VI. The Royal Family.

The Sumerian word for king is *lugal* or 'great man.' The 'great man' par excellence was the god. And so Bur Sin speaks of "Nannar (the moon-god) the *lugal* of Ur and Nin-gal (the moon-goddess) the mother of Ur." But there were 'great men' on earth too; great perhaps in stature, but certainly in might; great maybe by nature, if one may make a distinction which the Sumerians may not have made, but certainly great by the gifts of the gods from whom all kingship comes, as it is written in the ancient king-list: "kingship came down from heaven." ¹

On earth kings are "given kingship" by the gods, as was Lugalzaggisi, king of Erech, by Enlil, the king of the lands; named by the gods, as was Bur Sin, the king of Ur; loved by them as was Gimil Sin, king of Ur, by Enlil and by Nannar, the moon god; chosen by them to be shepherd of the land and of the four regions of the earth. Hence the full title of the king is "the great man, the mighty one, king of Ur, king of the four regions of the earth." We have no contemporary evidence of the details of the election, proclamation and enthronement of the kings, except that a few tablets speak of "Bur Sin whose name was spoken in Nippur by Enlil the lord of the earth." It is important to note that these tablets do not all come from Nippur,

¹ SAK., p. 198, d), 25 ff.
² OECT., vol. ii.; WB. 444; col. i. : 1, 41.
the city in which the name of Bur Sin was proclaimed. They come also from Erech and even from Ur, the capital city of the kingdom.\footnote{SAK., p. 198, g, 196, c. Ur Excavations, vol. I.} From this it may be suggested that the naming of the king was at this time done at Nippur, and there only, and not at Ur the capital. Further that the king-maker among the gods, who made all kings, was Enlil, himself the father of the gods, the king of heaven and of earth whose dwelling was on the mount whence he sends the winds, and in the 'mountain-temple' of his capital Nippur.

It will be recalled that in later days in Babylonia the 'greatman' took the right hand of Bel (Sumerian Enlil) and that there the 'king' was chosen and named by the god of the land. So that it may be that the later ceremony so reminiscent of the earlier, so far as we know it, is Sumerian in origin; a suggestion for which there are many antecedent probabilities.

The 'kings' of the third dynasty of Ur in order of succession are these: Ur-Nammu, reigned eighteen years; his son, Sulgi, reigned forty-six years; his son, Bur Sin, reigned nine years; his son, Gimil Sin, reigned nine years; his son, Ibi-Sin, reigned twenty-four years.

Two comments may be made on this list. First: the name of three of the kings is compounded of the name of the moon-god, Sin; or rather, one should say, of one of the names of the moon-god. For the moon-god was known by many names and at this period especially by the name Nannar. The second comment is that at this time a Sumerian kingdom was ruled by one family for one hundred and six (possibly eight) years. No Sumerian family had ruled a kingdom for so long before it and none after it, in Sumer. The Semitic family of Sargon I ruled from Agade for a longer period, but the line was not so direct as that of the kingly line of Ur III, for it was diverted by the passing of the throne from a son of Sargon, Rimuš, to his brother Maništiššu. It is sometimes objected against hereditary kingship that it puts incompetence in charge of the army. From such evidence as we have the objection could not be substantiated in regard to the kings of Ur III.

The sources whence is drawn the information offered in this...
article are the clay tablets contemporary with the third Dynasty of Ur. The King-list from which the list of kings in the order of succession and their length of reigns are taken,¹ is of a rather later date. But we can check the tradition represented by the King-list by means of the tablets contemporary with the kings. Indeed even without the King-list we know the number of years of Sulgi, Bur Sin and Gimi-Sin in their order.

The contemporary tablets are, for our purpose, of two kinds: the 'royal' inscriptions and the 'business' documents. The former are concerned directly with the reigning king. They are records of his care for the gods in their temples and of outstanding public works. There are comparatively few of these. Here is a sample: "For Enki, his 'king,' has Sulgi, man of might, 'king' of Ur, 'king' of Sumer and Akkad, his temple built." Similar records exist of Bur Sin, Gimi Sin and Ibi Sin.

The more important and vastly more numerous class is the class of business documents. These are primarily records of business by whomsoever transacted, whether by 'king' or by subject. There is no special 'royal' business record. What the 'king' did in this respect, either personally or through his agents, is recorded in the ordinary way of business in records of receipt, income and expenditure.

It is from these business records that we get much of our historical knowledge of the period. This is because this mass of seemingly unhistorical matter is dated. The vast majority of the records end with day, month and year. As examples of the year-dates we may take the date-formulae of the last years of Sulgi and the first years of his successor, Bur Sin.

Sulgi 44: "The year when Sulgi, the strong man, 'king' of Ur, 'king' of the four regions, destroyed in one day Kimaš, Ŧumurti and their land."

Sulgi 45: "The year when etc. (as preceding), the year after it."

Sulgi 46: "The year when Ŧarši, Ŧumurti, Kimaš and their land were destroyed in one day."

Bur Sin I: For a time, the formula of Sulgi 46 is used

preceded by the words "the year after." Then soon comes the new and proper formula. "The year Bur Sin was king."

Bur Sin II: A few tablets are dated "the year after Bur Sin was 'king.'" But soon we have "The year when Bur Sin destroyed Urbilum."

Bur Sin III: A few commemorate "the year after" the event of the second year; but soon records in all the land are celebrating "the year when Bur Sin the 'king' made the throne of Enlil."

The same formulae were in use throughout the kingdom. Thus the celebration of the same king and the same event was universal. Doubtless this uniformity, itself a mark of political unity, was imposed from Ur, the capital city. The psychological effect would be great. Each date imposes royalty, carries it into every home and every business house, more effectively than does the royal face on an English coin. This effect was increased by the circumstance that the date-formulae was changed every year. That change would be news. It would be matter of anticipation before it was announced and of discussion in homes and street when it became known; discussed as widely and as 'expertly' as a change of design on modern postage stamps and coinage. Each change announced a new glory of the reigning sovereign; a new good deed for the welfare of the land and the honour of the gods. The king destroys a city, erects a temple, builds a wall, constructs a boat, and the rest. By these things duly recorded on thousands of tablets in circulation in every town, thought and memory of the king were kept before the people. Even the installation of a priest, though nowhere set down as an act of the 'king' is proof of the royal piety, as is delicately insinuated by Bur Sin whose fourth year is dated "year when the high priest of heaven, priest of Nannar, beloved of Bur Sin, was installed."

The 'great man,' his lady and his children lived in the 'great house' or palace, sometimes called the 'house of the great man.' We may presume that their home was at Ur, the capital of the kingdom, and there are tablets which mention the 'great house in Ur.' But there were royal residences elsewhere; e.g. Lagash
tablets record a ‘great house’ at Girsu and Nina which were parts of Lagash, and at Gaes, Esagdana and Nippur.¹

The explanation that comes first to mind is that these houses were for the ‘king’ when away from home on royal business of war, administration or cult in the various cities of the kingdom. There are occasional references to the king’s movements; e.g. “when the king went to Nippur,”² “when the king went to Ur.”³

We may venture on an additional reason for the several country houses of the ‘great man.’ Each city had its temple which, as is known, was a group of buildings or apartments for the gods and their ministers. Now though it may be an exaggeration to say that the ‘king’ was a god, yet he was, in a sense unique among men, ‘divine,’ and thus attached more closely than any other man to the national and city pantheons. It would not be surprising if each city included amongst its chief buildings a ‘great house’ which should be a residence of the ‘king’ when the king was present and a centre of inferior worship of the ‘king’ during his absence.

A tablet in the Rylands collection mentions “the house of Meisdar son of the ‘king.’”⁴ The house was in Ur. I do not know of any other Ur III tablet which records a house of any other of the royal children. However, the item suggests that a member of the family might have a private residence or apartment independent of the family house, to which supplies were sent, in this instance supplies of oxen and of kids.

We have frequent references to goods “entered into the great-house.” These we may take to be part of the revenue of the ‘king’ and of his family, who were housed and fed and fêted at the nation’s expense, as were the gods themselves. If they did all that they were appointed to do, they deserved more than maintenance. They were to be “shepherds of the land,” guardians of justice, and protectors of the poor; in short a ‘popular’ monarchy, far removed in spirit and action from what is usually understood by an ‘oriental’ monarchy. A ‘king’ in Sumer stood not only for all gods but for all men in the land.

The essential of life was food, which meant principally the

¹ Hussey, II. nos. 115, 120, 122, 126; ITT., V. 6963.
² An. Or. 7, 104.
³ Ibid., 108.
⁴ JR. 470.
chief cereals (barley, wheat and emmer) and products (meal, bread, malt and beer). The tablets of this sort in the Rylands collection record animals (oxen, sheep, kids) entered into the great house.\textsuperscript{1} Others of this class mention delivery of beer, butter, bread, cheese, dates, goat-milk.\textsuperscript{2}

The 'currency' at the time of Ur III was silver and as a medium of purchase would be very useful at times of food-shortage, and not only then. So we have records of silver\textsuperscript{3} entered into the palace. And of clothes.\textsuperscript{4}

The 'king' held his possessions of the gods whose tenant he was. How great were his possessions and in what kinds will, perhaps, be disclosed to us by a study of the Ur tablets when published. In the meantime we have scraps of information on the point, and such as it is it is what we might expect. The king's chief needs were food, shelter and clothing. Revenue from the cities of the kingdom supplied some part of his needs. But there were sources of supply which were described as "of the king." Of the "great house" of the king we have already said something. Attached to this, and part of it, was a sheepfold.\textsuperscript{5}

The sheep would provide wool and the goats provided milk. The wool was worked up, woven into clothing in Gimmil-Sin's time, in his own "weaving-shed" by his own "weavers" who were women and children.\textsuperscript{6}

Essential food-cereals and vegetables were supplied by the king's fields and gardens. The milling was done by women and children.\textsuperscript{7} Other foods for the "king's table" were fish, pigs and butter. The fish are distinguished as fish of the reservoir or lake, and fish of the sea.\textsuperscript{8} The milling was an organised industry under a head. There was a royal cook in the royal kitchen, and a royal brewer of the royal beer.\textsuperscript{9}

In addition to employees engaged on essential work in his

\textsuperscript{1} JR. 139, 165, 170, 173, 437.
\textsuperscript{2} E.g. ITT., IV. 7171, 7232, 7248, 8026.
\textsuperscript{3} E.g. ITT., II. 4123; V. 7558, 8096; Hussey, II. 112, 118, 124, etc.; TU. 137, III.
\textsuperscript{4} ITT., IV. 7753; V. 6810.
\textsuperscript{5} E.g. TU. 292, etc.; ITT., V. 6906.
\textsuperscript{6} ITT., II. 651, 702, 844.
\textsuperscript{7} ITT., IV. 7481 a, b; 7561, etc.
\textsuperscript{8} ITT., IV. 7054, 7112, 7100.
\textsuperscript{9} ITT., IV. 7436; CT., IX. 20015, R. 17; ITT., IV. 7261, 7514.
service, the king had his own scribe, cantor, hairdresser, porter, milkman, cup-bearer, messengers, judge and religious officials.¹

Perhaps as a compliment to the king, the word for ‘king’ was used to describe the very best in stuffs, e.g. royal beer, royal barley meal; and the standard reliable dry measure was the royal gur.

The private and public devotions of the reigning ‘great-man’ are the essential matter of many of the royal inscriptions or records of the building of temples for various gods, and are indicated in the ‘business’ documents. Unfortunately the precise meaning of the terms used, e.g. a-ru-a, núg-giš-tag-ga, zur-ra, etc., is not known. They are “offerings,” on our texts usually of animals, but what differentiated one sort from another can be as yet but guesswork.

Finally, a word must be said about the current form of oath in which the parties swore by the ‘life’ of the king. The formula can be illustrated by the Rylands tablets.

Jr. 786: The tablet though broken across the first lines seems to deal with sheep that have been seized (šu-gid-da) from Akalla; account of Adu; in the month of še kar-ra gál-la he swore by the life of his king (mu-lugal-bi in-pad), to hand (them) over (sum-mu-da).

Jr. 536: Ur-Dumuzida, swore by the life of the king that he would not bring an action (enim-nu-un-gá-gá-a mu-lugal-bi in pad).

Jr. 541: Manšume, swore by the life of the king that he would not litigate about the silver (received by him in a transaction) (kù-babbar nu-ub-?-gi₄-gi₄-da mu-lugal-bi in-pad).

Cp. also Jr. 60.

Until recently the phrase mu lugal was translated by “the name of the king.” But it is now established that though mu does mean ‘name’ it also means ‘life’ and so the Sumerian phrase corresponds to the Semitic nîš šarrîm in Semitic oath formulæ. Nothing could illustrate more clearly the dignity and

¹ Cp. ITT., II. 731; STH., II. 73, 95; ITT., II. 771; IV. 7061; II. 731; RTC. 3500; ITT., IV. 8162, etc.; II. 1010: iii. 1.
authority of the king, except the cult of the king which will be discussed in a later article.

In such evidence as we have to date, the 'great man' is everywhere and the other members of the royal family are, by comparison, nowhere. In the old days of Lugalanda and Urukagina of Lagash, about earlier than the days of Ur III, king and queen and children figure much in the economy of the state, as became the earthly representatives of the heavenly family. But it would be as yet unfair to compare the position of the royal family at Ur with the earlier one at Lagash, chiefly because we have large quantities of evidence from Lagash, the city where the earlier reigning family lived, whereas we have hardly any evidence at all from Ur the royal residence of the Ur III kings and their families. We must await the publication of all Ur III tablets found at Ur by the joint expedition which has worked there so successfully since the war.

The queen is referred to as the "wife of the 'king,'" the "lady" and "madame." But she isn't referred to often on such records as we have. Perhaps she did not get about much. And this, if true, must not be attributed to harem enclosure, for there was no such thing in Sumer. There is abundant evidence of the 'advanced' position of women. But if absent the lady was not forgotten. She had here needs and the state had duty to supply them. Hence we occasionally read of provision for her. Two Rylands tablets ¹ mention a lamb, a sheep and a sow as food-stuff for her. On other records ² ducks and doves and sows are for her food. She had her own shepherd. ³

It is interesting that we do not read so often of food supplies for the other members of the family. Perhaps they are included in the phrase "taken into the palace" which occurs on tablets which record provisions for the queen. But whereas she has doves, ducks and sows, there are only dead birds and dead sheep for the 'palace.'

Of the queen's piety we have little evidence. There is a record ⁴ of "one sheep when the lady entered the temple" in

¹ JR. 45, 170, 484.
² E.g. TRU. 280, 281; H.G. 8; An. Or. 74 : 3; cp. ITT., IV. 7100.
³ ITT., II. 752.
the reign of Sulgi. And the lady of Bur Sin offered 104 fat oxen, 17 oxen, 708 sheep, 208 he-goats. Such large numbers of animals suggest large private possessions in live-stock. We have a reference to a queen’s shepherd.¹

They are described as "N son of the king." The name of the 'king' is not usually written. It is assumed that the king referred to must be the king in whose reign the tablet is dated. But there is reason to doubt whether this assumption always leads to truth. On a Rylands tablet ² we read of Āḫuni, the son of the king. The tablet is dated in the fifth year of Gimil Sin. But "Āḫuni, son of the king" occurs on a tablet recently published ³ which is dated in the third year of Bur Sin. It may be, of course, that both Bur Sin and Gimil Sin had a son named Āḫuni. But it seems better to say that 'son of king' may mean "son of a king" or "royal son."

But if we assume that the date-formulae do provide us with a certain clue to the parentage of the royal son mentioned in the body of the tablet, we may list the royal male children known to date as follows: Seven sons of Sulgi. They are Gimil-Enlil, Lu-Nannar, Na-di, Ur-Sin, Ur-Nannar, Ur-Adad, and of course the crown prince Bur Sin who succeeded. Of Bur Sin we hear of eight sons whose names are: Amir-Sulgi, Sulgirama, Gimil-िर, Ka-Nannar, Lu-Sulgi, Lugalazīda, Ur-Ninsun ⁴ and the crown prince Gimil-Sin.

There are other princes whose parentage cannot be with certainty identified either because the tablet is not dated, or it is dated by a formula which is used of more than one year. Thus, e.g. a Rylands tablet ⁵ refers to "Meišdar, son of a king." But the tablet is dated in "the year when Sašru was destroyed." But this event dates both the fortieth year of the reign of Sulgi and the sixth of the reign of Bur Sin.

The following are names of royal princes found on tablets which bear no date: Lu-Babbar, Lugal-ezen, Puzur-Ninsun, Nin-egalsi, Ur-Kadi.

Nothing of importance is recorded of these princes, not even of the crown prince. They make contributions to national cults.

¹ ITT., II. 752 (Bursin I). ² JR. 434. ³ Boson, ICS. 336. ⁴ ITT., III. 5001. ⁵ JR. 470.
at the various shrines and appear with lesser notables. One prince, whose name we do not know, the son of ‘king’ Ur-Nammu, was made priest of the goddess Innana at Erech. The event provides the date formula for one of the years of Ur-Nammu’s reign. A son of Bur-Sin, Ur-Nannar is recorded as going from Susa supplied with royal beer and barley meal.

Daughters of kings are referred to even less often than are sons of kings. But they play an important part in inter-state politics. Two of Sulgi’s daughters are married to foreign potentates. One became the lady of Marhaši, the other, became the lady of Anšan, one of the most important districts of Elam. A daughter of Ibi-Sin, by name Tukuntibattirnigriša, married a patesi of Zabšali which had been conquered by her grandfather Cimil Sin in the seventh year of his reign.

Occasionally we hear of princesses going on a journey, one from Adamdun which is somewhere in Elam, another to Kimasš which is located on the Adem river, a considerable distance from Ur, the home town. Of the latter it is recorded that she had as rations \(\frac{2}{3}\) of a gur of meal for ‘en route,’ and \(\frac{1}{3}\) whilst in the city. But the princess who went to Adamdun was allowed beer, barley meal and sesame oil. The beer for this princess was ordinary, but the beer allowed to prince Ur-Nannar who went to Susa, was ‘royal’ beer!

1 Hussey, II. 85.  
2 ITT., II. 4907.  
3 Hussey, II. 66.