

Zeitschrift: Genava : revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie
Herausgeber: Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève
Band: 8 (1960)
Heft: 1-4

Artikel: Sumerians and Akkadians in their ethno-linguistic relationship
Autor: Gelb, I. J.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-727774>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 16.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

zur patriarchalen Struktur vielleicht nicht einzig und allein auf akkadischen Einfluß zurückführen. Fratriarchale Verhältnisse sind in erster Linie in dörflichen Siedlungen mit nahe beieinander oder in Hausgemeinschaft wohnenden Familienverbänden möglich. In dem notwendigerweise zur Auflockerung größerer Familienverbände führenden Stadtleben dürfte sich Fratriarchat reiner Form nicht haben halten können. Das würde aber bedeuten, daß die Auflösung des Fratriarchats als Form der Familie schon in ältere Zeit fiel als die Aufgabe der fratriarchalischen Verwandtschaftsterminologie.

I. J. GELB, University of Chicago:

SUMERIANS AND AKKADIANS IN THEIR ETHNO-LINGUISTIC RELATIONSHIP

THE problem under inquiry in this paper pertains to the ethno-linguistic relationship between two peoples of a completely different origin, namely the Sumerians, who spoke an agglutinative-type language of unknown linguistic affiliation, and the Akkadians, in later times subdivided into Babylonians and Assyrians, who spoke a language belonging to the Semitic group. Some discussion will be devoted in this paper to the problem of the proto-population of Mesopotamia, that is, the population which both the Sumerians and the Akkadians may have encountered at the time of their entry into Mesopotamia.

The area here studied is Mesopotamia, particularly its southern part, called Babylonia in later times, and extending roughly from the modern Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. Within Babylonia we distinguish the southern part, called Sumer (or *Ki-en-gi* /*Ki-ĝir*/ in Sumerian), and the northern part, called Akkad (or *Ki-uri* in Sumerian).

The time covered is from the beginnings of Mesopotamian history down to the Old Babylonian period, when Akkadian established itself firmly as the dominant language in Babylonia, relegating Sumerian to the status of a "dead" language, limited to historiography, law, and religion. Within this long span of time we distinguish six periods:

1. The Earliest Babylonia.
2. The Proto-Literate Period, up to about 2800 B. C.
3. The Proto-Dynastic Period, up to about 2340 B. C.

4. The Sargonic Period, about 2340-2159 B. C.
5. The Ur III Period, about 2158-2008 B. C.
6. The Old Babylonian Period, about 2025-1725 B. C.

Before entering into a discussion of the main topic it is necessary to clear up the terminology in respect to my use of the term "ethno-linguistic." Some time ago¹ I defined the terms "nation" (*dēmos*) and "people" (*ethnos*) in the following way: "The definition of "nation" is relatively easy: "nation" is a political term denoting a body of persons linked together by a state or by the common will to a state. Definition of the ethnic term "people" is more difficult, as the traits characterizing a people are more numerous and more complex. The main traits of a people are community of tradition, customs, religion, culture, language, and geographic position. Not all of these traits are of equal strength, and indeed some of them may even be absent. Quite influential are the ties of common tradition in respect to descent. Compactness of geographic position is an important factor, even though parts of the same ethnic unit may at times inhabit widely scattered areas. Religion as an ethnic tie varies in strength. Language as the vehicle of tradition is one of the strongest foundations of a people. As an outward expression language becomes the symbol with which a people is most easily identified. For a people to give up its language in favor of another normally means the renunciation of its own ethnic identity and subsequent assimilation into the ethnic group from which the new language has been taken."

In using the terms "Sumerians" and "Akkadians" I mean the Sumerian and Akkadian peoples, respectively; under the terms "Sumerian people" and "Akkadian people" I mean mainly, though not exclusively, peoples who spoke the Sumerian and Akkadian languages, respectively. I have tried to justify the truism that *lingua fecit gentem* in the following way: ² "The importance of language in ethnic reconstructions is more evident in connection with ancient than with modern times, for in our day ethnic values are frequently confused with political, nationalistic, and racial attitudes. The ancient Near East is full of pertinent illustrations proving the closest connections between language and people. To quote just a few examples, we know that the Sumerians lost their ethnic identity when they gave up their language in favor of Babylonian, and that later the Babylonians and Assyrians disappeared as a people when they accepted the Aramaic language. The same trend continued when with the advent of Islam the Arabic language spread over the broad area extending from Mesopotamia to Egypt and beyond. Such cases as these, I believe, justify my acceptance of language as a basic means of distinguishing various ethnic units in the ancient Near East."

¹ *Hurrians and Subarians* (SAOC XXII; Chicago, 1944) p. v.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. v f.

The second point that needs to be stressed here is the relationship of *ethnos* to *dēmos*, specifically as it pertains to the origin of *dēmos*. In his widely quoted article, published over twenty years ago,³ Thorkild Jacobsen assumed that the conflict between the various human groupings in ancient Mesopotamia was based not on racial but on purely political and territorial factors. He maintained that the conflicts which can be attested in texts referred not to conflicts between the Sumerians and Semites as representing two different racial groupings, but to conflicts between one city and another or between one city-state and another, irrespective of whether they were occupied by Sumerians or Akkadians. Without attempting to define what he meant by the terms "race" and "racial", Jacobsen expressed himself rather strongly against the racial theories of the Nazis prevalent at the time, and against four historians of the Ancient Orient, namely Eduard Meyer, James H. Breasted, L. W. King, and H. R. Hall, for their loose use of racial terminology. Ever since the publication of this article I have had very strong feelings in respect to a number of points raised by Jacobsen. While I agree fully with him, of course, on the elimination of purely racial considerations, I found it unacceptable to me on three points:

1. In attacking the four historians of the Ancient Orient, named above, Jacobsen was attacking linguistic windmills rather than their actual scholarly position. In rereading recently my edition of Meyer's history I find that, while the German historian used terminology which may not be acceptable today, he was quite clear on the question of race. He did not believe in the purity of races, he assumed that from the very earliest historical times both the Indo-Europeans and Semites showed marked racial admixtures, and he never attempted to explain historical processes in terms of the superiority or inferiority of certain races. While it is true that the expression "race" appears frequently, in the publications of Breasted, King, and Hall, here again it seems to me that Jacobsen's attack was not quite justified, for he might equally well have attacked the English language, where the word "race" is used in many bewildering senses; cases in point are the uses of the terms "race" and "racial" in the works of, let us say, Rudyard Kipling or Winston Churchill.

2. In attacking other scholars because of the looseness of their racial terminology, Jacobsen was not aware of how vulnerable he was on the same score. While rejecting the importance of racial differentiation as a factor in political relationships, Jacobsen does not deny the existence of racial differentiation. But when he writes about *racial* differentiation between Sumerians and Semites, he actually means *ethnic* differentiation. This comes clearly to the fore not only from what he says on the subject but also from what he does not say. In talking about "racial" differentiation between the Sumerians and Akkadians, he does not waste one single word on such matters of physical

³ "The Assumed Conflict Between Sumerians and Semites in Early Mesopotamian History", JAOS LIX (1939) pp. 485-495.

anthropology,⁴ as color, stature, hair, etc.; what he writes about in this connection is about the use of the language, personal names, and religion — all matters pertaining to the *ethnos*. It seems to me that Jacobsen's confusion of the terms "race" and "people" was influenced by the old-fashioned belief that a people or *ethnos* forms merely a subdivision of a race in the well-known sequence race - people - tribe - clan - family.

3. If we replace Jacobsen's term "racial" with "ethnic", we are still left with his position that such ethnic distinctions as are based on common language, religion, customs, etc., do not form a basis for concerted action on the political scene, but are to be taken as distinctions between individuals on a purely private level.⁵ In the place of ethnic considerations Jacobsen introduced the political-territorial factor as the only basis for political configurations. But is the political-territorial factor as decisive as he makes it out to be? Did the political bodies of the Ancient Near East arise and grow in a completely haphazard way, on the basis of some nebulous interests artificially acquired within some territorial boundaries — something like the Monaco or Liechtenstein of our day? The answer I should give to these questions is no! In enlarging the definition of *dēmos* given above (p. 259), I should like to propose that the origin and growth of political bodies in the Ancient Near East was conditioned decisively by a shared community of interests deeply rooted in one certain ethnic background.⁶ In consideration of the importance of the ethnic, as against the territorial, tie in the origin of the state, note that the Sumerian signs for *uku* "ethnos," "people" and *kalam* "dēmos," "nation" are derived from one single symbol.

THE EARLIEST BABYLONIA

The ethno-linguistic composition of Babylonia in its earliest attested period, the so-called Obeid period and its predecessor known only from Eridu, can be reconstructed as having consisted of 1) an *x* population of unknown relationship, different from either the Sumerians or Akkadians, 2) the Sumerians, 3) the Akkadians, and 4) a mixture of any of these three elements.

In favor of the assumption that the proto-population of Babylonia consisted of an ethnic element of unknown background and relationship, which we call *x* for

⁴ In order to make clear my position I define race as a grouping of individuals linked together by certain physical characteristics, genetically inherited.

⁵ Jacobsen's old position was restated recently in his discussion of my paper "The Function of Language in the Cultural Process of Expansion of Mesopotamian Society" given in the *Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East*, held in Chicago in 1958.

⁶ Mild objections against Jacobsen's disregard of ethnic considerations have been registered (for the first time in Assyriology) by D. O. Edzard, *Die zweite Zwischenzeit Babylonien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), p. 4, n. 17, and, indirectly, by A. FALKENSTEIN: "La cité-temple sumérienne", *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* I, 1954, p. 808.

want of a better and safer expression, several arguments can be produced, based on the following evidence:

1. *Archaeological evidence.*⁷ There is a definite cultural break between the earliest phases of Babylonia, as represented by Obeid and Eridu, and the later proto-historical phases, often subsumed under the term "proto-literate" period. The differences are manifested in the pottery (the painted pottery of Obeid, as against the undecorated ware of the succeeding period), seals (stamp seals in early periods, as against cylinder seals in later periods), and certain features of architecture. The cultural break may mean an ethnic break, with the possibility that the early phase may be non-Sumerian, while the latter phase is definitely Sumerian. Also the extent of the Obeid culture into Mesopotamia, far beyond the confines of Babylonia, leads to the plausible conclusion that the Obeid culture was that of a non-Sumerian population, since the latter at all times in historical periods was limited to Babylonia proper.

2. *Physical-anthropological evidence.*⁸ The earliest skeletal material discovered in Babylonia clearly belongs to the type known as the eastern branch of the Mediterranean race (as best represented by the Beduins of Arabia), while the original Sumerians presumably belonged to a round-headed type with relations in Central Asia.

3. *Literary evidence.*⁹ On the basis of such parallels as India and Greece, it is assumed that the existence of the Sumerian Heroic Age, with its epic literature, presupposes a conquest of Babylonia by the Sumerians at some proto-historic period.

4. *Linguistic evidence.*¹⁰ A study of the lexical stock of the Sumerian language shows that the Sumerian vocabulary is composed of two basic layers: a) Sumerian proper and b) a large number of loan words borrowed from another language, which is assumed to be that of a native, pre-Sumerian population of Babylonia.

5. *Graphic evidence.*¹¹ The existence of many "*kakasiga*" entries in the Mesopotamian lexical texts, such as *ka-a* = KA = KA.KA-*si-ga*, that is entries with known syllabic values (*ka-a*), but with no corresponding logographic values, means that such

⁷ E. A. SPEISER: *Mesopotamian Origins* (Philadelphia, 1930); *idem*, "The Sumerian Problem Reviewed", *HUCA* XXIII, 1950-1951, pp. 339-355; A. MOORTGAT: *Die Entstehung der sumerischen Hochkultur* (AO XLIII, 1945).

⁸ SPEISER: *ops. cit.*; W. M. KROGMAN *apud* H. H. von der Osten: *The Alishar Hüyük. Seasons of 1930-32* III (OIP XXX; Chicago, 1937) pp. 269-273; Charlotte M. OTTEN: "Note on the Cemetery of Eridu", *Sumer* IV, 1948, pp. 125-127.

⁹ Samuel N. KRAMER: "Heroes of Sumer", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* XC, 1946, pp. 120-130.

¹⁰ B. LANDSBERGER: "Die Sumerer" etc., *Ankara Üniversitesi. Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Dergisi* I/5, II/3, III/2, 1943-1945.

¹¹ A. DAVID: "Le terme Ka.Ka.-siga", *Oriens Antiquus* Nos. 5-12, 1945, pp. 1-19.

writings with purely phonetic values reproduce originally non-Sumerian words, which were perpetuated in the Sumerian writing, but not in the Sumerian language. The concomitant conclusion is that the Sumerians borrowed their writing from another, presumably older, population.

6. *Ethnic evidence.*¹² The fact that the first dynasty attested in the Sumerian King List is named after the city $\text{HA.A}^{\text{K1}} = \text{Šu-ba-ri}$, the dominance of the personal name *Šubur* in the Fara texts, and the occurrence of the *lú* $\text{SU.A} = \text{Subarians}$ in the Pre-Sargonic texts from Lagaš may lead to the assumption that the Subarians constituted the native population of Babylonia before the coming of the Sumerians.

7. *Toponymic evidence.*¹³ All or almost all the geographical names known in the earliest historical periods of Babylonia are non-Sumerian, leading to the assumption that Babylonia was first settled by a non-Sumerian population, of unknown ethno-linguistic affiliation.

Of all the evidence presented above, the most conclusive is the evidence based on the geographical names. Because of its importance we shall discuss it here more fully.

The Babylonian geographical names which are either attested or can be safely assumed to have existed in the earliest periods are:

Eridu, Uri(m), Uruk, Kullab(a), Larsa(m), Lagaš(u), Giršu, Nina, Sirara, Zabala(m), Bad-Tibira, Umma (= Ubme), Šuruppak, Udab (= Adab) in South Babylonia.

Nippur, Keš, Marad, Larak, Išin in Central Babylonia.

Kiš, Sippar (= Zimbir), Akšak (and Upi), Akkad, Gudua, Babil(im), Barsip in North Babylonia.

Išnun, Tutub, Dabal in the Diyala Region.¹⁴

Some of these geographical names are expressed logographically by means of symbolism which we cannot interpret at the present, such as Eridu, written NUN , or Larsa, written UD.UNUG ; however, most of the names are written syllabically, either by means of signs of normal syllabic values, such as Giršu written *Gír-su*, Gudua written *Gú-du₈-a*, and Išnun written *Iš-nun*, or with signs whose syllabic values are reconstructed mainly from the geographical names, such as Lagašu written *La-gašu*(ŠIR.BUR), Udab written *Ud-ab_x*(NUN), Šuruppak written *Su-ru-pak_x*(KUR).

Of all these geographical names there is hardly one which can safely be called Sumerian. The closest to Sumerian is probably Bad-tibira, but even this name, spelled out as *Bad-bi-ra*, *Bàd-bi-ra*, and *Pà-ti-bí-ra* in the early sources, may be based

¹² GELB: *Hurrians and Subarians* (SAOC XXII; Chicago, 1944), pp. 31ff.

¹³ SPEISER: *op. cit.*; LANDSBERGER: *op. cit.*; B. MEISSNER in *Archiv für Orientforschung* V, 1928-1929, p. 8.

¹⁴ Ethnically and culturally the Diyala Region gravitated towards North Babylonia, as Central Babylonia did towards South Babylonia.

on popular etymology, as are clearly the later forms Ešnunna, Eridu, and Bâbilim.

The argument that the geographical names of early Babylonia are couched in a form of Sumerian which is no more recognizable as Sumerian owing to radical phonetic changes which might have taken place in the intervening time can be met by the counter-argument that in other areas, such as Palestine or ancient Arabia¹⁵ we generally have no difficulty in recognizing the Semitic character of the geographical names, even though they too must have gone through an extended period of phonetic change.

The non-Sumerian character of the Babylonian geographical names can be supported by another argument, based on the formal similarity between the geographical names of Babylonia and those in the North, in Mesopotamia proper. Cf., e. g., the *-u(w)a* suffix of Gudua, Nin(u)a, Arua in the South and of Ninuwa, Menua in the North; the *-ak* suffix of Šuruppak, Larak, Akšak in the South and of Ašnak, Zalmak in the North; and the southern names Nin(u)a, Barsip, Babil, Malgium, Karkara, for which exact parallels can be found in the North. The extent of these geographical names fits rather well the extent of the Obeid culture. Consequently, neither the Obeid culture nor the geographical names can be Sumerian. It is also quite clear that they cannot be Akkadian or generally Semitic. The Semites, like the Sumerians, are clearly newcomers in the land of the Two Rivers, superimposing themselves upon another population, of unknown background.

THE PROTO-LITERATE PERIOD

Under the heading "proto-literate" period are generally included the remains of the stratum Uruk IV, where the oldest yet known cuneiform tablets have been found, and the stratum Uruk III, with tablets of later date, which have been discovered also at Jemdet Nasr and Uqair, both in Northern Babylonia. In addition, we have from this period a small number of stone tablets, such as the Blau and Hoffman documents; one text from Kiš, one perhaps from Umma and another possibly from Nippur, and still others of unknown provenience (cf. Deimel, *Fara* I pp. 73 ff.), almost all dealing with the sale of fields.

As the name "proto-literate" indicates, this is the period during which writing first appeared in Babylonia. As the texts of Uruk IV are completely understandable, nothing can be said at present about the language or the texts or about the ultimate "inventors" of the writing, whether they were the Sumerians or the unknown population which preceded them in Babylonia. Apparently Sumerian are the texts of Uruk III, as proved by the occurrence of the Sumerian personal

¹⁵ The latter material now largely gathered in U. THILO: *Die Ortsnamen in der altarabischen Poesie* (Wiesbaden, 1958).

name written *En-lil-ti*. The important thing to note is that the writing was not limited to southern Babylonia, but that it was widely used also in the northern part, later called Akkad.

THE PROTO-DYNASTIC PERIOD

The proto-dynastic period is subdivided in the following into three stages, which only in part correspond to the Early Dynastic I-III, as used by some other scholars.

Our written attestation for the beginning of the proto-dynastic period is practically limited to the great majority of the economic texts and seals from Ur, published in Burrows, *Archaic Texts*. To judge from the personal names occurring in these texts, the population of Ur was almost exclusively Sumerian. While no Akkadian names can be attested, certain names of the type Dada, Lulu, Meme, or Ilala, Kukuga Ziziga may reflect the remnants of the proto-population from before the Sumerian immigration. The fact that no stronger traces of the proto-population can be attested in personal names is not surprising in the light of many parallels in the Ancient Near East, which show that, while the geographical names are conservative, the personal names are innovating; cf., e. g., the situation in the early Alalah period, with its many geographical names assignable to a proto-population, but with scarcely any personal names which could be assigned to the same population.

In the next stage of the proto-dynastic period, beginning roughly with the times of the Uruk I dynasty in the South and of the Kiš I dynasty in the North, our data become more eloquent. The rulers of Uruk, such as Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Gilgameš, are immortalized in legends composed in the much later Isin-Larsa period; and from Enmenbaragesi, the king of Kiš, we now have the first royal inscriptions found anywhere in Babylonia.¹⁶ Besides, our knowledge is rounded out by information culled from the many economic texts on clay found at Šuruppak, and some at Nippur, Ur, and Kiš, as well as from votive inscriptions and stone “kudurrus” from Ur, Lagaš, Nippur, Tutub, and other sites.

It is at this stage that a differentiation between the Sumerian South and the Akkadian North, based on ethnic, cultural, and political considerations, comes to the fore for the first time.

1. *Ethnic considerations.* While all the rulers of the southern dynasties, with the single exception of Labahšum¹⁷ of Uruk, bear Sumerian names, some names of rulers of the northern Kiš are Semitic, such as Kalibum, Zuqaqip, Samuk, and Tizkar,

¹⁶ D. O. EDZARD in ZA LIII, 1959, pp. 9-26.

¹⁷ The reading *La-ba-ah-šum* was suggested by GELB: MAD III p. 92, in place of an understandable *La-ba-ah?-ir* of JACOBSEN, SKL p. 90.

and some are Sumerian, such as the name of the well-known Enmenbaragesi. Names of private individuals at Šuruppak are almost all Sumerian, but some Akkadian names, such as Išlul-II, Ilum-mûdâ, and Ibûr-II are found there. Note also the worship of the Semitic deities ^d*E-lum*, *Eš₄-dar*, and ^d*Zu-en* at Šuruppak. In the few tablets from Kiš of the same period at least one clearly Akkadian name is found, namely Âlum-dûrî (EK IV Pl. XLV iv).

2. *Cultural considerations.* The most important point to consider under this heading is the spread of the writing in the North and the evolution of a northern variety of the writing, showing certain marked differences from the variety used in the South. Although our evidence in favor of the existence of two varieties of writing is based mainly on sources coming from the slightly later periods, all indications are in favor of the assumption that their differentiation began to take concrete form in the period under discussion.

The two main characteristics of the northern writing are: a) Frequent use of logograms which are different from those used in the South, as in SAG.RIG₇ "he offered ex-voto" in the North, for a *mu-ru* in the South, SAG.GIŠ.RA "he smote" in the North, for *e-hul* in the South. b) Frequent omission of Sumerian prefixes in northern logograms, as in SAG.RIG₇, SAG.GIŠ.RA, quoted above, and in NINDA KÚ "they eat bread" for the southern *ninda ì-kú-e*.

The influence of the North upon the South is visible in the number of loan words which the Sumerians borrowed from the Akkadians, such as *šám* "price," *ha-zi* (and *ha-zi-in*) "ax," and in the Sumerian syllabic values, such as *id*, *iz*, *pù*, *dan*, and *el*, derived from the Akkadian words *idum* "arm," *išum* "wood," *pum* "mouth," *dannum* "strong," and *ellum* "pure," respectively. The form of these borrowings, without any suffixes, conforms with the forms Zuqaqîp, Tizkar, etc., the names of the early rulers of Kiš, providing evidence that these borrowings must have taken place in this period. Slightly later in time are the Sumerian borrowings from Akkadian of forms ending in *-a*, such as *dam-ha-ra* "battle."

3. *Political considerations.* In the period under investigation we find for the first time a unit larger than the original city-states, namely the Sumerian nation of *Ki-en-gi* /*Ki-ġir*/ in the South organized around the "Nippur amphictyony." It is very probably that the origin of the larger political unit in the South may have been due to the establishment of a strong political unit in the North, centered around the city of Kiš, and to the growing danger from invasions of the Semites in the North of Babylonia.

The high development of the political organization of the South may be judged from two texts from Šuruppak, which describe the distribution of barley, probably on the occasion of a festival to 164,571, or 163,806 *men*¹⁸ — quite a feat from a logis-

¹⁸ R. JESTIN, TŠŠ Nos. 50 and 671.

tical point of view. The growing power of the kings of Kiš can be deduced from the fact that the kings of Kiš participated in the affairs of cities far away from Kiš, as in the case of Mesalim, king of Kiš, at Lagaš and Adab, and of Enmenbaragesi in Elam and at Tutub. The conquest of Kiš by a southern ruler gave him occasion to bear the title "Kings of Kiš," besides his local title, as in the cases of Mesanepada of Ur and Eanatum of Lagaš.

The third stage of the proto-dynastic period coincides roughly with the times of the last independent rulers of Lagaš, ending with Urukagina, and of the last rulers of Uruk, ending with Lugalzagesi. Many sources, much more numerous and varied than in the previous stages, help us greatly in reconstructing the picture. The sources, consisting mainly of royal inscriptions, votive texts of private individuals, economic texts on clay, and stone "kudurrus," are found both in the southern and northern parts of Babylonia, while some of them come from the provincial areas of the Diyala Region and Mari, North of Babylonia.

The most important feature of this stage is the first appearance of texts written in Akkadian. The texts in question are either votive inscriptions or stone "kudurrus." The first class is represented by the votive inscriptions of the kings and officials of Mari, which betray their Akkadian character through such spellings as DÙL-su(*d*) /šalamšu/ "his statue," a-na "to," and SAG.RIG₇ /išruk/ "he offered ex-voto;" SAG.RIG₇ alone occurs in the northern area in the votive texts from Kiš, Sippar, Tutub, and Agrab. The class of the Akkadian-written stone "kudurrus" is represented at Sippar and Kiš in northern Babylonia, and at Adab in southern Babylonia; their Akkadian character is shown by the spellings of šÀM-su(*d*) /šimšu/ "its price", šu "of," and in "in."

While cities bearing Sumerian names, such as Guabba, Guedina, E-Ninmar, all centered around Lagaš, begin to appear for the first time in southern Babylonia, still no Akkadian-named cities can be attested anywhere in its northern part. Apparently the city-building activities of the Akkadians did not take place until the next, Sargonic, period. This statement must be qualified by consideration of the availability of sources, which are much more numerous for the South than for the North.

In this stage we note a growing number of Akkadian personal names in the Sumerian economic records of Lagaš, Nippur, and Adab. In comparison with the previous stage, the retrenchment of Sumerian elements in the North and the growth of Akkadian elements in the South can be clearly recognized.

THE SARGONIC PERIOD

While certain northern cities, such as Sippar, Akšak (Upi), and, above all, Kiš, occasionally played a dominant role in the history of the most ancient Babylonia, it was only under Sargon, the first ruler of the northern city-state of Akkad, that the

North and, with it, the Semitic Akkadians, established a firm and enduring rule over the whole of the country, both North and South. The end of the preceding period is marked by Sargon's conquest of Uruk and his capture of its king, Lugalzagesi. After the conquest of Elam, Assyria, and Syria, far beyond the confines of Sumer and Akkad, Sargon could justifiably pride himself on having established an Empire extending from the shores of the Upper Sea (the Mediterranean) to the shores of the Lower Sea (the Persian Gulf). The reign of Sargon and his successors, which is comprised in the Sargonic dynasty, lasted from about 2340 to 2159 B. C.

In reconstructing the ethno-linguistic situation prevailing in the large area covered by the Sargonic texts we base ourselves largely on the use of language in the written sources and on the linguistic affiliation of the personal names. In treating written language as the basis for our considerations we must be careful to distinguish between the language of the historical and religious sources, which might reflect the traditional and official usages, and that of private letters and economic texts, which are likely to have been written in the spoken language of the area. The ethno-linguistic picture which can be reconstructed on the basis of our two main sources is fairly consistent in all the six sub-areas into which the Sargonic territory can be divided.

The languages of the royal inscriptions and of the year dates in the Sargonic period were Akkadian and Sumerian. As many of these sources appear in both languages, it seems very probable that the official inscriptions and dates of the Empire were issued in a bilingual form. Religious texts, such as incantations, were written either in Sumerian (e. g., Nougayrol in *Symbolae Hrozný* II Pl. III opp. p. 226; MAD I 333) or in Akkadian (e. g., MDP XIV 90).

The language of the non-official and non-religious inscriptions, such as economic texts and letters, was exclusively Akkadian in the North, that is, in Akkad. In the South, that is, in Sumer, the Sumerian language was used regularly, but even there Akkadian letters and economic documents occur frequently. The bilingual character of the Sumer area is indicated by the fact that in the unpublished correspondence of Mezi, the ensi of Adab, two letters are written in Akkadian (A 708; A 830) and two in Sumerian (A 868; A 942). Outside of Sumer, i. e., in Akkad, the Diyala Region, Elam, Assyria, and Mari, only the Akkadian language is attested, the unique Sumerian written contract from Tell Asmar (MAD I 305) appearing so out of place as to lead to the conclusion that the contract may have been composed outside of the Diyala Region.

The distribution of Sumerian and Akkadian personal names confirms the conclusion reached on the basis of the use of language. Sumerian personal names predominate only in Sumer proper. Certain areas, such as Nippur, have Sumerian names almost exclusively, while others, such as Lagaš, contain a large number of Sumerian names, with Akkadian names forming a fairly substantial percentage. Outside of

Sumer, disregarding non-Sumerian and non-Semitic elements in Elam and Assyria, the Akkadian names predominate thoroughly. This is fully true not only of Elam, the Diyala Region, and Assyria, but also of Akkad, to judge, as a test case, from the relative percentages of Akkadian and Sumerian personal names on the Obelisk of Man-ištušu (cf. the index in MDP II pp. 41-49). There, among hundreds of names, I could find only four which are definitely Sumerian, excluding those composed with *Ur-* which could be borne by Akkadians as well as by Sumerians (cf. the names of the kings of the 4th Dynasty of Kiš and 1st Dynasty of Isin).

During the Sargonic period we meet for the first time with a number of Akkadian geographical names scattered throughout the Empire, such as names composed with *Dûr-* or *Maškan-*, testifying to the colonizing activities of the Sargonic rulers.

One of the most striking features of the Sargonic period is the standardization of writing and of the written forms of the Akkadian language used throughout the Empire. This standardization, observed not only in official documents but also in private letters and economic texts, is evidence of the controlling power of the central chancellery and of the high level of administrative and political organization of the Sargonic period. Nothing like it was ever known in the preceding periods of Sumerian domination.

The apparent conclusion of our investigation is that in the Sargonic period the Sumerian elements were limited to Sumer proper, but even there they had to contend with strong inroads of growing Akkadian influence.

The attitude of the Sargonic rulers to Sumerians manifested itself in two ways. On the one hand, Sargon recognized the paramount position of the god Enlil in Nippur, as shown by his title *ensigal Enlil* "the great governor of Enlil,"¹⁹ by his having "purified" the temple of Enlil in Nippur,²⁰ and by his depositing his statues and inscriptions in that temple. On the other hand, Sargon followed the policy of destroying the walls of the fortified cities in Sumer and of appointing Akkadians to gubernatorial positions not only in Akkad but also in Sumer.²¹ The anti-Sumerian policy of the Sargonic kings is clearly expressed in a late Sumerian composition entitled "Curse of Akkad," according to which the political disaster which befell Akkad at the end of the Sargonic Dynasty was the direct result of the sacking of Nippur and the desecration of Ekur, Enlil's great sanctuary, by Narâm-Sin, the fourth ruler of the Akkad Dynasty.²²

The picture sketched above of the Sumerians and Akkadians as representing two different *ethnos* is not in accordance with the reconstruction of Jacobsen,²³

¹⁹ PBS V 34 ii and elsewhere.

²⁰ PBS XV 41 x.

²¹ PBS V 34 iv and PBS XV 41 ix. Cf. also JACOBSEN in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* LII, 1957, p. 137.

²² Cf. KRAMER: *From the Tablets of Sumer* (Indian Hills, Colo., 1956) pp. 267-271.

²³ See above p. 260-261.

who denies the existence of either racial (wherein I follow him) or ethnic conflict between the Sumerians and Akkadians and assumes instead that the conflict was of a political nature, between one city-state and another irrespective of their racial or ethnic background.

THE UR III PERIOD

Weakened by the invasion of the barbarian Gutians from the mountains, the Sargonic dynasty, and with it the Sargonic Empire, came to an end in the 22nd cent. B. C. and was replaced first by the ephemeral 4th and 5th dynasties of Uruk and then by the 3rd dynasty of Ur, all three originating in the South. In terms of the geographical extent and administrative organization of the farflung provinces, the Ur III Empire closely resembled the structure of the Sargonic Empire. The time covered is from about 2158 to 2008 B. C.

This is the period of the renaissance of the Sumerian language, as attested by hundreds of thousands of documents, mostly economic in character, written in Sumerian. The number of Akkadian-written texts in the Ur III period is limited to a few dozen.

While the Sumerian renaissance affected the use of the written language, the country as a whole continued in the direction of total Akkadization and elimination of Sumerian elements. This can be clearly established by the growing number of Akkadian personal and geographical names in the South of the country, of Akkadian loanwords in Sumerian, and by the fact that the last three rulers of the Ur III dynasty bore Akkadian names, in contrast to the first two rulers, whose names are Sumerian. The royal title borne by the kings was that of "King of Sumer and Akkad."

THE OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD

Towards the end of the Ur III period, the political picture of Mesopotamia underwent a radical change when a new ethnic factor, namely the Amorites, began to play a prominent role in the history of Western Asia. These Semitic nomads, spreading from the desert areas south of the Euphrates, brought an end to the 3rd dynasty of Ur and succeeded in establishing themselves as a dominant political force in the ancient lands of Sumer and Akkad. The emerging political structure is that of a small number of independent kingdoms, among which Išin, Larsa, and Babylon played the most important role. Gradually, the Dynasty of Babylon, especially under its most prominent ruler, Hammurapi, succeeded in uniting the whole country. The city of Babylon became the capital of the united country, and after it Babylonia

was named. The time under consideration for the whole Old Babylonian period is from about 2025 to 1725 B.C.

The importance of the Amorite ethnic elements in the affairs of Babylonia can be recognized from the following: A large number of persons bearing Amorite names and/or calling themselves "Amorite" occur in the sources. Most of the kings of Larsa and Babylon bore Amorite names; the others were Akkadian. King Hammurapi, besides several other titles connected with Babylonia, bore the title, "King of all the land of Amurru," a title presumably inherited from his predecessors. The fact that Amorites are mentioned beside Akkadians several times in the well-known edict of Ammi-saduqa ²⁴ may not indicate ethnic differentiation, but rather that in the eyes of the law the sedentary Akkadians were treated differently from the nomadic Amorites; a parallel case may be present-day Iraq, where the official code of the country was, until very recently, different from the code built around the tribal laws, which affected only the Beduin population.

We do not know the extent to which the Amorite language was or may have been used among the Amorites themselves after they established themselves in Mesopotamia. The influence of the Amorite language on Akkadian was negligible. Amorite was never used as a written language.

The dominant language of Babylonia was Akkadian. While Sumerian continued to be used, side by side with Akkadian, in the royal inscriptions, legal and economic texts, and religious literature, all the known correspondence, whether public or official, was in Akkadian. This is the best evidence that Akkadian became the commonly spoken language of the country, and that Sumerian was relegated to traditional usages in historiography, law, and religion.

With the total assimilation of the Sumerians and Akkadians into one Babylonian *ethnos*, the political boundaries of Babylonia coincided rather well with its ethnolinguistic boundaries. As a symbol of the achieved unity we may quote the Code of Hammurapi, which makes no distinction between the Sumerians and Akkadians, treating both as full equals in the eyes of the law.

²⁴ F. R. KRAUS: *Ein Edikt des Königs Ammi-saduqa von Babylon* (Leiden, 1958).