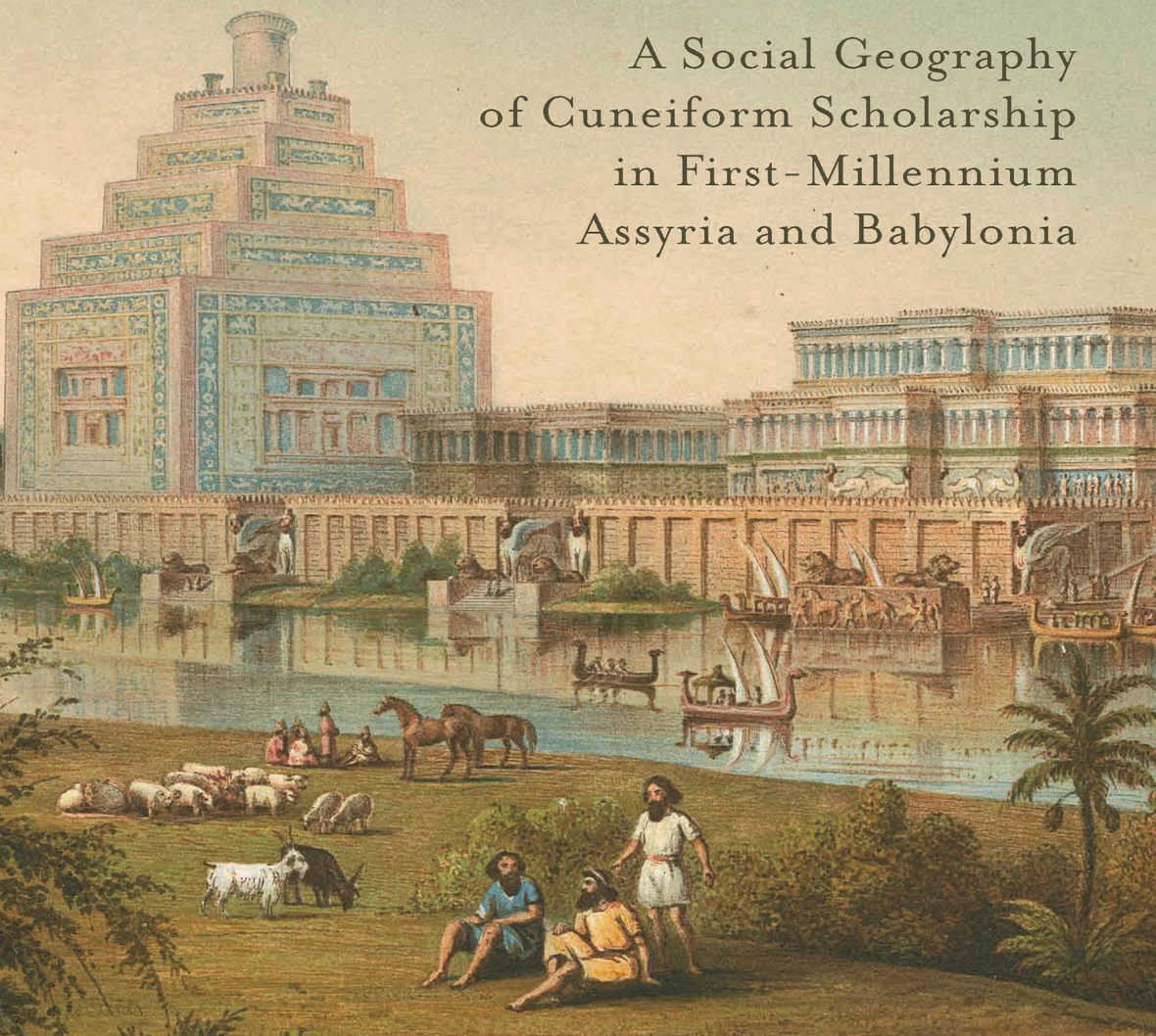
Eleanor Robson

Ancient Knowledge Networks

A Social Geography of Cuneiform Scholarship in First-Millennium Assyria and Babylonia



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In memory of Bo Treadwell (1991–2014)

Contents

Supplementary website at http://oracc.org/cams/akno featuring:

- Corpus of cuneiform texts quoted in this book
- Glossary of people, gods, and places
- Glossary of technical terms
- Links to online resources referenced
- Prosopography of Assyrian and Babylonian scholars of the first millennium BC: Tables A–B

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Acknowledgements

The fact that there is only one name on the cover of this book belies the huge number of people, projects and funding bodies who have contributed to its development over the past few years. Most fundamentally, I could not have begun to conceptualise it, never mind bring it to fruition, without the incredibly stimulating and always supportive intellectual environment of the Department of History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) at the University of Cambridge, where it was my privilege and pleasure to work for almost a decade (2004–13). It is always invidious to single out individuals but I shall do so anyway: Mirjam Brusius, Ruth Horry, Tamara Hug, Simon Schaffer, Jim Secord and Kathryn Stevens each gave significant amounts of practical advice and support in various vital ways.

The book is an outgrowth of several intertwined research projects. The Cambridge Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), then headed by Professor Mary Jacobus, gave me an Early Career Fellowship for the period January–March 2007 which, together with funding from the UK Higher Education Academy's Philosophy and Religious Studies subject group in 2007–8, enabled Ruth Horry, Karen Radner, Steve Tinney and me to begin work on *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (now at http://oracc.org/saao/knpp/). A further tranche of funding, from the HEA's Classics subject group in 2008–9, led to the development of *Cuneiform Revealed* (http://oracc.org/saao/knpp/cuneiformrevealed/) with additional contributions by Jon Taylor and Frans van Koppen. Although both were primarily pedagogical projects, they addressed two major concerns that lie at the heart of this book: the mutual shaping of politics and scholarship in the cuneiform world, and a bottom-up approach to cuneiform literacies. The volume that Radner and I subsequently edited – *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Radner and Robson 2011) – also fundamentally shaped the contents and style of this book; to all its contributors, the OUP editorial team, and of course Karen herself, I continue to be very grateful.

Meanwhile, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council generously funded a five-year research project, *The Geography of Knowledge in*

Assyria and Babylonia: A Diachronic Analysis of Four Scholarly Libraries (AH/E509258/1, http://oracc.org/cams/gkab), co-directed by Steve Tinney and me and based jointly at HPS in Cambridge and the Babylonian Section of Penn Museum, Philadelphia in 2007–12. Project members were: Marie-Françoise Besnier, full-time researcher from March 2008 to December 2012; Philippe Clancier, full-time researcher from September 2007 to August 2009; Graham Cunningham, part-time senior researcher from September 2007 to September 2011; Frances Reynolds, part-time researcher from September 2007 to October 2008; and Greta Van Buylaere, full-time researcher from October 2009 to May 2011. Fran and Graham were also instrumental in the project design during the funding application process, while Ruth Horry, Philip Jones, Henry Stadthouders, Kathryn Stevens and Niek Veldhuis all made valuable contributions too. This book is formally a 'research output' of that project, and certainly could not have been completed without it.

For eighteen months in 2011–12 the Leverhulme Trust funded the spin-off project *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Literacies: Identifying Individual Spelling Habits* under my direction, with project members Steve Tinney, Greta Van Buylaere and Niek Veldhuis, with invaluable programming consultancy by Chris Martin. Some preliminary results are discussed in Chapter 5. As should be obvious by now, Oracc, the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (http://oracc.org), has been the backbone behind those projects and this book. Online cataloguing, edition and analysis of the huge number of primary sources involved has fundamentally transformed – and, I hope, improved – my understanding of the linguistic, archaeological and historical details of cuneiform scholarship while opening up new views of the whole. I am particularly grateful to my fellow members of the Oracc steering committee Steve Tinney, Jamie Novotny and Niek Veldhuis, and to all Oracc project members I've worked with over the past several years.

Most of the manuscript of this book was written in the library of the Institut für Assyriologie at the University of Heidelberg during the period October 2011–March 2012, thanks to the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung's generous award of a Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Forschungspreis. (Note that by and large, I have been unable to consider works published since then.) It is a pleasure to express deepest gratitude to my host Stefan Maul, as well as colleagues Bettina Faist, Nils Heeßel, Markus Hilgert, Lisa Wilhelmi and Kamran Vincent Zand. During my stay in Germany I also gave papers in Munich – especial thanks to Walter Sallaberger, Alexa Bartelmus and Michael Roaf for their warm hospitality – and Tübingen, where Andreas Fuchs and Konrad Volk made me very welcome and gave

invaluable feedback. Later in 2012, Francesca Rochberg invited me to speak at UC Berkeley, where she, Jerry Cooper, Marion Feldman, Laurie Pearce, Niek Veldhuis and their students provided stimulating company and challenging discussion.

In October 2013, having submitted a near-final manuscript of this book to readers, I moved to the History Department at University College London, where I was made extraordinarily and immediately welcome. It has been a joy and an education to teach on and around the topics I consider here, especially with my MA students, and with final-year undergraduates taking my special subject 'Temple Life in Assyria and Babylonia'. It's also been a delight to be amongst large numbers of ancient historians again, particularly under the umbrella of the Institute of Classical Studies' seminars in Ancient History. I've had the pleasure of co-organising two of these series, with Benet Salway in autumn 2014 on libraries in the ancient world, and with Riet Van Bremen and Jennifer Hicks in summer 2016 on the Seleucids in the east. My profound thanks to all of my London students and colleagues for their enthusiasm and stimulus, which kept this project alive in difficult times, and which have had many beneficial effects on the final revisions, effected in autumn 2016 and spring 2018.

Elsewhere, Heather Baker, Eckart Frahm, Johannes Hackl, Michael Jursa and Jamie Novotny all generously and patiently answered questions on key points of detail, while Marie Besnier, Karen Radner and Greta Van Buylaere each read parts of drafts. Kathryn Stevens magnificently gave a first draft of the whole book a thorough and careful critique, chapter by chapter. Eduardo Escobar performed a similar service later in the process, at which point I also received helpful feedback from Claus Ambos, Marine Béranger, Uri Gabbay, Shai Gordin, Alison Gruseke, Bert van der Spek and Jon Taylor. Numberless others along the way have also helped, wittingly or unwittingly, to formulate the tone and substance of this book; my sincere thanks to all of them, with apologies for not naming every name. Needless to say, my many and various collaborators, commentators and constructive critics should take no blame for the errors and infelicities that remain.

Finally, a few inadequate words of thanks to those in and around Cambridge who have seen me through the past few years of writing and not-writing, which started out tough but have got better and better: Lawrence Grasty, Christina Riggs, my stalwart cat Bump, and his successors Barney and Fred. My last words, however, must be for my beloved stepson Bo Treadwell, who died in January 2014 far too young and suddenly, far too far from home. This book is for him, for all that he was and all that he could have been.

Bibliographical abbreviations

ACT	*Astronomical Cuneiform Texts*, Neugebauer (1955), 3 volumes.
BagM Beih. 2	*Baghdader Mitteilungen, Beiheft* 2, van Dijk and Mayer (1980).
BRM	*Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan*; BRM 1 = Clay (1912); BRM 2 Clay (1913); BRM 4 = Clay (1923).
CAD	*Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, Oppenheim et al. (1956–2010), 26 volumes.
CAMS/GKAB	Robson et al. (2007–12).
CTN	*Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud*. CTN 1 = Kinnier Wilson (1972); CTN 2 = Postgate (1973); CTN 3 = Dalley and Postgate (1984); CTN 4 = Wiseman and Black (1996); CTN 5 = Saggs (2001).
Nbk	Strassmaier (1889).
PNA	*Prosopography of Neo-Assyrian*, Baker and Radner (1997–2017). Updates online at http://oracc.org/pnao.
SAA	*State Archives of Assyria*, 20 volumes to date, online at http://oracc.org/saao/. SAA 1 Parpola (1987a); SAA 2 = Parpola and Watanabe (1988); SAA 3 = Livingstone (1989); SAA 4 = Starr (1990); SAA 5 = Lanfranchi and Parpola (1990); SAA 6 = Kwasman and Parpola (1991); SAA 7 = Fales and Postgate (1992); SAA 8 = Hunger (1992); SAA 9 = Parpola (1997); SAA 10 = Parpola (1993); SAA 11 = Fales and Postgate (1995); SAA 12 = Kataja and Whiting (1995); SAA 13 = Cole and Machinist (1998); SAA 14 = Mattila (2002); SAA 15 = Fuchs and Parpola (2001); SAA 16 = Luukko and Van Buylaere (2002); SAA 17 = Dietrich (2003); SAA 18 = Reynolds (2003); SAA 19 = Luukko (2012); SAA 20 = Parpola (2017).

SpTU	*Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk*. SpTU 1 = Hunger (1976); SpTU 2 = von Weiher (1982); SpTU 3 = von Weiher (1988); SpTU 4 = von Weiher (1993); SpTU 5 = von Weiher (1998).
STT	*Sultantepe Tablets*. STT 1 = Gurney and Finkelstein (1957); STT 2 = Gurney and Hulin (1964).
TCL	*Textes Cunéiformes du Louvre*. TCL 6 = Thureau-Dangin (1922).
UET 4	Figulla (1949)

Museum and excavation sigla

A	Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
AO	Antiquités Orientales, department of the Musée de Louvre, Paris
Ash	Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
BM (ME)	British Museum, London (Department of the Middle East)
CBS	Cuneiform Collection of the Babylonian Section, Penn Museum, Philadelphia
K	Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum
LB	De Liagre Böhl Collection of Leiden University, Leiden
IM	Iraq Museum, Baghdad
MLC	Morgan Library Collection of Yale University, New Haven
NCBT	Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets of Yale University, New Haven
ND	Tablets found at Nimrud, now housed in the Iraq Museum or on loan to the British Museum
Rm	Rassam Collection of the British Museum
Sm	Smith Collection of the British Museum
VA	Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
VAT	Tablet collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

Dating conventions

For most of the period covered by this book, Babylonian dating practice used regnal years, counting from each new king's accession year, while the Assyrians named years after eponym officials, nominated by the kings. The chronology for the first millennium BC is mostly uncontroversial, thanks to copious quantities of accurately dateable celestial observations, which are themselves dated in the ancient manner. The only exceptions are from the final years of the Assyrian empire, in the late seventh century BC, when the order of eponym officials has not yet been firmly established. In the main text, I thus give dates only in years BC, except for the so-called post-canonical Assyrian eponyms marked with an asterisk (see Chapter 3 note 169).

Continuous dating began with the Seleucid Era (SE), which was considered to have begun at the spring equinox of Seleucus I's accession year, 3 April 311 BC. The main text uses only dates BC; in the endnotes and online Table B both SE and BC dates are given. Conversions between the two systems were made using R.H. de Gent's online Babylonian calendar converter at http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal.htm.

Editorial conventions

In the running text, both Akkadian and Sumerian words are alphabetically normalised and set in *italics*. The consonants š, ṣ and ṭ represent the sound /sh/ and emphatic /s/ and /t/ respectively. All translations from Akkadian and Sumerian texts are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Sign-by-sign transliterations of all quoted passages of cuneiform text are given in the footnotes, using the following conventions:

- syllabic Akkadian and Sumerian are written in lower case with hyphens separating the signs within a word;
- logograms are written in UPPER CASE with periods separating the signs within a word;
- semantic determinatives are written in superscript and separated by periods;
- phonetic complements are also written in superscript but separated by hyphens;
- en-dashes (–) separate word elements within transliterated proper nouns;
- sexagesimal (base 60) numerals are transliterated with a semicolon as the 'sexagesimal point' separating integers from fractions and spaces separating the sexagesimal places;
- [] enclose missing text, restored by a modern editor;
- […] represents missing text, not restorable by a modern editor;
- … stands for text omitted for reasons of space or relevance;
- ⌜⌝ enclose damaged text, restored by a modern editor;
- < > enclose text omitted by ancient scribe, restored by a modern editor;
- ≪ ≫ enclose text erroneously inserted by ancient scribe;
- | marks line breaks on the tablet;
- ll. = lines (counted in Arabic numerals);
- i, ii, iii, etc. = column counts;
- obv. = obverse (front) of tablet;

- rev. = reverse (back) of tablet;
- l.e., r.e., t.e. and b.e. = left edge, right edge, top edge and bottom edge respectively.

In the notes, / and // stand for 'son of' and descendant of' respectively; so, e.g. 'Nidintu-Anu/Anu-belšunu//Ekur-zakir' should be read as 'Nidintu-Anu, son of Anu-belšunu, descendant of Ekur-zakir'.

The large majority of the cuneiform texts discussed and quoted in this book are accessible in online editions and translations through the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus at http://oracc.org/cams/akno/.

1
Introduction

This is a book about how knowledge travels, in minds and bodies, writings and performances. It explores the forms knowledge takes, the meanings it accrues and how they are shaped by the peoples and places that use it. This is also a book about the relationships between political power, family ties and literate scholarship in the ancient Middle East of the first millennium BC (see Tables 3a and 5a for chronological overviews). Its particular focus is on two regions where cuneiform script was the predominant writing medium: Assyria in the north of modern-day Syria and Iraq; and Babylonia to the south of modern-day Baghdad (Fig. 1.1). And third, this is a book about Assyriological and historical method, both now and over the past two centuries. It asks how the field has shaped and been shaped by the academic concerns and fashions of the day. But perhaps above all this book is an experiment in writing about 'Mesopotamian science', as it has often been known. By focusing on the geographical and the social I hope to shed new light on the historical and intellectual too. Although I have included a lot of technical detail and evidential data, I have tried to make the book accessible to those without a specialist training in cuneiform studies. In particular, the following introduction aims to set the scene and explain my rationale, while maps, online glossaries and other resources will, I hope, give some further support to non-expert readers.[1]

Mesopotamian science, cuneiform scholarship

How can one write a history of Mesopotamian science? There are so many definitional and methodological problems involved that sometimes it seems foolhardy even to try. As I and others have argued before, Mesopotamia – a Greek-derived word meaning 'land between the rivers' – is all too

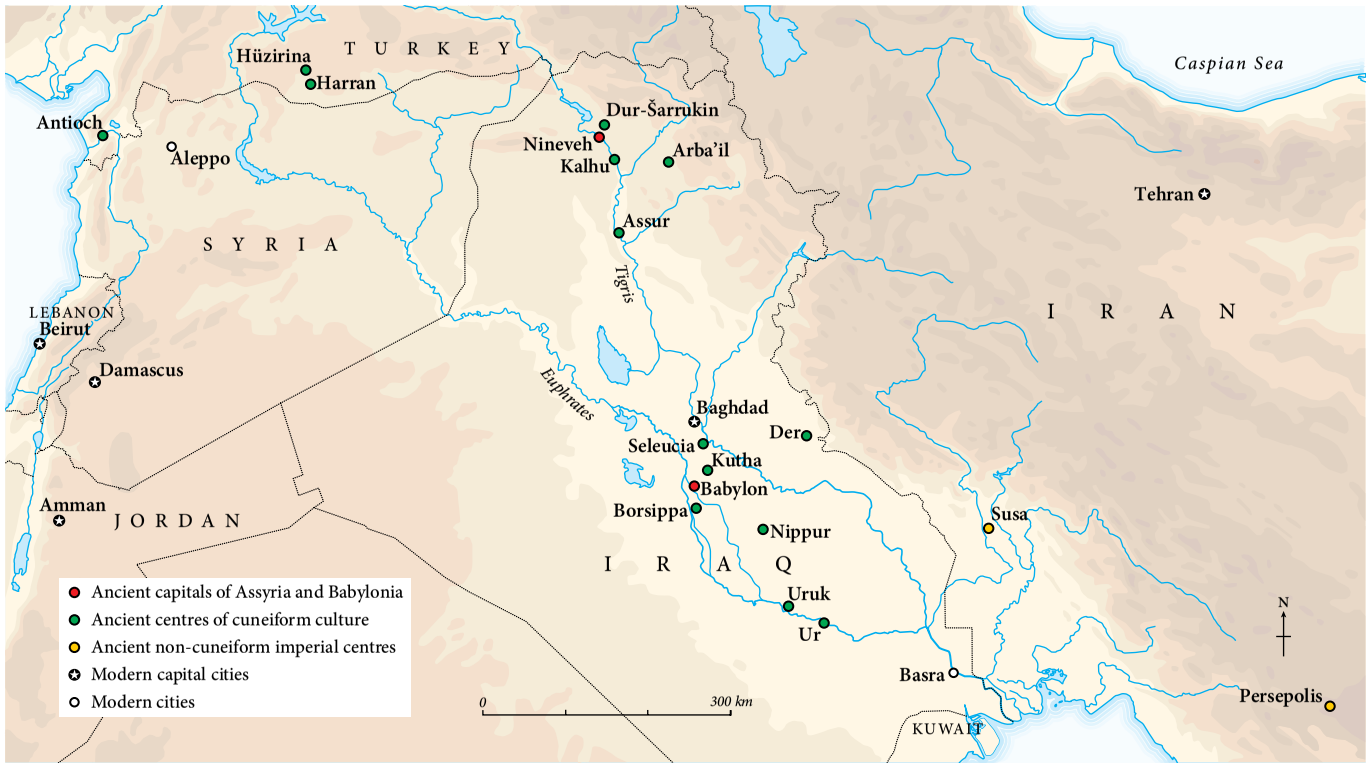

Figure 1.1 Map of the key places mentioned in this book. Source: Martin Brown.

often used as a catch-all term to refer to a large area over a vast period of time.[2] Maximally, the term encompasses most of Iraq and Syria, plus parts of Iran and Turkey, from prehistory through the beginnings of writing in the late fourth millennium BC, to the Persian and Macedonian conquests some 3,000 years later. It emphasises long-term, large-scale continuity and similarity – which admittedly has its methodological benefits – while underplaying localism, change and individuality. There is a resultant temptation to over-generalise from single instances and to downplay geographical and chronological difference.[3] As one means of avoiding this unwitting homogenisation Karen Radner and I proposed the term 'cuneiform culture' to label the object of most Assyriologists' historical attention. By this we meant the individuals and professional and social groups who cohered around 'the writing technology that is not only fundamental to a modern academic understanding of the region but which also bound the ancient inhabitants into a shared set of ways of understanding and managing their world'.[4] Of course one can and should also usefully subdivide that culture geographically, chronologically, linguistically and socially. In what follows I focus on a particular set of cuneiform subcultures: the tiny number of highly educated urban males in first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia who identified with, or aspired to, the highest echelons of intellectual life. As we shall see, it was they who produced the body of writings in the Akkadian and Sumerian languages that are now often labelled as cuneiform 'literature' and 'science'.[5]

These terms too are fraught with danger if applied unthinkingly to the cuneiform world, for they are often misrepresented as entirely separate realms of knowledge and treated very differently in modern academe. Cuneiform 'literature' has been accepted easily into the world canon, constituting early examples of poetry, myth and epic. Yet Niek Veldhuis and others have warned us off purely aesthetic or documentary approaches to 'literature' written in cuneiform, even when it does have clearly poetic or allegorical qualities.[6] Instead a more socio-functional analysis can help historians understand what these compositions, whether narrative or hymnic or dialogic, meant to those who memorised, copied and performed them. How did form relate, if at all, to function? By contrast, Francesca Rochberg and I have both shown in different ways how even the Babylonian intellectual endeavours with the closest family resemblances to modern scientific disciplines – namely astronomy and mathematics – struggled to be accepted into the history of science for much of the twentieth century.[7] Questions of form and function were barely addressed, as historians often tended to 'domesticate' ancient writings to more closely represent modern ways of thinking.

In the early 1990s, Rochberg edited a seminal collection of papers on 'cultures of ancient science' for the journal *Isis,* encapsulating an important historiographical shift whose ramifications are still being worked through.[8] In that volume Geoffrey Lloyd in particular laid out a compelling case for abandoning worries about the so-called 'demarcation question' – namely how to distinguish 'science' from its imitators – and focusing instead on the ancients' own ways of making sense of the world and the terminology with which they categorised their findings and themselves.[9] These ideas are usefully summarised by two equally eminent sociologist-historians of more recent periods. In David Bloor's words, 'Knowledge for the sociologist is whatever people take to be knowledge' and, says Steven Shapin, it should be studied by historians 'as if it was produced by people with bodies, situated in time, space, culture and society, and struggling for credibility and authority'.[10] With those exhortations in mind, in this book I try to eschew anachronistic, value-laden terms such as 'astrology', 'science', 'physician' and even 'Mesopotamia'. Rather, I try to carve the world of high cuneiform culture at its joints by respecting ancient taxonomies of knowledge.[11] Most fundamentally, the whole enterprise I consider here was known in Akkadian as *ṭupšarrūtu*, the abstract form of the noun *ṭupšarru* 'scribe'. It could mean most mundanely 'scribal employment' or 'the status of being a scribe' but also 'scribal learning'.[12] As we shall see, *ṭupšarrūtu* covered a wide range of intellectual enterprises, from (in modern-day terms) mythology to medicine to mathematics, and much that has no contemporary counterpart. Throughout this book, I shall denote the field of literate cuneiform learning simply as 'scholarship'.

Not everyone who copied, commented on or created scholarly writings used titles to identify themselves but in first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia there were, broadly speaking, five major specialisms in different areas of learning. Ideally – although the reality was often messier in practice – the *asû* and *āšipu* were two types of healer (often unhelpfully translated into English as 'physician' and 'exorcist'); the *bārû* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* (often 'diviner' and 'astrologer') read and interpreted provoked and unprovoked omens respectively; and the main role of the *kalû* ('lamenter') was to soothe and placate angry gods.[13] Degrees of expertise could be marked with terms such as *šamallû* 'apprentice' or *rab*(*û*) 'senior'. The bodies of work associated with the scholarly professions were, like *ṭupšarrūtu,* mostly named for them: *asûtu, āšipūtu, bārûtu* and *kalûtu.* Conversely, the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, literally 'scribe of "When the gods Anu, Ellil (and Ea established in council the plans of heaven and earth)"', was named after the celestial omen series that,

initially at least, was its primary reference work and source of authority. While there have been several useful studies of the individual scholarly professions, they tend to synthesise evidence from a range of periods, places and contexts.[14] Likewise, the realities of the relationships between scholarly genres, professional titles and living human beings were much more complex than this schema allows. Here instead I shall aim to draw out the nuances of difference across time, space and social class in order to track local practices and change, both in the meaning and function of the scholarly professions and in their relationships with the bodies of learning that individuals worked with.

Histories of science, geographies of knowledge

It has been hard to integrate history of science and Assyriology over the years, partly because of the relatively late decipherment of cuneiform and the huge linguistic challenges that it brings. Eurocentric reluctance to decentre classical Greece from origin myths of 'civilisation' fuelled worries about what counted as 'science'. Cuneiformists' challenges to long-established models of the past have gone largely unheard. All of these barriers have already been well documented. But there is also a fundamental structural problem in that the largely anonymous cuneiform record does not lend itself to the dominant modes of writing about more modern periods of science. Hagiographic accounts of brilliant individuals making world-changing discoveries are thankfully no longer mainstream in academic history writing but are still prevalent in more popular books and broadcast media. Assyrian and Babylonian scholars, who have left us very few names and the barest traces of personalities to identify them by, are necessarily excluded from this type of historical discourse. We can say almost nothing about individuals' motivations, interests and abilities. Similarly, the cuneiform record cannot supply the types and density of sources needed to contribute to more recent, sociologically motivated studies of the ways by which scientific controversies are resolved in favour of one theory or technique held to be superior. Instead, as we shall see further in Chapter 2, the Assyriological default has necessarily been to focus on the edition and interpretation of textual genres and compositions. More recently, however, attention has turned to other sorts of evidence: letters, school exercises, institutional documentation, archaeological context. Together they open up the possibility of studying Kuhnian 'normal science': the business-as-usual of everyday scholarly practice.[15]

All of that practice was situated in particular places and spaces. Enough evidence survives of those locales and their relationships to make cuneiform scholarship susceptible to what the historical geographer Alan Baker has dubbed 'locational-spatial' analysis.[16] At its most focused, this type of 'Where? And why there?' study is a form of micro-geography: an attempt to reconstruct the textures and rhythms of intellectual life in a single community, in a single place over a restricted period of time. Such approaches are a key feature of this book, especially in Chapters 4 and 5. Macro-geographies, on the other hand – the movements of people and objects, ideas and practices, techniques and knowledge across longer distances and between communities – are addressed mainly in Chapters 3 and 6. There have been a few previous studies of individual instances of long-distance scholarly journeys in the cuneiform world, but by and large intellectuals have been left out of accounts of travel in the ancient Middle East.[17] For instance, in her monograph about travellers on official business for the Neo-Assyrian empire Sabrina Favaro considers only magnates, governors and officials, messengers, and the king and his army. Yet, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, Assyrian court scholars were also frequently on the move.[18] As discussed in Chapter 2, over the past decade or so there has been a wave of geographical studies on more recent periods in the history of science. Historians have sought to identify where and under what socio-political conditions knowledge is generated, how that knowledge is replicated and spread, where it is consumed and by whom, and under what circumstances, and in what places, it flourishes or dies.[19] There is a plethora of both archaeological and textual evidence from ancient Iraq and its environs to enable Assyriology to tackle such questions; this book is an attempt to do just that.

In Chapter 2, I take Rochberg's classic advice to historicise our predecessors in order to better understand ourselves.[20] In this case the question is why cuneiform intellectual culture has so rarely been subject to historical or geographical study in the ways described above. I argue that the current image of universal sameness stems from two ideas created roughly a century apart. First, 'Ashurbanipal's Library' was constructed twice: first as that king's private collection in the seventh-century Assyrian capital Nineveh; and then as the epitome of royally supported cuneiform learning in the British Museum in the late 1860s AD. Second, the power of the American Assyriologist Leo Oppenheim's 1960s phrase 'the stream of tradition' has unintentionally stymied the historicisation of Assyrian and Babylonian intellectual culture despite his own later writings.[21] I then detail some of the new sources and methodologies that enable us to make a new start, and which underpin the following chapters.

Chapter 3 starts to pick a little further at the supposed first-among-equals status of 'Ashurbanipal's Library' by considering the evidence for Assyrian court scholarship over the centuries before that particular historical moment. It becomes clear that the close relationship between king Ashurbanipal and the god Nabu that permeates the intellectual culture of his reign was the culmination of a long development. I argue that Nabu was taken up by courtly intelligentsia as their patron deity in the early ninth century BC but it was not until the late eighth century BC that he became a central figure in the king's personal theology. At this point temples to Nabu, as centres of cuneiform scholarship, began to proliferate in Assyrian royal cities as the ruler became increasingly dependent on both the human and the divine support that they offered. Architectural and textual evidence suggests that at one level they can all be thought of as branches of the same institution. This flourishing of court patronage was relatively brief, however, and decline began even before the end of Ashurbanipal's reign.

Where Chapter 3 considers change over centuries and large-scale institutional upheavals between Assyrian royal cities, Chapter 4 zooms in on two decades or so of the early seventh century BC, during the reigns of Esarhaddon and his son Ashurbanipal. Here I trace the movements of scholarly professionals and their writings around the Assyrian court and consider who had access to these men and their knowledge. Royal scholarship was – perhaps not surprisingly – highly exclusive and exclusionary. I shall show that it served significantly different aims from the tablet collections of communities elsewhere in the Assyrian heartland and periphery. 'Ashurbanipal's Library' thus loses its claim as archetype, both within the history of the Assyrian empire and within its socio-political fabric.

In Chapter 5 I track the changing relationship between scholarship and kingship in Babylonia over the first millennium BC, in parallel with Chapter 3. Not surprisingly, the heyday of cuneiform scholarship in Babylonia was after the demise of Assyria in 612 BC, under the newly independent dynasty of Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar. But the Persian conquest of 539 BC did not kill off the old ways immediately. Rather, it was a series of brutal crackdowns on rebellions amongst the northern Babylonian elites in the late sixth and early fifth centuries that caused the greatest rupture. While the titles *asû* and *bārû* disappear almost completely from the historical record at this point, the scholarly professions of *āšipu, kalû* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* were able to adapt and survive. Meanwhile, the fate of Nabu in Babylonia was closely tied to his identity as son of the dynastic god Marduk. While he remained an important deity after the fall of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, institutional politics meant that temple affiliations took priority in scholars' personal

devotional declarations. Henceforth, lack of courtly patronage drove the exploitation of two other long-standing means of support in new ways. Through a complex mixed economy of temple-based performance and private practice, scholars continued to provide consultations for individual clients, deploying innovations in both theory and method. A close study of the Uruk temple community's scholarly output shows the various ways in which they reacted to the end of royal support. In Uruk, I argue, a robust sense of long scholarly heritage along with concomitant self-worth mixed with grievance over past royal slights kept cuneiform intellectual culture alive and creative, despite dwindling numbers of practitioners and clients, well into the second century BC.

Chapter 6 again takes a micro-geographical turn, with a study of the places and spaces of scholarly practice before and after the anti-Achaemenid rebellions around 500 BC. I explore scholarship's relationship with the temple, and with private clientele, city by city. Throughout Babylonia, cuneiform learning petered out gradually or disappeared suddenly over the course of the late first millennium, leaving the communities of Uruk and Babylon as the last survivors of cuneiform culture. By this time, it bore little resemblance to its predecessor in the Neo-Assyrian court of half a millennium earlier, in aims, content or social status. The Oppenheimian 'stream of tradition', in other words, turns out to be far more fluid and far less traditional than many of its more dogmatic proponents would allow. However, I also argue that these apparent disappearances are not simply the chance result of what archaeologists happen to have discovered. Rather, they reflect a genuine geographical and social shrinkage of cuneiform scholarly networks, both within and between the cities of Babylonia in the latter half of the first millennium BC.

Finally, Chapter 7 briefly pulls together several threads that have been running throughout the book – the social, the geographical, the cuneiform and the scholarly – and considers some fruitful directions for future research. In particular, I highlight the concept developed here of the 'survival bottleneck' for high cuneiform culture, by which it was twice almost extinguished, and that of the 'distributed library', which gave it the flexibility and resilience to endure for so long.[22]

Notes

1. At http://oracc.org/cams/akno.
2. Bahrani (1998); Robson (2008a: 272–4).
3. This trend can be seen, for instance, in the ubiquity of the phrase 'the Mesopotamian scribal curriculum' in the secondary literature, where what is actually meant is the commonality of

texts and practices used in the Babylonian city of Nippur, and to a greater or lesser extent in neighbouring cities, in the eighteenth century BC (Veldhuis 2016). Van der Toorn (2007: 55–9), for example, mixes evidence from early second-millennium Babylonia, the seventh-century Assyrian court in Nineveh and later periods in his account of 'Mesopotamian' scribal education, frequently referring to 'the curriculum'. Delnero (2010) gives a useful critique of the notion of curriculum in the Old Babylonian period (and implicitly beyond).

4. Radner and Robson (2011: xxvii).
5. Akkadian was a member of the Semitic language family, indirectly related to modern-day Hebrew and Arabic; Sumerian was, so far as we know, a linguistic isolate. Both were written in cuneiform script on clay tablets, waxed wooden writing-boards and other media. At its simplest cuneiform consisted of about 100 syllable signs and twenty word signs (logograms) but intellectuals used a much wider range, at least five times that number (see Chapter 5). For a basic overview of cuneiform script, the languages written in it and the modern conventions for representing them, see Robson and Radner (2009). Radner and Robson (2011) constitutes a useful introduction to the wider issues of cuneiform culture.
6. E.g. Veldhuis (2004: 39–47); Black et al. (2004: xix–xxx).
7. E.g. Rochberg (2004: 14–43; 2016); Robson (2008a: 268–74).
8. Rochberg (1992a). I am grateful to Andrew Gregory for organising the 'Cultures of Ancient Science' conference at UCL in the spring of 2013, at which the surviving contributors to the 1992 collection and other speakers reflected on its impact and legacy. Some of my talk on that occasion is scattered through this introduction.
9. Lloyd (1992). A useful introduction to the 'demarcation question' in philosophy of science is Hansson (2012).
10. Bloor (1976: 5); Shapin (2010: iii).
11. For a useful introduction to the philosophical concept of natural kinds and 'carving nature at its joints' (a phrase coined by Plato) see Bird and Tobin (2012); in relation to cuneiform culture, see now Rochberg (2016: 96–101).
12. CAD T: 162–3.
13. Not surprisingly, these professional designations are often written in arcane orthographies, and it is not always clear how to render them phonetically. In particular, it is likely that the *āšipu* – written variously with the logograms ^{lú}MU$_7$.MU$_7$; ^{lú}KA.PIRIG$_{(3)}$; ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ; ^{lú}KA.INIM.MA; ^{lú}ME(.ME); and ^{lú}ZABAR.DAB$_{(5)}$(.BA) – was also sometimes known by the term *mašmaššu* (CAD A/II: 431–5; M/I: 381). However, for simplicity's sake I shall use the word *āšipu* throughout.
14. E.g. Scurlock (1999); Jean (2006); Geller (2007) on the *asû* and *āšipu* and Rochberg (2000); Robson (2019) on the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*. See Robson (2011a) and Gabbay (2014a) respectively on *bārû* and *kalû* in the Neo-Assyrian royal court.
15. Kuhn (1996); see for instance Worthington (2009); Radner (2011b); Robson (2011a).
16. Baker (2003: 62–71); as opposed to 'environmental', 'landscape' and 'regional' approaches in his taxonomy. On space as a 'practiced place', produced by human action, see de Certeau (1984: 117–18); and more recently Withers (2009).
17. Good examples are by Wiggermann (2008); Heeßel (2009).
18. Favaro (2007: 5–49).
19. Two very influential early examples of this genre are by Livingstone (2003) and Secord (2004).
20. Rochberg (1992b).
21. E.g. Oppenheim (1975), to which I return in Chapter 7.
22. These two concepts are introduced and discussed at more length in Robson (2018); Robson and Stevens (2019).

2
From 'Ashurbanipal's Library' and the 'stream of tradition' to new approaches to cuneiform scholarship

Cuneiform script has been more or less readable to scholars since the 1840s. Since at least the 1850s Assyriologists have been editing and analysing the many cuneiform tablets that show us how ancient thinkers observed and made sense of the world around them. And since the early twentieth century, carefully recorded excavations have helped to put those tablets into archaeological context. And yet, we have been surprisingly reluctant to write a generalist history of cuneiform scholarship, one that not only describes these writings but attempts to account for their existence and character.[1] Instead, we have tended to characterise cuneiform scholarship as essentially unchanging and invariant. Why has this situation come about? In this chapter I shall try to answer that question by unpacking two big ideas that have accidentally dehistoricised our subject: 'Ashurbanipal's Library' and 'the stream of tradition'. I shall also outline some of the sources and approaches that I have found most useful in trying to put the history back in.

The two phrases 'Ashurbanipal's Library' and 'the stream of tradition' often crop up together in accounts of intellectual life in Assyria and Babylonia. They have gained currency and power far beyond the specialist discipline of Assyriology. Here, for instance, is a passage from John Van Seters' justly influential book on historiography in the biblical world, written in the early 1980s:

> History writing … is not the result of an accidental accumulation of data but is a literary work that was written for, and becomes part of, the society's 'stream of tradition'. Leo Oppenheim, who coined this phrase, draws a distinction between the great mass of

> written documents preserved from ancient Mesopotamia dealing with day-to-day business and those literary texts that were meant to be preserved and handed down to posterity …. The greatest known example of such a scribal tradition in the Near East before Alexander was the library of Ashurbanipal.[2]

In this passage, Van Seters rightly describes the 'stream of tradition' as a concept coined in modernity to capture the idea of a long-lived body of learned writings. In a similarly careful manner, he describes 'the library of Ashurbanipal' as 'greatest *known*' in the cuneiform world. Later in this chapter I will challenge the word 'library' and its attribution to one named king, but for now what matters is that Van Seters subtly signals the role of modern interpretation in this characterisation of the ancient past.

Now compare Hans Barstad's more recent account of cuneiform scholarship, written for a similar purpose and readership:

> Despite [the existence of] an enormous number of tablets, written in several different languages, the actual number of literary numbers and works that were handed down from generation to generation was fairly insignificant. We are, in other words, not dealing with newly invented, very different, or independent literary creations. Rather, all of the literature belongs to the same 'tradition stream' or *Einheitskultur*, the bulk of which must have been known to most of the ancient Near Eastern civilized world.[3]

Here Barstad implies that the 'tradition stream' was an objective feature of the first millennium BC, rather than a twentieth-century characterisation of it. In an accompanying footnote he quotes Oppenheim's assessment of 'Ashurbanipal's (668–627 BCE) 20000 tablets strong [*sic*] library in Nineveh, now in the British Museum' as 'representative of the main body, if not the entire content, of the scribal tradition'.[4] In other words, for Barstad cuneiform scholarship had no history – it never changed – and no geography – it was the same everywhere it existed. It simply varied in size. What is now in the British Museum is exactly what existed in antiquity. Consciously or not, Barstad presents the invidious cliché of the timeless and invariant Orient as incontrovertible fact.[5]

At risk of simplification, I shall label Van Seters' and Barstad's depictions of cuneiform scholarship as soft and hard, or weak and strong versions of the same idea: that in the first millennium BC cuneiform culture was transmitted unproblematically over time and from place to place; that for historians there is nothing to see here. No Assyriologist would, I

hope, have much sympathy with Barstad's strong ahistoricity. But weaker versions of this model undoubtedly still underpin many of our assumptions, and much of what we write and say, especially for wider audiences. In this chapter I explore how and why these images were created, and why they have endured so powerfully for so long. I shall also survey some of the new methodologies and sources that enable us to challenge, modify and perhaps completely redraw these images, as Oppenheim himself already hoped would happen over half a century ago.[6]

'Ashurbanipal's Library': From Nineveh to London

In the early nineteenth century the city of Mosul, now in northern Iraq, was a provincial capital at the eastern edge of the Ottoman empire. Its position on the Tigris river, crossing overland trade routes to nearby Persia, attracted Western traders and diplomats, while its substantial Christian communities drew European and North American Protestant missionaries seeking converts.[7] They had a famous ancient role model in Nebi Younis, or the prophet Jonah, who had supposedly refused to preach against heathen Assyrian idolatry until God gave him time to reflect, in the belly of a whale.[8] On changing his mind, he went to Nineveh, where he lived out the rest of his life. A Muslim shrine high on the east bank of the Tigris marked where the reluctant Old Testament prophet was said to be buried, linking the modern city opposite with the fabled ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh.

In 1836 the posthumous travel account of an East India Company man, James Claudius Rich, made local knowledge about ancient Nineveh available to Western readers.[9] In 1820, residents of Mosul had taken him to Jonah's shrine and shown him half-buried inscriptions and images carved in stone. Assyrian cuneiform had yet to be deciphered but Rich knew very well what it signified. This was the first material evidence of the mighty ancient empire so far known only through classical and biblical tales.

The French government quickly created a consular post in Mosul and chose Paul-Émile Botta as its first incumbent. Botta had begun his career as a naturalist and collector in California, Hawaii and Yemen before turning to diplomacy and antiquarianism.[10] He was expert in collecting specimens of plants and animals in the field for research and display back in Paris, and applied similar methods to collecting Assyrian artefacts.[11] Botta began digging the mounds of Nebi Younis and nearby Kouyunjik in 1842, establishing the methods that would dominate antiquarian fieldwork in

the region for much of the nineteenth century and beyond. These activities were not 'excavation' in the modern, archaeological sense, and nor could they have been, for it was not until the early twentieth century that German archaeologists introduced controlled, stratigraphic, carefully documented excavations to Assyrian archaeology. Rather, they were exercises in tunnelling through the mounds, mostly following the line of the sculptured wall decorations, to look for portable objects.[12]

Some four years later Botta was joined in Mosul by a young British traveller, Austen Henry Layard, first his protégé in antiquarian exploration but soon his rival.[13] Layard began his own intermittent digs on Kouyunjik in 1846, famously discovering the palaces of ancient Nineveh and shipping their sculptures back to London for his sponsors at the British Museum. During one of Layard's many prolonged absences, in the late spring of 1850, the local foreman Toma Shishman discovered two connecting rooms containing many thousands of cuneiform tablets (Fig. 2.1).[14] When Layard later wrote about these so-called 'chambers of records' he rightly identified them as belonging to the Southwest Palace of Nineveh, built for Ashurbanipal's grandfather king Sennacherib in *c*. 700 BC, and numbered them 40–41 on his room plan. Drawing from what must have been Shishman's eyewitness account, he described these rooms as follows:

> To the height of a foot or more from the floor they were entirely filled with [tablets]; some entire, but the greater part broken into many fragments, probably by the falling in of the upper part of the building. They were of different sizes; the largest tablets were flat and measured about 9 inches by 6½ inches; the smaller were slightly convex, and some not more than an inch long, with but one or two lines of writing. The cuneiform characters on most of them were singularly sharp and well defined, but so minute in some instances as to be almost illegible without a magnifying glass.[15]

As Reade points out, Layard's description of the volume of the find cannot be taken entirely at face value, 'since it is more than double the space now allocated to storing the … tablets individually in boxes on museum shelves', but there is no doubt that Shishman had stumbled on a very substantial trove.[16] We do not know exactly how many objects it comprised, since there are no figures for the numbers of tablets in each shipment to London.[17] But it must have been substantially more than the 278 tablets catalogued in the British Museum in the 1850s, for when George Smith re-excavated the same rooms in 1874 he found a further 3,000 or so fragments that Shishman and Layard's tunnels had missed. And in the winter

Figure 2.1: 'Archive chamber, Kouyunjik, sketched on the spot by S.G. Malan' (Layard 1853: opp. p. 345). Malan was a Swiss-British scholar of the Bible and Asian languages who travelled widely in India and the Middle East and was an accomplished artist. Many of the sketches he made while briefly visiting Layard's expedition in 1850 formed the basis of Layard's published illustrations (Gadd 1938; Clayden 2015). Public domain.

of 1890–1 Wallis Budge discovered 300 more simply by sifting through his predecessors' excavation dumps.[18]

Although Shishman's discovery of the 'chambers of records' must have constituted, in Reade's words, 'the major find' of tablets on Kouyunjik, it was not the only one (Fig. 2.2).[19] Some time between 1852 and 1855, Layard's Moslawi former assistant Hormuzd Rassam and his English colleague Henry Loftus each unearthed significant numbers of tablets elsewhere in the Southwest Palace. They also found more in the southeastern quarter of the nearby North Palace, which had been commissioned for Ashurbanipal in the mid-seventh century. Smith and

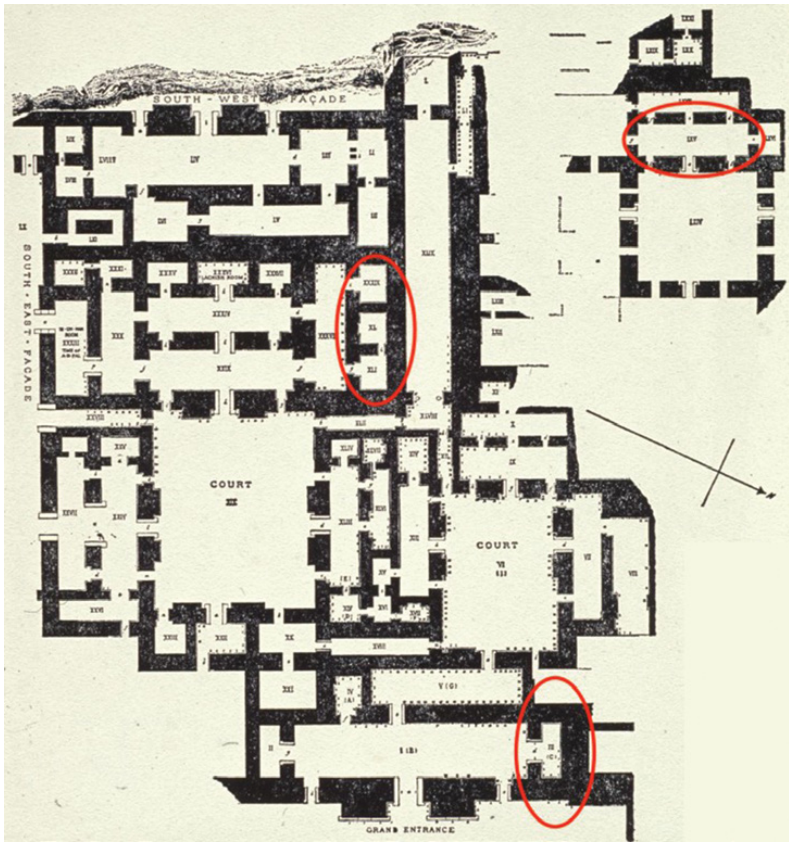

Figure 2.2: 'Plan of excavated chambers of Kouyunjik' (Layard 1853: opp. p. 67) with locations of major tablet finds added. Later generations of explorers also found tablets in the nearby temples of Ištar and Nabu as well as the North Palace on the same site. Public domain.

Rassam picked up further tablets in this vicinity in 1874 and 1878–82 respectively, while in the early twentieth century several hundred more were found in and around the temples of Nabu and Ištar, between the two palaces.[20] However, it is now impossible to identify definitive findspots for most Kouyunjik tablets, while some that are supposedly from that site are clearly not from Nineveh at all. Some will have been purchased in-country by the excavators, and others mixed up with finds from other excavations, either on site or in the museum before cataloguing.[21]

If the process of finding tablets was not yet archaeology, then back in London the treatment of this new type of museum object posed almost insurmountable problems too.[22] Their collective bulk was so overwhelming, their state often so fragmentary and fragile, and their contents so inscrutable that the British Museum was at a loss as to how to manage them. As mentioned above, in the early 1850s just 278 of the many thousands of tablets were photographed and catalogued with a 'K-number' to mark them as members of the so-called Kouyunjik collection.[23] By mid-decade there was a general consensus that the principles of cuneiform script had been correctly understood and that the underlying language, Assyrian, belonged to the Semitic language family.[24] But it was only with the British Museum's creation of a Department of Oriental Antiquities in 1860 that the organisation, conservation and publication of the Kouyunjik tablets really began.

The first of five volumes of *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* was published in 1861. It appeared under the name of the eminent politician, diplomat and decipherer Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson but was mostly put together by Edwin Norris, the elderly General Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society.[25] It contained no translations or even alphabetic transcriptions of ancient texts, but consisted entirely of lithographs of cuneiform inscriptions found on royal monuments, bricks and foundation stones from places such as Nineveh. These were the literal and metaphorical building blocks of Assyrian and Babylonian dynastic and military chronology, which – once edited and translated in other publications – were helping historians, and the avid general public, situate ancient Assyria in relation to the events and peoples of the Old Testament. However, for the next two decades work was piecemeal and sporadic, for the department had a tiny staff and little space for visiting researchers to work in, while tablets continued to pour in from other ancient Assyrian and Babylonian sites which also had to be dealt with.[26] Neither the conceptual nor the practical resources to handle this material yet existed.

In short, for some decades it was almost impossible for the Museum's staff, let alone other Assyriologists or the general public, to get any coherent understanding of just what had been unearthed from the 'chambers of records' and other similar findspots at Nineveh. Neither Layard himself nor his contemporaries ever talked of a 'library' in the 1850s; the word cannot be found in any immediate account of the discovery of Assyria. For instance, in Layard's 1854 pamphlet on the Nineveh Court display at Sydenham Crystal Palace in London we read:

> An immense number of such documents have now been discovered in Assyrian and Babylonian ruins and a large collection is now in the British Museum …. In fact there is reason to hope that they form almost a complete Assyrian library, furnishing us with a vast amount of information regarding the history, sciences, and customs of the Ninevites.[27]

Here it is clear that the 'library' Layard has in mind is the one that has been created *in* the British Museum, from tablets found all over Assyria and Babylonia, not a creation of the ancients.

As far as I am aware, the Kouyunjik tablets became 'Ashurbanipal's Library' only in the late 1860s. Earlier that decade, the ancient historian George Rawlinson – brother of Henry and thus closely informed of the very latest discoveries – had produced a monumental four-volume account of the *Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, comprising Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, Media and Persia.[28] It made no mention of any Assyrian library. But in the 1871 revision Rawlinson averred that a 'vast collection of clay tablets – a sort of Royal Library – was made at Nineveh', and elsewhere referred to it explicitly as 'the library of Asshur-bani-pal'.[29] What had brought about this change?

In 1866, the Department's second instalment of *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* had appeared.[30] This volume, produced under the same arrangement as the first, mainly contained Sumerian-Assyrian word-lists and other bilingual texts, which Norris needed as raw material for his never-to-be-completed *Assyrian Dictionary*.[31] Many of these tablets had short subscripts – colophons, in modern Assyriological parlance – that marked them as royal property (Figs 2.3–2.4). The shortest read, simply, 'Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, king of the land of Aššur'. The most elaborate, on Kouyunjik tablet K 39, can now be translated as:

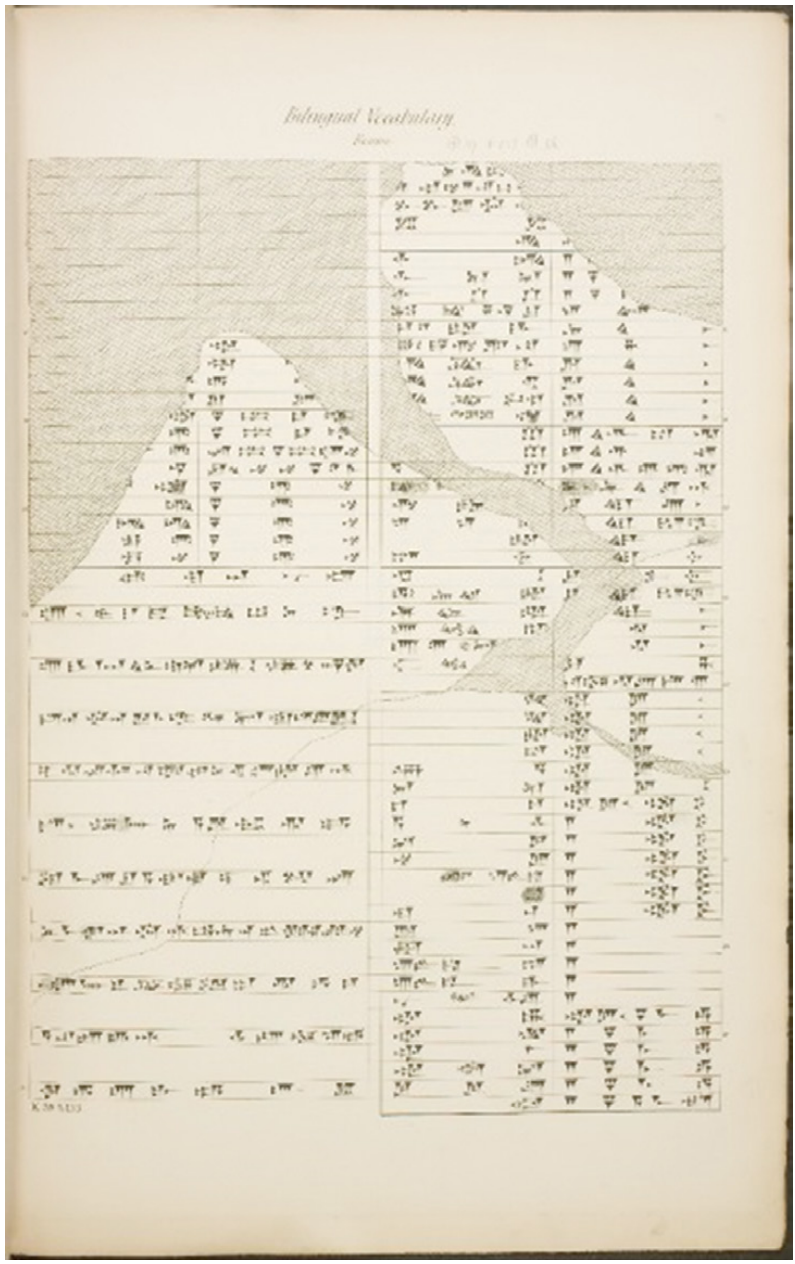

Figure 2.3: Lithograph showing the reverse side of British Museum tablet K 39, featuring Ashurbanipal's colophon praising the divine pair Nabu and Tašmetu (Rawlinson and Norris 1866: pl. 21). Colophons like this, which described their storage in the palace at Nineveh, were key to interpreting the tablets as a 'library' in the late 1860s. Reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

Figure 2.4: Composite digital photograph of the reverse side of British Museum tablet K 39, with the colophon highlighted. The Museum has systematically photographed all of the Kouyunjik tablets and developed a methodology for stitching together images of all surfaces – front (obverse), back (reverse) and edges. They are openly licensed on the Museum's online collections database, allowing maximum accessibility and legibility for researchers with high-speed internet connections. The burn marks from the final destruction of the palace are visible, while some fragments of the original object remain missing or unidentified. Size 175 × 121 × 29 millimetres. Reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

> Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the land of Aššur
> on whom Nabu and Tašmetu bestowed broad wisdom,
> who has sharp eyes: the highest level of the scribal art,
> such a skill as none amongst the kings my predecessors had learnt,
> the wisdom of Nabu, as many cuneiform signs as exist,
> I have written on tablets, checked and overseen (them), and
> for my viewing and reading out I deposited (those tablets) in my palace.[32]

Here, then, was unequivocal evidence that at least some of the tablets in the 'chambers of records' were not simply administrative or propagandistic and had been assembled with the direct involvement of at least one Assyrian king. 'Ashurbanipal's Library' was thus a natural label to give to the collection. The fact that the British Museum's magnificent round Reading Room had been completed just a few years earlier in 1857 – after three years of very noisy construction work in the central Great Court – must also have meant that ideas about libraries were very much in the air in the Department at the time (Fig. 2.5).[33]

By 1871 Samuel Birch, Keeper of the Department, was also publicly referring to the Kouyunjik tablets by their new name. In an address to the inaugural meeting of the Society for Biblical Archaeology, looking back over the Assyriological work of recent decades, he singled out:

> the excavations of MM. Layard, Rassam, Loftus, and Sir H.C. Rawlinson [which] exhumed the remains of the great archival library of Asshurbanipal at Kouyunjik, consisting of more than 20,000 fragments, many of which have been put together by archaeologists and scholars, and give a general idea of the literature and history of Assyria.[34]

Likewise, in 1876 George Smith's posthumous and enormously popular account of Assyrian and Babylonian mythology, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, talked retrospectively of 'Mr Layard discover[ing] part of the Royal Assyrian library, and further collections, also forming part of this library, hav[ing] been subsequently found by Mr H. Rassam, Mr Loftus and myself'.[35] By this time, there is no doubt, 'Ashurbanipal's Library' had solidified into an excavated artefact as real as the Assyrian sculptures on display at the British Museum (Fig. 2.6).

However, while the name 'Ashurbanipal's Library' is attractive and enduring it is to a large extent misleading. As Julian Reade has so ably summarised, the 31,000 or more tablets and fragments found at

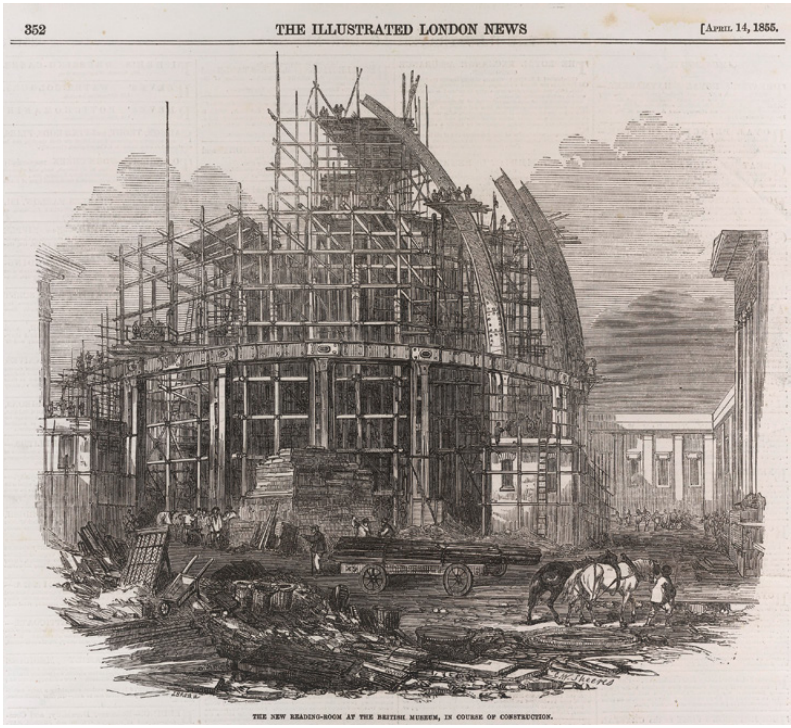

Figure 2.5: The Reading Room of the British Museum under construction, as shown in the popular periodical the *Illustrated London News*, 14 April 1855. Although the British Museum had had a library at its heart since its very foundation, this new building surely reshaped conceptions of the form and functions of written collections, ancient and modern. Reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

Nineveh from the 1850s onwards came from many different sites on the Kouyunjik mound: the temples of Ištar and Nabu, private dwellings, as well as the Southwest and North Palace buildings.[36] Many fragments have been joined to each other, so that the current total is nearer 25,000 than 31,000 and highly likely to reduce again as work progresses.[37] About 5,500 of the Kouyunjik tablets are administrative records, legal documents and royal correspondence, mostly dating from the final two centuries of the Assyrian empire, *c*. 800–612 BC, with particular concentrations from the reigns of Sargon, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in the late eighth and early seventh centuries.[38] A further thousand or so are official inscriptions built into the fabric of the institutional buildings: commemorative notices buried in the foundations; accounts of military

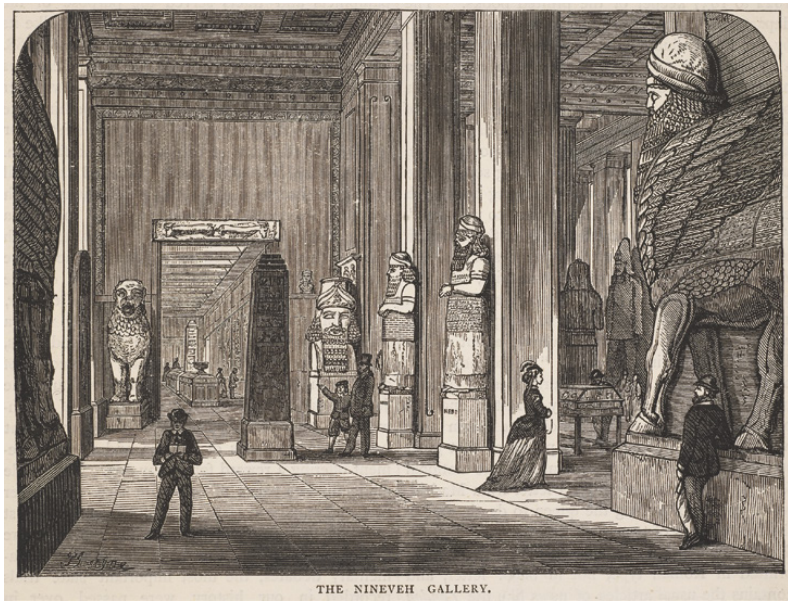

Figure 2.6: The Central Assyrian Saloon of the British Museum, as shown in a newspaper clipping from the 1860s or 1870s. While the business of identifying and deciphering the Museum's new cuneiform tablet collection went on behind the scenes, the public flocked to see the impressive sculptures that Layard had also brought to London, the first visual evidence of the Old Testament world. Reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

campaigns and building programmes inscribed on the walls; labels on free-standing sculptures; and so on.[39] It is difficult to put an estimate on the number of scholarly tablets from Kouyunjik but the consensus gives some 5–10,000 original manuscripts, representing perhaps 800 different (chapters of) works.[40] They too range in date from the early eighth to at least the mid-seventh centuries BC and therefore cannot all have originally belonged to Ashurbanipal. We shall repeatedly return to the size of tablet collections in later chapters.

If identifying Ashurbanipal as the 'owner' of the Kouyunjik tablets is problematic, then identifying them as a 'library' is just as questionable.[41] We have two sets of preconceptions to contend with here: the romantic, idealised connotations of 'library' that all Western-trained academics carry with them from their own formative experiences in such places; and the simplistic Assyriological definition of a 'library' as an excavated

assemblage of a particular type of cuneiform tablet.[42] I have tackled these questions elsewhere but continue to touch on them throughout the book and return to address them directly in the final chapter.[43]

New sources for ancient scholarship

It took over a decade for the Kouyunjik tablets to gain a coherent if slippery collective identity as 'Ashurbanipal's Library'. It was another thirty years before the individual tablets were fully transformed from found objects in their 'natural' state – uncleaned, unbaked, unjoined, unsorted, undocumented – to well-managed, tractable museum artefacts. In the mid-1880s, decades after the tablets' arrival in the Museum, a new Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities was created. Its Keeper, Ernest Wallis Budge, initiated a systematic documentation, storage and publication programme.[44] The Department published five volumes of Carl Bezold's catalogue of the Kouyunjik tablets at regular intervals from 1889 to 1899, the last being a general subject index that provided an overview of the finds.[45] The Department also commissioned scale drawings – 'hand copies' – of the museum's tablets from Kouyunjik and elsewhere. *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets* ran to about thirty volumes by the outbreak of the Great War and continued to grow sporadically throughout the twentieth century.[46]

These research tools, together with the increased accessibility of the Museum collection itself, enabled outsiders to work systematically on the tablets for the first time. The publication floodgates opened. In the years between 1890 and the Great War Assyriologists edited and translated a mass of primary sources from Nineveh: legal documents, political and scholarly royal correspondence, hymns and prayers, celestial omens and so on. These studies enabled in turn a new generation of synthetic, narrative accounts of Assyrian history, culture and religion.[47]

However, that flurry of activity by no means exhausted research on the Kouyunjik collection. Publication continues to this day, while since the early twenty-first century the current generation of British Museum curators has spearheaded a new cataloguing and digitisation effort, the Ashurbanipal Library Project.[48] Yet much is still unknown. It is currently impossible to say, for instance, exactly which Kouyunjik tablets were found by whom, in which locations on the royal citadel; how many bear Ashurbanipal's colophons (though the colophons themselves have been classified into about thirty different types) and how many have those of other scholars; and how many different compositions are represented in

the collection, in how many manuscripts. It remains, paradoxically, at once the most famous and the least understood of Assyriological discoveries. We shall revisit it in Chapter 3.

Meanwhile, throughout the twentieth century, excavations at many dozens of ancient Assyrian and Babylonian cities brought to light many thousands more tablets, both archival and scholarly, from the first millennium BC and earlier (Fig. 1.1). In the interwar period excavations mostly missed the opportunity to give archaeological context to cuneiform scholarship, by failing to keep systematic records of their discoveries. However, several long-term post-war projects yielded an abundance of useful data for historians. The majority of these, thanks to ever-developing methods of contextual recording, offer enormous potential for further interpretation. I briefly present the most important of these excavations here, not in chronological order of their ancient finds – the order in which they will be used in the coming chapters – but rather in approximate order of their discovery.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, several large groups of scholarly tablets were discovered in the cities of Assur and Babylon but the long, sad history of their post-excavation misfortunes means that, with the spectacular exception of the '*āšipus*' house' in Assur (see Chapter 4), many are now almost impossible to reconstruct in any useful detail.[49] Similarly, the discovery in 1924 of a small group of early Neo-Babylonian scholarly tablets in Kish was badly managed and then largely forgotten.[50] Even less can be done with the 1933–4 find of an unknown number of scholarly tablets in Neo- or Late Babylonian Ur.[51] However, in the nearby city of Uruk in 1928–9, excavators at the goddess Ištar's Neo-Babylonian temple Eanna unearthed some 250 scholarly tablets in secondary context, about half of which have been published.[52] And at Khorsabad, the site of the short-lived Assyrian capital Dur-Šarruken in *c*. 705 BC, the American expedition of 1928–35 discovered fragments of about thirty scholarly and administrative tablets scattered throughout the temple of the god Nabu, adjacent to the royal palace.[53] Two rooms of the temple were lined with storage niches, now empty, but which most likely originally served as tablet stores of some sort.[54] The tablets are only now being prepared for systematic publication, having been separated from their find numbers long ago.[55] We shall return to Dur-Šarruken, Assur and Neo-Babylonian Uruk in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

Between 1949 and 1963 the British School of Archaeology in Iraq carried out a detailed exploration of Nimrud, the ancient city of Kalhu or Calah.[56] Situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris between Assur and Nineveh, it served as the Assyrian king's main residence city in the ninth

and eighth centuries and continued to be occupied even after its destruction in 614 BC. In 1955–7 excavators unearthed around 250 scholarly tablets from the temple of Nabu, god of wisdom, on the royal citadel.[57] In the mid-1980s an Iraqi team discovered more in the same place: a room whose doorway directly faced Nabu's shrine.[58] Perhaps not surprisingly, the few extant colophons feature the names of royal scholars, including Adad-šumu-uṣur, Esarhaddon's chief *āšipu*-healer in the early seventh century BC. Both Kalhu and Nineveh will come under further scrutiny in Chapters 3 and 4.

Huzirina (modern Sultantepe) was a tiny town in western Assyria, about 15 kilometres north of the provincial capital Harran, destroyed by the Medes and their allies in the final rout of the empire in 610 BC. In the early 1950s, brief excavations by a joint British–Turkish archaeological team revealed a cache of about 400 scholarly tablets piled up outside the door of a substantial private house, protected by a semi-circular arrangement of wine-jars.[59] The most frequently occurring name on the tablets' colophons was Qurdi-Nergal, a *šangû*-priest of the god Zababa and his consort, along with other members of the Nur-Šamaš family. We shall return to this find in Chapter 4.

In the mid-1980s Iraqi excavators working at Sippar, northwest of Babylon, were exploring the city's main temple, Ebabbar, dedicated to the sun-god Šamaš. In an out-of-the-way storage room in the adjacent E-ulmaš, belonging to Šamaš's divine consort Annunitu, they found about 800 scholarly tablets, still in their pigeonholes. Although only about thirty tablets have been published so far, their colophons date from the mid- to late sixth century BC and feature scholars from several different families.[60] We will use some of this material in Chapter 6.

One of the most important finds for the history of cuneiform scholarship comes from a house in the southern Babylonian city of Uruk, rebuilt several times from the late fifth to early fourth centuries BC and perhaps later. Between the late 1960s and early 1970s the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft found about 420 scholarly tablets in it, as well as around fifty household legal documents. Some tablets were stored in large jars but most had been scattered by later burials dug down between the walls.[61] It turned out that most of the tablets had belonged to two different families of *āšipu*-healers: the descendants of Šangu-Ninurta, who had occupied the house until about 420 BC; and the Ekur-zakir family, who had lived there about a century later.[62]

Members of both families had connections to Reš, the enormous temple to the sky-god Anu in Uruk. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the same German team unearthed some 110 scholarly tablets, plus about

thirty administrative records, from a small room near the southeast gateway to the temple, where illicit diggers had worked in earlier decades. The formally excavated tablets, which date to the first half of the third century BC, are clearly the remains of a much larger group that includes many tablets sold on the antiquities market in the early twentieth century and dispersed to museum collections worldwide. Many originally belonged to the Ekur-zakir and Sin-leqi-unninni families of *āšipu*-healers and *kalû*-lamenters, but it is impossible to reconstruct exactly which of the illicitly excavated tablets were originally stored with the formally excavated ones.[63] The tablets from the houses and temples of Late Babylonian Uruk will be a primary focus of Chapter 5.

Sourcing the 'stream of tradition'

Despite this wealth of new discoveries, 'Ashurbanipal's Library' has remained the reference point and model for the publication and interpretation of scholarly writings in cuneiform. It was not only the first substantial find of such tablets but also the largest, and remains so. And, as Layard noticed back in 1853, Assyrian court scribes had beautiful handwriting and used the very best clay, so the Kouyunjik tablets are amongst the best-preserved and most clearly written of all cuneiform artefacts.[64] For all these reasons, Assyriologists are still drawn inexorably to the Kouyunjik tablets and tend to treat similar finds from other places as supplementary or variant sources. Since the late nineteenth century editors of the great works of cuneiform scholarship have typically assembled manuscripts from archaeological sites all over the Middle East, from periods throughout the first millennium BC, to create *scores* and *composite texts*. Scores assemble the witnesses to each line of the composition synoptically, like the musical score of an orchestral composition, so that variants are directly comparable. Composite texts, meanwhile, tend to hide variation by presenting the 'best' single reading of each line, word and sign, chosen from amongst all available manuscripts.[65]

There are many advantages to this editorial methodology, most obviously that it presents an immediate overview of the whole. But because most surviving scholarly tablets happen to be from Kouyunjik – half of the known manuscripts of the Standard Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, for instance, and perhaps as many as three-quarters of the omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* – that view of the whole is heavily slanted towards seventh-century Nineveh.[66] Similarity is privileged over difference, making it difficult to study local variation, chronological change and personal idiosyncrasy.

Indeed, the very term 'Standard Babylonian' for the literary dialect of Akkadian subconsciously encourages such standardising approaches. And while composite text methodology is perhaps necessary for print publication – Andrew George's masterful critical edition of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* had to relegate its scores to the internet – it is not well suited to works such as *Enūma Anu Ellil* which circulated in greatly variant versions.[67]

This homogenising attitude was most starkly expressed by the doyenne of late twentieth-century Assyriology, Erica Reiner, in two reviews of the tablets from Huzirina mentioned above (and to which we shall return in Chapter 4). Of the first volume she wrote in 1960: 'the collection is a representative sampling of Mesopotamian literature, and the novelties it offers are due to the fortunate but accidental circumstance of their preservation'.[68] Of the second, she reiterated:

> No major discoveries concerning literary genres can be expected from excavations of a new site, or even from publications of 'new' types of texts. I tried to stress [in my review of the first volume], and I should emphasize even more now, that our scholarly duty lies in the interpretation and reinterpretation of long-known texts, in order to gain more insight into both the underlying civilization and the literary forms that exist as its vehicles.[69]

In other words, for Reiner's generation it was still difficult to see geographical and chronological variation as anything but distracting noise in the historical record: the outcome of unfortunate but essentially uninteresting circumstances of preservation and recovery rather than an artefact of historical choice and change.

The 'composite text' method was not merely a matter of pragmatism, a reflection of the fact that the Kouyunjik collection comprised the bulk of primary sources for Assyrian and Babylonian scholarship, but also had a historiographical component. Indeed, Reiner's ideas belong to what we might call the Chicago school of Assyriology, for it was her colleague A. Leo Oppenheim who formulated this approach most explicitly. In 1960 he was commissioned to write a programmatic article on Assyriological method, which was reprinted a few years later in his justly influential monograph *Ancient Mesopotamia*.[70] To account for the apparent homogeneity of cuneiform intellectual culture Oppenheim coined the felicitous phrase 'the stream of tradition'. It described 'what can for convenience be called the corpus of literary works of various types that was maintained, controlled, and carefully kept alive by a tradition served by successive generations of learned and well-trained scribes'.[71]

Assyriologists were quick to adopt this elegant term to describe the apparent consistency of cuneiform scholarship across time and space, particularly in the first millennium BC. In the second of Reiner's reviews, in 1967, she already calls it 'accepted' and it remains in common currency today, far beyond Assyriology.[72] Indeed it is still useful when handled sensitively, as Van Seters demonstrates in the passage that opens this chapter. More problematically, some – like Barstad – now write as if the 'stream of tradition' were a native Mesopotamian concept, not a twentieth-century historiographical construct.[73] This was not what Oppenheim intended. Surprisingly, neither the phrase 'the stream of tradition', nor the lengthy discussion that Oppenheim embedded it in, has ever – so far as I know – been subjected to any sustained analysis.[74] The word 'tradition' encapsulates the mid-century Assyriological consensus about the conservative nature of cuneiform culture while 'stream' invokes a natural, self-perpetuating process that disallows individual creativity or local singularity. Let us consider them in turn.

At one point Oppenheim describes the 'stream' as a 'chain' of tablets which 'a class of scribes … considered its duty to copy and recopy faithfully' in order to keep it 'functioning' or 'unbroken'.[75] He attributes this duty neither to 'the desire to preserve a body of religious writings', nor 'the wish to sustain one tradition against the opposition of, or in competition with, rival traditions' but to the 'purely operational though highly effective device' of scribal training which consisted in 'copy[ing] faithfully the texts that made up the stream of tradition'. In this view the 'stream' is entirely without human agency: scholarly works were copied simply as a means of inducting new members into the profession, with little sense of the motivations behind the 'duty' or 'faith' ascribed to them. However, he does acknowledge the existence of 'a rich and productive oral literary tradition', apparently more creative than its written counterpart, which ran 'parallel and subsequent' to it and which sometimes made its way into the margins of cuneiform culture.[76]

Yet while the word 'stream' implies an ever-changing, moving body of knowledge, Oppenheim puts great emphasis on the stasis of tradition: on works which 'at some point in their early history were frozen into a specific wording and an established arrangement of content'. This standardisation or canonisation, which apparently began in 'the third quarter of the second millennium BC', 'effectively maintained the [works'] original contents against the pressures of changing concepts and attitudes, preserving obsolete text material that would otherwise have certainly disappeared'.[77] Given, as we have seen, the scarcity at mid-century of provenanced, dateable tablets from sites other than Kouyunjik and the

homogenising tendencies of text-editorial methodologies, this was a reasonable interpretation of the evidence available in 1960.

Yet even when Oppenheim was writing, this was no longer the consensus view (although it may have been the majority one). For instance, in 1957 Wilfred Lambert wrote: 'Much Akkadian literature did assume a final fixed form, did become a *textus receptus* [i.e. received text], but not all. The Gilgamesh Epic never reached a canonical form, and Enuma Anu Enlil circulated in several variant official editions.'[78] We have already seen some evidence that this was the case, and indeed Oppenheim himself noted historical shifts in ancient scholarly practice in his later writings, as we shall see further in Chapter 7.[79]

At the coarsest level of chronological, geographical and textual granularity, we also see significant change, much of which was also perceptible to Oppenheim himself, for the evidence was already known.[80] Genres came and went: Babylonian observational astronomy first appears in the mid-eighth century in the form of eclipse records and survived until the first century AD but was apparently never adopted at the Assyrian court. Horoscopic astrology was developed in the late fifth century, with other disciplines such as medicine and divination adapting to it shortly after.[81] Mathematical astronomy took off in the fourth century, with significant differences in methodology between Uruk and Babylon.[82] We see changing trends even amongst the very last generations of cuneiform scholars in second-century Uruk: there was a steady shift away from the omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* towards ever more sophisticated mathematical methods of astronomical prediction, even while the lamentations and rituals of *kalûtu* continued to be reproduced as before.[83] We shall return to these matters in Chapters 5 and 6.

In short, over the past half-century Oppenheim's notion of the 'stream of tradition' has, ironically, formed its own meta-stream. That is, many of the supposed features of the ancient 'stream' – essentially, preservation of the original in the face of new concepts and attitudes – seem in fact to apply more to the modern reception of Oppenheim's idea than to antiquity itself. In fact, the very stability of 'stream of tradition' historiography is – another irony – not at all what Oppenheim intended for it. He hoped that:

> when Assyriologists will be able to follow the fate of individual text groups through the history of their tradition, they will obtain more insights into the workings of this 'stream' and, conceivably, light will be shed some day on ideological preferences and other attitudes that neither the content nor the wording of these texts is likely to reflect directly.[84]

Indeed, Oppenheim himself did just that in the final chapters of his *Ancient Mesopotamia*. In this light, then, my aim here is not to undermine or replace Oppenheim's great idea but to push his own research agenda forward using some of the evidential and methodological resources that have since become available.

New views of the past

It is only since Oppenheim's day that the mechanisms and motivations behind the dissemination of knowledge have become the subject of sustained academic study. This book takes inspiration from three broad fields in particular: the history of books and reading; the historical geography of science; and the study of the ways in which communities construct their pasts. Now, it is self-evident that in ancient Assyria and Babylonia there were, strictly speaking, neither 'books' nor 'science' in the modern senses of these words. But equally, it would be perverse to argue that there were no analogues to them either. We cannot simply transport models created for other fields into Assyriology and put them directly to work unchanged. But they can certainly provoke us into thinking about new ways to approach our material, help to clarify problems and to formulate questions which we might not otherwise think to ask.

Most immediately, the work of the historian Eric Hobsbawm and his colleagues can help to us to think more critically about 'tradition' and the uses of the past in the ancient world.[85] Indeed, their influence is clear in some Assyriological writing, as we shall see below. Hobsbawm convincingly argued that *tradition* is not what it first appears, at least in the modern world: '"traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented'.[86] Traditions can even be 'imagined' ones with little relationship to what actually happened in the past.[87] Indeed, Hobsbawm argues:

> The peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with [the historic past] is largely factitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the 'invention of tradition' so interesting for historians of the past two centuries.[88]

Now, if the invention of tradition is an artefact of the hurly-burly of the modern world, it could be argued that it has little to offer Assyriology.[89] Yet the three millennia of Mesopotamian history include many periods of political and social upheaval during which one can imagine reactionary cultural forces at work. For instance, Niek Veldhuis has argued that we should understand the flowering of Sumerian literature in the early second millennium BC as a succession of attempts to halt the flow of cultural change in the wake of several radical political upheavals.[90] Paul-Alain Beaulieu views the 'antiquarian' royal inscriptions of the sixth-century rulers of Babylon, as they re-established their independence from Assyria, in a similar light.[91] On a smaller scale, we can see 'inventions of tradition' at play in 'pious forgeries' such as the Cruciform Monument of Maništušu.[92] This inscription purports to be a twenty-third-century royal edict granting rights and income to the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. Linguistic and historical anachronisms in the text reveal that it was composed in the early second millennium BC, presumably in order to establish historical precedents for new claims on the temple's behalf. It continued to be copied until at least the sixth century BC. And should we really take at face value the narratives of ancient loss and fortuitous recovery of cult objects and temple ordinances as described, for instance, on the so-called Sun-God Tablet of Nabu-apal-iddina or the daily offering rituals of the Reš temple in Seleucid Uruk?[93] We shall return to this topic in Chapter 5.

But what of the long periods of relative socio-political calm during which there was, arguably, little need to create stabilising links with the past? Hobsbawm usefully goes on to contrast modern tradition with habitual *custom*:

> The object and characteristic of 'traditions', including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition. 'Custom' … [by contrast] does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitations on it. What it does is to give any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history.[94]

In other words, 'tradition' imposes an artificial stasis on practice, at least temporarily, by forging links with the past (in both senses of 'forging'), while 'custom' moves with the times, albeit often imperceptibly.[95] The latter concept is most closely analogous to Oppenheim's 'stream of

tradition', despite his insistence on its purely 'operational' nature. But this 'operational' characteristic is a feature of Hobsbawm's '*convention* or routine, which has no significant ritual or symbolic function as such, though it may acquire it incidentally'.[96] Hobsbawm here contrasts the (conventional) wearing of protective headgear for horse-riding with the (traditional) form of riding hats and red jackets favoured by the British upper classes for hunting on horseback. Thus:

> [Conventions] are not 'invented traditions' since their functions, and therefore their justifications, are practical rather than ideological … . They are designed to facilitate readily definable practical operations, and are readily modified or abandoned to meet changing practical needs, always allowing for the inertia which any practice acquires with time and the emotional resistance to any innovation by people who have become attached to it.[97]

We can illustrate the tripartite distinction between Hobsbawmian tradition, custom and convention by looking at long-term changes in scribal education in cuneiform. In the late 1990s it became clear that scribal education was not as uniform as previously believed. At the crudest level of comparison, the elementary curriculum of eighteenth-century Nippur was significantly different from that of the late second millennium, which in turn differed from mid-first-century northern Babylonia, in several respects. In all three periods scribal teachers favoured standardised lists of signs, words and phrases, memorised through repeated copying. But the texts themselves, the ways they were used, the formats of the tablets and even the target language of instruction were all different.

In eighteenth-century Nippur, the Old Babylonian city whose educational practices we know best, students learned a more or less standardised repertoire of long lists of signs, words and phrases in Sumerian, in roughly four phases of increasing complexity.[98] Using four different types of tablet, students moved from initial copying of ten- to thirty-line extracts, through adding those newly learned passages to previously memorised sections of the same text, to recalling long sections of thoroughly memorised compositions. Some students then undertook intensive study of Sumerian literature, which was designed to position them within a clearly defined and constructed (Hobsbawmian) tradition. Carefully chosen hymns to long-dead kings, narrative myths and legends about traditional figures, and model texts about the attributes of an ideal society all contributed to the 'creation of a Sumerian heritage', in Veldhuis's words.[99] Furthermore, with its heavy emphasis on literacy,

numeracy and law this heritage imagined the scribe as its central figure, an upholder of social justice on behalf of royalty and deity by means of fair measurement.[100]

A comparison with contemporary training in non-professional cuneiform literacy reveals the heavy ideological component in Babylonian scribal education. In early second-millennium Assur, several hundred miles to the north of Nippur, junior members of merchant families learned enough cuneiform to communicate long-distance with their families and trading partners. The small numbers of surviving exercises from Assur and its Anatolian trading colony Kanesh suggest that these skills were mostly learned on the job. But the exercises that do survive are all closely related to the merchants' immediate needs to write about, and calculate with, the raw materials and manufactured goods in which they traded.[101] One can easily detect 'conventional' components in the format of tablets and the content of exercises, but no self-conscious construction of a scribal or mercantile identity and heritage.

Late second-millennium school tablets, primarily known from Kassite Nippur and Babylon, show a very different pattern of learning – although we have to bear in mind that only dozens, not thousands of these survive.[102] Just a couple of tablet types have been identified. On the front, or obverse, students typically copied passages from literary works in both Sumerian and Akkadian; and wrote out omens, incantations and laws, and monolingual or bilingual extracts from lexical lists on the reverse. Some exercises, especially the Sumerian literary works, were also used in eighteenth-century Nippur, while others are developments from that time or entirely novel compositions. Some genres, such as incantations and omens, although known from professional practice in earlier times, are new to scribal education at this date.

Another five centuries or more later, in and around Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, scribal trainees learned the basics of their craft in two stages, each of which employed three different tablet types.[103] In the first stage, on large multi-columned tablets the students reproduced long passages of six standard curricular lists, none the same as in eighteenth-century Nippur.[104] On the reverse of these tablets students sometimes added spelling exercises and short extracts from a selection of Akkadian-language compositions. In the second stage they wrote passages from a much wider variety of literary and lexical works, often three or more together, on smaller two-columned tablets. Unfortunately, at this stage of research we can say little about the internal chronology or geography of Neo-Babylonian education. But given the lack of centralised control over curricular content anywhere in the world before the early nineteenth

century AD, it is likely to have been as subject to change and local variation as its Old Babylonian counterpart.[105]

There are a few points of similarity across the millennia – the Neo-Babylonian vocabulary *Ura = hubullu* III is a much-expanded bilingual descendant of Old Babylonian *Ur$_5$-ra* I, for example, and the so-called Weidner God List is found on both Kassite and Neo-Babylonian tablets – but these similarities are mostly superficial. For instance, all that remains of the long and complex Old Babylonian multiplication tables and metrological series in Neo-Babylonian scribal schooling are occasional short lists of squared integers and a few sequences of capacity and weight measures.[106] We can attribute much of the shift in the very elementary curriculum to changing linguistic needs. In the Old Babylonian period we might attribute the continuing emphasis on Sumerian-language skills to conventional inertia, as defined by Hobsbawm. But eventually the Sumerian-language exercises disappeared in favour of bilingual or monoglot Akkadian counterparts, as the need for Sumerian declined. However, that explanation does not account for the continued prominence of the primarily Sumerian (or at least logographic) Weidner God List up until the Neo-Babylonian period, for instance. Indeed, the very use of a standardised list of deities, in any language, in any educational setting bears some religious or ideological weight; it cannot simply be a practical tool.

We can now see that scribal education – which, for Oppenheim, was what fed the 'stream of tradition' – was neither unchanging nor purely 'operational'. It did far more than simply impart the conventional technical skills necessary for the smooth transmission of ancient written knowledge. It adapted to socio-political upheaval by creating new traditions to stabilise itself, traditions that settled into custom in quieter times. Now, over half a century after Oppenheim, it would be eccentric to maintain that the choice of curricular material was entirely independent of current social forces, as he then had it, and was purely utilitarian in aim.

Books and texts

Oppenheim's 'stream of tradition' model implicitly works on the assumption of what the economist Stuart Chase called in 1934 an *economy of abundance*, namely an (economic) condition in which 'an abundance of material goods can be produced for the entire population of a community'.[107] In Assyriological terms, this translates into the tacit supposition

that every Assyrian and Babylonian scholar had full access to the products of cuneiform intellectual culture, thus enabling the small-scale replication of 'Ashurbanipal's Library' in all times and places across the first-millennium Middle East. But we might do better to posit an ancient *economy of scarcity*, where, in Chase's words, 'the choice between sharing and fighting [for resources] is chronic'.[108] How, and with what success, did potential scholars discover what was already known, and how much sharing and fighting was involved? These are central themes of this book, and we will use a variety of means to address them.

In his justly famous article, 'What is the history of books?', Robert Darnton presented a diagram labelled 'the communications circuit', detailing the variety of professions involved in the production and consumption of books in eighteenth-century France.[109] He highlighted the roles of not only authors, publishers and readers but also suppliers of ink, paper and other raw materials; printers, typesetters, binders and warehousemen; shipping agents, smugglers and customs officers; booksellers, pedlars and librarians. That particular model has been critiqued and refined several times in the intervening thirty years, not least by Darnton himself.[110] But the details are not at issue here, as very few of them are directly pertinent to the first millennium BC. For, as I have written elsewhere:

> If a book is a collection of pages bound together and sold on the open market, then there were no books in the ancient Middle East. If, on the other hand, a book is a means of recording and transmitting in writing a culture's intellectual traditions, then there were very many.[111]

In other words, merely by proposing 'a general model for analysing the way books come into being and spread through society', Darnton encourages us to consider the circulation of cuneiform tablets as material objects and all those involved in their production and distribution.[112]

Darnton's primary sources consisted of a whole host of 'letters by authors, booksellers, paper millers, shipping agents, smugglers, wagon drivers, compositors, and pressmen; letters scrawled by such unlettered persons that they had to be sounded out and read aloud to be understood; letters that revealed a whole human comedy behind the books'.[113] Assyriologists, of course, have nothing of the sort to work with. That does not mean we have to abandon the enterprise; rather we must draw on other sorts of evidence, both archaeological and internal to the 'books' themselves.

In the 1980s the literary theorist Gérard Genette proposed several ideas that are relevant here, whose overarching theme is 'transtextuality', or 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'.[114] What do these concepts mean in practice for Genette, and how are they applicable to cuneiform culture?

Genette distinguished five types of transtextuality, the first being Julia Kristeva's well-known *intertextuality*, 'the actual presence of one text within another', whether by acknowledged quotation, 'undeclared borrowing', or allusion.[115] Assyriologists have already made productive use of intertextuality so I shall say little more of it here.[116] The second is *paratextuality*, the relationships between the central text itself and those peripheral parts of it which 'enable a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers'.[117] For Genette, paratexts are the titles, contents pages, figure captions, indices, back-cover blurbs and so on which the modern reader encounters first when picking up a book, 'thresholds' at which she may decide whether to go on or turn back. The Assyriological paratext par excellence is the colophon: the subscript on a tablet describing the text and its circumstance of production. We saw above how decisive colophons were in creating the identity of 'Ashurbanipal's Library' in nineteenth-century London. Colophons have been classified and collected for many decades now, but Assyriologists have only started to exploit their potential as paratexts in the history of cuneiform scholarship.[118] They will be vital evidence throughout this book.

Returning to Genette's classification of types of transtextuality, the third and no less relevant is *metatextuality*, or commentary, an important and significant phenomenon in cuneiform scholarship but which has, again, only recently begun to be studied in its own right.[119] Fourth is *hypertextuality*, namely 'any relationship uniting a text B (… the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (… the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner which is not commentary'.[120] Whatever the particular relationship between them, hypertext B is 'unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it'.[121] In Assyriology we are used to talking of 'copies' and 'originals', 'forerunners' and 'urtexts'. The problem with terms such as 'forerunner' is that they presuppose a text's validity only in relationship to their later, putatively more sophisticated descendant.[122] The hypotext–hypertext pairing, however, frees us from such teleology and also allows us to articulate other sorts of relationships, so that we can now, for instance, describe the Neo-Babylonian

school exercise *Ura = hubullu* III, mentioned above, as a hypertext of Old Babylonian *Ura* I.[123]

Genette developed this terminology in order to study pastiche, parody and other self-conscious transformations of hypotexts within highly textualised modern literary culture. He presents the written word as if it only interacts with itself. But it is likely that Assyrian and Babylonian scholarship entailed a great deal of memorisation and recall as well as direct text-to-text relationships. The medieval historian Brian Stock argued that such is the case in all *textual communities*, or 'microsocieties organized around the common understanding of a script':

> The question of oral versus written tradition need not be framed in inflexible terms. What was essential for a textual community, whether large or small, was simply a text, an interpreter, and a public. The text did not have to be written; oral record, memory, and reperformance sufficed.[124]

The written word had to be present, in other words, but it did not need to be omnipresent.

Indeed, we have already seen that editorial constructions of composite texts often fail precisely because purely textual models of transmission do not adequately explain the variety of surviving cuneiform manuscripts.[125] This gives us further pause for reflection on the value of composite text methodology, already alluded to above.

Jeremy Black, amongst others, reflected at length on the problems that arise for editors of Sumerian literary works when trying to construct a composite text from multiple sources that are not stemmatically related to each other.[126] He concluded that, pragmatically, the composite text is a necessary tool, as long as both editor and reader are aware, in Piotr Michalowski's words, 'that a text such as the one presented [in the modern edition] never existed' in antiquity.[127] In other words:

> For practical purposes, a … critically informed acceptance of the work of editors offers, in almost every case, the only possible basis for literary analysis and criticism of Sumerian literature, given the special problems with textual integrity that exist.[128]

Of course, 'literary analysis and criticism' is only one possible avenue of research, and over recent decades Sumerologists have laid increasing emphasis on the importance of individual manuscripts and materiality in

historicising Sumerian literature.[129] Equally, attempts to historicise first-millennium scholarship will need to delve underneath the smooth surface of the composite text, in order to disentangle the interestingly messy local histories underneath. There is no space here to tackle histories of individual texts head-on but the approaches described above fundamentally informed the editorial practices of the research project from which this book emerged.

Geographies and communities

If Genette's tools are useful for constructing a Darntonian communication circuit by analysing transtextual relationships, they are of little help in understanding the motivations and interests of the producers, consumers and patrons who are Darnton's primary historical focus. For this I have turned to work in the social geography of science, pioneered in the 1970s and 1980s by the anthropologist Bruno Latour. Like Darnton, Genette and Hobsbawm, his foundational work has been subject to significant criticism and revision over the intervening decades. But, as before, it is the general principles rather than the particular details we are interested in, so let us start with his seminal 1987 study of modern techno-science, *Science in Action*. Here he articulated several related concepts that have opened up new lines of geographical research. First, and perhaps most influential, is the *network:*

> If techno-science may be described as being so powerful and yet so small, so concentrated and yet dilute, it means it has the characteristics of a *network*. The word network indicates that resources are concentrated in a few places – the knots and the nodes – which are connected with one another – the links and the mesh: these connections transform the scattered resources into a net that may seem to extend everywhere.[130]

If we now imagine the scholars of cuneiform culture as actors in a Latourian network, it becomes clear why earlier generations of Assyriologists perceived the intellectual world those scholars created as ubiquitous, monolithic and self-sustaining. As we shall see in later chapters, the absolute numbers of men involved in intellectual production in the first millennium BC were tiny, and concentrated in cities, around particular institutions. How they developed and maintained their networks will be of particular concern in the rest of this book.

Latourian Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is different in several respects from Social Network Analysis (SNA), which has become widely adopted in historical studies.[131] Where SNA provides tools and models for mapping and quantifying the social relationships between large numbers of (human) individuals, ANT is fundamentally a means of thinking about how science comes to be: where it happens, and who and what make it happen. Most distinctively, for Latour people are not the only actors in the network; objects are too, with as much power to influence events as people have. It is this aspect of his work that has attracted most scepticism but also praise.[132] However, for our purposes it is most germane that, on Latour's model, scientists must actively *recruit* other actors, both human and non-human, into their network, whether funders or experimental specimens.

Latour also argues that we do not need to understand everything the (human and non-human) actors think and feel; we need only examine their outcomes. These traces of actors Latour calls *actants*.[133] To my mind this is exciting for Assyriology as it encourages us to acknowledge the divine actors in intellectual networks, interrogated directly through prayer and divination, recruited by the scholars to curse and protect their malefactors and benefactors. We saw this recruitment in action in Ashurbanipal's appeal to his patrons Nabu and Tašmetu in the colophon above, but it is also visible in the correspondence between Assyrian kings and their courtly advisors. Scholars typically opened their more routine letters by invoking the gods Nabu and Marduk, as in this report from king Esarhaddon's chief *āšipu*-healer on the good health of a royal baby:

> To the king, my lord: your servant Adad-šumu-uṣur. Good health to the king, my lord! May Nabu and Marduk bless the king, my lord![134]

However, when it became particularly important to gain the king's attention and support, larger numbers of senior gods were summoned, as when the same Adad-šumu-uṣur petitioned for his son, the *āšipu* Urad-Gula, to be returned to royal favour:

> To the king, [my] lord: your servant Adad-[šumu-uṣur]. Good health to [the king, my] lord! May Aššur, Sin, Šamaš, [Bel], Nabu and Nergal very greatly bless the [king], my lord![135]

The fact that scientists record knowledge, advice, information and data also matters to Latour. For him, inscriptions (whether computer printouts or cuneiform tablets) are 'immutable and combinable *mobiles* …

conveniently at hand and combinable at will, no matter whether they are twenty centuries old or a day old'.[136] In other words, writing travels as much as people do, taking established knowledge to new places, and enabling new knowledge to be created through acts of editing and rewriting. Of course, this is not the whole picture. As Brian Stock reminds us, knowledge also travels in people's minds and in their bodies; memory and tacit knowledge are equally important to scientific communities too, as the sociologist Harry Collins showed back in the 1970s.[137]

In order for science to happen, Latour argues, the messy real world has to be categorised and simplified into manageable scientific (or scholarly) data: '*Metrology* is the name of this gigantic exercise to make of the outside a world inside which facts and machines can survive.'[138] In cuneiform culture, Assyrian royal diviners' observation and interpretation of sacrificial omens constitutes a clear example of Latourian metrology, as I have argued elsewhere.[139] According to Latour's ANT, the scientist's final act in transforming new knowledge into established truth is to 'black box' it, or erase all traces of the process of production.[140] Cuneiform scholars too were masters of black-boxing: almost no evidence remains of how their learned writings came to be.

More recently David Livingstone has argued very powerfully for the value of thinking geographically about science and about knowledge production more generally:

> Scientific theory evidently does not disperse evenly across the globe from its point of origin. As it moves it is modified; as it travels it is transformed. All this demonstrates that the meaning of scientific theories is not stable; rather it is mobile and varies from place to place. And that meaning takes shape in response to spatial forces at every scale of analysis – from the macropolitical geography of national regions to the microsocial geography of local cultures.[141]

Livingstone's work is primarily focused on the local site, the regional culture and the movements of science between them. However, as he acknowledges, this tripartite analysis is not just a matter of physical geography:

> We do not just inhabit material spaces. We also occupy a variety of abstract spaces, and we refer in spatial ways to the intellectual, social and cultural arenas through which we move. People close together physically may be 'miles apart' in terms of social distance or cultural space, living, as it were, in totally different worlds.[142]

This is a salutary reminder that scholarly endeavour was highly socially stratified within cuneiform culture too. Not only shall we be looking for ways in which Assyrian and Babylonian scholars built and protected their professional identities and status, but we should also fundamental questions of accessibility:

> The geography of science also calls attention to the uneven distribution of scientific information. Not everyone has had access to the deliverances of science because there are diffusion tracks along which scientific ideas and their associated gadgetry migrate.[143]

These questions pertain not only to the scholars themselves, their collaborators and rivals, but also to their patrons and potential clientele. However, they also draw attention to changes in the accessibility of Assyriological information in the decades since Oppenheim conceptualised the 'stream of tradition'. Put simply, we have moved from a Chasean economy of scarcity to an economy of abundance, particularly in the last few years. This is largely due to the democratisation of access to sources. On the one hand, colleagues and I have championed the creation of open access online ancient text corpora through Oracc and similar initiatives. On the other hand, commercial concerns such as Google and the university presses have undertaken huge-scale digitisation of journals, books and other secondary sources, as have funding agencies and organisations such as the Chicago Oriental Institute whose aims are primarily about freedom of access. Many of the modern sources I have drawn on in this chapter I discovered and accessed online as well as, or instead of, in print. Simply put, we are now in the privileged position of being able to find out much more about what ancient scholars wrote, and about what fellow historians think, than Oppenheim ever had the opportunity to do.[144]

Equally germane to our enquiry, as Jim Secord argued in 2004, is the question of 'knowledge in transit'. That is, while information about the world may be more uniformly accessible and globalised than at any time in history, it is still and always has been fundamentally local and contingent.[145] It is individuals, professional communities and societies who make meaning from the world around them, and the meanings they make depend to a large extent on their own needs and interests. Thus the same 'facts' are valued and interpreted differently as they move from individual to individual, community to community, society to society. That is particularly worth bearing in mind when we consider the longevity of some works of cuneiform scholarship: was the *Epic of Gilgamesh*

always read and interpreted in the same ways over the millennia? Or the omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil*? Almost certainly not. Rather, their durability rested in the multiple ways they could be put to work in new contexts for new purposes. Works, ideas and techniques that could not adapt did not survive. We shall further explore the multifaceted mutability of the 'stream' in Chapter 7.

Conclusions

Looking back at the quotations that opened this chapter, Van Seters' 'soft' use of the phrase 'stream of tradition' still seems unobjectionable, and indeed helpful as a shorthand for a body of knowledge which is transmitted and reshaped by a society over a long period of time.[146] Barstad's 'hard' characterisation, however, unwittingly picked out several features of Oppenheim's connotations of the phrase that now seem problematic: that scholarly works were simply 'handed down', like heirlooms; that their number was 'fairly insignificant' despite the 'enormous number' of surviving manuscripts; that they were not 'newly invented, very different, or independent … creations' but comprised a cultural monolith that was 'known to most of the ancient Near Eastern civilized world', regardless of geography, chronology or social circumstance.[147]

That is not to berate Barstad, or even Oppenheim, for characterising cuneiform culture in this way. For as we begin to historicise the intellectual endeavours of the ancient past, we also become attuned to the historical circumstances in which our own predecessors were working and writing. The 'stream of tradition' model was, in 1960, one that was built from the majority of the available data with the best available intellectual tools. For at mid-century the huge mass of seventh-century Kouyunjik tablets was still the only large body of cuneiform scholarship that had been catalogued, edited and studied in any detail. Pre-Second World War excavations had largely failed to capitalise on their textual discoveries while the publication and analysis of tablet assemblages excavated since the war – and indeed from Kouyunjik in nineteenth-century Mosul – were still decades away. Likewise, the 'stream of tradition' concept was shaped by the predominance of composite text-editorial methodology: at that time an absolute necessity for tracing the basic outlines of ancient intellectual endeavour, and perhaps the only viable means of doing so given the data-collection and publication technologies then available.

Perhaps what is more surprising is for how long powerful historical models endure. The idea of 'Ashurbanipal's Library' as a single entity, created by a single royal figure, was born in 1860s London, at a time when tablets were not yet archaeological artefacts but carried a dual identity as collected specimens for display and as bearers of decipherable text. Thus it mattered that they came from Kouyunjik, the site of the ancient city of Nineveh, as opposed to anywhere else. But their particular disposition in the ground – in relation to the ruined buildings, to each other and to other found objects – was not germane at all. Contrariwise, (some of) the tablets' own self-descriptions as 'property of Ashurbanipal's palace' were incontrovertible proof of their origins and function. Indeed, for much of the nineteenth century the British establishment privileged text over object- and people-based ways of studying the human past such as archaeology and ethnography.[148] As well-educated Western men, the first- and second-generation Assyriologists were all trained in Classics, Old Testament Hebrew or both. Familiarity with Greece, Rome and the Bible not only enabled them to tie Assyria into the known ancient world but also provided the methods by which the overwhelmingly abundant cuneiform manuscripts could be edited together into coherent canonical texts. There was no reason (yet) to suppose that Assyria and Babylonia had fundamentally different relationships to text than the other, more familiar ancient civilisations.

Thus Oppenheim inherited the working practices and tacit assumptions of previous generations of Assyriologists, just as our generation has inherited his.[149] Now, however, it is time to put the people and the objects back into the picture – informed but not, I hope, overwhelmed by the theoretical models discussed here. By doing so, as I aim to show, we start to give that picture life and movement, depth and texture. But it is only a first approximation, and I am confident that much in this book will turn out to be wrong or misguided. I hope too that we will not have to wait another half-century to find out.

Notes

1. Van De Mieroop (2015) and Rochberg (2016) both present accounts of Babylonian 'epistemology' that downplay the historical, social, geographical, political and contingent in favour of overarching grand synthesis.
2. Van Seters (1983: 4).
3. Barstad (2008: 63–4).
4. Barstad (2008: 64 n66) citing Oppenheim 1977 [1964]: 15. Barstad's chapter first appeared in a collective volume some years earlier (Barstad 2001: 70 with n47).

5. See Bahrani (1998) for a useful critique of the supposed 'despotic Orientalism' of ancient Mesopotamia.
6. Oppenheim (1960a: 412).
7. Tejiran and Simon (2012: 87–9).
8. The Old Testament Book of Jonah begins, in the words of the Authorised (King James) Version: 'Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee …. ' He took a boat from Joppa (modern Jaffa in Israel) to escape his destiny, but was shipwrecked. 'Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.' Jonah prayed and repented, whereupon, at 2.10, 'the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.' Chapter 3: 'And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord' (https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Jonah-Chapter-1/, last accessed June 2018).
9. Rich (1836: II 26–46).
10. For a somewhat hagiographical bibliography of Botta, see McGovern and McGovern (1986); his natural historical writings include Botta (1831a [trans. Knowlton 1984]; 1831b; 1839; 1841). The rubber boa (*Charina bottae*), a snake native to western North America, is named for him.
11. A useful overview of early Victorian scientific collecting practices is Camerini (1997).
12. On the development of archaeology in the nineteenth century see for instance Díaz-Andreu (2007); Rowley-Conwy (2007); and particularly Liverani (2000) for the development of mud-brick archaeology in the Middle East.
13. On Layard's discovery of 1850, see M.T. Larsen (1996: 262–4); on the reception of his writings and finds see e.g. Bohrer (2003: 98–222); T. Larsen (2009; 2013); Brusius (2012); Malley (2012).
14. Russell (1991: 36–7). It is sometimes asserted (e.g. Damrosch 2007: 110–13) or implied (e.g. Stronach and Codella 1997: 145) that it was Hormuzd Rassam who found the bulk of the tablets, in the North Palace, after he took over the Nineveh excavations from Layard in 1852. However, Layard's descriptions, given here, reveal that he (or rather Shishman) did in fact find substantial quantities of tablets in 1850. The misunderstanding may have arisen because of the fact that only 278 of those first tablets were catalogued by the British Museum straight away; the rest received accession numbers only much later (Reade 1986a: 213).
15. Layard (1853: 345).
16. Reade (1998–2001: 421).
17. Reade (1986a: 213).
18. Smith (1875: 144); Budge (1920: 83). For brief summaries of the tablets of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, see Russell (1991: 34–43) and Reade (1988–2001: 421–2) with further literature.
19. Reade (1998–2001: 421).
20. Reade (1986a: 221; 1998–2001: 422; 2005: 382); Lambert and Millard (1968).
21. Reade (1986a: 221; (1998–2001: 421).
22. This account does not attempt to give a full history of the British Museum's work on cuneiform tablets at this period; for further glimpses see Rowley-Conwy (2007); Brusius (2012; 2014).
23. See Brusius (forthcoming) for an in-depth study of the relationships between photography and Assyriology in mid-Victorian England.
24. See Robson (2013a) for a revisionist account of decipherment and its aftermath.
25. Rawlinson and Norris (1861).
26. Budge's (1925: 89–172) defensive and partisan account of the British Museum's work on the Kouyunjik tablets during these decades gives a vivid sense of the lack of staff, space, resources and expertise available – there or anywhere in the world.
27. Layard (1854: 37).
28. G. Rawlinson (1862–7). Rawlinson's 'Chaldean monarchy' is what we would now call Sumerian culture. The correct name was identified by Jules Oppert in 1869 (Evans 2014: 16).
29. G. Rawlinson (1871: II 212; III 13).
30. Rawlinson and Norris (1866).
31. Norris (1868–72).

32. Short colophons, now known as Ashurbanipal Type a (Hunger 1968: no. 317): KUR ^{m}AN.ŠÁR–DÙ–A | MAN ŠÚ MAN ^{kur}AN.ŠÁR^{ki} (Rawlinson and Norris 1866: pl. 10, 11, 18, 35, 39, 40 × 2, 59, 60, 65). Longer ones, mostly Ashurbanipal Types c–e (Hunger 1968: no. 319): Rawlinson and Norris (1866: pl. 21, 23, 27, 33, 38, 40, 42, 43, 51, 62). It is pl. 21 (Type d) that is translated here, from a copy of the word-list *Nabnītu* Tablet 10 (K 39, ed. Finkel 1982: 117–23): DUB 10-KÁM.MA SIG$_7$.ALAN nab-ni-tu$_4$ | É.GAL ^{m}AN.ŠÁR–DÙ–IBILA LUGAL ŠÚ LUGAL ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki} | ša ^{d}NÀ ^{d}taš-me-tu$_4$ GEŠTU-MIN DAGAL^{-tu} iš-ru-ku-šú | i-hu-zu IGI-MIN na-mir-tu na-šiq ṭup-šar-ru-ti | ša ina LUGAL-MEŠ$^{-ni}$ a-lik mah-ri-ia | mám-ma šip-ru šu-a-tu la i-hu-uz-zu | né-me-qí ^{d}NÀ ti-kip sa-an-tak-ki ma-la ba-áš-mu | ina DUB-MEŠ áš-ṭur as-niq ab-re-e-ma | a-na ta-mar-ti ši-ta-as-si-ia | qé-reb É.GAL-ia ú-kin.
33. Harris (1998: 180–90); Caygill (2000: 6–16).
34. Birch (1871: 5).
35. Smith (1876: 2).
36. Reade (1986a; (1998–2001: 421–7).
37. Reade (1998–2001: 421).
38. Now published in the SAA (online) series; see list of bibliographical abbreviations in the front matter.
39. Published variously in the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia and Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, republished and completed online by the Official Inscriptions of Middle Eastern Antiquity project (http://oracc.org/oimea, last accessed June 2018).
40. Reade (1998–2001: 421, 423), based on Weidner (1952/3: 198); Oppenheim (1977 [1964]: 15–20).
41. Following Lambert (e.g. 1967: 126), some Assyriologists prefer to use the term 'Ashurbanipal's libraries', thereby acknowledging the multiplicity of findspots, but this phrase does not address the fundamental definitional problem.
42. E.g. Pedersén (1998: 2–3).
43. Robson (2013b); Robson and Stevens (2019).
44. Budge (1925: 160–5).
45. Bezold (1889–99). Supplements were published throughout the twentieth century, following new discoveries on site and new joins and identifications in the Museum (King 1914; Lambert and Millard 1968; Lambert 1993). King (1914: xi) already acknowledges that the Kouyunjik collection is not co-extensive with or identical to 'Ashurbanipal's Library'.
46. Cf. Budge (1925: 171–85). The whole series is now freely available for download in PDF format at http://www.etana.org/coretexts/search/title?keyword=cuneiform%20texts%20babylonian%20tablets.
47. The list is too long to present exhaustively here. See e.g. Harper and Waterman (1892–1914); Knudtzon (1893); Craig (1895–7); Jastrow (1898); Johns (1898–1914); Thompson (1900); Boissier (1905–6); Virolleaud (1905–12); Olmstead (1908); Klauber (1913); Streck (1916).
48. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/Ashurbanipal_library_phase_1.aspx, last accessed June 2018.
49. Pedersén (1985–6; 2005; 2011). On the *ašipus*' house, see Maul (2010).
50. Moorey (1978: 48–50); Robson (2004: 46–62).
51. Woolley (1962: 47); Robson and Stevens (2019).
52. Falkenstein (1931).
53. Loud and Altman (1938: 104–5).
54. Loud and Altman (1938: 56–64).
55. J.A. Brinkman, pers. comm., August 2010.
56. Mallowan (1966); Oates and Oates (2001); Curtis et al. (2008); and see the Nimrud: Materialities of Assyrian Knowledge Production project (http://oracc.org/nimrud), last accessed June 2018.
57. Wiseman and Black (1996); Black (2008).
58. Hussein and Black (1985–6).
59. Lloyd and Gökçe (1953); Gurney and Finkelstein (1957); Gurney and Hulin (1964).
60. Hilgert (2013).
61. Kose (1998: 374–90).
62. Hunger (1976); von Weiher (1982; 1988; 1993; 1998); Clancier (2009a: 47–72, 387–405).
63. Van Dijk and Mayer (1980); Clancier (2009a: 73–80, 406–9).
64. Layard (1853: 345).

65. Editorial and analytic methodology has been the subject of much debate amongst literary Sumerologists in recent decades (for a useful overview see Delnero 2012) but is rarely discussed by Assyriologists working on first-millennium scholarship. We shall return to this question later in the chapter.
66. On the sources of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, see George (2003: 391–415).
67. George's scores of *Gilgamesh* are at http://www.soas.ac.uk/nme/research/gilgamesh/standard/ (last accessed June 2018). The seventy-odd Tablets of *Enūma Anu Ellil* are still not fully available in modern editions, partly because of its intractability to composite edition. So far the main studies include: Tablets 1–6 and 14 (the moon god Sin in its first crescent): Verderame (2002); Al-Rawi and George (1991/2); Tablets 15–22 (the moon god in the middle of the month, lunar eclipses): Rochberg-Halton (1988); Tablets 23/4–29/30 (the sun god Šamaš; coronas, parhelia, solar eclipses): van Soldt (1995); Gehlken (2000); Tablets 42–9 (thunderstorms, wind and rain): Gehlken (2008; 2012); Tablets 50/1, 56, 59–65 (signs from planets): Largement (1957); Reiner and Pingree (1978; 1981; 1998; 2005); and two catalogues showing different Tablet numbering systems (TCL 6: 15; Fincke 2001).
68. Reiner (1960: 24).
69. Reiner (1967: 177).
70. Oppenheim (1960a; 1977 [1964]). Indeed, it was Reiner who oversaw the completion of the second edition of *Ancient Mesopotamia* after Oppenheim's death in 1974.
71. Oppenheim (1960a: 410–11); cf. Oppenheim (1977 [1964]: 13), where he calls it 'the stream of the tradition'. The second 'the' is never used nowadays.
72. Reiner (1967: 177). Searches for the terms 'stream of tradition' and 'Traditionsstrom' on Google Scholar reveals that instances of its use are manifold, in fields as various as ancient world and biblical studies and contemporary heavy metal music (Elflein 2008). In most cases the phrase has become normalised as idiomatic English and its origins in Oppenheim's critique of Assyriology lost (search carried out on 16 October 2011).
73. Sensitive uses include e.g. Ambos (2010: 17); Goldstein (2010: 200); but cf. e.g. Halton (2009).
74. For Oppenheim's (very racialised) reflections see (1967: 35–7; 47); my own preliminary discussion is Robson (2011b: 557–9).
75. Oppenheim (1960a: 411; 1977 [1964]: 13–14).
76. Oppenheim (1960a: 414; 1977 [1964]: 22).
77. Oppenheim (1960a: 413; 1977 [1964]: 18).
78. Lambert (1957: 9).
79. E.g. Oppenheim (1977 [1964]: 215, 225).
80. E.g. Oppenheim (1967: 47).
81. Rochberg (2004: 98–120); Heeßel (2008); Steele (2011a: 335–8); Monroe (2016); Wee (2016).
82. Steele (2016).
83. Robson (2007b).
84. Oppenheim (1960a: 412; 1977 [1964]: 16).
85. There are also several sociological theories of tradition, as usefully discussed by Hintersteiner (2001). Perhaps most relevant to us is that of Edward Shils (1981), as reviewed and critiqued by Jacobs (2007). Jacobs picks out several features of Shilsian tradition that will be useful for us here: 'agents being *irredeemably ignorant* of facets of their traditions' and thus the importance of Polanyian tacit knowledge; tradition's creativity and adaptability to environmental change; and its function 'as a principle of *exclusion*' (Jacobs 2007: 141, 142–4, 150; cf. Polanyi 1958: 49–50; 2009 [1966]: 1–25). But Jacobs (2007: 155–9) also picks out Shils' failure to consider methods of transmission of traditions, the role that learning and education play, and the necessity of agents valuing their traditions (cf. Radin 1937: 64). Without such constraints on Shils' definition, he argues, 'it encompasses virtually every facet of social life' (Jacobs 2007: 160).
86. Hobsbawm (1992 [1983]: 1).
87. Ranger (1993).
88. Hobsbawm (1992 [1983]: 2).
89. Critiques of Hobsbawm's work include the collection edited by Dimitriyevic (2004).
90. E.g. Veldhuis (2004).
91. Beaulieu (1994; 2003a).
92. Sollberger (1968); Al-Rawi and George (1994).

93. Sun-god tablet: Woods (2004); offerings to Reš: TCL 6: 38; Linssen (2004: 227–32); Ambos (forthcoming).
94. Hobsbawm (1992 [1983]: 2).
95. Here Hobsbawm wants to claim 'custom' as belonging to 'traditional societies', in a perhaps unfortunate distinction between 'modernity' and 'tradition' (in the non-Hobsbawmian sense). As this supposed dichotomy between the 'invented traditions' of 'modern' societies and the 'customs' of 'traditional' ones seems both confusing and unhelpful I shall put it to one side in this discussion. Indeed Stock (1990: 163) usefully argues that 'if we are to come to grips with how tradition works, we must not only distance ourselves from the ideological positions that favor tradition or modernity. It is also necessary to abandon the naïve dichotomy "traditional/modern" …. Tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually interdependent.' Stock (1990: 164–6) does in fact make much the same distinction between different attitudes to the past as Hobsbawm does. But, confusingly, Hobsbawmian 'custom' is analogous to Stockian *traditional action*: 'the habitual pursuits of inherited forms of conduct which are taken to be society's norms'; and Hobsbawm's 'tradition' is comparable to Stock's *traditionalistic action,* which he usefully defines as 'the self-conscious affirmation of traditional norms [and] the establishment of such norms as articulated models for current and future behaviour, …. consciously selected from the fund of traditional knowledge in order to serve present needs'. We shall keep to Hobsbawm's terminology for clarity's sake.
96. Hobsbawm (1992 [1983]: 3).
97. Hobsbawm (1992 [1983]: 3).
98. Namely, in phase 1, a handwriting exercise now called Syllable Alphabet B and three standardised lists of personal names; in phase 2, the six-chapter Sumerian vocabulary *Ura*; in phase 3, sign lists such as *Proto-Ea* and *Proto-Diri*, multiplications and metrology; in phase 4, model legal contracts and proverbs. See most conveniently the overview by Veldhuis (2016).
99. Veldhuis (2004: 66–80; 2011).
100. Robson (2007a; 2008a: 97–124).
101. Michel (1998; 2008); Robson (2008a: 134–6).
102. Veldhuis (2000); Bartelmus (2016).
103. Gesche (2001); Veldhuis (2003).
104. Namely, the compositions now called Syllabary A (S^a), Syllable Vocabulary B (S^b), the Weidner God List and the first three tablets of *Ura = hubullu* (Gesche 2001: 66–78). Gesche counts seven, rather than six, but acknowledges that her S^bA and S^bB are two halves of the same work.
105. See e.g. Kumar (1988) and Donnelly (1989) on the modern development of national curricula; and Tanret (2002) and Ohgama and Robson (2010) on scribal education in the Old Babylonian cities of Sippar and Kish.
106. Robson (2008a: 192–8).
107. Chase (1934: 10).
108. Chase (1934: 51). His aim was to draw attention to the dramatic shift between the two economic states, which he argued had taken place in North America at the turn of the twentieth century, and to reflect on the economic mismanagement that had arisen through failure to notice that shift. It was also a highly moral work, which romanticised the frugal past and condemned present excesses. It is certainly not my intention to replicate such value judgements here.
109. Darnton (1982: 68).
110. E.g. Adams and Barker (1993); Darnton (2007).
111. Robson (2007b: 67).
112. Darnton (1982: 67).
113. Darnton (2007: 496).
114. Genette (1997a [1982]: 1).
115. Genette (1997a [1982]: 2).
116. E.g. Pongratz-Leisten (2010), in the collection by Alexander et al. (2010) which explicitly uses Genette's theories on ancient and medieval literature of the Middle East and Mediterranean. A useful survey of early Assyriological studies of intertextuality is Hays (2008: 24–5).
117. Genette (1997a [1982]: 3; 1997b [1987]: 1).
118. The seminal studies were by Leichty (1964) and Hunger (1968), still indispensable. More recently see e.g. Pearce and Doty (2000); Robson (2008a: 220–60); and Maul (2010) amongst many other examples.

119. Genette (1997a: 4); in Assyriology e.g. Frahm (2004; 2011a).
120. Genette (1997a: 5).
121. Genette (1997a: 5). Note that this is a rather different textual relationship from the borrowing or quoting of (snippets of) other texts that comprises intertextuality. Hypertexts fundamentally depend on their hypotexts for their very existence; intertextual relationships consist of much more casual borrowings.
122. See already Farber (1993) for an early critique of the standard Assyriological discourse on 'forerunners' and 'standard' versions.
123. Finally, the most abstract of Genette's transtextual types is the *architextual*, or 'the entire set of general or transcendent categories – types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres – from which emerges a singular text' (Genette 1997a: 1). Architext is 'a purely taxonomic matter' which 'the text itself is not meant to know, and consequently not meant to declare' (Genette 1997a: 4). That is, architextual taxonomies may override or contradict paratextual declarations: while native genre classifications, for instance, are often helpful, equally often it is necessary to impose our own. This is not news to Assyriologists, of course, since von Soden's famous coinage of the term *Listenwissenschaft* 'list science' as an overarching categorisation of many types of Mesopotamian knowledge production (von Soden 1936; cf. Hilgert 2009 for an important and long overdue critique).
124. Stock (1990: 23, 37; cf. 140–58).
125. Likewise, as hinted above, there is now a host of evidence that Old Babylonian scribal trainees learned mathematical and literary texts piecemeal, as much by reproduction from memory as by direct copying from pre-existing exemplars; e.g. Robson (2002); Delnero (2010); cf. Vogelzang and Vanstiphout (1992).
126. Black (1998: 28–38).
127. Michalowski (1989: 25).
128. Black (1998: 38).
129. E.g. Veldhuis (2004); Delnero (2010; 2012); Tinney (1999; 2011).
130. Latour (1987: 180).
131. E.g. Erickson (1997); Malkin et al. (2007); Malkin (2010); Ossendrijver (2011a; 2011b). On SNA methodology see e.g. Wellman and Berkowitz (1988); Scott (2000).
132. Criticism: e.g. Yearley (2005: 55–68), with references to earlier literature; praise: e.g. Harman (2009: 34).
133. Latour (1987: 84).
134. a-na LUGAL be-lí-ía | ARAD-ka ^{md}IŠKUR–MU–PAB | lu šùl-mu a-na LUGAL be-lí-ía | ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU a-na LUGAL | be-lí-ia lik-ru-bu (SAA 10: 194, obv. 1–5).
135. a-na LUGAL be-[lí-ia] | ARAD-ka ^{md}IŠKUR–[MU–PAB] | lu-u šùl-mu a-na [LUGAL] | be-lí-[ia] | ^{d}aš-šur ^{d}30 ^{d}UTU [^{d}EN] | ^{d}NÀ ^{d}U.GUR a-^{r}na^{1} [LUGAL] | be-lí-ia a–dan-niš a–[dan-niš] | lik-ru-bu (SAA 10: 224, obv. 1–8). Cf. Parpola (1987b); Westbrook (2005: 222–3).
136. Latour (1987: 227); my italics.
137. Stock (1990); Collins (1974). The literature on this subject is now vast. An important collection of essays on this topic is Shapin (2010).
138. Latour (1987: 251); my italics.
139. Robson (2011b).
140. Latour (1987: 2).
141. D.N. Livingstone (2003: 4).
142. D.N. Livingstone (2003: 6).
143. D.N. Livingstone (2003: 12).
144. However, this economy of Assyriological abundance has sharply demarcated geographical, linguistic and social boundaries. Those without the privilege to be an Anglophone westerner with subscription access to online collections such as JSTOR are still systemically excluded—including many academic colleagues in the Middle East.
145. See also Renn (2012).
146. Van Seters (1983: 4).
147. Barstad (2008: 63–4).
148. Rowley-Conwy (2007).
149. I (almost) resist the temptation to frame this summary in terms of Kuhnian 'normal science' (Kuhn 1996 [1962]: 10–42); cf. Bird (2011) with extensive further literature.

3
Trust in Nabu? Assyrian royal attitudes to court scholarship

I argued in Chapter 2 that 'Ashurbanipal's Library' was not, and is not, the single coherent entity that its beguiling name suggests.[1] Yet it is a background presence in almost all Assyriological research on scholarship in first-millennium cuneiform culture and also looms large in more general studies of libraries, literacy and learning in the ancient world. There have been many excellent studies of particular aspects of Neo-Assyrian court scholarship, especially in the past decade or so. But they have understandably focused on Nineveh during the short period *c*. 680–650 BC which is so amply documented by the 1,500 or so surviving scholarly letters, divinatory queries and astrological reports to kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.[2] For those reasons alone it would be sensible to reassess what we know about Assyrian royal scholarship. But, as I hope will become apparent, this chapter and the following one are not simply about correcting misconceptions and presenting an up-to-date overview of recent work. Even if 'Ashurbanipal's Library' were not so dazzlingly famous, Nineveh and its satellite cities would still be interesting sites of study in their own right. I shall return to a close study of the early seventh century in Chapter 4, but this chapter dramatically extends the chronological range, back into the late second millennium and forward to the end of empire in the 620s and 610s BC.

In this chapter I shall consider the people, gods and places involved in Neo-Assyrian court scholarship, through their changing relations with the central figure of the king himself. This involves geographical study on a number of different scales: the macro-geographical movements of rulers and deities, scholars and their writings between the cities of Babylonia and Assyria; the micro-geographical considerations of urban planning entailed in the relocation and renovation of royal cities across

the Assyrian heartland; and the architectural designs of the buildings in which encounters between king, god and scholar took place. Kings consistently recruited scholars into the royal entourage until at least the mid-seventh century BC, and those scholars consistently looked to Nabu for divine support. However, as we shall see, the third side of that conceptual triangle was fragile, intermittent and heavily dependent on political circumstance. Only two other kings expressed anything like Ashurbanipal's personal devotion to the god of scholarship which we saw in Chapter 2. Royal 'trust in Nabu', as Assyrian scholars put it, was not as constant as one might think.

The origins of Assyrian court scholarship

To help identify the particular features of the Neo-Assyrian court scholarship network, I begin with a brief survey of what came before. In the so-called Middle Assyrian period, conventionally defined as the thirteenth to eleventh centuries BC, the city of Assur was the kingdom's political and cultural centre. Already nearly 2,000 years old, it was so important to Assyrian self-identity that it was considered to be a god. A temple to the deified city dominated the tip of an escarpment on the west bank of the Tigris, surrounded by further temples and the royal family's main residence. However, the most important evidence for scholarly activity in late second-millennium Assur comes from 160 tablets excavated in a variety of secondary findspots in Neo-Assyrian archaeological strata.[3] For our purposes it does not matter whether or not these tablets are the remains of a single Middle Assyrian collection.[4] What matters in this context is the picture they collectively paint of how scholarship operated in and around the Assyrian royal court in the late thirteenth to early eleventh centuries BC.

Most of the tablets are copies of compositions in genres ranging from sign lists and word lists to hymns and myths, omens and even a star map. According to the thirty-five surviving colophons, their originals come from the cities of Assur, Babylon and Nippur, from 'the land of Akkad' (Babylonia) and 'the land of Assur'. Those originals are sometimes described as someone's personal property and once a tablet has been written 'according to the words of the female parfumier Tapputi-Belat-ekalli'.[5] However, all the copyists themselves are male, mostly junior scribes (*ṭupšarru ṣehru*) but also a *bārû*-diviner and an *āšipu*-healer. Their fathers and grandfathers, when they are described, are of the same professions, including a royal diviner (*bāri šarri*), a

chief diviner (*rab bārê*) and two royal scribes (*ṭupšar šarri*) – a post that Frans Wiggermann places at the top of the Middle Assyrian court hierarchy of literati.[6] In one royal scribe's family, brothers check each other's work:[7]

> Originals from Nippur and Babylon. Written according to a written tablet of Iqiša-Ninkarrak, son of Ninurta-bani.
> [Hand of] the junior scribe Marduk-balassu-ereš, [son of] the royal scribe [Ninurta]-uballissu. [Checked by] Bel-aha-iddina. [By the life of the god Aššur], do not erase [my written name!]
> [Month …], 19th day, eponymy of Aššur-[aha-iddina].[8]

Here, and in other colophons, the brothers Marduk-balassu-ereš and Bel-aha-iddina invoke the god Aššur to curse anyone who dares to remove their respective names from the tablet. They, like others, expected their tablets to travel beyond their immediate control, just as the models for their own copies had. They anticipated this by warning later men against denying their own claims to ownership and production.

Beyond the colophons, there is further evidence of both tablets and scholars travelling long distances. Twenty-four of the Middle Assyrian tablets from Assur are in Babylonian (rather than Assyrian) script, and must thus have come from the south or been written in Assur by southerners.[9] Indeed, we know of both scenarios. As early as the fourteenth century, shortly after Aššur-uballiṭ I had established Assyrian independence from the northern kingdom of Mitanni, he entered into a marriage alliance with Babylonia to the south. Shortly afterwards the Babylonian Marduk-nadin-ahhe of the venerable Arad-Ea family of royal land-surveyors, and a devotee of Marduk, took up the post of royal scribe (*ṭupšar šarri*) and built himself a house in central Assur.[10] We do not know if he moved under royal orders in order to cement the new dynastic relationship, or had made the most of a new political reality that enabled him to travel. There is an interesting parallel in the case of Raba-ša-Marduk, an *asû*-healer from Nippur.[11] In around 1280 BC the Babylonian king sent him as a diplomatic gift to the Hittite king Muwattalli I in Hattuša, where he settled down and married into the royal family. Apparently he never returned home. Eventually a collection of medical recipes against headache, written by him, somehow ended up in Assur even though – so far as we know – he never travelled there himself. Instead, Nils Heeßel suggests, the tablet may have been captured during the Assyrian invasion of northern Babylonia in *c.* 1207 BC, perhaps half a century after Raba-ša-Marduk's death.[12]

A long victory poem, now known as the *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta* after its hero-king protagonist, circulated until the seventh century BC.[13] It celebrates Assyria's capture and looting of Babylon, its king and its dynastic god Marduk. A fragmentary passage near the end describes how the Assyrians carried off a variety of scholarly genres from 'the land of Sumer and Akkad' (Babylonia), along with people, treasure, and other plunder, for the glorification of Assyria and the god Aššur:

> Treasure […]
> Tablets of […]
> *ṭupšarrūtu* […]
> *āšipūtu* […]
> *eršahunga*-laments […]
> *bārûtu* … the designs of heaven and earth […],
> *asûtu* recipes, procedures for bandaging […]
> The muster lists of his forefathers […]
> … of overseers and soldiers […]
> Not one was left in the land of Sumer and Akkad![14]

Whatever the balance between truth and rhetoric in this passage, it systematically lists three or four of the five major scholarly disciplines that later featured so prominently in Neo-Assyrian court life. First is *ṭupšarrūtu*, literally 'scribal lore', and in many contexts a very generalist term. It later became particularly associated with the observation of spontaneously occurring omens in the heavens and on earth but it may be inappropriate to retroject that meaning onto this occurrence of the word, given that there are no known Middle Assyrian works of celestial divination.[15] Then comes *āšipūtu*, often translated as 'exorcism' but which more broadly entailed healing through reconciliation of human clients with the divine world. Third is *bārûtu*, literally 'the art of seeing', or posing a question to the gods Šamaš and Adad while sacrificing an animal to them. Their answers were divined through reading the 'designs' on the entrails of the sacrificial offering. Finally, *asûtu*, 'physicians' lore', involved the reduction of bodily discomfort through therapeutic means, and was often closely allied to *āšipūtu*. As we have seen above, all four professions are attested in Assur at this period, with the *ṭupšar šarri* and *bāri šarri* associated explicitly with the royal court.[16]

The only Neo-Assyrian scholarly discipline missing from this list is *kalûtu*, 'lamentation', the art of appeasing angry gods so that they would reconcile with, and make amends to, those who had offended them. Perhaps significantly, the profession of *kalû* 'lamenter' (Sumerian *gala*),

well known in Babylonia from at least the mid-third millennium BC, is not yet attested in Middle Assyrian royal cities.[17] For instance, a catalogue of palace staff from Tukulti-Ninurta's capital Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta lists '2 *asûs*, 1 *āšipu*, 1 *bārû*, 1 *ṭupšarru ša bīt ṭuppāte* (scribe of the tablet house)' but no *kalûs*.[18] However, the *eršahunga*-laments mentioned in the extract from the *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta* given above were one of the major genres of Babylonian *kalûtu*.[19] This suggests that at least some aspects of lamentation were recognised and valued by the Assyrian court, even if they were not yet identified with a particular scholarly profession in Assur.

In short, this admittedly eclectic evidence demonstrates that there was already royal scholarship in fourteenth- to twelfth-century Assyria. It was based in the politically powerful cities of Assur and Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta but heavily reliant on scholars and scholarship from Babylonia, especially the cities of Nippur and Babylon (Fig. 3.1).[20] The king employed royal scribes (who were more than just bureaucrats) and *bārû*-diviners, as well as *āšipu*- and *asû*-healers. Within Assur, fathers trained their sons in their scholarly professions and expected them to inherit their titles too. On the rare occasion they invoked deities in their colophons they called on the imperial city god Aššur, although unsurprisingly the Babylonian incomer Marduk-nadin-ahhe remained a devotee of Marduk. However, it is difficult to say exactly how god, scholar and king interacted at this relatively early period.

The Middle Assyrian scholarly network is characterised by features that will be significant for later periods too: the movement of tablets (and writing-boards) over long distances; the inheritance of scholarly roles at court across several generations; and a related merging of familial and institutional identities. Nevertheless, it is immediately noticeable that one prominent actor in the Neo-Assyrian network of royal scholarship is missing: the god Nabu, who, as we saw in Chapter 2, was the primary deity of wisdom in Ashurbanipal's court. When did he emerge, why and how?

Nabu, god of scribes and magnates

In his foundational history of the cult of Nabu, published in 1978, Francesco Pomponio traced its origins to early second-millennium Babylonia.[21] At this time, Nabu was portrayed as the great god Marduk's scribe but he did not yet have his own temple and did not feature at all in Old Babylonian royal inscriptions.[22] It was not until about 1100 BC that Nabu gained the primary characteristics of his first-millennium persona, as lord of

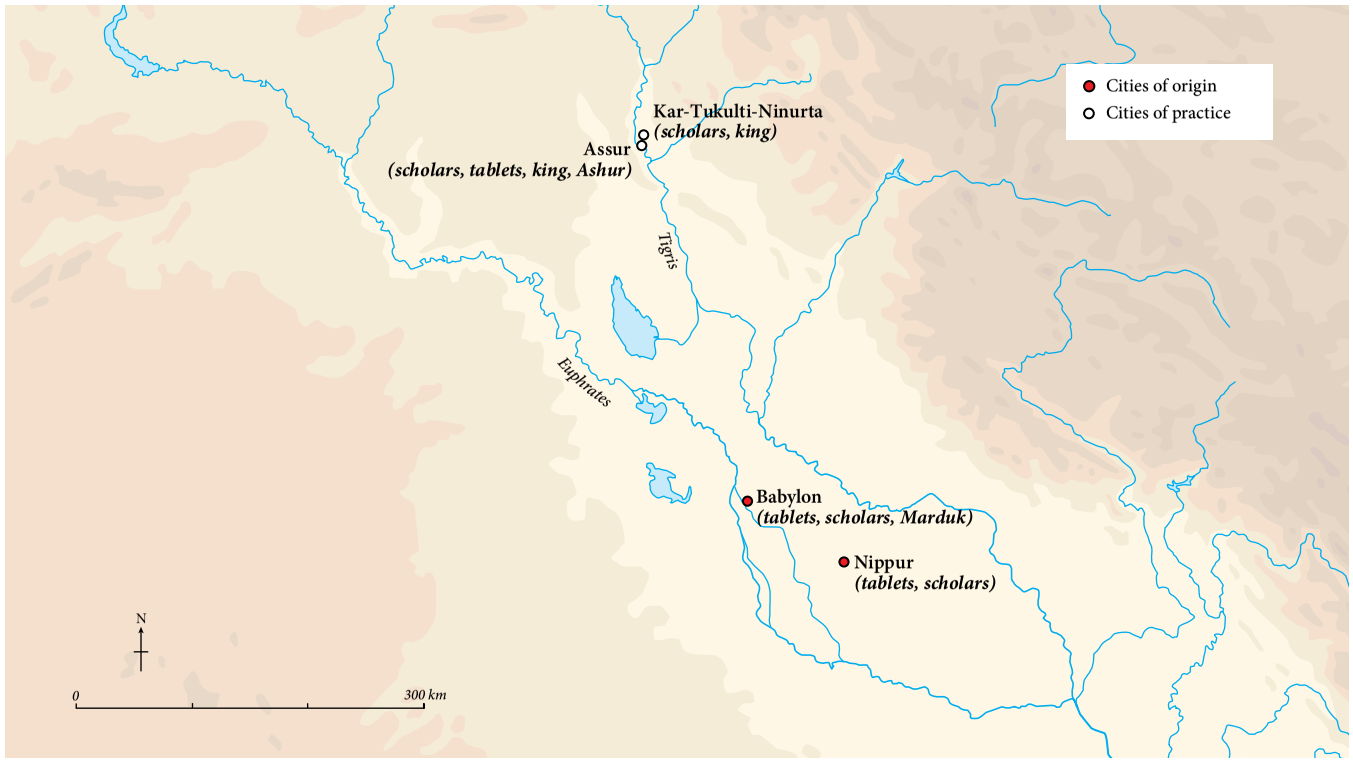

Figure 3.1: Map of Middle Assyrian scholarship. Source: Martin Brown.

wisdom, first-born son of Marduk and lord of Ezida – the 'true house' temple in Borsippa – and became important to the Babylonian royal family (Chapter 5).[23] Thus, in tracing Assyrian royal attitudes to scholarship, we should probably not read too much into Nabu's first appearances in Assyria, in fourteenth- and thirteenth-century personal names, nor pay much attention to the late seventh-century king Sin-šarru-iškun's (r. *c.* 627–612) claims that it was Shalmaneser I (r. 1273–1244) who founded Nabu's temple in Assur.[24]

Rather, the earliest pieces of concrete evidence for Nabu's involvement in Assyrian scholarship come from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (r. 1114–1076). None of Tiglath-pileser's own official inscriptions mention Nabu as part of the state cult.[25] Instead, literate senior administrators worshipped him in a private capacity, as we can see for instance on this prayer inscribed on a palace scribe's cylinder seal:

> At the command of Nabu, exalted son of Ekur (*or*: of the temple),
> for the days I am alive, let me obtain justice,
> let me uphold truth and rightness.
> As soon as I enter the palace each time,
> may my steps go well.
> Seal of the scribe Aššur-šumi-aṣbat,
> son of the royal scribe Ribatu.[26]

Here Aššur-šumi-aṣbat invokes Nabu's guidance in serving the palace to the best of his ability, by behaving with appropriate decorum ('may my steps go well') as well as by acting wisely and fairly ('let me obtain justice, let me uphold truth and rightness'). There are two possible interpretations of the final word in the first line. One option is that, by calling Nabu the 'exalted son of Ekur', Aššur-šumi-aṣbat invokes a name of Aššur's temple Ešarra in Assur, used since the thirteenth century.[27] If so, he situates Nabu in the upper echelons of divine power (and perhaps hints that there was a shrine to Nabu in Ešarra at this time).[28] But that is perhaps unlikely, given Nabu's absence from contemporary royal inscriptions. Alternatively, he may simply mean *ēkurru*, 'temple', in which case he is drawing a parallel between Nabu as the scribe in the temple and himself as the scribe in the palace.[29] In either case, the three-way relationship between god, scribe and palace – if not yet god, scholar and king – is clearly articulated.[30]

So far as I can tell, the first Assyrian king to engage directly, if not fully, with Nabu was Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859), an innovator in many aspects of imperial rule. He marked his break with the past most

conspicuously by building a new residence city at Kalhu, an abandoned town on the Tigris a few miles north of Assur. He started by erecting a substantial new palace on the northwest edge of the citadel, with several temples clustered immediately to the north of it (Fig. 3.2).[31] They served the most important deities of the reconceptualised empire including Ninurta, god of victory, and the great goddess Ištar, as the warrior *šarrat niphi*, 'blazing queen'.[32] Setting the aesthetic model for future Assyrian royal building, Ashurnasirpal's architects lined the ceremonial spaces of the palace and temples with stone panels carved in low relief. The brightly painted images depicted the army's all-conquering effectiveness and the king's devotion to the gods, which together produced material prosperity and divine protection for the empire. Near the main entrance to the palace throne room, and at the exit to Ninurta's shrine, Ashurnasirpal's architects encapsulated the king's commitment to scholarly engagement with the divine, through the figure of the fish-cloaked *apkallu*-sage.[33] According to Assyrian and Babylon mythology, the seven *apkallus* had rescued antediluvian wisdom from the long-ago Flood by

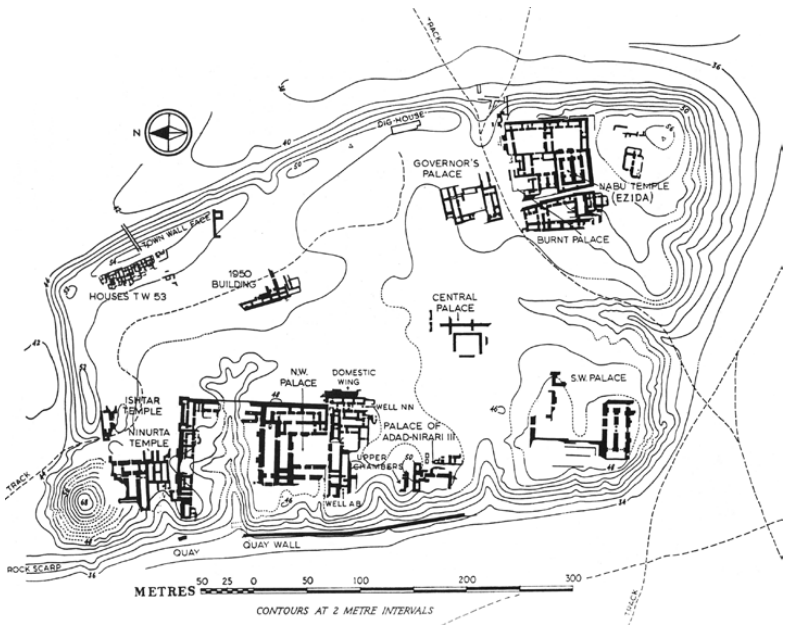

Figure 3.2: Plan of the royal citadel at Kalhu in the eighth century BC, showing the location of major temples in relation to the Northwest Palace and the Governor's Residence (Oates and Oates 2001: fig. 10; courtesy of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq).

which the angry gods had tried (and failed) to exterminate annoyingly noisy humankind.[34] They now stood for ancient, divinely sanctioned learning.[35]

In Ninurta's shrine, two stone fish-cloaked *apkallus* either side of the exit ushered the king and his followers out through a walkway lined with enormous mirror-images of Ninurta hunting down the Anzu-demon (Fig. 3.3).[36] According to the *Epic of Anzu*, this semi-divine thief had stolen the Tablet of Destinies on which the gods inscribed their intended fate for humankind.[37] Without the Tablet of Destinies the gods could not

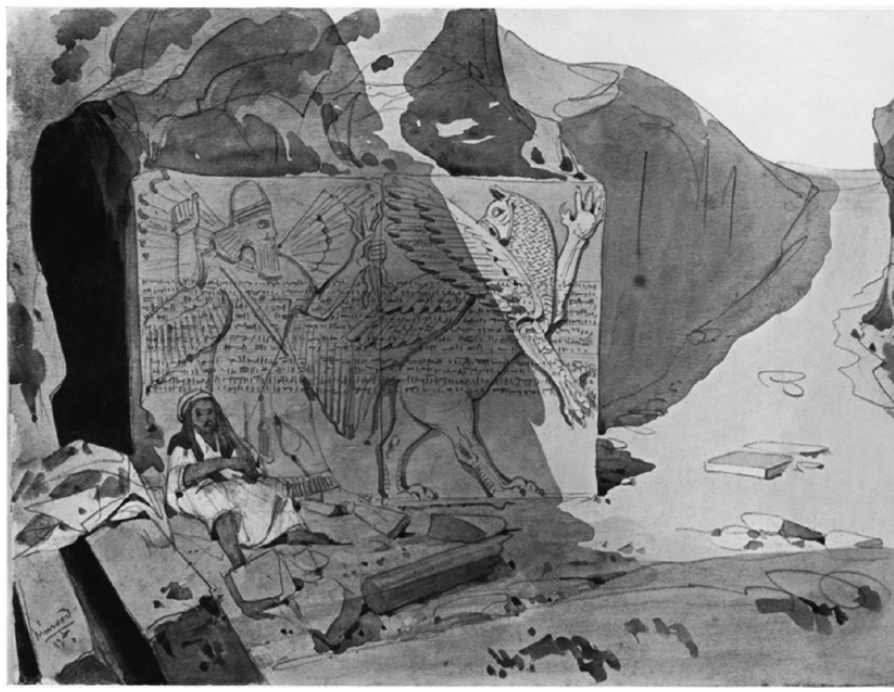

Figure 3.3: The entrance to the god Ninurta's shrine in Kalhu, built in the early ninth century BC, during excavation in 1850. Solomon Malan's sketch shows one of two bas-relief sculptures of Ninurta fighting the chaotic Anzu-demon for the Tablet of Destinies, now lost. Its mirror-image twin is on display in Room 6 of the British Museum (Gadd 1938: pl. XV; courtesy of Cambridge University Press). This figure cannot be reproduced, shared, altered, or exploited commercially in any way without the permission of Cambridge University Press, as it is copyrighted material and therefore not subject to the allowances permitted by a CC-BY licence.

control the future and nor could human scholars read their intentions through divination. This visually overwhelming tableau, in such a conceptually central imperial space, speaks powerfully of Ashurnasirpal's twin commitments to martial control of the world alongside intellectual engagement with the divine. But this royal conceptualisation of scholarship did not include Nabu.

Nabu's temple was one of the last to be built at Kalhu – and not in the palace quarter but several hundred metres to the southeast.[38] Ashurnasirpal's numerous and extensive building accounts rarely mention Nabu's temple, and they do so only in passing. Here, for instance, is a passage from his famous Banquet Stela commemorating a great inaugural feast, erected just outside the palace throne room and watched over by a colossal fish-cloaked winged bull:

> In the city of Kalhu, the centre of my lordship, I founded temples (such as) the temple of Enlil and Ninurta which had not previously existed. I (re)founded in (the city) the temple of Ea-the-king and Damkina, the temple of Adad and Šala, the temple of Gula, the temple of Sin, the temple of Nabu, the temple of *šarrat niphi*, the temple of the Sebittu, the temple of Kidmuri: the temples of the great gods.[39]

Nabu, then, was only a peripheral member of Ashurnasirpal's personal pantheon. Sadly, it is now impossible to determine what his temple might have looked like at this time, as only traces of it survived later building work.[40] However, it appears that it was, from its first days, a centre of scholarly activity. For amongst the tablets excavated from its seventh-century successor on the same site is a perfectly preserved hemerology, or ominous calendar, for Tašritu (month VII, just after the autumn equinox), with a colophon ascribing it to:

> The hand of Issaran-mudammiq, *šangamahhu* ('senior *āšipu*') of Ashurnasirpal, king of Assyria, son of Tappuya, *šatammu* ('temple administrator') of Der and grandson of the *šatammu* Huzalu.[41]

The text is duplicated exactly, even down to the colophon, on a tablet found in the so-called *āšipus*' house in seventh-century Assur, discussed further in Chapter 4.[42] As both Assur and Kalhu were royal seats at this time, it is possible that Issaran-mudammiq had two copies of this tablet (and perhaps others), one in each city. Equally, it is possible that one is a later copy of the other. Either way, as scholarly tablets written by several generations of his

family were found in Nabu's temple in Kalhu it is highly likely that Kalhu became his – or his immediate descendants' – primary base.

Although Issaran-mudammiq is the only scholar of Ashurnasirpal's to be attested in contemporary records, we know of a colleague, Gabbu-ilani-ereš, by later reputation (online Table A1). The seventh-century *Synchronistic King List* names Gabbu-ilani-ereš as both Tukulti-Ninurta II's (r. 890–884) and Ashurnasirpal's *ummânu*, 'master-scholar' – only the third man ever to have taken that title.[43] Gabbu-ilani-ereš's own descendants, on the other hand, many of whom also became prominent royal scholars, remembered him as the king's *rab ṭupšarrī*, 'chief scribe'.[44]

Historians typically credit Ashurnasirpal's great-grandson Adad-nerari III (r. 811–783 BC) for the major upturn in Nabu's fortunes in Assyria, whether or not we accept the late seventh-century king Sin-šarru-iškun's statement that he (re)built Nabu's temple in Assur.[45] Adad-nerari III was certainly responsible for constructing Nabu's temple on the citadel of Assyria's third city Nineveh.[46] The standard Assyrian eponym list – which rarely mentions particular events – tersely notes: 'foundations of Nabu's temple in Nineveh laid' in 788 BC (his twenty-third regnal year) and: 'Nabu entered the new temple' in 787.[47]

Equally, there is no reason to doubt that Nabu's temple at Kalhu was built or rebuilt during Adad-nerari's reign.[48] It was almost certainly at this time that the old temple on the acropolis was demolished and a massive 3-metre-high mud-brick platform was constructed for the new building to rest on.[49] The layout of Nabu and his spouse Tašmetu's twin shrines, and the rooms around the adjacent inner courtyard, stayed essentially the same until their destruction nearly two centuries later in 614 BC. (We shall discuss this layout in more detail later in the chapter.) The solid walls, monumental statuary and extensive use of large stone blocks in the foundation-courses and pavements all speak of considerable expense. Curiously, however, Adad-nerari's name is almost absent from the temple, while Nabu's name hardly ever occurs in Adad-nerari's royal inscriptions.[50]

Adad-nerari's name occurs in three places in Nabu's temple: on twin statues of divine attendants, 1.8 metres high, one of two pairs of stone guardians at the gateway from the inner courtyard to Nabu's shrine; and on a stone slab that was eventually reused as a paving stone in the shrine itself.[51] Here, for the first time since Aššur-šumi-aṣbat's cylinder seal three centuries before, we get a strong sense of a personal relationship between the god and a human being (Fig. 3.4):

> To Nabu, heroic (and) exalted, son of the Esangila temple, wise (and) splendid, mighty prince, heir of the god Nudimmud, whose

Figure 3.4: One of the guardian statues outside Nabu's cella in the Kalhu Ezida, inscribed with city governor Bel-tarṣi-ilumma's dedication to Nabu on behalf of king Adad-nerari III and his mother Sammu-ramat in *c*. 800 BC. Height 1.83 metres. BM ME 118890, reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

command is supreme, skilled in the arts, trustee of all heaven and underworld, expert in everything, wise, the holder of the tablet stylus, learned in the scribal art, merciful (and) judicious, who has the power to depopulate (and) repopulate (a country), beloved of the god Ellil, lord of lords, whose might has no rival, without whom there can be no order in heaven, the merciful (and) compassionate whose benevolence is good, dweller in the Ezida temple, which is within Kalhu, the great lord, his lord:

For the life of Adad-nerari, king of Assyria, his lord, and (for) the life of Sammu-ramat, the palace woman, his mistress: Bel-tarṣi-ilumma, governor of Kalhu (and) the lands of Hamedu, Sirgana, Temenu, (and) Yaluna, has had (this statue) made and dedicated (it) for his life, that his days might be long, his years many, (for) the well-being of his household and people, (and) that he might not become ill.

Whoever you are, after (me), trust in Nabu! Do not trust in another god![52]

The inscription allusively situates Nabu within a Babylonian divine context, relating him to Marduk's temple Esangila in Babylon, to the wily god Ea by means of the learned epithet Nudimmud, and to the fatherly Ellil. It is also one of the few Assyrian texts to use the Babylonian name 'Ezida' for this building: far more often than not it was simply known as 'Nabu's temple'.[53]

Bel-tarṣi-ilumma was Adad-nerari's eponym official in 797 BC and a particular devotee of Nabu.[54] His personal seal was found on sealings and a tablet in his Governor's Palace, right next door to the Ezida.[55] Its inscription ends, 'I have trusted in you, let me not be put to shame, O Nabu!'[56] And he was not the only senior court official with a particular affinity for the god of wisdom. Nergal-ilaʾi, Adad-nerari's *turtānu*, 'commander-in-chief', inscribed a 5-kilogram stone weight in the shape of a duck, found in Tašmetu's shrine, while – lower down the ranks – the scribe Nabu-šallim-ahhe dedicated a mace-head 'to Nabu, his lord, for his life', discovered just outside the Fish Gate entrance to the temple.[57]

Adad-nerari III was the third successive king to conduct military campaigns in Babylonia, and to pay homage to Babylonian Nabu in the god's home city of Borsippa.[58] He also continued the practice of appointing an *ummânu*, 'master-scholar', now a 150-year-old tradition (online Table A2). He gave the titles *rab* [*ṭupšarrī*(?)] 'chief [scribe(?)]' and *ṭupšar šarri* 'royal scribe', as well as *ummânu*, to one Marduk- … -bani(?), great-grandson of Ashurnasirpal's senior *āšipu*-healer Issaran-mudammiq

and now the fourth generation of that family to write scholarly tablets destined for the Ezida in Kalhu.[59] He appointed a *rab asî*, 'chief *asû*-healer', another devotee of Nabu and Tašmetu, whose name does not survive.[60] Adad-nerari also twice commissioned a Substitute King Ritual in reaction to two solar or lunar eclipses during his reign.[61] We do not know what exactly Adad-nerari's ritual involved but the version performed in the seventh-century Assyrian court comprised the enthroning and then killing a substitute to deflect an eclipse's portended evil from the body of the true king, all of which entailed substantial scholarly input.[62] In the eighth-century version, after his coronation the substitute travelled around the cities of Assyria for at least ten days, retinue in tow, before – presumably – being put to death like his seventh-century successors once the danger had passed.

Yet, to judge from lists of wine allocated to court personnel and visiting dignitaries, Adad-nerari did not hold his regular court scholars in particularly high regard.[63] Instead, he gave pride of place to the *dāgil iṣṣūrī*, 'augurs', from Assyria's northwestern vassal kingdom and close ally Commagene. These augurs, who divined the future from observing the flights of birds following a long-standing Syro-Anatolian tradition, were quite likely diplomatic visitors or long-term envoys and may well have participated prominently in an annual spring festival for the storm-god Adad.[64] Local scholars came much further down the lists of bread and wine given out on such occasions. The *bārûs* – described on one occasion as *kaššaya*, 'Kassite' or Babylonian – always preceded the *āšipus*, with the *asûs* usually following them, though the *rab asî* 'chief physician' sometimes headed the scholarly group.[65]

Adad-nerari's immediate successors continued the practice of honouring northwestern *dāgil iṣṣūrīs* above their own scholars, at least in this particular context.[66] Yet trust in Nabu remained strong amongst the upper echelons of imperial power. The turn of the eighth century is well known as a time of strong magnates and local officials who acted largely independently of the king and put up inscriptions in their own names.[67] Perhaps the most renowned of these men is the *turtānu* Šamši-ilu, who ran his own military campaigns in the west of Assyria in the first decades of the eighth century.[68] On two monumental stone lions in the city of Kar-Shalmaneser, he records a victory over the Urartian king Argištu. The inscription opens by invoking Aššur and eight Babylonian gods, all of whom he extols for their intellectual prowess.[69] It describes Nabu as 'scribe of Esangila, possessor of the Tablet of Destinies of [the gods], who resolves differences'.[70] In other words, just as in Bel-tarṣi-ilumma's inscription, Nabu is implicitly still linked to his Babylonian father Marduk

by means of his temple Esangila. But he now has command of the Tablet of Destinies, formerly the great god Ellil's prerogative according to the *Epic of Anzu*.[71] Thus Nabu becomes incorporated into the central myth of Ninurta, Kalhu's imperial god of victory.

At about this time Nabu began to figure more prominently in royal self-presentation too. Aššur-nerari V (r. 754–745) is the earliest known Assyrian king to include Nabu and Tašmetu amongst the deities summoned to protect a diplomatic treaty.[72] At roughly the same time we begin to see scholars invoking Nabu in their colophons to curse or bless. For instance, a *šamallû ṣehru* 'junior apprentice' who copied a set of ritual instructions for making protective clay figurines, in Nineveh in 750 BC, called on [Ea], Šamaš and Asalluhi to 'take away' (that is, kill) anyone who took away the tablet, calling such an act 'a taboo of Nabu, lord of the stylus'.[73]

After concerted military campaigning in the south, Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727) was crowned king of Babylonia in the penultimate year of his reign, reassuring conquered southern elites with soothing words such as, 'Bel and Nabu do know that there is no fault of yours'.[74] He also began to invoke Nabu, 'holder of the stylus (and) bearer of the Tablet of Destinies of the gods', amongst other deities in the introductions to his longer inscriptions.[75] Tiglath-pileser's magnates, such as the chief cupbearer Nabu-eṭiranni, occasionally began their letters to the king with blessings from Nabu and Marduk.[76] The powerful, independent-minded palace herald Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur, who was Tiglath-pileser's eponym official in 741 BC, founded the city of Dur-Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur, 'Fort Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur', about 100 kilometres west of Kalhu. On a stela commemorating this event he called on Nabu – along with Marduk, Šamaš, Sin and Ištar – in much the same terms as his king did.[77] Small objects, especially seals and tablets, found in and around the Kalhu Ezida show that it continued to be used throughout the eighth century.[78]

Perhaps, then, we should see the rise of Nabu and the concomitant Assyrian support of Babylonian-style scholarship, over the early first millennium, not simply as a royal measure designed to subjugate or appease Assyria's southern provinces.[79] There is an element of that, to be sure. But, as Table 3a summarises, Nabu attracted powerful emotions in the literate elite of the empire long before he gained particular prominence in royal thinking, and quite independently from Assyrian military and political activity in Babylonia. The men who wielded regional power and influence were far more articulate in their praise of Nabu, and the intellectual prowess he represented, than any of the kings they served. In this light, I contend, we might understand the extraordinary building

Table 3a: Developments in Assyrian court scholarship and worship of Nabu in the light of interventions in Babylonia.

Assyrian ruler	*Assyrian interventions in Babylonia (after Frame 2008)*	*Nabu in Assyrian royal inscriptions (after Pomponio 1978)*	*Developments in Assyrian court scholarship and worship of Nabu*
Aššur-uballiṭ I (*c*. 1363–1328)	Assyrian independence from Mitanni; failed marriage alliance with Babylonia leads to wars		Babylonian *ṭupšar šarri* in Assur
(gap of eighty-five years)		(Shalmaneser I, 1273–1244, founds Nabu's temple in Assur, according to Sin-šarru-iškun)	
Tukulti-Ninurta I (*c*. 1243–1207)	Loots Babylonia, captures Marduk's statue and Babylonian king		*Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta* records capture of Babylonian scholarship; Assyrian *bāri šarri, asî šarri* and *āšip šarri* and scholarly tablets attested in Assur from about this time
(gap of 107 years)			
Tiglath-pileser I (*c*. 1114–1076)			Court scribes invoke Nabu in personal inscriptions
(gap of 110 years)			
Tiglath-pileser II (*c*. 966–935)			First royal *ummânu*, according to seventh-century *Synchronistic King List*
(gap of fifty-two years)			

(*Continued*)

Assyrian ruler	*Assyrian interventions in Babylonia (after Frame 2008)*	*Nabu in Assyrian royal inscriptions (after Pomponio 1978)*	*Developments in Assyrian court scholarship and worship of Nabu*
Ashurnasirpal II (883–859)		First to mention Nabu in a royal inscription; builds temple of Nabu in new capital Kalhu; (repairs Nabu's temple in Assur, according to Sin-šarru-iškun)	Earliest extant scholarly tablets from Ezida in Kalhu
Shalmaneser III (858–824)	Conducts two military campaigns in support of Babylonian king; worships Nabu in Borsippa		
Šamši-Adad V (823–811)	Invades Babylonia four times; worships Nabu in Borsippa		
Adad-nerari III (810–783)	Defeats Babylonian army; worships Nabu in Borsippa	Authorises rebuilding of Nabu's temple in Kalhu; (re) builds Nabu's temple in Nineveh; (repairs Nabu's temple in Assur, according to Sin-šarru-iškun)	Syrian augurs precede other scholars in Nimrud Wine Lists; independent magnates invoke Nabu in public inscriptions
Shalmaneser IV (782–773)			
Aššur-Dan III (772–755)	Conducts three campaigns to Babylonia		
Aššur-nerari V (754–745)		First Assyrian king to invoke Nabu's name, in treaty document	Earliest attested invocation of Nabu in a scholarly colophon

(*Continued*)

Assyrian ruler	*Assyrian interventions in Babylonia (after Frame 2008)*	*Nabu in Assyrian royal inscriptions (after Pomponio 1978)*	*Developments in Assyrian court scholarship and worship of Nabu*
Tiglath-pileser III (744–727)	Campaigns in Babylonia – initially to support Babylonian king? Celebrates *akītu* festival in 728; is acknowledged as king in Babylonia		First attested magnates' letters which bless the king in the name of Nabu and Marduk
Shalmaneser V (726–722)	Acknowledged as king in Babylonia		
Sargon II (721–705)	Loses Babylonia at start of reign; regains in 710; celebrates *akītu* festival and is acknowledged as king in Babylonia	Features Nabu heavily in royal inscriptions from *c*. 714; rebuilds temples of Nabu in Kalhu and Nineveh; builds temple of Nabu in new capital Dur-Šarruken	Tablets from other cities moved to Nabu's temple in Dur-Šarruken; scholars on military campaign; earliest attested royal *kalû;* scholarly tablets in Nabu's temple in Nineveh
Sennacherib (704–681)	Takes throne of Babylonia; quashes rebellion and installs vassal and later his own son as king; after defeat and four-year interregnum recaptures and destroys Babylon (and Borsippa)	Makes Nineveh the new capital; does not invoke Nabu much in royal inscriptions	Court scholarship continues without royal patronage of Nabu
Esarhaddon (680–669)	Restores Babylon (and Borsippa), blaming former destruction of the city on Marduk's anger; names son Šamaš-šumu-ukin as successor in Babylon	Features Nabu heavily in royal inscriptions again; renovates Nabu's temple in Nineveh	Well-attested court patronage of scholarship, including Egyptian and Syrian disciplines

(*Continued*)

Assyrian ruler	*Assyrian interventions in Babylonia (after Frame 2008)*	*Nabu in Assyrian royal inscriptions (after Pomponio 1978)*	*Developments in Assyrian court scholarship and worship of Nabu*
Ashurbanipal (668–*c*. 630)	Šamaš-šumu-ukin claims Babylonian independence in 652; Ashurbanipal recaptures Babylon in 648 and installs new vassal king	Renovates Nabu's temples in Nineveh and Kalhu	Heavy use of Nabu's name in scholarly colophons, especially on Ashurbanipal's behalf; influx of tablets and scholars into Nineveh after conquest of Babylon
Aššur-etel-ilani (*c*. 630–*c*. 627)	Nabopolassar definitively gains Babylonian independence	Makes (shoddy) repairs to Nabu's temple in Kalhu	
Sin-šarru-iškun (*c*. 627–612)	Median-Babylon alliance destroys the Assyrian empire	(Re)builds Nabu's temples in Kalhu and Assur at start of reign but does not conceptualise him in scholarly terms	Last known court scholar, *621; temples of Nabu in Kalhu and Nineveh active until at least *616 and *618 respectively

enterprise in the Kalhu Ezida not as work commissioned by Adad-nerari himself, or even his mother Sammu-ramat, but as an entrepreneurial initiative by the Kalhu governor Bel-tarṣi-ilumma and a coterie of like-minded senior officials.[80] Building a temple can have been no more of a challenge than other gubernatorial activities, such as conquering new territories, subjugating enemy kings or creating new cities. The project must almost certainly have been carried out with the king's blessing, for it entailed large-scale demolition and rebuilding on the royal citadel, as well as the removal and reuse of large official monuments.[81] But – as we have seen – all the inscriptional and geographical evidence points to personal piety rather than official cult.

Sargon's adoption of Nabu

While both Ashurnasirpal II and Adad-nerari III supported Babylonian-style scholarship and the magnates' concomitant trust in Nabu, they kept

them somewhat at arm's length. Under Ashurnasirpal, Nabu's temple was amongst the last to be built on Kalhu, presumably on the far edge of the citadel. Adad-nerari oversaw the construction of a temple to Nabu on the citadel at Nineveh, Assyria's second city, but we only have the late seventh-century king Sin-šarru-iškun's unreliable testimony that either king supported Nabu's cult in Assur itself. It was only under Sargon II (r. 721–705) that Nabu and his scholars became fully integrated into the highest echelons of court life and even that was not an instant transformation.

Sargon gained power – as did so many Assyrian kings – in a palace coup, usurping his father Tiglath-pileser III's chosen heir Shalmaneser V (r. 726–722).[82] The aftermath was prolonged and its effects widespread. In the first years of his reign Sargon devoted much of his energy to quelling substantial opposition to his rule, letting Babylonia break free while he dealt with uprisings in Assyria. Sargon's early inscriptions, therefore, are heavily focused on establishing his strong relationship with the dynastic god Aššur.[83] He still keeps half an eye on Babylonia but without mentioning Nabu. The so-called 'Aššur Charter' from Nineveh, which records events from the first two years of his reign, describes the king as the 'offspring of Enlil and Marduk'.[84] The 'Juniper Palace' inscription from Kalhu, an early account of Sargon's first five years and the renovations to Ashurnasirpal's old Northwest Palace, introduces the king as 'appointee of Ellil, priest of Aššur, installed by Anu and Ellil, …, (and) whom Aššur (and) Marduk selected'.[85] Later in the inscription Sargon describes how he invited 'Nergal, Adad and all the gods of Kalhu' to the newly renovated palace for a feast; again, Nabu is not mentioned explicitly.[86]

However, within a couple of years Sargon had elevated Nabu to a position amongst the great gods of the empire. The turning point was not, as might be expected, his reconquest of Babylonia in 710 but the capture of the northern city of Muṣaṣir four years earlier. The plundering of its ancient and wealthy temple to the god Haldi not only secured Sargon's military reputation but also brought in substantial wealth, doubly confirming his right to rule. The famous *Letter to Aššur*, a report of this his eighth military campaign, opens with acknowledgement of 'the great support of Aššur, Šamaš, Nabu (and) Marduk' and consistently treats Nabu – always paired with his father Marduk – as a key factor in its success.[87] Famously, it also contains the earliest extant reference to scholarly omens determining the course of an Assyrian military campaign:

> At the exalted command of Nabu and Marduk (i.e., Mercury and Jupiter), who took a course through the positions of the stars

> (which signified) a good omen for the taking up of my weapons, and favourable signs which mean the gaining of power, Sin, lord of the crown, remained eclipsed for a watch, (a portent) for the ruination of the (enemy) Guti. At the invaluable consent of the hero Šamaš, who caused the liver to be inscribed with reliable omens that he would walk at my side … I took the road to Muṣaṣir, a difficult path.[88]

Here, scholars observe planetary and lunar omens, then confirm them by taking sacrificial omens, extispicies, as in seventh-century court practice.[89] Implicitly, by these actions the scholars proved their worth – and the value of their gods – to Assyrian kingship.

This is not to say that the Muṣaṣir campaign was Sargon's first use of court scholarship. The earliest extant Neo-Assyrian celestial divination report, concerning the appearance of Saturn in the lunar halo while the moon was in opposition to the sun, dates from the very first year of Sargon's reign.[90] And two manuscripts of a widely used prayer to avert the evil of thunder during a lunar eclipse explicitly name Sargon as the client of the accompanying ritual.[91] Rather, Muṣaṣir's capture was the spectacular, decisive proof of scholarship's value in predicting and determining the outcome of battle by maintaining clear lines of communication with the gods. And this was no mere rhetoric: scholars really did march with the Assyrian army. Adad-isseʾa, Sargon's governor of the province of Mazamua (modern Sulaimani in Iraqi Kurdistan), counted eight *ummânus* 'scholars' amongst the 1,430 'king's men' stationed in his city, while Nabu-belu-kaʾʾin, governor of Kar-Šarruken – probably modern Malayer, halfway between the Iranian cities of Kermanshah and Qom – also had a scholar in his service.[92]

Coincidentally or not, according to its colophon, the *Letter to Aššur* was written by a senior official, with Nabu in his name: 'Nabu-šallimšunu, *ṭupšar šarri rabû, rab ṭupšarrī, ummânu* of Sargon, king of Assyria, the son of Harmakki, *ṭupšar šarri*, Assyrian'.[93] Nabu-šallimšunu is also documented performing an important ceremony in Aššur that same year, according to a report written to the king in Kalhu.[94] How much influence did he exert over the content and tone of this composition, one wonders?[95] We can never know, but from this point onwards – well before Sargon's reconquest of Babylon in 710 BC after a decade of rebellion – Nabu occurs routinely, if not inevitably, in royal inscriptions as far afield as Cyprus and northwest Iran.[96]

Sargon's victory at Muṣaṣir proved a turning point, for the rich spoils enabled him to complete a new capital city, Dur-Šarruken (modern

Khorsabad), some 50 kilometres upriver from Kalhu, whose construction had already begun in 717 BC. In Dur-Šarruken, unconstrained by existing building, Sargon's planners were free to create the royal citadel exactly as the king wanted. That new vision put Nabu at its very heart. In one of the earliest Dur-Šarruken inscriptions, written in 713 (or soon after) on clay cylinders deposited all over the citadel, Sargon claims to have commissioned the bricks for the palace 'on the day of an *eššēšu*-festival for Bel's son, the exceedingly wise Nabu, scribe of everything, who gives orders to all the gods'.[97] And he built an enormous temple for Nabu right next door to the palace, linked to it by a private bridge.[98]

However, in order to gain a better understanding of how these complexes functioned we should turn first to Nabu's temple in Kalhu, which was also restored at about this time. There is no textual confirmation of the date of renovation and no inscriptions of Sargon survive in the temple.[99] However, there is no reason to doubt David Oates's carefully drawn conclusion that much of the northern part of the temple was built anew, and perhaps completely remodelled, under Sargon – if not actually by him.[100] There were also substantial repairs and upgrades to the southern courtyard adjacent to Nabu and Tašmetu's shrines at this time, as well as to the exterior of the western wall. It is essentially this version of the Ezida that was used right until the end of empire and which excavators discovered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The close relationship between Neo-Assyrian kingship, deity and scholarship was elegantly realised in the architecture of the Kalhu Ezida (Fig. 3.5). The temple, occupying an area of some 50 × 70 metres, was entered from the north via a monumental ramped gateway guarded by beneficent spirits in typical Assyrian style. But whereas most temples and palaces famously feature monumental winged bulls or lions, Ezida's main entrance – the so-called 'Fish Gate' – was flanked by giant *kulullû*-mermen, originally covered in gold leaf.[101] Like the fish-cloaked *apkallu*-figures, they represented the seven primordial sages who brought wisdom and civilisation to humankind in deep antiquity. There was no bas-relief sculpture in the interior, unlike the nearby temple of Ninurta described above, but it is possible that the smoothly dressed stone walls carried painted plaster or were hung with textiles.[102] Off the temple's first courtyard, which was surrounded by primarily utilitarian offices, were two further courts. A large courtyard to the south gave access to the twin shrines of Nabu and Tašmetu, whose larger-than-life statues, and Beltarṣi-ilumma's protective figures at their gateways, could gaze directly on the scholars at work in and around the tablet store immediately opposite. And to the west, a smaller courtyard led on to a small-scale throne room

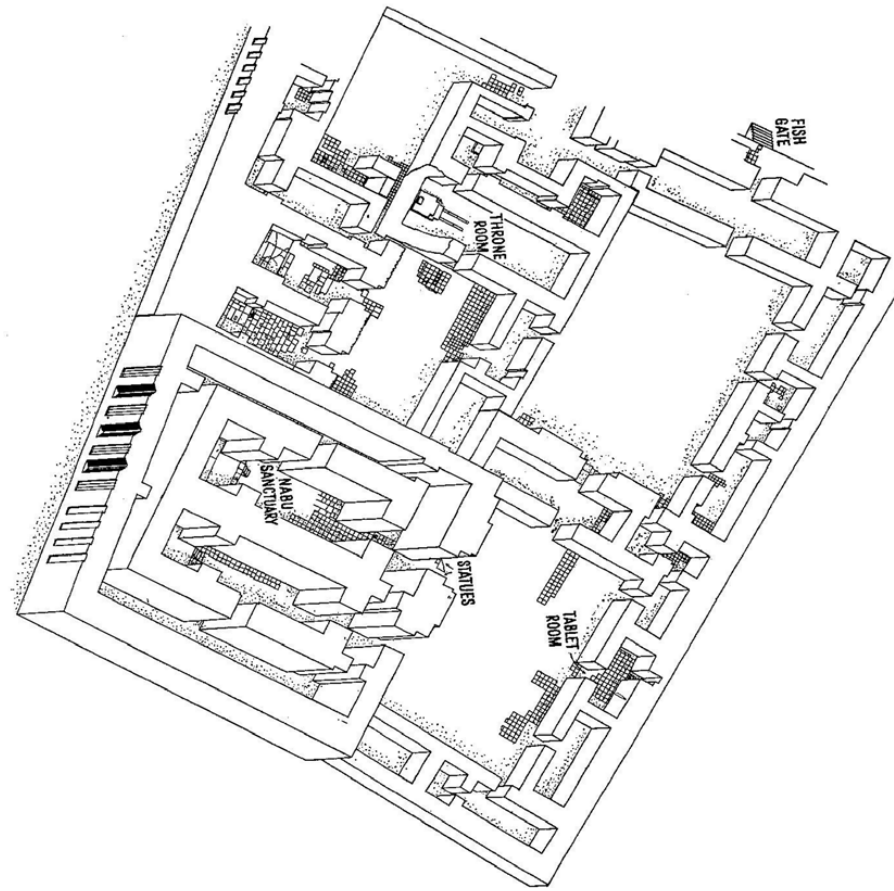

Figure 3.5: Isometric plan of the Ezida temple in Kalhu, oriented north. The northwest wing was the *akītu*-suite, with throne room, small twin shrines and 'seven-day room' opposite. The northeast courtyard housed the administration of the temple while the southern courtyard was probably restricted to scholars and priestly personnel. Nabu's shrine is immediately opposite the tablet store. Maximum dimensions *c*. 70 × *c*. 50 metres (Oates and Oates 2001: fig. 67; courtesy of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq).

and miniature versions of the twin shrines, so that the king could visit with appropriate ritual and protocol.

Early seventh-century records and letters show that this area of the temple was known as the *bēt akiāte*, the *akītu*-suite, which was set aside for an annual 'sacred marriage' ritual between Nabu and Tašmetu that

lasted several days in the second month of the year (in late spring).[103] A further room in the *akītu*-suite, which might have been called the *bēt ūmē sebitti* 'seven-day room', may have served as their bedroom for the duration.[104] Offerings made to the divine couple during this time were designed to prolong the life of the king and all of his descendants. Even if the king were unable to attend, the *hazannu* (literally, 'mayor') of Ezida was present throughout, to make offerings on the king's behalf. This celebration was not the well-known Babylonian new-year *akītu*, in which Nabu also played a central role, but served a similar function in renewing kingship and fertility as spring reached its peak (Chapter 5).

Some 170 × 120 metres at its maximum extent, Nabu's new temple at Dur-Šarruken was five times the size of the one at Kalhu, though clearly heavily influenced by it (Fig. 3.6). And unlike Ashurnasirpal's temple for Nabu at Kalhu this was no afterthought. It was set on a 3-metre-high platform so that it towered above all surrounding buildings except the palace itself and had to be accessed by a large ramp.[105] A private bridge from the palace allowed the royal retinue to move between the two buildings unimpeded, giving Sargon privileged access to Nabu and signalling an unprecedentedly intimate relationship between god and king. While the Kalhu Ezida is bereft of royal inscriptions from this period, the major

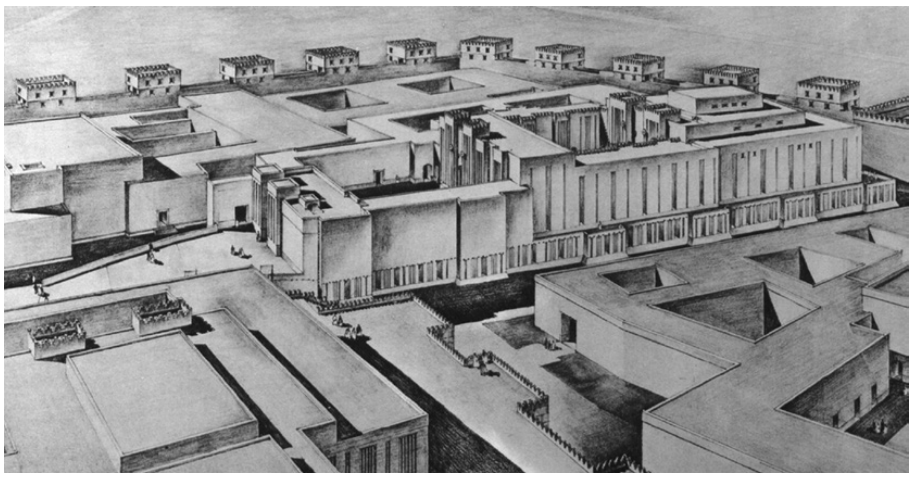

Figure 3.6: Reconstruction of Nabu's Ezida temple in Dur-Šarruken, looking southeast from the top of the ziggurat, *c.* 700 BC (Loud and Altman 1938: pl. 2; courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

thresholds of its successor at Dur-Šarruken were inscribed with the following prayer, proclaiming Sargon's piety towards Nabu (Fig. 3.7):

> O Nabu, scribe of the universe, controller of harmony: (as for) Sargon, king of the world, king of Assyria, city governor of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, builder of your shrine – look steadily with firm heart and direct your just face towards him, provide him with many days of bodily good health and fix years of wellbeing as his fate.
>
> May his reign be as long as heaven and earth; may he perform the shepherdship of all the lands; may his foundations be as firmly established as this building (site) and platform![106]

This new temple was furnished with not one but two rooms fitted with pigeonholes for storing tablets: one in the courtyard closest to Nabu and Tašmetu's shrines (Room 15), as at Kalhu, and one in the outer courtyard (Room 5).[107] A copy of the Assyrian King List found its way to the temple, copied from an original from Assur by one Kandalanu, a temple scribe, in Arbaʾil in 738.[108] An *āšipu* named Nabu-ušebši left two prayers there, to Marduk and Nabu, cleverly composed so that the first syllables of each line together spelled out his name and profession.[109] At least one set of new writing-boards was commissioned for the palace, of sixteen leaves, containing the celestial omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil*.[110] Further scholarly tablets may also have been moved to the new royal buildings from Kalhu and/or Nineveh. As at Kalhu too, the Dur-Šarruken Ezida had an *akītu* suite, accessed via a highly elaborate gateway into a series of courtyards and rooms which culminated in a throne room (Room 42).[111] However, there are no secondary shrines here; perhaps the divine couple went straight to their 'seven-day room' (Room 38?).

Sargon endowed the temple with 4,000 *imēru* (*c*. 7,200 hectares or 28 square miles) of land to ensure it had a reliable independent income. He also bestowed regular offerings of sheep and daily provisions of bread and beer for an *āšipu* (the Nabu-ušebši who wrote the prayers?) and a *lahhinu* ('temple steward').[112] Court personnel prepared for the move too, whether from the Assyrian royal cities or from Babylon, which had been Sargon's residence city since the conquest of 710 BC.[113] For instance, in 709 BC one Nabu-kabti-ahhešu, 'palace scribe (*ṭupšar ēkalli*) of Sargon, king of Assyria', bought substantial quantities of land near Dur-Šarruken, presumably in order to remain close to the new court. Although the contract was discovered in Sargon's palace at Dur-Šarruken, it had been drawn up in Kalhu, where it was witnessed by fifteen mostly very

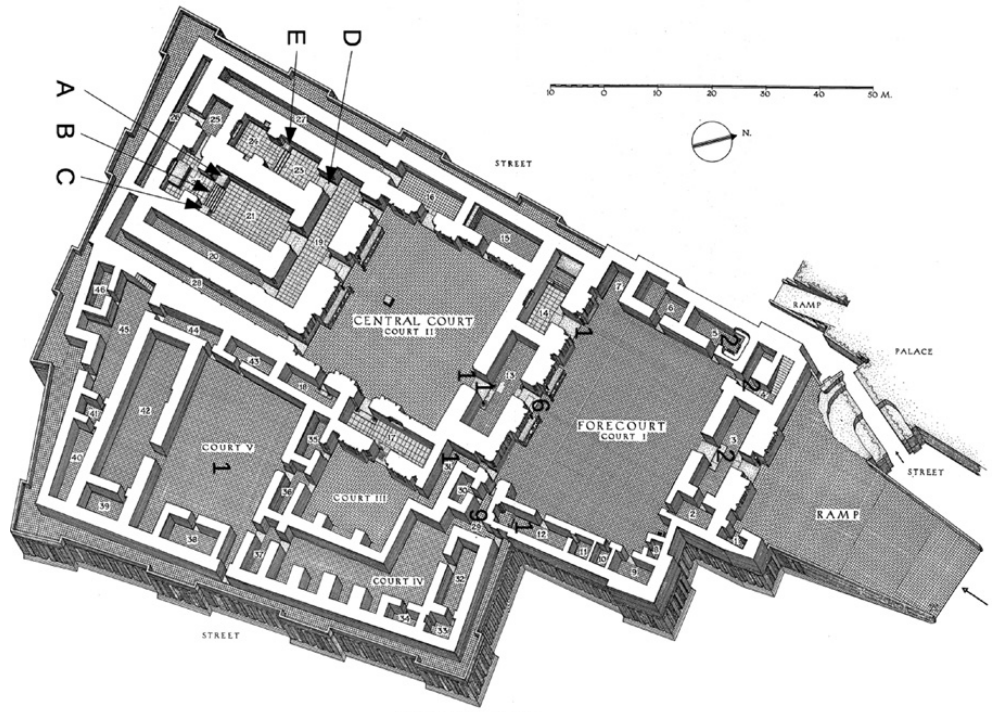

Figure 3.7: Plan of the Ezida temple in Dur-Šarruken, with the locations of inscribed elements (marked with letters A–E) and abandoned tablets (marked by numerals) added by the author. The bridge to the palace is to the northwest, tablet storage along the west wall (5, 15), and the gods' cellas to the southwest (21–4). The *akītu*-suite with throne room (42) and 'seven-day room' (35) is in the southeast wing. Maximum dimensions *c*. 170 × *c*. 120 metres (Loud and Altman 1938: pl. 67; courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

well-connected men.[114] Although Mikko Luukko has characterised the position of *ṭupšar ēkalli* as primarily administrative, Nabu-kabti-ahhešu was also intellectually active.[115] In the late 1920s archaeologists found three of his copies of incantations and lamentations amongst thirty-odd scholarly tablets in and around the ruins of the Ezida at Nineveh, though we do not know whether they were written there or came to Nineveh after his lifetime.[116] Some southern scholars may also have moved north during Sargon's reign. At least that is one plausible explanation for the hymnic and heroic compositions about the king, found on tablets in Neo-Babylonian script at Nineveh.[117]

Not every prominent scholar moved to Dur-Šarruken, however (online Table A3). The scribe Nabu-zuqup-kenu, descendant of Ashurnasirpal II's *ummânu* Gabbu-ilani-ereš, wrote numerous scholarly tablets in Kalhu during Sargon's reign and was certainly in Kalhu when Sargon died.[118] Interestingly, his colophons never mention Ezida or Nabu, just the city of Kalhu, so we cannot be sure which building they were intended for; they too probably ended up in Nineveh.[119]

The gods entered the temples of Dur-Šarruken on 22 Tašritu (month VII), 707 BC and the city was formally inaugurated on 6 Ayyaru (month II) 706 – that is, during Nabu and Tašmetu's annual *akītu* festival.[120] But when Sargon inauspiciously died in battle just a year later in the summer of 705, and – even more inauspiciously – his body was never found, his heir Sennacherib (r. 704–681) ordered the court to move to Nineveh for a fresh beginning.[121] The temple was hurriedly emptied of its collection of scholarly tablets, some of which were dropped at doorways and thresholds in the rush to leave (Fig. 3.7). Of the thirty tablets the excavators discovered in the building, twelve were found in corridors and staircases, ten in gateways and doorways, five in courtyards and only three inside rooms.[122] The new writing-board of *Enūma Anu Ellil* was abandoned down a well in Kalhu's Northwest Palace along with a few dozen others – perhaps before it even reached Dur-Šarruken – as it bore the ill-fated names of Sargon, his palace and his city on the cover.[123] Other tablets were presumably taken back to the palaces and temples of Kalhu and/or Nineveh, where scholarly business resumed or continued, more or less as before.[124]

Nabu's changing fortunes in the early seventh century

The situation, however, was not quite as before. Sennacherib was quick to distance himself from many of his father's policies and attitudes, not only his erstwhile capital city. The famous *Sin of Sargon* – a propagandistic work

of the reign of Sennacherib's own son Esarhaddon – blames Sargon for neglecting the gods of Assyria in favour of Babylonia and Sennacherib for going too far the other way.[125] Marduk disappeared completely from Sennacherib's royal inscriptions and Nabu was greatly demoted to occasional collective invocations to all the great gods for their blessings or curses.[126] The new king commissioned no building work on any of Nabu's temples.

Yet, even while neglecting Nabu, Sennacherib continued to call on scholarly assistance (online Table A4). The *Sin of Sargon*'s detailed account of the king's abundant use of *bārû*-diviners to determine the reason for his father's sudden death may well be Esarhaddon's back-projection of his own dependency on them.[127] However, Eckart Frahm argues that Sennacherib's reaction to his father's reign was heavily influenced by Nabu-zuqup-kenu's scholarly interpretation of the restless fate of the unburied soldier at the climax of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Tablet XII, which he made in the unhappy days between Sargon's death and Sennacherib's coronation.[128] Nabu-zuqup-kenu continued to write tablets throughout Sennacherib's reign, but safely tucked away in Kalhu, which Sennacherib systematically neglected in favour of Nineveh.[129] At the beginning of his second regnal year Sennacherib received an omen report of a lunar eclipse, in Assur, apparently as he journeyed south to begin his first military campaign against Babylonia, which had again declared independence.[130] On his eventual victory in 699 he appointed his son Aššur-nadin-šumi to rule as king of Babylon.[131] When the latter was abducted by Elamite rebels five years later, Sennacherib apparently commissioned omens of some sort to determine his fate; but sadly the tablet concerned no longer survives.[132] Sculptures of fish-cloaked *apkallu*-sages protected key doorways of his Southwest Palace at Nineveh, constructed between 703 and 694.[133] Several of the new gates of Nineveh were given astrologically significant names.[134] Many major building projects were carried out 'in a favourable month, on an auspicious day',[135] implying the scholarly use of hemerologies, while an *āšipu* and *kalû* even attended the opening of the 'Sennacherib Canal' which supplied Nineveh with fresh water.[136] And the official account of Sennacherib's indecisive campaign against Babylon and Elam in 691, 'one of the finest pieces of Assyrian royal literature', uses a sustained series of allusions to the Babylonian epic *Enūma Eliš* to present the southern enemy as a demonic threat to cosmic order which must be destroyed.[137] In this he finally succeeded in 689 BC, fifteen years into his reign, aiming to eradicate uncontrollable Babylon – and to claim Babylonian theology and scholarship for Assyria – once and for all.

This huge act of cultural appropriation not only entailed the systematic replacement of Marduk with Aššur in cultic literature such as *Enūma Eliš*,[138] but it also involved restructuring Aššur's temple in Assur to make it more like Esangila. A new East Wing was built, furnished with an enormous cultic basin adorned with *apkallu*-sages at each corner.[139] Sennacherib also commissioned an entirely new *akītu* temple outside the city walls so that Aššur could perform Marduk's erstwhile role in the New Year festival.[140] Its foundations were laid *ina šipir išippūti nēmeq kakugallūti* 'with the craft of the purification priest (and) the wisdom of the incantation priest'.[141] At least three senior scholars were amongst the witnesses to its official endowment in 684–683.[142] This building was first and foremost a symbol of Sennacherib's appropriation of Babylonian kingship and Aššur's usurpation of Marduk, but also signalled the abandonment of Sargon's *akītu*-suite in the Kalhu Ezida. Aššur had equally usurped Assyrian Nabu.

There are hints that these massive conceptual and architectural changes cannot have been easy for the scholarly establishment to deal with. Two manuscripts of the *Synchronistic King List* that attest to Sennacherib's reign, both written during or after his grandson Ashurbanipal's rule, assign no fewer than three different *ummânus* 'master-scholars' to Sennacherib, while other Assyrian kings usually had just one, often inherited from their predecessors.[143] Nothing is known about the first, who was called either Nabu-apal-iddina or Nabu-bani.[144] His successor Kalbu's case is revealing, however. In a long letter written to the new king Esarhaddon, shortly after Sennacherib's murder in 681, the Babylonian scholar Bel-ušezib explains how the ethics of court scholarship went badly awry under Kalbu's leadership:

> In the reign of your royal father, Kalbu, son of Nabu-eṭir, made a pact [with] the *ṭupšarru*-scribes and *bārû*-diviners without the knowledge of your royal father, saying: 'If an unfavourable sign occurs, we shall [tell] the king that an obscure sign has occurred.' For a period of time he censored all […s], if a sign that was unfavourable to him [occurred], and that was anything but good.
>
> Finally, when the *alû* (demon) had come, [(Sennacherib) said: 'If a sign] that is unfavourable to me occurs and you do not report it to me, […].'
>
> The scribes and diviners took heed of these words, and by [the gods of the king, they reported] every portent that occurred during the reign of your royal father, and your royal father did stay alive and exercise the kingship.[145]

It seems that Kalbu, fearful of angering the king, chose to supply him only with omens that were favourable or, at worst, ambiguous. The conspiracy of silence was revealed only upon the unpredicted appearance of a terrible, disease-bearing *alû*-demon, which perhaps manifested as an epidemic illness. At that point the king insisted that intellectual honesty be re-established, even when that entailed bringing him bad news. Kalbu's fate is unknown, but Sennacherib certainly replaced, perhaps even executed him. One might also suppose that the king ordered the dishonest divinatory reports and queries to be destroyed – which would help to explain their absence from the archaeological record.

The third of Sennacherib's *ummânus* was a Babylonian called Bel-upahhir, who may well have served the king in Babylon while Kalbu was in Nineveh.[146] Whether he survived the end of the reign or not,[147] his son and brother, Ṭab-ṣilli-Marduk and Bel-naṣir, retained sufficient favour to remain in Esarhaddon's entourage writing celestial omen reports.[148]

Under Esarhaddon (r. 680–669), and certainly for the first few decades of his son Ashurbanipal's rule (r. 668–*c*. 630), scholarship flourished once more at the Assyrian court, as the new king sought – according to the *Sin of Sargon* – to reach a compromise between the two pro-Babylonian and pro-Assyrian extremes of his predecessors.[149] Just as Sargon had named the *eššēšu*-festival of Nabu as the first official day of building work on his new palace at Dur-Šarruken, his grandson Esarhaddon likewise chose Nabu's *eššēšu*-festival on 8 Addaru (month XII) for his coronation.[150] He later described how auspicious movements of the sun, moon, Venus and Mars had laid the way for his kingship, along with many other favourable omens:

> Good signs occurred for me concerning the securing of the foundations of my priestly throne until distant days. In dreams and *gerrû*-oracles good omens occurred for me, concerning the securing of my throne (and) the lengthening of my reign. I saw them, gained confidence, and became glad.[151]

This official inscription, commemorating the restoration of Aššur's temple in Assur back to its pre-Sennacherib configuration in 679 BC, echoes a claim made by the Babylonian scholar Bel-ušezib to have foretold Esarhaddon's kingship in the stars. In that same letter – the one recounting Kalbu's misdeeds, discussed above – he also exhorted the new king to avoid his father's fate by continuing to trust in omens both good and bad, and to reject scholars who reported only the most favourable ones.[152]

Esarhaddon seems to have followed this advice, creating a large entourage of scholars around him (online Tables A5–A9), as we shall see in great detail in Chapter 4. He also devoted much political effort and economic resource to rebuilding devastated Babylon.[153] Sennacherib's destruction had not been terminal after all. Once again there were Babylonian scholars at the Assyrian court (online Table A10), while some scholars who remained in Babylonia were recruited into the royal network of celestial omen observers. But the presence of the 'foreign' scholars from newly conquered territories (online Table A10), and the fact that several of the 'local' men in the list do not appear again in the abundant court records of the period, together suggest that membership of the royal scholarly retinue was constantly in flux. A steady stream of hopefuls petitioned the king for entry into this 'inner circle', not always successfully, while the 'dead dogs' who had been expelled from court through loss of favour also begged for readmittance.[154] Although Esarhaddon's scholarly entourage was dominated by Nabu-zuqup-kenu's sons and their offspring, that did not prevent the disgrace and dismissal of one family member, the *āšipu*-healer Urad-Gula. As we saw in Chapter 2, his father, the *rab āšipī* Adad-šumu-uṣur, had then to negotiate the delicate business of requesting a reinstatement without losing favour himself.[155] We will return to the movements and mobility of Esarhaddon's court scholars in the next chapter.

The final decades

Ashurbanipal became king on his father's death in 669 BC, while his *talīmu* 'favourite brother' Šamaš-šumu-ukin was given control of Babylon, according to a succession treaty Esarhaddon had implemented three years earlier.[156] As a boy Ashurbanipal had trained for the priesthood because he was never expected to rule. His father Esarhaddon did not himself become crown prince until late in Sennacherib's reign – and even then nominated another son as crown prince ahead of him.[157] However, he cannily made the most of this unorthodox preparation for the role of king, and headed off possible worries about his suitability, by stressing his identification with the scholarly Nabu, 'crown prince of the gods', and Marduk's heir.[158] Ashurbanipal's scholarly ambitions and personal devotion to Nabu are so well known that I shall not examine them closely here.[159] He expressed them through prayers and dialogues with the god; the colophons on his extensive personal collection of scholarly tablets; and numerous official inscriptions and the repair programmes for Nabu's

temples in Kalhu and Nineveh.[160] We shall return to Ashurbanipal's acquisition of tablets when we consider the circulation of people and tablets in the Neo-Assyrian empire in Chapter 4. For now, let us focus more closely on the end of his reign, which began in 652 BC, when 'favourite brother' Šamaš-šumu-ukin turned traitor and allied with his Elamite neighbours to wage a war for Babylonian independence.

In keeping with his lack of military training, as usual Ashurbanipal did not lead the army in the field. Instead he stayed in Nineveh, ensuring divine support for Assyria by reading celestial omens and summoning prophetic messages from the great goddess Ištar.[161] He brought about Elamite defeat – and the infamous beheading of their king Teumman – not only 'through the command of Aššur (and) Marduk, the great gods, my lords who put their faith in me' but also through 'favourable signs, dreams, *gerrû*-oracles, (and) messages from ecstatics'.[162] As a gesture of thanks to his divine counterpart, Ashurbanipal enlarged and repaved the main courtyard of Ezida in Nineveh,[163] attributing the ultimate success of his military strategy to 'the placing of (Nabu's) order and the giving of his weighty command'.[164] Ashurbanipal's learned, non-combatant approach to kingship looked to be amply justified.

However, from around 650 BC, the evidence for Neo-Assyrian court scholarship starts to decline dramatically.[165] The latest dateable divinatory queries, prophecies and scholarly letters are all from 650 BC.[166] The latest dateable astrological reports from Assyria and from Babylonia are from 657 and 649 BC respectively.[167] Other types of court correspondence also peter out in about 646 BC.[168] The latest Nineveh manuscript of the list of Assyrian eponym officials stops in 649 BC (although another copy from Assur originally went up to *638 BC).[169] The latest of Ashurbanipal's official inscriptions written in Nineveh dates to *643–642 and the latest Babylonian one to early in the thirtieth year of his reign, namely 639.[170] What happened over the course of the 640s that led Assyrian court scholarship to such a dramatic decline?

Various possibilities present themselves. Simo Parpola and Julian Reade have both suggested that the palace administration simply moved to the renovated Succession (North) Palace on Kouyunjik in 646 and that the new archives have been lost to posterity or are yet to be found.[171] It is also reasonable to suppose, with Parpola, that as Aramaic replaced Akkadian as the everyday lingua franca, provincial and military governance relied increasingly on perishable media such as papyrus, leather and writing-boards.[172] However, given Ashurbanipal's reverence for cuneiform learning it is difficult to imagine that scholarly communication also changed media.

The courtiers' private legal documents certainly continued to be written on clay and these too suggest a dramatic drop in the presence of scholarly personnel at court at this time (Table 3b). While from the reign of Sargon onwards, somewhere between one in twenty and one in fifteen of the courtiers' legal documents were witnessed by at least one *asû, āšipu, bārû* and/or the *rab ṭupšarrī*, these titles are found on only one in fifty dateable post-canonical legal documents from Kouyunjik.[173] A few decades ago Parpola suggested that Ashurbanipal may have moved his residence from Nineveh late in his reign, perhaps to Harran, while Pierre Villard argued instead that the king must have relocated to Arbaʾil.[174] However, the post-canonical legal texts from the Nineveh citadel primarily concern quite central figures in the royal household – the king's eunuch, a harem manageress and many members of the crown prince's entourage – and there is no trace of such a move in the archaeology or textual record of western Assyria or the eastern heartland. We can therefore probably discount those theories too.

More recently, Raija Mattila has drawn attention to the dramatic shift in the character of the post-canonical eponym officials.[175] At first,

Table 3b: Scholars as witnesses to Neo-Assyrian legal documents.

	asû	*āšipu*	*bārû*	*rab ṭupšarrī*	Total scholars	Number of tablets	Total dated legal tablets
Sargon and Sennacherib (721–681 BC)	3	–	3	1	10	7	136
Esarhaddon and early Ashurbanipal (680–649 BC)	9	3	1	4	13	12	175
Post-canonical (*648–*612 BC)	1	1	1	–	3	2	93
Without dates (Sargon–Esarhaddon)	–	–	–	–	–	–	86
Without dates (Ashurbanipal and post-canonical)	1	2	1	–	4	3	327

Tablets: Sargon and Sennacherib: SAA 6: 12, 40, 81, 97, 123, 126, 134
Esarhaddon and early Ashurbanipal: SAA 6: 193, 268, 271, 309, 314, 320–1, 325, 328–30, 339
Post-canonical: SAA 14: 35 (*630 BC), 166 (*621 BC)
Without dates (Ashurbanipal and post-canonical): SAA 14: 207, 264, 271

they continued to be predominantly the governors of well-known, often far-flung provinces: Hindanu, Kar-Shalmaneser (Til-Barsip), Samaria, Babylon, Que (in *648–*645, *642 BC). But increasingly years began to be named after palace domestic staff: not only the chief eunuch (*644) and chief cupbearer (*641) but also, unprecedentedly, the chief fuller and chief singer (*638, *634). Ashurbanipal's successors even named years after palace scribes, a chief cook, a palace supervisor and a chamberlain (*629, *625, *620, *616, *615 BC). This is strongly suggestive of a major change in the functioning of the Assyrian state: the king's most trusted advisors were no longer his military officials or his scholars but his domestic staff.

Writing at the end of the twentieth century, both Jana Pečírková and Mario Liverani offered arguments for internal collapse. Pečírková blamed Ashurbanipal's attempts to 'buy [the] loyalty of his officials and officers with large gifts of land, often exempted from taxes and *ilku* duties' (i.e. military service or other labour).[176] In this way, she argued, Ashurbanipal weakened both the cohesion of his court and the strength of his army. The king, Pečírková suggested, was too wrapped up in his scholarly interests to do more than lament his fate in a literary dialogue with Nabu.[177] Liverani's argument was much less polemically *ad hominem*, pointing instead to larger, longer-term systemic failures in the Assyrian state.[178] The stabilisation of Assyria's borders in the early seventh century led to a sharp decrease in the inward flow of deportees, booty and tribute while the costs of state governance, and the maintenance of those far-away borders, remained high. Meanwhile, the agricultural hinterland was depopulated while urban centres grew, leading to an unhealthy imbalance between production and consumption. And the necessity of keeping up appearances at the centre – conspicuous consumption in the form of building works, public ritual and so on – was a further drain on depleted resources. More recently, Adam Schneider and Selim Adalı have argued that demographic growth in the early seventh century weakened Assyria's ability to cope with severe and widespread drought a few decades later.[179]

None of these historians mentions the Babylonian war of 652–648 as a proximate cause of Ashurbanipal's problems. But given the timings involved – scholarly correspondence disappears during the course of it, public building activity stops just two years later, royal inscriptions and official documentation such as date lists dries up within a decade – it is tempting to make the connection.[180] Babylon had been a major drain on resources throughout the century: Sennacherib had expended a great deal of effort in almost completely annihilating it; Esarhaddon spent

heavily on its magnificent reconstruction; and after Šamaš-šumu-ukin's treacherous secession, Ashurbanipal's siege and eventual recapture of Babylon must also have been costly. Military campaigns were hugely expensive and traditionally relied on plunder and tribute for their financing.[181] By the time Ashurbanipal had regained control of Babylonia from his brother and the Elamites, there was surely little left in either the Assyrian or the Babylonian coffers.

The financial impact does not seem to have been immediate, however. In the aftermath of the war there was a flurry of scholarly activity at court. Several thousand Babylonian tablets and writing-boards, taken as booty in late 648, needed to be processed (as discussed further in Chapter 4). There were accounts of the glorious victory to be composed, which were further revised several times until *645 BC.[182] Ashurbanipal, his Elamite enemies and Šamaš-šumu-ukin also had to be incorporated into the 'historical omen' tradition.[183] A fascinating letter from a *bārû* requests Ashurbanipal's opinion on whether to incorporate suggested new lung and liver omens into *Bārûtu*, but the fact that such omens were written into just one, perhaps two, known tablets suggests that the project did not get very far.[184] Lastly, some, but by no means all, scholarly tablets bearing Ashurbanipal colophons were moved from the old Southwest Palace to the newly completed Succession (North) Palace on Kouyunjik in 646 BC.[185] After that point the evidence for continued scholarship under Ashurbanipal is vanishingly small.

Whatever the fate of royal scholarship in the last decades of Ashurbanipal's reign, there was very little intellectual activity at court under his successors. The only manuscript of the *Synchronistic King List* that post-dates Ashurbanipal's reign assigns no *ummânu* to his ephemeral child heir Aššur-etel-ilani (r. *c*. 630–627), who probably ruled under the regency of the chief eunuch Sin-šumu-lešir.[186] As we have seen, during the reign of Aššur-etel-ilani's brother and successor Sin-šarru-iškun (r. *c*. 627–612), witness lists on sales documents from Nineveh show that the crown prince's household still boasted a *rab āšipī* and a *bārû* (though not necessarily at the same time), while there were also other *āšipus* around, apparently well into the 620s (online Table A11).

Cultic activity – if not scholarship – continued at the various Assyrian temples of Nabu. As late as *618 BC palace personnel were still making small but high-value votive offerings to Nabu in the Nineveh Ezida.[187] At Kalhu too, the Ezida continued to function, perhaps right until the end of the empire. Ashurbanipal refurbished and re-roofed it 'in glad singing and celebration'.[188] Aššur-etel-ilani repaired its east wall and *akītu* suite, and Sin-šarru-iškun probably carried out work there too.[189] At least for

the first two decades of Ashurbanipal's reign the temple gave out short-term loans of grain to local inhabitants in Nabu's name.[190] Until *621 or later it received private votive gifts of slaves and land for Nabu as 'scribe of the universe' or 'scribe of Esangila'.[191] These legal documents were witnessed by the temple's cultic and domestic – but not scholarly – personnel, as well as the *qēpu* or royal representative (online Table A12). A lack of dateable colophons prevents us from determining whether scholarly tablets continued to be written or deposited in the room opposite Nabu's shrine, but several hundred were still in situ when the building ceased to function as a temple, presumably when the city fell in 614 BC. Likewise, copies of Esarhaddon's succession treaty of 672 BC, which had bound citizens, scholars and vassals to supporting the appointment of Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin as his successors, must still have been stored somewhere in the temple, or at least close nearby. The temple's looters smashed them to pieces in the throne room, along with much rich ivory furniture, some pieces of which – to judge by the style of their carvings – dated back to Sargon II or even Adad-nerari III's time.[192] After a brief period of squatter occupation in its empty, roofless shell, when someone installed a bread oven in Nabu's sanctuary, there were short-lived attempts to repair the shrine and revive its cultic functions.[193] But there is no direct evidence for the worship of Nabu in post-Assyrian Kalhu.

The final big gesture of Assyrian royal reverence for Nabu was made by, or for, Sin-šarru-iškun, the penultimate ruler of Assyria.[194] During the very first year of his reign, when the king must still have been a child, a completely new temple to Nabu and Tašmetu was constructed in the heart of Assur, the ancestral city (Fig. 3.8).[195] Some of his inscriptions say that the original building in Assur – for which there is no independent evidence at all – had been put up by Shalmaneser (I) and later repaired by Aššur-reš-iši (r. 1132–1115) or Ashurnasirpal (II) and Adad-nerari (III).[196] But, through neglect by later kings, 'it had turned into waste-land, became (nothing but) ground', so that Nabu and Tašmetu had had to take up residence in Ištar's temple instead.[197] Indeed, the order of entries in the widely copied scholarly *Assyrian Temple List*, in which Nabu's residences are unexpectedly listed with Ištar's, seems to bear out this latter claim.[198] Sin-šarru-iškun now undertook to give them their own cult centre in Assur, based on earlier models – though, measuring some 30 × 40 metres, it occupied just one-third of the ground area of the Kalhu Ezida and one-fifteenth of that of Dur-Šarruken. Yet it still had twin shrines and antechambers for the divine couple (Rooms 18–19, 22, 26) and perhaps

Figure 3.8: Plan of Nabu and Tašmetu's temple in Assur, built for king Sin-šarru-iškun in *c*. 630 BC. The main entrance is to the northeast, the twin cellas (19, 26) to the southwest, and with perhaps a throne room to the northwest (5). There seems to have been no separate *akītu*-suite. Maximum dimensions *c*. 40 × *c*. 30 metres (Schmitt 2012: Taf. 13; courtesy of Harrassowitz Verlag).

also a throne room (Room 5).[199] The king also dedicated two gold washing bowls to Nabu and a silver serving spoon to Tašmetu.[200] However, there is no architectural or inscriptional evidence that the temple ever served as a scholarly centre, and Sin-šarru-iškun characterises Nabu as an 'honest judge who speaks truth and justice' rather than as a learned scribe.[201]

Conclusions

Looking back, then, across five centuries of the physical and conceptual geography of Assyrian court scholarship we see some impressive continuities as well as some dramatic changes. However, the picture is far from complete, and is inevitably compromised by the uneven preservation of evidence, particularly the glut of the early seventh century BC. We must be especially careful not to project the evidence of that period back onto earlier centuries without due consideration, whether that is a question of seventh-century views of the past (such as the official list of *ummânus* or Sin-šarru-iškun's history of Nabu's temple in Aššur) or of taking seventh-century documentation as representative of the period as a whole. Some of the conclusions offered here are necessarily arguments from silence, and must be taken on the understanding that they are highly likely to need modification in the light of new evidence and interpretive methods.

Most strikingly, although Assyrian kings employed court scholars throughout the whole period, the official attitude to divinely ordained cuneiform scholarship varied quite dramatically. Changing attitudes to the god Nabu, in particular, were not directly led by Assyrian military intentions or actions in his Babylonian home city of Borsippa, but instead were driven by increasing scribal and official reverence. Nabu gradually worked his way up the court hierarchy, as it were. This process culminated in Sargon II's enthusiastic promotion of divinely ordained cuneiform scholarship after the resounding success of its predictive powers in his campaign against Assyria's northern neighbour Muṣaṣir. Thereafter, Assyrian kings' attention to Nabu, and concomitant reverence for literate learning, is much more closely bound up in their attitudes to Babylonia: namely Sennacherib's rejection followed by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal's wholehearted embrace. The dramatic reduction in royal scholarship in the final decades of the seventh century as the whole court system collapsed – maybe in the aftermath of Ashurbanipal's Babylonian war – is mirrored in the abandonment of the image of Nabu as a learned scholar. If, as I have suggested, this image of Nabu was created by the literate court elite in the first place, then its erosion suggests that they too were disappearing and that their absence in the historical record is no mere accident of preservation and discovery: the whole network collapsed.[202]

We shall return to the consequences of that collapse in Chapter 7 but meanwhile we turn to the apparent heyday of Assyrian court scholarship, in the early seventh century BC, to explore its social, political and physical geographies in greater depth.

Notes

1. At Walter Sallaberger's kind invitation I presented an early version of this chapter at an Assyriological seminar at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, in December 2011. It was much improved as a result. I'm also grateful to Ruth Horry and Kathryn Stevens for insightful discussions of key points, and to Jamie Novotny for his invaluable help with the inscriptions of the later Assyrian kings.
2. Major studies include (but are not limited to): Parpola (1970–83); Koch-Westenholz (1995: 54–73, 137–51); Pongratz-Leisten (1999); Brown (2000); Verderame (2004); Jean (2006); Villard (2006); Robson (2011a). The standard editions of the correspondence are SAA 4; 8; 10; see also SAA 9; 13; 16: nos. 157–77; 18: nos. 124–42. For an introductory overview of early seventh-century Assyrian court scholarship, see Robson and Radner (2007–11) with extensive further English-language bibliography. Fincke (2017) and Heeßel (2017) came to my attention too late in the editorial process to take systematically into account here.
3. Pedersén (1985–6: I 32–42 M2); Hunger (1968: nos. 43–64); see also Heeßel (2017: 368–72).
4. I shall not attempt here to tackle the thorny question of 'Tiglath-pileser I's library' (Weidner 1952/3), except to note, following Freydank (1991: 94–7), that many of the 100-odd Middle Assyrian scholarly tablets found in Neo-Assyrian levels of Aššur's temple in Assur were probably written around fifty years before Tiglath-pileser's reign in the mid-twelfth century BC (see also Lambert 1976b: 85–86 n2; Pedersén 1985–6: I 31–42, II 12–28; Heeßel 2017: 370–1).
5. i-na pi-i ^{f}tap-pu-ti–^{d}NIN.É.GAL^{-ti} ^{f}mu-raq-qi-te na-ás-ha (Ebeling 1919–23: no. 220 rev. ii 9; Hunger 1968: no. 57).
6. Wiggermann (2008: 210).
7. From a tablet bearing a *širnamšub* hymn to the Babylonian goddess Ninisina (Ebeling 1919–23: no. 15 rev. 27–35; Hunger 1968: no. 44(B): šir-nam-šub ^{d}nin-isín^{si}-na-ke$_4$ | 49-ÀM MU ŠID. BI.IM GABA.RI NIBRU^{ki} KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} | a-na pi-i ṭup-pí ša-ṭa-ri ša ^{m}BA–^{d}NIN.KAR.RA.AK | ^{r}DUMU^{1} ^{d}NIN.URTA–ba-ni ša-aṭ-rat | [ŠU ^{md}]^{r}AMAR.UTU^{1}–TI.LA^{-su}–KAM DUB.SAR TUR | [DUMU ^{d}NIN].^{r}URTA^{1}–$^{ú-}$TI.LA^{-su} DUB.SAR LUGAL | [IGI.KÁR] ^{md}EN–ŠEŠ–SUM^{-na} | [MU ^{d}a-šur MU šaṭ]-ra la-a ta-pa-šiṭ | [ITI … U$_4$] 19-KÁM li-mu ^{md}^{r}a^{1}-[šur–ŠEŠ–SUM^{-na}]. Restored from parallels in Hunger (1968: no. 43), consisting of ten scholarly tablets written by the same individual (see most recently Wagensonner 2011; Michalowski 2016).
8. Assyrian years were not numbered but named after a senior imperial official, chosen annually by the king; see p. xix for more details.
9. Weidner (1952/3: 200); Gabbay (2014a: 122).
10. Wiggermann (2008).
11. Heeßel (2009).
12. Heeßel (2009: 19).
13. Machinist (1978); Foster (2005: 298–317).
14. ni-ṣir-[tu? …] | ṭup-pa-at […] | ṭup-^{r}šar-ru-ta^{1} […] | a-ši-pu-ta ^{r}ba^{1}-[…] | ÉR.ŠÀ.HUN.GÁ ^{r}šá pi^{1} […] | ba-ru-ta x-ka-nu ú-^{r}ṣu-rat^{1} AN^{-e} KI^{-ti} […] | mal-ṭa-rat a-su-ti né-peš na-^{r}aṣ-ma^{1}-[da-a-ti(?) …] | mah-ra-a-ti ma-šá-rat ab-be-e-šu šá šu-[…] | x-ni-iš šak-nat NÍG.GIDRU-MEŠ ù re-di-i […] | ul ez-ba ina KUR šu-me-ri ù URI^{ki} mam-ma-[an …] (BM 98730 rev. 1'–11': Machinist 1978: 128; translation Foster 2005: 315).
15. Rutz (2016).
16. And see Jakob (2003: 224, 509–41).
17. Radner (2009: 223); Gabbay (2014a: 118).
18. Freydank (1982: no, 17); Jakob (2003: 224); Radner (2009: 222).
19. Gabbay (2014a: 122).
20. For more on Nippur's role in the transmission of Babylonian scholarship to Assyria see Veldhuis (2012); Michalowski (2016); Tenney (2016).
21. An earlier version of this section can be found in my short essay 'Nabu' in Robson et al. (2013–15).
22. Pomponio (1978: 17, 24, 243). Hammurabi of Babylon (r. 1792–1750) named his sixteenth regnal year after the construction of a throne for Nabu (Pomponio 1978: 15). This might have been for Ezida, the 'true house' temple in Borsippa, which Hammurabi rebuilt for Marduk (Pomponio 1978: 17; Frayne 1990: E.4.3.6.17). Or it might equally have been for Esangila, Marduk's 'house whose top is high' in Babylon, into which Samsu-ditana (r. 1625–1595) in-

troduced a new statue of Nabu, commemorated in the name of his seventeenth regnal year (Pomponio 1978: 17–18; cf. George 1993: 139, 159–60).

23. Pomponio (1998–2001: 18–19).
24. Cf. Pomponio (1978: 68, 72–4); Böhl (1933: 35 ll. 22–23); Meinhold (2009: 453–4, ll. 41–5); Novotny (2014b: 162). As this claim appears in an inscription recording the later king's rebuilding of the shrine after centuries of neglect we should not accept it as primary evidence without further corroboration, as it could well be part of the construction of a tradition for the temple. Nabu's name does not occur in any of Shalmaneser I's extant inscriptions (Grayson 1987a: A.0.77.1–1011). None of the inscriptions by Middle Assyrian royal scribes edited by Wiggermann (2008: 219–22, 227–9) mentions Nabu either, but instead invoke Marduk or Ištar.
25. Cf. Grayson (1987a: A.0.87.1–30).
26. ina KA ^{d}NÀ A MAH šá É.KUR | EN U_4 TI^{-ku} me-šá-ru-tú lul-lik | ZI me-šá-ru lu-kil | qa-an-ni ina É.GAL | GEN^{-ku} liš-lim kib-si | KIŠIB ^{m}aš-šur–MU–DAB_5^{-bat} | A.BA A SU-MEŠ | A.BA MAN (after Deller 1982: 143 Abb. 1).
27. George (1993: 678–9).
28. Contra Pomponio's (1978: 75) interpretation of the Ekur here as a reference to Ellil's temple in Nippur. Thus his comment that 'in Assiria non erano ancora familiari gli attributi "canonici" del dio' (in Assyria they were not yet familiar with the 'canonical' attributes of the god [Nabu]) – a reference to the fact that Nabu was not closely associated with Ellil in Babylonian theology – is not pertinent.
29. Deller (1982: 146–7).
30. Aššur-šumi-aṣbat's father Ribatu was the copyist of a tablet of incantations, excavated from the Old Palace in Assur (Pedersén 1985–6: 31 no. M1:1; Jakob 2003: 530; Maul 2003). Its colophon reads: gaba-ri ^{giš}le-i SAR KUR URI[^{ki}] LIBIR.RA ana KA LIBIR.RA-šu | ^{m}ri-ba-a-tu DUMU ri-še-^{r}ia-a MAŠ^{1}.MAŠ MAN IN.SAR 'Copy of an old wooden writing-board from Babylonia, according to the wording of an original. Ribatu, son of the royal *āšipu* Rišeya, wrote it' (Ebeling 1919–23: no. 91 rev. 25–26; Hunger 1968: no. 64). The Babylonian writing-board may have been taken from Babylonia by force, through Assyrian military campaigns there, or have come to Assur with an itinerant scholar; both methods of transmission have already been discussed above.

    Similarly, in Assur one of Tiglath-pileser's eponym officials dedicated an inscribed brick to Nabu's divine consort Tašmetu: a-na ^{d}taš-me-ti NIN-šu | ^{md}a-šur–iš-ma-ni DUB.SAR | DUMU ^{d}a-šur–$DI.KU_5$ | a-na TI.LA-šu i-^{r}qi^{1}-iš 'To Tašmetu his mistress, the scribe Aššur-išmanni, son of Aššur-dayyan, dedicated (this brick) for his life' (after Grayson 1987a: 84, A.0.87.2001; cf. Freydank 1991: 118).
31. Reade (2002); Barjamovic (2011); Harmanshah (2013: 89–93, 114–30); Hussein et al. (2013: 104–8); Kertai (2015a: 18–48). See also the introductory online essays on the Northwest Palace and the ziggurat and its temples in Robson et al. (2013–15).
32. On Ninurta in relation to Assyrian kingship see Annus (2002: 39–47); Pongratz-Leisten (2015: 219–69); on Ištar see Zsolnay (2010); Pongratz-Leisten (2015: 334–60).
33. The identity of the fish-cloaked figures is given by a Neo-Assyrian ritual for the creation of protective figurines, which describes – amongst many other types – three sets of seven NU-MEŠ NUN.ME-MEŠ šá IM … lab-šú BAR KU_6 'clay figurines of *apkallu*-sages, clothed in fish-scales' (Wiggermann 1992: 14 ll. 174–82). The image type dates back to later second-millennium Babylonia (Green 1983: 90 n21).
34. Liverani (2004: 3–23); cf. Parpola (1993: XIX–XXIV) and Ataç (2010: 150–8), both of which should be treated with caution.
35. The earliest Assyrian depiction known to me of a fish-cloaked *apkallu*-sage in royal space is from the reign of Ashurnasirpal's father and predecessor Tukulti-Ninurta II (r. 891–884). Masetti-Rouault (2001: 89–114; 2014: 56) argues that his Terqa stela is an appropriation of a tenth-century Neo-Aramean monument, which originally depicted the weather-god Addu and a king battling the forces of chaos, represented by a snake. The *apkallu*-sage, she argues, was added at the same time as a cuneiform inscription that reinterprets the image as the god Aššur defeating rebellious local populations, supported by Tukulti-Ninurta's dead father Adad-nerari II and the *apkallu* – here representing Assyria's superior, ancient culture.
36. Reade (2002: 169–71). Ataç (2010: 150–1, 194–5) overlooks the close spatial relationship between the two types of image in the temple. The British Museum currently displays the fish-*apkallu* from the left side of the doorway with the Ninurta-Anzu scene from the right side, inadvertently giving the impression that the *apkallu* is blocking Anzu's exit, rather than stand-

ing behind Ninurta. Nineteenth-century images show their disposition on excavation (Layard 1849–53: II pl. 5; 1853: 302; Gadd 1938: pl. XV); cf. Horry and Robson's essay 'Anzu the monstrous lion-eagle' in Robson et al. (2013–15).

37. Annus (2001; 2002: 148–52); translation in Foster (2005: 555–78).
38. Postgate and Reade (1976–80: 309, 322).
39. Paley and Sobolewski (1992: 17–22, ED-1, pl. 4); cf. Englund (2003: pl. 6a); Al-Qaissi (2008: 49–51). The text reads ^{iri}kal-hi ma-ha-zi EN^{-ti}-ia É.KUR-MEŠ | šá ina pa-an la-a ba-šu-ú É ^{d}BAD u ^{d}MAŠ | ina qé-reb-šú ad-di É ^{d}é-a–MAN ^{d}dam-ki-na | É ^{d}IŠKUR ^{d}ša-la É ^{d}gu-la É ^{d}30 | É ^{d}MUATI É ^{d}GAŠAN–KUR^{-hi} É ^{d}IMIN.BI | É ^{d}kid$_9$-mu-ri É.KUR-MEŠ DINGIR-MEŠ GAL-MEŠ | ana eš-šú-te ina lìb-bi ad-di: after Grayson (1991: 291, A.0.101.30, ll. 53–9). Three other accounts describing groups of temples – but not Nabu's – are A.0.101.1, ii 131b–135 (Grayson 1991: 212); A.0.101.28, v 1–13a (Grayson 1991: 285–6); and A.0.101.32, 7b–11a (Grayson 1991: 296). There are also several which mention no temples at all, as well as some more detailed building inscriptions from individual temples in Kalhu – to Ninurta (Grayson 1991: A.0.101.31); *šarrat niphi* (Grayson 1991: A.101.32); Ištar (Grayson 1991: A.0.101.38) – as well as from Ištar's temple Emašmaš in Nineveh (e.g. Grayson 1991: A.101.40 and 45).
40. Mallowan (1966: I 236, 284, 286). Reade (2002: 144, 196) even suggests that Assurnasirpal's building may have been erected on a different spot and/or left unfinished. Likewise, the only evidence for Ashurnasirpal's involvement with Nabu's temple in Assur is the uncorroborated late seventh-century inscription of Sin-šarru-iškun which credits Shalmaneser I with its foundation (see note 24 above).
41. ŠU ^{md}GAL–^{mu}SIG$_5^{-iq}$ ^{lú}šag-ga-mah-hu ša ^{m}aš-šur–PAP–A LUGAL KUR ^{d}aš-šur | DUMU tap-pu-ia ^{lú}ŠÀ.TAM ša ^{iri}BÀD.AN^{ki} | DUMU hu-za-li ^{lú}ŠÀ.TAM (CTN 4: 58, rev. 26–28). Photos in Mallowan (1966: I 273–4, fig. 254).
42. Ebeling (1919–23: no. 147) = N4: 455; See Pedersén (1985–6: II 70) for its findspot and publication history.
43. Grayson (1980–3: 116–21).
44. PNA 1/II: 414–15; Šašková (2010). It seems, in fact, that the two terms are more or less synonymous, with *rab ṭupšarrī* the self-designation preferred by the scholars themselves and *ummânu* as 'master-scholar' used mostly in contexts such as king lists, where it could not be confused with its looser meaning of 'expert' or 'scholar' in general.
45. E.g. Mallowan (1966: I 261); Pomponio (1978: 69); Siddall (2013: 155) and see note 24 above.
46. Thirteen extant bricks record that É ^{d}NÀ EN-šú šá qé-reb ^{iri}ni-na-a | iš-tu URU$_4$-šú a-di gaba-dib-bi-šú | ana TI-šú šùl-mu NUMUN-šú u KUR-šú DÙ$^{-uš}$ 'from top to bottom he (re)built his lord Nabu's temple, which is within Nineveh, for his life (and) the well-being of his descendants and his land' (A.0.104.14 ll. 4–6, after Grayson 1996: 220). An inscription of Sargon II claims that Adad-nerari relocated the temple from its previous position 'opposite the new gate facing north' (ina tar-ṣi KÁ.GAL GIBIL^{-ti} ma-hi-rat $^{tu_{15}}$SI.SÁ (Winkler 1889: nos. 14–15 l. 4; Thompson and Hutchinson 1929: 133); see briefly Siddall (2013: 174).
47. UŠ$_8$: ša É ^{d}NÀ : ša NINUA^{ki} : kar-ru | … | : ^{d}NÀ : a-na É GIBIL : e-ta-rab (Millard 1994: 36–37, source B2 (K 3403) obv. 24' and 26' from Nineveh; with duplicates). See also Pomponio (1978: 70); Millard (1994: 58).
48. Oates (1957); Mallowan (1966: I 283–4, phase E).
49. Mallowan (1966: I 261).
50. Adad-nerari receives Nabu's *rēḫtu*-leftovers in Borsippa, during his ninth campaign in 802 BC (Grayson 1996: 213, A.0.104.8 l. 24) and Nabu is amongst the seven deities invoked to curse anyone who tampers with the royal decree SAA 12: 85 (rev. 27; Grayson 1996: 216, A.0.104.9).
51. The inscribed statues were excavated by Hormuzd Rassam in 1852 (Rassam 1897: 9–10) and are now in the British Museum (BM 118888, 118889). The slab is described by Oates (1957: 28) but was apparently never published.
52. a-na ^{d}NÀ da-pi-ni šá-qé-e DUMU É.SAG.ÍL IGI.GÁL šit-ra-hu | NUN kaš-ka-šu IBILA ^{d}NU.DÍM. MUD šá qí-bit-su MAH^{-rat} | ABGAL nik-la-a-ti pa-qid kiš-šat AN^{-e} KI^{-ti} mu-du-ú mim-ma MU-šú | rap-šá uz-ni ta-mì-ih GI ṭup-pi a-hi-zu šu-ka-mì re-me-nu-ú muš-ta-lu | šá šu-ud-du-ú šu-šú-bu ba-šu-ú it-ti-šú na-ra-am ^{d}BAD EN EN-MEŠ$^{-e}$ | ša la iš-šá-na-nu dan-nu-su šá ba-lu-uš-šu ina | AN^{-e} la iš-šá-ka-nu mil-ku | re-me-nu-ú ta-ia-a-ru šá na-ás-hur-šú DÙG.GA a-šib É.ZI.DA šá qé-reb ^{iri}kal-hi | EN GAL EN-šú a-na TI ^{md}IŠKUR–ERIM.TÁH MAN KUR aš-šur EN-šú ù TI | ^{f}sa-am-mu–ra-mat MUNUS.É.GAL NIN-šú ^{m}EN–tar-ṣi–DINGIR-ma ^{lú}GAR.KUR | ^{iri}kal-hi ^{kur}ha-me-

di ^{kur}sir-ga-na ^{kur}te-me-ni ^{kur}ia-lu-na | a-na TI ZI-MEŠ-šú GÍD UD-MEŠ-šú šúm-ud MU-MEŠ-šú šùl-mu É-šú u UN-MEŠ-šú la GÁL GIG-šú | ú-še-piš-ma NÍG.BA ma-nu ar-ku-ú a-na ^{d}NÀ na-at-kil ana DINGIR šá-ni-ma la ta-tak-kil (A.0.104.2002, after Grayson 1996: 227).

53. The only everyday uses of Assyrian 'Ezida' I have been able to find are in the legal documents SAA 12: 96 (*621 BC, Kalhu) and SAA 14: 397 (seventh century, Nineveh). For some scholarly uses, see George (1993: 160).
54. Millard (1994: 57).
55. Postgate and Reade (1976–80: 316).
56. at-tal-ka | a-[a ba]-áš ^{d}MUATI (A.0.104.2003 ll. 6–7, Grayson 1996: 228).
57. Mallowan (1966: I 257, 269); George (1979: 134 nos. 46–7, pl. XVII). On Nergal-ilaʾi (read Urigal-ilaya by Mallowan) see also Mattila (2000: 109). Mallowan (1966: I 257) took Nabu-šallim-ahhe to be a seventh-century figure, based on occurrences of the same name dating to 665 and 632 BC found in a merchant's house in Kalhu (ND 3424 and 3460, Parker 1954: 140, 145). However, PNA 2/II: 869 lists at least three earlier Nabu-šallim-ahhes at Kalhu, including a man who acts as a witness to the palace scribe Nabu-tuklatuʾa's purchase of three slaves during Adad-nerari's reign.
    Mallowan also tentatively dates to this period a fragment of a stone bowl with a four-line inscription mentioning a *kalamāhu*-lamenter and showing such a figure at worship, found in one of the rooms of the inner court, and a chalcedony cylinder seal found outside the Fish Gate, showing worshippers in front of divine symbols including those of Marduk and Nabu (Mallowan 1966: I 257 fig. 230, 269–70 fig. 251). An engraved stone pendant, about 8 centimetres across, found in the corridor surrounding Nabu's sanctuary, shows a worshipper in front of the standards of Marduk and Nabu with a very similar little inscription, NIR.GÁL-ZU | NU TÉŠ | ^{d}NÀ 'He who trusts in you shall not be put to shame, O Nabu!' (Mallowan 1966: I 270 fig. 252; Oates and Oates 2001: 277 n14).
58. Frame (2008: 22).
59. IM ^{md}AMAR.UTU–x-x–^{r}DÙ ^{lú}GAL^{1} […] | ^{rlú1}DUB.SAR MAN um-ma-an ^{m}10–ERÍN.TAH MAN ^{kur}aš-šur | ^{r}DUMU^{1} ^{mr}KÁ^{1}.DINGIR.RA^{rki1}-a-a ^{rlú1}MAŠ.MAŠ MAN | [DUMU] ^{rmd1}NÀ–mu-dam-me-eq ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ MAN | [per]-u ^{md}AN^{r1}.GAL–mu-^{r}dam-me^{1}-eq ^{rlú1}MAŠ.MAŠ MAN | per-u ^{md}AN.GAL–MU–DU.^{r}NA^{1} ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ MAN, 'Tablet of Marduk- … -bani(?), *rab* [*ṭupšarrī*(?)], *ṭupšar šarri, ummânu* of Adad-nerari, king of Assyria; son of the *āšip šarri* Babilaya, son of the *āšip šarri* Nabu-mudammiq, descendant of the *āšip šarri* Issaran-mudammiq, descendant of the *āšip šarri* Issaran-šumu-ukin' CTN 4: 8 (*Enūma Anu Ellil*) rev. ii 1'–6', dated 787 BC.
    Note the change of self-presentation: while Issaran-mudammiq identifies himself as a newcomer, with roots in the temple administration of the northern Babylonian city of Der, by his great-grandson's time the primary ancestor is a royal scholar, the otherwise unattested Issaran-šumu-ukin. We cannot know whether he was from the same genealogical line as Huzalu and Tappuya or represents another branch of the family. What matters is that by the early eighth century, after four generations of royal service, these scholars see themselves as always having been royal courtiers.
60. Hunger (1968: no. 528); Siddall (2013: 174).
61. They seem to have taken place during the 780s BC, though exact dating has proved extremely problematic (Parpola 1970–83: II XXVII–XXVIII; CTN 3: pp. 251–2).
62. Parpola (1970–83: II XXII–XXXII).
63. See CTN 1; CTN 3: nos. 119–45; Parpola (1976); Fales (1994); Radner (2009: 231–8).
64. Radner (2009: 231–3).
65. See the index of professions in CTN 3: pp. 283–4 sv. A.ZU(-MEŠ), *dāgil* MUŠEN-MEŠ, GAL A.ZU and HAL-MEŠ. The *āšipuṣ* (MAŠ.MAŠ-MEŠ) appear to be missing from this index; they can be found in CTN 1: 6 obv. 23, 8 obv. 29, 13 rev. 9, 15 l. 13', 16 obv. 33', 19 rev 8; CTN 3: 146. The Kassite diviners appear in CTN 1: 30 = CTN 3: 120 obv. 16', undated, where they receive 5 *qa* of wine.
    It is suggestive that these men were described only by their professional designations and not by name, though it may well be that other scholars appeared individually elsewhere in the lists. Sadly, the lists do not tell us how many men were being provisioned, but the *bārûs, āšipus* and *asûs* collectively tend to receive 1½–2 *qa* each and the *dāgil iṣṣūrī* 4 *qa*. If Powell's (1987–90: 502) estimate 1 *qā* ≈ 0.8 litre is correct, that would be equivalent to roughly the same number of modern bottles of wine (at 0.75 litres each). It is difficult to estimate how many people these quantities were supposed to supply without knowing how heavily they drank, how many dependents they were also expected to provision, and how long the wine was meant to last.
66. Radner (2009: 233–5).

67. Grayson (1993; 1999); Siddall (2013: 100–32).
68. E.g. Grayson (1993: 27); Mattila (2000: 110–11); Siddall (2013: 118–27).
69. A.0.104.2010 ll. 1–8 (Grayson 1996: 232). Shalmaneser III applies similar epithets to Aššur, Enlil, Ea, Sin, Šamaš, Ištar and Marduk in introductory passages to inscriptions that omit Nabu (e.g. A.0.102.10 i 1–8 and A.0.102.14 ll. 1–9, Grayson 1996: 51, 63–4). Less spectacularly, but in the same general vein, Pan-Aššur-lamur, governor of the city of Assur under Adad-nerari III, dedicated his personal seal to Gula, Babylonian goddess of healing (A.0.104.1016, Grayson 1996: 237).
70. ^{d}MUATI DUB.SAR É.SAG.ÍL a-hi-iz DUB si-ma-at [DINGIR-MEŠ sa]-ni-qu mit-hur-ti (A.0.104.1016 l. 6, Grayson 1996: 237).
71. See above, with note 37. The *Epic of Anzu* does not mention Nabu.
72. ^{d}NÀ ^{d}LÁL KI.MIN (= tùm-ma-tú-nu) 'You are sworn by Nabu and Tašmetu!', SAA 2: 2 rev. 10 (cf. Pomponio 1978: 71).
73. [^{d}é-a ^{d}]UTU ^{d}ASAL.LÚ.HI lit-ba-lu | … ik-kib ^{d}MUATI EN GI ṭup-pi (K 2987B+, vi 8'-9'. Wiggermann 1992: 22; cf. Hunger 1968: no. 563, with subsequent joins). Sadly the scribe's name is now missing. This practice may well pre-date the mid-eighth century, but it is difficult to pinpoint its origins as so few Neo-Assyrian scholarly tablets are dated.
74. EN u ^{d}MUATI lu ú-du-u | šum-ma hi-ṭa-ku-nu i-ba-áš-šú-u-ni (SAA 19: 1, rev. 9–10).
75. ^{d}NÀ ta-mi-ih GI.DUB.BA^{-e} na-ši DUB ši-mat DINGIR.DINGIR (Tadmor and Yamada 2011: Tiglath-pileser III 35 i 4, 37 l. 3).
76. ^{d}MUATI ^{d}AMAR.UTU a-na LUGAL | ^{r}EN^{1}-ia lik-ru-bu (SAA 19: 65, obv. 4–5). See too the letters of the Babylonian official Nabu-namir (SAA 9: 96–7, 101–5). Cf. Pomponio (1978: 85).
77. ^{d}NÀ ṭup-šar DINGIR-MEŠ ṣa-bit GI.DUB.BA KÙ na-ši DUB ši-mat DINGIR-MEŠ a-še-er ^{d}7 u ^{d}60 mu-ta-din kur-me-ti qa-iš TI 'Nabu, scribe of the gods, holder of the pure reed stylus, bearer of the gods' Tablet of Destinies, guide of the Sebittu and the Anunnaku gods, dispenser of rations, bestower of life' (after Pomponio 1978: 70–1 n50). See Grayson (1993: 28–9); Mattila (2000: 30–1).
78. Mallowan (1966: I 257).
79. As argued by e.g. Mallowan (1966: I 261); Pomponio (1978: 69–70).
80. For the argument that the Kalhu Ezida was built by Adad-nerari III see Oates (1957: 35); by Sammu-ramat see Mallowan (1966: I 261). On Sammu-ramat see most recently Siddall (2013: 86–100).
81. A bas-relief of Ashurnasirpal II was removed from the Northwest Palace for the pavement of Nabu's shrine (Mallowan 1966: I 265) and a stela of Adad-nerari's father Šamši-Adad V (r. 823–811) was relocated from Ninurta's temple on the other side of the citadel to stand next to Nabu's shrine – one reason for Mallowan (1966: I 261) to attribute this phase of Ezida to his queen Sammu-ramat rather than to their son.
82. Thomas (1993).
83. Fuchs (2009–11: 52).
84. na-du-^{r}šu?^{1} ^{d}EN.LÍL ^{d}AMAR.UTU (l. 13, Saggs 1975: 14, 18); alternatively, na-ṭù <a>-^{r}na^{1} ^{d}EN.LÍL ^{d}AMAR.UTU 'suitable for Enlil and Marduk' (Mayer 1988: 546, 'geeignet für(?)'). In either case, it is clear that the king has a relationship to Enlil and Marduk but not Nabu.
85. šá-ak-nu ^{d}EN.LÍL NU.ÈŠ ^{d}a-šur ni-šit IGI-MIN ^{d}a-num ù ^{d}EN.LÍL … | šá ^{d}a-šur ^{d}AMAR.UTU ut-tu-šu-ma (ll. 1–2; cf. Winckler 1889: I 168).
86. ^{d}URÌ.GAL ^{d}IŠKUR ù DINGIR-MEŠ a-ši-bu-ut ^{iri}kal-ha a-na lìb-bi aq-re-ma (l. 19; cf. Winckler 1889: I 172).
87. i-na tu-kul-ti-šú-nu GAL^{-ti} ša AN.ŠÁR ^{d}UTU ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU (l. 13); a-na-ku ^{m}LUGAL–GI.NA na-ṣir kit-ti la e-ti-iq i-te-e ^{d}a-šur ^{d}UTU šah-tu la mu-up-par-ku-ú pa-lih ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU 'I, Sargon, guardian of truth, who does not cross the limits set by Aššur (and) Šamaš, who is always reverent, who fears Nabu (and) Marduk' (l. 156); ša i-na a-de-e ^{d}a-šur ^{d}UTU ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU ih-ṭu-ma ib-bal-ki-tu it-ti-ia '(the king of Muṣaṣir), who sinned against an oath sworn to Aššur, Nabu, (and) Marduk, and revolted against me' (l. 310); i-na e-mu-qi ṣi-ra-a-te ša ^{d}a-šur EN-ia i-na li-i-te da-na-ni ša ^{d}EN ^{d}NÀ DINGIR-MEŠ tik-li-ia 'Through the exalted power of Aššur, my lord, through the might (and) strength of the gods Bel (and) Nabu, my divine helpers' (l. 417; Mayer 1983: 68, 84, 98, 110).
88. i-na qí-bi-ti ṣir-te ša ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU ša i-na man-za-az MUL-MEŠ ša šu-ut-bé-e ^{giš}TUKUL-MEŠ-ia iṣ-ba-tu ta-lu-ku | ù i-da-at dum-qí ša le-qe-e kiš-šu-ti ^{d}MÁ.GUR$_{8}$ EN a-ge-e a-na šul-pu-ut ^{kur}gu-ti^{ki} ú-šá-ni-ha EN.NUN | i-na an-ni šu-qu-ri ša ^{d}UTU qu-ra-di ša UZU-MEŠ ti-kil-ti ša a-lak i-di-ia ú-šá-áš-ṭi-ra a-mu-ti | … har-ra-an ^{iri}mu-ṣa-ṣir ur-uh mar-ṣa-ti aṣ-bat-ma (ll. 317–19, 321; Mayer 1983: 100). See Oppenheim (1960b: 136–8); Koch-Westenholz (1995: 153–4).

89. See Robson (2011a: 611).
90. SAA 8: 501.
91. Seux (1976: 305–7); Foster (2005: 636–7); cf. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 154).
92. SAA 15: 39, 316. Cf. SAA 11: 124 (undated but probably early seventh century), which names three scribes as ^{lú}um-ma-a-ni | ⌜ša¹ EN.NUN 'scholars of the watch' at the end of a fragmentary list of chariotry.
93. ṭup-pi ^{md}NÀ—šal-lim-šu-nu ^{lú}DUB.SAR šar-ri GAL-^{ú} ^{lú}GAL–GI.BÙR ^{lú}um-ma-an ^{m}LUGAL-GI.NA LUGAL KUR aš-šur^{ki} | bu-uk-ru ^{m}har-ma-ak-ki ^{lú}DUB.SAR LUGAL BAL.TIL^{ki}-ú (ll. 428–9; Mayer 1983: 112).
94. ND 1120: copy in Wiseman (1952: 69); edited by van Driel (1969: 198–205); colophon Hunger (1968: no. 314); collations in CTN 2: 246; photos in CTN 4: pl. 151.
95. Mallowan (1966: I 239) suggests that Nabu-šallimšunu wrote his tablet in the Ezida at Kalhu, but there is no evidence at all for this hypothesis. The tablet sooner or later found its way to the so-called *āšipus*' house in Assur, on which see Chapter 4 (Pedersén 1985–6: II 71, N4:477).
96. For instance, a summary of the king's deeds, written in 706 or shortly thereafter, several versions of which are known from both Kalhu and Dur-Šarruken, begins by averring that 'Aššur, Nabu (and) Marduk granted me an unrivalled reign and exalted my good name'. e.g. AN.ŠÁR ^{d}na-bi-um [^{d}AMAR.UTU] | LUGAL-^{ut} la šá-na-an ú-[šat-li-mu-ni-ma] | zi-kir šu-mì-ia [dam-qu] ú-še-ṣu-ú a-[na re-še-e-ti] (prisms found in Building ZT in Kalhu; Gadd 1954: 175, col. I 6–9; Fuchs 1994: 190–1 ll. 3–5); e.g. [^{d}aš-šur ^{d}NÀ ^{d}AMAR.UTU | LUGAL-$^{ú-tu}$ | [la] šá-na-an ú-šat-li-mu-in-ni-[ma] zi-kir [MU-ia] dam-qu ú-še-ṣu-ú | [a]-na re-še-e-ti (Dur-Šarruken Display Inscription, version of Room VII, Fuchs 1994: 190–1, ll. 1.2–1.4). The beginning of the version of the Annals attested at Dur-Šarruken does not survive (Fuchs 1994: 86). A now rather damaged stela found at Larnaca (ancient Kition) in Cyprus, which probably dates to 707 BC (Radner 2010b: 434), invokes many gods in its introduction, describing Nabu as '(Marduk's) […] heir' (^{d}NÀ IBILA […], l. i 15, Malbran-Labat 2004: 346). For the Tang-i Var relief from Iranian Kurdistan, especially l. 13, see Frame (1999: 36, 39). However, the earliest known version of Sargon II's annals, written in or after 711 BC and pieced together from fragments found in Nineveh and Assur, does not mention Nabu. Fuchs (1998: 53) points out that its introduction – where the gods are invoked – differs significantly from all other known introductions to the king's inscriptions and thus cannot be restored on the basis of parallels. It mentions an 'inhabitant of the remote heavens' ([a]-šib AN-^{e} ne-sú-u-⌜te¹ (l. 5) and 'Nudimmud (i.e., Ea), the creator | […] of (his?) wisdom' ([^{d}NU]. ⌜DÍM¹.MUD mu-um-mi | […] x šá ne-me-[qí-(šú)] (ll. 7–8; Fuchs 1998: 21–22). In other inscriptions of Sargon, *nēmequ* is associated with Ea as Nissikku: e.g. ^{d}NIN.ŠI.KÙ EN né-me-qí pa-ti-qu 'Nissikku, lord endowed with wisdom' (Fuchs 1994: no. 3.2.1 l. 1, an inscription commemorating the foundation of a temple to Nissikku in Dur-Šarruken); *Letter to Aššur* l. 7: EN né-<me>-qi ^{d}NIN.ŠI.KÙ, 'lord of wisdom, Nissikku' (Meyer 1983: 68).
97. i-na U_4.ÈŠ.ÈŠ ša DUMU ^{d}EN IGI.GÁL-^{li} pal-ke-e ^{d}NÀ DUB.SAR gim-ri mu-ma-^{ʾ}i-ir kul-lat DINGIR-MEŠ ú-šal-bi-na lib-na-as-su (l. 59, Fuchs 1994: 41, cf. 294).
98. Loud and Altman (1938: 56–65). Turner (1968: 63–4) argued that Sargon also integrated shrines for Nabu and Tašmetu into the fabric of the palace itself but Kertai (2015a: 98–100) has shown that this area (Rooms 139, 142–9) almost certainly served as a wine cellar and storage rooms throughout the life of the palace.
99. Black (2008: 265 and n19).
100. Oates (1957: 33, 35–6); followed by Mallowan (1966: I 283–4).
101. Oates (1957: 32); CTN 3: 95; Green (1986: pl. IX); Oates and Oates (2001: 111).
102. On wall paintings in ninth- and eighth-century Assyrian palaces, see Kertai (2015a: 225, 235).
103. Postgate (1974); Matsushima (1987); SAA 13: pp. XV–XVI.
104. É U_4 7!(8)-KÁM (IM 57545 = ND 4318, A l. 17). This enigmatic tablet, found in the Ezida, names twenty rooms of the temple and assigns a small number of men to each of them (Postgate 1974: 64–5). It is not clear when or why it was written, or whether the men are builders, domestic staff or cultic personnel.
105. The temple seems to have been completed before the corner of the palace terrace to which it was connected by a private bridge (Loud and Altman 1938: 56).
106. ^{d}na-bi-um ṭup!(UM)-šar gim-ri sa-ni-qu | mit-hur-ti a-na ^{m}LUGAL–GI.NA šàr kiš-šá-ti | šàr ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki} GÌR.ARAD KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} šàr ^{kur} EME.GI$_7$ | ù URI^{ki} ba-nu-ú!(KID) ku-um-mi-ka | i-na ku-un lìb-bi-ka ki-niš IGI.BAR-su-ma | bu-ni-ka ša mi-šá-ri šu-ut-ri-ṣa | ṣe-ru-uš-šu šu-ut-

lim-šu U_4-MEŠ | DU_{10}.GA UZU-MEŠ ru-uq-ti MU.AN.NA-MEŠ | hu-ud lib-bi ši-i-mi ši-ma-tuš | it-ti AN-e ù er-ṣe-tì | šu-ri-ik BALA-šu li-tep-pu-uš | RE.É.UM-ut ša gi-mir | ma-ti-tan it-ti áš-ri ù ki-gal-li | li-ku-na tem-me-en-šu (after Fuchs 1994: 281–2, 370, no. 3.2.5).

107. Loud and Altman (1938: 56–64, pl. 2, 12–29).
108. DS 828, rev. ii 33–35: gaba-ri iriBAL.TILki | ŠU mkan-dàl-a-nu lúDUB.SAR É DINGIR | šá qé-reb iriLIMMU.DINGIRki 'Original from Assur. Hand of Kandalanu, scribe of the temple in the middle of Arba'il' (Gelb 1954: 222; Hunger 1968: no. 350).
109. Lambert (1968); Sweet (1969); translation conveniently in Foster (2005: 704–5). The tablet number as published is Khorsabad 1932.26, which cannot be paired with any excavation numbers, but the closest match in Loud and Altman's (1938: 104) list of excavated tablets is a '15. PRAYER from Nabu temple, portal between forecourt and Room 13'. PNA 2/II: 900–2 lists no Nabu-ušabši that fits this description.
110. Wiseman (1955).
111. Postgate (1974).
112. SAA 1: 106, 128–9.
113. Fuchs (2009–11: 54).
114. SAA 6: 31; see also Postgate (1976: 78–81); Radner (1997: 19–23).
115. Luukko (2007).
116. ṭup-pi mdNÀ–IDIM–PAB-MEŠ-šú DUMU A.BA É.GAL | ša mLUGAL–GI.NA šàr KUR aš-šurki on 1930-5-8, 36 = BM 122647, found in Ištar's temple, square HH (Lambert and Millard 1968: 16); the composition is *eršahunga* no. 104, ed. Maul (1988: 350–2, pl. 56). Cf. 1929-10-12, 51 = BM 121055 (Nabu's temple, trench XIX: Lambert and Millard 1968: 6), *eršahunga* no. 103, ed. Maul (1988: 348–50, pl. 55); and 1929-10-12, 80 = BM 121084 (Nabu's temple, trench XXIX: 'Incantations, tablet of Nabu-kabit-ahhešu': Lambert and Millard 1968: 8), apparently unedited. See also Gabbay (2014b: 255).
    The architectural remains of this temple are negligible but some half-dozen different inscriptions recovered from the site show that it too was renovated by Sargon. Tantalisingly, the most frequently attested, on clay cones and bricks, refer to the temple as belonging to both Nabu and Marduk (e.g. Thompson and Hutchinson 1929: 124 no. 69; 133–4 nos. 122D, F and O); in versions found around the well and on decorative door-jambs it is Nabu's alone (e.g. Nassouhi 1927: 17 no. 4, 18 no. VIII; Thompson and Hutchinson 1929: 124 nos. 70–71). Is this change further evidence of Nabu's meteoric rise to prominence in the middle of Sargon's reign?
117. E.g. SAA 3: 4, 18.
118. Hunger (1968: nos. 293A–N, Q–S, 294A, Q–U and 297); Lieberman (1987: 204 n222); Frahm (1999: 88; 2005a).
119. Nabu-zuqup-kenu's tablets were most likely taken to Nineveh after his death, perhaps by one of his sons or grandsons (see below), where they were discovered by Layard and his associates in the 1850s (see Chapter 2). Alternatively, they may have been picked up from the Ezida in Kalhu by Victorian excavators as other tablets certainly were. For instance, the well-known palaeographic manuscript of Syllabary A comprises two directly joining fragments: K 8520 from the mid-nineteenth-century Kouyunjik Collection, and CTN 4: 229, excavated from the throne room of the Kalhu Ezida (Wiseman 1968: 248; Black 2008: 264). The clean lines of the broken surfaces are indicative of breakage during excavation rather than ancient damage, suggesting that the two parts were separated relatively recently.
    The colophon Hunger (1968: no. 313) further suggests that the tablet VAT 8807, a collection of Akkadian proverbs (Lambert 1960: 214–220, pls. 55–7), was also written in Kalhu at this time. However, although it names its owner as the (otherwise unattested) scribe Inurta-uballissu, also a descendant of the chief scribe Gabbu-ilani-ereš, and gives a date of 716 BC, Sargon's sixth regnal year, it does not state where it was made. The tablet itself was found in Assur, although its exact findspot is no longer known.
120. Fuchs (2009–11: 59). See McMahon (2013) on the visual and aural aspects of ceremonial performance in and around this temple.
121. Although Dur-Šarruken remained a provincial capital until the end of the empire, it was no longer a royal city and as such was no longer a centre of court scholarship. To judge from the post-canonical legal documents found in the building, the temple of Nabu seems to have been repurposed as an administrative centre (Radner 2006–8: 54).

122. Loud and Altman (1938: 104–5). Compare 'Ur-Utu's house' in sixteenth-century Sippar, where a basket of important archival tablets was dropped on the threshold of a courtyard during a rescue attempt, while the house was being evacuated during a major fire (Gasche 1989: 42).
123. Oates and Oates (2001: 97–99, 104 fig. 62).
124. See already Loud and Altman (1938: 103).
125. SAA 3: 33; Tadmor, Landsberger and Parpola (1989); Weaver (2004).
126. Tadmor, Landsberger and Parpola (1989: 26); Pomponio (1978: 78–9; 1998–2001: 19).
127. Cf. Tadmor, Landsberger and Parpola (1989: 50–1).
128. Frahm (1999; 2005a).
129. Hunger (1968: nos. 293O–P, 294B, 299, 305); Frahm (2011a: 265–7). Frahm's (2003: 158) conjecture that Nabu-zuqup-kenu was the author of Sennacherib's early military annals, as well as the later royal inscriptions of Sargon, remains unproven. On Sennacherib's neglect of Kalhu see Mallowan (1966: I 238–9); Radner (2011a: 327).
130. Fincke (2010).
131. Frame (2008: 26).
132. All that remains is a handwritten note by the British Museum Keeper Theophilus Pinches, which describes this event as an example of 'the kings of Assyria consult[ing] the stars to find out the future', but the article in which the note is published rightly refers to the missing tablet as 'the only extispicy report surviving from the reign of Sennacherib' (Finkel 1987).
133. Kertai (2015b).
134. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 154–5); Reade (1998–2001: 401–3).
135. ina ITI še-me-e u_4-mu mit-ga-ri (e.g. Grayson and Novotny 2012: Sennacherib 22: vi 51–2; 23: vi 43).
136. a-na pa-te-e ÍD šu-a-tu ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{lú}GALA ú-ma-aʾ-er-ma ú-šat-[…] 'At the opening of that canal I … ed an *āšipu* and a *kalû*' (Grayson and Novotny 2012: Sennacherib 223, l. 27).
137. Weissert (1997: 191, 197).
138. Frahm (2010a: 8–13).
139. Frahm (1997: 166–7, T133).
140. Novotny (2014a: 104–6).
141. ina ITI DÙG.GA u4-me šal-mu ina ši-pir i-šip-pu-ti | né-me-eq ka-kù-gal-u-ti (Grayson and Novotny 2012: no. 168 ll. 30–1).
142. Namely Aššur-bani, chief scribe(?) (^{m}aš-šur—ba-ni ^{rlú}GAL—Aʾ.BAʾ^{1}), a chief *asû*-healer ([…] ^{rlú1}GAL—A.ZU), and Nabu-etiranni, temple scribe ([^{md}]^{r}MUATI^{1}—KAR^{-ir}-an-ni ^{lú}A.BA É DINGIR) (SAA 12: 86, rev. 19, 21 and 27).
143. Ass 13616c, ll. iv 1'–11' = King List 12 (*Synchronistic King List*, Grayson 1980–3: 116–21) has Nabu-aplu-iddina when Sennacherib is king of Assyria alone, and Bel-upahhir and Kalbu when he rules both Assyria and Babylonia; Ass 13965dh = Schroeder 1920: no. 182, iv 1'–3' = King List 17 (*Synchronistic King List fragment*, Grayson 1980–3: 124–5) simply has Nabu-bani, Kalbu and Bel-upahhir.
144. Neither reading features amongst the nineteen Nabu-aplu-iddinas or the six Nabu-banis in PNA 2/II: 805–6, 809.
145. ^{m}kal-bi DUMU-šú šá ^{md}NÀ–KAR^{-ir} a-na tar-ṣi LUGAL AD-ka ri-ik-^{r}su^{1} [it-ti] | ^{lú}DUB.SAR-MEŠ ù ^{lú}HAL-MEŠ šá la LUGAL AD-ka ki-i ú-^{r}rak^{1}-[ki-su] | um-ma ki-i it-tu la ba-ni-ti ta-at-tal-ku a-na LUGAL ^{r}ni^{1}-[qab-bi] | um-ma it-tu e-si-ti ta-at-tal-ka ṭup-pi a-na ṭup-pi […] | gab-bi-šu-nu i-da-ku ki-i it-tu šá ina muh-hi-šú la ba-na-a-[tu tal-li-ku] | ù šu-ú mim-ma šá la ba-na-a ár-ka-niš a-lu-ú ki-i il-li-[ka um-ma it-tu] | šá i-na muh-hi-ia la ba-na-a-tu tal-li-kám-ma la taq-ba-a-ni […] | dib-bi an-nu-ti ^{lú}DUB.SAR-ME :. ^{lú}HAL-ME ina ŠU-MIN-šú-nu ki-i iṣ-ba-tu [DINGIR-ME šá LUGAL] | lu-ú i-du-ú ki-i it-tu ma-la a-na tar-ṣi LUGAL AD-ka tal-[li-ka la iq-bu-ma] | LUGAL AD-ka la bal-ṭu-ma ù LUGAL-ú-tú la i-pu-šú-ma en-^{r}na^{1} [a-du-ú GISKIM-MEŠ] (SAA 10: 109 rev. 1–10).
146. This would account for the different ways in which the *Synchronistic King List* manuscripts represent these scholars (see note 144 above).
147. SAA 8: 472 is by [Bel]-upahhir. But the author's name is partially restored, and there is no internal evidence in the report to date it to a particular year.
148. SAA 8: 437–48, 462–8; SAA 10: 159; SAA 16: 121. Noticeably, though, Ṭab-ṣilli-Marduk sometimes called himself 'nephew of Bel-naṣir' (SAA 8: 447) rather than 'son of Bel-upahhir' (SAA 8: 445, 448), suggesting he wanted to gain some distance from his father.
149. Tadmor, Landsberger and Parpola (1989).
150. Leichty (2011): Esarhaddon 1 I 87.
151. ša SUHUŠ ^{giš}GU.ZA | ša-an-gu-ti-ia | šur-šu-di a-na u_4-me ṣa-a-te | iš-šak-na-nim-ma | i-da-at dum-qí | ina MÁŠ.GE$_6$ u ger-re-e | šur-šu-di kar-ri | šul-bur BALA-ia | it-ta-nab-šá-a UGU-ia

| GISKIM-MEŠ du-un-qí | šu-a-ti-na a-mur-ma | lib-bu ar-hu-uṣ-ma | iṭ-ṭib ka-bat-ti (Leichty 2011: Esarhaddon 57 ii 14–26); cf. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 155).

152. SAA 10: 109, rev. 10–13.
153. Porter (1993).
154. Such petitions, from the hopeful, the rejected, and the well-established, include SAA 10: 161, 163, 165, 167, 176, 178, 182, 224, 226, 294, 308, 320 and 334.
155. Parpola (1987b).
156. On *talīmu*, see Bartelmus (2007); most recently on Esarhaddon's succession treaty Fales (2012).
157. E.g. Villard (1997); Novotny and Singletary (2009); Zamazalová (2011). Livingstone (2007: 113) even suggested that some of the hundreds of tablets written in Ashurbanipal's name were actually inscribed by him in the final stages of his training and, in the traditional manner, deposited *ina gerginakki bīt Nabu ša qereb Ninua* 'in the collection(?) of Nabu's temple Ezida which is in the middle of Nineveh' as offerings to the god of wisdom. However, there are problems with the details of this argument. All but one of the four pertinent colophon types refer to Ashurbanipal explicitly as *šarru* 'king' (Hunger 1968: nos. 327, 338, 339). That just leaves the tablets inscribed with Ashurbanipal colophon 'o', in which he is described as *rubû*, 'prince' (Streck 1916: LXXIX–LXXX; Lieberman 1990: 317 n62; Hunger 1968: no. 328). Gabbay's (2014b: 276–89) editorial work on colophon 'o' reveals that all ten known manuscripts bearing this colophon are works of *kalûtu*-lamentation in Emesal Sumerian: a catalogue of *kalûtu* compositions, four *eršema*-prayers, three *balag*-laments and two *šuʾila*-prayers. However, it would be going too far to infer that Ashurbanipal wrote them as an apprentice *kalû*, as no such professional designation is ever associated with him.
158. E.g. DUMU MAN DINGIR-MEŠ in *Ashurbanipal's Hymn to Tašmetu and Nabu* (SAA 3: 6, obv. 13). Likewise, the Egyptian immigrant community in Assur identified Nabu with Horus, son of Isis and Osiris (Radner 1999: 74).
159. Pomponio (1978: 80–3); Livingstone (2007); Frahm (2011b).
160. SAA 3: 6, 13; Hunger (1968: nos. 318–9, 321–3, 326–32, 336–9); Lieberman (1990); Pomponio (1998–2001: 20).
161. As Radner points out in her short essay 'Ashurbanipal' (Robson and Radner 2007–11), the king is conspicuously absent from all the bas-reliefs depicting the Battle of Til-Tuba, which adorned his new North Palace in Nineveh, but takes a prominent role in those depicting the post-battle ceremonies back in Nineveh. The annalistic accounts of this, his seventh campaign, elide his absence through the use of first-person 'I' throughout the narrative, but the very fact that eighty lines of the text are dedicated to the king's pre-war communications with the gods Sin and Ištar, and only ten to the battle itself, shows where the king's interests lay (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: Ashurbanipal 3 iv 80–v 88, v 89–97).
162. E.g. ina ⌜qí⌝-bit AN.ŠÁR ^{d}AMAR.UTU DINGIR-⌜MEŠ⌝ GAL-MEŠ EN-MEŠ-ía [šá ú-tak-kil-ú]-⌜in⌝-ni | ina GIŠKIM-MEŠ MUNUS.⌜SIG_5⌝ [MÁŠ.GE_6 INIM.GAR] ⌜ši⌝-pir mah-he-e (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: Ashurbanipal 3 v 87–88).
163. Esarhaddon had also carried out work on the Ezida in Nineveh: […ᵈ]MUATI EN-ia a-qiš a-na qiš-ti | […] ar-ṣip ú-šak-lil DINGIR-MEŠ a-ši-bu-ti qé-reb-e-šú-un | […] eb-bi ù marri KÙ.SIG_{17} ru-uš-še-e | […la-ba]-riš DU-ku eš-šiš ú-še-piš | … | […] ^{d}MUATI ^{d}taš-me-tu_4 la-ab-ru ú-šeš ma-aq-tu ak-šír | […]-ti ŠÀ-ma ú-šak-me-sa šá-pal-šú-un 'I gave […] to Nabu, my lord, as a gift. I built (and) completed […]. The gods who dwelt there […of] shining […] and a spade of red gold […] that had become [old], I had built anew. … I renewed what was old of [the … of] Nabu (and) Tašmetu, (and) repaired what had fallen off. […] … in it and I made kneel before them.' (Leichty 2011: 116, Esarhaddon 54, rev. 1–4, 6–7).
164. šá-kan UMUŠ-šu u SUM ur-ti-šú DUGUD^{-ti} (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: Ashurbanipal 59: 4). According to tablet copies of a dedicatory inscription, Ashurbanipal also dedicated a red-gold knife(?) (*akkasu*, from *nakāsu* 'to cut') to Nabu in celebration of the same event, but it is not clear whether the knife was offered in Nineveh, Kalhu or Borsippa (Bauer 1933: 51–2; Borger 1996: 320, 350).
165. Parpola (1986); Villard (1995).
166. SAA 4: 305; SAA 9: 9; and SAA 10: 104.
167. SAA 8: 8 and 487.
168. Parpola (1981: 120, 136 chart 2). As Parpola (1981: 120) notes, there is a peak in the Assyrian court epistolary record around the period 652–646 BC. This is consistent with patterns of preservation in well-ordered cuneiform archives, in which there has been no opportunity for regular clean-up before a sudden end (Civil 1980). The one scholarly tablet that Parpo-

la (1981: 134) identifies as post-Ashurbanipal, the eclipse report ABL 1444, has now been re-dated on astronomical grounds to 678 BC (SAA 10: 149).

169. Millard (1994): source A3 (Nineveh); source A7 (Assur). As described in Dating conventions (p. xix), non-canonical eponyms – those that appear on legal and administrative documents but not in the extant eponym lists – are assumed to post-date the lists. There have been several proposals to assign dates to them; here we follow Parpola's reconstruction in the preface of PNA and prefix them with an asterisk, thus: *647.
170. Grayson (1981: 245).
171. Parpola (1981: 121); Reade (1998–2001: 426). Against this argument, Radner (2014: 83) points out that only one letter to Ashurbanipal is known to have been found in the North Palace, while the six known letters to his son and successor Sin-šarru-iškun are all from Room 1 of the Southwest Palace.
172. Parpola (1981: 123). Radner (2014: 85) suggests that, as in other ancient Middle Eastern contexts, Assyrian state correspondence may have been written on alphabetic Aramaic ostraca – potsherds – in the empire's later years.
173. This dataset is only suggestive, not statistically robust, for the following reasons. The legal documents are fragmentary, with many names missing, while the vast majority of witnesses are named without titles. I have not attempted to deal with the 412 legal documents that have lost their dates, even though it is clear that many belong to the same principals as dated documents and can thus be dated with them. Many of the tablets witnessed by scholars during Ashurbanipal's reign concern the affairs of a single principal, the king's charioteer Remanni-Adad (cf. Kwasman 1986).
174. Parpola (1986: 235); Villard (1995). The long-considered possibility that Ashurbanipal ruled from the newly conquered city of Babylon, under the throne name Kandalanu, was definitively refuted by Zawadzki (1995: 70), who showed that their death dates do not coincide.
175. Mattila (2009).
176. Pečírková (1996: 160).
177. Pečírková (1996: 161), following Saggs (1984: 116); SAA 3: 12.
178. Liverani (2001: 387–9).
179. Schneider and Adalı (2014).
180. On the chronology of Ashurbanipal's building activity, see Grayson (1981: 238–9).
181. Liverani (2001).
182. E.g. Cogan and Tadmor (1981).
183. Starr (1985); Pongratz-Leisten (2015: 373–8).
184. The letter Rm 2, 455 (Leeper and Gadd 1920: pl. 37–38; Bauer 1933: 85–7) was omitted from SAA 10. It has been discussed most recently by Pongratz-Leisten (2015: 374–5).
185. Reade (1998–2001: 426).
186. Grayson (1980–83: 125).
187. SAA 7: 81. Many centuries later, the temple found new life as a cult centre of Nabu-Apollo (Hauser 2017: 239).
188. Clay prisms recording Ashurbanipal's building works were found in the tablet store opposite Nabu's shrine (Knudsen 1967). Prism C: ina za-ma-ri HÚL-MEŠ u ⌜ri⌝-[šá-a-ti] (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: Ashurbanipal 7 x 60').
189. Aššur-etel-ilani's brick inscription was first published by Rawlinson and Norris (1861: 8 no. 3) (see Pomponio 1978: 83). On archaeological evidence for the repairs to rooms NTS 1–2, 8 and 10 see Mallowan (1966: I 236–7). Novotny and Van Buylaere (2009) restore Sin-šarru-iškun's Cylinder B from fragments found in the Kalhu Ezida, amongst other findspots, and propose that it concerns building work there. Mallowan (1966: I 240) suggested that shoddy repairs to the throne dais in the *akītu* suite date to his reign.
190. Parker (1957).
191. SAA 12: 95–8. ^{d}MUATI DUB.SAR gim-⌜ri⌝ (SAA 12: 95 obv. 13); ^{d}MUATI DUB.SAR É.⌜SAG⌝.GÍL (SAA 12: 97 obv. 9').
192. Mallowan (1966: I 241); Oates and Oates (2001: 199).
193. Mallowan (1966: I 284–7).
194. Pomponio (1978: 83–5); Novotny and Van Buylaere (2009); Novotny (2014b).
195. Schmitt (2012: 82–100).
196. See Falkner (1952/3); Donbaz and Grayson (1984: 55–60); Frahm (2009: 89–91); Meinhold (2009: 445–66); and note 24 above. Shalmaneser I must be meant, as he is described as DÙ É AN.ŠÁR 'builder of Aššur's temple' (LB 1323 + VA 5060 l. 22, Meinhold 2009: 453). As

for the second king's name, most restore ^{m}aš-šur–PAP–A for Ashurnasirpal (II) (e.g. Pomponio 1978: 68), but Meinhold (2009: 453, l. 23), after collation, reads ^{m}aš-˹šur–SAG$^{?}$–i$^{?}$-ši$^{?}$ A$^{?}$ ^{m}mu$^{?}$˺-[tak$_{(3)}$-kil–^{d}NUSKA]. However, it is striking that Sin-šarru-iškun's new building lies directly over the ruins of Shalmaneser III's temple for Šarrat-niphu and immediately next to Aššur-reš-iši's temple of Ištar (Heinrich and Seidl 1982: I 277). Could a past have been invented for the new temple on the basis of foundation inscriptions found nearby? Novotny (2014b: 163–5) draws the same conclusions, having edited the 'stone block inscription' of Sin-šarru-iškun. This does not give the temple a history but says simply that, É ^{d}NÀ [šá] | ˹qé-reb˺ BAL. TIL šá ul-tu U$_4$-MEŠ SUD-MEŠ | la? ma?-al?-du ke?-e-mu-u ˹ni-du-tú˺, 'I built the temple of Nabu [that is] inside Baltil (Assur), which had not been born since distant days, in place of waste land' (Novotny 2014b: 160–1). This seems closer to the truth of the matter.

197. ni-du-tú il-lik-ma i-te-me qaq-qa-riš (LB 1323 + VA 5060 l. 24, Meinhold 2009: 453).
198. The *Assyrian Temple List* comprises the fourth section of the-called *Götteradressbuch of Assur* (George 1992: 67–84, 455–67). George (1992: 462) notes that the ceremonial names of Ištar's and Nabu's temples in Assur include É.ME and É.UR$_4$.UR$_4$ respectively. Neither is attested elsewhere but rather seem to be derived from É.ME.UR$_4$.UR$_4$, a name commonly given to temples of Ištar/Nanaya. He concludes that 'some time between the nineteenth and thirteenth centuries' – although a later date now seems more likely, given the evidence reviewed in this chapter – 'part of the temple of Ištar was set aside for the cult of Nabu. Theologically the partition of the name is a device that neatly documents the separation of the two cults and makes at the same time an implicit statement of the close bond between them' (George 1992: 462).
199. Andrae (1935: Taf. 7) restores a throne room suite (Rooms 3–7b) but Schmitt (2012: Taf. 13; Figure 3.8 here) is much more cautious in his reconstruction of the badly eroded northwest corner of the building.
200. Falkner (1952/3: 306–7).
201. da-a-a-nu ke-e-nu da-bi-ib kit-ti | ù meš-šá-ri (LB 1323 + VA 5060 ll. 8–9, Meinhold 2009: 451). Schmitt (2012: 100) lists nine fragments of much earlier royal inscriptions found in the fill of the temple but these, as he notes, are almost certainly the result of deliberate acquisition and storage. They apparently make no mention of either Nabu or Tašmetu, so perhaps instead reflect a desire to construct a royal ancestry for this newest of Assyrian buildings.
202. Assyria itself was not entirely depopulated by the fall of the empire, of course; Hauser (2017) gives a useful overview of its post-imperial afterlife. Beaulieu (2010) speculates on possible textual survivals of the Nineveh scholarly tradition in Hellenistic Uruk, but as he himself points out, 'the single fact that manuscripts of certain compositions are found only in Assyria and Hellenistic Uruk does not unequivocally prove a direct and exclusive line of transmission, nor does it mean that only these two centers knew the texts in question' (Beaulieu 2010: 13–14). For a more measured take on Assyrian influence on Babylonian life see Da Riva (2014).

4
The writing-board was at my house: Scholarly and textual mobility in seventh-century Assyria

Where Chapter 3 focused on the people, deities and places involved in scholarship in and around the Assyrian court from the late second millennium to the end of empire in the late seventh century, this chapter takes in a wider geographical horizon over a shorter timeframe (Fig. 4.1). In the second millennium scholars with their tablets and writing-boards were already travelling long distances between royal courts, whether as war booty, diplomatic gifts or self-motivated entrepreneurs seeking patronage. How did scholarly knowledge travel across the Assyrian empire in the seventh century BC? Who had access to it, who controlled that access and to whom was access denied? Letters, legal documents and colophons as well as architectural remains enable us to trace the movements of scholars between various sites of activity and contemplation, and to begin to identify what they did there. We will also look at the movements of scholarly works: both the compositions in the abstract and tablets on which they were written. How did they end up in courtly collections, and what happened to them subsequently? How were they used and why were they eventually abandoned?

Babylonia remained the intellectual centre of the region, despite Assyria's political and military dominance. A particular focus will therefore be how Babylonian scholarship was used in the Assyrian court, and the extent to which indigenous traditions were also developed and exploited. Finally, we look at Assyrian scholarship outside the royal heartland, both in the ancestral city of Assur and in the provincial west. However, this is necessarily no more than a preliminary sketch: in future years, systematic analysis of compositional change and manuscript variance within the major works of cuneiform scholarship will certainly nuance and correct the schema of geographical relationships outlined here.

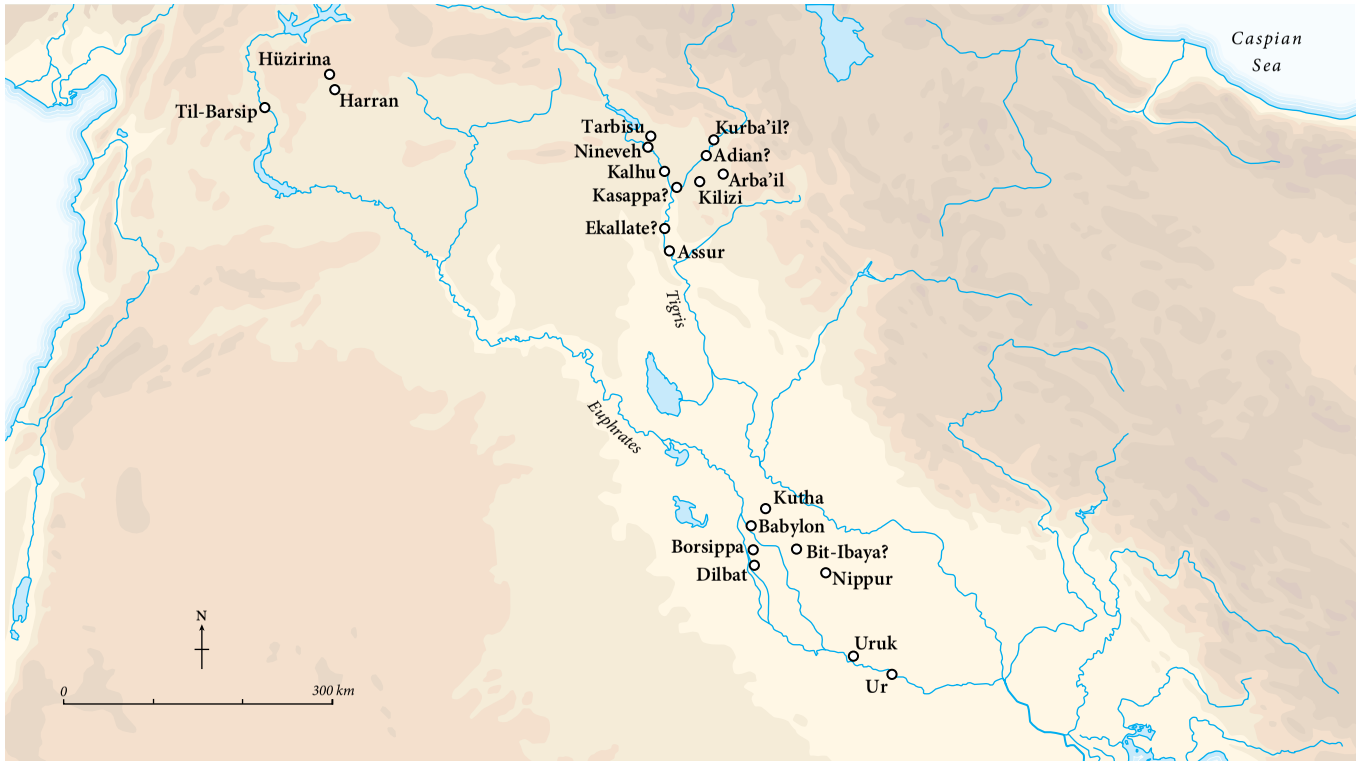

Figure 4.1: Map of the major cities mentioned in this chapter. Source: Martin Brown.

Geographies of royal scholarship under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal

A well-known roster of forty-five court scholars, written in Nineveh shortly after Esarhaddon's conquest of Egypt in 671 BC, is often used as evidence for the size and professional composition of the 'inner circle' of Assyrian royal advisors.[1] It names, in order, seven *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* (observers of celestial omens), headed by chief scribe Issar-šumu-ereš, nine *āšipu*-healers, five *bārû*-diviners, nine *asû*-healers, six *kalû*-lamenters, three *dāgil iṣṣūrī*-augurs, three Egyptian *harṭibu*-scholars and three Egyptian scribes. Another lists just two *āšipus*, neither of whom also appears in the first document, and four *asûs*, who do all recur.[2] Only a dozen of these men are unambiguously identifiable elsewhere in the voluminous royal correspondence of the period, perhaps a further four if we allow for them to hold different professional titles.[3] None of the nine members of the three non-Babylonian scholarly professions at the end of the long roster is ever mentioned elsewhere.

What should we make of this mismatch? It is of course possible that the king's court scholars stuck so closely to him that they rarely needed to write; but even so we might expect them to be mentioned in others' correspondence. Or could it be that, rather than being in the king's permanent employ, these men were summoned as needed, and supported through informal payment and patronage?[4] There is copious evidence that in the early seventh century BC royal scholars were not confined to the palace at Nineveh. Indeed, if they had been it is unlikely that the 1,500 scholarly letters, divinatory queries and celestial observation reports found at Kouyunjik would have been written in the first place.[5] Although royal protocol dictated that even those most intimate with the king had on occasion to communicate with him in writing, we must not mistake the presence of tablets in Nineveh for the permanent presence of their authors.

Peripheral figures and outcasts wrote wistfully of being 'summoned' (*našû*) by the king, while the more secure threatened to get rivals banished (*nasāhu*).[6] Even the most trusted scholars came and went from court. One of Nabu-zuqup-kenu's sons, the chief *āšipu*-healer Adad-šumu-uṣur, spent at least some of his time in the Ezida temple at Kalhu. His nephew, the crown prince's *āšipu* Šumaya, worked in his royal patron's residence city Tarbiṣu before petitioning for a move to Kalhu after his father's death. Likewise, Akkullanu, who advised king Esarhaddon on celestial portents, is likely to have spent more time in Assur, where he was *šangû*-priest of the god Aššur, than at court in Nineveh (Table 4a).[7] Banquet records regularly

Table 4a: References to court scholarship in Assyrian cities during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.

Profession	*Assur*	*Arbaʾil*	*Harran*	*Kalhu*	*Tarbiṣu*
King				Extispicy query concerning Esarhaddon leaving Kalhu safely (SAA 4: 148)Esarhaddon regularly performs *akītu* festival in Ezida (or has it performed on his behalf) (Matsushima 1987)	Nabu-naṣir writes from Nineveh to king in Tarbiṣu about royal baby (SAA 10: 305)
āšipu				Adad-šumu-uṣur performs ritual measures against fungus in Ezida (SAA 13: 71) Adad-šumu-uṣur and his nephew (perhaps Šumaya) copy scholarly works for Ezida (CTN 4: 45, 59, 74?, 78?, 89?) Banunu copies scholarly works for Ezida (CTN 4: 61, 116, 185?, 188, 192) At least some of Adad-šumu-uṣur's letters and reports sent from here? (SAA 8: 160–3; 10: 185–232) Šumaya requests he continue his father (Nabu-šumu-lešir)'s work in Kalhu (SAA 16: 34) Marduk-šakin-šumi consults tablets in preparation for a ritual with the queen mother (SAA 10: 245–6); apotropaic ritual to be performed in Kalhu as well as Nineveh (SAA 10: 240, 271) Nabu-nadin-šumi uncontactable in Kalhu (SAA 10: 228)	Royal ablution ritual (SAA 10: 93) Šumaya reminds the crown prince of his work for him in Tarbiṣu (SAA 16: 34)

(*Continued*)

Profession	*Assur*	*Arbaʾil*	*Harran*	*Kalhu*	*Tarbiṣu*
bārû		Extispicy query for Esarhaddon (SAA 4: 195) Extispicy reports for Ashurbanipal (SAA 4: 300, 324)		Extispicy queries for Esarhaddon (SAA 4: 122, 183)	Extispicy query for Esarhaddon (SAA 4: 155)
kalû		Nabu-epuš robs the temple (SAA 13: 138)	Urad-Ea and Nabu-zeru-iddina's home town (BAK: 500) Urad-Ea performs *akītu* ritual of Sin (SAA 10: 338)	Urad-Ea's son Nabu-leʾi (professional title unknown) copies scholarly tablet for Ezida (CTN 4, 187) Pulu reports abnormal entrails in sacrifices; is accused of misbehaving in Ezida (SAA 10: 131–4) Nabu-eriba steals from Ninurta's temple (SAA 13: 128)	

(*Continued*)

Profession	*Assur*	*Arbaʾil*	*Harran*	*Kalhu*	*Tarbiṣu*
ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil	Nabuʾa of Assur's reports (SAA 8: 126–38; SAA 10: 122–7) Observations made elsewhere to be checked here (SAA 8: 255; SAA 10: 151, 225) At least some of Akkullanu's letters and reports sent from here (SAA 8: 110–2; 10: 84–108; SAA 13: 16) Chief scribe Issar-šumu-ereš inspects temples (SAA 10: 21) Ominous event observed here (SAA 10: 127)	Issar-nadin-apli's reports (SAA 10: 136–42) Observations made elsewhere to be checked here and in Assur (SAA 10: 151)	Issar-šumu-ereš advises on erection of royal statues in temple of moon god to ensure lunar regularity (SAA 10: 13)	Babu-šumu-iddina's reports (SAA 10: 134–5) Observations made in Kalhu to be checked in Assur and Arbaʾil (SAA 10: 151)	

(*Continued*)

Profession	*Assur*	*Arbaʾil*	*Harran*	*Kalhu*	*Tarbiṣu*
raggim(t)u prophets	Oracles by Ilussa-amur and Nabu-hussanni (SAA 9: 1.5, 2.1; SAA 13: 37)	Oracles of Ištar of Arbaʾil by Ahat-abiša, Baya, Dunnaša-amur, Issar-beli-daʾʾini, Issar-la-tašiyat, Ladagil, Sinqiša-amur and Tašmetu-ereš (SAA 9: 1.1–2, 1.4, 1.7–8, 1.10, 2.2–3, 2.5 3.1–5, 6, 9–10; SAA 13: 139, 144, 148?)		Oracle by Urkittu-šarrat (SAA 9: 2.4)	
Literary works	Blessing for the city of Assur (SAA 3: 10)	Hymns to Arbaʾil and to Ištar of Arbaʾil (SAA 3: 3, 8)			

attest to the presence at court of scholars from Assur, Arba'il, Harran, Kalhu and the city of Nineveh, as well as those *qāt šarri* 'in the king's service' (Fig. 4.2).[8] Likewise, scholars from Nineveh, Kalhu, Kilizi and Arba'il were naturally amongst the many thousands of Assyrian citizens who convened in the capital in early 672 to swear to uphold Esarhaddon's succession treaty, which appointed his sons Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin as crown princes of Assyria and Babylonia respectively.[9] The king had learned correspondents in cities across Babylonia as well as Assyria, while the court scholars themselves were also relatively mobile, both because the king himself moved around and also because they were sent all over the region on royal business. The geography of scholarship, however, was different for different scholarly professions (Fig. 4.3).[10] We will start with the *bārû*-diviners, who spent most time in the king's presence, then move to the more independently mobile *asû*- and *āšipu*-healers, before considering the largely absent *kalû*-lamenters and the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*.

Whether or not Esarhaddon fully acceded to *The Sin of Sargon*'s demand that he trust only in diviners (see Chapter 3), it is apparent that wherever the king went, his most senior *bārûs* were expected to accompany him, and diviners simply took over suitable public spaces for their performance.[11] This was not solely a matter of expediency but an important aspect of divination's function. Members of the royal entourage who saw it in action were reassured that both gods and king were taking time to consider matters of grave import, whether or not the exact questions put to the gods Šamaš and Adad were publicly known. Within Nineveh, divinations were performed in the New (Southwest) Palace and in the crown prince's Succession (North) Palace on Kouyunjik, as well as the Review Palace on Nebi Younis.[12] Extispicy could take place in the sacred *qersu* enclosure by the river too – and even on the roof of a temple, where an ominous hoopoe had been spotted.[13] Royal diviners also performed in the cities of Kalhu, Tarbiṣu, Adian and Arba'il as needed.[14] However, although the king seems always to have had diviners at hand, just in case, divination did not simply happen at his whim. A fragmentary hemerology, or ominous calendar, specifies at least fifteen days of a particular month which are 'auspicious days for performing extispicy'.[15]

Mobile divination-on-demand entailed a reliable supply of sacrificial animals as well as peripatetic scholars. However, this aspect of the practice is much harder to trace: there is just one very fragmentary letter to the king mentioning a *bārû* and some sheep.[16] Senior temple staff, such as Dadi in Assur, report major problems with corrupt shepherds and failure of the offerings supply chain.[17] We do not know whether the royal diviners were similarly occupied – but somebody must have been

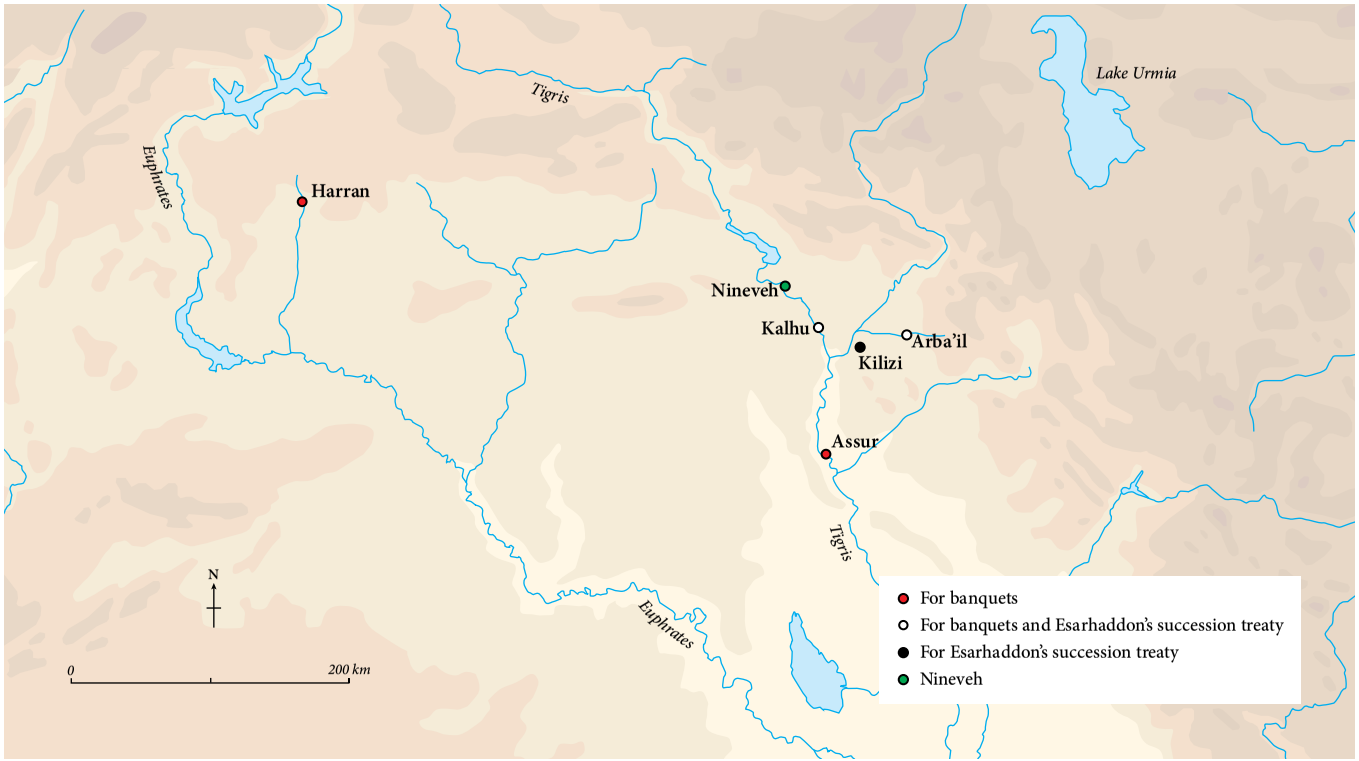

Figure 4.2: Cities from which scholars travelled for royal banquets and treaty ceremonies in Nineveh in the seventh century BC. Source: Martin Brown.

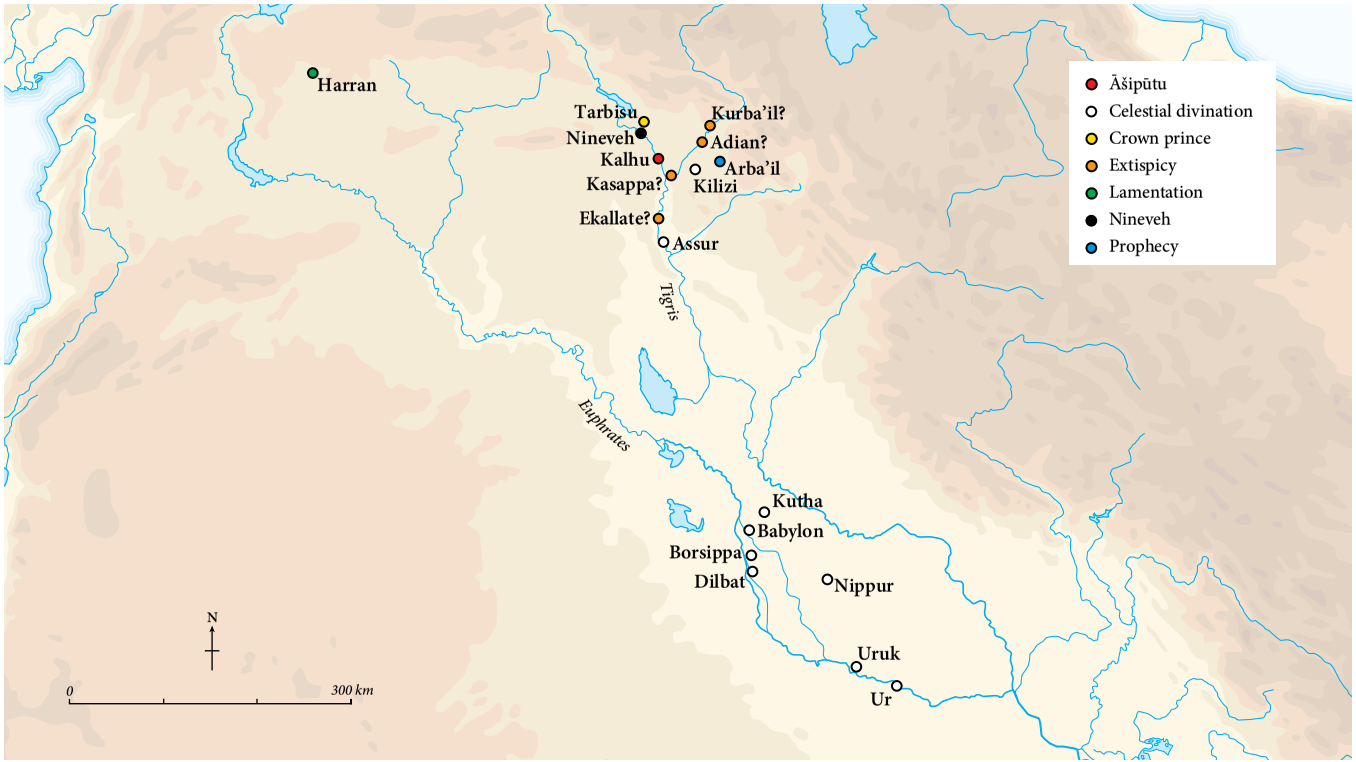

Figure 4.3: Geographies of the scholarly professions at the Assyrian royal court in the seventh century BC. Source: Martin Brown.

responsible for maintaining a regular source of high-quality animals. The courtly *bārûs* were not part of the clean-shaven temple priesthood, however, or the diviner Šulaya could not have *ziqnišu ibaqqan* 'torn at his beard' in frustration.[18]

Letters from *asû*-healers to the king are infrequent, suggesting that there was much personal contact instead. Yet while the chief *asû* Urad-Nanaya twice reminds Esarhaddon of what he said and did *ina pān šarri*, 'in the king's presence', he also formally requests permission to enter the palace: court security was so tight that even he could not simply wander in.[19] More often than not he writes in order to send medications, usually with instructions on how the king's personal servants should administer them.[20] Mostly this is because he is attending royal patients elsewhere but once it seems that he is *buralli attiši ussabšil* 'too busy cooking beryl stones' to attend to the king himself.[21] No wonder the king grumbles that his own staff don't give him the care and attention enjoyed by sick kings in former times.[22]

But in fact Urad-Nanaya is usually at the king's beck and call: he notes that [*ina bīt šarri*] *išpuranni attalak*, 'I have gone [where the king] sent me', and asks to be excused from *ilku*-duty so that he can continue to serve the king.[23] We do not know if his exhausted request for a month's leave was ever granted.[24] Urad-Nanaya's colleague Ikkaru, who had formerly served crown prince Esarhaddon, paints a similar picture: he sends the king medications, reports on the health of the prince(s) in his charge, requests a response and – interestingly – announces that he will come and see the king unless he hears otherwise.[25] Royal *asûs*, it seems, were always on duty: if not attending the king himself they were at the bedside of an ailing royal child or two, in the private quarters of another royal palace, or close at hand (at home in Nineveh?) preparing medications for the royal family. As for the *bārûs*, there is no hint that these men were priestly personnel.

Like the chief *asû*, the chief *āšipu*-healer Adad-šumu-uṣur took care of other members of the royal family as well as the king and occasionally sent him medicines, as did his successor Marduk-šakin-šumi.[26] However, as the sheer volume of surviving correspondence also suggests, he was not always at the king's disposal:

> Concerning what the king, my lord, wrote to me: 'Why haven't you sent an answer to (my) letter?' – I had to drive to the palace those rams that the chief cook had brought out for me, and the writing-board was at my house. Now then, I can look at the writing-board and extract the relevant interpretation. Concerning the ritual against earthquake […].[27]

Where was Adad-šumu-uṣur's house? It could well have been in Nineveh of course, but is just as likely to have been in Kalhu, where he kept scholarly tablets in Nabu's temple and performed exorcistic rituals (Table 4a). Given that Sargon II endowed Nabu's new temple in Dur-Šarruken with the means to support an *āšipu* (Chapter 3), it is likely that the Kalhu Ezida also provided Adad-šumu-uṣur and his family with an independent income.[28] Although there is no explicit statement on the matter, on the balance of evidence it is highly likely that the *āšipu* was a priestly office, held by the Gabbu-ilani-ereš family for many generations.

But Adad-šumu-uṣur also took private clients. Later in the same letter, he reports on the health of the scholar Urad-Daguna's ailing child and signs off, 'If it pleases the king, my lord, I will go and see him (the child) tomorrow. I will return for the (earthquake) ritual.'[29] On another occasion he is prevented from attending promptly to ailing princes because he is performing a ritual at the scribe Dan(n)i's house for the latter's sick son.[30] One gets the sense that he has a degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, when summoned by crown prince Ashurbanipal he announces, [*ša*] *šaprākuni annūrig* [*attalka*] '[because] I was sent for, [I have come] now'.[31] And he responds likewise to the king's instructions: *ina muhhi ša bēlī išpuranni assanamme; aššiār … allak* 'I always listen to what (the king) my lord has written to me; tomorrow I shall go … […]'.[32] Conversely, to some extent he controlled the royal family's movements too, in advising the king on auspicious dates for particular activities.[33]

On one occasion Adad-šumu-uṣur and the *kalû*-lamenter Urad-Ea attend the sacred *qersu*-enclosure on the banks of the Tigris near Nineveh in order to perform vital purification rituals to protect the king from the evil of the eclipse. But they do not intend to stay for the duration, offering substitutes in their place:

> I have appointed an *āšipu* for the *kalû* who is here, and gave him the following orders: 'For 6 days do likewise, performing the purification ritual like this'.[34]

On a similar occasion the *āšipu* Marduk-šakin-šumi performs twenty-one prayers and incantations against the evil of an eclipse on the river bank, with Urad-Ea performing another set *ina nubatti ina ūri ēkalli* 'this evening on the roof of the palace'.[35] Marduk-šakin-šumi also encourages the king to have similar rituals performed in Kalhu to protect princes Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin.[36] Adad-šumu-uṣur travels further afield, to 'Akkad' (probably Babylon) to oversee the Babylonian end of the Substitute King Ritual. On another occasion he accompanies the god

Marduk's statue back to Babylon with Issar-šumu-ereš and Marduk-šakin-sumi.[37] But although he advises on the timings of *akītu*-festivals in the cities of Der and Babylon he does not need to attend them himself.[38]

Perhaps the most interesting insight into the geography of court *āšipūtu*, however, comes from this comment of Adad-šumu-uṣur's on the unreliability of foreign medicines:

> And concerning the string of (amulet) stones, what the king, my lord, said is quite correct. Did I not tell the king, my lord, (already) in enemy country that they are unsuited to Assyria? Now we shall stick to the methods transmitted to the king, my lord by the gods (themselves).[39]

The king, it seems, has tried out a healing necklace, acquired on a military campaign, which has failed to live up to expectations. In reminding the king that he should have heeded the warning given at the time, Adad-šumu-uṣur is not so much decrying the quality of foreign therapies – for both *asûs* and *āšipus* sourced amuletic semi-precious stones from far beyond Assyria's borders – as attempting to re-establish his, and his deities', own authority and control over the king's wellbeing. It also tells us that the king travelled with a senior *āšipu* in his retinue.

Much less can be gleaned about the movements of the king's *kalû*-lamenters, although it is clear that they too had independent lives, as priests of the moon-god Sin in faraway Harran. Two different scholarly tablets describe Urad-Ea and his son Nabu-zeru-iddina as *kalamāḫ/kalē Sin u šarri* '(chief) *kalû* of Sin and the king'.[40] We have already seen Urad-Ea perform eclipse rituals at the *qersu* and 'on the roof of the palace' for Adad-šumu-uṣur.[41] Indeed most of his performances took place at night, in the open air, in the presence of the heavenly bodies which represented the deities he was placating.[42] He also travelled to Assur for sacrifices; to Arbaʾil with the *āšipu* Nabu-nadin-šumi; to Kurbaʾil; and home to Harran with a bodyguard, to perform royal rituals, at which the king was represented by his garments.[43] Other *kalûs*, who like Urad-Ea were all temple personnel, came to the king's attention only when they were misbehaving (Table 4a).

The most widely dispersed of the royal scholarly networks was that of the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, 'scribes of (the omen series) "When the gods Anu, Ellil (and Ea)"' (Fig. 4.3).[44] As I have argued elsewhere, this title did not represent a primary professional calling but instead was adopted as secondary identity by a range of *āšipus, kalûs* and other temple personnel who had appropriate expertise.[45] The king received reports of ominous

celestial events from the Assyrian cities of Assur, Arbaʾil, Kilizi and Kalhu and from at least the cities of Babylon, Borsippa, Dilbat, Kutha and Uruk in Babylonia (online Table A9).[46] But the scholars in these further-flung places did not necessarily communicate with one another; instead they sent *independent* reports and interpretations of the same events, in order to help the king measure the consistency of his own court scholars' observations and analyses.[47] Babylonian observers (and diviners) who failed to report to the king were themselves reported.[48]

Despite the wide reach of this network, its members appear to have been less mobile than other court scholars, although the *rab ṭupšarrī* travelled on other business for the king. Generally speaking celestial omen reports were read to the king by scribes rather than presented in person but the king also welcomed face-to-face discussions with senior scholars.[49]

The *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* were perhaps more concerned than any other scholarly profession with the geography of knowledge: with the ways in which portents observed in the skies and on earth mapped onto real-world events. As the crown prince's *ummânu* Balasi explains, terrestrial omens had only local effects:

> As to what the king, my [lord], wrote [to me]: '[In] the city of Harihumba lightning struck and ravaged the fields of the Assyrians' – why does the king look for (trouble) and why does he look (for it) [in] a peasant's house? There is no evil inside the palace, and when has the king ever visited Harihumba?[50]

What mattered instead were celestial events – in other words events that the scholars themselves could observe and corroborate for themselves without reliance on eyewitness reports from untrustworthy non-experts. The more trusted experts used both celestial and hemerological means to manage the king and crown prince's movements.[51] For instance, Nabu-ahhe-eriba advised Ashurbanipal in 667:

> Mars has turned around, started moving, and is going forward in the Scorpion constellation; that is a bad sign.
>
> ---
>
> Let them finish the muster quickly. The (public) appearances of the king, my lord, should be rare until we see how (Mars) moves and stands.[52]

As is well known, however, more frequently celestial events portended good or bad for whole regions.[53] To take a simple example, here is Nabu-ahhe-eriba again, quoting an omen from *Enūma Anu Ellil*:

> [If the moon becomes visible in] Nisannu (Month I) on the 30th day: Subartu [will devour] the Ahlamu; a foreigner will rule the Westland.
>
> ---
>
> We are Subartu.[54]

The first half of the omen is in effect an observation statement: Nabu-ahhe-eriba has observed the new moon at sunset on the final day of the month. The prediction, drawn from the omen series, is couched in arcane and archaic language: geographical terms such as 'Subartu' and 'Ahlamu' were rarely used in everyday communication. Nabu-ahhe-eriba thus explains the equation Subartu = Assyria. He does not bother to clarify the other terms (although Ahlamu = the Arameans who inhabited the western Middle East) as it is enough that the omen portends well for Assyria.

Finally, we should consider an alternative conduit of divine communications to the king: the mostly female, mostly uneducated *raggim(t)u*, literally 'shouters', ecstatic prophets.[55] Both the king and his scholars had a high regard for the importance of visionary dreams and ominous utterances.[56] But, unlike the other revelatory disciplines discussed here, they were not the exclusive preserve of the literate, male elite. Reports of ecstatic revelations concerning king and country came to Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal from both male and female prophets, speaking more often than not in the name of the goddess Ištar of Arbaʾil.[57] Naturally, most prophets were residents of Arbaʾil but reports also came occasionally from Assur, Kalhu and the mountain town of Dara-ahuya (Table 4a). Ninevite prophecies are conspicuously absent.

The uses of scholarly tablets and compositions in Neo-Assyrian court scholarship

Although there were significant practical and performative aspects to the court scholars' work, it was primarily their literate erudition, as well as their family connections, that earned them their place at court. Although the bulk of the tablets found at Nineveh bear colophons of Ashurbanipal

(as discussed further below) or have no surviving colophon at all, they also include manuscripts written by or for scholarly members of the Gabbu-ilani-ereš family – Adad-šumu-uṣur, Issar-šumu-ereš, Urad-Gula and perhaps Marduk-šakin-šumi – as well as the *kalû* Nabu-zeru-iddina.[58] The tablets from the Ezida temple in Kalhu were also particularly closely associated with the Gabbu-ilani-ereš men, as we saw in Chapter 3, along with their close associate, the *āšipu* Banunu who never names his family.[59] We can thus make a preliminary exploration of the relationship between scholarly literacy and scholarly activity at Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal's court.

Unfortunately, though, it is still difficult to get a clear picture of the number and contents of the scholarly tablets found on the royal citadel at Nineveh, over a century and a half since their first discovery. The vast quantity, often fragmentary state and complex post-excavation history of the Kouyunjik tablets mean that there is still no comprehensive overview of them.[60] However, two overlapping subsets of the corpus have been analysed (Table 4b; Fig. 4.4). According to Eckart Frahm about 800 learned commentaries survive from Kouyunjik, of which nearly half concern the omen series *Bārûtu* (divination from the entrails of sacrificed animals, used by *bārûs*) and just under one-third deal with the celestial omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* (used, of course, by the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*).[61] In all, over five-sixths of the commentaries are related to omens of some sort or another, a further one-seventh treat word-lists, and just one in thirty concern other topics. Similarly, Jeannette Fincke identified nearly 3,600 Kouyunjik tablets written in Babylonian (rather than Assyrian) script.[62] Some 1,880 of these are, or are likely to be, scholarly tablets. Two-fifths of them belong to omen series, or commentaries on them, with *Enūma Anu Ellil* representing the highest proportion and *Bārûtu* the second. Hymns and prayers, incantations and rituals – the domains of the *kalû* and the *āšipu* – each account for about an additional one-sixth of the Babylonian corpus at Kouyunjik, while medical recipes and related texts are the fourth-largest group, at just less than a twentieth of the corpus. Other genres, such literary myths and epics, Babylonian-style observational astronomy, hemerologies, royal inscriptions and chronicles, barely feature at all in either data set.

Although these are both small subsets of the Kouyunjik collection – the commentaries represent perhaps 5 per cent of the whole, the Babylonian tablets just over 12 per cent – they present an impressively consistent picture. The best-represented scholarly works, and those most frequently subjected to critical analysis through commentary, relate to the activities of the *rab ṭupšarrī* and his *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* colleagues, along with the equally high-status *bārûs*. This is exactly to be expected

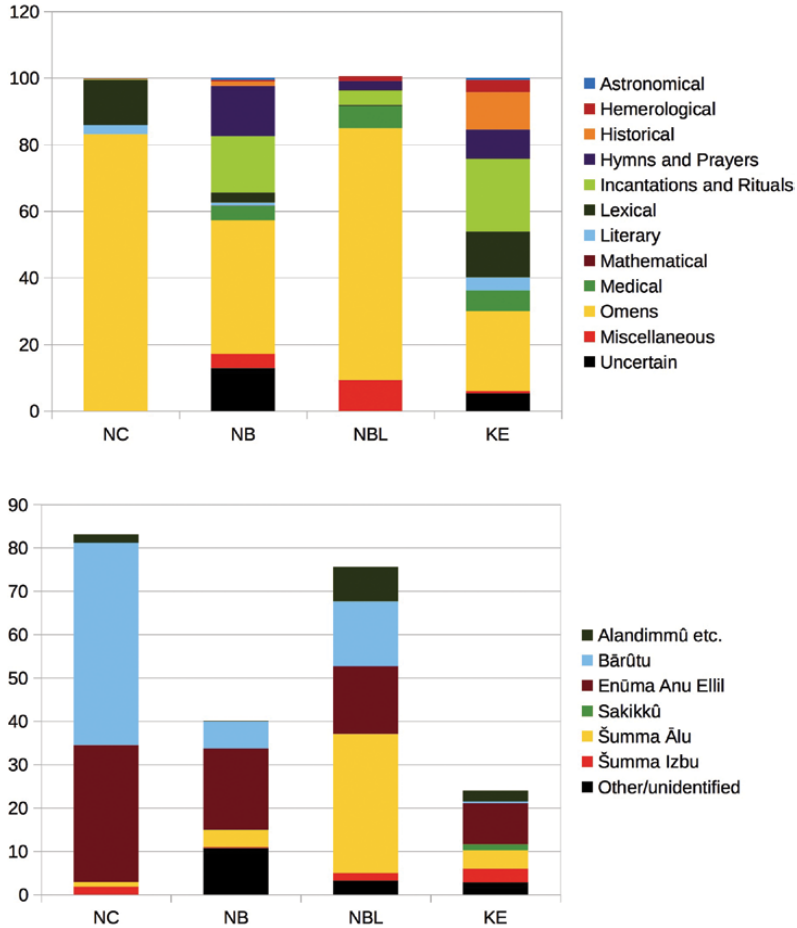

Figure 4.4: Percentages of scholarly genres at Kouyunjik and Kalhu, with further detail of the omen series. NC = Nineveh commentaries; NB = Nineveh Babylonian tablets; NBL = scholarly works in Nineveh booty lists and inventories; KE = tablets from the Kalhu Ezida. Source: author.

given the importance of both types of omens in royal decision-making. The corpora of the *āšipus, kalûs* and *asûs* are present in smaller but still significant numbers, but are rarely subject to commentary as these scholars' courtly roles primarily involved performance and remedy rather than giving advice.

However, we can further nuance this picture (Table 4b; Fig. 4.4). A useful comparandum are the 280 surviving scholarly tablets from Nabu's temple Ezida in Kalhu which, as we have seen, was the long-term base of

Table 4b: Percentages of scholarly genres at Kouyunjik and Kalhu.

*Genres**	*Kouyunjik commentaries (after Frahm 2004: 48)*	*Kouyunjik tablets in Babylonian script (after Fincke 2003/4: 142–7)*	*Tablets and writing-boards in booty lists (after Fincke 2004: 58)*	*Tablets in the Kalhu Ezida (after CAMS/ GKAB)*
Astrological	—	—	—	—
Astronomical	—	0.7	—	0.7
Hemerological	0.1	0.4	1.4	3.5
Historical	—	1.4	—	11.3
Hymns and Prayers	—	15.0	2.8	8.8
Incantations and Rituals	0.3	17.0	4.4	21.8
Lexical	13.5	3.0	0.3	13.7
Literary	2.8	0.9	—	3.9
Mathematical	—	0.1	—	—
Medical	—	4.3	6.7	6.3
Omens	83.1	40.1	75.6	24.0
Alandimmû etc.	1.9	0.1	7.9	2.5
Bārûtu	46.7	6.3	15.0	0.4
Enūma Anu Ellil	31.6	18.7	15.6	9.5
Sakikkû	—	0.1	—	1.4
Šumma Ālu	1.1	3.9	32.1	4.2
Šumma Izbu	1.8	0.3	1.8	3.2
Other omen/ unidentified	—	10.7	3.2	2.8
School	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	4.3	9.3	0.7
Uncertain	—	12.9	—	5.3
Total number of tablets	798	1880	505	284

* These genre descriptions are admittedly crude and anachronistic but help to give a rough overview of the compositional make-up of collections and corpora. Using observers', rather than actors', categories consistently across time and place also enables approximate diachronic and regional comparison (see also Tables 4c, 6b and 6c). Some comments on genre designations: 'Astrological' is shorthand for works using zodiacal methodology and thus only applies to writings of the fifth century BC or later (see Chapter 5). 'Astronomical' is reserved for observational and calculational works, plus *Mul-Apin*; it does not include the omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* (under 'omens'). 'Historical' consists of king lists, eponym lists, royal inscriptions and the like. 'Literary' mostly comprises narrative compositions but also proverbs. 'Mathematical' comprises arithmetical tables, metrological lists, calculations and word problems. 'Medical' consists of recipes, ingredient lists and similar, but not omen series such as *Sakkikû, Alandimmû*, etc. The 'School' category consists of elementary pedagogical exercises, extracts and compilations as defined by Gesche (2001). Commentaries are not counted as a separate genre but are included with the works they pertain to.

the Gabbu-ilani-ereš family of Assyrian court *āšipus*.[63] Once again omens make up the largest single group but only represent one-quarter of the total. *Enūma Anu Ellil* is the most frequently attested, at 10 per cent. These manuscripts may have formed the reference material for the celestial omen reports written by Esarhaddon's chief *Āšipu* Adad-šumu-uṣur.[64] There are also significant numbers of *Šumma Ālu* and *Šumma Izbu* manuscripts but *Bārûtu* is entirely absent.[65] Given that Assyrian court protocol kept *bārûs* quite separate from the other scholarly professions, and that they were not temple personnel, it is not surprising to see none of their works in the Ezida.[66] On the other hand, incantations and rituals – *āšipūtu* in other words – comprise over one-fifth of the Kalhu corpus, the largest proportion after the omens. Lexical works, historical inscriptions, hymns and prayers, and medical recipes are also well represented but – as in Nineveh – there are very few myths, epics or astronomical texts, and almost no commentaries.

In the absence of further evidence, it could be argued that these survival patterns are not truly reflective of usage patterns. Accidents of destruction and survival over the millennia and the haphazard nature of excavation, not to mention the almost complete absence of writing-boards in the archaeological record, all distort the evidence base. However, as we shall see, remarks made in the early seventh-century court correspondence strongly suggest that the surviving tablets in the three subcorpora we have just examined – commentaries, texts in Babylonian script and tablets from the Kalhu Ezida – are largely representative of the writings that the scholars actually used.

As is well known, both the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellils*' reports to Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal and the *bārûs*' reports to Ashurbanipal are full of citations from the celestial and sacrificial omen series.[67] But, in a form of Latourian metrology (see Chapter 2), neither set of scholars used the full range of omens available to them. *Bārûs* were really only concerned about the unfavourable portents they observed. Reports predicting an unfavourable answer to the king's request to the gods typically included four or five omens, but the entire extant repertoire comprises just sixty-four different omens out of the many thousands given in the ninety-nine-tablet omen series *Bārûtu*. Perhaps more tellingly, *Bārûtu* describes, and gives portents for, thirteen ominous zones of the liver but only six of those zones are mentioned regularly in the corpus of surviving reports; two more appear just once, while the remaining five are never mentioned.[68] It seems that, even on a generous estimate, Ashurbanipal's *bārûs* used no more than about one in ten sacrificial omens in practice.[69] But there were good reasons for this parsimony. As Ulla Koch-Westenholz

has explained, one function of the *mukallimtu*-commentaries to *Bārûtu* was to group together all the omens about individual observed phenomena from across the omen series and beyond.[70] There were often six or seven equivalent omens for the same phenomenon; only one needed to be chosen in practice. In a similar way, the writers of celestial omen reports tended to rely on a reduced set of celestial omens, especially those used in the *mukallimtu*-commentary to *Enūma Anu Ellil* known as *Sin ina tāmartišu*.[71]

While one role of *mukallimtu*-commentary series was to organise and reduce a mass of chaotic observational data and their meanings into a manageable dataset, they and other types of commentary also helped to interpret what had been observed. For instance, many commentaries on the celestial omen series provided strategies for interpreting one phenomenon as the analogue or equivalent of another, such as one that took place at a different time of the month or concerned a different heavenly body.[72] Similarly, the final chapter of *Bārûtu*, whose title is *Multābiltu*, 'Interpretation', summarises the principles by which predictions are drawn from observations, while there were also mechanisms for calculating the period for which omens were valid.[73] It is no wonder, then, that these compositions, designed to aid the scholarly aspects of royal decision-making, existed in such quantities at Nineveh.[74]

However, it is difficult to determine whether scholars consulted such texts routinely or only when memory failed.[75] The *bārûs*' reports were written in large, crude script on rough clay, strongly suggesting that they were made by the divinatory team's *bēl ṭēmi* 'reporter' as the examination of the animal progressed – and therefore that the omens were quoted from memory rather than from consultation with the *Bārûtu* series.[76] Reporters of celestial omens, by contrast, do sometimes explicitly mention that they have consulted *Enūma Anu Ellil*.[77] For instance, Mar-Issar writes to Esarhaddon from Babylonia about a recently observed lunar eclipse in 671 BC, 'I have extracted the [relevant] interpretation written on the tablet and sent it, together with this letter, to the king, my lord'.[78] Likewise, Balasi and Nabu-ahhe-eriba quote astronomical descriptions from *Mul-Apin* to the king, although they may be doing so from memory.[79] Scholars also occasionally refer to looking up omens in the compendia *Šumma Ālu* and *Šumma Izbu*.[80] In one instance – the lightning strike in rural Harihumba discussed above – Balasi uses direct quotation to head off the king's concerns (though again he may know this passage by heart):

> If the king, my lord, says: 'How is it said (in the tablets)?' (the relevant omen is): 'If the god Adad devastates a field inside or outside a

> city, or if he puts down a … of (his) chariot, or if fire burns anything, the said man will live in utter misery for 3 years.' This applies (only) to the one who was cultivating the field.[81]

By stark contrast, never once in nearly 130 extant letters do the *āšipus* cite the prognostic omen series *Sakikkû* 'Symptoms' in support of their diagnoses, recommendations or instructions.[82] Rather, their prognoses tended to be based on careful observation, long experience and a large dose of no-nonsense pragmatism.[83] Marduk-šakin-šumi, for instance, reassures Ashurbanipal:

> Concerning the chills about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, there is nothing to be worried about. The king's (personal) gods will quickly cure it, and we shall do whatever is relevant to the matter. [It is] a seasonal illness; the king, my lord, should not worry.[84]

However, when it came to ritual activity, court *āšipus* liked to do things by the book.[85] In a now very fragmentary letter the *rab ṭupšarrī* Issar-šumu-ereš quotes instructions for performing an apotropaic ritual against earthquake in the Review Palace.[86] In 670 BC the *rab āšipī* Marduk-šakin-šumi paints a very detailed picture of the preparations for an eclipse ritual, somewhere outside Nineveh, which Esarhaddon is trying to hurry along:

> Concerning the ritual about which the king said yesterday: 'Get it done by the 24th day' – we cannot make it; the tablets are too numerous, (god only knows) when they will be written. Even the preparation of the figurines which the king saw (yesterday) took us 5 to 6 days …. And concerning the Sumerian texts of the counter-spells about which the king said: 'Send (word)! They should be brought from Nineveh!' – I shall send Nadin-ahhe; he will go and bring them. He will also bring with him the other tablets of the 'refrain series'. Let the king perform (his part) on the 2nd of Ṭebetu (month X), the crown prince on the 4th and the people on the 6th.[87]

This letter reminds us too that tablets could be written anew and sent where needed. We have already seen Marduk-šakin-šumi and Urad-Ea performing from tablets on the riverbank and the palace roof. On another occasion Adad-šumu-uṣur dashes home to consult a writing-board.[88] He also sends tablets of incantations to the king, while the *rab asî* Urad-Nanaya sends medical recipes.[89] In another revealing

letter to Esarhaddon, probably written a few months before the one just quoted, Marduk-šakin-šumi writes from Kalhu about preparing a ritual for the Queen Mother:

> Now, if she – as the king, my lord, says – comes to Kalhu, let them send Ahuni to pick up and bring (the tablets), so she can establish(?) the interpretations. As for myself, I am presently collecting the 30 to 40 best tablets that are relevant to the matter, as well as (all) the existing extraneous ones that are ever performed (in this connection).[90]

Was Marduk-šakin-šumi in Kalhu in order to consult the tablets there – at the Ezida or elsewhere? – or did he just happen to be there? Were the tablets he was looking at only in Kalhu or in Nineveh too? These passages raise the difficult questions of where, if anywhere, scholarly tablets and writing-boards belonged, who had access to them, and who – if anyone – had the authority to allow 'royal' tablets to circulate. We can start by noting that protective formulae in colophons, invoking one or more scholarly deities to protect the tablet, are extremely rare at both seventh-century Nineveh and Kalhu, although relatively common elsewhere. (We have already seen examples from twelfth-century Assur, eighth-century Nineveh and seventh-century Huzirina in Chapters 2 and 3.) Indeed, at Kalhu it is only the *āšipu* Banunu – who is conspicuously without ancestry – who protects his tablets, urging, *gerginakku lā tuparrar; ikkib Ea ša Apsi* 'Do not disperse the *gerginakku* ('collection(?)'); taboo of Ea, king of the Apsu'.[91] It seems as though the king and his scholars were in general supremely confident that their tablets would not fall into outsiders' hands. However, in order to address such issues fully we need to think more carefully about the acquisition and management of scholarly writings at the Assyrian royal court. In other words, in what senses, if any, did they constitute a 'library'?

Collection, acquisition and edition at the royal court

As Chapter 2 showed, the scholarly tablets found on the royal citadel at Nineveh have popularly been called 'Ashurbanipal's Library' since at least 1871. But, as implied by the evidence presented here and in Chapter 3, scholars in the Assyrian king's employ had been collecting learned writings for centuries before Ashurbanipal came to the throne. That much is

well known already (though we shall briefly review the evidence again below). What has not really been considered before is the chronology of Ashurbanipal's own endeavours, which seem to post-date all the documentary evidence of others' scholarly activity. That is, his concerted 'library'-building effort (if such it was) seems to have taken place as Assyrian court scholarship was collapsing, in the mid-seventh century BC.

As we saw in Chapter 3, tablets entered royal collections by copying and capture, by local production and by long-distance acquisition. In the early fourteenth century Aššur-uballiṭ appointed the Babylonian scholar Marduk-nadin-ahhe as his *ṭupšar šarri*, 'royal scribe'. In the late thirteenth century Tukulti-Ninurta I claimed to have captured scholarly tablets as Babylonian booty. The late twelfth-century royal *āšipu*-healer Ribatu copied incantations from a wooden writing-board from Babylon and left his tablets in the Old Palace at Assur.[92] It is not clear whether Sargon II also systematically collected scholarship from Babylonian temples in the aftermath of his defeat of the usurper Marduk-apal-iddina in 710.[93] Either way, he may well have recruited Babylonian scholars for his court circle while in residence there. Indeed, the only surviving manuscripts of new compositions from Sargon's reign – now called the *Nanaya Hymn of Sargon II* and the *Epic of Sargon II* – are both in Babylonian script despite having been found in Nineveh (though they may be later copies in a Babylonian hand).[94] They also remind us that Assyrian court scholarship was not simply a matter of reproducing Babylonian originals. Apart from the royal annals and other official inscriptions, which must have been produced by court literati, the *Letter to Aššur* reporting the highly profitable sack of Muṣaṣir was written by Nabu-ušallim in 714 (in Neo-Assyrian script).[95] Several historians have suggested that Nabu-zuqup-kenu was composing new works at this period too.[96] Be that as it may, he certainly copied many chapters of *Enūma Anu Ellil* from Babylonian writing-boards onto tablets that eventually made their way from Kalhu to Nineveh.[97] Donald Wiseman even suggested that Nabu-zuqup-kenu was the scribe responsible for producing the abandoned writing-board of *Enūma Anu Ellil* destined for Sargon's new capital.[98] Whether or not this hypothesis can ever be proven, the inscription on the cover gives incontrovertible evidence of plans for a scholarly tablet collection in the palace at Dur-Šarruken as well as in the temple:

> Palace of Sargon, king of the world, king of Assyria. He had the series *Enūma Anu Ellil* written on a writing-board of elephant-ivory and deposited it in his palace at Dur-Šarruken.[99]

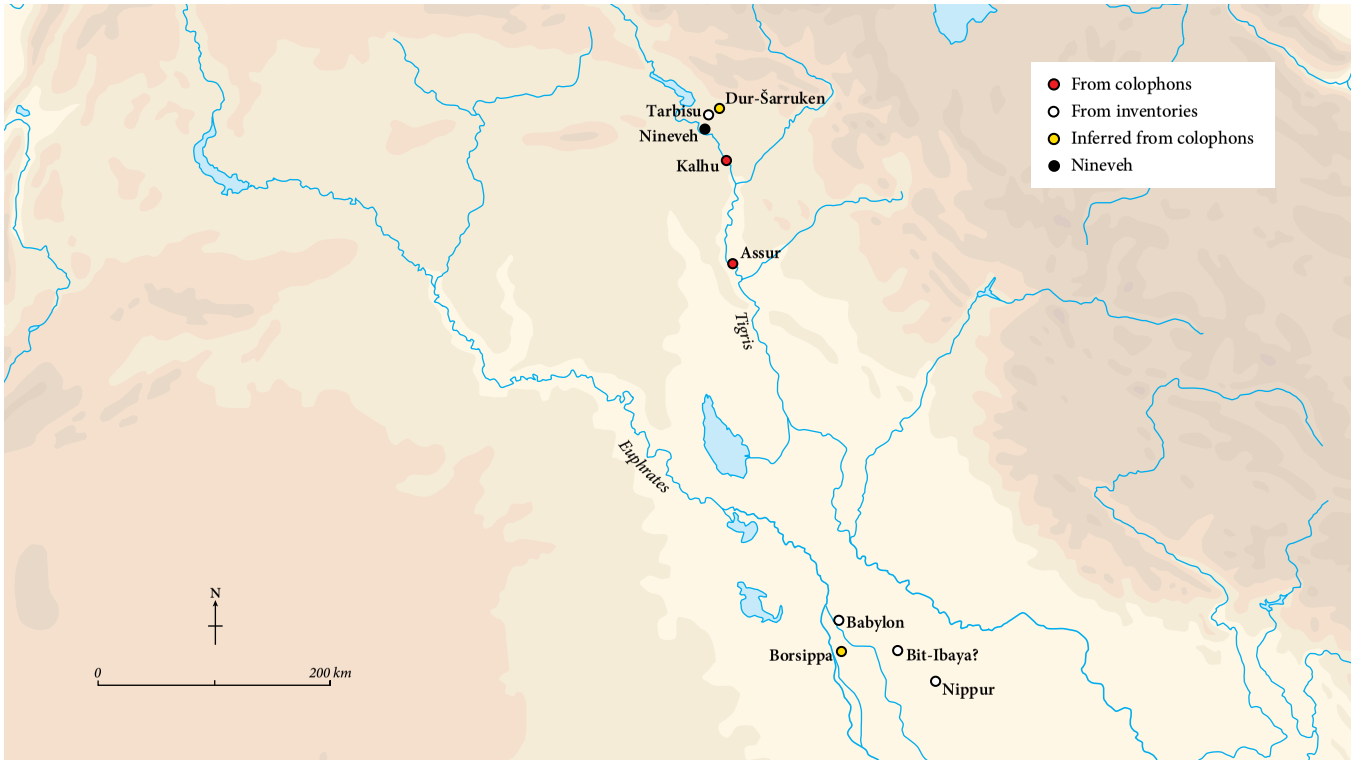

Figure 4.5: Sources of scholarly tablets for the royal palaces at Nineveh, according to booty lists, inventories and colophons; at least two captive scholars from Nippur and the Borsippa region were also put to work making copies. Source: Martin Brown.

Even under Sennacherib, courtly production of scholarly works continued, a particular aim being to undermine Babylonian intellectual hegemony through appropriation of the epic *Enūma Eliš* and the denigration of Marduk in the so-called *Marduk Ordeal* (see Chapter 3).[100] However, Sennacherib does not seem to have taken tablets or writing-boards from Babylonia during his campaigns against the region: his aim was total annihilation of its traditions and prestige, not preservation of its culture.[101]

For Esarhaddon's reign (680–669) there is particularly clear and copious evidence for the accumulation of tablets through indigenous copying and recall, editing and composing, and inheritance. Courtly works written at this period include, of course, *The Sin of Sargon*, as well as a hymn of praise to the city of Assur.[102] It is possible that the scholarly tablets copied by Sargon's *ṭupšar ēkalli* 'palace scribe', Nabu-kabti-ahhešu (Chapter 3), were moved to Nineveh from Kalhu or Dur-Šarruken in the early seventh century (if they were not written in Nineveh in the first place). We have seen that the scholar Nabu-zuqup-kenu's tablets were moved from Kalhu to Nineveh, presumably by one of his descendants. His son Adad-šumu-uṣur's name certainly features, with others, in a now very fragmentary inventory of scholarly works, mostly omen series, lexical lists and literary compositions, which seems to have been drawn up for the palace.[103]

Various court scholars writing to king Esarhaddon report on – or complain about – the complexities of collecting, collating and editing old tablets. Not surprisingly, it is his *rab ṭupšarrī* Issar-šumu-ereš who has most to say about this. In the context of an otherwise routine report on a full moon, he suggests:

> Let them bring in that writing-board of *Enūma Anu Ellil* which we wrote, (and) let the king, my lord, have a look. Also, let them give us the Babylonian (lit. 'Akkadian') writing-board of the king; (the star map) *Three Stars Each* should accordingly be drawn on it. A eunuch should be appointed to open the seal (and) to supervise the drawing.[104]

From this we learn that there were tablets and writing-boards *ša šarri* 'of the king', which were kept in a particular location that it seems even Issar-šumu-ereš could not access without royal permission.[105] Some manuscripts in the king's collection were made by Issar-šumu-ereš himself, while others came from (or were copies of material from) Babylonia. Copying and compilation did not have to be directly supervised by

a scholar, as long as another trusted official, such as a eunuch, was on hand.[106] The implication that royal permission was needed for editorial work is confirmed by a letter from the chief *bārû*-diviner Marduk-šumu-uṣur and his colleagues Naṣiru and Tabni. They notify a king, almost certainly Esarhaddon:

> The series should be revised. Let the king command: two 'long' tablets of *ṣâtu*-commentary should be removed, and two tablets of *Bārûtu* should be put (instead).[107]

Simo Parpola understood the *bārûs* to be requesting permission to revise what they teach their apprentices.[108] But whether this was an educational or an editorial matter, it is clear that the diviners could not simply change the textual basis of their interpretative framework without consultation, as the king was so heavily dependent on it for decision-making on matters of state.

As for Issar-šumu-ereš's 'Akkadian writing-boards of the king', these could be acquired in a number of ways. For instance, the Babylonian scholar Ašaredu the Younger notifies Esarhaddon that:

> The tablet which the king is using is defective and not whole. Now then, I have written and fetched from Babylon an ancient tablet made by king Hammurabi and an inscription from before king Hammurabi. [Let] the king [perform] the ritual according to [these tablets (instead)].[109]

But writings were not always offered voluntarily. A well-known administrative record documents eighteen Babylonian men under the supervision of Assyrian scholars, reciting from *liginnu*-tablets and writing out 'the Series' (that is, *Enūma Anu Ellil*), 'Sick Man's House' (the omen series *Sakikkû*) and the incantation series *Utukku Lemnūtu* 'Evil Demons'.[110] As Parpola points out, two of these men can almost certainly be identified as the offspring of Babylonian governors: Ninurta-gimilli, son of the *šandabakku* of Nippur, who *sipparrī parzilli šakin* 'has been put into iron fetters'; and Kudurru, son of Šamaš-ibni, sheikh of the Bit-Dakkuri tribe near Borsippa, who was deported to Assyria in 675 BC.[111] Two others, Bel-epuš and Naṣiru, are probably identical with two of the *āšipu*-healers listed in the roster of court scholars from 670 BC with which this chapter opens. One of these men's overseers, Banunu, may be the ancestor-less *āšipu* we have seen protecting the *gerginakku* of the Kalhu Ezida, above.

Esarhaddon's son and successor Ashurbanipal began amassing a private tablet collection well before he took the throne. While he was still crown prince, for instance, his scribe Keni's son Aplaya wrote a section of the word-list *Ura = Hubullu* for his *tamrirtu* 'checking'.[112] As we saw in Chapter 3, Ashurbanipal dedicated at least a dozen tablets of *kalûtu* to Nabu and Tašmetu *ana balāṭ napšātišu* 'for the preservation of his life' and deposited them *ina gerginakki Ezida* 'amongst the collection(?) of Ezida', Nabu's temple in Nineveh. Their colophons refer to him only as *rubû* 'prince', in contrast to his father and grandfather, who are both designated *šar kiššati šar māt Assur* 'king of the world, king of the land of Assur'.[113] A further three tablets dedicated to Nabu in a similar way are probably in the king's own hand, an unusually large and idiosyncratic script. As Alasdair Livingstone notes, their colophons uniquely contain the phrase *anāku Ashurbanipal* 'I, Ashurbanipal', but any royal titles that may have followed the name are now missing.[114] It is possible that these too pre-date Ashurbanipal's coronation, although he continued to offer votive scholarly tablets to Nabu's temple once he became king.[115]

However, the vast bulk of the colophons in Ashurbanipal's name, which unambiguously refer to him as the king, were clearly written by expert chancery scribes on his behalf. Stephen Lieberman identified three distinct categories of the king's scholarly tablets.[116] We have just discussed the few dozen tablets that were votive offerings to Nabu in the Nineveh Ezida. The largest number of Kouyunjik tablets were simply stamped, painted or inscribed with the property mark 'Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of the land of Aššur' (see Chapter 2). A smaller number, with more elaborate colophons, claimed that the king himself wrote, checked and deposited the tablet in the palace *ana tāmartišu* 'for his reading' and similar phrases.[117] None of them is dated.

Thus, apart from the minority destined for Nabu's temple – which, like its counterparts in Kalhu and Dur-Šarruken, was presumably the *āšipus*' domain – the majority of Ashurbanipal's tablets constituted 'his personal collection, gathered in his palace for *his own* study', not to form any official, centralised collection for the use of his scholarly retinue or others.[118] Indeed, this fits with Eckart Frahm's observation, discussed above, that the large majority of Ashurbanipal's commentary texts concerned the omen series *Bārûtu* and *Enūma Anu Ellil*, precisely those works on which royal scholars based their recommendations for royal decision-making.[119] Gianni Lanfranchi objected to Lieberman's interpretation, on the grounds that it must have been 'clear both to the king and to the scholars that even if the king had (had) rigidly uniform editions of scholarly texts at hand, the problem of correct interpretation would

have been left almost totally unsolved'.[120] But in fact the interpretation of omens was routinely and necessarily a matter for discussion between king and scholars and never, so far as we can tell, simply a matter of filing a report.[121]

Ashurbanipal's wish to know the evidential basis for scholarly recommendations is particularly visible in the *bārûs*' communications with the king. During Esarhaddon's reign and for the first decade or so of Ashurbanipal's rule, the diviners did not, as far as we know, record their observations; only the queries they posed to the gods survive.[122] However, sometime between 657 BC – the latest extant date on these divinatory queries – and 652 BC, Ashurbanipal started to make his scholars write summary reports of the ominous features they had identified in the entrails of the sacrificed animal, the omens that they chose to associate with those observations, and a brief overall verdict of 'favourable' or 'unfavourable'.[123] By this means the king was presented with the raw material for discussion *ina puhur ummânī*, 'in a gathering of scholars', as he famously boasts of doing in the official inscription often cited as L^4.[124]

Historians usually assign to Ashurbanipal's reign all letters to the king that discuss the copying, collecting and editing of scholarly tablets, on the assumption that he was the only Assyrian king interested in such matters.[125] Yet at least some could equally well have been addressed to Esarhaddon.[126] Neither king's annals ever mention the confiscation of tablets or deportation of scholars to Nineveh, so we have no official chronology.[127] However, Late Babylonian copies of three Neo-Assyrian letters give some insights into the means by which he acquired tablets from Babylonia – if we are to believe every detail of their historicity given that the extant manuscripts date to around 100 BC.[128] One, purportedly from the scholars of Borsippa, promises to fulfil Ashurbanipal's command to 'Write out all the scribal learning (*ṭupšarrūtu*) in the property of Nabu and send it to me'.[129] Another, to Ashurbanipal from the scholars of Marduk's temple Esangila in Babylon (or possibly vice versa), specifies more precisely a request for:

> the entire corpus of scribal learning, the craft of Ea and Asalluhi: [*Enūma Anu Ellil* (?), *Šumma*] *Izbu, Šumma Ālu ina mēlê šakin, āšipūtu, kalûtu, bārûtu*, and all the scribal [learning, as much as there is, that is in the possession] of the great lord Marduk, my lord.[130]

The letter goes on to describe the manufacture of writing-boards in order to carry out this royal mandate, sent in 'the fifth year' of Ashurbanipal's

reign, 664 BC, and the payment of a large sum of silver as recompense. Third, a letter-order from an unnamed king, presumed to be Ashurbanipal, commissions the otherwise unattested official Šadunu to 'seize the scholars of Borsippa whom you know, and collect whatever tablets are in their houses and whatever tablets are kept in the Ezida temple (in Borsippa)'.[131] There follows a long list of incantations and ritual series, with the reminder that 'if, further, you see any tablet or ritual which I myself have not written to you about and it is good for my palace, take it too and send it to me'.[132] The temple steward and city governor are instructed to enforce full compliance.

If we accept this very late testimony, the full-scale commissioning and confiscation of Babylonian scholarship was underway by the mid-660s. It was apparently far enough advanced by the 650s for Ashurbanipal to order his diviners to change their reporting practices. Another chronological clue is given by eight, now very fragmentary, inventories of the scholarly contents of some confiscated tablets and writing-boards that arrived in Nineveh in late 648 BC (Fig. 4.5). Most or all of these writings were the former property of named individuals, mostly Babylonians but also a few men in the crown prince's retinue.[133] Parpola estimated that these inventories originally listed the contents of some 2,000 tablets and 300 multi-leaved writing-boards, around 1,440 and 70 of which respectively are attested on the surviving fragments.[134] Fincke's more recent calculations for those surviving fragments are lower, coming to about 1,470 tablets and 140 writing-boards, plus a further 190 or so inscribed objects which could be either tablets or boards (Table 4b; Fig. 4.4).[135] In any case, both agree that omen series represent by far the highest proportion of the extant inventories, perhaps three-quarters of the total. Notably, however, *Bārûtu* is only on writing-boards, while *Enūma Anu Ellil* is mostly on tablets. Most surprising, though, are the 161 tablets of the terrestrial omen series *Šumma Ālu*, representing nearly one-third of the extant total. The Assyrian court scholars did not hold this form of divination in particularly high regard and in fact Fincke counts just seventy-three such pieces amongst the surviving Babylonian tablets.[136] This makes *Šumma Ālu* the only inventoried composition or series which is attested in fewer numbers in extant tablets than in the contemporary records. Were the rest simply thrown away?

Whatever the case, the preponderance of omen series is striking, but perhaps by now unsurprising. In other words, whether or not these records document a routine addition to the palace tablet collection or an exceptional one, they are not witnesses to the development

of a 'universal library', as so many historians have claimed.[137] Rather, this large-scale acquisition was closely targeted to the king's particular needs. In particular Lanfranchi has suggested that 'it was probably aimed at obtaining as many Babylonian texts as possible in order to achieve maximum thoroughness in the work of scholarly comparison'.[138] Drawing on Parpola's observation that 'the texts listed for [the tablets' and writing-boards' erstwhile owners] do not represent their entire private libraries but rather only that part of it [*sic*] which they did not need in their professional work', both Lanfranchi and, more recently, Jacqueline Du Toit have deduced a benevolent sort of despotism from these patterns.[139] Lanfranchi argues that 'royal patronage and the king's personal cooperation in this work favoured and enhanced, at least ideologically, a process of cultural fusion between the two lands', while Du Toit states that by only taking what he needed, 'without damaging the fabric of the colonized society [Ashurbanipal] leaves the private citizenry able to fulfil their societal obligations'.[140] Frame and George even suggest, least plausibly, that 'the tablets were not so much confiscated as requisitioned temporarily for copying and then returned to their owners'.[141]

All of these proposed scenarios seem idealistically benign. Julian Reade, on the other hand, has perceptively situated the acquisition of tablets within the more general Assyrian royal propensity for hoarding war booty. Drawing a comparison with the vast quantities of ninth-century Phoenician ivory furniture abandoned for centuries in Kalhu's Fort Shalmaneser, he notes:

> The perennial problem was that prestigious collections of imported goods, constantly accumulating in buildings that must in any event have been adequately furnished in Assyrian style may once have demonstrated Assyrian supremacy but became with the passage of time not merely old-fashioned but largely superfluous junk …. It is doubtful whether even Ashurbanipal's tablet collections at Nineveh were properly maintained after his death, and there is no indication that either of his sons added to them.[142]

Indeed, as we have seen from the chronology of decline outlined towards the end of Chapter 3, this process of abandonment may have even begun as early as the mid-640s BC, just a few years after these tablets entered the palace. We are left with the surprising conclusion that the heyday of Ashurbanipal's library – his own personal tablet collection, that is – may not have lasted much more than a decade or two.

Beyond the royal scholarly network: Assur and Huzirina

Even though we have now seen abundant evidence for the primacy of Babylon and Babylonia as the ultimate source of scholarly writings, practitioners and even deities in Assyria, it is striking that the colophons on Ashurbanipal's own tablets never give precise information on the origins of their sources. Instead one finds general statements such as 'according to the wording of original tablets (and writing-boards) from the land of Assur and the land of (Sumer and) Akkad' instead of the more usual convention of naming a city, temple or individual as the source.[143] Thus the king's personal collection erases all traces of its intellectual ancestry: it is as if its predecessors are both everywhere and nowhere. If information about knowledge elsewhere was erased on entry to Nineveh, was information about, and access to, royal scholarship similarly restricted? In other words, did the Assyrian court network connect back into the outside world, or did it just draw knowledge inwards? There are two places we can look: the ancestral city of Assur and the western provincial city of Huzirina.

Assur may have been the cultural heart of the empire, home of the Assyrian elite, burial place of kings and dwelling of the god Assur, but it had not been a centre of power since Ashurnasirpal II had moved the court to Kalhu in the early ninth century. As Eckart Frahm has discussed, this liminal position on the edges of political influence may well have been a factor in the revolts and coups that broke out sporadically in the city in the ninth to seventh centuries BC.[144] Intellectually, as we have already seen, there was certainly some contact between Assur and the royal cities. Most fundamentally, the scholars of Assur likewise acknowledged Nabu as their primary divine mentor. Many of them took names containing the element Nabu and referred to themselves in colophons as *ša Nabu tuklātsu* 'he whose trust is in Nabu'.[145] Although, as we saw in Chapter 3, Nabu did not have his own temple in Assur until the reign of Sin-šarru-iškun, there was a shrine to him in the goddess Ištar's temple. It is not yet clear when that shrine was installed but the so-called *Götteradressbuch of Assur* tells us that one of its names was E-niggidru-kalama after Nabu's temple in Babylon, which was restored by Esarhaddon (Chapter 5).[146] It is therefore possible that the Assur equivalent also dates to that time. During the reign of Ashurbanipal we know of at least one priest of Nabu-Horus in Assur.[147]

As for individual contacts, Aššur-mudammiq of the Bel-kundi-ila'i family, scribes of Aššur's temple in Assur, wrote out two chapters of the celestial omen series *Enūma Anu Ellil* that ended up in Nineveh.[148] A man

named Nabu-mušeşi reported on celestial omens for both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal and may also have been a colleague of the chief scribe Issar-šumu-ereš.[149] One Nabu'a of Assur sent routine reports of full moons, new moons and equinoxes to the palace in Nineveh over several years in the early seventh century BC.[150] He may well have been a subordinate of Akkullanu, *šangû*-priest of Aššur's temple, who was also a regular correspondent of kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. As well as reporting on non-routine celestial events, he sent them regular missives about cultic and ritual matters.[151] It has even been argued that Akkullanu was involved in the creation of Ashurbanipal's tablet collection, although his letters about such matters are just as likely to have been addressed to Esarhaddon. Equally, they may well concern textual production for the temple Akkullanu managed, which had a substantial tablet collection of its own, not for the palace in Nineveh.[152]

Assur, then, contributed to the inward flow of royal scholarship; did any of that scholarship flow back out? A series of extensive archaeological excavations across the city in the early twentieth century yielded an informative and sizeable sample of domestic dwellings and potentially provided a unique insight into the degree of high-level literacy in major urban centres. Reconstruction of the archaeological record of Assur, however, has been badly hampered by the post-excavation loss of records, photographs and tablets through the vicissitudes of two world wars.[153] The assemblage of perhaps several hundred scholarly tablets in Aššur's temple, overseen by Akkullanu, needs much further study before meaningful conclusions can be drawn from it, as does the rather smaller one from (or near) the so-called Prince's Palace, built by Sennacherib for one of his sons.[154] The six domestic collections of scholarly tablets that were excavated from trenches all over the city range in size from a small cache of elementary school exercises to a large holding of at least 800 learned writings, assembled over several generations by a family of *āšipus* descended from one Baba-šumu-ibni (online Table A13).[155] These men shared the same profession as the descendants of Gabbu-ilani-ereš in the Kalhu Ezida just 70 kilometres to the north, and were their almost exact contemporaries. If there had been free exchange of scholarly ideas, compositions and personnel between palace and city then we might expect to find evidence of it here.

The Baba-šumu-ibni family's scholarly tablets were found, apparently in situ, in a single room of a substantial courtyard house, about 350 metres due south of Aššur's temple.[156] The tablets were clustered into groups which perhaps reflect their original disposition on shelves or in storage baskets. The family's domestic archive was in the room next door,

above a vaulted tomb, with a few further tablets scattered elsewhere throughout the house. Little else by way of domestic furnishings or equipment was recovered. However, another room off the central courtyard had a dozen or more deposits of figurines and other objects buried at strategic points around it and red-plastered walls. It might have served as some sort of ritual performance space for the *āšipus* and their clients. Dates on the tablets show that the house was occupied until the fall of Assur in 614, when it was suddenly abandoned, presumably because its owners had fled or been killed.[157]

It is difficult to quantify and categorise the compositions in this tablet collection, not only because the room in which they were found was only partly excavated in 1908, but also because – for a variety of political and intellectual reasons – systematic work on them began only in recent decades and is still ongoing.[158] However, according to Olof Pedersén, incantations and rituals, hymns and medical texts make up over three-quarters of the assemblage, with only a handful each of literary works, lexical texts, ominous calendars and omens (Table 4c; Fig. 4.6).[159] Eckart Frahm identifies nine commentaries in the collection,

Table 4c: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in Assur and Huzirina

*Genres**	*Assur, Kiṣir-Aššur's house (after Pedersén 1985–6: II 48–58)*	*Huzirina, Qurdi-Nergal's house (after CAMS/GKAB)*
Astrological	—	—
Astronomical	0.2	1.8
Hemerological	0.8	1.3
Historical	1.5	1.3
Hymns and Prayers	4.8	9.7
Incantations and Rituals	36.7	36.1
Lexical	2.2	7.6
Literary	1.2	14.7
Mathematical	0.3	0.3
Medical	35.3	11.3
Omens	0.7	6.5
School	0.7	0.3
Miscellaneous	1.8	2.9
Uncertain	13.3	6.3
Total number of tablets	*c.* 600	382

* See note to Table 4b.

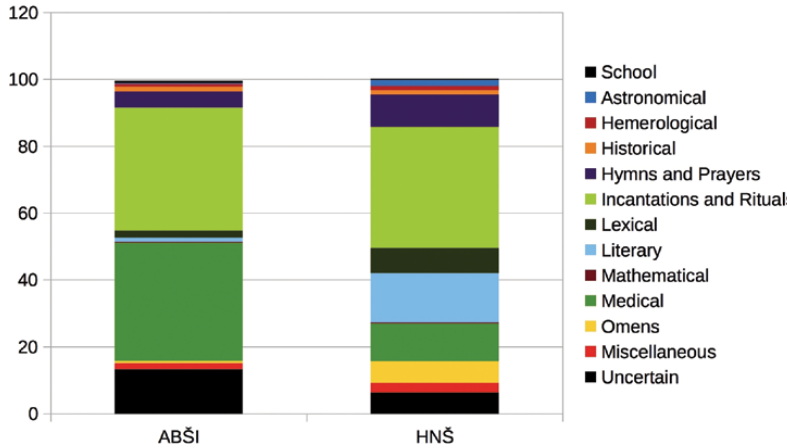

Figure 4.6: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in Assur and Huzirina. ABŠI = Assur, Baba-šumu-ibni family; HNŠ = Huzirina, Nur-Šamaš family. Source: author.

mostly dealing with incantations and rituals.[160] He argues that specific details of their internal structure, along with occasional hints of local Assyrian dialect amid the erudite Standard Babylonian, show that they were composed for pedagogical purposes. The archival tablets from the house concern cultic activities in Aššur's temple as well as apparently more mundane matters.

As Stefan Maul has brilliantly shown, the collection accrued over the course of the seventh century BC, as three generations of men wrote, copied and stored scholarly tablets as part of their training and professional business as *āšipus* of Aššur's temple in Assur (online Table A13).[161] In the second generation, for instance, Kişir-Aššur's titles evolved from *šamallû ṣehru* 'junior apprentice', through *šamallû* 'apprentice', *šamallû āšipu ṣehru* 'junior apprentice *āšipu*', *āšipu ṣehru* 'junior *āšipu*' and *āšipu* to *āšip bēt Aššur* '*āšipu* of Aššur's temple'.[162] Kişir-Aššur apparently had no sons able to inherit his profession, for it was his nephew Kişir-Nabu whom he took on as an apprentice once the younger man had reached *āšipu ṣehru* status, most likely under his own father Šamaš-ibni.[163] Other male members of the family are not well attested even though they too were *āšipus*. They presumably set up their own households and professional practices elsewhere, taking with them most of the tablets they had produced. However, the collection also included thirteen tablets with

colophons of *šamallû* or *šamallû ṣehru* who apparently did not belong to Kiṣir-Aššur's family, but who seem to have done part of their training with him and left behind some of their works when they moved on.[164]

The family copied tablets and writing-boards from other collections in Assur, including Gula's temple Esabad, and a man named Aššur-šarrani. One tablet was copied off an original from Nineveh.[165] Other compositions came from Babylonian cities: Babylon itself, (Bit-)Dakkuri, Borsippa, Nippur and Uruk (Fig. 4.7).[166] Recipes annotated with phrases such as *hanṭiš nasha* 'hurriedly excerpted', along with protective curse formulae against stealing or damaging tablets, hint at a lively flow of textual exchange within the Baba-šumu-ibni men's scholarly community, however that might have been defined.[167]

Through their positions at Aššur's temple, the *āšipus* of the Baba-šumu-ibni family had professional contact with the institution of Assyrian kingship. Their tablet collection included prayers for kings Sargon, Ashurbanipal and Sin-šarru-iškun, as well as several royal rituals to be performed in the temple.[168] They also owned the only known manuscript of Sargon II's *Letter to Aššur*, written in 714 BC (see Chapter 3), a copy of the *Synchronistic King List*, compiled during the reign of Ashurbanipal's ephemeral successor Aššur-etel-ilani, and a short extract from a treaty of Sin-šarru-iškun.[169] Eckart Frahm further points out they also possessed tablets produced by members of the Bel-kundi-ila'i family, scribes of Aššur's temple, possibly including a few by Aššur-mudammiq, some of whose other tablets made their way into the royal collections in Nineveh.[170]

However, only two tablets hint at direct involvement with royal scholars. One is an exact duplicate – even down to the colophon – of the ominous calendar copied by Issaran-mudammiq, Ashurnasirpal II's chief *āšipu* in the early ninth century BC.[171] The Kalhu manuscript is the oldest dated tablet to have been found in the Ezida, and is likely to have been stored there since the temple's earliest days (see Chapter 3). The Assur manuscript, on the other hand, could have found its way to the *āšipus*' house from anywhere; at most it shows a long-ago relationship – perhaps even a blood relationship – to a former line of royal scholars which had vanished long before Baba-šumu-ibni's descendants were active in the seventh century.

There is also a single tablet bearing two incantations, the first of which is said to be 'a copy from the palace of Hammurabi, king of the world' and the second 'a copy from the palace of Esarhaddon, king of […]'.[172] This juxtaposition of names recalls Ašaredu the Younger's promise to Esarhaddon, discussed above, to send him tablets from Hammurabi's

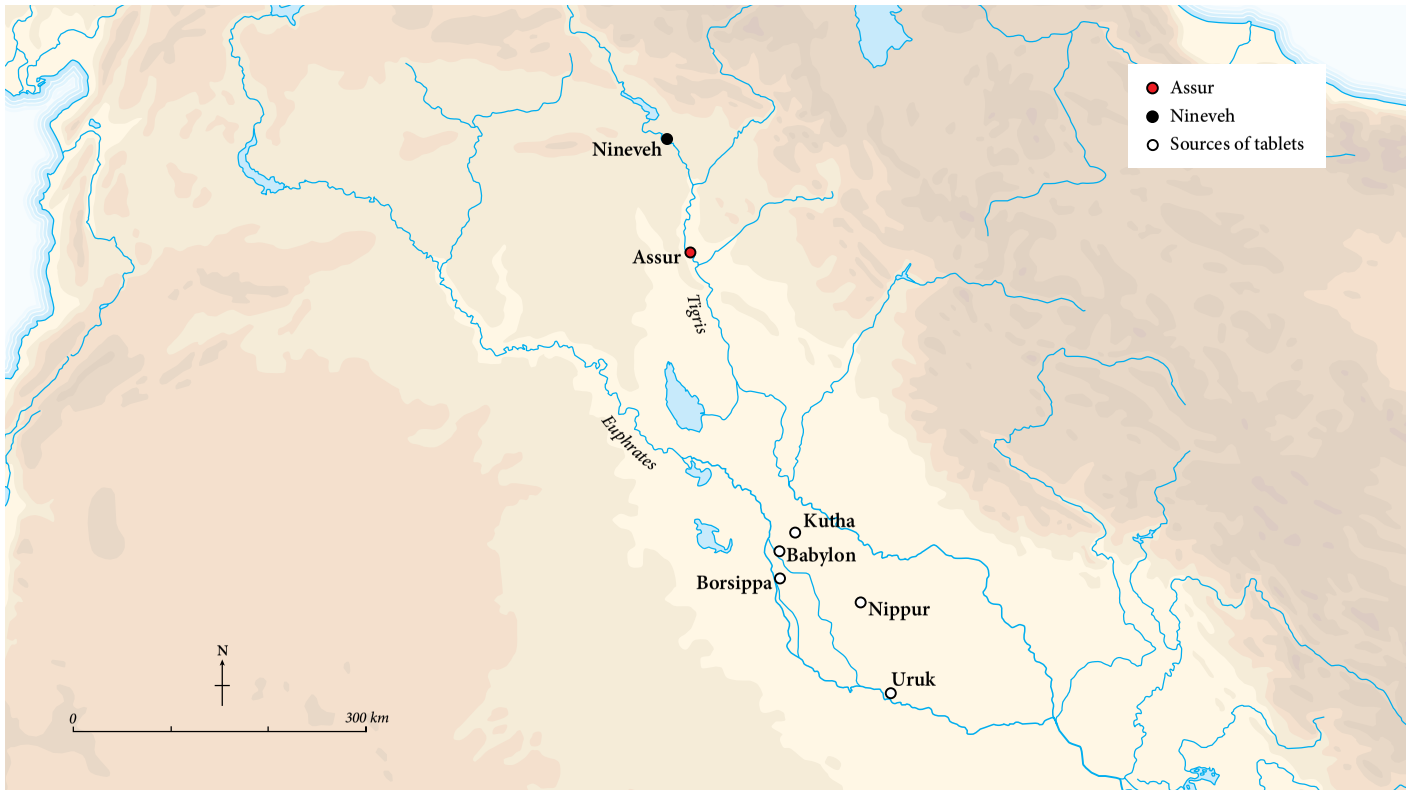

Figure 4.7: The scholarly networks of the Baba-šumu-ibni family of *āšipus* from seventh-century Assur. Source: Martin Brown.

time, a millennium before.[173] The tablet's colophon names the otherwise unattested *šangû*-priest Ninurta-šumu-lešir as its owner, with no mention of Kişir-Aššur or his relatives. It is not obvious, therefore, how it came to be in the house. Further, as Franz Köcher showed, both compositions are also known from other duplicates – including a copy of the first text by Kiş ir-Aššur himself – which do not mention any royal provenance.[174] In any case, the incantation attributed to Hammurabi's palace, in Neo-Assyrian script and Standard Babylonian dialect, can hardly be a 1,000-year-old direct survival from Babylonia. The names of prominent ancient kings became attached to a variety of therapeutic recipes, rituals and materials in the first millennium, thereby endowing them with both antiquity and authority.[175] All in all, we should doubt the provenance claims made for these particular recipes.

Overall, the Baba-šumu-ibni family's tablet collection is structurally very similar to that of the Kalhu Ezida, perhaps even more tightly focused on *āšipūtu* than its royal counterpart (Figs 4.4, 4.6). Yet it gives no strong evidence for relationships with Assyrian court scholarship – beyond professional roles within Aššur's temple – but rather looks to its local community and to Babylonia instead. And as we shall see, the further we move from the imperial heartland the more inaccessible royal circles seem to have been.

A long-lived merchant city and cult centre of the moon god Sin, the city of Harran (Akkadian 'Road' or 'Journey') was located at the crossroads of two vital overland trade routes: east–west from the Assyrian heartland to Aleppo and the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean; and north–south down the Balikh river from Anatolia to the Euphrates and Babylonia.[176] The Harran region, some 400 kilometres west of Nineveh, had been under Assyrian administration since the mid-ninth century BC but – for reasons that are not yet entirely clear – became particularly important to the state under Sargon II in the late eighth century. Despite being the epicentre of a major coup against Esarhaddon in 670 BC it remained in royal favour.[177] Simo Parpola has even suggested that Ashurbanipal may have moved his residence there in 645 BC (see Chapter 3).[178] Certainly, it briefly became the Assyrian capital after the fall of Nineveh in 612, as the empire regrouped and tried to fight back against the invading Medes and Babylonians.[179]

We have already seen above that Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal's chief *kalûs*, Urad-Ea and his son Nabu-zeru-iddina, held parallel appointments as *kalûs* of Sin in Harran. However, they were not native westerners but descendants of the illustrious Babylonian Šumu-libši, also a chief *kalû*.[180] Two of Nabu-zeru-iddina's three known scholarly tablets

were copies of original writing-boards from the Šumu-libši kin-group's paternal house in Babylon.[181] But these men were not the only scholarly incomers to the area, as witnessed by the finds from Huzirina (modern Sultantepe), a small town about 20 kilometres north of Harran.[182]

Close to a large institutional building – almost certainly a temple, perhaps to the moon-god Sin of Harran or to the goddess Ištar – was a courtyard house with a small domestic altar made of rubble and plaster built against its outer wall, close to the front entrance. On top of the altar, the excavators found a pile of nearly 400 scholarly tablets, surrounded and protected by a semi-circle of empty storage jars and covered with a heap of stone and pottery vessels.[183] The whole of the surrounding area was covered in smashed household goods and even a decapitated skull, suggesting that the tablets had been hurriedly deposited over the shrine for protection as the Babylonians and Medes threatened Harran and its environs in 610 BC.

The composition of the cached tablet hoard differs markedly in some respects from that of the contemporary Assyrian royal libraries (Table 4c; Fig. 4.6; cf. Table 4b; Fig. 4.4).[184] Most noticeably, omens – which dominate court scholarship – account for less than one-fifteenth of the extant tablets from Huzirina. As in the Kalhu Ezida, hymns, incantations and rituals predominate (almost half the corpus). Medical recipes (one-tenth) and word-lists (one-fifteenth) survive in somewhat similar proportions to Kalhu, but the most conspicuous difference is the relatively large number of literary works, representing nearly one-sixth of the assemblage. More than fifty manuscripts of many of the great Standard Babylonian classics – including the *Epic of Creation, Gilgamesh, Anzu, Nergal and Ereškigal*, and the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* – were found here, compared to just a handful in Kalhu. However, where the tablets from the royal cities are generally, as one might expect, elegantly executed in a clear hand and good orthography, the Huzirina tablets tend to poor spelling and sometimes incomprehensible script.[185]

The scribes attested in the Huzirina colophons are particularly revealing of the collection's function (online Tables A14–A15). The oldest scholarly tablets in the cache date to the first few years of Sargon II's reign, including one copied by a Šum-tabni-uṣur, son of the crown prince's *asû*-healer Nabu-tukulti.[186] Greta Van Buylaere has suggested that they represent the first generation of cuneiform-literate Assyrians in Huzirina, sent to settle the area by the king himself.[187] A generation later, the corpus starts to be dominated by members of the Nur-Šamaš family, who – it is reasonable to assume – probably lived in the immediately adjacent house. The paterfamilias was one Qurdi-Nergal, who is named

as a *šamallû agašgû* 'novice apprentice' in a tablet dating to 701 BC and later became *šangû*-priest of the gods Zababa and Baba of Arbaʾil, Harran and Huzirina.[188] His son Mušallim-Baba also appears in colophons as a *šamallû (agašgû)*, while in 619 BC Inurta-[…], a *šamallû ṣehru* 'junior apprentice' and son of the *šamallû ṣehru* Nabu-zer-kitti-lešir, is perhaps Qurdi-Nergal's great-grandson.[189]

Some unrelated men also wrote tablets *ana tāmarti Qurdi-Nergal* 'for Qurdi-Nergal's viewing', including the eunuch and *šamallû* Nabu-ahu-iddin and his pupil Nabu-rehtu-uṣur. Using identical wording to the *āšipu* Banunu in Kalhu, the latter warns against the dispersal of the *gerginakku* as a taboo of the god Ea, in the colophon to a literary work copied in 701 BC.[190] A further thirty or so writers, including twenty *šamallû (ṣehrūtu)* '(junior) apprentice scribes' are also named in the Huzirina cache (online Tables A15–A16). Apart from Šum-tabni-uṣur's father, the crown prince's *asû*, their parents include a *bārû*-diviner, two *šangû*-priests, eight scribes and two scribes of the *turtānu*. The *turtānu* was the most senior of Assyria's military officials who, not coincidentally, also governed the province immediately to the north of Harran.[191] A further tablet was even written by an otherwise unattested *turtānu*, Aplaya.[192]

Conspicuously, none of these young men claimed to hail from the royal cities of Kalhu, Dur-Šarruken or Nineveh (Fig. 4.8). Instead their family backgrounds, where mentioned, are Huzirina, Assur and the Babylonian city of Kutha, also via Assur. A *šangû*-priest of Aššur's temple in Assur and an *āšipu* from Babylon also appear in broken colophons, most likely as fathers, ancestors or owners of tablets that have been copied. And it was not only the human actors in the Huzirina network who were excluded from contemporary Assyrian royal scholarship. While three Huzirina tablets are said to be copies from Babylon, or from the goddess Gula's temple Esabad, either there or in Assur, none claims to be from any other city of the Assyrian imperial heartland.[193] And while Nabu was clearly central to the royal scholarly network, as we saw in Chapter 3, in Huzirina it was the divine couple Zababa and Baba of Arbaʾil, Harran and Huzirina who were the deities served by Qurdi-Nergal and his family.[194]

While it is of course possible that Qurdi-Nergal and his descendants acquired some or all of these other men's tablets through purchase, inheritance or exchange, their social homogeneity and mediocre scribal ability together suggest an alternative explanation. It is tempting to see the Huzirina tablet collection as the remains of a scribal school, run by Qurdi-Nergal and his descendants, perhaps to supplement their temple income.[195] The parallels with the *āšipu* Kiṣir-Aššur's household in Assur are compelling. Both houses, it appears, were centres of scholarly

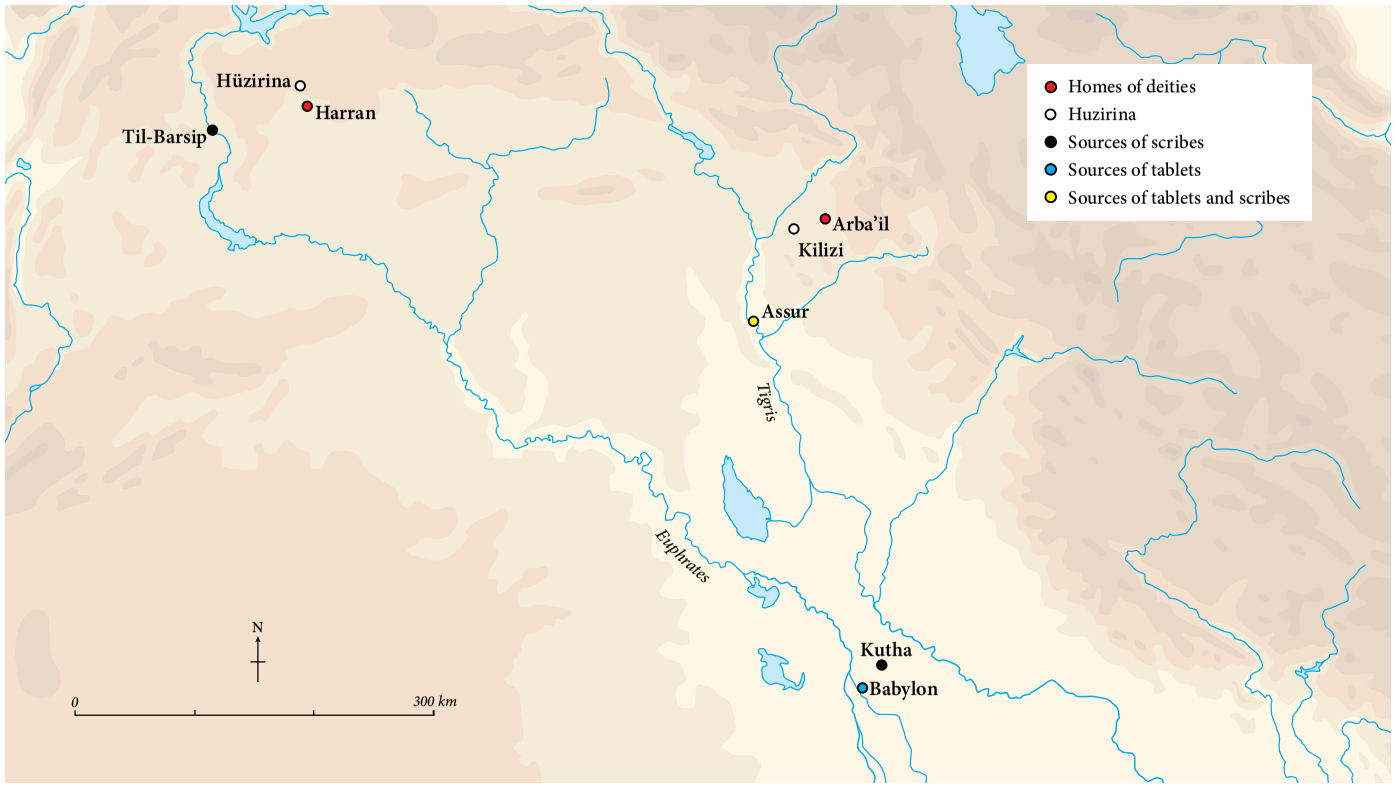

Figure 4.8: The scholarly networks of the Nur-Šamaš family from seventh-century Huzirina. Source: Martin Brown.

apprenticeship that attracted advanced (but not always entirely competent) learners from outside the resident family. But the Huzirina students were not generally drawn from the local population who, as Van Buylaere has pointed out, were mostly Aramaic speakers.[196] Rather, they were predominantly the sons of provincial officials, priests and scholars who – with the possible exception of Šum-tabni-uṣur in the first generation – had no direct connection to the Assyrian royal family or the inner circle of court scholars, although some belonged to well-to-do families from the city of Assur. The tablets were produced, as was traditional, by copying or dictation, by youths in their late teens or early twenties in the final stages of training, for their older teachers. The quality of the manuscripts, the rather isolated location and the social status of the apprentices collectively suggest that this was not an establishment of the highest educational standing – those would have been in the royal cities of the heartland – but certainly had aspirations and pretensions to cultural roundedness. As its students were not preparing to access the inner circle of the royal court they had no great need for omens in order to advise on imperial affairs. But as they were probably destined for positions in the middle ranks of imperial governance, they were given a thorough grounding in the literary classics of their culture as well as in standard works of healing, prayer and penitence. The presence of Assyrian scholarly tablets in Kullania (modern Tell Tayinat), 250 kilometres southwest of Harran, hints that the school at Huzirina may not have been entirely exceptional.[197]

Conclusions

Not surprisingly, as the primary locus of royal power moved from city to city, so did its scholarly entourage. But what is perhaps more surprising is the degree of movement *between* cities in the Nineveh–Assur–Arbaʾil triangle and almost nowhere else, at least in the late eighth and early seventh centuries when the evidence is densest. This looks like a tiny area on the map, and it certainly is in comparison with the distances the Assyrian army travelled, but it is some 80–105 kilometres between each of the three cities as the crow flies. The Nineveh–Assur route is easily made by river but the journey to Arbaʾil was across hilly, often mountainous terrain. We might estimate that it took at least three days to get there from Nineveh or Assur, the other two corners of the triangle.[198] Nevertheless scholars, especially *āšipu*-healers, regularly shuttled between Kalhu and Dur-Šarruken (*c*. 50 kilometres, mostly by river), later Kalhu and Nineveh (just

c. 35 kilometres by river), often independently of the whereabouts of the king. Indeed, to risk an anachronistic and over-topical analogy, we could say that the royal scholars were members of the Assyrian academic precariat, on zero-hours contracts. The king's *kalû*-lamenters were equally at home in the palace and in the temple, while his *āšipus* were affiliated with the various temples of Nabu. Indeed, we may even see these buildings as branches of the same institution, the particular domains of the leading scholarly family of the time. *Bārû*-diviners and *asû*-healers, who had no temple affiliations, so far as we know, were in much closer attendance on the person of the king, though *asûs* were just as likely to be assigned to other ailing members of the royal family, often in quite separate locations. With the exception of the *rab ṭupšarrī*, 'chief scribe', who was often out and about on royal business, reporters of celestial omens appear to have been more static, although as a group much more widely dispersed throughout the heartland of the empire and in northern Babylonia. Most of the men making celestial observations for the king primarily served him – and, we presume, their local communities – in other scholarly or priestly capacities, however. The title *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* did not designate a primary profession but a secondary specialism. Interestingly, the non-literate, non-scholarly *raggim(t)u* prophets appear mostly where the scholars are not: namely in Arbaʾil, the one central Assyrian city which royal scholarship apparently barely penetrated.

Within the royal network, there seems to have been relatively free movement of tablets and texts. Scholars made copies of works for their own personal use, which also made their way into temple and palace collections. They also copied, compiled, composed and commented on scholarly works for the king and palace. The lack of protective formulae in their colophons, and in Ashurbanipal's, is suggestive. It cannot be that they openly shared the textual foundations of their learning with all comers. Rather, we must conclude that they were so confident of their ability to maintain their exclusivity that there was no need to guard against the possibility of outsiders gaining access to their network, while insiders need not be admonished to return what was, in effect, their common intellectual property.

If Stephen Lieberman is correct, access to Ashurbanipal's palace collection for consultation was restricted to – or perhaps just by – the king himself.[199] And while most Assyrians were willing to acknowledge their intellectual debts to Babylonia in colophons, Ashurbanipal treated the sources of his manuscripts as an imperial inheritance or denied their origins altogether. Given the demonstrated mobility of tablets between the

various palaces and Nabu's temples, we should probably not be worrying about how many 'libraries' Ashurbanipal maintained. On this view, the fact that his tablets were divided between the Succession (North) Palace and the New (Southwest) Palace matters less than has recently been argued. It is only the lamentations he offered to Nabu's Ezida in Nineveh – and which he thereby put at the disposal of the scholars attached to that temple – that should be treated as conceptually distinct.

Meanwhile in Assur, the *āšipus* Kiṣir-Aššur, Kiṣir-Nabu and their associates belonged to a thriving urban network of scholars who looked to the temples of Aššur and Gula rather than to the palace for institutional support.[200] As Stefan Maul has shown, there was controlled movement of apprentices and tablets between households, and copyists were careful to acknowledge their sources, whether city, temple or private individual. Intellectual interests were tightly focused on professional healing and ritual.[201] Out west in Huzirina, the *šangû*-priest Qurdi-Nergal and his descendants attracted apprentices from across the middle echelons of the imperial governing classes who were looking for a broad cultural education as well as a degree of professional literacy. The notable lack of commentaries here, compared to the collections of the Assur *āšipus* and the royal court, suggest that they were primarily consumers of knowledge rather than creative thinkers. While we can imagine that many of these young men aspired to gain access to the inner circles of the royal court, it is unlikely that they ever did.

Notes

1. SAA 7: 1; e.g. Parpola (1993: XIV); Brown (2000: 49–50 n154) describes this list as 'perhaps the best guide to the inner circle at this time' (i.e. the reign of Ashurbanipal by Brown's reckoning); on the dating to shortly after 671 BC see Radner (2009: 222), who also discusses the 'foreign' experts. For the concept of the 'inner circle' see Parpola (1993: XXV–XXVII).
2. SAA 7: 2.
3. Unambiguously attested elsewhere in the Assyrian royal correspondence: *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* Issar-šumu-ereš, Balassu, Bel-eṭir and Nadin-ahhe; *āšipus* Nabu-gamil, Nabu-nadin-šumi, Remuttu; *bārûs* Aqaraya, Bani and Zizi; *kalû* Nabu-zeru-iddina; homonymous senders of celestial omen reports: Bel-ušezib, Nabuʾa and Zakiru; and the Assur *āšipu* Kiṣir-Nabu is probably too young to be the man with that name listed on SAA 7: 1. For more details see online Tables A5–9.
4. On scholarly patronage at the Assyrian court, see Westbrook (2005); Robson (2011a).
5. Mostly published in SAA 4; 8; and 10 with reviews, additions and corrections at http://oracc.org/saao/knpp/lettersqueriesandreports/, last accessed November 2016.
6. Letters on scholars being summoned include: SAA 10: 160, 171, 294; on banishment: SAA 10: 284.
7. Akkullanu also served as a judge, entailing yet more time away from advising royalty (Jas 1996: nos. 21, 46; Villard 1998a).
8. SAA 7: 149–53; ŠU-MIN MAN, e.g. SAA 7: 150, obv. iii 11'.
9. SAA 2: 6; SAA 10: 6–7.

10. We know little about the movements of non-cuneiform scholars in the seventh century: the *dāgil iṣṣūrī* augurs from the western lands who, for most of the eighth century, appear to have enjoyed much higher status at court than their local colleagues, as well as the Egyptian scholars. Of course, their presence in Assyria may well have been on diplomatic grounds rather than scholarly ones but – as the case of the Middle Assyrian *asû* Raba-ša-Marduk in Chapter 3 reminds us – they need not have been mutually exclusive, and initially brief visits could end up lasting a lifetime.
11. According to SAA 10: 182 Esarhaddon said of Marduk-šumu-uṣur(?), a-di ina KUR aš-šur^{ki} [šu-tu-ni] | ⌜lu¹ [qur]-ba-an-ni, 'As long as [he is] in Assyria, let him stay close to me'. The following paragraphs are based on the much more extensive Robson (2011a).
12. Southwest Palace: SAA 4: 156, 279, 280, 296, 419; North Palace: SAA 4: 283, 326–8; Review Palace: SAA 4: 129.
13. SAA 10: 176, 183.
14. SAA 4: 122, 155, 185, 196, 300, 324.
15. [PAB 15 U_4]-MEŠ DÙG.GA-MEŠ DÙ-^{ti} HAL$^{r-ti¹}$ (SAA 8: 235, obv. 12; restored from parallel formulation in obv. 2); cf. SAA 10: 183.
16. SAA 16: 236.
17. SAA 13: 19.
18. ^{m}šu-la-a ^{lú}HAL i-qab-⌜bi¹ | ù ziq-ni-šú i-ba-qa-⌜an¹ (SAA 17: 105 rev. 10'–11').
19. ina pa-an LUGAL aq-ṭi-bi: SAA 10: 315 obv. 11, 324 obv. 14; Radner (2010a).
20. SAA 10: 315–16, 321–3, 336.
21. ^{na_4}bu-ra-al-li ⌜at¹-ti-ši | ú-sab-ši-il (SAA 10: 323 rev. 10–11); busy elsewhere: SAA 10: 297, 319–23.
22. SAA 10: 316.
23. [ina É LUGAL] iš-pur-an-ni-ni | [at]-ta-lak (SAA 10: 318, l.e. 1–2); SAA 10: 324.
24. SAA 10: 320.
25. SAA 10: 328.
26. Other royalty: SAA 10: 187, 191–7, 200–1, 213–14, 217–18, 222–3, 231; sending medicine: SAA 10: 194, 241, 244, 247, 250.
27. ša LUGAL be-lí | iš-pur-an-ni ma-a a-ta-a | GABA.RI e-gír-ti la taš-pur-ra | ina ŠÀ É.GAL a-na ⌜UDU.NÍTA¹-MEŠ šú-nu | ša ^{lú}GAL–MUHALDIM ú-še-ṣa-an-ni | ú-se-li ^{giš}ZU ina É šú-u | ú-ma-a an-nu-rig ^{giš}ZU | a-mar pi-šìr-šu a-na-sa-ha | ina UGU dul-li ša ri-i-bi | […] (SAA 10: 202, obv. 5–13).
28. 2 SÌLA NINDA-MEŠ 2 SÌLA KAŠ-MEŠ ša ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ '2 litres of bread, 2 litres of beer for the *āšipu*' (SAA 1: 128 rev. 16).
29. ú-ma-a šum-ma ina IGI LUGAL | be-lí-ía ma-hir ina še-a-ri | la-al-lik la-a-mur | a-du dul-li la-ás-hu-ra (SAA 10: 202, rev. 12'–15').
30. SAA 10: 222.
31. [ša] šap-ra-ku-ni | [an-nu]-rig | [at-tal-ka] (SAA 10: 195, rev. 3–5).
32. ina UGU ša be-lí iš-pur-an-ni | a-sa-na-am-me a–še-ʾa-ar | ina ⌜UGU¹ ku-⌜us¹-[si]-ía al-lak | […] (SAA 10: 204, obv. 5–7).
33. SAA 10: 190, 203, 207, 209, 225.
34. a-na ^{lú}GALA šá an-na-ka | ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ is-se-šu | ap-ti-qi-id ṭè-e-mu | as-sa-ak-an-šu | mu-uk 6 u_4-me šam-hír | tak-pir-tú da-at an-né-e | tu-še-ta-qa (SAA 10: 212, rev. 9–15).
35. PAB 21 ṭup-pa-a-ni ina UGU ÍD | u_4-mu an-ni-i e-ta-pa-éš | ina nu-bat-ti ^{m}ARAD–^{d}é-a ina ÙR É.GAL | ep-pa-áš (SAA 10: 240, obv. 17–20); cf. SAA 10: 264.
36. SAA 10: 240, cf. 271.
37. SAA 10: 24, 314; cf. 377.
38. SAA 10: 253.
39. ù ina UGU ṭur-ri ša LUGAL be-lí iq-bu-ni | de-ʾi-iq a–dan-niš | la-a ina KUR na-ki-re-e | a-na LUGAL EN-ia aq-bi | mu-uk la si-ma-a-ti | ša KUR aš-šur^{ki} ši-na | ú-ma-a ina pu-ut GIŠ.HUR-MEŠ | ša DINGIR-MEŠ a-na LUGAL EN-ía | id-di-nu-ni ki-i ha-an-ni-i | nu-ka-a-la (SAA 10: 241, rev. 4–13).
40. ^{m}ARAD–^{d}é-a ŠÚ.MAH 30 u LUGAL (Sm 80 l. 2', only colophon extant; Hunger 1968: no. 524); ^{md}NÀ–NUMUN–SUM^{-na} ŠÚ ^{d}30 u LUGAL (K 3238, rev. 8, a lament to Nabu; Hunger 1968: no. 500); cf. Parpola (1970–83: II 452); Gabbay (2014a: 120).
41. SAA 10: 212, 240, cf. 25, 29, 264.
42. SAA 10: 340–3, cf. 345.
43. SAA 13: 155; SAA 10: 287, 338–9.

44. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 56–73); Brown (2000: 39–42).
45. Robson (2019).
46. Brown (2000: 39) adds the Assyrian cities of Tarbiṣu, Ekallate, Kar-Mullissu, Kasappa, Harran, Dur-Šarruken and Arrapha to this list. But none of the letters or reports he cites as evidence relate to astrological reports from those cities: the scholars in Tarbiṣu, Ekallate and Kasappa are *āšipus* (SAA 10: 93, 279, 294); the king not the *ṭupšarru* is in Kar-Mullissu (SAA 8: 472); neither king nor scholar is in Harran (SAA 10: 13); and Brown gives no evidence in support of naming Arrapha or Dur-Šarruken as the locations of royal scholarly activity. To the Babylonian list Brown (2000: 40) adds Nippur, Sippar and Ur. SAA 10: 114 does indeed state that there were *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* in Nippur, but there is no evidence that they reported to the king. The tablet purportedly from Sippar (CBS 1471 = SAA 10: 295) was purchased, not excavated (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P258805, accessed July 2018) and could thus have been unearthed anywhere. Even if it were found in Sippar, that tells us nothing about the whereabouts of its sender. Finally, SAA 8: 499 mentions only that the Babylonian *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* Šumaya met the king in Ur, not that he made observations there.
47. SAA 8: 255; SAA 10: 151, 225.
48. SAA 16: 21.
49. SAA 10: 60, 68–9, 76.
50. ša LUGAL ⌜be¹-[lí iš]-pur-[an-ni] | ma-⌜a¹ [ina] ⌜iri⌝ha-ri¹-hum-⌜ba¹ | ma-a [i]-⌜šá-tú TA¹ AN-e | ⌜ta-at¹-tu-uq-ta A.ŠÀ-MEŠ | ⌜ša¹ KUR áš-šu-ra-a-a ta-ta-kal | ⌜LUGAL¹ a-ta-a ú-ba-ʾa-a | [ina] ⌜É¹ liú⌝qa-tin-ni LUGAL | [a]-ta-a ú-ba-ʾa-a-ma | ⌜HUL¹ ina ŠÀ É.GAL la me-me-ni | ⌜LUGAL¹ ina ⌜iri⌝ha-ri-hum-ba | im–ma-te il-lik-ma (SAA 10: 42, obv. 5–15).
51. e.g. SAA 10: 44, 48–54.
52. mulṣal-bat-a-nu is-su-uh-ur | ut-ta-me-iš ina pa-na-tu-uš-šú | ina ŠÀ MUL.GÍR.TAB | il-lak lum-nu šu-ú | ma-šar-tú ár-hi-iš lu-gam-me-ru | uṣ-ṣu-ú ša LUGAL EN-ia lu-u ú-qur | a-du né-mar-u-ni a-ke-e ša il-lak-u-ni | iz-za-zu-u-ni (SAA 8: 53, rev. 2–8).
53. E.g. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 104–9).
54. [* 30 ina] iiiBARÁ U_4 30-KÁM [IGI] | [su]-bar-tu_4 ah-la-ma-a [KÚ] | EME BAR-tu_4 kur⌜MAR.TUki i-be-⌜el¹ | ⌜li¹-šá-a-nu a-hi-tu_4 [… i]-bi-il | a-ni-nu $SU.BIR_4$ki (SAA 8: 60, obv. 1–4).
55. The close synonym *mahhû*, literally 'raver', does not occur in Neo-Assyrian courtly letters but is found exclusively in literary and scholarly texts at this time (SAA 2: 6, obv. 117; SAA 3: 23 obv. 5; 34: obv. 28; 35: obv. 31; 39, obv. 27; SAA 4: 317, obv. 10; 320, obv. 9').
56. SAA 10: 59, 174, 298, 305, 361, 365; Butler (1998); Nissinen (1998). The Babylonian scholar Bel-ušezib complains that, while he was out of royal favour, *raggimus* and *raggimtus* were summoned to court during Esarhaddon's period as crown prince (SAA 10: 109).
57. As we saw from Ashurbanipal's preparations for war against the Elamites in Chapter 3, the king himself could also commission or induce revelations for himself from Ištar of Arbaʾil.
58. Parpola (1970–83: II 450–3); Lambert (1976a); Robson (2018).
59. CTN 4: 61+62, 63, 116, 170(+)188, 192; Robson (2014).
60. The British Museum's ongoing Ashurbanipal Library Project, with the aid of funding from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, has begun a systematic online catalogue and image database of the Kouyunjik Collection, with the long-term aim of providing as much documentation as possible (www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/ashurbanipal_library_phase_1.aspx, accessed July 2018).
61. Frahm (2004: 48).
62. Fincke (2003/4: 141–9).
63. CTN 4; http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/kalhu (accessed July 2018).
64. SAA 8: 160–3. Interestingly, Fincke (2010) identifies a draft celestial omen report amongst the tablets of the Kalhu Ezida but its author is unknown (CTN 4: 29). In very fragmentary catalogue of scholarly works the lines * U_4 AN dEN.LÍL ÉŠ.GÀR BAR-MEŠ | a-di ṣa-a-ti-šú '*Enūma Anu Ellil*: the series and the extraneous (tablets), together with its word-commentaries' may have started a listing of tablets belonging to Adad-šumu-uṣur (K 11922+ i 10'–11': Lambert 1976a); see Robson (2018).
65. The putative list of Adad-šumu-uṣur's tablets continues: * IRI ina SUKUD-e GAR : * iq-qur DÙ-uš | a-di BAR-MEŠ | ṣa-a-tu mu-kal-lim-tu '*Šumma Ālu ina Melê Šakin* (and) *Iqqur Īpus*, together with extraneous tablets, word-commentaries and *mukallimtu*-commentaries' (K 11922+ i 12'–14': Lambert 1976a); see Robson (2018). The exact findspot of CTN 4: 60 (Koch 2005: 77–82), a diviner's clay model of a sheep's lung, is unclear. Mallowan (1956: 8) states that it 'was found in the debris of the courtyard outside the east wall of the throne room', namely inside

the temple; alternatively (1966: I 274) 'in debris of NT6', the corridor at the back of Nabu's shrine. But the excavation record locates it in the street outside Ezida, near the rabetted stone wall that marks the exterior of Nabu's shrine (C.B.F. Walker, pers. comm., 2016). The text is written in Babylonian script with a colophon attributing it to one Nabu-pa[šer(?)] of Šapiya, a town in the territory of Bit-Amukkani, and dating to year 9 of a Babylonian king, whose name is missing. Frahm (2011a: 184, 279) suggests this could have been Marduk-apal-iddina II, a rebel king who claimed independence from Sargon in the late eighth century (r. *c.* 721–710 and 703–702).

66. Robson (2011a: 610).
67. SAA 8; SAA 4: 279–343.
68. Robson (2011a: 612–18).
69. Robson (2011a: 621).
70. Koch-Westenholz (2000: 31–6).
71. Koch-Westenholz (1999); Veldhuis (2010: 81–3); Frahm (2011a: 155–60).
72. Koch-Westenholz (1995: 82–8); Brown (2000: 75–81); Frahm (2011a: 133–55).
73. Koch (2005: 5–33, 56–66, 85–273, 447–80); Heeßel (2010); Frahm (2011a: 167–91).
74. Frahm (2004: 49–50).
75. Cf. Frahm (2004: 46).
76. Robson (2011a: 615).
77. The fact that the scholars consistently quoted omens in Standard Babylonian dialect rather than their vernacular Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian (Worthington 2006) tells us little about whether they were quoting from memory or not.
78. [ša iš-kun]-u-ni pi-ʿšîrʾ-[šú …] | ša ina ṭup-pi sa-ṭir-[u-ni …] | at-ta-as-ha TA e-gír-[ti] | an-ni-ti a-na MAN EN-ía ú-ʿseʾ-[bi-la] (SAA 10: 347 rev. 3'–6'); cf. SAA 10: 362.
79. [^{giš}]DA ^{mul}APIN | [ki]-i an-ni-i-e | [iq]-ʿṭi-biʾ 'The writing-board of *Mul-Apin* says as follows:' (SAA 10: 62 obv. 13–14).
80. E.g. SAA 8: 237; SAA 10: 60.
81. šum-ma LUGAL be-lí | i-qab-bi ma-a | a-ke-e qa-bi | A.ŠÀ lib-bi IRI lu-u | qa-an-ni IRI ^{d}IM ir-hi iṣ | lu ṭi-bi-ih ma-ga-ar-ri | iš-kun lu-u i-šá-ti | mì-im-ma ú-qa-al-li | a-me-lu šu-u 3 MU.AN.NA-MEŠ | ina ku-ú-ri u ni-is-sa-te | it-ta-na-al-la-ak | a-na ša A.ŠÀ i-ru-šu-u-ni | qa-bi (SAA 10: 42 obv. 20 – rev. 10).
82. SAA 10: 185–313; Heeßel (2000: 93).
83. Robson (2008b: 474).
84. ina UGU ku-uṣ-ṣi | ša LUGAL be-lí iš-pur-an-ni | la-áš-šú hi-ṭu DINGIR-MEŠ-ni ša ʿLUGALʾ | ár-hiš i-pa-aṭ-ṭu-ru | ʿùʾ a-ni-nu mì-i-nu | [ša ina] UGU-hi qur-bu-ni | [né-ep]-ʿpaʾ-áš mur-ṣi šat-ti | [šu-ú] ʿLUGALʾ be-lí | [ina UGU ŠÀ]-ʿšú laʾ i-šak-kan (SAA 10: 236 obv. 5–13). Issar-šumu-ereš gives similar advice to Esarhaddon: 'The king my lord need not worry about this illness. This is a seasonal disease; all the people who were sick are well (now). Further, the king my lord who is one who reveres the gods and prays day and night to the gods – can really anything happen to the king my lord and his offspring?' ina UGU la ṭu-ub UZU an-ni-i | LUGAL be-lí TA lìb-bi-šú la i-da-bu-ub | mur-ṣu MU.AN.NA šu-ú | UN-MEŠ am–mar mar-ṣu-u-ni | gab-bu šul-mu | tu-ra-ma LUGAL be-lí | ša pa-lìh DINGIR-MEŠ šu-tu-u-ni | u_4-mu ù mu-šú DINGIR-MEŠ ú-ṣal-lu-u-ni | kit-tu-ú me-me-ni | a-na LUGAL EN-ia ù NUMUN-šú il-la-ka (SAA 8: 1, obv. 6–rev. 2).
85. E.g. SAA 10: 238, 263, 277, 296.
86. SAA 10: 10.
87. ina UGU dul-li ša LUGAL | ina ti-ma-li iq-bu-u-ni | ma a-na U_4 24-KÁM ep-šá | la-áš-šú la nu-šá-an-ṣa | ṭup-pa-a-ni ma-aʾ-du-ti šu-nu | im – ma-ti ʿi-šaṭ-ṭu-ruʾ | ù šá-aṣ-ʿbuʾ-[tú šá] NU-MEŠ-ni | ša LUGAL e-mur-[u]-ʿniʾ ina ŠÀ U_4-MEŠ | 5 6 re-e-šú ni-ʿitʾ-ti-ši | … | ù ina UGU šu-me-ra-ni | ša $UŠ_{11}$.BÚR.RU.DA-a-ni | ša LUGAL be-lí iq-bu-u-ni | ma-a šu-pur ʿTAʾ NINA^{ki} | lu-bi-lu-ni ^{m}SUM–PAB-MEŠ | la-áš-pur ʿlil-likʾ lu-bi-la | ù ṭup-pa-ʿa-niʾ am-mu-ti | ša ÉŠ.GÀR mi-ʿihʾ-ri | is-se-šú-ma lu-bi-la | a-na U_4 2-KÁM ʿšaʾ ^{iti}AB | LUGAL le-pu-ʿušʾ U_4 4-KÁM | DUMU–MAN le-pu-[uš] U_4 6-KÁM | UN-MEŠ le-pu-[šú] (SAA 10: 255, obv. 5–13, rev. 1–13).
88. SAA 10: 202, 240.
89. SAA 10: 194, 321.
90. ú-ma-a ki-i ša LUGAL be-li | i-qab-bu-ni šum-mu tal-la-ka | a-na ^{iri}kal-ha a-na ma-hu-ni | liš-pa-ru-ni li-in-tu-ha | lu-bi-la ba-si pi-šîr-a-ti | lu tak-ru-ur ù a-na-ku | an-nu-rig ṭup-pa-a-ni 30 40 | SIG_5-MEŠ am–mar ina UGU^{-hi} qur-bu-u-ni | ù a-hi-ú-ti i-ba-áš-ši | i-se-niš ša im–ma-ti-me-ni | [in-né]-ʿpuʾ-šú-u-ʿniʾ re-e-šú | [a-na-áš-ši a]-ʿmaʾ-ta-ha (SAA 10: 245, rev. 7–18).

91. IM.GÚ.LÁ là BAR$^{-ár}$ NÍG.GIG ^{d}é-a LUGAL ABZU (CTN 4: 116, rev. 36'; 188, rev. ii 7'). For a much fuller version of this argument, see Robson (2018).
92. Maul (2003).
93. Fincke's (2004: 55–6) evidence in favour of this position consists of two letters to the king. The first, probably from his ally Ana-Nabu-taklak, sheikh of the Bit-Dakkuri tribe in the Borsippa region, reminds Sargon that 'when they removed our writing-boards […], they brought (them) to Marduk-apal-iddina'. ^{giš}DA-MEŠ-^{r}ni^{1} [ki-i …] | [ú-še]-ṣu-nu a-na ^{md}AMAR.UTU–DUMU.UŠ–^{r}SUM^{-na1} | [ul-te]-bi-lu (SAA 17: 201 rev. 1'–3'; see SAA 17: p. XXXIV for the attribution to Ana-Nabu-taklak). The second, from a certain Bel-iddina, reports on 'the writing-board (singular, not plural) of the temples' ^{giš}LE.U$_5$.UM šá É.KUR-MEŠ (SAA 17: 43 obv. 6). It is clear from the rest of the letter that this is the writing-board that he himself is drawing up concerning the temples of Babylonia. What exactly is on this writing-board is never mentioned, but there is no reason to suppose that this letter, or Ana-Nabu-taklak's, concerns the confiscation of scholarly writings rather than administrative matters.
94. SAA 3: 4, 18.
95. For the ninth century, see *Shalmaneser's Campaign to Urartu* (SAA 3: 17), known in a late eighth- or seventh-century copy from Huzirina, and the *Letter from Aššur to Šamši-Adad V* (SAA 3: 41), found in Assur, again probably in a seventh-century manuscript.
96. Cf. Lieberman (1987: 211–12).
97. Lieberman (1987: 210–11).
98. Wiseman (1955: 9).
99. É.GAL ^{m}MAN–GI.NA MAN kiš-šá-ti | MAN ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki} * U$_4$ AN ^{d}EN.LÍL ÉŠ.GÀR | ina ^{giš}LE.U$_5$.UM ZÚ AM.SI ú-šá-áš-ṭir-ma | ina qé-reb É.GAL-šú ina ^{iri}BÀD–MAN–GIN ú-kin (ND 3557, Wiseman 1955: 7).
100. SAA 3: 34–35; Lambert (1997); Weissert (1997). Frymer-Kensky's (1983) re-dating of the *Marduk Ordeal* to Esarhaddon's restoration of Babylon and the return of Marduk's statue to Esangila has not been widely accepted (e.g. Livingstone 1986: 205–53; Porter 1993: 139–40).
101. e.g. Frame (2008: 26–8).
102. SAA 3: 10, 33.
103. K 11922+ (Lambert 1976a); Robson (2018).
104. ^{giš}LE.U$_5$.UM am-mì-u | ša U$_4$ AN ^{d}EN.LÍL ša ni-iš-ṭur-u-ni | lu-še-ri-bu-u-ni LUGAL be-li le-mur | ù ^{giš}le-$^{'}$u ak-ka-du-u | ša LUGAL lid-di-nu-na-ši | MUL-MEŠ 3-TA.ÀM ina pu-u-ti | ina ŠÀ-bi le-ṣi-ru | ^{lú}SAG lip-qi-du ša un-qu i-bat-tu-ni | ina IGI-šú e-ṣi-ru-ni (SAA 8: 19 rev. 1–9).
105. Royal writing-boards are also referred to in the unassigned fragment SAA 10: 388 (obv. 2'–4'), where a royal official has asked, 'Who is this Mr [so-and-so], who is inscribing those writing-boards of the king, my lord?' (ma-a man-nu $^{m'd'}$[…] | ša ^{giš}le-$^{'}$a-a-ni am-mu-[te] | šá LUGAL EN-ia i-šá-ṭar-u-ni).
106. Another letter from Issar-šumu-ereš talks about 'new writing-boards that are being inscribed' ([^{giš}]ZU-MEŠ eš-šu-ti ša i-šá-ṭar-u-ni) which the king wants to look at (SAA 10: 30 obv. 8). Parpola (1970–83: II 329) dates this tablet to early in the reign of Ashurbanipal on the grounds that 'the king in question took considerable interest in literature'; but this argument seems circular to me.
107. iš-ka-ru | li-ib-[ru-u] | LUGAL li-iq-bi | 2-ta li-gi-na-a-te | ša ṣa-a-ti | li-iš-šur-ru | 2-ta ša ba-ru-te | liš-kun (SAA 10: 177 obv. 15–rev. 6). They are dateable to Esarhaddon's reign on the grounds that the only datable extispicy reports by Tabni and/or Naṣiru are from that time (SAA 4: 3, 13, 18, 44, 49, 81, 94, 114, 122, 129, 139, 142, 155, 157).
108. Parpola (1970–83: II 99–100).
109. ṭup-pi šá LUGAL ip-pu-šú | [ma]-ṭu ù ul šá-lim | [a]-du-ú ṭup-pi | ^{r}la^{1}-bi-ru šá am-mu-ra-pi LUGAL | [e]-pu-šú ma-al-ṭa-ru | [šá] ^{r}pa^{1}-ni am-mu-ra-pi LUGAL | ki-i áš-pu-ru | ul-tu TIN.TIR^{ki} | at-ta-šá-a | LUGAL né-pe-šú | [i]-^{r}na^{1} pi-it-^{r}ti^{1} | [ṭup-pa-ti an-na-a-te le-pu-uš] (SAA 10: 155 obv. 5–15).
110. an-nu-te 2 | ša li-gìn-nu | i-qa-bu-ú-ni | … | ^{md}MAŠ–ŠU DUMU ^{lú}GÚ.EN.NA | ÉŠ.GAR ug-da-mir | si-par-ri AN.BAR šá-kin | … | ^{m}ku-dúr-ru | ^{m}ku-na-a-a | UDUG.HUL.A-MEŠ | ug-dam-me-ru | … | dul-lu ša É ^{lú}GIG | ep-pa-šu-ú-ni (SAA 11: 156 obv. 3–5, 8–10, 14–17, rev. 12–14).
111. Parpola (1972: 33).
112. a-na tam-ri-irtu(GABA) ^{md}aš-šur–DÙ–A DUMU LUGAL GAL^{-u} (Hunger 1968: no. 345, rev. ii 26).

113. ^{md}aš-šur–DÙ–A NUN … | DUMU ^{md}aš-šur–PAP–SUM^{-na} MAN ŠÚ LUGAL KUR aš-šur^{ki} | ŠÀ.BAL.BAL ^{md}30–PAP-MEŠ–IRI MAN ŠÚ MAN KUR aš-šur^{ki} | a-na TI ZI-MEŠ … | … | i-na IM.GÚ.LÁ É.ZI.DA É ^{d}MUATI | ša qé-reb NINUA^{ki} EN-ia ú-kin (K 2529 rev. ii 37–9, 47–8, Hunger 1968: no. 328; Gabbay 2014b: 276–89).
114. Livingstone (2007: 113). Borger (1970) shows that the two colophons Hunger (1968: nos. 338–9) are essentially identical. All four known tablets bearing this Ashurbanipal colophon are listed by Hunger (1968: 105–6) with a further join by Borger (1970).
115. Hunger (1968: no. 327). See Chapter 2 for this Ashurbanipal colophon Type n.
116. Lieberman (1990).
117. E.g. Hunger (1968: nos. 318–19, 323–5).
118. Lieberman (1990: 318–19).
119. Frahm (2004: 84); SAA 4: xxxv; cf. Radner (2011a).
120. Lanfranchi (1998: 154).
121. E.g. SAA 10: 276, from the *āšipu* Nabu-nadin-šumi to Esarhaddon.
122. SAA 4: 1–278.
123. Latest dated query: SAA 4: 272; earliest dated reports: SAA 4: 316, 322; cf. Robson (2011a).
124. šu-ta-du-na-ku i-na UKKIN um-ma-a-ni (K 2694 + 3050, obv. i 14': Novotny and Jeffers 2018: Ashurbanipal 73); see also e.g. Livingstone (2007: 100); Zamazalová (2011: 315).
125. E.g. Parpola (1970–83: II 329).
126. There are three such letters from Akkullanu, chief priest of Aššur's temple in Assur (SAA 10: 101–3). But there are no clues in the letters themselves as to when they were written, while his dateable astrological reports and royal correspondence span the quarter-century 675–650, i.e. far back into Esarhaddon's reign too (SAA 8: 101–4; SAA 10: 88–91, 94, 96, 100, 104–5). Given that SAA 10: 102 – assigned to Akkullanu but without an extant sender – mentions the copying activities of the Assur-based *āšipu* Kiṣir-Aššur, these letters may in fact concern work for a collection in Assur, not for Nineveh (*contra* Villard 1998b). Likewise, Ninurta-aha-iddin, the Babylonian author of two now very fragmentary royal letters about reading and writing scholarly tablets (SAA 10: 373–4), is almost certainly not Ashurbanipal's military correspondent in Nippur (SAA 18: 56, 200) and more likely to be the father of a scholar mentioned in a letter to Esarhaddon (SAA 10: 291; cf. Lieberman 1990: 311 n27; PNA under 'Inurta-ahu-iddin' nos. 6, 7, 9).
127. The *ummânus* of Ashurbanipal's annals, captured from Elam and the Gambulu tribe of Chaldeans in his sixth and eighth campaigns respectively (Novotny and Jeffers 2018: e.g. Ashurbanipal 3: vi 24), are to be understood as expert craftsmen, not scholars, given the context in which they appear in the midst of military personnel (CAD: U 113, sv. *ummânu* 2a 9').
128. Frame and George (2004); cf. Frahm (2005b); Goldstein (2010); see further Chapter 6 and Robson (2018).
129. kul-lat ^{lú}DUB.SAR$^{-tú}$ ^{r}šá ŠÀ^{1} NÍG.GA ^{d}NÀ EN-iá šu-ṭu-ra-a$^{?}$ šu-bil-an-ni (BM 45642, obv. 9).
130. kul-lat ^{lú}DUB.SAR$^{-tú}$ gab-bi né-me-qí ^{d}é-a u ^{d}ASAL.^{r}LÚ^{1}.[HI …] | [BE iz]-bu IRI ina SUKUD^{-e} GAR^{-in} ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ$^{-tú}$ ^{lú}GALA$^{-tú}$ ba!(NA)-ru-tu u kul-lat $^{lú r}$DUB^{1}.[SAR$^{-tú}$ …] | [šá ŠÀ NÍG].^{r}GA^{1} ^{d}AMAR.UTU ^{d}EN GAL$^{-ú}$ EN$^{-iá}$ (BM 28825, obv. 8–10). Note that the parallel phrases are spelled in exactly the same way as in BM 45642.
131. ^{lú}um-ma-nu šá BÁR.SIPA^{ki} | šá at-ta ti-du-ú ina ŠU-MIN-ka ṣa-bat-ma | DUB-MEŠ ma-la ina É-MEŠ-šú-nu i-ba-áš-šú-ú | ù DUB-MEŠ ma-la ina É.ZI.DA šak-nu (Thompson 1906: no. 1, ll. 6–9).
132. ki-i | mim-ma ṭup-pi u né-pe-šú šá a-na-ku | la áš-pu-rak-ku-nu-šú u ta-tam-ra-ma | a-na É.GAL-ia ṭa-a-bu | it-ti-i'-im-ma i-šá-nim-ma | šu-bi-la-a-ni (Thompson 1906: no. 1, ll. 34–8).
133. SAA 7: 49–56; Parpola (1983); Fincke (2004: 58).
134. Parpola (1983: 4).
135. Fincke (2004: 58).
136. Fincke (2003/04: 146).
137. Cf. e.g. Du Toit (2005).
138. Lanfranchi (1998: 155).
139. Parpola (1983: 8–9).
140. Lanfranchi (1998: 155); Du Toit (2005: 99).
141. Frame and George (2004: 283).
142. Reade (2004: 257).
143. Hunger (1968: nos. 318, 328, 336). Borger (1969–70: 168) notes just one exception: four tablets of the purification ritual series *Bīt Rimki* were copied 'according to the wording of original writing-boards from Babylon' ki-i KA ^{giš}LE.U$_5$.UM/^{giš}ZU GABA.RI KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki}.

144. Frahm (2010b: 89–90).
145. E.g. ki-ṣir–^{d}NÀ ša ^{d}NÀ NIR-su (Hunger 1968: no. 212a; cf. nos. 198, 200, 205, 211, 212, 214, 238, 248, 252, 504–5). This is, so far as I can tell, a formulation that is exclusive to Neo-Assyrian Assur, when expressed in relation to Nabu.
146. é-gidru-kalam-ma-sum-mu : É ^{giš}GIDRU i-šar-tú ana KUR i-nam-di-nu : É ^{d}MUATI šá ha-ri-i, 'E-gidru-kalama-sumu = House which gives the righteous sceptre to the land = temple of Nabu *ša harê*' (George 1992: 178–9, l. 158).
147. Radner (1999: 74).
148. Hunger (1968: nos. 504, 518).
149. SAA 8: 143–59; SAA 8: 2; SAA 10: 205.
150. SAA 8: 126–42; SAA 10: 122–7.
151. SAA 8: 100–112; SAA 10: 84–108, 232; SAA 13: 16.
152. Pedersén (1985–6: II 12–29, N1); and see note 126 above.
153. See e.g. Grayson (1983). The archives and libraries of Assur were very usefully surveyed by Pedersén (1985–6) and (re)publication of the scholarly tablets from Assur is the subject of a long-term project at the University of Heidelberg (https://www.ori.uni-heidelberg.de/assyriologie/forschung/keilschrift/, last accessed July 2018). The first five volumes are now online at http://digi.hadw-bw.de/view/kal (last accessed July 2018).
154. Pedersén (1985–6: II 76–81, N5).
155. Pedersén (1985–6: II 84–5, N8; II 41–76, N4); Maul (2010).
156. Pedersén (1985–6: II 41–3); Miglus (1996: 236–41); see also Heeßel (2017: 373–5).
157. Miglus (1996: 239) discounts an earlier theory that the house had been destroyed by fire, noting that while there are traces of burning on some of the older plaster layers on the walls of the courtyard, there is no evidence of a fire in other rooms of the house.
158. Maul (2010: 192–6). According to Maul (2010: 194), 1,242 tablets and fragments from the German excavations are currently associated with this house, but this number is likely to fall as further joins are made. A brief report of Iraqi excavations on other parts of the house in the late 1970s, and some of the 150 or so further tablets and fragments found there, is given by Ismail (1982: 199–200 with figs 1–6).
159. Pedersén (1985–6: II 48–58). Frahm (2011a: 268) notes the complete absence of the diagnostic omen series *Sakikkû* from the Baba-šumu-ibni family's house. This confirms the impression given by the royal *āšipus*' letters discussed above that – despite the impression given by the series' incipit, *inūma āšipu ana bīt marṣi illik* 'When the *āšipu* goes to the sick man's house' – Neo-Assyrian *āšipus* did not in fact use this work in their daily healing practice (Robson 2008b). However, the family's collection does include a few chapters of the sacrificial omen series *Bārûtu* and related works (Heeßel 2012: nos. 19, 30, 71), suggesting that the disciplinary isolation of divination that was maintained in the Assyrian court was not so sharply observed in other contexts.
160. Frahm (2011a: 268–70).
161. Maul (2010); Hunger (1968: nos. 191–220). To date the Assur project has (re)published some sixty scholarly tablets with firm provenance from the house (Heeßel 2007: nos. 19, 35, 45, 55; Schwemer 2007: nos. 8, 13, 23–6, 31, 39, 41, 46, 49, 58–9; Frahm 2009: nos. 76, 80; Maul et al. 2011: nos. 4–8, 16, 18–21, 32, 34–8, 41–4, 48, 53, 60, 62, 66, 71; Heeßel 2012: nos. 19, 30, 71; Meinhold 2017: nos. 9, 11, 14, 16, 21, 23, 25, 34, 39?, 59) and undoubtedly many more that have since lost their excavation numbers.
162. Maul (2010: 208).
163. Maul (2010: 211).
164. Maul (2010: 216).
165. Hunger (1968: no. 203A).
166. Pedersén (1985–6: II 47–8); Maul (2010: 212).
167. Maul (2010: 214); see also Robson (2018).
168. Pedersén (1985–6: II 50, 57).
169. Grayson (1980–3: 124–5); SAA 2: 12. Grayson (1987b: 154) describes the latter composition as 'a schoolboy's exercise in writing a treaty clause', given that it 'does not say much, and is inept in style and grammar'. However, Parpola and Watanabe (SAA 2: L) disagree with this characterisation, on the grounds that the object on which it is written is not a 'typically clumsily shaped and round or ovoid' school tablet but 'has the standard format of excerpt tablets'. However, since both of those pieces were published, Gesche (2001: 174–84) has shown that excerpt tablets were routinely used in first-millennium scribal education. On balance, then, Grayson's interpretation is probably the correct one.

170. Frahm (2011a: 270). To the tablets listed in PNA under Aššur-mudammiq (11) and Bel-kundi-ila'i (1) add IM 92995, a bilingual hymn to Nabu on behalf of Bel-kundi-ila'i (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1998). Note too SAA 13: 39, a letter from one Nabu-bessunu – possibly the same man as Kiṣir-Aššur's father – to an Aššur-mudammiq concerning repairs to Aššur and Mullissu's thrones in the temple.
171. Hulin (1959); CTN 4: 58.
172. GABA.RI É.GAL ^{m}ha-am-^{r}mu-ra^{1}-bi LUGAL ŠÁR, GABA.RI É.GAL ^{m}aš-šur–ŠEŠ–SUM^{-na} LUGAL ^{r}ŠÁR^{1} (A 284 + 420 ll. 29, 91, Köcher 1971: no. 322).
173. SAA 10: 155.
174. Köcher (1971: ix).
175. e.g. healing stones and necklaces of Hammurabi and of Naram-Sin: Schuster-Brandis (2008: 163–9, 346–53).
176. Lloyd and Brice (1951: 80–1); Green (1992).
177. Radner (2003).
178. Parpola (1986: 235).
179. Postgate (1972–5: 124).
180. Members of the Šumu-libši kin-group are attested in both Babylon and Uruk in the seventh century (Nielsen 2011: 186, 260 n154); the fragmentary *Catalogue of Texts and Authors*, also found at Kouyunjik, describes Šumu-libši as a *kalû* and *ummânu* (^{lú}GALA UM.ME.A) of Eridu (Lambert 1962: 66–7, 75). See further Chapter 6.
181. Hunger (1968: nos. 499–500); Parpola (1970–83: II 452 nos. 11–12). SAA 11: 153, a seventh-century list of Babylonians dedicated to Bel, written in Neo-Assyrian and found at Kouyunjik, locates the Šumu-libši kin-group's paternal house opposite Lugalirra's temple in central Babylon (Nielsen 2011: 56–62).
182. On the archaeology of Huzirina (modern Sultantepe) see Lloyd and Göçke (1953); S. Lloyd (1954); on the tablets see Gurney (1952; 1953; 1997); Finkelstein (1957); Gurney and Finkelstein (1957); Reiner (1960; 1967); Gurney and Hulin (1964); Hunger (1968: nos. 351–408); Pedersén (1998: 178–80); http:/oracc.org/cams/gkab/huzirina (last accessed July 2018).
183. Lloyd and Gökçe (1953: 37).
184. *Pace* Reiner (1960; 1967), discussed in Chapter 2.
185. Gurney (1952: 26).
186. STT 1: 21 (718 BC), an anonymous copy of the *Epic of Anzu*, Tablet 2; STT 36 (716 BC), an unidentified composition copied by the *šamallû ṣehru* Šumu-tabni-uṣur; cf. STT 108 (704 BC), a copy of *Abnu Šikinšu* also by Šumu-tabni-uṣur (Hunger 1968: nos. 355, 363–4).
187. Van Buyalere (2011); see SAA 19: 179.
188. STT 2: 192; STT 1: 64.
189. STT 1: 64; STT 2: 179, 199, 299, 305; STT 2: 300 (619 BC).
190. STT 1: 38 (701 BC); STT 2: 161, 172, 237, 247.
191. Radner (2006–8: 59).
192. STT 1: 56, containing prayers to Ea and Sin, dedicated to Adad for his life (Mattila 2000: 113).
193. From Babylon: STT 2: 136, 232, 323; from Esabad: STT 1: 73; cf. George (1993: 137–8). However, STT 2: 232 is said to be GABA.RI ^{r}TIN^{1}.TIR^{ki} šá ^{m}^{r}MU?^{1}–HÉ.GÁL$^{-šú}$ | ù ^{md}MUATI–KAR^{-ir}–ZI-MEŠ A ^{m}har-^{r}ri^{1}-ri [x] ^{r}d^{1}AMAR.UTU, 'a copy of Babylon, of Šumu-libšu and Nabu-eṭir-napšati, the son of Harriru, the […] of Marduk': is this a link, however tenuous, to the royal *kalûs* of the Šumu-libši kin-group?
194. However, the colophons do invoke a similar range of gods to curse or bless those who would steal or protect the tablets. In the very fragmentary Kalhu tablets only Ea and Šamaš are currently legible (CTN 4: 27, 116, 188). At Huzirina, Šamaš is invoked five times out of the fifteen extant instances (STT 1: 71, 84, 92; STT 2: 215, 394) and Ea three times, always in conjunction with Nabu (STT 1: 38, 40; STT 2: 192). Nabu is summoned a further three times, once together with Marduk (STT 1: 108; STT 2: 247, 256), while Iddi-Meslamtaea calls twice on Lugalirra (STT 1: 33; STT 2: 159) and there are single occurrences of Adad – for the *turtānu* Aplaya – and Zababa (STT 1: 56; STT 2: 199). But with the exception of the last two, these deities do not seem to have particular regional or personal significance here, but rather stand for the general or specific realms of learning with which the colophon writers wished to be associated.

It has been argued that there were least two temples of Nabu within the region: at Haddatu (modern Arslan Tash) 55 kilometres due west of Harran, and at Guzana (Tell Halaf) 90 kilometres due east, both constructed in the late eighth century (Turner 1968; Heinrich and Seidl 1982: 270–71). Although they have been identified as temples of Nabu on the basis of their twin shrines, they have yielded no evidence of royal or scholarly activity there and Kertai (2015a: 101) suggests that the building at Haddatu, at least, was probably a palatial storage facility.

195. Two fragmentary records of endowments to the temples of Zababa and Baba, and of Ištar, were found at Huzirina (SAA 12: 48, 91 = STT 1: 44; STT 2: 406+407).
196. Van Buylaere (2011).
197. Lauinger (2011).
198. In late October 1820 (AD!) James Claudius Rich and his party took three days to travel from Erbil to east Mosul, the modern equivalents of Arbaʾil and Nineveh (Rich 1836: II 18–26).
199. Lieberman (1990).
200. Note that, as argued in Chapter 3, there was no independent temple of Nabu in Assur until very late in the seventh century.
201. Maul (2010).

5
Grasping the righteous sceptre: Nabu, scholarship and the kings of Babylonia

I argued in Chapter 3 that the Assyrian scholarly community was heavily invested in the cult of Nabu, god of wisdom, from at least the early first millennium BC. Throughout the empire, in imperial capitals and provincial centres alike, men of learning put their 'trust in Nabu' and exhibited that faith through naming practices, invocations in letters and colophons, and dedications to the deity in his temple. Only in the late eighth century did king Sargon and his descendants follow their advisors' lead, with the royal patronage of Nabu reaching its apogee during the reign of Ashurbanipal. After the decline and death of this unusual scholar-king, his weak successors in the last decades of the seventh century could only pay lip service to a cult, and concomitant intellectual culture, in terminal decline. In this chapter I trace the parallel relationship between king, god and scholar in first-millennium Babylonia and discover some striking differences.

However, as the nature of the Babylonian evidence is very different from that of the Neo-Assyrian empire we cannot directly compare like with like. There are substantial holdings of tablets from family businesses and temples – especially Šamaš's Ebabbar in Sippar and Ištar's Eanna in Uruk – but almost no palace archives (Fig. 5.1).[1] Further, with some exceptions the large majority of those assemblages come from informal or illicit excavations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some groups of tablets were removed from the ground by official expeditions with little regard to context, as for instance the 'Babylon' and 'Sippar' collections of the British Museum. In other cases, such Woolley's expedition to Ur, Langdon's to Kish and Koldewey's to Babylon, documentation has since been lost or proved inadequate.[2] Tablets were also dug up

Figure 5.1: Map of the major cities mentioned in this chapter. Source: Martin Brown.

specifically for sale to local and international antiquities traders, often from identical or adjacent locations to formally excavated finds. Looters could reopen archaeological trenches; archaeologists could investigate looters' pits. Michael Jursa has provided an invaluable guide to the complexities of this material but hitherto there has been no systematic publication programme comparable to the State Archives of Assyria project.[3] On the other hand, Babylonian royal inscriptions, king lists, chronicles and observational diaries have in the main been well published and carefully analysed, providing an essential chronological and political framework for the period.[4] Nevertheless, we must remain alert to the fact that the chronicles, especially, exist primarily in manuscripts made many decades, even centuries, after the events described in them; and in many cases they are more faithful reflections of current concerns than of the periods they purport to document.[5] Finally, as for Assyria, we need to be aware of the increasing use of alphabetic scripts on perishable media, even if this is difficult to quantify or account for. In particular, it is highly likely that the Neo-Babylonian court, as indeed its non-Babylonian royal successors, depended far more on Aramaic than on Akkadian for correspondence and administration.[6]

I begin by considering Babylonian monarchs' views of cuneiform scholarship, and in particular its most important divine manifestation, the god Nabu, both before and after the Assyrian occupation. Next I consider the anti-Persian revolts and their consequences in the decades around 500 BC, just a generation or two after the Achaemenid conquest of Babylon. I shall argue that these events, also known to historians as 'the end of archives', constitute as significant a watershed for cuneiform scholarship as the collapse of the Assyrian empire a century or so earlier. To mark the break, I shall refer to the centuries before 484 BC as the Neo-Babylonian period and the following half-millennium as the Late Babylonian. In the final section, I examine some literary responses to the ruptured relationship between kingship and scholarship, through selected writings from Late Babylonian Uruk.

Babylonian royal attitudes to Nabu

The independent Babylonia that emerged from the collapse of the Assyrian empire in the late seventh century BC was not solely a successor state but had a long-standing, deep-rooted identity of its own. Several different dynasties had ruled from Babylon over the half-millennium before Tiglath-pileser III's conquest of Babylonia in 728.[7] Unfortunately there

are relatively few surviving royal inscriptions from this long period, many of which survive only in later copies.[8] Instead, one of the most informative datasets for this early Neo-Babylonian period consists of the so-called *kudurrus*: records of royal grants of land, income or other long-term entitlements to favoured individuals and their descendants, inscribed on objects that were usually commissioned by the beneficiary.[9] They were designed to be enduring witnesses to endowments set up in perpetuity, and were thus carved into stone, or baked into terracotta. These small-scale monuments could be deposited in temples for safekeeping as well as (or instead of) on the boundaries of the gifted territory and they often survive because of their very monumentality. Later scholarly writings also make many references and allusions to earlier Babylonian political history. Some of these, as we shall see, are more useful as retrospective images of that period than as primary historical witnesses. Yet they also highlight how much has been lost from that time, and caution us not to mistake the paucity of surviving evidence for a lack of royal activity or interest in Nabu.

Our evidence begins in the late twelfth century BC (Table 5a; cf. Table 3a). Nebuchadnezzar I (Nabu-kudurri-uṣur, 'O Nabu, protect my heir!', r. 1126–1104) was the first Babylonian king to take a throne name that invoked Nabu. A further nine kings followed his example over the next 300 years, almost equalling the eleven Babylonian rulers with the national god Marduk in their names.[10] The first extant royal inscription dedicated to Nabu describes Marduk-šapik-zeri's (r. 1081–1069) restoration of the Ezida temple in Borsippa.[11] It is also the earliest dateable evidence that the temple no longer belonged to Marduk. The following king, Adad-apal-iddina (r. 1068–1047), complemented his predecessor's building work by giving Nabu 'a sash of red gold which is adorned with precious stones and rampant wild bulls in four directions'.[12]

Neither ruler, though, seems to have been much interested in Nabu as a god of wisdom. For Adad-apal-iddina, for instance, Nabu was 'he who makes secure the throne, the sceptre and the crown, who establishes a reign, who decrees kingship'.[13] These epithets appear to allude to Nabu's role in in the new-year *akītu*-festival in Babylon, in which Marduk annually renewed the king's right to rule.[14] If Nabu could not leave Borsippa to visit Marduk at his temple in Babylon, the *akītu* could not take place and the king and cosmos were left vulnerable to the forces of chaos until the following year.[15] So crucial was the *akītu* to dynastic stability that the Chronicles record the rare occasions on which political disruption prevented it happening, especially in the turbulent years of the late eleventh and early tenth centuries, as a sign of divine disfavour.[16] Few details are

Table 5a: Developments in Babylonian and post-Babylonian royal attitudes to Nabu and cuneiform scholarship.

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Nebuchadnezzar I (r. 1125–1104) (gap of twenty-three years)	Two military raids into Assyria; and into Elam, resulting in the recapture and return to Babylon of Marduk's cult statue, which had been taken some years earlier		First Babylonian king to take a throne-name invoking Nabu (Nabu-kudurri-uṣur, 'O Nabu, protect my heir!)	Later tradition traces some Babylonian scholarly works to the king's *ummânu* Saggil-kinam-ubbib
Marduk-šapik-zeri (r. 1081–1069)	Good relations with Assyria; repels repeated raids by Aramean tribes	Earliest extant royal inscription dedicated to Nabu, recording restoration of Ezida in Borsippa		
Adad-apla-iddina (r. 1068–1047) (gap of twenty-two years)	Perhaps conducts a marriage alliance with Assyria; repels repeated raids by tribal forces		Earliest known allusions to Nabu's role in new-year *akītu*-festival	Grants (prebendary?) land to *āšipu* in Babylon; later tradition traces the omen series *Sakikkû* to the king's *ummânu* Esangila-kin-apli
Simbar-šipak (r. 1025–1008)	Restores cult of Šamaš at Sippar, disrupted by earlier raids		First attestation of Nabu's temple E-niggidru-kalama-suma in Babylon	Grants land in Babylon to a *bārû*; his successor installs him as *šangû*-priest in Sippar

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
(gap of *c.* 150 years)				
Nabu-apla-iddina (r. *c.* 888–855)	Good relations with Assyria under Ashurnasirpal II			Gives leadership of 3,000 troops against Assyria to a *bārû*; grants prebend in Eanna temple to an *āšipu*; installs *bārû* as *šangû*-priest in Sippar
Marduk-zakir-šumi I (r. *c.* 855–819)	Alliance with Assyrian king Shalmaneser III against rebels	Grants tax exemptions to people of Babyon and Borsippa; allows Shalmaneser to make offerings to Nabu, Marduk and Nergal		Grants prebend in Eanna to a *kalû* in Uruk
(gap of *c.* sixty years)	Assyria invades Babylonia multiple times			
Nabu-šumu-iškun (r. 760–748) (gap of twenty years)	Assyria invades Babylonia multiple times	City governor repairs Ezida instead of king; king breaks priests' purity code	Fails to perform *akītu*-festival or to let Nabu return to Borsippa	

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Tiglath-pileser III and Shalmaneser V (r. 728–722)	Assyria conquers Babylonia; Babylonia never fully accepts Assyrian rule		Tiglath-pileser performs *akītu*-festival on accession to Babylonian throne	
Marduk-apla-iddina (r. 721–710, 703)	Reclaims Babylonian independence			
Sargon II (r. 710–705)	Sargon regains Assyrian control of Babylonia; rules from Babylon	First known king to adopt epithet 'provider for Esangila and Ezida' in royal inscriptions	Performs *akītu*-festival on accession to Babylonian throne	Hymns to Sargon in Babylonian script found at Nineveh
Sennacherib, Bel-ibni, other vassal kings and rebel rulers (r. 704–681)	Sennacherib struggles to control Babylonia; sacks Babylon in 688	Borsippa neglected but not directly attacked?	No *akītu*-festival for eight years; Marduk (but not Nabu?) held captive in Assur	
Esarhaddon (r. 680–669)	Gradually restores Babylon; names Šamaš-šumu-ukin as Babylonian crown prince	Restores Nanaya's temple in Uruk in hope she will advocate for him to Nabu	Returns Marduk from Assur after twelve years; no *akītu*-festival meanwhile; restores E-niggidru-kalama-suma	Babylonian scholarly captives put to forced copying work in Nineveh in 675 BC

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Ashurbanipal, Šamaš-šumu-ukin (r. 668–648) and Kandalanu (r. 647–627)	Civil war 652–648; Babylon sacked again. Ashurbanipal installs vassal ruler	Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin jointly rebuild city wall and repair temple	*Akītu*-festival resumes on Šamaš-šumu-ukin's accession; halts during civil war	Wholesale removal of scholarly tablets to Nineveh on Ashurbanipal's victory
Nabopolassar (r. 626–605)	Son of Assyrian loyalist governor of Uruk; starts war for Babylonian independence in 630; founder of Chaldean dynasty	Proclaims himself to have been 'protegé of Nabu and Marduk' in early life	No *akītu*-festival in accession year	Probable revival of Babylonian court and temple scholarship
Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562) (gap of six years)	Former *šatammu* of Eanna in Uruk; increases reach of Babylonian imperial power to Mediterranean coast	Massive building programmes encompass work on Ezida and a new processional barge for Nabu	Performs *akītu*-festival in accession year; restores E-niggidru-kalama-suma	Evidence of *āšipus* at court

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Nabonidus (r. 555–539) and crown prince Belshazzar	Usurper from Harran, perhaps of Assyrian descent; favours clergy of Ur over Chaldean-linked temples of Uruk and Babylon; spends a decade in Tayma oasis while Belshazzar rules	Repairs Ezida	'Grasps the righteous sceptre' of Nabu on accession; ten-year hiatus in *akītu*-festival; celebrated 'as in normal times' in 539	Removes pro-Chaldean temple elites from office; uses *bārûtu* to assert will over Ebabbar temple in Sippar; uses dreams to rebut scholarly authority on celestial divination; *āšipus* at crown prince's court
Cyrus II (r. 539–530)	Conquers Babylon and incorporates it into nascent Persian empire; courts Babylonian northern elites	Cuneiform inscriptions in his name declare devotion to Marduk and Nabu, Esangila and Ezida	Cyrus performs *akītu*-festival; Cambyses takes sceptre from Nabu as crown prince	Anti-Nabonidus, pro-Cyrus cuneiform inscriptions show strong support for new king from northern Babylonian elite

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Darius I (r. 522–486); Nebuchadnezzar III and Nebuchadnezzar IV (r. 522, 521)	Usurper who has to quash many revolts on accession, including two temple-backed, pro-Chaldean insurgencies; Behistun inscription and Old Persian cuneiform assert authority; from 499 mostly occupied with subduing rebellions in Ionia and Asia Minor			Support for rebel kings from (at least) Ebabbar temple in Sippar and Eanna in Uruk; removal of senior officials in aftermath; further rebellions plotted on tributary journeys to king's new palace in Susa
Xerxes I (r. 486–465); Bel-šimanni and Šamaš-eriba (r. 484)	Quells two Babylonian revolts early in his reign, with harsh reprisals in Babylon and beyond; reconfigures Babylonian society and economy to favour loyalists; repeated invasions of Ionia			So-called 'end of archives' in 484 marks end of many pro-Chaldean temple communities in northern Babylonia and Uruk; Esangila disempowered; Reš and Irigal temples establish themselves in Uruk

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
(gap of 135 years)				
Alexander the Great (r. 330–323) (two kings in twelve years)	Conquers Babylon and incorporates its territories into nascent empire; on sudden death in Babylon leaves major power vacuum			Engages seriously with cuneiform scholarship, especially divination; allows performance of Substitute King Ritual; orders repairs to Esangila and Etemenanki
Seleucus I Nicator (r. 311–281)	Former general of Alexander, establishes stable dynasty with major seat at Antioch, 850 kilometres from Babylon			
Antiochus I Soter (r. 281–261)	Based in Babylon as co-regent; but later moves Greek community to nearby Seleucia and taxes Babylon heavily to fund war against Egypt	Commemorates minor work on Ezida and Esangila with last-known cuneiform royal inscription in 268 bc		Berossus of Esangila dedicates his Greek-language *Babloniaca* to the king, according to much later testimony

(*Continued*)

Ruler of Babylon	*Significant political developments*	*Attentions to Nabu and Ezida in Borsippa*	*Attentions to Nabu, E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the* akītu*-festival in Babylon*	*Relations with cuneiform scholarship and temple communities*
Antiochus II Theo (r. 261–246)	Primarily occupied with war against Egypt in Syria and rebellions in Persia	Endows significant tax-exempt land and income rights to Ezida and Esangila		Late in the reign, Uruk city governor Anu-uballiṭ Nikarchus begins building work on Reš, invoking king's name
(gap of twenty-four years)				
Antiochus III (r. 222–187)	Primarily occupied with wars in Syria, Asia Minor and Persia		Performs *akītu*-festival in 205 BC to celebrate military victory	Uruk city governor Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon undertakes building work on Reš, in king's name
(gap of *c.* forty-five years)				
Hyspaosines (r. *c.* 141–124)	Former local governor of the Sealand, who declares independence from weak Seleucid rule and captures Babylon in 127 BC	Fragmentary Diary reference to entering Borsippa on conquest of Babylon	Fragmentary Diary reference to interrupted rites in *akītu*-temple (now restored?)	A *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* from Esangila in attendance at court: the last attested Babylonian court scholar

known about the festival in the early first millennium, but in the later Neo-Babylonian period there was a preamble in which Nabu, as Marduk's son (and with the unexplained epithet *ša harê*), ceremonially handed the regalia of kingship to the current ruler's nominated successor, perhaps every year, perhaps only on the crown prince's nomination.[17] This ritual took place in the purpose-built E-niggidru-kalama-suma temple ('House which bestows the Sceptre of the Land') in Babylon, which stood just north of Marduk's ziggurat Etemenanki on the central Processional Way.[18] A Seleucid chronicle about ominous occurrences in late eleventh-century Babylon reports a panther swimming in the Euphrates behind this important site of dynastic succession.[19] Whether or not we believe this much later testimony to the temple's existence at this early date, Adad-apal-iddina's inscription suggests that Nabu was already central to the divine sanctioning of dynastic succession.

However, neither Adad-apal-iddina's nor Marduk-šapik-zeri's inscription is preserved in its original form. The first was written out by a member of the Huṣabu family of prebendary brewers of Borsippa's Ezida temple in 633 BC (see Chapter 6), while the second survives in a copy made by the *āšipu* Urad-Gula of the powerful Gabbu-ilani-ereš dynasty of Assyrian royal scholars, who served in Esarhaddon's court around 670 BC (see Chapter 4).[20] Their survival tells us as much about the importance of Nabu's cult in the seventh century BC as it does about the late second millennium.

Although it appears that early Neo-Babylonian rulers valued Nabu more as a king-maker than as a patron of learning, Nabu's human counterparts were regularly members of the royal entourage. The monuments known as *kudurrus* reveal scanty but clear information about the sorts of scholars who were close to the king in the late second and early first millennium: those who were honoured with endowments and those who were entrusted with drawing up or witnessing the necessary legal documentation (online Table B1). *Asûs, bārûs* and *kalûs* – but no *āšipus*, so far as is known – all served from time to time as witnesses to royal grants, while *bārûs* could also function as scribes. Surviving endowments to scholars include land granted to a *bārû* in thirteenth-century Nippur; land and prebendary rights given to a *bārû* in late eleventh-century Sippar; and land and prebendary rights assigned to a *kalû* and an *āšipu* in ninth-century Uruk (Fig. 6.1).[21] An Assyrian royal inscription of 878 BC also tells us that the Babylonian king Nabu-apal-iddina (r. *c*. 888–855 BC) counted a *bārû* amongst his commanding officers, leading 3,000 troops.[22]

Likewise, little is known about the relationships between Babylonian kingship and scholarship in the period immediately following, except

when abnormal occurrences allow us to infer something of normal conditions by contrast to the events reported. For instance, an inscription on a clay cylinder, discovered in Borsippa's Ezida temple, describes the restoration of a storeroom in the temple during the reign of Nabu-šuma-iškun (r. 760–748).[23] The work and inscription were commissioned not by the king, as might be expected, but by Nabu-šuma-imbi, the city governor. He acknowledges Nabu as '[endowed with(?)] wisdom and deliberation, evaluator of omens', the earliest known acknowledgement in a Babylonian official inscription of Nabu's scholarly status.[24] As Nabu-šuma-imbi notes, the mid-eighth century was a time of 'disorder, disturbances, revolt and turmoil in Borsippa, city of truth and justice', which had greater consequences for Nabu than the governor taking over the royal role as patron of building works.[25] A sixth-century chronicle, probably also written in Borsippa, notes that, 'in Nabu-šuma-iškun's 5th and 6th years Nabu did not go out for Bel's (i.e. Marduk's) (*akītu*) procession'.[26] In a similar vein, a fragmentary scholarly text from early Seleucid Uruk claims that this same king 'kept Nabu in Babylon' after the *akītu*-festival instead of letting him return to Borsippa, and made the priesthood of Ezida break their purity code by forcing them to eat leeks.[27] Finally, during this period of urban unrest two secondary deities of Ezida endowed a temple position for a relative of the city governor's. Given that this was normally the king's prerogative, the gods (and their human servants) were presumably acting at the governor Nabu-šuma-imbi's behest in the absence of Nabu and Nabu-šuma-iškun respectively.[28] In short, when kingship was so weak that neither king nor god could travel to perform the duties normally expected of them, local political power, and local deities, stepped in to ensure the maintenance of the cult. Ezida was not entirely dependent on royal patronage, in other words, but could also rely on local dynasts for their support. In return, they gained further familial influence in the form of temple endowments.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Assyria first gained political control over Babylonia in 728 BC and held on to it, more or less, in the face of much native opposition – and several substantial periods of native rule – until Nabopolassar's foundation of the Chaldean dynasty in 626 BC. However, the Assyrian kings did not assimilate Neo-Babylonian Nabu into the already well-developed Assyrian deity (who was in turn, as we have seen, a local outgrowth of his Middle Babylonian incarnation) but maintained their quite discrete identities.[29] From the mid-ninth century onwards, Assyrian kings on campaign in northern Babylonia had typically taken a pilgrimage route through Babylon, Borsippa and Kutha in order to receive the *rēhtu*-leftovers of the meals offered to the gods

Marduk, Nabu and Nergal respectively.[30] After Tiglath-pileser's conquest of Babylonia 728 BC, he and his successors also participated in the *akītu*-festival whenever they could, in order to establish themselves as true Babylonian kings.[31] Then, at the end of the eighth century, Sargon dropped the worship of Nergal at Kutha in favour of increased attention to the other two members of the divine trio.[32] He made Babylon his residence city for four years, as we saw in Chapter 3, and was the first known king to adopt the epithet *zānin Esangila u Ezida* 'provider for Esangila and Ezida'.[33] He guaranteed the supply of sacrificial animals to the two temples by imposing a livestock tax on a northern Babylonian tribal settlement, which he renamed Dur-Nabu ('Fort Nabu'), and heavily promoted Nabu in Assyria too.[34]

By contrast Sargon's son, the virulently anti-Babylonian Sennacherib, virtually ignored Nabu and Borsippa in his inscriptions, venting all his rage against Marduk and the capital city (Chapter 3). To what extent did he include Borsippa in his all-encompassing destruction of Babylon or exempt it from retributions? The answer can be inferred from the inscriptions and correspondence of his son and successor Esarhaddon that relate to the subsequent reconstruction process.[35] It appears that Sennacherib's army had hardly touched Borsippa and Ezida. Esarhaddon proudly lists many new zoomorphic adornments for the temple, all in precious metal and designed to ward off evil. But he says nothing about repairs to the building's infrastructure, which suggests that it had no need of fixing.[36]

Letters to Esarhaddon from his scholar and political agent Mar-Issar give the same impression.[37] In one missive he reports on the dedication of a new tiara for Nabu, inscribed with the king's name, then goes on to reveal deep-seated corruption within the Borsippan priesthood. Even the *šatammu* himself – the most senior official in the hierarchy – is implicated in the misappropriation of sacrificial animals. Mar-Issar urges the king to restore regular offerings *ša* [*ina*] *labīri* 'as [in] the past'.[38] In another letter he requests permission to improve a pontoon bridge across the canal next to Ezida using labour from the temple workforce; but it appears that no work is needed on the building itself.[39] In sum, it seems that the decay in physical and ethical standards that Mar-Issar found was not the result of any targeted destruction campaign by Sennacherib but rather the outcome of royal neglect. While kingly attention was elsewhere, the moral fibre of the temple had decayed more than its material infrastructure. Esarhaddon's programme of conspicuously lavish refurbishment was as much a reassertion of royal power over the temple and its human personnel as it was an act of homage to the god of wisdom.

In Babylon too, Esarhaddon took care of Nabu, by rebuilding E-niggidru-kalama-suma, the tiny temple in which the god bestowed the Sceptre of the Land on the new crown prince (Fig. 5.2).[40] For the king and his entourage there must have been parallels with the *akītu*-suite in Nabu's Assyrian temples (see Chapter 3).[41] However, although Esarhaddon's E-niggidru-kalama-suma and the Assyrian Ezidas served similar functions, their layouts and sizes are significantly different. We saw in Chapter 3 that the Assyrian temples of Nabu were distinguished by twin, long-axis cellas with ante-cellas, one each for Nabu and Tašmetu, plus a secondary *akītu*-suite that included a pair of smaller shrines and an adjacent throne room. In Nabu *ša harê*'s temple in Babylon, however, both god and goddess inhabited short-axis shrines, without ante-chambers but accessed directly from a courtyard. The cella of Nanaya, Tašmetu's Babylonian counterpart (Room 23), was considerably smaller than Nabu's (Room 9), tucked away in the southeastern corner of the building and without direct communication to her spouse's suite.[42] Nor, apparently, was any area of the temple specifically designed as a throne room – but this is unsurprising given that the building's primary ritual

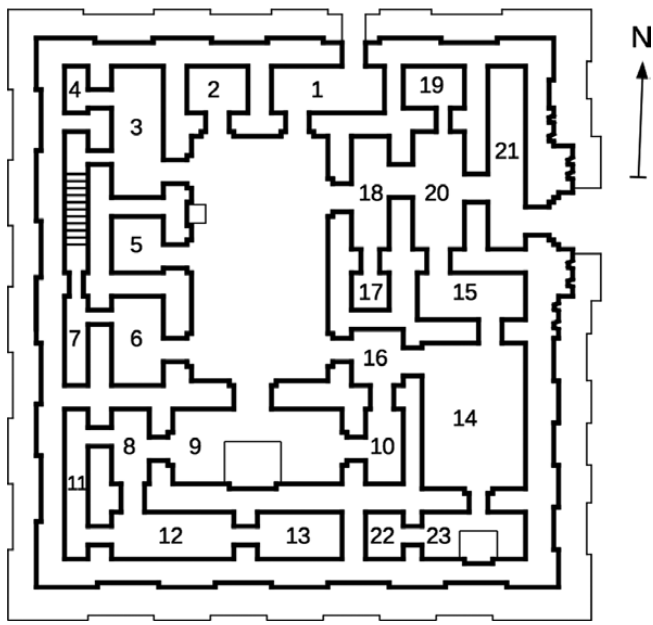

Figure 5.2: Plan of Nabu's temple E-niggidru-kalama-suma in Babylon by excavator Daniel Ishaq, oriented north. Maximum dimensions *c.* 25 × 25 metres. Drawing by the author after Cavigneaux (2013: 67).

function was not to serve ruling monarchs but to bestow the right to reign. And, at just 25 metres square, the E-niggidru-kalama-suma could have fitted into the Kalhu Ezida five times over. It is clear, then, that Esarhaddon's refurbishment did not impose Assyrian concepts of Nabu onto the architecture of E-niggidru-kalama-suma but almost certainly aimed to maintain continuity with established Babylonian practice.

We might expect a Babylonian temple dedicated to Nabu to have contained substantial holdings of scholarly tablets, as they did in the Assyrian royal cities. But there is no evidence of this in Babylon. Esarhaddon's building was decommissioned during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (Nabu-kudurri-uṣur, 'O Nabu, protect my eldest son!', r. 604–562), when it was emptied of its fittings and furniture in preparation for rebuilding.[43] Only a few remnants of scholarly tablets were left behind, along with perhaps as many as 1,500–2,000 fragmentary school exercises, abandoned on the floors and even trampled into them, in and around the northern stairwell (west of Room 5).[44] On the obverse of these large, square multi-column tablets were the typical products of the most elementary phases of Neo-Babylonian scribal education.[45] Short or long extracts from one or more of half a dozen standard elementary works were often combined with brief passages from ad hoc and 'non-curricular' exercises – for instance metrology, personal names, place names, professional designations, lexical lists – and/or literary works, proverbs and administrative formulae. But there is no archaeological evidence for a scribal school on the premises: no recycling bins, fresh clay or broken styluses.[46] What, then, were these tablets doing in the otherwise empty temple?

On the reverse of many of the exercise tablets are long, tripartite colophons which were often pre-prepared for the novice scribes by their teacher or a more advanced trainee.[47] They typically begin with a short prayer to Nabu *ša harê* or Nabu *ša nikkassī* 'of accounts', then give a list of wishes for the welfare of the scribe and his family, followed by an appeal to the tablet itself to intercede with Nabu on the dedicator's behalf.[48] Some of the more complex colophons reveal that these *ṭuppī meṣḫerūti*, 'tablets of childhood', were made from clay from a 'holy place' (*ašru ellu*) or 'the orchard of the Apsu' (*kirê apsî*), which seems have been to have been a garden area within the precinct of Marduk's temple Esangila.[49] Other colophons tell us that they were handed to the temple doorkeeper (*kannik bābi* or *kannāk bābi*) to be deposited in special receptacles (*gunnu*) in the temple, perhaps at an appropriate point in the new year's *akītu*-festival or the autumn *kislīmu*-festival (Fig. 5.3).[50] Almost all cuneiform tablets turn from top to bottom – that is, the text on the reverse is upside down in relation to the obverse. By contrast, many of these were written so that they

Figure 5.3: A large exercise tablet (*c*. 170 × 130 millimetres), dedicated to Nabu in the temple E-niggidru-kalama-suma in Babylon, *c*. 600 BC. The obverse contains very simple writing exercises while on the reverse a student named Belšunu son of Nabu-nadin-apli asks for many types of divine favour in return for this offering, given 'to the gatekeeper for the tablet-receptacle' (Gesche 2001: 650–2). BM ME 77665, reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

turned left to right like a book, perhaps so that they could be displayed and read on both sides.[51] They were, then, no ordinary school tablets but sacred objects which must have been accumulating over a long period of time in the temple. They were kept not for the knowledge or ideas they contained, but as evidence of personal piety and reminders to Nabu *ša harê* of the prayers he must answer. While they were not worth saving for the newly reconstructed temple, neither could they be thrown away like secular rubbish, so were left as fill for the foundations.[52]

Similar tablets, with similar colophons, suggest that juvenile scribes also made votive offerings to Šamaš and/or Nabu in the Ebabbar temple in Sippar, and perhaps also to deities in other temples of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur and Uruk in the Neo-Babylonian period.[53] In this light, we can now understand his son Ashurbanipal's dedication of scholarly tablets to Nabu in the Nineveh Ezida (see Chapter 4) as a particularly elaborate and showy instance of the same phenomenon.

Esarhaddon's restoration of Nabu *ša harê*'s temple in Babylon might have been motivated by his elaborate succession arrangements, designed to secure the dual reign of his sons Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin. But whether or not his intentions were for Šamaš-šumu-ukin to receive the Sceptre of the Land in E-niggidru-kalama-suma, it is probable that this never happened. The so-called *Akītu Chronicle* reports that, 'for [8] years under Sennacherib, for 12 years under Esarhaddon: for 20 years Bel (i.e., Marduk) dwelt in Assur [and so] the *akītu*-festival was called off'.[54] Marduk arrived back in his home city only in 669 BC, to mark Šamaš-šumu-ukin's succession to the Babylonian throne. Marduk and Nabu then resumed their annual *akītu* duties, while Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin worked in tandem to support Nabu's cult in Borsippa. Matching steles celebrate their jointly sponsored renewal of the Ezida. Ashurbanipal repaired the city wall while Šamaš-šumu-ukin restored the temple's *šutummu*-storehouses. One or both rulers also procured new equipment for Nabu's processional barge.[55] In all of these inscriptions, though, care was taken to preserve Marduk's primacy: Babylonian Nabu was never allowed to forget that he was merely the son of the national god and, unlike his human counterparts, destined never to inherit the throne.[56] However, Assyrian reverence for Nabu's wisdom was not completely repressed: for Ashurbanipal he was 'carrier of the gods' Tablet of Destinies, who is in complete control of omens', while Šamaš-šumu-ukin expressed similar sentiments.[57]

Civil war between the royal brothers again prevented the regular renewal of kingship in 652 BC.[58] Assyria definitively lost control of Babylonia just a few years after Ashurbanipal's death in 630 BC. The leader of the uprising, and first native king for three generations, was

one Nabopolassar (Nabu-apal-uṣur, 'O Nabu, protect the heir!', r. 626–605). His inscriptions portrayed him as the 'son of a nobody', a tabula rasa with no prior political entanglements, but in reality he belonged to an elite northern Babylonian family who had held significant power in the southern city of Uruk for several centuries.[59] His grandfather Nabu-naṣir had been *šatammu* of the Eanna temple of the goddess Ištar during Esarhaddon's reign; then his father (Nabu-)Kudurru(-uṣur) had served as governor of Uruk under Sin-šarru-iškun.[60] Repudiating this long-standing Assyrian patronage, Nabopolassar nevertheless appointed his eldest son, the future king Nebuchadnezzar II, as *šatammu* of Eanna, a position which he held until at least 617 BC. He in turn named a son Eanna-šarra-uṣur ('O Eanna, protect the king!'), suggesting that the Chaldean dynasty's links with Uruk remained strong. Given the close but complex relationship between Babylonian temples and scholars, discussed further in Chapter 6, it is highly likely that members of the new royal family were enthusiastic supporters of literate scholarship.

Indeed, the Neo-Babylonian kings' support for Nabu himself is clearly visible in their inscriptions and building works. Rocio Da Riva lists the titles and epithets used by Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus (Nabu-naʾid, 'Attentive to Nabu', r. 555–539) to describe themselves in official inscriptions.[61] When kings express a relationship between themselves and one or more deities or temples, over half the time they invoke the pairing Marduk and Nabu (e.g. Nabopolassar's *muṭīb libbi Nabu u Marduk*, 'he who pleases Nabu and Marduk') and/or Esangila and Ezida (e.g. the ubiquitous *zānin Esangila u Ezida*, 'provider for Esangila and Ezida').[62] However, there is no particular divine favouritism beyond this classic pairing and neither Nabu nor any other god tends to stands alone in relation to the king. It is only Nebuchadnezzar who expresses 90 per cent of his divine relationships in terms of Nabu, Marduk or the two combined.

Nebuchadnezzar's devotional priorities are reflected in the number of building works he ordered for Nabu in both Babylon and Borsippa. He completely rebuilt E-niggidru-kalama-suma, improved Nabu's processional ways in both cities and commissioned a new processional barge for the god's journeys between them along the Arakhtu canal.[63] Not least, Nebuchadnezzar also repaired Ezida and its ziggurat in Borsippa. The Neo-Babylonian Ezida was built to the same basic plan as Esarhaddon's E-niggidru-kalama-suma, but on a much larger scale – or perhaps, rather, the latter was a tiny version of the former. With maximum dimensions 100 × 100 metres, it was some sixteen times bigger than the temple in Babylon (Fig. 5.4).[64] Here too Nabu's short-axis cella (A3) was off the

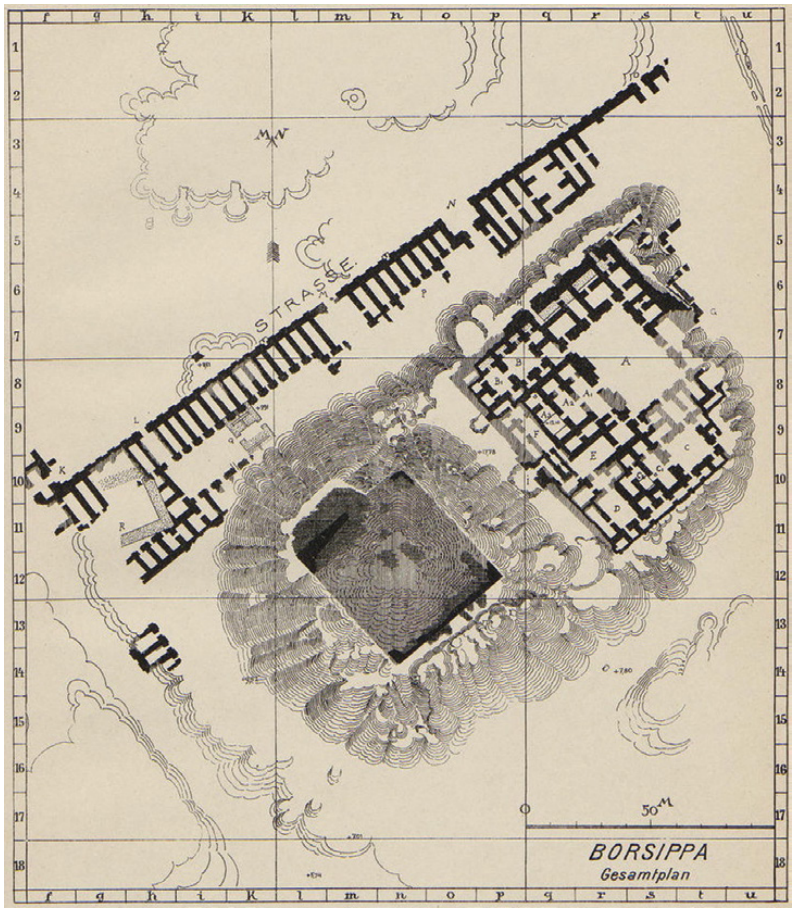

Figure 5.4: Plan of Nabu's temple Ezida in Borsippa in the Neo-Babylonian period, with Nabu's shrine (A3) located far from Nanaya's (C2). The temple itself, some 100 × 100 metres in area, is located to the northeast of the ziggurat. Both are enclosed by a precinct bordered by *šutummu*-warehouses in which the temple personnel stored their tablets and cultic equipment (Koldewey 1911: Taf. XII). Public domain.

main courtyard (but accessed via two large antechambers), while Nanaya occupied a similar but smaller suite of rooms off a separate courtyard to the southeast (C2). Again, the excavated portion of the building contains no obvious throne room, but two adjacent courtyards to the northwest of Nabu's shine look as though they serviced a series of chapels for minor deities in Nabu's entourage (B, B1).

The chronicles for this time report no problems with the *akītu*-festival after the accession year of Nabopolassar, until Nabonidus's still mysterious ten-year sojourn in the Arabian oasis settlement of Tayma.[65] This hiatus in royal residence in Babylon meant that for a decade, *c*. 553–543 BC, 'Nabu did not go to Babylon, Bel did not go out, the *akītu*-festival was called off', although 'the sacrifices in Esangila and Ezida to the gods of Babylon and Borsippa were offered as normal'.[66] Indeed it was Nabu's role as bestower of kingship that Neo-Babylonian rulers highlighted above all. They invoked his scholarly aspects only when commemorating works on temples.[67] Compare, for instance, two building inscriptions of Neriglissar (r. 559–556). On clay cylinders that celebrated the completion of canal works in Babylon, he is described as the king 'in whose hands Nabu, the supervisor of all heaven and earth, placed the just sceptre, the rightful staff for making all subjects prosper' – a clear reference to Nabu's function in E-niggidru-kalama-suma.[68] By contrast, on another clay cylinder marking repairs to the ziggurat of the god Šamaš in Sippar, the same king calls himself 'the beloved of Nabu, the judicious one, full of wisdom', before noting that Šamaš 'speaks justly in lawsuits and divinations'.[69]

Nabonidus had a rather more complex relationship with Nabu, according to Paul-Alain Beaulieu.[70] As a usurper from an Assyrian background, who had overthrown the infant king Labaši-Marduk to gain the crown, he had to work hard to prove his legitimacy.[71] One obvious obstacle was that he had not received the Sceptre of the Land from Nabu in E-niggidru-kalama-suma. He rectified that omission early in his reign, according to an inscription that describes him entering the E-niggidru-kalama-suma so that Nabu could 'make (him) grasp the righteous sceptre'.[72] He also ordered improvements to Ezida and its boundary wall.[73] However, he also drew on theological traditions that syncretised Nabu (as well as Anu) with the moon-god Sin, the primary deity of his home city Harran of whom his mother had been a particular devotee. Sin gained Nabu's powers to bestow kingship, while Nabu's symbolic stylus appeared in place of Sin's crescent moon on an important stele erected in Harran.[74] Thus did the new king attempt to align the object of his particular devotions with the traditional dynastic deities of Babylonia. But, as we shall see, just as Assyrian kings' tampering with theology had offended the temple elites of Assur, Nabonidus's promotion of Sin and his sanctuary at Ur, combined with organisational reforms of Eanna and removal of its key office-holders, upset the Babylonian aristocracy that was so closely allied to his immediate predecessors in Uruk and the north.[75]

There were close structural parallels between the way the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian palace households were organised, probably arising from the Chaldean royal family's closeness to the Assyrian court.[76] Given this, and the dynasty's origins in the elite northern Babylonian community that served the Eanna temple in Uruk, we might expect to find substantial numbers of scholars at court in Babylon, perhaps predominantly from the extended royal family. However, due to the extreme paucity of Neo-Babylonian royal archival material there is little evidence of a scholarly retinue barring a few scattered references to *āšipus*.[77] The royal inscriptions give some clues; indeed, their very existence presupposes the presence of literati at court who were involved in their composition. As we saw, the Neo-Babylonian dynasts invoked different deities to different degrees depending on the context.[78] The same is true of their references to cuneiform scholarship. For instance, the only known official context in which Nabopolassar mentions divinely inspired scholarship is in the inscription describing repairs to Etemenanki, Marduk's ziggurat in Babylon:

> By the cleverness of Ea, the intelligence of Marduk, the wisdom of Nabu and Nisaba, by means of the capacious mind with which the gods who created me supplied me, I deliberated in my great sagacity and I commissioned wise experts. The surveyor measured the measurements with a 1-rod reed. The master-builder stretched out the rope, established the boundaries. I performed a divination of Šamaš, Adad, and Marduk and, wherever my mind deliberated and I pondered the measurements, the great gods revealed (them) to me by the performance of divination. Through the work of *āšipūtu*, the wisdom of Ea and Marduk, I purified that place and established its foundation platform on its former base.[79]

Nabonidus's inscriptions mention scholarship much more frequently than his predecessors', but do so in highly constrained contexts. The two extant references to *āšipūtu* both relate to the purification of temples or temple personnel.[80] The king obtains a confirmatory *bīru* 'act of divination' in two types of circumstance: first, to establish his own right to rule and to confirm the appointment of his daughter Ennigaldi-Nanna as high priestess of Sin at Ur; second, to gain divine (and human) support for rebuilding selected temples.[81] Closest to his heart was Sin's Ehulhul temple in Harran, so it was particularly important to demonstrate divine

support for that project. In Babylonia, Nabonidus consulted Šamaš as *bēl bīri* 'lord of the divinatory act' only when Šamaš's interests were directly at stake: before work on his Ebabbar temples in Larsa and Sippar, and the adjacent E-ulmaš of Ištar-Annunitu in Sippar. We do not know whether it was palace or temple *āšipus* and *bārûs* who performed the actual rituals for, obeying the usual conventions of royal inscriptions, the scholars themselves are not mentioned.[82] As illustrated by the extract from Nabopolassar's inscription above, they are simply portrayed as a means of communication between god and king; their individuality and agency in the transaction is erased from the royal record.

However, that does not mean that all scholars passively did the king's bidding. In one inscription describing the creation of a new tiara for the sun-god Šamaš, Nabonidus gives an extraordinarily elaborate description of the series of extispicies he has commissioned, including full reports of the omens observed in the final set of rituals, as verification that he is indeed complying with the god's wishes.[83] The sequence of repetitions, followed by the need for full justification, suggests that scholarly opinion was not entirely with him. There was also some debate over the interpretation of the lunar eclipse that supposedly signalled Sin's desire for a new priestess at Ur. Nabonidus's own inscriptions tell it his way, of course, but the somewhat later Royal Chronicle suggests that the king forced his own interpretation on the scholars.[84] He tried to back this up by taking confirmatory extispicies – but even by his own account, it took three attempts to get the desired answer. Nabonidus found other means of circumventing scholarly directives too. On one occasion he simply dreamed of a favourable alignment of heavenly bodies, with his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar on hand to explain their meaning in the same vision.[85] Thus he bypassed the living scholars' observations and interpretations altogether and trumped their authority with that of the dead king to whom many were perhaps still loyal.[86]

In short, the major feature of Babylonian royal attitudes to Nabu is that from the late second millennium he came to be treated as a major deity, crucial to the annual renewal of kingship in his role as Marduk's son, rather than as god of scholarship. His cult centres remained – so far as we know – the Ezida in Borsippa; the special-purpose E-niggidru-kalama-suma in which crown princes were inaugurated; and a secondary shrine within Marduk's temple Esangila in Babylon. Individual high-status scholars were close enough to royal circles to act as legal witnesses to acts of kingly favour and could even sometimes be on the receiving end of such acts of generosity. That suggests that they were serving the king

directly, perhaps like their counterparts in Assyria, but it is hard to draw more detailed conclusions than that.

A fight for survival: The 'end of archives' and the end of royal patronage

Just as Nabopolassar had maintained continuity with Assyrian imperial practices while presenting himself as an untainted new beginning, in 539 BC the Persian conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus (r. 539–530), was portrayed as the antithesis of the allegedly heretical Nabonidus, whom he had just defeated.[87] The famous Cyrus Cylinder denigrates the defeated Chaldean for 'repeatedly doing evil against Marduk's city' and thereby inviting divine wrath. Cyrus, by contrast, is described there as *ša Bel u Nabu irâmū* 'he whom Bel (i.e. Marduk) and Nabu love'.[88] On his cylinder seal, Cyrus likewise uses the epithet *rā'im Esangila u Ezida* 'lover of the Esangila and Ezida temples'.[89] The so-called Nabonidus Chronicle, which displays the same pro-Cyrus rhetoric, even describes how Darius's heir Cambyses received the Sceptre of the Land from Nabu in the E-niggid-ru-kalama-suma and thereby became Babylonian crown prince.[90]

But we must read these statements and actions in large part as motivated by the simple political expedience of courting the trust, favour and collaboration of the northern Babylonian elite, who were so necessary to the smooth running of local society and economy.[91] Indeed, given that they were written in cuneiform, in traditional media and formats, it is highly likely that they were not only addressed to the northern Babylonian literati but also composed by one or more members of that small community.[92] Nabonidus's slighting of this group's needs and interests, through his patronage of the moon-god Sin at Ur at the perceived expense of the cults of Uruk and Babylon, made it particularly tempting to portray Cyrus as their pro-Marduk saviour who would restore the Chaldean status quo of a generation before. Yet it is impossible to tell whether these cleverly designed rhetorical moves reflected concrete support for real people. We know almost nothing about the presence of Babylonian scholars at the early Achaemenid court – but we should expect those scholars to have ranked below the Persians' own *magi* in status and to have had to compete for attention and patronage with intellectuals from other cultures too.[93]

Relations between Persian royalty and the northern Babylonian elite began to sour on the death of king Cambyses (r. 530–522 BC). In short order two different men claimed power over a newly independent Babylonia, each taking the throne name Nebuchadnezzar

(now conventionally numbered III and IV) and claiming descent from Nabonidus. Each lasted only a few months before capture and execution by the Persian army under the new king Darius (r. 522–486). But both garnered support for their actions in the Babylonian temples: the scribes of both Eanna in Uruk and Ebabbar in Sippar chose to acknowledge the pretenders' reigns in the way that tablets were dated.[94] The authorities of Eanna even took the opportunity to investigate and remove from temple office a corrupt associate of the satrap of Babylon.[95] The Persian administration responded with a wholesale replacement of Eanna's senior personnel and a thorough reorganisation of procedures and practices which soon led to institutional collapse.[96]

Back in Persepolis, Darius commissioned an official new script for writing the Old Persian language, an innovation that must have been interpreted – and perhaps was intended – as a direct snub to the Babylonian cuneiform literati. The sign system bore a superficial resemblance to traditional Mesopotamian cuneiform but functioned much more like an alphabet with just a handful of logograms. One of its first and most spectacular uses was for a monumental rock carving, engraved on a cliff some 100 metres above the town of Bagastana (modern Bisutun or Behistun) on the royal road between Babylon and the old Median city of Ecbatana, now a Persian royal capital.[97] Under a huge bas-relief sculpture of Darius dominating ten captured rebels, some 500 lines of text in Old Persian cuneiform describe how he quashed numerous revolts – including those of the two Nebuchadnezzars – early in his reign. Parallel versions in Akkadian and the local Elamite language were appended in traditional cuneiform script. The Akkadian version, in a dialect far removed from the elegant Standard Babylonian of scholarly writings, would have grated on the ear of any well-trained reader: another deliberate cultural assault? In Babylon, a bespoke stela was also set up, whose image and (Akkadian cuneiform) text focused only on the parts of the narrative concerning the capture of the Babylonian rebels.[98] The message was unequivocal: the old order was over and Achaemenid Persia now dominated Babylonia both militarily and culturally.

When Xerxes came to the throne in 486 BC, Persian–Babylonian relations deteriorated even further. In the winter of that year crown finance officers withheld prebendary income from the priests of Ezida in Borsippa, for reasons that are not yet clear.[99] In Xerxes' second regnal year, two more pretenders to the throne independently stoked rebellion in the towns of northern Babylonia.[100] It is possible that Darius's gloating stela in Babylon was smashed to pieces as part of this mood of revolt.[101] At about the same time, Xerxes may have ordered a divine statue to be

removed from Marduk's temple Esangila, in an incident in which one priest allegedly died. He also demolished the staircases of Marduk's ziggurat Etemenanki, effectively decommissioning it.[102] Third, Xerxes did away with the post of *šākin ṭēmi*, provincial governor, of Babylonia, as well as the temple posts of *šatammu* and *qēpu*, which had long been sinecures for wealthy elites.

The chronological sequence of events is still unclear: did Xerxes' actions provoke the revolts, or react to them? Whatever the answer, the outcome was devastating for the cuneiform-literate urbanites of northern Babylonia. The elite families of Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Dilbat and Kish were all were removed from positions of power – and maybe worse.[103] Trusted supporters of the crown stepped in to fill their roles where institutional continuity was needed, directly benefiting from the end of the old social order. But this did not happen everywhere: Šamaš's Ebabbar temple in Sippar, and Ištar's Eanna in Uruk, failed to make the transition and gradually wound down. As we saw, the latter had already been perceived as a major threat under Darius thanks to its close connections to the Chaldean dynastic line.[104] As Karl-Heinz Kessler showed, families with northern Babylonian names disappear from Uruk's historical record at this time, as did its small Assyrian community.[105] Meanwhile southerners, who seem to have played no part in the uprising, gradually turned their economic and religious attentions to Anu's Reš temple and Ištar's Irigal instead (see below and Chapter 6).[106]

This so-called 'end of archives' does not therefore represent a complete cessation of Babylonian economic, religious and literate activity, and its effects were felt differently in different parts of the country. Nevertheless, it marks a significant and traumatic social and theological rupture which must have had as direct and devastating an impact on cuneiform scholarship, its practitioners, patrons and clientele as the collapse of the Assyrian empire just over a century before. As I argued in Chapter 3, Assurbanipal's unsustainable collecting habits removed a great deal of written knowledge from circulation in the mid-seventh century BC and ultimately deprived many individuals of royal patronage as the system failed. In the final sack of Assyrian royal cities just a few decades later, tens of thousands of tablets and writing-boards were buried in the rubble, sometimes with their unfortunate owners: any Assyrian manuscript known to modernity through archaeological recovery was, by definition, lost to later readers in antiquity. A similar process took place during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, so that over the course of less than two centuries we might estimate that the human and textual dimensions of cuneiform culture both halved and halved again. Borrowing a

phrase from population biology, I have elsewhere suggested that we should think of these episodes as 'survival bottlenecks' which – especially in the latter case – could equally have played out as extinction events, had circumstances been slightly different.[107]

Not least, the revolts of 484 BC and their aftermath marked the effective end for royal patronage of cuneiform culture. No evidence at all survives of late Achaemenid support for traditional Babylonian learning. The very absence of cuneiform royal inscriptions from this period onward is telling (as is the one exception that we shall return to shortly). When Alexander the Great (r. 330–323) definitively defeated Persia it first appeared that he might engage much more directly with Babylonian scholarship than his Achaemenid predecessors had, despite having his own Greek intellectuals in his retinue. Babylonian scholarly activity around and about the Macedonian conqueror is well documented, in both cuneiform and classical sources.[108] Chronicles and Diaries were kept, and omens taken, on the key events in Alexander's brief reign, and the Substitute King Ritual (see Chapter 3) was performed to ward off the evil portended by a life-threatening eclipse.

The Greek historian Callisthenes, meanwhile, was charged with writing an account of the king's victories, now lost, but which must form the basis of surviving classical accounts.[109] It has often been stated that Alexander's former tutor Aristotle requested Callisthenes – to whom he was related – to send him Babylonian astronomical data.[110] But this anecdote stems only from the sixth-century AD commentator Simplicius, writing nearly 1,000 years after the event.[111] We should probably not take Simplicius' account as a reliable historical source but rather as a reflection of late antique preoccupations with astrology.[112] For it turns out that Alexander's court kept Babylonian scholars at arm's length, just as its late Achaemenid predecessor had.

Diodorus Siculus (fl. *c*. 60–*c*. 30 BC) reports that as Alexander was returning to Babylon in 323 BC, 'Chaldean' scholars foresaw 'through divination of the stars … the coming death of the king in Babylon'.[113] But their leader, one 'Belephantes' (presumably a form of the Babylonian name Bel-apal-iddina), was unable to obtain a direct audience with Alexander and had to report instead to one of the king's army officers, Nearchus. The scholar warned that to make amends to the angered gods Alexander should avoid the city and instead rebuild 'the tomb of Belus' – probably Marduk's ziggurat Etemenanki whose staircase Xerxes had dismantled almost two centuries before.[114] Initially, the story goes, Alexander followed Belephantes' warnings. He pitched camp outside the city instead of entering it directly, and both classical and cuneiform

accounts agree that work started to clear the rubble from Etemenanki, albeit paid for by the temple's own tithes.[115] However, says Diodorus, Greek philosophers in Alexander's entourage soon persuaded him to change his mind: the king entered Babylon and abandoned the building works. The scholars thus had no option but to instigate a Substitute King Ritual to protect Alexander, initially without his knowledge or involvement. But on discovering the ritual in progress Alexander 'put the man to death in accordance with their [i.e. the Babylonian scholars'] judgement, so that the portended troubles would be turned upon that man'. Diodorus reports that Alexander 'started to find fault with the philosophers who had persuaded him to enter Babylon, and began to admire the skill of the Chaldeans'. But this change of heart apparently came too late to avert the gods' wrath and the king's death.[116] In this account, then, the intellectual battle between the Greek court philosophers and the Babylonian scholars was won by the former – but at the cost of Alexander's life.

In the messy aftermath of the conqueror's death it took a decade or so for a new state to coalesce. Eventually Alexander's former general and eventual successor Seleucus I Nicator (r. 311–281 BC) managed to create a stable dynasty, which was to last around 170 years. Seleucid royal engagement with Babylon and Babylonian scholarship remained fitful at best.[117] Sporadic attempts at clearing the site of Etemenanki for rebuilding continued over the following half-century but, ironically, the only tangible outcome was a rubble mound on the other side of the city (known now as Homera) which later formed the foundation of a Greek-style theatre.[118] The ziggurat was never rebuilt and even the temple itself was at some point abandoned, at least in part.[119] Meanwhile Seleucus founded two new capital cities: Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, 65 kilometres to the north of Babylon, named after himself; and Antioch-on-the-Orontes (near modern-day Antakya) 850 kilometres northwest up the Euphrates, named after his father. Antioch became the Seleucid kings' primary base as their attentions increasingly focused on the western regions of the empire.

However, when Seleucus' son, also called Antiochus, became co-regent in 293 BC he spent a lot of time in Babylon, perhaps even dwelling there.[120] Three or four fragmentary Chronicles, as well as brief passages in the Diaries, report on Antiochus' attentions to temples in Babylon, and to Nabu's temple Ezida in Borsippa.[121] As king Antiochus I Soter (r. 281–261 BC), he famously commemorated preparations for repairs to Esangila and to Ezida with the only known cuneiform royal inscription in Babylonia since the reign of Cyrus nearly three centuries before (Fig. 5.5). As recent analysis shows, the so-called 'Borsippa Cylinder' or

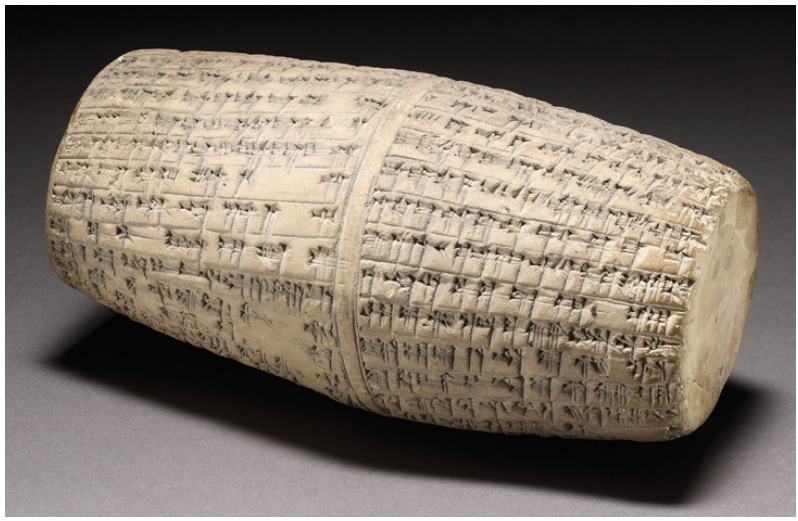

Figure 5.5: The so-called Antiochus Cylinder is the latest surviving cuneiform inscription written on behalf of a king of Babylon. It was designed in the traditional barrel-shaped format of a foundation inscription. In 268 BC it was buried in the foundations of the Ezida temple in Borsippa (under the threshold of the doorway between Court A and Room A1: Fig 5.4) during the building works it commemorates (Stevens 2014). BM ME 36277, reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

'Antiochus Cylinder' attempts to present a classic image of Babylonian kingship but is hardly a glowing testament to an unbroken scholarly tradition, as previously thought.[122] However, what it does have in common with its Neo-Babylonian predecessors is its emphasis on Nabu as *bukur Marduk rēštû* 'Marduk's firstborn son' and *aplu ṣīru* 'exalted heir' rather than as divine patron of scholarship.[123] It is the last attested act of royal favour on Nabu's now ancient temple, however meagre.

Yet Antiochus' relationship with the native inhabitants was not entirely supportive. A close reading of the Antiochus Cylinder shows that he was not actually present in Babylonia for the temple building works but merely ceremonially moulded bricks for it 'in the land of Hatti' (northern Syria).[124] He relocated the Greek community in Babylon to Seleucia, more or less leaving Babylon to its own devices, while regularly imposing heavy taxes on it to pay for the new Greek city.[125] Berossus (Babylonian Bel-reʾušunu or Bel-reʾušu), a self-styled contemporary of Alexander and

'priest of Belus' (Marduk) in Babylon,[126] supposedly dedicated his Greek-language historical work *Babyloniaca* to Antiochus. But this testimony is given only by the early Christian theologian Tatian, writing in the second century AD – that is, some 400 years later – and so, as Geert de Breucker points out, 'there is no reason to suppose that he [i.e. Berossus] was a member of the Seleucid court'.[127]

Evidence for Antiochus' successors' involvement in Babylonian intellectual culture is even more sparse; their attention was almost always elsewhere. There were some highlights, however: in 236 BC the *šatammu* and *kiništu*-assembly of Esangila recorded that Antiochus II (r. 261–246) had granted tax-exempted royal land 'for the upkeep of Esangila, Ezida and Emeslam', with the right of disposition, in perpetuity; now the temple planned to commission a stone stele recording that fact, perhaps concerned that this donation might otherwise be forgotten or rescinded.[128] It may even have been this gift that enabled the *šatammu* and *kalûs* of Esangila to continue to make sacrifices to the life of the king in absentia until at least the early first century BC.[129] As Lucinda Dirven notes, on the rare occasions that the Seleucid kings and officials made offerings themselves, 'these offerings were not always undertaken out of generosity': the Chronicles and Diaries show that they were often followed in short order by removal of, or greater control over, the temple's dwindling assets.[130]

Exceptionally, Antiochus III the Great (r. 222–187 BC) participated in the *akītu*-festival in 205 BC to celebrate a major military victory – the first time that a king had done so, according to the surviving evidence, in around three centuries.[131] Those who had last performed it in full had died out generations ago; but Babylonian scholars had presciently kept detailed instructions for just this eventuality.[132] He also returned to Babylon for at least a fortnight during the last year of his reign.[133] He or his grandson Antiochus IV Epiphanes (r. 175–164 BC) formally reintroduced a Greek population into Babylon but the incomers remained administratively, culturally and intellectually very segregated from the native inhabitants. The latter were represented politically to the Greek authorities by the *šatammu* of Esangila (a position that had been restored in the late Achaemenid period), who also continued to provide sacrifices on behalf of kings and generals.[134] Yet, even if the secular powers had long abandoned cuneiform high culture, we shall see in Chapter 6 that the temple was still a focus of Babylonian scholarly activity as well as civic life, until at least the first century BC.

Finally, there is no evidence at all of Babylonian scholarly interaction with court life after the Parthians' capture of Seleucia and the

Babylonian cities in 141 BC.[135] But there is a tantalising suggestion of engagement with one of its local rivals. Under Antiochus IV, the last of the Seleucids, the governor of Characene, the southern marsh region at the head of the Gulf, had developed increasing levels of autonomy and eventually created a small (semi-)independent polity under the Parthians.[136] In 127 BC, when this king Hyspaosines (r. *c.* 141–124 BC) conquered Babylon itself, the Esangila temple dispatched one of its *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, Itti-Marduk-balaṭu, to take up the same role at the palace. The initiative seems to have been the temple community's – the *kiništu* record mentions 'Itti-Marduk-balaṭu whom we sent', *ša nišpuru* – but he was accepted into the royal entourage and paid *ina hišihti ša bāb šarri* 'from the resources of the king's gate' *u enna agâ ibašši* 'and is still there'.[137] Itti-Marduk-balaṭu's appointment may have been a statement of Hyspaosines' commitment to maintaining Seleucid (or Parthian) forms of rule or a deliberate attempt to stand apart by affirming long-lapsed royal obligations to support local knowledge practices; in the absence of further documentation it is impossible to tell. Either way, Itti-Marduk-balaṭu is the last known royal scholar in Babylonian history. We shall return to him in Chapter 6.

Loss of royal favour: The view from Uruk

How did scholars respond to the loss of royal patronage? In Chapter 6 we shall consider the question from a pragmatic point of view: where they worked and how they supported themselves financially. Here, though, I shall consider some of the intellectual responses from Late Babylonian Uruk, not only to the contemporary absence of kingly favour but also to perceived injustices of the Chaldean era centuries before.

If Babylon was cut off from access to royal favour and power from the late fifth century BC, then Uruk, some 200 kilometres further south, was even more isolated from the political elite. Matthew Stolper states that 'Iranian personal names are absent from late Achaemenid texts from Uruk, and they remain absent from post-Achaemenid texts': Persians did not mix with southern Babylonian cuneiform-literate society.[138] Similarly, in Seleucid times, Cameron Petrie argues that 'no decisive evidence exists for a [separate] Greek community at Uruk': no public inscriptions, no public buildings, such as 'palace, agora, theatre [or] gymnasium'.[139] There was, however, a degree of Grecophile aspiration amongst members of the local community – the piecemeal adoption of Greek names, the imitation of Greek domestic ceramics, a

high-status burial outside the city walls.[140] Greek taxation officials operated in the city from at least the mid-third century, while a city governor, Anu-uballiṭ of the Aḫutu family, boasts of having been given the Greek name Nikarchus by Antiochus (I or II).[141] Given what we have seen of Antiochus I's at least partial interest in Babylon, this earlier king is probably meant. That boast is made in a building inscription of 244 BC that commemorates work on the great Reš temple of Anu and Antu, by now a major centre of cuneiform learning (Chapter 6). That identification means, however, that the royal favour had been granted at least fifteen years before, Antiochus I having died in 261 BC. And significantly, it is Anu-uballiṭ Nikarchus himself who has commissioned the work and the inscription, not the current ruler, although the governor states that he has 'built and completed (the temple) for the life of Antiochus and Seleucus the kings'.[142]

We are reminded here of Nabu-šuma-imbi, the eighth-century governor of Borsippa discussed earlier in this chapter, who undertook restoration of the Ezida temple in the absence of a strong royal lead. And perhaps we are not the only ones to recall that precedent, for the scholarly work now known as *Crimes and Sacrileges of Nabu-šuma-iškun* that details the breakdown in eighth-century Babylonian rule is known only from a tablet found in a late fourth-century context in Uruk.[143] It was almost certainly owned by a member of the Ekur-zakir family, close scholarly associates of the Anu-uballiṭ's Aḫutu clan.[144]

In fact, Anu-uballiṭ Nikarchus's building inscription has very little to say about kingship, or the lack of it. Neither does it say anything significant about the gods who are to inhabit the temple he has commissioned. It is all about the magnificence of the building itself:

> He built and completed the Lofty Gate, the great gate, pedestal of Papsukkal, entrance to the Reš temple; the Great Gate, pedestal of Nusku, entrance gate – 2 gates that open on the south side – (and) the Gate of Plenty, gate that allows the bounty of the land to enter: total 3 gates that open onto the outside, 7 courtyards are located next to the courtyard of the Dais of Destinies; the enclosure wall of the Reš temple, the service buildings, the shrines of the great gods and their courtyards.[145]

We know relatively little about what these structures looked like because a generation later another Anu-uballiṭ of the Aḫutu family did further major work on Reš, and it is his rebuilding that is documented in the modern archaeological record.[146] He did not commemorate his achievements

on a traditional clay cylinder buried in the foundations, as Anu-uballiṭ Nikarchus (and Antiochus I in Borsippa) had done. Instead he had them hand-inscribed on the horizontal surface of baked bricks, equally invisible in the walls of the building. The text varies slightly from brick to brick, and the bricks themselves are now very damaged, but a composite reconstruction runs like this:

> Anu-uballiṭ, whose second name is Kephalon, son of Anu-balassu-iqbi, *rab ša rēš āli* (lit. 'chief of the city leaders') of Uruk:
>
> Enamena, the cella of Anu, and Egašananu, the shrine of Antu, of the Reš temple that previously Oannes … had built,[147] had become dilapidated, so I demolished (it) and on day 2 of Nisannu (Month I) of year 110,[148] for the sake of the life of Antiochus (III), king of the lands, my(?) lord, I extended its ancient foundations and I applied gypsum (plaster) to them.
>
> I built and I completed the interior(?). I brought cedars from Mahdaru(?), the strong mountain, and I built a roof with them. I installed strong cedar doors at the gates of their (i.e., the gods') shrines.[149]

In both inscriptions, the Anu-uballiṭs dedicate their building works to their respective kings – but in neither do they claim any direct royal involvement. Indeed, had these works been royal commissions we would expect to find inscriptions in the king's name, not the local rulers'.[150] In this we are reminded of how Bel-tarṣi-ilumma, governor of the Assyrian capital city Kalhu, dedicated his construction of Nabu's temple to king Adad-nerari III in about 800 BC (Chapter 3). By depicting bold acts of independence as statements of deference to both king and deity, such dedications purported to confirm local obedience to royal power, but in fact they equally asserted equality, perhaps even supremacy, as well as financial autonomy.

Indeed, the sheer bulk of the Anu-uballiṭs' Reš and its associated ziggurat were unequivocal statements of local wealth and independence. At around 210 × 160 metres around the external perimeter, the temple dwarfed even the precinct of Marduk's ziggurat Etemenanki in Babylon, whose Neo-Babylonian phases, not comprehensively restored for many centuries and possibly now in ruins, measured only around 170 × 130 metres.[151] Likewise, the base of Anu's ziggurat was some 110 metres square, about 20 metres more than the long-abandoned Etemenanki.[152] Even if no Uruk scholar ever travelled to Babylon to see Marduk's temple complex for himself, a collection of mathematical exercises which used

the dimensions of Etemenanki and the courts of Esangila gave a sense of its scale. The one surviving copy was owned by an Anu-belšunu of the Ahʾutu family – possibly even Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon's brother of the same name.[153] The tablet was made for him in 229 BC by Anu-belšunu [1] of the Sin-leqi-unninni family (online Table B.12) from a Borsippan original and may well have been kept in the Reš temple.[154] Indeed, a much smaller and anonymously composed tablet, excavated from a storeroom of Reš, is composed in a similar but more simplified style and may well be a direct response to it.[155] Compare the first two sections of each:

> The Great Court of Esangila: its measurement is 1 (*ikû*) area. … Enlarge the Great Court by 2½ *mūšaru*, the pillar of Ubšukkinnakku. … The length of the Great Court is 11;23 30 (rods, *c*. 68.4 metres), the width of the Great Court is 9 (rods, *c*. 54 metres). 11;23 30 times 9 is 1 42;30 (*mūšaru*). … It is 1 (*ikû*) 2½ *mūšaru* area in seed-measure by the large cubit (*c*. 3,700 m^2), the measurement of the Great Court.
>
> The shrine of Reš: its length is 150 cubits (*c*. 75 m), its width 260 cubits (*c*. 130 m). Its seed-measure is 1 (*pānu*) 1 (*sūtu*), 1 *qā* (*c*. 9,750 m^2).[156]

As the two texts use different measurement systems it is difficult at first glance to compare like with like. But looking at the modern equivalents the comparison becomes clear: Anu's inner sanctum is nearly three times the size of Marduk's main courtyard. And the shrine of Ištar's Irigal temple next door, the Uruk text continues, is almost double that size again.

Indeed, Claus Ambos argues that the very name Reš – literally 'head', but also 'beginning', 'origin' – is itself significant, projecting an image of deep antiquity even though the use of the Akkadian language, rather than the traditional Sumerian of temple names, betrays its relatively recent origin.[157] Indeed both of the Anu-uballiṭs' inscriptions hark back to earlier times. Nikarchus makes an allusive final reference to re-establishing offerings *kīma mahrîmma* 'as formerly'; while Kephalon states quite explicitly that he has demolished the remains of a temple constructed by Oannes the antediluvian sage.[158]

These hints of fierce local independence, and the insistence on ancient antecedents, could easily be construed as coincidental, were they merely isolated occurrences. But as we shall see, this was not the case. There are at least five ways in which the scholars of Late Babylonian Uruk articulated their strong sense of local identity and independence from royal support.

Perhaps the most overt manifestation of scholarly localism can be seen in the frequent use of the self-description 'Urukean', native of Uruk. In the late Achaemenid and early Hellenistic periods, scholars of the Šangu-Ninurta and Ekur-zakir families called themselves 'Urukeans' every now and again, in about 12 per cent of their tablets with surviving colophons.[159] It is typically amongst the last pieces of information given about the owners of tablets and can occur in relation to any type of work, whether copy, commentary or new composition. By the mid-Seleucid period, however, all twenty or so of the best attested owners and/or scribes from all four known scholarly families (Ahʾutu, Ekur-zakir, Hunzu, Sin-leqi-unninni) regularly identify themselves as 'Urukeans'.[160] It was clearly majority practice in Uruk by this time, although scholars from other Seleucid cities rarely labelled themselves as a 'Babylonian', 'Borsippan' or the equivalent.[161]

Second, it seems that local identity could assert itself more subtly, through the everyday habits of cuneiform literacy. Digital edition and quantitative orthographic analysis of samples of Late Babylonian scholarly texts from Uruk are beginning to suggest a remarkable consistency

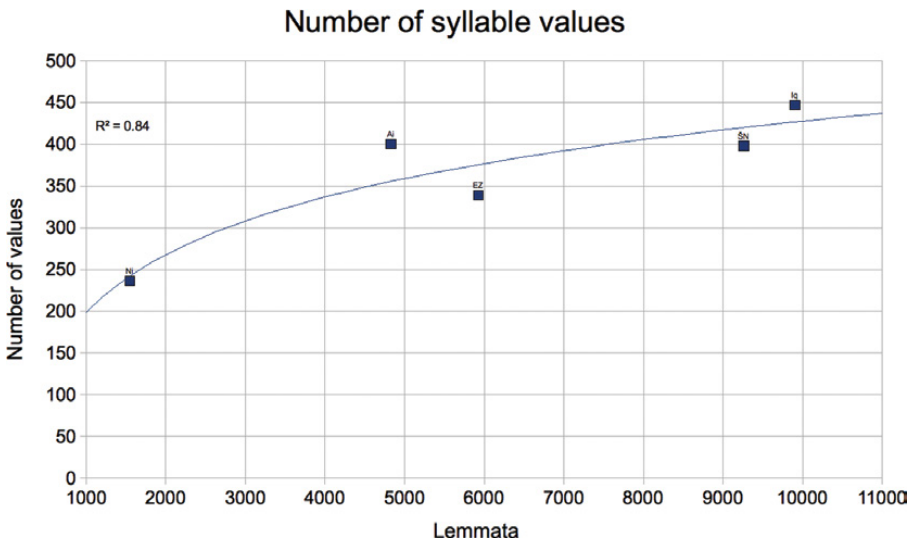

Figure 5.6: Late Babylonian scribal families used a consistent number of syllabic values in their cuneiform repertoire: the larger the number of words (lemmata) in the corpus analysed, the closer the number reached 450. Ni = Nippur; Ai = Anu-ikṣur of Uruk; ŠN = other members of the Šangu-Ninurta family of Uruk; Iq = Iqišaya of Uruk; EZ = other member of the Ekur-zakir family of Uruk. Source: author.

in sign choice, across families, professions and centuries, that is significantly different even from nearby Nippur. Pilot studies for the Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Literacies project in late 2012 suggest that Late Babylonian scholars consistently drew on a repertoire of around 450 Akkadian syllable values, deployed across a range of genres (Fig. 5.6).[162] That was far more than strictly necessary and thus offered the scribes a wide range of spelling choices. For instance, one could choose whether to write closed syllables – those which start and end with a consonant – with one closed-syllable sign (such as *bat* or *din*) or two open-syllable ones (*ba-at, di-in*). Indeed, a common elementary exercise was to practise writing Akkadian verbs using both of these styles (*iṣ-ba-at, iṣ-bat* 'he seized', *id-din, id-di-in* 'he gave').[163] Strictly speaking one could write syllabic Akkadian perfectly correctly using only open syllables – and over the long history of cuneiform many literates did just that – but one gained both elegance and efficiency by using closed values too. Statistical analysis shows that the *āšipus* of Late Babylonian Uruk were extraordinarily consistent in their syllabic spelling habits. Across three centuries from the late Achaemenid to the Seleucid period, they always used slightly more closed than open syllable values, in a ratio of about 8:7. Their near neighbours in Nippur, meanwhile, preferred open to closed syllables in a ratio of 3:2 – a dramatic difference.[164] The Uruk scholars do not appear to have found the Nippur spelling habits distasteful, however, as they incorporated these tablets into their own collections.[165]

Third, Urukean scholars were fascinated by local ancestors and ancient heroes. There is a clear case of an invented tradition for the *āšipus*, in a frequently discussed list of the priestly families of Seleucid Uruk.[166] The list begins by naming seven ancestral *āšipus*: Gimil-Anu, Hunzu, Ile"i-Marduk, Ekur-zakir, Nagaraya, Iddin-Ellil and Parakki-Marduk. As Martin Kümmel pointed out decades ago, the first and last of these names are not attested at all in Neo-Babylonian or late Achaemenid Uruk, the third is not documented in relation to prebendary professions, and the remainder were associated instead with other types of priesthood.[167] In the Seleucid period itself, solely the families of Ekur-zakir, Hunzu and Gimil-Anu are currently known to have produced *āšipus*.[168] Iddin-Ellil is the other family name on the list to appear in the cuneiform documentation at this time. The ancestral names Ile"i-Marduk and Parakki-Marduk had disappeared with Xerxes' purge of northern Babylonians from Uruk; and Nagaraya is not (yet) attested at all.[169] The fact that the ancestors number seven is also significant, as this quantity is highly meaningful in the practice of *āšipūtu*.[170] Most tellingly, as Wilfred Lambert noted over half a century ago, the text is a scribal exercise, which begins to repeat itself on the reverse

of the tablet.[171] It is not a factual roster of the prebendary professions of Hellenistic Uruk but rather a reimagining of a mythical past.

In a similar fashion, the *kalûs* of Seleucid Uruk consolidated around the family name Sin-leqi-unninni. Earlier in the millennium the Hunzu and Iddin-Ellil clans had also produced Urukean *kalûs*, but although the families survived into the Hellenistic period, their association with *kalûtu* did not (online Tables B1, B5, B9). Sin-leqi-unninni, of course, was renowned as the long-ago editor of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the legendary king of Uruk.[172] The *Epic* itself continued to be copied in the city until at least the early Hellenistic period, although there are no surviving manuscripts of it by members of the Sin-leqi-unninni family themselves.[173] Another literary composition, now called *Adapa and Enmerkar*, links the sage Adapa-Oannes (whom we have already met above, invoked by Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon as the first builder of Reš) with a second legendary king of Uruk. Enmerkar is best known in modern times through a cycle of four Sumerian literary works from the early second millennium BC, in which he defeats the mythical Iranian city of Aratta, but he had a much more enduring legacy than that.[174]

Oannes and Enmerkar, Gilgamesh and Sin-leqi-unninni all reappear in an Uruk list of ancient kings and their *apkallus* 'sages' or *ummânus* 'master-scholars'.[175] It was drawn up by the *kalû* Anu-belšunu [2] of the Sin-leqi-unninni family (online Table B12) in 165 BC and excavated from the Reš temple in the late 1950s. As Alan Lenzi has shown, the list is highly Urukean in character and intent.[176] It is divided into three sections. The first seven lines list seven antediluvian kings and their *apkallu*-sages, starting with the pair Ayyalu and Oannes – note the reappearance of the number seven. After a horizontal ruling the textual pattern is broken, in order to devote four lines to the installation of a bronze kettle-drum (the *kalûs*' ritual instrument par excellence) in Anu's temple during Enmerkar's reign. Following another horizontal ruling the listing resumes, with eight postdiluvian kings and their *ummânu*-scholars, from Gilgamesh and Sin-leqi-unninni to Esarhaddon and one Ṭupšar-Ellil-dari, also known by the Aramaic name Ahiqar.[177] Other than Gilgamesh, all six extant kings' names are historically attested, even though their scholars are not. Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid rulers are conspicuously absent, a fact we shall return to shortly. The next and final name is that of Nikarchus, who, Lenzi argues, must be none other than the Anu-uballiṭ-Nikarchus who had been city governor of Uruk eighty years before. However, no scholar is named with him.[178] The contents of this text are in stark contrast to the straightforwardly pragmatic *Uruk King List*, excavated from the same locale, which systematically enumerates the reign lengths of all rulers of

Babylonia from Ashurbanipal to Seleucus II, like many others of the same genre.[179] Read against this second, highly practical document the political intent of Anu-belšunu's list is clear: Uruk has been supported by kings, served by sages and master-scholars, since the time before the flood, but in recent centuries the bond between royalty and scholarship has been broken and the local, temple-based community of *āšipus* and *kalûs* is now forced into self-reliance.

Similar sentiments about the unworthiness of kings are expressed in the so-called *Uruk Chronicle*, known only from a single clay tablet copied from a wooden writing-board in 251 BC.[180] Its scribe was Anu-balassu-iqbi [2] of the Ekur-zakir family, who made it for his father Anu-ah-ušabši [1], *āšipu* and high priest of Reš just prior to, or just at the start of, Nikarchus' renovations of the temple (online Tables B12, B13). The colophon tells us the tablet was destined for deposit in the Reš but it was in fact found in the upper levels of the *āšipus*' house nearby (Chapter 6).[181] An extract from a longer chronicle, now mostly missing, it describes how Šulgi, long-ago ruler of Ur (r. 2094–2047 BC), abetted by his *ummânu* Lu-Nanna, 'removed the rites of Anu, the ordinances of Uruk, the scholars' treasure, in an undestined manner'.[182] Šulgi claimed all of Uruk's cultural heritage for his own dynastic deity, the moon-god Sin, and falsified the written record accordingly. Anu revenged himself, perhaps by inflicting some sort of bodily suffering on the guilty king (the passage is somewhat damaged).[183] The chronicle may also have painted unflattering portraits of Šulgi's immediate predecessor and successor, kings Ur-Namma and Amar-Suen; only fragments survive.[184] Through its obvious parallels with Babylonian king Nabonidus's favouritism towards Ur it implies, even more forcefully than the *List of Kings and Sages*, that Uruk is better off without certain sorts of royal intervention.

The Uruk Chronicle also draws attention to the fourth feature of Uruk localism in the Late Babylonian period: the celebration of Anu's cult as the revival – or perhaps in Urukean eyes, continuation – of an age-old practice. The Sumerian god An had been worshipped in Uruk since at least the late fourth millennium BC. Yet by the Neo-Babylonian period, if not before, his temporal power had been eclipsed by Ištar and the wealth of the Eanna temple. Now Ištar moved to the magnificent new Irigal temple after the collapse of Eanna and the bilingual *Exaltation of Ištar* continued to be copied in Uruk well into the Seleucid period.[185] At the same time, as we have already seen, local southern scholars gave Anu's previously minor sanctuary Reš renewed importance, presenting it as the 'original' temple, although it was at most perhaps a few centuries old. This fifth-century, post-Xerxean theological reconfiguration thus represented a return to origins, planned on scholarly principles.

Table 5b: Changes in the hierarchy of Uruk deities from Neo-Babylonian Eanna to Late Babylonian Reš.

	Neo-Babylonian Eanna (Beaulieu 2003b: 73)	*Late Babylonian Reš (Beaulieu 1992: 55–6)*	*The god list* An = Anu *(Litke 1998; cf. Beaulieu 1992: 57–8)*
1	**Ištar**-of-Uruk and Bel	Anu (^{d}60)	Tablet I, ll. 1–95: Anu and Antu
2	**Nanaya** and Nabu	Antu	Tablet I, ll. 148–370 (end): Ellil
3	**Belet-ša-Reš**	Ellil (^{d}50)	Tablet II, ll. 1–128: Belet-ili
4	**Marduk** (once Sin)	Ea (^{d}40)	Tablet II, ll. 129–422 (end): Ea
5	Uṣur-amassu and Urkayitu	Sin (^{d}30)	Tablet III, ll. 1–96: Sin
6	Gula	**Šamaš** (^{d}20)	Tablet III, ll. 97–205: Šamaš
7	^{d}IGI.DU	Adad (^{d}10)	Tablet III, ll. 206–83 (end): Adad
8	Belet-Eanna and ^{d}IGI.DU of Udannu	**Marduk**	(Marduk in Ea's entourage, Tablet II, ll. 185–289)
9	Divine Chariot	Papsukkal and Amasagnudi	(both in Anu's entourage, Tablet I, ll. 41–54)
10	*Bīt hilṣi*	**Ištar** (^{d}15)	Tablet IV, 1–294 (end): Ištar
11	Nergal	Belet-ṣeri	
12	Ninurta	**Nanaya**	
13	Nusku	**Belet-ša-Reš**	
14	**Šamaš** and Aya of Larsa	Šarrahitu	

Paul-Alain Beaulieu has convincingly shown that the new divine regime was programmatically constructed from the seven-tablet god list *An = Anu*, which had been used in scribal pedagogy since at least the mid-second millennium (Table 5b).[186] Where previously Ištar and Nanaya – and their northern Babylonian royally sanctioned spouses Bel and Nabu – had been the focus of Eanna's offerings regime, in Reš it was the local deities Anu and Antu who were now the focus of ritual attention. Marduk was demoted and Nabu removed altogether.[187]

There are three known manuscripts of *An = Anu* from late Achaemenid Uruk, more or less contemporary with that theological reformulation, one of which was copied by the junior *āšipu* Anu-ikṣur for his father Šamaš-iddin.[188] In the same spirit, in 235 BC one Illut-Anu, a *kalû* of the Sin-leqi-unninni family (online Table B12), wrote a commentary on the names of Antu for his relative and fellow-*kalû* Anu-uballiṭ.[189] Moreover, the hymns and rituals for performance in Reš unequivocally reflect the new Anu-centric regime.[190] Indeed the very fact that they were formally recorded suggests that they needed to be documented: not, as in the case of the Hellenistic *akītu*-festival in Babylon, because it was no

longer a living tradition, but rather because this was a tradition in the course of invention (Chapter 2).

Even if we are wrong to infer that the literary figure of Šulgi was a metaphor for Nabonidus in particular, he was clearly a paradigm of bad kings past. And nor was he the only one. Some time in the early second century BC, Šamaš-eṭir of the Ekur-zakir family (online Table B11) copied a set of detailed ritual instructions for the daily feeding and care of the gods of Reš. The colophon asserts that it was written:

> in accordance with the wording of tablets that Nabopolassar, king of the Sealand, carried off from Uruk, and then Kidin-Anu the Urukean, the *āšipu* of Anu and Antu (and) descendant of Ekur-zakir, the high priest of the Reš temple, saw those tablets in the land of Elam, and during the reign of Seleucus and Antiochus, the kings, copied (them) and brought (the copies back) to Uruk.[191]

In other words the founder of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Nabopolassar (r. 626–605 BC), had stolen Uruk's ritual heritage, which was only reclaimed in the early third century by Kidin-Anu, Šamaš-eṭir's kinsman and predecessor as chief priest of Reš, over three centuries later.[192] We do not know to what extent this claim is based on historical fact: Šamaš-eṭir was chief priest of Reš in 193 BC, about 100 years after the purported return, and so this can hardly be an eyewitness account, whenever he wrote it. But for our purposes, the validity of his claims is unimportant: what matters is the message, now somewhat familiar, that a past king of Babylonia desecrated the shrines of Uruk and order was restored only by the initiative and resourcefulness of a leading member of the city's educated elite.

Further, this colophon spells out what was only implicit in the list of kings and their scholars discussed above: that the rot set in not with the Achaemenids, as we might expect, but with Nabopolassar, son of the last governor of Uruk under the Assyrian empire and founder of the newly independent Babylonian state upon Assyria's collapse.[193] Did the native Urukeans blame the long-ago northern Babylonian community in Uruk, so closely associated with the defunct Eanna temple, for the withdrawal of royal patronage from the south? It is easy to imagine that the Neo-Babylonian kings had favoured members of northern families over southerners for courtly positions, while a generation or two later the northerners' abortive rebellions against Darius and Xerxes had led to the irreversible end of royal patronage of Babylonian scholarship in around 500 BC. In this light, the absence of the Chaldean dynasty from the *List of*

Kings and Sages starts to make more sense: in Late Babylonian scholarly eyes, the rot had set in even then.

Finally, the southern scholars' ambivalence, even hostility, to northern Babylonian kingship can be seen too in their relations with the god Nabu – or, rather, in their lack of them. As we saw in Chapter 3, throughout early first-millennium Assyria the educated elite had put their 'trust in Nabu' long before, and much more consistently than, the royal family ever did. This intimate relationship with the god of scholarship manifested itself through personal names, invocations in letters and on colophons, and votive offerings in Nabu's several temples. In Babylonia, by contrast, we have seen in this chapter that Nabu was the subject of royal attention from at least the late second millennium BC, primarily because he was the son of Marduk, the king's personal god. Babylonian Nabu was the crown prince's divine counterpart first, the embodiment of scholarly knowledge second, the mirror image of his conceptualisation in Assyria. Thus Nabu remained a predominantly northern Babylonian deity even under the Chaldeans: the geographical distribution of personal names, epistolary blessings and invocations in colophons is more or less confined to the cities of Babylon, Borsippa and Sippar along with the north-Babylonian scholarly community in Uruk. In Nippur and Ur, and amongst the southerners of Uruk, scholars associated themselves more closely with local deities such as Ellil and Ninurta, Ningal and Sin, and Nanaya and Ištar the Lady-of-Uruk respectively (Table 5c).[194]

After the anti-Persian revolts and their consequences, not only did the cuneiform-literate community of Uruk remove him from the pantheon, as we have already seen, but they also stopped naming their children after Nabu. Nor did they ever invoke him in Late Urukean scholarly colophons.[195] This was a highly localised phenomenon for, as Francesco Pomponio noted many years ago, the cult of Nabu spread far and wide in the late first-millennium Middle East, from Elephantine and Syene in Egypt to the northern desert cities of Palmyra, Edessa, Hierapolis, Dura-Europos and post-imperial Assur.[196] In this light, Nabu's absence from Seleucid Uruk is even more striking and seems a deliberate snub.

The Urukean intelligentsia did not entirely despair of ever having a good king to rule over them, however. A set of four alternative public rituals to be performed by *kalûs* in the event of a lunar eclipse includes, somewhat optimistically, a final version in which the king participates.[197] The so-called *Uruk Prophecy*, known from a single anonymous manuscript found in early Hellenistic Uruk, predicts that after ten successive unjust rulers, a worthy king – a local king – will arise to found a dynasty that will rule fairly in perpetuity and worship in Tirana, Uruk's temple district:

Table 5c: Protective deities invoked in colophons of Assyrian and Babylonian scholarly works, in chronological order.

Deity / Collection	*Kalhu Ezida temple*	*Huzirina*	*Aššur Baba-šumu-ibni family*	*Sippar E-ulmaš temple*	*Uruk Šangu-Ninurta family*	*Uruk Ekur-zakir family*	*Uruk Reš temple*	*Parthian Babylon*
Number in sample	3	15	11	4	16	16	16	10
Adad		x				x		
Ea	x							
Ea and Nabu		x						
Lugalirra		x						
Marduk			x	x				
Nabu		x	x	x				x
Nabu and Marduk		x	x	x				
Nabu and Nisaba			x					
Šamaš	x	x	x					
Zababa		x						
Adad and Šala						x	x	
Anu and Antu					x	x	x	
Anu and Ištar					x			
Anu, Ellil and Ea						x	x	
Gula							x	
Ellil and the gods of Ekur							(x) Nippur	
Bel and Beltiya								x
Marduk and Za-rpanitu					(x) Babylon			
Šamaš and Marduk								x

> He will judge the lawsuits of the land. He will decide the legal cases of the land. He will establish the rites of Anu inside Tirana …. He will rebuild the temples of Uruk. He will return the gods' temples to their proper condition. He will renew Uruk. He will build Uruk's city gates with lapis lazuli. He will fill the watercourses and meadows with abundance and plenty. After him a king, his son, will arise inside Tirana and rule over the Four Quarters. He will exercise rule and kingship inside Tirana. His dynasty will be permanent forever. The kings of Uruk will exercise rule like gods.[198]

In other words, the mythical glory days of the Urukean culture-heroes Enmerkar and Gilgamesh will one day come again.

Conclusions

The relationship between Nabu and the kings of Babylonia stayed remarkably stable over half a millennium or more, until at least the fall of the last native dynasty in the mid-sixth century BC. However, in contrast to Assyria it was Nabu's status as Marduk's son that mattered more than his identity as god of scholarship. Even Assyrian kings who ruled Babylonia upheld native practices and did not force their own ideas onto tradition. Every spring equinox Nabu assisted his divine father in renewing the king's right to rule, by means of the *akītu*-festival, and, further, bestowed the Sceptre of the Land on the heir apparent in the purpose-built E-niggidru-kalama-suma temple in Babylon. It was also in that temple that budding scribes and scholars offered the first fruits of their literate labour to Nabu in the hope that he would nurture their health and talents. Whether or not this practice is as old as the temple or started only in the seventh century with Esarhaddon's rebuilding, we can perhaps now understand Ashurbanipal's dedication of tablets to Nabu in Nineveh (see Chapter 3) as a hybrid of Assyrian royal attitudes and Babylonian scribal practice.

Although the evidence for Neo-Babylonian court scholars is extremely scanty – there are just a few scattered references to *āšipus* – there are likely to have been substantial numbers of them, perhaps dominated by the Urukean families of northern Babylonian descent given the dynasty's roots in Eanna. By contrast, at the Achaemenid court, which was more often resident in Persia than it was in Babylonia, the cuneiform

literati are likely to have been in fierce competition for the king's patronage, with Zoroastrian *magi* at the top of the pecking order of advisors and scholars from other parts of the empire further down the courtly hierarchy. We cannot know what Babylonian court scholars thought of Nabu, as we have no direct evidence of what they thought about anything. However, Nabu remained a predominantly northern deity throughout this period. That regionality is probably largely attributable to Nabu's association with the royal family: scholars further away from the Neo-Babylonian court, whether socially or geographically, were perhaps more likely to associate him with novices and apprenticeship or (as perhaps in Hellenistic Uruk) to reject him entirely.

Babylonian rebellions against kings Darius and Xerxes in the decades either side of 500 BC saw the effective end of royal patronage of cuneiform scholarship. Darius's heir Cambyses was, so far as we know, the last crown prince to 'grasp the righteous sceptre' of Nabu in 539 BC. Yet the scholars themselves never quite gave up hope of rekindling the relationship. Alexander the Great's defeat of the Achaemenids in the late fourth century saw Babylonian intellectuals almost succeed in gaining his trust but in the end his own advisors won the day. Fifty years later Antiochus I and II both flirted with support of Esangila and Ezida, but whether that also involved courtly patronage of the temples' learned personnel it is impossible to know. However, the marked absence of cuneiform literacy, so bound up in Babylonian scholarly identity, from late first-millennium courtly culture is itself highly suggestive of the low regard in which it was held by non-Babylonian royalty. Nevertheless, throughout the Seleucid period, scholars in Babylon maintained instructions for performing key royal rituals, in expectation – rarely fulfilled – of kingly involvement. Meanwhile the temple community of Uruk, deeply proud of its antiquity and heritage, expressed its dissatisfaction with the current lack of royal attention while enumerating past exemplars of bad kingship, hoping against hope for the return to a time when rulers respected and needed cuneiform learning.

How, in this light, should we interpret the independent king of Characene, Hyspaosines, receiving the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* Itti-Marduk-balaṭu from Esangila in Babylon in the late second century BC? Was this a speculative venture on the temple's part, as the sole piece of somewhat damaged testimony – now lost – seems to suggest? Was every king open to such approaches, despite what the scholars of Uruk imply, or was Hyspaosines uniquely attempting a Babylonian cultural revival to counter centuries of neglect? In the absence of further evidence, it is hard to judge. Whatever the facts of the matter, it shows the incredible

resilience of cuneiform scholarship, and its continued attraction for a few kings at least, some 400 years after the devastating loss of Achaemenid royal support. In the following chapter I consider how, and where, Babylonian intellectual culture managed to survive for so long on its own resources.

Notes

1. Only fifty-four members of the 300-tablet archive excavated in 1908 from one of the vaulted rooms of Nebuchadnezzar's South Palace can now be identified, very few of which have yet been published. For useful overviews see Pedersén (2005: 111–27) and especially Jursa (2010b).
2. The Ur Online Project at the British Museum and Penn Museum (2012–16) digitised the finds and field notes from Woolley's excavations in the 1920s and 1930s in order to reunite them online (http://www.ur-online.org, last accessed August 2018). The Field Museum in Chicago carried out a similar project for Kish in 2004–6, on a smaller scale and sadly excluding the cuneiform tablets (http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/kish/, last accessed August 2018). Pedersén (2005) reunites the scattered tablets from Koldewey's excavations in Babylon of 1899–1917. Pedersén (1998: 181–212) and Robson and Stevens (2019) survey collections of scholarly tablets from first-millennium Babylonia.
3. Jursa (2005). An online version is under development, directed by Kathleen Abraham at Leuven University (https://nabucco.arts.kuleuven.be, accessed 3 August 2018).
4. Royal inscriptions: Frame (1995); Schaudig (2001); Da Riva (2008); *Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia* online (http://oracc.org/ribo, accessed August 2018). King lists and chronicles: Glassner (2004); van der Spek and Finkel (2004–); Waerzeggers (2012); observational diaries (more often known as astronomical diaries though that is not all they contain): Hunger and Sachs (1988; 1990; 1996); van der Spek (1993; 1997/98); Pirngruber (2013); now online at *Astronomical Diaries Digital* (http://oracc.org/adsd, accessed June 2019).
5. Waerzeggers (2012).
6. Jursa (2014).
7. Cf. Brinkman (1968).
8. Cf. Frame (1995: 3).
9. Paulus (2014).
10. Pomponio (1998–2001: 19).
11. Frame (1995: B.2.7.2).
12. tug_2 ib_2-la_2 ku_3-sig_{17} huš-a na_4 kal-la mi_2-zi-de_3-eš dug_4-[ga] ; né-bé-eh hu-ra-ṣi ru-uš-ši-i šá ina ab-ni a-qar-ti […] ; igi gir_3-peš-bal-a am u_3-na-gub-bu ugu-bi ma-ʳan⁷-gub⁷ʳ | ù ana TU_{15} 4-ti ri-mu kàd-ru-tu e-liš na-zu-uz-zu (BM 79503, ll. 9–10, Frame 1995: B.2.8.5).
13. mu-šar-šid ku-us-se-e ù-luh-hi ú-ma-ni | mu-[kin⁷ pa⁷-le⁷]-e na-bu-u šar-ru-ti (BM 79503, ll.3–4, Frame 1995: 56, no. B.2.8.5).
14. E.g. Grayson (1970); Glassner (2004: no. 20). The *akītu* of Marduk and Nabu is first attested in the Old Babylonian period (Cohen 2015: 390) and was but one of many such festivals in Babylonia from the third millennium onwards (Cohen 2015: 99–106, 389–408).
15. Sommer (2000). On the *akītu*-festival in general see most recently Ambos (2014: 329–32) with earlier literature; on the Seleucid version, Ristvet (2014; 2015: 153–210).
16. Brinkman (1968: 171–2); Pomponio (1978: 117); Glassner (2004: no. 51)
17. Pongratz-Leisten (1994: 103); George (1996: 378–85). It is still unclear whether this was an annual ritual or a one-off investiture of the crown prince. Cavigneaux (1999: 385 n3) presents a brief discussion of the epithet *ša harê*; in his opinion *harû* probably means some sort of offering vessel.
18. Cavigneaux (1999: 386).
19. The panther was killed and then dragged out onto dry land: ina $^{itu}DU_6$ U_4 25-KÁM nim-ru bal-ṭu | ÍD iq-qé-lep-pu-ma ina ku-tal É.GIŠ.GIDRU.KALAM.MA.[SUM.MA] | i-du-ku-šu-ma ana ta-ba-li ú-še-lu-niš-ša (Glassner 2004: no. 51 ii 9–11).

20. We shall return to the question of the prebendary professions in Chapter 6.
21. We shall return to these grants in Chapter 6, when considering the relationship between scholarship and priesthood in first-millennium Babylonia.
22. 'I captured 50 cavalrymen together with the troops of Nabu-apla-iddina, king of Karduniaš (i.e. Babylonia), Zabdanu his brother with 3,000 fighting men, (and) the *bārû* Bel-apla-iddina, their commanding officer' 50 pit-hal-lu a-di ÉRIN-MEŠ «šá» ša ^{md}NÀ–A–SUM^{-na} MAN ^{kur}kar-du-ni-áš | ^{m}za-ab-da-a-nu ŠEŠ-šú a-di 3 LIM ÉRIN-MEŠ ti-du-ki-šú-nu ^{m}EN–A–AŠ ^{lú}HAL a-lik pa-an ÉRIN-HI.A-MEŠ-šú-nu it-ti-šú-nu ina ŠU ú-ṣab-bi-ta (Grayson 1991: A0.101.1, iii 19–20).
23. Found during Rassam's excavations for the British Museum in 1879 (Reade 1986b: 108–9).
24. […] ˹né˺-me-qí ù ši-tul-ti muš-ta-bi-li te-re-e-ti (Frame 1995: B.6.14.2001 I 5').
25. i-na BÁR.SIPA^{ki} IRI kit-ti ù mi-šá-ri e-šá-a-ti dal-ha-a-ti si-ti | ù sah-ma-šá-a-ti i-na BALA^{-e} ^{d}PÀ–MU–iš-kun (Frame 1995: B.6.14.2001 I 16'–17').
26. MU 5 MU 6 ^{d}NÀ–MU–GAR^{-un} ^{d}NÀ ana È ^{d}EN NU DU^{-ku} (Glassner 2004: no. 19 l. 22).
27. ^{d}NÀ ina TIN.TIR^{ki} ik-le-e-ma … GAR.RAŠ^{sar} ik-kib É.ZI.DA ˹ana? É˺ ^{d}NÀ | ú-˹qar˺-rib u KU$_4$–E-MEŠ ul-ta-kil (Frame 1995: B.6.14.1 ii 9, 17–18; cf. Cole 1994: 228–9).
28. Thureau-Dangin (1919: 141–4); Waerzeggers (2011b: 739–44); Paulus (2014: no. 67).
29. Porter (1997).
30. Pomponio (1978: 68–72); cf. Brinkman (1984: 22 n19).
31. Porter (1993: 78 n180).
32. We might, then, be tempted to trace the Kuthean ancestors of the Huzirina scribes (Table A15) to pre-Sargonic raids-cum-pilgrimages to this city; but this conjecture can be no more than speculative on current evidence.
33. Pomponio (1978: 77–8).
34. The letter that Pomponio (1978: 77 n3) attributes to Sargon's reign, describing the enlargement of Nabu's canal in Borsippa, has now been reassigned to Esarhaddon's courtier Mar-Issar and re-dated to 669 BC on the basis of astronomical observations reported at the end (SAA 10: no. 364).
35. Porter (1993: 62–3).
36. Leichty (2011: no. 58, rev. 10b–16a).
37. SAA 10: nos. 347–70; SAA 16: no. 171.
38. ša [ina la]-bi-ri (SAA 10: no. 353, obv. 17).
39. SAA 10: no. 364.
40. Cavigneaux (1999: 386); Leichty (2011: Esarhaddon 113, ll. 20–4).
41. As proposed already by Pongratz-Leisten (1994: 102). However, her argument is overly reductive, as George (1996: 377–85) already suggests; a further problem that neither addresses is the dramatic disparity in size and layout of the different temples.
42. On Nanaya's relationship to Nabu see most conveniently Stol (1998–2001: 150); for later periods Ambos (2003).
43. Cavigneaux (1980; 1981; 1999; 2013).
44. Cavigneaux (1999: 386, 388, 391).
45. Gesche (2001: 61–171).
46. E.g. Cavigneaux (1999: 390).
47. Gesche (2001: 153–7).
48. The tablets for Nabu *ša nikkassī* were offered, according to their colophons, in the E-gišla-anki 'Temple of the Auditor of Heaven and Earth' (Cavigneaux 1981: 37). The location of this building has not yet been ascertained but the fact that school tablets were moved from there to the E-niggidru-kalama-suma strengthens the argument that the tablets were votives that could not be otherwise disposed of. Charpin (2017: 132) suggests that E-gišla-anki was the earlier name of the same temple, renamed E-niggidru-kalama-suma by Nebuchadnezzar. But this cannot be correct, as Esarhaddon (Leichty 2011: Esarhaddon 113, ll. 20, 24) names this temple twice as E-niggidru-kalama-suma.
49. Maul (1998: xiv).
50. Cavigneaux (1999: 390); Maul (1998: xvi). E.g. BM 77665 (Fig. 5.2; Gesche 2001: 650–2).
51. Gesche (2001: 157).
52. Cavigneaux (1980); George (1986: 12–16).
53. Gesche (2001: 164–5). The practice dates back to at least the Old Babylonian period (Charpin 2017: 114–15).

54. [8] MU-MEŠ ina ^{md}30–[ŠEŠ–SU] | 12 MU-MEŠ <ina> ^{m}AN.ŠÁR–[ŠEŠ–ŠUM] | 20 MU-MEŠ ^{d}EN ina BAL.TIL^{ki} a-[šib-ma] | i-sin-nu a-ki-tú ba-ṭi-[il] (Glassner 2004: no. 20 ll. 1–4). The tablet is not dateable.
55. Frame (1995: B.6.32.13–14, B.6.33.3–5).
56. As the Neo-Assyrian kings' attitudes to, and relationships with, Babylonian scholars are covered extensively in Chapter 3 I shall not revisit them here.
57. na-šu-u ṭup-pi NAM-MEŠ DINGIR-MEŠ šá gu-um-mur te-re-e-ti (Frame 1995: B.6.32.13 l. 2; cf. B.6.33.4 1–5).
58. Glassner (2004: no. 19 ll. 38–40; no. 20 ll. 5–8).
59. DUMU la ma-am-ma-na-ma a-na-ku-ma (A Babylon 11 i 8: Al-Rawi 1985: 3; Da Riva 2008: 4; cf. Kessler 2004).
60. Jursa (2007). In this light, the presence of a *qēpu*-inspector in Eanna with the Assyrian name Aššur-bel-uṣur in the period 665–648 BC is no longer remarkable (cf. Beaulieu 1997; Frame 1997).
61. Da Riva (2008: 99–107). I exclude Da Riva's (2008: 103–4) data on Neriglissar (r. 559–556) because the numbers of attestations are so small as to be statistically meaningless for our purposes.
62. mu-ṭib ŠÀ ^{d}NÀ u ^{d}AMAR.UTU a-na-ku (A Babylon 11 ii 7: Al-Rawi 1985: 3); for za-nin/za-ni-in É.SAG.GÍL u É.ZI.DA see e.g. Schaudig (2001: 695).
63. Pomponio (1978: 101–2).
64. See Waerzeggers (2010: 65–76) for an exhaustive prosopography of the senior officials of the Neo-Babylonian Ezida in Borsippa, including the posts of city governor, *šatammu* and *ērib bīti*.
65. Beaulieu (1989: 149–85).
66. ^{d}NÀ ana E^{ki} nu DU^{-ku} ^{d}EN NU È$^{-a}$ EZEN a-ki-tú ba-ṭil SÍSKUR-MEŠ ina É.SAG.GÍL u É.ZI.DA DINGIR-MEŠ ša TIN.TIR^{ki} u BAR.SIP^{ki} ki šal-mu SUM^{-na} (Glassner 2004: no. 26 ii 6–8, 11–12, 20–1, 24–5).
67. Further to the examples presented here, see e.g. Nebuchadnezzar's hymns to Nabu within building inscriptions (Foster 2005: 846–7).
68. šá NÍG.GIDRU i-ša-ar-ti uš-pa-ri ki-nim | ša ^{d}NÀ pa-qí-id ki-iš-[ša]-at | ša-mé-e ù er-ṣe-ti | a-na šu-um-mu-hu ba-a᾽-ú-la-a-ti | [ú]-ša-at-mi-ih qá-tu-uš-šu (Da Riva 2013: 121, NeglC22 i 7–11).
69. na-ra-am ^{d}na-bi-um | mu-uš-ta-lam a-hi-iz né-me-qí; i-na di-i-ni$_7$ ù bi-ri ^{d}[UTU] | i-ša-ri-iš i-dá-ab-bu-bu (Da Riva 2013: 141, NeglC022 i 5–6, ii 4᾽–5᾽).
70. Beaulieu (2007).
71. Cf. Mayer (1998).
72. a-na É.NÍG.GIDRU.KALAM.MA.SUM.MA | e-ru-ub-ma ina ma-har ^{d}NÀ | … | ú-šat-mi-hu ŠU-MIN-ú-a (Schaudig 2001: no. 3.3a VII 23–4, 29).
73. Probably near the beginning of his reign: Schaudig (2001: no. 2.10).
74. Harran Stele (Schaudig 2001: no. 3.1); Beaulieu (2007: 148–9).
75. See Kleber (2008: 12–16) on Nabonidus's reforms of Eanna.
76. Jursa (2010b); Da Riva (2014: 101–4).
77. On the basis of five surviving letter-orders, Beaulieu (1989: 6–12; followed by MacGinnis 1995: 162–3; Rochberg 2004: 224–5) also argues that Nabonidus sent scholars (*ummânu*) from Babylon to Ebabbar in Sippar to excavate the temple's foundations and look for ancient inscriptions there. However, Bongenaar (1997: 367–9) presents a large number of ration-list entries from Ebabbar as evidence to suggest that in fact these *ummânu* were 'specialist craftsmen', such as *kutimmu*-goldsmiths and *kabšarru*-jewellers, who regularly travelled to Ebabbar in the late spring – perhaps in order to carry out delicate repairs to the gods' adornments – over a period of at least sixty years (*c.* 585–525 BC). Rochberg (2004: 225–6) notes that Nabonidus's inscriptions conspicuously fail to make explicit mention of court scholars, even in contexts such as royal divination – but as this elision of agency is typical of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions too, as Chapter 3 showed, we should perhaps not read too much into this omission. On the other hand, the 'scholars' mentioned in Nabonidus's royal inscriptions probably, in both instances, refer to men associated with the Ebabbar and Eanna temples respectively, rather than the royal court in Babylon: the UKKIN DUMU-MEŠ UM.ME.A 'assembly of scholars' looking for the foundations of the Sippar Ebabbar were presumably members of that temple's priesthood, while equally the *um-man-nu mu-du-ú a-šar-ša* 'scholars who knew the location' of

the dais of the Larsa (not Sippar!) Ebabbar were far more likely to have been local men than courtiers (Schaudig 2001: nos. 2.9 I 36, 2.11 II 56).

78. Da Riva (2010).
79. NaplC31 II 9–36: i-na me-re-šu ša ^{d}é-a | i-na IGI.GÁL$^{-ú-tu}$ ša ^{d}AMAR.UTU | i-na ne-me-qu ša ^{d}na-bi-um ù ^{d}NISABA | i-na li-ib-bi-im šu-un-du-lu | ša DINGIR ba-ni-ia | ú-ša-ar-ša-an-ni | i-na pa-ak-ki-ia ra-bí-im | ú-ša-ta-ad-di-im-ma | DUMU-MEŠ UM.ME.A e-em-qú-tim | ú-wa-a^{ʾ} -ir$_4$-ma | a-ba-aš-lam i-na GI.NINDA$_2$.NA-kum | ú-ma-an-di-id mi-in-di-a-tam | ^{lú}ŠIDIM.GAL^{-e} | iš-ta-ad-dú-um eb-le-e | ú-kin-nu-um ki-su-úr-ri-im | àr-ka-at ^{d}UTU ^{d}IŠKUR ù ^{d}AMAR.UTU | ap-ru-us-ma | e-ma li-ib-ba-am | ú-uš-ta-ad-di-nu | ú-ka-ṣi-pu mi-in-di-a-tim | DINGIR GAL.GAL i-na pa-ra-si à-ar-ka-tim | ú-ad-du-nim | i-na ši-pí-ir KA.KÙ.GÁL$^{-ú-te}$ | né-me-qá ^{d}é-a ù ^{d}AMAR.UTU | à-aš-ri-im ša-a-te | ú-ul-li-il-ma | i-na KI.GAL^{-e} re-eš-ti-im | ú-ki-in (Da Riva 2013: 82–4, 88).
80. Ennigaldi-Nanna Cylinder II 9: i-na ši-pí-ir INIM.KÙ.GÁL$^{-ú-ti}$ i-ši-ip-pu-ut-su e-pú-uš-ma a-na É.GI$_6$.PÀR ú-še-ri-ib 'by the work of *āšipūtu* I purified her (Ennigaldi-Nanna) and had her enter the Gipar' (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.7); Ehulhul Cylinder 11 I 43 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.12).
81. Royal appointments: Harran Stele 2 III 12, 22–24 (Schaudig 2001: no. 3.1); Larsa Stele II' 1–3 (Schaudig 2001: no. 3.5); Ennigaldi-Nanna Stela I 14–23 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.7). Temple works: Larsa Cylinder II 41–8 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.11); Ebabbar Cylinder I 26–30 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.9); Tiara Cylinder II 2–33 (Starr 1985: 127–9; Schaudig 2001: no. 2.8a); Ehulhul Cylinder 11 I 42, II 60 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.12); Stele Captions 2 II 52–6 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.14). See also Babylon Stela XI (Starr 1985: 129–31; Schaudig 2001: no. 3.3a), though it is not clear exactly what these particular extispicies relate to, as the stela is badly damaged. They may refer back to confirmation of Nabonidus's rule (cf. Harran Stele, Larsa Stele, above) or to the rebuilding of Ehulhul in Harran (cf. Ehulhul Stele above).
82. The few passing references to *ummânus*, 'scholars' or 'experts', all refer to temple personnel (Schaudig 2001: nos. 2.9 I 36, 2.11 1 II 56).
83. Tiara Cylinder II 2–33 (Starr 1985: 127–9; Schaudig 2001: no. 2.8a).
84. Reiner (1985: 7–10); Beaulieu (1989: 127–8); Ennigaldi-Nanna Cylinder I 8–10 (Schaudig 2001: no. 2.7). Royal Chronicle III 2'–5': ṭup-pi-MEŠ ÉŠ.GÀR U$_4$ AN ^{d}EN.LÍL.LÁ | ^{gi}pi-sa-an ul-tu TIN.TIR^{ki} a-na nap-lu-su | ^{lú}DUB.SAR ú-bil-lu-nu ma-har-šú la še-mu | la i-di lib-bu-uš ba-ala qa-bé-e-šú 'the scribes brought him a basket of tablets of the series *Enūma Anu Ellil* from Babylon to consult. There was no understanding, no knowing their contents without his instruction' (Glassner 2004: no. 53).
85. Beaulieu (1989: 110–11); Babylon Stele VI 4–36 (Schaudig 2001: no. 3.3a).
86. These tussles for power were part of a bigger battle between king and temple over the control of the temples' very substantial financial assets; see most conveniently Fried (2004: 20–4).
87. Beaulieu (2007); Kuhrt (2007a). The pro- and anti-Nabonidus factions also presented very different images of that king's intellectual prowess. The so-called *Verse Account of Nabonidus* (Schaudig 2001: no. P1) satirises his 'pretensions to divine knowledge' and his devotion to the moon god by having him miswrite *iškāru enūma* 'the series *Enūma (Anu Ellil)*' as U$_4$.SAKAR = *uskāru* 'crescent moon' instead of the correct ÉŠ.GÀR U$_4$ (Machinist and Tadmor 1993: 147). Conversely, the *Epic of Nabonidus* (Schaudig 2001: no. P4), known only in a much later manuscript, presents the king as having 'a virtuosity in all the needed scribal skills and erudition – extispicy, astrology, priestly instructions – and an ability to use one to check the others … a virtuosity … unmatched by the scribes around the king, who are unaware of the issues at hand and/or unable to read the texts relevant to them' (Machinist and Tadmor 1993: 151).
88. ša ^{d}EN u ^{d}NÀ ir-a-mu (Schaudig 2001: no. K.2.1 l. 22).
89. ra-a^{ʾ}-im | É.SAG.ÍL u É.ZI.DA (Schaudig 2001: no. K.1.1 ll. 1–2).
90. The reading of George (1996: 380) of this passage is to be preferred over that of Glassner (2004: no. 27 ll. 24'–28').
91. There are no extant chronicles, or political comments in the so-called astronomical diaries, for the early Achaemenid rulers, and their court in Babylon left no extant records. The royal inscriptions from the Persian's homeland in Fars not surprisingly make no mention of Babylonian-style scholarship, and nor does the documentation from other parts of the Achaemenid empire (Kuhrt 2007b). Parpola (1993: XXIX) suggests that an anecdote in Herodotus' *Histories* VII.15 and 17 about Artabanus playing at being Xerxes, although 'properly speaking not an instance of the Substitute King Ritual … contains all the elements of it' and 'if Herodotus heard this anecdote from Persian informants, it would certainly imply that the Substitute King Ritual

was regularly practiced in the court of Xerxes.' However, see note 108 below for the problems of reading too much historicity into Herodotus' accounts of scholarship at the Achaemenid court.

92. There has been much debate recently about the chronology of their composition (e.g. van der Spek 2014; Waerzeggers 2015); but whether written at the time or generations later, the same point holds, namely that they were produced and consumed in northern Babylonia for the local cuneiform-literate elite and do not necessarily represent official imperial inscriptions.
93. On scholarly healers in the Persian court see most conveniently Kuhrt (2007b: 586–7 §12.12), noting (587 n1) that 'our one-sided information ascribes a prominent place to Greek doctors' such as Democedes of Croton, a Greek physician who supposedly came to Darius I's court as a prisoner of war and became one of his 'table-companions' (Kuhrt 2007b: 658 §13.38; Herodotus, *Histories* III.132). However, note Davies's (2010) thorough unpicking of Herodotus' account of Democedes. It is, he concludes, 'from start to finish a tissue of folk-tale motifs from which one cannot extract one or two details and privilege them with historic status', with suspiciously close parallels to another Herodotian anecdote about the healing of an Egyptian pharaoh. Its basic purpose is to recount how 'the omnipotent and potentially violent eastern despot is outwitted by the cunning and resourceful Greek' (Davies 2010: 39). Ctesias, who served as personal physician to Artaxerxes II (r. 404–359 BC) for the first several years of his reign, wrote a twenty-three-book history of the Persian empire and its Assyrian and Median predecessors, which survives now only in fragments and summaries by others. The remnants of this *Persika* have been edited most recently by Lenfant (Ctesias 2004), while Tuplin (2004) has considered its scholarly and medical content in considerable detail. A useful reassessment of *Persika*'s reliability as a historical source has been made by Colburn (2011), who concludes that 'regardless of ancient or modern opinions of Ctesias' merits as a historian, it is clear that his work cannot be read literally as a straightforward historical account that faithfully reproduces the events … and personalities of the Achaemenid court in the early fourth century' (Colburn 2011: 92). While cautioning us that 'all epitomes … are likely to remove the most interesting things' from their originals (Tuplin 2004: 306), the latter shows that Ctesias' intellectual world is entirely Hippocratic, both in its philosophical approach and in the disease entities and medical personnel that populate it. Any Babylonian members of the Persians' scholarly retinue, such as there were, and whether Ctesias originally wrote about them or not, have long vanished from the historical record. The Greek sources also mention Egyptian healers at the Persian court but no Babylonian ones; however, 'it is extremely likely that the *magi*, with their extensive knowledge of plants, were the chief court doctors' (Kuhrt 2007b: 587 n2 with full references). Herodotus (*Histories*, VII.37.2–3) describes one of Xerxes' *magi* misreading a solar eclipse as a favourable portent, which hints that he had at least a rudimentary knowledge of cuneiform-style scholarship. But as Rollinger (2000: 69) points out, the misreading of ominous signs is a common trope in Herodotus, presenting those who neglect or misread portents 'either as a tragic figure or an evil-doer'. He also notes that the account of the eclipse 'does not accord with the calculations of modern astronomers', further undermining its historicity in favour of its moral value to ancient readers.
94. Zawadzki (1994).
95. On this well-documented affair, see e.g. Jursa (2004); Holz (2013: 147–71); Kozuh (2014: 171–5).
96. Van Driel (1998: 67–8); Kleber (2008: 25, 343); Frahm and Jursa (2011: 23).
97. Harmatta (1966); Zawadzki (1994); Huyse (1999); Beaulieu (2006a: 201–6). See Kuhrt (2007b: 135–58 §5.A.1) for a convenient translation and discussion of the whole text.
98. Seidl (1999); Beaulieu (2006a: 204–5).
99. Jursa (2013); Robson (2017).
100. Waerzeggers (2003/4). See also Kessler (2004); Oelsner (2007); H.D. Baker (2008).
101. Seidl (1999: 113–14).
102. George (2010). But see Kuhrt (2010; 2014) for rebuttals of Waerzeggers' and George's arguments.
103. Waerzeggers (2003/4: 155–7); Kessler (2004); Baker (2008).
104. Kose (1998: 10); Kessler (2004).
105. Kessler (2004); see also Beaulieu (1997).
106. Robson (2017).
107. Robson (2018).
108. Van der Spek (2003); Beaulieu (2006a: 23–5).
109. Fragments of that history survive in ninety-five short passages quoted by others (Rzepka 2016).

110. Fotheringham (1928: 303); van der Waerden (1984: 119); and still propagated, for instance on *Livius* (http://www.livius.org/articles/person/alexander-the-great/alexander-3.6-last-days/, last accessed August 2018) despite e.g. Bosworth (1970: 410–11). Burstein (1984) argues that there is no prima facie case for disbelieving the story, but Steele (2004; 2011b) shows that the Babylonian observation data known to the Greeks was a set of eclipse reports covering the period 747–315 BC and which therefore cannot have been translated and transmitted during Alexander's lifetime. See Romm (1989) for a critical assessment of Alexander's supposed patronage of scientific work and the nature of his relationship with Aristotle.
111. (Rzepka 2016, FgrH 124 T3).
112. In a similar vein, Papathanassiou (1999) shows that Alexander's birth horoscope, given in one manuscript of pseudo-Callisthenes' third-century AD *Historia Alexandri Magni*, is in fact for a client born in Alexandria on the night of 2–3 November 149 BC. In other words, historical vignettes about Babylonian-style celestial scholarship seem to have clustered around the culture-heroic figure of Alexander for a long period after his death. For a similar argument on late antique sources for the life of Pythagoras – another Greek supposedly heavily influenced by Babylonian scholarship – see Burnyeat (2007).
113. *Bibliotheca Historica* 17.112.2. Here I follow the translation of Welles (1963: 450–1) with corrections by Kathryn Stevens (pers. comm. 2012).
114. See George (2005/6: 89–91) for more detail on the variant classical accounts of this episode.
115. George (2005/6: 91–2); van der Spek (2006: 269–72).
116. *Bibliotheca Historica* 17.116.4 (see note 111). Plutarch (*c.* 46–120 AD), writing some 400 years after the event, gives a shorter account in his *Life of Alexander* (73–4), which begins with the scholars' meeting with Nearchus, and continues with the observation of terrestrial and sacrificial omens – dead ravens, a lobe-less liver, a lion killed by a donkey – and Alexander's accidental encounter with a furtive Substitute King Ritual, which ends with him 'put[ting] the man out of the way, as the seers directed' (Plutarch 1919: 428–9).His slightly younger contemporary Arrian (*c.* 86–180 AD) gives a much longer report of the same events in *Anabasis Alexandri* ('Alexander's Expedition', VII.16–18, 24) that is broadly similar in outline. It differs in that the Babylonians came to Alexander directly with their fears for his life but he rebuffed them and suspected them of trying to hide the fact that they were misappropriating temple funds (Arrian 1983: 263–9, 287–9).
117. That is not to deny Kuhrt's (1996: 44) assertion that 'the Seleucid kings interacted with Babylonia substantially'; it is rather to make the more modest claim that they did not directly patronise Babylonian scholarship. For a rather different take on this topic, see Clancier (2011: 759–62).
118. Van der Spek (2001); George (2005/6: 92); Potts (2011).
119. Hauser (1999: 222–7); Dirven (2014: 16).
120. Van der Spek (2006: 272).
121. Van der Spek and Finkel (2004–: nos. 5–8); van der Spek (2006: 272–5, 290–9).
122. Stevens (2012; 2014); Beaulieu (2014); new edition at http://oracc.org/cams/selbi/Q004179 (last accessed August 2018).
123. IBILA ṣi-i-ri (l. 16); bu-kúr ^{d}ASAR.RI reš-tu-ú (l. 35).
124. SIG$_4$-HI.A | É.SAG.ÍL ù É.ZI.DA | ina ^{kur}ha-at-tì ina ŠU-MIN-ía el-le-ti | i-na Ì.GIŠ ru-uš-ti al-bi-in-ma 'I moulded bricks for Esangila and Ezida in the land of Hatti with my own pure hands, with best oil' (ll. 8–11).
125. Van der Spek and Finkel (2004–: no. 5 rev. 6–10); Hunger and Sachs (1988: no. –273B rev. 30'–32', 36'–38'); van der Spek (2006: 272; 2009: 107).
126. But van der Spek's (2000: 439) proposal to identify him with a particular Bel-re'ušunu who was *šatammu* of Esangila in 258–253 BC is probably to be rejected on chronological grounds (de Breucker 2011: 637). However, given Late Babylonian habits of papponymy (naming firstborns after their grandfathers; H.D. Baker 2002), it is entirely possible that van der Spek's Bel-re'ušunu was descended from, or otherwise closely related to, Berossus.
127. De Breucker (2011: 637). Even later, Eusebius (early fourth century AD) suggests that it was dedicated to Antiochus II. The most recent edition, with commentary, of the extant fragments of *Babyloniaca* as preserved by Tatian, Eusebius and others is by de Breucker (2010). In scientific and scholarly cultures worldwide, there are many instances of speculative dedications to potential patrons, by no means all of which were successful (e.g. Pumfrey and Dawbarn 2004; Brentjes 2008: 308).

128. ana e-pe-šú šá É.SAG.GÍL É.ZI.DA u É.MES.LAM | [i]-na-an-din-nu ù šá-la-ṭu id-din-na-šú … ana da-riš iz-ziz, MMA 86.11.299 ('Lehmann Text'), obv. 10–11, 13: Wallenfels and van der Spek (2014) with further corrigenda and an updated translation by van der Spek at https://www.academia.edu/27745534/ (last accessed August 2018).
129. E.g. Hunger and Sachs (1990: no. –229B obv. 5–11); van der Spek (2016); latest attested: Hunger and Sachs (1996: no. –77B rev. 15).
130. Dirven (2014: 11–12).
131. Hunger and Sachs (1990: no. –204 ll. 14–19); Kuhrt (2010: 492).
132. See most conveniently Boiy (2004: 277–80) for a summary of those tablets.
133. Hunger and Sachs (1996: no. –187 rev. 3'–18'); van der Spek (2009: 263).
134. Van der Spek and Finkel (2004–: no. 14); van der Spek (2009: 108); Dirven (2014).
135. The *šatammu* of Esangila nevertheless continued to pay for offerings for the life of Parthian kings, officials and generals (Dirven 2014: 12).
136. On Characene see e.g. Schuol (2000) with useful reviews by Boiy (2001); Hauser (2001); and Sommer (2002) with subsequent discussion; Kosmin (2013).
137. Unfortunately the tablet is now lost and therefore impossible to check, but according to its late nineteenth-century edition it appears to say: ^{m}KI–^{d}ŠÚ–DIN … | … $^{<lú>}$UMBISAG U_4 AN.NA ^{d}EN.LÍL.LÁ A ≪LÚ≫ šá ^{m}MU–^{d}EN | šá i-na IGI-ma a-na Á as-pa-si-né-e LUGAL | ⌜ni$^{?}$-iš$^{?}$-pu^{1}-ru šá hi-ših-ti ina KÁ LUGAL | [in-na-din-nu]-⌜ú^{1} u en-na a-ga-a i-ba-áš-ši (BOR 4: 132 obv. 9–14 = Pinches 1896; McEwan 1981: 17–18; van der Spek 1985: 550; cf. Joannès 2000: 700 n12; Stolper 2006: 231–2).
138. Stolper (2006: 238).
139. Petrie (2002: 105).
140. Boiy (2005); Petrie (2002).
141. Taxation officials: Lindström (2003: 58–62). ^{md}60–TIN^{-it} DUMU šá ^{md}60–ik-ṣur A ^{m}ŠEŠ$^{-u-ú-tú}$ | ^{lú}GAR^{-nu} šá UNUG^{ki} šá ^{m}an-ti-i$^{?}$-i-ku-su LUGAL KUR.KUR-MEŠ | ^{m}ni-ki-qa-ar-qu-su MU-šú šá-nu-ú iš-kun-nu 'Anu-uballiṭ, son of Anu-ikṣur, descendant of Ah$^{?}$utu, governor of Uruk, to whom Antiochus king of the lands gave the second name Nikarchus' (Clay 1915: no. 52, ll. 1–3).
142. ana bul-ṭu šá ^{m}an-ti-i$^{?}$-i-ku-su u ^{m}si-lu-ku LUGAL-MEŠ DÙ$^{-uš}$-ma ú-šak-lil (Clay 1915: no. 52, l. 15).
143. SpTU 3: 58 from the so-called *āšipus*' house, discussed further in Chapter 6; Frame (1995: B.4.16.1).
144. For instance, in SE 91 (221 BC) Nidinti-Anu, son of Anu-belšunu, descendant of Ekur-zakir, copied a chapter of *Bārûtu* for Anu-balassu-iqbi, chief of the city leaders (*rab ša rēš āli*) of Uruk, son of Anu-aha-ittannu, descendant of Ah$^{?}$utu (TCL 6: 1; Koch 2005: no. 13).
145. Clay (1915: no. 52, ll. 5–11); new edition at http://oracc.org/cams/selbi/Q004181 (last accessed August 2018).
146. Kose (1998: 116–21).
147. The illegible lacuna is possibly to be restored with the name a-da-pà (van Dijk 1962: 47) or perhaps UM.ME.A = *ummānû* 'scholar'.
148. Probably 30 March 202 BC or possibly 26 July of the same year; the month name as written (^{iti}BÁRA.NE.GAR) is a hybrid of ^{iti}BÁRA.ZAG.GAR (Nisannu, month I) and ^{iti}NE.NE.GAR (Abu, month V). All things being equal, a ceremonial entrance during the spring *akītu*-festival seems more likely than in the blazing heat of summer, during a month that had little ritual significance.
149. Based on Falkenstein (1941: 6–7); new edition at http://oracc.org/cams/selbi/Q004180 (last accessed August 2018).
150. Cf. Schaudig (2010: 142).
151. Wetzel and Weissbach 1938: (14, 23). Boiy (2010: 212–13) lists several tablets recording tithe payments for the rebuilding of Babylon during Alexander's reign but notes that 'it is not known if anything was done apart from collecting the money'; see also van der Spek (2006: 266–75); Dirven (2014: 209).
152. Downey (1988: 16); George (2005/6: 75).
153. The two men share a patronym and the dates are commensurate: cf. Doty (1988: 100, 102).
154. TCL 6: 32 (George 1992: no. 13); and see also SpTU 4: 220 (George 1995).
155. BagM Beih. 2: 96.
156. TCL 6: 32 obv. 1–2, 5–7; BagM Beih. 2: 96 obv. 1–3.
157. Ambos (2013: 63; 2019).

158. Nikarchus: gi-nu-ú sat-tuk-ku | ki-ma mah-ri-im-ma ú-kin-in-ni qé-reb-šú 'inside it I established *ginû*-offerings and *sattukku*-offerings, as formerly'(ll. 18–19); Kephalon: $^{\text{é}}$SAG šá ⌜i-na mah-ri⌝ | $^{\text{m}}$U$_4$–$^{\text{d}}$60 DA x x ⌜ME⌝ E⌝ i-pu-uš-šú | i-te-ni-ih-ma 'I destroyed the Reš temple that formerly Oannes … had built' (ll. 6–8).
159. The Šangu-Ninurta men always write $^{\text{lú}}$qaq-qar–$^{\text{d}}$60$^{\text{-ú}}$ or $^{\text{lú}}$KI–$^{\text{d}}$60$^{\text{-ú}}$ (Šamaš-iddin: SpTU 1: 48; SpTU 3: 69, 84; SpTU 5: 254; Anu-ikṣur: SpTU 1: 45; SpTU 3: 99; Rimut-Anu: SpTU 4: 152; unknown *āšipu*: SpTU 3: 111). Iqišaya, by contrast, writes simply UNUG$^{\text{ki-ú}}$ or TIR.AN.NA$^{\text{ki-ú}}$ (SpTU 1: 94, 139; SpTU 2: 38; unknown member of the Ekur-zakir family, presumably Iqišaya: SpTU 2: 39).
160. In about forty tablets – nearly half of those with surviving colophons. The scholars concerned are as follows, with texts in which their names are restored in square brackets (all tablet owners unless otherwise noted; see online Tables B11–B13):
    - Ahu'tu: Anu-balassu-iqbi [1] (TCL 6: 1); Anu-belšunu [3] (TCL 6: 32);
    - Ekur-zakir: Anu-ah-ušabši [1] (BRM 4: 7–8; TCL 6: 19); Anu-ah-ušabši [2] (scribe for Nidintu-Anu [3]: BRM 4: 13; TCL 6: 2–4, 7, 35); Anu-ah-ušabši [3] (scribe for Anu-ab-uter: [ACT 161]); Anu-uballiṭ [4] (scribe for Anu-ab-uter: [ACT 702]); Ina-qibit-Anu [1] (ACT 101); Nidintu-Anu [1] (BRM 4: 12; SpTU 2: 33; TCL 6: 2, 4–5, 7, 16, 35; scribe for unknown owner: TCL 6: 10); Šamaš-eṭir (ACT 163, 171, 601; scribe for Anu-uballiṭ [1]: TCL 6: 39); Ša-Anu-iššu (scribe for Anu-ah-ušabši [1]: SpTU 4: 157);
    - Hunzu: Anu-uballiṭ [1] (TCL 6: 39; scribe for Nidintu-Anu [1]: BRM 4: 12; TCL 6: 16); Nidintu-Anu [2] (TCL 6: 11, 31);
    - Sin-leqi-unninni: Anu-ab-uter (ACT [161], [174], 194 = TCL 6: 25, 702; [BagM Beih. 2: 86]; scribe for Anu-belšunu [1]: ACT 135+200 = TCL 6: 24+26; Weidner 1967: 45; scribe for Šamaš-etir: ACT 162, 171, 600 = TCL 6: 28); Anu-balassu-iqbi [3] (scribe for Anu-ab-uter: BagM Beih. 2: 6); Anu-belšunu [1] ([BagM Beih. 2: 12], BRM 4: 11; TCL 6: 12, 24+26 = ACT 135, 220); Anu-belšunu [2] (BagM Beih. 2: 89); Nidintu-Anu [3] (TCL 6: 56–7); Nidintu-Anu [4] (BRM 4: 21).
161. The only exception, so far as I know, are the men from Der, who identify themselves as Dereans on five of their six surviving tablets, namely BRM 4: 18; Figulla (1959: no. 12); the 'Converse Tablet' (Lambert 1971); SpTU 4: 125, 185. The practice is also sporadically attested in Neo-Assyrian Assur (Hunger 1968: nos. 194, 264). Tablets are rather frequently said to have been produced in a particular place – usually given just before the date at the end of the colophon – or copied from originals from a named location (e.g. Hunger 1968: 157–8). But that is a rather different phenomenon from an individual's self-identification with a city.
162. That is, plotting syllabic range against sample size, counted by lemmata (individual words), the line of best fit tends logarithmically to 450 syllable values with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.86$, indicating a very good fit. The programming was undertaken by Chris Martin and Greta Van Buylaere, to Greta Van Buylaere's research design and overseen by Steve Tinney. Statistical analysis was by Eleanor Robson. The project was generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust, 2011–12.

    Five samples were taken from the CAMS/GKAB corpus: (1) five tablets from late Achaemenid–early Hellenistic Nippur and found in the *āšipus*' house in Uruk (SpTU 2: 29, 36, 43; 3: 101; 5: 260) amounting to 1,551 lemmata and using 236 different syllabic values; (2) seventeen tablets written by Anu-ikṣur of the Šangu-Ninurta family in late Achaemenid Uruk (SpTU 1: 28, 31, 32, 38, 45, 47, 49–51, 56, 59, 60, 72, 126; 3: 99; 5: 241, 248), amounting to 4,826 lemmata and using 400 different syllabic values; (3) twelve tablets by other named members of the Šangu-Ninurta family (Anu-ikṣur's father, brother and nephew) (Friberg et al. 1990; SpTU 1: 43–4, 55; 3: 90, 100, 116; 4: 151–2, 174; 5: 231), amounting to 9,259 lemmata and using 398 different syllabic values; (4) twenty-eight tablets written by Iqišaya of the Ekur-zakir family in early Hellenistic Uruk (BRM 4: 20; SpTU 1: 14, 90, 94, 96, 139; 2: 18, 21, 25, 32, 34–5, 37–8, 43–4; 3: 65, 97, 104–5; 5: 150, 158–9; 162; 188; TCL 6: 9, 17, 50), amounting to 9,902 lemmata and using 447 different syllabic values; (5) eleven tablets by other members of the Ekur-zakir family in early Hellenistic and Seleucid Uruk (BRM 4: 7; SpTU 2: 33; 4: 147; TCL 6: 2–3, 10, 15, 19, 27, 35, 39), amounting to 5,924 lemmata and using 339 different syllabic values. Logographic values were not counted as these are much more determined by generic conventions than syllabic writings are.
163. Gesche (2001: 103–24).
164. Numbers of different syllable values in the samples described in note 30 above (open/closed): (1) 142/94; (2) 190/210; (3) 186/212; (4) 188/259; (5) 152/176. Pearson's chi-square test

results with four degrees of freedom (looking at proportions of V, CV, VC, CVC and other syllable signs): (1)–(4): $\chi^2 = 21.75$ (statistically significant to a likelihood of 0.001 error); (2)–(3): $\chi^2 = 3.88$; (2)–(4): $\chi^2 = 4.34$; (3)–(5): $\chi^2 = 1.9$; (4)–(5): $\chi^2 = 4.26$ (all statistically insignificant). See Oakes (1998: 24–2) for the use of this method in corpus linguistics.

165. These results, if suggestive, are highly provisional. A much more detailed programme of further research into cuneiform literacies is planned for the near future.
166. Schroeder (1916: no. 1); transliteration online at http://oracc.org/hbtin/P342454 (last accessed August 2018).
167. Kümmel (1979: 156–7).
168. See Boiy (2012) for a family tree of the Seleucid Ekur-zakir kin-group.
169. E.g. BRM 2: 3; Weisberg (1991: no. 36); Sarkisian (1955: no. 1); Doty (2012: no. 8); see http://oracc.org/hbtin/qpn-x-lineage/, (last accessed August 2018). Iddin-Ellil is sometimes read as Iddin-Amurru.
170. As the smallest integer that is sexagesimally irregular (co-prime to sixty) it was associated with the uncanny, the difficult and the non-human (Robson 2008a: 179); in Uruk the *āšipus*' prebends were divided into sevens (Corò 2005a).
171. Lambert (1957: 3).
172. Beaulieu (2000); George (2003: 28–33).
173. SpTU 4: 122 (*Gilgamesh* I), SpTU 2: 30 (*Gilgamesh* II), SpTU 3: 59 (*Gilgamesh* V) and SpTU 5: 251 (a fragment mentioning Gilgamesh) were all found in the early Hellenistic level II of the *āšipus*' house. SpTU 4: 123 (*Gilgamesh* III) and SpTU 4: 124 (*Gilgamesh* IV), recovered from fill in level IV, may be late Achaemenid or early Hellenistic in date.
174. The ambiguous find context of SpTU 1: 4 (see also Foster 2005: III.21.b) during Season 27 of the excavation of the *āšipus*' house means that it may be either late Achaemenid or early Hellenistic in date. For the Sumerian Enmerkar cycle, see Vanstiphout (2003).
175. BagM Beih. 2: 89.
176. Lenzi (2008b).
177. As we saw in Chapters 3–4, the names Ṭupšar-Ellil-dari (sometimes read Aba-Ellil-dari) and Ahiqar (better, Ahi-iaqar) are not attested amongst the retinue of Neo-Assyrian court scholars in the cuneiform record, although there is a rich Aramaic tradition about the latter from about 500 BC, as well as a reference to him in the apocryphal *Book of Tobit*, set in late eighth-century Nineveh but probably composed in the second century BC (Lindenberger 1983; Contini and Grottanelli 2005; Niehr 2007).
178. Lenzi (2008b: 163).
179. BagM Beih. 2: 88; Grayson (1980–3: 97–8).
180. SpTU 1: 2 (Glassner 2004: 288–92; Cavigneaux 2005).
181. [ina UNUG]^{ki} u ^{e}re-eš É EN$^{\cdot ú\cdot tú}$-šú ú-kin 'he deposited it [in Uruk] and Reš, temple of his (i.e. Anu's) lordship' (SpTU 1: 2 rev. 9').
182. GARZA ^{d}60$^{\cdot ú\cdot tú}$ GIŠ.HUR-MEŠ šá UNUG[^{ki}] | [ni]-ṣir-ti ^{lú}um-man-nu šá la ši-mat ú-nak-[ki-ru] | [ši]-pir ^{d}30 be-lu ŠEŠ.UNUG^{ki} iš-ṭur (SpTU 1: 2 obv. 13–15).
183. […] GI zu-mur-šú ú-lab-biš 'he covered his body in … ' (SpTU 1: 2 obv. 20).
184. The first line of the composition looks like the closing formula of an earlier section of the text, as it summarises Ur-Namma's reign: […] ^{m}UR–^{d}NAMMA LUGAL MU 18 IN.AK '[…] Ur-Namma served as king for 18 years' (SpTU 1: 2 obv. 2) . Likewise the final line summarises Amar-Suen's: [^{m}AMAR]–^{d}SUEN.NA MU 10-LÁ-1 […] LUGAL$^{\cdot ú\cdot tú}$ i-pu-[uš] '[Amar]-Suena exercised the kingship for 9 years […]' (SpTU 1: 2 rev. 4'). The preceding lines, now missing or badly damaged, presumably gave a fuller account of that king's (mis)rule.
185. Tablet IV was copied by Iqišaya of the Ekur-zakir family in 316 BC, on a tablet unearthed in the early twentieth century (Hruška 1969: source F). A manuscript of Tablet I was found in the early Hellenistic levels of the *āšipus*' house but its colophon mentions one Ištar-šum-ereš, *kalû* of Anu and Antu, son of Balaṭu and thus presumably not a member of the Ekur-zakir family, who were all *āšipus* (SpTU 2: 28). Two Seleucid duplicates of Tablet III come from illicit excavations in Uruk, including one owned by Anu-ab-uter of the Sin-leqi-unninni family (online Table B12) (TCL 6: 51–2; Hruška 1969: sources A–B).
186. Beaulieu (1992: 57–9); edition of the first-millennium text by Litke (1998). An Old Babylonian version begins with the divine couple Enki and Ninki and does not mention An(u) until obv. i 31 (de Genouillac 1930: no. 10).
187. Beaulieu (1992); compare the Eanna offerings lists of Beaulieu (2003a: 73) with the Reš offering ritual TCL 6: 38 (Linssen 2004: 227–32).

188. SpTU 3: 126+ (Tablet III; colophon of Anu-ikṣur); SpTU 4: 182; SpTU 4: 183.
189. MLC 1890 (Beaulieu 1995b).
190. Frank (1933); Linssen (2004).
191. ki-i pi-i ṭup-pi-MEŠ | šá ^{md}NÀ–A–URI$_3$ LUGAL KUR–tam-tì TA qé-reb UNUG^{ki} iš-lu-lu-ma i-nu-uš ^{m}ki-din–^{d}60 ^{lú}UNUG^{ki}-a | ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{d}60 u an-tu$_4$ ŠÀ.BAL.BAL ^{m}É.KUR–za-kir ^{lú}ŠEŠ.GAL^{-i} šá ^{é}SAG ṭup-pi-MEŠ MU-MEŠ | ina ^{kur}ELAM.MA^{ki} ip-pal-lis-ma ina BAL^{-e} ^{m}si-lu-ku u ^{m}an-ti-^{ʾ}i-i-ku-su LUGAL-MEŠ | iš-ṭur-ù-ma a-na qé-reb UNUG^{ki} ú-bi-il (TCL 6: 38 rev. 46–50).
192. Linssen (2004: 227–32); Boiy (2010).
193. See above and Jursa (2007).
194. Pomponio (1978: 106–12); Kessler (2004); Fadhil and Hilgert (2008: 184).
195. The Uruk legal documents known to me mentioning individuals with Nabu-names are: Weisberg (1991: no. 40), date missing: Nabu-ušallim (^{md}NÀ–GI), son of Kudurru; seal Wallenfels (1994: no. 660B); McEwan (1982: no. 2), SE 11.viii.02: Amat-Nabu (^{f}GEME$_2$–^{d}NÀ), daughter of Nabu-zabaddu (^{md}NÀ–za-bad-du), wife of Nidintu-Anu; Schroeder (1916: no. 23), SE 33.vii.10 and McEwan (1982: no. 10), SE 41.iii.30: ^{m}DAM-U, son of Iddin-Nabu (^{m}MU–^{d}NÀ); Corò (2005b: 220–2, 222–3), SE 37.viii.11: Bel-ereš, son of Nabu-naṣir (^{md}NÀ–PAP). Likewise in nearby Larsa: L83.6 (Joannès 2001), Philip 3.xi.17: Ina-qibit-Anu, son of Nabu-he-si-i^{ʾ}(^{md}NÀ–he-si-i^{ʾ}); BRM 2: 51, Philip 6.–.6: Nabu-ittannu (^{md}NÀ–MU^{-nu}), son of Šamaš-kaṣir; McEwan (1982: no. 26), SE 86.xii.10?: (a different) Nabu-ittannu (^{md}NÀ–MU^{-nu}). Patronyms suggest that these are men and women of northern stock; but the names of their spouses and offspring imply that they have married locally, integrating into the local community by, *inter alia*, giving their children southern names.
196. Pomponio (1978: 218–33; 1998–2001: 20–3); see also Dirven (1997; 2014) and e.g. Müller-Kessler and Kessler (1999: 73–5) for the survival of Nabu (with other northern Babylonian deities) amongst the Mandaeans of late antique Iraq.
197. BRM 4: 6; Brown and Linssen (1997); Linssen (2004: 109–17, 306–16).
198. EGIR-šú LUGAL ina qé-reb TIR.AN.NA^{ki} E$_{11}$-ma di-i-na KUR i-da-a-nu EŠ.BAR KUR KU$_5^{-as}$ | GARZA ^{d}a-nu-ú-tu ina qé-reb TIR.AN.NA^{ki} … | … É.KUR-MEŠ šá UNUG^{ki} DÙ$^{-uš}$ É-MEŠ DINGIR-MEŠ ana KI-ši-na GUR$^{-ár}$ | UNUG^{ki} ud-da-áš KÁ.GAL-MEŠ UNUG^{ki} šá ^{na_4}ZA.GÌN DÙ$^{-uš}$ ÍD-MEŠ GARIM-MEŠ ṭuh-du u HÉ.GÁL ú-mal-li | ^{r}EGIR^{1}-šú LUGAL DUMU-šú ina qé-reb TIR.AN.NA^{ki} E$_{11}$-ma kib-rat er-bet-ti i-bé-el | [be-lu]-ú-tu ú LUGAL$^{-ú-tu}$ ina qé-reb TIR.AN.NA^{ki} DÙ$^{-uš}$ a-di ul-la BALA-šú i-ka-a-nu | [LUGAL]-^{r}MEŠ^{1} ša UNUG^{ki} ki-ma DINGIR-MEŠ ip-pu-šú be-lu-ú-tu (SpTU 1: 3 rev. 11–18). There have been extended discussions as to which historical king this passage refers to (e.g. Beaulieu 1993 with earlier literature; Cavigneaux 2005; Neujahr 2012: 50–8). Beaulieu (1993: 49) argues that Antiochus I was probably intended, perhaps an oblique target for royal patronage of Reš.

6
At the gate of Eanna: Babylonian scholarly spaces before and after the early fifth century

It can appear at first glance that Assyrian scholarship was predominantly court-based and Babylonian scholarship temple-based, but that is more to do with the nature of the evidence than with any ancient reality. As Chapter 4 showed, a close reading of the Neo-Assyrian royal correspondence reveals that while *asûs* and *bārûs* had only royal (and perhaps private) clientele, the *āšipus* and *kalûs* were at least partly based in the temples as well as in the court, and moved between them. The courtly *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* were also secular in function, though *āšipus, kalûs* and even the chief priest of Aššur's temple could write celestial divination reports to the king. Beyond the confines of royal patronage, it is difficult to see how such a calling could be a primary profession, as who would their clientele have been? Outside the royal court, the *āšipus* of the Baba-šumu-ibni family in seventh-century Assur were attached to the temple of Aššur, while their learned associates the Bel-kundi-ila'i family were scribes of the same institution. At Huzirina, Qurdi-Nergal was a *šangû*-priest of Zababa and Baba. So although the court was a major source of scholarly support in seventh-century Assyria, it was not the only one, even for the most elite of learned men. Conversely, at the start of Chapter 5 I argued for the presence of scholars at the Babylonian royal court, especially in the early first millennium, up to the end of the sixth century BC. Here I begin by surveying the evidence for scholarly lives and livelihoods in other institutional and social spaces in Babylonia at that time. I focus first on administrative archives and scholarly tablets found in temples, then consider the view from the domestic sphere. We shall see that the relationships between Babylonian temples and scholars – which I have glossed over so far – were in fact more complex than perhaps previously allowed.

I also argued in Chapter 5 that the northern Babylonian urban revolts against Darius and Xerxes in the decades around 500 BC led to large-scale reprisals that could have been fatal for cuneiform culture, and for scholarship in particular, if they had been pursued any further. Even so, the period amounted to a 'survival bottleneck' for the scholarly professions, whose effects were felt particularly harshly amongst the communities most closely associated with Nebuchadnezzar's old Chaldean dynasty and who agitated for its return. In the previous chapter I focused especially on the kings' subsequent removal of themselves from the long-established cuneiform knowledge network, and to scholarly reactions to that absence from Late Babylonian Uruk. I now consider the real-life consequences for the survivors. How did the social geographies of cuneiform knowledge adapt to this new political reality in different parts of Babylonia? Finally, I test the claim, made in Chapter 5, that the community and its networks really were radically reduced and demonstrate that the extant Late Babylonian evidence is not just an artefact of modern excavation patterns.

Scholars in temples in the long sixth century BC

The *āšipu, kalû* and *bārû* have all tended to be seen as priests in the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods. For the first two terms, standard dictionaries of Akkadian offer translations such as 'incantation priest' and 'lamentation priest' while the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* treats all three professions as cultic personnel.[1] But major new initiatives in the study of Neo-Babylonian priesthood and temple economy now suggest that the situation is not as clear-cut as was once thought. First I shall briefly consider what is meant by the term 'priest' at this period, taking Caroline Waerzeggers' work as my starting point.[2]

Although Assyriology has traditionally defined the priest as a professional intermediary between the human and divine worlds, for Waerzeggers the role of the Neo-Babylonian priest was simply 'to maintain the cult and to perform the worship of the gods correctly and diligently'.[3] In other words, he (and in the first millennium BC it was always he) had no pastoral role in the community. Waerzeggers bases her arguments on three types of document from the temples themselves. First are those concerning prebends, or rights to shares in temple income in return for cultic service on set days of the month or year. This practice goes back to at least the early second millennium in Babylonia but is not attested at all in Assyria.[4] Second are records relating to the selection and

consecration of priests; and third are royal land grants – the *kudurrus* we first met in Chapter 5. In short, Waerzeggers' argument goes like this. The king, as the gods' chosen representative on earth, had the ultimate right to select priests but in practice appointments were based on two criteria: ownership of legal title to the role, in the form of a prebend; and physical suitability (purity, bodily fitness, legitimate descent from a priestly line). It was not enough to have inherited or bought a prebend. Potential priests were also subject to extensive scrutiny of their family backgrounds and physical condition. They then underwent a complex ceremony of purification to prepare them for the role, and had to regularly renew that status through washing, shaving and appropriate dress.

Waerzeggers distinguishes four types of priests: ritualists, as might be expected, who took care of cultic performance; caterers, who provided and prepared the gods' food and drink; artisans, who looked after the fabric of the temple and the gods' material needs; and bureaucrats, who controlled and inspected the flow of goods and people coming in and out of the building.[5] The first group primarily comprised the head priest – *šatammu* in larger establishments, *šangû* in smaller ones – plus the *ērib bīti* 'temple-enterers', those who were allowed into the inner sanctuaries of the gods, as well as specialist performers. The second and third groups included artisanal professions such as brewers, bakers, oxherds and table-setters, who worked mostly in the outer court(s); plus carpenters and weavers, potters and jewellers. The fourth group contained scribes and measurers, gatekeepers and barbers (who maintained the other priests' cultic purity). All of these men held prebends in particular specialisms, which spelled out their duties, days of office and remuneration, and all were subject to the social and bodily constraints of priesthood. In smaller temples, individuals might hold prebends in more than one priesthood but prebendary specialism was the norm in the larger ones.

Priests maintained their own workshops and storerooms (*šutummu*) within the temple precinct, where they kept their cultic equipment and clothing, and which could be bought, sold and inherited as private property (Fig. 5.4).[6] It is reasonable to suppose that priests also kept tablets in their *šutummus*, whether family archives or scholarly works.[7] The voluminous finds from early, informal excavations may thus come from such structures, or from domestic contexts, or both, as well as or instead of central temple archives.

On the face of it, we should expect the scholarly professions to be highly visible in the prebendary community, not least because of the royal grants and income rights that were given in perpetuity to *āšipus, bārûs* and *kalûs* in the early first millennium BC (Chapter 5). Here, for

instance, are the entitlements that king Marduk-zakir-šumi bestowed on the *kalû* Ibni-Ištar of Uruk and his descendants in 854 BC (Fig. 6.1):[8]

> 12 *kurru* of arable land, 2 *sūtu* per *ikû* by the large cubit (i.e. *c*. 25 ha): a meadow in Uruk on the bank of the Royal Canal, adjacent to the grain warehouse, next to the *Šangû*-Priest's Canal; its short end is Cow Road, and its long side is the opening of the Old Canal (in a) sector (belonging) to no-one.
>
> 8 built houses, 2 yards, along with an outbuilding next to the Eanna temple in the Narrow Gate;
>
> the house of Zabdi-ili, servant of Mušallim-Marduk of the Amukkanu tribe: his house, his garden and 5 of his family.
>
> 1 *qâ* of bread, 1 *qâ* of first-class beer in front of the goddess Nanaya;
>
> 1 *qâ* of bread, 1 *qâ* of first-class beer in front of the goddess Kanisurra;
>
> 1 *qâ* of bread, 1 *qâ* of first-class beer in front of the gods Anu and Ellil;
>
> bread, first-class beer, *mersu*-cake, fish, vegetables, enough for three temple-enterers;
>
> four bowlfuls from the Peace-of-the-Temple ritual;
>
> one sheep from before the gods (in general); the neck of a bull (and) the neck of a ram, from the regular offerings and the monthly offerings; the royal offering; the priestly offering;
>
> monthly 2 *sūtu* of barley, is the ration of the temple's *šangû*-priest, according to the *sūtu* measure;
>
> from which are withheld the temple's dues, as much as there is, 1 *sūtu* per *kurru* (i.e. 1/30th);
>
> from the disbursements a handful, namely 12 *akalu* (per *kurru*, i.e. 1/200th);
>
> 1 *qâ* of bread, 1 *qâ* of first-class beer from the shrine of the god Sin in the courtyard.
>
> The *kalûs*' prebend that Marduk-zakir-šumi, king of Babylon, bestowed on Ibni-Ištar, descendant of Hunzu, scribe of the Eanna temple, his servant, always, unto distant days.

There then follows a series of curses that will befall anyone who tampers with the inscription or otherwise attempts to invalidate its legality. It concludes with a list of half a dozen illustrious witnesses, topped by crown prince Marduk-balassu-iqbi and tailed by its scribe, one Šumu-uṣur, a *kalû* of Marduk. The whole is inscribed on a modestly sized (33 ×

Figure 6.1: A *kudurru*-stone recording Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-šumi's grant of land in perpetuity to the *kalû*-lamenter Ibni-Ištar in Uruk, *c*. 850 BC. AO 6684, maximum dimensions 320 × 150 × 50 millimetres. Photo © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/ Thierry Ollivier.

15 centimetres) but elegantly executed limestone tablet, illustrated with the donation scene and its divine protectors. It was found in illicit excavations at Uruk in the early twentieth century and was purchased by the Louvre Museum in 1914.

The essence of the contract is as follows: Ibni-Ištar receives previously unowned farmland, substantial real estate and slaves as a means to support himself and his descendants quite comfortably. He also receives the right to a fixed quantity of the daily sacrifices after they have been offered to the second-ranking deities of the Eanna temple – not Ištar herself but her immediate entourage – as well as its lesser divine inhabitants, plus a fixed proportion of the temple's non-sacrificial income. In return for this handsome reward Ibni-Ištar undertakes to perform *kalûtu* for Ištar in Eanna, on top of his current prebendary roles. As spelled out in a section of the text not translated above, he was already a scribe of Eanna – one of the temple's most senior administrators – and also a temple-enterer of Nanaya and *šangû*-priest of the minor goddess Uṣur-amassa.[9] Unlike the gifts of land and property that Assyrian kings made to their court scholars, this was not an informal patronage arrangement that could be revoked at any time but a legally binding transfer of ownership in perpetuity, witnessed by divine and elite human onlookers. In this way, the Babylonian kings unwittingly created the mechanism by which cuneiform scholarship could outlive their systematic support for many centuries. Members of the Hunzu family were still writing scholarly tablets and receiving prebendary income in Uruk – albeit as *āšipus*, not *kalûs* – until at least the late third century BC (online Table B11).

In this light, we might expect to find abundant evidence for prebendary scholars in Neo-Babylonian temples but in fact it is surprisingly sparse (online Table B2). In Uruk, no scholarly prebends actually appear in the Eanna temple documentation of the long sixth century but, as Martin Kümmel suggests, that does not mean that there were none.[10] We have already seen Ibni-Ištar, recipient of a *kalû*'s prebend in the ninth-century Eanna. A slightly later scheme for the redistribution of sacrificial meat in Eanna includes both *āšipus* and *kalûs* amongst the classes of prebendary recipients.[11] At least some of the regime it describes may still have been operational in the sixth century but that hypothesis remains unproven.[12] The only unambiguous references known to me are from Šamaš's temple Ebabbar in Sippar in the late sixth century.[13] First, in 527 BC a large quantity of grain is disbursed to an *āšipu* or an intermediary, representing the surplus of all the offerings for the first three months of the year 'of the festival of the temple for the *ērib bīti* and the *āšipu*'s prebend'.[14] Second, in 510 BC Nidinti-Marduk of the Ile"i-Marduk family leased the income

of an *āšipu*'s prebend along with other types of offering to another man, presumably because he was temporarily unable to perform the duties himself.[15] In another document he receives grain 'from all the offerings of the *āšipu* of Isin', either on that person's behalf or in his own right.[16] We shall return to Nidinti-Marduk later in the chapter, because he and/or his associates also wrote large numbers of medical tablets, many of them clearly scribal exercises.

Next there are scholars known by the title <profession> of <deity>: six *bārûs* of Šamaš and Adad in Sippar in 604 BC; a *kalû* of Ištar-Annunitu in mid-sixth-century Sippar; two *kalûs* of Nabu in late eighth- and late fifth-century Borsippa; and the many *kalûs* of Ištar-of-Uruk and Nanaya spanning the mid-eighth to mid-sixth centuries. These men clearly played formal roles in temple affairs, but it is impossible to know whether those roles were prebendary. Likewise, Aplaya, the chief *bārû* who paid a tithe in barley to the Ebabbar in Sippar in 574 BC, must have had a formal connection to the temple.[17] This evidence is still very meagre given the huge size of the extant temple documentation, even allowing for the vagaries of preservation.

Even more inscrutable are titles of the type <profession> of <city>: we have seen an *āšipu* of Isin mentioned in relation to Nidinti-Marduk above, while a scholarly tablet deposited in Sippar's E-ulmaš temple was apparently written 'by dictation from … an *āšipu* of Nippur'.[18] We cannot deduce from them any social or institutional standing beyond the explicit geographical associations.

Scholarly tablet collections in the temple

As that last example hints, scholarly tablets deposited in temples paint a fuller picture of scholarly activity around temples – though again we cannot infer contractual relationships from them. We are used to thinking of temples' scholarly tablet collections as reference 'libraries' of some sort. Recent work, however, has begun to challenge that assumption.[19] For instance, in the mid-1980s an Iraqi team excavated some 400–500 scholarly tablets from pigeonholes in a secluded storage room in E-ulmaš, the small temple dedicated to the sun-god Šamaš's divine consort Ištar-Annunitu that was annexed to the enormous Ebabbar in Sippar.[20] This find is popularly known as the 'Sippar Library' but, as Markus Hilgert has demonstrated, it was probably nothing of the sort. Although only about thirty tablets have published so far, their colophons contain dates ranging from the late seventh to the mid-sixth century BC and feature

kalûs, āšipus and an apprentice *bārû* from several different families (online Tables B3–B5).[21] Amongst them, the descendants of Paharu, Šangu-Akkade and Šangu-Sippar are all well attested in the archives of the next-door Ebabbar as scribes, while many members of the latter family also held brewers', bakers' or temple-enterers' prebends.[22] Hilgert estimates that nearly 30 per cent of the tablets contain passages from the standard omen series, mostly *Bārûtu*, while lexical lists make up another 20 per cent and *kalûtu* laments a further 12 per cent (Fig. 6.2, Table 6a. Myths and epics comprise just under 10 per cent of the whole, while the remaining 30 per cent of the identified assemblage includes historical texts, hymns and prayers, commentaries, medical, hemerological, astronomical and other works. No rituals, catalogues or school exercises have been identified.[23]

Let us assume, as throughout this book, that the surviving tablets are a reasonably representative sample of what was originally to be found there: that is, that there had been no systematic removal of particular genres at the end of the building's life, and that surviving tablets held more or less the same types of composition as long-perished writing-boards. Then it is clear that this was not a working library for the use of temple personnel. We have already seen that there is only the slenderest evidence for prebendary *bārûs* in Neo-Babylonian Sippar, so the fact that *Bārûtu* accounts for 17 per cent of the whole assemblage is already curious. Equally, the fact that there are negligible numbers of hymns, prayers and rituals – exactly the sorts of works one would think might be most useful for cultic activity – would be just as difficult to explain away. Conversely, what use would temple ritualists have for large numbers of lexical lists?

Looking in more detail at the content and disposition of the tablets in the pigeonholes – insofar as that data has been published – these suspicions are confirmed. Some of the fifty-six niches in the walls were packed with tablets three rows deep, meaning that most were impossible to browse or access by sight. Conversely, though each niche had room for about sixty tablets stored in this way, some 85 per cent of the room's storage capacity was left empty (although it is likely, of course, that significant numbers of writing-boards were originally kept there too).[24] Nor is any system apparent in the grouping of tablets in those niches. For instance, Niche 3A contained a copy of Tablet III of the ritual series *Mīs Pî*, which was used to inaugurate and activate cult statues, plus Tablets I, III, IX and XIII of *Lugale*, an epic of the god Ninurta whose first-millennium version ran to fifteen chapters.[25] At least three of the four *Lugale* tablets were made by a certain Nabu-eṭir-napšati of the Paharu family. Similarly,

Table 6a: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in Neo-Babylonian temples.

Genres[*]	*Sippar E-ulmaš temple (after Hilgert 2013)*[°]	*Uruk Eanna (after Falkenstein 1931; Hunger 1968: 77–8, 106, 108)*
Astrological	—	—
Astronomical	1.4	—
Hemerological	1.7	3.0
Historical	7.1	—
Hymns and Prayers	6.8	6.7
Incantations and Rituals	18.7	19.4
Lexical	19.4	4.5
Literary	9.2	4.5
Mathematical	0.3	—
Medical	2.4	6.0
Omens	28.2	53.0
School	—	—
Miscellaneous	4.8	3.0
Uncertain	—	—
Total number of tablets	325	134

* See the note to Table 4b.
° Merges Hilgert's categories of lamentation with incantations (no rituals); excludes the 103 unidentified fragments.

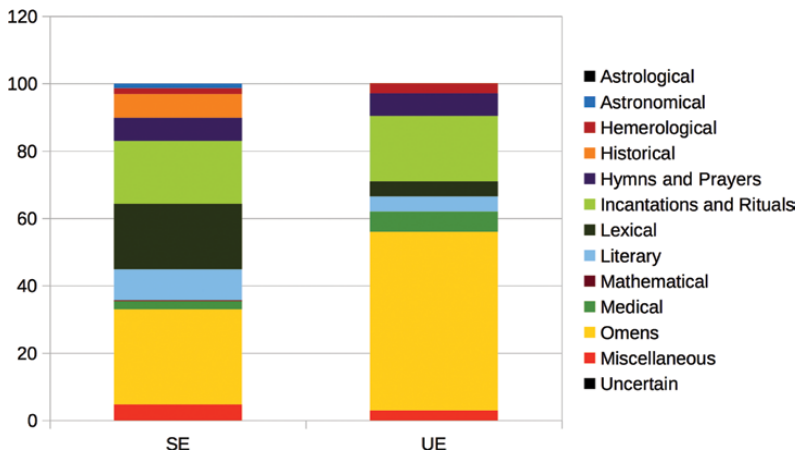

Figure 6.2: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in the Neo-Babylonian temples. SE = Sippar E-ulmaš; UE = Uruk Eanna. Source: author.

the room seems to have yielded only Tablets I, II, IV and V of perhaps eleven chapters of the flood myth *Atrahasis*.[26] Three were stored together in niche 6A, the other in niche 1D with, amongst others, a manuscript of Tablet I of the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*.[27] Only two colophons of the *Atrahasis* tablets have been published but they come from disparate sources: Tablet I was 'written from speech', while the *āšipu* Nanaya-apal-iddina, son of Dabibu, copied Tablet II 'according to its original'.[28] The assemblage also included no fewer than three copies of Tablet III of the eight-part lexical list *Malku = Šarru*, one copy of Tablet I, and none at all of the other six.[29] There is little evidence, in other words, for any systematic approach to the production, acquisition or storage of a 'library'. Not only are there significant gaps in the collection (which may of course have been filled by writing-boards), but chapters of the same work came from disparate sources, often in multiple copies, and were shelved in no particular order.[30]

Hilgert thus concludes that this find was no 'temple library' but rather a 'tablet depository' of copies of standard compositions (and not, for the most part, original works), made by educated members of the local elite families and presented to the temple as offerings.[31] This very attractive argument neatly accounts for the tablets' eclecticism, their apparent disorganisation and the variety of producers and owners. But – at least on the colophons of the tablets published so far – there are no votive inscriptions dedicating the tablet to a deity 'for the life' or health of the scribe or a beloved. Such dedications are a distinguishing feature of, for instance, Ashurbanipal's tablets destined for the Ezida temple in Nineveh, as opposed to the ones written for his personal use (see Chapter 4). They also feature on some of the elementary school tablets of Nabu *ša harê*'s temple in Babylon (see Chapter 5). Conversely, four of the nineteen E-ulmaš colophons published to date include borrowing clauses – such as 'Whoever fears Nabu should return (if) lost' – which are much more typical of domestic scholarly collections like those from Huzirina and Assur.[32] On present evidence then (and much of the detail of this interpretation is bound to change as the whole assemblage becomes available), it is likely that they were not written expressly *as* votive offerings but found their way to the temple, having been produced for other purposes. Whatever the case, though, it is clear from their find circumstances that these tablets were in storage when the temple was abandoned, not in active use.

The scholarly tablets from Eanna in Neo-Babylonian Uruk tell a similar picture. About 250 were excavated from the northern end of the temple's main courtyard in 1928–9, scattered amongst a few thousand

administrative records in a context badly disturbed by prior looters.[33] Due to their fragmentary condition, only about half have been published to date.[34] A few scholarly tablets from the illicit digs can also be identified as Eanna's property on the basis of their colophons, giving a total available corpus of roughly 140, about eighteen (13 per cent) of which have colophons.[35] As in E-ulmaš, the tablets were produced by and for men of several different families involved in the prebendary priesthood: the descendants of Dabibu (scribes and *šatammus*), Ekur-zakir (mostly oxherds), Sin-leqi-unninni (a *kalû*), Šangu-Ea and Šangu-parakki.[36] Five men identified themselves as *āšipus*, including one descendant of Šangu-parakki, a family otherwise known as prebendary oxherds. As the scribe and his father both bore northern Babylonian names – Itti-Marduk-balaṭu and Mušallim-Marduk – it is likely that the Šangu-parakki *āšipus* did not survive Darius's temple reforms (see Chapter 5).

Over half of Eanna's scholarly tablets contain omens, mostly *Sakikkû* (28 per cent of the whole) and *Enūma Anu Ellil* (13 per cent), as well as significant numbers of *kalûtu* and other incantations and rituals (21 per cent). The remaining one-quarter of the corpus consists mostly of small quantities of hymns, medical recipes, lexical texts, literary works and other standard omen series. Also, as in E-ulmaš, the large majority of the tablets are copies of standard works (with originals from Babylon and Borsippa as well as Uruk); only a small handful are commentaries. And amongst the colophons there are just three votives for the life of the scribe, including one dedicated to Ištar-of-Uruk. All three are described as *makkūr Eanna* 'property of Eanna' but none are formally excavated tablets.[37] In short, although the Eanna scholarly tablets are fragmentary, partially published and apparently not discovered in primary archaeological context, their collective characteristics are at least consistent with those of E-ulmaš.

Finds from nineteenth-century digs at Babylon and Borsippa also suggest similar scenarios. Surprisingly, only one possible scholarly tablet (and half a dozen tablets of other types) has been found in Esangila itself.[38] But, as Olaf Pedersén notes, this is because the excavation was conducted by tunnelling along the walls rather than by uncovering the floor surfaces of the rooms: much may remain in situ.[39] Nevertheless, votive colophons on tablets from informal nineteenth-century excavations show that several *āšipus* deposited scholarly tablets in Esangila, on dates unknown.[40] In Borsippa, meanwhile, an *āšipu* of the Arkat-ilani-damqa family deposited a learned commentary in Ezida 'for the well-being of his life'.[41] Although the tablet is undated, it must have been copied in the Neo-Babylonian period, as the Arkat-ilani-damqa kin-group

did not survive the 'end of archives'. At least five other members of this family held *ērib-bīti* prebends at Ezida, while seven held the office of city governor.[42] This clan clearly belonged to the elite of Borsippa.

It appears, then, especially on the evidence of E-ulmaš and Eanna, that scholars could give tablets to temples, just like the trainees in Babylon did (Chapter 5), either as bespoke votive offerings or as ones they had already written earlier. The deposited works are, so far as we can tell, almost exclusively copies of standard scholarly and literary works, rather than commentaries or original compositions. There is no colophon evidence at all that they were intended to form any sort of working library in the temple: no references to reading or use, as we saw in the Baba-šumu-ibni and Nur-Šamaš collections in seventh-century Assyria, for instance (Chapter 4). Rather, these works were kept in deep storage. However, as we shall see, copies of temple tablets also made their way into private collections, so that this storage cannot have been completely inaccessible. Likewise, the find context of the Eanna tablets suggests that at the end of the temple's life someone took them out and searched through them, looking for useful content. The copyists of those tablets were all from well-connected prebendary families but were not always holders of scholarly titles.

A third set of evidence for the activities of scholars in temples comes from the official documentation of the temple. Four '*kalûs* of the Lady of Uruk' (namely Ištar) appear together in a deposition to the senior officials of Eanna in 531 BC: three descendants of Sin-leqi-unninni, including the *kalamāhu* 'senior lamenter', plus a man of the Iddin-Ellil family. They collectively admit to having performed a public kettledrum ritual against the evil of an eclipse without the permission of the Eanna's administrator or its royal representative:

> On the 13th day of Simanu (month IV), in the 8th year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king of the lands, when we placed the copper kettledrum at the gate of Eanna, we did not consult with Nabu-mukin-apli, the *šatammu* of Eanna, son of Nadin, descendant of Dabibu, or with Nabu-aha-iddin, the royal official, commissioner of Eanna, about placing the kettledrum (there). And they did not approach us about it until it was time for to remove the kettledrum.[43]

A similar document, dated three days earlier, suggests that they – or someone else in Uruk – had also instructed three *kalûs* of Šamaš's Ebabbar temple in nearby Larsa to do the same:[44]

> On the 13th day of Simanu, in the 9th year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king of the lands, after sunset the *kalûs* of Ebabbar placed a copper kettledrum at the gate of Ebabbar and declared, 'Eclipse!' And all the people of Larsa saw our placing of the copper kettledrum.

As Beaulieu and Britton argue, the *kalûs* had (mis)calculated the date and time of the ritual, resulting in an elaborate, expensive and humiliating fiasco when the eclipse failed to appear to their very public drumming and lamentation.[45] These two documents are revealing in many respects. Most obviously, they show that the *kalûs* of Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Larsa performed in groups, in the streets of the city as well as in the temple, on the basis of mathematical calculations that they themselves made (for no-one else was held to account for the error). They were answerable to senior officials and the assembly of priests for their actions, and a representative of the crown also took an interest.

Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, though, the Eanna documentation collectively suggests a reason for the lack of clear evidence for scholarly professions elsewhere. Three of the four Uruk *kalûs* are identifiable in other Eanna documents through their patronyms and family names, and the chief *kalû* Šamaš-tabni-uṣur held a *ṭupšar Eanna* prebend just like his ninth-century predecessor Ibni-Ištar (online Table B2). Yet these two depositions constitute the only surviving record of their scholarly titles. This fact suggests that scholarly titles were not normally used in administrative documentation or in routine legal contexts such as witnessing. Rather they were reserved for acts of ritual performance – even when those performances went wrong – and for scholarly writing and copying. Finally, as I have argued elsewhere, these depositions hint at an explanation for the universal absence (so far) of any *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* in Neo-Babylonian temple archives or tablet collections. As in the Neo-Assyrian period, outside the royal court celestial observation and prediction was carried out by a variety of scholars but *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* was no-one's primary profession or identity.[46]

Scholars outside the temples in the long sixth century

It is becoming clear, then, that even when the professions *āšipu, bārû* and *kalû* were not demonstrably tied to temple prebends, the men who sometimes used these titles were often also holders of other prebends and/or demonstrably from prebendary families. Likewise, members of those prebendary families could deposit copies of standard scholarly

works in the temple without necessarily claiming scholarly titles. As the Uruk *kalûs* Ibni-Ištar and Šamaš-tabni-uṣur demonstrate above, one could perform multiple temple-related functions, using the appropriate context-dependent title as needed. But to what extent were scholarly titles used outside temple contexts? What evidence – apart from the frustratingly uninformative <profession> of <city> – do we have for the secular performance of scholarship in the Neo-Babylonian period?

I have found no evidence at all for *asûs* in temple contexts and none outside Sippar for *bārûs*. Non-temple documentation is similarly scarce (online Table B2).[47] To date Sippar is the only Neo-Babylonian city where *asûs* may be attested, possibly as late as the mid-sixth century.[48] One (undated) Sippar man is described as *ša bīt asê*, 'of/from the house of the *asû(s)*'.[49] However, given that Asu was a widely attested family name in northern Babylonia until at least the reign of Darius I (r. 522–486), the phrase 'house of the *asû(s)*' is just as likely to be a reference to an ancestral house or kin-group as to a physical building.[50] That is not to say that there were no longer any *asûs* after the seventh, perhaps sixth, century BC, and, as we shall see, *asûtu*-healing was certainly still practised. Rather, the *asû* as a scholarly profession was no longer closely associated with the institutions – by now, essentially just temples and wealthy family businesses – which kept their records in cuneiform.

The family name Baru died out in the early seventh century but there was a *bīt bārê* 'house of the diviner(s)' near Dilbat – presumably analogous to the *bīt asê* – as late as the mid-seventh century.[51] Likewise, in Borsippa there was a 'street of the *āšipu*'s (or *āšipus*') house' on which the temple owned land that it sold to its *qēpu* (royal resident) during the reign of Darius I.[52] But the phrases <house>/<street> of <profession> are even less revealing than <profession> of <city> for they are just as likely to allude to past associations with scholars as reflect the identities of their current occupants. Slightly more revealing are records of state taxation, which groups of ten or fifty men or households, organised by profession and/or neighbourhood, typically paid collectively. Their contributions of silver, which could be collected directly by tax officials or entrepreneurially by tax farmers, bought hired labourers to work on state projects.[53] For instance, a group of ten *āšipus* paid 'bow-land' tax to an agent of the city governor of Babylon in 510 BC.[54]

In short, the evidence for real-life scholars outside the temple is disappointingly thin. But we should not be surprised by this: the *kalûs* of Uruk's Eanna temple demonstrate that the use of professional titles was highly

context-dependent. Much of that context, moreover, seems to belong to the secular sphere. Our best evidence for scholarly practice comes from family archives, whether excavated intact or reconstructed from museum collections after dispersal through the market. For instance, the so-called Bel-remanni or Šangu-Šamaš A archive from early Achaemenid Sippar comprises nearly 300 tablets, roughly two-thirds of which are administrative and one-third scholarly.[55] Dating from *c*. 570–485 BC, especially from the last few decades of that period, they concern the business and intellectual activities of the brothers Bel-remanni and Šamaš-naṣir, sons of Mušebši-Marduk of the very well-connected Šangu-Šamaš or Šangu-Sippar family. Another key figure in the archive is Nidinti-Marduk son of Šamaš-šumu-lišir, descendant of Ile"i-Marduk, whom we met above, who might have been a relative of theirs by marriage. The brothers held prebends in brewing and baking at Ebabbar, as well as prebends for the subsidiary shrine of the gods Adad and Šala, while – as we saw – Nidinti-Marduk was probably a prebendary *āšipu*. They also owned and leased substantial tracts of land in and around the city.

All ninety or so of the scholarly tablets that have been associated with these men's administrative records contain medical writings, several in multiple copies. Most are recipes and incantations, in error-prone short extracts, written in rough handwriting and generally without colophons. One set of three duplicate manuscripts, for a recipe to cure rashes, is marked *ina pî šaṭir*, literally 'written from the mouth', i.e. by dictation.[56] Another three parallel manuscripts in more competent hands, of an incantation against witchcraft-induced phlegm, are *ina pî lēʾî gabari Babili šaṭir*, 'written according to (lit. from the mouth of) a wooden writing-board, a copy from Babylon'.[57] Third, a compilation of extracts from the standard plant list *Uruanna* is annotated, 'tablet of Bel-eṭeru, *āšipu* of Marduk' – perhaps a colleague, teacher or student of Nidinti-Marduk's.[58] Together the tablets cover a wide range of traditional *asûtu* and *āšipūtu*, along with two reference works in the emerging field of 'astrological medicine', by which suitable therapies were prescribed according to their associations with particular signs of the zodiac.[59]

In short, the assemblage is clearly a by-product of training and professional practice in the healing arts: it contains very few reference copies of standard works, and a large number of hastily scrawled single recipes and rituals on 'perfunctorily recycled' clay, presumably for memorisation or immediate use.[60] The old theoretical division between *asûtu* and *āšipūtu* is preserved in the formats of the tablets – recipes tend to be written in portrait orientation, with text parallel to the short side of

the tablet, and rituals and incantations in landscape, parallel to the long side – albeit perhaps for practical reasons.[61] Yet the fact that the two disciplines are found together in the same archive, in the same hands, shows incontrovertibly that the *āšipu* Nidinti-Marduk and his associates dealt as much in 'physical' therapies as in 'spiritual' ones. It appears too that they were learning, teaching and practising their healing arts on private clientele, outside of the ritual temple setting.

A smaller but remarkably similar archive has been reconstructed from about sixty tablets from late Achaemenid Nippur, belonging to members of the Absummu family.[62] Although they date from *c*. 425–365 BC – some 60–120 years after the anti-Achaemenid revolts – I shall consider them here as Nippur had played no part in those rebellions. As a result, cultural and intellectual continuity with earlier periods seems to have been much stronger here than in Uruk or northern Babylonia. Paul-Alain Beaulieu argues that the Absummu clan had dominated the prebendary brewing profession at Ellil's temple Ekur since at least the seventh century; if so, that implies a continuity of at least 200 years.[63] About half of the late Achaemenid archive consists of legal documents and administrative correspondence concerning the family's private business and their prebendary duties in Ekur, while the other comprises a variety of scholarly tablets. About half contain single medical recipes, incantations and/or short lists of therapeutic and ritual ingredients, but they also include a hymn to Ninurta, a horoscope for 410 BC, planetary observations for the years 365–364 BC, a short lexical extract and some very erudite commentaries.[64] As in the Šangu-Šamaš A family's scholarly archive, recipes and ingredient lists are all inscribed on very small portrait-format tablets, while all other writings are on larger square or landscape-format tablets. However, the texts themselves do not duplicate any of those in the earlier archive.[65]

The principal protagonists are (Ellil-)Belšunu, son of (Ninurta)-naṣir; his sons Ninurta-ahhe-bulliṭ and Zer-kitti-lešir; and their associate Taqiš-Gula of the Ellil-UŠ-Igigi family. Both Ellil-belšunu and Ninurta-ahhe-bulliṭ managed the temple's flocks amongst other business. Ninurta-ahhe-bulliṭ was almost certainly a prebendary brewer too, as well as manager of the family's domestic affairs.[66] Ellil-belšunu is also named as an *āšipu* (online Table B3) and his father as a (prebendary) brewer of Ellil on the colophon to a commentary tablet of *Sakikkû*, while Zer-kitti-lešir names himself as a *ṭupšarru ṣehru* 'junior scribe', at the end of a list of deities involved in *merdētu*-ceremonies in Nippur's minor shrines.[67] No scholarly title survives for Taqiš-Gula, owner of two lexical lists and correspondent of the two

brothers.[68] In short, the Absummu men identified principally as brewers in their formal interactions with the temple, yet their scholarly tablets reveal another side of their lives, as healers who did not simply copy texts but who performed therapies too – as evidenced by the many short, ad hoc practical writings found in their collection. Nor were their interests limited to *āšipūtu*: the horoscope, astronomical text and *kalûtu*-like writings together suggest a broad range of intellectual engagement.[69]

The data presented here for the geography of Babylonian scholars in the long sixth century is bitty and certainly incomplete (Table 6b). We can do very little with it compared to the rich evidence for social stratification and scholarly mobility in seventh-century Assyria discussed in Chapter 4. The macro-geographical distribution in particular

Table 6b: Scholarly professions attested in Neo-Babylonian cities, from north to south.

City	*asû*	*āšipu*	*bārû*	*kalû*
Sippar	House of the *asûs*(?)	Ebabbar temple prebend; tablets in E-ulmaš temple; familial practice	*bārû* of Šamaš and Adad; chief *bārû*; tablets in E-ulmaš temple	tablets in E-ulmaš temple; *kalûs* of Ištar-Annunitu
Babylon	—	active at the royal court (Ch. 5); tablets in Esangila temple; tax-payers	—	(*kalû* of Marduk) (*kalû* of Ea?)
Borsippa	—	tablets in Ezida temple; house of the *āšipus*(?)	—	*kalû of* Nabu; tax-payers
Dilbat	—	—	House of the *bārûs*(?)	—
Nippur	—	title '*āšipu* of Nippur'; familial practice	—	—
Isin	—	title '*āšipu* of Isin'	—	—
Uruk	—	(active in Eanna temple?); tablets in Eanna temple	—	active in Eanna temple; tablets in Eanna temple; *kalûs* of Ištar-of-Uruk and Nanaya
Larsa	—	—	—	active in Ebabbar temple

is highly provisional: new epigraphic finds, on site or in the museum, could easily reveal scholarly activity in cities such as Kish, Ur or Kutha. Equally, they could overturn the current impression that *asûs* and *bārûs* were much less ubiquitous than *āšipus* and *kalûs*. Nevertheless, we can provisionally account for this apparent relative scarcity if we assume that, as earlier in Assyria, the Neo-Babylonian *asûs* and *bārûs* (outside Sippar) were primarily secular and therefore engaged little with the temple documentation that dominates the extant written record of this time. Conversely, the micro-geographical patterns of the *āšipus* and *kalûs* are convincingly coherent: the *kalûs* are found only in the temple and (if earlier *kudurru* evidence is considered admissible) at the royal court, while the *āšipus* also served secular clients through familial practice. Even though we can rarely be certain whether either profession was attached to prebendary priesthood, it is clear that both titles were taken by men of prebendary families, and who may themselves have held prebends in other temple offices. Given the inherently part-time nature of all prebendary duties, all men who performed them must have also had parallel secular lives and identities; healing was but one possible component of the portfolio.

Surviving the anti-Achaemenid revolts: Who, where and how?

The evidence surveyed in this chapter so far has been heavily weighted towards Sippar and Uruk. That is in large part because those two city's most important temples, Ebabbar and Eanna, did not survive into the fifth century BC. As discussed in Chapter 5, their archives and scholarly collections yield such rich information about the long sixth century because they were not available for recycling or reuse to later generations. But what of the cuneiform-literate groups that did live on?

We can split the post-revolt fates of Babylonia's temple communities, and the scholars associated with them, into four groups that closely match the fates of the family archives tracked by Waerzeggers in her seminal article on 'the end of archives' (Fig. 6.3).[70] First, as we have just seen, some (culturally) northern institutions, such as Ebabbar and Eanna, never recovered from the purges and their communities disappeared from history. For us, their story ends here. Second, some southern temples were entirely unaffected by the independence movements and the reprisals taken against them. As we saw earlier in this chapter,

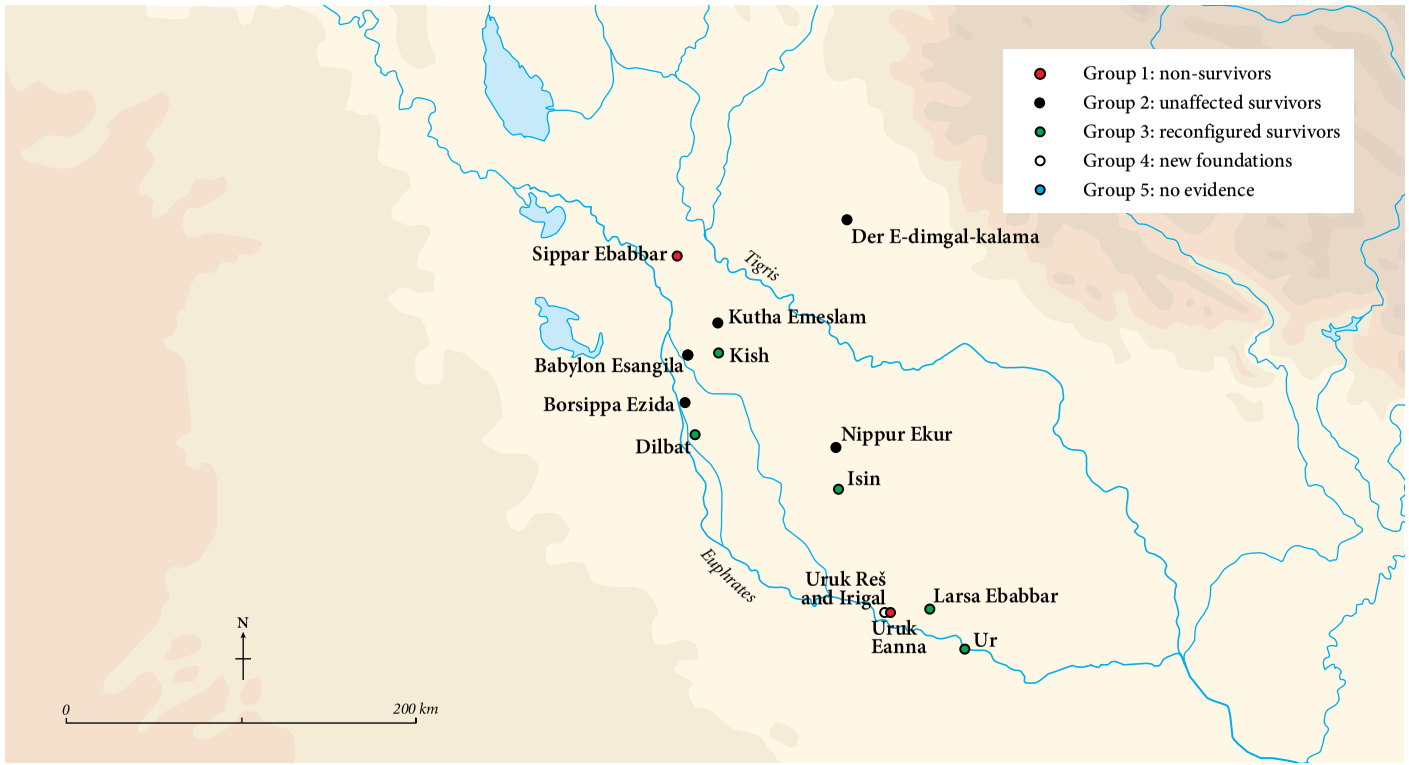

Figure 6.3: The fates of the Babylonian temples after the 'end of archives'. Source: Martin Brown.

for instance, the prebendary system of Nippur's temples survived intact. Third, some cultic communities managed to reorganise and live on, often in substantially different form. Marduk's temple Esangila in Babylon, for example, was too big – too culturally and too economically important – to be allowed to fail completely, yet the state could not tolerate its former power. Nabu's temple Ezida in Borsippa and Nergal's Emeslam in Kutha also belong to this third group. Fourth, one or more entirely new institutions emerged in the aftermath of the revolts, constituted by the survivors of purged temples. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Urukeans regrouped around the Irigal and Reš temples over the course of the fourth century BC and similar scenarios may have played out elsewhere. There is of course also a provisional fifth group: several cities, including Larsa and Ur in the south and Kish and Dilbat in the north, are yet to yield any relevant data though they were apparently all still functioning urban centres well into the Late Babylonian period.[71] Let us therefore take the second to fourth groups in turn.

So far, Nippur is the only city amongst those unaffected by the anti-Achaemenid revolts to have produced any clear evidence on the social geography of scholarship in Late Babylonian period. The long-running American excavations of the 1940s–1980s have not yet yielded any published archaeological contexts that are relevant to this discussion. As mentioned above, the main evidence consists of the reconstructed tablet collection of the Absummu family. We saw there that it documented two generations of men, *c*. 414–362 BC, some of whom were prebendary brewers and managers of the Ekur temple's flocks while at least one other practised as a healer and identified as an *āšipu*. The few dated scholarly manuscripts cluster at either end of the administrative archive's timespan: the anonymous birth horoscope from 410 BC and Taqiš-Gula's manuscript of the lexical list *Diri*, written in 400 BC, are amongst the earliest documents. The latest include Zer-kitti-lešir's list of Nippur deities in 365 BC and some anonymous planetary observations three years later.[72]

There are also half a dozen further scholarly tablets, written by prebendary brewers and priests in Late Babylonian Nippur but discovered in Uruk.[73] Amongst the tablets of the Ekur-zakir family (on whom see further below), Eckart Frahm has identified four Nippur commentaries on the omen series *Šumma Ālu* and *Enūma Anu Ellil*, and the lexical series *Aa* = *nâqu*, probably written in the late fourth century.[74] The individuals named in their colophons include a junior *āšipu*, prebendary brewers and a *nêšakku*-priest of Ellil. We should probably also add to this list a list of the temples and shrines of Nippur found in the same Uruk house, and a highly arcane commentary on kettledrum rituals, presumably found by

illicit diggers in Uruk but copied by one Ellil-kaṣir, *kalû* of Ellil, from a Nippurian copy.[75]

Two isolated legal records concern the reallocation of prebendary brewing duties in the Ekur temple during the late 150s BC.[76] They are not in themselves conclusive proof of scholarly activity in the second century, but they at least show that the temple remained functional, and therefore a potential venue for scholarship, until a decade or so before the Parthian conquest. Not long afterwards, Ekur was repurposed as a military garrison. Inanna's temple, close nearby, remained in operation until at least the second century AD, likely long after the disappearance of cuneiform culture from the city.[77]

What of the scholars associated with the northern temples of the third group, around Babylon and further north? In Babylon itself, epicentre of the independence revolts, reprisals were harsh and immediate, as shown in Chapter 5. We do not know exactly what Xerxes' removal of the ziggurat Etemenanki's staircase meant for the performance of cult, but it must have been devastating, or it would not have been worth doing, and the surviving priesthood would not have lobbied Alexander for its restoration 150 years later. As we saw in Chapter 5, the material fabric of Marduk's temple Esangila was not maintained by later kings either. It too fell into disrepair and was eventually abandoned. Indeed, as Stefan Hauser points out, by the end of the millennium the Esangila building constructed in Nebuchadnezzar's time lay at least 5 metres below the surface of the surrounding houses, apparently buried in a deep layer of Greco-Parthian rubble.[78] Alongside this physical assault, in 484 BC Xerxes also abolished the Esangila temple's system of prebendary priesthood, along with the leadership roles of *šatammu* and *qēpu*, depriving the temple community of its wealth and political influence.[79] As Heather Baker has argued, the material consequences are also clearly visible in Babylon's archaeological record.[80] The grand houses of the wealthy city centre, from the Processional Way to the eastern wall, were largely abandoned at this time and the area – known to archaeologists by the Arabic name Merkes, 'Centre' – remained relatively impoverished for centuries.

However, the Achaemenid kings could not allow Marduk's temple to fail completely. Its income was an important source of taxation revenues, while its collapse might provoke further popular revolts. Xerxes and his successors therefore allowed it to continue in a politically neutered state, playing no part in secular governance. Philippe Clancier and Julien Monerie suggest that the functioning part of Esangila was now reduced to a southern area called the Juniper Garden, known to archaeologists by the Arabic name ʿAmrān ibn ʿAlī ('Ibn ʿAli's Building').[81] Clancier thinks it

is also likely to be the source of the British Museum's copious quantities of Late Babylonian tablets, acquired by informal excavation and purchase from the 1880s onwards, that bear colophons of scholars associated with Marduk's temple.[82] He argues that they were probably found in similar houses to one which the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft later excavated, in early 1902. Here Robert Koldewey's team discovered a small family archive plus a few scholarly works, from incantations to mathematical astronomy, the latest of which dates to 206 BC.[83]

Johannes Hackl's meticulous archival work has shown that after the 'end of archives' the temple began to govern itself through a body called the *ṭupšar u bēl piqnēti ša Esangila*, 'the scribes and commissioners of Esangila', comprising representatives from the formerly prebendary professions.[84] By the 420s BC these professions, including *āšipus, kalûs* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, had organised themselves into guild-like structures, each headed by a *kiništu*, 'assembly' of (some of) their members.[85] Archival records from the fourth century BC show *āšipus, kalûs* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* receiving monthly *kurummatu*-rations from a *bēl mindi* 'quartermaster', in place of their former prebends.[86] As before, large numbers of individuals were involved, strongly suggesting that the new system still took care of many part-time practitioners and their immediate families (*kalûs*' wives and daughters are often included). However, the absence of ancestral names from these records makes it almost impossible to judge how many kin-groups were involved. Hackl argues that this absence marks the absence of the old elite clans from the temple community.[87] Equally, it could well be that, in this particular context, family names were redundant, for instance if particular extended family groups still held monopolies on individual temple professions. If everyone overseen by a particular *kiništu* were descended from the same ancestor it would be pointless to record that fact in the *kiništu*'s records. The few surviving dated scholarly tablets from fourth-century Babylon suggest that at least some ancestral names persisted in scholarly circles or, more conservatively, that the practice revived after the restoration of the post of *šatammu* in *c*. 360 BC.[88]

For instance, some time after 322 BC, one Bel-apal-iddina, a descendant of Mušezib, copied an observational diary dated to that year, as well as two sets of instructions for calculating the positions of Venus and Mercury.[89] Both genres were innovations of the period. Bel-apal-iddina never gives a scholarly or priestly title in his colophons but, as we shall see, in later centuries members of his family identified as both *kalûs* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil.* An exact contemporary of his was Tanittu-Bel, son of Bel-aba-uṣur of the Ša-našišu family, who copied

or owned at least fourteen scholarly tablets.[90] Tanittu-Bel's colophons never reveal his scholarly profession either, but both Irving Finkel and Joachim Oelsner provisionally identify him as an *āšipu,* as his tablets predominantly comprise therapeutic rituals and incantation series such as *Muššuʾu* ('Rubbing').[91] However, as both also note, a *kalû* of the same name and patronym received a *kurummatu*-ration from Esangila in 312 BC, just a decade or so later than the only surviving dates on Tanittu-Bel's colophons. There is no a priori reason to suppose that a *kalû* could not also have interests in healing works. In the absence of further evidence Tanittu-Bel's professional identity must remain unknown but, as before, we can infer that individuals' cultic roles did not always transfer straightforwardly to their outside lives.

Sporadic attestations of *āšipus* and *kalûs* in Babylon continue into at least the mid-third century, in the records of the Abu-ul-ide family of entrepreneurial temple agents and in descriptions of cultic events in chronicles and observational diaries.[92] Both professions continued to receive *kurummatu*-rations, run their own *kiništu*-assemblies and take part in the performance of Esangila's *akītu, kislīmu* and kettledrum rituals. There is then an evidentiary gap of nearly 150 years – which should probably be put down to the vagaries of preservation – after which the *kalûs* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* resurface, as detailed below (online Table B6).[93] It is not at all clear whether the *āšipus*' absence from the documentary record of Esangila in these final two centuries BC is significant or circumstantial.

The well-known (reconstructed) archive of the Mušezib family of Babylon, comprising perhaps a dozen tablets, dates to *c*. 150–115 BC, spanning the final years of Seleucid rule and the tumultuous first decades of the Parthian period.[94] Most importantly for our purposes, it includes two legal decisions of the *kiništu* of the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*, each of which grant named practitioners the right to land and income in silver in return for regular observational and calculational work. In one case that right was awarded not only on the grounds of the claimants' technical expertise but also on the basis that their family status trumped that of the current incumbent.[95] The father of the two brothers, Itti-Marduk-balaṭu, had himself served as *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* but, most unusually, was not relinquishing his temple service through death. Rather, he had gone to the court of king Hyspaosines (r. *c*. 141–124 BC) of Characene, now also ruling Babylon (see Chapter 5), *u enna agâ ibašši* 'and is still there'. While Itti-Marduk-balaṭu was now being paid *ina hišihti ša bāb šarri* 'from the resources of the king's gate', his sons would receive their annual stipend of 2 minas of silver *ina hišihtini* 'from our (the *kiništu's*)

resources'.[96] In return they were expected to 'do everything their father offered: (namely,) make celestial observations and present annual ephemerides tables', in collaboration with five other named *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* and any men who may replace them in future.[97] The document states that Itti-Marduk-balaṭu also held the title *rab bānûtu* 'gardener', as well as *uppudētu ša bītāt ilāni* 'overseer of the temples' and perhaps too *<ša> muhhi āli*, something like 'city supervisor'. Meanwhile one of the ousted men, Nabu-apal-uṣur, son of Nabu-mušetiq-uddi, was also a *kalû*.[98] We can interpret these multiple identities either as continuing evidence for the pluralism we saw in the long sixth century, or as meaning that for at least some men *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* was a secondary or parallel duty to their primary temple functions, as seems to have been the case in Uruk.[99]

These legal documents, along with many others in the archive, do not give family affiliations. But the genealogy of Itti-Marduk-balaṭu and sons is identical to that found amongst nearly two dozen scholarly tablets of the Mušezib family, spanning eight or more generations from Bel-apal-iddina in the late fourth century to (a different) Nabu-mušetiq-uddi in 69 BC.[100] Most record observational and mathematical astronomy, as we would expect from the discussion above, but they also include a tablet of *Enūma Anu Ellil,* a bilingual incantation, and literary works including Tablet X of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, copied for Itti-Marduk-balaṭu by one of his sons. None of the colophons includes any scholarly titles, however, even on the works of mathematical astronomy.

The Mušezib family were not the only cuneiform scholars of Parthian Babylon. The descendants of Egiba-tila and Nanna-utu also worked with them, and with each other. I have been able to identify some forty tablets that attest to their intellectual interests, each with an extant colophon. Three generations of the Nanna-utu family, some of whom were junior *kalûs* of Marduk, copied out long bilingual *balaggu*-liturgies, *ana zamāri nashi* 'excerpted for singing'.[101] Nabu-balassu-iqbi and his sons Marduk-zeru-ibni and Nabu-šumu-lešir Egiba-tila collected commentaries to omen series such as *Šumma Ālu* and *Sakikkû*, which were now many centuries old.[102] One member of the Egiba-tila family learned *balaggu*-liturgies from a Nanna-utu man, while two others drew up tables of mathematical astronomy *ana ṭarṣa*, 'according to' (the methods of?) Marduk-šapik-zeri, a *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* of the Mušezib clan.[103] An Egiba-tila man is mentioned in connection with the performance of rites, presumably in Esangila, in a diary of 156 BC.[104]

The cuneiform scholarly community around the Esangila temple probably never comprised more than a handful of Parthian Babylon's estimated 20,000 highly diverse inhabitants.[105] And by the mid-first

century BC, a few generations after the Parthian conquest, it had almost entirely disintegrated.[106] The latest surviving archival records are those of Rahim-Esu, who provided banking services to Esangila, in 94–93 BC.[107] The observational diaries stop mentioning sacrifices and rituals in Esangila in 78 BC, and the last known diary record of any kind is from 61 BC.[108] The last known scholarly colophon and the last horoscope both date to 69 BC.[109] The latest lunar and solar observations are for 41 and 10 BC respectively.[110] The only exceptions are a few badly written almanacs and goal year texts, summary celestial forecasts used in the production of birth horoscopes. As David Brown has convincingly argued, their authors were a few decreasingly cuneiform-literate practitioners who continued to produce these genres well into the first century AD, in order to 'exploit a shrinking market for old-fashioned astrology in cuneiform', the last representatives of cuneiform culture.[111]

The other northern temples had much shorter afterlives (online Table B7). At Der, 150 kilometres northeast of Babylon, *āšipus* and *kalûs* were active in the god Ištaran's temple E-dimgal-kalama until perhaps the fourth century BC. At least half a dozen published tablets of liturgical laments and other scholarly works have colophons by such men and their apprentices.[112] Two are expressly stated to be *ana zamārišu* 'for his singing' or *ana šuzmuri kalê* 'for having the *kalûs* sing (it)'.[113] However, the Der tablets may have been dispersed already in antiquity: at least one of these tablets is said to have been bought (in modern times) in Babylon, while two more were excavated even further south, at Uruk in a late fourth-century context.[114]

In Borsippa, the prebendary brewer Nabu-kuṣuršu of the Huṣabu family copied at least twenty-four tablets of literary and lexical works during the reign of Artaxerxes I or II (454–453 or 394–393 BC) and deposited them in the Ezida.[115] The Huṣabu family is the only line of Nabu's prebendary brewers attested after the 'end of archives'.[116] Many, perhaps hundreds, further scholarly tablets now in the British Museum and elsewhere may also come from this temple. The youngest known example is a highly esoteric commentary on temple rituals, copied by Bel-ahhe-iddina of the Eṭiru family in 138 BC, four years after the Parthian conquest.[117] In Kutha, conversely, I know of no Late Babylonian scholarly tablets, but a legal document dating to 186 BC records a decision of the *kiništu* of *āšipus* to reallocate land from a deceased member of their group to the son of another.[118] The witnesses include a *kalû*, while the rest all take prebendary titles such as *kutimmu* 'carpenter', *ṭābihu* 'butcher' and *sīrāšû* 'brewer'.

The fourth and final group of scholarly survivors to discuss are the southern families of Uruk. They remain visible in the cuneiform record after the collapse of Eanna and the resultant disappearance of their northern colleagues, presumably purged for their ties to the former Chaldean dynasty of Babylon, as discussed in Chapter 5. We can trace the aftermath through the archives of two families of *āšipus* who successively occupied a single house in post-Eanna Uruk. Their residence, in the southeastern quarter of the city, was excavated in the late 1960s to early 1970s by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, led by Heinrich Lenzen. The house had been rebuilt several times from the late fifth to early fourth centuries BC and again later, perhaps as late as the Parthian period.[119] The descendants of Šangu-Ninurta, literally 'priest of Ninurta', occupied the house until about 420 BC, when they left behind about 160 scholarly tablets, including fifty-four with colophons.[120] Some tablets were preserved in large storage jars but most had been scattered by later burials dug down between the walls. Medical recipes, healing rituals and incantations, and medical, terrestrial and birth omens predominate, as might be expected of a family of healers, but mathematical and metrological works also feature (Fig. 6.4, Table 6c). The most prominent individuals in the archive are Šamaš-iddin, his sons Anu-ikṣur and Rimut-Anu and Anu-ikṣur's son Anu-ušallim – all traditional Urukean names (online Table B8).[121] As I have discussed elsewhere, the younger generations copy for the older men, while Anu-ikṣur in particular creates commentaries on omens for his father.[122] One of Anu-ikṣur's medical tablets was written for him by a Belu-kaṣir, son of Balaṭu, apparently not a relative, but in general the family do not seem to have had an extensive apprenticeship network like those of their Assyrian predecessors in seventh-century Huzirina and Assur.[123]

Sometime around 400 BC, the same house was re-inhabited by a different family of *āšipus*, over at least three generations, who claimed descent from one Ekur-zakir, literally 'the Ekur temple names'. Like Šangu-Ninurta, the name suggests an origin in Nippur but the kin-group was already well established amongst the prebendaries of sixth-century Eanna as goldsmiths, oxherds and – most suggestively – temple scribes.[124] The best-attested family members are Iqišaya (or Iqiša) and his son Ištar-šuma-ereš, named after his grandfather (online Table B9). Iqišaya also had an apprentice, Anu-aba-uṣur, from the equally venerable Kuri family.[125] These men were active in the early Hellenistic period (*c*. 320–300 BC) but their descendants seem to have lived there until at least the 220s BC (online Table B9).[126] Some 230 scholarly tablets can be associated with Iqišaya and Ištar-šuma-ereš's period of occupation, fifty-eight

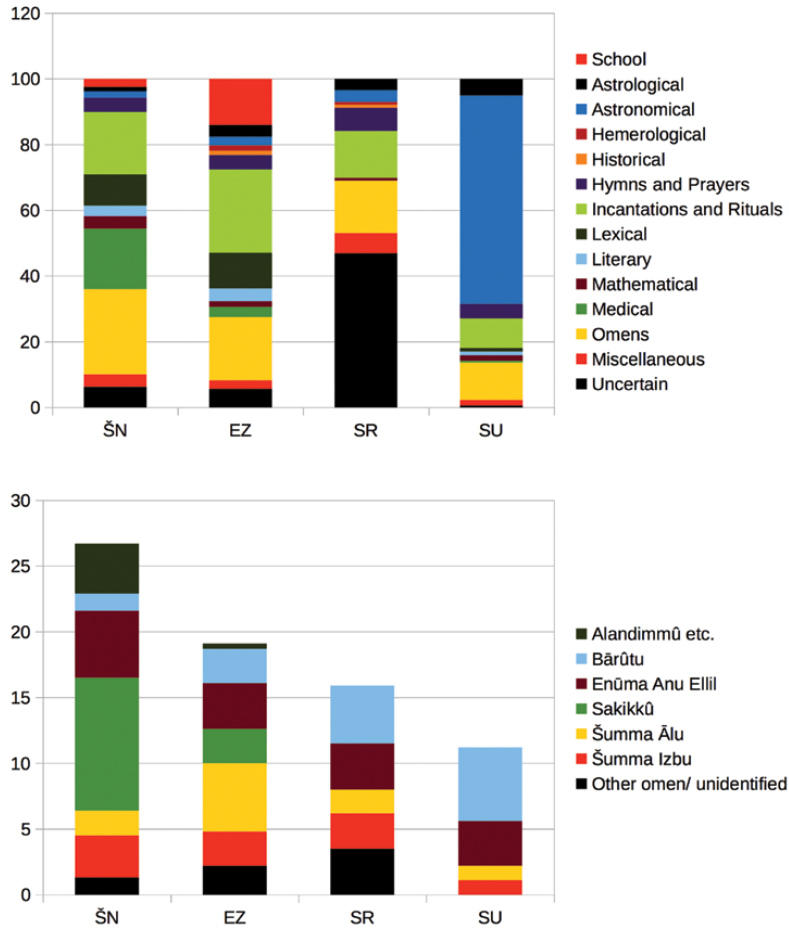

Figure 6.4: Percentages of scholarly genres in Late Babylonian Uruk, with further detail of the omen series. ŠN = the late Achaemenid Šangu-Ninurta family; EZ = the early Hellenistic Ekur-zakir family; SR = the Seleucid Reš temple; SU = illicitly excavated tablets from Seleucid Uruk. Source: author.

Table 6c: Percentages of scholarly genres in Late Babylonian Uruk.

*Genres** (data after CAMS/GKAB)	*Late Achaemenid Šangu-Ninurta family*	*Early Hellenistic Ekur-zakir family*	*In Seleucid Reš temple*	*Illicitly excavated from Seleucid Uruk*
Astrological	1.3	3.5	3.5	5.1
Astronomical	1.9	2.6	3.5	63.3
Hemerological	—	1.7	0.9	—
Historical	—	1.3	0.9	—
Hymns and Prayers	4.4	4.4	7.1	4.5
Incantations and Rituals	19.0	25.3	14.2	9
Lexical	9.5	10.9	—	1.1
Literary	3.2	3.9	—	1.1
Mathematical	3.8	1.7	0.9	1.7
Medical	18.4	3.1	—	0.6
Omens	25.9°	19.2	15.9	11.3
Alandimmû etc.	3.8	0.4	—	—
Bārûtu	1.3	2.6	4.4	5.6
Enūma Anu Ellil	5.1	3.5	3.5	3.4
Sakikkû	10.1	2.6	—	—
Šumma Ālu	1.9	5.2	1.8	1.1
Šumma Izbu	3.2	2.6	2.7	1.1
Other omen/unidentified	1.3	2.2	3.5	—
School	2.5	14.2	—	—
Miscellaneous	3.8	2.6	6.2	1.7
Uncertain	6.3	5.7	46.9	0.6
Total number of tablets	158	229	113	177

* See the note to Table 4b.
° The percentages of individual omen series sum to a greater number than this because some tablets have different compositions on obverse and reverse.

of which contain colophons, plus a handful of legal documents. While their range of intellectual interests was broadly the same as their Šangu-Ninurta predecessors, the Ekur-zakir men owned proportionally more hymns, incantations and rituals as well as lexical texts, and significantly fewer therapeutic medical texts (the old *asûtu*) (Fig. 6.4, Table 6c). And where over half of the Šangu-Ninurta men's copies and commentaries on omen series related to *Sakikkû* and physiognomic omens, the Ekur-zakirs owned roughly equal proportions of all the major omen genres.

We do not yet know if any member of the Šangu-Ninurta family had any legal relationship to a temple, for instance as holders of prebends. The surviving legal documents from the house furnish no evidence, and none of the family's scholarly colophons mentions any temple affiliation. About half give the writer's professional title, and about half of those also state their association with the city of Uruk.[127] It may be that there was not yet any post-Eanna prebendary system in place, but that question is still unresolved. A century later, the tablets of the Ekur-zakir men and their associates do refer occasionally to institutional affiliations: Iqišaya once calls himself an '*āšipu* of Uruk, *ērib bīti* of Anu and Antu', which seems to make a clear distinction between his scholarly profession and temple-based prebendary duties (but at which temple we do not know).[128] He also contracted out his duties as a prebendary brewer but, again, the temple context is not specified.[129] However, by around 200 BC his descendants Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu, and his grandson Mannu-iqapu, both call themselves '*āšipu* of Anu and Antu' and are clearly associated with the Reš temple.[130]

Hard evidence for private practice in the Uruk *āšipus*' tablets is slim but tangible. As we saw in Chapter 4, Stefan Maul has argued convincingly that in the colophons of the Baba-šumu-ibni family of *āšipus* in seventh-century Assur the phrase *(hanṭiš) nasha* '(quickly) excerpted' indicated recipes and rituals being prepared for therapeutic use.[131] In post-Xerxean Uruk, Anu-ikṣur once states that he has 'excerpted' a list of therapeutic ingredients, while an anonymous set of instructions for determining the planetary cause of an eclipse has also been 'excerpted'.[132] A dozen or so casually written tablets, very different in format to the elegant 'library' copies that predominate in the house, also suggest practical use. Their contents include incantations, medical ingredients and horoscopic calculations.[133]

Iqišaya and his descendants were part of a larger scholarly community in Uruk that survived to *c*. 140 BC, attested by about 320 scholarly tablets and more than 500 archival records. The large majority of these artefacts, including 180 scholarly tablets, come from illicit diggings at Uruk but there are a few hints as to their findspots. Six tablets owned by Iqišaya were published already in the early twentieth century. It is just possible that they, and others, came from upper levels of the *āšipus*' house, which had eroded (or been dug) away decades before formal excavations began in the 1970s. Further, as we saw above, one of the tablets discovered in Iqišaya's house was owned by his descendant, Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu, who may also have copied or owned a dozen illicitly excavated scholarly tablets in the 210s BC.[134]

Meanwhile, about 140 fragmentary tablets, including at least ninety scholarly works and thirty archival records, were excavated in 1959–60 from a small room in Anu's temple Reš, which had already been subject to looting. Amongst them were eight tablets owned by six different members of the Sin-leqi-unninni family, with dates spanning the late fourth to the mid-second centuries BC.[135] Three of these men can be securely identified with the owners and/or copyists of illicitly excavated scholarly tablets; a further two have likely matches with other known Uruk scholars.[136]

However, given how mobile tablets were in antiquity, we should not assume that all of the Ekur-zakir family's illicitly excavated tablets originally came from the *āšipus*' house and the Sin-leqi-unninnis' from the Reš. If nothing else, this model would not securely locate tablets written by a member of one family for the other, nor tablets written by or for the descendants of Ahʾutu or Hunzu.[137] Indeed the just-mentioned Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu – if we are to believe he was a single personage – owned tablets found in both archaeological excavations. Further, two scholarly tablets are also known to come from excavations at Ištar's Irigal (or Ešgal) temple, close nearby, which earlier in the twentieth century may have been an additional illicit source of finds.[138]

Whatever their original storage locations, the tablets from Seleucid Uruk clearly show a close-knit community of scholars that functioned over two centuries. It comprised around thirty men from just a few families, who worked closely with each other across familial and professional boundaries.[139] Only members of the Ekur-zakir, Gimil-Anu and Hunzu families were *āšipus*, contrary to the seven ancestors of Urukean *āšipus* named in the exercise list discussed in Chapter 5.[140] Descendants of Sin-leqi-unninni had a complete monopoly on *kalûtu*, while both *āšipus* of the Ekur-zakir family and *kalûs* of the Sin-leqi-unninni family could also take the secondary title *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* (online Tables B10–B11). However, as in all periods and places we have considered so far, there were also men involved in intellectual production, including members of the politically prominent Ahʾutu family, who took no prebendary or scholarly titles (online Table B12).

It is clear too that these titles were closely bound up in temple life. By the mid-third century BC, scholars in Uruk were routinely taking the titles '*āšipu* of Anu (and Antu)' and '(chief) *kalû* of Anu and Antu'. Two-thirds of the thirty-odd known scribes or owners of scholarly tablets use one or the other (online Tables B11–B12). All four known high priests, *šešgallû*, of the Reš temple were drawn from the *āšipus* and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* of the Ekur-zakir family.[141] There is also incontrovertible

evidence that *āšipūtu* and *kalûtu* were prebendary like many other, better-attested temple professions at the Reš. Just one published legal document relates to the *kalûs*' prebend: a quitclaim in which one Rihat-Anu, a descendant of Sin-leqi-unninni, renounces his interest in a prebend he has sold to Aristocrates, son of Nanaya-iddin.[142] The purchaser's name is noteworthy: not for the bare fact of a man of Babylonian descent choosing to buy a prebend in his Greek name, for that in itself is not particularly unusual. Rather, it is remarkable that a self-identified Grecophile buys a prebend associated with traditional Babylonian scholarship, as no practising scholar ever goes by a Greek name in the cuneiform record of Hellenistic Uruk. This may imply that not all owners of scholarly prebends actually performed the duties associated with them, but – like butchers, bakers and other prebendaries – could contract out their obligations to another man.

Five prebendary *āšipūtu* contracts have also been published, including four in which one Labaši of the Ekur-zakir family buys up shares from other members of his extended family over the decade 265–255 BC.[143] As Paula Corò has shown, this is part of a much larger pattern of Labaši's prebendary acquisitions over several decades covering a wide range of priesthoods, especially those of the temple enterer, attendant, brewer and butcher.[144] About half a century later Labaši's widow – or his eponymous grandson's widow – made a similar purchase.[145] From these records it appears that the *āšipus*' prebend was originally divided into seven equal shares, which then became further subdivided into halves, quarters and eighths through inheritance.[146] Perhaps these tiny fractions were simply too small to operate with any economic efficiency, and Labaši's purchases represent a consolidation exercise, in return for which the sellers gained cash in silver coins. In any case, the *āšipus*' prebends always remained within the family, and could even be bought by female relatives.[147] This practice stands in sharp contrast to the *kalûs*' prebend, which as we have just seen, could be bought even by men with Greek names and no attributed ancestry. In both cases, however – women and ancestor-less men – it is almost certain they paid deputies to perform the necessary cultic duties on their behalf as they were not themselves qualified to do so.

The secular lives of these scholars is harder to detect. However, three Seleucid birth horoscopes from Reš and (perhaps) elsewhere in Uruk show that consultation for private individuals was compatible with institutional affiliation.[148] In addition, a single surviving bird-augury, commissioned by city governor Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon of the Ahʾutu family in about 200 BC (see Chapter 5), is a useful reminder that powerful men still needed diviners to help them with decision-making in the post-*bārû*

world. Unfortunately, the name of the augur is absent from the request but in it he asks the gods to decide whether 'the goldsmiths and the carpenters who are doing work on the statue of Ištar should set in her left hand a … -stone that is suitable for a sceptre'.[149]

The latest surviving dated scholarly tablet from Uruk, a ritual for sacrificing a bull to make the membrane of a *kalûs*' kettledrum, was written out by a young member of the Sin-leqi-unninni family in 161 BC, at about the same time that Reš was badly damaged in a fire.[150] The temple itself somehow staggered on for another half-century, through the Parthian conquest of the 140s BC, and is last attested in a legal document dating to 108 BC.[151]

Intercity knowledge exchange: The shrinking scholarly networks of later Babylonia

So far in this chapter I have documented the micro-geographical dispositions of Babylonian scholars and their tablets before and after the independence revolts of around 500 BC. It has proved possible to track the continuities, evolutions and ruptures in each community's economic foundations over the course of time. But the approach I have taken, dependent as it is on the happenstance of archaeological (or illicit) discovery of artefacts, does not address my claim that the total population of scholars was devastated in the revolts' aftermath. We need therefore to trace the human, divine and textual relationships *between* regional centres in Babylonia, in order to determine the extent to which scholarly knowledge networks were affected by the supposed purges.

Let us start in the long sixth century, when relationships between palace, temple and scholarship were still healthy and functional. Michael Jursa has examined the communication and exchange networks of both Eanna in Uruk and Ebabbar in Sippar (Fig. 6.5).[152] Both cities, he notes, were situated on the major Euphrates trade route that ran south from Opis through Sippar, Babylon, Borsippa, Dilbat, Marad and Uruk to Ur and the Sealand. As might be expected, both institutions' archives reveal the overwhelming dominance of Esangila and Babylon, with influential prebendary families spreading from the capital to also colonise the major provincial temples. The two temples were also in regular, substantive contact with each other but much less with other Euphratean cities. However, Jursa points out that whereas Eanna used the trade route 'in its entirety', officials from Ebabbar rarely ventured south of Dilbat.[153]

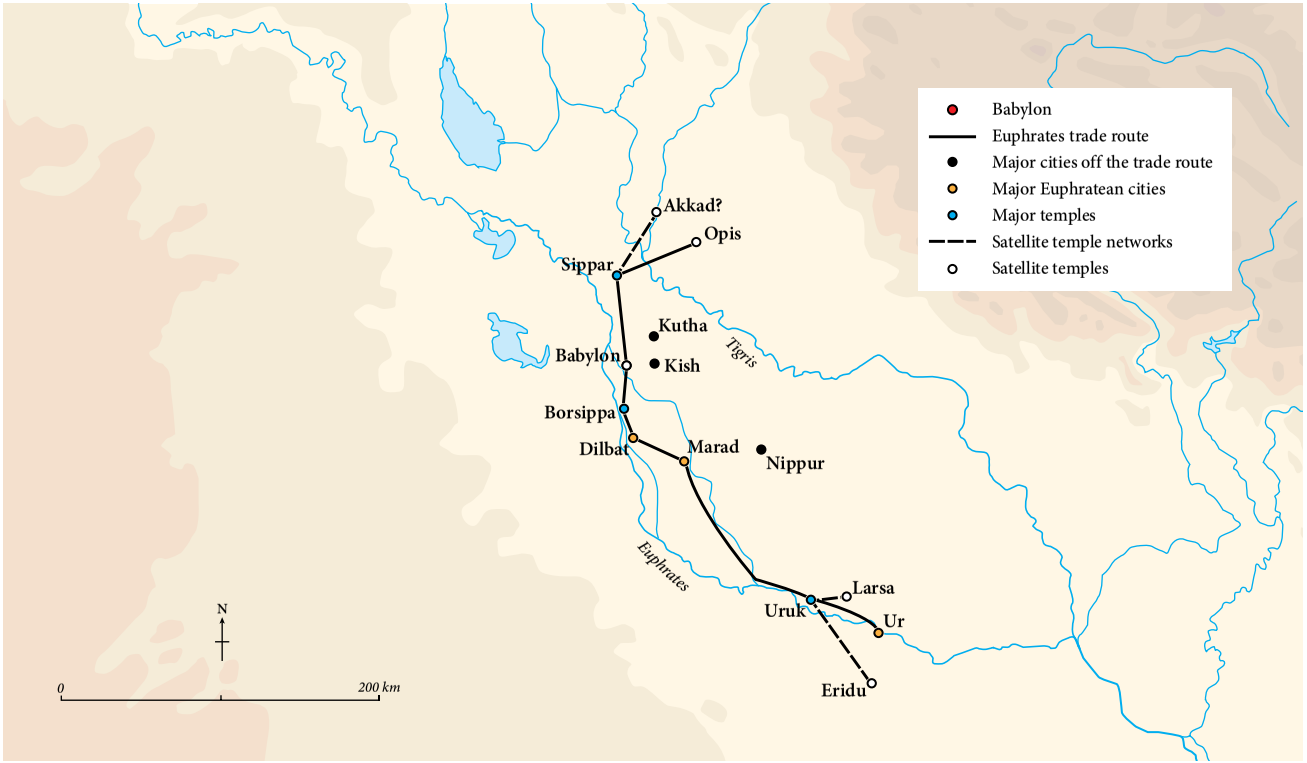

Figure 6.5: The Euphratean temple trade network of the long sixth century, according to Jursa's (2010a: 64–117) analysis. Source: Martin Brown.

This pattern fits with Eanna's close connections to the ruling Chaldean dynasty in Babylon (Chapter 5), contrasted with the absence of southern interests for Ebabbar. Major settlements on other watercourses – Kish, Kutha, Nippur – were almost entirely outside either temple's purview, despite their relative proximity and connectedness via other canals.[154] Rather, the regional temple administrations focused their economic and cultic attention on nearby satellite cities, such as Larsa and Eridu for Uruk, and Akkad for Sippar, where cultic personnel often held secondary prebendary posts. Babylon was clearly the hub, so it is likely that cities such as Kish, Kutha and Nippur were not as completely cut off from the flow of people, goods and knowledge to and from the capital that this necessarily Uruk- and Sippar-focused picture presents.

We should envisage, then, two types of scholarly movement through Babylonia in the long sixth century: a vertical flow up and down the Euphrates, the whole length of the land, and much routine centripetal–centrifugal traffic in and out of major regional centres to their surrounding satellites. Sadly, there is not enough colophon information from this period to systematically map the geography of copying statements, nor yet a detailed enough understanding of hypotextual–hypertexual relationships (Chapter 2) to chart direct transmission of manuscripts and compositions from city to city.[155] However, the scanty evidence from Uruk's Eanna temple and Sippar's E-ulmaš, a subsidiary of Ebabbar, is at least consistent with this model. Eanna's scholarly tablets include copies made from originals from Borsippa and Babylon in the north, as well as perhaps the southern satellite town of Eridu (if that is the home of the '*šangû*-priest of Ea' Labaši-Marduk, whose name appears in the fragmentary colophon of a chapter of *Enūma Anu Ellil*).[156] And we have already seen above that Larsa's Ebabbar temple relied on Eanna for instructions on timings of *kalûtu* rituals. Meanwhile, the depositors of scholarly tablets in Sippar's E-ulmaš worked with originals from nearby Borsippa, Babylon and perhaps Nippur, but no further south than that.[157] And the gods they invoked in their colophons – so far as we can tell – also reflected this northern Babylonian focus.[158] As more such information becomes available in future years, it will be possible to test Jursa's model further.

Now let us turn to the situation after the anti-Achaemenid revolts and their aftermath. In late fifth-century Uruk, half a century after the 'end of archives', the Šangu-Ninurta family of *āšipus* owned about two dozen scholarly tablets that had been copied from other tablets or writing-boards.[159] The originals, where described, include three 'Urukean copies'; two writing-boards that had belonged to the now defunct Eanna temple; a 'Babylonian copy' of a writing-board; and a tablet 'from among

the old tablets of (E-)Meslam', the god Ninurta's temple in the northern Babylonian city of Kutha.[160] In addition, a tablet found in the same archaeological context, and which therefore probably also belonged to the family, was owned, according to its colophon, by one Sin-banunu, an *āšipu ṣehru* of Marduk, and may therefore also come from Babylon.[161] We do not know how those tablets arrived in the house: purchase, inheritance, exchange? But we can also see that the family was part of a wider network of scholars (Fig. 6.6). For instance, Rimut-Anu owned two tablets copied for him by Belu-kaṣir, son of Balaṭu, and by one Nadin, whose relationship to him is unclear.[162] Were they his apprentices, learning to write tables as part of their training; or his colleagues, generously making copies of works for him that he needed? On present evidence we cannot tell.[163]

But if the Šangu-Ninurta family's human network still reached to northern Babylonia, its access to learned writings seems to have been significantly reduced, at least on one indicator. A catalogue of scholarly works now called *The Āšipu's Handbook* circulated in cities across Assyria and Babylonia in the first millennium BC.[164] Cynthia Jean has convincingly shown that in seventh-century Assur, Kiṣir-Assur of the Baba-šumu-ibni family (Chapter 4), who made a copy of this work, had access in his household collection to about half of the 200-odd compositions enumerated in it.[165] However, in late fifth-century Uruk, Rimut-Anu, who also copied the *Handbook*, had access to about half that number again in his family's tablets. Of course, it is likely that both households possessed at least some of the 'missing' works in manuscripts on wooden writing-boards or other media. But it would be over-optimistic to assume that all of them could be accounted for in this way. There is a great deal of further work to be done, to map the changing geography of the scholarly corpus across the first millennium BC.

A century later, in the same house, the Ekur-zakir family must have been entirely unaware of the scholarly treasure trove abandoned by the Šangu-Ninurta men under their very feet. They owned twenty tablets copied from original sources, including two from elsewhere in Uruk.[166] The only one with an explicit statement of provenance outside the city is Iqišaya's copy of Tablet 43 of *Šumma Ālu*, 'from an old writing-board from Nippur'.[167] Perhaps it came into the house by the same means as four commentaries written by or for men from the community of prebendary brewers in early fourth-century Nippur, discussed above, a generation or more before Iqišaya and Ištar-šuma-ereš were alive.[168] Two further tablets were written by scholars from Der; two more, dating to the reign of Darius I (506 and 486 BC respectively), have protective formulae invoking

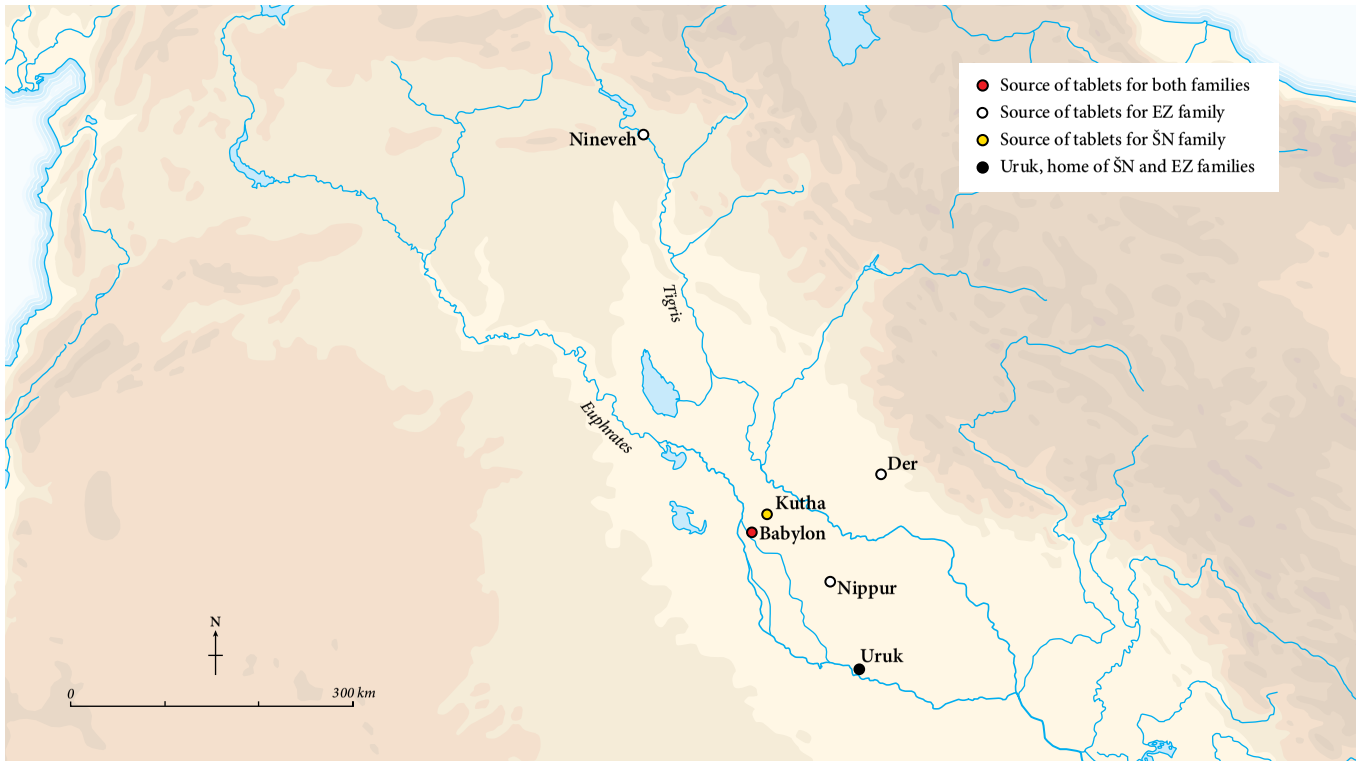

Figure 6.6: The scholarly networks of the Šangu-Ninurta family of late fifth-century Uruk and of the Ekur-zakir family of late fourth-century Uruk. Source: Martin Brown.

Marduk and Zarpanitu, suggesting that they originate from Babylon; and one even bears a colophon of Ashurbanipal from early seventh-century Nineveh (Fig. 6.7).[169] There is not much evidence of direct human contact with other scholars, however, except for Iqišaya's apprentice Anu-abuṣur of the Kuri family of Uruk, who made at least three tablets for him.[170]

By around 200 BC, the Ekur-zakir family's descendants and their associates were mostly copying tablets and writing-boards from Uruk itself, including 'the property of Anu and Antu'.[171] Just three or four originals are said to be from Babylon or Borsippa (Fig. 6.7).[172] The fragmentary scholarly tablets excavated from Reš itself do not include any that were obviously made outside the city and of course it is impossible to know if the illicitly discovered cache originally contained manuscripts that had arrived in Uruk from elsewhere. However, there is a striking consistency in the deities invoked in the scholarly colophons of Uruk, from the fifth to the second centuries BC. As I have suggested already in Chapter 5, it was only Anu and his entourage that mattered here; Nabu, Marduk and the other gods of northern Babylonia were never summoned to protect the southerners' writings (Table 5c).

Although this evidence cannot be definitive it is suggestive in its consistency: over the course of nearly three centuries after the 'end of archives' the Uruk scholarly community was able to access tablets and colleagues from an ever-smaller range of Babylonian cities. And once they ceased to be active, some time in the mid-second century, the scholars of Parthian Babylon were more or less on their own. For instance, the scholar Nabu-balassu-iqbi, descendant of Egiba-tila, seems to have made copies of commentaries that were on tablets and leather scrolls (*magallatu*) only from Babylon, Borsippa and one 'Belšunu's house'. And he invoked only northern gods: Bel and Beltiya (Marduk and Zarpanitu) of Babylon, Nabu of Borsippa and Šamaš of Sippar (Fig. 6.8).[173] Once more, however, it is impossible to tell if Nabu-balassu-iqbi or his colleagues owned tablets written elsewhere, or by others writing anonymously. Such are the limitations of working without archaeological context.

At the same time, as I have argued elsewhere, these men stopped worrying about the theft of their intellectual property. For many, many centuries both Assyrian and Babylonian scholars had habitually protected their writings by invoking divine protection in their colophons, with a particular focus on works most closely associated with their personal professional interests.[174] As we saw in Chapter 4, only the scholarly advisors to the Assyrian king and Ashurbanipal himself did not bother with this practice, as they could rely on their own high status – and the very real security systems in place around them – to guard their writings

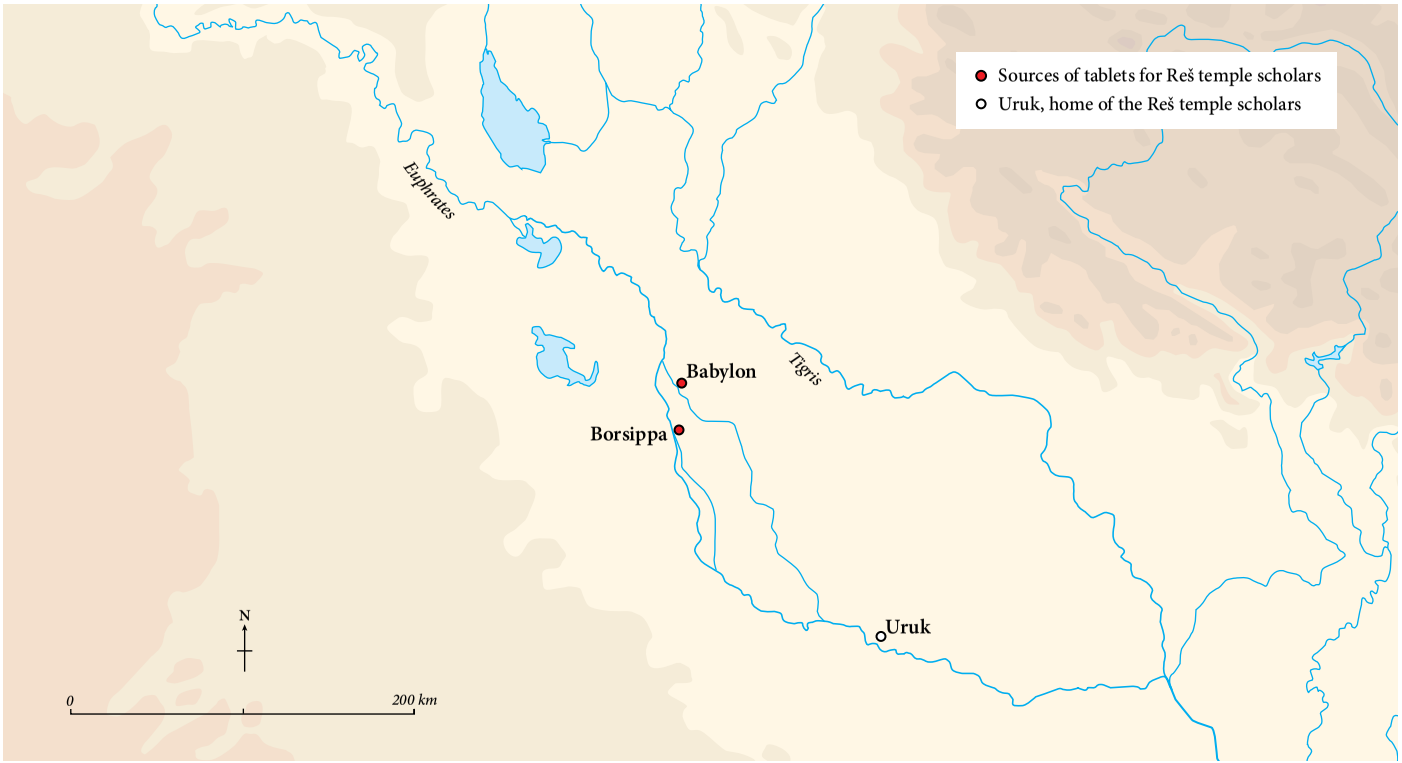

Figure 6.7: The scholarly network of the Ekur-zakir and Sin-leqi-unninni families of Seleucid Uruk. Source: Martin Brown.

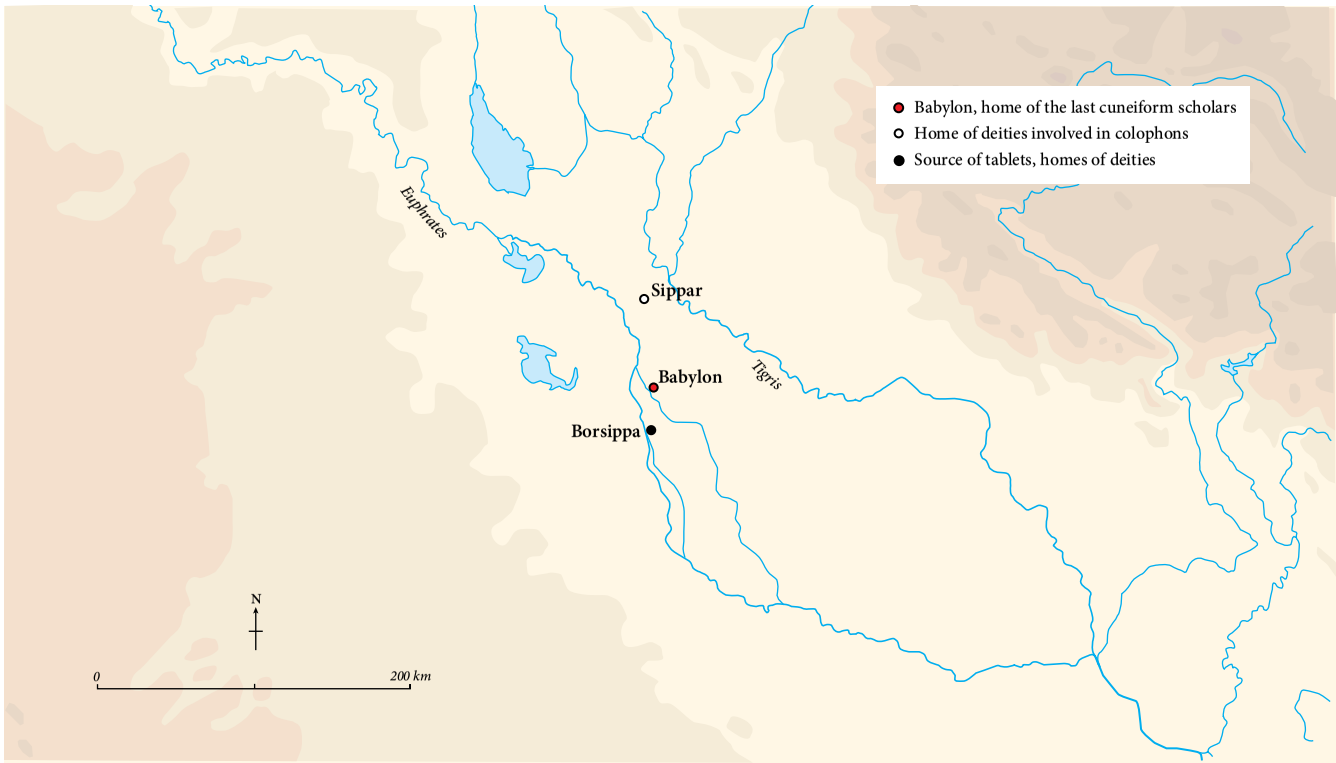

Figure 6.8: The scholarly network of the Egiba-tila, Mušezib and Nanna-utu families of Parthian Babylon. Source: Martin Brown.

against misadventure. Even in second-century Uruk, scholars regularly urged that 'Whoever reveres Anu and Antu shall not take it (i.e. this tablet) away by theft!'.[175] However, by around 100 BC the risk of theft seemed so improbable to the scholars of Babylon that only the vestigial utterance 'Whoever reveres Šamaš and Marduk!' remained.[176]

Conclusions

In Chapter 4, I compared the movements of five different types of scholar at – and far beyond – the Assyrian court in the seventh century, through their correspondence with the king. I also argued that the social world of the scholars was highly stratified, with those lower in the hierarchy having least access to the full range of written knowledge and thus expressing greatest anxiety about the potential loss of what they did have. The data collected in this chapter does not allow us to replicate that study exactly for Babylonia, but it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the mobility of scholarly practitioners, and the accessibility of scholarly writings, across professions and dynasties and cities in the course of the first millennium BC.

The impact of Darius's and Xerxes' reigns in the decades around 500 BC cannot be overstated. In the past two chapters I have detailed how the Achaemenids' repression of northern Babylonian independence movements affected different scholarly communities, city by city. But those events also seem to have had a different significance for each the four primary scholarly professions. Coincidentally or not – it is impossible to say for now – the 'end of archives' coincides more or less with the disappearance from historical record of both *asûs* and *bārûs*. That is not to say that these professions no longer existed, nor that *asûtu* and *bārûtu* stopped being copied. Rather, cuneiform-literate scholars no longer chose to identify themselves as members of those professions. As witnessed in almost every Late Babylonian tablet collection discussed in this chapter, *asûtu*-healing was now the domain of the *āšipu* – and indeed the boundaries between them had never been clear-cut, as I have argued elsewhere.[177] Meanwhile, with the possible exception of Babylon, *bārûtu* in cuneiform remained only a heritage tradition, copied as an antiquarian curiosity.

More study is needed in order to identify the reasons for these huge changes but there must have been both socio-economic and intellectual factors at play. I argued in Chapter 4 that in seventh-century Assyria, the professions of *asû* and *bārû* had the loosest connections to the temple. If

the same held true in Babylonia, the loss of royal patronage, as a source of both income and prestige, must have been devastating. Meanwhile, the *āšipus* and *kalûs* were the great survivors, at least in some cities. Their long-standing ties to economically robust urban temples, often with prebendary privileges attached, gave them an extraordinary resilience to dramatic political upheavals. At the same time, the work of the *ṭupšar Enūma Ellil* – that is, of a subset of *āšipus* and *kalûs* – was undergoing major conceptual and methodological transformation. Through long-term programmes of observation and calculation in Babylon, begun under the Chaldean dynasty, short-term observational divination was replaced by horoscopic astrology and mathematical astronomy. Sacrificial divination, inherently resistant to repeatability, standardisation and mathematisation, may have been mothballed for the same reasons as *Enūma Anu Ellil*. Further research is needed to determine whether these dramatic shifts were coincidentally an outcome of the post-Xerxean intellectual landscape, or fundamentally driven by the need to adapt to the new socio-political circumstances.

Yet even in Babylon and Uruk, the worlds of the *āšipu* and *kalû* were steadily shrinking. As scholarly communities elsewhere died out, the opportunities for intellectual exchange, in writing or in person, diminished all the time. What were once intra-Babylonian networks, spanning north and south, collapsed down to regional hubs, as reflected in the restricted circulation of compositions and practitioners, and a consequent reduction in the range of divine patrons. Somehow, the *āšipus* and *kalûs* of Uruk survived until the late second century BC while their counterparts in Babylon hung on for another 100 years. It is clear, though, that in the long run they were fighting a losing battle with multicultural modernity. Although the vagaries of preservation mean that cuneiform tablets dominate the surviving textual record, archaeological and historical evidence points clearly to the increasing dominance of new ways of thinking, circulating in other media and other languages. Educated urbanites now had an unprecedented abundance of philosophical and theological choice about how to conceptualise the divine, about the natural world, about society's and the individual's relationships to them. And increasingly they chose not to patronise cuneiform scholarship or the temples that supported it.[178]

However, it is clear that geographies of knowledge in first-millennium Babylonia were not bounded by the closed system of increasingly esoteric cuneiform culture. Networks of intellectual communication transcended the confines of script, medium and locality, despite the social and technological constraints imposed from within and without. The

abandonment of the clay tablet did not necessarily entail the rejection of the observations, methods and theories of Babylonian scholarship. As always, they could and did live on in translations and adaptations, memories and bodily gestures – and many were adapted and assimilated into newer philosophical movements. But it would take another book, and a very different set of expertise than I have, to trace the various interactions, many already well documented, between cuneiform high culture and the intellectual worlds of Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Persian speakers in the late first millennium and beyond.

Notes

1. Sallaberger and Huber Vulliet (2003–5).
2. Waerzeggers (2010; 2011a). I have by and large refrained from citing earlier literature on priests and prebends in the following paragraphs, for which see the footnotes and bibliographies in Waerzeggers' work.
3. Waerzeggers (2011a: 63). On the priest as professional intermediary between humanity and divinity, e.g.: 'Als Priester bezeichnet man den Fachmann, der als Mittler zwischen der Gesellschaft und der Götterwelt fungiert' (Sallaberger and Huber Vulliet 2003–5: 617).
4. Van Driel (2003–5).
5. Waerzeggers (2011a: 63).
6. Waerzeggers (2010: 11–13).
7. Van Driel (2002: 48).
8. AO 6684 (Thureau-Dangin 1919; Paulus 2014: no. 67); on the provenance, Thureau-Dangin (1919: 120).
9. ^{m}ib-ni–^{d}iš-tar | DUMU ^{m}hu-un-zu-u'-i | ^{lú}GALA ^{d}INNIN UNUG^{ki} | ^{lú}KU$_4$–É ^{d}na-na-a | ^{lú}É.MAŠ ^{d}URI$_3$–INIM-sa | ^{lú}DUB.SAR É.AN.NA (AO 6684 iii 7–12; Thureau-Dangin 1919: 126).
10. Kümmel (1979: 157).
11. McEwan (1983).
12. Beaulieu (2003b: 27).
13. Da Riva's (2002: 403) statement that *āšipūtu* prebends are 'überhaupt nicht bezeugt' (completely unattested) in Sippar is thus incorrect.
14. ri-hi ma-la-a-ta | šá ^{iti}BARÁ ^{iti}GU$_4$ u ^{iti}SIG$_4$ | a-di-i U$_4$ 22-KÁM šá i-si-nu É | šá ^{lú}KU$_4$–É$^{-ú-tu}$ u ^{lú}ZABAR$^{-ú-tu}$ a-na ^{m}su-qa-a-a A-šú šá ^{m}ba-ku-ú-a | SUM^{-na} (Strassmaier 1890b: no. 236, dated Darius 4.iii.25). Bongenaar (1997: 288) notes that the recipient, Suqaya son of Bakua, may not be an *āšipu* himself but acting as the *āšipus*' intermediary; he is likely to be the overseer of the priestly brewers at Ebabbar (although there is no prima facie reason why prebendary brewers should not also have been *āšipus*, as we shall see).
15. BURU$_{14}$ is-qu ^{lú}za-bar-ru-^{r}ú-tu^{1} (BM 42408 obv. 1, Jursa 1999: 72–5, 177–8; cf. Waerzeggers 2011a: 67); see Jursa (1999: 73) on the unusual syllabic writing of the logogram ZABAR. Jursa (1999: 177) also discusses the phrase from obv. 2, bi-re-e-tu$_4$ šá UDU.NÍTA sat-tuk '*bīrētu* of the regular sheep-offerings', provisionally translating the first word as *Schafs(leber)beschauungen*, 'extispicies', though noting that at that time there were no other known attestations of *bīru* in the feminine plural. Now, however, see Sassmannshausen (2001: 168) for several instances of this form in Kassite administrative texts, where it always refers to oil divination. In any case, if Jursa's interpretation is correct, the income is from *acts* of divination, not from a prebendary post. At most, then, it shows that divination was performed on sacrificial animals but does not demonstrate that the diviner was a prebend-holder. Indeed, given the clear contrast between *isqu āšipūtu* '*āšipu*'s prebend' in l. 1 and *bīrētu ša immer sattukk(i)* 'divinations from the regular sheep-offerings' in the following line, it could even be argued that divination was explicitly not a prebendary duty.
16. 1 GUR ŠE.BAR ina ma-^{r}la^{1}-[a-tu$_4$] | šá ^{lú}ZABAR ISIN^{ki} a-na | ^{m}ni-din-tu$_4$–^{d}AMAR.UTU SUM^{-na} (Pinches 1982: no. 236, obv. 2–4, Jursa 1999: 74).

17. […] GUR ŠE.BAR 2(GUR) ZÚ.LUM.MA | eš-ru-ú šá ^{m}IBILA-^{a} | ^{lú}GAL ^{lú}HAL-MEŠ | … a-na É.BABBAR.RA it-ta-din (Nbk 234 obv. 1–6; cf. Bongenaar 1997: 135).
18. šá pi-i … ^{lú}KA.PIRIG.GA NIBRU$^{ki\text{-}ú}$ (IM unknown, l. 24: George and Al-Rawi 1998: 204).
19. E.g. Hilgert (2013); Robson (2013b); Robson and Stevens (2019).
20. Anonymous (1987: 248–9 and pl. XLVII); Pedersén (1998: 194–8); Hilgert (2013: 142–3). Earlier estimates (e.g. Pedersén 1998: 197) put the total number of tablets at 800 but Hilgert (2013: 145) counts 428, of which 325 contain clearly identifiable compositions or genres plus a further 103 as yet unidentified fragments.
21. Fadhil and Hilgert (2008: 183) with full bibliography; Hilgert (2013).
22. Bongenaar (1997: 447–63, 541).
23. Hilgert (2013: 145–6).
24. Hilgert (2013: 143).
25. Al-Rawi (1995); Al-Rawi and George (1995).
26. George and Al-Rawi (1996).
27. George and Al-Rawi (1998).
28. IM 124646 top edge: ana KA ša-ṭir (George and Al-Rawi 1996: 160); IM 124649 t.e.: ki-ma la-bi-ri-šú | [^{md}na]-^{r}na^{1}-a–IBILA–MU A ^{m}da-bi-bi ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ IN.SAR (George and Al-Rawi 1996: 170–1).
29. Hilgert (2013: 146).
30. Compare, for instance, the situation in Neo-Assyrian Nineveh, where George (2003: 381–5) identifies four sets of the eleven-chapter *Epic of Gilgamesh*, each written by or for a separate individual and clearly demarcated by layout and palaeography, none of which is anywhere near complete either.
31. Hilgert (2013: 147–8).
32. pa-lih ^{d}NÀ hal-qa GUR on a copy of the so-called 'Weidner chronicle' made by one Marduk-eṭir, son of Eṭir-[…] of uncertain family ([…]-x-ha-a-a) (IM 124470, rev. 40; Al-Rawi 1990: 8). Other such borrowing formulae are pa-lih ^{r}d^{1}[…] | la i-tab-bal-ma ina ITI-šú a-na ^{d}EN-šú ^{r}te?^{1}-[er?-šú?], 'Whoever fears […] must not take it away and must [return(?)] it in the same month to its owner' on a cultic lament written for Nergal-teša-eṭir, son of Rimut-Gula, descendant of Šangu-Akkade by of Nabu-tabni-uṣur, son of Nabu-apla-iddina, of the same family (IM 132506, rev. iv 13'–14', Fadhil and Hilgert 2008); pa-lih ^{d}AMAR.UTU | […] 'Whoever fears Marduk […]' on a collection of medical recipes owned by Mušezib-Bel, [son of] Šamaš-mukin-apli (IM 132670 rev. 46, Heeßel and Al-Rawi 2003); and pa-lih ^{d}MUATI | […] 'whoever fears Nabu […]', on a planisphere and star list (IM unknown, rev. 28, Horowitz and Al-Rawi 2001).
33. Pedersén (1998: 205–6); van Driel (1998: 61).
34. Falkenstein (1931).
35. Hunger (1968: nos. 77–8, 106, 108).
36. Hunger (1968: 108); Kümmel (1979: 80, 169–70).
37. Hunger (1968: nos. 106, 108).
38. Pedersén (2005: 283–5, N20).
39. Pedersén (2005: 283). Clancier (2009a: 142–3) discusses the possibility that Hormuzd Rassam, digging for tablets at Babylon on behalf of the British Museum, could have discovered a 'library' in Esangila in 1881, but concludes on balance that the large numbers he found are more likely to have come from several deposits south of the temple, i.e. in the ʿAmrān area. See further below, note 81.
40. E.g. Hunger (1968: nos. 151, 156–7).
41. ^{md}MUATI–SUM^{-na}–ŠEŠ | A ^{m}àr-kàt–DINGIR-MEŠ–SÌG ^{lú}MAŠ.<MAŠ> ana TIN IGI-ME-šú | IN.SAR ina É.ZI.DA ú-kin (5R 46,1, ll. 62–4; Hunger 1968: no. 135); see Lenzi (2008a: 68) for further bibliography on this text.
42. Waerzeggers (2010: 65, 79).
43 ina ^{iti}SIG$_4$ | U$_4$ 13-KAM MU 8-KAM ^{m}ku-ra-áš LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} LUGAL KUR.KUR | ul-tu li-li-si ZABAR i-na KÁ.GAL^{-i} šá É.AN.NA | ni-iš-ku-nu it-ti ^{m}NÀ–DU–IBILA ^{lú}ŠÀ.TAM É.AN.NA | DUMU-šú šá ^{m}na-di-nu DUMU ^{m}da-bi-bi ù ^{m}NÀ–ŠEŠ–MU ^{lú}SAG LUGAL | ^{lú}EN pi-qit-tu$_4$ É.AN.NA a-na UGU šá-[ka]-nu ša li-li-si | ul ni-im-me-lik ù a-di UGU si-ma-nu šá da-ke-e | šá li-li-si a-na UGU ul ik-šu-du-nu (Tremayne 1925: no. 71, ll. 17–24; Beaulieu and Britton 1994: 76).
44. ina ^{iti}SIG$_4$ U$_4$ 13-KAM MU 8-KAM ^{m}ku-ra-áš | LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} LUGAL KUR.KUR EGIR ri-ib šá ^{d}UTU ^{lú}GALA-ME | šá É.BABBAR.RA li-li-su ZABAR i-na KÁ.GAL^{-i} | šá É.BABBAR.RA il-tak-nu iq-ta-bu-ú um-ma AN.TA.LÙ | ù ^{lú}UN-ME šá LARSA^{ki} gab-bi šá-ka-nu šá li-li-si ZABAR | it-ti-i-ni i-ta-am-ru (unidentified tablet, ll. 17–22: Boissier 1926: 15; Beaulieu and Britton 1994: 74).

45. That is, they had calculated the date of the eclipse correctly but had not predicted that it would be invisible in Babylonia: see Beaulieu and Britton (1994); Robson (2019).
46. Robson (2019); cf. Rochberg (2004: 224–80). As far as I know, there are no published Neo-Babylonian tablets of *Enūma Anu Ellil* or of observational astronomy, such as diaries or planetary records, that record the scholarly profession of the copyist.
47. Bongenaar (1997: 135) also notes several (undated) stone weights owned by Neo-Babylonian diviners: a 2 ½-mina duck weight belonging to Ahiya son of Mudammiq-Adad, *bārû* (2 ½ MA.NA GI.NA | šá ^{m}ŠEŠ$^{-ia}$ | A ^{m}SIG^{-iq}–^{d}IŠKUR ^{lú}HAL), found in Sippar (Walker and Collon 1980: 104 no. 80, pl. 28); and an unprovenanced 1/3-mina barrel weight of Nusku-etel-ilani, *bārû*, son of Rim-Nusku (1/3 MA.NA GI.NA | šá ^{m}NUSKA–NIR–DINGIR-MEŠ | ^{lú}HAL DUMU ^{m}rim–^{d}NUSKA, Lambert 1995: 135). See also Brinkman (1968: 122 n709, 134 n794, 300 n1970, 300–1 n1972); Frame (1995: B.2.7.2001) for one Napsamenni, *bārû* and *nêšakku*-priest of Ellil in eleventh-century Sippar.
48. Ist Ni 1364 (Kramer 1944: no. 71), a tablet of Sumerian liturgy from Nippur, was thought to be Neo-Babylonian by Hunger (1968: no. 122). He read the last line as 'Sohn des Ištar-muballiṭat-ahi, der Arzt' (A×A ^{d}iš$_{8}$-tár–DIN–ŠEŠ ma-ri A.ZU), noting that 'diese Berufsname könnte auch als Familenname aufgefaßt werden'.
49. ^{m}ba-ku-ú-a | šá É a-se-e (Pinches 1982: no. 618); see Joannès (2006: 84).
50. See e.g.Tallqvist (1905: 16); Wunsch (2003: II 277) for Asû as a northern Babylonian family name before the 'end of archives'; cf. Nielsen (2011: 1, 56–62) for ancestral homes in Babylon at this time; Bongenaar (1997: 135); Joannès (2006: 84) for the interpretation 'house of the physician'.
51. Brinkman (2006: 29 n103); Nielsen (2011: 252 n106).
52. KASKAL-MIN šá É ^{lú}a-ši-pu (AO 20295 ll. 6, 16, Joannès 1982: 301 no. 80).
53. See most conveniently Jursa (2011a: 437–41).
54. NÍG.GA LUGAL šá ^{giš}BÁN šá ^{lú}a-ši-pu-MEŠ (BM 33954, obv. 2, Abraham 2004: 82, 350–2, text 79); cf. Jursa (2010a: 199–203). Apparently too, *kalûs* paid *ilku*-duty in Borsippa in 497 BC, according to the unpublished tablet BM 49254 (Zadok 2009: 240).
55. Jursa (1999; 2005: 127–8); Finkel (2000).
56. a-na KA SAR$^{-tír/tir_{4}}$ (Finkel 2000: 150–1 nos. 1A–C).
57. ki pi-i/KA ^{giš}DA GABA.RI TIN.TIR^{ki} SAR$^{-tir_{4}}$/šaṭ-ṭir (Finkel 2000: 204–5 nos. 48A–C).
58. IM ^{md}EN–ᶠe-ṭè-ru^{1} ^{lú}ᶠMAŠ^{1}.[MAŠ ^{d}]ᶠAMAR^{1}.UTU (Finkel 2000: 178 no. 29). Although Jursa (1999: 27 n94) argues that this Bel-eṭeru was probably an earlier compiler, in fact there are several men with that name attested as scribes in the Šangu-Šamaš archive, any of whom might be identical with this individual (Jursa 1999: 277).
59. Finkel (2000: nos. 55–6); cf. Reiner (1995: 114–18); Heeßel (2008).
60. Finkel (2000: 138–9). But note that none of the extracts is marked with phrases such as *hanṭiš nasha* 'quickly excerpted', as one finds, for instance, in the Baba-šumu-ibni family's tablets in Neo-Assyrian Assur (Maul 2010: 212–13).
61. Finkel (2000: 146). Fincke (2009: 98) shows this formatting division between landscape-orientation tablets of *asûtu* and portrait-orientation *āšipūtu* was not universal at this period: recipes for healing eye diseases could be written onto either one.
62. Joannès (1992); Jursa (2005: 111–12); Robson (2019); preliminary online edition at http://build-oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cams/akno/absumu (last accessed August 2018).
63. Beaulieu (1995a).
64. The list given by Joannès (1992: 97–100) can be updated with the following editions and translations: Maul (1994: no. VIII.12(b)); Rochberg (1998: no. 1); Hunger, Sachs and Steele (2001: no. 63); Foster (2005: 707–8); and see note 62.
65. Finkel (2000: 143), who also suggests the tablets UET 4: 148–53 (Figulla 1949: nos. 148–53) comprise a parallel group of medical tablets. However, they are not from a single findspot. Tablets UET 4: 146–8, identified by Jursa (2005: 137) as lists of spices, were found a pot in a private house with the so-called Sin-uballiṭ archive, concerning this man's financial activities in northern Babylonia during the years *c*. 625–616 BC (Jursa 2005: 135–7). Tablets UET 4: 150–2 (lists of stones and gems, maybe for healing purposes), plus UET 4: 208 (a short commentary on the lexical list *Nabnītu*: see Frahm 2011a: 249, 312), are from the U.20089 excavation lot which comprises the small Sin-ili archive, spanning the years *c*. 510–480 BC (Jursa 2005: 135). Tablets UET 4: 149, 153 have lost their excavation numbers and therefore can no longer be associated with an archaeological findspot or archival context.
66. Joannès (1992: 89–92).

67. ^{md}EN.LÍL–EN-šú-nu ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ [TUR?] A-šú šá ^{m}na-ṣir | ^{lú}KUL.LUM ^{d}EN.LÍL A ^{m}AB.SUM.MU šu-me-ru$_6$-u (AO 17661 rev. 25–6, Durand 1979: 168; George 1991: 152); ^{m}NUMUN–kit-ti–GIŠ A šá ^{m}EN-šú-nu ^{lú}ŠID ṣa-har | A ^{m}AB.SUM.MU šu-me-ru-ú (AO 17661 rev. 13–14, Nougayrol 1947: 35, 38; Hunger 1968: no. 123).
68. Hunger (1968: nos. 119–20); Frahm and Jursa (2011: no. 155).
69. It may well be that the Šangu-Šamaš A men likewise had intellectual interests beyond healing, but the methodological limitations of museological reconstruction mean that it is almost impossible to identify such tablets when they lack colophons or other distinguishing features.
70. Waerzeggers (2003/4).
71. Oelsner (1986: 232–7); Streck (2003–5: 344).
72. Horoscope: Rochberg (1998: no. 1); *Diri*: Civil (2004: 181); Hunger (1968: no. 119); deities list: Durand (1979); Hunger (1968: no. 123); planetary observations: Hunger, Sachs and Steele (2001: no. 63).
73. On observational astronomy from late Achaemenid Nippur see, very briefly, Ossendrijver (2012: 6 n33).
74. SpTU 2: 36, 54; 3: 101; 5: 260 (Frahm 2011a: 195 n918, 198 n936).
75. SpTU 2: 29 (George 1992: no. 18); TCL 6: 47 (Livingstone 1986: 187–204): rev. final 2–3: [GABA].ᵀRIᵀ NIBRU^{ki} GIM SUMUN-šú SAR-ma ba-rù ᵀIM ^{m1d}EN.LÍL–KÁD ^{lú}GALA ^{d}EN.LÍL A šá ^{md}EN.LÍL–MU–im-bi | […] ana IGI.DU$_8$.A-šú iš-ṭur.
76. UM 29-15-802 and N 4029 (van der Spek 1992: 250–60).
77. Streck (1998–2001: 546); Keall (1975); Gibson et al. (1998–2001): 556.
78. Hauser (1999: 227); Dirven (2014: 16).
79. Hackl (2013: 293–5).
80. Baker (2008).
81. Clancier and Monerie (2014): 196.
82. Clancier (2009a: 180–2, 409–70).
83. Pedersén (2005: Babylon 20/N 19).
84. Hackl (2013: 297–9). I am enormously grateful to Johannes Hackl for sharing some of his unpublished PhD with me. It contains far more detail and data on the scholars of Esangila and Ezida than I have chosen to discuss here.
85. Hackl (2013: 299–300).
86. Hackl (2013: 319–25; 326–36; 342–3) collects extensive prosopographical data; see also Robson (2019). It is also possible that *bārûs* are the subject of two further ration lists from the Esangila archive (Hackl 2013: 325–6). As Jursa (2002: 112) notes, the reading ^{lú}HAL is not entirely certain, but alternatives such as ^{lú}ÚŠ-MEŠ (*mītūtu* 'dead men') and LÚ SUMUN (*amēlū labīrūtu* 'old men') seem a priori less likely. Likewise, a reading ^{lú}DIDLI (*ēdûtu* 'prominent, high-ranking men') seems excluded because – as far as I know – this designation does not appear elsewhere in the archive.
87. Hackl (2013: 393).
88. Hackl (2013: 295).
89. Hunger and Sachs (1988: no. –321); Oelsner (2000: 802–11); Ossendrijver (2012: nos. 5, 9); cf. Robson (2019).
90. Finkel (1991).
91. Finkel (1991: 91 n1); Oelsner (2000: 798–9).
92. Boiy (2004: 269–71); Jursa (2005: 73).
93. An anonymous *bārû* may also be mentioned in one of Rahim-Esu's temple accounts dating to 103 BC (McEwan 1981: 15 n56; Hackl 2013: 325) but see the reservations expressed in note 86 above.
94. Jursa (2005: 75). Clancier and Monerie (2014: 220–3) argue that Babylon had been established as a Greek-style polis some time in the period 180–160 BC.
95. E.g. van der Spek (1985); Rochberg (2004: 234–5). It is often assumed that astronomical observations were made from the top of the ziggurat Etemenanki, but George (2005/6; 2010) shows that it had been made inaccessible by the removal of its staircase, probably by Xerxes in 484 BC and was gradually levelled to the ground during the years 327–281 BC.
96. i-na IGI-ma a-na Á as-pa-si-né-e LUGAL | DÙ x x RU šá hi-ših-ti ina KÁ LUGAL | [in-na-din-nu]-ᵀúᵀ u en-na a-ga-a i-ba-áš-ši | TA hi-ših-ti-ni ni-din-nu (Pinches 1896: 132, obv. 12–14, rev. 4; van der Spek 1985: 550; cf. Joannès 2000: 700 n12; Clancier 2007: 34–5; Stolper 2006: 231–2). For a longer discussion of these documents, see Robson (2019).

97. lib-bu-ú | mim-ma šá ^{m}KI–^{d}ŠÚ–DIN ^{lú}AD-šú-nu iš-šu-ú | šá na-ṣar i-na-aṣ-ṣa-ru-ú u ter-se-e-tu | šá MU.AN.NA-us-su i-nam-din-nu-ú (Pinches 1896: 132, obv. 12–14, rev. 5–7; see note above).
98. ^{md}NÀ–A–ŠEŠ ^{lú}GALA ^{lú}DUB.SAR U_4 AN ^{d}EN.LÍL.LÁ | A šá ^{md}NÀ–DIB–ud-da (Kennedy 1968: no. 144, obv. 9–10; Rochberg 2000: 373); ^{m}KI–^{d}ŠÚ–DIN ^{lú}GAL.DÙ | <šá> UGU IRI ^{lú}up-pu-de-tú šá É-MEŠ DINGIR-MEŠ $^{<lú>}$UMBISAG U_4 AN.NA ^{d}EN.LÍL.LÁ A ≪LÚ≫ šá ^{m}MU–^{d}EN (Pinches 1896: 132, obv. 9–11; van der Spek 1985: 550).
99. Cf. Beaulieu (2006a: 17–18).
100. Oelsner (2000: 802–10); Robson (2008a: 220–7); add Nabu-mušetiq-uddi/Bel-uballissu/Nabu-mušetiq-uddi//Mušezib: scribe of literary letter of Ashurbanipal (Frame and George 2004: 268) and the *Fable of the Poor, Forlorn Wren*, dated to SE 242.xii.22 = 19 March 69 BC (Jímenez 2017: 340–1).
101. E.g. ana DU_{12} ZI^{-hi}: VAT 270 rev. 10' (Reisner 1896: no. 3); see also Reisner (1896: nos. 5, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20a, 25, 27, 28, 36, 44–46, 49, 51, 53 and 55); Spar and Lambert (2005: nos. 2, 8 and 15); and the *Bilinguals in Late Mesopotamian Scholarship* corpus, http://oracc.org/blms/ (last accessed November 2017).
102. See Frahm et al., *Cuneiform Commentaries Project online* (CCPo) under Nabu-balassu-iqbi http://ccp.yale.edu/catalogue?ccp=&scribe=Nabu-balassu-iqbi (last accessed November 2017).
103. Liturgy: Reisner (1896: no. 3); Mathematical astronomy: ACT 122 (Zo), 420+821b (Zld); van der Spek (1985: 549); Ossendrijver (2012: 294).
104. 1^{-en} ^{lú}DUMU E^{ki} A ^{m}e_4-⌜gi$_7$⌝-ba-ti-⌜la⌝ […] | ku-um ^{lú}UN-MEŠ šá TA ^{iri}BAR.SIP^{ki} ana DÙ$^{-eš}$ par-ṣi ana […] 'A citizen of Babylon, a son of Egiba-tila […] instead of the people who are from Borsippa, to perform the rites at […]' (Hunger and Sachs 1996: no. –155a rev. 8–9).
105. Dirven (2014); see Hauser (1999: 228) for the estimate of Parthian Babylon's population.
106. Brown (2008); see also Robson (2018; 2019) for other aspects of this community.
107. Van der Spek (1998); Hackl (2017).
108. Sachs and Hunger (1996: nos. -78, -62).
109. Colophon: BM 35654 (Jímenez [2017: 333 ms. a]); horoscope: BM 38104+ (Rochberg 1998: no. 27).
110. Steele (2001).
111. Brown (2008).
112. Namely BRM 4: 18; Figulla (1959: nos. 12 and 21); the 'Converse Tablet' (Lambert 1971); and SpTU 4: 125, 185. The colophons of the first three are edited by Hunger (1968: nos. 188–90); see also Oelsner (1986: 237).
113. ana ŠÌR-šú (Figulla 1959: no. 12 rev. 36); ana šu-uz-mu-ru ^{lú}GALA-MEŠ (Figulla 1959: no. 21 rev. 16).
114. SpTU 4: 125, 185 are from Uruk; see further below. BRM 4: 18 is said to have been bought in Babylon (Pedersén 2005: 296, N 26 no. 89, with further bibliography). Figulla (1959: nos. 12 and 21) were acquired by the British Museum from a Dr H.C. Duncan in 1956, while the 'Converse Tablet' (named after its first modern owner) is also in private hands.
115. Reade (1986b: 107–8) describes how in 1879 Hormuzd Rassam, excavating Nabu's temple Ezida in Borsippa for the British Museum, discovered an unspecified quantity of tablets in Room C1, an antechamber to a cella in the southeast of the building. Reade suggests they may have included the tablets BM 93043–93064 (Leichty 1986: 370), which were 'written with a distinctive fine script [on a] smooth slipped surface'. One of the tablets bears a colophon of Nabu-kuṣuršu, enabling a linkage with several other scholarly tablets of his (Hunger 1968: nos. 124–32). Jay Crisostomo is currently undertaking a study of this collection.
116. Waerzeggers (2010: 169).
117. E.g. Hunger (1968: nos. 133–40); Livingstone (1986: 7); Linssen (2004: 3 n22).
118. BRM 1: 88; McEwan (1981: 21–3).
119. On the archaeology of this house, see Kose (1998: 374–90); on the tablets SpTU 1–5, Pedersén (1998: 212–13); Clancier (2009a: 47–72, 387–405); and http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/uruk (last accessed August 2018). A few scholarly tablets from illicit excavations can also be linked to this house by their colophons: one owned by Šamaš-iddin // Šangu-Ninurta (Friberg et al. 1990) and six owned by Iqišaya // Ekur-zakir (Langdon 1915; BRM 4: 20; TCL 6: 9, 17, 34, 50).
120. The family's only dated scholarly tablet is a copy of the *Āšipus' Handbook* made by Rimut-Anu during the reign of Darius II (SpTU 5: 231; Clancier 2009b). The twenty-eight Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid legal and administrative documents from the house are discussed by

Kessler (2003). At least nine belonged to the Gimil-Nanaya family, *c*. 510–475 BC, and a further seven to ten to Ubaru, son of Anu-ahhe-iqiša, *c*. 420–410 BC (cf. Jursa 2005: 147, 149).

121. A member of the Šangu-Ninurta family witnessed the legal document SpTU 2: 55 in Uruk in 610 BC (= Nabopolassar 14). The name does not appear in the archives of Eanna, although the priestly position of Ninurta's *šangû* is attested there (Beaulieu 2003b: 303). The lineage does not appear to have survived into the Seleucid period.
122. Robson (2008a: 227–37; 2011b: 565–9).
123. SpTU 1: 43.
124. Kümmel (1979: 31, 80, 130); Gehlken (1990: no. 131).
125. SpTU 1: 90; 2: 44; 4: 162.
126. Scholarly and legal tablets of the very well-attested Iqišaya, of the second generation, date to the final two decades of the fourth century BC (SpTU 1: 90, 128; SpTU 2: 38; SpTU 3: 97; SpTU 4: 162, 170; SpTU 5: 308, 310–11). Only two tablets are from earlier in the fourth century: a fragmentary legal document of 359 BC and some astronomical calculations of the timings of summer solstices in the 360s BC (SpTU 1: 129; SpTU 4: 168). There are also two third-century scholarly tablets from the house: a calculation of the new moons of 271 BC (SpTU 1: 98) and a copy of an esoteric commentary on the duration of *Bārûtu* omens, with a colophon dating to SE 83 = 229 BC (SpTU 4: 157). The owner of this tablet was an unknown member of the Ekur-zakir-family (but possibly Anu-ah-ušabši [1], son of Kidin-Anu: the only member of the Ekur-zakir family known to have owned tablets written at this time (TCL 6: 19, dated SE 84 = 228 BC); its scribe was one Ša-Anu-iššu son of Ištar-šum-ereš, family name unknown (but hitherto the only known Uruk scholars with this name are all members of the Ekur-zakir family). And, as argued below (note 129), it is possible that SpTU 2: 33 was written in the 220s or 210s BC.
127. E.g. SpTU 1: 48 (Šamaš-iddin); SpTU 1: 33 (Anu-ikṣur).
128. SpTU 1: 94; see also SpTU 2: 28 (Ištar-šum-ereš).
129. SpTU 1: 128; 5: 308.
130. SpTU 2: 33. This provisional dating is based on Weisberg (1991: no. 51), a hymn to Adad copied by a Mannu-iqapu//Ekur-zakir for his (grand)father Nidintu-Anu/Anu-belšunu//Ekur-zakir, dating to SE 111 (*c*. 200 BC). A Nidintu-Anu/Anu-belšunu//Ekur-zakir also copied two scholarly tablets in the period SE 90–1 (221–220 BC) and owned eight more that were written over the period SE 97–9 (214–212 BC). In each of their colophons he calls himself ^{lú}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{d}60/^{d}a-nù u an-tu (cf. Robson 2008a: 256; Ossendrijver 2011b: 641). However, it is by no means certain that this was the same individual, as the names Nidintu-Anu and Anu-belšunu were both very common amongst the scholarly families of Seleucid Uruk.
One Ištar-šum-ereš/Balaṭu is a '*kalû* of Anu and Antu' in his only colophon, undated (SpTU 2: 28). It is unlikely that this is Iqišaya's father because all attested *kalûs* belong to the Sin-leqi-unninni family.
131. Maul (2010: 214).
132. SpTU 1: 56; 4: 161.
133. SpTU 1: 58 (list of five plants 'for a cure'), 97 (scrappy astronomical calculation); SpTU 2: 25 (*ušburruda*-ritual, Iqišaya), 27 (*uru'ame irabi* liturgy); SpTU 3: 77 (*šuʾillakku*-prayer to Ištar); SpTU 5: 227 (unidentified hymn or prayer), 234 (ritual fragment), 235 (*uttukkū lemnūtu* incantations), 257 (unidentified), 271 (horoscope fragment), 274 (list of seven therapeutic stones).
134. See note 129 above.
135. Van Dijk and Mayer (1980): 13.
136. In chronological order (the BagM Beih. 2 tablets were formally excavated from Reš): Nidintu-Anu [5] (338 BC; 322 BC); Nidintu-Anu [3] (SE 66, 81, 84); Anu-belšunu [1] (SE 81, 83, 84; SE 108, 112, 120, 121); Anu-uballiṭ [3] (SE 85); Anu-ab-uter (SE 118–21, 124, 130, 136); Anu-balassu-iqbi [3] (SE 130, 136); Anu-belšunu [2] (SE 147, 150) (see online Tables B12–B13).
137. E.g. tablets written by Anu-ab-uter [1] for Šamaš-eṭir in SE 118 (online Tables B11–B12); or tablets written by the brothers Anu-uballiṭ [4] and Anu-ah-ušabši [3] for Anu-ab-uter in SE 124 (online Tables B11–B13). There are nine scholarly tablets written by or for descendants of Ahʾutu or Hunzu known to me (online Tables B11, B13): Weidner (1941/4: Taf. 14); TCL 6: 1 and 32 owned by members of the Ahʾutu family, written in SE 80–91 (online Table B13); TCL 6: 11, 31 and 39 owned by descendants of Hunzu (all undated); and BRM 4: 12; TCL 6: 5 and 16 written by members of the Hunzu family for Nidintu-Anu [1] of the Ekur-zakir family.

138. Pedersén (1998: 209). Nöldecke et al. (1937: 57) give the total number of epigraphic finds here as two scholarly tablets (W 16343, an 'omen text' and W 16383a, a 'commentary'); seventeen economic documents, two of which are dated to the reign of Demetrius II Nicator (r. 145–141 BC); sixteen 'insignificant' fragments; plus fifteen impressed clay bullae (for parchment rolls). It is unclear to me where Pedersén's (1998: 206) figure of '55 cuneiform tablets and several clay bullae' comes from; it is followed by Clancier (2009a: 36).
139. E.g. Robson (2008a: 240–60; 2008c); Ossendrijver (2011a; 2011b).
140. See Boiy (2012) for a family tree of the Seleucid Ekur-zakir clan. Iddin-Ellil (sometimes read Iddin-Amurru) is the only one of the other four ancestors to appear in the cuneiform documentation at this period: e.g. Clay (1913: no. 3); Weisberg (1991: no. 36); Sarkisian (1955: no. 1); Doty (2012: no. 8). As discussed in Chapter 5, the supposed families Ile"i-Marduk, Nagaraya and Parakki-Marduk are not (yet) attested at all.
141. Anu-ah-ušabši/Kidin-Anu: e.g. BRM 4: 7, 8; SpTU 1: 2 (SE 61); Anu-ah-ušabši/Ina-qibit-Anu: e.g. TCL 6: 2, 4, 7 and 35 (SE 99); Anu-ah-iddin: e.g. TCL 6: 15 (SE 117); and Šamaš-eṭir: e.g. ACT 163 (*c.* SE 118 or later). See Robson (2008c) for the career of Šamaš-eṭir.
142. Weisberg (1991: 47); Corò (2005b: 218–19); date missing.
143. Seller Anu-belšunu/Anu-ahhe-iddin//Ekur-zakir: BM 105200, dated SE 47: 1/4 of 1/7 share for 20 shekels of silver (Corò 2005b: 148–9); BM 105178, date missing: 1/4 of 1/7 for 30 shekels of silver (Corò 2005b: 151–2). Sellers Anu-aha-ittannu and Anu-uballiṭ/Nidintu-Anu/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zakir: BRM 2: 16, dated SE 57: 1/8 of 1/7 share for 10 shekels of silver (McEwan 1981: 72; Corò 2005b: 146–8); BM 109946, dated SE 57, sixteen days later: 1/8 of 1/7 share for 10 shekels of silver (Corò 2005b: 149–51). These contracts fall in the chronological gap between the Ekur-zakir family's scholarly tablets of the early Hellenistic and mature Seleucid periods, and so these men are otherwise unknown to me.
144. Corò (2005b: 87–93).
145. NCBT 1954 (SE 95/6), in which Ina-qibit-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//Ekur-zakir (unknown from scholarly tablets) sells 1/18 of a 1/7 share to Maqartu/Anu-aba-uṣur//Hunzu, the wife of Labaši/Anu-zera-iddin//Ekur-zakir (the same man or his grandson?) for 17 shekels of silver (McEwan 1981: 73).
146. Corò (2005a). McEwan (1981: 73) already draws attention the scholarly significance of the number seven for the *āšipus*; note too that there are seven ancestral *āšipus* named in Schroeder (1916: no. 1; see Chapter 5), although only in practice the *āšipus* were drawn from just two or three families in Seleucid Uruk.
147. McEwan (1981: 73).
148. BagM Beih 2: 81 (two horoscopes), 82; NCBT 1231 (Beaulieu and Rochberg 1996).
149. lu-šad-bi-bi-i' a-na ^{lú}KÙ.DÍM-MEŠ | u ^{lú}NAGAR šá dul-^{r}lu šá ṣa-lam$^{?}$ šá ^{d}X ip-pu-uš-MEŠ | šá i-šak-kan-nu-u' ina ŠU-MIN GÙB-šú ^{na_4}ŠUK | šá la ^{giš}GIDRU DU$_{10}^{.i}$ ik-kaš-ši-du (Ash 1923.749 obv. 10–12; McEwan 1980).
150. BagM Beih. 2: 5 (Linssen 2004: 270–4), written by Anu-belšunu [2] of the Sin-leqi-unninni family. On the fire in Reš, see Kose (1998: 49–51).
151. Kessler (1984). I exclude from my definition of 'scholarly' SpTU 1: 99, an almanac that may date to the second half of the first century AD (Hunger and de Jong 2014). As its editors point out, the dating of that tablet is highly problematic, not just because of the tablet's fragmentary state and its out-of-context findspot on the surface of the tell, but more fundamentally because the text itself is so badly executed. But if it was written in the period 42–79/80 AD it belongs to the final semi-scholarly phase of cuneiform practised by just a few horoscopic astrologers in Babylon (Brown 2008) and Uruk.
152. Jursa (2010a: 64–117).
153. Jursa (2010a: 98).
154. Jursa (2010a: 115–16).
155. Nielsen (2009) argues that two men of the Iddin-Papsukkal family, who appear as witnesses on a contract written in Ur in 658 BC, are identical with two individuals of the same name appearing in very damaged scholarly colophons from Eanna in Uruk. Even if we accept the proposed restorations, with Nielsen (2009: 176), the scholarly tablets must be at least thirty years younger than the legal document, given their archival context. As scholarly tablets were typically produced by young apprentices for their fathers/masters in the final stages of their training, the men who witnessed the legal tablet are thus far too old to have produced the scholarly tablets too. On the other hand, the legal witnesses in Ur could theoretically be the Uruk scholars' grandfathers (cf. H.D. Baker 2002).

156. Hunger (1968: nos. 75, 82, 84 and 86). Gordin (2017) makes the case for a cult of Ea in Babylon too.
157. Borsippa: cruciform monument of Maništušu (Al-Rawi and George 1994); Babylon: *Bārûtu* (Starr and Al-Rawi 1999) and *Lugale* (Al-Rawi 1995); dictation from an *āšipu* of Nippur: proverbs (George and Al-Rawi 1998); also a copy of the laws of Hammurabi, whose colophon claims it to be 'a copy of the original stela that Hammurabi, king of Babylon, erected in Susa [*sic*]' (Fadhil 1998) but was presumably not made directly from the monument itself.
158. Marduk: healing recipes (Heeßel and Al-Rawi 2003); Nabu: Weidner Chronicle (Al-Rawi 1990); *ziqpu*-star list (Horowitz and Al-Rawi 2001); Nabu and Marduk: table of reciprocals (Fadhil and Hilgert 2008: 184–5, n273).
159. Writing-boards: SpTU 1: 56; SpTU 3: 66, 84; SpTU 4: 127, 151; SpTU 5: 254; Friberg et al. (1990); plus SpTU 3: 80 and SpTU 4: 161 which, while not bearing Šangu-Ninurta colophons, were found with their tablets in the same large jars. Tablets: SpTU 4: 172; SpTU 5: 231, 241.
160. Eanna: SpTU 3: 66; SpTU 4: 127; Babylon: SpTU 3: 80; Meslam: SpTU 5: 241; Uruk: SpTU 1: 59; SpTU 3: 90; SpTU 4: 172.
161. SpTU 3: 81.
162. SpTU 1: 43; SpTU 4: 174.
163. Both types of relationship are attested amongst the *āšipus* of seventh-century Assur (Maul 2010: 212, 216).
164. Geller (2000); Clancier (2009b).
165. Jean (2006: 65–7).
166. SpTU 3: 91 and 97.
167. SpTU 2: 34.
168. Frahm (2011a: 195 n918, 198 n936).
169. Babylon?: SpTU 1: 86; SpTU 3: 86; Der: SpTU 4: 125, 185; Nineveh: SpTU 2: 46; Nippur: SpTU 2: 34.
170. SpTU 1 90; 2: 44; 4: 162.
171. Uruk: TCL 6: 12, 39, 48; VAT 7815 (Weidner 1967: 45); property of Anu and Antu: BRM 4: 7 and 8; SpTU 1: 2.
172. Babylon: TCL 6: 16; ACT 155(A); Borsippa: TCL 6: 32; also TCL 6: 4 if ^{iri}BIR.AN.SIKIL can be taken as an esoteric writing of Borsippa.
173. Babylon: CCPo 3.4.1.A.i (see note 102).
174. Stevens (2013); Robson (2018); Robson and Stevens (2019).
175. e.g. pa-lih ^{d}60 u an-tu$_4$ ina šur-qa là TÙM-šú (TCL 6: 50 rev. 26); ACT 600(L), a planetary table written by the *kalû* Anu-aba-uṭer//Sin-leqe-unninni for the *āšipu* Šamaš-eṭir//Ekur-zakir in SE 118 = 194 BC.
176. e.g. pa-lih ^{d}UTU u ^{d}AMAR.UTU (ACT 122(Zo), u.e. 2), a table of new moons written by a descendant of Egiba-tila in SE 209 = 103 BC.
177. Robson (2008b).
178. See Dirven (2014).

7
Conclusions: Towards a social geography of cuneiform scholarship

Over the past six chapters I have found new and, I hope, productive ways to historicise the elite intellectual life of Assyria and Babylonia in the first millennium BC. More conventional Assyriological, text-editorial approaches to the cuneiform sources will always remain essential but they can now be complemented with other methodologies. This monograph is but a first attempt to sketch a social geography of cuneiform scholarship, as a means to highlight and historicise change and variation in a diverse and long-lived corpus of writings. It does not pretend to be the best or only way to account for the intellectual life of the ancient Middle East and it certainly makes no claims to completeness or finality. But I do hope that it will provoke discussion and debate, and encourage the twenty-first-century community of cuneiform scholars to think afresh about our long-ago forebears and the ideas that occupied them. Here I sum up some of its findings and point to some of the myriad potential directions for future research.

My foil is once again A. Leo Oppenheim, that towering figure of mid-twentieth-century Assyriology, who wrote, to my knowledge, the first and perhaps only other sociological account of 'the position of the intellectual in Mesopotamian society' some forty-five years ago.[1] While it may seem unfair to single out a single, long-dead author for detailed critique – having already deconstructed his 'stream of tradition' in Chapter 2 – Oppenheim's achievements, reputation and legacy are unassailable. As one obituary has it, 'probably no other scholar in this [twentieth] century has had such a profound effect on Assyriology'.[2] He also did more than anyone to position the subject in the history of science and, indeed, bring the subject to a much wider public.[3] My aim is only, as it was in Chapter 2, to use this work as a historical milestone by which to measure how far the discipline has moved on in the past forty-five years.

Briefly put, Oppenheim argued for three types of cuneiform-literate intellectuals, each of whom operated in a particular set of environments: the 'bureaucrat-scribe' in both palace and temple; the 'poet-scribe' in the same institutions; and the 'scholar-scribe' in palace and 'unattached'.[4] Independent experts were, he contended, the outcome of 'a new habitat' of the first millennium BC, in which 'a new merchant class' provided an affluent clientele. So far, so good. Then, in a statement which now seems radically at odds with the evidence, he added:

> the Mesopotamian scribes are not *a priori* connected with sanctuaries or other religious institutions; their activities occur without the stimulus of a sacred book or of a traditional collection of normative ('classical') writing, both bound to produce a continuity maintained by those who study such texts, comment upon them, engage in their exegesis, strive to emulate them or to relate them to the ever-changing present by performing such functions as judge, moralist or literary critic.[5]

Whatever its rights or wrongs from our perspective, the account is thus both historical, in that it identifies change and seeks to account for it, and geographical, in that it recognises that different types of 'intellectual' operated in different social spheres and physical environments. It is also strikingly different in argument and conclusions from Oppenheim's 'stream of tradition' paper critiqued in Chapter 2, which argued quite explicitly for 'a corpus of literary works of various types that was maintained, controlled, and carefully kept alive by a tradition served by successive generations of learned and well-trained scribes'.[6]

If one renowned expert could reshape his vision of cuneiform culture so radically in the course of fifteen years, however overlooked that revision has been since, then further review seems absolutely justified, if not well overdue, several decades on.[7] I do so first by focusing on four central subjects of the book – the social, the geographical, the cuneiform, the scholarly – while revisiting some of the themes highlighted in Chapter 2. I also revisit two concepts developed in the course of this project – 'survival bottlenecks' for high cuneiform culture, and the 'distributed library' – to account for the broad sweeps of history I have endeavoured to address here.

The social

The individuals involved in the production, communication and consumption of written knowledge in first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia

were exclusively men.[8] More than that, they were urban men of well-to-do or aspiring families who could afford for their offspring to undergo long periods of training, whether within their own household or another's. Scribal education seems in the main to have been a family matter: Oppenheim's confident assertion that 'one would have to stress the absence of a father–son relationship between teacher and disciple' had long been overturned, even in his day.[9] There were of course exceptions: the young men of empire in Neo-Assyrian Huzirina (Chapter 4), for instance, and the specialist *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* in Hellenistic Uruk (Chapter 6). But there is no direct evidence for legally binding apprenticeship contracts, though parallels with other professions and the frequency of terms such as *šamallû* 'apprentice' in colophons strongly suggest that such formalities were possible, as was adoption into one's mentor's family.[10]

Gaining entry to the scholarly community through education, whether within the family or without, entailed gaining social acceptance as a practitioner and acquiring practical, technical skills as well as accumulating and absorbing written knowledge. Those first two aspects are difficult to access in the historical record but are hinted at, for instance, in the excerpting of medical recipes for use with patients. As we have seen, the early stages of the scholarly education process were no different from the training of other professions requiring cuneiform literacy, such as book-keepers or legal scribes. Indeed, in Hellenistic Uruk budding scholars such as Šamaš-eṭir (Chapter 5) also took on more artisanal scribal work.[11] Thereafter, the element of more advanced training that has left the deepest historical traces consisted in copying standard works of cuneiform scholarship, based on exemplars owned by the family or borrowed from elsewhere. In this way the learner committed much to memory while creating new items for the household's collection of tablets and writing-boards. In Anu-ikṣur's case (Chapter 6), in late Achaemenid Uruk, copying was not (or not always) the end of the matter. Rather, he actively worked to make meaning from the key texts of his family's profession by writing out linguistic commentaries on them.[12] Anu-ikṣur's example also suggests that both copying and commenting continued for as long as there were new texts to acquire and eyesight sharp enough to do so. He and/or other members of his family also practiced complex calculations as, presumably, did all apprentices to *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*.[13]

Changes in professional titulature from *šamallû ṣehru* 'junior apprentice' to, for instance, *kalamāhu* 'senior lamenter' are documented over several individuals' lives, especially in seventh-century Assur (Chapter 4). It is not at all obvious whether there were formal milestones for progression and qualification, however localised, and what they

might have consisted of. However, memoranda of the *kiništu*-assemblies of temple scholars in Parthian Babylon and Kutha (Chapter 6) suggest that those communities, if no others, subjected potential members to a test of their abilities. Maybe in most cases the transition from student to professional was simply a matter of exhausting one's teacher's knowledge, reaching the end of a contracted term of apprenticeship, developing an economically sustainable client base (or acquiring a patron) of one's own, or some combination of the three.

It was the norm for particular scholarly titles, and even particular institutional posts, to remain in the family over many generations. The royal *āšipus* of Issaran-mudammiq's family in early first-millennium Kalhu (Chapter 3) identified the originator of their lineage as a *šatammu*-priest from the northern Babylonian city of Der, while the *kalûs* of Late Babylonian Uruk famously traced their ancestry to back to the scholar Sin-leqi-unninni (Chapter 5).[14] Yet the social status of scholarly families varied widely, from the urban middle classes such as Kiṣir-Assur's family in seventh-century Assur to intimates of royalty like the descendants of Gabbu-ilani-ereš at the Neo-Assyrian court (Chapter 4). At the upper end, exceptionally, were the crown princes Ashurbanipal and perhaps also Nebuchadnezzar (Chapters 4 and 5).

As shown by the infamous case of Urad-Gula's loss of favour in seventh-century Nineveh, or even his great-grandfather Nabu-zuqup-kena's retreat to Kalhu under Sennacherib, family membership was no guarantee of continued royal support. Patronage relationships with social superiors, however multi-generational, were inherently fragile (Chapter 3). Membership of temple communities, whether through prebendary rights or other means, provided much more security, though, in later Babylonia, one was still answerable to the *kiništu*-assembly for one's actions (Chapter 6). In the Parthian period kinship ties could even earn one a temple position over outsiders, provided that sufficient disciplinary competence could be demonstrated (Chapter 6). Ancestry was as strong a marker of professional trustworthiness as disciplinary competence: scholars with no stated family affiliation, such as the *āšipu* Banunu, active in seventh-century Kalhu and Nineveh (Chapter 4), were the exception rather than the rule.

Colophons also make it clear that many young men copied scholarly works without taking up scholarly professions themselves. In some cases, this may simply have been because they did not have sufficient aptitude. In other circumstances the acquisition of some formal scholarship seems to have been part of a more gentlemanly or bureaucratic education. The apprentices of seventh-century Huzirina are a particularly clear case in

point (Chapter 4), but this may also have been the situation for some of the young men whose copies ended up in Babylonian temple collections (perhaps because they did not need them for themselves). Some members of the high-ranking Ahʾutu family in Hellenistic Uruk also seem to fall into this category (Chapter 6). In any case, in both Assyria and Babylonia, professional identity seems to have been somewhat fluid and context-dependent. Even Esarhaddon's chief *āšipu* Adad-šumu-uṣur was not at the king's beck and call twenty-four hours a day but saw private clients and took time off for other business (Chapter 4). For many men scholarship was not a full-time occupation but a role they performed when needed by a patron, institutional contract or private client. At other times they were occupied with family affairs, temple business and so on. In those circumstances they used titles – if they used them at all – that were pertinent to that other context (Chapter 6). In other words, we should treat Oppenheim's useful labels 'bureaucrat-scribe', 'poet-scribe' and 'scholar-scribe' not as immutable markers of separate individuals but as fluid identities that could be adopted by a person over the course of a working life, or even a working day.

Patterns of lending and borrowing tablets show that scholarly networks could extend well beyond the immediate family. Writing and copying for individuals outside the family group is particularly well evidenced in seventh-century Huzirina and Assur (Chapter 4) and Late Babylonian Uruk (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, there must usually have been no more than a few dozen intellectually active individuals in any one city at any one time: even the Assyrian royal court in Nineveh counted only twenty or so scholars in attendance. The huge numbers of *āšipus* and *kalûs* in fourth-century ration-lists from Babylon's Esangila temple almost certainly represent the fragmentation of income entitlements across the year (Chapter 6). Exhortations to secrecy found on colophons of works particularly closely associated with an individual's profession aimed to exclude only the supposedly 'unlearned', *lā mūdû*, not fellow members of one's own scholarly community.[15] Scholarly networks not only kept out the *lā mūdû*, however: they also excluded each other. This social stratification of the scholarly world is particularly visible in seventh-century Assyria, where the Baba-šumu-ibni family of *āšipus* in Assur had only the most tangential of connections to the Assyrian court and the *šamallûs* of Huzirina none at all (Chapter 4).

Scholars' networks were not solely familial and professional. As I argued in Chapter 2, scholars recruited not only human beings into their networks – students and teachers, colleagues and rivals, patrons and clients – but divine actors too. The god Nabu was many scholars' primary

source of inspiration, trust and praise, summoned in seals and colophons, letters and prayers. But he was not worshipped everywhere or in all circumstances, especially in southern Babylonia. Some of the other deities invoked in colophons were city-specific: Zababa in Huzirina, Marduk and Zarpanitu in Babylon, Ninurta and Ellil in Nippur, Anu and Ištar or (later) Antu in Uruk. Other gods were genre-specific: Anu, Ellil and Ea for copies of *Enūma Anu Ellil*, Gula for works of healing. The pair of storm and plague deities Adad and Šala were called on to blight those who mistreated tablets. However, other gods were invoked entirely as a matter of personal theology: Šamaš and Lugalirra, for instance, in Huzirina.

The geographical

Although Oppenheim rightly identifies the temple, palace and private sphere as the primary loci of scholarly practice, he dramatically underestimates the place of the temple in scholarly life.[16] He also overlooks the degree to which individuals were able to move between the three. Some intellectual activity took place in specially designated places, such as the performance of *āšipūtu* rituals in a dedicated room of the Baba-šumu-ibni family's house in Assur (Chapter 4), or the offering and storage of votive tablets in the temples of Nabu and other deities (Chapter 6). Other activities temporarily took over other spaces: the Assyrian court *bārûs*' divinations in public parts of the palace (Chapter 4), or the *kalûs*' (mistimed) lamentations on the streets of early Achaemenid Larsa and Uruk (Chapter 5).

Scholars presumably wrote tablets outdoors in the household or temple courtyard, as indoor light levels would have been insufficient. Certainly, wherever clay recycling facilities have been found by archaeologists they have almost always been in domestic courtyards.[17] Students rarely kept their more elementary exercises but did purposely accumulate copies and extracts of standard works, commentaries and original compositions. At home, families stored tablets in designated rooms, either in large jars (as for instance the Šangu-Ninurta family's house in late Achaemenid Uruk, Chapter 6) or in boxes, baskets or shelves, now long-perished. In some temple storerooms – Nabu's Ezida in late eighth-century Dur-Šarruken, Ištar-Annunitu's E-ulmaš in Neo-Babylonian Sippar – officials filed tablets in pigeonholes. But in others – Nabu's Ezida in Kalhu, perhaps Anu's Reš in Hellenistic Uruk? – more ephemeral solutions were found. Tablet collections could be moved wholesale, as from the Ezida temple in Dur-Šarruken when that city was

vacated by the royal court. Or they could be dispersed piecemeal, as suggested by the appearance of tablets from Nippur, Der, Babylon and even Nineveh in early Seleucid Uruk.

Equally, entire tablet collections could be abandoned inside a disused building: 'Ashurbanipal's Library' in seventh-century Nineveh; the decommissioned Eanna and E-ulmaš temples in early Achaemenid Uruk and Sippar; the lower strata of the *āšipus*' houses in Assur and Uruk. In times of danger, valuable collections could be secreted away in the hope that they could be returned for later, for example in Huzirina and perhaps also in the Ezida temple at Kalhu as Assyria fell. All of these abandonments took tablets out of circulation: de facto, the artefacts available to archaeologists were not accessible to later generations. In this way, learned works regularly fell out of circulation, sometimes on a sufficiently large scale as to constitute veritable survival bottlenecks for cuneiform scholarship, at least locally.

The scholars occupied well-to-do urban courtyard houses, unremarkable save for their tablet storage facilities and – in the Baba-šumu-ibni family house in Assur – a ritual performance room, painted dark red and thoroughly protected by clay figurines. They also travelled to their clients' homes and sometimes performed in public or institutional spaces; the Assyrian court correspondence makes this clear, even if it were not already intuitively obvious (Chapter 4). Assyrian kings even took scholars on military campaign. However, public performance courted reputational risk if all did not go to plan, as the *kalûs* of early Achaemenid Uruk and Larsa found after a mistimed eclipse ritual (Chapter 6).

Designated places for scholarship are not (yet) detectable in the layout of Assyrian palaces, though scholarly performances are displayed on the bas-reliefs decorating ceremonial spaces, from *bārûs* on military campaign to ritual invocations or celebrations of victory. In doorways, dark corners and bathrooms, genies and other protective spirits benignly gazed down on the king and his entourage to drive away evil. The image of the fish-cloaked *apkallu*-sage was particularly widespread in the royal buildings of ninth-century Kalhu.[18] Neo-Assyrian *bārûs* co-opted public areas to make divination visible and thus accountable to other members of the royal court to support the king's political decision-making. However, even the highest-status scholars did not necessarily have 'access all areas' passes to the palace and had to request entry and audience with the king (Chapter 4).

We know almost nothing about where Assyrian court *bārûs* spent their free time, if they had any; perhaps they, exceptionally, were permanently on call. In seventh-century Assyria none of these roles seem to

have had temple affiliations, unlike royal *kalûs* who had attachments to temples of the moon-god Sin in Harran, and perhaps also closer to home. From at least the ninth century BC, temples to Nabu in Assyrian royal cities became the intellectual home of dynasties of *āšipus*, funded, it seems, by endowments and offerings. This income supplemented the patronage gifts that the king and crown prince bestowed on scholars in their entourages. From the reign of Sargon onwards, if not before, the architecture of Nabu's Assyrian temples also reflected a three-way relationship between god, king and scholarship (Chapter 3). In Kalhu's Ezida, the main entrance was flanked with monumental, gold-plated statues of mermen representing antediluvian wisdom, while the tablet store was immediately opposite Nabu's cella in the inner courtyard, so that god and scholars could commune directly. A special wing, complete with throne room and bedroom, was set aside for the annual week-long *akītu*-ceremony involving the king or his representative, together with Nabu and his divine consort Tašmetu. There are hints that Assyrian royal *āšipus* and their tablets moved quite freely between the temples of Nabu, the royal palaces and their homes (Chapter 4).

In Babylonia, temples to Nabu took on a rather different architectural form, with Tašmetu/Nanaya relegated to a distant corner of the building and no dedicated throne room for royal visitors (Chapter 5). But that was because here Nabu was primarily the dynastic god Marduk's son and therefore represented crown-princehood, not kingship. In the Babylonian *akītu*-festival Nabu also played second fiddle to his father. This emphasis on youth and filial status played out too in the offerings of school tablets to Nabu in his temple in Babylon (and likewise in Ashurbanipal's elaboration of this custom). However, Nabu was invoked in Babylonian scholastic and scholarly colophons only in northern cities such as Babylon, Sippar and of course Borsippa, and only before the 484 BC 'end of archives'. There is no mention of him in the admittedly very fragmentary colophons of scholarly tablets from the Eanna temple in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, although those colophons are dominated by men with Nabu-names, from northern Babylonian families (Chapter 5). In the Late Babylonian period Nabu's domain shrank down to Babylon, Borsippa and Kutha: he never features in the names and colophons of southern Babylonian scholars or even (so far as we have evidence) in those from the northeastern city of Der (Chapter 6).

It seems as though most, perhaps all, of the major urban temples of Babylonia had communities of scholars attached to them, whether through prebendary entitlements (*isqu*) to feed or otherwise care for the gods or, in post-Xerxes Babylon and Borsippa, through receipt of

kurummatu-rations.[19] One could be a prebendary brewer inside the temple and an *āšipu* outside it, as for instance Iqišaya of late fourth-century Uruk (Chapter 6). Answerable to the crown via an in-house palace official (*qēpu*) until the early Achaemenid period, with the loss of their political power Babylonian temples became self-governing institutions run by autonomous *kiništu*-assemblies. Ironically, they could now provide scholars with much more stability than royal court settings. While *kiništus* could and did hold members to account for misbehaviour, they looked after their own and favoured the familial inheritance of membership. Temple service, at least in the prebendary system, was part-time and allowed for the substitution of (qualified) deputies, enabling scholars to pursue other interests and sources of income. Perhaps not surprisingly, scholars attached to the temples, however loosely, tended to invoke locally powerful deities in preference to Nabu, especially in Babylonia.

Very little is known about cuneiform-literate scholarship outside the Babylonian and Assyrian heartlands, perhaps for good reason: to earn a viable living, scholars were economically dependent on a sizeable population of affluent private clientele, the guarantee of regular temple income and/or occasional gifts and grants from elite patrons. The scribal school at Huzirina, not far from the city of Harran in eastern Assyria, may have been part of an Assyrianising mission in the Aramaic territories, as well as a focal point for the offspring of imperial administrators posted to the provinces. It remains to be seen whether similarly tiny settlements, at home or abroad, were able to sustain scholarly communities.

Huzirina's scholarly network, if not particularly high-status, was certainly far-reaching, with connections back to Assur and even to Babylon and Kutha. Further up the social ladder, the Assyrian king's *kalûs* of the Šumu-libši clan are attested far and wide, from Harran to Uruk (Chapter 4). The royal court in seventh-century Nineveh attracted scholarly hopefuls over long distances, even if rigorous gatekeeping – both literal and metaphorical – kept most of them at bay. And of course, the Assyrian court sourced scholarly tablets for the royal collection from across Assyria and Babylonia, systematically erasing all traces of provenance as originals were re-copied and destroyed (Chapter 3). While some scholarly families, such as the Ekur-zakirs of early Hellenistic Uruk, seem to have been rooted to one location, and indeed fiercely attached to it, they nevertheless accumulated tablets from Nippur, Babylon, Der and even Ashurbanipal's long-defunct palace (Chapter 6). For some scholarly communities, particularly in Assur and Uruk, statements of local identity seem to have been particularly important; in other places they hardly feature at all.

The most striking difference between Assyrian and Babylonian high cuneiform culture, once we factor in discrepancies in the evidence base, is the status and role of the god Nabu. In Assyria Nabu is first mentioned on a palace scribe's seal in around 1100 BC and becomes ubiquitous in scholarly colophons from the mid-eighth century onwards, at about the same time that he starts to be acknowledged by Assyrian kings. Yet the Ezida in Kalhu shows scant sign of direct royal patronage and may have been the remit of the city governor, whose residence was immediately opposite the temple's main entrance (Chapter 3). In the late eighth century king Sargon II fully bought into Nabu's cult, perhaps as a result of the scholarly foretelling of his great and lucrative victory over Muṣaṣir. Downplayed by his son and successor Sennacherib, Nabu was taken up again by Esarhaddon and most especially by Ashurbanipal as a self-styled scholar-king. In Babylonia, by contrast, Nabu was very much Marduk's son and Borsippa's city deity. Babylonian kings depended on both gods equally for the renewal of the right to rule in the annual *akītu*-festival at the spring equinox, at least until the mid-sixth century BC and perhaps until Xerxes' reprisals against Babylonian rebels in 484 BC (Chapter 5). After this point references to royal involvement in the *akītu* are sporadic, and Hellenistic copies of the ritual were presumably intended to capture a dying memory of procedures that had once been passed on through annual participation. Likewise, the so-called Antiochus Cylinder of the early third century BC, which records royally sanctioned preparations for renovations to Ezida in Borsippa and Marduk's temple Esangila in Babylon, appears to be a deliberate if short-lived attempt to resurrect old ways.

The cuneiform

Forty years ago, Oppenheim expressed his frustration with the cuneiform sources compared to those from other ancient cultures: they exhibited 'stereotyped, self-centred, repetitious rhetoric' with a 'narrow range of interest' in 'startling contrast to the often sensitive, reality-centred and multi-layered presentation of the Old Testament'.[20] Along with the 'absence of any polemic in cuneiform literature', unlike that of ancient Greece, he said, these features put 'curiously inhibiting and ultimately falsifying constraints' on their interpretation. The 'one saving grace', he noted, was 'a staggering amount of evidence' despite 'severely curtailed literacy' due to 'the patent cumbersomeness and phonetic inadequacies' of cuneiform, 'obstinately maintained by the schools'.[21] In this view,

cuneiform culture is an obstacle to be overcome rather than a complex historical phenomenon to be studied in its own right. In this section I begin to explore how we might stop trying to stare through, over and around cuneiform script in order to peer at the historical hinterland behind, but focus instead on its richness and complexity for what it might reveal to us of those who used and valued it for so many hundreds of years.

Sociolinguists of more recent periods and less complex scripts have revealed how orthography is a social practice, in which spelling choices make statements about a writer's social, national and cultural identity.[22] Systematic study of cuneiform spelling habits is still in its infancy but new analytical tools, and new corpora on which to test them, are currently in development. Over thirty years ago Parpola carried out a pioneering study of the orthographic features of the scholarly letters to kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.[23] He systematically tabulated the individual characteristics of the known senders (contrastive orthographies, linguistic forms and other distinctive features), grouping the writers 'by profession and family relationship in order to make the orthographic and linguistic differences (or similarities) between members of the same profession and/or father and son stand out as clearly as possible'. In this way, he was able to determine the authorship of several letters that lacked the sender's name, making attributions which have convincingly stood the test of time.[24] A very small-scale pilot study, involving computational analysis of the writings of Late Babylonian *āšipus* and *kalûs*, suggests that the benefits of such quantitative methods could be widespread (Chapter 5). Orthographic profiling of individual scholars, their families and professional networks will provide valuable clues about textual communication practices and suggest attributions of currently anonymous manuscripts. It is already possible to identify local trends and differences, for instance in the writing habits of scholars from late Achaemenid Uruk and Nippur.

It will soon be possible, I hope, to use computational, quantitative analysis of spellings to track the movement of cuneiform compositions across time and space. As we have seen throughout this book, colophons show that tablets and writing-boards were extremely mobile in antiquity. However, most copied texts do not carry statements of origin and so comparing orthographic profiles of individual manuscripts – much like fingerprint matching – will add depth and detail to the existing, somewhat sketchy picture. It will also become possible to determine the degree to which individual copyists felt constrained by a particular genre's customary orthography and/or family or community spelling habits.

These results might in turn shed further light on the question of scarcity and abundance I first brought up in Chapter 2. Scholarly communities must have had quite mixed feelings about the relative accessibility of written sources, which were embedded in social asymmetries. There is an eclectic, opportunistic feel to the acquisition strategies behind family collections such as those of the Šangu-Ninurta and Ekur-zakir clans in Late Babylonian Uruk: one borrowed, copied, inherited, maybe bought whatever one could, wherever it was from, even if not directly related to one's own disciplinary specialism (Chapter 6). It was rarely possible to acquire full sets of multi-tablet compositions and – to judge by their scarcity in the archaeological record and the gaps in modern editions – chapters from the end of a particularly long series were especially difficult to come by. Outside the most elite royal circles, scholars formally protected the works closest to their own particular expertise with divinely sanctioned threats, while alive to the fact that too much protectionism and reluctance to lend discouraged reciprocity from colleagues.

Collections of scholarly tablets in temples, it seems, could likewise accrue in various ways. In some institutions scholarly families built up large repositories much as they would have done at home: first the Issaran-mudammiqs and then the Gabbu-ilani-ereš family at the Kalhu Ezida, for instance; later the Sin-leqi-unninni family at Anu's temple Reš in Hellenistic Uruk. In other temples the collection assembled itself somewhat more randomly through acts of votive donation, so that E-ulmaš in Sippar had a particularly eclectic set of tablets, including many duplicates and gaps. Nabu *ša harê*'s temple in Babylon also accumulated large numbers of elementary scribal exercises over the years, which were neither useful reference works nor secular junk that could just be thrown away.

The only palace collection that it is possible to say anything about is 'Ashurbanipal's Library' from seventh-century Nineveh. It is still only partially published and researched, yet clearly anomalous in many ways: its vast size, the political clout behind the collecting imperative (who else could chain up young Babylonian noblemen while they wrote out what they knew?), the systematic re-copying and editing, and the heavy focus on omens for royal decision-making. Despite its popular modern name, it is arguably even more problematic to call Ashurbanipal's stockpile of tablets a 'library' than it is to so label the domestic and temple collections that it drew on and dwarfed. It was certainly not the 'universal library' that has sometimes recently been claimed, but more like an accumulation of cultural booty and a statement of imperial control, analogous to the large piles of Phoenician ivory heaped up in abandoned rooms of Kalhu's Fort Shalmaneser (Chapter 4).

Of course, it could be argued that many imperial libraries of the modern world have also functioned to coerce and control, whether the Archivo General de Indias in Seville or the British Museum's Reading Room in Victorian London. But both of those institutions gave at least limited access to others, if only to the elite men of empire who could use the knowledge they acquired there to further and bolster the regime. It is not at all clear that anyone but the king had access to the Nineveh tablets, certainly not the scholars of the city of Assur (who might be analogous to the men who held readers' tickets to the British Museum in Layard's day). I have warned elsewhere of the dangers of applying the term 'library' unthinkingly to collections of cuneiform tablets, in any but the weakest sense.[25] In particular, given the extraordinary mobility of tablets described here, we should not fall into the trap of equating archaeologically excavated assemblages of tablets, in the disposition in which they were found, with closed 'library' collections of antiquity. Found assemblages are merely snapshots of what happened to be in the building at the time of abandonment or collapse – and we are necessarily ignorant of ephemeral media such as animal-skin, papyrus and writing-boards. We shall return to this question at the end of this chapter.

The scholarly

I have detailed at the end of each chapter how the five major scholarly professions constituted themselves and related to each other at each place and time I have covered. In short, over the whole period the *āšipus* and *kalûs* had the closest relationships to the temples, even if they did not everywhere hold prebendary priesthoods. Whatever their affiliation, they always had plenty of time and opportunity to cultivate non-temple life. It was probably only in the royal courts, and perhaps also in the Late Babylonian Esangila in Babylon, that the role of *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil* could be considered to be a primary professional designation. Elsewhere, even in the outer circles of the Assyrian king's retinue, celestial observation and prediction were carried out by *āšipus, kalûs* and men with other primary professional identities. The *bārûs*, meanwhile, depended quite heavily on court patronage or wealthy clientele, as their time-consuming rituals with large, physically perfect livestock cannot have come cheap. In the decades after the end of the Assyrian empire the profession of *bārû* began to fade from the cuneiform record, and Xerxes' elimination of the northern Babylonian urban elites sounded its death knell. Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon's use of bird-augurs in Seleucid Uruk suggests that high-status

individuals found alternative methods of soliciting divine approval for important decisions (Chapter 6). Meanwhile, calculation, zodiology and long-term prediction were rapidly replacing short-term ominous practices for the *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Ellil*. The fact that *bārûtu* was not as quantifiable, observationally objective or repeatable as celestial observation, and was therefore less adaptable to new means of thinking about the world, may also have had something to do with its demise. The professional title *asû* disappears at more or less the same time but family archives of recipes and rituals, in places such as Nippur and Sippar, as well as in the larger collections of the *āšipus* in Uruk, show that this represented a merging of professional identities, not an abandonment of healing practices (Chapter 6). And of course it is entirely possible that both professions of *asû* and *bārû* continued to be active in social spheres that were not cuneiform-literate.

Despite these major alterations to scholarly thought and practice, Late Babylonian scholars continued to copy compositions which represented older ways of thinking about the world. But now *bārûtu* and *Enūma Anu Ellil* became heritage compositions, representing the deep-rooted past of the scholarly professions. In early Hellenistic Uruk, the *āšipu* Iqišaya attempted to reconcile the basic ominous zones of the liver in *bārûtu* with current zodiological principles, while a now anonymous author reworked the so-called *Āšipu's Almanac* – a calendar of rituals to be performed over the year – so that it too measured time by zodiacal signs instead of lunar months.[26] Fresh commentaries on this work and on other works of *āšipūtu* show which compositions were still actively engaged with; Late Babylonian commentaries on *Enūma Anu Ellil*, by contrast, become part of the copied tradition just like their hypertexts.

If I have had little to say here about the details of textual change in the first millennium BC that is not because there is little to say about them. As should already be apparent, in part that was because I have chosen here to highlight the gods, people and places involved in textual production and transmission rather than the texts themselves. There was simply not the space to include detailed case studies in this book.[27] However, as the online corpus of scholarly manuscripts grows on Oracc, especially those from centres such as Assur, Babylon and Nineveh, and the tools develop to analyse their orthography, lexis and grammar, it will become increasingly practicable to examine more subtle historical change. At that point, as I have already argued in Chapter 2, it will also become important to utilise more sophisticated analytical terminology to describe transtextual relationships, such as those offered by Gérard Genette.

Patterns of textual transmission are closely related to the question of conservatism and creativity in scholarly cuneiform culture. To a large extent the image of tradition that Oppenheim's generation saw, and which is still very apparent today, is the image that the ancient scribes themselves constructed. Yet the times they were always a-changing, and these intelligent men were constantly testing their own experiences of the world against the texts they saw as foundational. Even in seventh-century Nineveh, *bārûs* used only a small fraction of the omens available to them, while *āšipus* shunned omens almost entirely in favour of statements and recommendations based on observation and experience. The formal written record of scholarship inevitably lagged behind actual practice. Even tracking changes in those standard texts is difficult, given the paucity of sources and, as we saw in Chapter 4, because of the way that Ashurbanipal's minions systematically erased scholarly history through the editing and disposal of their sources. Lastly, as I argued in detail for the scholarly community of Late Babylonian Uruk (Chapter 5), sometimes invented tradition was particularly necessary. In the face of encroaching Greek culture and despite the methodological and theoretical innovations that the scholars themselves were instigating, they took comfort in creating a past world – a world created, ironically, by the composition of new texts – in which scholarship had full royal support, and kings did as they were meant to. It didn't do the scholars of Uruk much good then and we should not be too beguiled by it now: the 'stream of tradition' flowed far faster and more freely than its tranquil surface shows.

The historical

Finally, a few words are in order about the factors that shaped the historical course of cuneiform scholarship in the first millennium BC. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Oppenheim already pointed in this direction four decades ago, with his identification of 'a new merchant class' that constituted a new clientele.[28] However, it is now clear that political events and royal attitudes also profoundly influenced the production of written knowledge, for better and worse, as did the ways in which learned communities interacted with each other and the wider world.

Broadly speaking we can periodise the ever-changing relationship between political power and scholarly activity into times of relative harmony and crisis. Harmonious relationships are most visible in Assyria through royal patronage of court scholarship, for instance in the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II, Sargon II and Esarhaddon in the ninth to seventh

centuries BC. In Babylonia, meanwhile, they are most clearly manifested earliest in our period through royal endowment of perpetual rights to status and income, in the form of temple prebends. In the long sixth century, newly independent Babylonia also conspicuously patronised cuneiform scholarship. Even if there is no surviving counterpart to the Assyrian royal correspondence, the Babylonian kings' commitments to divinely sanctioned knowledge are frequently expressed in official inscriptions. Meanwhile, in both empires, lower down the social scale much individual thought and practice, targeted to private clients needing healing and divination, must have remained relatively unaffected by the vagaries of royal policy most of the time.

However, two sequences of royal action had consequences so detrimental for cuneiform scholarship that they jeopardised its very existence. Elsewhere I have characterised these series of events as 'survival bottlenecks', a phrase from conservation biology: near-catastrophic events that threaten a population's survival through significantly reducing its size and diversity.[29] In the mid-seventh century BC, Ashurbanipal surely cannot have intended his unprecedentedly large-scale acquisition of learned writings to have such devastating effects (Chapter 3). But his concurrent, financially disastrous war on Babylonian and Elamite rebels meant that that neither this project, nor indeed the empire writ large, was economically sustainable. The end result for cuneiform scholarship, as we all know, was a vast, inaccessible hoard of tablets and writing-boards buried in the ruins of his royal residences at Nineveh. The human consequences are harder to delineate as we simply do not know what happened to the scholarly elite of Assyria in the late seventh century. But the end of empire surely meant the end of many people's lives and livelihoods, as the archaeological record shows. Amongst countless others, neither the Nur-Šamaš household in Huzirina, for instance, nor the Baba-šumu-ibni family in Assur can have survived unscathed (Chapter 4).

Just a century later, the Achaemenid kings Darius and Xerxes made deliberate assaults on the northern Babylonian elite, in reprisal for a series of political uprisings, in 521 and 484 BC (Chapter 5). Whole swathes of the cuneiform-literate population disappear from the written record at this point, while archaeology attests to the closure and abandonment of some major urban temples, along with their archives and scholarly tablets. Less politically active centres, such as Nippur, remained relatively unaffected but in key cities, such as Babylon and Uruk, the religious and scholarly communities took several generations to regroup and reinvent themselves (Chapter 6). That entailed the development of new intellectual approaches, new clientele and in Uruk's case even a new theology.

These innovations were sufficient to sustain cuneiform scholarship for a few hundred more years, when it was curtailed only by the terminal shrinkage of the social and intellectual networks that sustained it.

This, then, is a story of how political power manages knowledge and its producers, in three contrasting models. In both Assyria and Babylonia, we saw how power can co-opt learning for imperial gain, to support governance, decision-making and control but also as conspicuous consumption of luxury expertise. The whims of scholarly patronage reflected the inherent instability and fierce competition of the Assyrian regime itself: just as every king's demise led to a fight to the death amongst his heirs for succession, so too the members of his scholarly entourage had repeatedly to demonstrate their loyalty, intellect and fitness to serve. In both cases bloodlines were necessary but not sufficient to merit appointment. In the short term this led to a ruthlessly effective imperial structure, albeit at the cost of individual lives and livelihoods. But the co-dependency of scholarly and royal dynasties meant that when the state coffers emptied, the learned too were destitute. For even the many who did not serve the king directly served his courtiers, his magnates or the inhabitants of the (formerly) great cities of the empire. The links between power and knowledge were both short and fragile; and when one system failed the other was irrevocably broken too.

Meanwhile, in Babylonia, much of the day-to-day politics of royal scholarship was no less violently competitive, as made visible in the tussles between Nabonidus and the temple elites. Just as in Assyria, individual scholarly dynasties must have fallen in and out of royal favour and retreated to the temple when not welcome at court. But the learned communities of Babylonia were inherently more resilient than those of Assyria. For here kings rewarded learned loyalty through the gifting of inalienable rights to income in the form of temple prebends, documented enduringly on *kudurru*-monuments. Compared to the intrinsic instability of Assyrian patronage, the prebendary system provided the scholarly community with financial security over many generations while the crown gained a long-term reliable tax base and source of political support – so that when successive external imperial powers arrived in Babylon, from the mid-sixth century BC onwards, and rejected cuneiform scholarship as an irrelevant mode of indigenous knowledge, the temples provided continued refuge and reward.

It was a hard balance to strike, on both sides: for Persians and Macedonians alike understood the necessity of keeping the temples' taxation stream flowing; but they equally grasped the temples' role in Babylonian elite self-identity and concomitant claims to political

independence. For the scholars, on the other hand, the grand legacy of cuneiform culture was a constant reminder of their much-reduced political power. Where once Babylon and Uruk had been vital centres of knowledge production, first in the overthrow of Assyria and then in the construction of a new imperium, now they were peripheral: at best neglected or exploited, at worst actively targeted as rebellious troublemakers or a convenient source of war funds. The transition from imperial power-brokers to irritant colonial subjects must have been devastating.

But the robustness of the prebendary system cannot have been the only reason for the sustainability of cuneiform scholarship, for around half a millennium after the death of its symbiotic relationship with royal power. For, as we have seen, scholarly prebends did not operate in every temple – and nor should we assume that every scholar had a temple affiliation. We must also consider intellectual and social adaptability: the drive to explore new ways of thinking that would be meaningful and relevant to new situations while maintaining a strong sense of heritage and origins. Cuneiform scholarship's changing relationship to divine patrons was one element of its continued authority, which helped it to retain its perceived utility and relevance for as long as it did. More central to the theme of this book, however, but also closely related, was geographical mobility. This trait is evidenced both in the ubiquitous long-distance movement of scholars and their writings – whether letters or treatises – across Assyria and Babylonia and in the small-scale movements of individuals and tablets within communities. The 'distributed library' is the name that Kathryn Stevens and I have given to the sharing of textualised expertise, by memorisation and copying, by borrowing and lending, within social and professional peer groups.[30] This practice was not entirely failsafe, and almost every scholar must have been acutely aware of classic works that were not locally available, but it did facilitate collective textual accessibility in all but the most extreme circumstances. Thus were ancient knowledge networks created and sustained, protected and abandoned across hundreds of miles and thousands of years in the land that is now Iraq.

Notes

1. Oppenheim (1975).
2. Leichty (1974: 369). See also Hirsch (1974/7); and Reiner and Renger (1974), a rare microfilm edition of a selection of Oppenheim's papers which apparently includes a full bibliography. More recently, the work of Jean Bottéro (e.g. 1992 [1987]; 2001 [1998]) has also received a wide non-specialist readership but seems to have had relatively little impact on anglophone history of science. See the collection of essays on Bottéro and his Assyriological legacy edited by Faivre, Lion and Michel (2009).

3. E.g. Oppenheim (1964 [1977]: 206–310; 1975; 1978).
4. Oppenheim (1975: 39–42).
5. Oppenheim (1975: 43).
6. Oppenheim (1960a: 410–11). Note, however, that Oppenheim is consistent in denying both religious motivation and intellectual engagement through revision, commentary and critique (Oppenheim 1960a: 411). Neither stance now seems justified in the light of current evidence.
7. 'Fifteen years' may seem to be an approximation, as Oppenheim's 1975 paper was self-evidently written before his death in 1974; however, Oppenheim (1960a: 410) clearly states that the first draft of that earlier paper was submitted for review in July 1959.
8. There is almost no trace of cuneiform-literate women in the first millennium BC, with the exception of the princesses of the Assyrian court in seventh-century Nineveh (who may have had female scribes too, if early second-millennium parallels are anything to go by). On cuneiform-literate women see most conveniently Lion (2011) with extensive further bibliography. Of course, it is highly likely that at least some women wrote and read alphabetic scripts in languages such as Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew (cf. Cole 1981; W.V. Harris 1989: 22–4, 106–8, 270–1, 279–80; Sheridan 1998; Bar-Ilan 1998: 31–50). Likewise, there must have been many highly knowledgeable women involved in non-literate healing, herbalism and midwifery, whether within the family or local community, or as peripatetics (cf. Lloyd 2003: 19, 41; Robson 2008b: 473).
9. E.g. Neugebauer (1955: I 13–16); Hunger (1968: 17–19) contra Oppenheim (1975: 44).
10. Cohen and Kedar (2011); Hackl (2011).
11. Robson (2008c).
12. Robson (2011b: 565–9).
13. Robson (2008a: 237).
14. An earlier and even more enduring example is the Arad-Ea family of land surveyors in late second-millennium Babylonia (Robson 2008a: 171–6).
15. Stevens (2013); Robson (2018).
16. Oppenheim (1975: 39–42).
17. Faivre (1995).
18. Oates and Oates (2001: 255–6).
19. There may have existed similar forms of self-governance in Assyrian temples too; however, the evidence for this is currently lacking. The term *kiništu* is not attested in Neo-Assyrian. CAD: K 386, under *kiništu* (a), lists one use of the variant *kinaltu* but the word is damaged and, whatever the signs actually read, it clearly does not mean 'temple assembly' in this context: x ⸢$^{\text{lú}}$ki-na-al⸣-ti | ša $^{\text{m}}$EN–šal-lim $^{\text{lú}}$GAL.KAR | ⸢ur-ta-am-me⸣ 'I rejected the … *kinaltu*(?) of Bel-šallim, the chief of trade' (SAA 16: 20, obv. 5–7, a letter from crown prince Ashurbanipal to king Esarhaddon). In SAA 19: 1 obv. 3, $^{\text{lú}}$ki-na-⸢al-ti⸣ explicitly refers to Babylon, TIN.TIR$^{\text{⸢ki⸣}}$ (obv. 5).
20. Oppenheim (1975: 38).
21. Oppenheim (1975: 38–9).
22. Sebba (2007).
23. Parpola (1970–83: II 432–46). More recently, Worthington (2006) has shown how those same scholars moved between Babylonian and Assyrian dialects in their correspondence with the king, depending on how much they wanted to emphasise their scholarly sophistication or their deference to the state.
24. Parpola (1970–83: II 437–46).
25. Robson (2013b); Robson and Stevens (2019).
26. Iqišaya: Robson (2011b: 568); the *Āšipu's Almanac:* Scurlock (2005/06); Geller (2014).
27. Recent examples include Heeßel (2011); Rutz (2011); Veldhuis (2012).
28. Oppenheim (1975: 42).
29. Robson (2018). Sennacherib's siege and destruction of Babylon in 690 BC must also have had deleterious effects on scholarship in that city. But the fact that lunar eclipses were recorded in Babylon during the eleven-year period of ruination (Hunger, Sachs and Steele 2001: no. 1), while Babylonian observers sent numerous celestial divination reports to Esarhaddon throughout the 670s BC (e.g. SAA 8: 289, 200, 316, 336, 502), suggest that the effect on the institutions of learning was not completely devastating.
30. Robson and Stevens (2019).

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