

Mesopotamian astronomy, pp. 115–32). John M. Steele concentrates on the length of the Babylonian month in the same period, and shows how empirical observation was eventually superseded by reliable prediction based on a very exact astronomical understanding of the lunar cycle (The length of the month in Mesopotamian calendars of the first millennium BC, pp. 133–48).

An additional paper by Alexander Jones describes astronomical calendars devised by Greek and Hellenistic scholars (On Greek stellar and zodiacal date-reckoning, pp. 149–67). It and most of the papers that precede it confirm the emphasis, conveyed also by the name of the workshop that hosted them and by the book's subtitle, on the calendar as a phenomenon in the history of science in general, and of astronomy in particular. Ancient Near Eastern calendars were also socio-economic, political and intellectual instruments, but for these aspects of them the reader must look elsewhere.

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DOUGLAS R. FRAYNE:

*Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC).*

(Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 1.) lvi, 464 pp.

Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008. £150.

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After an interval of eleven years, here is the book that completes the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia's project to publish the formal inscriptions of south Mesopotamian rulers of the third and early second millennia BC (RIME). Douglas Frayne has played the leading role as the editor of four of the five volumes of "early periods": RIME 4 (1990), 2 (1993), 3/2 (1997) and now RIME 1. Collected within the customary blue boards are the votive and building inscriptions of rulers and officials who flourished during the middle of the third millennium BC. These are the oldest such documents in human history, and present a picture of the evolution of the genre of formal, commemorative inscriptions from very simple labels comprising a single phrase to highly complex texts of many dozens of lines.

Frayne's newest contribution to the RIME series competes in the market place with the German edition of third-millennium formal inscriptions by Horst Steible, *Die altsumerische Bau- und Weihinschriften* (2 vols, Stuttgart, 1982) and a less comprehensive anthology of English translations by Jerrold S. Cooper, *Sumerian and Akkadian Royal Inscriptions: Presargonic Inscriptions* (New Haven, 1986). I. J. Gelb and B. Kienast's *Die altakkadische Königsinschriften des dritten Jahrtausends vor Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1990) mostly comprises Sargonic inscriptions, dealt with in RIME 2, but also includes a few older texts that therefore feature in RIME 1. It is a feature of Assyriology that new primary sources are continually becoming available and it is thus inevitable that books published twenty years ago have been overtaken by recent discoveries. This review flags up what Frayne includes that was not treated in any of the three volumes cited above.

The largest corpus of pre-Sargonic inscriptions comes from Girsu and neighbouring sites, where late nineteenth-century excavations laid bare the remains of third-millennium buildings built by rulers of Lagaš. The written legacy of this dynasty occupies a large part of the book (pp. 77–291). A few scraps have been added to

the corpus in the last quarter century: E1.9.1.30b is a short brick inscription of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš published in 1984. E1.9.3.18, on an alabaster fragment in the Louvre, is a hitherto unpublished text including royal titulary of Eannatum of Lagaš. E1.9.5.30 is a cone-fragment of Enmetena published in 1984. E1.9.10.2 is the remains of the titulary of a ruler of Lagaš preserved on a piece of alabaster bowl, previously published in 1991.

The excavations led by Leonard Woolley at Ur in the 1920s and '30s produced a good many third-millennium inscriptions, but some minor texts have escaped inclusion in previous anthologies. Four cylinder seals found in the celebrated royal tombs and first published in 1934 are identified as the property of members of the royal family of Ur, and thus their inscriptions take a place in the book as texts E1.13.1 (A-anzu), E1.13.2.1001 (Gankugsig), E1.13.3.1 (king Meskalamdug), E1.13.3.3 (Pū-abum), E1.13.4 (Ašusikilam, wife of Akalamdug). Two spearheads, one inscribed with a short dedication of Meskalamdug, were also found at Ur but published only in 1994, and accompany his seal as E1.13.3.2. Texts E1.13.5.2–4 are labels of king Mesannepadda and his queen, Nintur, inscribed on seals from disturbed contexts near the royal tombs. A bowl bearing the label of Nintur is considered to belong to the same lady, although it was found in the grave of Meskalamdug (E1.13.5.4 ex. 1). As explained on p. 401, many scholars doubt that this Meskalamdug is the same person as king Meskalamdug.

From sites other than Lagaš-Girsu and Ur there is less to report. Text E1.7.43, incised on a stone fragment from Khafaje, has been known since its excavation in the 1930s but in its very damaged state escaped edition until 1991. E1.8.3.2 is an Akkadian text inscribed on a statue fragment from Nippur that was first transliterated in 1977 but is nevertheless absent from RIME 1's competitors. A limestone disk from Nippur, long kept in the University Museum, Philadelphia, but overlooked until 1991, bears a dedication of Lugalkiginnedudu of Uruk (E1.14.14.3b). A stone foundation peg from Uruk, kept for almost as long in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin and much discussed in the art-historical literature, seems to have escaped a philological treatment until now; its inscription, a dedication by Lugal-KISAL-si, is E1.14.15.2. Finally, texts E1.10.15 and E1.10.17.2–3 derive from the unpublished impressions of royal seals found at Mari in 2000.

The new material reported in the preceding paragraphs is rather a modest haul for the passage of more than two decades. But certainly the process of accretion will continue. The Schøyen Collection is known to hold many unpublished third-millennium inscriptions, some of them new to knowledge, others duplicates of known inscriptions. One piece, a cone fragment of Giššakidu of Umma, is already included in the present book (E1.12.6 ex. 3).

An innovation of this book is the inclusion under kings of Mari of narrative passages of the well-known letter sent by Enna-Dagan of Mari to the ruler of Ebla, first published in 1980 and definitively edited in 2003; these passages are not royal inscriptions of kings of Mari but short reports of military events embedded in a later review of historical relations between Mari and Ebla. One desideratum noted by reviewers of previous volumes is here supplied: an index of divine, personal and geographical names. This will be a substantial aid to the book's users. Another departure from the usual RIME style of presentation is the occasional extended passage of commentary, for example on Urukagina's reform inscription (pp. 249–58). There is much in Frayne's commentaries for scholars to assimilate, a process that can only deepen understanding and refine current knowledge.

The RIME volumes are standard resources in Assyriology and ancient history. Douglas Frayne deserves both fields' gratitude for bringing to completion the volumes on the early periods. It was a blow when the project in Toronto closed

for want of funds; its revival in Philadelphia is splendid news and we look forward to the continuing appearance of these big blue books.

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THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

KONRAD HIRSCHLER:

*Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors.*

(SOAS/Routledge Series on the Middle East.) x, 181 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. £65. ISBN 0 415 38377 3.

DANIELLA TALMON-HELLER:

*Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria. Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146–1260).*

(Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture.) xv, 306 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2007. €109. ISBN 978 90 04 15809 2.

SAMI G. MASSOUD:

*The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian Period.*

(Islamic History and Civilization.) xiii, 477 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2007. €137. ISBN 978 90 04 15626 5.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000585

The advance of the Saljuqs instigated the emergence of military dynasties in Syria (Bilād al-Shām). With the removal of the Fatimids from Cairo this system of military rule expanded to Egypt. The new soldier-rulers, many of them foreigners, were aware of the political weight of legitimacy, image and propaganda, particularly when they advanced the ideology of protecting the Abode of Islam against its enemies, first the Franks and later the Mongols. They forged strong ties with the religious establishment and invested considerable resources in pious endowments. They were also Maecenas of literature and supported historians who told the stories of their dynasties and communicated their memory. As a result, the stormy centuries of the late ‘Abbāsīd period (1055–1517) witnessed the development of a rich Arab historiography in Syria and Egypt (cf. Claude Cahen, “L’historiographie arabe: des origines au VIIe s. h.,” *Arabica* 33, 1986, 182). The history of society and of the historical craft in these lands during the Zangid (1127–74), Ayyubid (1171–1260), and Mamluk (1250–1517) years are the subject of the three new studies reviewed here.

Clio’s practitioners commonly agree that the past and history are not the same thing, and frequently debate questions concerning historiography and fiction. The “Culture industry”, as understood by Adorno and Horkheimer, including the interpretation of historical narratives, has constituted a component of the craft of historians for centuries prior to the new wave of scholarly debates on narrative, deconstruction, image and other buzz-words. Konrad Hirschler takes on this theme,