

The Assyrian Recension of Enuma Elis WILFRED GEORGE LAMBERT Birmingham Heinrich Zimmern first drew attention to the existence of an Assyrian recension of Enuma Elis in 1917, a form of the text in which the hero Marduk, god of Babylon, was replaced by Ashur, state god of Assyria. Ebeling's publication of KAR 117 and 118 (judged by the present writer to be two parts of one tablet) in the year 1917 provided the evidence. The replacement of one divine name by another is well known in prayers, for example in the penitential psalm in the Nineveh copy the worshipper asks to be taken care of by Marduk: su-ri-ba-an-ni-ma a-na e-sag-il e-kal ilani bit balati(tila) a-na marduk re-me-ni-i a-na damigtim(sigstim a-na qate" damgati(sigs)mes pig-dan-ni IV R2 59 no. 2 rev. 25-26 Send me in to Esagil, palace of the gods, temple of life, entrust me to merciful Marduk for favour, to kind hands. In the Assur copy of this prayer, LKA 29k rev. 23-24, another temple is named: .. e]-sar-ra e-kal ilani bit ba-la-ti .sigsi u gate" damgati(sigs)mes pig-dan-ni While Esarra could allude to either Enlil's or Ashur's temple, the latter is more probable in this case, and no doubt 'Ashur should be restored in the second line of the couplet. There is, however, a Late Assyrian letter, ABL 1336 S. Parpola, LAS 288, which quotes Tablet IV 17 with Ansar in place of Bel: ansar sa tak-lu-ka [napistasu gi-mi]l-ma (collated) Ansar, spare [the life] of him who trusts in you. Parpola dates this letter to the reign of Esarhaddon (AOAT 5/2 p. 285), which, if correct, would indicate that some Assyrian scholars continued to support this revised text after Sennacherib's death. It proceeds to quote from Enuma Elis, and this can only be (one would suppose) the text Enuma Elis known to us since there is specific allusion to its being recited to Marduk in the month Nisan: e-nu-ma e-lis sa da-bi-ib-u-ni ina pan/mahar bel ina itinisanni (bara) i-za-mur-u-su-ni ina muhhi sa sa-bit-u-ni [su-u] P. 84 34 Enuma Elis, as it is called, which they chant in the presence of Bel in the month Nisan, refers to his imprisonment. The former only is given here: su-u ina libbi e-nu-ma e-lis ig-ti-bi ki-i same ersetimtim la ib-ba-nu-ni ansar it-tab-si] ki-i alu u bitu ib-su-u-ni su-u it-tab-si It is said in Enuma Elis p. 85 54-55 When heaven and earth were not yet created, Ashur had [come into being], When city and temple came into being, Ashur had come into being, 2 The fact is that in our text of Enuma Elis these lines do not occur, indeed they never could have occurred. Zimmern's observation has been accepted by all later scholars concerned with the matter, and it has been further suggested that this pro-Assyrian revision was provoked by Sennacherib's religious reforms, when he destroyed the city of Babylon, carried away the holy statue of the god Mar Edik, so preventing the occurrence of the annual Akitu festival in which Marduk was re-affirmed as king of the gods. Of the surviving copies of this text, the earliest are a few fragments from Assur, undated, but probably to be put about 900 B.C. The largest quantity of copies are Late Assyrian, dating to c. 700-612 B.C. A lesser quantity of Late Babylonian copies survive, to be dated c. 600-250 B.C. Only the Late Assyrian copies attest the Assyrian recension, and only those from Assur and Nineveh. Thus Marduk's parents Ea and Damkina are replaced Lahrau and Lahamu. The replacement of Anu by Lahmu can be justified in that Anu and Ansar identified in some traditions, though emphatically not in Enuma Elis. If there was a complete, original Enuma Elis composed in Assyria to support Sennacherib's reforms, then so far no single fragment has been found which might be assigned to it. This is not a fatal objection to the idea, since such a text might have been considered heretical and blasphemous on the part of many, and so have enjoyed limited circulation. Either there was another text, composed at Sennacherib's bidding

presumably, beginning enuma elis and containing this couplet, centering on the god Ashur, or there was no such text and the quotation is bogus. It may be suspected that Sennacherib's anti-Babylonian policies spurred this literary activity, but its imperfections make one wonder whether flattering courtiers assured the king without bothering to make sure that all new copies were fully and correctly changed. The two fragments from Nimrud are too small to supply any evidence, and though the Sultantepe copies cover the passages where the name Marduk could have been altered to Ashur they conspicuously fail to show any sign of this revision. Thus an Assyrian editor had boldly replaced the Babylonian Marduk with the Assyrian Ashur. Thus conclusions can be drawn without delay