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Critical Editions of Ancient Texts

Babylonian Ceremonial Script
in Its Scholarly Context

Volume 1

Carole Roche-Hawley



Ψ LOCKWOOD PRESS

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CAROLE ROCHE-HAWLEY



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ṭup-šar-ru-tu₄ bīt bu-ni
ni-šir-ti am-ma-an-ki-[ma]
ta-da-al-liṭ-šim-ma
ni-šir-ta-ša ú-kal-lam-[ka]

The scribal art is a “house of richness,”
the secret of Amanki.

Work ceaselessly with the scribal art
and it will reveal its secret to you.

The Scribal Art (from Sjöberg 1972, 127–28).

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PREFACE

My first contact with paleographic lists was in 2000 in Syria while I was working on the newly excavated texts (1999) from Ras Shamra. In charge of the establishment of the catalog of the Akkadian texts for the mission, I discovered such lists and the ceremonial script. Since then, I have worked on these texts regularly in Damascus. I developed my research in Aleppo thanks to the support and authorizations of Daniel Arnaud and Jean-Claude Margueron who allowed me to work on the texts found in Tell Meskene–Emar. I would like to thank them here and Michel al-Maqqdissi and the DGAM, and staff of the Aleppo Museum for their help.

After my initial studies on the paleographic lists from Ugarit and Emar (Roche-Hawley 2012b) I chose to develop this research into the first millennium for a comprehensive view on the topic. Most of the texts are neo-Assyrian and part of the British Museum collections. I am very thankful to Jonathan Taylor and the entire staff of the study room for their help. This was the research I proposed for my *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* defended with Brigitte Lion as referee and the following jury: Dominique Beyer, Dennis Pardee, Jonathan Taylor, and Niek Veldhuis. I thank all of the members of this jury for their remarks and encouragement for the publication of this work. I thank Andrew Burlingame for the initial translation into English. I also wish to express here my gratitude to Robert Hawley for his endless support and multiple adaptations of the English version of my manuscript.

I was unable to collate the tablets excavated in Sippar, Ur, Uruk, and Assur preserved in museums in Turkey or Iraq. The texts from Sippar are particularly relevant and important for this study since they would be the oldest examples of paleographic lists, but I was not able to access these texts, which is unfortunate since publications mention these texts with neither copies nor pictures.

These paleographic lists, attested for the second and first millennia, record archaizing forms of the cuneiform signs used in monumental inscriptions and glyptic, as well as in certain scholarly texts. Copied over more than one thousand years, they demonstrate an intellectual and scholastic approach that combines the transmission of preserved knowledge with logical and creative reflection.

Taking up this largely unpublished corpus (or only transcribed in the MSL) and editing the sixty or so texts it contains, spread over a millennium and attested in Babylonia and Assyria, as well as on the periphery, I became fascinated by a subject that is relatively neglected and that took me much further than I had first thought. All Assyriologists have known since the nineteenth century AD that there were two types of script in ancient Mesopotamia: the script we call “cursive,” which was used for everyday documents, but also most library texts,

etc., and a script for which a label is not fixed, which is presented as an archaizing writing, reserved primarily for what Oppenheim called ceremonial use, royal texts, votive texts, and so on. While this digraphy is well known in Assyriology, neither historians of scripts nor Assyriologists consider it in their presentations of cuneiform writing. All descriptions of cuneiform speak of a linear evolution. The same cannot be said for Egypt, where the emphasis is on the coexistence of different scripts for different uses at the same time. In the case of cuneiform, despite the classic pattern found in all textbooks, some signs from different periods are in fact very similar, and clearly distinguishable from those used in practice. So there really is such a thing as hieratic writing, lapidary writing, paleo-Babylonian lapidary writing, archaizing writing, and calligraphic writing. This script was used for over two millennia and, after 150 years of Assyriology, there is no specific study devoted to it, nor any syllabary.

This volume, in addition to a study of paleographic lists and the creation of a syllabary, provides the first step in a wider study of this script. This script was used in thousands of documents (seals, bricks, lapidary inscriptions, etc.) and it is obviously not possible to present a complete study of this material. For me, it is all about opening up a field of study and asking questions about the purpose of this writing—for example, its prestige value among scribes (and even Assurbanipal was sensitive to this when he declared he was able to “read inscriptions from before the flood”); to denote solemnity; and probably magical and religious purposes.

Tamaris-sur-mer, August 18th 2023

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86. BM 55147 obverse. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
87. BM 55147 reverse. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
88. BM 72170. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
89. BM 60185+ obverse. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
90. BM 60185+ reverse. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
91. BM 37957. Photograph by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
92. CTMMA 2, 45 fragment 1
93. CTMMA 2, 45 fragment 2
94. CTMMA 2, 45 fragment 3
95. CUSAS 12, 2.2 (photograph CDLI)
96. K 8520 + ND 4311 obverse. Copy of ND 4311 by Wiseman CTN 4, 229; photograph of K 8520 by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
97. K 8520 + ND 4311 reverse. Copy ND 4311 by Wiseman CTN 4, 229; photograph of K 8520 by the author with the kind authorization of the Trustees of the British Museum.
98. Msk 74107ao. Photograph by the author.
99. Msk 74117o. Copy D. Arnaud, *Emar IV*, vol. 1.
100. Msk 74152e. Copy D. Arnaud, *Emar IV*, vol. 1.
101. Msk 7415c. Photograph by the author.
102. Msk 74146r. Photograph by the author.
103. Msk 7483b. Copy D. Arnaud, *Emar IV*, vol. 1.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	<i>Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology</i>
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AuOrSup	Aula Orientalis Supplementa
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CTN	Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
<i>Emar IV</i>	Beyer, Dominique. <i>Emar IV: Les sceaux. Mission archéologique de Meskéné-Emar. Recherches au pays d'Aštata</i> . OBOSA 20. Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001.
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Records
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JEOL</i>	<i>Jaarbericht Ex Orient Lux</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>MARI</i>	<i>Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</i>
MDP	Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran
<i>MDOG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient Gesellschaft</i>
MRS	Mission Archéologique de Ras Shamra
Msk	tablet siglum of texts from Meskene
MSL	Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon/Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon
<i>NABU</i>	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBOSA	OBO Series Archaeologica
OIMP	Oriental Institute Museum Publications
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul

POLO	Proche-Orient et Littérature Ougaritique
RA	<i>Revue Assyriologique</i>
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Period
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–2018.
RS	tablet siglum of texts from Ras Shamra
RSO	Ras Shamra-Ougarit
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SMEA	<i>Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici</i>
SpTU	Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk
SSS	Semitic Study Series
StBoT	Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten
StMes	<i>Studia Mesopotamica</i>
UAVA	Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie
UE	Ur Excavations
UET	Ur Excavations. Texts
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>Ugaritica</i> 3	Schaeffer, Claude F.-A. <i>Sceaux et cylindres hittites, épée gravée du cartouche de Mineptah, tablettes chypro-minoennes et autres découvertes nouvelles de Ras Shamra</i> . Mission de Ras Shamra 8. Paris: Geuthner, 1956.
<i>Ugaritica</i> 5	Nougayrol, Jean, Emmanuel Laroche, Charles Vroilleaud, and Claude F. A. Schaeffer. <i>Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit</i> . Mission de Ras Shamra 16. Paris: Geuthner, 1968.
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient- Gesellschaft
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
YOS	Yale Oriental Studies
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
ZK	<i>Zeitschrift für Keilschriftforschung</i>