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Achaemenid Period Historical Texts Concerning Mesopotamia

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I. The Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series (Arnold)

These Babylonian chronicles provide most of the information we have on historical and military events in the Neo- and Late-Babylonian periods because we lack royal annals from Babylonia, such as we have among Neo-Assyrian sources. We have 15 tablets or fragments of Babylonian chronicles, which are conventionally divided into the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series (Chronicles 1–7) and the Late Babylonian Chronicle Series (Chronicles 8–13a). The first group is presented here in translation.¹

We glean here a broad outline of the series of events, although the Series is far from complete and the information is often terse. The tradents who produced the Series were interested almost exclusively in Babylonia and the military exploits of the king. Besides reconstructing to some degree the broad outline of events in the period, the chronicles can sometimes be correlated to extra-Babylonian sources, especially events in the southern Levant; for example, the capture of Jerusalem in 597 BCE, and again in 587 BCE. It is often observed that the tradition that produced these texts represents the greatest achievement of the Babylonian historians when it comes to reliable and objective historiography.²

150. Chronicle 1³

The best copy we have of this chronicle was written in Babylon during the twenty-second year of Darius (500 BCE), as the colophon attests (iv 43). It chronicles events in Babylonia, Assyria, and Elam, from Nabu-nasir (747–734 BCE) to Shamash-shum-ukin (668–648 BCE). It covers a more comprehensive period of history than Chronicles 2–7, although in less detail.

After a broken beginning, this chronicle picks up with the accession year of Tiglath-pileser III and therefore illumines Assyro-Babylonian relations





during the period. The text includes activities from a list of Babylonian rulers and usurpers during Tiglath-pileser's reign: Nabu-nasir, Nabu-nadin-zeri, Nabu-shuma-ukin II, and (Nabu)-Mukin-zeri. None is able to sustain success against him, and eventually he united the thrones and ruled Babylonia himself (i 19–23). After the interlude that was Shalmaneser V, Sargon II rose to the throne of Assyria, and the Babylonian throne returned to native hands in the person of Merodach-baladan II. The latter's 12-year reign is chronicled in some detail. Eventually Sargon drove him from Babylonia and resumed control of the royal city himself (ii 1–5). The chronicle records events from Sargon's rule, and after a gap in the text, his son and successor Sennacherib is on the throne. An extended portion of the chronicle is devoted to the rule of Sennacherib and his son, Ashur-nadin-shumi (ii 19–iii 38). There were intermittent Babylonian rulers during this time (Nergal-ushezib and Mushezib-Marduk), and a time when "there was no king in Babylon" (iii 28). The remainder of the chronicle covers the reign of the Assyrian monarch, Esarhaddon, and his son, Shamash-shum-ukin, who assumed the throne in Babylon while his brother ruled in Assyria.

(i1–8) . . . [Year 3: Nabu-nasir,] king of Babylon. Tiglath-pileser III ascended the throne in Assyria. That year, [the king of Assyria] went down to Akkad,⁴ plundered the cities Rabbilu and Hamranu, and took away the gods of Shapazza. At the time of Nabu-nasir, Borsippa rebelled against Babylon, but the campaign that Nabu-nasir conducted against Borsippa is not recorded.

(i9–10) Year 5: Nabu-nasir. Humban-nikash I ascended the throne in Elam.

(i11–13) Year 14: Nabu-nasir became ill and died in his palace. Nabu-nasir exercised kingship in Babylon for 14 years. Then Nabu-nadin-zeri, his son, ascended the throne in Babylon.

(i14–18) Year 2: Nabu-nadin-zeri was killed in a rebellion. Nabu-nadin-zeri exercised kingship in Babylon for two years. Nabu-shuma-ukin II, provincial governor and chief of the rebellion, ascended the throne. Nabu-shuma-ukin exercised kingship in Babylon for one month and [x] days.⁵ Then Mukin-zeri,⁶ son of Amukani,⁷ deposed him and seized the throne.

(i19–23) Year 3: Mukin-zeri. When Tiglath-pileser III went down to Akkad, he plundered Bit-Amukani and defeated Mukin-zeri. Mukin-zeri exercised kingship in Babylon for three years. Then Tiglath-pileser III ascended the throne in Babylon.

(i24–8) Year 2: Tiglath-pileser III died in the month of Tebet. Tiglath-pileser exercised kingship in Akkad and Assyria for <18> years.⁸ He exercised kingship for two years in Akkad itself. On the twenty-fifth day of the month of Tebet, Shalmaneser V ascended the throne in Assyria <and Akkad>. He plundered the city of Samaria.⁹

(i29–32) Year 5: Shalmaneser V died in the month of Tebet. Shalmaneser V exercised kingship in Akkad and Assyria for five years. On the twelfth day of the month of Tebet, Sargon II ascended the throne in Assyria. In the month of Nisan, Merodach-baladan II ascended the throne in Babylon.

(i 33–7) Year 2: Merodach-baladan II. Humban-nikash I, king of Elam, conducted a campaign in the province of Der against Sargon II, king of Assyria. He put Assyria to flight,¹⁰ and inflicted a very great defeat on them. Merodach-baladan II and his

forces, who had gone to the assistance of the king of Elam, did not reach the battle so he withdrew.

(i38–42) Year 5: Merodach-baladan II. Humban-nikash I, king of Elam, died. Humban-nikash I exercised kingship in Elam for 26(?) years. [Shutruk-Nahhu]nte, his sister's son, ascended the throne in Elam. From the beginning of the kingship of Merodach-baladan II until the tenth year, [Assyria/Sargon] was hostile toward Merodach-baladan II.

(i43–4) Year 10: Merodach-baladan II destroyed Bit-[. . .], he plundered it.

(ii1–5) Year 12: Merodach-baladan II. Sargon II went down [to Akkad] and conducted a campaign against [Merodach-bala]dan II. Merodach-baladan II [took flight] before [him] and became a fugitive in Elam. Merodach-baladan II exercised kingship in Babylon for 12 years. Sargon II ascended the throne in Babylon.

(ii1'–2')¹¹ Year 13: Sargon II seized the hand of Bel (i.e., Marduk). He conquered Dur-Yakin.

(ii3') Year 14: The king stayed in the land (i.e., Babylonia).

(ii4'–5') Year 15: On the twenty-second day of the month of Tishri, the gods of the Sea Land returned to their former places. There were plagues in the land of Assyria.

(ii6') [Year 17(?): Sarg]on II [marched] to the land of Tabalu.

(broken text)

(ii19–23) He [Sennacherib(?)] did not scatter the Babylonians. He pursued(?) [Merodach-baladan II(?)] to the border, but Merodach-baladan II [. . .]. He [Sennacherib(?)] plundered his land. [. . .] The cities of Larak and Sarrabanu [. . .] When he withdrew, he (Sennacherib) placed Bel-ibni on the throne in Babylon.

(ii24–5) First year of Bel-ibni. Sennacherib destroyed the cities Hirimma and Hararatum.

(ii26–31) Third year of Bel-ibni. Sennacherib went down to Akkad and plundered Akkad. He took Bel-ibni and his overseers into exile in Assyria. Bel-ibni exercised kingship in Babylon for three years. Then Sennacherib placed Ashur-nadin-shumi, his son, on the throne in Babylon.

(ii32–5) First year of Ashur-nadin-shumi. With regard to Shutruk-Nahhunte II, king of Elam – Hallushu-Inshushinak I, his brother, seized him and imprisoned by him. Shutruk-Nahhunte II exercised kingship in Elam for 18 years. Then Hallushu-Inshushinak I, his brother, ascended the throne in Elam.

(ii36–45) Sixth year of Ashur-nadin-shumi. Sennacherib went down to the land of Elam and destroyed the cities of Nagitum, Hilmi, Pillatum and Hupapanu. He plundered them. Afterwards, Hallushu-Inshushinak I, king of Elam, went to the land of Akkad and entered Sippar at the end of the month of Tishri. He killed its people. Shamash did not come forth from E-babbar. Ashur-nadin-shumi was captured and taken away to Elam. Ashur-nadin-shumi exercised kingship in Babylon for six years. Then the king of Elam placed Nergal-ushezib on the throne in Babylon. He put Assyria to flight.

(ii46–iii 8) First year of Nergal-ushezib. On the sixteenth day of the month of Tammuz, Nergal-ushezib captured Nippur. He plundered it, and carried away the booty. On the first day of the month of Tishri, the army of Assyria entered Uruk. They plundered the gods of Uruk and its people. As for Nergal-ushezib – after the Elamites had come and taken away the gods of Uruk and its people¹² – on the seventh day of the month of Tishru, he conducted a campaign against the army of Assyria in the province of Nippur. He was captured during pitched battle and led away to the land of Assyria. Nergal-ushezib exercised kingship in Babylon for one year (i.e., six months of



a regnal year¹³). On the twenty-sixth day of the month of Tishri, the people of Hallushu-Inshushinak I, king of Elam, rose up against him. They imprisoned him and killed him. Hallushu-Inshushinak I exercised kingship in Elam for six years.

(iii9–12) Kudur-Nahhunte ascended the throne in Elam. Afterwards, Sennacherib went down to the land of Elam and destroyed it from the land of Rashi to Bit-Burnaki. He plundered it. Mushezib-Marduk ascended the throne in Babylon.

(iii13–18) First year of Mushezib-Marduk. On the seventeenth¹⁴ day of the month of Ab, Kudur-Nahhunte, king of Elam, was captured during an insurrection and killed. Kudur-Nahhunte exercised kingship in Elam for 10 months. Humban-nimena ascended the throne in Elam. In a year not known, Humban-nimena called up the armed forces of Elam and Akkad, and conducted a campaign against the land of Assyria in the city of Halule. He put Assyria to flight.

(iii19–27) Year 4: Mushezib-Marduk. On the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan, Humban-nimena, king of Elam, was struck with paralysis and his mouth was so affected that he was unable to speak. In the month of Kislev, on the first day of the month, the city was captured. Mushezib-Marduk also was captured and taken away to Assyria. Mushezib-Marduk exercised kingship in Babylon for four years. In the month of Adar, on the seventh day of the month, Humban-nimena, king of Elam, died. Humban-nimena exercised kingship in Elam for four years. Then Humban-haltash I ascended the throne in Elam.

(iii28–38) During the eighth year, in which there was no king in Babylon, on the third day of the month of Tammuz, the gods of Uruk came from Elam to Uruk. In the month of Tishri, on the twenty-third day of the month, Humban-haltash I, king of Elam, was wounded at midday, and died at sunset. Humban-haltash I exercised kingship in Elam for eight years. Then Humban-haltash the second, his [son], ascended the throne. In the month of Tebet, on the twentieth day of the month, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his son during an insurrection. Sennacherib exercised kingship in Assyria for [x] years. From the twentieth day of the month of Tebet until the second day of the month of Adar, insurrection continued in the land of Assyria. In the month of Adar, on the twenty-eighth¹⁵ day of the month, Esarhaddon, his son, ascended the throne in Assyria.

(iii39–48) First year of Esarhaddon. When Nabu-zer-kitti-lishir, governor of the Sea Land, had gone upstream, he encamped against Ur, but he did not [capture] the city. He became a fugitive before the officials of Assyria and went to the land of Elam. In the land of Elam, the king of Elam captured him and killed him with weapons. In a month not known, the governor in Nippur . . . In the month of Elul, Ishtaran¹⁶ and the gods [of Der] went [from . . .] to Der. [. . .] went to Dur-Sharrukin [. . .] In the month of Adar . . . [. . .] Second year: the palace supervisor . . . [. . .]

(iv1–2) [Third year. X-ahhe]-shullim, the governor of Nippur and [Shamash-ibni, son of Dakk]juri,¹⁷ were led away to the land of Assyria, and in the land of Assyria, they were executed.

(iv3–4) Fourth year. The city of Sidon was captured and turned into booty. In that same year, the palace supervisor levied troops in the land of Akkad.

(iv5–8) Fifth year. On the second day of the month of Tishri, the army of Assyria captured Bazza. In the month of Tishri, the head of the king of Sidon was cut off and carried to the land of Assyria. In the month of Adar, the head of the king of Kundu and Sisu was cut off and carried to the land of Assyria.

(iv9–15) Sixth year. The king of Elam entered Sippar; a massacre ensued. Shamash did not come forth from E-babbar. The Assyrians <went> to the land of Milidu. On



the seventh day of the month of Elul, Humban-haltash II, king of Elam, died in his palace without becoming ill. Humban-haltash II exercised kingship in Elam for five years. Then Urtaki, his brother, ascended the throne in Elam. In a month not known, Shuma-iddina, the governor of Nippur and Kudurru, son of Dakkuri, were led away to Assyria.

(iv16–18) Seventh year. On the fifth day of the month of Adar, the army of Assyria was defeated in the land of Egypt. In the month of Adar, Ishtar of Akkad and the gods of Akkad came from the land of Elam and entered Akkad on the tenth day of the month of Adar.

(iv19–22) Eighth year of Esarhaddon. On the (text broken) day of the month of Tebet, the land of Shubria was captured and turned into booty. In the month of Kislev, its booty entered Uruk. On the fifth day of the month of Adar, the wife of the king died.

(iv23–8) Tenth year. In the month of Nisan, the army of Assyria went to Egypt. (text broken) Three times – the third, sixteenth, and eighteenth days of the month of Tammuz – a massacre ensued in Egypt.¹⁸ On the twenty-second day (of Tammuz), Memphis, the royal city, was captured and its king abandoned. His son and bro[ther] were cap[ture]d.(?) (Memphis) was turned into booty; its people taken as plunder; and its property carried off.

(iv29) Eleventh year. The king in Assyria killed his many officials with weapons.

(iv30–3) Twelfth year. The king of Assyria went to the land of Egypt. He became ill during the campaign and on the tenth day of the month of Arahsamni, he died. Esarhaddon exercised kingship in Assyria for 12 years. Then his two sons ascended the throne, Shamash-shum-ukin in Babylon and Ashurbanipal in Assyria.

(iv34–8) Accession year of Shamash-shum-ukin. In the month of Iyyar, Bel (i.e., Marduk) and the gods of Akkad came out from the city of Libbi-ali (i.e., Ashur), and on the fourteenth [or twenty-fourth(?)] day of the month of Iyyar, they entered Babylon. In that same year, the city of Kirbitu was ca[pture]d] and its king defeated. On the twentieth day of the month of Tebet, Bel-etir, the judge of Babylon, was captured and killed.

(iv39–43) The first section was written according to its original, and checked and properly executed. Tablet of Ana-Bel-erish, son of Liblutu, son of Kalbi-Sin. Handwriting of Ea-nadin, son of Ana-Bel-erish, son of Kalbi-Sin. In Babylon, on the sixth¹⁹ [day of the month of x], the twenty-second year of Darius, king of Babylon and the lands.

151. Chronicle 2²⁰

The beginning of the chronicle is entirely lost, and the start of each line at the beginning of the text is also missing. Enough remains to illuminate more of the Assyro-Babylonian hostilities, ending eventually in Babylonian victory and the accession of Nabopolassar to the throne (14–17). However, hostilities continued between the two countries after he became king, with each inflicting inconclusive defeats upon the other (18–41).

(1–17) [. . .] . . . when he [they(?)] sent during the night [to] Babylon . . . they conducted a campaign against the city during the day. [. . .] of Sin-shar-ishkun became a fugitive in the land of Assyria. [. . .] he appointed officials for the city. On the twelfth day of the month of Elul, the army of Assyria entered [. . .] the city of Shaznaku. They burned the temple with fire.²¹ [. . .] in the month of Tishri, the gods of Kish came to Babylon. The [army of] Assyria came to Nippur, and Nabopolassar took flight





before them. [The army of Assyria and the Nippurians followed after him as far as Uruk. At Uruk, they conducted a campaign against Nabopolassar but they took flight before Nabopolassar. In the month of Iyyar, the army of Assyria came down to the land of Akkad. On the twelfth day of the month of Tishri, the army of Assyria – when they had come toward Babylon – on that same day, the Babylonians came forth from Babylon. They conducted a campaign against the army of Assyria, and they inflicted a very great defeat on the army of Assyria. They plundered them. For one year there was no king in the land. On the twenty-sixth day of the month of Marchesvan, Nabopolassar ascended the throne in Babylon. Accession year of Nabopolassar. In the month of Adar, the gods of the land of Susa – which Assyria had brought and settled in Uruk – their gods Nabopolassar sent back to the city of Susa.

(18–24) First year of Nabopolassar. On the seventeenth day of the month of Nisan, terror fell on the city.²² Shamash and the gods of the city of Shapazzu went to Babylon. On the twenty-first day of the month of Iyyar, the army of Assyria entered the city of Sal[lat]. They brought out the possessions. On the twentieth day <of the month of Sivan or Tammuz(?)>²³, the gods of Sippar went to Babylon. On the ninth day of the month of Ab, Nabopolassar and his army [went to the city of Sal]lat, and conducted a campaign against Sallat. He did not capture the city. Rather, the army of Assyria arrived, and he took flight before them and withdrew.

(25–8) [Second year] of Nabopolassar. At the beginning of the month of Elul, the army of Assyria came down [to Akkad] and encamped by the Banitu Canal.²⁴ They conducted a [campaign against Nabopolassar], but they did not carry off anything. [...] and they withdrew.

(29–41) [Third year.] On the eighth day [of the month . . .], Der rebelled against the land of Assyria. On the fifteenth day of the month of Tishri, [...] the king of Assyria and his army came down to Akkad, and . . . , and [stationed troops] in Nippur.²⁵ Afterwards, Itti-ili [...] . . . and posted a garrison in Nippur. [...] he marched upstream²⁶ [against] the Transeuphrates (i.e., Syria) and against [...] he destroyed [...] and set his face towards Nineveh.²⁷ [...] . . . who had come for battle against him [...] when they saw him, they bowed down in submission before him. [...] . . . the rebel king [...] one hundred days [...] . . .

152. Chronicle 3²⁸

The chronicle covers events from Nabopolassar's tenth to his eighteenth years (616–609 BCE), including the fall of Nineveh. During the intervening years between the end of chronicle 2 and this one, the Babylonians have greatly increased in military strength. The campaigns of Nabopolassar now engaged the Assyrians further from the homeland and with increasing victory. Eventually they overcame the Assyrians within their own territories and together with Cyaxares the Mede, Nabopolassar participated in the capture of the Assyrian capital cities (16–30 and 38–52). This chronicle is important for the light it sheds on the fall of Assyria as well as the gradual rise of Babylonian military power.

(1–15) Tenth year of Nabopolassar. In the month of Iyyar, he called up the armed forces of the land of Akkad, and went to the bank of the Euphrates. The lands of Suhea and Hindanea did not conduct a campaign against him. Rather their gifts they





placed before him. In the month of Ab, the army of Assyria gathered at the city of Gablini, and Nabopolassar went upstream against them. On the twelfth day of the month of Ab, he conducted a campaign against the army of Assyria. The army of Assyria took flight before him, and he inflicted a very great defeat on Assyria. He plundered them thoroughly. They captured the land of Mannea, which had come to their help, and the officials of Assyria. On that same day, he captured the city of Gablini. In the month of Ab, the king of Akkad and his army went upstream to the cities of Mane, Sahiri, and Balihu. They plundered them. They carried off very much booty; they hauled off their gods. In the month of Elul, the king of Akkad and his army turned back. On his journey back, he also carried off the city of Hindanu and its gods to Babylon. In the month of Tishri, the army of Egypt and the army of Assyria pursued the king of Akkad as far as the city of Gablini, but they did not reach the king of Akkad, so they withdrew. In the month of Adar, the army of Assyria and the army of Akkad conducted a campaign against each other in the city of Madanu, that is Araphu. The army of Assyria took flight before the army of Akkad, and they²⁹ inflicted a very great defeat on them. They drove them back to the Zab River. They captured their chariots and their horses. They plundered them thoroughly. [. . .] . . . they brought across the Tigris many things with them, and brought them into Babylon.

(16–23) [Eleventh year. The king] of Akkad called up his army and went to the bank of the Tigris. In the month of Iyyar, he encamped against Baltil.³⁰ [On the . . . day] of the month of Sivan, he conducted a campaign against the city, but he did not capture the city. Rather the king of Assyria called up his army and pushed the king of Akkad back from Baltil. Then he pursued him as far as the city of Takritain, a city which was on the bank of the Tigris [. . .]. The king of Akkad posted his army in the fortified outpost of Takritain. The king of Assyria and his army encamped against the army of the king of Akkad, which was posted in Takritain. For 10 days, he [the Assyrian king] conducted a campaign against them [the Babylonians], but he did not capture the city. The army of the king of Akkad, which he had posted in the fortified outpost inflicted a very great defeat upon Assyria. The king of Assyria and his army [withdrew(?)] and he returned to his land. In the month of Marchesvan, the land of Medes went down to the land of Arraphu and [. . .].

(24–30) Twelfth year. In the month of Ab, the Medes, when [they had set out (?)] against Nineveh [. . .] they rushed quickly, and they captured the city of Tarbisu, a city of the province of Nineveh. [. . .], they came down to the [Tigris and encamped against Baltil. They conducted a campaign against the city, and [. . .] tore (it) down. They greatly defeated a mighty people. They plundered them, and carried away the booty. The king of Akkad and his army, who had gone out to the assistance of the Medes, did not reach the battlefield. The ci[ty . . .] . . . [The king of Akka]d and Cy[ax]ares³¹ met³² one another beside the city. They established an alliance of good will and good relations [i.e., peace].³³ [Cyax]ares and his army returned to his land; the king of Akkad and his army returned to his land.

(31–7) [Thirteenth year. In the month of Iy]yar, the land of the Suheans revolted against the king of Akkad, and acted with hostility. [The king of Akkad] called up his armed forces and went to Suhu. On the fourth day of the month of Sivan, he conducted a [campaign against] Rahilu, a city (on an island) in the middle of the Euphrates,³⁴ and at that time, he captured the city. He built his [. . .] The men of the bank of the Euphrates came down to him. [. . .] he encamped against the city of Anati. The siege-tower [he brought over (?)] from the op]posite bank on the west. [. . .] . . . he brought the siege-tower up to the city wall. He conducted a campaign



against the [city,] and [captured it (?)]... The king of] Assyria and his army came down, and the king of Akkad and his army... [. . .] . . .

(38–52) [Fourteenth year.] The king of Akkad called up his armed forces [and went to the land of xxx]. The king of the Umman-manda [came down (?)] towards the king of Akkad. . . [. . .] . . . they met one another . . . the king of Akkad . . . [Cy]axares . . . brought across and they went to the bank of the Tigris, and . . . [they encamped] against Nineveh. From the month of Sivan until the month of Ab – for three [months . . .] – they conducted a rigorous campaign against the city. [On . . . day] of the month of Ab, [. . .] they inflicted a great [defeat upon] a mighty [people.] At that time, Sin-sharra-ishkun, king of As[syria . . .] . . . [. . .] . . . they carried away heavy spoils from the city and the temple. [They turned] the city into a ruin heap. [. . .] of Assyria escaped from the enemy, and . . . the king of Akkad . . . [. . .] On the twentieth day of the month of Elul, Cyaxares and his army returned to his land. Afterwards, the king of Akk[ad and his army(?)] went to the city of Nasibini. Plunder and exile . . . [. . .] and they brought [the people of (?)] the land of Rusapu before the king of Akkad in Nineveh. On [the . . . day of the mo]nth of [X . . . Ashur-uballit II] ascended the throne of kingship over Assyria in the city of Harran. Until the [. . . day of the] month [of . . .] in Nineveh, [. . .] from the twentieth day of the month of [. . .] the king of [. . .] took away, and in the city of [. . .].

(53–7) Fifteenth year. In the month of Tam[muz, the ki]ng of Akkad [called up his armed forces and . . .] went to the land of Assyria. [. . .] triumphantly [. . .] . . . of the land of . . . [. . .] and he conquered the land of Shu-[. . .]. They plundered them; they carried away heavy spoils. In the mon[th of Marches]van, the king of Akkad [took] the lead of his army and [went ag]ainst the land of Rug[gulitu(?)]. He conducted a campaign against the city and on the twenty-eighth day of the month of Marcheswan, he captured the city [. . .] . . . He did not [leave behind] a single man alive [. . .] He returned [to his land].

(58–65) Sixteenth year. In the month of Iyyar, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and went to the land of Assyria. Fro[m the month of . . .] until the month of Marchesvan, they marched around triumphantly³⁵ in the land of Assyria. In the month of Marchesvan, the land of Umman-mand[a, who had come to the assis]tance of the king of Akkad, joined their troops together and went to the land of Harran, [against Ashur-uballit II(?)], who had ascended the throne in the land of Assyria. As for Ashur-uballit II and the army of the land of Eg[yp]t, who] had come [to his aid] – terror of the enemy fell upon them, and they gave up the city, and [. . .] crossed over. The king of Akkad reached the city of Harran and [. . .] captured the city. He carried away heavy spoils from the city and the temple. In the month of Adar, the king of Akkad abandoned their [. . .] and returned to his land. And the Umman-manda, who had come to the assistance of the king of Akkad, withdrew.

(66–75) <Seventeenth year.> In the month of Tammuz, Ashur-uballit II, king of Assyria, the large army of Egypt [. . .] He crossed the river and went to the city of Harran in order to conquer it [. . . they cap]tured it. They defeated the garrison, which the king of Akkad had posted in it. When they defeated it, they encamped against the city of Harran. Until the month of Elul, they conducted a campaign against the city. They did not [carry off] anything, but neither did they withdraw. The king of Akkad went to the aid of his army, and [. . .] he went up to [the land] of Izalla, and [. . .] . . . the many towns of the mountains [. . .] burned their [. . .] with fire. At the same time, the army [of . . .] went as far as the province of the city of Urartu. In the land of [. . .] they plundered their [. . .]. The garrison, which the king [. . .] had



posted inside it, he remo]ved,(?) and they went up to the city of [. . .] . . . the king of Akkad returned to his land.

(76–8) In the [eighteenth ye]ar, [during the month of El]ul, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and [went . . .] . . .³⁶ [Whoever] loves Nabu and Marduk, guard (this tablet); may it not be turned over to other hands!

153. Chronicle 4³⁷

The chronicle covers events from later in Nabopolassar's reign (608–606 BCE), picking up where chronicle 3 ended (notice the catch-line at the end of 3 and beginning of 4). These years saw the Babylonian armies conducting campaigns in Urartu and regions in the northern Euphrates. In Nabopolassar's nineteenth year, the Babylonian army is divided into two, with the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar II leading one and his father leading the other (5–15). However, Nabopolassar soon returned home and left Nebuchadnezzar to win his own victories on the field of battle.

(1–4) Eighteenth year of Nabopolassar. In the month of Elul, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces, and went down to the bank of the Tigris and to the mountain of Bit-Hanunya, in the province of Urartu. He burned the cities with fire; he plundered them thoroughly. In the month of Tebet, the king of Akkad returned to his land.

(5–15) Nineteenth year. In the month of Sivan, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and Nebuchadnezzar – his eldest son, the prince of the crown-prince's palace³⁸ – also called up his armed forces, and they went to the mountains of the land of Za-[. . .]. The king of Akkad left the prince and the army behind in the country and returned to Babylon during the month of Tammuz. Afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar conducted a campaign against the city of Biranatu of the mountains³⁹ and captured it. He burned it with fire; he plundered the mountains thoroughly. He conquered all of the mountains as far as the province of the land [of . . .]. [In the mon]th of Elul, the prince returned to Babylon and in the month of Tishri, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and went to the land of Kimuhu, which is on the bank of the Euphrates. He crossed the river and conducted a campaign against the city. In the month of Kislev, he captured the city. He carried away its booty; he posted his garrison in its midst. In the month of Shebat, he returned to his land.

(16–26) Twentieth year. The army of the land of Egypt went to the city of Kimuhu, against the garrison there, which the king of Akkad had posted in it, and conducted a campaign against the city for four months. They captured the city; they defeated the garrison of the king of Akkad. In the month of Tishri, the king of Akkad called up his army and went to the bank of the Euphrates, and pitched his camp at the city of Quramati, which is on the bank of the Euphrates. He made his army cross the Euphrates, and captured the cities of Shunadiru, Elammu, and Dahammu, cities of the Transeuphrates. He plundered them. In the month of Shebat, the king of Akkad returned to his land. The army of Egypt, which was in the city of Carchemish, crossed the Euphrates and went against the army of Akkad, which was encamped in the city of Quramati. They drove the army of Akkad back, and so they withdrew.

(27–8) Twenty-first year. The king of Akkad remained in his land. Nebuchadnezzar – his eldest son, the prince of the crown-prince's palace – called up the armed forces of Akkad, and . . .⁴⁰

154. Chronicle 5⁴¹

The chronicle covers events from the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II (605–595 BCE), picking up where chronicle 4 ended (notice the catch-line at the end of 4 and beginning of 5). This chronicle records the historically important battle at Carchemish, where the Babylonians thoroughly defeated Egypt and gained control of the important city of Hamath (obv 1–8). In the same year, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne (obv 9–11). In the first three years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the chronicle records repeated victories in the west (obv 12–23, rev 2–4). In the fourth year, they fought Egypt to a draw and found it necessary to stay home with no campaign during the fifth year (rev 5–8). After successes against the Arabs of the west in the sixth year (rev 9–10), the chronicle records the Babylonian capture of the "city of Judah" in 597 BCE, the capture of Jehoiachin and appointment of Zedekiah (rev 11–13). The rest of the chronicle is poorly preserved, but appears to record more campaigns in the west, mostly successful, and occasional rebellion at home. Unfortunately, the chronicles for the rest of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the years of Evil-Merodach's, and the early years of Neriglissar's are lost.

(obv 1–11) [Twenty-first year.] The king of Akkad remained in his land. Nebuchadnezzar – his eldest son, [the pri]nce of the crown-prince's palace – called up [the armed forces of Akkad]. He took his army's lead and went to the city Carchemish, which is on the bank of the Euphrates. He crossed the river [against the army of Egypt(?)], which was encamped at Carchemish. [. . .] They struck each other, and the army of Egypt took flight before him, and he inflicted a defeat upon him. He finished them off until none were left. As for the remnant of the army of [Egypt], which had escaped the defeat without serious injury⁴², – the army of Akkad conquered them in the province of the land of Hamatu. They inflicted such a defeat upon them that no man returned to his land. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Hamatu completely.⁴³ For twenty-one years, Nabopolassar exercised the kingship of Babylon. On the eighth day of the month of Ab, he died. In the month of Elul, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, and on the first day of the month of Elul, he ascended the royal throne in Babylon.

(obv 12–14) In the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, he returned to the land of Hatti,⁴⁴ and until the month of Shebat, he marched around triumphantly in Hatti. In the month of Shebat, he took the heavy tribute of Hatti to Babylon. In the month of Nisan, he grasped the hands of Bel and of the son of Bel. He observed the akītu-festival.⁴⁵

(obv 15–20) First year of Nebuchadnezzar. In the month of Sivan, he called up his armed forces and went to the land of Hatti, and marched around triumphantly in Hatti until the month of Kislev. All the kings of the land of Hatti came before him, and he received their heavy tribute. He went to the city of [. . .]-illunu and captured it in the month of Kislev. He caught up with its king, plundered it and [carried away] the booty. He turned the city into a ruin heap. In the month of Shebat, he left and returned to Babylon.

(obv 21–3) [Second ye]ar. In the month of Iyyar, the king of Akkad gathered his main body of troops, and [went to the land of Hatti(?)]. He encamped [. . .]. He



brought large siege-towers across . . . From the month of Iy]yar until the mon[th of . . . he marched around triumphantly in Hatti(?)]

[. . . lacuna of indefinite length . . .]

(rev 2–4)⁴⁶ [Third year. On the] thirteenth [day of the month of . . .], Nabu-shumu-lishir . . . In the month of . . . , the king of Akk]ad called up his armed forces and [went] to the land of Hatti. [. . .] . . . he brought into Akkad the vast [spoils(?)] of Hatti.

(rev 5–7) Fourth year. The king of Akkad called up his armed forces and went to the land of Hatti. [He marched around trium]phantly in Hatti. In the month of Kislev, he took the lead of his army and went to the land of Egypt. When the king of Egypt heard it, he ca[ll]ed up(?) his armed forces. They fought in close battle on the open battle-field,⁴⁷ and inflicted a very great defeat on one another. The king of Akkad and his army turned around and [returned] to Babylon.

(rev 8) Fifth year. The king of Akkad remained in his land. He gathered a great many chariots and horses.

(rev 9–10) Sixth year. In the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and went to the land of Hatti. He sent his army off from Hatti and directed them into the desert. They thoroughly plundered the vast land of Arabia – their goods, their livestock, and their gods. In the month of Adar, the king returned to his land.

(rev 11–13) Seventh year. In the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad called up his armed forces and went to the land of Hatti. He encamped against the city of Yahudu.⁴⁸ On the second day of the month of Adar, he captured the city and defeated its king. He appointed a king of his own choosing in it. He to[ok away] its heavy tribute and brought it into Babylon.

(rev 14–15) Eighth year. In the month of Tebet, the king of Akkad [went . . .] to the land of Hatti as far as the city of Carche[mish . . .]. In the month of Shebat, [the king returned] to his land.

(rev 16–20) Ninth year. [In the month of . . . , the king of Akk]ad and his army [went . . .] the bank of the Tigr[is . . .]. The king of the land of [. . .] . . . the king of Ak[kad . . .] . . . he pitched his camp at [. . . a city(?)], which is on the bank of the Tigris. Between them was the distance of a day's journey. . . . he feared the king of E[lam(?)] and terror fell on him, so he re[turned(?)] to his land.

(rev 21–4) Tenth [year. The king of Akk]ad remained in his land. From the month of Kislev until the month of Tebet, there was rebellion in the land of Akkad . . . He killed his many [officials]⁴⁹ with weapons. He defeated his enemy with this own hands.⁵⁰ . . . he went [to the la]nd of Hatti, and . . . The kings and . . . [. . . He received] their heavy tribute and returned [to Babyl]on.

(rev 25–6) [Eleventh year]. In the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad [called up] his armed forces, and went [to the land of H]atti.⁵¹

155. Chronicle 6⁵²

The chronicle covers events from the third year of Neriglissar (557 BCE). It records a campaign against one Appuashu of Pirindu in Anatolia, who had conducted a raid into Syria and then attempted to ambush the Babylonian troops. Appuashu appears to have escaped although Neriglissar can claim a modest victory.





(1–14) *Third year. Appuashu, king of the land of Pirindu, called up his [numerous] armed forces and set [his face] towards the Transeuphrates for purposes of plunder and spoils. Neriglissar called up his armed forces and went against him in the land of Hume. Prior to this,⁵³ Appuashu had placed his army and the mounted couriers that he had gathered in position for ambush in a mountain gorge. When Neriglissar reached them, he inflicted a defeat upon them. He defeated the large army; he captured his troops and many horses. He pursued Appuashu over a 15-mile (24-kilometer)⁵⁴ distance in difficult mountainous terrain, in which men had to march in single file, as far as his royal city, Ura. He caught up with him, captured the city of Ura, and carried away his spoils.*

[. . . erasure . . .]

(15–27) *(He continued on) from Ura as far as the city of Kirshi, the royal city of his fathers, over a 6-mile (10-kilometer) distance in severe mountainous terrain and difficult passes. When he came to Kirshi, he captured the strong city, his royal city. He burned its wall, its palace, and its people with fire. He captured in boats the city of Pitusu, a mountain (on an island) in the middle of the (Mediterranean) Sea and the 6,000 combat troops who had gone up inside it. He carried off its city and captured its people. In that same year, he burned with fire (everything) from the entrance of the city of Sallune as far as the border of the city of Ludu.⁵⁵ Appua[shu] became a fugitive, so he did not [ca]tch up] with him. In the month of Adar, the king of Akkad returned to his [land].*

156. Chronicle 7⁵⁶

The chronicle covers events from the reign of Nabonidus (556–539 BCE), and is therefore sometimes known as the “Nabonidus Chronicle.” It is especially interested in the king’s neglect of the *akītu*-festival, which is not unlike the Hebrew Chronicler’s interest in the Israelite kings’ attitude toward the feasts of the priestly calendar (e.g., 2 Chr 30; 31: 3; 35: 1). The first several years of Nabonidus’ reign recorded here are poorly preserved, leaving only traces of campaigns in the west but few details (all of column 1). The conflict between Astyages and Cyrus II is preserved for the sixth year of Nabonidus (ii 1–4). The seventh year is the first in which it is reported that the king stayed in the city of Tema, and the *akītu*-festival “did not take place” (ii 5–8), a theme repeated for years 9, 10, and 11. The lines for the next several years are poorly preserved, but in the seventeenth year of the king, the festival was finally celebrated again (iii 5–12). In the same year, the city fell to the Persians and Nabonidus was captured (iii 12–16). The chronicle records the peace that ensued, and the joy with which all Babylonians received Cyrus (iii 17–20).

(i1–8)⁵⁷ *[First year(?). . .] . . . he carried. The king . . . [. . .] carried off the [. . .] of their land to Babylon. . . [. . .] . . . they were terrified, and he did not carry [. . .] . . . all their families. [. . .] . . . the king called up his armed forces and [went] to Hume.*

(i9–10) *[Second year(?). . .]. In the month of Tebet, [. . .] to the land of Hamatu . . .⁵⁸ [. . .].*



(i11–22) [Third year(?). . . On the . . . day of the mon]th of Ab, [. . .] the land of Ammananu, the mountains [. . .] . . . orchards, fruit of all kinds [. . .] . . . from them into the center of Babylon. [. . . the king(?) be]came ill, but survived. In the month of Kislev, the king [called up] his armed forces . . . and to Nabu-tattan-uīur⁵⁹ [. . .] . . . of the land of Amurru, to [. . . , and] he/they encamped [against E]dom.⁶⁰ [. . .] . . . and numerous troops [. . . the g]late of the city of Rugdini(?). [. . .] . . . he defeated him [. . .] . . . the troops . . .

(ii1–4) [Astyages⁶¹] called up [his armed forces and] went against Cyrus,⁶² the king of Anshan for purposes of con[quest]. As for Astyages, his army rebelled against him, and he was taken into custody. [They presented him(?) to Cyrus [. . .]. Cyrus <went> to the land of Ecbatana, the royal city, and the silver, gold, goods, and property, which he carried away as spoils from Ecbatana, he took to Anshan. The goods and property of the army [. . .].

(ii5–8) Seventh year. The king remained in the city of Tema. The king's son, his officials, and his army remained in the land of Akkad. [In the month of Nisan, the king] did not come to Babylon. Nabu did not come to Babylon. Marduk did not come out, and the [akītu]-fest[ival did not take place].⁶³ The offerings were given to the gods of Babylon and Borsippa in Esagil and Ezida as [in more prosperous times⁶⁴]. The šēšgallū-priest poured out (libations) and cared for the temple.

(ii9) Eighth year. [blank space]⁶⁵

(ii10–18) Ninth year. Nabonidus, the king, remained <in> the city of Tema. The king's son, the officials, and the army remained in the land of Akkad. In the month of Nisan, the king did not come to Babylon. Nabu did not come to Babylon. Marduk did not come out, and the akītu-festival was neglected. The offerings were given to the gods of <Babylon> and Borsippa in Esagil and Ezida as in more prosperous times. On the fifth day of the month of Nisan, the king's mother died in Dur-Karashu, which is on the bank of the Euphrates upstream from Sippar. The king's son and his army were disconsolate⁶⁶ for three days, and a mourning-ritual was performed. In the month of Sivan, a mourning-ritual was performed for the king's mother in the land of Akkad. In the month of Nisan, Cyrus, king of the land of Persia, called up his armed forces, crossed over the Tigris downstream from the city of Arba'il, and in the month of Iyyar [he went to(?)] the land of Lu[uddi⁶⁷(?)]. He killed its king, took its goods, and posted a garrison (in it) for himself [. . .] Afterwards, the king and his garrison remained in its midst [. . .]

(ii19–22) Tenth year. The king remained in the city of Tema. The king's son, the officials, and his army remained in the land of Akkad. In the [month of Nisan], the king [did not come to Babylon]. Nabu did not come to Babylon. Marduk did not come out, and the akītu-festival was neglected. The offerings were given to the gods of Babylon and Borsippa in E[sagil and Ezida] as in more prosperous times. On the twenty-first day of the month of Sivan, [. . .] of the land of Elamma, in the land of Akkad . . . [. . .] the governor of Uruk [. . .]

(ii23–5) Eleventh year. The king remained in the city of Tema. The king's son, the officials, and his army remained in the land of Akkad. [In the month of Nisan, the king did not come to Babylon. Nabu] did not come [to Baby]lon. Marduk did not come out, and the akītu-festival was neglected. The offer[ings] were given [to the gods of Baby]lon and Borsippa [in Esagil and Ezida as in more prosperous times].

(iii1–28) [. . .] . . . the Tig[ris] River [. . .] . . . Ishtar of Uruk [. . .] . . . [the gods] of Pa[rsu]⁶⁸ returned to their former places(?) . . . [. . .]



[Seventeenth year(?).] Nabu [came] from Borsippa for the processional of [Marduk. Marduk came out . . . in the month of] Tebet, the king crossed into Etur-kalamma. In . . . [. . .] . . . he poured out a libation of wine . . . [. . .] . . . Marduk came out. They performed the akitu-festival as in more prosperous times. In the month of [. . .] . . . [. . . and the gods] of Marad, Zababa⁶⁹ and the (other) gods of Kish, Ninlil [and the (other) gods of] Hursagkalamma⁷⁰ entered Babyon. Until the end of the month of Elul, the gods of the land of Akkad [. . .] while those above the IM⁷¹ and those below the IM were entering Babylon. But the gods of Bosippa, Cuthah, and Sippar did not enter. In the month of Tishri, when Cyrus conducted a campaign at Opis on [the bank(?)] of the Tigris against the army of the land of Akkad, the people of Akkad took flight. He made off with plunder and killed the people. On the fourteenth day, Sippar was captured without a fight. Nabonidus became a fugitive. On the sixteenth day, Ugbaru, the provincial governor of the land of the Gutium and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without a fight. Afterwards, when Nabonidus had withdrawn, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month, the shield-bearers of the Gutium surrounded the gates of Esagil. There was no interruption of any kind in Esagil or the temples, and no festival-period was missed. On the third day of the month of Marchesvan, Cyrus entered Babylon. They filled bags before him(?).⁷² Peace was established in the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all of Babylon. Gubaru, his provincial governor, appointed (additional) provincial governors for Babylon. From the month of Kislev until the month of Adar, the gods of the land of Akkad, which Nabonidus had taken into Babylon, returned to their shrines. On the eleventh day of the month of Marchesvan, Ugbaru died during the night. In the month of [. . .], the king's wife died. From the twenty-seventh (day) of the month of Adar until the third day of the month of Nisan, a mourning-ritual was performed in Akkad. All the people uncovered their heads. On the fourth day, when Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, entered Egidrikalammasummu, the temple official(?)⁷³ of Nabu who [. . .] When he came [. . .] because of his Elamite garments(?),⁷⁴ the hands of Nabu . . . [. . .] . . . [Lan]ces and quivers from [. . .] . . . the king's son(?) to the corvée [labor . . .] Nabu to Esagil . . . before Marduk and the son of Mar[duk . . .]
(iv1-9) [. . .] . . . Babylon, water [. . .] . . . burned incense [. . .] . . . the gate was demolished [. . .] . . . Eanna of . . . [. . .] . . . he went out of the sculptor-workshop⁷⁵ [. . .] . . . [. . .] . . . into Babylon . . . [. . .] Babylon, he depicted (on bas-relief⁷⁶), and . . .

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II. 157. Cyrus Cylinder (Michalowski)

Beginning in 614 BC, the Medes and Babylonians laid waste to Assur, Nineveh, and all the major urban centers of the Assyrian Empire, culminating with the conquest of the Syrian city of Harran in 610. The center of power in Mesopotamia shifted south, and the Neo-Babylonian state took over many of the areas previously governed by Assyria. Some historians have stressed the





differences between the two Mesopotamian states, but others have focused on the similarities, on continuity rather than change. The Neo-Babylonian state lasted less than a century; its last king, Nabonidus, came to the throne in 555 and was to reign only 18 years.

Nabonidus is one of the most enigmatic figures in Mesopotamian history. He reclaimed, or rather reinvented, ancient traditions, spent 10 years living far away from Babylon in Arabia, and revered the moon-god Sin, celebrating and rebuilding his cult centers in Mesopotamian Ur and Syrian Harran. It is difficult to understand both his motivations and contemporary reactions to his actions because although documents and inscriptions from his time have survived, later opinions about him were formed on the basis of the words of his enemies.

Nabonidus returned from Arabia and had to face a new threat from Iran: the Persians under the leadership of Cyrus, having consolidated power in Iran, had outflanked the Babylonians in Anatolia by defeating Sardis in 541. Eight years later they swept down into Babylonia from the east through the Diyala valley and after brutal fighting approached the capital city of Babylon. The city fell to Cyrus in October 539; some sources claim that the end came without a battle, but there is no contemporary evidence to support this suspicious claim. Thus ended the last independent ancient Mesopotamian state. Babylonia was now one of the provinces of a huge new territorial state – the Persian Empire.

Our knowledge of these events is based primarily on three one-sided texts, written by scribes working for the conquerors, known by their modern names as *The Nabonidus Chronicle*, *The Persian Verse Account*, and the *Cyrus Cylinder*. We cannot judge just how representative these texts are, since they were preserved by accident and undoubtedly provide only partial documentation of the polemics of the times. However, most biblical and Greek sources that relate or allude to the Persian takeover of Babylonia echo similar sentiments and seem to take inspiration from likeminded ideological claims of the new masters of the land.

The Babylonian text of the *Cyrus Cylinder* is inscribed on a barrel-shaped clay cylinder that was discovered out of context in Babylon in 1879 and deposited in the British Museum. An additional piece of the same object made its way to the antiquities market and ended up in the Yale Babylonian Collection in New Haven, Connecticut. Objects of this shape were usually inscribed with dedicatory inscriptions and were buried in foundation deposits under walls or buildings and were not addressed to contemporary audiences but to future readers and to the gods. The “Cylinder” was written by someone familiar with the language of Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions, and it is possible that it was written in conjunction with the rebuilding of *Imgur-Enlil*, the city wall of Babylon, which had previously been worked on by Assurbanipal (668–627), the last great king of Assyria, as well as by Nabopolassar (626–605), the founder of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

The first few lines are broken, but it would appear that the first section is an attack on the cultic actions of Nabonidus, aiming to portray him as an



enemy of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. If the translation offered here is correct, and it does gloss over a grammatical difficulty, Cyrus criticized an event that the Babylonian ruler had described with pride in his own inscriptions: the elevation of his daughter to be the high priestess of the moon-god, thus turning his own words against him. It should be noted however, that the sentence in question could also be translated as “an incompetent (i.e., Nabonidus) had been appointed to rule in his land,” perhaps an allusion to his usurpation of power. The author then uses an old Mesopotamian ideological turn, ascribing a king’s downfall to divine withdrawal of favor. Marduk then searched throughout the world for a new king to take his place; this again is an old motif that goes back more than a millennium. With the god at his side, Cyrus marched upon Babylon, which surrendered without a battle; the Persians entered in peace and without resorting to the customary plunder and pillage that customarily accompanied such events.

The stress on a peaceful entry – it is repeated for emphasis – contains a clear message: Cyrus was different from previous conquerors of the city, notably the Assyrians under the kings Tukulti-Ninurta I (1245–1208) and Sennacherib (704–681), who had sacked the sacred city. Other literary patterns demonstrate that the scribe who composed it wanted to provide allusions to the language of the inscriptions of Assurbanipal and to a foundation cylinder of Nabopolassar that celebrated the rebuilding of Imgur-Enlil. The fragmentary ending provides a more concrete connection to the deeds of the Assyrian king, whose earlier foundation deposit was apparently found during the renovations of the wall. Such archaeological links with the past were characteristic of writings composed in the name of Nabonidus, who also attempted to portray himself as a successor to the legacy of Assurbanipal and the Assyrian state. The author of the Cyrus Cylinder clearly wanted to combine all of these elements in the name of Cyrus, making him the true king of Babylon not only by Marduk’s choice, but also by displacing the ignominious Nabonidus, turning his words and deeds upside down and making his own claim as the cultural and literary heir to the legacy of both Assyria and Babylonia.

The Cyrus Cylinder is therefore primarily a legitimation text that provides us with some insight into the kind of claims that were made by Cyrus as he sought to bring to his side Babylonian elites and to convince them to back his claims to the throne of Babylon. Generically, it belongs with other foundation deposit inscriptions; it is not an edict of any kind, nor does it provide any unusual human rights proclamation as is sometimes claimed.

II. The Cyrus Cylinder (Michalowski)

[When . . .] his . . . [. . .] the regions . . . , an insignificant (candidate) was installed as high priestess (of the Moon) in his land, and [. . .] he imposed upon them. He made a replica of the Esaggil, [. . . established] improper rites for Ur and the remaining cult centers as well as [unclean offer]ings; daily he continuously uttered unfaithful



(prayers); furthermore he maliciously suspended the regular offerings and upset the rites. He plotted to end the worship of Marduk and continuously perpetuated evil against his city. Daily [he . . .] brought all his [people] to ruin by (imposing) toils without rest.

Hearing their complaints, the Enlil of the Gods was terribly angry [and left] their territory; the gods living amongst them abandoned their abodes. (Nabonidus) brought them into Babylon, to (Marduk's) fury. Marduk, ex[alted one, the Enlil of the God]s, roamed through all the places that had been abandoned, (and upon seeing this) reconciled his anger and showed mercy to the people of Sumer and Akkad who had become (as) corpses.

He sought and looked through all the lands, searching for a righteous king whose hand he could grasp. He called to rule Cyrus, king of Anshan, and announced his name as the king of the universe. He made the Guti-land and all the Medes (Ummanmanda) bow in submission at his feet and so (Cyrus) assiduously looked after the justice and well-being of the Black-Headed People over whom he had been made victorious (by Marduk). And Marduk, the great lord, leader of his people, looked happily at the good deeds and steadfast mind of Cyrus and ordered him to march to his own city Babylon, set him on the road to Babylon, and went alongside him like a friend and companion. His teeming army, uncounted like water (flowing) in a river, marched with him fully armed. (Marduk) allowed him to enter Babylon without battle or fight, sparing his own city of Babylon from hardship, and delivered Nabonidus, who had not worshiped him, into his hands.

All the people of Babylon, the entire land of Sumer and Akkad, rulers and princes, bowed down to him, kissed his feet, and rejoiced at his rule, filled with delight. They happily greeted him as the lord, by means of whose trust those who were as dead were revived and saved from all trial and hardship; they praised his name.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the universe, son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, from an ancient royal lineage, whose reign is beloved by (the gods) Marduk and Nabu, whose kingship they desired to make them glad.

After entering Babylon in peace, amidst joy and jubilation I made the royal palace the center of my rule. The great lord Marduk, who loves Babylon, with great magnanimity, established (it) as (my) destiny, and I sought to worship him each day. My teeming army paraded about Babylon in peace, and I did not allow any trouble in all of Sumer and Akkad. I took great care to peacefully (protect) the city of Babylon and its cult places. (And) as for the citizens of Babylon . . . whom (Nabonidus) had made subservient in a manner (totally) unsuited to them against the will of the gods, I released them from their weariness and loosened their burden. The great lord Marduk rejoiced in my deeds. Kindly he blessed me, Cyrus, the king, his worshiper, Cambyses, the offspring of my loins, and all of my troops, so that we could go about in peace and well-being.

By his lofty command, all enthroned kings, the whole world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, inhabitants of distant regions, all the kings of the West, tent dwellers, brought their heavy tribute to me in Babylon and kissed my feet. From [Babylon] to Aššur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the cities of Zamban, Meturnu, Der as far as the borders of the Gutians – I returned to these sanctuaries on the other side of the Tigris, sanctuaries founded in ancient times, the images that had been in them there and I made their dwellings permanent. I also gathered all their people and returned to them



their habitations. And then at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I resettled all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods in their shrines, the places which they enjoy. May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask Marduk and Nabu each day for a long life for me and speak well of me to him; may they say to Marduk, my lord that Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son . . . their . . . I settled all the people of Babylon who prayed for my kingship and all their lands in a peaceful place. Daily I supplied (the temple) [with offerings of x gee]se, two ducks, and ten turtledoves above the former (offerings) of geese, ducks, and turtledoves. The wall Imgur-Enlil, the great (city) wall of Babylon, I strove to strengthen its fortifications [. . .] the baked brick quay on the bank of the city moat, constructed by an earlier king, but not completed, its work [I . . . thus the city had not been completely surrounded], so [to complete] the outside, which no king before me had done, it troops, mustered in all the land, into Babylon [. . .]. I made it anew with bitumen and baked bricks and [finished the work upon it. . . . I installed doors of] mighty [cedar] clad with bronze, thresholds and door-opening[s cast of copper in all] its [gates. . . . I saw inside it an in]scription of Assurbanipal, a king who came before [me . . . for e]ver.

Bibliography

Sources: The first edition of the British Museum piece was published in H. C. Rawlinson and T. G. Pinches, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia V*. London: R. E. Bowler, 1880–4, no. 35. A drawing of the Yale fragment was first published in J. B. Nies and C. E. Keiser, *Historical, Religious and Economic Texts and Antiquities*, Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies II, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920, no. 32; and the two were joined and edited together by P.-R. Berger, “Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment BIN II Nr. 32 und die Akkadischen Personenamen in Danielbuch,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 64 (1975): 192–234. A new edition, with improvements of the text based on inspection of the originals has now been provided by Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros’ des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften. Textausgabe und Grammatik*. Altes Orient und Altes Testament 256. Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2001, 550–6.

Further reading

The life of Nabonidus has been studied by Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 BC*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. See also Piotr Michalowski, “The Doors of the Past,” *Eretz-Israel* 27 (2003): 136–52. On the historical and ideological ramifications of the conquest of Babylon by the Persians see (with further bibliography) Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002. The structure and message of the Cyrus Cylinder has been analyzed in Janos Harmatta, “The Literary Patterns of the Babylonian Edict of Cyrus,” *Acta Antiqua* 19 (1971): 217–31; Amélie Kuhrt, “The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983): 83–97. See also Amélie Kuhrt, “The Achaemenid Empire: a Babylonian Perspective,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 34 (1988). Older translations into English are by A. Leo Oppenheim in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*





- 11 Lines of text with apostrophes are taken from a different text tradition, because the main textual exemplar is broken; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 75.
- 12 The chronology is anticipatory, since this event is found in iii, 29 below.
- 13 John A. Brinkman, "Ur: 721–605 B.C.," *Orientalia* NS 34 (1965): 241–58, esp. 245, note 1.
- 14 Variant, "eighth day"; see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 80.
- 15 Or, perhaps only 18.
- 16 The city god of Der, a city on the border with Elam; Jeremy A. Black and Anthony R. Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 111.
- 17 I.e., from the Chaldean tribe known as Bit-Dakkuri; see Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–626 B.C.*, 14–15.
- 18 Another copy (text C) adds at this point, "It (Egypt) was plundered and its gods were abducted."
- 19 The break on the tablet obscures whether it should be "sixth," "sixteenth," or "twenty-sixth."
- 20 For copy, see D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1961), plates vii and viii; and for bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 191–3.
- 21 Lit. "they threw fire down upon the temple."
- 22 The city, according to Zawadzki was not Babylon, but rather Shapazzu; see Stefan Zawadzki, "The First Year of Nabopolassar's Rule according to The Babylonian Chronicle BM 25127: A Reinterpretation of The Text and Its Consequences," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41 (1989): 57–64, esp. 59.
- 23 Or, the month Iyyar, again according to Zawadzki; *Ibid.*
- 24 A principle waterway near Kish; see Erich Ebeling, "Banîtu," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 1: 397.
- 25 Presumably the idiom intended by the Š-stem of erēbu(m); *CDA* 77; *AHW* 236⁷, Š, #b.
- 26 For šaqû, "move upstream," see *CAD* Š/2: 21.
- 27 Common Semitic idiom for determination or intent to do something; *CDA* 263.
- 28 For copy, see Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*, ix–xii; and for bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 90. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 193–7.
- 29 I.e., the Babylonians.
- 30 "Baltil" in this series of chronicles will refer to "Ashur"; Erich Ebeling, "Baltil," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 1: 395.
- 31 The name made immortal by Herodotus, although the spelling in this chronicle is "Umakishtar." See Joan Oates, "The Fall of Assyria (635–609 B.C.)," *Cambridge Ancient History* 2 3/2: 172–84; Stefan Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria and Median-Babylonian Relations in Light of The Nabopolassar Chronicle* (Poznan: Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 1988), 114–31.
- 32 For amāru #8, "meet," see *CAD* A/2: 27.
- 33 D. J. Wiseman, "Is it Peace? – Covenant and Diplomacy," *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982): 311–26.
- 34 Lit. "a city of the middle Euphrates"; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 93.



- 35 “March around triumphantly” in these chronicles (*šaṭṭāniš ittallak*) is a general expression, which may have less to do with combat operations than with maintaining a Babylonian presence in conquered territories in order to establish law and order; Donald J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, Schweich Lectures 1983 (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1985), 21–2.
- 36 A catchline, being substantially the same line as that at the beginning of the next chronicle.
- 37 For copy, see Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*, plates xiii–xiv; and for bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 197–8.
- 38 Lit. “prince of the house of legitimate succession”, or “succession house” (*AHW*, 134, #23). All references to Nebuchadnezzar in this text refer to Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.E.), as distinct from Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 B.C.E.) of the Second Dynasty of Isin; see Bill T. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), ch. 5.
- 39 Grayson observes that this may simply be “fortresses” in the mountains rather than a specific place name, although the determinative for “city” occurs both here and in the next line; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 97.
- 40 A catchline related to the first line of chronicle 5.
- 41 For copy, see Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*, plates xiv–xvi; and for bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 198–200.
- 42 Lit. “no weapon had reached them.”
- 43 Lit. “to the border of its entirety,” *AHW*, 852; *CAD G*: 77.
- 44 “Hatti” or “Hittite” in this chronicle will generally refer to Syria-Palestine in the west.
- 45 The 12 days of the *akītu*-festival were celebrated at Babylon in Nisan around the time of the vernal equinox. Similar New Year festivals were celebrated at the city of Ur as early as the Neo-Sumerian period, but assumed new religious significance during the early Neo-Babylonian period, around the time of the ascendancy of Babylon’s god Marduk (Bel). The ritual for the festival called for prayers to Marduk on behalf of the city of Babylon, a ritual cleansing of his temple, a symbolic enthronement of Marduk (“grasping the hands of Bel” as here), as well as a symbolic recitation of the *Enūma Eliš* on the fourth day of the festival. Thus the festival represented a convergence of power and authority in the sole personhood of Marduk, his city Babylon, and the king of Babylon; Jeremy A. Black, “The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: ‘Taking the Hand of Bel’ and A Cultic Picnic,” *Religion* 11 (1981): 39–59; Amélie Kuhrt, “Usurpation, Conquest and Ceremonial: From Babylon to Persia,” in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, eds. David Cannadine and S. R. F. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 20–55.

The religious and symbolic significance of the festival in Babylonian culture during the Neo-Babylonian period is best illustrated by the way these Chronicles (especially Chronicle 7 below) carefully note times when the festival was suspended due to political weakness.



- 46 Line rev 1 has only illegible traces.
- 47 For this idiomatic use of *irtu*, “breast, chest,” see *CAD* I-J: 185.
- 48 The siege of Jerusalem (the “city of Judah”) began in November/December (Kislev) and culminated in the fall of the city on the second of Adad (March 15/16, 597 BCE). The captured king was Jehoiachin, and the king of Nebuchadnezzar’s own choosing was Zedekiah; 2 Kgs 24: 10–17; 2 Chr 36: 9–10; Jer 22: 24–30; 24: 1; Ezek 17: 12.
- 49 Grayson restores “army” here instead, but I am assuming a parallel with Chronicle 1, iv: 29; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 102; and see also Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 34.
- 50 The Chronicle suggests that the king himself captured the culprit in person; Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 34.
- 51 Apparently a catchline for the next tablet, now lost.
- 52 For copy, see Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*, plates xvii–xviii; and for bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 200–201.
- 53 The preposition *lāma* plus possessive suffix indicates anterior action, in this case; *AHw* 531; *CAD* L: 53. Thus Appuashu stationed troops for an ambush before Neriglissar’s advance.
- 54 The *bēru* is a linear measure of a double-hour, and often translated simply “mile,” perhaps approximating 10,800 meters; *CDA* 43. For *bēru* A, “mile” plus *qaqqari*, see *CAD* B: 209–10.
- 55 The Iron Age kingdom of Lydia was in western Anatolia, west of Phrygia; M. Mellink, “The Native Kingdoms of Anatolia,” *Cambridge Ancient History* 2 3/2: 619–65, esp. 643–55.
- 56 For bibliography prior to 1975, Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 104. See also Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 201–4; Oppenheim, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Its Successors,” esp. 305–7.
- 57 Presumably, this portion chronicles events from Nabonidus’ accession year and first year.
- 58 Grayson restores ŠED7 (*kašû*), “it was cold.” However, without the context of line 10, it is impossible to be confident; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 105.
- 59 The personal name is problematic in form and meaning; Oppenheim, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Its Successors,” 304; Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, 202; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 282.
- 60 Reading [u]-du-um-mu for [a]-du-um-mu; see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon, 556–539 B.C.* (Yale Near Eastern Researches 10; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 166.
- 61 The name made immortal by Herodotus, although the spelling here is “Ishtumegu.” Astyages probably came to the throne of Media in 585 BCE; T. C. Young, Jr, “The Early History of the Medes and the Persians and the Achaemenid Empire to the Death of Cambyses,” *Cambridge Ancient History* 2 4: 1–52, esp. 16–17.
- 62 The name familiar from biblical and classical sources is spelled here “Kurash”; *ibid.*, esp. 24–46.
- 63 For *baṭālu*, “to stop, interrupt an activity, to cease regular deliveries, to come to an end,” see *CAD* B: 174–6. On the the *akītu*-festival, see note 45 above. The



- implication of this chronicle is that the the king was expected to be present in Babylon during Nisan, the appointed time for the festival. An important part of the festival was the processional in which Marduk “came forth” [(w)āšû(m)] from his shrine, Esagil.
- 64 The meaning of the phrase, restored from a similar expression in Chronicle 17, ii: 4, is uncertain. For this proposal, see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106.
- 65 The events of the eighth year were unavailable to the scribe for some reason. A blank space was left to be filled in later, but the scribe either forgot to return to this point or never found the pertinent information.
- 66 For adāru #5, šu’duru “to cause annoyance,” see *CAD* A/1: 103–5; *AHw* 11.
- 67 Lydia.
- 68 Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 282.
- 69 The local deity of Kish, Zababa a warrior god attested from Early Dynastic times; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*, 187.
- 70 Twin city of Kish in northwestern Babylonia.
- 71 The interpretation of the logogram IM is still not resolved satisfactorily. For attempts, see A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Records of the ancient Near East 1/2* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972–), 1: 71, note 140.
- 72 Bags of gold, perhaps; *ḫarinnu*, cf. *AHw* 326. The line is in question, see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 110.
- 73 For questions about the ¹⁶É.PA of line 25, see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 111.
- 74 As difficult as this line is, Grayson’s reconstruction remains an improvement over Oppenheim’s; compare Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 111 and Oppenheim, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Its Successors,” 307, n.16.
- 75 For *bīt mummu*, as a workshop used to make and repair ritual objects, see *CAD* M/2: 197–8; *AHw* 672.
- 76 This interpretation of *ešēru* may be preferable in light of the mention of the *bīt mummu* in the preceding context.