

# SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN AND SUMERIAN FLOOD STORIES <sup>1</sup>

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The topic of the Flood has interested Assyriologists for almost a century. In fact, only a few years after the birth of Assyriology the first cuneiform text alluding to the Flood was deciphered. That discovery brought attention to the Biblical Flood story of Genesis and to the story of the Flood according to Berossus, who had written a history of Babylonia in Greek a generation after Alexander the Great.

In the sequence of archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia the Assyro-Babylonian texts came to light first; later the Sumerian. The decipherment, study and analysis of texts mentioning the Flood awakened much interest because of their obvious relationship with the Bible records of the Flood. On the one hand, topical studies were of value, because they established points of agreement and differences among the texts as they became known. On the other hand, a study of the texts establishing their relative dates of origin, and their chronological order also proved helpful. These two aspects of the investigation are of importance in order to establish the priorities of composition with regard to texts and to ascertain the parentage of the Flood traditions as presented in the Assyro-Babylonian and Sumerian recensions.

## *I. Characteristics of the Assyrian Flood Texts*

1. *The First Assyrian Tradition of the Flood.* The first discovered cuneiform text of the Flood in Accadian was identified by George Smith, a minor official of the Assyrian

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Spanish by Leona G. Running.

Department of the British Museum, when he encountered the fragment of a text containing the Assyrian story of the Flood among the tablets coming from the ruins of Nineveh. Smith gave an account of his discovery in a lecture which he delivered before a select audience of the Society of Biblical Archaeology on December 3, 1872.<sup>2</sup>

The mutilated text was part of Tablet XI of a composition known as the Gilgamesh Epic consisting of twelve tablets, of which the ancient title corresponded to the first three words of the text, *Ša nagba imura*, "He who saw everything." It is supposed that the tablets containing the Gilgamesh Epic, to which Tablet XI belonged, were discovered by Hormuzd Rassam in 1853 during the excavations at Kuyunjik, one of the ruin-hills of ancient Nineveh, carried out by Henry Layard and Rassam from 1848 to 1854. During those years some 25,000 cuneiform tablets, many of them in a fragmentary condition, were brought to light. The majority of them belonged to the library of King Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.).

In the first seven lines of Tablet XI<sup>3</sup> of the poem *Ša nagba imura*, Gilgamesh is presented asking Utnapishtim, whose name means "long of life,"<sup>4</sup> how he had attained to immortality. The answer of Utnapishtim extends from line 8 to line 196. He relates how the god Ea spoke to him while he was living in Shuruppak in a reed hut similar to the *mudhif* which is still used in lower Mesopotamia. According to the message received, he was to build a ship to save himself from the coming disaster. Having done this he gave a great banquet. Without letting his fellow countrymen in on the secret that had been

<sup>2</sup> George Smith, "The Chaldean Account of the Deluge," *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, II (1873), 213-234.

<sup>3</sup> All references with regard to Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic are from the translation of E. A. Speiser in *ANET*, pp. 93-97.

<sup>4</sup> Speiser (*ANET*, p. 90, n. 164) suggests that the Assyrian name Utnapishtim means, "I have found life," though he admits that the grammar is "somewhat anomalous," in contrast to the warning *balāṭam lā tuttā* (i. 8; iii. 2), "life thou shalt not find," with which Gilgamesh was confronted.

revealed to him by Ea, he loaded the ship with his wealth, his family, and domestic and wild animals. After closing the door and windows he entrusted the ship to the boatman Puzur-Amurri.

In the Assyrian Flood tablet, the tempest is described in eloquent terms from lines 96-130, after which lines 131-143 relate how the storm was calmed and the ship came to rest on Mount Nisir. Next Utnapishtim enumerates the birds that were set free, from lines 145-155. The description of the sacrifice that he offered on the mountain, which pleased the gods so much that they "crowded like flies about the sacrificer," occupies lines 156-161.

Lines 162-169 of the narrative say that the goddess Ishtar admonished the gods not to permit the god Enlil to meet Utnapishtim since he, Enlil, had been guilty of bringing on the Deluge. But Enlil came anyway, and after having listened to the reproaches of Ea, recorded in lines 178-188, went aboard the ship and blessed Utnapishtim and his wife. Their apotheosis was the result of Enlil's touching their foreheads, through which they became gods and received, according to lines 189-196, an eternal dwelling place at the mouth of the rivers.

2. *The Second Assyrian Tradition of the Flood.* A deluge tablet representing a second Assyrian tradition was found by George Smith at Kuyunjik. After having discovered the first fragmentary Flood tablet in the British Museum, public opinion was aroused to such an extent by his lecture on the subject that the owners of the "Daily Telegraph" of London sent him to Mesopotamia in order to find the missing parts of the text.

When Smith began his excavations at Kuyunjik in 1875, he almost immediately unearthed a fragment of a tablet that described the Flood.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, it was not one of the

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis* (New York, 1876), p. 7.

missing pieces of Tablet XI that he had translated in London, nor was it even a part of the same story or tradition. Nevertheless the new lines discovered were concerned with the Flood. But they differed from the Gilgamesh Epic. In the former text deciphered by Smith the hero Utnapishtim was the leading character in the Flood story, while in the new fragment the heroic figure was Atrahasis, or the "Exceeding Wise."

The new fragment discovered by Smith at Kuyunjik consists of about 17 lines of cuneiform text that deal with the subject of the Deluge. In spite of the brevity of the text, it was apparent that it was part of another poem concerning the Flood.<sup>6</sup> However, both texts, each representing a separate tradition of the Deluge, belonged to the library of Ashurbanipal.

The contrast between these two Assyrian epics was not limited to the differences in the names of the actors. Although André Parrot thinks that Utnapishtim and Atrahasis represented two different legendary cycles,<sup>7</sup> E. A. Speiser has expressed the opinion that the appearance of the name Atrahasis in line 187 of the first Assyrian tradition of the Deluge, *i.e.*, in Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh poem, is an epithet given by the god Enlil to Utnapishtim. He therefore believes that reference is being made to the same hero in two forms.<sup>8</sup> The fundamental contrast between the two Assyrian texts that meant so much for George Smith, resides in a singular detail: Utnapishtim of the Gilgamesh Epic appears as an experienced ship-builder, as lines 54 to 79 present him, referring in detail to the construction of the refuge-ship and to its builder. On the other hand, in the second Assyrian tradition Atrahasis declares emphatically, in lines 11 to 17,

<sup>6</sup> L. W. King, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc.*, in the *British Museum*, XV (London, 1902), 49; E. Ebeling, in *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament*, ed. H. Gressmann (2d ed.; Berlin, 1926), p. 200; A. Boisier, *RA*, XXVIII (1931), 92-95.

<sup>7</sup> André Parrot, *Déluge et arche de Noé* (Neuchâtel, 1955), pp. 24, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 95, n. 218.

that he never had built a ship, hence he begs the god Ea to make a design of the ship upon the ground so that he will be able to build it.<sup>9</sup>

3. *The Third Assyrian Tradition of the Flood.* The third Assyrian tradition of the Flood is represented by a somewhat mutilated tablet with four columns of text, three of them having 61 lines devoted to the catastrophe. This tablet likewise comes from the library of King Ashurbanipal. Its first translation was made by L. W. King. Later it was the object of the investigations of A. T. Clay and E. Ebeling.<sup>10</sup> This recension is characterized by a different focus. Human beings, in a state of depravity, appear punished first by famine. Then, after they repented, the famine ceased; but as they returned to sinful life a pestilence was sent upon them. On relapsing, they were punished with sterility of fields as well as of people and flocks. Finally, because of their disorderly lives, they were swept away by the Flood.<sup>11</sup>

## II. Characteristics of the Babylonian Traditions Referring to the Flood

1. *First Babylonian Tradition of the Flood.* The first tradition is represented by a tablet discovered in the ruins of Nippur, and published by H. V. Hilprecht.<sup>12</sup> The tablet was

<sup>9</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 105, Fragment C; R. Largement, "Le thème de l'arche dans les traditions suméro-sémitiques," *Mélanges bibliques redigées en l'honneur d'André Robert* (Paris, 1957), pp. 60-65.

<sup>10</sup> King, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Ebeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-206.

<sup>11</sup> Sidney Smith, *RA*, XXII (1925), 63, 64; G. Contenau, *L'Épopée de Gilgamesh, poème babylonien* (Paris, 1939); Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1946), pp. 111-116; Speiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 105, 106, Fragment D.

<sup>12</sup> H. V. Hilprecht, *The Earliest Version of the Babylonian Deluge Story and the Temple Library of Nippur*, "Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania; The Babylonian Expedition," Ser. D, Vol. V, Part 1 (Philadelphia, 1910), pp. 1-65; Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 105, Fragment X; A. Deimel, "Diluvium in traditione babylonica," *VD*, VII (1927), 186-191; Deimel, "Biblica diluvii traditio cum traditione babylonica comparata," *VD*, VII (1927), 248-251.

found in such a poor state of preservation that only 11 lines could be deciphered. They refer to the command to build the ark, into which the larger animals and birds to be saved were to be brought.

The antiquity of this tablet goes back to the First Dynasty of Babylon, which, according to the long chronology, would correspond to the period between the years 1844 and 1505 B.C.<sup>13</sup> One of the characteristics of this Babylonian version of the Flood is that the hero of the Flood is ordered to name the ship that would save him, "Preserver of Life."<sup>14</sup>

2. *Second Babylonian Tradition of the Flood.* The second Babylonian tradition of the Flood appears in a tablet discovered in the ruins of Sippar. It contains eight columns with a total of 46 lines of the 439 that were in the complete text.<sup>15</sup> A chronological detail given by this second tradition consists of the information contained in the colophon. There the copyist, Ellit-Aya, the junior scribe, declares that this was Tablet II of the series *Enūma ilu awēlum*.<sup>16</sup> Besides, he indicates that he copied it in the year when King Ammišaduqa rebuilt Dur-Ammi-šaduqa, near the lower Euphrates, in the 11th year of his reign. Modern chronologists differ with regard to the dates for Ammišaduqa. Those who follow the "long" chronology date his reign to 1702-1682,<sup>17</sup> while those adhering to the "short" chronology, date his reign to 1582-1562.<sup>18</sup>

The individual saved from the Deluge, according to this

<sup>13</sup> Parrot, *Sumer* (Madrid, 1960), p. 310.

<sup>14</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 105, Fragment X, line 8; A. Salonen, *Die Wasserfahrzeuge in Babylonien* (Helsinki, 1939), p. 51, under *eleppu qurqurru*.

<sup>15</sup> A. T. Clay, *Babylonian Records in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library*, IV (New Haven, Conn., 1923), Pl. I; Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 110; Speiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105, Fragments A and B.

<sup>16</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 105, Fragment A, col. viii.

<sup>17</sup> F. Thureau-Dangin, "La chronologie de la première dynastie babylonienne," *Mémoires de l'Académie*, Tome 43, Part 2 (1942), pp. 229-258.

<sup>18</sup> W. F. Albright, *BASOR*, No. 88 (Dec. 1942), p. 32.

story, is named Atramhasis and not Atrahasis.<sup>19</sup> Another dissimilarity of this tradition is the reference to the growing number of human beings and to their oppressive spirit, for which the gods decided to send the Flood. This is described in the form of a great flood-storm with many clouds accumulated by the wind. The god Enki accuses the god Enlil of having sent the Flood.

Probably belonging to the second Babylonian tradition is a fragment of a tablet with only 15 legible lines, not counting the colophon. The latter gives the following information: "... Total 1245 [lines] of three tablets. By the hand of Ellit-Aya, the junior scribe..."<sup>20</sup> That statement gives evidence that the tablet comes from the same hand as the previous one and that, consequently, it belongs to the same period.<sup>21</sup> The few lines remaining refer to the command to destroy the house of the main actor, probably Atramhasis—whose name does not appear in those few lines—in order to build a ship in which he could be saved, leaving behind his earthly possessions.<sup>22</sup>

### III. *Characteristics of the Sumerian Texts Referring to the Flood*

I. *First Sumerian Tradition of the Flood.* The first is a fragmentary tablet discovered by A. Poebel among the tablets of the University Museum, Philadelphia, which had been found in the ruins of Nippur. Its condition permits the reading of only about 90 lines, distributed over six columns, and it is

<sup>19</sup> Boisier, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-97. Obviously Atramhasis was simply the Old Babylonian form for the later Assyrian Atrahasis.

<sup>20</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 105, Fragment B.

<sup>21</sup> Boisier, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-95.

<sup>22</sup> The Babylonian traditions of the Flood have some resemblance with the Gilgamesh Epic. But the tablets from Ashurbanipal's library originated at a much later date. E. A. Wallis Budge and C. J. Gadd, *The Babylonian Story of the Deluge and the Epic of Gilgamesh* (London, 1929); A. Schott and W. von Soden, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos* (Stuttgart, 1958); cf. von Soden, *ZA*, LIII (1959), 228.

calculated that some 230 lines of cuneiform text have been lost.<sup>23</sup> This singular text has also engaged other Sumerologists.<sup>24</sup>

As 37 lines are missing from the beginning of the tablet, it is not known which god began the dialogue. Kramer says: "The name of the speaker (or speakers) is destroyed; probably it is either Enki or Anu and Enlil (perhaps better Anu Enlil, . . .)." <sup>25</sup>

This Flood tradition presents the king and priest Ziusudra ("Long of life"), in the moment when he is carving a god of wood to worship and consult as an oracle. The text claims that in this way Ziusudra was informed of the grave decision of the gods: "By our hand a Deluge . . . will be [sent]; to destroy the seed of mankind . . ." <sup>26</sup> The hero was saved in a ship during the cataclysm, which lasted seven days. When he opened the covering, the sun god Utu appeared. After sacrificing an ox and a sheep and bowing before Anu and Enlil, Ziusudra received the gift of immortality in the land of Dilmun.

The Sumerian text of the Flood, after mentioning the creation of the animals and man, refers to the founding of five antediluvian cities. Lacking are the lines that could have referred to the causes that determined the cataclysm of the Flood. The hero Ziusudra is presented as a pious king who was informed of the decision taken by the gods to destroy mankind. The section of the text that could have mentioned the building of the saving ship also is broken. On the other hand, the violence of the Flood during seven days and seven nights is described. After the disaster the

<sup>23</sup> Arno Poebel, *Historical Texts*, "The University Museum, Publications of the Babylonian Section," Vol. IV, No. 1 (Philadelphia, 1914), pp. 9-70; S. N. Kramer, *ANET*, pp. 42-44; A. Pacios, "Diluvio," *Enciclopedia de la Biblia*, II (Barcelona, 1964), col. 930.

<sup>24</sup> Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 58, 59; Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Philadelphia, 1944), pp. 97, 98; Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-105.

<sup>25</sup> Kramer, *ANET*, p. 42, note 1, but see also note 4.

<sup>26</sup> Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

sun god Utu appears and "brought his rays into the giant boat." And Ziusudra, in order to live as the gods, is translated to the land of Dilmun, "the place where the sun rises."<sup>27</sup> Dilmun, according to the preamble of the myth of Enki and Ninḥursag, represented a pure, clean, and brilliant place where, probably, there was neither sickness nor death.

2. *Reference to the Flood in the Sumerian King List.* The Sumerian King List involves texts of a completely different character from all the preceding ones. These appear as poems or epics that recur in the common tradition of the Flood cataclysm, while the Sumerian King List constitutes documents of a historiographic character. Such documents containing a list of the kings of Sumer were published for chronological and historical purposes, and divided Sumer's history into two periods: *lam abubi*, "before the Flood," and *arki abubi*, "after the Flood."<sup>28</sup>

The texts of this kind are scarce. They consist, first of all, of two documents acquired by H. Weld-Blundell, and in addition, of a tablet published by V. Scheil,<sup>29</sup> furthermore of a list of the first kings of Mesopotamia. The critical examination of that material by Thorkild Jacobsen, studying textual, stylistic and historical problems, has shown that the original was written in the days when Utuhegal, king of Uruk, liberated Sumer from the Guti domination.<sup>30</sup> Scholars are still divided with regard to dates for the end of the Guti Dynasty and for Utuhegal of Uruk, which lie between *ca.* 2120 and *ca.* 2065 B.C.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Kramer, "Dilmun the Land of the Living," *BASOR*, No. 96 (Dec. 1944), pp. 18-28; Kramer, *L'histoire commence à Sumer* (Paris, 1957), pp. 206, 207.

<sup>28</sup> Contenau, *Le déluge babylonien* (Paris, 1952), p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> V. Scheil, "Liste susienne des dynasties de Sumer-Accad," in *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, LXII (Cairo, 1934), (= *Mélanges Maspéro*, I), 393-400.

<sup>30</sup> Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 141.

<sup>31</sup> For the earlier date see Gadd, "The Dynasty of Agade and the Gutian Invasion," *CAH*, 2d ed., Vol. I, Fasc. 19 (Cambridge, 1966), p. 56. For the late date see Albright, *loc. cit.*

The two documents obtained by Weld-Blundell are complementary to each other. The first consists of a prism that mentions five antediluvian cities and enumerates eight kings who reigned before the Flood.<sup>32</sup> The second document has only 18 lines, but is also of interest because it again mentions the names of the antediluvian kings and the Flood itself.<sup>33</sup>

The study of all Sumerian King Lists has been undertaken by Jacobsen in order to establish a "standard version," by a combination of different texts. The reference to the Flood appears after the mention of eight kings and five antediluvian cities (Eridu, Badtibira, Larak, Sippar and Shuruppak). The text alluding to the Flood is brief: "These are five cities, eight kings ruled them for 241,000 years. (Then) the Flood swept over (the earth). After the Flood had swept over (the earth) (and) when kingship was lowered (again) from heaven, kingship was (first) in Kish."<sup>34</sup>

3. *The Sumerian Tradition Reflected in the Flood Account of Berossus.* Berossus, priest of the cult of Marduk in the city of Babylon, a contemporary of the king Antiochus I Soter (281-260), wrote in Greek a history of his country entitled *Babyloniaca*. That work, written on the Aegean island of Cos about the year 275 B.C., has been lost. Nevertheless many of its principal paragraphs are known through quotations of the following historians: Apollodorus of Athens (ca. 144 B.C.), Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 88 B.C.), Abydenus (ca. 60 B.C.), King Juba of Mauretania (ca. 50 B.C.-ca. A.D. 23), Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-103), Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 265-340), and Georgius Syncellus (ca. A.D. 792).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> W.B. 444 was published by S. Langdon, *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*, II (Oxford, 1923), 8-21, Pls. I-IV. See also Edouard Dhorme, "L'aurore de l'histoire babylonienne," *Recueil Edouard Dhorme* (Paris, 1951), pp. 3-79.

<sup>33</sup> For the document W.B. 62 see Langdon, *JRAS*, XC (1923), 251 ff.; Ebeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>34</sup> Oppenheim, *ANET*, p. 265.

<sup>35</sup> Ebeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 201; Heidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-119; Paul Schnabel, *Berossos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur*

The Flood story of Berossus was the only Mesopotamian tradition of that cataclysm that was known before the discovery of cuneiform texts containing Flood stories. The account of Berossus, which begins with the creation of the world, points out ten antediluvian kings of long life, indicating Xisuthros as the tenth, who appears as the hero of the Flood. According to Berossus, Xisuthros was warned by one of the gods of the imminence of the Flood, being ordered to prepare a ship to save his family and his friends, and also the animals. Saved in this manner, he disembarked on a mountain in Armenia. After having worshiped the gods, he and his wife, his daughter, and the pilot disappeared from among mortals to be with the gods.

It is interesting to note, as Parrot has pointed out, that the account of Berossus has great affinities with the Sumerian text of the Flood and with the Sumerian King Lists. It can be observed that in the tablet W.B. 62 the names of the kings of Shuruppak are indicated: Su-kur-lam, son of Ubar-Tutu, and Ziusudra, son of Su-kur-lam. Ziusudra appears both in the Sumerian tablet of the Flood and, with the name Xisuthros, in the account of Berossus, who must have selected the Sumerian text as the most ancient.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. *Latest Discoveries of Fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic*

Since 1853, when Hormuzd Rassam discovered the tablets with the Ninevite text of the Gilgamesh Epic in Kuyunjik, translated by George Smith in 1872, other fragmentary copies have been discovered elsewhere. Such fragments come from the ruins of Asshur, Hattushash, Kish, Megiddo, Nippur, Sippar, Sultantepe, Ugarit, Ur and Uruk. Among these discoveries a notable one was made at Boghazköy, which exhibits a Hittite recension and a Hurrian translation that

(Leipzig, 1923), pp. 264 ff.; F. Lenormant, *Essai de commentaire des fragments cosmogéniques de Bérosee* (Paris, 1872).

<sup>36</sup> Parrot, *Déluge et arche de Noé*, pp. 28-32.

presents evidence of the literary interest of the inhabitants of the ancient capital of the Hittite empire.<sup>37</sup>

The discoveries of the tablets with fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic published in recent years are of varied importance according to their length and content. The following texts have come to the author's notice and are listed here in the sequence of their publication, although the preserved fragments do not all refer to the Flood. However, it can be assumed that in their original state the Flood story was part of each composition.

1. *Two Fragments from Sultantepe*. The find made in 1951 at Sultantepe, Anatolia, consists of fragmentary tablets containing extracts of the Gilgamesh Epic. Contextual evidence shows that the two fragments, classified as S.U. 51, 129 A and 237, belong to the same tablet, while the tablet S.U. 51, 7 contains a different text. The study of the text of the two fragments from Sultantepe shows that it corresponds with the small fragments discovered in Nineveh (S.2132 obv. and Rm. ii 399).<sup>38</sup> These were published by R. Campbell Thompson as if they belonged to the beginning of Tablet IV of the great poem of Gilgamesh from the library of Ashurbanipal. But this opinion was considered erroneous by A. Schott, A. Heidel and Peter Jensen, who pointed out that the two fragments belonged to Tablet VII, with which idea O. R. Gurney agreed after studying the two fragments from Sultantepe.<sup>39</sup>

The comparative study of an almost complete tablet, Sultantepe S.U. 51.7, made it possible for Gurney to corro-

<sup>37</sup> An Accadian fragment (KUB IV 12) was translated by A. Ungnad, *Gilgamesch-Epos und Odyssee* (Breslau, 1923), p. 18; the Hittite fragments were collected and translated by J. Friedrich, *ZA*, XXXIX (1930), 1-82.

<sup>38</sup> O. R. Gurney, "Two Fragments of the Epic of Gilgamesh from Sultantepe," *JCS*, VIII (1954), 87-95; Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets*, I (London, 1957), Nos. 14 and 15, Pls. XVII and XVIII.

<sup>39</sup> Gurney, *JCS*, VIII (1954), 87.

borate that it corresponds to columns I and II of Tablet VIII of the Gilgamesh Epic discovered in Nineveh; this conclusion has been accepted by Speiser.<sup>40</sup> One of the merits of Tablet S.U. 51, 7 from Sultantepe is that it permitted the restoration of the first line of the text of the Nineveh Tablet VIII. This Anatolian tablet presents the lament of Gilgamesh for the death of his friend Enkidu. Gurney called attention to the fact that on comparing this text with that of Nineveh (K 8564) it is found that the Sultantepe scribe omitted lines 11, 12, and 14 of column I of Tablet VIII and that, after writing lines 1 to 16 of column II, he introduced different verses and omitted line 23 of the Neo-Assyrian text from Nineveh. In addition, it is to be noted that below line 16 of the reverse appears the trace of a line that crosses the tablet from one border to the other, separating the preceding text from the subsequent lines 17 to 20. These final four lines contain Gilgamesh's call to artisans to erect a monument of precious stones and gold as a memorial to his deceased friend Enkidu.

The text of Sultantepe terminates abruptly and without colophon, but it is known that it is not continued on another tablet nor is it truncated, because it ends with the word *a-sak-[kiš]*, which means "collated," or "end of the text." This singular characteristic of Tablet S.U. 51, 7 from Sultantepe raises the possibility that the scribe, because he had not correctly calculated the available space, intentionally omitted the content of several verses of the text he was copying, in order to save the space needed for the last four lines that are climaxed by talking about the erection of a statue of precious stones and gold.

2. *Fragment from Megiddo.* In 1955, Moshe Karawani, a Palestinian shepherd, discovered a fragment of a tablet on the dump of discarded materials from the excavations carried out at *Tell el-Mutesellim* by the Oriental Institute of

<sup>40</sup> Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 87, n. 136.

Chicago between 1925 and 1938. It was published by Albrecht Goetze and S. Levy.<sup>41</sup>

The fragment, 10.2 × 10.1 cm. in size, comes from a tablet which originally consisted of four columns of text of 60 lines each. Only 17 lines of the obverse and 20 lines of the reverse are preserved. The text can be compared with the Nineveh fragments K 3389 and K 3588, and belongs to Tablet VII of the Gilgamesh Epic from the library of Ashurbanipal. Paleographic evidence shows that the script is slightly earlier than the Amarna Letters, for which reason the fragment can be dated to the early 14th century B.C. Its ductus resembles most closely that of the Amarna Letters written in cities of Phoenicia.

3. *The Fragments from Ugarit.* With respect to the finds in Syria, they were made in the ruins of Ugarit which has provided so many valuable archaeological and epigraphical discoveries. The first news of the find was given by Jean Nougayrol in 1960.<sup>42</sup> It was a fragment with about 20 short and mutilated lines, beginning with the words indicating its contents: "When the gods counseled together, the Deluge came to the countries." The following sentences coincide with Tablet XI of the Neo-Assyrian version from Nineveh. On May 12, 1964, Nougayrol informed C. F.-A. Schaeffer by letter concerning the discovery of another fragmentary tablet which apparently refers to the youth of Gilgamesh, according to a communication of Schaeffer to M. E. L. Mallowan.<sup>43</sup> These tablets from Ugarit are to be published in *Ugarita V* respectively as No. 167 (= R.S. 22.421) and No. 268 (= R.S. 22.219 + 22.398).

<sup>41</sup> A. Goetze and S. Levy, "Fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic from Megiddo," *Atiqot*, II (1959), 121-128, Pl. XVIII; see also *IEJ*, V (1955), 274; G. Ernest Wright, *BA*, XVIII (1955), 44; Dhorme, *RA*, LV (1961), 153, 154.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Nougayrol, "Nouveaux textes accadiens de Ras Shamra," *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions*, 1960, pp. 170, 171.

<sup>43</sup> M. E. L. Mallowan, "Noah's Flood Reconsidered," *Iraq*, XXVI (1964), 62, n. 3.

The study of all cuneiform texts which deal with the Flood has made possible comparisons concerning the contents and the antiquity of the texts. In some cases the lacunae due to breakage or to accidental or intentional omissions have been satisfactorily filled from the texts contained in fragments of other tablets. In certain cases the expressions which were obscure because of editing or omissions have been satisfactorily clarified. This is the case, for example, with Tablet XI of the library of Ashurbanipal. This tablet from the seventh century B.C. presents Utnapishtim listening from his house of rushes in Shuruppak to the announcement of the Flood as given by the god Ea. But in the Ugaritic fragment *Ugaritica V*, No. 167 (= R.S. 22,421), Utnapishtim is presented as dwelling in the temple of his god Ea. This god, who knew the secrets of all the gods, had been sworn by the others to secrecy, agreeing not to reveal divine decisions to mortals. But as Ea desired to save Utnapishtim from the Flood in order to offer him immortality, his ingenious method of not breaking his oath and yet accomplishing his wish was to tell to the rush walls of his great temple the gods' secret about the cataclysmic destruction of mortals. This subterfuge of the god Ea appears in the Ugarit text in the following words, which are similar to those of other texts of the Gilgamesh Epic: "Their words, to the hedge of rushes he repeated (saying): 'Wall, hear! . . .'"

Nougayrol, translator of the text from Ras Shamra, believes that it constitutes the geographic link that was missing between the tablets referring to the Flood, discovered in Boghazköy, and that which was found at Megiddo. Besides, with reference to the relation of the Flood text from Ugarit with the group of Accadian and Sumerian texts on the same subject, in a session of the Académie des Inscriptions held in Paris he stated: "I consider that the fragment from Ugarit is found at the confluence of the old traditions on the Flood (Sumerian Flood, Poem of the Very Wise Man) and the no less venerable traditions about Gilgamesh."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Nougayrol, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

4. *Four New Fragments in the British Museum.* In 1960 D. J. Wiseman published four new fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic from the British Museum. These fragments were classified as B 23, 24, 25, 26.<sup>45</sup> The scope of these individual fragments is of great similarity to the classic Tablet III from Nineveh, and to a tablet discovered at Ur, recently published and translated by Gadd.

5. *Tablet from Ur.* Digging at *Tell el-Muqaiyar* in Iraq began in 1922, carried on by the Joint Expedition of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania. Among the tablets discovered there is one that belongs to the Gilgamesh Epic, but it has no excavation number nor any special marks. It is characterized by the defective condition of its surface. Upon the tablet an overlay of fine clay had been spread with the purpose of obtaining greater clearness, but the unfortunate result was that the overlay became detached, carrying away many signs over irregular spaces, leaving defective lines.

This tablet from Ur has recently been published by Gadd.<sup>46</sup> The text of the tablet corresponds to Tablet VII of the Accadian Gilgamesh Epic from Nineveh.

Gadd presented a translation of the cuneiform text of Ur and a discussion of the internal evidences given by the text so as to obtain indications for the date of its composition. The following characteristics attracted his attention: the use of few Sumerograms; the use of prepositions that were common following the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I; the use of suffixes for pronouns that suggests the end of the Kassite period or the second Dynasty of Isin. Taking all this into account, Gadd supposes that it "be best assigned to the early 11th century B.C."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> D. J. Wiseman, "Additional Neobabylonian Gilgamesh Fragments," in P. Garelli, ed., *Gilgameš et sa légende* (Paris, 1960), pp. 123-135; W. G. Lambert, *Cuneiform Texts of the British Museum*, XLVI (London, 1965), Pl. XXXI.

<sup>46</sup> Gadd, "Some Contributions to the Gilgamesh Epic," *Iraq*, XXVIII (1966), 105-121.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

All these discoveries from Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian sections of Mesopotamia, and from Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine show the wide diffusion that the Gilgamesh Epic, including the traditions about the Flood, attained as a literary work.

### V. *General Conclusions*

A study of the available Flood texts considered in this paper leads to the following conclusions:

1. The Accadian—Assyrian and Babylonian—texts of the Flood have a similar theme, but show secondary differences with reference to the names of gods and in expressions due to regional coloring.

2. The names Utnaphistim, Atrahasis, Atramhasis, Ziusudra, Xisuthros, given to the hero of the Flood are different, because preferential epithets were adopted in different regions of Mesopotamia. However, this does not constitute sufficient reason to assume that more than one person was actually meant.

3. The Assyrian texts, coming from the library of Ashurbanipal, as the most recent compositions, are regarded by scholars to be dependent upon the Babylonian traditions, from which local adaptations of the Deluge theme were made.

4. The Babylonian texts of the Flood, although following the lines of two parallel recensions, point to a common origin, which chronologically goes back to the tradition that had circulated in Sumer.

5. It is evident that some of those who used the Accadian language were familiar with the classical Sumerian literature, by which they attained a direct acquaintance with the traditions of Sumer, as evidenced much later by Berossus.

6. The Mesopotamian texts of the Flood—Assyrian, Babylonian, and Sumerian—contain the same old tradition of a great cataclysm, and show that the Deluge was considered to mark a clear break between two periods: the prediluvian and the postdiluvian world.