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CHRISTOPHER J. LUCAS

THE PIVOTAL ROLE of the scribe in the development of Mesopotamian culture can scarcely be exaggerated. His was the cohesive force that helped preserve and enrich one of mankind's very earliest civilizations throughout its long historical career, that impressed upon it its unique form and character, and that maintained and revitalized its vast body of traditions, customs, and ideals over the span of almost three millennia, doing so in spite of repeated social, political, and intellectual changes. With the deployment of the first practical system of writing—an innovation which obviously lent societal mores a permanence and continuity heretofore lacking—the scribe emerged early as a central figure in the workings of Mesopotamia. Thus armed with a means of fixing thought on clay, it was inevitable perhaps that the tablet-writer should come to occupy a strategic position in his several roles as temple functionary, court secretary, royal counselor, civil bureaucrat, commercial correspondent, poet, and scholar. The role and importance of the *tupšarru*, it has been rightly observed, might be likened to those of the clergy in medieval Europe; his lore, *tupšarrūtu*, to that extensive body of knowledge, skills, and *savoir-faire* covered by the Islamic term *adab*. (1) Any holistic appreciation for the Mesopotamian cradle of civilization, arguably, will accord pre-eminence to the scribe and his craft in ancient Near Eastern society.

Traditional Assyriological scholarship, it must be said, has been duly cognizant of the practical and literary achievements of the Mesopotamian scribe, and has explored in some detail the scribal contribution to the historical evolution of both form and content in the extant—albeit fragmentary—corpus of Sumero-Akkadian and Babylonian literature. Less well developed, however, (with a few notable exceptions) has been concern and appreciation for the pedagogic means whereby scribes were prepared for their vocation, the institutions in which their training and subsequent scholarly endeavor were conducted, the character of those documents employed as objects of study, and, generally, the nature, content, and organization of formal school curricula. This is to say that while the appli-

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cation of scribal craft has been analyzed and celebrated at length, the setting within which scribes mastered their lore has received rather less systematic attention than it deserves.

I.

The historical priority of organized instruction in the *wadi arifidan* or "twin rivers basin" of the Tigris and Euphrates seems virtually incontestable. Whereas the existence of formal learning institutions is highly probable but as yet unconfirmed for Egypt of the Middle Kingdom (c. 1900 B.C.), for example, or in the still more remote yet literate Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro cultures of the Indus Valley (c. 2500 B.C.), culture-sites in lower Iraq attest to what might justifiably be termed the "first" schools in recorded history. (2) Surviving texts together with other archaeological remains point to the existence of schools in Mesopotamia at least by Old Babylonian times (c. 2000 B.C.) and most likely several centuries before. There can be little doubt that by the time of Hammurabi in the mid-eighteenth century, at any rate, scribal institutions of learning were flourishing all along the axis of the *al-Jarīrah* or "island" formed by the twin rivers, from modern Baghdad southeastward down toward the Shatt 'el-Arab.

Some of the factors responsible for the early emergence of schools in Mesopotamia are not difficult to divine. The documented prevalence of large-scale cereal agriculture in many areas (supplemented extensively by horticulture and animal husbandry) must have necessitated a developed "storage economy," complete with ways for recording wages and rations, registering land titles and rentals, crop payments, the transfer of other staples and materials, and similar transactions. At the center of this complex economic circulation system stood the temple, which served also as the pivot of the larger social and political order. These autarchic "landed sanctuaries" or cultic preserves would have been supported by extensive land holdings and serfs, organized ostensibly to provide an adequately maintained abode for the divine presence. Insofar as the temple likewise functioned as the prime regulator of trade and commerce, not to mention its sponsorship of public works, it would have been the first institution to stand in need of a literate class of administrators. Writing fragments uncovered from the archaic temple of E-Anna in Uruk, to cite a case in point, reveal the presence of such a literate class well before the midpoint of the third millennium, and further open up the possibility of organized instruction conducted under temple auspices. (3) Overall, it can be assumed that the invention of cuneiform sometime around the end of the fourth millennium was at once the necessary and sufficient condition for the emergence of a literate bureaucracy; and the scribal class, in turn, represented a logical response to the need for efficient record-keeping within ever-increasingly elaborate systems of administrative control.

Still another factor supportive of the growth of a scribal class and hence

of schools was the rise of the royal court as a major center of power. Mesopotamian courts, no less than temples, required the service of literate bureaucrats for conducting affairs of state, and, correlatively, schools of some sort in which to train scribes for their work. From the many economic, administrative, political, and literary tablets recovered so far, it is obvious that the number of scribes who practiced their craft in the service of temple and court from Sumerian times onward must have run into the thousands. (4) The earliest Sumerian word for scribe is *umbisag*; the later, more common term was *dubsar* (Akkadian: *tupšarru*, or "tablet-writer"). There were "junior" and "high" scribes, liturgical and cultic functionaries, administrative factotums, and court retainers who served as ranking officials in the upper echelon of the royal bureaucracy. Others were employed as private secretaries or commercial copyists, but only in later periods. A partial list of occupational titles, each position carefully designated in both Sumerian and Akkadian, indicates an elaborate system of differentiation by rank and specialization. (5) Included are the notary or seal inscriber (*musar* = *mušarru*), the land surveyor or registrar (*ašàgu* = *sašukku*), the military recorder (*kilu úbgarra* = *tupšarr ummani*), the writer and stele engraver (*kabsar* = *kapsarru*), the "district" scribe (*arua*), the copyist (*geštula* = *sukkuku*), the court advisor (*umunak* = *tupšarr assuru*), the secretary (Old Babylonian: *zagga* = *zazakku*), the common scribe for laborer groups (*erinna* = *tupšarr sabē*), and several classes of lesser clerks (imma).

Precious little is known of the social position and influence of tablet-writers as a class. Fragmentary evidence dating from Ur III (c. 2113-2006 B.C.), however, indicates that the *dubsars* considered themselves members of an intellectual elite (*dumu gir*), and perhaps justifiably so. Undoubtedly the high scarcity value of literacy translated into special standing, as suggested by the scribal boast that they alone were fit to dispense counsel (*nadiga* = *masartu*) to kings and other members of the reigning aristocracy. Generally speaking, if the literati were not themselves members of the ruling class, at least they enjoyed the patronage and respect of the rich and powerful. (6)

Letters addressed to kings or to their scribes illustrate forcefully the importance of the court scribe or royal secretary. (7) Virtually all correspondence addressed to or emanating from the monarch—edicts, directives, battle orders, royal inscriptions, diplomatic communications, and so forth—passed through the hands of the copyist. In his capacity as official correspondent, the scribe therefore exercised enormous control over the flow of information to and from the palace, the vital link between a ruler and the world outside his court. Nor did the secretary's role as arbiter go unacknowledged. Oftentimes those who addressed messages to the royal person appended a separate request that the scribal mediator take special pains to convey the exact message intended or to speak favorably on the author's behalf in submitting the tablet before the throne.

Occasionally duplicate copies of official missives were dispatched to the royal secretary; sometimes negotiations were conducted exclusively between scribes of different courts. Also common were elaborate invocations of divine blessings upon the scribal recipient rather than upon the person to whom the letter was officially addressed.

Precisely when the school as a discrete institution developed of course is problematic. In light of the high degree of institutional articulation characteristic of the Sumero-Akkadian states, however, it is probable that some systematic provision for the transmission of literacy skills must have been made attendant upon large-scale employment of scribes within the social economy. Again, the considerable number of tablets tentatively identified as school "textbooks" excavated at Shuruppak hint at the operation of schools at least by the mid-point of the third millennium. Whatever the truth of the matter, a few centuries thereafter the issue is no longer in doubt. The appearance of schools in large numbers around 2000 B.C. came at a particularly critical juncture, at a time when the political center of gravity was shifting northward from Ur to Isin and Larsa, then to Babylon, ultimately the seat of a vast new imperium. As the second millennium opened, domination by Amoritic Babylonians was well advanced throughout the region formerly divided up among the separate city-states of ancient Sumer and Akkad. The advent of Babylonian hegemony brought with it major changes: an enormous expansion of the political horizons of Mesopotamia, a concomitant influx of foreign influence, and, most significantly, a shift from the Sumerian language to an Akkadian dialect as the vernacular medium of communication. In consequence, Old Babylonian supremacy clearly spelled the possibility of a cultural rupture with the past. Behind Babylon loomed a full thousand years of history, extending from the Early Dynastic age of the pre-Sargonic city-states (c. 2800 B.C.) down through the brilliant if short-lived "Neo-Sumerian" renaissance of the Third Dynasty of Ur in the period immediately preceding. To the schools of the succeeding Isin-Larsa and Babylon I Dynasty fell the monumental task of mediating and shaping this Sumero-Akkadian cultural legacy, re-casting it in a form adopted to a substantially altered social milieu. (8)

The fruits of a many-sided cultural florescence which had blossomed forth at the time of the leadership of Isin and Larza was an array of Sumerian literary works, an increasing number of lexical and grammatical compilations for the teaching of Sumerian (furnished with interlinear Akkadian translations), and the beginnings of a separate body of Akkadian literature. The challenge confronting scribal scholars of the Babylon I period was not simply to assemble the Sumerian texts of the past and thus maintain, as it were, the "stream of the tradition," but beyond this to extend that literature in the Akkadian tongue—now employed more and more for literary purposes, as distinct from the more utilitarian uses to which it had been put under the kings of the Dynasty of Akkad. Con-

sidering the singular durability of Mesopotamian culture, it may not be too much to credit the literati of the Babylonian *scriptoria* for having succeeded in their historic mission and so contributing to the remarkable cultural continuity Mesopotamia was to evidence thereafter—continuing as it did well into Achaemenian and Seleucid times. (9)

At the risk of some oversimplification, it may be observed that two distinct strains evolved within the literary tradition. One was comprised by the sort of informal, non-canonical literature in which the artistic aspirations of the poet, the ideologies of the political writer, and the novel theories of the scholar materialized. The other, deriving from the first, was a more or less fixed assemblage of texts which became the mainstay of the educational system. (10) Upon this latter collection of documents depends most of the data presently available concerning the work of those scribes who were neither temple nor court officiants, but who served rather as professional pedagogues in the Mesopotamian school. What is plain is that virtually nowhere else from antiquity do writing tablets preserve in so complete a fashion or with quite so much vivid detail the particulars of those archetypal institutions of learning within which the task of cultural preservation and transmission was carried out.

II.

The Sumerian word for "school" was *edubba* or *é-dub-ba-a*, and was rendered in the Akkadian language as *bīt-tuppi*, literally, "tablet-house." (11) Apart from so-called *Lesestücke* or "school compositions," (to be considered momentarily) which were themselves likely employed in classroom instruction, direct textual references to the Babylonian *edubba* are to be found chiefly in letters of correspondence dating to the opening of the second millennium, and in a few royal hymns of the same period in which kings sometimes mention their formal education. Literacy was still a noteworthy accomplishment, furnishing the subject of much royal boasting. Thus the speaker in one such hymnal narrative recounts, "Since I was a child (I was in) the *edubba*, and on the tablets of Sumer and Akkad I learned the scribal art; of the young, no one could write a tablet like me; in the place of wisdom (where) the scribal art (is learned) people . . . (fragment missing); I am perfectly able to subtract and add, (skilled in) counting and accounting; the fair Nanibgal, Nisaba, has lavishly provided me with wisdom and intelligence; I am an 'open' scribe . . . am I." (12)

A second reference to the school appears subsequently (lines 311-315) in the same royal hymn: "May the scribe stand ready for my prayer in the Ekur (i.e., the Temple of Enlil, in Nippur) . . . may he take it in his hand (i.e., record it); may the singer (or narrator) stand ready for it and perform it; in the *edubba* it will never be changed; in the place of learning it will never cease." (13) The first passage is instructive, both for its identification of the "tablet-house" as a "place of wisdom" where scribes were trained, and for its indirect references to the teaching of writing and

mathematics. The second excerpt likewise characterizes the *edubba* as a "place of learning," and implies that one of the duties of a palace scribe was to attend at liturgical observances, recording for posterity the monarch's obeisance before the temple god. The latter text further suggests that royal petitions were preserved in a fixed canonical form within the scribal school and were studied by successive generations of scholars. Quite probably the tablet-house also was a place where hymns and other important literary documents were composed originally, or having been handed down in an oral tradition, were first committed to written form. (14)

At least two Old Babylonian letters make reference to a formal educational institution. "Instruct him (my son) to go to school," writes a parent to his son's teacher, "watch over his hand (writing) and help him." (15) The second alludes to schooling in the context of a brief message passed between a teacher and student: "I entered the tablet-house and read (the composition beginning with) 'gá-nu,' correcting the tablet of 'gá-nu' which you left." (16)

Scattered allusions to the *bīt tuppi* are found from later periods as well. One such reference dates to the post-Old Babylonian era when the god Nabu had replaced the goddess Nisaba as a scribal patron, though it does not necessarily indicate that the scribal school was still functioning: "The son of Bêl (Nabu) (goes) from the *bīt tuppi* to (the place) where he lives as master." (17) Another textual source, somewhat more "literary" or "poetic" in character, appears on a cuneiform tablet fragment from Boghazköy: "You shall mix urine from a donkey with clay from (the) *bīt tuppi*." (18) There are similarly oblique references to schools and instruction in a Hittite source and again in a text dating to the Kassite period (c. 1600–1200 B.C.). In neither case, however, do the passages in question demonstrate the actual existence of the tablet-house in these later centuries. (19) Generally speaking, the *edubba* or *bīt tuppi* as an institutional type was distinctive of the Old Babylonian period, and seems to have been supplanted in later periods by private or tutorial instruction. (20)

Extant school literature supplies no physical description of the Babylonian tablet-house, only brief allusions to the streets outside, where a pupil is cautioned not to loiter; to a gate through which students passed to and fro; and to a courtyard within which oral interrogations or examinations were sometimes held. The only specific reference to a building as such is contained within a somewhat enigmatic Sumerian riddle of indeterminate vintage. "A house with a foundation like heaven," it reads, "a house which like a . . . vessel has been covered with linen; a house which like a goose stands on a (firm) base; one with eyes not opened has entered it; one with open eyes has come out of it. Its solution: a school." (21) The metaphorical sense of opened eyes in the latter portion seems clear enough. The school's purpose is to convert one who is ignorant and illiter-

ate into a person of wisdom and learning. Otherwise the text is obscure and offers nothing suggestive of the school's actual appearance. The analogy with a linen-covered vessel might mean a fly screen. Or possibly it could refer to an awning or tent-like apparatus overhead to shield the school's occupants from the glaring sun, after the fashion of roof shades still found in use on some dwellings throughout the Middle East. Obviously, in the absence of further evidence even so tentative an interpretation must remain purely conjectural. So too as regards the school's foundation and its standings on a firm base—without the means for judging whether the meaning intended is literal or metaphorical, the text is unhelpful. For more detailed information about the school edifice and its furnishings, physical artifacts have proven far more revealing. Fortunately, archaeological sites plausibly identified as schools, complete with classroom apparatus, are fairly numerous.

Common to practically every find are the scattered, frequently-broken remnants of baked clay tablets inscribed with word lists for study and practice writing. A specimen typically will bear on one side a short model sentence (or in some cases a longer literary passage) prepared by a teacher. A more or less crude facsimile will appear on the obverse side, strongly suggestive of some young schoolboy's struggle to master the intricacies of cuneiform writing. (22) The calligraphy varies greatly, from the accomplished hand of an experienced writer to copywork recording a novice's first faltering application of wedged stylus to clay. Besides simple word lists and elementary syllabic exercises, school tablets recovered to date bear geographical place-name lists, syllabaries, mathematical tablets, lists of personal names, magical formulae and religious incantations, collections of wisdom sayings or proverbs, compendia of technical terminology pertaining to various trades and professional specialties, maps, model business contracts, extracts from literary works—in short, a fair representation of all the diverse subjects taught in school.

While the archaeological record preserves considerable data concerning tablet-house curricula, it fails to clarify as a general rule whether the school was an adjunct to the palace, ancillary to the temple, or was conducted primarily under private auspices. At Larsa (modern Sankara), for example, numerous school tablets found within the precincts of the royal house of King Nūradad (1865–1850 B.C.) suggested a palace institution. Likewise at Uruk (Warka), tablet concentrations fell within the remains of the royal palace of Sinkasid. On the other hand, at Šaduppûm (Tell Abu Harmal), lexical and literary texts were all recovered from within the temple of Nisaba and her spouse Haja, Sumerian patron-deities of the scribal art. At Kish (Al Uhaimir), tablets revealing the former existence of an *edubba* were excavated only upon the site of the scribes' domestic quarters. Much the same pattern was repeated at Nippur (Nuffar) where school texts were unearthed from scribal dwellings atop a hill on the far side of a former canal running south of the Temple of Enlil. There dig-

gings produced an abundance of abandoned practice tablets, reference works, and literary texts. Finally, at Ur (Mukayyar), excavators found a house ("No. 1 Broad Street") belonging to a certain Igmil-Sîn which contained nearly 2,000 small lentil-shaped school texts, as well as a profusion of religious works, literary compositions, and syllabaries. Given its lack of immediate proximity to the temple or palace, the *edubba* of Igmil-Sîn may have been a purely private undertaking. (23)

Other major finds include school texts from Kisurra and Tell Ed-Dēr, from Telloh, Adab, and a number of other locations. (24) Interestingly, although it is known that many women in Old Babylonian times were literate and participated actively in community business life, (as shown, for example, by signed contracts bearing women's names and by subscripts on other commercial documents) the existence of female scribes is attested to only by tablet fragments from Sippar. (25) No definite evidence has ever been uncovered to indicate that girls attended schools of their own or that co-educational instruction was offered in a tablet-house. Nonetheless, the fact that women could read and write, a few even finding employment as scribes, strongly suggests that provision of some sort must have been made for the instruction of females. Presumably it would have been possible for parents of middle and upper-class background to find tutors for their children of either sex; and the custom may have been unexceptional among royalty.

Archaeological discoveries at Mari supply the most conclusive data concerning arrangements within the ancient Babylonian classroom. (26) On the grounds of the great palace investigors uncovered two adjoining rooms of modest proportions which almost certainly served as places of organized instruction. Occupying the middle of both enclosures were ranges of low brick benches, of varying lengths, capable of accommodating one, two, or four occupants. Other benches of diminutive size ran along the walls. No teacher's lectern or raised dias was found, but strewn about the premises were scores of practice tables, some of which were covered with minute script. Also, at Mari and elsewhere, archaeologists have found *in situ* shallow water troughs which presumably held the wet clay from which writing cakes or tablets could be kneaded. Oval pottery trays with flat bottoms and rims associated with classrooms could have served the same purpose, or perhaps were used to hold writing utensils.

III.

Model lessons and compositions recounting aspects of school life supply a much more detailed if not always coherent indication of how the *edubba* was staffed, the nature of the instruction offered, and the content of the curriculum. Collectively, members of the tablet-house, young and old, masters and pupils, referred to themselves as "school sons" (*demu edubba*), but addressed one another privately as "colleagues" (*gimeaas* = *kinātu*). The headmaster or "school father" was the *adda edubba*, re-

spectfully termed "master" or *ummia* (Akkadian: *ummianu*). The *ummia* figures prominently in school literature as a personnage of some importance. He is usually mentioned with a reverence becoming his exalted status. "Master, god who (shapes?) humanity," runs one typical panegyric, "my god you (verily) are. Like a puppy you have formed 'humanity' (*namlulu*) in me." (27) Elsewhere a school graduate's eulogy of his teacher is unsparing in its praise: "He guided my hand on the clay, showed me how to behave properly, opened my mouth with words, uttered good counsel, focused (my) eyes on the rules that guide the man of achievement." (28) If a master deigned to visit a student's home, he was accorded the seat of honor. (29) The school ummia was an "authority," one possessed of great wisdom and knowledge. More learned than lesser men, the master was hailed as a *dubsar gagazu (= tupšarr mūdû)*, a "scribe rich in scholarship."

Assisting the tablet-house "father" was a *šešgal* or "elder brother." The *šešgal* served apparently as a kind of tutor-assistant for the younger students. His duties were to write down lines on a new clay tablet which the "junior" scribe (*dubsar tur*) learned by rote and copied out below or on the tablet's reverse side. The "standing lines" (*mugubba*) of the day's lesson might be retained for later review; more often the practice tablet (*imsar šubba*) was discarded at the end of the day after having been "checked" (*igi karkar = baru*) for accuracy by the "elder brother." Sometimes the student's portion was simply cut off and thrown away while the tablet's top half was preserved for further use. The *šešgal*, besides reviewing the boys' written exercises, was charged with hearing oral recitations (*kakesèke = têlu*; literally, "to make equal in the mouth"). Another staff member mentioned frequently is the "over-seer" or "clerk" (*ugula*), possibly an administrative functionary rather than a teacher. The *ugula* was the "supervisor of the tablet-house" and was responsible for enforcing the "statutes and rules" (*gišhura ágá = usurtu u tèrtu*) of the school. The title of *ugula* may have been synonymous with that of "proctor" (*lu gišshurra*). Alternatively, the latter appelation may have designated a separate supervisory role. Also cited in school literature are the *dubsar eme kiengira* or "scribe of Sumerian" and the *dubsar ni šid* or "mathematics teacher." The latter title appears to have been interchangeable with the *dubsar zaga* ("scribe of mensuration") and the *dubsar ašaga* or "scribe of the field." There were in addition several other kinds of lesser functionaries, including the teacher of drawing, the *lu usannake* or "man of the whip" who served as disciplinarian, an attendance monitor, and a gatekeeper.

Years of wearisome toil were demanded before a student could hope to master the complexities of scribal craft (*namdubsar = tupšarrutu*). Schooling began in early youth and continued into adulthood. The school regimen made for a demanding preparatory period, one punctuated with examinations and reviews. "I will write the second (exercise)," promises

one novice in an account preserved on a fragment with an Assyrian translation. (30) "Now," directs the examiner, "write your name in lapidary form (i.e., as it would appear incised in stone)." The student prepares to comply. "If you can, you will write (for yourself)," cautions the master. His charge apparently succeeds, for the teacher pronounces the words, "You are a scribe," and he proceeds, as it appears, to warn the boy not to be overly impressed with his accomplishment. Elsewhere, a bilingual text labeled "Examination Text A" dating to the period 1720-1625 B.C. reveals how testing was conducted in the tablet-house. The source is especially revealing for its wealth of detail on the specifics of the Babylonian curriculum. (31) The scene is the courtyard of the *edubba* where an *unmia* proposes to examine informally a young scribe before the assembly of masters. The school-father queries the candidate: "From your childhood to your adult age you have been reposing in the tablet-house. Do you know the scribal art that you have learned?" The candidate responds confidently, "What would I not know? Ask me, and I will give you the answer." The school master is skeptical. He predicts (correctly as it turns out) that the young man will not be able to answer all the questions. There follows a barrage of difficult and intricate problems.

The scribe is required during the course of the interrogation to translate back and forth between Akkadian and Sumerian. He is examined over different types of calligraphy and occult script. There are questions about the various classes of priests and other types of professions. Part of the examination concerns the preparation of official documents and seals. Other questions review catagories of songs and problems of choral direction. At one point, the master asks the candidate to explicate technical details of the "tongues" (*eme* = *lišānu*) of the several classes of priestly officials, of silversmiths, jewelers, shepherds, and master shippers. The master poses mathematical problems relating to the allocation of rations and the division of fields. Finally, there is a query about the use and techniques employed in playing musical instruments. At this point the junior scribe abandons his effort and accuses the examiner of not having taught him sufficiently. The tablet-house father responds with a stern reprimand:

> What have you done, what good came of your sitting here? You are already a ripe man and close to being aged! Like an old ass you are not teachable any more. Like withered grain you have passed the season. How long will you play around? But, it is still not too late! If you study night and day and work all the time modestly and without arrogance, if you listen to your colleagues and teachers, you still can become a scribe! Then you can share the scribal craft which is good fortune for its owner, a good angel leading you, a bright eye, possessed by you, and it is what the palace needs. (32)

A conflation of three variant sources with Examination Text A yields a seventeen-line composition dubbed "In Praise Of The Scribal Art" which extends the same theme. (33) "The scribal art is the mother of orators,

the father of masters," the narrator proclaims. "The scribal art is delightful, it never satiates you." Apparently addressing himself to the student, the speaker continues, "The scribal art is not (easily) learned, (but) he who has learned it need no longer be anxious about it." The tablet-house father offers counsel: "Strive to (master) the scribal art and it will enrich you. Be industrious in the scribal art and it will provide you with wealth and abundance. Do not be careless concerning the scribal art, do not neglect it." The passage following elaborates: "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 is a good lot, richness and abundance." The narrator emphasizes the difficulties of learning to become a full-fledged scribe. "If you neglect it (the scribal art)," he warns the student, "they will make malicious remarks about you. Since you were a child it causes you grief . . . (but) work hard for it (and it will bring you) its beautiful prosperity." Reference is made to the many tasks a scribe performs, including the settling of accounts, surveying fields, using technical language, and writing in Sumerian. Even when he has attained to the status of a master scribe, the speaker concludes, a conscientious *dub-sar* will always be willing to work hard (literally, "call for the corvée basket") in the service of his craft. So didactic a composition would have been considered well-adapted for classroom instruction; and it requires no stretch of the imagination to surmise that it was authored expressly for some such purpose.

School instruction began at an early age with young neophytes set to memorizing and recording elementary syllabic exercises in a vowell sequence "u-a-i," such as *tu-ta-ti, nu-na-ni, bu-ba-bi, zu-za-zi*, and so on. (34) This was followed by the study of a sign list of some 900 entries which gave single signs along with their phonetic pronunciation. Then came lexical lists containing hundreds, ultimately thousands of words and phrases grouped according to meaning or subject matter. (35) Students labored at great length over long lists or animals, plants, birds, fishes, insects, stones and minerals, geographical and place-names; after which there came short sentences to be copied out, the common formulae of canonical texts, honorific titles, collections of the most common expressions used in legal and administrative documents, and other compendia. For example, one student records, "I have written (a tablet) from the different names of Inanna up to (the names of) the animals living in the steppe (and the names of) the different artisans." (36) Compounding the difficulty of learning any form of cuneiform script was the added disadvantage of having to do so in two dissimilar languages: in Sumerian, which was best suited for classifying and recording; and the more plastic Akkadian, better adapted to literary expression. Sumerian instruction required memorizing some 30,000 lines of lexical text. Akkadian likewise produced uncounted lines of omnia which had to be committed to memmemory. Thus, school vocabularies at advanced levels were invariably

bilingual and divided into sections consisting of groups of Sumerian words together with their Babylonian translations. (37) For example, the Sumerian *nin-da* for "bull" would be paired with its Akkadian equivalent *mi-i-rum*, while *il-ar* and *ti-il-pa-nu* would be juxtaposed with their signs for "throwing stick." (38)

Some uncertainty surrounds how and when the two languages were taught in school. Possibly teaching was conducted at the outset in the Babylonian vernacular, and only later progressed with the study of Sumerian, which by Old Babylonian times was no longer commonly spoken. Or possibly bilingualism was pursued throughout in the *edubba*. What is clear is that Sumerian was highly valued as the language of ancient literature, and its teaching definitely aimed at proficiency in speaking and writing the language. "A scribe who does not know Sumerian," one saying asks rhetorically, "where will he expect to obtain a translation of a Sumerian text?" (39) Or, again, "If there is a translation to be made from the Sumerian, the Sumerian is hidden from you!" (40) Scribes who had studied only the Akkadian language were thought to be deficient in their training: "A scribe who does not know Sumerian, what (kind of) a scribe is he?" (41) The implication, of course, is that Sumerian was no longer the native tongue of scribes, and maybe was no longer a living language at the time the passages were composed. (42) In the composition labeled "Disputation Between Enkimansi and Girnishag," appears the line, "He is a deaf fool when it comes to the scribal art, a silent idiot when it comes to Sumerian." (43) Another gibe at a scribe allegedly ill-versed in Sumerian runs, "Your tongue is not adapted to the Sumerian language." The so-called "Colloquy Between Enkitalu and Enkihegal" contains a similar line: "He is 'heavy' for the Sumerian language, he cannot move his tongue correctly." (44) Following a succession of abusive criticisms, the scribe Enkitalu emphasizes his diatribe with the words, "(And) that I will tell you in *both* languages, Enkihegal!" (45)

Apparently the *edubba* course of instruction was as far-ranging and comprehensive as it was difficult. Scattered references throughout the school literature make mention of a broad array of subjects. Tablet-house students naturally had to be proficient in keeping records and at letter-writing. In the vituperative exchange between Enkimansi and Girnishag, for example, one disputant hurls a charge at his fellow scribe: "You have written a tablet, but you cannot penetrate (its) meaning; you have written a letter (but) that is all you can do." (46) Stele-writing as a related occupation of scribes was undoubtedly taught in school. (47) Surveying also took its place in the curriculum, as shown in the taunt, "You go to divide an estate but you are unable to divide it. For when you go to survey the field, you are unable to hold the tape and the measuring rod; the pegs of the field you cannot drive in; you are not able to figure out the sense." (48) Regarding mathematics, one of the specific questions levied in Examination Test A, cited earlier, concerns multiplication, reciprocals, co-

efficients, the balancing of accounts, administrative accounting, and computing pay allotments. (49) As Enkitalu and Enkihegal dispute their respective virtues, mention is made (lines 6 and 57–78) of reciting the multiplication table, inverted numbers, and the calculation of volume. Still another important subject pursued was music. (50) The candidate whose interrogation is recorded in Examination Text A is asked, "Do you know . . . the *summu*-instrument, the *timbutu*, the *harharu*, and the *inu*-instrument, as many as they are?" The interrogator goes on to inquire whether he is able to divide up and distinguish the various parts of a musical composition (*pirsisunu parasu*). (51) Once again, in the exchange between Enkitalu and Enkihegal the allegation is made that one of the two protagonists is unskilled in music. "Even if he had a *zami*-instrument," the speaker claims, "he could not learn the art of singing, he, the most backward among (his) classmates; he has not been able to make a beautiful tremolo and sound . . . he cannot sing a song, cannot open his mouth." (52)

Tablet-house students devoted much time to the study of legal phraseology. Though scribes did not function as the equivalent of attorneys or argue court cases, they were expected to be intimately conversant with legal codes and their terminology. Numerous anthologies of law and the particulars of jurisprudence (*ana ittišu*) were drawn up in the *edubba* and studied, both in Sumerian and with Akkadian translation. Besides the well-known Codex of Lipit-Ishtar (c. 1920 B.C.) and the Code of Ur-Nammu (c. 2100 B.C.), the famed "Verdicts Of The Just Order" (*dīnāt mīšarim*) or Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 B.C.) was invariably studied in school. A famous murder trial in Isin also seems to have found frequent use as an exercise-piece copied out in the Old Babylonian *edubba*. (53) Copies of model contracts, and of the Laws of Esnunna may have been products of a tablet-house, recopied for instruction in the school at Šaduppum (Tell Abu Harmal). (54) A scribe who specialized in legal studies, or was exceptionally well-trained in law, would find employment as a recorder in a court of law. He was referred to as a *dumu edubba* (Akkadian: *ša dajjāni*) or "scribe of the judge."

As the student progressed from simple lexical and grammatical texts to more connected examples of prose and poetry, the study of literature assumed a more important role in his program of studies. Oral dictation of literary passages may have been a relatively late introduction to the tablet-house; and the practice of exact replication may have been unusual in pre-Old Babylonian times. Thereafter, the distinction becomes common between "to dictate" (*linguinna - quabû*) and *linginna - šatāru*, "to take dictation." (55) The teacher would dictate a text; the student would repeat it orally and simultaneously record it on a tablet. One whose written copy was faithful to the dictated word was thought to be an ideal scribe: "A scribe whose hand moves in accordance with the mouth," runs one old proverb, "he is indeed a scribe." (56) Another saying went as follows: "A

scribe without a hand (is like) a singer without a throat"—that is, an injury to the hand of a scribe has the same incapacitating effect as an injury to a singer's throat. (57) When Enkimensi and Girnishag argue over who is the more competent *dubsar*, the first attacks his rival, saying, "Your hand may be fair, but it is not fit for the reed stylus, is not apt for the clay (tablet), (and your) hand does not rival (your) mouth." (58) Whatever the form of instruction, whether primarily oral or written or a combination thereof, it appears reasonable to assume that the *edubba* master and his assistants supplemented the bare lists, tables, and literary passages copied down with oral explanatory material. It is known, for example, that besides the canonical texts, there existed an extensive oral tradition (*ša pi ummāni*) involving narrative poems, hymns, lamentations, "wisdom" literature (proverbs and fables), and tales of the exploits of Sumerian heroes which had been handed down from earliest times. Much of the corpus of this material was preserved without benefit of reduction to writing until Old Babylonian times. Some works were not recorded until much later, around the time of Ashurnasirpal in the mid-ninth century.

Fixing the place of literature in the tablet-house is a hazardous undertaking, if only because so much disagreement attends discussion of precisely how the ancient Sumerian literary traditions were perpetuated and their contents preserved. (59) Suffice it to say, it was in the schools of the Old Babylonian period where the bulk of pre-Babylonian literature deemed worthy of preservation was given fixed form. (60) This Neo-Sumerian inheritance was incorporated into the Babylonian curriculum in one of two ways. Either an oral tradition was "modernized" so as to make it more congenial to the new Nippur theology, or an already extant written body of literature was reworked in process of its rendering into Akkadian. As noted previously, formerly Akkadian had been considered fit primarily for administrative texts, for royal monuments (mainly translations or imitations of Sumerian prototypes), and for a handful of literary fragments. Now a whole new literary dialect was created for Akkadian, and the works produced by it were gradually freed from excessive dependence on Sumerian models. (61)

This phenomenon is nicely illustrated in the development of royal hymnology and prayers. Repeatedly, specific petitions or celebrations of particular historic occasions were divested of any features distinctive to a particular time or place. History, it could be said, was converted into myth, and historical interests subordinated to theological considerations. (62) Much the same process may have surrounded the canonization of other literary forms in the schools, most notably epic poems. The results, no matter what the specific means utilized, was a rich legacy of hymns, epics, laments, love songs, lullabies, prayers, elegies, records of royal correspondence, and legal compendia. This literature was to occupy a prominent place in the curriculum of the Old Babylonian *edubba* for centuries afterward.

IV.

The most distinctive if somewhat perplexing literary form studied in the tablet-house was that of "hostilities (Akkadian: *tesitu*). (63) The Sumerian term for this genre, freely translated, could be "man-against-man" or "contest in speech." Typically a *tesitu* essay assumes the form of a verbal contest of merit between two characters. Protagonists alternate with speeches proclaiming their respective virtues, all the while hurling insults at one another. An exchange is apt to become abusive in the extreme. The argument between Enkitalu and Enkihegal, alluded to earlier, supplies one illustration; the vitriolic debate between Enkimansi and Girnishag furnishes another. Examination Text A falls under the same general heading since the tablet-house father's lengthy reprimand to the junior scribe disparages the latter's qualifications as a student. Invariably, the setting for "contest-in-speech" literature is the school, or involves characters who are tablet-house graduates. This common feature has led some to conclude that *tesitu* compositions were an invention of Sumerian school scribes and were copied down and read by students. Sumero-Babylonian *Streitgedicht* (as it has been dubbed aptly) has a certain air of burlesque about it. Speaking of the stock characters and situations portrayed in school sketches, C.J. Gadd comments:

> The absurdly complacent professor, the obsequious students, the bullying of students who, in turn, ape but too faithfully the conceit of their superiors, the hoodwinking of parents, the venality of teachers, the indiscipline and rowdyism of the schoolrooms—all these might be the creations of a satirist, even a reformer, rather than the writings of men themselves engaged in the activities so invidiously described, even caricatured. (64)

After pondering the question at some length, however, and considering the possibilities that school literature was intended to serve as social criticism or satire, Gadd concludes "that it was pure interest in contemporary life (naturally, with a bias to their own profession) which inspired the writers of these scenes." (65) Perhaps the abusiveness displayed—so obviously blown up to larger than life proportions—was calculated to amuse and entertain, to afford relief from the drudgery of ordinary classroom routine. Whatever the truth of the matter, the authors of school *tesitu* had a keen sense for the ludicrous and a warm appreciation of the human comedy.

The essay "Schooldays" has rightly been described as one of the most "human" documents excavated in the ancient Near East. (66) This brief piece, probably penned by some anonymous *ummia* around 2000 B.C., offers a vivid account of school life in Old Babylonian times. Meticulously assembled and restored from over twenty different tablet fragments, the document describes in graphic detail the experiences and reactions of a schoolboy attending the *edubba*. (67) It opens with a question from a tablet-house father to a former student. "School-son," he asks, "where did you go (when you were young)?" The graduate recalls, "I went to

school." The master then asks, "What did you do in school?" The question prompts a long reminiscence on the school-son's part of what purports to be a day in his life as a student. He tells how he recited his tablet, ate his lunch, prepared a new tablet, wrote it, finished it; then his model tablets were brought to him. In the afternoon he returned to his writing exercises. When school was dismissed, the boy went home. "I . . . entered the house," the speaker relates, "and found my father sitting there. I explained my exercise-tablets to my father, recited my tablet to him, and he was delighted. . . ." Afterwards, the boy summoned servants to bring food and drink, to bathe his feet, and to prepare his bed. "Wake me early in the morning," he instructs them, "I must not be late (to school) lest my teacher cane me."

The next day, so the narrative continues, "When I rose early in the morning, I faced my mother and said to her, 'Give me my lunch, I want to go to school!' My mother gave me two rolls, and I set out; my mother gave me two rolls, and I went to school. Upon arriving at the tablet-house (the monitor) said to me, 'Why are you late?' I was afraid, my heart was pounding," Trembling with apprehension, the tardy student hastened inside and managed a respectful curtsy before the teacher. But to no avail; the boy was to have a hard time of it. Upon examining his work and finding it incomplete, the *ummia* caned the student. Matters quickly went from bad to worse. An *edubba* proctor reprimanded him for his slovenly appearance and for loitering in the streets. He was caned again. As the narrator remembers it, the remainder of the day was given over mainly to beatings from other school functionaries. When he spoke without permission, he was punished. The next caning was administered for standing at ease without asking permission. The boy forgot to ask permission to rise from his seat and received another beating. When he wandered out the gate without the gatekeeper's authorization, he was beaten once again. His Sumerian language teacher flogged him for not speaking properly in Sumerian. Yet another whipping came at the hand of the school disciplinarian. The *ummia* pronounced the student's handwriting unsatisfactory and called for still another session with the cane.

The hapless boy began to dread school and neglected his lessons. As for his teacher, the speaker recalls, he "took no delight in me; even stopped teaching me his skill in the scribal art; in no way prepared me in the matters essential to the art of being a 'young scribe,' or the art of being an 'elder brother' (*šešgal*). In growing despair, the student went to his father with a proposal that the school master be invited home and plied with gifts.

At this point, the narrator himself takes over and assumes the role of a third-person observer of events ensuing. "To that which the schoolboy said, his father gave heed. The teacher was brought from school; having entered the house, he was seated in the 'great chair' (i.e., the place of honor). The schoolboy attended and served him, and whatever he

learned of the scribal art, he unfolded to his father. His father, with joyful heart, spoke to the headmaster of the school: 'You have opened the hand of my young son, and you make him an expert. You show him all the fine points of the scribal art; you have shown him the recondite details of mathematical problems . . . and cuneiform script." Thereupon, the father turned to his household servants and instructed them to bathe his honored guest with fragrant *irda*-oil. The schoolmaster was dressed in a fine new garment, given money and a ring for his finger.

Mollified, the pedagogue grew more kindly disposed toward his host's son and "with joyful heart" addressed him, saying, "Young man, because you did not neglect my word, did not forsake it; may you reach the pinnacle of the scribal art, achieve it completely from beginning to end. Because you shared with me unstintingly, and paid me a salary larger than my efforts deserve and have shown me great honor, may Nisaba, the queen of guardian dieties, be your guardian angel." There follows a lengthy invocation in which the *ummia* calls down blessings upon the student: "Of your brothers may you be their leader, of your friends, may you be their chief, may you rank the highest of the schoolboys. . . . You have carried out well the school's activity, you have become a man of learning. Nisaba, the queen of the place of learning, you have exalted. O Nisaba, praise!" The self-depreciatory humor apparent in this account of the schoolmaster's final change of heart, from hostility and anger to lavish praise, is almost too obvious to bear mention.

Another revealing school essay is entitled, "A Scribe And His Perverse Son," a work of some 180 lines reconstructed from more than a score of tablet fragments. (68) It begins with a dialogue between a father who is apparently a professional scribe and his son. (69) "Where did you go?" asks the father. "I did not go anywhere," his son replies sullenly. "If you did not go anywhere," exclaimes the father, "why do you idle about? Go to school, stand before your 'school-father,' recite your assignment, open your schoolbag, write your tablet, let your 'elder brother' write your new tablet for you. When you have completed your assignment and reported to your monitor, return home to me, and do not wander about in the street." To make sure the boy has understood his instructions, the father in growing exasperation has his son repeat them verbatim. The boy complies, and when he finishes, his father adds, "Come now, be a man. Do not loiter about in the public square or wander along the boulevard. As you walk through the streets, do not gawk at everything around you. Be humble and show humility before your school monitor. When you make a show of modesty, the monitor will like you."

The remainder of the essay consists of long monologue on the father's part. Turning bitter as he speaks, the father rebukes his wayward son for his constant grumblings and repeated disobedience. The boy is reminded that unlike so many other adolescents his age, he was never made to work in the fields: "I never sent you to work (carrying reed rushes) or to plow

my field. I never sent you to work to dig up my field. I never sent you to work as a laborer." Other boys, the father points out, are made to help support their parents, even very young children. "Night and day," the father complains, "am I tortured because of you. Night and day you waste in pleasure. You have grown wealthy and influential; you are full-grown and filled with your own sense of self-importance." The boy is warned that his family expects his downfall; his kin will rejoice because the boy has neglected cultivating his own "humanity." The scribe mourns that his offspring has shown little inclination to follow in his father's footsteps and become a scribe. Warming to his theme, the father continues with words of praise for the scribal art. He urges his son anew to take up the craft. The essay concludes with his invocation of a blessing from the moon-god Nanna and his consort Ningal.

More acrimonious by far in its tone is the exchange cited previously where Enkimansi, an older student, contends with his rival, Girnishag. The latter is represented as having attained the superior status of a *šešgal* or "elder brother" in the *edubba*. The dialogue opens with Girnishag asking Enkimansi, "Son of the tablet-house, today (after completing the tablet) what shall we write?" The subordinate student responds by proposing that the day's usual grammar lesson and the study of dialects be abandoned. Instead, declares Enkimansi somewhat impudently, "I am resolved to write something of my own. I myself will decide the subject." Shocked by this display of youthful independence, the *šešgal* asks, "If you are to decide the subject-matter for yourself (how can I be) your 'elder brother?' In what, pray tell, does my 'big brotherhood' consist? Girnishag turns sarcastic: "O intellect of weighty mind, vindicator (?) of the tablet-house, luminary of writing, lion (?) of Sumerian, your hand does not rival (your) mouth. You cannot equal me, for I am a scribe. . . . (If I were) like you, I could not be called a scribe." (70)

Enraged, Enkimansi retorts, "What do you mean, I am not a scribe like you? When you write a document, it makes no sense. When you write a letter it is illegible. You go to divide an estate, but you are unable to divide it. For when you go to survey a field, you are unable to hold the tape and the measuring rod; the pegs of the field you cannot drive in; you are not able to figure out the sense." He adds, "You don't know how to arbitrate between the contesting parties. You aggravate struggle among brothers. You are the most unworthy among all scribes. What are you fit for, can anyone say?" Girnishag responds in kind. He re-affirms his own competence, protesting that he is indeed an able surveyor, an experienced arbitrator between contesting parties, skilled in pacifying arguments. Returning to the attack, he taunts the junior scribe, saying, "But in everything you (are incompetent), the most careless person imaginable. When you do multiplication, your work is full of errors. . . ." The torrent of abuse goes on. Epithets are exchanged in quick succession. Girnishag alleges that Enkimansi cannot compose a ritual prayer, is

unable to transfer an inscription from a tablet to a stele, or impart the secrets of a ceremony. The former further derides Enkimansi's pretensions at being a scribe. The latter rises to the challenge with hyperbolic criticisms of his own. "What do you mean," he demands finally, "I am not the 'heart' of the student body?"

At a later point, one of the two characters—it is difficult to ascertain which—claims superiority by virtue of his lineage. "Gifted with a Sumerian name, I have written (Sumerian) since childhood. But you are a bungler, a braggart. You cannot shape a tablet properly, you cannot even handle the clay. You cannot write your own name! Your hand is unfit for tablet-writing. . . . Clever fool (*galam huru*), cover up your ears! You cannot hope to emulate me, I am a Sumerian." (71) By this time, the quarrel has become so heated that the intervention of the *ugula* or "supervisor" of the tablet-house is required. Angered by Enkimansi's intemperance, the monitor threatens to lock up the obstreperous student in chains:

> Why is it you behave this way? One knocks down the other, 'grinding the grain, threshing the straw' (a metaphor suggestive of a remorseless assault), and brawls in the tablet-house. The commotion assails my ears! What do you think you 'elder brother' is for? Do you suppose you are more learned than he? Why do you fail to show him the respect to which he is entitled? And yet you continue 'grinding the grain, threshing the straw.' The master (*ummia*) who knows all, even he advises me to do whatever is necessary (to restore peace). For one such as you, assailing your 'elder brother,' there is only a stick awaiting you. I will beat you with it, wrap a . . . chain around your feet, and keep you confined within the tablet-house for a full two months and not let you out! (72)

Following four unintelligible lines, the composition closes with the terse comment, "In the dispute between Girnishag and Enkimansi the *ummia* gave the verdict."

Overall, the impression given is one of brawling students and harried teachers trying vainly to preserve order in the classroom. Judging from the "Schooldays" essay as well as this debate, discipline must have been harsh and unforgiving. Students are portrayed as indolent or disruptive. Respect for teachers is conspicuously lacking. In contrast, the first portion of yet another school essay starts off in a much happier vein. An *edubba* graduate is summoned to hear a story told by a *ugula* or a clerk of an estate. The clerk recounts how when he was a boy in school, his teacher in turn had reminisced about his own days as a student. "I like you, was once a little fellow and had an 'elder brother,' " the *ummia* had said to the future clerk. "The *ummia* would assign me work (that was even too much) for a (grown) man." But as the clerk's schoolmaster remembers it, when he was in school he was a diligent and conscientious pupil. He paid attention to his 'elder brother' and showed proper deference before him. The *šešgal*, for his part, displayed humility and was not caught up with a sense of his own self-importance.

Impatiently, the *edubba* graduate breaks in on the clerk's tendentious account. Much of the rest of the essay follows the now-familiar pattern of vituperative complaints and accusations levied by one character at another. The scribe heaps abuse on the clerk for implying with his story that he—the tablet-house graduate—has been negligent somehow in the performance of his duties. "Why do you lay down rules for me as if I were an idler?" he asks angrily. "Anyone who heard you would drop his hands in despair." The young scribe protests that he understands his responsibilities and has been faithful in discharging all the obligations of his position. He has labored conscientiously. He has superintended the household slaves and kept them at their tasks. The scribe, or so he alleges, has offered repeated prayers to guardian duties as the *ugula* instructed. He has fulfilled the clerk's order to keep the estate's field laborers working night and day.

The *ugula* responds amiably enough, conceding the truth of his accuser's words. He admits, or so it appears, that the scribe has excelled in all aspects of his work. The clerk notes that his subordinate as acquired a good reputation as a supervisor in his own right; he is well thought of by all. The scribe's commands are obeyed, he has kept peace among staff members, and the scribe's former teachers are pleased with his work since leaving the tablet-house. The composition concludes with the *ugula's* repetition of a lengthy blessing delivered by schoolmasters. He calls upon Nisaba, patron goddess of the *edubba*, to look with favor upon the school-house graduate, to grant him joyfulness of heart, good fortune in his future endeavors, and continued effectiveness in his work of settling disputes. "May the loftiness of Nisaba," says the clerk, "bring you unrivaled rejoicing." (73)

Other vignettes of school routine and the life of a scribe are less well-preserved. Of those cited, the "Schooldays" essay and the composition entitled "A Scribe And His Perverse Son" are the most complete and best understood. Portions of the Examination Texts still await explication and further interpretation, as do parts of the "Disputation Between Enkimansi and Girnishag" and the piece sometimes called "Colloquy Between Enkitalu and Enkihegal." Still more fragmentary in character are various proverbs or sayings found on tablets which relate to Babylonian scribes. Incomplete though they may be, they share with the longer specimens of school literature the capacity to conjure up the spirit of schoolroom instruction from a very remote period. "You are a scribe and you don't even know your own name! You should slap your face.' " So runs one taunt at a scribal student who has just made an absurd and inexcusable mistake in his work. "You may be a scribe when viewed from above." reads another, "but you are not even a man when viewed from below"—that is, the scribe possesses the confidence of his superiors, but he does not have the respect of his subordinates and colleagues. In what is probably a reference to the pupil who was slow in learning to read syllabic exercises aloud,

one tablet fragment records the words, "A fellow who cannot even make the sounds 'a-a,' where will he expect to obtain fluent speech?" Yet another saying pokes fun at a young student more attentive to his hunger than his lessons: "A junior scribe is over-much concerned with food for his stomach; he does not pay attention to his scribeship." Finally, there is preserved a laconic warning about the probably destiny of a scribe who, through malfeasance, might be forced to take up a more lowly occupation as a writer of magical incantations: "A disgraced scribe becomes a man of spells." (74)

V.

Babylonian schoolhouse literature considered as a whole affords a wealth of information about early schooling in the Near East. Inevitably, much data is missing. Still unanswered are questions concerning the social composition of scribes, prevailing patterns of socialization, and the issues of contention that must have made for lively, animated debate among the literati. Nonetheless a surprising amount of material has survived as a basis for reasoned conjecture. Details of the tablet-house curriculum, how instruction was managed and classroom discipline maintained, the larger role of the school within the political economy, the ideals of scribal craft—all can be gleaned from the lines of *edubba* compositions. More important, the figures of teacher and student are neither dim nor shadowy. They appear clothed with substance, so to speak, and their full humanity is preserved almost intact despite the lapse of almost forty centuries. They are individual characters with defined personalities: the despairing father and his delinquent son, an angry and impatient school monitor, the long-winded clerk, an obsequious schoolmaster all too willing to dispense praise for a price, a bully of a senior student and a disrespectful junior scribe. These *persona* add a dimensional quality largely absent in accounts of school life in other distant historical periods. What is all the more surprising is the substantial antiquity of these reports, and the sense for the familiar they engender for an otherwise remote cultural milieu.

The Greek satirist Lucian, in a dialogue on the vanity of human hopes and effort, written a full thousand years after the Babylonian tablet-house had slipped into history, ventured a melancholy prediction, "Nineveh," he wrote, "has already perished, and not a trace of it now remains. As for Babylon, the city of the magnificent towers and the great circuit—wall, soon it too will be like Nineveh, and men will look for it in vain." The Hebrew prophet Jeremiah advanced a similar prophecy concerning the ancient land of Mesopotamia: "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwells, neither does any son of man pass thereby." For almost another two millennia the prophets' declarations held true, until the remains of once-mighty civilization were once again brought to light. Only in modern times has appre-

ciation grown for the extent of mankind's indebtedness to that ancient culture. Revealed by the documents is an image of Mesopotamia as an important and great civilization early in the history of the human race. Although difficult to fathom and to appreciate across the span of so many centuries, complex and alien in its functioning, and somewhat inaccessible by virtue of the difficulties presented by its long-dead languages, Mesopotamia nonetheless emerges as a civilization aware of its own image, as focused and purposeful in its aspirations, and as consistent in all the facets of its self-expression as any of the later great civilizations. (75) The historical account of how that culture was shaped, defined, and preserved in the humble Babylonian tablet-house forms an integral part of the picture, and at one suggests something of the timeless character of institutionalized educational effort.

NOTES

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1. A. Leo Oppenheim, "A Note On The Scribes In Mesopotamia," in *Studies In Honor Of Benno Landsberger On His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, April 21, 1965*, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago Assyriological Studies No. 16, edited by Hans G. Güterbock and Thorkild Jacobsen (Chicago, 1965), p. 253.
2. The earliest reference of record to schooling in Egypt appears in the "Instruction of Duauf (or Khety)," dating to the early portion of the second millennium: "Instruction . . . composed for his son . . . when he voyaged up to the Residence, in order to put him in the School (or House) of Books, among the children of the magistrates. . . ." Cited in Johann A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians,* translated by A.M. Blackman (London, 1927), p. 68. For a discussion of "wisdom" or teaching texts *(sebayet)* and the difficulty of dating schools earlier than the fourteenth century, see John A. Wilson, "Scribal Concepts of Education," in *City Invincible, A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East,* edited by Carl H. Kraeling and Robert M. Adams (Chicago, 1960), pp. 102-104; and Jacquetta Hawkes, *The First Great Civilizations* (New York, 1973), pp. 435-436. Still less can be said authoritatively about schooling in ancient India. Note the dated but still useful discussions in Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India* (London, 1962), chapter V and VI; Ernst J. Mackay, *Early Indus Civilization,* 2nd edition (London, 1948), pp. 123-128; R.E.M. Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge, 1953), *passim.*; and the reference in Hawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 279. For a more general analysis, see C.J. Gadd, *Teachers And Students In The Oldest Schools, An Inaugural Lecture* (London, 1956), pp. 1-2. The claim that Sumerian-Akkadian schools enjoy chronological priority is advanced by, among others, Samuel Noah Kramer in *History Begins At Sumer* (Garden City, New York, 1959), chapter 1.

3. Consult Adam Falkenstein, *Archaische Texte aus Uruk* (Leipzig, 1942), *passim.* and especially pp. 64ff.
4. The bulk of documents presently available which reveals the work of scribes in keeping economic and political records dates mainly from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods (c. 2220-1600 B.C.). Refer to Oppenheim, *Letters From Mesopotamia;* Henry Frederick Lutz, "Sumerian Temple Records Of The Late Ur Dynasty," *Semitic Philology* 9 (May 31, 1928): 117-268; Tom B. Jones and John W. Snyder, *Sumerian Economic Texts from the Third Ur Dynasty* (Minneapolis, 1961); Tom B. Jones, "Sumerian Administrative Documents: An Essay," in *Sumerological Studies In Honor Of Thorkild Jacobsen*, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago Assyriological Studies No. 20, edited by Stephen J. Lieberman (Chicago, 1976), pp. 41-1; and Edmund Sollberger, *Business and Administrative Correspondence under the Kings of Ur* (Locust Valley, New York, 1966).
5. The following discussion of Scribal titles follows Benno Landsberger, "Scribal Concepts of Education," in Kraeling and Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95; and his "Babylonian Scribal Craft and its Terminology," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third International Congress of Orientalists* (London, 1954), pp. 123-127.
6. For an illuminating discussion of the notion of a "strategic elite" and its contrast with the concept of a "ruling class," consult Suzanne Keller, *Beyond the Ruling Class: Strategic Elites in Modern Society* (New York: 1963), pp. 4-58. While her observations are intended to apply to modern societies, her analysis of elitist recruitment, internal organization, degree of specialization, and social standing can be adapted readily to an archaic society with equal facility.
7. See E.F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien* (Leipzig, 1923), p. 108; and Oscar Schroeder, "Ein mündlich zu bestellender altbabylonischer Brief," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 21 (1918): 5ff.
8. See A. Leon Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 157 ff.; and Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (London, 1964), chapter 11.
9. The case for the essential continuity of the Old Babylonian literary tradition with the earlier Ur III period is made persuasively by Bendt Alster in "On The Earliest Sumerian Literary Tradition," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 28 (1976): 109-126. See also F.R. Kraus, *Wandel und Kontinuität in der sumerisch-babylonischen Kultur* (Leiden, 1954), pp. 24 ff.
10. This abbreviated analysis depends in part upon the interpretation and summation offered in Oppenheim, *Letters From Mesopotamia,* p. 36.
11. References to the *edubba* were first collected by Adam Falkenstein, "Der 'Sohn des Tafelhauses,' " *Welt des Orients* 1 (1948), pp. 174-175. Note also the citation of variant renderings in Åke W. Sjöberg, "The Old Babylonian Eduba," in Lieberman, *op. cit.*, p. 159, note 1.
12. G.R. Castellino, "Two Sulgi Hymns," *Studi Semitici* 42 (1972): 30-31. The specific citation is to Hymn B, lines 13-20, which refers to the education of Ishme-Dagan, Viceroy of Ekallatum (c. 1781-1742 B.C.). The translation is modified following Sjöberg in Lieberman, *op. cit.*, p. 176, note 60. Nisaba, goodness of science, "who in her hand holds the stylus," was the patron deity of scribes and the art of writing. Consult Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 242.
13. Castellino, *op. cit.*, p. 62. Refer to Falkenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 185; and for a more extended discussion, see W.H.P. Römer, *Sumerische "Königshymnen" der Isin-Zeit* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 21-29; and William W. Hallo, "Toward A History Of Sumerian Literature," in Lieberman, *op. cit.*, p. 193, note 79.

14. This, at any rate, is the interpretation offered in M. Civil and R.D. Biggs, "Notes sur des textes sumériens archaiques," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 60 (1966): 1-16. The reasonable assumption is that the royal court ordered hymns to the king from the *edubba* and that the teaching scribes composed hymns for the palace while also using them for instructional purposes.
15. R. Frankena, "Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift and Übersetzung," *Briefe aus dem British Museum*, Vol. 2 (Leiden, 1966), p. 48, #81; and British Museum, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* 2 (London, 1896-), plate 11, lines 29-31.
16. Nederlandsch Archaeologisch Philologisch Instit voor het nabije ossten, *Tabulae Cuneiformae a F.M. Th de Liagre Böhl Collectae* (Leiden, 1954), #84, lines 21-23. See Also I.J. Gelb, et. al., *The Assyrian Dictionary* Vol. Z (Chicago and Gluckstadt, 1956-), p. 75; and University (of Pennsylvania) Museum, *Babylonian Section, Publication No. VII* (1911-), #89.
17. Erich Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts* (Leipzig, 1919), p. 200, #122, line 10.
18. Gerhard Meier, "Ein akkadisches Heilungsritual aus Bogazköy," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archaologie*, 45 (1935): 200, line 4.
19. Consult the additional references cited in Sjöberg, *op. cit.*, p. 160, note 4.
20. Benno Landsberger, "Scribal Concepts of Education," in Kraeling and Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Landsberger's judgment is that the tablet-house disappeared after the Old Babylonian II period (ends with Samsu-ditana, c. 1625-1595 B.C.) and that scribal education, paralleling the change from a form of democracy to feudalism under the Kassites, fell into the hands of individual families, a kind of nobility who traced their ancestry back ten or twelve generations. For a discussion and analysis of the lineage of prominent scribal families, consult W.G. Lambert, "Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 11 (1957): 1 ff.
21. The rendition follows Sjöberg, *op. cit.*, p. 159; a variant translation is given in Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians, Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago, 1963), p. 236.
22. Illustrative reports include Donald E. McCown, "Writing and History: The New Tablets from Nippur," *The University (of Pennsylvania) Museum Bulletin* 16 (July, 1951): 21-27; and Donald E. McCown, "Interim Report on the Excavations at Nippur," *Sumer* 6 (1950: 90-100.
23. For a representative sample of archaeological reports and technical commentary, see Adam Falkenstein, "Zu den Inschrifttenfunded der Grabung in Urak-Warka, 1960-61" *Baghdad Mitteilungen* 2 (1963): 41-42; Leonard Woolley, "Excavations at Ur, 1930-1," *Antiquaries Journal* 11 (1931): 365 ff.; and Woolley, *Excavations at Ur, A Record of Twelve Years' Work* (London, 1954), pp. 185 ff.; C.J. Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Sjöberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-178; and D.E. McCown and R.C. Haines, *Nippur I*, Chicago University, Oriental Institute Publication No. 78 (1967), pp. 148-49. For a detailed description of temple schools, albeit for a later period, consult the references in H. Lensen, "Mesopotamien Tempelanlagen," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 18 (1955): 1-36; and, most recently, preliminary press reports of newly-uncovered school sites near Baghdad at Tell Abu Harmal (Šaduppûm) which appeared in Baghdad's official newspaper *Althawra* for July 20, 1977.
24. See D.D. Luckenbill, *Inscriptions from Adab*, Chicago University, Oriental Institute Publication No. 14 (1930), pp. 53-56; Civil and Biggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-5; and for a report on inscriptions presumed to be products of a tablet-house at Telloh, refer to F.

Thureau-Dangin, *Nouvelles fouilles de Telloh* (Paris, 1910-1914), *passim*. Inscriptions from Kisurra and Tell Ed-Dēr appear in Iraq Museum, *Texts in the Iraq Museum* 7 (Baghdad, n.d.), #236-253.

25. See R. Harris, "The Organization and Administration of the Cloister in Ancient Babylonia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 6 (1963): 138-139; and Benno Landsberger, *Materialienzum sumerischen Lexikon* 9 (Rome, 1937), p. 148. The subscript *munus* preceding *dubsar* ("scribe") following a tablet inscription shows the female gender of the writer, as in SU-MUNUS DUB.SAR on a Sippar tablet. Refer to Berlin Staatliche Museen, *Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmaler der Königliche Museen* 10 (Leipzig, 1907): #207. For another example, see British Museum, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* 6 (London, 1896), plate 35a. A third inscription is recorded in A. Leo Oppenheim, *Catalogue of the Cuneiform Tablets of the Wilberforce Eames Babylonian Collection*, American Oriental Series No. 32 (New Haven, 1948), p. 21-22.
26. Full reports appear in André Parrot, "Mission archéologique de Mari II: Le Palais, Architecture," *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* 68 (Paris, 1958), pp. 186-191 (plates XLI-XLII); Parrot, "Les fouilles de Mari, deuxième campaigne (Hiver, 1934-35)," *Syria* 17 (1936): 21 (plates 3, 4); and in "Les fouilles de Mari, troisième campaigne (Hiver 1935-36)," *Syria* 18 (1937): plate VIII. See also Adam Falkenstein's discussion in "Die babylonische Schule," *Saeculum* 4 (1953): 127; and the more cautious identification in F.R. Kraus, "Briefschreibübungen im altbabylonischen Schulunterricht," in *Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux,"* 16 (Leiden, 1964), p. 33.
27. J.J.A. Van Dijk, *La Sagesse suméro-accadienne* (Leiden, 1953), p. 24. For further explication of the important concept of *namlulu* or "humanity," see Kramer, *The Sumerians*, p. 243, 264, 285-286; and a commentary in Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 13, note 1.
28. Samuel Noah Kramer, *Cradle of Civilization* (New York, 1967), p. 124.
29. Samuel Noah Kramer, "Schooldays: A Composition Relating to the Education of a Scribe," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69 (1949): 203; 206, line 52.
30. Paul Haupt, "Arab, Tajr and Assyrian, Tamkaru," *Beträge zur Assyriologie* 10 (Baltimore, 1913) p. 36; and Haupt, "Ishtar's Azure Necklace," *ibid.*, p. 99. See also *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* 2 (London, 1896-), #K4815.
31. Text A comes from the library of Assurbanipal, at Nineveh, and is preserved in Musée national du Louvre, *Textes cunéiformes* (Paris, 1910), #1696. The translation and summary appears in Landsberger's "Scribal Concepts of Education," *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101. See also Åke W. Sjöberg, "Examenstext A," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 64 (1975): 137-176.
32. Landsberger, *ibid.*, p. 101.
33. Ake W. Sjöberg, "In Praise Of The Scribal Art," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 24 (1972): 126-129.
33. Åke W. Sjöberg, "In Praise Of The Scribal Art," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 24 (1972): 126-129.
34. See Benno Landsberger, "Zum 'Silbenalphabet B.'" *Zwei altababylonische Schulbücher aus Nippur* (Ankara, 1959) p. 98.
35. For example, the sign *ilu* as a heading signified that the entries to follow were names of divinities; *matu* indicated that the next list designated various peoples; and the sign for "wood" preceded "box" or the name of a type of tree, and so on. An illustrative list containing the sixty names of a deity appears in Bruno Meissner, "Tex-

tkritische Bemerkungen zu einem medizinischen Kompendium," *Archiv für Keilschrift-forschung* 1 (1923): 12.

36. Joint Expedition of the British Museum and of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, *Ur Excavations, Texts,* 6/2 (London, 1928), #167, lines 16-17; and Benno Landsberger, *Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon* 8 (Rome, 1937), #14; and the same phrase from a longer dialogue in Samuel Noah Kramer, "Sumerian Literary Texts from Nippur in the Museum of the Ancient Orient at Istanbul," *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 23 (New Haven, 1944): #116, obverse, lines 3-4.
37. Lines 198-200 of the bilingual vocabulary Erimhus I, for example, read: *dulla = redutu* ("succession"), édulla = *ėdullu ("a building"), lahlah = šalālu* ("to lead into captivity," "to plunder"). See E. Leichty, "The Omen Series Šumma Izbu," *Texts from Cuneiform Sources* (Locust Valley, New York, 1970), p. 232; Gelb, *op. cit.*, vol. E, p. 38b and vol. L, p. 173 b. Old Babylonian lexical and grammatical texts are similarly divided into sections of etymologically unrelated words, each pair given in Sumerian and a translation. See Benno Landsberger, *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexicon* 2 (Rome, 1937), pp. 142-146; and Godrey Rolles Driver, *Semitic Writing from Pictograph to Alphabet* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 65 ff.
38. A good discussion of sign lists is supplied in A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 244 ff. Since some passages (as distinct from single words) were quite lengthy, it is doubtful whether they were memorized as was the case with the simpler bilingual vocabulary lists.
39. Edmund J. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs, Glimpses of Everyday Life In Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York, 1968), p. 208, #2.49.
40. Edward Chiera, *Sumerian Epics and Myths*, University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Publication No. 15, Cuneiform Series III (Chicago, 1934), #67, obverse, lines 7-8.
41. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 206, #2.47.
42. See J.S. Cooper, "Sumerian and Akkadian in Sumer and Akkad," *Orientalia*, new series 42 (1973): 239-246. For the contrary interpretation, see Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 18; and the discussion in Sjöberg, "The Old Babylonian Eduba," *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.
43. *Ur Excavations, Texts* 6/2, *op. cit.*, #150, line 10.
44. Universität Jena, *Texte und Materalien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities im Eigentum der Universität Jena*, Neue Folge 3 (Leipzig, 1932), #42ii, line 13.
45. *Ibid.*, line 6: and see also Samuel Noah Kramer, "Sumerian Literary Texts," *op. cit.*, line 56 of the same dialogue. In the exchange between Enkimansi and Girnishag, the one protagonist challenges his opponent with the question, "Do you, as I do, speak Sumerian?" *Loc. cit.*, line 66.
46. See M. Civil, "Notes on Sumeriar Lexicography I," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 20 (1966): 123.
47. Many examples of stele inscriptions survive. Note, for instance, the copy of a stele of Išme-Dagan of Isin reproduced in E. Chiera, *Sumerian Religious Texts* (Upland, Pensylvania, 1924), #13. For other illustrations, consult J.J.A. Van Dijk, "Textes divers du Musée de Baghdad," *Sumer* 11 (1955): 110, plate XVI. and Åke W. Sjöberg, "Ein Selbstpreis des Königs Hammurbai von Babylon," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebeite* 54 (1961): 51-70.
48. *Ur Excavations, Texts* 6/2, *op. cit.*, #150. Note also the reference: "to write a stele, to draw a field, to settle accounts," in Sjöberg, "In Praise of the Scribal Art," *op. cit.*, p. 127, line 15.

49. See also line 48 with its reference to "counting and accounting," in Kramer, "Schooldays," *op. cit.*, p. 206.
50. See the discussion in Adam Falkenstein, "Die Babylonische Schule," *Saeculum* 4 (1955): 132, note 28; and in his "Der 'Son des Tafelhauses,'" *op. cit.*, p. 185.
51. Sjöberg, "Examenstext A," *op. cit.*, p. 142. Other references to the teaching of music appear in Kramer, "Sumerian Literary Texts," *op. cit.*, lines 94-97; and in *Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection . . .*, *op. cit.*, #42, obverse 11, lines 10-15.
52. For commentary, consult J. Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priestertum der altbabylonischen Zeit," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 59 (1969): 181.
53. See Thorkild Jacobsen, "An Ancient Mesopotamian Trial for Homicide," *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* 12 (Rome, 1959): 130-150.
54. A. Goetze, *The Laws of Eshnunna* (New Haven, 1956), p. 14.
55. Landsberger, "Scribal Concepts of Education," *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.
56. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 202, #2.40.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 204, #2.43. Alternatively: "A scribe who writes illegibly or cannot take accurate dictation is as useless as a mute (or untalented) singer."
58. Quoted in Sjöberg, "The Old Babylonian Eduba," *op. cit.*, p. 170. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, p. 241, translates "cannot take dictation."
59. Note the technical analysis appearing in Adam Falkenstein, "Zur Chronologie der sumerischen Literatur," *Compte rendu de la seconde Rencontre assyriologique internationale* (Paris, 1951), pp. 12-30; and the discussion in M. Civil, "Remarks on Sumerian and Bilingual Texts," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26 (1967), pp. 201 ff.
60. See William W. Hallo, "Toward A History of Sumerian Literature," in Lieberman, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-203. Hallo's judgment is that many of the finest compositions from the courts of Lagash, Ur, and elsewhere in Neo-Sumerian times (c. 2200-1900 B.C.) derived wholly or in part from prototypical exemplars dating back to Old Sumerian times (c. 2500-2200 B.C.), and were either revised or updated subsequently by Babylonian scribes. See also his "On the Antiquity of Sumerian Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963): 167-176.
61. See W. Von Soden, *Zweisprachigkeit in der geistig en Kulture Babylonians* (Vienna, 1960); and D.O. Edzard, *Heidelberger Studium zum alten Orient* (Weisbaden, 1967), pp. 185-199.
62. An interesting account is given in William W. Hallo, "Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 71-89. Also useful for a broader perspective is Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Philadelphia, 1972).
63. Gadd, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-42. See also R.H. Phiffer, "Fables and Didactic Tales," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, edited by James B. Pritchard (Princeton, 1955), p. 411.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
66. Kramer, "Schooldays," *op. cit.*, p. 199; Kramer, *The Sumerians*, p. 237. See also Kramer, *History Begins At Sumer*, chapter 2.
67. Sources are given in Kramer, "Schooldays," *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.
68. Quoted passages are free renditions from the German translation in Åke W. Sjöberg, "Der Vater Und Sein Missratener Sohn," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 25 (1973): 105-169.
69. A contrary interpretation holds that the character of the father in this essay claims to be a "singer" (*nar*). For reasons too complex to treat succinctly, one scholar's settled

conclusion is that the entire composition should be viewed as a satire of the profession of singers, composed by scribes. Consult Brendt Alster, "On the Sumerian Composition 'The Father and His Disobedient Son'," *Revue d' Assyriologie et d' archéologie orientale* 69 (1975): 81-84.

70. See Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 31; and *Sjöberg*, "The Old Babylonian Eduba," *op. cit.*, p. 170.
71. The term *galam huru* or "clever fool" shares the literal sense of the Greek "sophosmoros," or in English, "sophomore." Kramer, *The Sumerians*, p. 241; and Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 34, note 1.
72. The narrative is freely adapted and selectively rendered after several published sources, according to whatever seems to yield the clearest sense. Consult the variants in *Texte une Materialen der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection . . .*, *op. cit.*, #42; Kramer, *The Sumerians*, pp. 242-243; and in Gadd, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
73. Kramer, The Sumerians, pp. 247-248.
74. Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 204, 207, 210, 211; respectively, #2.37, 2.44, 2.48, 2.53, 2.54.
75. Oppenheim, *Letters From Mesopotamia*, pp. 9-10.