



WHO WAS KING? WHO WAS NOT KING?

edited by
Petr Charvát – Petra Maříková Vlčková

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Who Was King? Who Was Not King?

The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East

Petr Charvát – Petra Maříková Vlčková (eds.)

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Chapter 1

**“The Poor Are the Silent Ones in the Country”. On the Loss of Legitimacy;
Challenging Power in Early Mesopotamia** *(Gebhard J. Selz)* 1

Modern historians of ancient Mesopotamia are chiefly concerned with the deeds of the kings and mainly use sources which reflect conditions at the apex of Mesopotamian society. This paper attempts to investigate possible traces of discontent and opposition as well as the criteria involving the loss of the legitimacy of power in Early Mesopotamia. We will deal with two major types of sources: the early curse formulas in “royal” inscriptions, and the school-based tradition of Sumerian proverbs. Especially the latter allow for a more socially-balanced understanding of history.

Chapter 2

The Earliest History of the Kingdom of Kiš *(Petr Charvát)* 16

A black-stone bas-relief from Kiš, dating probably to the Uruk IV–III period, shows a scene interpreted, with recourse to an earlier image documented on one of the sealings from Susa B (= Susa Acropole 27–23) as depicting a symbolic transfer of political power. The possibility of a legitimization of the earliest kingdom of Kish from a source other than the Uruk-age Uruk polity is considered, and the possible consequences of such an act are weighed against the testimony of written sources of the ED I–III period.

Chapter 3

**Représentation et légitimation du pouvoir royal aux époques
néo-sumérienne et amorrite** *(Bertrand Lafont)* 23

Dans la haute histoire du Proche-Orient ancien, l'image qu'offre l'institution royale est complexe et variée. Le titre même de LUGAL, « roi », est susceptible d'avoir été interprété de diverses façons. Cet article vise à montrer que, entre les deux périodes d'Ur néo-sumérienne et de Mari amorrite (fin du III^e millénaire – début du II^e millénaire avant notre ère), le fil de certaines traditions touchant à l'institution royale et à la conception qu'on en avait ne fut jamais complètement interrompu, malgré la différence des contextes géographique et socio-historique. Plusieurs exemples sont pris dans les documentations de l'époque d'Ur III et de celle du temps des rois amorrites de Mari : persistance de l'héritage culturel sumérien, sacralisation de la personne du roi, élection divine du souverain, attributs royaux, rôle symbolique des équidés.

Chapter 4

History and Ideology in the Old Babylonian Year Names (*Lukáš Pecha*) 38

The year names of Old Babylonian kings represent a very useful source of information not only on the contemporary royal ideology, but also on some historical events that were mentioned in those texts. In this contribution, the year names issued by the kings of Isin, Larsa and Babylon are compared. There are marked distinctions among the year names of the three dynasties with regard to the nature of events mentioned in them. In the year names of Isin dynasty, there are virtually no allusions to wars, whereas both the dynasties of Larsa and Babylon relatively frequently mention military successes. The year names of Babylon, unlike those of Isin and Larsa, contain no mentions of appointment of cultic personnel by the king. Further, in the year names of the Larsa dynasty, legal activity of the kings is completely omitted, while in the year names of Isin and Babylon such deeds occasionally figure. Besides, an interesting development can be observed during the reign of the 1st Dynasty of Babylon. In the late Old Babylonian period, the number of dedications of votive objects constantly rises whereas large building projects and military events are mentioned less frequently. This can perhaps be understood as a reflection of the gradual decline of the Old Babylonian state.

Chapter 5

König Ḫammurapi und die Babylonier: Wem übertrug der Kodex Ḫammurapi die Rechtspflege? (*Walther Sallaberger*) 46

Ḫammurapi von Babylon schuf seine Gesetze für die Menschen seines Landes, vertreten durch ihre Götter, anlässlich der Neuordnung des Reichs. Es stellt sich die Frage, wie das im Kodex Ḫammurapi festgelegte Recht weiterhin gepflegt und erhalten werden sollte. Der Epilog scheint diese Aufgabe dem Nachfolger zuzuweisen, doch lassen sich in den rechtlichen Regelungen selbst drei zentrale Prinzipien erkennen: 1.) das Schriftlichkeitsprinzip bei Rechtsgeschäften, 2.) die Verpflichtung des Einzelnen zur gesellschaftlichen Verantwortung und 3.) die Fürsorgepflicht der städtischen Institutionen gegenüber dem Individuum. Das Rechtswesen erfordert und fördert also eine autarke Ordnung in der Zivilgesellschaft, im Prinzip zunächst unabhängig vom jeweiligen Königtum. Dem Palast werden dabei juristische Grenzen seines Handelns gezogen, so dass die Gesetze Ḫammurapis auch nicht zu einer Stärkung von Eliten aus dem Umfeld des Palastes führen.

Chapter 6

The Daughters of the Kings of Babylon and their Role in the Old Babylonian Economy and Society (*Witold Tyborowski*) 59

A very interesting fact connected with the *nadītum* priestesses of Šamaš in Sippar is that one can find daughters of the kings of Babylon among them. Formally they were ordinary priestesses and surely they performed the same duties as the other women of that profession. Apart from that as many other *nadītum*, the king's daughters possessed land and other commodities which were necessary for their living and like the other priestesses they did business to make profit with it. One might expect also, that the presence and activity of the Babylonian princesses in the Sippar cloister might be significant somehow and it might be an informal link between the palace and the clergy and the city. However, the analysis of documents concerning the activity of the princesses shows that this did not happen and especially Iltani, daughter of Abī-ešuh might have separated herself from the other *nadītum* and from the clergy of the Šamaš temple and cloister. Thus her life in Sippar did not have any major significance for the social life of the local community.

Chapter 7

To Be King, or Not to Be King, or Much Ado About Nothing? The Concept of Royalty in the Amarna Correspondence (*Jana Mynářová*) 71

It has already been confirmed by a series of studies that the corpus of the Amarna letters, dated to the middle of the fourteenth century BCE, can be considered a set of diplomatic documents in all aspects entailed in this expression. This corpus of letters is hence closely related to the stage

of international politics. But who was (a) king in the Amarna correspondence? Based on the textual analysis it is obvious that the political and social dependency of the local kinglets of Syria-Palestine upon the king of Egypt is evident not only from their frequent pleas for help but unambiguously also from the manner in which the Pharaoh is identified. It is the aim of this study to discuss several aspects of the king's address attested in the respective bodies of the Amarna letters.

Chapter 8

Wer war der (erste ugaritische) König? (Pavel Čech)

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Antike Königslisten werden in der Altorientalistik – mit der Ausnahme der Angaben, die sich solcher Deutung durch entstellte Namen oder gekünstelte Lebensdauerangaben vom Haus aus widerstreben – hauptsächlich als historische Quellen angesehen und gewertet. Aber manchmal dienen die Königslisten primär keinen historiographischen oder chronographischen Zwecken, sondern sind eher Ausdruck politischer Theologie und deshalb Objekt der Soziolinguistik. Auf dem Beispiel der ugaritischen Königsliste wird dargestellt, dass ihre ersten Namen sog. Charaktonyme sind, welche die ugaritische Gründungslegende wiedergeben, somit die Stellung des Stadtstaates in der Region definieren und zugleich Mittel zur Lösung potenzieller Probleme entwerfen. Die in diesen Charaktonymen verschlüsselte Nachricht kann unter Umständen auf der geographischen, historiographischen, mythologischen oder anderen Ebene gelesen werden, was durch strukturelle Ähnlichkeiten zur alttestamentlichen und anderen Gründungserzählungen veranschaulicht wird.

Chapter 9

Jehu, the King of Israel who Repaid and Paid. 'Last' King of Omride Dynasty according to Neo-Assyrian, Aramaean and Biblical Historiography (Filip Čapek)

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King Jehu (842–815 BCE), the ruler of the Northern Israel, is according to 2 Kings 9–11 responsible for a *coup d'état* and for the slaughter of two kings, namely the Israelite Jehoram and Judean Ahaziah. Moreover, the killing of Jehoram entails the very end of the influential Omride dynasty. This contribution tries to settle problems related to the image of Jehu provided by external, non-biblical evidence, which makes king's image far from unambiguous. Neo-Assyrian documents (COS 2.113D, COS 2.113E, and COS 2.113F) depict Jehu as a weak ruler at the margin of the expanding Assyrian empire, whose existence is determined by Šalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) and the Aramaic Tel Dan inscription (COS 2.39) ascribes the responsibility for the termination of the two kings mentioned above to the Aramaean king Hazael (842–805 BCE) and not to Jehu. Who was then Jehu in reality, what was his relation to the Omrides, and what forces stood behind the literary construction of his biblical portrayal?

Chapter 10

Adad-šumu-ušur and his Family in the Service of Assyrian Kings (Kateřina Šašková)

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From Neo-Assyrian period, there is preserved a number of texts dealing with different aspects of Assyrian scholarship. A huge amount of these texts related to scholars at the Assyrian royal court date back to the relatively short period of time, from the reign of kings Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal, however, it is highly probable that even the other Neo-Assyrian kings regularly received reports and letters from their scholars. Assyrian royal scholars were very respectable and well-educated persons. Besides obvious knowledge of reading and writing, these people mastered one of the important disciplines of Mesopotamian learning, nevertheless, their education was much broader and contained knowledge of many other fields. It is evident that scholars were indispensable persons at the royal court. They used to look after the ruler within their discipline in which they were educated. However, they also used to fulfil tasks which were related to their field only very little or not at all. From the preserved texts it is apparent that the important offices

in the king's vicinity were shared only by some privileged families and family relations inside the group of king's closest scholars are documented very frequently. The family of Adad-šumu-ušur is likely to be the most significant example, because members of this family evidently used to work in the service of Assyrian kings for nearly 250 years.

Chapter 11

The Rulers and the Ruled in Achaemenid Art (*Michael Roaf*) 131

The royal monuments of the Achaemenid Persian dynasty illustrate the ruler and the ruled, i.e. the king and his subjects, who are depicted as representatives or delegations of distinct peoples. Current scholarship considers that these illustrations indicate an ideology of Persian kingship radically different from that of earlier and later empires, namely one in which there existed a mutually beneficial, harmonious relationship between the ruler and the ruled. A recently published article has suggested that in the delegations of subject peoples it is possible to identify and, in some cases, name both satraps and kings, who might be thought of as rulers among the ruled. This chapter discusses these proposals and reaches the conclusion that neither of them is supported by the available evidence.

Chapter 12

The Portrait of Nabonidus and Cyrus in Their (?) Chronicle. When and Why the Present Version Was Composed (*Stefan Zawadzki*) 142

Scholars regard the Nabonidus Chronicle as one of the most important sources for the reconstruction of the reign of Nabonidus, but there has been a lack of the requisite contemplation concerning the message it contains, and of discussion regarding the circumstances under which the present version, with its message, was composed. The argument put forward in the article suggests that fundamental changes were made to the original text of the Chronicle soon after the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, as a result of which the most positive figure in the Chronicle is not Nabonidus but Cyrus.

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“Who Was King? Who Was Not King?” The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East

Petr Charvát – Petra Maříková Vlčková – Lukáš Pecha

The title of this volume of studies, which may sound somewhat surprising, does, of course, allude to the famous dictum by which, nearly four millennia ago, the Sumerian King List characterized the political situation in the lands of Sumer and Akkad after the demise of the Akkadian royal dynasty, by and large, in the 22nd century before the common era. As such, it sets before our faces the very first instance where one of the fundamental categories of human history appears to have been put into doubt so serious that the bearers of the cuneiform civilization of ancient Mesopotamia felt that the very existence of state had been put into jeopardy.

Incidentally, after four millennia of human history or so, we have chosen this title in order not only to investigate the nature, structure, reliability and, so to speak, stamina of the ancient Mesopotamian state, but also to put to a serious test our own ability to comprehend the historical features determining the main currents of ancient Near Eastern history.

It fills us with pride and honour that this undertaking, one of the very first in recent history of central Europe, has been taking place under the patronage of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague. This Institute, which can rightfully look back at a long and remarkable history of scholarly endeavour, has recently expanded its field of vision not only into issues of European, but also of universal archaeology and history. Suffice it here only to remind the readers of the effort of Institute of Archaeology research specialists to elucidate historical problems of ancient Egypt, not speaking about the work aimed at the full appreciation of one of the Institute's most durable achievements, that of its Mongolian expedition of 1958. With a laudable intention to pursue the gathering of knowledge of ancient societies still further, specialists from the Institute are now submitting before their learned audience results of a three-year project aimed at the investigation of the nature of the state in ancient Mesopotamia and the Near East.

Another remarkable feature of this undertaking lies in the fact that our project has been linking the efforts of scholars all over the area of the central Europe. Academic cooperation between specialists working in institutions of learning and of the pursuit of high studies has always belonged to one of the traditions of this part of the world, and it gives us a great pleasure to refresh these contacts, severed for a considerable time by the adversities of the history of 20th century AD. We owe to our colleagues from Poznań, Budapest, Wien (Vienna), München (Munich) and Paris a great debt of gratitude for having been kind enough to accept our invitation, to come to Prague and to have shared with us their expert knowledge and deep wisdom.

The scholars who exchanged their views during a common session which took place on the premises of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic at Prague from April 14th to April 16th, 2010, submitted contributions included in this volume of studies. Should we be proposing general historical conclusions which follow out of these scholarly efforts,

it seems to us that we have outlined the main trends of the state development in the ancient Near East in terms of three subsequent phases.

For the third pre-Christian millennium, the nature of the state may be termed theocratic. This does not mean that the suzerains would have ruled their states solely as representatives of their gods. It seems rather that anyone putting himself forward as a sovereign ruler had to possess a special “inner” qualification, a personal quality indicating that the exercise of public power by the throne-keeper in question was approved, and applauded, by the gods of the Sumerian world. This principle seems to have been operative long before Narām-Sîn and then Šulgi cast it into an official garb by adopting divine status. The case of Šulgi seems particularly instructive: the numerous hymns sung in praise of him sound alien to us, but we have to acknowledge the fact that for the very functioning of the state, the superhuman nature of its chief representative was of key importance.

This changed fundamentally with the advent of the second millennium. King Ḫammurapi did not feel any need to claim divine status, as his immense power clearly represented the common consent of people living in what may be termed the corporate state. The Old Babylonian and Kassite kings did not derive their power from divine sources, but from the fact that they devised, put into operation and engineered an overall scheme of social co-operation and participation in projects carried out for common good which met with public approval, and in which the non-royal sector of Mesopotamian society willingly participated. Of course, this took place only insofar as the non-royal élites saw it sensible to upkeep the image of supreme royal power for the sake of common utility, or insofar as the Mesopotamian royal office did not meet with the onslaught of an external threat the impact of which it could not sustain.

Things went still farther in the first millennium BCE. The huge states and empires of this age, with their multitudes of subject nations, creeds and languages, could no longer claim legitimacy deriving from one single source or one single society. In the Babel of languages and cultures characterizing first-millennium metropolitan states, the rulers deemed it expedient to return to the age-old notion of suzerains holding their power as representatives of the gods, indeed, gradually assuming the garb of the gods themselves. All the subject nations had to comprehend that the divine endowments of their rulers kept the states under control, maintained the day-to-day functioning of the essentials of the social engines and represented the pledge of general security of life, property and ‘civic rights’. This was achieved through the fiction of the benevolent rulers full of wisdom, compassion, valour and munificence, shedding the rays of their beneficent light over the nations subjected to their all-encompassing suzerainty. Born within the Assyrian empire, this concept came to its first peak in the realms of the Achaemenid rulers, spreading from there to the Hellenistic states and finding its second climax in the Roman Empire.

It is only with the return of worldly power from where it had once sprung – to heaven – with Christianity that a new cycle of development of the state began. That phenomenon, however, belongs already to the history of the Middle Ages.

We now submit the fruit of our scholarly efforts to our readers, hoping from all our hearts that they will weigh us and find us at least not light with error, presumption or vanity.

This publication represents a research output of a grant project supported by the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague under the No. IAA8000 20804. We duly acknowledge our debt of gratitude to this sponsoring body.

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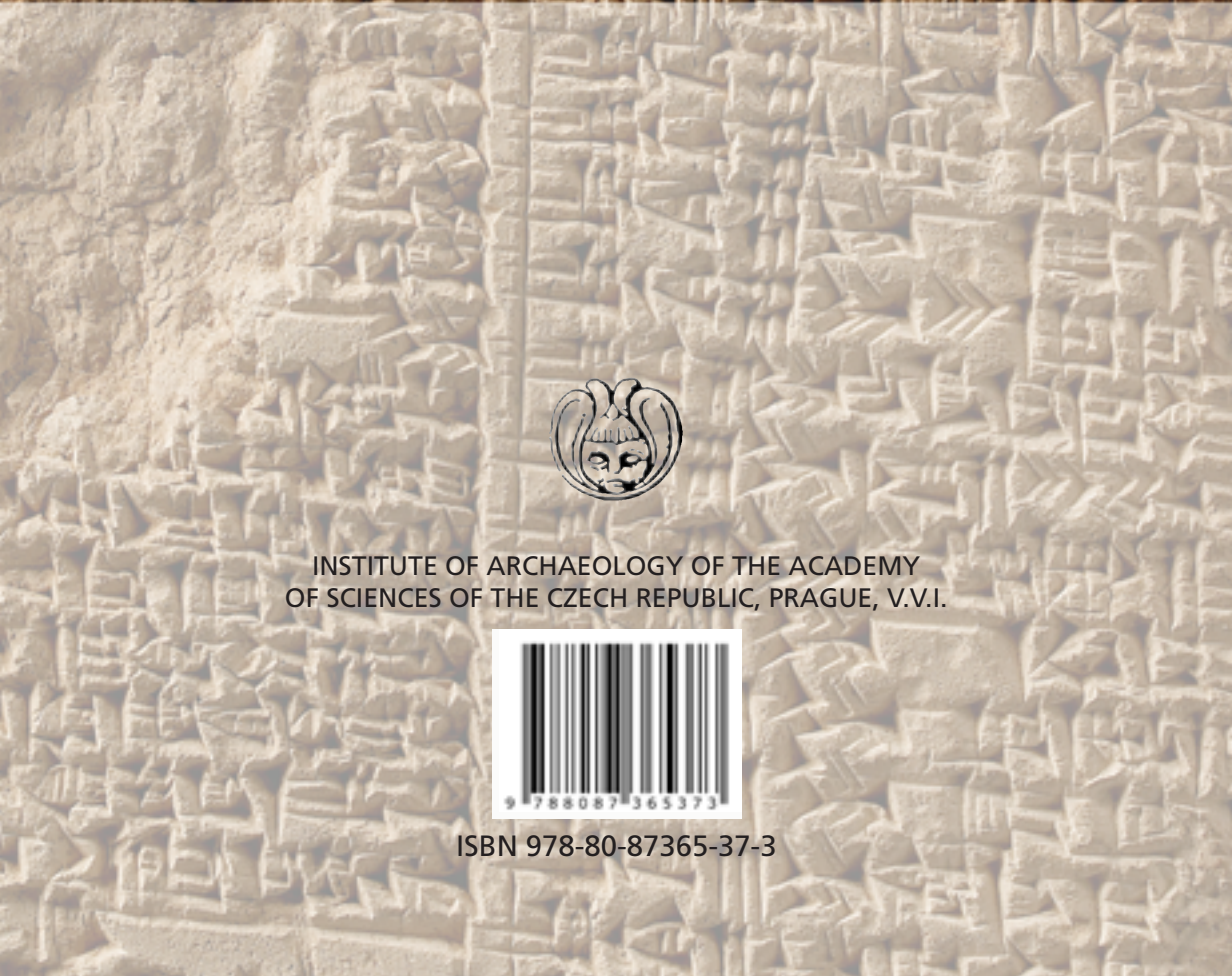
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