MURDER IN MESOPOTAMIA

By D. J. WISEMAN

This contribution to the volume in honour of Sir Max Mallowan has its starting point in texts found at Nimrud (Calah) during the excavations he directed there in 1949–57.[1] The initial publication of texts soon after their discovery was invariably due to his personal encouragement and realization of their wide-ranging importance and interest. Indeed, his work at the site produced much new evidence for the political and cultural history of Assyria during the last four centuries of its power when it dominated much of the ancient Near East.[2] Later generations may well attribute to his work there much of the change from the traditional picture of Assyrian kings as primarily the forerunners of military frightfulness to a new view of them as sensitive, able leaders, administrators and builders. It is true that they always needed to be alert to guard their personal position while they maintained law and justice in troubled times which then, as so often in the history of Mesopotamia, required the use of military resources to maintain territorial integrity and the economic basis on which it depended.

The vassal-treaties imposed by Esarhaddon illustrate the means by which the stability of the royal dynasty was maintained and the often precarious nature of the king's hold over his subject peoples.[3] The stipulations presented to them both orally and in writing in May 672 B.C. called both for an initial affirmation of loyalty and for its periodic renewal.[4] The royal house, among other considerations, was to be inviolate; no person not nominated by the king himself as his royal successor, even if a member of the royal family, was to be put on the throne (ll. 55–71). No vassal was ever to take violent action against the crown-prince designate who had been presented publicly to them all in a solemn ceremony (ll. 66–7; 105–6).[5] To this end no one was to pay attention to anyone who might speak with him about, or plan, murder (l. 133).[6] Any such plot had to be reported as had any rumour or stirring to revolution. The vassal had to capture and put to death anyone who murdered Aššurbanipal the crown-prince and, further, had to take vengeance on the whole of the murderer's family by shedding " blood for blood ' (*dāme kūm dāme*), so eradicating their name and descendants from the land (ll. 254–8). This stipulation

[1] M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains* I–II (1966). The title of this article has been chosen, with apologies to Dame Agatha Christie Mallowan, in the hope that it may be a small tribute to them both for all they have done together for the British School of Archaeology in Iraq at Nimrud and elsewhere over more than forty years.

[2] M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains* I–II (1966); W. W. Hallo, " The Rise and Fall of Kalah ", *JAOS* 88 (1968), 772–5.

[3] *Iraq* 20 (1958), 1–99; R. Borger *ZA* 54 (1961), 173–196; E. Reiner, *ANET* (1969), 534–541.

[4] *Iraq* 20 (1958), 3 ff.

[5] *qātē*^{II}*-kunu ana limnēti ina libbīšu tubbalāni*; to lay hands on, to bring (Reiner, " lift ") the hands against a person (or country) with evil intent is a stronger action than mere hostility (cf. *CAD* A/1, 19; H. Güterbock, *ZA* 42 (1934), 53 (l. 29)).

[6] Cf. *ABL* 1279, r. 8, 23, " if you hear of a plot to murder (*ša dâki*) or do away with Aššurbanipal ". For " murder " as opposed to " execute ", i.e. put to death judicially (passim) see *CAD* D, 35–43, especially sub 2. For *ana dâkim kullum*, " to vow to murder " see *RA* 62 (1968), 24.

was followed by one which required them to swear never to murder the crown-prince by giving him poisoned food or drink or by causing him to anoint himself with some deadly embrocation. Nor were they to practise witchcraft against him or to bring the anger of his personal god or goddess upon the heir-apparent (ll. 258–265). All these were presumably among the common methods used in cases of regicide or murder.

Considerable emphasis is placed in this text on the need to warn the king of impending danger and to protect him whether in the country or within the city (ll. 49–50, 99–100).[7] The vassal had the additional obligation to put to death any usurper (l. 306). While the king's safety largely lay in his personal relationships with his family and the state and palace officials and servants, all of whom are listed as potential enemies of the crown, it was probably effected by a special class of personal attendants close to the king.[8] These flanked the king even during certain ritual ceremonies.[9] There was also the royal guard (*ša qurbūti ša šarri*) attached to the king or acting as household infantry (*qurbūti ša šēpē*) or cavalry (*qurbūti ša piṯḫalli*).[10] These were employed on guard duties outside the palace in addition to their responsibilities in the field, and may have worn distinctive uniforms.[11] Both the king and the crown-prince also had special chosen and skilled personnel, possibly including trusted foreigners, who would act as bodyguards.[12] Thus in an earlier attempt at political assassination in Mari, Kibri-Dagan once exposed a plot with the following caution: " Heaven forbid that my lord should be in a hurry to go out from the palace into the street. For as long as the king has not put these men in chains, nor brought his foes and his enemies to his feet, nor put them in prison, do not let my lord leave the palace for two or three days." [13] There are similar warnings in other Old Babylonian letters: " Protect yourself! Station at your side your servants and trustworthy persons (*ebbūtū*) on whom you can rely. Let them stand by you so that they can guard you. Never walk alone! " [14]

[7] *Naṣāru*, translated " serve " by E. Reiner, *ANET* (1969), 534 ff., ll. 50, 65, 100, 169; the restoration in ll. 329, 331 is doubtful, means " to guard or keep (a covenant) ", or " keep (faith with) " as Heb. *nāṣar*, Ps. 78:7, etc. (M. Weinfeld, *JAOS* 93 (1973), 193, 198 n. 104). The context of Esarhaddon's treaties is in each case one of violent action (ll. 67–71) or fighting for the crown-prince so the emphasis is here on protection (cf. *AHw*, 756a). The phrase *ina eqli* (*ina*) *birti āli* (ll. 49, 99) may emphasize the open (undefended) country and the fortified (defended) city rather than the latter be translated simply " town " (as E. Reiner, loc. cit., 535). It differs from *ālu libbi āli* (" Binnenstadt ", *RlA* I, 173) which is generally taken as a name for Assur (URU ŠÀ URU, so *VTE*, l. 31; A. L. Oppenheim, *ANET* (1950), 281, n. 4; and now G. van Driel, *The Cult of Aššur* (1969), 200, l. 6′; J. N. Postgate, *CTN* 2 (1973), 231 (no. 248, 6) (contra *Iraq* 13 (1951), 116 (ND 487); 14 (1952), 65, n. 7).

[8] In Old Babylonian times these were the *girseq(q)û*, pl. *gir-sig$_5$-ga-te* (A. Goetze, *JCS* 11 (1957), 81), possibly a eunuch (*CT* 39, 45, 33). For their rôle as a bodyguard in battle, see J. M. Sasson, *The Military Establishments at Mari* (1969), 19 f.

[9] G. Dossin, *RA* 35 (1938), 2 ii 17–18.

[10] J. N. Postgate, *The Governor's Palace Archive* (= *CTN* 2, 1973), 69 (32, 7′).

[11] J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud Wine Lists* (= *CTN* 1, 1972), 48–9.

[12] D. J. Wiseman, *BSOAS* 30 (1967), 495, ll. 12′–14′ (*kiṣri maṣṣārtu dunnūt* ^{mā}'GNN *ša bīt rēdûti lū nasqu lū bēri*). Similarly David employed foreign mercenaries (Kerethites, Pelethites and Gittites) in his bodyguard. They were used to quell internal rebellion (2 Sam 15:17–21) but could be mobilized with the standing army especially if there was any delay in its call-up (2 Sam 18:2). The role of the third man in the chariot as a royal guard should be noted. Respect for the king's person was such that one refused to kill off his master even when he lay mortally wounded in battle (1 Chron 10:4).

[13] *ARMT* III, 18, 17–27.

[14] *ARMT* X, 7, 8–22.

Regicide

In Assyria. The assertion which is often made that murder of a king by his sons, or others, was a common fate among Oriental monarchs [15] may be questioned. In the long line of eighty-two kings of Assyria from Erišum I (*c.* 1950 B.C.) to Aššurbanipal (*c.* 627 B.C.) there seems to have been only one undisputed change in the dynastic line (under Šamši-Adad I).[16] On three occasions when the legitimate king (*šarru dannu*) [17] was removed (e.g. Aššur-rabi I, Šamši-Adad IV) or disappeared (Mutakkil-Nusku) he was replaced by a close member of the immediate ruling house. There are only three documented cases of regicide, none of which resulted in a change of dynasty, despite the fact that in each instance the intrigue was probably instigated by the Babylonians. The danger of assassination is one possible reason for the development during the first millennium B.C. of the practice of announcing the name of the successor during the life of the king [18] and for the institution of a form of co-regency.[19]

The murder of Tukulti-Ninurta I of Assyria is recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle: " Tukulti-Ninurta ruled Babylonia for seven years. Then the Babylonian nobles who had rebelled in Babylonia put Adad-šuma-uṣur on the throne there. Aššur-naṣir-apli, the son of Tukulti-Ninurta, who had planned to do evil against Babylonia,[20] rebelled against him and tore him from his throne. They imprisoned him in a house in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta and then put him to death by the sword (*idūkūšu ina ^{iš} kakki*).[21] Even if the name of the patricide, given as son and successor of Tukulti-Ninurta and father of Aššur-nerari (III) by the King List [22] were to be a scribal error for Aššur-nadin-apli the latter, possibly a brother,[23] is given as the family successor of Tukulti-Ninurta I and the dynasty was unchanged.[24] The motive for this murder is nowhere stated and its attribution to military defeats and widespread territorial losses must remain a surmise.[25] The Babylonian Chronicle has, among its purposes, to corroborate the revenge taken for the Assyrian removal of the statue of Marduk. It is, therefore, not without significance that the murder of another Assyrian King, Sennacherib, was taken by the same Chronicle to be a reprisal for his action, or that of his troops, in destroying the temples in Babylon and for the

[15] E.g. H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon* (1962), 123.

[16] The Synchronistic Chronicle gives 82 kings from Adasi (J. Brinkman, *The Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia* (1968), 30; the earlier part of the list may have omissions).

[17] A. L. Oppenheim, *ANET* (1950), 274, n. 1. The title *šar māt Aššur^{ki}* is itself no sign of legitimacy or otherwise in the King List. It is applied to Šamši-Adad I and omitted after Erišum.

[18] As shown by the procedure of installing the heir-apparent in the *bīt rēdûti* and by *VTE*, ll. 83–89.

[19] The association of princes in the administration may, in conjunction with acts which marked specific length of reign, be significant here, e.g. Shalmaneser III's recurrence in the *līmmu* list after 30 years (*RlA* II, 420), cf. Idrimi's hand over to Adad-nerari at the end of a thirty year rule at Alalah (Idrimi, 91), if this was not merely related to his personal affairs as suggested by Drower (*CAH* II/1 (1973), 435). The timing of such co-regencies varied, e.g. Belshazzar was associated with Nabonidus after his father had only ruled three years.

[20] Cf. n. 4 (here *ana bābili ana limutti* [*qās*]*su ūbillū*). In a study of law and order in the O.T. world (*Vox Evangelica* 8 (1973), 16–17), I have suggested that the phrase " to do right/evil " can denote a specific legislative act.

[21] Chron. P iv. 6–8; L. W. King, *Records of the reign of Tukulti-Ninib I* (1904), 96–100, 157; E. F. Weidner, *Die Inschriften Tukulti-Ninurtas I und seiner Nachfolger* (1959), 41–2 (Nr. 37, 7–11).

[22] I. J. Gelb, *JNES* 13 (1954), 219 iii 11–13.

[23] Weidner, op. cit., 42.

[24] *JNES* 13 (1954), 219 iii, 21.

[25] M. Munn-Rankin, *CAH* II/2 (1967), chap. XXV, 21.

removal of Marduk.[26] Such disrespect for Babylon has been suggested as the reason for the violent death at the hands of his own family of Tukulti-Ninurta I, as well as the Hittite Mursilis I, the Elamite Kudur-Nahhunte and the Persian Xerxes I.[27]

" On the 20th of the month Tebet, his son killed Sennacherib, king of Assyria, during a rebellion. Sennacherib had ruled as king over Assyria for 23 years. The revolt continued from the 20th of the month Tebet to the 2nd of the month Adar. On the 18th of the month Adar his son Esarhaddon sat on the throne of Assyria." [28] It has been argued that Esarhaddon himself was the son referred to in this Babylonian Chronicle and that he was the head of a pro-Babylonian party which planned the assassination. This is unlikely since he had been nominated crown-prince by his father and had been forced to hide, probably in Cilicia, due to the opposition of his brothers.[29] It may have been during his absence that his brothers rose and murdered their father (i.e. December/January 681/0 B.C.). Esarhaddon later publicly berated his brothers for plotting and, as " avenger " of his father, had a mausoleum built for him. He was much aggrieved when a contemporary failed to send condolences.[30] According to 2 Kings 19:37 Sennacherib " was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch when his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword and escaped to the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon reigned in his place." [31] The site of the crime was therefore Assyria as is borne out by Aššurbanipal's reference thirty-two years later to his punishment of those who had plotted evil (*ikpudūni limuttu*) against Aššur and himself: " I tore out their tongues and smote them down. The rest of the people by the (figures of the) protective deities between which my grandfather Sennacherib had been struck down, I myself struck down those very people while they were alive at the funerary offering for him (Sennacherib)." [32] This, however, does not elucidate the question of the precise number of plotters or the manner of the murder.

It is possible that Sennacherib had used the occasion when his subject peoples were present at the celebrations to mark the opening of his palace at Nineveh to remind them of their vassal obligations both to him and his crown-prince.[33] Esarhaddon's own vassal-treaty ceremony in 672 may have coincided with his completion of work on his own (" south-west ") palace at Calah. If Brinkman's conclusion of a date late in the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal II for the opening of his own palace at Calah is upheld [34]

[26] D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (1924) 161 (ll. 34–5), cf. 83 (ll. 46–8).

[27] J. Brinkman, *JCS* 25 (1973), 95 and n. 31.

[28] *CT* 34, 50 iii 28.

[29] R. C. Thompson, *The Prism of Esarhaddon and Sennacherib* (1931), 9 f. (i, 10–44). Note that Esarhaddon makes no direct reference to his father's death.

[30] So D. J. Wiseman in D. Winton Thomas (ed.), *Documents from O.T. Times* (1958), 71 based on the chronological arrangement of the Esarhaddon prism dated 673/2 B.C.; R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons* (1956), Nr. 27, Ep. 2.

[31] There is no indication in the juxtaposition of vv. 36–7 of how long this was after Sennacherib's return from Jerusalem. The name of his assailant may represent Arad-malki (and the other an abbreviation for (the god X)-šarru-uṣur). A West Semitic name is possible (cf. Atarmilki as suggested for Adrammelech of 2 Kings 17:31 in *RA* 30 (1933), 72).

[32] M. Streck, *Assurbanipal* (1916) II, 38 (Annals iv, 69–72).

[33] D. D. Luckenbill, op. cit., 116, viii 65–76 (*baḫulāte* need not refer only to the (native) subjects of Sennacherib or Sargon (as *CAD* B, 183, 2′).

[34] *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia* (1968), 186, n. 143. The Aššurnaṣirpal II stele may record a special religious occasion in which the population census was secondary. The inclusion of 5,000 important delegates from ten named regions (ll. 143–7) may indicate that the king had invited them to impress them with his power and wealth and to

that occasion too might have been the opportunity for his subjects to reaffirm their loyalty and for him to present his heir (Shalmaneser III) to them. Early in his reign he had taken action when the town of Suri in Bīt-Halupe had rebelled and murdered the Assyrian governor Hamatai, and set up as their king a commoner [35] Ahiababa whom they had brought in from Bīt-Adini.[36] Aššurnaṣirpal would have been well aware of potential danger to his own person. However, his opening ceremony at Calah may have been following traditional practice [37] though it is not impossible that the stele he erected by the main entrance to his throne room [38] reflected also the action of Shalmaneser I (*c.* 1274–1245) who had been a previous developer of Calah as a city, but not its original founder.[39] That monarch had set up stelae to commemorate the opening of the rebuilt temples of Ištar at Assur and at Nineveh.[40]

Aššur-nerari (V), the last of four kings to occupy Adad-nerari III's palace outside the inner citadel of Calah [41] was probably murdered in the city in 746 B.C. The motive might have been the discontent acerbated by the cutting off of the main trade-route with the south. In his predecessors' reign there had been an uprising

take the occasion for a renewal of their vassal obligations. Some of these could have been at the court for some years where they might have been held as hostages for the city-states which had paid tribute to Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884). Brinkman thinks that the ceremony took place *c.* 874–866 B.C. on the grounds that the reference to the Mediterranean in the historical summary (l. 11) cannot be a generalization (cf. " all countries beyond the Tigris to the Lebanon ") and must refer to an actual campaign of 875 or later. He considers that the peoples listed as attending the banquet, and the countries mentioned specifically as the source of persons settled in Calah (ll. 33–36), could not have arrived until late in his reign. Some of these peoples were in revolt early in his reign or had not yet been the target of military campaigns. However, an earlier date (e.g. *c.* 879/8) cannot yet be ruled out for the opening of the new capital. Aššurnaṣirpal's annals state that he was in residence in Calah in 878 B.C. and that the city was his basis for subsequent campaigns (*AKA*, 346 iii 1). The stele does not state that all work on the city had been completed or the annals that this was the first occupation of the site. It seems to have been a reoccupation of an older (ancestral?) holding during the eponymate of Šu-ilima-damqa in 879/8 B.C. (Annals, ii 131 (*ana ešŝūte aṣbat*), Standard Inscription 15 (*ana ešŝūti abni*), i.e. " I took up my residence in Calah again " as *CAD* E, 377). In his first year the king had begun work on a palace at Tušhan (Annals, ii 3–5) and on another at Dur-Aššur in the following year. By 878 work was also in progress at Kar-Aššur-naṣir-apli and Nibarti (Annals, iii 50). Tušhan was formally opened three years after work had commenced there, i.e. 879 B.C. It would seem improbable that Calah itself would have been accorded a lower priority in the building programme, especially as already in 881 labourers from the hill-tribes had been drafted in to do corvée work there (*kudurru*, Annals, ii 80), as were peoples from other lands (Annals, iii 125). Since the Suhu are already mentioned (Annals, i 100) as are the Hindanu (i 96) and Hatti (ii 32), it cannot yet be decided that the stele itself is as late as it is assumed are the Annals (877–867 B.C.). Cf. now W. Schramm, *EAK* II (1973), 31.

[35] *mār la mamman/mammana*. Since Aššur-dugul is designated *la mammana la* EN GIŠ.GU.ZA (*JNES* 13 (1954), 215 ii 8), and the six succeeding kings likewise, this points to " a person not of the immediate royal line ", possibly a " commoner " (as *ANET*, 280) rather than " usurper ".

[36] *AKA*, 281–2, 286 (Annals, i 75, 81–2, 93).

[37] Aššurnaṣirpal II may have held a separate ceremony for the dedication of the Ninurta temple in the month Šabaṭu (Annals, ii 134; cf. Stele l. 53). For festivals see *Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons*, Pl. 38, iii 37; R. Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 63, Ep. 23: 49 ff.; and D. D. Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib*, 116 (viii 74 f.) at the initiation of Sennacherib's palace (*ina tašrit ekalli*).

[38] M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains* (1966), I, 62–73; D. J. Wiseman, *Iraq* 14 (1952), 22–44; A. L. Oppenheim, *ANET* (1969), 558–560; J. N. Postgate, *CTN* 2 (1973), 238–240.

[39] For the early occupation of the SE. part of the acropolis, see *N & R*, 74 and for the Old Babylonian occupation of the site (*N & R*, 223). The town was then possibly called Kamilhu (W. W. Hallo, *JCS* 18 (1964), 83) and pronounced *Kâlḫ*; cf. Zalḫa (*PRU* VI 20, 8′) and Heb. *Kālaḥ* (Gen. 10:11). ^{al}*Kal-ḫi* is first found in a Middle Assyrian corn loan from Rimah (TR. 119, 6) dated to Shalmaneser I or a successor (*Iraq* 30 (1968), Pl. LXXII and p. 195).

[40] *AOB* I 124 iv 26.

[41] *N & R* I, 109.

(*sīḫu*) in Assur, Arrapha and Guzana during half the time he held the throne.[42] Except for an expedition to Namri, Aššur-nerari was confined to his own reduced territory. The rebellion in Calah itself in 746 is the only recorded *sīḫu* in which an Assyrian king may have died. His successor, Tiglath-pileser III, continued the same family line on the throne.

In Babylonia. If there are few recorded cases of regicide in Assyria, and these mainly attributed to divine vengeance for mistreatment of the gods of Babylon, the Babylonian Chronicle notes seven changes in the ruling houses in the post-Kassite period alone. These were, however, primarily changes due to invasion or tribal activity in the south.[43] The long line of ninety-eight kings recorded is but rarely besmirched with murder. This is mentioned in Babylonian omens which refer to historical rulers and events.[44] Sargon of Agade was accused by later historians of impiously establishing a substitute capital city which detracted from the " eternal " glory of Babylon itself.[45] The omens record that on an expedition to Marhaši he " was running into darkness " when Ištar " made her light appear for him ".[46] This seems to have been some form of miraculous delivery from a storm or death in battle with the Elamites. His successor Rimuš was said to have been killed by his officials (or servants, *wardūšu*) [47] with their cylinder seals or tablets (*ina kunukkātīšunu idūkūšu*). This method of murder is as yet hard to interpret. It has been suggested that the murder weapon was an actual cylinder seal [48] or even the pin on which such a seal was sometimes mounted.[49] Gadd thought that it might represent a stylus [50] and others heavy stone tablets used to batter the king to death in some murder by scribes.[51] Though improbable these ideas cannot be ruled out for lack of circumstantial evidence. However, it must be noted that the same omen, and manner of death, is related of kings Maništusu [52] and Šarkališarri.[53] The *kunukkāti* might represent some other cylindrically shaped objects [54] or one not related to the same root as " the seal ". Alternatively it may describe a sealed, and here perhaps a forged, document used to bring about the king's death.[55]

Later murder victims clearly recorded by Babylonian scribes include Xerxes, killed in August 465 B.C.[56] and Seleucus I, murdered in the land of Hani in August/September 281 B.C.[57]

[42] *RlA* III, 430 (years 762–758); for the year 746. *sīḫu ina* ^{al}*Kālḫi*.

[43] J. A. Brinkman, op. cit., 38.

[44] A. Goetze, *JCS* 1 (1947), 253–265.

[45] C. J. Gadd, *CAH* I/2 (1971), 419.

[46] A. Goetze, loc. cit., 256, n. 25 (*nūrīšu ušēṣû-*liberated him?); cf. *ša nūrum ūṣīšu* in an omen concerning the otherwise unknown ruler TE-Enlil (ibid., 263), perhaps indicating that it was a message sent by fire signals.

[47] A. Goetze (loc. cit., 257 and n. 27) cites a parallel form of the omen which shows that Rimuš was killed " by his palace " (*e-ka-lu-šu*) which he considered a possible error for " his ministers " (*su-ka-lu-šu*).

[48] H. Hirsch, *AfO* 20 (1963), 13, n. 128.

[49] W. W. Hallo, *HUCA* 33 (1967), 13, n. 107.

[50] C. J. Gadd, *History and Monuments of Ur* (1929), 96.

[51] *N & R* I, 336, n. 44; cf. 162.

[52] Goetze suggests that Maništusu like Rimuš may have died in a revolt and that this explains why a Mari liver omen refers the same omen to Rimuš (J. Nougayrol, *RA* 35 (1938), 41; A. Goetze, loc. cit., 257).

[53] *YBT* X, 44, 8.

[54] For *ku-nu-ka-tu(m)* see *CT* 45, 21:9 (O.B. list of objects); *AfO* 18 (1957/8), 306, iii 13, 17 (of ivory).

[55] Cf. the use of sealed royal letters to bring about the judicial procedure which led to Naboth's death (1 Kings 21:8).

[56] *LBAT* 1419 (BM 32234) quoted by R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626* B.C.–A.D. *75*, (1956), 17.

[57] *Iraq* 16 (1954), 205.

Other Babylonian rulers who died in mysterious circumstances may not have been the victims of murder plots. Tirika (of the Guti dynasty) "died amidst his army",[58] though according to Utuhegal he had been captured.[59] A similar equation of captivity and death occurs in the omens of Šulgi concerning his prisoner Tappa-darah.[60] Amar-Su'en of Ur, "to whose foot a . . . shoe was fitted, died from the 'bite' of the shoe".[61] This is generally taken to be death from an infection.[62] Irra-imitti, king of Isin, to avoid a time of ill-omen, installed a gardener, Enlil-bani, on his throne and even placed his own crown upon this "substitute king". While the latter was ruling, Irra-immiti died in his palace while supping hot porridge (*pappasu emmetu ina sarāpīšu imtūt*). As Enlil-bani "was still sitting on the throne he did not get up and was thus elevated to the real kingship".[63] Sin-iddinam of Larsa died when the stairway (or a ladder?) fell on him in the temple of Šamaš.[64] King Sumunasa "who died during his offering" was also no case of murder.[65] Since so little is stated about the manner of death of so many rulers, it may not be without significance that an unpublished fragment of an omen text dated to the second day of Tebet, third year of Nabonidus (31 December 553 B.C.) apparently links the names of the Kassite kings Burnaburiaš and Nazimurutaš with predictions of destruction by "ghost" (*ina zaqiqi utabbat*) and by floodwater(?) (*ina rāqi utabbat*) respectively (BM. 35163, ll. 1–4; Plate LVI).[66]

Outside Mesopotamia. It helps to set the above evidence of cases of regicide against the background of similar events outside Assyria and Babylonia.

In Elam an attempt to change the dynasty by the murder of Kadašman-Harbe, son of Karahardaš by his Assyrian wife, during a revolt proved unsuccessful. Aššur-uballiṭ of Assyria invaded Babylon, defeated the usurper, a commoner[67] named Nazibugaš (or Šuzigazi), and set his grandson, a young son of Kadašman-Harbe on the throne.[68] There is no evidence that the later ruling line in Elam was upset by internal upheavals even on the death of Untaš-^{d}GAL.[69]

The Hittite Hattusilis I had publicly proclaimed his own heir (and possibly thereby flouted ancient traditions of matriarchal descent) to avoid undue disturbances in the succession to the throne.[70] Telipinus, however, attributed the failure of his predecessors to instability due to several assassinations and much disorder in the ruling family.[71] His proclamation was directed specifically against regicide since bloodshed was common in the Old Kingdom. He tells how subjects in the conquered lands rebelled and conspired against their masters, the sons of Hattusilis, and contrived to kill the princes. Later Zidantas and Hantilis plotted and murdered Mursilis I. Hantilis seems to have lived in fear and eventually Zidantas murdered Pisenis, Hantilis' son, together with his brothers and leading citizens and so took over the throne. In due time the gods avenged the blood of

[58] A. Goetze, loc. cit., 259.

[59] *RA* 9 (1912), 111 f.; 10 (1913), 98 ff.; cf. H. Güterbock, *ZA* 42 (1934), 14.

[60] *YBT* X, 26, 31 f.

[61] *YBT* X, 18, 61; 25, 32.

[62] Goetze, loc. cit., 261, 265.

[63] L. W. King, *CCEBK* II, 12, 15; D. O. Edzard, *Die "Zweite Zwischenzeit" Babyloniens* (1957), 140 f.

[64] Goetze, loc. cit., 265.

[65] H. Hunger, *RA* 66 (1972), 180–1.

[66] Published by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

[67] See n. 35.

[68] C. J. Gadd, *CAH* II/2, chap. xliii, 11.

[69] R. Labat, *CAH* II/2, chap. xxix, 11.

[70] O. R. Gurney, *CAH* II/1 (1973), 666–8.

[71] H. A. Hoffner, in D. J. Wiseman (ed.), *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (1973), 205.

Pisenis and caused Ammunas to kill his own father Zidantas. After Huzziyas had become king, a plot he had instigated to have Telipinus and his wife Istapariyas killed became known. Telipinus drove him into exile, pardoned the brothers of Huzziyas, and became king himself.[72]

Mursilis II (1345–1310) recounting the deeds of his father Suppiluliumas recalled that the Egyptian Nibhururiya had died and his sonless widow wrote to Suppiluliumas asking for one of his sons in marriage as she was afraid. The Hittite sent his chamberlain to check the truth of her statement and then " concerned himself with the matter of a son ". Alas, the son he sent, Zannanza, was killed by the Egyptians soon afterwards.[73]

Tudhaliyas the younger was heir-apparent to the throne when murdered by a group of officers. There is some evidence that Suppiluliumas may have been acting on behalf of his father, himself possibly a younger brother of the older Tudhaliyas, and that he may have succeeded the murdered king only after the death of his own father.[74]

In Egypt regicide seldom if ever occurred and never resulted in a change of dynasty. Ammenemes I (*c.* 1791–1786) survived an assassination attempt about ten years before his death and just before his son was made co-regent.[75] Manetho's record that Ammenemes (II) " was murdered by his own eunuchs ",[76] may be a misplaced notice that belongs to Ammenemes I.[77] Examination of the mummy of Tutankhamun has failed to establish the cause of his death in 1352 B.C. The damage near his left ear could have been accidental or inflicted after death.[78] The harim-conspiracy against Ramesses III (*c.* 1160 B.C.) probably failed, for there is no sign in his mummy of a violent death and his heir, Ramesses IV, succeeded in the normal way.[79] The shattered skull of Seqenenre of the Seventeenth Dynasty is generally attributed to battle wounds at the hands of the Hyksos rather than to murder.[80]

In Syria also regicide is rarely attested. Hazael, a usurper,[81] murdered Adad-idri (Ben-hadad II), king of Assyria, at Damascus in 843 B.C. by suffocating him on his sickbed with netting or a blanket soaked in water, and then seized the throne.[82] The Assyrians remembered the disappearance of this Syria king who had been the victim of foul play.[83]

The Davidic dynasty in Judah was for a time torn by a series of regicides. Jehoram, who had murdered all his brothers to secure the throne, died of a diseased bowel,[84] and his son Ahaziah died at Megiddo, after being shot with Joram of Israel by the treacherous Jehu of Samaria.[85] The queen-mother Athaliah, who then took over by killing all royal rivals, was considered a usurper by the influential priesthood. Their leader, Jehoiada, organized her death outside the temple precincts and ensured the

[72] E. H. Sturtevant and G. Bechtel, *A Hittite Chrestomathy* (1935), 184–7.

[73] H. Güterbock, *JCS* 10 (1956), 94–5 (A iii 7, 13–15).

[74] O. R. Gurney, loc. cit., 673–4.

[75] *CAH* I/2 (1971), 498–9. I owe this and some of the following references to Mr. K. A. Kitchen.

[76] W. G. Waddell, *Manetho* (Loeb edn.), 66 f., 70 f.

[77] G. Posener, *Littérature et politique dans l'Égypte de la XII^e Dynastie* (1956), 68–9.

[78] I. E. S. Edwards, *The Treasures of Tutankhamun* (1973), 22.

[79] G. Faulkener, *CAH* II/2, chap. xxiii, 32–3.

[80] So T. G. H. James, *CAH* II/2 (1973), 289.

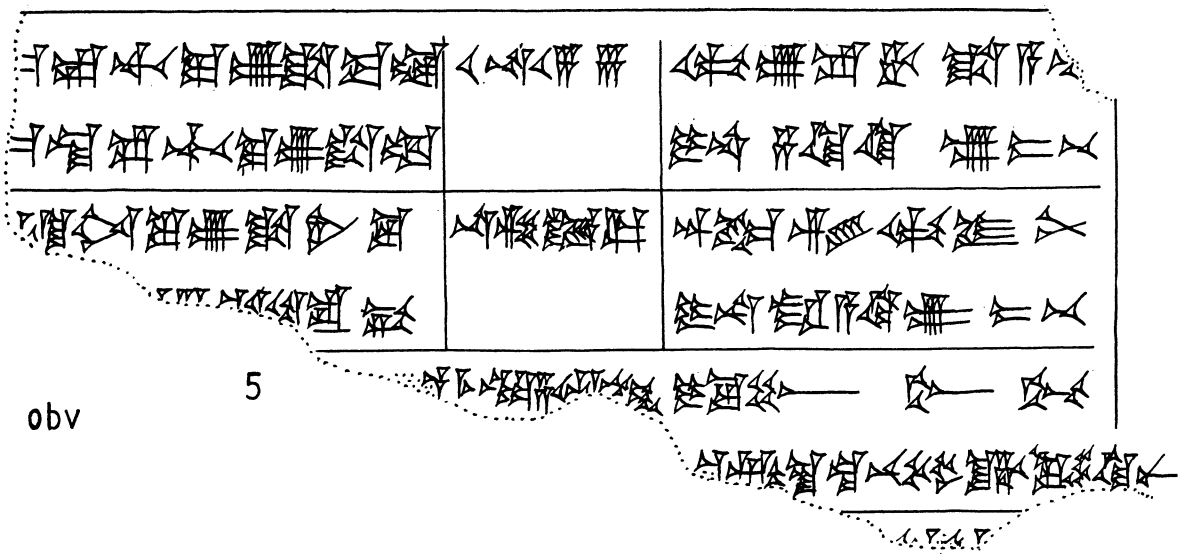
[81] *mār la mamman* must mean " usurper " here; cf. n. 35.

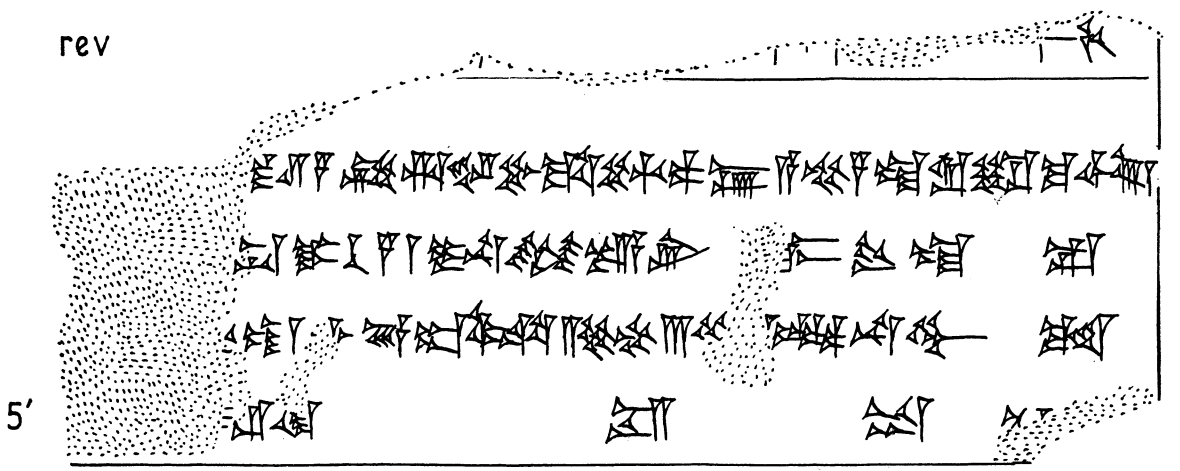
[82] 2 Kings 8:15.

[83] *AfO* 13 (1940), 233 f.

[84] 2 Chron. 21:18–20.

[85] 2 Kings 9:27.





BM. 35163 (Sp. II. 715).

continuation of the ruling house by setting a seven-year-old son of Ahaziah, Je(ho)ash, who had been hidden in the temple to avoid the queen-mother's pogrom, on the throne. So the royal line continued within the single family. However, in his turn Jehoash was assassinated by two officials, probably in revenge for his part in the execution of the priest Zechariah son of Jehoiada.[86] It is worthy of note that he was nevertheless succeeded by his own son Amaziah who was eventually also attacked and killed by rebels at Lachish, though the dynasty went on.[87]

It was seldom that circumstances enabled a small state to avenge itself upon its overlord by a single heroic deed. When a Benjaminite Ehud was handing over his country's tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, he pretended that he had a secret message to deliver. After all the royal attendants had withdrawn, Ehud stabbed the king to death with a long dagger he had strapped to his right thigh beneath his robes. He then left, locking the door to gain time to escape.[88]

No people liked to have the murderer of their own king as their new overlord,[89] for murder was an improper and unseemly act against the whole land whether directed against king or commoner.[90] It was the concern of all to safeguard the king, for as Adad-šumu-uṣur wrote to Esarhaddon: " My lord the king is the one selected by the great gods. The protection of the king my lord is beneficial to all ".[91]

Homicide

By its very nature homicide may be presumed to have been much more prevalent than regicide, yet the number of records of murder, that is unjustifiable homicide or killing other than in specifically judicial or military contexts, is small among the mass of extant cuneiform texts.[92] This may be less due to the accident of discovery than to the fact that most cases were dealt with locally if they ever came to court and to the custom of settling such affairs orally between the families concerned.

The perennial problem of the other man or third party is reflected in the only case of murder included in the laws of Hammurapi [93] where " a wife procured the death of a man (i.e. her husband) on account of another man " and was sentenced to be impaled (§ 153).[94] As with the other case-decisions in Hammurapi's collection the circumstances are not stated nor is the subject or murder specifically covered.

Few accounts of trials for murder have survived. One before the assembly at Nippur, dated early in the reign of Rim-Sin of Larsa, was recopied by later scribes with other cases before the same court, perhaps for didactic purposes. Three men, one a barber and another a slave, killed a priest named Lu-Inanna. When his wife was informed she refused to make any statement and the case was taken to king

[86] 2 Chron. 24 : 25 ; 2 Kings 12 :21.

[87] 2 Kings 14 :17–21.

[88] Judges 3 :14–26.

[89] *ABL* 1109, r. 10 (*bēl dāmē ša bēlīnu ina muhhīnu ul irabbī*).

[90] Tušratta letter (E. A. 17:14, *amata lā banīta ana mātīya īteḫušma u bēlšu idūk*) ; R. Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 103, ii 8 (*šarru ša anzilli la kittu ḫabālu šagāšu i[kkibšu]*).

[91] *ABL* 652, 18–19.

[92] For a partial study cf. S. J. Feigin, " Homicide in the ancient Oriental law and Babylonian-Assyrian contracts ", in *Hatequfah* 32/33 (1947), 746–765.

[93] Death of a distrainee from maltreatment (§ 116) and other cases of sudden death (§§ 207–212, 218, 229) are treated as justifiable homicide (or our " manslaughter ").

[94] *aššat awēlim aššum zikarim šanîm mūssa ušdik* ; Driver and Miles, *Bab. Laws* I, 313 suggest that she contrived the death by poison ; A. Poebel (*SAG* 1134) that " she gets (her lover) to kill " the husband (*ušdik* III/1).

Ur-Ninurta at Isin who referred it to the Nippur assembly (*puḫrum*). Nine men spoke and demanded the death penalty while two spoke in defence of the woman. The court ruled that the woman's guilt was greater than that of the three men since she could have passed on information to them and since she had refused to speak. The death sentence was pronounced on all four.[95]

In the thirtieth year of Rim-Sin of Larsa one Idiniatum carried off and stole a Subarean named Ribam-ili. He was caught by a shepherd, Abum-rabi, who locked both up in the house of a brewer. There Idiniatum strangled Ribam-ili. Evidence was taken on oath from all witnesses by judges in the court sitting in the gate of Ninmar who duly recorded their conviction of the murderer but specified no details of the sentence in the court record.[96] A case before king Niqmadu (II?) of Ugarit states that Gabanu put to death (*idūkšu*) Yatarmu the king's scribe who had acted in a hostile and disloyal way against the king. Gabanu gave the king the village of Beka-Ištar, presumably as compensation for, or as confiscated from, the deceased. Since the king then gave Gabanu some property and land belonging to another individual and freed him and his descendants from service to the palace for ever, it is possible that this murder was an act of protecting the king's person or had been instigated by the palace itself.[97]

Investigation of suspected murder cases was normally the responsibility of the citizens of the town in whose area the body was discovered.[98] When the body of a baby of less than a year old, so mutilated that the sex could not be determined, was found lying on the river bank, Bahdi-Lim of Mari reported to Zimri-Lim. He said that he had already questioned the overseers of the city-quarters, the skilled craftsmen and the harbour officials as well as the present " owner " of the child and its father and mother, but no one knew anything about the case. Interrogations continued for more than a week.[99] In a letter to Ammistamru II of Ugarit the king of Carchemish stated that the citizens of Arruwa had sworn on oath that they had not killed a woman's husband nor did they know who had killed him.[100] This disclaimer of responsibility was sufficient for the case to be dropped and for the indemnity money payable at Ugarit (usually 3 *mana* of silver) not to come into question.[101] Where caravaners were killed, inter-state complications occurred and it was customary to demand revenge for the bloodshed and the punishment of the culprits if diplomatic relations were not to cease.[102] So the king of Carchemish wrote, " They kill my merchants in the land of Amurru . . . they do not kill anybody in the land of the Hittites. If the king hears of any such thing, they seize the killer of such a person and hand him over to the brothers of the murdered man. His brothers take the monetary

[95] T. Jacobsen, " An ancient Mesopotamian Trial for Homicide ", *Studia Biblica e Orientalia* III (= *Analecta Biblica et Orientalia* 12, 1959), 130–150 (reprinted *Toward the Image of Tammuz* (1970), 193–214).

[96] B. Landsberger, *ZA* 43 (1936), 315–6; cf. J. G. Lautner, *Die richterliche Entscheidung und die Streitbeendigung im altbabylonischen Prozessrechte* (1922), 74 ff.

[97] J. Nougayrol, *PRU* III (1955), 68–9 (no. 16.269).

[98] So also LH § 23; Deut. 21 : 1–9, i.e. the same procedure as for fugitive slaves, missing persons or robbers (Alalakh Tablet 2, ll. 27, 37, 43, 53).

[99] " Knew about " or " identified it " (*idū ūl ilêm*; *ARM* VI, 43, translated by A. L. Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia* (1967), 103–4; cf. *dāik* ^{I}*Ipqatum la idū anāku la ušāhizzu*, " I do not know the murderer of I., I did not incite him " (*CT* 29, 42, 13–14).

[100] *Ugaritica* V, 27, 40 ff.

[101] *PRU* IV, 152.

[102] H. Reviv, *JESHO* 12 (1969), 283–297.

compensation for the murdered man and they perform the expiatory ritual on the murderer, through whose act a life was taken. But if the brothers do not want to accept a monetary compensation, they execute the man who has taken a life." [103] In the case of murdered slaves compensation might be in kind. Thus when the slave wife of Bel-ilani-uṣuršu was shot and killed with an arrow, the murderer was required to repay seven slaves.[104] Such action and the payment of blood-money (*dāmē*) [105] by the murderer (*bēl dāmē*) [106] were doubtless the mainstay of the customary law which held murder in check.[107]

[103] *KBo* I, 10; *KUB* III, 72 as translated by A. L. Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia*, 144.

[104] *BBSt* 9, 5 (p. 57).

[105] So *CAD* D, 79 sub *dāmu*.

[106] In Hittite this is " the one responsible for the blood ", i.e. the person who has the right to claim the blood-money (V. Korošec, *Staatsvertrāge*, 38). Other terms for murder include *tābik dāmē*, *TCL* 3, 150; *Šurpu* II, 49). While *ša nērti* may be so used it is more frequently used of violent action whether against humans or property. Thus the man charged with " murder " (*amēlu eli amēli nīrtu iddīma* (*Iraq* 27 (1965), 6, iii. 21) and subject to the river ordeal seems to have been involved in causing maltreatment resulting in death. In royal titles *nâru* is used only of a king killing foreign enemies (M-J. Seux, *Epithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* (1967), 197–200. On *nâ/ê/rum* see also *JNES* 16 (1957), 259; cf. *ikappudūšu nīrti* (*BWL*, 88; Theodicy, l. 284).

[107] E.g. A. K. Irvine, " Homicide in pre-Islamic South Arabia ", *BSOAS* 30 (1967), 277–292.