

Jinyan Wang

The Rise of the Babylonian Empire

Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records



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Jinyan Wang

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Abbreviations

ABAW	Abhandlungen der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
ABC	Grayson, A. K. <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1975
ABL	Harper, R. F. and L. Waterman. <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i> . 14 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892–1914
AcIr	Acta Iranica
ADFU	Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka
ADOG	Abhandlungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AfO Beih.	Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft
AH	Achaemenid History
AIS	Ancient Iran Series
<i>AIV</i>	<i>Atti dell'Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti</i>
<i>AMI NF</i>	<i>Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran, Neue Folge.</i>
<i>AnatAnt</i>	<i>Anatolia Antiqua</i>
ANEMS	Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean Studies
<i>ANES</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
<i>AnSt</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
AntOr	Antiqua et Orientalia
AO	Antiquités orientales, Louvre Museum, Paris
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<i>AoF</i>	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
<i>Aramazd</i>	<i>Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archív orientální</i>
<i>ASJ</i>	<i>Acta Sumerologica</i>
<i>Athenaeum</i>	<i>Athenaeum: Studi periodici di letteratura e storia dell'antichità</i>
<i>AuOr</i>	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
AUWE	<i>Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka. Endberichte</i>
<i>AWE</i>	<i>Ancient West & East</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAALHS	Bulletin d'archéologie et d'architecture libanaises hors-série
BabAr	Babylonische Archive
BaFo	Baghdader Forschungen
<i>BaM</i>	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BARIS	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCSMS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies</i>
BHAW	Blackwell History of the Ancient World
BIN	<i>Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies</i> . 10 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917–1987
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BM	British Museum, London

BMA	Roth, M. <i>Babylonian Museum Agreements: 7th–3rd centuries B.C.</i> Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Civil, M. et al. (eds.). <i>Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964–2010
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CDLB	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin</i>
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CLeO	Classica et Orientalia
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum. 58 vols. London: British Museum Publications, 1896–1990
CTMMA	<i>Corpus of Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art</i> . 4 vols. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988–2017
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DSASM	Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor
Dubsar	Dubsar
EKI	König, F. W. <i>Die elamischen Königsinschriften</i> . Graz: Weidner, 1965
<i>ErIs</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
EŞ	Eski Şark Eserleri Müzesi, Istanbul
FLP	Free Library of Philadelphia
GAT	Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
GC	Dougherty, R. P. <i>Goucher College Cuneiform Inscriptions</i> . New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923 and 1933.
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record
HANEM	History of the Ancient Near East Monographs
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
<i>HeBAI</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
<i>Henoch</i>	<i>Henoch: Historical and Textual Studies in Ancient and Medieval Judaism and Christianity</i>
<i>Historia</i>	<i>Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
IM	Iraq Museum, Baghdad
<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Iraq: Journal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq</i>
<i>Isimu</i>	<i>Isimu: Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la antigüedad</i>
<i>JAAS</i>	<i>Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies</i>
<i>JANEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JARCE</i>	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JCSMS</i>	<i>Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian History</i>

<i>JEOL</i>	<i>Jaarbericht van het Voor-Aziatisch-Egyptisch-Gezelschap</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JOTSUP	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
KAR	Ebeling, E. <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> . 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1919–1923
<i>KASKAL</i>	<i>KASKAL: Rivista di storia, ambiente e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico</i>
KAV	Schroeder, O. <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts</i> . Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920
KFSIE	The Kauffman Foundation Series on Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Kt	Inventory numbers of Kültepe texts
LAOS	Leipziger Altorientalische Studien
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
Mes	Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art
MR	Waerzeggers, C. <i>Marduk-rēmanni: Local Networks and Imperial Politics in Achaemenid Babylonia</i> . OLA 233. Leuven: Peeters. 2014
MS	Manuscript siglum, the Schøyen Collection
<i>NABU</i>	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
NBC	Nies Babylonian Collection
NBDM	Neo-Babylonian Documents in the University of Michigan Collection
Nbk.	Strassmaier, J. N. <i>Inschriften von Nabuchodonosor, König von Babylon</i> . Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1889
Nbn.	Strassmaier, J. N. <i>Inschriften von Nabonidus, König von Babylon</i> . Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1889
NCBT	Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets
NU	Hunger, H. “ <i>Das Archiv des Nabû-ušallim.</i> ” <i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i> 5 (1970): 193–304
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts
OHANE	The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia periodica</i>
OPSNKF	Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
<i>Orient</i>	<i>Orient: The Reports of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan</i>
OrientLab	OrientLab: Inclusive Archaeology
<i>OrNS</i>	<i>Orientalia, Nova Series</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>Palamedes</i>	<i>Palamedes: A Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PIHANS	Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
<i>PNA</i>	Baker, H. D. and K. Radner (eds.). <i>The Prosopography of The Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> . 4 vols. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998–2017
<i>PSBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology</i>
PTS	Princeton Theological Seminary
QGS	Quaderni di Geografia Storica

RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
RGTC	Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RINAP	The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RINBE	The Royal Inscriptions of The Neo-Babylonian Empire
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie (und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie)</i>
ROMCT	Royal Ontario Museum Cuneiform Texts
RT	<i>Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANE	Sources from the Ancient Near East
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SANTAG	SANTAG: Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SbB	Spätbabylonische Briefe
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLAIL	Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Israel and its Literature
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
<i>Semitica</i>	<i>Semitica: Cahiers publiés par le Laboratoire d'études sémitiques, Collège de France</i>
SH	Radner, K. <i>Die neuassyrischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad: Mit Beiträgen von Wolfgang Röllig zu den aramäischen Beischriften</i> . Berlin: Reimer, 2002
SpTU II	von Weiher, E. <i>Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk</i> . Berlin: Mann, 1983
StOr	Studia Orientalia
StOrE	<i>Studia Orientalia Electronica</i>
StPohl	Studia Pohl: Dissertationes scientificae de rebus orientis antiqui
StSem	Studi Semitici
Subartu	Subartu: Studies in the Archaeology & History of Upper Mesopotamia & Adjacent Regions
SVR	Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen
TCL	Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
<i>Tel Aviv</i>	<i>Tel Aviv: Journal of the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology</i>
TH	Friedrich, J. et al. <i>Die Inschriften vom Tell Halaf: Keilschrifttexte und aramäische Urkunden aus einer assyrischen Provinzhauptstadt</i> . AfO Beih. 9. Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1967
TMH	Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection
Topoi	Topoi: Berlin Studies of the Ancient World
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TUAT, NF	<i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UTSHS	University of Tehran Science and Humanities Series
VAS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler
VAT	Vorderasiatische Abteilung
VDI	<i>Vestnik drevnej istorii</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

VWGT	Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
YBC	Yale Babylonian Collection
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
YOS	Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZOA	<i>Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie</i>
ZT	Parpola, S. "Cuneiform Texts from Ziyaret Tepe (Tušhan), 2002–2003." <i>SAAB</i> 17 (2008): 1–113

1 Introduction

Nabopolassar ascended to the Babylonian throne in 626 BC, officially declaring war against the Assyrian Empire. In 612 BC, Nineveh succumbed to an alliance of Babylonians and Medes and the last Assyrian king died defending his city. Although the Assyrian crown prince, who fled to the city of Ḫarran in the West, made a coalition with Egypt, the Babylonians eventually eliminated his power. By the 570s BC, the Babylonians firmly controlled the Levant, while Egypt's sphere of influence was restricted. Despite this broad outline, the details of this transitional period from the fall of the Assyrian Empire to the formation of the Babylonian Empire have remained rather opaque.

When did Ashurbanipal, the last powerful ruler of the Assyrian Empire, die? How did his succession unfold in Assyria? What were the processes and strategies for the Babylonians to defeat the Assyrians? Who was Nabopolassar, the first king of the Babylonian Empire? What were the policies of the early Neo-Babylonian kings to centralise power and legitimise their kingship? What was the impact of this new administration on the Babylonian economy and society? This monograph aims to address these prominent questions, among others. Accordingly, it focuses on the transitional period of 631–585 BC, which involved the struggle and decline of the mighty Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Babylonians, who gradually expanded their territorial control and established the Babylonian Empire.

1.1 Previous Scholarship

So far, no single work has provided a detailed and integrated reconstruction of this transitional period (631–585 BC), despite several works that provide outlines and summaries.¹ Some studies address the history of Babylonia prior to the rise of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty,² the last phase of which overlaps the beginning phase of the period under discussion. Brinkman reconstructs the history of the period 747–626 BC and his seventh chapter in his book specifically focuses on the period 647–626 BC.³ Frame surveys the events in Babylonia during the period

1 Jursa 2014a: 123–125; Beaulieu 2018: 223–236; Dalley 2021: 214–247; Da Riva 2022; RINBE 1/1: 2–5.

2 von Voigtlander 1984 is the only monographic political history of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. However, this is a PhD dissertation that was never published as a book.

3 Brinkman 1984.

689–627 BC, with one chapter dealing with the period 647–627 BC.⁴ With regard to the mature phase of the Babylonian Empire, there have been many surveys of late, with various focuses:⁵ material culture,⁶ economy⁷ and living conditions,⁸ taxation,⁹ organisation of the state,¹⁰ and administration of the temples.¹¹ There have also been contributions on the Neo-Babylonian legal system and court procedures,¹² army,¹³ as well as socio-political groups, such as tribal populations,¹⁴ prebendary elites,¹⁵ entrepreneurs,¹⁶ slaves,¹⁷ and so on.

In terms of primary sources concerning the Babylonian Empire, numerous editions of the royal inscriptions of this dynasty were recently published. Da Riva published an introduction to the whole corpus¹⁸ as well as an edition of the royal inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amēl-Marduk, and Neriglissar.¹⁹ Nebuchadnezzar II's inscriptions and rock reliefs from Lebanon were also recently edited and studied,²⁰ while a new edition of his Prism was released by Da Riva.²¹ The Munich-based project, the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (RINBE), has published RINBE 1/1 (*The Royal Inscriptions of Nabopolassar [625–605 BC] and Nebuchadnezzar II [604–562 BC], Kings of Babylon, Part 1*) and RINBE 2 (*The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk [561–560 BC], Neriglissar [559–556 BC], and Nabonidus [555–539 BC], Kings of Babylon*), while RINBE 1/2 (*The Royal Inscriptions of Nabopolassar [625–605 BC] and Nebuchadnezzar II [604–562 BC], Kings of Babylon, Part 2*) is set to be published in 2026. The inscriptions can also be accessed through the electronic text corpus RIBo (Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia Online

4 Frame 1992.

5 For overviews of the whole Neo-Babylonian dynasty, see RINBE 2: 1–13; Jursa 2023: 96–108.

6 Baker 2012, 2019.

7 Baker and Jursa (eds.) 2005; Jursa 2010a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a.

8 Baker 2014a.

9 Jursa 2011a; Boivin 2021.

10 Jursa 2010b and 2015b.

11 Beaulieu 2003a; Kleber 2008; Jursa 2011b.

12 Holtz 2008, 2014; Sandowicz 2012, 2019.

13 Gombert 2018.

14 Fales 2011; Beaulieu 2013; Nielsen 2021.

15 Waerzeggers 2010; Still 2019.

16 Wunsch 2010; Jursa 2010a: 193–205, and 286–293.

17 Baker 2001.

18 Da Riva 2008.

19 Da Riva 2013a.

20 Da Riva 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013b, 2015, and 2018.

21 Da Riva 2013c.

project) led by Jamie Novotny and Frauke Weiershäuser of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU).²²

New archives and texts from this period have been identified and published. An archive belonging to a certain Sin-uballit from Ur, dated to Years 2 through 9 of Nabopolassar (624–617 BC), provides new information on the Nabopolassar Revolt.²³ A text from Assyria, dated according to the reign of the Median king Cyaxares, contributes to the reconstruction of the very end of the Assyrian Empire.²⁴ A dossier produced in the Babylonian garrison in Tyre during the 14th year of Nebuchadnezzar II has been identified,²⁵ shedding new light on the periphery of the Empire.

In the last two decades, plenty of new evidence concerning this transitional period has emerged. There are more insights into various matters, such as the chronology of the period,²⁶ the origin of Nabopolassar,²⁷ and Neo-Babylonian imperial policy.²⁸ These new developments, among others, provide a much better basis for research, enabling us to present a more detailed and integrated description of the events that led to the rise of the Babylonian Empire. Including these new developments, this monograph also synthesises the previous studies and reinterprets some old evidence.

1.2 Textual Sources Pertaining to the Transitional Period

With the recent work engaging with first millennium Babylonia, there are now more sources for studying this period than ever before. These sources can be divided into four categories: royal inscriptions, archival texts, chronicles, and late Babylonian historical literature.

The kings of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty left numerous royal inscriptions.²⁹ The inscriptions of Nabopolassar amount to fifteen, including records of building

²² The corpus can be read online at: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/babylon7/corpus/>.

²³ For a brief summary of the archive, see Jursa 2005: 135–137. An edition of the archive is currently being prepared by Beaulieu.

²⁴ Toptaş and Akyüz 2021.

²⁵ Kleber 2008: 144.

²⁶ Beaulieu 1997a.

²⁷ Jursa 2007a.

²⁸ Beaulieu 2020.

²⁹ All transliterations and translations of the inscriptions of Nabopolassar cited in this book are based on Da Riva 2013a. Each inscription of Nabopolassar is given the number used in RINBE 1/1 and the siglum in Da Riva 2008 in brackets. As for the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, the transliterations and translations are taken from RINBE 1/1 and 1/2, which can be accessed

projects in Babylon and Sippar.³⁰ These inscriptions provide some information about the victory over the Assyrians and some (idealised) autobiographical data about the monarch. Nebuchadnezzar II produced the most inscriptions among the Neo-Babylonian kings, amounting to more than one hundred.³¹ These inscriptions are the main sources for analysing the royal ideologies of the period. Furthermore, political information can be gleaned from them, since the construction of temples and palaces, as well as civic structures, involved not only the ideology of kingship, but also the ability of the royal administration to extract taxes from city-dwellers and temple personnel and coordinate manpower.

Neo-Babylonian archival texts are unevenly distributed throughout the different phases of this transitional period. Following the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (652–648 BC), the puppet king Kandalānu was installed on the Babylonian throne by Assyria, which led to a period of peace. Over 200 economic texts dating to the reign of Kandalānu have been discovered so far.³² Around the time of the death of Kandalānu, there was civil disorder in Babylonia, so record-keeping declined. The rise of Nabopolassar led to battles between the Assyrians and Babylonians for control of Babylonia, which lasted several years. Not until late in the reign of Nabopolassar was there an increase in documentation, which reached its apex during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. The date formulae found in these archival texts are especially helpful for reconstructing the political situation of each city. Furthermore, letters sent within Babylonia and between Babylonia and Assyria provide significant information concerning the detail of the Nabopolassar Revolt.

Most of the archival texts come from temple and private archives,³³ with the exception of a group of ration lists from Nebuchadnezzar II's South Palace.³⁴ The

through the electronic text corpus RIBo. Each inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II is given the number used in RINBE 1/1 and the siglum in Da Riva 2008 in brackets.

30 Da Riva 2013a. Note that the Larsa inscription (RINBE 1/1 Npl 01 and 02 [C011]) does not belong to Nabopolassar. Instead, it belongs to Nebuchadnezzar II. See RINBE 1/1: 15, n. 93.

31 Da Riva 2008: 117–124.

32 Brinkman 1984: 107.

33 Jursa 2005 made a comprehensive collection of the archives of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

34 In contrast to the Assyrian Empire, there are not many state archives from the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, that might provide more evidence for the Neo-Babylonian presence in the West. So far, there is only one archive (mostly unpublished) from the South Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II, see Pedersén 2005a: 111–127, Archive N1; Pedersén 2005b; Jursa 2005: 60; Jursa 2007b; Pedersén 2009; Alstola 2020: 60–63. Another element contributing to the scarcity of state archives is that Aramaic was used in the state administration, and these documents were written on perishable materials (Jursa 2014d: 97)

majority come from just five sites: Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Sippar and Uruk.³⁵ Among the temple archives are two very large collections: the archive of Eanna in Uruk, which contains 8,000+ tablets and many fragments, and the archive of Ebabbar in Sippar, which contains around 35,000 tablets.³⁶ The former contains very few texts from the time of the Assyrian domination of Babylonia, and a vast number of texts from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar onwards.³⁷ The latter consists of two archives, designated as “early” and “late,” of which the early Ebabbar archive is most relevant to the topic of this monograph. With more than 5,000 tablets (and fragments), it contains texts that date from the reigns of the final Assyrian kings to the middle of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (ca. 640–580 BC).³⁸ There are also many private archives, but most texts are dated to the later period of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and the early period of the Achaemenid period. The institutional and private archives provide a significant amount of information about the royal policies at the formative stage of the Empire, as well as the corresponding response from the temples and non-institutional households.

The Babylonian chronicles can be divided into two groups, the Borsippa chronicles and the Babylon chronicles, according to the provenance of the tablets.³⁹ Those from Borsippa, which were composed during the Neo-Babylonian period, contribute significantly to my research.⁴⁰ Among this group, the chronicles ABC 2–5 are the most informative, covering the period from the reign of Nabopolassar (ABC 2–4) to that of Nebuchadnezzar II (ABC 5) and focusing primarily on military history.⁴¹ Although there are many gaps in the timeline of the chronicles, they still serve as the backbone of the history of the transitional period.

The late Babylonian historical-literary narratives date to the Hellenistic period. They are mainly from the library of the Esagil temple in Babylon, but also

³⁵ Jursa 2005: 2. As mentioned above, the archive of *Sîn-uballiṣ* from Ur, with most of the texts written in northern Babylonia, is also an important source for the early years of Nabopolassar.

³⁶ Jursa 2005: 2, n. 7.

³⁷ Jursa 2005: 138.

³⁸ Jursa 2005: 117–118; Da Riva 2002a.

³⁹ The provenance of the tablets is not determined by archaeological information, because the chronicles were acquired from the antiquities market. However, the acquisition history of those tablets may provide insight in this respect. For instance, other tablets in the same museum collections may come from the same material context. According to the museum collections to which they belong, Waerzeggers (2012) claims that the chronicles originate from two different places: Babylon and Borsippa.

⁴⁰ For the chronicles produced in Borsippa, see Waerzeggers 2012: 293 (Table 2).

⁴¹ The chronicles ABC 2–5 are among the group categorised as the “Chronicles of the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty” by Waerzeggers (2012: 294).

other centres of worship and learning, such as Uruk.⁴² In these texts, ancient scholars evaluate proper and improper kingship using historical examples, among which are the Assyrian and Babylonian kings of the first millennium. These late narratives about Nabopolassar, such as *Letter of Šin-šarru-iškun to Nabopolassar*, *Declaring War*, *The Nabopolassar Epic*, and the *Epic Fragment No. 9*, complement the scarce documentation that dates to the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar.

All of the sources available to us (which are outlined above) have a clear urban bias. Neo-Babylonian society was dimorphic in three aspects: population, lifestyle, and language. There were traditional local populations, as well as tribal populations that arrived more recently. While the local population mainly lived in cities, towns, and villages, having a sedentary lifestyle, the tribal population had a mixture of sedentary and nomadic lifestyles. While the spoken language was Aramaic, the local elites still wrote in Akkadian in cuneiform. Thus, these sources were produced primarily by the institutions and the local elite class, while there is a clear lack of textual evidence from tribal populations and the lower class.

It is also important to note that the historicity of these sources varies depending on the genre. The royal inscriptions were written from the perspective of the king and guided by the ideology of the state. Thus, the royal scribes likely intentionally manipulated the details, or the entire narrative, of some events in order to portray the king and the dynasty in a positive light. Neo-Babylonian archival texts are significantly better in terms of reflecting historical reality. The intent of these texts from institutions and private households was to record administrative, economic, and legal affairs, so they are typically free of propaganda. The date formulae according to the reign of a king can provide information about which ruler was controlling the city or the institute itself. A certain degree of caution should be taken with regards to letters written by Babylonian and Assyrian officials, because they could not always tell the exact truth if they wanted to please the higher authority. The historicity of the chronicles is a matter of debate. While some studies interpret the accounts in the chronicles as being reliable and objective, others caution against treating them as accurate historical records. Biased viewpoints or errors in the dating and details of events in the chronicles have previously been pointed out.⁴³ This monograph primarily relies on the chronicles ABC 2–5 for the reconstruction of the military activities of Nabopolassar and Neb-

⁴² Clancier 2011.

⁴³ Dewar (2023: 211–212) summarises this debate concerning the historicity of the chronicles and collects the relevant bibliography.

uchadnezzar II. The accuracy of the records in these chronicles seem to be reliable to a certain degree, because events in which Nabopolassar and his army were either defeated or withdrew were recorded, although the degree of the defeat may have been downplayed. For example, the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 7–9) records that Nabopolassar was defeated in Nippur and retreated to Uruk at some point.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the chronicle ABC 3 (lines 16–18) records that Nabopolassar attacked Assur in 615 BC, but failed to take the city and was pursued by the Assyrians to the fort Takritain (modern Tikrit).⁴⁵ While these military records are generally trustworthy, it is better to be cautious when using them. Of course, it is ideal if there is other textual evidence to complement the chronicles. Unfortunately, however, the chronicles often provide the only known evidence for certain military events. Although the late Babylonian historical-literary texts were written after the fall of the Empire, it is reasonable to assume that these texts are at least based on historical materials, such as royal inscriptions and chronicles. Nevertheless, caution should also be exercised when analysing such texts, since they were inevitably influenced by the aims of the author and the expectations of the audience.

44 Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217.

45 Grayson 1975a: 92; Glassner 2004: 221.

2 History of Scholarship on Chronology (631–609 BC)

The chronology of the transitional period (631–609 BC),¹ which witnessed the decline of the Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Babylonian Empire, is a well-researched, yet inconclusive, area of study. The main reason for the uncertainty is the lack of data from the chronological sources: eponym lists, king lists, and chronicles. The Assyrian canonical eponym list ends abruptly in 649 BC. The total number of the post-canonical eponyms is not yet certain and the sequence is debated.² Furthermore, there are no king lists recording the succession of Assyrian kings after Aššur-etel-ilāni.³ Finally, no chronicle recounts the period between the reigns of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn and Nabopolassar, except for the chronicle ABC 16, which only mentions the accession year of Nabopolassar.⁴

The central figures of this transitional period are the six rulers who claimed kingship over Assyria or Babylonia,⁵ either successively or simultaneously: Ashur-

1 Year dates in this monograph are given according to the Julian calendar. A year given as “631 BC” stands for the period from Mar/Apr 631 to Mar/Apr 630 BC, since the Babylonian New Year began in March or April of the Julian calendar. Month and day dates are given in terms of the Babylonian (or Assyrian) calendar, with Roman numbers for months and Arabic numbers for the day. For example, 20/III/631 stands for the 20th day of the month Simānu (III), 631 BC.

2 For a summary table of the proposed sequences, see PNA 4/I: Appendix 3. Also cf. RINAP 5: 30–33. Whiting (1994: 72, n. 4) gives an estimate of about 50 for the total number of the post-canonical eponyms, but indicates that there are various methods of counting used among different studies: “opinions vary on which eponym should be accepted unconditionally, which variant spelling represent the same eponym and which a different one, which writings are mistakes for other eponyms, which eponyms with the same name but different titles are the same, etc.” It is also possible that there could be more than one eponym within a regnal year, as was first noted by Falkner, who proposed pairs of eponyms in 644, 636, 627, and 615 BC (Falkner 1954–1956: 118–120). Whiting (1994: 73, n. 5) indicates that only one of the pairings by Falkner, that of 627 BC could be valid. Oates (1991: 166) speculates that there is a possibility that the last kings of Assyria adopted a similar practice as in Rome where the consulate, according to which the year was named, could be held by more than two persons in the same year.

3 Assyrian king lists and synchronistic king lists available do not go beyond Aššur-etel-ilāni. The Uruk King List (Grayson 1980–1983: 97) and the Ptolemaic Canon only contain the kings recognised in Babylonia.

4 For its edition, see Grayson 1975a: 131–132; Glassner 2004: 212–214.

5 Essentially, Ashurbanipal was not recognised as king of Babylonia. For his titles in the dates of the texts from Babylonia, see Frame 1992: 193, n. 8. Ashurbanipal was given the title “king of Sumer and Akkad” and/or “viceroy of Babylon” in a few texts from Nippur (see Frame 1992: 194).

banipal, Aššur-etel-ilāni, Sîn-šarru-iškun, Sîn-šumu-lišir, Kandalānu, and Nabopolassar. The Ptolemaic Canon provides three relevant datings to this period:⁶ the accession year of Šamaš-šumu-ukin is 668 BC; the accession year of Kandalānu is 648 BC;⁷ and the accession year of Nabopolassar is 626 BC.⁸ Based on these data, the accession year of Ashurbanipal can be placed to 669 BC.⁹ The last attested date of Ashurbanipal's reign is the 20th day of the month Simānu (III) in the 38th year written on a text from Nippur.¹⁰ This year is dated to 631 BC accordingly. Whether his reign extended beyond this point is debated, because the Ḥar-ran inscription of Adad-guppi' attributes a 42-year reign to Ashurbanipal. At some point, his son Aššur-etel-ilāni ascended the throne of Assyria. His reign is attested in Nippur from his accession year to his fourth year.¹¹ Only two other people are

6 The Ptolemaic Canon, which is the backbone of the chronology of Mesopotamia during the first millennium BC, was compiled by the Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the second century AD for the purpose of dating astronomical phenomena. In the first segment of the list, different rulers of Babylonia (from Babylonia or Assyria), are listed, beginning with Nabonassar (Depuydt 1995; see also Grayson 1980–1983: 101). The Canon is based on the Egyptian year, which starts from Jan/Feb of the Julian calendar. The accession year of a king is omitted by the Canon, which records the regnal years of a king from his first year. Since the astronomical phenomena recorded in Ptolemy's *Almagest*, which uses the same dating system used in his Canon, can be accurately dated, it provides an absolute chronology for the reigns of the rulers listed.

7 An astronomical text, which contains a collection of observations of the planet Saturn during the reign of Kandalānu, confirms the dating of Years 2–14 of his reign (See the table in Walker 1999: 70–71). The name of Kandalānu is reconstructed from only a few traces in the first line. However, the reconstruction is certain in the light of astronomical considerations. See Walker 1999: 63.

8 In this monograph, the reign of a ruler is counted from the accession year, rather than the first year. For example, the accession year of Esarhaddon is 681 BC, and he died in 669 BC, thus his reign is dated as 681–669 BC.

9 According to the Ptolemaic Canon, the reign of Esarhaddon went from 681–668 BC, while the reign of Šamaš-šumu-ukin went from 668–648 BC. However, since Šamaš-šumu-ukin ascended the Babylonian throne the year after his father Esarhaddon died (Frame 1992: 103), it can be assumed that Esarhaddon died in 669 BC and, therefore, that his reign was from 681–669 BC and Ashurbanipal's accession year is 669 BC. However, the canon attributes 13 years to his reign, which is based on the compilation rule of the canon: when the last year of the king's reign was not identical with the accession year of his successor, the intervening time was added to the reign of the previous king (Brinkman 1968: 35, n. 161). Since it is situated in the context of the Babylonian throne, the last year of Esarhaddon was not identical with the accession year of Šamaš-šumu-ukin.

10 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: J. 38. Although Nippur was a city in Babylonia, it adopted a date system by the reign of Assyrian kings after the suppression of the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukin and this practice continued into the reigns of Ashurbanipal's successors, because Nippur operated as a military base in Babylonia for the Assyrians. See Cole 1996a and b.

11 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M. date uncertain.

known to have been given the title “king of Assyria” in this period: Sîn-šarru-iškun and Sîn-šumu-lišir. Sîn-šarru-iškun was a brother of Aššur-etel-ilāni, who was recognised in Nippur and some other cities in Babylonia, including Babylon. Texts dated to his reign are found from his accession year until his seventh year.¹² Sîn-šumu-lišir was the chief eunuch of Aššur-etel-ilāni,¹³ who assisted the latter to ascend the Assyrian throne.¹⁴ Apparently, he later claimed the throne for himself, but only reigned for a very short time.¹⁵

Furthermore, Kandalānu’s reign can be dated to 648–627 BC, a total of 21 years. Kandalānu ascended the throne of Babylonia after the suppression of the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (652–648 BC). However, the accession year of Kandalānu is not attested in any document.¹⁶ The earliest date according to his reign is 6/X/1 (647 BC).¹⁷ The latest date according to his reign is 8/III/21 (627 BC).¹⁸ There are two texts dated by the formula *arki* Kandalānu: 1+x/VIII/21 and 2/VIII/22 *arki* Kandalānu.¹⁹ This makes it clear that Kandalānu died between the third month and the eighth month of his twenty-first year (627 BC).²⁰ Nabopolassar ascended the throne of Babylon a year after the death of Kandalānu in 626 BC. He defeated Nineveh with the help of the Medes in his 14th year and went on to found the Babylonian Empire (for the summary of these preliminary data, see Table 1).

There are two key factors in terms of dating the reigns of Aššur-etel-ilāni, Sîn-šarru-iškun, and Sîn-šumu-lišir: (1) it is uncertain when Ashurbanipal died; and (2) it is uncertain whether there were gaps or overlaps between the reigns of these rulers. In order to answer these questions, roughly a century of scholarship has been dedicated to the chronology of this transitional period. Numerous pro-

12 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. Sîn-šarru-iškun, date uncertain.

13 Schaudig 2009: 524–525; PNA 3/I: 1148.

14 This event is recorded in two land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni (SAA 12, 35–36).

15 It seems that he reigned for less than a full year, since only his accession year is attested in Nippur and other Babylonian cities (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N).

16 Frame 1992: 192.

17 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 1. while texts in the cities of northwest Babylonia were still dated to the reign of Ashurbanipal as late as 646 BC: A text from Dilbat was dated to 29/I/646 (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: J. 24). After 646 BC, all of Babylonia was placed in his charge, except for Nippur, which still used the dating system according to the reign of Ashurbanipal.

18 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 159.

19 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 160; 163.

20 Proposed first by Wiseman 1956: 89–90. The Ptolemaic Canon’s attribution of 22 years to the reign of Kandalānu appears to be a mistake. Beaulieu argues that this span of 22 years includes the year after Kandalānu died (Beaulieu 1997a: 384; first proposed by Wiseman 1956: 90): since Kandalānu died in 627 BC and Nabopolassar ascended the throne one year later, in 626 BC, the Ptolemaic Canon attributed 626 BC to the reign of Kandalānu, resulting in the 22-year reign. This practice is consistent with the counting of the reign of Esarhaddon in Babylonia in the text.

Table 1: Summary of the Preliminary data concerning the reigns of the six rulers.

Year (BC)	Assyrian kings				Babylonian kings	
	Ashurbanipal	Aššur-etel-ilāni	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Sîn-šumu-līšir	Kandalānu	Nabopolassar
	The last great king of Assyria	Son of Ashurbanipal	Son of Ashurbanipal	Chief eunuch of Aššur-etel-ilāni	Puppet king	Revolted against Assyria
631	38	Years 0–4 are attested	Years 0–7 are attested in	Year 0 is attested in	17	
630	39–42 in the	in Nippur	various cities	Nippur,	18	
629	Harran inscription of	exclusively.	in Babylonia.	Babylon, Ru'a, and Sippar.	19	
628	Adad-guppi'				20	
627					21 (<i>arki</i>)	
626					22 <i>arki</i>	0
625						1
624						2
623						3
622						4
621						5
620						6

posals have been advanced, each limited by the primary and secondary sources available at the time the research was conducted. As new sources relevant to the topic have been published and our understanding of the sources has improved significantly, these proposals have become outdated to varying degrees. Indeed, many of them conflict with the evidence and arguments presented in the following chapter concerning my reconstruction of the chronology. Of course, it is still necessary to review these proposals, both to contextualise my own proposal and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the argumentation.

In 1988, Zawadzki produced a thorough and detailed review of the different proposals made up to that point.²¹ Since the time of this publication, many more

²¹ Zawadzki 1988: 23–63. The proposals he reviews include von Soden 1957: 316–322; von Soden 1962: 122–124; von Soden 1967: 241–255; Borger 1959: 62–76; Borger 1965: 59–78; van Dijk 1962: 53–57; Oates 1965: 135–159; Reade 1970: 1–9; Mazetti 1979: 18; von Voigtlander 1984: 1–37.

proposals have been made.²² To avoid repetition, I only review the main arguments regarding important matters or texts from these earlier works, and focus on the newer proposals. There are three main areas which have been heavily debated: (1) The year of Ashurbanipal's death (and the accession year of Aššur-etel-ilāni); (2) The accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun; (3) How to deal with the chronological information contained in the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi'.

2.1 The Year of Ashurbanipal's Death (and the Accession Year of Aššur-etel-ilāni)

The last attested date that references the reign of Ashurbanipal is from his 38th year. Whether his reign extended beyond this year has been debated for a long time, because of seemingly contradictory information in the evidence. I address two issues here: (1) whether Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu were the same person; (2) how to interpret the phrase *nammušišu alāku* in the two land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni (SAA 12, 35–36).²³ The Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi' is relevant to this topic as well, since it claims that Ashurbanipal reigned for 42 years. However, the interpretations of this inscription have been intertwined with the questions of the death of Ashurbanipal and the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun. For this reason, I deal with the inscription separately after the review of the scholarship concerning the death of Ashurbanipal and the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.

2.1.1 Whether Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu Were the Same Person

The theory of the identification of Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu is based on very few facts and some assumptions: (1) Kandalānu died in 627 BC, which is the same year Ashurbanipal died according to the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi';²⁴ (2) Berossos claims that the successor of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn was his brother, Sardana-pallos (= Ashurbanipal);²⁵ (3) the name Kandalānu only appears in date formulae,

²² New proposals were made by Zawadzki 1989: 57–64; Oates 1991: 162–193; Na'aman 1991a: 243–267; Zawadzki 1995: 67–73; Beaulieu 1997a; Gerber 1998a.

²³ Editions in Postgate 1969: Nos. 13–14; Kataja and Whiting 1995: Nos. 35–36.

²⁴ The inscription of Adad-guppi' states that Ashurbanipal reigned for 42 years. Since Ashurbanipal's accession year is 669 BC, the last year of his reign is 627 BC.

²⁵ Burstein 1978: 24–25.

chronicles, and king lists, as well as an astronomical text,²⁶ while there are no extant royal inscriptions attributed to him; (4) Ashurbanipal never mentioned the appointment of Kandalānu as king of Babylonia; (5) it is believed that at some point there was a practice for Assyrian kings to bear Babylonian throne names (e.g., Tiglath-pileser III²⁷ and Shalmaneser V).²⁸

This theory went through various stages. At the beginning of the 20th century, the equation of Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu was very popular in Assyriology.²⁹ At that time, it was typically assumed that Ashurbanipal was using a different throne name to rule in Babylonia. This supporting evidence is tenuous at best and is no longer accepted, as is discussed later in this section.

The second stage marked the dismissal of this hypothesis based on the idea that Ashurbanipal's reign ended earlier than Kandalānu's. Between the 1920s and 1940s, a number of studies attempted to reconstruct the end of the reign of Ashurbanipal and provided different proposals. For example, Weissbach suggests that Ashurbanipal ruled until 631 BC at the latest;³⁰ Dubberstein proposes that the reign of Ashurbanipal ended in 633 BC.³¹ Since these dates are earlier than the death of Kandalānu (627 BC), the identification of Ashurbanipal as Kandalānu was rejected.

The third stage involved some renewed acceptance of the equation of Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu. This was based on the publication of the Ḥarran inscription in 1958 by Gadd,³² which claims that Ashurbanipal reigned for 42 years, resulting in his death in 627 BC, the same year that Kandalānu is known to have died. This was first noted by Borger in 1959,³³ followed by van Dijk,³⁴ Oates,³⁵ and Reade.³⁶ Oates comments that "as Borger points out, perhaps the older Assyriologists were right after all."³⁷ In 1988, Zawadzki re-examined the question and made a strong state-

26 Walker 1999.

27 Tiglath-pileser III went by the name Pūlu in Babylonia.

28 Shalmaneser V went by Ulūlayu in Babylonia.

29 For a review of this stage, see Zawadzki 1988: 25.

30 Weissbach 1932: 204.

31 Dubberstein 1944: 38–42. For a review of this stage and other proposals, see Zawadzki 1988: 25, and nn. 16–21.

32 Gadd 1958: 35–92.

33 Borger 1959: 74, then he rejected it in 1965, based on his arguments that Ashurbanipal died in 629 BC, according to the Ḥarran inscription (Borger 1965: 60–61).

34 van Dijk 1962: 53–57.

35 Oates 1965: 158–159; Oates 1991: 171.

36 Reade 1970: 1.

37 Oates 1965: 158–159.

ment that “the identification of Ashurbanipal as Kandalānu, the subject of many heated discussions, should be no longer questioned.”³⁸

In the fourth stage, the scholarly consensus once again rejects this theory. Among others, the most influential are Brinkman,³⁹ Na’aman,⁴⁰ and Frame.⁴¹ Although Zawadzki was certain about the identification in 1988 (as mentioned above), he changed his mind in 1995 after reviewing Na’aman’s reconstruction of the fragment of the synchronistic king list KAV 182.⁴² Although he disagrees with Na’aman regarding the text’s date of composition and the scribe’s intentions, he admits that his reconstruction is fully justified.⁴³

The rejection of the identification of Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu now prevails for the following reasons: (1) there is no evidence that the Assyrian kings ever had separate throne names in Assyria and Babylonia and the so-called “throne names” Pūlu and Ulūlāyu (employed by Tiglath-pileser III and Shalmaneser V) are now explained in other ways;⁴⁴ (2) there is no obvious reason why there would be two different dating systems in Babylonia, one according to the reign of Ashurbanipal beginning in 668 BC in Nippur, the other according to the reign of Kandalānu beginning in 647 BC in other cities of Babylonia; (3) the statement of Berossos that Šamaš-šumu-ukīn’s successor was his brother, can be explained in two ways: either this brother was Ashurbanipal, if Kandalānu was overshadowed by Ashurbanipal, or this brother was Kandalānu;⁴⁵ (4) the reconstruction of KAV 182 by Na’aman shows that when Aššur-etel-ilāni succeeded the throne of Assyria, Kandalānu was still the king of Babylonia.

38 Zawadzki 1988: 24, 57–62.

39 Brinkman 1976–1980: 368–369; Brinkman 1984: 106; Brinkman 1991: 60–61.

40 Na’aman 1991a: 251–254.

41 Frame 1992: 194. There is also a detailed examination in his Appendix F (296–306).

42 Na’aman 1991a: 248.

43 Zawadzki 1995: 70. He argues that if Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu were the same person, it means that Aššur-etel-ilāni removed his father from reigning in Assyria but approved his rule in Babylonia as Kandalānu, or vice versa, based on Na’aman’s reconstruction of KAV 182. This is difficult to perceive according to his opinion.

44 They are more likely to be family nicknames since they never appeared in contemporary official documents. Shalmaneser V was using Ulūlāyu in his letters to his father (Frame 1992: 303). In terms of their meanings, Pūlu may be the abbreviation of the full name of Tiglath-pileser III; Ulūlāyu may indicate the month Ulūlu in which Shalmaneser V was born (Frame 1992: 303, n. 25).

45 Although it is not known if Kandalānu was in fact a brother of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, his (Kandalānu’s) name is attested in the letter CT 53, 966, along with Šērū’a-ēterat, the sister of Ashurbanipal, which may indicate that he was a member of the Assyrian royal family. See Frame 1992: 195: [. . .] x ¹še-ru-u-a-KAR-at(?) and [. . .] ^mkan-dāl-a-nu (lines 9–10). Note that Kandalānu was a common name attested for several individuals in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. See PNA 2/I: 600–601 (Kandalānu).

2.1.2 The Dispute Around *nammušišu alāku*

On the issue of the death of Ashurbanipal, the meaning of the phrase *nammušišu alāku* in the two royal land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni (SAA 12, 35–36) has been debated.⁴⁶ This phrase was used to describe Ashurbanipal in the context where Sîn-šumu-līšir was recognised as the one who installed Aššur-etel-ilāni on the throne of Assyria:

SAA 12, 36, obv., lines 4–9:⁴⁷

- 4 'ul¹-tu 'AD¹ ba-nu-ú-a il-'li¹-ku 'nam¹-[mu-ši-šú]
 5 'AD²?¹ la ú-rab-ba-an-ni-ma la 'iṣ¹-[pu]-pa-an-ni [kap-pi]
 6 'ba¹-an-tu ul iḥ-su-us-'ma¹ [ul tu]-'šar¹-šá-an-ni [tè-e-mu]
 7 [m^d]30-MU-SI.SÁ¹ GAL-'SAG¹ [EN-MUN?]¹ 'AD ba¹-[ni-ia ša ki-ma AD it-tan]-'nàr-ra¹-[an-ni ka-x x x]
 8 [ina^{gis}]GU.ZA AD ba-ni-ia šal-mi-'iṣ¹ [ú-še-šib-an-ni-ma? UN.MEŠ^{kur} aš-šur^{ki} TUR u GAL x x x x x x]
 9 [ina] 'še¹-he-ri-ia ma-šar-tú 'LUGAL¹-[ti-ia iṣ-šu-ru-ma?] 'ip¹-tal-la-'hu¹ [LUGAL-u-ti?]

After my father and begetter had d[ied], no father brought me up or taught me to spread my [wings], no mother cared for me or saw to my [education], Sîn-šumu-līšir, the chief eunuch, [one who had deserved well] of my father and begetter, who had led me constantly like a father, installed me] safely on the throne of my father and begetter [and made the people of Assyria, great and small, keep] watch over [my kingship during] my minority, and respected [my royalty].

Borger notes that the passage above has a partial parallel in an inscription of Ashurbanipal from the Ištār temple in Nineveh,⁴⁸ in a context where a god/goddess installed the ruler in case of the lack of a father and mother:⁴⁹

RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 023, lines 18–20:⁵⁰

- 18 šá a-bu la ú-rab-ban-ni la iṣ-pu-pan-ni [kap-pi . . .] x TAR x [. . . nu]-bal-lu
 19 [. . .]Ú taḥ-ti-nin-ni [. . .] x TI x [. . . sa?]-li#-mu
 20 [šu-lul-ki] DÜG.GA tu-šat-ri-ši UGU-[ia . . .] šur-šú-diš tu#-[še-ši-bi-in-ni ina^{gis}GU.ZA?] AD# DÜ-ia

⁴⁶ Postgate 1969: Nos. 13–14.

⁴⁷ The transliteration and translation are based on SAA 12, 36 with modifications from the author.

⁴⁸ Borger 1959: 72, n. 40.

⁴⁹ This theme can also be found in prayers of Ashurbanipal to Ištār and Mullissu (Langdon 1927: 68, lines 13 and 73, line 16); and can be traced back to Neo-Sumerian period, manifested by Gudea's Cylinder A (RIME 3/1 Gudea E 3/1.1.7.CylA, col. III, lines 6–8).

⁵⁰ The transliteration and translation follow RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 023.

whom no father has raised (nor) taught to spread [(his) wing(s), . . .] . . . [. . . w]ing
[. . .] you protected me [. . .] . . . [. . . pe]ace, you had [your] beneficent [protection]
spread out over [me, . . .] y[ou had me] firmly [placed on the throne of the fat]her who
had engendered me.

It is certain that Ashurbanipal was raised by his father Esarhaddon. Therefore, Ashurbanipal's claim "no father raised me up or spread wings over me" was a complete fiction. This shows that Aššur-etel-ilāni's claim "no father raised me up or spread wings over me, no mother cared for me or arranged my education" cannot be taken literally. However, Ashurbanipal's accession occurred in an unusual situation: his father Esarhaddon died unexpectedly en route to Egypt, which put his accession at risk. The fact that Aššur-etel-ilāni praised Sîn-šumu-lišir for his assistance to his accession to the Assyrian throne indicates that his accession was not smooth, or without any risk at least. This parallels the circumstance of the accession of Ashurbanipal. Thus, it is safe to say that the claim of the lack of a father and mother was connected to an accession in a difficult situation.

Different interpretations of this passage have been suggested. For example, Borger suggests that the phrase *nammušišu alāku* does not necessarily mean "to die"; it could mean "to get away."⁵¹ Zawadzki indicates that this phrase has a metaphorical meaning: it implies that Aššur-etel-ilāni ascended the throne in extraordinary circumstances, but does not necessarily refer to Aššur-etel-ilāni's accession to the throne after the death of Ashurbanipal.⁵² Reade suggests that this expression is dubious, and it does not indicate that Ashurbanipal died before the accession of Aššur-etel-ilāni.⁵³

However, in the CAD, *nammušišu alāku* is defined as a euphemism of "to die", as demonstrated by lexical texts and Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions,⁵⁴ and this definition is widely accepted.⁵⁵ In fact, there is no clear evidence that this phrase can hold any other meaning than that.

2.1.3 Conclusion

Dating the death of Ashurbanipal has been connected with the question whether he and Kandalānu were the same person. Currently, the scholarly consensus is that they were most likely not the same person. Furthermore, the two royal land grants of

⁵¹ Borger 1959: 72.

⁵² Zawadzki 1995: 68, n. 4.

⁵³ Reade 1970: 1.

⁵⁴ CAD, N 1: 235.

⁵⁵ Oates 1991: 168; Na'aman 1991a: 250; Beaulieu 1997a: 385.

Aššur-etel-ilāni (SAA 12, 35–36) explicitly indicate that Ashurbanipal's death was followed by a civil war and the eventual accession of Aššur-etel-ilāni to the throne.

2.2 The Accession Year of Sîn-šarru-iškun

Different proposals about the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, ranging from 629 BC to 623 BC, are made based on different sources.

2.2.1 The Year of the Death of Kandalānu: 627 BC

Na'aman proposes that the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun is 627 BC. His argument is that Sîn-šarru-iškun's accession year cannot be earlier than the last year of Kandalānu because tablets with his dates would be inserted among those of Kandalānu.⁵⁶ This argument assumes that Sîn-šarru-iškun could only be involved in Babylonia after the death of Kandalānu. However, it is possible that Sîn-šarru-iškun could already engage in Babylonia in the last years of Kandalānu.

Van Dijk had proposed this dating in 1962 based on the same argument. He further suggested that because Sîn-šarru-iškun's name appears in the description of the events of the month Ulūlu (VI) in the chronicle ABC 2, he must have acceded the Assyrian throne before that month. Furthermore, because Sîn-šumu-līšir's name appears before that of Sîn-šarru-iškun in the Uruk King List, Sîn-šumu-līšir must have seized power before Sîn-šarru-iškun.⁵⁷ This proposal is also followed by Novotny.⁵⁸

2.2.2 The Uruk Siege Documents: 627 BC

There is a group of texts dated to Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar and Years 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun in Uruk. Additional to the normal date formulae according to the reign of the rulers, a term *edil bābi*, “closure of the gate,” was used in the dates. Based on three documents from this group available to Reade in 1970 (one is

⁵⁶ Na'aman 1991a: 246. Na'aman dates the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni to 631–627 BC, because he believes that Aššur-etel-ilāni and Kandalānu died in the same year. His reason is that the synchronistic king list KAV 182 was composed because of the death of the two kings in one year (Na'aman 1991a: 249). However, this argument is rejected by Zawadzki (1995: 69).

⁵⁷ van Dijk 1962: 55.

⁵⁸ RINAP 5/3: 30.

dated to Year 5 of Nabopolassar, and the other two dated to Year 7 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*), he suggests that the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* was 627 BC. According to his argument, these three documents recorded three sieges after one party captured Uruk: Nabopolassar captured Uruk from *Sîn-šarru-iškun* in 621 BC (Year 5 of Nabopolassar), causing a siege after the capture; he then lost it twice to *Sîn-šarru-iškun* in 620 BC; every time *Sîn-šarru-iškun* regained the city, he undertook a siege, resulting in two siege documents in his seventh year; after that, Nabopolassar recaptured the city and had a steady control onwards.⁵⁹ There are also some texts from Uruk that simply use the date formula MU+Year Number (*ša/ina edil bābi* or *nukurtu ina māti*, “hostilities in the land,” with no mention of the king. The period with these text is called “The Era of Unrest” by Beaulieu.⁶⁰ Van Dijk places the first year of this period to 627 BC. He links this year to the fight in Uruk that was recorded in the first section of the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 7–9), which he dates to 627 BC.⁶¹ Reade places the first year of this period to 626 BC.⁶²

Based on more evidence discovered at the end of 1990s, Beaulieu correctly reconstructed the chronology and the historical events reflected by the siege documents in Uruk. He places the first year of “The Era of Unrest” to 626 BC and proposes that the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* was 628 BC.⁶³

2.2.3 The Nippur Siege Documents: 629 BC

There are nine documents dated to the third, fourth, and sixth month of Year 3 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* in Nippur, recording that people sold their children for money due to a siege of the city.⁶⁴ Von Soden dates this event to 626 BC, Year 0 of Nabopolassar, because he thinks this siege was recorded in the first section of the chronicle ABC 2 (line 7) right before the accession of Nabopolassar.⁶⁵ Therefore, he proposes a synchronism: Year 3 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* = Year 0 of Nabopolassar,

⁵⁹ Reade 1970.

⁶⁰ Beaulieu 1997a: 375–380.

⁶¹ van Dijk 1962: 56–57.

⁶² Reade 1970.

⁶³ Beaulieu 1997a. I discuss this proposal in detail in Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Oppenheim 1955: 87–9; TMH II/III 267 contains some similarities.

⁶⁵ He suggests that the whole section refers to one year, 626 BC: the Assyrian army was divided into two parts. One went down to Nippur in the month of *Tašritu* (VII), causing Nabopolassar to retreat, and at about the same time, the other one descended to Babylon, failing to capture the city and had to withdraw, allowing Nabopolassar’s accession to the throne of Babylon in the month of *Arašamnu* (VIII). The siege of Nippur happened just before these two events. The same dating is proposed by Oppenheim 1955: 85.

resulting in a date for the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun in 629 BC.⁶⁶ This proposal was later followed by Borger.⁶⁷

The evidence from the chronicle ABC 2 for dating the siege of Nippur in the third year of Sîn-šarru-iškun is not sufficient. Line 7 in this chronicle records that Assyrian army went to Nippur, causing Nabopolassar to retreat.⁶⁸ Although it is possible that Nippur was besieged by Nabopolassar for some time, there is no evidence that this siege must be the one occurred in the third year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.

2.2.4 The Course of Events in Sippar: 625 BC

Zawadzki dates the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun to 625 BC. His proposal is based on the synchronism Year 0 of Sîn-šarru-iškun = Year 1 of Nabopolassar. He argues that only this synchronism results in a proper order of the transfer of the city from the hands of Nabopolassar to Sîn-šarru-iškun, as reflected in the chronicle ABC 2 and the dates according to the reigns of Sîn-šarru-iškun and Nabopolassar from Sippar.⁶⁹ However, this is not the only synchronism that works with the textual evidence from the chronicle ABC 2 and the date formulae from Sippar. Furthermore, dating the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun to 625 BC causes a major conflict with the Uruk King List (obv., lines 1'–14'), which lists Sîn-šumu-lišir and Sîn-šarru-iškun between Kandalānu and Nabopolassar as kings of Babylonia.⁷⁰

2.2.5 The Ḥarran Inscription of Adad-guppi' and the Chronicle ABC 2: 623 BC

Oates proposes that Sîn-šarru-iškun did not succeed Aššur-etel-ilāni until 623 BC, based on the Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi' and the chronicle ABC 2.⁷¹ Taking the chronology of the Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi' as correct, she believes that the accession year of Aššur-etel-ilāni is 627 BC.⁷² Nippur documents attest to

⁶⁶ von Soden 1957: 317.

⁶⁷ Borger 1959: 64–65 and Borger 1965: 70.

⁶⁸ Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217.

⁶⁹ Zawadzki 1989: 57–64.

⁷⁰ Grayson 1980–1983: 97.

⁷¹ Oates 1965: 141–143; Oates 1991: 167–175.

⁷² The Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi' states that Ashurbanipal reigned for 42 years. Since the accession year of Ashurbanipal is 669 BC, the last year of his reign is 627 BC. Assuming Aššur-etel-ilāni succeeded his father in the same year, the accession year of Aššur-etel-ilāni is 627 BC.

his fourth year, so the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* cannot be earlier than 623 BC. She also links the accession of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to the revolt in 623 BC that was recorded by the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 29–30).⁷³ For these two reasons, Oates dates the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 623 BC. However, the chronological data in the *Ḥarran* inscription of *Adad-guppi'* is not historically reliable (I discuss this in detail later). Besides, the rebellion that occurred in 623 BC was the revolt of a certain *Itti-ili* in *Dēr*, according to later studies on the chronicle.⁷⁴

Oates uses the year *limmu ša arki Nabû-šarru-ušur A.BA KUR* to fit her chronological proposal. According to Oates, the use of the word *arki* means that *Nabû-šarru-ušur* was the eponym of the previous year and was reused for some reason, and two possible dates for this year are 626 and 622 BC. According to her proposed timeline, *Aššur-etel-ilāni* ascended the throne by the end of 627 BC, “thus it should have been possible to appoint an eponym at the beginning of the following year.” Based on this, the first option is excluded by her. The second possibility, 622 BC, can be evidence for dating the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 623 BC. As Oates explains: “as *Sîn-šarru-iškun*’s claim to the Assyrian throne and to Babylon both fall at the end of the year, it is more than likely that no one was in a position to appoint a legitimate eponym at the beginning of 622.”⁷⁵ However, this year *limmu ša arki Nabû-šarru-ušur A.BA KUR* may be dated to a different year. For example, Falkner dates it to 625 BC,⁷⁶ Parpola dates it to 628 BC,⁷⁷ and Reade 623 BC.⁷⁸ These theories greatly contrast with one another and there is no certainty involved in any of them.

2.2.6 Line 7 in the Text TMH II/III 35

The text TMH II/III 35, a collection of loans from Nippur, is often discussed in connection with the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*. The text was written at the end of the second year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*, and contains several sections, separated by a single ruling. Each section records a promissory note, indicating the amount of silver, the debtor, the witnesses, the scribe, and the date. The date of the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* appears in the second section (lines 5–7):

⁷³ Grayson 1975a: 89; Glassner 2004: 217.

⁷⁴ Both Grayson (1975a: 89) and Glassner (2004: 217) interpret that the rebellion was waged by *Dēr* against Assyria.

⁷⁵ Oates 1965: 157.

⁷⁶ Falkner 1954–1956: 100–112.

⁷⁷ Parpola 1998: xviii–xx.

⁷⁸ Reade 1998: 255–265.

TMH II/III 35, lines 5–7:⁷⁹

5 1 MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR *ina* 'UGU' [. . .] A ^{md}NÀ-KAM *mu-kin-ne-e* ^{md}U.GUR-GI A ^{md}U.GUR-SUR
 6 [. . .]-KIN A [. . .]^{lu}UMBISAG ^m]MÁŠ-KAR-ir A ^mNÍG.DU ^{mi}DU₆ UD 1-KAM KÙ.BABBAR *na-din*
 7 [. . .] 'MU' 3-KAM [.] *šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*

1 mina of silver, owed b[*y* . . .], descendant of Nabū-ēreš. Witnesses: Nergal-ušallim, descendant of Nergal-ētir, [. . .], descendant of [. . . Scribe]: Ninurta-ētir, descendant of Kurdu. On the first day of the month Tašrītu (VII), the silver was given. It was written [.] the third ye[ar . . .] The accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun.

Line 7, which mentions the accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun, is quite broken. So far, seven different reconstructions have been proposed:

- (1) San Nicolò 1951: No. 63
[. . .]MU 3-KAM [^d*aššur-etel-DINGIR.ME*](?) *šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*
- (2) Borger 1965: 66
«[am] 23.(sic ??) [Tag des Monats . . . ist die Urkunde] geschrieben . . . »
- (3) von Soden 1967: 246
[*ina ṭuppi/labiri*] MU 3-KAM [^d30.MU.SI.SÁ] *šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*
- (4) Na'aman 1991a: 247, n. 10
[*a-di*] MU 3-KAM [MÁŠ *inaddin kim*] *a šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*
- (5) Beaulieu 1997a: 384
[*ina*] MU 3-KAM [^dAN.ŠÁR-NIR-DINGIR.ME] *šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*
- (6) Gerber 1998b: 76
[*ina*] MU 3-KAM [AN.ŠÁR-NIR-DINGI]R *šá-ṭir* MU SAG NAM.LUGAL.E ^d30-LUGAL-*iš-kun*
- (7) Oates 1991: 175⁸⁰
“Year 3 of Nabopolassar, that is to say the accession year of Sin-sharra-ishkun.”

In 1998, Gerber provided a new collation of the end of the second gap in the line by Krebbernik. He also offered a review of the first five proposals and made another reconstruction (6), a modified version of (5). He argues that because the remaining part of the second gap in the copy is a vertical wedge,⁸¹ reconstruction (5) must be excluded. However, he indicates that the name of Aššur-etel-ilāni remains possible, if it appears in the form without ME: [AN.ŠÁR-*e-til-lu*-DINGI]R.⁸²

⁷⁹ The transliteration and translation are made by the author.

⁸⁰ Oates 1991: 175. This reconstruction supports his dating of the accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun to 623 BC, see Oates' proposal concerning the accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun above.

⁸¹ Gerber 1998b; also Oates 1991: 170, n. 18: “All that remains of the name is a single vertical wedge at the end.”

⁸² Gerber 1998b. For the entire range of attested writings for the name, see PNA 1/1: 183.

Typically, the reconstructions propose that a royal name is situated in the second gap, and thus that the line can be translated “It was written [in the third ye]ar [of RN]. The accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.” These reconstructions are plausible. Apparently, when the text was compiled, Nippur was under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun. Since the text is a collection of promissory notes made in the previous few years, the original promissory notes may have been dated to the reign of another ruler (other than Sîn-šarru-iškun). When the scribe was compiling those promissory notes into one text, he may have had to “correct” the original dates, which were made according to the reigns of other rulers.⁸³ For this reason, line 7 was written to convert the date from the old dating system into the current one.⁸⁴

In Gerber’s article, he concludes that restorations (4) made by Na’aman and (6) by himself are equally plausible.⁸⁵ However, restoration (4) presents a grammatical problem. The translation of Na’aman’s reconstruction is: “[He will pay the interest until the] third year [a]s was contracted.” In this case, *šaṭru*, the subordinate stative form of the verb *šaṭāru*, “to write,” would have been used instead of *šaṭir*, the simple stative form. However, this restoration is still possible assuming that the scribe made a mistake.

Therefore, the reconstruction of a royal name in the second gap is plausible. However, since it is not absolutely certain, this text should not be used as evidence for reconstructing the chronology.

2.2.7 Conclusion

As discussed above, previous studies have adopted various ways to date the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, ranging from the assumed synchronism between the death of Kandalānu and the accession of Sîn-šarru-iškun, the course of events based on the documents from Uruk, Nippur, and Sippar, to the chronological data from the Ḫarran Inscription of Adad-guppi’ and the chronicle ABC 2. Additionally, a reconstructed synchronism in the Text TMH II/III 35 has been argued as a piece of evidence for dating the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun. Based on these arguments, the dates 629, 627, 625, and 623 BC have been proposed. These arguments are not well founded, and some are even based on pure assumptions.

⁸³ Oates indicates that dating by the reigns of two rival Assyrian claimants on the same document is “inherently unlikely on the part of any Assyrian scribe” (Oates 1991: 170).

⁸⁴ The section (lines 8–11) is dated to the first year of Aššur-etel-ilāni, and the scribe did not convert this date. It is probably because Sîn-šarru-iškun did not seize power yet in that year.

⁸⁵ Gerber 1998b.

Additionally, some of the evidence and, by extension, interpretations of the evidence, are now outdated. However, the methodology employed by Reade and Beaulieu in their reconstructions is correct. As is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, it makes use of the date formulae in the Uruk siege documents, which provide a synchronism between the reigns of Šin-šarru-iškun and Nabopolassar solely from everyday documents.

2.3 The Ḫarran Inscription of Adad-guppi'

The Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi' was composed by the order of Nabonidus to legitimise his kingship.⁸⁶ The text provides three pieces of chronological information related to the mother of Nabonidus, Adad-guppi': her birth year, her age at the accession of Nabonidus, and the year she died:

RINBE 2 Nabonidus 2001, col. I, lines 29–38.⁸⁷

- 29 *ul-tu* MU 20-KÁM AN.ŠÁR-DÙ-A LUGAL^{kur} *aš-šur šá al-da-ku*
 30 *a-di* MU 42-KÁM 'AN.ŠÁR'-DÙ-A MU 3-KÁM^d *aš-šur-e-til-lu-DINGIR*
 31 DUMU-šú MU 21-KÁM^d MUATI-A-PAP MU 43-KÁM^d MUATI-NÌG.DU-PAP
 32 MU 2-KÁM^m LÚ-^dAMAR.UTU MU 4-KÁM^m U.GUR-LUGAL-URÙ
 33 *ina* 95 MU.MEŠ^d 30 LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ *šá-AN-e u KI-ti*
 34 *šá áš-ra-a-ti* DINGIR-ú-ti-šú GAL-ti *áš-te-'e-u*
 35 *íp-še-ti-iá* SIG₅.MEŠ *ḫa-diš ip-pal-sa-an-ni-ma*
 36 *su-pi-e-a iš-mu-u im-gu-ru qi-bi-tú ug-ga-ti*
 37 *lib-bi-šu i-nu-uḫ-ma ana É.ḪÚL.ḪÚL É^d 30*
 38 *šá qé-reb*^{uru} KASKAL *šu-bat tu-ub lib-bi-šú*

From the twentieth year of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, (during) which I was born, until the forty-second year of Ashurbanipal, the third year of Aššur-etel-ilāni, his son, the twenty-first year of Nabopolassar, the forty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar (II), the second year of Amēl-Marduk, (and) the fourth year of Neriglissar, after (these) ninety-five years, (when) the god Šin, king of the gods of heaven and earth, the sanctuaries of whose great divinity I constantly sought out, looked with pleasure upon my good deeds and (then) heeded my prayers (and) accepted my request(s), (when) the wrath of his heart was appeased, and (when) he became reconciled towards Eḫulḫul, the temple of the god Šin which is inside the city Ḫarrān, the residence of his happiness.

⁸⁶ Beaulieu 1989: 139–40.

⁸⁷ The transliteration and translation follow RINBE 2 Nabonidus 2001.

RINBE 2 Nabonidus 2001, col. II, lines 26–29:⁸⁸

26 *ul-tu pa-ni* ^mAN.ŠAR-DÛ-A LUGAL ^{kur}*aš-šur*^{ki} *a-di* MU 9-^rKÁM¹
 27 ^mMUATI-NÍ.TUKU LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} DUMU *ši-it lib-bi-ia*¹
 28 1 ME 4 MU.AN.NA.MEŠ SIG₅.MEŠ *i-na pu-luḥ-ti šá* ^d30 LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ
 29 *ina lib-bi-ia iš-ku-nu ú-bal-liṭ-an-ni* . . .

From the time of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the ninth year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, (my) son, my own offspring, he (Šin) kept me alive for 104 good years on account of the reverence that the god Šin, king of the gods, had placed in my heart.

This inscription provides the following data: (1) Ashurbanipal ruled for 42 years;⁸⁹ (2) Aššur-etel-ilāni ruled for at least three years.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, there seems to be a two-year discrepancy in the age of Adad-guppi' between this text (col. II, line 28: 104) and the overall chronology (649–547=102).⁹¹ Since the publication of this inscription, its contents have been dealt with in one of two ways: either (1) the chronological information within it is accepted and the two-year discrepancy is explained away, or (2) its timeline is considered unreliable because of its internal inconsistencies and propagandistic nature. The former solution is much more popular, and as a result a variety of chronological reconstructions have been made.

2.3.1 Proposals in Accordance with the Inscription

Some proposals suggest that the two-year discrepancy concerning the age of Adad-guppi' was caused by a scribal error about the accession year of Ashurbanipal, while others suspect overlaps between the reigns of different rulers were ignored.

⁸⁸ The transliteration and translation follow RINBE 2 Nabonidus 2001.

⁸⁹ When Gadd published the inscription, he claimed that “most valuable in it is the first statement which has ever been available for the full extent of Aššurbanipal’s reign, 42 years; this compares with the latest date hitherto obtained from a contract of his 38th year” (Gadd 1958: 70).

⁹⁰ Oates argues that Aššur-etel-ilāni reigned for four years, and in the third year of Aššur-etel-ilāni, Adad-guppi' moved from Ḥarran to Babylon, which is the reason behind the reference of “the third year of Aššur-etel-ilāni” in the inscription of Adad-guppi' (Oates 1965: 142). I don't think the relocation of Adad-guppi' would be the reason not to record the total length of the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni, if Nabonidus, who had the inscription created, fully acknowledged the legitimacy of Aššur-etel-ilāni during his whole reign.

⁹¹ The number 104 corresponds to the total of numbers mentioned in column I: 104 = 22 + 3 + 21 + 43 + 2 + 4 + 9. However, she was born in the 20th year of Ashurbanipal, which is 649 BC, and died in the 9th year of Nabonidus, which is 547 BC. There are only 102 years between these two dates.

An Error Regarding the Accession Year of Ashurbanipal

Borger argues that the scribe mistakenly thought that the accession year of Ashurbanipal was 671 BC, instead of 669 BC.⁹² This error resulted in 2 years being added to the reign of Ashurbanipal, for a total of 42 years (671–629 BC), instead of the 40-year reign (669–629 BC) proposed by Borger. His chronological scheme is as follows:

Ashurbanipal	669–629 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni (=Sîn-šarru-iškun)	629–626 BC

The foundation of this chronological scheme is his dating of Sîn-šarru-iškun's accession year to 629 BC.⁹³ Borger further suggests that Aššur-etel-ilāni and Sîn-šarru-iškun were the same person.⁹⁴ His reasons for equating the two kings are as follows: First, the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi' states that Aššur-etel-ilāni reigned for three years before the reign of Nabopolassar, which means the accession year of Aššur-etel-ilāni is 629 BC, the same year as Sîn-šarru-iškun, according to his dating. Second, the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi' and the Synchronistic King List Fragment KAV 182 never mention Sîn-šarru-iškun. However, there are texts from Nippur dated according to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni and texts from all the major cities of Babylonia (Babylon, Sippar, Uruk, and Nippur) dated according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun. If they were the same person, there would be no reason to use two different dating systems in Babylonia, especially in the same city (Nippur).⁹⁵ Therefore, this proposal should be rejected.

An Overlap in the Reigns of Aššur-etel-ilāni and Nabopolassar

Oates proposes that the reigns of Aššur-etel-ilāni and Nabopolassar overlapped for three years (from the second year to the fourth year of Aššur-etel-ilāni), and that the scribe of the inscription of Adad-guppi' was ignorant of this fact, mistakenly recording Adad-guppi's age as 104, instead of 102.⁹⁶ Her chronological scheme is as follows:

⁹² Borger 1965: 60–61.

⁹³ Borger 1959: 64–65 and 1965: 70. His main argument is that the Nippur siege documents were produced before the accession of Nabopolassar, as this siege was recorded in the first section of the chronicle ABC 2 (line 7: Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

⁹⁴ Borger 1959: 68.

⁹⁵ For more reasons, see Oates 1965: 138.

⁹⁶ Oates 1965: 141–143; Oates 1991: 167–175 and n. 11. The same suggestion is made by Frame 1992: 27.

Ashurbanipal	669–627 BC
Kandalānu (=Ashurbanipal) ⁹⁷	648–627 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni	627–623 BC

Oates argues that Aššur-etel-ilāni reigned for four years, and in the third year of Aššur-etel-ilāni, Adad-guppi' moved from Ḫarran to Babylon. In the counting of the age of Adad-guppi', the scribe did not consider the three-year overlap between the reigns of Aššur-etel-ilāni and Nabopolassar and took the three years as the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni instead of four years. For this reason, a three-year discrepancy was reduced to a two-year one.⁹⁸

This proposal has a flaw regarding the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun. According to texts dated by the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun, Nippur was under his control from the latter half of his second year at the latest, and he had a continuous, stable control of the city from the third year of his reign.⁹⁹ Therefore, the last date of the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni, which is 1/VIII/4,¹⁰⁰ the only date in this year, should be prior to or in the second year of Sîn-šarru-iškun. Sîn-šarru-iškun should have ascended the throne in 625 or 624 BC, which is after Nabopolassar's accession of the Babylonian throne. This contradicts the Uruk King List (obv., lines 1'–14'), which lists Sîn-šumu-līšir and Sîn-šarru-iškun as kings of Babylonia between Kandalānu and Nabopolassar.¹⁰¹

Coregency: An Overlap in the Reigns of Ashurbanipal and Aššur-etel-ilāni

Several studies make similar reconstructions based on the hypothesis that there was a coregency between Ashurbanipal and Aššur-etel-ilāni. In 1967, von Soden proposed the following chronology:¹⁰²

⁹⁷ The scholarly consensus went back and forth on the relationship between Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu since the beginning of the 20th century. Currently, it is commonly accepted that Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu were most likely not the same person. Kandalānu was appointed by Ashurbanipal to the throne of Babylonia, although he never mentioned this appointment in his inscriptions. One of the reasons to reject the identification of Ashurbanipal and Kandalānu is that there were two different dating systems in Babylonian cities: one according to the reign of Ashurbanipal beginning in 668 BC in Nippur, and the other according to the reign of Kandalānu beginning in 647 BC in other cities of Babylonia. Furthermore, the theory that Assyrian kings employed a throne name for Babylonia has been rejected.

⁹⁸ Oates 1965: 142.

⁹⁹ For the texts from Nippur dated to the second year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, see TMH II/III 35 (lines 4 and 20) and Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.13, 15, 17–18. Nippur was under siege while being controlled by Sîn-šarru-iškun in his third year (Oppenheim 1955: 69–89).

¹⁰⁰ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M.12.

¹⁰¹ Grayson 1980–1983: 97.

¹⁰² von Soden 1967: 246. This proposal was revised from his earlier proposal in 1957 before the publication of the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi':

Ashurbanipal	669–627 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni	633–629 BC

The foundation of his proposal is the dating of the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 629 BC.¹⁰³ The dating of the accession year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* is based on: (1) there is a synchronism of Year 3 of *Sîn-šumu-lišir* = Year 0 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*, based on his reconstruction of line 7 in the text TMH II/III 35; (2) the accession year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* should be prior to the accession year of *Sîn-šumu-lišir*.

Van Dijk joined this discussion with a proposal that the four years of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* coincided with the last four years of *Ashurbanipal*, beginning in 631 BC.¹⁰⁴

Ashurbanipal	669–627 BC
Kandalānu (=Ashurbanipal)	648–627 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni	631–627 BC

The foundation of his chronological scheme is the dating of the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 627 BC.¹⁰⁵ He also assumes that the accession year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* is four years earlier than the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*, so that *Aššur-etel-ilāni* began his reign in 631 BC.

Later, Reade reconstructed a three-year overlap in the reigns of *Ashurbanipal* (as *Kandalānu*) and *Aššur-etel-ilāni*. He suggests that *Kandalānu* was a second name or a statue which represented *Ashurbanipal* at the New Year's Festival. After *Ashurbanipal* was succeeded by *Aššur-etel-ilāni* in 630 BC in Assyria, he continued to rule in Babylonia as *Kandalānu* until his death in 627 BC.¹⁰⁶ His chronological scheme is as follows:

Ashurbanipal	669–630 BC
Kandalānu (=Ashurbanipal)	648–627 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni	630–623 BC

Ashurbanipal: 669–631 BC

Aššur-etel-ilāni 631–627 BC

The dating of the accession of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* is based on the last date from the reign of *Ashurbanipal* in his 38th year (631 BC).

103 von Soden dates the siege of Nippur in the third year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 626 BC, the accession year of Nabopolassar, because he thinks this siege was recorded in the first section of the chronicle ABC 2 (line 7) right before the accession of Nabopolassar (von Soden 1957: 317).

104 van Dijk 1962: 53–57.

105 He thinks that *Sîn-šarru-iškun*'s accession year cannot be earlier than the last year of *Kandalānu* (van Dijk 1962: 55).

106 Reade 1970: 1–9.

The foundation of this scheme is the dating of the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* to 627 BC.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Reade makes a synchronism between the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* and Year 3 of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*. He argues that from the Nippur documents, the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* cannot be earlier than the third year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*, so there are only two choices of synchronism: the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* is Year 4 or 3 of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*.¹⁰⁸ The latter fits the double dates in the text TMH II/III 35, and it fits the length of the reign of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* (3 years) in the inscription of *Adad-guppi'*, assuming that the inscription only counts the years before the revolt of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*. This synchronism results in dating the accession of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* to 630 BC.

Gerber makes a similar reconstruction. He proposes that the one-year discrepancy in the reign of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*¹⁰⁹ results from the scribe's identification of the fourth year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* as the year when there was no king in the land (626 BC) in the chronicle ABC 2 (line 14).¹¹⁰ This leads to a synchronism: Year 4 of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* = Year 0 of Nabopolassar (626 BC). Gerber's proposal is as follows:

Ashurbanipal	669–627 BC
Aššur-etel-ilāni	630–627 BC

Here there is a three-year overlap in the reigns of Ashurbanipal and *Aššur-etel-ilāni*. This discrepancy is reduced by the year that was not counted, i.e., the year without a king.¹¹¹ Therefore, there is a 2-year discrepancy in the age of *Adad-guppi'*.¹¹²

107 Reade's dating is based on three documents from the group of the Uruk siege documents available in 1970 (one is dated to Year 5 of Nabopolassar, and the other two dated to Year 7 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*). He argues that these three documents record three sieges after one party captured Uruk: Nabopolassar captured Uruk from *Sîn-šarru-iškun* in 621 BC, causing a siege after the capture; he then lost it twice to *Sîn-šarru-iškun* in 620 BC; every time *Sîn-šarru-iškun* regained the control of the city, he undertook a siege, resulting in two siege documents in his seventh year (Reade 1970).

108 Reade 1970: 1–9.

109 Date formulae from Nippur attest the fourth year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*, while the Ḫarran inscription of *Adad-guppi'* attributes three years to his reign.

110 Gerber 1998a: 75–76. For the chronicle ABC 2 (line 14), see Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

111 Similar opinion in Reade 1970: 3.

112 Gerber (1998a: 90–91) also attempts to use the total number of the post-canonical eponyms to set a time range for the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* and the death of Ashurbanipal. He theorises that the total number of the post-canonical eponyms equals the number of regnal years of all the Assyrian kings who claimed the throne after 649 BC. However, the total number of the post canonical eponyms are not yet certain. See the discussion in footnote 2.

These proposals featuring coregency or abdication have been criticised by several studies. Oates indicates that “this hypothetical abdication, for which there is no direct evidence, has a superficial appeal as the simplest solution to the apparent contradictions in chronology.”¹¹³ Furthermore, Na’aman suggests that “coregency is not attested elsewhere in the history of Assyria. Such an *ad hoc* solution with no historical precedent is best avoided.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the proposals of Borger, von Soden, van Dijk, and Reade are founded on their datings of the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, which are questionable, as I have discussed in the previous section concerning the various proposals of the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.

2.3.2 Rejecting the Chronological Information in the Inscription

Some studies simply reject the chronology provided in the inscription. Na’aman indicates that the two-year discrepancy results from a long-established tradition of Mesopotamian scribes.¹¹⁵ He argues that “Mesopotamian scribes always calculated the time-spans to past events by a combination of the regnal years borrowed from king-lists.”¹¹⁶ Therefore, the numbers concerning the lengths of different kings’ reigns were acquired from king lists available to the scribes at the time of Nabonidus.¹¹⁷ Concerning the 42 years for the reign of Ashurbanipal, he argues that the scribes knew that Ashurbanipal ruled concurrently with Šamaš-šumu-ukīn and Kandalānu,¹¹⁸ so they added up the reigns of the two kings (21+21) as the reign of Ashurbanipal.¹¹⁹ Therefore, Na’aman concludes that “the chronological data of the Ḫarran inscription must be eliminated from the discussion.”¹²⁰

More recently, Novotny proposed another explanation for the erroneous 42-year reign of Ashurbanipal. According to his theory, the scribe of the inscription of Adad-guppi’ mistook the 20th year of Ashurbanipal for the 20th year of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, then combined this 20 years (the regnal year of Ashurbanipal when

113 Oates 1991: 167.

114 Na’aman 1991a: 250.

115 Na’aman 1991a: 250–251.

116 Na’aman 1984: 115–20.

117 It means that the three years assigned to Aššur-etel-ilāni must be borrowed from some king lists, which can be a piece of evidence for the synchronism of Year 3 of Aššur-etel-ilāni = Year 0 of Sîn-šarru-iškun. Na’aman thinks this year was the time when Adad-guppi’ moved to Babylonia from Ḫarran (Na’aman 1991a: 250). The same opinion is found in Oates 1991: 142.

118 The Synchronistic King List lists Ashurbanipal as a contemporary of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn and Kandalānu, see Grayson 1980–1983: 116–121.

119 Na’aman 1991a: 250; Beaulieu 1997a: 384.

120 Na’aman 1991a: 243

Adad-guppi' was born) with 22 years (the period from the 20th year of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn to the accession year of Nabopolassar) to reach 42 years.¹²¹

The inscription also attributes three years to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni, which conflicts with the attestation of Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni from Nippur.¹²² This could potentially be explained by the usurpation of the Assyrian throne by Sīn-šarru-iškun in 628 BC. After Aššur-etel-ilāni was defeated, he still controlled Nippur, the stronghold of Assyrians in Babylonia. This is why the date formula according to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni continued in Nippur, while Sīn-šarru-iškun assumed total control of Assyria and started to engage in Babylonia.

As Beaulieu points out, this text was heavily influenced by royal ideology, and therefore the chronology in it may not be reliable.¹²³ The most obvious evidence for the propagandistic nature of the text is that only legitimate kings (from the perspective of Nabonidus) are listed; Sīn-šarru-iškun and Sīn-šumu-līšir are omitted. Therefore, the chronological information contained in this inscription should not be treated historically accurate.

121 RINAP 5/3: 26–31.

122 His reign is attested in Nippur from his accession year to his fourth year (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M. date uncertain).

123 Beaulieu 1997a: 384–385.

3 Chronological Reconstruction: Synchronisms through Date Formulae

Chronological synchronisms can be deduced from non-everyday documents, such as king lists, royal inscriptions, and chronicles. However, the nature of such sources makes them less reliable for historical reconstructions. I deal with these synchronisms first in order to determine whether it is appropriate to use them.

The Last Year of Ashurbanipal = Year 0 of Aššur-etel-ilāni

At least four independent texts suggest that Aššur-etel-ilāni was the immediate successor of Ashurbanipal: the fragment KAV 182 of the Synchronistic King List,¹ the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi,² and two land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni (SAA 12, 35–36).³ However, each of these texts was potentially influenced by royal ideology and may have omitted certain kings that were not understood to be legitimate. It is a known fact that the Ḫarran inscription of Adad-guppi omitted some kings.⁴ In other words, more evidence is needed to evaluate the validity of this synchronism.

Year 0 of Sîn-šumu-lišir = Year 0 of Sîn-šarru-iškun

This synchronism can be reached on the basis of the Uruk King List (obv., lines 1'–14'), which lists Sîn-šumu-lišir and Sîn-šarru-iškun between Kandalānu and Nabopolassar as kings of Babylonia.⁵ The simplest explanation is that Sîn-šumu-lišir and Sîn-šarru-iškun successively ascended the throne of Assyria (and Babylonia) in the same year, between the death of Kandalānu and the accession of Nabopolassar.⁶ However, this is just one of two possibilities. An alternative is that the

1 Na'aman 1991a: 248.

2 There are controversies surrounding the interpretation of this text. For a discussion of this text, see section 2.3.

3 Editions in Postgate 1969: Nos. 13–14; Kataja and Whiting 1995: Nos. 35–36. There are controversies surrounding the interpretation of the phrase *nammušišu alāku* in these texts. For a discussion of the phrase, see section 2.1.2.

4 Sîn-šarru-iškun and Sîn-šumu-lišir are omitted.

5 Grayson 1980–1983: 97.

6 For example, this is proposed by Frame (1992: 210, n. 96).

rules of *Sîn-šumu-lišir* and *Sîn-šarru-iškun* were only recognised in Babylonia between the death of *Kandalānu* and the accession of *Nabopolassar*. The year an Assyrian king was recognised in Babylonia does not necessarily correspond to their accession year. Therefore, this synchronism also requires more evidence.

The Last Year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* = Year 0 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* = Year 0 of *Sîn-šumu-lišir*

Assuming that there was no enduring civil war between *Aššur-etel-ilāni* and *Sîn-šarru-iškun*, it can be determined that the last year of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* equals the accession year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*.

Resulting Chronological Proposal

Based on these three synchronisms, *Novotny* proposes a chronology as following:⁷

<i>Ashurbanipal</i>	669–631 BC
<i>Aššur-etel-ilāni</i>	631–627 BC
<i>Sîn-šumu-lišir</i>	627 BC
<i>Sîn-šarru-iškun</i>	627–612 BC

As shown in the following sections, this chronology cannot fit with the historical reality based on the date formulae used in different cities.

More reliable synchronisms can be gathered through the date formulae that are used in everyday documents. Since everyday documents tend not to be ideologically motivated, it is relatively safe to use them in the reconstruction of the chronology. I construct the following synchronisms in this chapter: (1) Years 3–5 of *Nabopolassar* = Years 5–7 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*; and (2) Year 38 of *Ashurbanipal* = Year 0 of *Aššur-etel-ilāni*; Year 4 of *Aššur-etel-ilāni* = Year 1 of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*.

⁷ RINAP 5/3: 26–31.

3.1 Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar = Years 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun

3.1.1 Date Formulae in Uruk

Based on the date formulae in the Eanna archive from Uruk, a synchronism between Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar and Years 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun can be established.⁸ According to this synchronism, the three-year period (Years 3–5) of Nabopolassar in which there are few texts dated to the reign of Nabopolassar corresponds to a three-year period (Years 5–7) of Sîn-šarru-iškun in which there is an increase of texts dated to his reign (Figure 1).⁹

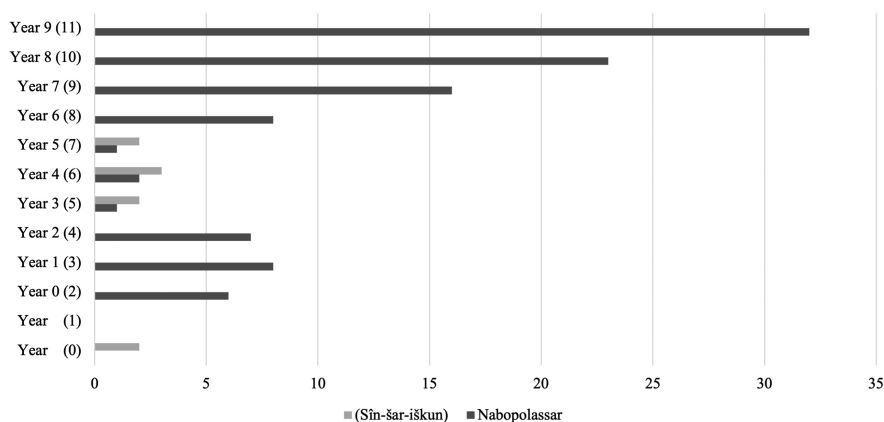


Figure 1: Numbers of texts dated by the reigns of rulers from Uruk.

The reign of Nabopolassar was used in date formulae in Uruk as early as his accession year (626 BC), and he enjoyed a stable rule over the city until his third year, when the number of texts dated to his reign suddenly drops and maintains a low level in the following three years, until his sixth year. These low numbers suggest that during this period Nabopolassar's rule in Uruk was challenged by someone else. Beginning in his sixth year, the number of texts increases until it reaches 32 in his ninth year, showing that Uruk was under the stable and continuous control of Nabopolassar again. The most likely candidate who was competing with Nabopolassar during his Years 3–5 was Sîn-šarru-iškun, whose accession year and Years 5–7 were used in date formulae in Uruk. The synchro-

⁸ Beaulieu 1997a.

⁹ This table is based on Tables 1 and 2 in Beaulieu 1997a.

nism of Nabopolassar's Years 3–5 and Sîn-šarru-iškun's Years 5–7 is not invalidated by the fact that their dates occur concurrently at Uruk; during this period, they were competing over control of the city, which is why texts dated to the reigns of both kings occur simultaneously.

Admittedly, the correspondence of Nabopolassar's Years 3–5 and Sîn-šarru-iškun's Years 5–7 based on the phenomenon in Figure 1 has to be assessed with due caution—this phenomenon may be explained by accidents of discovery. However, the correspondence can be further supported by another piece of evidence concerning the formula *edil bābi*, “closure of gate,”¹⁰ which appears in the dates of the texts dated to the 3-year period in question.¹¹ The only text dated to Year 5 of Nabopolassar bears the date: MU 5-KAM ^dNĀ-IBILA-URĪ LUGAL KÁ.DINGIR^{ki} ^ʿ*ina* ¹*e-di-il* KÁ, “the fifth year of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, during the closure of the gate.”¹² All the dates of the texts dated to Years 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun bear the formula (*ina*) *edil bābi*.¹³ The co-occurrence of this formula suggests that Nabopolassar's Year 5 falls within the period of Sîn-šarru-iškun's Years 5–7, which accords with the above synchronism.

Since the chronology of Nabopolassar's reign is fixed at 626–605 BC, the synchronism Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar = Year 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun can help situate the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun as being from 628–612 BC.

10 Baker (2014b: 88–89) argues that this phrase “should not be taken too literally, but rather as a metaphor for the city having been cut off by the enemy.” The main reason is that the city wall of Uruk may have already fallen into ruins by the late seventh century. It should be noted that the practice to “close the gate” was implemented by the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk, who expelled the party that was loyal to Nabopolassar from Uruk. This means that Uruk cut itself off from the outside, in order to prevent Nabopolassar's force coming back and taking over the city. This was probably done by blocking off the main traffic routes to enter Uruk, both on land and water.

11 Apart from serving as a supplement to the date by the reigns of rulers, this term featured another system to date during that period, together with the term *nukurtu ina māti*. This date system solely used a year number and the formula (*ina*) *edil bābi* and *nukurtu ina māti*. It was based on “the era of unrest,” which began in the year after the year Kandalānu died (Beaulieu 1997a: 375–379). Synchronisms between the reigns of Nabopolassar, Sîn-šarru-iškun, and the era of unrest are established too (Beaulieu 1997a: 379). More Uruk siege documents of this period have been published by Da Riva 2002b and 2003/2004, and Zawadzki 2013.

12 See the edition in Scheil 1914: 191–92.

13 Beaulieu 1997a: 374, Table 2.

3.1.2 Nabopolassar’s Rise and Political Infightings in Uruk

For the sake of the validity of the synchronism Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar = Year 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun, it is necessary to examine the historical background and the order of events in Uruk that contextualise this synchronism: the rise of Nabopolassar and the political infightings in Uruk.

The origin of Nabopolassar has been a puzzling aspect of the Neo-Babylonian history for decades,¹⁴ mainly because there is little information in the royal inscriptions of Nabopolassar about his origin. He only emphasised the fact that he was a native of Babylonia¹⁵ and described himself as the son of a nobody (*mār la mammāna*).¹⁶ However, there are several pieces of evidence connecting the origin of Nabopolassar to the Sealand or Uruk.¹⁷

There are three texts that associate Nabopolassar with the Sealand.¹⁸ The first of these, TCL 6, 38, concerns rituals for the temple of Anu in Uruk, dated to the early years of the Seleucid era. Its colophon designates Nabopolassar as the king of the Sealand.¹⁹ This same text also mentions that it was copied in Elam from the tablets Nabopolassar plundered from Uruk. Accordingly, it has been suspected that these tablets were those Nabopolassar sent to Elam from Uruk in his first year, when he also sent back the gods plundered by the Assyrians to win the support of Elam.²⁰ The second such text is a literary letter *Declaring War* (BM

¹⁴ The main studies are Beaulieu 1997a: 391–93; Kleber 2008: 8; Da Riva 2008: 2–5; Fuchs 2014: 58–64; RINBE 1/1: 2.

¹⁵ One inscription of Nabopolassar (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], col. I, lines 15–20) states that Nabopolassar was born in Babylonia, see Da Riva 2013a: 96.

¹⁶ Da Riva 2013a: 96 (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], col. I, lines 7–14).

¹⁷ Despite Nabopolassar’s southern origin, a place dominant by the tribal populations, the Aramean and Chaldean element is conspicuously absent from the political ideology developed in Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions.

¹⁸ For the assumption that Nabopolassar was a member of the Chaldean tribe Bit-Dakkūri, see Fuchs 2014: 63–64.

¹⁹ Colophon of TCL 6, 38: “According to the tablets which Nabopolassar, king of the Sealand, plundered from Uruk.” For a discussion of this colophon, see Da Riva 2017a: 78–79.

²⁰ Fuchs (2014: 61) points out that the Urukians, who were the owners of those tablets, were probably not willing to give them away, resulting in the accusation of tablet robbery. He also suggests that the reconquest of Uruk by Nabopolassar from the hands of pro-Assyrian parties must have caused violence and looting, which would have contributed to the accusation of “plunder.” Beaulieu (1997a: 392) argues, instead, that it was because the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk were severely punished after Nabopolassar regained the control of Uruk after the era of unrest, which left them with bad memories.

55467) from the Achaemenid or Seleucid period.²¹ This letter is ostensibly written by Nabopolassar, although there is no mention of his name, to an Assyrian king (probably *Sîn-šarru-iškun*), to lay an accusation that the Assyrians committed various crimes to Babylonia. The author, assuming the identity of Nabopolassar, claimed that he was from the Sealand.²² The third text is the *Babyloniaca* of Berossos, in which Nabopolassar (under the name Bupolassaros) is said to have been sent by *Sîn-šarru-iškun* (under the name Sarakos) to Babylon in order to suppress a revolt in the Sealand, later rebelling himself.²³

The Uruk Prophecy links the early kings of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty to Uruk,²⁴ but does not explicitly name Nabopolassar. It enumerates previous kings' reigns until the current one during whose reign the text was written, giving a brief observation regarding whether or not the king provided justice or made the right decisions for the land. In some cases, important religious and political events that happened in Uruk are also included. The obverse of the tablet is quite broken, while the reverse is preserved well, describing the reign of 11 kings, ending with two kings from Uruk. The identification of the kings in this text has long been debated. Many proposals have been made,²⁵ most of which identify at least one of the last few kings (Kings 9, 10, and 11 [Table 2]) as the first ruler of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

The proposal of Hunger and Kaufman, which was strengthened by Beaulieu, that King 10 is Nebuchadnezzar II, is quite convincing. The most compelling reason for this identification is the similarity between the description of King 10 and the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus, which refer to the restoration of the Eanna Temple and the return of the protective goddess to Uruk.²⁶ Fur-

²¹ An edition of this letter can be found in Gerardi 1986: 30–38. For a more recent edition, see Frazer 2024: No. 6.8. A recent discussion of its content can be found in Da Riva 2017a: 80–81.

²² *Declaring War*, obv., lines 10–11: “[Fr]om the midst of the land of the lower sea, Marduk, the great lord, had looked favourably upon me” (Gerardi 1986: 34–35).

²³ Burstein 1978: 26 (Book 3, 2. 6c). The newest edition of *Babyloniaca* is Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996, which, however, does not include the relevant passage. For more on Berossos, see the edited volume Haubold et al. (eds.) 2013.

²⁴ A recent translation and discussion of this text can be found in Beaulieu 1993a. Prophecy is defined as a genre of literature which depicts the reigns of unnamed kings in the form of predictions (see Grayson and Lambert 1964: 7).

²⁵ Hunger and Kaufman 1975: 371–375; Grayson 1990: 203–218; Lambert 1978: 11; Beaulieu 1993a; Scurlock 2006: 450–465.

²⁶ Beaulieu 1993a: 45–46; Beaulieu 2003a: 129; Da Riva 2008: 110–112. For an inscription on a cylinder from Uruk itself commemorating Nebuchadnezzar II's return of the statue of Ištar and reconstruction of Eanna, see Da Riva and Novotny 2023.

Table 2: Description of Kings 9–11 in the Uruk Prophecy.

King	Origin in Uruk	Justice	Right decisions	World domination	Contributions to Uruk
No. 9	No	No	No	Yes	—
No. 10	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Establishment of the rites of the cult of Anu; returning of the old protective goddess from Babylon to Uruk; rebuilding of the temples and sanctuaries; renewal of Uruk; rebuilding of the gates of Uruk; development of agriculture.
No. 11	Yes	—	—	Yes	Establishment of Uruk as the capital

thermore, Nebuchadnezzar II has a close relationship with Uruk: he used to be the *šatammu* of the Eanna temple, and his three daughters may have resided in Uruk.²⁷ Taking King 10 as Nebuchadnezzar II, Hunger and Kaufman, followed by Beaulieu, identify the final three kings of the Uruk Prophecy as follows: Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Amēl-Marduk.

This identification proposes a link between the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and Uruk, since the final two kings are described as arising in Uruk and are called “the kings of Uruk.” However, this would mean that Nabopolassar is not one of the kings who arose in Uruk. Fuchs suggests that he is not referred to as king of Uruk as a result of negative opinions towards Nabopolassar in Uruk. He argues that this is because Nabopolassar tried to sever the relationship between his family and Uruk, manifested by the statement that he was “a son of nobody,” to avoid a special relationship with and a preference for a certain city, which would harm the integration of other cities into his state in an early stage. This policy inevitably caused disappointment to his followers in Uruk. The negative opinion towards Nabopolassar was passed down by Urukians who supported him in the beginning and became disappointed in him later.²⁸

²⁷ Two daughters, Ba’u-asītu and Kaššaya, are attested only in texts from the Eanna temple archive (Joannès 1980: 183–184; Beaulieu 1998). The third daughter was named Innin-ēṭirat, of which the divine appellation was exclusive to Uruk. Therefore, this daughter may have lived in Uruk as well (Beaulieu 1998: 198).

²⁸ Fuchs (2014: 59–60) indicates three aspects of the negative descriptions: (1) he is described as unjust and irresponsible; (2) he is not referred to as king of Uruk; (3) while King 11 is presented as the son of King 10, the family relationship between King 9 and King 10 is omitted. In my opinion, Nabopolassar’s distancing from Uruk and his ancestry was because he did not

All of the texts discussed above point to a southern origin of Nabopolassar. Considering the relative consistency among these texts, this conclusion seems almost inescapable. Thanks to recent prosopographical research on the family of Nabopolassar (Figure 2), the family's connection with Uruk has been revealed. During the Assyrian domination of Babylonia, Nabopolassar's father

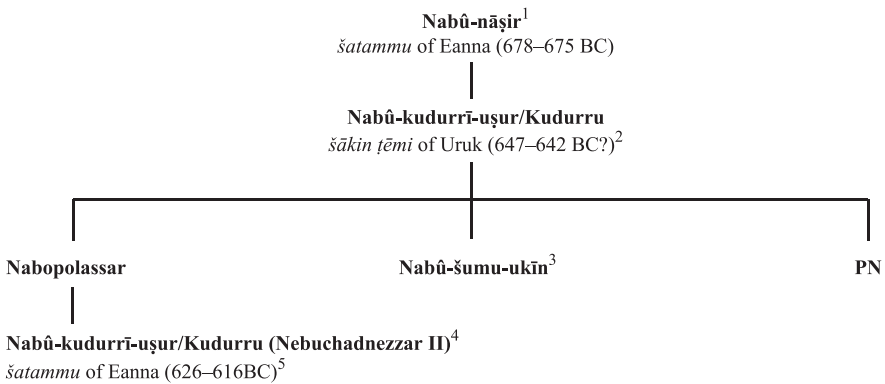


Figure 2: Genealogy of Nabopolassar.

¹Frame 1992: 280; PNA 2/II: 857: Nabû-nâšir 31; Da Riva 2008: 4.

²Frame 1992: 280; PNA 2/I: 633–634: Kudurru 20. Kudurru was out of the office by 642 BC at the latest (Frame 1992: 201). Furthermore, the tenure of Kudurru overlapped with that of Šamaš-danninanni, the governor of Akkad. This is shown in BIN 2, 132, which mentions a legal dispute between the two parties concerning some Puqudians. Šamaš-danninanni is attested via the eponymy of Šamaš-danninanni (c. 643–642? BC). For the date of this eponym, see Frame 1992: 28–29.

³Nabû-šumu-ukīn and an individual whose name is broken are attested in a letter (SAA 22, 48) as the sons of Kudurru (see below). A person with the same name is mentioned in PTS 2001 as a close official of Nabopolassar (see Jursa 2007a: 134).

⁴The identification of Kudurru, the *šatammu* of Eanna (626–616 BC), with Nebuchadnezzar II (Nabû-kudurrî-ušur), was first proposed by Beaulieu 1997a: 381. He acknowledges that there is a difficulty with this identification: 64 years passed between the first attestation of the *šatammu* of Eanna, Nabû-kudurrî-ušur/Kudurru, and the death of Nebuchadnezzar II (Beaulieu 1997a: 392–393). In support of Beaulieu, see Jursa 2007a: 133.

⁵Nebuchadnezzar II is attested in a letter (YOS 3, 7) dated to 626 BC. For other attestations, see Beaulieu 1997a: 380.

want to be connected to the pro-Assyrian family history during the generations of his grandfather and father.

Nabû-kudurrî-ušur/Kudurru²⁹ and grandfather Nabû-nāšir held high positions in Uruk.³⁰ After Nabopolassar assumed power, his son Nabû-kudurrî-ušur/Kudurru, the future Nebuchadnezzar II, was installed as the *šatammu* of Eanna, the position Nabû-nāšir used to hold.

It is known that Kudurru, the father of Nabopolassar, acted in the interest of the Assyrians and had a close relationship with Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria. The name Kudurru was already mentioned by Nabû-ušabši, the governor of Uruk (661–649 BC),³¹ in a few letters dating before the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn.³² However, it is uncertain whether the Kudurru(s) in these letters should be identified with Nabopolassar's father. During the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, Kudurru acted as the subordinate of Nabû-ušabši, and assumed his position during his absence at one point.³³ Kudurru became the governor of Uruk in 647 BC at the latest. After that, he corresponded with king Ashurbanipal very often. The

29 The identification of Kudurru and Nabû-kudurrî-ušur both as the governors of Uruk around the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, with Kudurru being a short form of the name Nabû-kudurrî-ušur, was first suggested by Brinkman 1977: 312 (as is discussed in Frame 1986: 263–264). For the identification of Kudurru as the father of Nabopolassar, see Jursa 2007a.

30 In the past, Bêl-ibni, the governor of the Sealand, was identified as the son of Nabû-kudurrî-ušur/Kudurru, the governor of Uruk. For example, Frame 1992: 159, n. 122; 212, n. 102; 277, n. 51; PNA 2/II: 842 (Nabû-kudurrî-ušur 5). This relationship was based on the reconstruction of ABL 1106, rev., line 14: ^{md}EN-ib-ni DUMU-ša ^{md}NĀ-'NIG.DU¹-URĪ. However, this reconstruction is now rejected. The name of the father is commonly reconstructed as ^{md}NĀ-'DU¹-ŠEŠ. See Jursa 2007a: 130, n. 26.

31 Frame 1992: 280.

32 ABL 266 and ABL 226, sent by Nabû-ušabši to Ashurbanipal, refer to a person named Kudurru. ABL 266 can be dated to 654 BC, see PNA 2/I: 634: Kudurru 20d; ABL 998 seems to be dated to roughly the same period as ABL 226, as it refers to one of the same events. See Frame 1986: 261, n. 6.

33 This is indicated by the letter ABL 754+CT 54, 250, written during the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, whose sender may be reconstructed as Kudurru (for the debate on the sender of the letter, see Frame 1992: 161, n. 131). The letter is to report the military actions the author, along with Aplaya, the governor of Arrapha, and Zamū, the governor of Nūrea, took to aid Sîn-tabni-ušur, the governor of Ur, when he requested their help during the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn. Frame suggests that if this letter was written by Kudurru, it might have been sent when Nabû-ušabši, the contemporary governor of Uruk, left Uruk before Babylon was besieged in the fourth month of 650 BC (Frame 1986: 264).

topics of the letters include affairs concerning Elam³⁴ and internal administration in Uruk.³⁵ It seems that Ashurbanipal made efforts to cultivate the loyalty of Kudurru: even Kudurru's health problems drew his attention.³⁶

However, at some point, Kudurru became involved in a power struggle in Uruk, during which he lost the favour of Ashurbanipal. The letter SAA 22, 48 mentions that a legal dispute involving Kudurru was brought to Ashurbanipal and the king sided with the party who litigated against Kudurru. As a result, the family of Kudurru was expelled.³⁷

SAA 22, 48, obv., line 1'–rev., line 17'.³⁸

Obv.:

- 1' [.] 'x' [. . .]
 2' [.] 'x'.MEŠ-ka it-ta-aš-ru-ú
 3' [. . EN.NUN]-ti šá LUGAL EN-ni ni-iš-šu-ru
 4' [.] di-i-ka-ni u ħi-pa-a-nu
 5' [.] x na un-qu šá LUGAL EN-ni
 6' [.] ^{md}NÀ-SIG₅-iq a-na ^{lu}GAR*-UŠ₄-ú-tu
 7' [šá UNUG^{ki} ip]- 'te*¹-qid mi-tu-tu a-ni-ni
 8' [x x x x] 'MUN*¹.ĤI.A-ni ina É EN-i-ni
 9' [šak]-'na-at* ù* ^{md}NÀ¹-SIG₅-iq PAB-ru¹ šá EN.NUN-ti
 10' šá LUGAL EN-'ni¹ [x (x)] 'ina* muĥ*¹-ĥi-ni [a-na ^{lu}]GAR-UŠ₄-ú-tu
 11' ip-qi-d[u* šu-ú LUGAL EN-ni] 'IR*¹.MEŠ [šá ina IGI]-'šú*¹ liš-a-al-ma
 12' li-[iq-bu-ú um-ma ^mx (x)]'x¹-PAB a-na [KA(?)] ^mAN.ŠÁR-DÙ-A
 13' AD-'ka*¹ [EN.NUN-ti šá] UNUG^{ki} u É.AN.NA
 14' it-[ta-šar u NÍG.KA₉ šá UNUG]^{rki¹} u É.AN.NA it-ta-šú [0]
 15' ki-'i¹ [ni-x x x] 'LÚ*¹.BAD šá ^mNÍG.DU ina su-ú-qu
 16' ni-'il-ta¹-[ad-da u] 'DUMU*¹.MEŠ-šú ul-tu UNUG^{ki}

Rev.:

- 1 ni-ik-ta-at-mu ina IGI* ^mAN.ŠÁR-DÙ-A AD-ka
 2 di*-i-nu it-ti-šú-nu ki-i nid-bu-ub
 3 di-na-nu it-ti-šú-nu i-te-pu-uš

34 In ABL 277, Kudurru reported hostility towards the king and a famine in Elam.

35 ABL 518 (SAA 21, 33) was sent by Ashurbanipal to Kudurru and the citizens of Uruk about a weeping ceremony that takes place in the month of Simānu (III) in Uruk. It is dated to 24/II/646 BC (see Radner 2014: 80). ABL 296 (not dated) (SAA 21, 32) is another letter sent by Ashurbanipal to Kudurru and the citizens of Uruk, but it is badly damaged.

36 Kudurru sent a letter (ABL 274) to Ashurbanipal thanking him for sending a physician to cure his illness. For the translation, see Oppenheim 1967: 156.

37 For a different interpretation, see Jursa 2007a.

38 The transliteration follows Jursa 2007a: 125–126. The translation is based on Levavi 2017: 180–181 with modifications from the author.

- 4 É.MEŠ -ni^{giš}SUB.BA.MEŠ-ni^{giš}KIRI₆.MEŠ -'niⁱ
 5 šá a-ki-i piš-ki iš-šu-ú ki-i ú-ter-[ru]
 6 it-tan-na-an-na-šú ù^{giš}KIRI₆.MEŠ-šú-nu
 7 [a-na]^{r^d}[GAŠAN] šá UNUG^{ki} u^dna-na-a a-ki-i NÍG.KA₉
 8 [šá ul-tu] 'É'.AN.NA iš-šu-ú it-ta-din
 9 [a-na]^rUNUG^{*1ki} ul ú-ter-šú-nu-tu
 10 [en-na PN] u^mtab-né-e-a^{lú}NIBRU^{ki}.MEŠ
 11 [šá ina]^rUNUG^{*1ki} iš-šu-nu iq-ta-bu-na-a-šú
 12 [um-ma PN u^m]^dNÀ-MU-DU DUMU.MEŠ ša^mNÍG.DU
 13 [.] a-na UNUG^{ki} šap-ru-ni
 14 [.] 'x x x¹.MEŠ -ni ana muḥ-ḫi-ni
 15 [.] 'x i* -na* pi*¹-i
 16 [.]-ni
 17 [.] 'x¹

. . . they have kept the watch . . . we are keeping the watch of the king, our lord . . . we were killed and broken . . . the seal of the king, our lord . . . he appointed Nabû-udammiq as the governor [of Uruk]. We (were) dead, [but now], grace was bestowed upon our ‘offices.’ He entrusted Nabû-udammiq over us [to look] after the royal service. Our lord, in his benevolence, appointed him as governor. [The king, our lord], should ask the [serv]ants before him, they [will say: “Nabû-kudurri-u]šur [served] Uruk and the Eanna, by the [order] of Ashurbanipal, your father. He, however, seized property of Uruk and the Eanna.” [We . . .] and dragged Kudurru’s body in the streets and drove his sons out of Uruk.

We had the legal dispute with them before Ashurbanipal, your father, who ruled in our favour. He took back our houses, our prebends and our gardens, which were wrongfully taken, and gave them to us. He gave their gardens to the Lady of Uruk and Nanaya on account of the property which was taken from the Eanna. He did not let them back in Uruk. [Now, PN] and Tabnēa, the Nippurians, who are in Uruk, are telling us: “[. . . and] Nabû-šumu-ukīn, sons of Kudurru [. . .] were sent to Uruk” . . .

Here, the name of the former, purportedly corrupt, governor of Uruk is partially broken, where only the final sign is preserved (obv., line 12⁷). However, in the following sentence, the authors of the letter mentioned dragging the body of Kudurru in the streets and driving his sons out of Uruk. Therefore, it is probable that this governor is, in fact, Kudurru,³⁹ the father of Nabopolassar.

Furthermore, according to the letter, the governor commits a major transgression by encroaching upon the property of the Eanna temple, while Kudurru is known to have gone against the interest of the Eanna temple in a dispute involving a group of Puqudians, who had been dedicated to the temple by previous

39 Levavi (2017: 181) reconstructs the name as Nabû-aplu-ušur, following Jursa (2007a: 128).

kings.⁴⁰ This case represents an earlier conflict between Kudurru and the Eanna temple during the reign of Ashurbanipal and may well have been part of the legal dispute mentioned in SAA 22, 48. It is noteworthy that Šamaš-danninanni, the governor of Akkad, brought this lawsuit against Kudurru.⁴¹ Šamaš-danninanni, who was also called the provincial governor of Babylon, was probably focused on administering northern Babylonia.⁴² Uruk was the Assyrians' stronghold in southern Babylonia. A dispute between these two high officials in northern and southern Babylonia was certainly significant enough to be brought before Ashurbanipal. The settlement of this dispute by the king decided which party would receive his favour. It turns out that Kudurru lost the case, also losing the favour of the king. This fits with the situation that is referred to in the letter SAA 22, 48.

The power struggle between Kudurru and the authors of the letter SAA 22, 48 probably occurred around 642 BC. It seems that there was an administrative reorganisation in Uruk during this year because none of the high officials attested before 642 BC continued his tenure after 642 BC (Table 3).⁴³ The office “*qīpu* of Eanna” was replaced by “*qīpu* of Uruk and Eanna” in 642 BC at the latest. Considering that *qīpu* is a royal representative, the renaming of this office shows an unprecedented royal interference in the prerogatives of the *šākin tēmi* of Uruk. This fits well with the power struggle in which the *šākin tēmi* of Uruk lost the favour of the Assyrian king and was expelled from the city.⁴⁴

As a result of this power struggle, Kudurru's grave was desecrated, and his sons were driven out of Uruk. However, the letter mentions that two sons of Kudurru were later sent back to Uruk. It might be the intention of the authors of the letter to complain to and warn the king that he had sent someone to Uruk whose family had been corrupted and who was now in conflict with them—the ruling class of Uruk.

⁴⁰ BIN 2, 132 records the decision that settled this dispute. For the bibliography of the studies of this text, see Na'aman 1991a: 252, n. 33. First, the text states the previous decision, made during the reign of Esarhaddon, that those Puqudians belonged to the temple. It goes on to describe the details of the current case (lines 7–27), a reconstruction of which is provided by Na'aman (1991a: 253). Finally, a judgment is recorded: a *hursān*-ordeal, resulting in 28 Puqudians being assigned to the temple.

⁴¹ BIN 2, 132 lines 12–13: ¹ma^dUTU-*dī-na-an-ni* ^{1a1}[GAR].¹KUR URU^{ki1} *it-ti* ^{1m}NI^g.DU ^{1a}GARKU UNUG^{ki} *dī-i-ni ig-re*¹-[*e-ma* . . .] “Šamaš-danninanni, the governor of Akkad, brought a lawsuit against Kudurru, the governor of Uruk and . . .”

⁴² Frame 1992: 301–302.

⁴³ The table is made according to Frame 1992: 279–281.

⁴⁴ Furthermore, there was a decrease in the number of economic texts from Uruk after 642 BC, although this phenomenon could also be explained by the accident of discovery (Frame 1992: 199, n. 37).

Table 3: High officials in Uruk around 642 BC.

Officials	Before 642 BC	642 BC	After 642 BC
<i>šākin ṭēmi</i>	Kudurru (648–646 BC)	Nabû-zēru-līšir (642 BC)	Na'id-Marduk (631 BC) ⁴⁵
<i>šatammu</i> of Eanna	Bēl-uballiṭ (650–646 BC?)	—	—
<i>qīpu</i> of Eanna/ Uruk and Eanna	Aššur-bēlu-ušur (contemporary with the tenure of Nabû-ušabši)	Šamaš-ilaya (642, 639 and 637 BC)	Šamaš-ilaya (642, 639 and 637 BC)
<i>tuṣšarru</i> of Eanna	Širikti-Marduk/ Ibni-Ištar (644 BC)	Širikti-Marduk /Nabû-ušallim//Ḫunzû (642 BC)	—

The sons of Kudurru may be attested in the document YBC 11414 from Uruk, which is dated to the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun (628 BC).⁴⁶ This document is about a dispute over a house of a son of Nabû-ušabši. According to this text, the sons of Kudurru, one of whom is called Šumu-ukīn (probably a short form of Nabû-šumu-ukīn), were sought to deal with this dispute, and later paid an amount of silver to have the house free of claims. It seems that these two sons of Kudurru held authority in Uruk, perhaps on account of some royal commission, which is why people would bring a dispute to them. Moreover, they seem to have a good relationship with the son of Nabû-ušabši. This Nabû-ušabši could have been the previous governor of Uruk in 661–649 BC, although there is no way to prove it. However, if it is really the case, the relationship between the two sons of Kudurru and the son of Nabû-ušabši can well be explained.

If this is the case, the letter SAA 22, 48 can only be dated to 628 BC. There were only two periods in which Sîn-šarru-iškun could send his people to Uruk. One was 628 BC, his accession year, and the other was 623–621 BC, the era of unrest, when the pro-Assyrian party took over the city. Since the sons of Kudurru are attested in Uruk already in 628 BC, the former option is preferable. Jursa suggests that the letter can be dated to 623–621 BC,⁴⁷ because the letter mentions the appointment of Nabû-udammīq as governor of Uruk, who is attested in that capacity in 623–621 BC. However, it is possible that he was first appointed to that office in the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun (628 BC), lost his job when Nabopo-

⁴⁵ He may have been a member of the Kurû family. For the reconstruction of this relationship, see Nielsen 2011: 205 n. 117.

⁴⁶ Published by Ellis 1984: 24. It has a duplicate AO 6820, published as TCL 12, 14. This document is mentioned by Nielsen 2011: 265, n. 164.

⁴⁷ Jursa 2007a: 125.

lassar controlled the city (627–624 BC), and finally, recovered his office when the pro-Assyrian party took over the city (623–621 BC).

According to this reconstruction, Nabopolassar and his brothers were sent to Uruk by Sîn-šarru-iškun along with the appointment of Nabû-udammiq as the governor of Uruk in 628 BC. In this year, scribes in Uruk began to date texts by the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun. The elites of Uruk were not happy with their return because of the conflict of the previous generation so they sent a letter to complain to and warn Sîn-šarru-iškun. Nabopolassar rebelled soon after and controlled the city during 627–624 BC. For this reason, the pro-Assyrian officials lost their positions and the texts dated by the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun in Uruk disappeared during this period. The pro-Assyrian party took back the city during 623–621 BC. This caused the co-existence of texts dated by both rulers.

3.2 Year 38 of Ashurbanipal = Year 0 of Aššur-etel-ilāni; Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni = Year 1 of Sîn-šarru-iškun

As mentioned above, the last attested date from the reign of Ashurbanipal is from his Year 38 (631 BC), which means that his son, Aššur-etel-ilāni, ascended the Assyrian throne in 631 BC at the earliest.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the last attested date from the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni is from his Year 4 (627 BC at the earliest).⁴⁹ Since his brother, Sîn-šarru-iškun, ascended the throne in 628 BC, there seems to be an overlap between their reigns. According to texts dated by the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun, Nippur was under his control from the latter half of his second year (626 BC) at the latest, and he had a continuous, stable control of the city from the third year of his reign onwards.⁵⁰ Therefore, the last attested date of the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni, which is 1/VIII/4, the only attested date in this year, should be prior to or in the second year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.⁵¹

Let us first examine the possibility that Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni is Year 2 of Sîn-šarru-iškun (626 BC). There are six dates attested from Nippur in Sîn-šarru-iškun's second year from the month of Dūzu (IV) to the month of Addaru (XII):

48 As discussed above, the theories of coregency between Ashurbanipal and Aššur-etel-ilāni have been dismissed generally. Since coregency is not attested elsewhere in the history of Assyria, it is best to avoid such reconstruction.

49 1/VIII of Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni from Nippur (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M. 12).

50 For the texts from Nippur dated to the second year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, see TMH II/III 35 (lines 4 and 20) and Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.13, 15, 17–18. Nippur was under siege while being controlled by Sîn-šarru-iškun in his third year (Oppenheim 1955: 69–89).

51 The same argument was made by Reade 1970: 1–9.

?/IV/2, 17#/V#/2, 24/VI/2, 7/VIII/2, 10/XI/2, and 14/XII/2.⁵² The only date for Aššur-etel-ilāni occurs in the eighth month of the year, which would conflict with the steady rule of Sîn-šarru-iškun in that city during this period. Therefore, Year 2 of Sîn-šarru-iškun (626 BC) must have come after Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni.

In conclusion, the beginning of the four-year reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni cannot be earlier than 631 BC, and the end cannot be later than 627 BC. This means this four-year reign can only be placed within the time period from 631–627 BC. Thus, the chronology of the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni can be fixed as follows:

Year 0 of Aššur-etel-ilāni = Year 38 of Ashurbanipal = 631 BC

Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni = Year 1 of Sîn-šarru-iškun = 627 BC

This synchronism is consistent with the royal inscriptions about the succession of Ashurbanipal: the Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi',⁵³ and the two land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni.⁵⁴

3.3 The Accession Year of Sîn-šumu-lišir

According to the Uruk King List (obv., lines 1'–14'),⁵⁵ there was one year between Kandalānu and Nabopolassar when Sîn-šumu-lišir and Sîn-šarru-iškun were controlling Babylon simultaneously or successively. This year should fall into the period between the reigns of Kandalānu and Nabopolassar. As a rule to compile king lists, the reign of a king is counted from the first regnal year to the last one. For example, the total number of years for Kandalānu's reign is 21 years, because Kandalānu's first regnal year is 647 BC and the last one is 627 BC. Therefore, the year between the reigns of Kandalānu and Nabopolassar means 626 BC. Sîn-šumu-lišir probably ruled less than one year, because only the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir is attested. Based on the Uruk King List, the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir can be plausibly dated to 626 BC. Thus, there forms a synchronism: Year 2 of Sîn-šarru-iškun = Year 0 of Sîn-šumu-lišir (=Year 0 of Nabopolassar = Year 22 of *arki* Kandalānu).

The texts from the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir involve four cities: Nippur, Babylon, Ru'a, and Sippar. The date from Ru'a is broken.⁵⁶ It is necessary to see

52 TMH II/III 35, line 20, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.13, TMH II/III 35, line 4, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 15 and 17–18.

53 The Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi' indicates that Aššur-etel-ilāni ruled for three years.

54 The two land grants of Aššur-etel-ilāni show that Aššur-etel-ilāni was the immediate successor of Ashurbanipal.

55 Grayson 1980–1983: 97.

56 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 7. Published in Da Riva 2001: 48–52.

whether the dates of Sîn-šumu-lišir would conflict with any other rulers in Nippur, Babylon, or Sippar, if this synchronism is adopted. The only date according to the reign of Sîn-šumu-lišir from Nippur is 12/III/0,⁵⁷ which is not in conflict with the dates according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun (?/IV/2, 17#V#/2, 24/VI/2, 7/VIII/2, 10/XI/2, and 14/XII/2).⁵⁸ There are three dates according to the reign of Sîn-šumu-lišir from Babylon: 15/V/0, 15?/VI/0, and a broken date, 1+?/[]/0.⁵⁹ These dates do not conflict with dates referring to the reign of Kandalānu (2/VIII/22 *arki* Kandalānu). There are no texts from Babylon dated according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun in this year. As for Sippar, there are no texts that date to the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir. However, in Babylon and Ru'a there are two texts dated according to his reign from the archive of Ebabbar of Sippar.⁶⁰ The former has a recognisable date: 15/V/0. As Da Riva notes, this text was made by the administrators of the Ebabbar temple of Sippar, who were exiled to Babylon, which was at that time controlled by Sîn-šumu-lišir. In other words, Sîn-šumu-lišir ruled Sippar for a while, prior to the 15th day of the month Abu (V), before losing control of the city. This explains the dates of the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun, which shows that he controlled Sippar at least in the months of Ayyaru (II), Simānu (III),⁶¹ and Kislīmu (IX).⁶² Thus, the dating of the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir to 626 BC seems plausible.⁶³

Some studies date the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir to 627 BC.⁶⁴ This dating should be discarded based on the events that occurred in Babylon in 627 BC, which can be reconstructed based on the evidence from the chronicle ABC 2 and the archival texts as follows:

1. There are texts dated to Year 21 of Kandalānu (627 BC) in the month of Nisannu (I) and Ayyaru (II) from Babylon,⁶⁵ which means Babylon was under the control of Kandalānu for the first two months of this year. It is possible that Sîn-šarru-iškun had already controlled Babylon at this time, because

57 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 1. Da Riva (2001: 46) indicates that the text is from Nippur.

58 TMH II/III 35, line 20, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.13, TMH II/III 35, line 4, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 15 and 17–18.

59 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 2 (published in Da Riva 2001: 52–55); 5 (N. 6 is its duplicate); 3.

60 One text from Babylon (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 2. Published in Da Riva 2001: 52–55) and the text from Ru'a (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 7. Published in Da Riva 2001: 48–52) can be attributed to the Ebabbar archive on internal grounds, see Da Riva 2001: 48–55.

61 1/II/2, 8/II/2, 20/II/2 and 25/II/2. See Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N. 9–12. N. 19 (BM 49982) is dated to 18/II/2 by Leichty (1986: 22).

62 (2)?/IX/2. See Brinkman and Kennedy 1986: O. 15a.

63 This proposal is accepted by Na'aman 1991a: 247–248.

64 For example, Na'aman (1991a: 246), van Dijk (1962: 55), and Novotny (RINAP 5/3: 26–31).

65 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 154 and L. 157.

there is a receipt of a land purchase dated to 21/XII/0 of Sîn-šarru-iškun from Babylon.⁶⁶

2. The chronicle ABC 2 describes the political and military events that happened the year prior to Nabopolassar's accession year and his accession year itself.⁶⁷ Since the chronicle narrates the events in chronological order, the report that Nabopolassar came to fight with Sîn-šarru-iškun's garrison over Babylon must have happened before the month of Ulûlu (VI).⁶⁸ Therefore, the month at the beginning of the text can be reconstructed as the month Abu (V) at the latest. This would mean that Babylon was under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun until some point before the month of Ulûlu (VI). At least before the 12th day of the month of Tašrîtu (VII), Babylon was under the control of Nabopolassar, but he lost it shortly thereafter. In that same month, Assyrian troops went down, causing Nabopolassar to retreat as far south as Uruk. It is interesting that a date of *arki* Kandalānu occurs in a text dated to Araḥsamnu (VIII),⁶⁹ undoubtedly as result of this power vacuum.⁷⁰

Table 4 relays the information discussed above, with respect to what can be determined about the transfer of power in Babylon in 627 BC. During the first month, Babylon was under the control of Kandalānu, while in the second to fifth months, control of the city was assumed by Sîn-šarru-iškun, then by Nabopolassar, who controlled it until the seventh or eighth month of that same year.

Table 4: Babylon under the control of different rulers in 627 BC (Months I–VIII)

Month	Kandalānu	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Nabopolassar
I	x	(x)	
II–V	x	(x)	
		x	
			x
VI			x
VII–VIII			x
	x (<i>arki</i>)		

⁶⁶ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 5; Published by Ellis 1984: No. 24.

⁶⁷ For a detailed discussion, see section 3.4.2.

⁶⁸ If it happened in the month of Ulûlu, the author would have omitted the month in the following date (the 12th day of Ulûlu), only keeping the day.

⁶⁹ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 160.

⁷⁰ Da Riva 2001: 47, n. 38.

Since, during the month of Ulūlu (VI) and probably from the month of Abu (V), Babylon was under the control of Nabopolassar, until the month of Tašritu (VII), it is less likely that Sîn-šumu-lišir had influence in Babylon during this period. Therefore, the dating that the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir is 627 BC is not much likely.

3.4 Harmonisation with Other Evidence

3.4.1 The Chronicle ABC 16

The chronicle ABC 16 records that Nabopolassar ascended the throne of Babylon after Kandalānu died.

The chronicle ABC 16, lines 24–27:⁷¹

- 24 EGIR ^mkan-da-la-nu ina MU.SAG ^dNÀ-IBILA-URÌ
 25 saḥ-ma-šá-a-ti ina ^{kur}[aš]-šur u ^{kur}URÌ^{ki} GAR.ME-ma
 26 nu-kúr-tú GAR-at šal-tú sad-rat
 27 ^dNÀ¹ NU GIN-ku ^dEN NU È-[a]

After Kandalānu, in the accession year of Nabopolassar, there were uprisings in Assyria and Babylonia. There were hostilities (and) warfare continued. Nabû did not come, Bêl did not come out.

This text makes it clear that the accession year of Nabopolassar was the year *arki* Kandalānu, “after Kandalānu.” As mentioned above, this term was also used in the date formulae of Kandalānu’s Year 21 and 22 after his death. This year *arki* Kandalānu should not be identified with Kandalānu’s Year 21, since it is more likely that the scribe used the term “the twenty-first year of Kandalānu” to name the year (Kandalānu was alive in the first half of the year). Therefore, this year *arki* Kandalānu should be Year 22 of *arki* Kandalānu, which is 626 BC. This fits with the chronology that has been determined above—Kandalānu died in 627 BC and Nabopolassar acceded the Babylonian throne in 626 BC.

⁷¹ Transliteration and translation are based on Grayson 1975a: 131–132 with modifications from the author. Also see Glassner 2004: 215.

3.4.2 The Chronicle ABC 2

The chronicle ABC 2 mentions the fact that for a year there was no king in Babylonia:

The chronicle ABC 2, lines 1–17:⁷²

- 1 [ina^{iti} . . .^{md}NÀ-IBILA-URÌ ÉRIN.MEŠ] ana TIN.TIR^{ki} ki-i iš-pu-ru ina GE₆
- 2 [ina ŠÀ URU KU₄.MEŠ] ù? kal u₄-mu šal-tú ina ŠÀ URU DÙ.MEŠ
- 3 [BAD₅.BAD₅ GAR.MEŠ^{lu} šu-lu]-tu šá^{md}30-LUGAL-GAR-un ana^{kur} aš-šur ZÁĤ.ME
- 4 [. . .] [ŠÀ? URU ip-ta-qid ina^{iti}KIN U₄ 12-KÁM ÉRIN^{kur} aš-šur
- 5 [it-tar-du-nu]^{uru} šá-az-na-ku KU₄.MEŠ IZI ana É.KUR ŠUB.ME
- 6 [NÍG.GA È.ME] ù ina^{iti}DU₆ DINGIR.ME šá KIŠ^{ki} ana TIN.TIR^{ki}
- 7 [ina U₄ . . . -KÁM ÉRIN].^{MEŠ}^{kur} aš-šur ana NIBRU^{ki} GIN.ME-nim-ma^{md}NÀ-IBILA-URÌ
ina IGI-šú-nu BALA-ma
- 8 [ÉRIN.MEŠ^{kur} aš]-^{uru} šur¹ u NIBRU^{ki}.ME EN ŠÀ UNU^{ki} EGIR-šú it-tal-ku
- 9 ina UNU^{ki} šal-tú ana ŠÀ^{md}NÀ-EDURU-URÌ DÙ.MEŠ-ma ina IGI^{md}NÀ-EDURU-URÌ
BALA.MEŠ
- 10 ina^{iti}GU₄ ÉRIN^{kur} aš-šur ana^{kur}URI^{ki} it-tar-du-nu ina^{iti}DU₆ U₄ 12-KÁM ÉRIN^{kur} aš-šur
- 11 ana UGU TIN.TIR^{ki} ki-i il-lik-ú-nu ina U₄.BI^{hi}TIN.TIR^{ki}.ME
- 12 TA TIN.TIR^{ki} ki-i ú-šu-ú šal-tú ana ŠÀ ÉRIN^{kur} aš-šur DÙ.MEŠ-ma
- 13 BAD₅.BAD₅ ÉRIN^{kur} aš-šur ma-a-diš GAR.MEŠ hu-bu-ut-su-nu iḫ-tab-tu
- 14 1-et MU.AN.NA LUGAL ina KUR NU GÁL^{iti}APIN U₄ 26-KÁM^{md}NÀ-IBILA-URÌ
- 15 ina TIN.TIR^{ki} ina AŠ.TE DÚR-ab SAG LUGAL-tú šá^{md}NÀ-IBILA-URÌ ina^{iti}ŠE
- 16 DINGIR.ME šá^{kur} šu-šá-an šá^{kur} aš-šur i-bu-ku-nim-ma ina UNU^{ki} ú-še-ši-bu
- 17 DINGIR.ME-šú-nu^{md}NÀ-EDURU-URÌ ana^{uru} šu-šá-an ul-taḫ-ḫi-si

[In the month of . . . , when Nabopolassar] had sent [troops] to Babylon, [they entered the city] at night and did battle within the city all day. [They inflicted a defeat. The garrison of Sîn-šarru-iškun fled to Assyria. He appointed [. . .]n the city. In the month of Ulūlu (VI), the 12th day, the army of Assyria [went down.] They entered into Šaznaku and set fire to the temple, [carrying out the properties.] And in the month of Tašritu (VII), the gods of Kish went to Babylon. [The . . . th day, the troo]ps of Assyria reached Nippur and Nabopolassar retreated in front of them. [The army of Assy]ria and the Nip-purians pursued him to Uruk. They did a battle with Nabopolassar in Uruk and retreated before Nabopolassar. In the month of Ayyaru (II), the army of Assyria went down to Babylonia. In the month of Tašritu (VII), the 12th day, when the army of Assyria reached Babylon, on that day, the Babylonians came out of Babylon and did battles with the army of Assyria. They inflicted a major defeat on the army of Assyria and took captives. For one year, there was no king in the land. In the month of Arašsamnu (VIII), the 26th day, Nabopolassar ascended the throne in Babylon. In the accession year of

⁷² Transliteration and translation are based on Grayson 1975a: 87–90 with modifications from the author. Also see Glassner 2004: 217.

Nabopolassar, in the month of Addaru (XII), Nabopolassar returned to Susa their gods which the Assyrians had carried off and settled in Uruk.

The above text mentions the accession of Nabopolassar, before which it is said that: “for one year, there was no king in the land.”⁷³ This can be understood as one year having passed between the death of Kandalānu and the accession of Nabopolassar. This interpretation is supported by the text itself, which records the political and military events from at least the month of Ulūlu (VI) of the year prior to Nabopolassar’s accession year (627 BC) until the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII) of Nabopolassar’s accession year (626 BC), roughly a one-year period without the mention of any king.⁷⁴ As discussed above, Kandalānu died between the third and eighth month of his Year 21. This event may have been recorded in the broken part of the text, of which the date is before or in the sixth month.

73 Concerning the interpretation of 1-*et* MU.AN.NA LUGAL *ina* KUR NU GÁL, Brinkman proposes that this phrase is probably only a date formula, which can be translated as “the first year when there was no king in the land,” see Brinkman 1984: 110, n. 550. However, this interpretation has a difficulty that there should be a line ruling before a date formula, cf. MU 8-KÁM LUGAL *ina* TIN. TIR^{ki} NU TUK, “the eighth year when there was no king in Babylon,” in the chronicle ABC 1, col. III, line 28 (Grayson 1975a: 81; Glassner 2004: 199). Furthermore, the writing whereby the number precedes the sign MU.(AN.NA) is not normal in date formulae. The interpretation “for one year, there was no king in the land” makes more sense, cf. [3+]1 MU LUGAL *ina* KUR NU TUK, “for 4 years there was no king in the land,” line 3 in “The Hellenistic Royal Chronicle” (Glassner 2004: 134). This interpretation supports the suggestion about the time span this section refers to, that the whole section refers to two years, 627 BC and 626 BC (see the discussion in the next footnote). I accept the interpretation of Zawadzki (1988: 52–54): the events described from the beginning to line 9, which follow the order of months (x, VI, VII), happened in 627 BC; the next event, that the Assyrian army went down to Babylonia in the month of Ayyaru (II), happened in the next year 626 BC; before narrating the accession of Nabopolassar, the chronicler inserted a comment that for one year, there was no king in the land; after this comment, the text continued with the remaining events happened in 626 BC. As for the absence of the line and year date to separate the two years, Zawadzki (1988: 53) notes that the line and the year date MU x-KÁM, “year X” (of a given king), used to separate not calendar years, but successive years in the reign of a given king, cannot be applied here, because there was no king in the land at that point; “the chronicler quite deliberately omitted the ruling line and did not mark (other than by using month dates) the passage to the account of the next year, even though he recorded the events of those two years chronologically.”

74 Different opinions regarding the timespan this section refers to and their difficulties are: (1) the whole section refers only to 626 BC, which results in a disorder of the sequence of months; (2) the whole section refers to two years, 627 BC and 626 BC, which results in no line ruling or date formula to separate the two years; (3) the whole section refers to three years, 628 BC, 627 BC and 626 BC, which encounters the same difficulty as the second one. For more discussion, see Brinkman 1984: 109, n. 546; Zawadzki 1988: 48–54 and Frame 1992: 211.

3.4.3 Fragment KAV 182 of the Synchronistic King List

Fragment KAV 182 of the Synchronistic King List records the names of the kings of Babylonia and their *ummânu*s on one side and the contemporary kings of Assyria and their *ummânu*s on the other side.⁷⁵ With regard to the transitional period, the Babylonian side is quite broken, while the corresponding Assyrian side is well preserved.

The reconstruction of the names of the kings of Babylonia in lines 5–7 has been a matter of debate for a long time. Borger states that the candidate for a Babylonian contemporary is either Kandalānu or Nabopolassar when Aššur-etel-ilāni was the Assyrian king in line 7.⁷⁶ In 1991, Na’aman reconstructed the passage as follows:⁷⁷

5	[Šamaš-šumu-ukīn]	Ashurbanipal	Ištar-šumu-ēreš
6	[Kandalānu]	DITTO	DITTO
7	[DITTO]	Aššur-etel-ilāni	

Na’aman’s reading has also been accepted by Zawadzki.⁷⁸ It would mean that Aššur-etel-ilāni acceded to the Assyrian throne when Kandalānu was still alive, which fits well with the chronological framework proposed above.

3.5 Conclusion

Based on the date formulae in everyday documents from various cities, there are three synchronisms between Ashurbanipal, Kandalānu, Aššur-etel-ilāni, Sîn-šarru-iškun, and Nabopolassar:

Years 3–5 of Nabopolassar	=	Years 5–7 of Sîn-šarru-iškun
Year 38 of Ashurbanipal	=	Year 0 of Aššur-etel-ilāni
Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni	=	Year 1 of Sîn-šarru-iškun

⁷⁵ Grayson 1980–1983: 124–125.

⁷⁶ Borger 1965: 62.

⁷⁷ Na’aman 1991a: 248.

⁷⁸ Zawadzki (1995: 70) discusses the plausibility of this reconstruction. However, he does not agree with Na’aman’s suggestion about the time of the composition. Na’aman proposes that this text was composed because of the death of the two kings Aššur-etel-ilāni and Kandalānu in a same year. However, as Zawadzki (1995: 69) notes, new entries of synchronistic king lists were made shortly after a new king was installed. Since Aššur-etel-ilāni was the new Assyrian king in the last entry of the text, this list was written during his reign, not after the death of Aššur-etel-ilāni.

Combining with the dating of the accession year of Sîn-šumu-līšir, they form the following framework of chronology (Table 5):⁷⁹

Table 5: Proposed chronology based on the date formulae (631–620 BC).

Year (BC)	Ashurbanipal	Kandalānu	Aššur-etel-ilāni	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Sîn-šumu-līšir	Nabopolassar
631	38	17	0			
630		18	1			
629		19	2			
628		20	3	0		
627		21 (<i>arki</i>)	4	1		
626		22 <i>arki</i>		2	0	0
625				3		1
624				4		2
623				5		3
622				6		4
621				7		5
620				8		6

It is important to note that my chronology posits an isolated incident in the history of Neo-Assyrian political struggles, in that the deposed king was not immediately executed. Aššur-etel-ilāni survived Sîn-šarru-iškun's usurpation and fled to Nippur,⁸⁰ continuing to wield important military and political power in Babylonia. Although this would be unprecedented, it remains a plausible scenario.⁸¹ The dispersion of Sîn-šarru-iškun's army to various Babylonian cities in his accession year (628 BC) may have prevented him from totally eliminating the force of Aššur-etel-ilāni after he had dethroned him.⁸² In the following year (627 BC), Nabopolassar revolted in southern Babylonia, further complicating the

⁷⁹ A similar table can be found in Beaulieu 1997a: 387.

⁸⁰ However, Nippur would be a reasonable place of refuge for Aššur-etel-ilāni, since it had been controlled by the Assyrians since the reign of Esarhaddon (Cole 1996b: 74, n. 34). It is likely that an Assyrian garrison was stationed in Nippur during the reign of Ashurbanipal (Cole 1996b: 79), which Aššur-etel-ilāni could have potentially used as part of his army.

⁸¹ The co-existence of the rule of Sîn-šarru-iškun and Aššur-etel-ilāni is arguably supported by the text TMH II/III 35, which attests to the equation of the third year of Aššur-etel-ilāni and the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun, and another text from Nippur dated to the fourth year of Aššur-etel-ilāni.

⁸² In order to prevent other Babylonian cities from taking advantage of the succession war in Assyria to rebel or joining the exiled king after he fled to Babylonia, Sîn-šarru-iškun sent troops to certain cities during his accession year (628 BC), for example, Babylon and Uruk.

political situation. Faced with the rapid progress made by Nabopolassar, Sîn-šarru-iškun was forced to ally with the army of Nippur in 627 BC, potentially led by Aššur-etel-ilāni, in order to deter Nabopolassar. Aššur-etel-ilāni's chief eunuch Sîn-šumu-lišir eventually replaced him in Nippur, joining the competition over control of Babylonia.

The chronology reconstructed above is mainly built on the synchronisms based on the dates in everyday documents. Since these documents were less affected by political ideologies than other materials, such as royal inscriptions and king lists, the proposed chronology can be more trusted. However, the discovery and publication of the cuneiform texts are necessarily arbitrary, which determines the haphazard nature of the evidence at the current stage. Therefore, the synchronisms reconstructed above can only be confirmed if more everyday documents from this transitional period are published in the future.

4 The Nabopolassar Revolt (627–620 BC)

After the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukin (652–648 BC), Assyria enjoyed a stable dominance over Babylonia for about 20 years. Following the death of Ashurbanipal, political turmoil began to prevail in both Assyria and Babylonia. In 627 BC, Nabopolassar took this opportunity to rise to power, securing the independence of Babylonia by 620 BC.¹

The main source for this period is the chronicle ABC 2, complemented by royal inscriptions, archival documents, including letters sent to Sîn-šarru-iškun from Babylonia, and the late Babylonian historical-literary texts *Declaring War* and *The Nabopolassar Epic*.² These sources are of different types and have various biases: the chronicles, royal inscriptions, and the historical-literary texts were composed by scribes in temples and palaces, inevitably being influenced by political ideologies; the archival documents are more historically reliable, because they are based on the events occurring in reality. The chronicle ABC 2 provides the backbone of the reconstruction, although the information from it is selective and scattered. It is unfortunate that the chronicle breaks off after the third year of Nabopolassar (623 BC) and only resumes in his tenth year (616 BC).

In the Babylonian royal inscriptions, the Nabopolassar Revolt was described as vengeance against the Assyrians—Assyria was Babylonia's arch enemy and Nabopolassar was chosen by the gods to liberate Babylonia from the oppression of the Assyrians. This idea was passed down to the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods and was adapted in its historical-literary texts. For example, in *Declaring War*, the Assyrians were accused of filling Babylonia with disorder and darkness and Nabopolassar was chosen by the gods to avenge Babylonia. Of course, the actual situation was not this simple. The idea that Assyria was an enemy did not prevail throughout Babylonia: not all the Babylonians gave their undivided support to Nabopolassar. According to letters written by Assyrians and pro-Assyrian officials from Babylonia to Sîn-šarru-iškun, the Babylonian gods were siding with Assyria and Assyria was understood to be a reliable master. Some Babylonian cities developed strong loyalties to Assyria, the typical example being Uruk in southern Babylonia. As a result of the presence of a pro-Assyrian faction in Uruk, Nabopolassar was not able to hold total control of Uruk until his sixth year (620 BC).

¹ For details of the political history of Babylonia during 814–627 BC, see Brinkman 1984 and Frame 1992. For the main historical figures and events, see Beaulieu 2018: 183–218 and Dalley 2021: 170–213.

² Grayson 1975b: 78–86; Da Riva 2017a: 81–88.

Especially useful for the reconstruction of the history of this period are the date formulae of archival documents, which provide information about which ruler was controlling the city in each time period and the degree of stability of his control.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of information regarding the role of the Chaldeans and Arameans in the revolt.³ Despite later literary tradition linking Nabopolassar to the Sealand, there is no information about that area during the time of the revolt.⁴ Although the chronicle ABC 2 mentions Elam in the first year of Nabopolassar, indicating an alliance between Nabopolassar and Elam, there is no other information about the involvement of Elam in this revolt.

4.1 Babylonia before the Nabopolassar Revolt

4.1.1 Social and Political Instability

In the early first millennium, Babylonia experienced extreme social and political instability. This was caused by the influx of tribal populations, as well as Assyrian involvement in Babylonia.

Tribal Populations

At the end of the second millennium, tribal groups began to migrate into Mesopotamia. The two main tribal groups that settled in Babylonia were the Arameans and the Chaldeans.⁵ Each of these groups shared a common identity and territory and enjoyed considerable autonomy from the king of Babylon.⁶ They were distributed throughout the countryside of Babylonia, and their settlements were generally termed *huṣṣētu*, “reed huts,” *bītātu*, “houses,” *kaprīnu*, “villages,” and *bīr-*

3 Interestingly, in Nabopolassar’s royal inscriptions, there is no mention of Chaldeans or Arameans, which is surprising, firstly because Nabopolassar was originated from the South, and secondly because the Chaldean and Aramean populations were numerous and wielded considerable political power.

4 The Sealand was included in the administrative realm of Uruk at the end of the seventh century BC (Da Riva 2017a: 78).

5 Arameans began to emigrate to Mesopotamia at the end of the twelfth century BC, while the Chaldeans followed suit soon after. For the theories about the migration routes of the Arameans throughout Mesopotamia, see Fales 2011: 91–92.

6 Brinkman 1968: 260–285; Brinkman 1984: 12–15; and Frame 1992: 36–48.

ātu, “countryside.”⁷ In the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, rural villages and townships, as well as walled cities, are attested.⁸

The Arameans occupied the area near Sippar from the Tigris riverbank to the Euphrates and the southeastern plain between the Tigris and Elam, adopting a pastoral and semi-nomadic lifestyle. Many of them conducted seasonal transhumance as far as Syria. They were divided into at least forty tribes, and shared a less centralised leadership. Within the tribe, they were divided into clan units, led by a *nasīku* (or *nassīku*), “sheikh.” The most prominent Aramean tribes were the Puqūdu and Gambūlu. Puqūdu was located in the marshes of the river Uqnū on the border of Elam (for the territories of the tribes, see Figure 3). Gambūlu, about which there is very little information, was located nearby.⁹ Only three texts from the late seventh and sixth centuries BC mention this tribe: PTS 2102, Nebuchadnezzar II’s prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]), and NCBT 165. The Babylonian impression of the Arameans was that of a particularly destructive force. The chronicle ABC 24 (rev., lines 11–12) records that Arameans took away the land belonging to the citizens of Borsippa and Babylon before the reign of Eriša-Marduk.¹⁰ In an inscription of Sargon II (722–705 BC), the Hamarānu tribe is said to have plundered the caravans belonging to Babylonian citizens near Sippar.¹¹ One letter written by a *šandabakku* of Nippur during the eighth century BC mentions that the tribe Ubūlu robbed Urukian caravans travelling between Uruk and Nippur. Another letter mentions that the chief of this tribe had a dispute over land with cultivators from Nippur. On the other hand, the Arameans adopted the Babylonian pantheon to some degree. This is confirmed by a letter from the same archive of the *šandabakku* of Nippur mentioning that the entire Puqūdu tribe would be participating in a certain festival held in Nippur in the month of Ulūlu (VI).¹²

The Chaldeans largely assimilated to Babylonian culture and were more united than the Arameans. They were divided into five tribes: Bīt-Dakkūri, Bīt-Amukāni, Bīt-Yakīn, Bīt-Šilāni, and Bīt-Ša’alli. The leaders of these tribes were called *rāšu*, “chieftain.” Bīt-Dakkūri was located in the area along the river from

7 Richardson 2012: 27.

8 For example, Sennacherib boasted to have conquered 88 walled cities and 820 small townships of the Chaldean tribes during his first campaign into Babylonia (703 BC), see Fales 2011: 96.

9 Frame 1992: 45.

10 The date of the reign of Eriša-Marduk is unknown. He ruled for at least nine years and his reign presumably ended shortly before 760 BC (Brinkman 1968: 221–224). For the passage in the chronicle ABC 24, see Grayson 1975a: 182–183; Glassner 2004: 287.

11 RINAP 2 Sargon II 001, lines 379–382.

12 For these letters from the archive of the *šandabakku* of Nippur, see Cole 1996a: Nos. 32, 98, and 27.

Borsippa to that of Marad. Bīt-Amukāni was located basically between Uruk and Nippur. Bīt-Yakīn was located in the most southern part of the alluvial plain. These tribes were settled at least partially. It is attested that some of the tribal populations lived in Babylonian cities. Almost all the individuals who can be identified as Chaldeans had Babylonian names. They were so acculturated that the word “Chaldean” became a synonym of “Babylonian” in the biblical texts and classical literature.¹³ They assumed the Babylonian national identity to some degree, acknowledging their status as subjects of the Babylonian king on occasion. This is indicated by the presence of a leader of Bīt-Amukāni in Babylon during the Akītu festival at the beginning of the second year of Marduk-zākīr-šumi I (c. 851–824 BC).¹⁴ This subjection seems to have been dissolved during the revolt of Marduk-bēl-usāti, the brother of Marduk-zākīr-šumi I. This is deduced from the fact that after Shalmaneser III (859–824 BC) helped to suppress the revolt, he campaigned in the land of Chaldea. The leaders of these tribes were referred to as kings by Shalmaneser III in his royal inscriptions (e.g., RIMA 3 Shalmaneser III A.0.102.59, line 47). The Assyrian narrative to justify Assyrian domination of the Chaldeans was based on their assimilation to Babylonian culture: Shalmaneser III claimed that he was the agent of Marduk and, therefore, that the Chaldeans’ adoption of the Babylonian pantheon made them his subjects.¹⁵ The following inscription of Shalmaneser III, describing the defeat of the Bīt-Dakkūri tribe, can serve as an expression of this ideology:

RIMA 3 Shalmaneser III A.0.102.5, col. VI, line 7:¹⁶

7 . . . ^ma-dī-nu A ^mda-ku-ri pūl-ḫi me-lam-me šá ^dAMAR.UTU EN GAL-e is-ḫu-pu-šú-ma ĜĪR.II.
MEŠ-a DAB . . .

. . . The fearful splendour of Marduk, the great lord, overwhelmed Adinu, the descendant of (Bīt-)Dakkūri and he submitted to me . . .

This narrative was continued by the following Assyrian kings during the eighth and seventh centuries.¹⁷

The Arameans and Chaldeans enjoyed enormous economic and political power after their arrival in Babylonia. The territories they occupied comprised various agricultural resources, allowing them to produce large amounts of barley

¹³ Frame 1997; Beaulieu 2006: 194–197.

¹⁴ Nielsen 2021: 110. On the Akītu festival, see Zgoll 2006; Debourse 2022.

¹⁵ Nielsen 2021: 112.

¹⁶ The transliteration and translation are based on RIMA 3 Shalmaneser III A.0.102.5 with modifications from the author.

¹⁷ For example, in the inscriptions of Sargon II, Marduk was evoked as the god who supported and helped the king to defeat the Chaldeans (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 001, lines 268–273).



Figure 3: The locations of the tribal populations in Babylonia.¹⁸

and dates. Apart from agriculture and herding, tribal populations were actively engaged in long-distance trade. Some Aramean tribes continued to move between Babylonia and the Ḥabur region, energising the trade routes between Babylonia and the West. Aramean tribes in the Diyala region at the foot of Zagros also facilitated trade from Elam.¹⁹ The Sealand became the main trading centre in the South. Wood, purple fabrics, and *argamannu*-fabrics were included in the tributes from Bīt-Yakīn to the Assyrians. The Eanna temple acquired gold from the Sealand.²⁰ Furthermore, along with the arrivals of the Arabian nomads in Babylonia, Chaldean tribes established trade relations with the Arabs. Arabian products were included in the tributes to Assyria from various Chaldean tribes. For exam-

¹⁸ All maps were produced by the author, heavily modified from Laursen and Steinkeller 2017: Fig. 1.

¹⁹ Graslin-Thomé 2009: 317–319.

²⁰ Kleber 2008: 326–328; Jursa 2010a: 93–94.

ple, ebony was included in the tributes from Bīt-Amukāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, and Bīt-Yakīn.²¹

Because of their wealth and their (originally) nomadic lifestyle, the tribes were equipped with significant military capacity. It is known that Arameans and other tribal populations were widely employed in the Assyrian military service throughout the Empire, especially the Gurraeans and the Itu'aeans.²² For example, more than half of the standing army of the province of Zamua were of tribal background: 360 Gurraeans as spearmen and 440 Itu'eans as archers.²³ It is likely that the same applied to the Babylonian states during the early first millennium, although there is lack of evidence in this respect.²⁴ The Sealand and the tribe of Puqūdu probably made a significant part of the military force of the Nabopolassar Revolt and the imperial expansion of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.²⁵ The employment of tribal populations in the military service continued to the Persian period. A letter from Babylon during the reign of Darius I (522–486 BC) attests to the fact that troops from Bīt-Dakkūri were stationed in Babylon.²⁶

The advantages in economy and military discussed above resulted in the political power of the tribes in Babylonia. From the first half of the eighth century to the early part of the seventh century BC (starting in the reign of Adad-nārārī III [810–783 BC]), there were six kings of Babylon of Chaldean origin: Marduk-apla-ušur,²⁷ Erība-Marduk, and Nabû-šuma-iškun (760?–748 BC), (Nabû)-mukīn-zēri (732–729 BC), Marduk-apla-iddina II (722?–710 and 703 BC), and Mušezib-Marduk (693–689 BC).²⁸ The tribes were also able to form anti-Assyrian alliance with Arabs²⁹ and Elamites.³⁰ Marduk-apla-iddina II also sought an anti-Assyrian alliance with Hezekiah of Judah (2 Kgs 20:12).

21 Graslin-Thomé 2009: 317–319.

22 Luukko 2019.

23 SAA 5, 215. For the analysis and discussion of the text, see Postgate 2000 and MacGinnis and Matney 2009: 10.

24 For a detailed treatment of the Neo-Babylonian army, see Gombert 2018.

25 According to the Bible, Nebuchadnezzar II came to besiege Jerusalem with bands of Chaldeans and Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites (2 Kings 24:1–2).

26 Abraham 2004: No. 88.

27 Very little is known about this king (Brinkman 1968: 215).

28 Brinkman 1968: 192–220.

29 For example, the aid of brother of Iati'e, queen of the Arabs to the Chaldeans against Sennacherib in 703 BC, see Eph'al 1974. On Arabian queens, see Bennett 2024.

30 For example, Elamite aid to Marduk-apla-iddina, see Brinkman 1965.

Assyrian Involvement in Babylonia

Along with the arrival and settlement of tribal groups in Babylonia, the Assyrians increased their involvement in Babylonia. During the early period of the dynasty of E,³¹ especially during the reign of Nabû-apla-iddina (c. 886–853 BC), Babylonia experienced a political and economic revival. The reign of Marduk-zākir-šumi I, the seventh king of the dynasty, marked the turning point of the dynasty.³² During the revolt of his brother, Marduk-bēl-usāti, the Babylonian king had to seek help from the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. After Shalmaneser III helped to suppress the revolt, he continued to campaign in the land of Chaldea, rendering the Chaldean tribes vassals of Assyria.³³ It is likely that Marduk-zākir-šumi I came to the aid of the successor of Shalmaneser III, Šamši-Adad V (823–811 BC), to suppress a widespread revolt in Assyria during the period 827–822 BC. After the revolt, the two rulers made a treaty in which the Assyrian king was ranked lower than his Babylonian counterpart.

However, the political positions of Babylonia and Assyria soon changed. The Assyrian king Šamši-Adad V (823–811 BC) invaded Babylonia in 814–813 BC and carried off the successor of Marduk-zākir-šumi I, Marduk-balāssu-iqbi,³⁴ to Assyria.³⁵ From this point on, Assyria increased its intervention in Babylonia. Sometimes, the Assyrian king directly claimed the Babylonian royal title for himself. The first king to do so is Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC), who removed Nabû-mukīn-zēri, a Chaldean, from the Babylonian throne in 729 BC.³⁶ After him, there were several other kings employing the same practice, such as Shalmaneser V (727–722 BC), Sargon II (722–705 BC), and Esarhaddon (681–669 BC).³⁷ Members of the Assyrian royal family were installed on the Babylonian throne as well, for example, Sennacherib's son Aššur-nādin-šumi (700–694 BC) and Ashurbanipal's brother Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (668–648 BC). After the suppression of the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (652–648 BC), Ashurbanipal installed a puppet king Kandalānu on the Babylonian throne, with himself being the *de facto* ruler.³⁸

31 E is probably an alternate designation for Babylon (Brinkman 1968: 166–168).

32 For the reigns of Nabû-apla-iddina and Marduk-zākir-šumi I, see Brinkman 1968: 182–205.

33 RIMA 3 Shalmaneser III A.0.102.5, col. V, lines 3–col. VI, line 7.

34 The reign of Marduk-balāssu-iqbi is uncertain. His reign ended in c. 813 BC (Brinkman 1987–1990: 376).

35 Brinkman 1968: 205–210.

36 For the military and diplomatic measures, see Brinkman 1984: 42–43.

37 Sennacherib (705–681 BC) did not claim the title of the king of Babylon. It is historically significant that Sennacherib captured Babylon in 689 BC. For Sennacherib's descriptions of the event and the Babylonian reaction, see Zaia 2015; Levavi 2021a. For the relationship between Assyria and Babylonia during the reign of Sennacherib, see Brinkman 1984: 54–67; Frame 1992: 52–70; Frahm 2017a.

38 For the reign of Kandalānu, see Brinkman 1984: 105–112; Frame 1992: 191–213.

During this period, control of the Babylonian throne became unstable, as power frequently changed hands. Between 814 and 627 BC, there is only one recorded case of a son inheriting the throne from his father.³⁹ Sometimes, the throne was even left vacant. The chronicle ABC 24 (rev., line 8) records a period in which “there was no king in the country,”⁴⁰ while an administrative document is dated to “the fourth year when there was no king in the land.”⁴¹ Furthermore, the authority of the Babylonian monarch was significantly limited and, every so often, cities and tribal groups gained significant independence from the Babylonian king.

Elite Response to Social Instability

Conflicts with the newly arrived tribal groups, frequent transfer of the Babylonian throne, and violent resistance against the Assyrians caused an extremely unstable social environment. The traditional Babylonian elites, mainly comprised of temple administrators and other urban elite groups, suffered significant downward social mobility. Property loss of the elites was extremely common, perhaps even inevitable during times of war. Naturally, soldiers on campaign relied on plunder, as there were no organised supply chains. Looting for booty was also a common phenomenon. A letter (SAA 18, 181 [lines 7–8]) sent to Ashurbanipal from Babylonia refers to the royal edict about the disposal of confiscated booty from Babylonia: “Nobody may administer booty from the land of Akkad without my permission.” Such behaviour caused additional destruction to buildings, fields, and orchards, beyond the damage that resulted from intense battles.

Apart from this, relocation of populations and forced selling of land under difficult circumstances deprived the urban elites of their land, in whole or in part. After Babylon was destroyed by Sennacherib in 689 BC, the land belonging to the citizens of Babylon fell into the hands of the neighbouring tribes. Esarhaddon’s royal inscriptions claim that, after rebuilding the city of Babylon, the king returned to the citizens of Babylon and Borsippa the fields that had been taken away by the Chaldeans of Bīt-Dakkūri.⁴² During the siege of Babylon in the Šamaš-šumu-ukīn revolt, there was an increase in land sales conducted in Babylon in order to pay for food. One text (YBC 11404) from Babylon, dated to 649 BC, shows that a woman named Eṭirtu had to sell her arable land (probably her dowry) to feed her family (herself and her son). A certain Marduk-šāpik-zēri, de-

³⁹ Brinkman 1979: 228. The single case is the succession of Nabû-nādin-zēri (733–732 BC) to the throne of his father, Nabonassar (747–733 BC).

⁴⁰ Grayson 1975a: 182; Glassner 2004: 287.

⁴¹ Brinkman 1968: 213, n. 1328.

⁴² RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 001, col. III, lines 62–70.

scendant of Egibi, acquired a large amount of land during this period. One such piece of land was located in Dilbat, which he purchased from a member of the Basia family, who had migrated to Babylon for refuge.⁴³ Two sales of land located in Kish dated to 650 and 649 BC were made in Babylon, presumably by citizens of Kish who took refuge in Babylon.⁴⁴

Moreover, local elites' property was sometimes taken away by Assyrian officials who were appointed to Babylonia. After the suppression of the Šamaš-šumukin revolt, Ashurbanipal appointed governors and other officials to Babylonia.⁴⁵ The aforementioned letter (SAA 18, 181) written by a Babylonian named Nabû-balāssu-iqbi⁴⁶ to the Assyrian king records a complaint about the newly appointed mayor, Šarru-lū-dari,⁴⁷ who unjustly took away his land and retainers.

The downward social mobility suffered by the urban elites motivated them to adopt family names that symbolised the prestige of their own families.⁴⁸ Often, these were the names of influential ancestors or their hereditary institutional positions.⁴⁹

43 Nielsen 2015: 101.

44 OECT 10, 6 and 7.

45 Frame 1992: 191.

46 PNA 2/II 807 (Nabû-balāssu-iqbi 14).

47 The name is a typical one for royal officials since it contains the element *šarru* (Jursa 2015b: 601). Therefore, it is likely that he was sent by Ashurbanipal from Assyria.

48 The elite adoption of family names can be traced back to the Kassite period and became more established and standardised during the eighth and seventh centuries BC. A family name would be replaced in certain situations to gain more recognition, avoid confusion with another similar family name, or avoid a decline in influence caused by a similar name that was less prestigious. For instance, the descendants of Nabû-apla-iddina changed their family name from Aqar-Nabû to Abunaya. This name change was caused by the recovery of their paternal property, named as Bit-Abunaya on the *kudurru* of that property (King 1912: No. 28; see more discussion, see Nielsen 2011: 250). Certain members of the Ṭābiḥu family, named after the prebend of the family—the temple butcher—changed their name to Êṭiru. This is because the emergence of the family name Ṭābiḥ-kāri, “butcher of the market,” during the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods caused a decline in the prestige of the butchering profession (which was previously exclusive to the temple). For this reason, and to avoid unnecessary confusion, the Ṭābiḥu family name was abandoned gradually (Wunsch 2014).

49 Nielsen 2011: 274–276 discusses the motivation behind the adoption of an occupational family name. He points out that most families were not holding the profession indicated by the family name. This can be explained by two scenarios: (1) the family lost the corresponding position at some point; (2) the family was a marginal lineage of the kin group, which was not centred enough to share the position. For instances where the family held the corresponding occupation or position, see Wunsch 2014: 753, n. 6. It was common to use occupations or positions as patronymic names in the Kassite period (Brinkman 2006). Probably, this is how a name of a profession or position became a family name. Around half of the occupational patronyms attested in Kassite

The elite adoption of family names prevailed in northern Babylonian cities but was considerably less common in central and southern Babylonia during the eighth and seventh centuries BC.⁵⁰ This is consistent with the adoption of family names for the *bīt abi* in land sale contracts in different regions. In these documents, there is a clause to prevent people with kin-based ties from claiming the land. Those people were defined as *kimtu*, *nisūtu*, and *salātu* of the house of the seller or the house of the father of the seller, namely, the *bīt abi*. During the eighth and seventh centuries BC, while the *bīt abi* was given the family name overwhelmingly at Babylon, Borsippa, Dilbat, and Kish, it was still identified according to the father's name of the seller in Nippur, Ur and Uruk.⁵¹ The contrast between different regions with respect to the adoption of family names shows that the elites in the northern cities suffered more from downward social mobility than those in central and southern Babylonia during the eighth and seventh centuries BC.⁵²

The elite identity signaled by the family name could help elites of a declining or reduced status in various situations. Because of the widespread loss of land and property among the elites, kings usually introduced land (re-)allocation to the urban dwellers on the basis of their descentance from a prestigious family, in order to acquire more support and revive the economy.⁵³ Presumably, there was competition among the city dwellers to receive these allotments of land. Participation in the local elite network was a key element of candidacy. Possessing a family name that symbolised the prestige and influence of the past may well have contributed to the recognition required to be included in this network. Besides real estate, it was possible for religious elites to lose their prebends during periods of turmoil.⁵⁴ Descent from a prebend holder was used to legitimise recovery of the

texts were later used as family names during the early Neo-Babylonian period (Nielsen 2011: 262, n. 159).

⁵⁰ Nielsen 2011: 217 and 228.

⁵¹ Nielsen 2011: 247–249.

⁵² To the contrary of the northern Babylonians, the Urukian elites seem to have suffered much less loss of land during the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Uruk and Ur were undergoing a revival economically and politically during the eighth and seventh centuries. This is confirmed by the two *ḥansū* allocations made during the reign of Kandalānu in Uruk. The recipients of these allocations may have been the lower stratum of the society, perhaps rural classes (Jursa 2010a: 421–422). The recipients of *ḥansū* allocations bore the responsibility for military service. The fact that the lower stratum of society received land from the government shows that the urban elites in Uruk were not seeking land belonging to the land-for-service sector. In other words, there was no lack of land for the elites. Otherwise, this *ḥansū* land would be desirable even if the land carried responsibility for state service.

⁵³ Still 2019: 75–78.

⁵⁴ For a summary of the prebend system in Babylonia, see Waerzeggers 2021: 24–25.

prebend, since it was seen as a property belonging to the *bīt abi*. For example, in the Sun-god tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina which records the royal grant of the prebend of *šangû* of Šamaš to Nabû-nādin-šumi,⁵⁵ the royal grant of the same position to his ancestor Ekur-šuma-ušabši during the reign of Simbar-šipak is invoked as the reason for the restitution. A similar case is recorded in a tablet from the reign of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, who renewed and expanded a prebend granted by Sennacherib's son, Aššur-nādin-šumi, when he was the king of Babylon.⁵⁶

During times of political instability, certain families may have faced a situation where their political stance opposed that of the local authorities. In this case, they became the target of political persecution and some of them were exiled. Furthermore, when war broke out, it was common for residents of cities within or close to the battlefield to seek refuge in other cities. The archive of Lābāši, son of Nādin, attests to the fact that his family fled Dilbat and moved to Borsippa during the Šamaš-šumu-ukīn revolt. Members of the Basia family in Dilbat also sought refuge in Babylon during this time.⁵⁷ In 689 BC, Sennacherib captured Babylon. Although it seems likely that Sennacherib's account of the total destruction of Babylon is exaggerated, the city and the elites of the city definitely suffered damage. It is probable that some elites were forced to emigrate, who may have been able to return to Babylon after Esarhaddon restored the city and its temple Esagil, which started in 679 BC.⁵⁸

When elites moved from one city to another in the situations mentioned above, they inevitably lost their property and income, either in part or in whole. They were new to the local elite network, and thus they had to make efforts to be accepted and maintain their elite identity. Again, a family name that indicated prestige in another period or city may have facilitated their entry into this network, since it was very difficult for immigrants to integrate into a local community. Lābāši, son of Nādin, chose Borsippa as his city of refuge during the Šamaš-šumu-ukīn revolt because he had already formed ties to the local social network prior to moving.⁵⁹ Local social networks are naturally exclusive, even during periods of peace and economic development. For example, during the reign of Nebu-

55 Slanski 2003: 196–221; Hurowitz 2000: 364–368; Woods 2004.

56 BM 77611+BM 77612+four unnumbered fragments from the 84-2-11 collection (Da Riva and Frahm 1999–2000).

57 For the relevant texts from these archives of Lābāši and the family Basia, see Nielsen 2015.

58 For the date for Esarhaddon to consider rebuilding Babylon, see Novotny 2015. Because the excavated tablets from Babylon are mostly unpublished, it is difficult to have an idea about the amount of texts produced in Babylon between 688 and 679 BC. Furthermore, the Assyrian levels of the site was hardly reached by or exposed to archaeological excavation to any significant extent. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the aftermath of Sennacherib's destruction of the city.

59 Nielsen 2015: 94.

chadnezzar II, because of the economic opportunities provided by the revival of the economy in Sippar, families with small scale wealth in Babylon were driven to Sippar. During the early years of the migration, they were excluded by the Sipparian elite network and therefore had to rely on each other with regard to social and economic affairs. Because of this social unity, which was, in turn, a result of the barrier to integrating into the local network, they were designated as a tax and corvée unit called “the Babylonians.”⁶⁰ This sheds light on the inward-looking nature of local networks.⁶¹ Presumably, this characteristic would only be strengthened during periods of political instability and economic decline.

In conclusion, the adoption of family names in northern Babylonian cities was a response of the local urban elites to the downward social mobility caused by political and social instability. On one hand, recovery of family property and institutional position was based on descent from an ancestor who previously owned them. On the other hand, a family name signaling the former prestige and influence of the family helped the elites to remain or return to the elite social networks of their own cities or enter the networks of other cities to which they had migrated.

4.1.2 Political Divisions in Tribes and Traditional Babylonian Cities

During the early first millennium, Assyrian dominance over Babylonia often encountered resistance led by the Babylonian king, whether he was of tribal origin or native. Even when the Assyrian king installed his own brother on the throne of Babylonia, in the case of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, there was a Babylonian revolt. In the turmoil of war, the political allegiance of the tribal groups varied from year to year and group to group. Occasionally, the Chaldeans and Arameans helped the Babylonians resist Assyrian domination. During the invasion of Šamši-Adad in 814–813 BC, the Chaldeans and Arameans assisted the Babylonian king Marduk-balāssu-iqbi, along with the Elamites and soldiers from Namri in the Zagros.⁶² Assyria was sometimes successful in gaining the loyalty of some tribes. When Tiglath-pileser III tried to remove Nabû-mukīn-zēri of Bīt-Amukāni from the Babylo-

⁶⁰ Waerzeggers 2014: 45–49.

⁶¹ The exclusivity of the local social network is also shown by the Borsippian community. Some prebendary families originated from Babylon, such as families of Bēliya’u, Esagil-mansum, and Eppēš-ilī, were marginalised in the Borsippian community during the early years of migration.

⁶² RIMA 3 Šamši-Adad A.0.103.1, col. IV, lines 37–45.

nian throne, he managed to win over Bīt-Yakīn and Bīt-Dakkūri, as well as some Aramean tribes.⁶³ During the reign of Sargon II, chariotry units comprised of Chaldeans are attested in the Nimrud Horse Lists.⁶⁴ During the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, while most of the Arameans sided with the Babylonian king, political divisions were formed in the Chaldean tribes—some remained loyal to Assyria, while others supported Šamaš-šumu-ukīn.⁶⁵ The Puqūdu and the Sealand were the main forces of rebellion in the South during this revolt.⁶⁶

There were also political divisions among the traditional Babylonians regarding Assyrian dominance. The northern cities of Babylonia held an anti-Assyrian attitude,⁶⁷ while southern cities, especially Uruk, held a pro-Assyrian bias. This division was evident during the revolt of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn: Babylon, Borsippa, and Dilbat supported the revolt, while cities in southern Babylonia, such as Uruk, Ur, Eridu, Kullaba, and Kissik, sided with Assyria.⁶⁸

Northern Babylonian cities suffered from military aggression and political retaliations, since the Assyrians intervened heavily in Babylonia from 814 BC onwards. Babylon was besieged twice: first, in 690–689 BC by Sennacherib and then, in 650–648 BC during the rebellion of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn. The frequent wars with Assyria resulted in devastation in northern Babylonia: cultic centres were destroyed or damaged; cultic performance was interrupted; there was property

63 Brinkman 1984: 42–43; Fales 2011: 97–111. The political divisions among the Chaldean tribes were revealed by a letter written by Zākīr, the leader of Bīt-Ša'alli to Marduk-apla-iddina II of Bīt-Yakīn to complain about the latter's loyalty to Assyria. See Nielsen 2021: 108–109.

64 Dezsó 2012: 83.

65 Frame 1992: 167–175.

66 A letter (ABL 1241+CT 54, 112) written by the allies of Assyria in the South expresses the fear caused by the Puqūdu and the Sealand (Frame 1992: 164–165). For the participation of the Sealand in the revolt, see Frame 1992: 175–182.

67 At times, some cities, or a group of citizens in the northern cities were on the Assyrian side. Letters (SAA 17, 20–23) from citizens of Babylon to Sargon II, inviting Assyrians to assume the Babylonian throne, are known to us. Inscriptions of Sargon II record that citizens of Babylon and Borsippa sided with Sargon II during Sargon II's campaign of 710 BC against Marduk-apla-iddina II (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 001, lines 371–374). A letter (SAA 18, 158) written by a citizen of Babylon to Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn mentions that when Nergal-ušēzib (693 BC) assumed the throne of Babylon, he killed a man named Eṭēru and his sons for their loyalty to Assyria. Furthermore, Nippur was brought under Assyrian control since the reign of Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal eventually assumed direct rule of Nippur in 664 BC, although he passed the rule to Šamaš-šumu-ukīn from at least 660 to 651 BC. After 646 BC, Nippur was the only city in Babylonia that still dated texts to the reign of Ashurbanipal (Cole 1996b: 73–80). A letter (ABL 327) written to the Assyrian court shows how unpopular Nippur was among the Babylonian cities (Brinkman 1979: 236–237).

68 Later, Eridu and Kullaba switched to the side of the rebels owing to the lack of instructions and aid from Assyria (Frame 1992: 164–165).

damage, deportation, and displacement of the elites. The anti-Assyrian sentiment derived from this suffering contributed to more revolts against Assyrian domination, which in turn caused even more suffering.

At the same time, northern Babylonians held a positive opinion towards the kings of Chaldean origin in general.⁶⁹ This resulted from the fact that these kings favoured the cities of northern Babylonia to acquire more support. Erība-Marduk and Marduk-apla-iddina II were seen as benevolent kings who restored the lands of the citizens of the northern cities. It is recorded in the chronicle ABC 24 (rev., lines 11–12) that Erība-Marduk restored the land taken by Arameans to the citizens of Borsippa and Babylon.⁷⁰ One *kudurru* from the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina II also attests to the king's land restoration for the citizens of Borsippa and Babylon. In this inscription, Marduk-apla-iddina II claims descent from Erība-Marduk in order to legitimise his kingship.⁷¹ This means that Erība-Marduk must have had widespread support among the northern cities. The popularity of the Chaldean kings in the northern cities is also reflected in the military support from those cities in the face of the Assyrian invasions. For instance, Nabû-mukîn-zēri was supported by the northern Babylonian cities when Tiglath-pileser III invaded Babylonia,⁷² while Marduk-apla-iddina II acquired support from urban Babylonians to resist Sennacherib's attack.⁷³

Southern cities in Babylonia generally held a pro-Assyrian attitude. This was a result of the interactions between the cities and their neighbouring tribes and the Assyrian policies in the South. Since the arrival of the tribal groups in the South, the southern Babylonian cities suffered economically and politically from competition with neighbouring tribal groups.⁷⁴ The situation improved after the Assyrian involvement in Babylonia, which caused significant damage to the power of the tribal groups in the South.⁷⁵ The southern cities were further

69 After Nippur was controlled by the Assyrians directly, it became a watch station against the tribal groups. Ashurbanipal once sent a letter to the governor and citizens of Nippur to catch a tribal fugitive, probably Nabû-bēl-šumāti, the leader of Bit-Yakīn, who sided with Šamaš-šumu-ukīn in his revolt of 652–648 BC (Cole 1996b: 34).

70 Grayson 1975a: 182–183; Glassner 2004: 287.

71 Paulus 2014: MAI II 1, col. III, lines 15–25 (land restoration); col. II, line 43 (royal genealogy).

72 Not all the northern cities supported Nabû-mukîn-zēri. Nippur and Dilbat sided with the Assyrians (Brinkman 1968: 237).

73 Brinkman 1984: 49–53, 56–59.

74 For the territory of the Chaldeans, see Beaulieu 2013: 39–43.

75 Extensive deportations of Chaldeans, Arameans, and Babylonians (more than 450,000 people) were made to Assyria, Syria, and the Levant between 745 and 703 BC and people from Kummuh were moved to settle in Bit-Yakīn (Brinkman 1979: 234)

granted privileges and favour by the Assyrians to counter the power of the tribes.⁷⁶ Reduced competition with the tribal groups, exemption from tax and corvée labour, and more investment from the Assyrian court, contributed to the revival of the southern cities.⁷⁷

Uruk and Ur also enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy from the Babylonian king during the Assyrian domination. During the reign of Nabonassar in the latter half of the eighth century, the Akītu temple in Uruk was restored by two unknown brothers in 743 BC, although the scribe still used the official dating system in the inscription.⁷⁸ It was the king's prerogative to carry out building activities for infrastructure and institutional buildings. This usurpation of the official powers of the king suggests the independence of the Urukian administration during this period.⁷⁹

Ur enjoyed considerable independence since the tenure of Ningal-iddin, the governor of Ur. Two documents in Ur were dated according to his tenure (in the eighth and twelfth years), probably during the reign of Sennacherib (705–681 BC).⁸⁰ This governor remained loyal to Assyria when the leader of the Sealand, Nabû-zêrkitti-lišir, rebelled following the death of Sennacherib and probably attempted to reclaim the independence of Babylonia in 680 BC.⁸¹ The semi-autonomous administration was continued by the son of Ningal-iddin, Sîn-balāssu-iqbi, who was probably appointed during the reign of Esarhaddon and stayed in office during most of the reign of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn before the latter's revolt. This governor had several inscriptions made, recording his building activities on Ur's ziggurat, the Ningal temple, and other structures. He also discovered an inscribed brick of Amar-Sîn, a king of the Ur III dynasty at the end of the third millennium, and displayed a copy of it. Furthermore, some of his inscriptions were dedicated to Ashurbanipal, the king of

76 Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal carried out building activities and recovered the cults of many local gods successively in Uruk (RIMB 2 Sargon II B.6.22.3–6; Esarhaddon B.6.31.15–21; Ashurbanipal B.6.32.19). Ashurbanipal claimed that he returned a statue of Nanaya to Uruk from Elam (e.g., RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 009, col. V, lines 72–74 and col. VI, lines 1–11). Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Larsa, Kullaba, Kissik and Nemed-Laguda were granted with freedom from obligations (*andurāru*) in the times of Sargon II (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 007, lines 136–137).

77 Brinkman (1979: 244, n. 70) notes that the Assyrian treatment of the southern cities was to reverse the distribution of political weight in southern Babylonia.

78 The building is dated to the fifth year of Nabonassar (RIMB 2 Nabû-nāšir B.6.15.2001).

79 The chronicle ABC 1 (col. I, lines 6–8) also records a revolt in Borsippa during the reign of Nabonassar (747–734 BC) (Grayson 1975a: 71; Glassner 2004: 195).

80 Frame 1992: 285.

81 Frame 1992: 65–66.

Assyria, instead of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, the king of Babylon.⁸² All of this indicates that he acted more like a direct vassal of Ashurbanipal than a city governor of the state of Babylon.

While northern Babylonians held a positive opinion towards the kings of Chaldean origin in general, southern elites had a bitter memory of their reigns, especially in Uruk. The Uruk prophecy, which mentions the transfer of the statue of Ištar from Uruk to Babylon, demonstrates that the northern cities were favoured at the cost of Uruk. Although some contributions were made by kings of Chaldean origin to Uruk,⁸³ the hostile sentiment towards the tribal groups prevailed. This stance undoubtedly influenced the priestly interpretation of the abduction of Ištar from Uruk. This event probably took place during the disturbance caused by the Chaldeans and Arameans, as the poem *Erra and Išum* describes:

*Erra and Išum, Tablet IV, lines 54–62:*⁸⁴

- 54 *su-ti-i su-ta-a-tu na-du-u ia-ru-ra-^lti¹*
 55 *de-ku-ú* E.AN.NA *kur-gar-ri* ^{lú}*i-sin-[ni]*
 56 *šá ana šup-lu-uḫ* UKÛ.MEŠ ^dINANNA *zik-ru-su-nu ú-te-ru ana* ^lSAL¹-[ti]
 57 *na-áš pat-ri na-áš nag-la-bi qap-pe-e u šur-^lti¹*
 58 *šá ana ul-lu-uš kab-ta-at* ^dINANNA *i-tak-ka-lu* ^la¹-[sak-ka]
 59 GÌR.NÍTA *ek-šu la ba-bil pa-ni e-li-šú-nu tas-^lkun¹*
 60 *uš-šis-si-na-ti-ma par-ši-ši-na i-te-^lti¹-[iq]*
 61 ^d*iš-tar i-gu-ug-ma is-sa-bu-us* UGU ^lUNUG¹[ki]
 62 ^{lú}KÚR *id-kam-ma ki-i še-im ina* IGI A.MEŠ ^l*i-maš-šá-a'* KUR

There Sutean nomads, men and women, bandy war whoops! They turned out the actors and singers (of) Eanna, whose manhood Ištar changed to womanhood to strike awe into the people. The wielders of daggers and razors, vintner's shears and flint knives, who take part in abominable acts for the entertainment of Ištar, a haughty, remorseless governor you placed over them. He harassed them and interfered with their rites. Ištar was angered. She flew into a rage against Uruk. She stirred up the enemy and swept clean the country, like granules on the water's face.

⁸² Frame 1992: 125–126.

⁸³ Eriša-Marduk was said in one of his inscriptions (MS 1846/4, edited by George 2011a) to renew or repair some object or building in Uruk; Esarhaddon mentions that Eriša-Marduk expanded the Ehilianna shrine in the Eanna temple (RIMB 2 Esarhaddon B.6.31.18). Furthermore, one inscription of Marduk-apla-iddina II (RIMB 2 Marduk-apla-iddina II B.6.21.1) commemorated his restoration work on the Eanna temple in Uruk.

⁸⁴ The transliteration follows Cagni 1969: 110. The translation follows Foster 2005: 904.

In this poem, the blame for the abduction of Ištar is shared by three parties, the Suteans (a term for nomadic people in general from the end of the second millennium onwards),⁸⁵ the governor of Uruk, and the enemy brought by Ištar, who probably was responsible for taking the statue away.⁸⁶ There is no mention of interference of a king. However, the elites of Uruk blamed the abduction of Ištar solely on the sacrilege committed by the Chaldean king of Babylon, Nabû-šuma-iškun (760?–748 BC) in the account of *The Crimes and Sacrileges of Nabû-šuma-iškun* (col. II, lines 31–38).⁸⁷ This text was presumably composed during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, whose return of the statue of Ištar may have inspired the Urukian priests to explain the loss of the statue in the past.⁸⁸ Nabû-šuma-iškun's reign is known to have been weak. According to the inscription of Nabû-šuma-imbī, the governor of Borsippa during his reign, Borsippians, Babylonians, and Dilbatians, as well as the Arameans and Chaldeans, were fighting over fields belonging to the Borsippians.⁸⁹ This shows that Nabû-šuma-iškun did not even have a stable control in northern Babylonia. Therefore, he probably did not have had enough power to interfere in conflicts between Uruk and the neighbouring tribal populations. The blame placed on this king seems arbitrary.

Apart from committing sacrileges to different cultic centres, and abducting Ištar from Uruk, Nabû-šuma-iškun was said to have cancelled the exemptions of the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha, and even to have murdered some of them.⁹⁰ He also showed favour to the Chaldeans and Arameans by deporting re-

85 A description of the devastation caused by the Suteans during the reign of Adad-apla-iddina to the cult centres, especially Sippar, can also be found in the Sun God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina, during which the statue of Šamaš vanished (Woods 2004: 41). This description collaborates with other texts, such as a dedicatory inscription of Simbar-Šipak and the chronicle ABC 24. See Woods 2004: 41, n. 90.

86 Beaulieu 2001: 38–39.

87 “[. . .] she who sits on a throne [. . .] seven lions. [. . .] he unleashed and [. . .] he allowed to roam freely. [. . .] he had her grasp [. . .] he had her leashed. [. . . of] Ištar [. . .] he had (someone) disconnect” (Cole 1994: 235). The text is known in a copy from late Achaemenid or Hellenistic Uruk. See Cole 1994; Beaulieu 2001; Zadok 2017.

88 Beaulieu 2001: 36 and 38–39. This interpretation was also adopted by the authors of the Uruk Prophecy (Beaulieu 2001: 36).

89 See RIMB 2 Nabû-šuma-iškun B.6.14.2001, col. I, lines 15’–21’.

90 Col. III, lines 10’–17’: “Year by year he (Nabû-šuma-iškun) increased the killing, pillaging, murdering, and forced labour upon them. In one day he burned alive 16 Cutheans in the Zababa Gate, which is in Babylon. He carried off the sons of Babylon to Syria and Elam as gifts. He expelled the sons of Babylon, their wives, their sons, and their slaves and s[ettled them] in the countryside” (Cole 1994: 234).

bellious Babylonians to their territories⁹¹ and taking the property of the Esagil temple to make offerings to the gods of the Sealand, Chaldea, and Aram.⁹² So far, there is no evidence from outside of Uruk concerning Nabû-šuma-iškun's mistreatment of northern Babylonians and favourable treatment of the Chaldeans and Arameans.⁹³ The inscription of Nabû-šuma-imbī does not mention any bias of the king in terms of the treatment of the Babylonians and tribal populations. It is more likely that the mistreatment of the northern cities was a projection of what happened in Uruk. It is possible that the exemptions of the citizens of Uruk granted by the Assyrian kings were cancelled at some point by Babylonian kings (whether of tribal descent or not), since they tended to reverse the Assyrian policies, and exemption was limited to northern Babylonian cities traditionally. Some Neo-Assyrian inscriptions record deportations of citizens of southern cities and kidnapping of their gods to the territories of the Chaldeans and Arameans.⁹⁴ As the economic and religious centre in the South, Uruk may have suffered the most from these actions. In other words, the Urukians projected their negative experience with the tribal groups onto other Babylonian cities, portraying Nabû-šuma-iškun as the primary enemy.

This feeling of hostility towards the tribal groups provided the Assyrians with the opportunity to inspire and secure the loyalty of the southern cities, who also had a negative opinion of the tribal groups.⁹⁵ The pro-Assyrian stand of the southern cities also caused the negative view of the tribal groups towards them. Two letters (SAA 22, 84 and 85) mention that Kissik was unpopular and its citizens were hated by the Chaldeans because of their loyalty to Assyria.

91 Col. III, lines 26'–27': "His (a court opponent) people, as many as there were, he carried off to Chaldea and Aram as gifts" (Cole 1994: 236).

92 Col. III, 36'–43': "The possessions of Esagil, all that the kings who preceded him had brought into it, he took out, gathered in his palace, and made his own. Silver, gold, precious gems of exceedingly high value, and every divine appurtenance that there was—with them, he made offerings as he wished to the gods of the Sealand, Chaldea, and Aram" (Cole 1994: 236).

93 Beaulieu (2001: 39) notes that the account of the crimes and sacrileges of Nabû-šuma-iškun is the only source that depicts this king in a negative perspective.

94 The inscriptions of Sargon II mention that citizens of southern cities were taken as booty to Bit-Yakīn (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 002, lines 374–375), the gods of these cities were once carried off as booty to Bit-Yakīn, and the cultic rites were disrupted (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 007, line 137).

95 The Assyrian hostility towards the Chaldeans was expressed in the royal inscriptions. Sargon II described Marduk-apla-iddina II as "descendant of Yakīn, of Chaldean extraction, the (very) image of an evil *gallū*-demon" (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 002, line 370) and "a doer of evil deeds" (e.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 001, line 273).

4.2 Reconstructing the Revolt: Historical Events in Babylonian Cities

Šin-šarru-iškun rebelled against his brother Aššur-etel-ilāni and ascended to the throne of Assyria in 628 BC. Until the second half of the year, documents dated to his accession year began to appear in some Babylonian cities (Sippar, Babylon, and Uruk). Nabopolassar revolted in southern Babylonia, controlling Uruk in 627 BC. During the following several years, he competed for the control of Babylonia with Šin-šarru-iškun and Aššur-etel-ilāni, who was later replaced by Šin-šumu-lišir. Eventually, he ascended to the throne of Babylon in 626 BC and drove the Assyrian forces out of Babylonia around 620 BC. This section presents the processes of the Nabopolassar Revolt in the following Babylonian cities: Sippar, Babylon, Nippur, Uruk, and Ur.

4.2.1 Sippar

628–627 BC

In 628 BC, the accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun, documents dated to Kandalānu and Šin-šarru-iškun co-existed in Sippar. All of them are from the Ebabbar temple archive. While there are seven documents dated to the 20th year of Kandalānu from the month of Ayyaru (II) to Addaru (XII),⁹⁶ there are only two dated to the accession year of Šin-šarru-iškun (8/VII/0 and 22/VIII/0).⁹⁷ The amount of documents dated to Šin-šarru-iškun is considerably smaller than Babylon and Uruk, where he established military garrisons. The same situation lasted at least until the month of Ayyaru (II) of 627 BC. There is an administrative memorandum, probably from Ebabbar, dated to Ayyaru (II) in the first year of Šin-šarru-iškun (11/II/1),⁹⁸ while date formulae according to the reign of Kandalānu were still used in the same month (5/II/21⁹⁹ and 13/II/21).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ 12/II/20, 6/VII/20, 23/VII/20, 22/IX/20, 26/IX/20, 14(+)/XII/20, 15/XII/20 (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 139, 142–143, 146a, 147, and 151–152). L. 142 has been discussed by Nielson (2011: 138, n. 42). L. 143 is from a town called Šibtu-ša-šakin-māti, which was likely near Sippar (Zadok 1985: 279).

⁹⁷ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 1–2. O. 1 has been discussed by Beaulieu (1997a: 385, n. 48) and Myers (2002: 210). Regarding the provenance of the tablet O. 2, see Leichty 1986: 1. For the view that it belonged to the Ebabbar archive, see Bongenaar 1997: 322.

⁹⁸ BM 57149 (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 8). Regarding the provenance of the tablet, see Leichty 1986: 226.

⁹⁹ MMA 86.11.187 from the Ebabbar archive.

¹⁰⁰ The museum number is not available. The text is mentioned by Oppert 1892: 341.

Nabopolassar rebelled in 627 BC, threatening Sîn-šarru-iškun's control over Sippar. Before the month of Dûzu (IV), he captured Babylon from Sîn-šarru-iškun. It is very probable that Nabopolassar continued to go north. He may have captured the area surrounding Sippar, including Šaznaku. This is demonstrated by the fact that when the Assyrians came down in the month of Ulûlu (VI), Šaznaku was under the control of Nabopolassar and was plundered by the Assyrian army.¹⁰¹ As Šaznaku is a town close to Sippar, its falling into the hands of Sîn-šarru-iškun suggests the possibility that Sippar was also controlled by Sîn-šarru-iškun at this time. According to the chronicle ABC 2 (line 6), the Assyrian army kept going south, causing panic in Kish, and the gods of Kish were sent to Babylon in the month of Tašrîtu (VII).

626 BC

After the month of Ayyaru (II) in 627 BC, there is a gap in the documentation from Sippar. The documents resume at the beginning of 626 BC, all of which are dated according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun (1/II/2, 8/II/2, 20/II/2, 25/III/2, 2(?) /IX/2).¹⁰² There are no texts dated to the reign of Kandalānu and Sîn-šumu-lišir.¹⁰³

It appears that the elites of the Ebabbar temple were divided into two camps at the rise of Sîn-šumu-lišir, one of whom was loyal to Sîn-šarru-iškun, the other to Sîn-šumu-lišir. The former was headed by the *šatammu* of the Ebabbar temple, probably Šamaš-mudammiq, while the latter was headed by the *šangû* of Sippar,¹⁰⁴ Bulluṭu, descendant of Bunene-ibni, followed by the *qîpu* of the Ebabbar temple, Bēl-īpuš.¹⁰⁵

At the direction of Sîn-šarru-iškun, the Assyrian army marched down to Sippar in the month of Ayyaru (II), most likely to engage in the power struggle in Sippar. In the end, the party supporting Sîn-šumu-lišir lost and was driven out of Sippar. They fled to Nippur to seek refuge, where Sîn-šumu-lišir held control. However, Sîn-šumu-lišir eventually lost Nippur to Sîn-šarru-iškun in the month of

101 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 4–5 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

102 VAT 238 (Ungnad 1908: No. 2), BM 49982, FLP 1517, BM 92718, Brinkman and Kennedy 1986: O. 15a (published by Roth [1989: BMA 2]). For the provenance of BM 49982, see Leichty 1986: 22. The first four texts are from the Ebabbar archive, while the last one is a marriage agreement from a private archive.

103 The date 22/VI/0 according to the reign of Nabopolassar is still in debate (Kennedy 1986: T.O.1).

104 The position of *šangû* of Sippar was introduced at this point. See Da Riva 2001: 55.

105 Bongenaar 1997: 47. For these figures, see Bongenaar 1997: 26 (Šamaš-mudammiq and Bulluṭu, descendant of Bunene-ibni); 47 (Bēl-īpuš).

Simānu (III) or Dūzu (IV). As a result, the Sipparian refugees were forced to move again, now settling in Babylon, which was still held by Sîn-šumu-lišir.

Three texts reveal the exile of the Sipparian followers of Sîn-šumu-lišir in Nippur and Babylon. MMA 86.11.76 is a promissory note involving the temple of Šamaš (Ebabbar) and five individuals in Nippur. The *qīpu* of the Ebabbar temple, Bēl-īpuš, was overseeing this transaction.¹⁰⁶ It is dated to the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir, but the month is broken. Two more texts dated to his reign, one from Babylon and another from Ru'a, also involve the administration of the Ebabbar temple. The text from Babylon, which is dated to 15/V/0 of Sîn-šumu-lišir, is an internal administrative document of the Ebabbar temple, recording the disposal of one talent of silver by Bulluṭu, son of Bunene-ibni, the *šangū* of Sippar. The text from Ru'a, of which the month of the date formula is broken, involves an anonymous *mār šipri ša* Šamaš, “messenger of Šamaš,” who was probably acting for the *qīpu* of the Ebabbar temple.¹⁰⁷

It is hard to determine whether Sîn-šumu-lišir actively controlled Sippar for a while. Sîn-šarru-iškun took Nippur from Sîn-šumu-lišir in the month of Simānu (III) or Dūzu (IV), and the Sipparian refugees must have arrived in Nippur before Sîn-šumu-lišir lost the city. This means that the Sipparian refugees left Sippar in the month of Dūzu (IV) at the latest. The Assyrian army marched down to Sippar in the month of Ayyaru (II). Meanwhile, there are documents dated to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun in the same month. Therefore, the period of Sîn-šumu-lišir's control of the city must have been very short, at most one month (maybe only the first month of the year).

Sîn-šarru-iškun still held Sippar in the month of Kislimu (IX). Nabopolassar ascended to the throne of Babylon in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII). At some point, he may have eliminated the power of Sîn-šumu-lišir in Cutha.¹⁰⁸ There is a date (22/VI/0) according to the reign of Nabopolassar, of which the place of writing is still in debate.¹⁰⁹ Even if Nabopolassar had ever captured Sippar in 626 BC, he would lose it to Sîn-šarru-iškun before the month of Kislimu (IX). It is evident that Sippar was still controlled by Sîn-šarru-iškun for the remainder of the year, as a document from the beginning of the next year was dated to 11/I/3 of Sîn-šarru-iškun (625 BC).¹¹⁰

106 Published in Moldenke 1893: 1; mentioned in Bongenaar 1997: 47.

107 For the details of these texts, see Da Riva 2001: 51–55.

108 This event was probably described in *The Nabopolassar Epic* (BM 34793), obv(?), col. II(?), lines 10'–16': “The streets of the city, the canals, were filled [with blood . . .] The canal of Cutha with blood [. . .]The almighty chief eunuch from the roof [of the palace looked down] (. . .) When [he saw the scene] from the roof of the palace th[us he cried(?)]: ‘Do not kill me, mighty king [. . .]!’ (But the king commanded): ‘Let the Assyrian be killed [(. . .)]!’ The Assyrian was killed [(. . .)].” (Da Riva 2017a: 82).

109 See the explanation in Kennedy 1986: 178 (T.0.1).

110 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.21.

625 BC

Sippar experienced some sort of turbulence in 625 BC, because the chronicle ABC 2 (line 18) records that “the first year (of the reign) of Nabopolassar, in the month of Nisannu (I), the 17th day, panic prevailed in the city (Sippar).”¹¹¹ Following this is the statement (line 19) that the god Šamaš and the gods of Šapazzu/Bāš¹¹² went to Babylon. Because Babylon was under the control of Nabopolassar at that time,¹¹³ the turbulence in Sippar was probably caused by the approach and conquest by Nabopolassar from Sîn-šarru-iškun. After the conquest, Nabopolassar decided to move the gods to Babylon for protection.¹¹⁴

Sîn-šarru-iškun may have responded to this quickly, but he was distracted by the rebellion in Raqmat. The army that was intended for Babylonia may have changed their routes to the West, as Raqmat was in Ḫanigalbat, in the eastern part of the Ḫabur triangle.¹¹⁵ Sîn-šarru-iškun must have shifted his focus there. The chronicle ABC 2 (line 20) records that the Assyrian army entered Raqmat on 21st day of Ayyaru (II). Sippar was left in the hands of Nabopolassar. Dates according to the reign of Nabopolassar in Sippar are attested in the month of Simānu (III), Abu (V), and Ulūlu (VI).¹¹⁶ In the month of Abu (V), Nabopolassar went to assist the rebellion in Raqmat. Even with the help of Nabopolassar, the rebels did not reacquire Raqmat, and Nabopolassar retreated.¹¹⁷

624–620 BC

It is likely that Sippar was under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun for a short while in 624 BC. There are no documents dated to Sîn-šarru-iškun or Nabopolassar in Sippar, and the chronicle ABC 2 does not mention Sippar in that year. However,

¹¹¹ Glassner (2004: 217) suggests that the city refers to Babylon; Na’aman (1991a: 260) suggests that it refers to Sippar.

¹¹² Šapazzu was also named Bāš (Joannès 1987a).

¹¹³ Texts from Babylon and Borsippa are continually dated according to the reign of Nabopolassar during Year 1–6 of Nabopolassar (Kennedy 1986: 178–185).

¹¹⁴ Zawadzki (1989: 57–64) challenges this reconstruction: “We have no evidence that . . . they (Babylonians) regained the city between the 11th of Nisan and the 20th of Iyyar Nbp. 1. It is also improbable that the Assyrians who were not far from Sippar, would not have helped their fellows in the city.”

¹¹⁵ Raqmat has also been read as Amat and Sallat. For the reading and location, see Postgate 1995: 10. According to Fales (2014: 221–231), Ḫanigalbat held an important place in Neo-Assyrian politics. It was controlled by another branch of the royal family, from which Sargon II and his successors came.

¹¹⁶ Zawadzki 1989: 58, according to Kennedy 1986: T.1.5, T.1.9, and T.1.15.

¹¹⁷ The chronicle ABC 2, lines 22–24 (Grayson 1975a: 89; Glassner 2004: 217).

the chronicle records battles between the Assyrian army and Nabopolassar near the Banītu Canal,¹¹⁸ which extended from Babylon to Kish along the royal road.¹¹⁹ Because Sippar is north of this canal, it must have been under the control of the Assyrians. The Babylonians and Assyrians fought several battles there, which ended in a deadlock, and the Assyrian troops eventually retreated.

623–620 BC

There is little information from Sippar during the period 623–620 BC. According to the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 30–32), the Assyrian troops came down to Babylonia and set up a garrison in Nippur in 623 BC.¹²⁰ However, their presence in Babylonia was interrupted by a rebellion in Assyria,¹²¹ which resulted in Nabopolassar gaining control of all of Babylonia by 620 BC. It appears that Assyria gained control of Sippar in the first half of 623 BC, while Nabopolassar captured it in 621 BC at the latest.¹²²

4.2.2 Babylon

628–627 BC

As the capital city, Babylon was a significant political target for those contending for control of Babylonia. It was under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun as early as his accession year (628 BC). There is a receipt of a land purchase dated to 21/XII/0 of Sîn-šarru-iškun.¹²³ In order to ensure the loyalty of the city, Sîn-šarru-iškun may have sent troops to Babylon. A letter (SAA 18, 163) addressed to Sîn-šarru-iškun may have been written when the Assyrian army entered the city.

SAA 18, 163:¹²⁴

Obv.:

- 1 [a-na LUGAL] ^rbe¹-[lī-ia] ARAD-ka
- 2 ^[md]rNĀ⁺¹-NUMUN-GI.NA ^dNĀ u ^dAMAR.UTU
- 3 [a-na] LUGAL be-lī-ia lik-ru-bu
- 4 [UD-mu]-us-su ^dAMAR.UTU u ^dzar-pa-ni-tum
- 5 [a-na] TIN ZI.MEŠ GÍD.DA UD-mu
- 6 [tu]-^rub¹ ŠĀ-bi tu-ub UZU

118 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 25–28 (Grayson 1975a: 89; Glassner 2004: 217).

119 Grayson 1975a: 252.

120 Grayson 1975a: 89–90; Glassner 2004: 217.

121 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 33–41 (Grayson 1975a: 90; Glassner 2004: 219).

122 A date by the reign of Nabopolassar in 621 BC: 25/IV/5. See Kennedy 1986: T.5.5.

123 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.5; Published by Ellis 1984: No. 24.

124 The transliteration and translation follow SAA 18, 163.

- 7 [ù] *sa-ka-pu* ^{lú}KÚR
 8 [šá] ^lLUGAL¹ *be-lí-ia ú-šal-la*
 9 [na]-^láš¹-*par-ti šá LUGAL be-lu*₄
 10 ^liš¹-*pur-ra-an-ni un-qa-a-ta*
 11 [KUG].^lGI*¹ *šá id-dí-nu-nu um-ma*
 12 [a]-^lna¹ KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} *šu-bi-il*
 13 ^lun¹-*qu! a-na* ^mmu-še-zib-^dAMAR.UTU
 14 *at-ta-din un-qu! šá* ^mMU-MU
 15 ^{lú}ŠÀ.TAM *šá BÀD.DINGIR*^{ki} *ina pa-ni-ia*
 16 *ši-i ul ad-da-áš-šú*
 17 ^mMU-MU *za-nit LUGAL lu-^lú i-dí¹
 18 *hi-'a-a-lu ma-a-da a-di tèt-em*
 19 *bab-ba-nu-ú ni-iš-mu-ú*
 20 *ul nu-še-bi-il tèt-em*
 21 *ki-i ni-iš-mu-ú hi-'a-a-lu**

Rev.:

- 1 *it-ta-par-ras ina sú-le-e*
 2 *šá* ^dAMAR.UTU DINGIR-*ka ERIM.MEŠ ma-a'-du-tu*
 3 *ina TIN.TIR*^{ki} *ma-aš-šar-ti*
 4 *šá LUGAL be-lí-ia i-na-aš-ša-ru*
 5 ^dAMAR.UTU *u* ^dzar¹-*pa-ni-tum DINGIR.ME-ka*
 6 *šá še-pít-su-nu ta-aš-ba-ta*
 7 *mim-ma ma-la LUGAL be-lí-a ip-pu-šú*
 8 *šu-nu-ma ina ŠU.II LUGAL be-lí-ia ú-šal-la-am*
 9 *ina ŠÀ-bi DINGIR.MEŠ-ka* ^{lú}A-KIN *šá il-la-ku*
 10 *ni-ta-mar a-na UGU šu-ru-bu*
 11 *šá un-qa-a-ta a-na TIN.TIR*^{ki}
 12 ^lLUGAL¹ *be-lí-a lu-ú ra-ḥu-uš*
 13 ^[d]AMAR.UTU *u* ^dzar-*pa-ni-^ltum¹ DINGIR.MEŠ-*ka*
 14 [ki]-*i ú-šal-li-mu* ^{lú}TIN.TIR^{ki}.MEŠ
 15 [gab]-^lbi¹ *ma-aš-šar-ti šá LUGAL be-lí-ia*
 16 [i-na]-^laš¹-*ša-ru pa-ni-šú-nu a-na UGU LUGAL*
 17 [be-lí]-^lia¹ *il*-ta*-kan ul*-tu UGU šá* ^{giš}GEŠTIN
 18 [a-na KÁ].DINGIR.RA^{ki} *a-na* ^dEN DINGIR-*ka*
 19 [x x x a]-^lki? *ma*¹-de-e pa-ni-šú-nu*
 20 [x x x x x x x x]+^lx.MEŠ¹ *šu-nu*
 21 [x x x x x x x x]-^lx¹
 22 [x x x x x x x x x x].^lMEŠ¹*

Right edge:23 [x x x x x x x]+^rx NUN x¹+^[x]24 [x x x x x]-^rú¹-a u ^{md}EN-^rDÙ¹25 [x x x x x]+^rx¹-nu ab-ku-u¹**Left edge:**

26 a-di UGU šá en-na NÍG.ŠID-šú-nu mam-ma [x x x x x x x]

27 ul ina pa-an ^dEN ul ina pa-an LUGAL ^rú^{*1}-[ta-kan x x x x x x]

[To the king, my] lo[rd]: your servant, [Nab]û-zêru-ukîn. May Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord! I pray every [day] to Marduk and Zarpanitu [for] the long life, [hap]piness, good health, [and] overthrow of the enemy [of the ki]ng, my lord.

(Concerning) the [mes]sage which the king, the lord, [s]ent to me (and) the [gol]den seals which they gave to me, saying: ‘Send (them) [t]o Babylon!’—I have given one seal to Mušêzib-Marduk. The seal of Šumu-iddin, the *šatammu* of Dêr, is in my custody; I shall not give it to him. Šumu-iddin is . . . The king should know (this).

We did not dispatch a large force until we heard the good news. When we heard the news, the force was dispersed in the street of Marduk, your god. Many men in Babylon keep the watch of the king, my lord. Marduk and Zarpanîtu, your gods, whose feet you have grasped, will make the king, my lord, successful in whatever the king, my lord, does. Thanks to your gods, we received the messenger who was coming. The [ki]ng, my lord, can rely on the delivery of the sealed messages to Babylon.

Marduk and Zarpanîtu, your gods, have seen to it that [al]l the people of Babylon [are ke]eping the watch of the king, my lord. They have turned their faces towards the king, [m]y [lord].

Ever since wine [. . . to Ba]bylon for Bêl, your god, [. . .] their faces very much [. . .] they are [. . .] *[Break]*

[N]N and Bêl-ibn[i] [. . .] have been brought in. Up to now nobody [. . .] has p[ut] their property either at the disposal of Bêl or at the disposal of the king [. . .].

This letter belongs to the collection K 48-7-20 in the British Museum, a small group of letters dated to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun,¹²⁵ found in or near the throne room of the South-West Palace of Kuyunjik. It is possible that this letter was written shortly after Sîn-šarru-iškun won the civil war in Assyria. Thus, the “good news” mentioned by the author likely refers to his victory over Aššur-etel-ilāni.¹²⁶

125 See Reade 1986: 213.

126 SAA 18: xxxviii, n. 98.

Apparently, Sîn-šarru-iškun was not ignorant of the rebellious trend of the Babylonians, who would catch every chance to seek independence from the Assyrians. Therefore, he sent troops to Babylonia to prevent rebellions, even before having total control of Assyria. Since Babylon was the capital of Babylonia, it was naturally the first city whose loyalty he sought to secure.

The author of the letter reported the arrival of the Assyrian army in Babylon. According to the letter, their entry into the city was entirely peaceful, without any violence or conflict. It is said that the citizens of Babylon “have turned their faces towards the king.” The author was commissioned to deliver seals to one Mušēzib-Marduk and Šumu-iddin, the *šatammu* of Dēr. Those seals are probably the royal bureau seals¹²⁷ of the king Sîn-šarru-iškun, while Mušēzib-Marduk is probably a high official in Babylon. It was a common administrative practice in the Neo-Assyrian period for the king to issue the royal bureau seals to his officials (e.g., provincial governors) in order to delegate power. The bearer of the seal acted as a representative of the king.¹²⁸ After entering the city, a garrison of the Assyrian army was set up in the city.¹²⁹

It seems that Sîn-šarru-iškun still allowed the rule in the name of the puppet king, Kandalānu, since Sîn-šarru-iškun himself was never given the title of king of Babylon. Date formulae according to the reign of Kandalānu were still used in Babylon when Sîn-šarru-iškun’s garrison was stationed in the city in 627 BC.¹³⁰

However, Sîn-šarru-iškun’s control was challenged by Nabopolassar in the second half of the year (627 BC). According to the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 1–3), sometime before the month of Ulūlu (VI),¹³¹ Nabopolassar came to fight with Sîn-šarru-iškun’s garrison over Babylon and succeeded. During the month of Tašrītu (VII), Babylon was still ruled by Nabopolassar. The gods of Kish were sent to Babylon for protection.¹³² In the same month the troops of Assyria went down, causing a retreat of Nabopolassar as far south as Uruk.¹³³ It is possible that the Assyrian troops have bypassed Babylon and they cut off Nabopolassar from going to

127 For the definition of bureau seals, see Radner 2008: 486–487.

128 Radner 2008: 487–494.

129 A garrison of Sîn-šarru-iškun is mentioned in the chronicle ABC 2, lines 1–3 (Grayson 1975a: 87–88; Glassner 2004: 217).

130 26/I/21, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 154; 6/II/21, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 157.

131 Since the chronicle narrates the events according to chronological order, Nabopolassar must have fought with Sîn-šarru-iškun over Babylon before the month of Ulūlu (VI). If it had occurred in the month of Ulūlu (VI), the composer would have omitted the month in the following date (the 12th day of Ulūlu), keeping only the day. Therefore, the month at the beginning of the text can be reconstructed as the month Abu (V) at the latest.

132 The chronicle ABC 2, line 6 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

133 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 7–9 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

Babylon, forcing him to retreat south. The date of *arki* Kandalānu occurred in Babylon in the text dated to the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII),¹³⁴ as a result of this power vacuum.¹³⁵ In conclusion, Sîn-šarru-iškun held Babylon at the beginning of the year. During this time, the date formula by the reign of Kandalānu was still allowed. At some point during the months of Ayyaru (II) to Abu (V), Nabopolassar took over the city. During the months of Tašritu (VII) to Araḥsamnu (VIII), the situation became more uncertain, because Nabopolassar was in retreat and not in Babylon. At this point, Kandalānu was already dead. The Babylonians chose to use the date formula of *arki* Kandalānu in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII) in response to this uncertainty. There is no information from the other months of this year. It can be assumed that the power vacuum lasted until the end of the year. The transfer of control over Babylon in this year is evident from the data presented in Table 6 (below).

Table 6: Babylon under the control of different rulers in 627 BC.

Month	Kandalānu	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Nabopolassar
I	x	(x)	
II–V	x	(x)	
		x	
			x
VI			x
VII–VIII			x
	x (<i>arki</i> Kandalānu)		
IX–XII	x <i>arki</i> Kandalānu?		

626 BC

In the later part of 627 BC, Nabopolassar retreated to Uruk. Taking advantage of this, Sîn-šumu-lišir joined the competition over Babylon during 626 BC, which made the situation more complicated.¹³⁶ There is evidence that he was able to capture and hold Babylon during the months of Abu (V) and Ulūlu (VI),¹³⁷ while he lost Nippur to Sîn-šarru-iškun around the month of Dūzu (IV). Soon after, Na-

¹³⁴ 1+x/VIII/21 *arki* Kandalānu. See Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 160.

¹³⁵ Same opinion by Da Riva 2001: 47, n. 38.

¹³⁶ Sîn-šumu-lišir may have engaged in the competition already at the end of 627 BC, but he claimed the title of king only in 626 BC.

¹³⁷ There are texts dated to his accession year from Babylon: 15/V/0 (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N.2. Published in Da Riva 2001: 52–55) and 15/'VI'/0 (Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N.5 [N.6 as its duplicate]).

bopolassar came up to reclaim Babylon from him and managed to do so.¹³⁸ Sîn-šarru-iškun's army, which came down to Babylonia already at the beginning of the year, came to Babylon in the month of Tašritu (VII).¹³⁹ As recorded in the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 10–13), some citizens of Babylon sided with Nabopolassar: they joined the battle, and defeated the Assyrian army. However, this fight may have not been limited to one battle. At some point, there appears to have been a deadlock between the two parties, for there is a date formula referencing 22 *arki* Kandalānu during the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII).¹⁴⁰ It can be assumed that the result of the fight was unclear at the time, so part of the Babylonians decided to be neutral. Eventually, in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII), Nabopolassar won the fight and ascended to the throne.¹⁴¹

625–620 BC

From 625–620 BC, Babylon was under the sole control of Nabopolassar. All of the texts during this period from Babylon and Borsippa are dated according to the reign of Nabopolassar.¹⁴² Having stable control over Babylon, Nabopolassar approached and took over Sippar at the beginning of 625 BC. Sîn-šarru-iškun was distracted by a rebellion in Raqmat, so he was not able to come down to Babylonia.¹⁴³

From 624 BC on, there were some challenges to his control of the city. One such instance occurred in 624 BC, in the month of Ulūlu (VI), when the Assyrians came down and set up camps near the Banītu Canal. The Assyrians reached a point very close to Babylon, but Nabopolassar successfully forced them to retreat. The other challenge to Nabopolassar's rule over Babylon took place in 623 BC when Assyrians gained back some territory. According to the chronicle ABC 2, the Assyrians

138 There may be a text dated to 22/VI/0 of Nabopolassar from Babylon. That is, BM 49656, which is published in Wiseman 1956: 93–93 and Pl. 21 (as is mentioned by Brinkman 1984: 110–111, n. 551). While there is no placename in the text, Wiseman (1956: 93–93), Oates (1965: 145), Borger (1965: 63–63), and Reade (1970: 4) attribute it to Sippar. Kennedy (1986: T.0.1) questions this assumption, pointing out that the collection 82-3-23 (one of the Sippar collection in the British Museum), to which this text belongs, is not from archaeological excavations. While a large number of texts are from Sippar, there are many from elsewhere (e.g., Dilbat and Babylon). Thus, the provenance of the text cannot be secured. In fact, it is possible that this text is from Babylon, which was under the control of Nabopolassar by the month of Tašritu (VII) and may have already been under his control in the late part of the month of Ulūlu (VI).

139 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 10–13 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

140 2/VIII/22 *arki* Kandalānu. See Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 163.

141 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 14–15 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

142 For the texts dated according to the reign of Nabopolassar in Babylon and Borsippa during 625–620 BC, see Kennedy 1986: 178–185.

143 The chronicle ABC 2, line 20 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

captured Nippur, where they set up a garrison.¹⁴⁴ Nabopolassar also lost control of Uruk, which was ruled by pro-Assyrian forces. However, during this period, there is no indication that the Assyrians captured Babylon. While there is no extant textual evidence from Babylon during this period, there is one text from Borsippa, which is dated to Year 3 of Nabopolassar.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, it is likely that Nabopolassar's power was limited to the area of Babylon and Borsippa in this year.

4.2.3 Nippur

628 BC

During the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni, Nippur still served as the frontier settlement of the Assyrians in central Babylonia. The date formulae in texts from Nippur continued to be based on the reign of the Assyrian king. When Sîn-šarru-iškun usurped the throne of Aššur-etel-ilāni in Assyria, the latter probably fled to Nippur, because the date formulae according to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni continued in Nippur during this year.¹⁴⁶

627 BC

In 627 BC, Nabopolassar rose in southern Babylonia and began to compete with Sîn-šarru-iškun in central and northern Babylonia. He captured Babylon sometime before the month of Ulūlu (VI). He seems to have also threatened the city of Nippur, as the chronicle ABC 2 records an alliance between the Assyrian army and the Nippurians, forcing Nabopolassar to retreat from Nippur to Uruk in the month of Tašrītu (VII).¹⁴⁷ This record seems to indicate a temporary alliance between Sîn-šarru-iškun and Aššur-etel-ilāni. After resolving this crisis, Nippur seems to have remained under the control of Aššur-etel-ilāni, as evidenced by a text dated to 1/VIII of Year 4 of Aššur-etel-ilāni from Nippur.¹⁴⁸

Whether Sîn-šarru-iškun had control over Nippur at some point in this year (627 BC) is uncertain. There is a text (YBC 7399) from Nippur that may potentially date to the first year of Sîn-šarru-iškun.¹⁴⁹ However, Brinkman and Kennedy date

144 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 30–32 (Grayson 1975a: 89–90; Glassner 2004: 217–219).

145 Kennedy 1986: T.3.5.

146 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M. 8–11 and TMH II/III 35, which attests to 1/IV/3 of Aššur-etel-ilāni and 1/VII/3 of Aššur-etel-ilāni.

147 The chronicle ABC 2, lines 7–9 (Grayson 1975a: 88; Glassner 2004: 217).

148 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: M. 12.

149 Borger 1965: 67; Ellis 1984: 6. Reade (1970: 4) cites it as evidence that Sîn-šarru-iškun controlled Nippur in 626 BC.

it to the second year of *Sîn-šarru-iškun*,¹⁵⁰ while Falkner dates it to the same year, but attributes it to Babylon.¹⁵¹ The reason why there are different proposals for the date of this text is that it is difficult to ascertain the number following the sign MU, “year.” It contains a horizontal character with a stroke below.¹⁵² As Zawadzki notes, this stroke can either be “an accidental extension of a horizontal wedge belonging to preceding character *mu*”, or “a distinct character” representing the digit 2.¹⁵³

626 BC

In 626 BC, *Sîn-šumu-lišir* claimed the throne of Assyria, as evidenced by a text dated to 12/III/0 of *Sîn-šumu-lišir* from Nippur.¹⁵⁴ He controlled Nippur, where he had likely been living since 628 BC. His sphere of influence was not limited to the city of Nippur. In Sippar, he won the favour of some powerful individuals, causing a political divide among the elites of the Ebabbar temple. He even captured Babylon for a short while.¹⁵⁵ However, he did not control the city of Nippur for very long. In the month of Ayyaru (II), the Assyrians marched south once again, reaching Nippur and capturing it in the month of Dûzu (IV) at the latest, since texts dated to the reign of *Sîn-šarru-iškun* appeared continually from the month of Dûzu (IV) to Addaru (XII) (?/IV/2, 17#/V#/2, 24/VI/2, 7/VIII/2, 10/XI/2, and 14/XII/2).¹⁵⁶

625–624 BC

Nippur was besieged by Nabopolassar in 625 BC. This is established by the siege-documents from Nippur in the months of Simānu (III) through to Ulūlu (VI), which show that people sold their children for food during the siege.¹⁵⁷ Among those texts, one (IM 57917) describes the siege situation explicitly.

¹⁵⁰ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.16.

¹⁵¹ Falkner 1952–1953: 308.

¹⁵² For the copy of the text, see Ellis 1984: No. 25.

¹⁵³ Zawadzki 1988: 43, n. 86.

¹⁵⁴ FLP 1319, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: N.1; Da Riva 2001: 46 (as mentioned in Borger 1969: 238).

¹⁵⁵ Nabopolassar came north to capture Babylon in the month of Ulūlu (VI) at the latest. This appears to contradict the assumption that *Sîn-šumu-lišir* and Nabopolassar made an alliance in this year, see Na’aman 1991a: 256.

¹⁵⁶ TMH II/III 35, line 20, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 13, TMH II/III 35, line 4, Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 15 and 17–18.

¹⁵⁷ Oppenheim 1955: 69–89.

IM 57917, lines 1–5:¹⁵⁸

- 1 [x x x (x) ^{me^d}]30-LUGAL-iš-kun LUGAL ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki}
 2 [EN.LÍL^{ki}] *la-mi-i'-ma ši-ti KÁ.GAL*
 3 [x x x x K]I.LAM šá BÁN.TA.ÀM ŠE.BAR URU
 4 [x x x] x UN^{me^s} DUMU^{me^s}.š[ú-n]u *a-na*
 5 [KÛ.BABBAR *ip-š*]u-ru . . .

[In the third year of] Sîn-šarru-iškun, king of Assyria, [the town of Nippur] was under siege. Exit through the gate was [impossible/closed]. The equivalent (of one shekel of silver was) one *sātu* of barley; the town [was . . .], the people [so]ld the[ir] children for [money].

The siege may have continued into 624 BC. There is only one text from Nippur dated to Year 4 of Sîn-šarru-iškun (624 BC).¹⁵⁹ According to the chronicle ABC 2, in this year Sîn-šarru-iškun sent his army to Babylonia in the month of Ulūlu (VI), but they could not go further south than the Banītu Canal, so they retreated after a number of battles with Nabopolassar.¹⁶⁰ As a result, Nippur was unable to receive aid from Sîn-šarru-iškun. Therefore, it is probable that Nippur was still being besieged by Nabopolassar.

623 BC

In 623 BC, the city of Dēr, which had been annexed by Assyria in the second half of the eighth century BC,¹⁶¹ rebelled against Assyria. Na'aman suggests that Itti-ili, the governor of Dēr, pledged loyalty to Nabopolassar, which resulted in his position as military commander.¹⁶² He went down to Nippur to help Nabopolassar conquer the city.¹⁶³ At last, Nippur received help from the Assyrian army, which, led by Sîn-šarru-iškun himself, came down to Babylonia and rescued Nippur from the hands of Nabopolassar. After that, they set up a garrison there.¹⁶⁴

622–620 BC

In Nippur, there are only two extant texts dated to 622 BC, both of which are dated according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun,¹⁶⁵ while there are none from

¹⁵⁸ The transliteration and translation follow Oppenheim 1955: 87–88 (2 NT 297).

¹⁵⁹ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 34.

¹⁶⁰ The chronicle ABC 2, lines 25–28 (Grayson 1975a: 89; Glassner 2004: 217).

¹⁶¹ The name of its governor was used as an eponym in Assyria in 670 BC (Frame 1992: 222).

¹⁶² Na'aman 1991a: 263–264.

¹⁶³ The chronicle ABC 2, lines 29–30 (Grayson 1975a: 89; Glassner 2004: 217).

¹⁶⁴ The chronicle ABC 2, lines 30–32 (Grayson 1975a: 89–90; Glassner 2004: 219).

¹⁶⁵ Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O. 40 and O. 41.

621 BC. It is very likely that Nabopolassar conquered the city in 622 BC. Na'aman indicates that there is a gap in the Nippur tablets from 621 to 607 BC, which may be a result of the partial destruction of Nippur by Nabopolassar.¹⁶⁶

4.2.4 Uruk

628 BC

Uruk was traditionally a pro-Assyrian city. It is not surprising that Uruk was one of the Babylonian cities that pledged loyalty to Sîn-šarru-iškun in his accession year. While there is a text dated to Year 20 of Kandalānu in the month of Tašrītu (VII),¹⁶⁷ the date formula of the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun was used in a legal document and its duplicate in the month of Šabāṭu (XI).¹⁶⁸

The letter SAA 22, 49 was probably written to Sîn-šarru-iškun in this year by a group of Nippurians who came to Uruk. According to this letter, the Urukians were worried about ending up in the enemy's hands like Nippur and were anxious to receive military assistance from Assyria.

SAA 22, 49, lines 16'–21':¹⁶⁹

- 16' . . . *pa-ni-šú-nu šá* ^{kur}*aš-š[ur^{ki}]*
 17' [*pa*]^l-*hu-ú um-ma* ^{kur}*aš-šur^{ki}* *ru-ú-qu šid-di ina* UGU-*hi-[ni]*
 18' [ŠĀ-*b*]*u-ú'* EN.LÍL^{ki} *ni-in-né-ep-pu-uš-ma* ŠU.2 ^{lú}KÚR *ni-x* [x x]
 19' [0] ^{kur}*aš-š[ur^{ki}]* *u tē-e-mu šá* LUGAL EN-*i-ni ki-i ni-i*[*d^l-bu-bu*]
 20' [0] *um-ma* LUGAL EN-*a-ni ki-i* [É *a-n*]a DINGIR^{mes} *u É*.[GAL x x]
 21' [0] *e-mu-qí-šú ma-a'-du-tu i-l*šap^l-*par-ku^l-nu-ši* [*it-tu-hu*]

They are oriented towards Assyria, but they are afraid and say: “Assyria is far away and the distance is against [us]. We'll be made [li]ke Nippur and [will end up] in the enemy's hands.” When we [reported] [(the news) about] Assyria and the command of the king, our lord, saying: “The king, our lord, is like [. . . t]o the gods and the pal[ace]; he will send his numerous forces to you,” they [calmed down].

This letter mentions Nabû-udammiq, the governor of Uruk, who is attested during the period of 623–621 BC. For this reason, it would seem possible to date the letter within this timeframe. However, the year 628 BC is also possible. During 623–621 BC, it would have been difficult for people to enter Uruk, which was under siege.

¹⁶⁶ Na'aman 1991a: 265.

¹⁶⁷ NCBT 1093; Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: L. 144.

¹⁶⁸ YBC 11414 (6/XI/0); published by Ellis 1984: 24. It has a duplicate AO 6820, published in TCL 12, 14. It records a legal decision about a house, mentioned by Nielsen 2011: 265, n. 164.

¹⁶⁹ The transliteration and translation follow SAA 22, 49.

The first date containing the phrase *edil bābi* in Uruk, “the closure of the gate,” occurs in 623 BC in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII).¹⁷⁰ It is likely that the siege of Uruk was a result of the activities of the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk, who fought back against their opponent, the party supporting Nabopolassar. After that, the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk closed the gates of Uruk in case Nabopolassar came to attack the city. Their initial activities were reported to Sîn-šarru-iškun through a letter. Therefore, it is unlikely that the group of Nippurians entered Uruk during this period. The year 628 BC better fits the context of the letter, as Uruk was under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun at the end of this year. It would have been likely for him to plan to send troops to ensure control there, just like in Babylon. This would put the appointment of Nabû-udammiq in 628 BC, which accords with my interpretation of the letter SAA 22, 48.¹⁷¹

627 BC

Nabopolassar controlled Uruk in 627 BC. It is unclear exactly how he came to achieve this control. There are no texts from Uruk dating to 627 BC. However, the chronicle ABC 2 (lines 7–9) provides some relevant information: Nabopolassar was defeated in Nippur and retreated to Uruk in the month of Tašrītu (VII) in 627 BC. This means that Uruk was under the control of Nabopolassar before the month of Tašrītu (VII) of 627 BC.

The fact that there are no extant texts from Uruk in 627 BC may well be explained by the major political turmoil caused by Nabopolassar’s takeover in this year. The chronicle ABC 2 (lines 1–4) mentions the presence of his army in Babylon before the month of Ulūlu (VI) of 627 BC. He probably controlled Uruk prior to that march. Nabopolassar’s progress was halted by the counteroffensive of Sîn-šarru-iškun. In the month of Tašrītu (VII), Nabopolassar was forced to retreat to Uruk. Although the Assyrian army chased him to Uruk and fought battles with him there, Nabopolassar was able to resist them until they retreated.

626–624 BC

During 626 BC, Nabopolassar made major progress, eventually ascending the throne of Babylon. Throughout his victorious march, Uruk remained his loyal supporter. Even before his accession in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII), Uruk had acknowledged his kingship. Some texts in Uruk are dated according to his reign in the months before his accession to the throne of Babylon. For example, NCBT

¹⁷⁰ SpTU II, 57, see Beaulieu 1997a: 382.

¹⁷¹ I discuss this letter in section 3.1.2.

557 is dated to the second month of the accession year of Nabopolassar,¹⁷² while PTS 2208 mentions a date 10/IV of his accession year. A letter (YOS 3, 7), dated Ayyaru (II) or Simānu (III) of 626 BC,¹⁷³ shows that the officials in Uruk acknowledged the kingship of Nabopolassar at that point. The letter was written to Nabopolassar by the three highest officials of the Eanna temple: the *qīpu*, *šatammu*, and *ṭupšarru*.

YOS 3, 7:¹⁷⁴

- 1 *ana* LUGAL KUR.KUR EN-*i-ni*
- 2 ÌR^{meš}-*ka* ^{md}KUR.GAL-KAL
- 3 ^mNÍG.DU *u* ^{md}AMAR.UTU-GAR-MU
- 4 UNUG^{ki} *u* É.AN.NA *a-na* LUGAL KUR.KUR
- 5 EN-*i-ni* *lik-ru-bu u₄-mu-us-su*
- 6 *ina* BAD KÁ [*ù*] *tur-ru* KÁ
- 7 ^dGAŠAN *šá* UNUG^{ki} *u* ^d*na-na*-(*a*)
- 8 *a-na* TIN ZI^{meš} GÍD.DA UD^{meš}
- 9 *ṭu-ub lib-bi ṭu-ub* UZU
- 10 DU SUHUŠ^{giš} GU.ZA LUGAL-*ú-tu*
- 11 *ù sa-kap* ^{lú}KÚR
- 12 *šá* LUGAL KUR^{meš} EN-*ni nu-šal-lu*
- 13 *šu-lum a-na* EN.NUN-*ti*
- 14 *šá* É.AN.NA É DINGIR^{meš}-*ka*
- 15 *gi-iz-zu ina* É DINGIR^{meš}-*ka*
- 16 *nu-ul-tir-ra ina pa-ni*
- 17 ^dGAŠAN *šá* UNUG^{ki} *u* ^d*na-na-a*
- 18 *a-na* LUGAL KUR.KUR EN-*ni ník-ta-rab*
- 19 *um*-[*ma a-g*]-*a-a lu-ú* IGI-*ú*
- 20 *šá* 1 ^rLIM *gi-iz*¹-*za-nu*
- 21 *a-na tar-ši* ¹*pa-ni*¹ *šá* LUGAL KUR.KUR
- 22 EN-^r*ni*

To the king of the lands, our lord, (thus say) your servants Amurru-udammīq, Kudurru and Marduk-šākin-šumi; may Uruk and the Eanna bless the king of the lands, our lord! Daily, at the opening of gate and at the closing of the gate, we are praying to the Lady of Uruk and Nanaya for the prosperity, long life, happiness, health, the enduring of the royal throne and the suppressing of the enemies of the king of the lands. All is well

172 Beaulieu 1997a: 369, n. 8 discusses the date of the text. He points out that Brinkman (1984: 110–111, n. 551) suggests that this text could be dated to the reign of Nabû-apla-iddina, a king in the early years of the ninth century, and argues that this date does not fit with the time span of the Eanna temple archive, where the earliest text is dated to the end of the eighth century.

173 Jursa 2014d: 108–109; Levavi 2017: 178–179.

174 The transliteration and translation follow Levavi 2017: 178.

with the service of the Eanna, the temple of your gods. We have begun the shearing in the temple of your gods. We are praying to the Lady of Uruk and Nanaya for the king of the lands, our lord, (saying), “may this be the first of 1000 shearings during the (reign of the) king of the lands, our lord!”

In this letter, Nabopolassar is referred to as “king of the lands,” rather than “king of Babylon,” which implies that he had not yet captured Babylon. Note that the title “king of the lands” was never used by Neo-Babylonian kings in their royal inscriptions.¹⁷⁵ They commonly used the titles “king of Babylon” and “king of Sumer and Akkad.” Except for Nabonidus, they avoided to use titles expressing royal ego in order to show their extreme humility before the gods, such as “great king,” “mighty king,” “king of the world,” and “king of the four quarters.” For this reason, the title “king of the lands” was also avoided. On the other hand, it is noticeable that “king of the lands” was also used in the letter (SAA 22, 61) sent by pro-Assyrian Urukians to address Sîn-šarru-iskun, the Assyrian king.¹⁷⁶ Because Sîn-šarru-iskun never assumed the throne of Babylon, they could not use the title “king of Babylon” for him. Furthermore, the Urukians had to choose a title that show the king’s authority over Babylonia to legitimise their pro-Assyrian stand. Therefore, the title “king of the lands” was used.

The intent of this letter was to report to the king that the shearing season had begun. The fact that Nabopolassar was informed of such minor details involved in the Eanna temple reflects the extent of his power. The letter also shows that Nabopolassar did not stay in Uruk as he was busy “suppressing of the enemies,” but he left his son, the future Nebuchadnezzar II, there.

During his rise to power, Nabopolassar appointed a group of high officials who were loyal to him and appointed his son Kudurru (Nebuchadnezzar II) as the *šatammu* of Eanna. Three of them are the authors of the letter YOS 3, 7: Amurru-udammiq, the *qīpu* of Eanna; Kudurru (Nebuchadnezzar II), the *šatammu* of Eanna; Marduk-šākin-šumi, the *tuṣšarru* of Eanna.¹⁷⁷ From 626–624 BC, Nabopolassar held Uruk steadily, as evidenced by the consistent, although moderate, number of texts that are dated according to his reign during these years.

623–621 BC

The situation changed totally in the years 623–621 BC. During this time, most of the documents are dated with the phrase (*ina edil bābi*), “(during) the closure of

175 For the royal titles of each king, see Da Riva 2008: 99–107.

176 For the analysis of this letter, see below.

177 For the attestations, see Beaulieu 1997a: 379.

the gate.”¹⁷⁸ Pro-Assyrian officials replaced the previous ones who were loyal to Nabopolassar.¹⁷⁹ They were Nabû-udammiq, son of Zēr-Bābili, the *šākin tēmi* of Uruk,¹⁸⁰ Gimillu, son of Nadnaya, the *šatammu* of Eanna,¹⁸¹ Na’id-Marduk, son of Um-19-ušur, the *qīpu* of Eanna,¹⁸² and Širiktu, probably the *tuššarru* of Eanna. There is evidence that the party loyal to Nabopolassar was seeking refuge in Cutha at that time. Nebuchadnezzar II, called the *šatammu* of Eanna, is attested in a text (VAT 8455) dated to year 5 of Nabopolassar (621 BC) from Cutha.¹⁸³ However, texts dated in Uruk according to the reigns of both Sîn-šarru-iškun and Nabopolassar are attested. While there are seven texts dated to the fifth to seventh year of Sîn-šarru-iškun (4/VIII/5, 12/VIII/5, 16/VI/6, 23/VII/6, 6/XI/6, 9/IV/7, 12/X/7),¹⁸⁴ there are four texts dated to the third to fifth year of Nabopolassar (22/IV/3, 26/I/4, 29/III/4, 16/V/5).¹⁸⁵

This phenomenon is unique. It seems that the political situation was so unclear that both date formulae were used in the city. In other words, the citizens of Uruk were not sure who would win the conflict, so they could only bet on the party they thought had more potential. This shows that the Assyrians did not fully control the city. It is likely that the spontaneous and independent activity of the pro-Assyrian party drove out the opposition party without the assistance of the Assyrian army.

The action of the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk may have been inspired by the situation outside of Uruk. In 623 BC, the Assyrians came down to Babylonia again, marching triumphally. They rescued Nippur from the siege of Nabopolassar. The fact that the Assyrian army had access to Nippur shows that Nabopolassar was not able to resist them any further north. Cities north of Nippur, such as Kish and Sippar, probably fell into the hands of Sîn-šarru-iškun. With the knowledge that Nabopolassar was struggling with Sîn-šarru-iškun in northern and central Babylo-

178 The main study of these documents is Beaulieu 1997a: 367–94. For some newer texts, see Da Riva 2002b: 249–251, and Da Riva 2003/2004: 245–254. During this siege, the city was under great economic pressures. The prices of prebend sales were significantly higher than they ever were before (and ever would be)—5 to 13 shekels per day at the beginning of the conflict to 20 shekels per day near the end of the siege (Pirngruber and Waerzeggers 2011: 125).

179 See Kleber 2008: 7–8; Beaulieu 1997a.

180 He is attested during VIII/623 to XI/622. For the texts, see Beaulieu 1997a: 379. Note that 4 *edil bābi* = *šattu ša edil bābi* = 5 Sîn-šarru-iškun = 623 BC

181 He is attested in VIII/623 to XI/622 and Year 14 of Kandalānu (without titles). For the texts, see Beaulieu 1997a: 380. Note that 4 *edil bābi* = *šattu ša edil bābi* = 5 Sîn-šarru-iškun = 623 BC.

182 He is attested as a beneficiary of *hansū* land. See Janković 2013: 368–369; Still 2019: 69, n. 25.

183 Kennedy 1986: T.5.22.

184 SpTU II, 57; NU 23; NU 12; NU 11; NU 10; AfO 24, 125; ZA 9, 398–399.

185 YBC 11538; BM 47446; PTS 2158; RT 36, 191–92.

nia, the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk took the opportunity to control the city. SAA 22, 61 is a report to Sîn-šarru-iškun presumably after they took control of Uruk.

SAA 22, 61.¹⁸⁶

Obv.:

- 1' [UNUG]^{ki} u 'É'¹. [AN.NA a-na LUGAL KUR.KUR]
- 2 [EN]-ia lik-ru-[bu x x x x]
- 3 [ina] BAD¹ KÁ ù šu-[luh-hi]
- 4 ina na-da-nu me-e Š[U.2^{me}]^š
- 5 ù šú-uh-mu¹ BUR¹.SAG
- 6 ^diš-tar u ^dna-na-a
- 7 a-na TIN ZI^{meš} GÍD.DA UD^{meš} ma-du-tu
- 8 kun-nu ŠUHUŠ^{giš}GUZA LUGAL-ú-tu
- 9 sak-kip^{lu} KÚR ša-la-mu
- 10 ši-pir ù ši-tul¹-ti šá^{lu}um-man
- 11 šá LUGAL KUR.KUR EN-ia ú-šal-la
- 12 ^{d+}EN ^dGAŠAN šá UNUG^{ki}
- 13 ^{d+}NÀ u ^dna-na-a ina sa-lim
- 14 dam-qa-a-ta hu-up-ti
- 15 DINGIR-ú-ti-šú-nu šir-ti
- 16 ina šá-ka-nu pa-ni
- 17 šá pa-ni-šú-nu a-na UGU-ḫi
- 18 ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki} dum-qí
- 19 iš-kun-nu-nu
- 20 ^{md+}NÀ-SIG₅-iq A-šú šá
- 21 ^mNUMUN-TIN.TIR^{ki}

Rev.:

- 1 ^mI-^dAMAR.UTU A-šú ša ^mUD-20.LÁ!.11-KÁM!-'PAB¹
- 2 ^mgi-mil-lu A-šú šá ^mnad-na-a
- 3 u ^{lu}DUMU¹-DÜ^{meš} šá UNUG^{ki}
- 4 a-ḫi-ia ul-ta-šu-nin¹-ni
- 5 um-ma a-ni-ni it-ti-ka
- 6 ^{lu}šá-IGI-É.GAL du-ú-ku
- 7 2 MA.NA KÙ.GI nid-dak-ka
- 8 KÁ ni-dí-il-ma a-ki-i
- 9 ša maḫ-ri-im-me pa-ni-ni
- 10 a-na ^{kur}aš-šur^{ki} ni-iš-kun
- 11 ina šu-li-e šá DINGIR^{meš} šá LUGAL
- 12 9 ERIM^{meš} up-ta-ḫir

186 The transliteration follows SAA 22, 61. The translation is based on SAA 22, 61, with modifications from the author.

- 13 *r[i]k-su aš-ta-kàs*
 14 [*šu-le*]-*e ina É^d za-ba₄-ba₄*
 15 [*i-na pa-an*]^{d7} *za-ba₄-ba₄¹¹ ki-i*
 16 [*ú-šal-lu-ú*]¹⁴ *šá-* [IGI-É.GAL]
 17 [*ad-duk* x x x x x]

Rest broken away

Side:

- 1 GÍD.DA *lu-ú a-lik* LUGA[L EN-a]
 2 1 KASKAL.GÍD *qaq-qa-ru ul-tu* [x x (x x)]
 3 LUGAL *lu-ú i-di*

May [Uruk] and E[anna] ble[ss] the king of the lands, m[y] [lord]!

[In . . . , in] gate-opening and lu[stration] ceremonies, [in] giving water [for washing the] h[ands], and in promptly serving the divine meal, I pray to Ištar and Nanaya for the good health, extremely long life, secure foundation of the royal throne, overthrow of the enemy, (and) the success of the work and council of the scholars of the king of the lands, my lord.

In the benevolent reconciliation of the superiority of their august godhead, Bēl, the Lady of Uruk, Nabû and Nanaya have decreed good fortune for Assyria by turning their faces towards (it).

Nabû-udammīq, son of Zēr-Bābili, Na'id-Marduk, son of Um-19-ušur, Gimillu, son of Nadnaya, and the noblemen of Uruk urged me to raise my arms, saying: "We are with you. Kill the palace overseer!" "We will give you two minas of gold, let's shut the gate, and let's place our trust in Assyria, just as previously!" With prayers to the gods of the king, I assembled nine men (and) made a contract (with them). Having [prayed] in the temple of Zababa [before] Zababa, [I killed] the [palace] over[seer]. (Break)

I should have gone a long way. The kin[g, my lord], is a distance of one league fro[m Uruk]. The king should know (this).

I suggest that this letter was written around 623 BC. First, in the prayer at the beginning of the letter, the author mentions "the enemy", implying that the king was engaged in a war. Furthermore, the reference to the gods turning their faces towards Assyria might signal that Šîn-šarru-iškun was winning the war against Nabopolassar. Lastly, the letter mentions that the pro-Assyrian party "locked the gate," which fits the situation in Uruk during 623 BC.

620 BC

Nabopolassar recaptured Uruk in 620 BC at the latest. After that, all the texts from Uruk are dated according to his reign and the phrase (*ina*) *edil bābi*, "(during) the closure of the gate," is no longer used.¹⁸⁷ After the capture, the officials who sup-

¹⁸⁷ See Beaulieu 1997a: 370.

ported Nabopolassar recovered their positions. Furthermore, there was a reorganisation in Uruk in favour of the party that supported Nabopolassar to the detriment of the pro-Assyrian party. During this reorganisation, naturally some individuals disputed ever having been members of the pro-Assyrian party. For example, BIN 1, 70 was written by Marduk and Innin-šumu-ušur to Marduk-šākin-šumi, the scribe of Eanna, during this reorganisation.¹⁸⁸ The senders claimed that they were mistaken as enemies of the king (Nabopolassar) and pleaded for fair treatment in income. They mentioned that they were in Uruk before the *nukurtu* (unrest). This term is attested in a date formula during 623–621 BC.¹⁸⁹ So they were trying to explain that they were in Uruk (supporting Nabopolassar) well before the power struggle during 623–621 BC.

4.2.5 Ur

No texts using the date formulae according to the reign of Nabopolassar have been found in Ur. However, an archive belonging to a certain Sîn-uballiṭ provides some information about the political situation in Ur.¹⁹⁰ Although the owner of the archive was a citizen of Ur, the texts in the archive were written in Babylon or other northern cities, such as Dilbat, Borsippa, and Šapiya. The archive was dated to Years 2 to 9 of Nabopolassar (624–617 BC) and bears witness to the owner's military duties that were carried out in the North. While doing his service away from home, Sîn-uballiṭ wrote letters to his wife and mother in Ur, asking assistance or dealing with family affairs. When Sîn-uballiṭ was able to return home in 617 BC, he brought his part of the archive with him and stored it with the letters he wrote to his families in a jar in his house.¹⁹¹ This archive suggests that Ur was in the steady control of Nabopolassar, at least from 624 BC. Otherwise, citizens of Ur would not have been in the military service for Nabopolassar, and communication between Ur and the North would not have been easy.

¹⁸⁸ For the edition, see Levavi 2018: No. 4. For its discussion, see Levavi 2017: 182–183 and 2018: 51, 63, 68, 78, 99, 118, and 201.

¹⁸⁹ A dating system solely using a year number and the formula *nukurtu ina māti* was used after the death of Kandalānu in Uruk. The first year according to this date system is 626 BC. The fourth, fifth, and sixth years are attested in Uruk, which is 623, 622, and 621 BC (Beaulieu 1997a: 375–379).

¹⁹⁰ For a brief summary of the archive, see Jursa 2005: 135–137. An edition of the archive is currently being prepared by Beaulieu.

¹⁹¹ Beaulieu 2021: 153–159.

4.2.6 Overview

This section provides an overview of the period (628–620 BC), from the rise of Sîn-šarru-iškun to the year Babylonia re-established its independence. During these eight years, the competition in Babylonia was furious and complex, while the social and political climate was chaotic.

628 BC: Sîn-šarru-iškun's Control in Babylonia

In 628 BC, a civil war between the king, Aššur-etel-ilāni, and his brother, Sîn-šarru-iškun, broke out in Assyria, which resulted in the accession of the latter to the Assyrian throne. Despite this, Nippur, a traditional Assyrian stronghold in central Babylonia,¹⁹² remained loyal to Aššur-etel-ilāni. Being aware of the history of rebellions in Babylonia, Sîn-šarru-iškun could not be cautious enough. On the eve of the victory over Aššur-etel-ilāni in Assyria, he sent troops to Babylonia to prevent rebellions. On account of its political significance, Babylon was one of the cities to which Sîn-šarru-iškun sent troops. The entry of the Assyrian army was peaceful, and a garrison was set up there. Another city that came under the control of Sîn-šarru-iškun was Uruk, the traditionally pro-Assyrian city in southern Babylonia. It seems that Sîn-šarru-iškun appointed a new governor to Uruk and Assyrian troops were also sent there to ensure control. The situation in Sippar was different. There is no evidence for the presence of the Assyrian army in the city. However, the date formula of the accession year of Sîn-šarru-iškun was used in the internal administrative memoranda of the Ebabbar temple. It seems that the elites of the Ebabbar temple did not need to be coerced to side with Assyria.

627 BC: The Rise of Nabopolassar and the Counterattack of Sîn-šarru-iškun

Sîn-šarru-iškun's efforts to prevent rebellions in Babylonia seem to have been in vain. Nabopolassar, at the time a general who, according to Berossos, was sent by Sîn-šarru-iškun, rebelled in 627 BC, probably with the support of the Sealand. It seems that he quickly controlled Uruk at some point and captured Babylon before the month of Ulūlu (VI). By the month of Ulūlu (VI), Nabopolassar's sphere of influence was extended to northern Babylonia, including Šaznaku, a town closed to Sippar. However, it appears that Nippur successfully resisted the army of Nabopolassar, who was still struggling to conquer the city in the month of Tašritu (VII).

In response to Nabopolassar's progress in Babylonia, Sîn-šarru-iškun launched a counter-attack in the month of Ulūlu (VI). The Assyrian troops began their march

192 For Nippur as a frontier settlement of the Assyrians, see Cole 1996b: 5–22.

south to Nippur, which likely followed the river course en route to Kish, bypassing Babylon. Their force was irresistible and many cities on their route were plundered. When they arrived in Nippur in the month of Tašritu (VII), Nabopolassar's forces were still struggling there. Sîn-šarru-iškun allied with the Nippurians, in order to fend off the force of Nabopolassar. Eventually, Nabopolassar was defeated and had to retreat. The allied forces chased Nabopolassar as far as Uruk. Although they were not able to eliminate Nabopolassar's force, Nabopolassar's influence seems to have been limited to Uruk. Babylon returned to using the date formula according to the reign of Kandalānu, as the result of this power vacuum.

As a result of the interference of Sîn-šarru-iškun, Nippur resolved the crisis, maintaining its status as the stronghold of Aššur-etel-ilāni. It is possible that the strategy of Sîn-šarru-iškun was to ally himself with Aššur-etel-ilāni temporarily to defeat Nabopolassar. Nabopolassar would have needed to eliminate the forces of Aššur-etel-ilāni to achieve total control of Babylonia. In hindsight, it was in his interest to help maintain the status of Nippur as the stronghold of Aššur-etel-ilāni in central Babylonia.

626 BC: Three Contenders in Babylonia

The last date according to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni in Nippur appears in his fourth year (627 BC). His position in Nippur was replaced by Sîn-šumu-lišir in 626 BC. It is probable that Aššur-etel-ilāni died or was usurped by Sîn-šumu-lišir in Nippur in 626 BC, who had been manipulating him since his accession. This year became the accession year of Sîn-šumu-lišir, who claimed kingship of Assyria.

With Nabopolassar's power limited to the south and Sîn-šarru-iškun at a distance in Assyria, it was an opportune time for Sîn-šumu-lišir to rise and expand his territory. Taking advantage of the power vacuum in Babylon, Sîn-šumu-lišir captured Babylon. His sphere of influence was extended as far north as Sippar. There was a schism of the elites of the Ebabbar temple—one party remaining loyal to Sîn-šarru-iškun as before, while another pledged loyalty to Sîn-šumu-lišir.

In the month of Ayyaru (II), the Assyrians came down to Babylonia again. Sîn-šarru-iškun may have considered it to be the right time to eliminate both of his rivals in Babylonia. The descent of the Assyrian army may have interfered with the power struggle in Sippar. As a result, Sîn-šarru-iškun actively controlled the city, while the pro-Sîn-šumu-lišir party fled to Nippur to seek refuge. However, Nippur was soon taken over by Sîn-šarru-iškun, at least by the month of Dūzu (IV). The Sipparian refugees had to move again. This time they went to Babylon, which was still under the control of Sîn-šumu-lišir, where they are attested in texts dating to the month of Abu (V) and Ulūlu (VI).

Even in the city of Babylon, Sipparian refugees were not safe. Nabopolassar came to capture Babylon in the month of Ulūlu (VI) at the latest. In the month of Tašritu (VII), the Assyrian army came to fight with Nabopolassar, possibly from Nippur. A date of 22 *arki* Kandalānu occurred during this fight, showing how uncertain the situation was. Eventually, Nabopolassar defeated Sîn-šarru-iškun's army and ascended to the throne in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII). At some point, Nabopolassar may have marched to Cutha to destroy the power of Sîn-šumu-lišir. However, Nippur was still in the hands of Sîn-šarru-iškun. A siege surrounding Nippur must have been made by Nabopolassar from this year, which would last for the following years until he seized the city.

625 BC: A Rebel in Ḫanigalbat and the Siege of Nippur

At the beginning of 625 BC, Nabopolassar captured Sippar, probably on the 17th day of Nisannu (I). After the capture, he carried the gods in Sippar and Šapazzu/Bāš to Babylon for protection, because those cities were vulnerable owing to their position on the border between Babylonia and Assyria. Sîn-šarru-iškun's army could not come to Babylonia, because there was a rebellion in Raqmat, a town in Ḫanigalbat. Therefore, Sîn-šarru-iškun may have shifted his focus away from the South.

During the months of Simānu (III), Dūzu (IV), and Abu (V), Sîn-šarru-iškun must have been preoccupied with the revolt in Ḫanigalbat. Nabopolassar lent his support to the uprising in the month of Abu (V). However, even with the help of Nabopolassar, the rebels did not take back the town of Raqmat, and Nabopolassar retreated.

Nippur became the only Babylonian city which was in the hands of Sîn-šarru-iškun up to this point. Sîn-šarru-iškun's force couldn't enter Babylonia this year. Therefore, Nippur's siege could not be lifted. The living situation inside the city, especially that of the lower strata of the society, was deteriorating quickly. A number of contracts recording the sale of children attests to this cruel reality.

624 BC: Sîn-šarru-iškun's Ill-fated Attack

Nabopolassar held most of Babylonia steadily in 624 BC. The chronicle ABC 2 records that Sîn-šarru-iškun sent an army down to Babylonia in the month of Ulūlu (VI). However, they could not go further south than the Banītu Canal. They set camps nearby and encountered resistance from Nabopolassar. Sippar, which is north of the Banītu Canal, was probably under the control of the Assyrians at that point. The Assyrians and the army of Nabopolassar fought several indecisive battles there, resulting in the retreat of the Assyrian army. It seems that with this failed attempt of Sîn-šarru-iškun, Nabopolassar still controlled most of Babylonia, except for Nippur, where texts dated by the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun are still attested in this year.

623 BC: The Assyrian Offensive and Sudden Halt

In 623 BC, the Assyrian army came down to Babylonia again, this time led by Sîn-šarru-iškun, the king of Assyria, who is not mentioned with the Assyrian army in other parts of the chronicle ABC 2.¹⁹³ The Assyrian army marched triumphantly,¹⁹⁴ rescuing Nippur from the siege of Nabopolassar, although the latter received assistance from Dēr, a city that rebelled against Assyria earlier in the same year. In response to the victories of the Assyrians, the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk expelled supporters of Nabopolassar and took over the city. This forced Nabopolassar to regroup in his territory, which was limited to Babylon and the nearby cities of Borsippa and Cutha. The exiled administrators of Eanna from Uruk are also attested in Cutha during this year.

Assyria's offensive was halted by a revolt in the West, which grew to the extent that it threatened Nineveh. Sîn-šarru-iškun must have realised the urgency of the situation and turned back to Assyria immediately to deal with the revolt. Nevertheless, the revolt was ultimately successful. The chronicle ABC 2 mentions that someone usurped the throne and probably ruled for one hundred days.¹⁹⁵

622–620 BC: The Victory of Nabopolassar

The withdrawal of Assyrian troops from Babylonia in 623 BC had a decisive impact on the competition between Nabopolassar and Sîn-šarru-iškun.¹⁹⁶ In the next two years, date formulae according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun are increasingly rare, while date formulae according to the reign of Nabopolassar become more frequent. The last date according to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun in Babylonia is from Uruk in 12/X of his seventh year (621 BC).¹⁹⁷ During 622–620 BC, date formulae according to the reign of Nabopolassar are attested in Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Uruk, Dilbat, and Cutha. In 620 BC, nearly a decade after Nabopolassar's initial rebellion (627 BC), Babylonia's independence was finally secure.

193 This is pointed out by Na'aman 1991a: 263.

194 Na'aman (1991a: 263) indicates that the number of the tablets dated to this year decreases significantly; this may well be explained by the Assyrian onslaught.

195 For the suggestion that the usurper was an Assyrian, possibly a commander of the Assyrian army in the West rather than a foreign prince, see Na'aman 1991a: 263; Cavaignac 1957: 28–29.

196 Na'aman 1991a: 264.

197 Brinkman and Kennedy 1983: O.45.

5 Elimination of Assyria (620–608 BC)

About a decade after Nabopolassar expelled the Assyrians from Babylonia, Ḫarran, the last capital of Assyria, fell to the firm control of the Babylonians, despite an ill-fated attack of the coalition of the Assyrians and the Egyptians (609 BC). In the following year (608 BC), Nebuchadnezzar II, continuing his father's expedition, conquered the southern part of the Urartu region. This marks the end of the Assyrian Empire, and the beginning of the competition between the Babylonians and the Egyptians over the control of the Levant.¹

The sources for this period consist of documentary and archaeological sources. Documentary sources include Babylonian chronicles, archival documents, royal inscriptions, and historical literature. The Hebrew Bible and Classical sources refer to this period, as well. The chronicle ABC 3 and the beginning of the chronicle ABC 4, provide a concise narrative of the events from the tenth year of Nabopolassar (616 BC) to his 19th year (608 BC).² Those accounts provide the backbone of the history of the period. However, since the chronicle ABC 2 breaks in the third year of Nabopolassar (623 BC), the situation between these dates remains open to speculation. There are also a few archival documents from Babylonia and the provinces of Assyria. Those documents were produced by both administrative institutions and private households, shedding some light on the political and social climate.

Not many royal inscriptions mention the fall of Assyria. Only four inscriptions of Nabopolassar (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], 06 [C31], 07 [C12], and 15 [C22]) and one inscription of Nabonidus (RINBE 2 Nabonidus 3)³ refer to this event. This is consistent with the royal ideology of the new dynasty. The Neo-Babylonian kings focused on the role of builder and restorer, rather than boasting of their military strength and territorial expansion in their inscriptions.⁴ Mentioning the fall of Assyria serves different purposes for the two kings. In order to legitimise his rulership, Nabopolassar is depicted as the conqueror of Assyria, which was viewed as an oppressor of Babylonia. The inscription of Nabonidus links the destruction of Assyria to that of Babylon by Sennacherib, which was described as a result of Marduk's wrath. Nabopolassar was called up by Marduk to return favour to Baby-

1 In 607 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II began to invade the upper Euphrates, capturing Kummuh. This was the first direct conflict between the Babylonians and the Egyptians, who controlled the Levant up to the upper Euphrates at that time.

2 For the edition of the chronicle ABC 3, see Grayson 1975a: 90–96; Glassner 2004: 218–225. For the edition of the chronicle ABC 4, see Grayson 1975a: 97–98; Glassner 2004: 224–227.

3 RINBE 2: 59–72.

4 Da Riva 2008: 28–29 and 108–113.

lon after his wrath relented. Marduk further provided Nabopolassar with a powerful ally, the Medes.⁵ Nabonidus claimed that destruction of the cult centres in Assyria was done solely by the Medes, while Nabopolassar “did not lay his hand(s) upon any of the rituals of the gods.”⁶ In this way, Nabonidus, the promoter of the god Šin, attributed the responsibility of destroying the temple of Šin in Ḥarran solely to the Medes, giving to himself the pure honor of rebuilding that temple.

Additionally, some historical literature from later periods features the theme of the victory of Nabopolassar over the Assyrian Empire, namely the two letters between Nabopolassar and Šin-šarru-iškun,⁷ both of which are likely fictional.⁸ Some textual materials from outside Mesopotamia which feature the sack of Nineveh are preserved. The fall of Nineveh was referred to by the Hebrew Bible (Nahum 2). Passages on the fall of Nineveh in the *Persica* of Ctesias, who was an official in the Persian court at Susa in the early fourth century, are preserved in the writings of Diodorus of Sicily (first century BC).⁹ These narratives parallel Sennacherib’s account of the destruction of Babylon, in which a flood is said to have turned the city into ruins.¹⁰

The last but not the least source is the archaeological material of this period from the sites in the Assyrian heartland and provinces,¹¹ revealing the details of the battles, including the defence measures, the number of attacks, and the degree of violence and destruction. The picture emerging from this evidence supplements that of the textual evidence, providing a fuller understanding of the history of this period.

5 RINBE 2 Nabonidus 3, col. I, line 20’–col. II, line 13’.

6 RINBE 2 Nabonidus 3, col. II, lines 36’–38’: *la ú-bil ŠU.II-sú / a-na pel-lu-de-e / DINGIR^{mes} ka-la-ma*.

7 The letter of Nabopolassar, *Declaring War* is dated to the Achaemenid or Seleucid period; the letter of Šin-šarru-iškun claims to be a Hellenistic copy of a Babylonian original from Esagil. For the former, see Gerardi 1986; De Breucker 2015: 77; for the latter and a discussion of both texts, see Lambert 2005; Goldstein 2010: 200; De Breucker 2015: 78. Both letters are edited in Frazer 2024: No. A16 (*The Letter of Šin-šarru-iškun to Nabopolassar*) and No. A17 (*Declaring War*).

8 No consensus has been reached concerning the authenticity of the letter of Šin-šarru-iškun, see Lambert 2005: 205; Frahm 2005: 44 and Da Riva 2017a: 81.

9 For an edition of all the fragments written by Ctesias, see Lenfant 2004. For the translations, see Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010. For the ancient Near Eastern context of Ctesias’ *Persica*, see Waters 2017.

10 Van de Mierop 2004: 2–4. For more discussions of the flood imagery in Nahum 2 and the writings of Ctesias, see Machinist 1997: 189–195; Stronach 1997: 319–321; Pinker 2006; Crouch 2015.

11 Although the dating and interpretation of these remains is highly contested.

Joannès has reconstructed and analysed the Babylonian process to eliminate the Assyrian state and its territorial expansion after that during the period 616–604 BC. He analysed the pace and the means of war, and examined the intent and military strategy of the Babylonians in different phases. According to him, this process can be divided into three stages. The first stage was from 616 BC to 612 BC, during which the Babylonians managed to cut off the Assyrian heartland from its western provinces and destroy major cities in the Assyrian centre; the second stage (612–608 BC) featured the destruction of the eastern part of Assyrian territories and the last capital in the West, Ḫarran; the third stage (607–605 BC) focused on the conquest of Syria and the Levant. Joannès concludes that there were two reasons for the success of eliminating the Assyrians: (1) the role of the Medes in this endeavor was limited to assisting in the conquest of the Assyrian capitals, but was decisive, because the Medes helped to tip the balance of military force in favour of Nabopolassar and constrict the Assyrians' movement to a different location to recover; (2) Nabopolassar had a long-term plan, weakening the Assyrians step by step over a long period, in order "to compensate for its own modest manpower and resources."¹²

Agreeing with Joannès, this chapter provides a more detailed description of the process to eliminate the Assyrian state, divided into four stages: conquest of the west passage along the Euphrates, the Assyrian heartland, the Upper Tigris, and Ḫarran. First, I examine the geopolitical background at the end of the seventh century BC, contextualising the fall of Assyria within the broader ancient Near East.

5.1 The Shrinking Assyrian Empire

During the last decades of the seventh century, the Assyrian Empire was losing its control in the peripheries. One such area was Media, which is located east of the Assyrian heartland.¹³ The Assyrian Empire had a long history of interaction with the Medes, from horse trade, periodical raids by the Assyrians, to absorbing some Median areas into the Assyrian provincial system. The Assyrian sources from the ninth to the early half of the seventh century show that the Medes were organised

¹² Joannès 2008.

¹³ Gopnik 2017: 52 argues that the Median cities have several common elements in the location: on the edge of valleys, therefore accessible to both lowland for agriculture and highland for animal husbandry; on travel routes, therefore accessible to and in control of the trade routes. Another common element among the Medes is their supreme skills as horseback warriors, as Radner (2003a: 64) points out.

along various local powers, whose leaders were called *bēl āli*, “city lord.”¹⁴ In contrast, the Babylonian sources indicate that they had a centralised state which was ruled by a single king: in the chronicle ABC 3 (line 38), Umakištar (Cyaxares) is referred to as “the king of the Ummān-manda” in 612 BC, and the chronicle ABC 7 implies that Ištumegu (Astyages) was the king of the Medes, for his city Agamtanu (Ecbatana) was called “the royal city” (col. II, lines 1–4). This leads to an idea that towards the end of the seventh century, the independent tiny “kingdoms” of the Medes had been absorbed into a unified Median state, which took Hamadan as a permanent capital.¹⁵ However, instead of a united state, an unstable confederacy of various Median city-states makes more sense.¹⁶ The image presented by the chronicles may lack historical validity. The chronicler probably either imposed the model of the Mesopotamian state on it or intended to give the impression that

14 For the consistent power structure of the Medes attested in Assyrian sources, see Radner 2003a: 44–62. For a Median sanctuary at Bit-Ištar, see Radner 2003b.

15 Diakonoff 1985: 115; Reade 2003: 151.

16 The existence of a Median empire after the fall of Assyria has been rejected. According to the narrative of Herodotus, the Medes controlled Iran, Armenia, eastern Anatolia, and northern Mesopotamia after the fall of Assyria (Rollinger 2003: 289). However, the historical authenticity of this narrative has been doubted. A seminal workshop was held in 2001 to discuss Median empire/territory/entity (Lanfranchi, Roaf, and Rollinger [eds.] 2003). Rollinger, among others, argues that Herodotus’s idea of a Median empire may be inspired by the Median participation in the fall of Assyria and modeled on other empires, such as the Assyrian and Persian empires (Rollinger 2003: 316). Different works have established that there is no evidence that the Medes controlled Persia (Kienast 1999: 65; Rollinger 1999: 127–134), the Assyrian heartland (Kuhrt 1995: 241–243; Jursa 2003: 172–174), Syria and the Upper Euphrates (Rollinger 2003). Furthermore, the existence of a Median cultural entity has been challenged as well. There is no object currently discovered representing a Median culture, since the artifacts unearthed in Median sites were either contemporarily widespread in the Near East, or heavily influenced by Assyrian culture (Curtis 2003: 165). Certain elements of Median culture in architecture and pottery have been identified (Stronach 2003: 247). However, there is a lack of homogeneity in either of the two among the Median sites, even in the Median heartland, the geographical triangle with Hamadan, Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe as the three points. The similar pottery and architecture in Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe have not been identified in the current excavations at Hamadan (Stronach 2003: 236). Boucharlat (2020: 141–156) also questions the existence of the concept of Median architecture, which was built on the similarities among the buildings in “Median” forts, such as Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe. He argues that the differences between the Central Asian buildings on the one hand and the Iranian forts on the other hand were underestimated and discovers a lack of homogeneity for the buildings in Western Iran. The sharing of some culture elements among different cities could have been achieved through economic, social, or political interactions, such as trade, political coalition.

the ally of Nabopolassar was in an equal state of civilisation with the Babylonians, so that Nabopolassar could avoid being allied with a group of barbarians.¹⁷

It is known that the Median cities often allied with each other to fight against the Assyrian Empire. An oracle query by Esarhaddon reveals how the Medes initiated alliances through correspondence. The query mentions that Kaštaritu, the city lord of Kār-kašši, wrote to Mamitāršu, another Median city lord as follows: “Let us act together and break away from Assyria.”¹⁸ The last information from Assyrian sources is that the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal had a battle with an alliance of three Median city lords: Birishatri, Sarrati, and Parihia.¹⁹ After that, there is no information about Assyrian interaction with the Medes, but the next time the Medes appear in Mesopotamian sources, they are allied with Nabopolassar and participate in the conquest of the Assyrian heartland.

Similarly, the Assyrian Empire was losing its influence in its southern Levantine provinces in its last decades, which is evident by the reforms of Josiah of Judah in the 620s BC. Josiah of Judah (640–609 BC) took advantage of the decline of Assyrian influence in the Levant to initiate his program of religious reforms.²⁰ The reform aimed at eliminating gods other than Yahweh, including those gods introduced into Judah by the Assyrians for political control or along with cultural influence.²¹ When the contraction of Assyria in the Levant occurred is debatable. While some studies suggest that Assyrian influence began to decline by about the end of the 640s, others propose that the western periphery of the Empire was still under the firm control of Assyria before the 620s.²²

Another problem concerning the withdrawal of the Assyrians from the Levant is whether there was a Scythian invasion. So far, no consensus has been reached on the acceptance of the account of Herodotus about the Scythians’ onslaught down the coast of the Levant. Redford argues that the possibility for such

¹⁷ Gopnik 2017: 48. Furthermore, it may explain why the Medes did not absorb part of the territory of the Assyrian Empire into their territory. It is not they did not want to, but rather they were not able to, lacking the administrative capacity (Melville 2011: 23).

¹⁸ SAA 4: 41.

¹⁹ RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 006, col. V, lines 6–7.

²⁰ There are different datings of the event in Biblical sources. 2 Kings provides a date no earlier than 622 BC (2 Kings 22:3); 2 Chronicles 36:3 (2 Chronicles 34:3). There is no consensus on which one is more plausible. For discussions, see Vanderhooft 1999: 68.

²¹ It has been argued that this religious reform occurred at the death of Ashurbanipal, and it is the beginning of the decline of the Assyrian control in the Levant, for example, by Cross and Freedman (1953: 56–58). However, it is not necessary to correlate the death of Ashurbanipal and the religious reform of Josiah, even if his reform was in connection with the decline of the Assyrian control in the Levant.

²² Vanderhooft 1999: 65–66. For a later extraction, see Na’aman 1991b: 34–38.

an event to happen is conceivable, and the incursion could be dated to 641–640 BC.²³ However, doubts on the historical reliability of this account have been raised since the 1910s, since neither documents nor material culture from the ancient Near East can confirm this hypothesis so far.²⁴

On the other hand, evidence shows that Assyrian control continued in northern Syria and southern Anatolia. Provincial governors in the Upper and Middle Euphrates region and Cilicia were included among the post-canonical eponyms. Archaeological evidence shows that Til-Barsip/Kār-Shalmaneser (modern Tell Ahmar) was under Assyrian control until the very end of the seventh century.²⁵ The most decisive evidence is that the Assyrian crown prince Aššur-uballiṭ fled to Ḫarran where he made his last stand after the fall of Nineveh (612 BC).

While Assyria retreated from the Levant, Egypt began to extend its influence in the area. This occurred by the end of the reign of Psammetichus I (664–610 BC), founder of the 26th dynasty of Egypt. Psammetichus I ascended the throne with the support of the Assyrians. Later he united Egypt at the cost of the petty rulers in Lower and Middle Egypt.²⁶ With this centralised power, Egypt was able to throw off the yoke of Assyria by the mid-650s BC. Sometime before 653 BC, Egypt stopped delivering tribute to Assyria, and removed the Assyrian garrison in Memphis.²⁷ In the inscription of Prism A of Ashurbanipal, a coalition between Lydia and Egypt is recorded, and Psammetichus I is described as one “who had cast off the yoke of my lordly majesty.”²⁸

Although the evidence for an earlier control of Egypt over the Levant is indirect or disputed, the presence of the Egyptians in the Levant in the last two decades of the seventh century is certain. A scarab bearing the Horus name of Psammetichus I (Uah-ib-Ra) was found in Stratum IX, Area A of Yavneh-Yam, probably dated to ca. 620 BC.²⁹ By the end of the reign of Psammetichus I, Egypt’s hegemony was extended along the Levantine coast as far as and including Phoenicia. There is record of Egyptian officials supervising timber production and exportation in that area during the reign of Psammetichus I. However, the details for Egypt to assume control over the Levantine coast are not clear. Some major Philistine cities, such as Gaza and Ashkelon, may have been voluntarily subject to

23 Redford 1992: 438–445.

24 Na’aman 1991b: 36–37.

25 Bunnens 1997: 25.

26 Vanderhooff 1999: 69; Na’aman 1991b: 38–41.

27 Vanderhooff 1999: 69.

28 RINAP 5/1 Ashurbanipal 011, col. II, line 115. For the dating of the alliance of Lydia and Egypt, see Cogan and Tadmor 1977: 84.

29 Fantalkin 2001: 132.

Egypt. Some of the southern Phoenician city states, such as Tyre and probably Arwad, were under the control of Egypt well before the end of the reign of Psammetichus I. Egypt also controlled Lebanon, as one text from 613 BC reveals that an Egyptian royal courtier was appointed over the rulers of Lebanon, and Egypt imposed the same tax on Lebanon as the land of Egypt.³⁰ During the process of expansion, mercenary troops were hired by the Egyptians in garrisons of the Levant. Greek garrison troops are attested with material and textual evidence in different areas.³¹

After the Babylonians gained their independence from Assyria and began to wage war in the Assyrian provinces in the Middle Euphrates, Egypt and Assyria made an alliance.³² This can be understood as Egypt's effort to restore the status quo in Mesopotamia.³³ It was not in the interest of the Egyptians for either Assyria or Babylonia to hold firm control over the other. Keeping conflict and balance between the two countries would prevent the formation of a single unified state in Mesopotamia, which would otherwise be able to compete with Egypt in the Levant and potentially even threaten Egypt's independence. However, despite the Egyptians' best efforts, the Babylonians would eventually eliminate all Assyrian power in the region, going on to take over the Levant and threaten Egyptian sovereignty, just as they had feared.

The situation in the northern periphery of the Assyrian Empire, Urartu, in the latter half of the seventh century was complicated. During the eighth century BC, it comprised a large territory that centred around Lake Van and extended from Lake Sevan in the North to the Zagros Mountains in the South, and from Lake Urmiya in the East to the Upper Euphrates in the West. Urartu is frequently attested in the Assyrian sources dated to this century, evidencing frequent and intense conflicts between the two states. At the end of the eighth century, during the reign of Sargon II, Assyrian sources attest that the Cimmerians invaded Urartu and caused great destruction and also that a rebellion occurred within the Urartian court. In 714 BC, Sargon II conducted a military campaign against Urartu and sacked its primary cult centre Muşaşir.³⁴ From this period onwards, Urartu went into decline. During the reign of Ashurbanipal (669–631 BC), Urartu was likely reduced to the status of a vassal of Assyria. An Ištār/Issar-duri

³⁰ For the details, see Redford 1992: 442.

³¹ Redford 1992: 445.

³² I discuss this alliance in detail below.

³³ Na'aman (1991a: 39) and Reade (2003: 152) suggest that Assyria delivered those territories to Egypt for an agreement of alliance.

³⁴ For studies on the historical and geographical reconstruction of this campaign, see RINAP 2: 273–271.

(Sarduri), king of Urartu, was recorded sending tribute to Ashurbanipal between 646 and 642 BC.³⁵ It has been generally agreed that the evidence of the written sources concerning Urartu (Assyrian and Urartian) ends in the 640s BC. Archaeological excavations show that there is a destruction level in Urartu, presumably dated to the late seventh century BC, with some disagreements about precise dating.³⁶

Based on all evidence, it is likely that the Urartian state fell shortly after the middle of the seventh century. Rusa, son of Argišti, in the second quarter of the seventh century BC, was the last powerful ruler of Urartu.³⁷ Therefore, the Sarduri who is attested as a ruler of Urartu in Assyrian sources between 646 and 642 BC, was not a king of a powerful regional state anymore, but rather a petty ruler of a small territory.³⁸ There are several references to Urartu in the Neo-Babylonian chronicles, as well as the so-called Babylonian World Map.³⁹ These references designate the area previously occupied by the state of Urartu, rather than the political entity of Urartu, which no longer existed.⁴⁰ The same could be applied to Mannea, a state located to the northeast of Assyria, a buffer-zone be-

35 However, it is uncertain whether or not this delivery was seen as a tribute from the perspective of the Urartians. For a summary of the political history of Urartu, see Kroll et al. 2012a: 9–20.

36 Muscarella 2012: 276. Rollinger (2008) argues that Urartu was destroyed by Cyrus II in 547 BC based on the chronicle ABC 7 (col. II, lines 15–17), which records that Cyrus II defeated a state, whose name begins with *ú*. Following Joachim Oelsner's collation, he reconstructs the name as *kurru¹-[raš-tu]* (col. II, line 16). However, this reconstruction seems not convincing enough as it would make it a single broken attestation in the sixth century BC (Kroll et al. 2012b: 446, n. 4.) Further collations have been made since Oelsner (Rollinger and Kellner 2019: 161–166), and the most popular proposal currently is made by van der Spek: KUR Lu-ú-[du GI]N (Rollinger and Kellner 2019: 164). Because of the lack of absolute certainty for any reading, the toponym should be approached in a different way. Rollinger and Kellner (2019) argue that Urartu is the most convincing candidate through the contextualisation of the whole text passage.

37 For the possible kings of Urartu after Rusa, son of Argišti, see Kroll et al. 2012a: 11, table 01.02. Recent studies show that some of them were princes or high officials during the reign of Rusa, son of Argišti. Furthermore, there is a Rusa, son of Erimena, as the king of Urartu. His reign should be placed before Rusa, son of Argišti (Kroll 2012: 183–186; Kroll et al. 2012b: 446).

38 Kroll et al. 2012b: 446. Meanwhile, who was the destroyer(s) of the Urartian state and who reoccupied the previous Urartian sites is still under scholarly discussion. After the fall of the Urartian state, destruction prevailed at most major centres and only a few sites such as Arinberd were reoccupied. Different proposals have been made concerning the ethnicity of the people and the level of administration in those “post-Urartian” sites. Some studies propose that the destruction was caused by the Median expansion, while others suggest that it was connected to the formative stage of the Armenian kingdom (Kroll et al. 2012b: 446).

39 Horowitz 1998: 20.

40 Kessler 1986; Hellwag 2012: 227–233.

tween Urartu, Assyria, and Media.⁴¹ In the chronicle ABC 3 (line 5),⁴² Mannea was said to come to Assyria's assistance. It is probable that the term only refers to mercenaries from the traditional area of the Mannean state, rather than the political entity of Mannea.⁴³

To the southeast of Babylonia is located the land of Elam. During the years 653–645 BC, Ashurbanipal launched a series of campaigns against Elam, resulting in large-scale destruction. After that period, archaeological and epigraphical sources from the Elamite region and Assyria indicate that a Susa-based Neo-Elamite monarchy re-emerged. Especially important are the Susa Acropole texts, which date from the late seventh century to the early sixth century. Recording the management of various goods by the local palace at Susa, this archive not only proves the continuity of royal power in Susa, but also sheds much light on the tripartite structure of the Neo-Elamite kingdom:⁴⁴ the Elamite-Mesopotamian border region in Susiana, the centre of Susiana, and the highlands. In the centre of Susiana, a centralised state, with Susa as capital, managed an administrative network, while in the other two regions, strong local rulers of different people were distributed. In the Acropole archive, they are referred to by the title of *sunki* (EŠŠANA/LUGÁL as the logogram), “king.” In the Neo-Assyrian sources, they are called *nasīku*, “sheikh,” and their territory, “the land of the sheikhs.” In the lowlands, several sheikhs are attested, such as the sheikhs of the Zari people (in the Elamite-Babylonian border region), the Samatian people (in the Zagros foothills to the North), and the people of the land of Zamin (in the Tupliyaš area near the Babylonian border).⁴⁵ In the highlands, inscriptions and one relief (EKI 75) belonging to Hanni, a ruler of Ayapir, a vassal of the Elamite state, were discovered.⁴⁶ There was also a ruler named Huban-šuturuk in the area of Gisat.⁴⁷

One of the first deeds of Nabopolassar in his accession year was to return several cult statues from Uruk, which had been taken by the Assyrians, to Susa, probably to foster an alliance with the Elamite state.⁴⁸ This is supported by some evidence from the types of destruction found at Nineveh. In Room XXXII of the

41 For a discussion about the state during the Neo-Assyrian period, see Radner 2013.

42 Grayson 1975a: 91; Glassner 2004: 219.

43 Reade (2003: 152) argues that the state of Mannea may have been disintegrated at that time, and the Manneans in the chronicle ABC 3 could have been Mannean mercenaries hired by Assyria.

44 For a summary of this archive, see Henkelman 2008: 5–6.

45 Gorris and Wicks 2018: 257.

46 He is referred to as *kutur*, which means “leader, chief” in Elamite.

47 For an overview of the political landscape of the Elamite region in this period, see Wicks 2019: 28–30.

48 The cult statues probably include the goddess Nanaya of Uruk, and the mostly likely Assyrian king who sent the statue from Susa to Uruk is Ashurbanipal (Frame 1992: 202).

South-West Palace in Nineveh, reliefs concerning Elam were found to have been selectively defaced, presumably during the sack of the city in 612 BC, including a depiction of two Assyrian soldiers killing the Elamite king Te'umman and his son and the Assyrian scribes who recorded the event, a depiction of Ummanigaš, the pro-Assyrian king of Madaktu and a caption concerning his installation, as well as a depiction of two Elamite ambassadors who appeared among the Assyrians.⁴⁹ This selective defacement reveals that Nabopolassar either hired some mercenaries from Elam or had Elam as an ally, who provided troops for the attack of Nineveh.

That the Babylonians and the Elamites would form a coalition should come as no surprise, especially because it had precedents. During the reign of Sargon II, Marduk-apla-iddina II, the Chaldean tribal chieftain, received assistance from Elam, and was able to achieve the independence of Babylonia from the Assyrians for a certain amount of time.⁵⁰ A marriage between him and a woman from the royal family of Elam was concluded, from which a son with the Elamite royal name Huban-nikaš was born.⁵¹ There is also evidence showing that Elam attempted to seek alliance with (cities of) Babylonia. During the reign of Te'umman (664–653 BC), horses and horse trappings were sent to the Eanna temple, in order to make Uruk an anti-Assyrian ally.⁵²

5.2 Campaigns on the West Passage along the Euphrates (616 and 613 BC)

Nabopolassar's invasion of the cities on the banks of the Middle Euphrates, as Melville notes, marked a new phase of the war between Assyria and Babylonia (for the various sites in the Middle Euphrates region, see Figure 4).⁵³ Up to this point, the Babylonian revolt was no different from previous ones, where the frontiers of the war were never pushed north into the Assyrian heartland and the western territory of the Assyrian Empire; Nabopolassar was able to do so for the first time.

In Nabopolassar's tenth year (616 BC), he went on a campaign in the Middle Euphrates. The land of Suḫu and Ḫindanu submitted to him without a fight in the

⁴⁹ Reade 1992: 88; Reade 2003: 154.

⁵⁰ Brinkman 1965.

⁵¹ Waters 2002: 87.

⁵² Waters 1999.

⁵³ Melville 2011: 16.

month of Ayyaru (II).⁵⁴ He then captured Gablini in the month of Abu (V), as well as Manê, Saḥiri, and Balīḥu. In the month of Ulūlu (VI), Nabopolassar deported Ḥindanians and kidnapped their gods to Babylon.⁵⁵

The land of Suḥu and Ḥindanu were located near the modern Iraqi border with Syria. Gablini, Manê, and Saḥiri were on the left bank of the Euphrates between the confluence of the Balīḥu and the confluence of Ḥabur river.⁵⁶ As for the location of Balīḥu, no consensus has been reached yet. While Joannès identifies it with the site Tell Sabi Abyad, upstream of the Balīḥu river,⁵⁷ Astour thinks that it was located near the confluence of the Balīḥu with the Euphrates.⁵⁸

This year (616 BC) also witnessed the coalition of Egypt and Assyria, which pushed back the Babylonians led by Nabopolassar to Gablini in the month of Taš-rītu (VII). After that, the coalition did not march further, but withdrew.⁵⁹ This shows that Assyria and Babylonia fell into a deadlock. Neither had the strength or confidence to mount an all-out invasion of the territory of the other.⁶⁰

The people of Suḥu rebelled three years later, the 13th year of Nabopolassar (613 BC). The rebellion started in the month of Ayyaru (II) and Nabopolassar reacted quickly, marching to Suḥu right away. The chronicle ABC 3 (lines 31–36) details the battles Nabopolassar waged against Raḥīlu (Raḥi-ilu) and Anat during his suppression of the revolt, mentioning the adoption of siege engines against the enemy. It seems that the king of Assyria came to assist the rebels when Nabopolassar besieged Anat. It is unclear how exactly the siege ended, since there is a lacuna in the chronicle (lines 36–37). Grayson suggests that Nabopolassar captured Anat before the arrival of the Assyrian army. He does not reconstruct the part pertaining to what happened to the Assyrian and Babylonian army, but provides a reconstruction of the last sentence of this section, i.e. “He (the king of

⁵⁴ For more about the conquest of Suḥu, see Clancier 2021: 494–496. For Suḥu in general, see Clancier 2021; Edmonds 2024.

⁵⁵ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 1–9 (Grayson 1975a: 91; Glassner 2004: 219).

⁵⁶ For Gablini being adjacent to the confluence of Ḥabur river, see Zadok 1985: s.v. Gablini 2. In a text from 180 AD, Gablini, called Gabalein, was a centre of a district including the confluence of the Ḥabur river, see Astour 1992: 38, n. 232. Manê and Saḥiri (called Zahiran in texts from Ebla) were located in the same section of the left bank of the Euphrates, see Astour 1992: 37.

⁵⁷ Joannès 2008: 214.

⁵⁸ Astour 1992: 38.

⁵⁹ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 10–11 (Grayson 1975a: 91; Glassner 2004: 219).

⁶⁰ Melville (2011: 17) suggests that the purpose of Nabopolassar at this point was simply to keep the Assyrians out of Babylonia. She indicates that when the Egyptians and Assyrians pushed back, Nabopolassar did not want to confront them, for he had no ambition to destroy the whole Assyrian Empire yet.



Figure 4: Sites in the Middle Euphrates region and the Assyrian heartland.

Akkad) went home.”⁶¹ Glassner has a different reconstruction: Nabopolassar did not capture the city, and after the Assyrian army arrived, the Babylonians retreated before them.⁶²

The purpose of Nabopolassar’s campaigns in the Middle Euphrates region was either simply to keep the Assyrians out of Babylonia by cutting off the passage into Babylonia from the West,⁶³ or to prepare for the invasion into the Assyrian heartland by cutting the western support for the Assyrians.⁶⁴ It is notable that the cities in the H̄abur region were not coming to assist the Assyrians, and Nabopolassar left out that area. It shows that the trend to be independent from the Assyrian state had already started at this point.⁶⁵ The chronicle ABC 3 (lines 47–49a) also records that after the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC, the people of Ruṣāpu (Raṣappa in Assyrian texts) came to Nabopolassar at Nineveh, probably to show

⁶¹ Grayson 1975a: 94.

⁶² Glassner (2004: 221) interprets the lines 36–39 as: “[. . .], he brought assault towers up to the wall, joined battle in the town but [did not take it (?), . . . The king of] Assyria went down with his troops, and the king of Akkad [withdrew (?)] with his troops.”

⁶³ Melville 2011: 17.

⁶⁴ Joannès 2008: 214.

⁶⁵ After the fall of Nineveh, Dūr-Katlimmu, the centre of the H̄abur region, was showing some elements of independence from the authority of the Assyrian crown prince Aššur-uballiṯ, who fled to H̄arran. This trend of independence is likely connected with the continuous occupation during the Assyrian/Babylonian transitional phase in the H̄abur region.

submission.⁶⁶ This Assyrian provincial capital is possibly identified with present-day Reṣāfa/Ruṣāfa, a location in Jebel Bishri below the Baḷiḥu region.⁶⁷ Ruṣāpu had great strategic value to Nabopolassar as it offered an ideal base to campaign in the Upper Euphrates, for example, against Ḥarran.⁶⁸

5.3 Campaigns in the Assyrian Heartland

After the conquest of the Middle Euphrates, Nabopolassar began to target the cities in the Assyrian heartland (for the sites in the Assyrian heartland, see Figure 4). According to Melville, the Assyrians never adopted an effective defensive strategy in the heartland. A notion that the best defence is offense had been fostered before and during the Assyrian imperial expansion.⁶⁹ Considering Assyrian cities in the heartland to be primarily centres of politics, commerce, religion, and royal ideology, the Assyrians neglected defence to promote instead accessibility in peacetime.⁷⁰ The best example is Nineveh. Although Nineveh's city wall is thick and high, backed by a lower stone curtain wall, this defensive utility was compromised by fifteen gates and the unusually elongated shape of the site, for those long walls had to be manned during an attack, which means the Assyrian army had to be stretched thin to defend them.⁷¹

5.3.1 Conquest of the Arrapḥa Area (616–615 BC)

The chronicle ABC 3 records the Babylonian campaigns in the area of Arrapḥa (modern Kirkuk),⁷² the southern edge of the Assyrian heartland during 616–615 BC. In the month of Addaru (XII) of the tenth year of Nabopolassar (616 BC), the

⁶⁶ Levavi (2019: 67, 68) suggests that the Raṣappians came to pledge their loyalty to Nabopolassar.

⁶⁷ Parpola 2017. For Raṣappa (Ruṣāpu in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 263.

⁶⁸ The area of Raṣappa had some economic importance in the Neo-Babylonian period. See Da Riva 2002a: 216–220.

⁶⁹ For the historical background and the manifestation of this strategy, see Melville 2011: 23–25.

⁷⁰ Assyrian cities were built with standard defensive properties. For example, Assur is built on the natural advantage of the site. The northern side of the city is on high cliffs, and the eastern side is on the bank of the courses of the Tigris, while a moat and double walls were built on the third side (Stronach 1997: 307–308). However, there were defensive weaknesses in different cities, see Melville 2011: 25–26.

⁷¹ Stronach 1997: 311–321; Melville 2011: 26.

⁷² For Arrapḥa in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 29.

Babylonians had a battle with the Assyrians at Madanu, a town near Arrapha, and won a major victory.⁷³ It is notable that the battle happened at the end of the year, the end of winter. It is known that military expeditions often began in the spring and summer, and the army usually went back home before the winter, owing to the difficulty caused by the severe weather in wintertime. The fact that the Babylonians remained in the area of Arrapha in the wintertime indicates that the Babylonians had already stationed garrisons in that area. This battle was probably started by the Assyrians, who tried to take advantage of the weather, which would slow down the food supply and assistance from far-away Babylonia. However, although the Assyrians had this advantage, they were defeated by the Babylonians.

The invasion of the area surrounding Arrapha implies that Nabopolassar already included the Diyala region in his control. The chronicle ABC 3 does not mention any military campaigns in that area, but this can be surmised.⁷⁴

5.3.2 Entry and “Wandering” of the Medes (615–614 BC)

The next year (615 BC), Nabopolassar began to attack Assur, the former capital and the most important religious centre of Assyria. He encamped against the city in the month of Ayyaru (II) and launched a battle in the month of Simānu (III). The result of the battle did not favour Nabopolassar. He was pursued by the Assyrians to the fort Takritain.⁷⁵ This fort is located on the bank of the Tigris between the confluence of the Lower Zab and the confluence of the Adhaim river, the ‘frontier’ between Babylonia and Assyria.⁷⁶ There, Nabopolassar was able to resist the Assyrians who besieged the fort and defeated them after ten days of battle.⁷⁷ Although Nabopolassar failed to capture Assur, his position in the Arrapha area was firm, for he stationed strong garrisons there. The situation was worsened for the Assyrians by the arrival of the Medes in the latter half of this year.

The participation of the Medes in the invasion of Assyria was likely motivated by the economic suffering caused by the conflict between Assyria and Babylonia,

⁷³ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 11–15 (Grayson 1975a: 91–92; Glassner 2004: 219).

⁷⁴ Fuchs (2014: 38) suggests that Nabopolassar may have taken over the Diyala region during 619–617 BC, which is the gap in the chronicles.

⁷⁵ For Takritain (Tagritain in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 301.

⁷⁶ Kuhrt 1995: 247.

⁷⁷ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 16–22 (Grayson 1975a: 92; Glassner 2004: 221).

which interrupted the interregional trade upon which the Median economy relied. The Median cities were typically located on trade routes. Accordingly, when Median cities were turned into Assyrian provinces, the formative element *kāru*, “harbour, trading station,” was always used for their new names.⁷⁸ Instability and violence caused by the war between Assyria and Babylonia could have caused great damage to long-distance trade. Therefore, the Median cities must have been under economic pressure. This situation prompted the Medes to plunder Assyria.⁷⁹

The chronicle ABC 3 (line 23) records that the Medes came down to Arrapha in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII) in 615 BC. The text breaks off after that, so the reaction of the Babylonians who stationed troops there at that time is unknown. However, the alliance of Nabopolassar and the Medes was probably concluded before their entry into Assyria. Therefore, it is likely that the Medes drove straight in with the consent of the Babylonians. The next reference to the Medes in the chronicle ABC 3 (line 25) is in the month of Abu (V) in the 12th year of Nabopolassar (614 BC). It is likely that the Medes did not leave Assyria the year before and that they were wandering in the area between Arrapha and Nineveh before they reached Tarbiṣu.

Kalḥu (modern Nimrud) may be one of the cities they attacked during this period.⁸⁰ Archaeological excavations found that Nimrud suffered two attacks at the end of the Empire, between which there was hasty and incomplete restoration and reoccupation above the layer of debris. During the restoration, original foundation deposits were found and reused. For example, in the northeast corner of S35 of Fort Shalmaneser, seven winged *apkallu* figurines, which may have been the original foundation deposits, had been found and inserted into a layer of debris above the original pavement for the safety of the new building. During the second and the final attack, they were exposed and subjected to deliberate destruction.⁸¹ Those two attacks can be attributed to this period and to the year 612 BC, the year when Nineveh fell.⁸²

⁷⁸ Radner 2003a: 51. For more about *kārus*, see Yamada 2005.

⁷⁹ Melville 2011: 18.

⁸⁰ Reade 2003: 152. For Kalḥu (Kalaḥ in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 191.

⁸¹ Oates 1961: 8–9. Note that destruction of the foundation is referred to in *Declaring War* (rev., lines 7–8): “[The city] of Sennacherib, son of Sargon, offspring of a house slave, conqu[eror of Babylon], [plund]erer of Akkad, its roots I shall pluck out and the foundations of the land I shall obliterate.” (Gerardi 1986: 36).

⁸² Oates (1961: 9) explains that the reason why the chronicle does not mention these two events is that “it offered little resistance and that its capture was not considered of great account, at least by the Babylonians who had no hand in it.”

Nineveh was assaulted briefly as well, which is hinted by the chronicle ABC 3 (line 24–25)—The Medes were said to be *en route* to Nineveh. The assault is confirmed by the archaeological evidence. Before the final destruction of Nineveh, hurried repairs and emergency measures were made to the Enlil Gate,⁸³ owing to an unsuccessful attack against the gate, probably in this period. Small-scale or less skillfully carved blocks of stone, instead of large, good quality isodomic masonry, which is supposed to be the original material for the facade, were used to repair parts of the surface of the destroyed gate. There are also traces of narrowing the width of the entry way and an adjacent portion of the central corridor through the gate. The entry way varied from 7.00 to 4.70 m in width originally. It was narrowed to 2 m after the construction work. A further effort to narrow the outer stone limits of the doorway on the base of the first construction was also made.⁸⁴ Similar defensive measures were carried out at the Šamaš Gate and Adad Gate, as well.⁸⁵

After an unsuccessful assault against Nineveh, the Medes marched towards Tarbišu (modern Sherif Khan), some 5 km to the northwest of Nineveh.⁸⁶ It was the residence of the crown prince, connected with Nineveh by a paved royal road to the Nergal Gate. After that, the chronicle is broken.

The stay of the Medes in Assyria during this period is documented by a late Assyrian land sale document, which is dated to “Ubaki-isteri, the Median king. Month Šebetu (XI), 10th day, Year 9 of Lâbâši, chief cupbearer.”⁸⁷ The Median king in the date can be identified as Cyaxares, the Median ally of Nabopolassar.⁸⁸ This dating method was exceptional since the Neo-Assyrian documents were dated by *limmu*. The dating according to the tenure of the chief cupbearer indicates that this province was under the authority of this official and the reference of the Median king shows that it was controlled by the Medes at the moment. This may have happened during 615–614 BC. It is probable that the Median soldiers were stationed in cities they captured for supplies and ensuring stable control, as they were preparing for the capture of Assur, likely the purpose of the arrival of the Medes as intended by Nabopolassar.

⁸³ This gate was identified as Hälzi Gate by Stronach (1997), and Reade (2016) has argued that it is actually the Enlil Gate.

⁸⁴ Stronach 1997: 316–317; for the detail of the plan to narrow down the entrance, see Stronach 1997: 317, Fig. 5.

⁸⁵ The inner part of the central corridor of the Šamaš Gate was reduced in width and the external entryway of the Adad Gate was narrowed from seven to two meters in width (Stronach 1997: 318).

⁸⁶ For Tarbišu in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 306.

⁸⁷ Toptaş and Akyüz 2021.

⁸⁸ Roaf 2021.

5.3.3 Fall of Assur (614 BC)

The capture of Assur by the Medes occurred after the capture of Tarbišu in the same month Abu (V), when the Babylonians were on the way to assist.⁸⁹ According to the chronicle ABC 3 (line 29), after the Babylonian king arrived, the two rulers met each other and “concluded friendship and peace with each other.” This leads to an impression that the alliance of the Babylonians and the Medes was made from this point. However, one Babylonian archival text (VAS 6, 202) seems to show that the alliance was concluded earlier, and the attack on Assur was planned as a coordinated offensive. This text is a memorandum made by the administration of the temple of Ninurta, probably in Nippur, dated to the 12th year of Nabopolassar (614 BC).⁹⁰ It mentions that 300 temple dependants were sent to a campaign to Assur, led by Zērūtu, on the 29th day of Abu (V).⁹¹ The memorandum is made to record the rations assigned for their expedition. According to this text, the Babylonian troops could have arrived Assur in the early half of the following month, the month of Ulūlu (VI). This fits well with the account in the chronicle that the Babylonians arrived after the capture of Assur by the Medes, which occurred late in the month of Abu (V).

The attack against Assur was not unexpected on the side of the Assyrians. After the failed attack of Nabopolassar one year before, defensive measures must have been made as preparation. Barricades were built in the main street extending from the Tabira Gate to the southeast to prevent or delay the attacker from entering the inner city. Preparing for supplies for the army and population during a siege, a large amount of grain was stored in secured rooms in palaces and temples, where a thick layer of burnt grain has been preserved. Despite these preparations, Assur could not resist the force of the Medes. Evidence shows that the battle was very intense and probably was decided very quickly. Numerous arrowheads were found on the south wall and tower front. The Tabira Gate was burned down, and the roof made of cedar beams burned and fell into the gate area. There is also evidence for the besiegers’ unfinished plan to dig a tunnel to enter the new town. After they breached the fortification of the city wall, the target of the enemies shifted to the public buildings in the northern part of the city. Temples and palaces fell one after another. Fire prevailed in the whole area. The

⁸⁹ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 26–28 (Grayson 1975a: 93; Glassner 2004: 221). For Assur (Aššur in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 33–35.

⁹⁰ Zadok 1985: 33; Jursa 2003: 173, n. 28.

⁹¹ Joannès 2008: 214 and n. 34.

fighting also spread to the residential area, where burned and fallen walls and roofs were widespread, and skeletons were found.⁹²

The consequences of the destruction of Assur and Ešarra, the temple of Aššur, were significant. Assur was the most important religious centre in Assyria since the formation of the Assyrian state as a distinct and independent cultural and political entity in the early second millennium. The city and its god were foundational to the Assyrian national identity and the Assyrian statehood, as shown in the name of Assyria, *Māt-Aššur*, “the land of Aššur”, and the phrase for Assyrian imperial control, *nīr Aššur*, “the yoke of Aššur.”⁹³ Furthermore, a coronation in Ešarra in the presence of the state god Aššur was key to an Assyrian king’s legitimacy. The destruction of the temple meant the loss of the approval of Aššur for the kingship. For this reason, the crown prince Aššur-uballiṭ remained a crown prince to the Assyrian subjects,⁹⁴ although the Babylonian chronicles acknowledged the kingship of Aššur-uballiṭ.⁹⁵

5.3.4 Fall of Nineveh (612 BC)

Nineveh became the target of the alliance of the Babylonians, the Medes, and probably the Elamites, in 612 BC.⁹⁶ The two former parties met one another before they marched to Nineveh. After a siege of three months (from the month of Simānu [III] to Abu [V]), Nineveh fell.⁹⁷

⁹² Miglus 2003: 86–89. For more evidence for the destruction of Assur, see Andrae 1977: 237–248.

⁹³ For these two phrases, see Postgate 1992.

⁹⁴ For more discussion in this respect, see Radner 2019.

⁹⁵ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 49–50 (Grayson 1975a: 94–95; Glassner 2004: 223).

⁹⁶ For Nineveh (Ninua in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 238–239.

⁹⁷ The chronicle ABC 3, lines 38–46 (Grayson 1975a: 94; Glassner 2004: 221–223). The destruction of Nineveh has been connected with flooding, as indicated by classical sources and the Hebrew Bible (Nahum 2). However, the river level would have been low at this time, which was the height of summer (Scurlock 1990: 382; Stronach 1997: 319), although some studies argue that there is the possibility that the besiegers manipulated a damaging mass of stored water to break the wall (Scurlock 1990: 383–384; Stronach 1997: 323, n.22). Machinist (1997: 189–195) and Stronach (1997: 319–323) both suggest that the most likely use of flood was a ritual act, undertaken for the post-capture stage. Crouch (2015) argues that the flood imagery of the fall of Nineveh corresponds with the mythological language used in the ancient Near East to describe destruction (also cf. Pinker 2006).

The chronicle ABC 3 (line 45) describes the city as having been turned into a ruin.⁹⁸ Archaeological excavations reveal various destroyed gates.⁹⁹ Weapons and skeletal remains with clear traces of a violent death were excavated together at the Enlil Gate and Adad Gate.¹⁰⁰ A thick ash layer was found in multiple areas, such as the Nabû temple,¹⁰¹ the South-West Palace of Sennacherib¹⁰² on the summit of Kuyunjik, and the road extending directly eastwards from the Maški Gate in Area MG 22 in the outer town.¹⁰³ It is probable that the Assyrian king Sîn-šarru-iškun died in the battle.¹⁰⁴

Although the chronicle ABC 3 does not record the attacks launched by the alliance against other cities in the Assyrian heartland, excavations reveal that Dūr-Šarrukīn (modern Khorsabad) was attacked as well. Furthermore, smaller centres, such as Balawat, Khirbet Khatuniyeh, and Imgur-Enlil, suffered heavy destruction too—traces of fires, collapse of roofs and walls prevail in these areas.¹⁰⁵

5.4 Campaigns in the Upper Tigris (612–608 BC)

The conquest of the Upper Tigris, as far as the border of Šubria to the West and the centre of the Urartian area to the northeast, was made in several steps in different years (for the various sites, see Figure 5).¹⁰⁶ The first step was undertaken after the coalition of the Medes and the Babylonians conquered Nineveh (612 BC). After the Medes left, Nabopolassar campaigned northwest of Nineveh on the

98 According to *Persica*, Nabopolassar collected some ashes from the ruins of Nineveh, and deposited them as a monument. On this subject, see Scurlock 1990.

99 Stronach and Lumsden 1992: 230–232.

100 Stronach 1997: 317–318.

101 Thompson and Hutchinson 1929: 77.

102 Russell 1991: 1.

103 Stronach 1997: 313. For more evidence of Nineveh's destruction, see Reade 1976: 105; 1983: 51, Fig. 73; 1998–2000: 415–416 and 427–428; 2018: 32–33 (with Fig. 28); Curtis and Reade 1995: 72–77 (with Figs. 20–22), 86–87 (with Figs. 28–29), and 122–123; Porter 2009: 203–207; MacGinnis 2018a: 281.

104 The part mentioning Sîn-šarru-iškun in the chronicle ABC 3 is broken, so it is uncertain what exactly happened to him. For the reconstruction that Sîn-šarru-iškun died, see Grayson 1975a: 94; Glassner 2004: 223. According to *Persica*, the Assyrian king, mistaken as Ashurbanipal, died setting fire on himself and his concubines and eunuchs in the palace. According to *Babyloniaca* of Berossos, the Assyrian king died the same way.

105 Curtis 2003: 161–164.

106 For the topography of this region, see Radner and Schachner 2001.

upper Tigris. In the month of Ulūlu (VI), Nabopolassar marched to Našibina (modern Nusaybin), which was located on the eastern side of the Ḥabur triangle.¹⁰⁷



Figure 5: Sites in the Upper Tigris region.

The second step was made in 611 BC. The Babylonian king was waging war north of the Ḥabur triangle. In the month of Dūzu (IV), Nabopolassar marched to Tušḫan (modern Ziyaret Tepe) and Šinigiša.¹⁰⁸ Tušḫan was a major province on the southern bank of the upper Tigris,¹⁰⁹ and Šinigiša was a major city in that region. They were located to the north of Našibina, on the border of Assyria and Šubria. One letter (ZT 22), written in Tušḫan before the attacks of the Babylonians,

107 For Našibina (Našibīni in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 235.

108 The chronicle ABC 3, lines 53–57 (Grayson 1975a: 95; Glassner 2004: 223). The place names in this part are broken after the determination KUR. Reade (2003: 153) reconstructs them. In the first name, the options for the five or six signs are: *'uš/ta/ri/dal/za-a/a-pi/a-a'*; *'si/gur/iš'*; *ha*; *an*; and a final sign entirely missing. In the second name, the options of the four signs are *š'in*; *ni*; *g'* *il-šá'*. He suggests that the first name could be the province of Tušḫan on the upper Tigris, and the second name could be Šinigiša in that region. For the second name, also see the reconstruction as Šu[br]ja (Parpola 2008: 13–14).

109 For the archaeological picture of the capital Tušḫan under the administration, see MacGinnis and Matney 2009.

probably in 611 BC, shows the despair and utter hopelessness of an official who was ordered to muster chariot troops.

ZT 22:¹¹⁰**Obv.:**

- 1 [a-na^{lú*}IGI].^rUM EN¹-ia
- 2 [ARAD]-^rka^mman-nu-GIM-^{uru}ŠĀ-URU
- 3 [lu] DI-mu a-na^rEN¹-ia
- 4 ^rša^r KUR.MEŠ gab-bu^{lú*}A¹.BA.MEŠ
- 5 ^rkur^raš-šur-a-a^{kur}ár-ma-a-a
- 6 ^{lú*}GAL-TÚG.KA.KÉŠ.MEŠ-ni
- 7 ^{lú*}EN pi-^rqi¹-ta-te^{lú*}um-ma-ni
- 8 ^{lú*}SIMUG-URUDU^{lú*}SIMUG-AN.BAR
- 9 ša a-nu-tú^rgis¹til-li.MEŠ
- 10 i-kap-pa-ru-ni^{lú*}NAGAR.MEŠ
- 11 ^{lú*}ZADIM-BAN^{lú*}ZADIM-GAG.TI
- 12 ^{lú*}UŠ.BAR.MEŠ^{lú*}TÚG.KA.KÉŠ.MEŠ
- 13 ša bat-qu i-ka-^rša¹-[ru-ni]
- 14 a-na-ku a-na man-ni [up-ni-ia]
- 15 la-ap-te mi-i-^rnu¹ [la-aq-bi]
- 16 mi-i-nu lu-ra-[ad-di]
- 17 ki-i ša^{lú}[x x x x]
- 18 gab-bu ta-ri-[iš x x x]
- 19 in-nu-u 1-en [x x x]
- 20 a-na-ku-u ú-[di-ia]
- 21 a-mu-at^rla¹-[áš-šú]

Bottom:

- 1 la-a i-^ršá¹-[mu-u-ni]
- 2 ^{md}NĀ-[GIN-PAB ša]

Rev.:

- 1 i-si-is [x x x x x x]
- 2 e-ta-rab [x x si-bar-ri]
- 3 šá-ki-in ina [x x x x x]
- 4 ina UGU ši-iḥ-[li-ia x x x]
- 5 ^rdul-lu ša^rgis^rÉ¹-[x x x x]
- 6 ^{gis}É-ki-šir.MEŠ [x x x x]
- 7 ša NÍG.ŠID.MEŠ-ma [x x x x]
- 8 ša^{iti}DU₆ lu qur-[bu x x x]
- 9 ^{md}NĀ-GIN-PAB^rlu¹ [x x x]

¹¹⁰ The transliteration and translation follow Parpola 2008: 87–88.

- 10 *ú-ma-a 1-en ina ŠÀ-bi-šú-¹nu¹*
 11 *la-áš-šú a-ke-e a-qa-bi*
 12 *me-me-ni ina ŠÀ ši-pir-ti*
 13 *an-ni-ti ša áš-pur-an-ni 1-en*
 14 *la-áš-šú¹ú¹ 3. U₅.¹MEŠ¹*
 15 *ša IGI^{GIS}GIGIR.MEŠ me-me-¹ni¹*
 16 *la-áš-šú man-nu re-e-šu*
 17 *i-na-áš-ši ina ku-me*
 18 *an-¹ni¹-e ša si-bar-ri*
 19 *[x x x] x šá-ki-nu-u-ni*
 20 *[x x x] a-šá-par-u-ni*
 21 *[x x x x x] ¹x x¹*

Left edge:

- 1 *ina IGI-ia la-áš-šú ina pi-ti mi-i-ni lu-si-pu-[šú-nu]*
 2 *mu-a-tú ina ŠÀ-bi il-la-ka la-a 1-en [ú-še-za-ab]*
 3 *ep-šá-ak [0]*

[To the treasurer], my [ofrd]: yo[ur servant], Mannu-kī-Libbāli. [Good] health to my lord! [O]f all the horses, Assyrian (and) Aramean scribes, cohort-commanders, officials, craftsmen, copper-smiths, blacksmiths, those who scour the tools (and) equipment, carpenters, bow-makers, arrow-makers, weavers, tailors (and) those who ma[ke] the repairs—to whom should I pr[ay], what [should I say], what mo[re] should I do? Just as a man [. . .], everything is possi[ble] [. . .], Our [end is] one. (So) am I a[lone] going to die? [They pay] a [absolutely] no he[ed to me].

Nabû-[kēnu-ušur], my associate [. . .] entered [. . .] (and) has been put [in irons] in [. . .]. As to [my] secon[d-best man . . .] the work [o]n the [. . .] containers, the bandage boxes [. . .], even that of the accounts [. . .] of Tishri should be prese[nt] [. . .]. Nabû-kēnu-ušur should be [. . .]. Now, not one of them is there. How can I command? Nobody (mentioned) in this letter that I'm sending, not one (of them) is there! There are no “third men” to supervise the chariots. Who will make the muster instead of this one who is being kept in irons [. . .]?

[The lists that] I sent [. . .] are not at my disposal. According to what can they collect [them]? Death will come out of it! No one [will escape], I am done!

Archaeological evidence shows that some monumental buildings at Tušhan were left without any valuables before abandonment. The excavated city gates bear no trace of destruction or struggle.¹¹¹ This means that the city was abandoned by the elites, among them the Assyrian administrators, before the arrival of Nabopolassar's army.

The third step of conquering the Upper Tigris region was achieved in 609 BC when Nabopolassar came to the assistance of the army stationed in Ḫarran, when

¹¹¹ MacGinnis and Matney 2009: 14.

the city was besieged by the alliance of Egyptians and Assyrians. It seems that Nabopolassar changed his destination on the way to Ḥarran. As a result, Nabopolassar went to campaign in the Ṭur Abdin mountain range, and an area termed as a “district of Urartu.”¹¹² The chronicle ABC 3 (lines 70–75) mentions that Nabopolassar captured Izalla and numerous cities in the mountains.¹¹³

The final target of Nabopolassar on the Upper Tigris was the region east of the Tigris as far as the centre of Urartian area. In the month of Ulūlu (VI) of 608 BC, Nabopolassar went up to the mountains of Bit-Ḥanūniya in the “district of Urartu.” He returned to Babylon in the month of Ṭebētu (X) and went to the same area with his crown prince Nebuchadnezzar in the month of Simānu (III) of the following year (607 BC).¹¹⁴ This year, they campaigned in the mountain of Zaturī.¹¹⁵ Nabopolassar returned to Babylon in the month of Dūzu (IV), but Nebuchadnezzar stayed and continued the expedition in that area.¹¹⁶ He was said to campaign as far as the district of the sea.¹¹⁷

Bit-Ḥanūniya is a region in the Urartian area.¹¹⁸ Zaturī may be the city of Zaturu bordering Šubria, on the northern bank of the Tigris right opposite the provinces of Tušhan and Amidi. As for the “district of the sea,” it is likely referring to Lake Van, which was the centre of the traditional Urartian state.¹¹⁹ With these four steps, the Babylonians conquered the area of the Upper Tigris, as far as the border of Šubria to the West and the centre of the Urartian area to the East. In 607 BC, the Babylonians returned to the Upper Euphrates, capturing Kummuh (modern Samsat). This marked the beginning of a new phase of the history, that is, the competition between the Babylonians and Egyptians in the Levant.

112 The mention of the “district of Urartu” comes after Izalla, an area in the Ṭur Abdin mountain range, following a march, therefore this term should not be seen as a designation of Izalla. Note that Ṭur Abdin had been conquered by Assyria already in the 9th century BC.

113 Grayson 1975a: 96; Glassner 2004: 225.

114 The chronicle ABC 4, lines 1–7 (Grayson 1975a: 97; Glassner 2004: 225).

115 The chronicle ABC 4, line 7 (Grayson 1975a: 97; Glassner 2004: 225). For the reconstruction *za-^ftu-ri¹* in this line, see Reade 2003: 154.

116 The chronicle ABC 4, lines 8–10 (Grayson 1975a: 97; Glassner 2004: 225). For the discussion of the translation of ^{uru}*bi-ra-na-a-tu* as fortresses in line 9, see Grayson 1975a: 97. Glassner (2004: 225) takes it as a place name.

117 The chronicle ABC 4, line 11 (Grayson 1975a: 97; Glassner 2004: 225). For the reconstruction *tam-^ftim[?]*, see Reade 2003: 154. Note that Grayson (1975a: 97) reconstructs it as [Urartu], and Glassner (2004: 225) reconstructs it as [Uraštu (?)].

118 Grayson 1975a: 253.

119 For these two locations, see Reade 2003: 154.

5.5 Capture of Ḥarran (611–609 BC)

After the heartland of Assyria fell into the hands of the alliance of the Babylonians and the Medes, the Assyrians were forced to move to the West. They chose Ḥarran, a significant cultic and political centre in the West, to make a last stand. Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal all contributed to the restoration and renewal of the city and its temple.¹²⁰ Ashurbanipal even appointed his younger brother to Ḥarran as *šešgallu*, “high priest,” of the temple of Šin.¹²¹

The expedition to Ḥarran only began with the conquest of Ruggulitu in the second half of 611 BC.¹²² The town Ruggulitu was located in the Til-Barsip/Kār-Shalmaneser region, west of Ḥarran.¹²³ Til-Barsip itself was abandoned before the arrival of the Neo-Babylonian army, since there was no trace of violence at the site at the end of Assyrian domination.¹²⁴

It seems that the Babylonians did not launch an attack against Ḥarran, or they made an unsuccessful one. After this, the Babylonians returned to “Assyria” (the northwest on the Upper Tigris, bordering the Urartian region). But Nabopolassar did not give up eliminating the Assyrian power totally. One year later (610 BC), he came back to the Upper Euphrates. This time, he was accompanied by his allies, the Medes. A letter (TCL 9, 99) sent by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar from Ḥarran at this point to the highest administrators in the Eanna temple reveals a vivid picture of the situation.¹²⁵

TCL 9, 99, lines 1–5, 8–25:¹²⁶

- 1 IM ^{md}NĀ-NÍG.DU-ÛRU
 2 a-na ^{md}MAŠ-LUGAL-ÛRU
 3 ^{md}NĀ-na-din-MU
 4 u ^{md}AMAR.UTU-KAR-ir
 5 lu-ú šu-lum a-na ka-šú-nu
 . . .
 8 LUGAL a-na ^{kur}ḥar-ra-nu

120 For Ḥarran (Ḥarrānu in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 153.

121 Na’aman 2003: 208.

122 Nabopolassar captured Ruggulitu in the month of Araḥsamnu (VIII), see the chronicle ABC 3, lines 56–57 (Grayson 1975a: 95; Glassner 2004: 223).

123 It used to be an important city of the kingdom Bit-Adini, later annexed to Assyria during the reign of Shalmaneser III.

124 Bunnens 1997.

125 For the dating and context of the letter, see Joannès 1991: 261; Da Riva 2008: 8; Kleber 2008: 338–339; Jursa 2014d: 105.

126 Transliteration and translation follow Levavi 2017: 187. For a more recent edition, see Levavi 2018: No. 58.

- 9 *it-ta-lak*
 10 *e-mu-qu ma-a-du*
 11 *šá^{kur}ma-da-a-a it-ti-šú*
 12 *it-ta-lak*
 13 *mam-ma ma-la*
 14 LUGAL *i-ra-a'-mu*
 15 *u a-na-ku i-ra-man-ni*
 16 'AD¹ *u* 'DUMU¹
 17 '1*?-en*? *la* i*-kil*¹-li**
 18 [x x x] *gab-bi*
 19 [*dí-ke*]-*e-ma*
 20 'a*-*dí*-i* qí¹-it*
 21 [^{iti}x *li*]-*'il*¹-lik*
 22 'x-*bi?* x x *ía*¹*
 23 *na*-'aš*¹-ra*
 24 [^úEN.¹NUN*¹-*tú*
 25 *am-'mar*¹ ('x¹)*

Letter of Nabû-kudurri-ušur to Ninurta-šarru-ušur, Nabû-nādin-šumi and Marduk-ēter; may you be well! (. . .) The king has arrived in Ḫarran; he is accompanied by a great force of Medes. No one who loves the king and/or loves me personally, father or son, shall hold someone (else) back. [Lev]y all the [. . .] They should co[me until] the end of month [. . .]. Is my [. . .] safe? I will inspect the guards.

The contrast between the military force of the Babylonians and the Medes is evident in this letter. While Nebuchadnezzar described the army of the Medes as “a great force of Medes”, he was anxious about the shortage of soldiers on the side of the Babylonians. It appears that there was some resistance among the citizens to the levy of troops. This explains why Nebuchadnezzar was appealing to the people not to hold back.¹²⁷

On the other hand, the Assyrians acquired military assistance from the Egyptians. However, the armies of Assyria and Egypt abandoned Ḫarran before the Babylonians and the Medes arrived. The chronicle ABC 3 (lines 59–65) records that the armies of the Medes and the Babylonians joined and marched to Ḫarran together in the month of Araḫsamnu (VIII). The fragmented Late Babylonian tablet BM 34656 probably deals with this event. The tablet is extremely broken, but there are some indicative terms, such as the “King of Egypt” and the “land of Ḫatti.” The text mentions the month of Araḫsamnu (VIII), which is the exact time of the conquest recorded in the chronicle ABC 3.¹²⁸ Aššur-uballiṭ and his Egyptian

¹²⁷ Same opinion in Levavi 2017: 187.

¹²⁸ For the details, see Schaudig 2023.

allies were frightened and fled out of Ḥarran. Therefore, Nabopolassar captured the city easily. It is likely that the Babylonians and the Medes shared the vast booty from the city and the temple of Sîn, Eḫulḫul.¹²⁹

This is not the first time the Egyptians came to the assistance of Assyria. In 616 BC, the Egyptians helped the Assyrians to push the Babylonians partway down the Euphrates as far as Gablini, when Nabopolassar and his troops marched in the Middle Euphrates. After 616 BC, there is no mention of the Egyptians until this year. The Egyptian assistance came easily, since Egyptian garrisons were already stationed in Syria and the Levant at this point.¹³⁰ This event occurred around the succession of Necho II to the throne of his father Psammetichus I in Egypt. However, the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt retreated without a battle, as the chronicle records. This does not mark the end of their effort to fight back against the Babylonians. One year later (609 BC), Ḥarran was facing a crisis owing to the return of the alliance of Assyria and Egypt.¹³¹ They defeated the garrison of Nabopolassar in the city and besieged the city in the month of Dûzu (IV). In the following month, they launched another attack but still failed to take the city. Nabopolassar came to help but it seems that he did not join battle, either because the garrison inflicted a defeat over the coalition of Assyrians and Egyptians in a battle the chronicle missed, or the latter retreated after hearing or witnessing the approach of Nabopolassar.¹³² The line (70) in the chronicle ABC 3 mentioning that Nabopolassar came to the assistance of Ḥarran is broken. Grayson suggests that the siege of Aššur-uballiṭ and the Egyptians was lifted with the arrival of the army of Nabopolassar,¹³³ while Glassner reconstructs that Nabopolassar did not join any battle at Ḥarran.¹³⁴ The latter is more convincing to me. The

129 The chronicle ABC 3 (line 64) only mentions that the Babylonians carried off the booty (Grayson 1975a: 95; Glassner 2004: 223). According to Nabonidus' inscriptions and the Ḥarran inscription of Adad-guppi', the temple of Sîn in Ḥarran was destroyed by the Medes in 610 BC, and Ḥarran was under the Median domination since then. However, other textual evidence including royal inscriptions and archival documents show that Syria was under the firm control of the Neo-Babylonian state. Rollinger suggests that Nabonidus' narrative was created to blame the destruction of the temple solely on the Medes and explain why the temple was not already restored before his reign. This narrative also fits with the traditional idea that barbarians would be called up at the wrath of the gods and doomed when the gods reconciled because of their desecration of cultic centres. For the details and his discussion of previous views in this respect, see Rollinger 2003: 297–305.

130 Redford 1992: 447–448.

131 During the march of the Egyptian army to Ḥarran, they suffered an ambush by Josiah of Judah at Megiddo, but were able to defeat and kill the Judean king (Redford 1992: 448).

132 The chronicle ABC 3, lines 66–71 (Grayson 1975a: 96; Glassner 2004: 223–225).

133 Grayson 1975a: 19.

134 Glassner 2004: 224–225.

broken part of line 70 is too small for a description of a battle. It is more possible that the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt were defeated by the garrison or retreated themselves. Seeing this, Nabopolassar turned his way to the north of Ḫarran right away. After this, the Assyrian crown prince Aššur-uballiṭ disappeared in all sources, which marks the end of the Assyrian state.

5.6 Transition of the Ḫabur Region

After the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian crown prince Aššur-uballiṭ fled to Ḫarran. Dūr-Katlimmu, the centre of the Ḫabur region, was showing some elements of independence from his authority. This is evidenced by a legal document (SH 199) written after the fall of Nineveh from Dūr-Katlimmu. In its guarantee section, the *adê ša mār šarri*, “*adê* of the crown prince,” is invoked.

SH 199, bottom, line 9–rev., line 1:¹³⁵

Bottom:

9 *man-nu šá* 'GIL-u-nu' [*aš-šur* ^dUTU]
 10 EN *de-ni-šú a-de-e* A MAN *ina* ŠU-šú
 11 'lu'-[*ba-i-ú*]

Rev.:

1 10 MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR *i-dan*

(For) whoever transgresses (the agreement), [Aššur and Šamaš] shall be his adversaries in court; the *adê* of the crown prince [shall hold him responsible]; he shall pay 10 minas of silver.

In all other attestations of the similar clause, the *adê ša šarri*, “*adê* of the king,” is invoked instead. This becomes the evidence for its dating.¹³⁶ Also of interest is the title *bēl āli*, “city lord,” in this text, referring to one of the witnesses. This can be contrasted with the title *ḫazannu*, “mayor,” and *ša muḫḫi āli*, “city overseer,” which were traditional titles within the Assyrian centralised administration. While the former claimed political independence, the latter were included in the Assyrian provincial systems.¹³⁷ Another sign for its political independence is that the tablet was dated by a local eponym: Se-ila'i, which is not attested elsewhere.

Archaeological evidence shows that there is continuous occupation during the Assyrian/Babylonian transitional phase in the Ḫabur region. The Assyrian ce-

¹³⁵ The transliteration is from Radner 2002: 215. The translation is made by the author.

¹³⁶ Prosopography also shows that the text is dated to the final years of the Assyrian Empire (Radner 2002: 17–18).

¹³⁷ Radner 2019: 138–139.

ramic style continued into the Neo-Babylonian period, as well as the ceramic production.¹³⁸ The administrative structure, the so-called Red House was reused, added to by some new parts. It seems that even the administrative personnel of Dūr-Katlimmu were kept with its Assyrian administrative formulae during the Neo-Babylonian period.¹³⁹ Four cuneiform tablets (SH 37–40) were excavated in the Red House.¹⁴⁰ These administrative texts were written in Neo-Assyrian dialect, script, and text format, but dated to the second and fifth years of Nebuchadnezzar II. Furthermore, the official titles mentioned in the texts are Assyrian ones (some attested prior to 612 BC), without any Babylonian ones. All this information points to one conclusion, that the transition from Assyrian political control to the Babylonian one was peaceful, and the local power structure and culture were preserved at least down to 600 BC.¹⁴¹

5.7 Overview

There were four phases for the conquest of the Assyrian Empire (see Figure 6 and Table 7). The first was to cut the Assyrian heartland off from the support from the West through the Middle Euphrates (616 BC and 613 BC: Phase 1); the second was to conquer the Assyrian heartland (Phase 2), which started in the area of Arrapha (615 BC), interrupted by a revolt on the Middle Euphrates (613 BC), and finished one year later (612 BC); the third was to conquer the Upper Tigris, which consisted of four steps in 612 BC (Phase 3/1), 611 BC (Phase 3/2), 609 BC (Phase 3/3), and 608 BC (Phase 3/4); the fourth was to eliminate the Assyrian state, which was limited to the territory centred at Ḫarran (611–609 BC: Phase 4). The third and fourth stages were intertwined with each other.

Phase 1: Blocking the West's Access to the Assyrian Heartland (616 BC and 613 BC)

After Nabopolassar drove the Assyrians out of Babylonia, his first aim was to block the western access to the Assyrian heartland. This access was the passage along the Euphrates in the Middle Euphrates region. The alliance of the Egyptians and the Assyrians came to confront Nabopolassar from further west, while the cities of the Ḫabur region, which lay closer to the cities targeted by Nabopolassar, remained uninvolved. The former were only able to prevent Nabopolassar from going further

¹³⁸ Kreppner 2008a, 2008b.

¹³⁹ Kühne 1995: 83.

¹⁴⁰ Edited by Radner 2002: Nos. 37–40. Also cf. Brinkman 1993. Note that Radner mistakenly converted the date of No. 37 to 602 BC. The correct date is 603 BC.

¹⁴¹ Levavi 2019: 68.

than Gablini, located on the Euphrates near the confluence of the Baliḫu with the Euphrates. Although the land of Suḫu, which is located near the modern Iraqi border with Syria, rebelled in 613 BC, Nabopolassar was able to suppress the revolt, despite the assistance of the Assyrian king, Sîn-šarru-iškun. It is surprising that there is no mention of the cities in the Ḫabur region when the expedition of Nabopolassar in this area is described in the chronicle ABC 3. It is likely that the region began to resist the control of the Assyrian state already from this point.

Phase 2: Conquering the Assyrian Heartland (615–612 BC)

After blocking the passage into Babylonia and the Assyrian heartland, and ensuring the neutrality of the Ḫabur region, Nabopolassar dared to invade the Assyrian heartland. The invasion was not made by the Babylonians alone. Nabopolassar probably allied with the Elamites and certainly with the Medes, who swept the Assyrian heartland like a storm. The Babylonians first captured the Arrapha region, and stationed a garrison there. They then began to invade the Assyrian core, the Assur – Nineveh – Arbela triangle. The Medes captured Assur in 614 BC. The invasion of this area was interrupted by the revolt of Suḫu in the Middle Euphrates (613 BC). Nabopolassar was able to suppress the revolt and resume the invasion of the Assyrian heartland in the following year, while the Medes came to assist again. The alliance captured Nineveh in 612 BC. The whole Assyrian heartland was turned into ruins. Evidence of devastating destruction is widespread not only in those big centres but also in small settlements.

Phase 3: Campaigns in the Upper Tigris (612, 611, 609, and 608 BC)

The campaigns in the Upper Tigris were conducted in different years. After the alliance of the Medes and the Babylonians conquered the Assyrian heartland, the Medes left, presumably with plentiful booty. Nabopolassar had a greater ambition. He marched to the south of the Upper Tigris, the area of Našibina (612 BC: Phase 3/1). This was continued in the following year, when Nabopolassar was campaigning in the area of Tušḫan (611 BC: Phase 3/2). In 609 BC, Nabopolassar went up to the Ṭur Abdin mountain range and Urartu after the crisis of Ḫarran was resolved (Phase 3/3). In 608 BC, Nabopolassar, later with Nebuchadnezzar II, campaigned in the East of the Upper Tigris (Phase 3/4). After Nabopolassar left, Nebuchadnezzar campaigned as far as Lake Van.

Phase 4: Capture and Defence of Ḫarran (611–609 BC)

After the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC, the crown prince of Assyria Aššur-uballiṯ fled to Ḫarran. In 611 BC, Nabopolassar waged a war in the Til-Barsip/Kār-Shalmaneser region, west of Ḫarran. He captured the city of Ruggulitu in this year. In 610 BC, Nabopolassar, again allied with the Medes, marched towards Ḫarran, and captured the city without a battle, because the Assyrians, who acquired assistance from Egypt, re-

treated themselves. The latter alliance came back the following year (609 BC), attempting to regain the control of the city, but failed. This ill-fated attempt marks the end of the power of Aššur-uballiṭ.

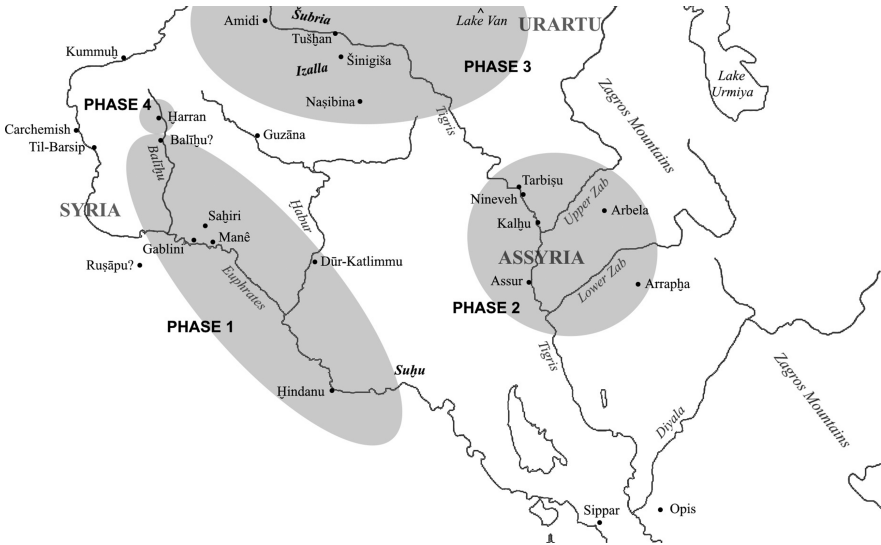


Figure 6: Four phases to eliminate the Assyrian Empire.

Table 7: Phases in the elimination of the Assyrian Empire.

Phase	Year (BC)	Babylonian Date	Target	Median Assistance to the Babylonians	Egyptian Assistance to the Assyrians
1	616; 613	Npl 10	The west passage along the Euphrates		Yes
2	615–614; 612	Npl 11–12; Npl 14	The Assyrian heartland	Yes	
3/1	612	Npl 14	Upper Tigris (Našibina)		
3/2	611	Npl 15	Upper Tigris (Tušhan)		
3/3	609	Npl 17	Upper Tigris (Tur Abdin mountain range and Urartu)		
3/4	608	Npl 18	Upper Tigris (Urartu)		
4	611–609	Npl 15–17	Harran	Yes	Yes

The elimination of the Assyrian state was very strategic. Nabopolassar decided to attack the cities on the passage along the Euphrates first to cut the Assyrian centre off from the western provinces. The Assyrians sought help from the Egyptians, but still failed to stop the progress of Nabopolassar. Another important element contributing to the success of Nabopolassar was the independent trend in the Ḫabur region. This region held a neutral stance when Nabopolassar campaigned in the area of the Middle Euphrates and the Assyrian heartland, without providing any military assistance to its fellow cities and the capitals of the Empire. After the fall of Nineveh, this region became semi-independent from the authority of the Assyrian crown prince Aššur-uballiṭ and went through a peaceful transition into the Neo-Babylonian administration later.

Nabopolassar's alliance with the Medes was a key factor in his plan. The ill-fated attack of Nabopolassar against Assur in 615 BC proved that Nabopolassar did not have a strong enough army to conquer the Assyrian heartland. The letter (TCL 9, 99) sent by Nebuchadnezzar asking for more soldiers to capture Ḫarran in 610 BC also shows that the force of the Babylonian army was quite limited. The Median force helped Nabopolassar to launch powerful blows against the Assyrian heartland and the last capital in the West. The fear of the Assyrians towards the Medes was evidenced by the retreat of the alliance of Assyria and Egypt in Ḫarran in 610 BC. After the conquest of the Assyrian centre, Nabopolassar still held a decent-sized army and used it to conquer the remaining part of the Assyrian territories—the Upper Tigris, eliminating the possibility for a recovery of the Assyrian heartland. The Elamites were probably another ally of Nabopolassar. The Medes and the Elamites generally held a hostile attitude toward the Assyrian Empire, which was seen as an oppressor to them. On the other hand, the political situation of these entities remained fragmented. For this reason, they were unlikely to pose a great threat to the Babylonians once the Assyrian Empire was destroyed. Indeed, ultimately the Babylonians absorbed most of the territory of the Assyrian Empire without conflict with the Medes or the Elamites.

In conclusion, the fall of Assyria was the result of internal political fragmentation, a hostile external environment, and the great plan and strategy of Nabopolassar.

6 Imperial Expansion and Organisation

Whether or not the impact of the Babylonians in Syria and the Levant was purely destructive has been a matter of debate for a long time.¹ While royal inscriptions indicate a dual system of administration (vassals and provinces),² as was the case under the Assyrian dominance, textual evidence regarding imperial organisation in the West is scarce.³ Recently, as more evidence has surfaced and more research has been done, the idea that there was a well-developed imperial structure in the West became more popular. Synthesising the archaeological and textual evidence, Jursa argues that there were two phases of Neo-Babylonian presence in Syria and the Levant. The first phase was the conquest phase, which caused widespread destruction.⁴ The second phase was more peaceful, as the Empire aimed to recover and maintain certain administrative and economic infrastructures while ensuring political control.⁵ I begin by discussing the conquest phase, the campaigns carried out by Nebuchadnezzar II during 607–575 BC, followed by the establishment of a provincial system in the West beginning in the latter part of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.

6.1 Nebuchadnezzar II's Campaigns

Concerning the campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar II, the chronicle ABC 5 is an important source which enumerates Nebuchadnezzar II's annual campaigns in the

1 Concerning the opinion that the Babylonians never established an effective administrative system in the peripheries, see the examples cited by Hasegawa (2020: 26–27).

2 Such as Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŞ 7834, the so-called *Hofkalender* (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]) and the Etemenanki cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar II (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 [C41]) (Da Riva 2008: 19–23).

3 Vanderhoof 2003 and other articles in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (eds.) 2003.

4 Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 389; Lipschits 2005: 185–191; Zorn 2013; and the articles in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (eds.) 2003.

5 Jursa 2014a: 139. A similar two-phased argument with regard to resource extraction is also adopted by Levavi (2019: 60): “in the first half of the Neo-Babylonian period, until ca. 585 BC, Babylonian imperial rule in the western periphery was primarily a straightforward exploitative tributary regime. From about the mid-reign of Nebuchadnezzar onwards, however, there was a shift towards a more sustainable resource extraction through the creation of stable pockets of Babylonian presence in the periphery.” In terms of the archaeological evidence for a sustainable administrative structure in the area, there is a significant amount of difficulties in distinguishing the Neo-Babylonian period from the Persian period (Zorn 2013: 825–827). For the difficulty of identifying sixth-century pottery assemblages, see Faust 2012: 11–17.

West until his 11th regnal year (594 BC). Unfortunately, there are no royal inscriptions or chronicles about the campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar II after 594 BC. However, there is some information in the Hebrew Bible and the writings of Flavius Josephus and Herodotus. Sometimes, Babylonian archival texts can shed light on this issue as well.

It is commonly accepted that there was a swift transition from Assyrian to Babylonian dominion in the Levant, and that Babylonia inherited the administrative structure imposed by the Assyrians.⁶ However, this is too simplistic. First, during the decades before the fall of Assyria (609 BC), the Assyrian provincial system was already dissolved. Some areas, especially in the coastal zones of Phoenicia and Philistia, restored their royal regimes.⁷ After the Assyrian withdrawal from the Levant, Egypt established its dominance in the region.⁸ An Egyptian garrison had been set up in Carchemish when Aššur-uballiṭ retreated to Ḫarran. Therefore, there was a gap between the dissolution of the Assyrian provincial system and the consolidation of Babylonian control.

The transition of power in the Levant involved three parties: the hegemonic powers of Babylon and Egypt and the political interest of the local elites. It can be divided into three phases. In the first phase (607–605 BC), the Egyptians and the Babylonians confronted each other in the region of Carchemish, resulting in the victory of Nebuchadnezzar II. The second phase (605–597 BC), was the period during which Nebuchadnezzar II triumphed throughout the Levant, turning city-states into Babylonian vassals, while the Egyptians fully retreated from the area. The first deportation from Judah (598 BC) occurred during this phase.⁹ The beginning of the third phase (595–575 BC) was marked by the revival of Egyptian influence in the southern Levant, resulting in rebellions against Babylonian dominance. Nebuchadnezzar II returned to the region and suppressed the revolts. He set up garrisons in the city-states bordering Egypt and proceeded to carry out two more deportations from Judah, in 587 and 582 BC.

6.1.1 Defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish (607–605 BC)

While Nabopolassar was busy campaigning in Urartu after inflicting the ultimate defeat on the Assyrians in Ḫarran (609 BC), the Egyptians still held Carchemish

⁶ Vanderhoof 2003: 237.

⁷ Vanderhoof 2003: 237–240.

⁸ Beaulieu 2020: 6–7. For example, the kingdom of Judah probably became a client state of the Egypt during this period, see Kahn 2015: 511–512.

⁹ For the policies to resettle the deportees, see Alstola 2020: 254–257 and MacGinnis 2010: 159.

and stationed garrisons there, taking the city as a stronghold. The Levantine territory south of Carchemish was under the control of Egypt, although the Judean king ambushed the Pharaoh Necho II at Megiddo when he was coming to the aid of the Assyrians in Ḥarran in 609 BC.¹⁰ As a result, the Judean king was killed and his son Jehoahaz succeeded the throne. After three months, the Egyptians conquered Judah and imprisoned Jehoahaz in Riblah in Syria. The Pharaoh then established his brother, who he renamed Jehoiakim, as the king of Judah to serve as an Egyptian vassal.

After the Babylonians conquered Urartu, they once again turned to the West and found themselves in an immediate conflict with the Egyptians. The Babylonians did not confront the Egyptians directly by a frontal attack on Carchemish. Instead, they took over the town of Kummuh, northeast of Carchemish, and stationed troops there in 607 BC (for the various sites, see Figure 7).¹¹ Egyptians soon responded by launching an attack on Kummuh the next year and eventually captured it.¹² They were also able to push back the Babylonian army led by Nabopolassar, which came in an attempt to regain control over the area.¹³ The situation changed dramatically when Nebuchadnezzar II came to the area in 605 BC. The Babylonian army destroyed the force of the Egyptians at Carchemish and pushed the Egyptians back to the south of Hamath.¹⁴ This marked the beginning of the retreat of the Egyptians and the entry of the Babylonians into the Levant. In the following years, Nebuchadnezzar II gradually conquered the city-states south of Hamath.

6.1.2 Establishment of Vassal States in the Levant (605–597 BC)

After conquering Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar II dislodged the Egyptians from the fortress of Riblah in the Hamath area (605 BC),¹⁵ establishing his headquarter there (2 Kgs 25:6, 20–21) and continued his campaigns down the Levant (for various sites in the Levant, see Figure 8). The chronicle ABC 5 records yearly cam-

¹⁰ Kahn 2015.

¹¹ The chronicle ABC 4, lines 12–15 (Grayson 1975a: 97–98; Glassner 2004: 225). For Kummuh (Kumuḥu in Babylonian) in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 199.

¹² The chronicle ABC 4, lines 16–18 (Grayson 1975a: 98; Glassner 2004: 227).

¹³ The chronicle ABC 4, lines 19–26 (Grayson 1975a: 98; Glassner 2004: 227).

¹⁴ The chronicle ABC 5, obv., lines 1–8 (Grayson 1975a: 99; Glassner 2004: 227).

¹⁵ Riblah was located at the northern end of the Beka Valley on the east bank of the Orontes. For the strategic importance of Riblah, see Da Riva 2008: 13–14. Egyptians' presence at Riblah is recorded by the Hebrew Bible (2 Kings 23:33).

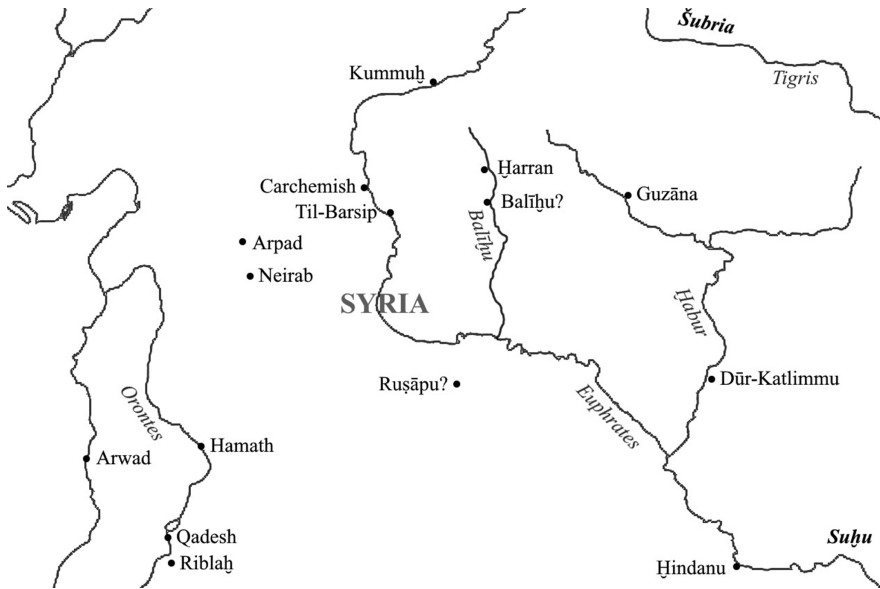


Figure 7: Sites in the Upper Euphrates region.

paings of Nebuchadnezzar II in “the land of Ḫatti” from his accession year to his third year (605–602 BC).¹⁶ Nebuchadnezzar II was said to “march about victoriously in Ḫatti.”¹⁷ The Babylonian campaigns caused panic among the city-states, which were vassals of Egypt, and met with Egyptian resistance. For example, the leader of Ekron (an inland Philistine city), Adon, sent a letter to the Pharaoh to ask for help upon the invasion of the Babylonian army.¹⁸

During his fourth year (601 BC), the Babylonian king reached the border of Egypt, but was unable to defeat the Egyptians.¹⁹ This event shows that the whole Levant (the coast from Arwad down to Arqa, Tyre, Ashkelon, Gaza, and eastwards to Aphek, Ekron, Gezer, and Jerusalem) was under the control of the Babylonians. Otherwise, Nebuchadnezzar II would not have attempted to attack Egypt. With

¹⁶ The chronicle ABC 5, obv., line 12–rev., line 4 (Grayson 1975a: 100–101; Glassner 2004: 229). Ḫatti was used to designate “the whole area of Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean corridor” (Da Riva 2010: 167).

¹⁷ For example, the chronicle ABC 5, obv., line 16 (Grayson 1975a: 100; Glassner 2004: 229).

¹⁸ Porten 2002: 132–134.

¹⁹ The chronicle ABC 5, rev., lines 5–7 (Grayson 1975a: 101; Glassner 2004: 229). Against Babylonian aggression, the eastern border of Egypt was heavily fortified (Basílico and Lupo 2007: 160; Redford 2000: 185–186).

the submission of the whole Levant, the Babylonians were able to extend their influence into the desert of Arabia after a one-year hiatus.²⁰

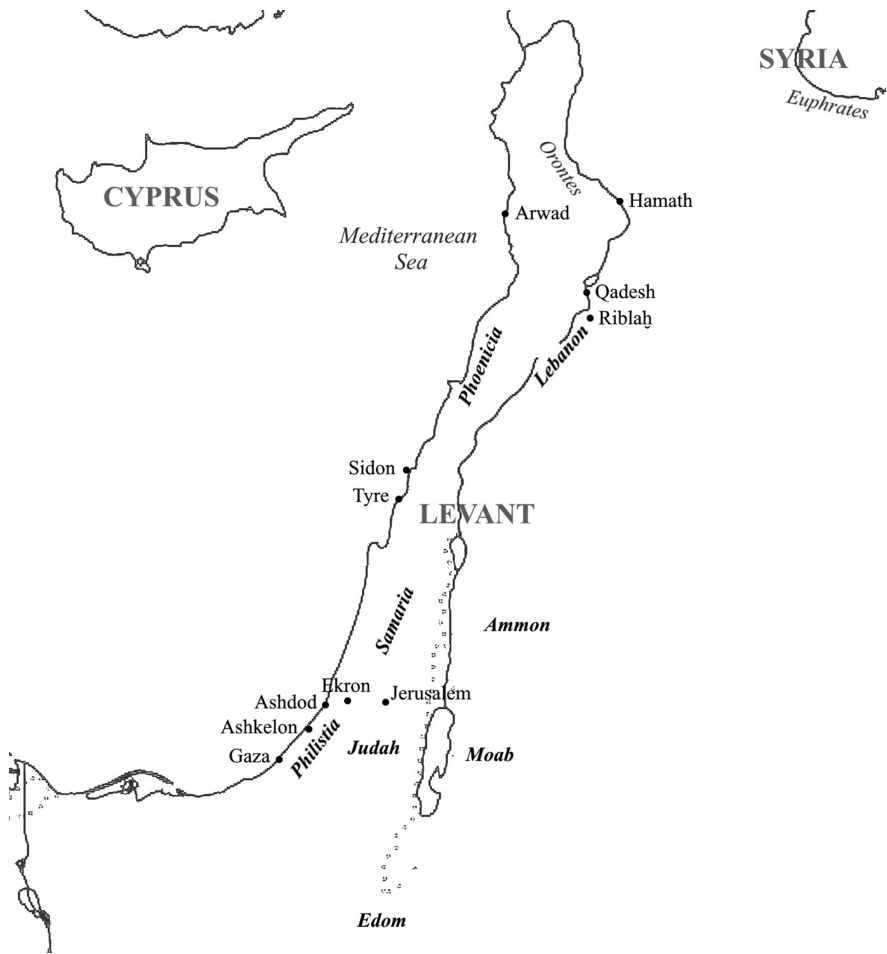


Figure 8: Sites in the Levant.

Judah rebelled after three years of obedience, according to 2 Kings 24:1–2. A Babylonian chronicle (ABC 5) records that Nebuchadnezzar II came down to the Levant in the month of Kislimu (IX) of his seventh year (598 BC).²¹ The Babylonian

²⁰ The chronicle ABC 5, rev., lines 9–10 (Grayson 1975a: 101; Glassner 2004: 231).

²¹ The chronicle ABC 5, rev., lines 11–13 (Grayson 1975a: 102; Glassner 2004: 231).

king was able to suppress the revolt and carried out a deportation. Afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar II placed the uncle of the previous king, Zedekiah, on the throne. The biblical text 2 Kings 24:7 records this historical event, indicating that the Egyptian Pharaoh did not come to the aid of Judah and acknowledging that Nebuchadnezzar II was able to control the territory “that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.”²²

During this phase, widespread destruction was carried out and the remaining city-states were reduced to a status of vassal states. For example, the city of Ashkelon was completely destroyed and it was not able to recover until the Persian period.²³ Other Philistine sites suffered destruction to various degrees as well, such as Ekron and the neighbouring site of Timnah (modern Tel Batash).²⁴ In Nebuchadnezzar's Prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011[Prism]), which is dated to Nebuchadnezzar II's seventh year (598 BC), Tyre, Gaza, Sidon, Arwad,²⁵ and Ashdod were listed as vassals for their contributions to the building of the South Palace in Babylon.

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 (Prism), col. VII, lines 23'–29'.²⁶

- 23' LUGAL ša^{kur} šú-ú-ru¹-[ru]
 24' LUGAL ša^{kur} ha-az-za¹-[ti]
 25' LUGAL ša^{kur} ša-š-du¹-[ni]
 26' LUGAL ša^{kur} ar-ma-[da]
 27' LUGAL ša^{kur} áš-š-du¹-[du]
 28' LUGAL ša^{kur} mir-x-[x x]
 29' LUGAL ša^{kur} x¹ [x x]

The king of Ty[re]; the king of Gaz[a]; the king of Sido[n]; the king of Arwa[d]; the king of Ashd[od]; the king of Mir[. . .],²⁷ (and) the king of [. . .].

22 The wadi of Egypt is the southern border of Judah or Canaan (Blischke 2013: 523).

23 The chronicle ABC 5, obv., line 18 (Grayson 1975a: 100; Glassner 2004: 229). Archaeological evidence shows that the city was devastated (Stager 1996 and Master 2018: 79–92). It has been suggested that Nebuchadnezzar II decided to destroy Ashkelon completely, because it could be used by the Egyptians again as a harbour for the military campaigns if they returned to the area to compete with the Babylonians (Fantalkin 2011: 87–111).

24 Stern 2001: 317–318.

25 Arwad was included within the province of Samaria during the Neo-Assyrian period.

26 The transliteration and translation follow RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011.

27 Na'aman (2000: 41) suggests that this may be an abbreviated form of Samsimurūna, with the theophoric element Samsi (Šamši) dropped. This is an Assyrian province on the Mediterranean coast just north of the Nahr el-Kalb (Na'aman 1995: 109).

During the Levantine campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar II, captives from different cities were brought to Babylonia. In the archive from the South Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II,²⁸ dated from the 10th to the 28th year of his reign (595–577 BC), a collection of texts records the distributions of sesame oil to a group of foreigners. Some of them were prisoners,²⁹ including the Judean king, Jehoiakim,³⁰ and members of the royal family of Ashkelon.³¹ The mass deportation executed by the Babylonians is also recorded in other sources. According to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* X, 220; *Against Apion* I, 136),³² Egyptians, Judeans, Phoenicians, and Syrians were taken as captives by Nebuchadnezzar II. After the conquest of the Levant, Nebuchadnezzar was able to focus his efforts on conquering land on the border of Elam in his ninth year (596 BC).³³

6.1.3 Suppression of Revolts in the Southern Levant (595–575 BC)

Egyptian influence was restored in the southern Levant during the reign of Psammetichus II (595–589 BC) and, especially, the early years of Hophra (Apries) (589–570 BC). At the same time, there were some hints of political instability in the core of the Babylonian Empire. The chronicle ABC 5 (rev., lines 21–22) records that there was a rebellion in Babylonia during the tenth year of Nebuchadnezzar II (595 BC).³⁴ One text dated to his 11th year (594 BC) refers to a Borsippian who committed treason.³⁵ Taking advantage of this situation, Levantine vassals, including Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, and Judah, formed an alliance of rebellion in 594 BC.³⁶ In the same year, the Babylonian king returned to the Levant,

²⁸ Pedersén 2005a: 111–127, Archive N1; Pedersén 2005b; Jursa 2005: 60; Jursa 2007b; Pedersén 2009; Alstola 2020: 60–63.

²⁹ Zadok 2018: 112–122.

³⁰ 2 Kings 24: 8–12; 25: 27–30; 2 Chr 36: 9–10.

³¹ Zadok 2018: 117.

³² For the translation of *Antiquities of the Jews* X, see Begg and Spilsbury 2005. For the translation of *Against Apion* I, see Barclay 2007.

³³ The chronicle ABC 5, rev., lines 16–20 (Grayson 1975a: 102; Glassner 2004: 231).

³⁴ Grayson 1975a: 102; Glassner 2004: 231.

³⁵ Weidner 1954–1956: 1–5; Jursa 2001 and 2004.

³⁶ Jeremiah 27:1–11 alludes that in the fourth year of Zedekiah (594 BC), the Judean king met with envoys from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon to plan a rebellion. Jeremiah 51:59 also records that Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon the same year; perhaps the Babylonian king was trying to prevent the rebellion after he heard of the conspiracy or was aware of the potential for a rebellion at the time. Also see Vanderhooft 2003: 243.

presumably to quell the rebellion.³⁷ To the following year is dated an omen predicting that a victory would occur over a foreign nation,³⁸ probably referring to this revolt in the Levant. It is probable that the Egyptians were backing the rebels, since Papyrus Rylands 9, dated to the reign of Darius II (423–404 BC), records a trip led by Psammetichus II to Kharu (Canaan) in 592 BC.³⁹

Tyre was conquered by the Babylonians before 591 BC, since Babylonians began to set up garrisons there during that year. The Eanna's royal representative, the *qīpu* Ninurta-šarru-ušur, was sent there to supervise the establishment. A dossier of texts (NBC 4665, NBDM 32, YOS 17, 225, and NCBT 757) dated to the 14th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (591 BC) records the goods sent to or received by him in Tyre.⁴⁰ His letters to the *šatammu* of the Eanna temple to request money, labourers, raw materials, and agricultural tools, are also found.⁴¹ PTS 3020, dated to 14th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, records that Eanna sent spades, shovels, axes, quivers, daggers, and arrows to the personal guards (*tašlišus*) who were probably sent to Tyre.⁴²

After conquering Tyre, the expedition continued. CT 22, 3 and CT 56, 555 dated to the 15th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (590 BC) may suggest that Ebabbar was called upon to provide military assistance in Upia (Greek Opis), which was a border city with a garrison and a collection point for the military campaigns into the Levant. Jerusalem was besieged during the years 589–587 BC,⁴³ and another deportation was carried out. Probably for setting up garrisons in the area or continuing the expedition, more soldiers from Babylonia were conscripted to come to the Levant in 586 BC.⁴⁴

Another rebellion broke out in the Levant in 582 BC. In that year Nebuchadnezzar II attacked Lebanon, Ammon, and Moab.⁴⁵ It seems that the Egyptians

37 The chronicle ABC 5, rev., lines 25–26 (Grayson 1975a: 102; Glassner 2004: 231).

38 Finkel and Seymour (eds.) 2008: 95; Finkel 2014: 59–60.

39 See Kahn 2008: 148–153.

40 Kleber 2008: 144.

41 Levavi 2018: Nos. 84–85.

42 Zaia 2021: 178.

43 Jerusalem was besieged from 589–587 BC. For the dating of the siege, see Young 2012: 18–21 and the bibliography in n. 27. Along with the capital, a lot of other sites were destroyed. For the details, see Stern 2001: 321–326. Jeremiah 37:5–11 records that Apries came to the aid of the besieged in 587 BC.

44 One text from Uruk, dated to 586 BC, alludes to the fact that additional Babylonian foot soldiers were sent to Upia for urgent military assistance in the west. See Kleber 2008: No. 20 (214–217).

45 Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* X, 181f.) attests to the campaigns against Lebanon (Coele-Syria), Moab, Ammon and Egypt: “for on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which

came to the rebels' aid at some point. A stele dated to the reign of Apries describes a campaign conducted by the Pharaoh in his seventh year (582 BC) in Sinai. It is probable that the unnamed enemy, described as "those of bad character", was the Babylonian army.⁴⁶ The result of this expedition is that the vassals in the Levant were turned into Babylonian provinces.

A point worth noting connected to the reconstruction of this phase is the 13-year siege of Tyre according to Josephus (*Against Apion* I, 156–160; *Antiquities of the Jews* X, 228).⁴⁷ It is said that after the siege, Baal reigned for 10 years (*Against Apion* I, 156). After Baal, Tyre was ruled by "judges," probably signaling a change in the political status of Tyre.⁴⁸ There were five judges, ruling for 6 years and 15 months in total (*Against Apion* I, 157). Then the royal regime resumed. The first king ruled for 1 year, and the second 4 years (*Against Apion* I, 157–158). It is in the 14th year of the third king when Cyrus "sized power" (*Against Apion* I, 159), which probably means his ascendance to the throne of Babylon in 539 BC. Counting backwards, the siege would have started in 588 or 587 BC and ended in 576 or 575 BC.⁴⁹

In *Against Apion* I, 159, it is said that it was in the seventh year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II that he began to besiege Tyre. This line has been interpreted as the seventh year of Ithobalos based on a variation concerning a pronoun in Greek and Latin manuscripts.⁵⁰ Katzenstein found that the part in question in the

was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Coele-Syria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites and Moabites; and when he had brought all these nations under subjection, he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned and set up another; and he took those Jews that were their captives, and led them away to Babylon."

⁴⁶ Kahn 2018: 72–73.

⁴⁷ Dixon (2022) examines the textual variations concerning the length of the siege in manuscripts. She presents a collection of eighth-seventeenth-century Latin manuscripts containing *Antiquities of the Jews* X, 228 referring to the length of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre. In eight manuscripts, the length is written as three years and ten, which can be interpreted as 13 years. However, nine manuscripts record the length as three years and ten months and one records three years and three months. The formula "three years and ten" is the way to write 13 years in Greek. Therefore, the interpretation of three years and ten months in Latin manuscripts was probably just a misunderstanding.

⁴⁸ Zawadzki (2003: 279) suggests that there was a revolt in Tyre between the month Abu of the 41st and the month Tašritu of the 42nd year of Nebuchadnezzar II (564–563 BC), which resulted in the loss of the status as a vassal state. This is rejected by van der Brugge and Kleber (2016: 201).

⁴⁹ van der Brugge and Kleber (2016: 200–208) propose that it is possible that the siege occurred during the years 588–575 BC.

⁵⁰ Among the available Greek and Latin manuscripts of *Against Apion*, there is not much variation. All extant manuscripts in Greek are direct or indirect copies of a manuscript from the eleventh century, with some additions and modifications. The Latin copies of *Against Apion* also show consistency (Dixon 2022: 176).

Latin manuscripts was written as *septimi siquidem anno regni sui Nabuchodonosor coepit*, “it was in his seventh year, Nebuchadnezzar began.”⁵¹ The pronoun following the regnal year can be interpreted as Ithobalos’.⁵²

After the suppression of the revolt in Tyre, there seems no evidence for political instability in the Levant. Nebuchadnezzar II invaded Egypt in 567 BC, probably with short-lived initial success.⁵³

6.2 Provincial System in Syria and the Levant

6.2.1 Ḥabur Region and the Upper Euphrates

As previously discussed, the transition from Assyrian to Babylonian administration in the Ḥabur region was peaceful. This region is also mentioned as a centre for animal husbandry of the royal household during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.⁵⁴ Furthermore, during the last decades of the dynasty, Ebabbar, Esagil, and Ezida received royal grants of land in the Ḥabur region.⁵⁵

It is evident that a provincial administration was established by the Babylonians in Guzāna (modern Tell Halaf).⁵⁶ A governor of Guzāna is mentioned in a tablet (BM 78887) from the Ebabbar archive from the early years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.⁵⁷ Four letters (TH 117–120), written in the Neo-Babylonian script, which invoked Bēl and Nabû in the greetings, were also found there.⁵⁸

Some evidence suggests that the Upper Euphrates was included in the Babylonian provincial system. A governor (¹⁴NAM) of Arpad is referred to in two administrative tablets (Nbk. 74 and CT 56, 439) from the Ebabbar temple in Sippar in Nebuchadnezzar II’s 19th year (586 BC).⁵⁹ It is also worth noting that a family archive dated from (roughly) the 40th year of Nebuchadnezzar II to the first year of

51 Katzenstein 1997: 328.

52 This interpretation is followed by Zawadzki 2015. Schaudig (2008: 537) points out that this pronoun is missing in the Greek manuscripts.

53 Kahn 2018: 74–77.

54 CT 57, 214 (24 <Nbk>); for the date and the collation, see Jursa 1995: 223. This text mentions that sheep from this region were brought as royal offerings for the Ebabbar temple in Sippar.

55 Jursa and Wagensonner 2014.

56 For Guzāna in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 144.

57 This tablet will be published by Zawadzki.

58 Edited by Friedrich et al. 1967: 66–68; also see Curtis 2003: 163, n. 14; Jursa 2005: 151 n. 1172; Fales 2012: 124, n. 39.

59 Joannès 1994: 21–22.

Nebuchadnezzar IV has been found in Neirab.⁶⁰ However, it seems that this archive was not written in this Syrian city, but in a deportee village near Nippur, which had the same name.⁶¹ Later the deportees returned to their original city and brought the archive with them. These Neirabites had probably been deported to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar II during his campaigns to this area.

6.2.2 Tyre and Qadesh

Although Phoenician cities are mentioned in Babylonian economic texts,⁶² there is not much information about the administrative system in the region. One notable exception is Tyre. From the 31st year of Nebuchadnezzar II to the accession year of Amēl-Marduk (574–562 BC), Babylonian troops were garrisoned on the island and an agricultural settlement of Babylonians was established on the Levantine coast to provide food for the garrison.⁶³ It is likely that Tyre was turned into a part of province at some point. A promissory note (BM 40546) dated to Nebuchadnezzar II's 40th year (565 BC)⁶⁴ seems to suggest that Tyre was under the jurisdiction of the Babylonian governor of the province of Qadesh. The text, which was written in Tyre, records that the governor (*bēl pīhati*) of Qadesh was responsible for delivering cattle to an individual. Therefore, the governor of Qadesh may have had an institutional estate in Tyre,⁶⁵ in which case it is likely that Tyre was included in the province of Qadesh.

⁶⁰ Dhorme 1928; Pedersén 1998: 192–193 with further references.

⁶¹ Jursa 2005: 152.

⁶² see Zadok 1985: 29 (Armada/Arwad), 32 (Ašdūdu/Ashdod), 158 (Ḥazzatu/Gaza), 279 (Sīdūnu/Sidon), and 281 (Šūru/Tyre).

⁶³ van der Brugge and Kleber 2016: 200. The texts from Tyre during this period were thought to refer to a small village of deportees from Tyre near Nippur, which would have adopted their original city's name, Šūru (Tyre). This theory was advanced by Joannès 1982 and 1987b. Kleber (2008: 141–154) re-evaluated this file, identifying that these tablets were written in Tyre, the Phoenician city, and added new documents to it.

⁶⁴ Wiseman 1985: 28, n. 191. For another attestation of the governor of Qadesh, see McEwan 1982: No. 2 (41 Nbk). For the discussion of the two texts, see Zawadzki 2003: 281, n. 26.

⁶⁵ Another (perhaps less likely) possibility is that the governor of Qadesh owned a personal estate in Tyre.

6.2.3 Samaria

It seems that Samaria did not suffer any military destruction by the Babylonians during this period, and there is also no evidence that there were deportations carried out from Samaria. Archaeological excavations show that there was continuity in the territory of Samaria from the late eighth century to the fourth century BC. There was also a major demographic growth during the Persian period, which may have already started in the Neo-Babylonian period.⁶⁶ Archaeological evidence shows that Mesopotamian-style residences and administrative buildings during the Neo-Babylonian period continued to be used into the Persian period at the site of Hazor⁶⁷ and probably in Megiddo and Tel Rekhesh as well.⁶⁸ However, the administrative status of this area during the Neo-Babylonian period is unknown.

6.2.4 Judah, Transjordan, and Philistia

There was a major depopulation and ruralisation in the areas of Judah, Transjordan, and Philistia. In Judah, along with many destroyed urban centres, settlements in most of the rural areas were destroyed or abandoned.⁶⁹ There was also a cultural break—the traditional Judahite tombs prevailed among the elites and the predominant “four-room” house type suddenly disappeared during the Persian period.⁷⁰ In Philistia, many sites were destroyed⁷¹ and a new mainly Phoenician population replaced the Philistines in the Persian period.⁷²

⁶⁶ See Knoppers 2013: 103 and 108 for the archaeological continuity and 104–105 for the population growth in the Persian period.

⁶⁷ Zorn 2013: 828. One of the buildings is a reception hall, probably functioning as an administrative institution.

⁶⁸ For Megiddo, see Zorn 2013: 828. For Tel Rekhesh, see Hasegawa 2020.

⁶⁹ Faust (2003) examined the continuity into the Persian period in excavated Iron Age rural settlements and concluded that rural settlements were greatly reduced there during the sixth century BC.

⁷⁰ Faust 2004: 160–165. Although several large “four-room” houses were perhaps reused in Mizpah (modern Tell en-Naşbeh), the new capital, in the sixth century BC (for more details, see Faust 2004: 165).

⁷¹ Zorn 2013: 831.

⁷² Stern 2004: 274–275.

There was rebuilding by the Neo-Babylonian administration in the area. In Judah, after the old capital was destroyed,⁷³ new administrative and economic centres were established, such as Mizpah (modern Tell en-Naşbeh) and Gibeon.⁷⁴ There were traces of Babylonian administrative interference.⁷⁵ Small rural settlements arose around them, with wine presses and other agricultural installations. Those settlements provided agricultural production, which was subject to taxes imposed by the Babylonians on wine, olive oil, grain, and other agricultural products. Military garrisons were established as well.⁷⁶

Ammon, Moab, and Edom may have been established as provinces, although there is lack of decisive evidence. In Ammon, a new capital (Tall al-ʿUmayri) was built near the original capital, Rabbat-Ammon. This settlement specialised in wine and oil production, mainly used for taxes paid to the Babylonian centre. Its peripheries were neglected by the Babylonian administration. There was no interest for the Babylonians in developing and protecting those peripheral areas, especially in the areas bordering the semi-nomadic regions.⁷⁷ At various sites of Ammon, such as Amman, Meqabelein, Tell el-Mazar, Tall al-ʿUmayri, and Umm Udeina, stamp seals in Babylonian style were discovered.⁷⁸ In Philistia, rebuilding activities have been found at a few sites. In the stratum Ekron IA, a Mesopotamian-style open court was found, evidencing some sort of Babylonian administration there.⁷⁹

73 For the destruction of various sites during the suppression of the revolt in 587 BC, see Stern 2001: 321–326. Along with this urban centre, the rural settlements in Jerusalem’s environs were destroyed or abandoned (Faust 2003: 39–41).

74 For the evidence in Mizpah, see Zorn 2003. For a summary of the post-destruction administration, see Zorn 2013.

75 People used stamped jars to deliver wine and oil, as taxes, to the collecting centres. Previously, the jars were stamped with a rosette. During the Neo-Babylonian period, the symbol on the stamp changed to a lion (Lipschits 2011: 73).

76 Lipschits 2004: 44–46.

77 Lipschits 2004.

78 For the pictures of the stamp seals of the Babylonian style, see Tyson 2019: 11.

79 For the Babylonian administrative evidence at the sites west of Ammon and Ekron, see Zorn 2013: 832.

7 Administration and Royal Intervention

7.1 State Administration

7.1.1 Royal Officials

The Neo-Babylonian court was modeled after the Neo-Assyrian court. Many official titles were either of Assyrian origin, or were first attested when Babylonia was under Assyrian dominance.¹ Jursa lists the highest officials in charge of six areas of the royal household and state administration (Table 8).²

Table 8: Top royal officials during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

Area	Title	Translation	Responsibilities
Royal Household	<i>ša pān ekalli</i>	The “Palace Superintendent”	Construction and maintenance of the huge palace buildings
	<i>rab nuhatimmī</i>	The “Chief Baker”	Royal meals and the provisioning of the royal household
Royal Estates	<i>rab bīti</i>	The “Major-domo”	Royal estates and their agricultural production
	<i>rab būli</i>	The “Chief Flock-master”	Royal flocks
	<i>rab tamkāri</i>	The “Chief Merchant”	Royal trade
Temple and Civil Administration	<i>zazakku</i>	The “Royal Secretary”	Temple administration and civil administration
Juridical Administration	<i>sartennu</i>	The “Chief Judge”	Chief judge
	<i>sukkallu</i>	The “Grand Vizier”	Chief judge
Infrastructure and Taxation	<i>mašennu</i>	The “Canal inspector”	Irrigation installations and other public works; agricultural taxation
	<i>rab kāširi</i>	The “Chief Treasurer” literally: “Chief Tailor”)	Non-agricultural taxation

¹ Jursa 2010b: 97–99; Jursa 2014a: 129; Da Riva 2014: 101–104.

² Jursa 2014a: 128–130; For the details of each official, see Jursa 2010b: 80–91.

Table 8 (continued)

Area	Title	Translation	Responsibilities
Army ³	<i>rab ša rēši</i>	The Chief Chamberlain (literally: “Chief of Courtiers”)	The overall commander in chief of the Babylonian army
	<i>rab ṭābiḫī</i>	The “Commander of the Royal Guard”	The commander in chief of the standing army, the core units of the military
	<i>rab mungī</i>	N/A	The commander in chief of the chariotry

These officials administered the state revenue from taxation and organised public building projects and military campaigns. It is unfortunate that only one small state archive was discovered so far from the Neo-Babylonian period.⁴ As a result, there is not much information about these high royal officials. Limited information can be extracted from the royal inscriptions or the archives of temples and private owners. For example, the letter YOS 3, 141 from the Eanna archive mentions the *ša pān ekalli* because temple personnel were working under him, perhaps for the building of the North Palace.⁵ Furthermore, Biblical texts mention these royal officials during the Babylonian campaigns against Jerusalem. In 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 39, the following officials are involved in the campaign in 587 BC:⁶ Nergal-šarru-ušur as *simmagir*, another Nergal-šarru-ušur as *rab mungī*, Nabû-zêru-iddin as *rab ṭābiḫī*, Nabû-šūzibanni as *rab ša rēši*, and Nabû-šarrūssu-ukīn as *rab ša rēši*.

The royal officials enjoyed a high status, as is shown by Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]). When the king listed the individuals who contributed labour to the building of the South Palace, the royal officials were named before the local governors of the country:⁷ *mašennu*, *rab nuhatimmī*, *rab kāširī*, *ša pān ekalli*, *rab bitī*, *rab ṭābiḫī*, *rab nikkassi* (the chief of accounts), *mašennu ša bīt sekrēti* (the canal inspector of the female quarters),⁸ *ṭupšar ša bīt*

³ For the military commanders, see also Joannès 2000: 64–66.

⁴ Pedersén 2005a: 111–127, Archive N1; Pedersén 2005b; Jursa 2005: 60; Jursa 2007b; Pedersén 2009; Alstola 2020: 60–63.

⁵ Levavi 2018: No. 117.

⁶ Jursa 2010b: 85.

⁷ For the list of local governors, see col. VI*, lines 19'–32' and col. VII*, lines 1'–22'.

⁸ Da Riva 2013c: 203. Svård (following Parpola 1988) renders MUNUS.É.GAL as *sēgallu* (Svård 2010). For a discussion of the various theories, see Parpola 1988.

sekrēti (the scribe of the female quarters), *rab rēdi kiksi* (the chief tracker), *rab kallabi* (the chief of the light cavalry), *rab amilāti* (the supervisor of the (female) domestic staff), *šāqū* (the cupbearer), *rab zammari* (the chief singer), *sepīri ša mār šarri* (the alphabet scribe of the crown prince), *rab būli* (the chief flock-master), *rab malāhi* (the chief boatman), and *rab tamkāri*.⁹

Courtiers (*ša rēš šarri*) were lower level royal officials, but were the backbone of the state administration. They were not originally from the upper strata of the urban society, but were taken from their families and raised in the palace. Some of them were even from foreign lands.¹⁰ Without familial interest, they developed strong loyalty towards the king and the central government.¹¹ They were designated only by their personal name and title,¹² unlike ordinary Babylonians, whose personal names were always accompanied by their patronymic name, and in the case of elite Babylonians, their family name. They were stationed in tribes, temples, and local governments as royal delegates for the purpose of centralising the administration. As administrators of tribes, they were called *šanū ša* (Bīt-) tribe X, “deputy of tribe X,” as their official title.¹³ Since they were delegates appointed by the king and solely represented the interests of the king, they were sometimes called *qīpu*, “royal delegate.”¹⁴ In temple administration, they were formally designated as *qīpu ša* temple X, “royal delegate for temple X,” or as *ša rēš šarri bēl piqitti ša* temple X, “courtier, the supervisor of temple X.”¹⁵ These royal representatives could enjoy a significant status in the local administration. In Sippar, the titles *abu*, “father,” and *bēlu*, “lord,” are used by the *šangū* of Ebabbar for the *qīpu* in the letters CT 22, 2–4.¹⁶ Furthermore, in one letter, the *šangū* of Ebabbar feared the anger of the *qīpu*.¹⁷

⁹ Col. V*, lines 35’–40’ and col. VI*, lines 1’–18’ (Da Riva 2013c: 211–213).

¹⁰ Jursa 2015b: 599–602. For courtiers of Aramean (or Chaldean) origin, see Jursa 2011c.

¹¹ De Zorzi and Jursa 2011. Babylonian courtiers may not have been eunuchs, as in the case of Assyria (Jursa 2011c; Pirngruber 2011; Radner 2011: 359–360).

¹² For some exceptions where the courtiers are attested with patronymic names, see Jursa 2015b: 600.

¹³ In the Sealand, the position was called *šanū ša tām̄ti* or *šanū ša šakin tām̄ti*.

¹⁴ Nabū-ētir-naṣṣāti and Nabū-šarru-ušur were called the deputy and royal resident of the Sealand. For further discussion, see Levavi 2018: 156–158.

¹⁵ Jursa (2015b: 602) discusses the cases of Sippar and Uruk.

¹⁶ BM 79327, BM 50204, and BM 49181 (CT 22, 2–4). For the transliterations and translations, see Levavi 2018: Nos. 191–193. These letters can be dated to 20 Npl–21 Nbk, according to the prosopographical data.

¹⁷ BM 49181 (CT 22, 4).

7.1.2 Administrative Divisions

The Babylonian imperial core was divided into three regions: Assyria,¹⁸ Akkad, and the Sealand. Assyria denoted the area north of Babylonia, with the most southern point being Dēr and the most northern point being the heartland of Assyria.¹⁹ Akkad encompassed northern and central Babylonia, including territory east of the Tigris. The Sealand included the southern cities and the area of the Chaldean tribe of Bit-Yakīn, which was dissolved during the Assyrian dominance of the seventh century BC. This division can be detected through several inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II. For example, the Etemenanki cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar II (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 [C41])²⁰ demonstrates the administrative structure of the core of the state by listing the places that contributed labour to the building of the Etemenanki in Babylon:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 (C41), col. II, line 45–col. III, line 29:²¹

Col. II:

45 *úr*^{ki} UNUG^{ki} *larsa*^{ki}

46 *eridu*^{ki} *ṛkul-aba*^{ki}

47 ^{uru}*né-mé-ed*.^{ṛd}[*la*]-*ṛgu*¹-*da*

48 ^{kur}*ú-ga-ar*.^{ṛd}EN.ZU

49 *na-ap-ḥa-ṛar*¹ KUR *ti-a-am-tim ša-ap-li-tim*

18 Textual evidence shows that the Neo-Babylonian administration was established in the Assyrian heartland. MacGinnis (2000: 336) published a text (BM 58761), most likely dated to the accession year of Neriglissar (Jursa 2003: 173), mentioning a governor of Assur. For the references to Assyrians and Arraphians in Babylonia during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, see Dandamayev 1997: 42; Beaulieu 1997b; Zadok 1997 and 1998. After the elimination of the Assyrian state by the Babylonians, the Assyria's once-grand metropolises maintained a certain degree of urban life and Aššur's cult continued in Assur. For the details, see Miglus 1992; Dalley 1993: 134–147; 2013: 179–202; Frahm 2017b: 193–194; Radner 2017.

19 For the evidence for Babylonian administration in Assyrian heartland, see Jursa 2003: 173–174.

20 Da Riva 2008: 19–23.

21 The transliteration and translation are based on RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 with modifications from the author. The inscription, written in archaising Neo-Babylonian script, records Nebuchadnezzar II's construction on the ziggurat of Marduk at Babylon, the Etemenanki, the work of which had already begun during the reign of Nabopolassar. It is uncertain when this inscription was composed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. So far, there are fourteen clay cylinder fragments discovered with this inscription. One of them was found at Susa, which was probably brought there after the Etemenanki was damaged during the two revolts against Xerxes in 484 BC (RINBE 1/1: 165). For further information concerning the Etemenanki, see RINBE 1/1: 7–8.

- 50 *iš-tu re-e-ši-ša*
 51 *a-di iš-di-ša*
 52 NIBRU^{ki} *i-si-in^{ki}*
 53 *la-ra-ak^{ki} dil-bat^{ki} mār-^rda^{1[ki]}*
 54 ^{kur}*pu-qu-du* ^{kur}*É-da¹[ku-ru]*
 55 ^{kur}*É-a-mu-ka-a-nim* ^{kur}*É-[si-la-a-nim]*

Col. III:

- 1 ^{kur}*bi-ra-^ra¹-[tim]*
 2 BÂD.DINGIR^{ki} *a-ga-dê^{ki} uru¹[BÂD-20-GIN]^[ki]*
 3 ^{kur}*ar-ra-ap-ḥa* ^{kur}*la-ḥi-[ri^{kur} x x]*
 4 *na-ap-ḥa-ar* KUR-*ak-^rka¹-[di-im]*
 5 *ù* ^rMA.DA^{1,d} *[aš-šur^{ki}]*
 6 LUGAL.MEŠ *ša e-bé-er-na-^ra¹-[ri]*
 7 ^{lu}*pi-ḥa-ta-a-^rtim¹*
 8 *ša* MA.DA-*ḥa-at-tim*
 9 *iš-tu ti-a-am-tim e-li-tim*
 10 *a-di ti-a-am-tim* ^r*ša¹-ap-li-tim*
 11 MA.DA-*šu-me-ri* *ù ak-ka-di-im*
 12 MA.^rDA¹-SU.BIR^{4,ki} *^rka-la-ši¹-[na]*
 13 LUGAL *na-gi-i ne-su-tim*
 14 *ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-tim*
 15 *e-li-tim*
 16 LUGAL *na-gi-i ne-su-tim*
 17 *ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-tim*
 18 *ša-ap-li-tim*
 19 GÌR.NÍTA.GÌR.NÍTA
 20 MA.DA-*ḥa-at-tim*
 21 *né-bé-er-ti-^{id}BURANUN^{ki}*
 22 *a-na e-re-eb* ^dUTU-*ši*
 23 *ša i-na a-ma-at*
 24 ^dAMAR.UTU *be-lí-ya*
 25 *be-lu-ut-su-nu a-bé-lu-ma*
 26 ^{giš}EREN.MEŠ *da-nu₄-tim*
 27 *ul-tu* ^{kur}*la-ab-na-nim*
 28 *a-na* URU-*ia* KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki}
 29 *i-ba-ab-ba-lu-nim*

(With regard to) Ur, Uruk, Larsa, Eridu, Kullaba, Nemed-[La]guda, Ugar-Sîn, **the entire land of the Lower Sea**, from its uppermost part to its lowermost part,

Nippur, Isin, Larak, Dilbat, Marad, Puqūdu, Bīt-D[akkūri], Bīt-Amuk(k)āni, Bīt-[*Šillāni], Birāt[*u*], Dēr, Agade, [Dūr-Šarrukku], Arrapha, Laḫī[*ru*, . . .], **the entirety of the lands of Ak[kad and Assyria],**

the kings of E[ber-nāri], the provincial governors of Ḫatti,²²

from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, the land of Sumer and Akka[d], al[*l* of] the land of Subartu (Assyria), king(s) of remote islands that are in the midst of the Upper Sea, king(s) of remote islands that are in the midst of the Lower Sea, (and) governors of the land of Ḫatti, Nēberti-Puratti, to the west (lit. “entering of the sun”), over whom I exercise dominion by the word of the god Marduk, my lord, and who bring (beams of) hard cedar from Mount Lebanon to my city, Babylon.

Three geographic divisions of the imperial core can be observed from this passage: the Sealand (the land of the Lower Sea), Akkad, and Assyria. Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Kish, and Cutha are not mentioned in this inscription, but they belonged to the division of Akkad.²³ This administrative structure also governs the list of high officials who contributed to the construction of the South Palace in the Nebuchadnezzar II prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]), the so-called *Hofkaler*,²⁴ which was composed in 598 BC.²⁵ Table 9 is the comparison of the administrative divisions of RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 (C41) and 011 (Prism).²⁶ Figure 9 illustrates the three administrative divisions on a map.

The administrative division of the imperial core included the tribes of Puqūdu, Gambūlu, Bīt-Amukāni and Bīt-Dakkūri in the territory of “Akkad.” Uruk and other southern cities were included in the territory of the Sealand. This may reflect an effort to integrate traditional Babylonian populations and tribal groups.

²² Ḫatti was used to designate “the whole area of Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean corridor” (Da Riva 2010: 167). Eber-nāri refers to the Eastern Mediterranean corridor and Nēberti-Puratti refers to Upper Syria, mainly the Ḫabur region. For Ḫatti (Ḫattu in Babylonian), Eber-nāri, and Nēberti-Puratti in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 157, 129, and 237.

²³ It may be that these cities were enjoying some kind of tax exemption for this project.

²⁴ For other editions and translations, see Unger 1931: 284–285; Oppenheim 1969: 307–308; see also Vanderhooft 1999: 41–42, 93–99; Beaulieu 2002: 99–101; Da Riva 2013c.

²⁵ It was found in the western annex building of the South Palace in Babylon, and is currently preserved at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. It originally had eight columns (or sides), but only six have been preserved. Da Riva (2013c: 196) notes that prisms were very common as material supports for Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, but this prism is the only known example during the Neo-Babylonian period.

²⁶ Da Riva 2013c: 200–201. Areas belonging to the region of Assyria are marked with an asterisk (*). Place names which appear in both inscriptions are bold.

Table 9: Administrative divisions in RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 (C41) and 011 (Prism).

Nbk 027 (C41)	Nbk 011 (Prism)
Ak[ka]d and Assyria* ²⁷	
Nippur, Isin, Larak, Dilbat, Marad, Puqūdu , Bit-D [akkūri] , Bit-Amuk(k)āni , Bit-[Šillāni], Birāt[u], Dēr* , Agade, [Dūr-Šarrukku], Arrapḫa*, Laḫīru*, . . .] ²⁸	Nādin-aḫi, (governor) of the land Tupliyaš; ²⁹ Bēl-šumu-iškun, (governor) of the land (of the) Puqūdu (tribe); ³⁰ Bibēa, descendant (= governor) of (the) Dakkūru (tribe); Nādin-aḫi, the <i>šangū</i> of Dēr* ; ³¹ Marduk-šarru-ušur, (governor) of the land (of the) Gambūlu (tribe); ³² Marduk-šarrāni, provincial governor of Sumandar; ³³ Bēl-lē'i, descendant (= governor) of (the) Amuk(k)ānu (tribe); ³⁴ Rēmūtu, governor of the land Zamê; ³⁵ Nabû-ēṭir-napšāti, governor of [the land Yap]tīru. ³⁶
The land of the Lower Sea ³⁷	
Ur , Uruk, Larsa , Eridu, Kullaba , Nēmed-[La]guda , Ugar-Sîn ³⁸	Erīb-Sîn, the <i>šangū</i> of (the city) Ur ; ³⁹ Mušēzib-Bēl, the <i>šangū</i> of (the city) . . .]; (PN), priest of the city [. . .]; Šumu-ukīn, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Dūr-Y[akīn]; Bāniya, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Limītu; Marduk-zēru-ibni, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Mādakalšu; Šulaya, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Nēmed-Laguda ; Šumaya, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Kullaba ; Nergal-zēru-ibni, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Udannu; Marduk-ēreš, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Larsa ; Nabû-(mu)kīn-apli, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Kissik; (and) Bēl-upaḫḫir, the <i>šangū</i> of the city Bakuššu. ⁴⁰

27 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027, col. III, lines 4–5.

28 Col. II, line 52–col. III, line 3.

29 For Tupliyaš/Tupliyiš in Neo- and Late Babylonian texts, see Zadok 1985: 315.

30 Puqūdu was located on the western bank of the Tigris, to the East or northeast of Uruk.

31 Dēr was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris.

32 Gambūlu was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris, in the border between Babylonia and Elam.

33 Sumandar was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris (Frame 1992: 291). There was also a Sumandar near Uruk (Zadok 1985: 275).

34 Bit-Amukāni was located opposite the Puqūdu on the right bank of the Nār-šarri, northwest of Uruk. Bit-Dakkūri is part of Bit-Amukāni.

35 Zadok 1985: 333; Fuchs 1994: 470. Zamê was a region in eastern Babylonia. There was also a city called Zamê near Uruk.

36 Col. VI, lines 22'–32' (The translation is based on RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 with modifications from the author).

37 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027, col. II, line 49.

38 Col. II, line 45–48.

39 Beaulieu 2019: 14, n. 33.

40 Col. VII, lines 1'–12' (The translation is based on RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 with modifications from the author).



Figure 9: Three divisions of the imperial core: Assyria, Akkad, and the Sealand.

7.1.3 Administrative Hierarchy and Regional Networks

Babylon was the capital of the Babylonian Empire.⁴¹ This high status can be traced back to the First Dynasty of Babylon. As the most important religious cen-

⁴¹ For a summary of the archaeological excavations of Babylon, see Pedersén 2021.

tre, Babylon housed the temple of the state god Marduk, Esagil,⁴² and hosted the Akītu festival,⁴³ when gods and priests from other cities would travel to Babylon to join the divine assembly presided over by Marduk. It was the only city of royal residence in the Empire during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II and, as the result of the building works of Nebuchadnezzar II, it now had three palaces.⁴⁴ People and goods frequently moved between Babylon and other parts of the state. Local governors and priests travelled to the capital to meet with the king and the king sent his representatives to other cities to carry out royal missions. Babylon also served as the collection centre for taxes. Texts from the archives of Eanna in Uruk and Eabbar in Sippar attest to the payment of regular taxes to Babylon.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, large amounts of goods were transported from Babylon to other cultic centres when the royal household and officials in Babylon gave tithes, gifts, and offerings to temples.⁴⁶ Babylon was also the seat of the highest judicial authority. Nebuchadnezzar II created a *bīt dīni*, “court-house,” in Babylon,⁴⁷ and appointed royal judges.⁴⁸ Very important legal cases were brought to Babylon,⁴⁹ especially when various regions were involved in the case.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Babylon served as the most important centre on the Euphrates trade route in Babylonia.⁵¹

Of all Babylonian cities, three religious centres enjoyed a status of privilege: Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha. In the context of tithes, the main temples of the three cities constitute a unique administrative unit,⁵² probably because they were assigned with a higher amount of tithe compared to other temples. The three divine patrons of this triad (Marduk, Nabû, and Nergal) were selected as the representatives of the

42 For the influence of Esagil over cultic centres during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and the early Achaemenid period, see Jursa 2010a: 68–73.

43 For the Akītu festival, see Zgoll 2006; Debourse 2022.

44 For the discussion of the three palaces of Nebuchadnezzar II (South Palace, North Palace, and Summer Palace), see Beaulieu 2017: 9–10. Note that instead of a palace, Esagil, the temple of Marduk with the ziggurat, was in the centre of the city. For the ideology governing the locations of the palaces and the temple (and its comparison with the Neo-Assyrian counterpart), see Beaulieu 2008: 8–11. For the attestations of various palaces during the Neo-Babylonian period, see Jursa 2003–2005.

45 Kleber 2008: 75–101; Jursa 2010a: 66–67.

46 Jursa 2010a: 67.

47 Sandowicz 2009.

48 The royal judges in charge of this institution were attested in the second half of his reign. This text is still unpublished but identified by M. Sandowicz (Jursa and Gordin 2018: 48).

49 Nbk. 109 records a trial in Babylon presided over by the governor of the Sealand, witnessed by the high officials from the Sealand, Uruk, Ur, Larsa, and other areas in the Sealand.

50 Jursa 2010a: 65–66.

51 Graslin-Thomé 2016: 6–7.

52 VAS 6, 67; Nbk. 430; Nbn. 270 (Jursa 1998: 10, n. 34)

whole pantheon for descriptions of royal offerings and building activities for the deities in the inscription RINBE 1/1 Nbk 019 (C34). This representation also appeared in the inscriptions of early Neo-Assyrian kings, who claimed that they visited the sanctuaries of Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha when they travelled to Babylonia. The supremacy of the triad was also shown in the *inūma*-sections of some inscriptions, where the descriptions of royal restorations of the triad's shrines are detailed, while the descriptions of other temples are very brief.⁵³ Furthermore, the high status of Marduk, Nabû, and Nergal in the pantheon is reflected in the name-giving practice among sons during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. The eldest brother would be given a Marduk-name, the second a Nabû-name, and the third a Nergal-name.⁵⁴

Regional networks of administration were established during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Each network was comprised of a large dominant centre and several satellite cities or towns, some of which had their own satellites. In the networks of each level, the satellite administrative units were under the charge of the centre. The organisation of the temples in the network adopted the same satellite system. The temple of the centre city supervised and financed the temples in the minor urban centres for the management and daily offerings on a very regular basis. Sometimes, the personnel of the dominant temple held prebends, or other strong economic ties, in the subordinate temples.⁵⁵ In the centre, the highest civic official was called *šākin tēmi*, "governor," and the highest administrator of the main temple was called *šatammu*, "bishop." In the satellite cities or towns, the highest civic official was called *ḫazannu*, "mayor,"⁵⁶ and the highest administrator of the temple was called *šangû*, "high priest." Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŞ 7834 attests to several *šangûs* of minor urban centres, such as Dēr, Dūr-Yakīn, Limītu, Mādakalšu, Nēmed-Laguda, Kullaba, Udannu, Larsa, Kissik, Bakuššu, and probably Ur.⁵⁷ This system facilitated communication between the centre and the periphery and contributed to the movement of knowledge and manpower within the region.

53 Da Riva 2010: 47 and n. 10.

54 Baker 2002: 10–11.

55 Jursa 2010a: 114.

56 For the office of *ḫazannu* in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, see Tarasewicz 2012.

57 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 (Prism). For other editions and translations, see Unger 1931: 284–285; Oppenheim 1969: 307–308; Vanderhoof 1999: 41–42, 93–99; Beaulieu 2002: 99–101; Da Riva 2013c. There were also smaller temples or shrines in major cities, which were under the central administration of the main temple. The highest administrator of those institutions was also called *šangû*. For example, there were small temples or sanctuaries in Uruk other than the Eanna. These cultic units were headed by *šangûs* and were under the supervision of the Eanna and received support in different forms from the Eanna. The archive of Eanna attests to *šangûs* of Nergal, Ninurta, Nusku, and Ušur-amāssu (Beaulieu 2019: 15 and n. 35). The same organisational system existed in Babylon. See the next footnote.

There were seven cities which held the position of *šatammu*: Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Uruk, Dilbat, Kish/Ḫursagkalama, and Marad. Babylon and Uruk are attested as the centres of their own regional networks.

Regional Network of Babylon

Babylon, along with its temple, Esagil, was the centre of a regional network in northern Babylonia. It was surrounded by several satellite towns, which were under the supervision of Babylon and Esagil.⁵⁸ The range of its jurisdiction reached to Sippar and its temple, Ebabbar.⁵⁹ The governor of Babylon was in charge of the taxation of Sippar. He sub-contracted part of the tax farming in Sippar to the Ša-nāšišu family from Babylon.⁶⁰ The *šangû* of Sippar and other temple administrators routinely travelled to Babylon to report their work or engage in various temple affairs.⁶¹ According to one text (CT 56, 463), an official of Esagil ordered Ebabbar to pay a large number of dates (110 *kor*) as the rations of two men working in Agade.⁶²

This network was quite complex. Sippar itself served as the centre of a smaller network, while Agade,⁶³ Šapazzu/Bāš,⁶⁴ and Dūr-Galzu⁶⁵ were its satellite towns. The temples of these towns were headed by *šangûs*.⁶⁶ Texts originating from or concerning these temples were found in the archive of Ebabbar.⁶⁷ The

58 Beaulieu 2019: 15. Five satellite towns (Tibira, Luḫāṭu, Dunnu-sā'idi, Tuba, and Elip) are attested in the text BM 77433 (George 1992: 222–226). This text was probably from Esagil in Babylon. It lists the *šangûs* of minor temples in Babylon and its satellite regions as the receivers of the offerings for different religious ceremonies.

59 The administration of Ebabbar was headed by a *šangû*. Ebabbar used to be headed by a *šatammu*. The position of *šangû* of Sippar was introduced by the supporters of Sîn-šumu-lišir in Sippar in 626 BC. See Da Riva 2001: 55.

60 Waerzeggers 2014: 51.

61 Jursa 2010a: 65.

62 Bongenaar 1997: 62. BM 83712 is a duplicate, but it does not help to restore the gaps in CT 56, 463.

63 The relationship between the Ebabbar temple in Sippar and the Eulmaš temple in Agade is studied by Jursa 1996.

64 Joannès 1987a. The relationship between the Ebabbar temple in Sippar and the Ekitušgina temple in Bāš is studied by MacGinnis 1997: 124–125.

65 Dūr-Galzu, where Ištar-tašmê and Nanaya were worshipped, was also a satellite of Sippar (Zawadzki 2006: 177–178).

66 The main temple in Agade was Eulmaš, the temple of Ištar, whose *šangû* is attested (Zadok 1985: s.v. Akkadu). The main temple in Bāš was dedicated to the god Bêl-šarbi, whose *šangû* (of Bāš) is also attested (VAS 6, 248; BM 64803; BM 65802).

67 A few texts originating in the temple of Agade's archive ended up in the archive of Ebabbar (BM 61522 and BM 62561). More than a dozen texts in the archive of Ebabbar are known to concern the town, with the alternative names of Bāš and Šapazzu (MacGinnis 1997: 124–125).

Ebabbar temple even hosted a cashbox for Eulmaš of Agade.⁶⁸ Some families concurrently held prebends in Sippar and these urban centres.⁶⁹ Evidence indicates that the Ebabbar provided silver (money), raw materials,⁷⁰ craftsmen, tools, and food to support the cult and economy in these subordinate temples. It seems that the Ebabbar also owned land in these smaller centres.⁷¹

Regional Network of Uruk

Uruk was under the jurisdiction of the Sealand, although this city seems to have enjoyed significant autonomy at the same time.⁷² The relationship between Uruk and the Sealand is explained by the text Nbk. 109,⁷³ a court record written in the 17th year of Nebuchadnezzar II. The trial was supervised by the *šakin māti* of the Sealand (obv., line 4).⁷⁴ The judges were the highest dignitaries in southern Babylonia and were listed according to their ranks: Nabû-ētir-napšāti, the *qīpu* of the Sealand; Nabû-šuzzizanni, the *šanû* of the Sealand; Marduk-eriba, the *šakin tēmi* of Uruk; Imbi-Sîn, the *šangû* of Ur; Bēl-uballit, son of Marduk-šumu-ibni, the *qīpu* of ‘Beyond (the River: Uqūn?)’; . . . (three individuals without official titles); Bā-niya, son of Aplaya, scribe of the Amurru temple; and Šamaš-ibni, the *šangû* of the Amurru temple. The fact that the *šakin tēmi* of Uruk was listed after the *qīpu* and the *šanû* of the Sealand indicates that Uruk was ranked lower than the Sealand in terms of the administrative hierarchy. The administration of the main tem-

68 CT 57, 100. See Jursa 1996: 206, n. 24.

69 For families who held prebendaries and positions in both of Sippar and Agade, see Jursa 2010a: 112 and n. 631.

70 A delivery of linen for Bēl-šārbi in Bāš was included in the linen issued by Ebabbar for the *bit-agī* of the Queen of Sippar in the text Nbn. 104.

71 BM 74604 (Bertin 2424) is a promissory note for 1000 *kur* of dates, guaranteed by the *šangû* of Sippar, whose seal was impressed on the tablet (for the seal, see MacGinnis 1995: A.10). This promissory note was written in Bāš, and was to be repaid in Sippar. This leads to the suggestion that this was actually a document concerning tax or rent farming. It was common practice for the tax or rent farmer of temples to enter a promissory note with the amount of the tax or rent they were required to pay at the harvest, with temple officials present at the drawing up of the tablet. It is likely that this promissory note was issued for the tax or rent of the land of Ebabbar in Bāš.

72 Beaulieu 2002: 113; Kleber 2008: 311–331. For the history of the relationship between Uruk and the Sealand, see Beaulieu 2002: 112.

73 Beaulieu 2002: 110–111; Kleber 2008: 320.

74 Kleber 2008: 311 argues that the governor of the Sealand was called *šakin tâmti* or *šakin māti* alternatively. *šakin tâmti* was mostly used by the governor himself to introduce himself in his letters; *šakin māti* was a colloquial term used by other officials to refer to the governor of the Sealand (Levavi 2021b: 23).

ple of Uruk, Eanna, was also within the jurisdiction of the governor of the Seal-
and, as shown in the letter YOS 3, 154.

YOS 3, 154:⁷⁵

Obv.:

- 1 IM ^{lú}ŠÁ.KÌN *tam-[ti]*
- 2 *a-na* ^{md}+AG-na-din-[MU]
- 3 ù ^{md}AMAR.UTU-'KAR'
- 4 ŠEŠ.MEŠ-šú *lu-ú šu-lum*
- 5 *a-na* ŠEŠ.MEŠ-e-a
- 6 *ina muḥ-ḫi dul-li-ku-nu*
- 7 ù EN.NUN-ti
- 8 šá É.AN.NA
- 9 *la ta-šél-la-a*₄
- 10 EN.NUN-ti šá É
- 11 DINGIR.MEŠ-e-a
- 12 *uṣ-ra-a*

Bottom:

- 1 *a-mur a-na-ku*
- 2 *al-la-ka*

Rev.:

- 1 *ma-la a-ga!-a*
- 2 *u₄-mu a-na-ku*
- 3 ^{md}*na-na-a-DÙ*
- 4 ù ^{mì}IR-ia
- 5 *it-ti* ^{lú}A-KIN.MEŠ
- 6 *gab-bi a-kan-na*
- 7 *ak-te-li*
- 8 *a-na ku-um* MU DINGIR
- 9 *šú-ú šá ú-še-lu-ú*
- 10 EN.NUN-ti-a
- 11 *a-kan-na*
- 12 *it-ta-šar-ru*

Letter of the governor of the Sea[land] to Nabû-nādin-[šumi]⁷⁶ and Marduk-ēter,⁷⁷ his brothers. May my brothers be well. Do not neglect your work and the service of Eanna. Look after the service of the temple of my gods. You will see, I will come personally. Up

⁷⁵ The transliteration and translation are based on Levavi 2018: No. 39 with modifications from the author.

⁷⁶ Nabû-nādin-šumi is attested during 15 Npl–3 Nbk (Kleber 2008: 33)

⁷⁷ Marduk-ēter is attested during 15 Npl–7 Nbk (Kleber 2008: 35).

until now I have personally withheld here Nanaya-ibni and Ardia, along with all of the messengers. It is on account of the oath to the god which they have sworn that they have been looking after my service here.

Although the base of the Sealand government was probably Mādakašū, Uruk served as the religious centre in the whole region. Eanna was headed by a *šatammu* and centralised the administration of the nearby minor urban centres, such as Larsa,⁷⁸ Udannu,⁷⁹ Eridu,⁸⁰ Kullaba, and Kissik.⁸¹ The temple of Amurru in the Sealand may have also been dependent on the Eanna temple. In the letter NCBT 11, an official of the temple of Amurru addressed the *šatammu* of Eanna as “my lord.”⁸²

This network, which centred around Uruk and the Eanna, resembles the aforementioned network in the city of Babylon. Money, goods, and manpower moved from the centre to the peripheries and vice versa. Many prebendary families in Uruk also held prebends in satellite towns, such as the prebends of baker and brewer.⁸³ This ensured a mutually beneficial relationship between the centre of the network and its satellites.

7.1.4 Administration in Tribes

There is much less evidence about the administration in tribes than in the Babylonian cities. The main tribes are those mentioned in the royal inscriptions: Puqūdu, Bīt-Amukāni, Bīt-Dakkūri, and Gambūlu. These tribes had patriarchal leaders, who were given the title of the descendant of a certain tribe.⁸⁴ Under them, deputies (*šanū*) were appointed to represent the interests of the king. The title *šanū* of Puqūdu is attested in BM 114577 and *AnOr* 8, 33. *šanū* of Bīt-Amukāni is attested in BM 114550 and YOS 7, 30, in the form of DUMU ^{uru}u-^{ka}nu¹. The inter-

78 Beaulieu 1991a and 1993b.

79 This city has been studied by Beaulieu (1991b, 1992, and 2003a: 289–295).

80 The *šangū* of Eridu, Ea-iqbi, is attested in YOS 17, 127 and BIN 1, 95. For the *šangū* of Eridu, see Zadok 1985: s.v. Eridu. The relationship between Eridu and Eanna is revealed by the letters sent from Eridu to Uruk where the requests for materials were made. For the letters, see Beaulieu 2003a: 339.

81 For Kullaba and Kissik, see Beaulieu 1992, 1993c and 2003a: 323 and 334.

82 The text will be published by Beaulieu, mentioned in Beaulieu 2003a: 328.

83 For the case of people who held prebends in both of Uruk and Larsa, see Beaulieu 1993b.

84 See *mār* Dakkūru and *mār* Amukānu in Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŠ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]); DUMU ^{uru}u-^{ka}nu¹ (YOS 7, 30).

nal administrative structure in the tribes resembled the cities in that the elders and an assembly of citizens were involved in decision-making.⁸⁵

These tribes enjoyed significant political power. The highest dignitaries in the country, *šakin māti* and *simmagīr*,⁸⁶ were closely connected to the tribes. These two positions were at the interface of local governorship and royal officialdom. While they acted as governor of the Sealand and a province in eastern Babylonia,⁸⁷ they were active on a non-regional level sometimes. In Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]), they were listed as the first two local governors. The two officials also acted as supervisors of judicial administration.⁸⁸ The loyalty of the *simmagīr*, Neriglissar, was so important that Nebuchadnezzar II married his daughter to him to secure the alliance.

While there is no evidence concerning the ethnicity of the two known *šakin mātis* during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, the ethnicity of the first *simmagīr*, Neriglissar, is known. His father was probably the ruler of Puqūdu. Neriglissar mentioned his father's name, Bēl-šumu-iškun, in his royal inscriptions. It is known that the ruler of Puqūdu listed in Nebuchadnezzar II's prism EŞ 7834 (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 [Prism]) had the same name. The equation of these two individuals is based on the text GC 2, 149, which mentions that messengers were sent to Puqūdu concerning the silver title of Neriglissar.

The tribe of Puqūdu and the Sealand probably contributed significantly to the Nabopolassar Revolt and to the imperial expansion of the dynasty, since they had a long tradition of fighting against Assyria.⁸⁹ The tribal contribution during the imperial expansion is revealed by 2 Kings 24:2, which mentions that the army of Nebuchadnezzar II consisted of "Chaldeans" (which can mean the Chaldean tribes as well as traditional Babylonians) as well as Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites. Furthermore, Neriglissar of the tribe of Puqūdu was a military commander accompanying Nebuchadnezzar II at the siege of Jerusalem during 589–587 BC.⁹⁰ The tribe's significant role in the military contributed to the usurpa-

85 Elders of Puqūdu (BM 114577; Durand 1982: Nos. 175 and 475); *mār-banê* of Puqūdu (P235704, edited by Wunsch 2004); elders of Bīt-Amukāni (AUWE 5, 136); *mār-banê* of Bīt-Amukāni (NCBT 666).

86 For the *simmagīr* Neriglissar, see van Driel 1998: 228–229.

87 Jursa 2014a: 128.

88 In the tablet (BM 103452/NCBT 627) dated to the 41st year of Nebuchadnezzar II, the *šakin māti* Lalê-Esagila-lušbi appears as the first judge, followed by Neriglissar, the *simmagīr* (Jursa, Paszkowiak, and Waerzeggers 2003/2004: 265, mentioned by Beaulieu 2002: 111).

89 It is known that during the Šamaš-šumu-ukīn revolt, the Puqūdu and the Sealand were supporting the revolt. However, not all the Puqudians were unanimously on the side of the rebels. For the active roles of the Puqūdu and the Sealand in the revolt, see Frame 1992: 167–170 and 175–182.

90 Jursa 2010b: 85.

tion of the throne by Neriglissar and Nabonidus. Both came from the tribal groups and held military positions before they seized the throne.⁹¹

7.2 Social and Economic Interventions

Upon the establishment of the dynasty, the social and economic institutions were interrupted because of a prolonged period of turmoil. Some temples had been totally abandoned or significantly reduced. Restoring and updating the infrastructure in the social and economic domains became one of the most important tasks for the crown. This was also appealing to the urban elites who suffered from the institutional disruption of the previous centuries: a large amount of elites lost their prebendaries and family properties in the cities and the countryside. The Babylonian kings fulfilled this task through various socio-economic interventions, resulting in the emergence of the entrepreneurial elites, the increased wealth of private households, and the restoration and expansion of public institutions.⁹²

The living standard in the Neo-Babylonian period was significantly higher than in earlier periods of Mesopotamian history. Compared with the dental data from the cemetery of Tell Aḥmad al-Ḥattū from the early third millennium BC, an analysis of Neo-Babylonian skeletons shows that people's diets were much higher in sugars and carbohydrates during this period.⁹³ Additionally, Neo-Babylonian houses were significantly larger than those of the second millennium BC.⁹⁴ Furthermore, dowry lists and household inventories of Neo-Babylonian urban elites contained goods of more variety, better quality, and included more metal objects, when compared with the Old Babylonian period. Silver (and gold) in the form of money is very frequently attested in the dowry lists during the Neo-Babylonian period, ranging from nine shekels to forty minas, while Old Babylonian dowries do not include silver and only a number of Old Babylonian inheritance division tablets refer to silver money.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Nabonidus, who was also Aramean, was a military commander under Nebuchadnezzar II in charge of military recruitment and finance both in the south and north of Babylonia (Jursa 2014a: 133 and n. 17).

⁹² These phenomena are evidenced by the increase of the documentation of the urban elites (prebendary and entrepreneurial) and institutions since the beginning of the dynasty (Jursa 2005). I detail these phenomena below in this section.

⁹³ Wittwer-Backofen 1983: 92.

⁹⁴ Miglus 1999: 177–314.

⁹⁵ Jursa 2010a: 807–811.

At the same time, the Neo-Babylonian economy experienced a structural change with emerging capitalist features. Before this period, the basic model of the ancient Mesopotamian economy was the *oikos* model. The economy of the public institutions dominated the whole society and the vast majority of the population was affiliated with those institutions, while redistribution was the basic model of all economic transactions. The Neo-Babylonian period witnessed several breaches to this model: (1) enlargement of the private sector, (2) free markets of real estate, commodities, housing, and labour, and (3) a monetised economy.⁹⁶

One of the reasons for this prosperity is the improvement in the climate. By the eighth century BC, the cold, dry climate that contributed to the crisis of the empires at the end of the second millennium BC came to an end. A more friendly climate resulted in a great increase of agricultural production. This economic development led to demographic growth and a phase of increased urbanisation.⁹⁷ Taking advantage of these elements, the Babylonian Empire invested significantly in the various areas of society and economy. This section surveys the royal policies concerning the revival of social and economic dynamism during the early stage of the dynasty.

7.2.1 Restoration and Reorganisation of Cult Centres

In ancient Mesopotamia, the temples and the households of the prebendary class were the backbone of the economy. However, they were affected by a long period of turmoil and unrest from the late second to early first millennium BC. Temples in different cities suffered various degrees of damage, such as the loss of property and personnel and the cessation of certain rituals, while some suffered total destruction or abandonment. The most famous example is the temple of Marduk in Babylon, Esagil, which was damaged by Sennacherib as retaliation (it was later rebuilt by Esarhaddon).⁹⁸ Because of this destruction, the prebendary families lost some or all of their income from the temples.

There is evidence that the early kings of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty made donations of land to temples. CTMMA 6, 178 is a *kudurru*-like prism, almost certainly dating to the reign of Nabopolassar, recording that the king bought a large piece of land from private individuals and gave it to a temple, possibly Esagil in Babylon. The recipients of the land allotments were the prebendaries of the tem-

⁹⁶ For a summary, see Jursa 2014b; for the details, see Jursa 2010a.

⁹⁷ Jursa 2014b: 30.

⁹⁸ For the reconstruction of Esagil, see Frame 1992: 68; Streck 2002.

ple and the land was free from state taxation. This land assignment may have related to the *ḥanšû* land allotment schemes, which can be traced to the early first millennium BC.⁹⁹ The *ḥanšû* land allotment schemes were conducted in Sippar to assign land to the Ebabbar temple during the early years of the dynasty. At some point between the 17th year of Nabopolassar and the 9th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, the land at Āl-Šamaš was reorganised. Part of the land was transformed into *ḥanšû* land for temple farmers and heads of plough teams of Ebabbar.¹⁰⁰ The land along the Nār-Šamaš was allotted in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar II as the orchards of the *rab banê*, “temple gardeners.”¹⁰¹ This same group was the recipient of another royal land allotment scheme on the Nār-*mašennu* in Sippar early in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.¹⁰² Evidence also shows that temples had possessed a significant amount of land during the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁰³ At the same time, the royal inscriptions record various building activities in the cultic centres. Some inscriptions single out the construction of a specific temple, such as the temple of Šamaš in Larsa by Nebuchadnezzar II:

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 104 (B26), lines 11–25.¹⁰⁴

- 11 *i-na u₄-mi-šu é-babbar-ra*
 12 *É^dUTU šá qé-re-eb larsa^{ki}*
 13 *šá iš-tu u₄-um ru-qu-ú-ti*
 14 *i-mu-ú ti-la-ni-iš*
 15 *qé-re-bu-uš-šu ba-aš-ša iš-ša-ap-ku-ma*
 16 *la uđ-da-a ú-šu-ra-a-ti*
 17 *i-na pa-le-e-a EN ra-bu-ú^dAMAR.UTU*
 18 *a-na É šu-a-ti i-ir-ta-šu sa-li-mu*
 19 *IM.LÍMMU.BA ú-ša-at-ba-am-ma*
 20 *SAḤAR.ḤLA qé-er-bi-šu is-su-uḥ-ma*

99 Nielsen and Waerzeggers 2016; Still 2019: 69–74. For a text recording the allocation of *ḥanšû* land to *rab hanšês* during the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina II, see AnOr 9, 1 and NBC 4848 (van Driel 2002: 304–305). A *ḥanšû* land allocation to prebendary families in Borsippa is attested (Still 2019: 78–85. For the locations of the *ḥanšû* land in the countryside of Borsippa, see Zadok 2006: 420–447). However, not all the *ḥanšû* land allotments were to do with temples. There were two *ḥanšû* allocations made during the reign of Kandalānu in Uruk. The recipients of these properties may have been from the lower social strata, such as the rural class (Jursa 2010a: 421–422).

100 Jursa 2010a: 336 and n. 1957.

101 Jursa 2010a: 324.

102 Da Riva 2002a: 170; Jursa 2010a: 335. For the *rab banês* in Sippar during the reign of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, see Da Riva 2002a: 136–171.

103 For the estate of Ebabbar, see Jursa 2010a: 323–348 and Jursa and Wagensonner 2014. For the estate of Eanna, see Jursa 2010a: 419–429.

104 The transliteration and translation are from RINBE 1/2 Nbk 104.

- 21 *in-nam-ra ú-šu-ra-a-ti*
 22 *ia-a-ti* ^{md}AG-ku-dúr-ri-ú-šur
 23 LUGAL KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} *re-e-šu pa-li-iḫ-šu*
 24 *a-na e-pé-šu É šu-a-ti*
 25 *ra-bi-iš ú-ma-'e-er-an-ni*

At that time, (with regard to) Ebabbar, the temple of the god Šamaš, which is in Larsa, which in the distant past had turned into a heap of ruins, in which sand had piled up, and (therefore) its ground plans were not exposed, (it was) during my reign (that) the great lord, the god Marduk, had compassion towards that temple. He raised the four winds, removed the earth inside of it, and (thereby) its ground plans could be seen (again). He greatly commissioned me, Nebuchadnezzar (II), the king of Babylon, the servant who reveres him, to build that temple.

Lists of cult centres that were renewed or restored are attested in several inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, including: Esagil in Babylon, Ezida in Borsippa, Emešlam in Cutha, Ebabbar in Sippar, Ebabbar in Larsa, Ekišnugal in Ur, E-ibbi-Anum in Dilbat, Edurgina in Šapazzu/Bāš, Eiggikalamma in Marad, and Eanna in Uruk.¹⁰⁵ Apart from the royal inscriptions, administrative texts from the Eanna temple also attest to the royal projects in cult centres.¹⁰⁶ These building activities are also confirmed by archaeological evidence in Babylonia.¹⁰⁷ Sometimes, the king would participate in the building rites (RINBE 1/1 Npl 06 [C31]),¹⁰⁸ and even directly oversee the rebuilding activities, as reflected in the letter YOS 3, 5 sent by Nebuchadnezzar II.¹⁰⁹

The monarch also paid significant attention to the cultic practices in the temples. This can be shown from the royal letters preserved from the Neo-Babylonian period. The order for the temple administrators to carefully execute the cultic practices features in most of the letters sent by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II.¹¹⁰ For example, in a letter sent to the *šatammu* of Eanna, Nabopolassar ordered: “Do not neglect the service of Eanna, the temple of my gods. Fine

¹⁰⁵ For example, RINBE 1/1 Nbk 019 (C34) and RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC). Nebuchadnezzar II probably also restored Udannu, although it is not attested in the royal inscriptions (Beaulieu 2019: 15). The reconstruction of Eanna probably connects to the return of the statue of Ištar by Nebuchadnezzar II (Da Riva and Novotny 2023: 21). The latter event also led to a change of titles of the goddess from Ištar to Lady of Uruk in the texts of the Eanna archive and Nebuchadnezzar II's inscriptions (Beaulieu 2003a: 123–130).

¹⁰⁶ Beaulieu 2005; Kleber 2008: 133–172.

¹⁰⁷ Finkel and Seymour (eds.) 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Da Riva 2013a: 9–10.

¹⁰⁹ Beaulieu 2003a: 130.

¹¹⁰ Jursa 2014d: 106.

bread, fine beer, (and) fattened sheep should be offered to my gods. Look after the service in the temple of my gods and pray for me to Bēl and Nabû.”¹¹¹

Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II carried out religious reforms aimed at the centralisation of religion. The first aspect of this reform was to strengthen the supreme status of Marduk. The rise of Marduk directly affected the status of Anu and Enlil, who were the first-ranking gods in the Sumerian tradition. In *Enūma Eliš*, this reduction in status was achieved by cancelling the agency of these two gods. They became the background gods who promoted Marduk, while Marduk was the active god who fought with Tīāmat.¹¹² While they were the old generations, namely, the “fathers” of Marduk, Marduk acquired agency resulting in the triumph over chaos.¹¹³ During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, more efforts were made in this respect. In the offering lists of Sippar, these two gods were moved to the end of the lists. The kings also promoted state gods over local deities in different cities. During the reign of Nabopolassar, Marduk and Zarpanītu were raised to the second rank in the animal offering lists of Sippar, just below Šamaš and Aya.¹¹⁴ After Ištar was reinstalled in Eanna of Uruk by Nebuchadnezzar II, she was paired with Marduk. The animal offerings of the state gods and their manifestations, such as Marduk, Nabû, and Ninurta, were considerably increased in the same period, as another attempt to promote the dynastic gods.¹¹⁵

Nebuchadnezzar II also reformed the temple administration during the second decade of his reign. One important aspect of this reorganisation was the promotion of Esagil and Ezida as the first-ranking temples. The system of two offerings, *maššartu* and *ginû*, was reformed to distinguish the status of these two temples’ prebendaries from all others. There is also evidence of an attempt to standardise cultic practices. For example, Nebuchadnezzar II reorganised the cycle of the shifts to offer *maššartu*. Furthermore, it seems that Nebuchadnezzar II also reorganised the book-keeping system of Ebabbar in Sippar.¹¹⁶

111 BM 118097. It is edited by Levavi (2018: No. 61). Also see Jursa 2014d: 106.

112 For a detailed discussion of the ways of the poem and especially the fifty names of Marduk at the end of the poem, exalt Marduk, see Seri 2006.

113 At the end of the myth, Marduk returned the tablet of destinies to Anu, acknowledging the nominal kingship of Anu.

114 For the offering lists of Sippar, see Zawadzki 2006: 166–167 and 170–171. The promotion of the state gods in Ebabbar of Sippar may have been facilitated by the placement of Ebabbar under the centralised administration of Esagil in Babylon. Ebabbar used to be headed by a *ša-tammu*. In 626 BC, Sin-šumu-līšir introduced the position of *šangû* of Sippar (Da Riva 2001: 55). The Neo-Babylonian dynasty kept this practice.

115 For the efforts to promote the state gods in Eanna, see Beaulieu 2003a: 75–79 and 82–87.

116 For the details of the evidence concerning Nebuchadnezzar II’s reorganisation of temple administration, see Sandowicz 2012: 46–47.

There may also have been a reorganisation of the structure of the religious network in the Sealand. The Eanna of Uruk was the centre of this network and centralised the administration of the satellite temples in the Sealand. This hierarchy was shown by the titles of the heads of Eanna and other temples. As the centre, Eanna was headed by a *šatammu*, while the minor temples were headed by *šangûs*. Around the 20th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, there may have been a change in the administration of the temple of Amurru in the Sealand. There are attestations of both *šangû* and *šatammu* of the temple of Amurru. The *šangû* is attested in the 17th year of Nebuchadnezzar II (Nbk. 109), while the *šatammu* is attested roughly in Years 24–28 of Nebuchadnezzar II (PTS 3245).¹¹⁷ The position of the head of the temple of Amurru may have been raised around the 20th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, thus the temple of Amurru may have replaced the Eanna of Uruk as the centre in the area.

7.2.2 Relocation of the Prebendary Families

It was the prerogative of the king to introduce a new prebendary position and grant it to a certain individual.¹¹⁸ During the early years of the dynasty, this prerogative was used to relocate prebendary families to the restored cultic centres. Revivals of the cultic centre required not only the restoration of physical buildings, but also the revitalisation of cultic personnel to provide the knowledge and manpower to perform rites and offerings. The relocation of the prebendary families also served to strengthen the centralisation of the state. Inserting prebendary elites from the capital into the local prebendary community of other cities contributed to the communication of the state interest in the local network and increased state control.

¹¹⁷ Schmid's (2020: 262–263) suggestion that an attestation of the *šatammu* of the temple of Amurru appears in the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II conflicts with this argument.

¹¹⁸ Waerzeggers 2011: 742. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of royal grants of prebends during the Neo-Babylonian period. The texts commemorating the grant were often inscribed on the stone monuments known as kudurrus dated from the late second to the early first millennium BC. The only case violating the royal prerogative came from the introduction of a temple-enterer of the Ezida temple during the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun (eighth century BC), owing to the powerlessness of the king (Waerzeggers 2011: 742–744).

Sippar

The second *šangû* of Sippar during the reign of Nabopolassar was probably appointed because of his connection to Babylon and Borsippa.¹¹⁹ The position holder was named Bêl-nāšir, son of Balātu, descendant of Ahiya'utu.¹²⁰ It is certain that the family of Ahiya'utu was not a prominent family in Sippar during the eighth and seventh centuries BC. However, this family had some significance in Borsippa during that time.¹²¹ Bêl-nāšir was active in Sippar already during the reign of Kandalānu and the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar.¹²² He was able to establish a connection with the administrators of Ebabbar during the reign of Kandalānu. This is evidenced by BM 50110, in which he acted as a scribe for a sale involving the *šatammu* of Ebabbar, Šamaš-šumu-lišir,¹²³ and witnessed by Aplaya, son of Aqar-aplu, descendant of Šangû-Sippar/Šangû-Šamaš. He was listed as a witness in FLP 1517 (626 BC), which attests to the individuals who belonged to some of the most notable families in Babylon and Borsippa, such as Ša-nāšišu, Ile"i-Marduk, and Egibi.¹²⁴

Bêl-nāšir became a perfect candidate for the position of *šangû* of Sippar. On the one hand, his integration into the local network ensured less resistance from the local elites. On the other hand, originating from Borsippa (probably) and having connections with the elites in Babylon and Borsippa, he was more connected to the capital. However, this family was not able to retain their status in Sippar. They soon lost the position to the family Šangû-Sippar at the end of the reign of Nabopolassar.¹²⁵

119 The position of *šangû* of Sippar was introduced by Šin-šumu-lišir in 626 BC, when he held Babylon. In the same year, Nabopolassar captured Babylon and ascended to the throne in Babylon. The position of *šangû* of Sippar was continued by Nabopolassar, and Bulluṭu/Bunene-ibni remained in office, probably resulting from his immediate surrender to Nabopolassar in 626 BC. He is attested as the *šangû* of Sippar from the seventh to eighth year of Nabopolassar (Bongenaar 1997: 26–27). For the suggestion that Bunene-ibni was the father's name, rather a family name, see Nielsen 2011: 134.

120 He is attested as the *šangû* of Sippar from the ninth to eighteenth year of Nabopolassar (Bongenaar 1997: 26–27).

121 Nielsen 2011: 135 and n. 26. This family held the prebend of brewer of Ezida in Borsippa during the Neo-Babylonian dynasty (Waerzeggers 2010: 168).

122 Citizens of Babylon and Borsippa travelled to Sippar frequently, actively participating in the economy of Sippar, and vice versa. Waerzeggers 2014 presents an excellent example of a family, Šāhit-ginê, stemming from Babylon moved to Sippar and established multiple firms there. For the travels of one member of this family, Marduk-rēmāni, from Sippar to Babylon and Borsippa, see Waerzeggers 2014: 95–98. For Sipparians in Babylon, see Waerzeggers 2014: 98–99.

123 Bêl-nāšir is attested under the name Bêl-nāšir-napšati (Da Riva 2002a: 365).

124 Dillard 1975: 21–22 and 235.

125 Ebabbara-šadūnu/Šamaš?1-1-apla1-ušur/Šangû-Sippar is attested as the *šangû* of Sippar from twentieth year of Nabopolassar to the twenty-first year (?) of Nebuchadnezzar II (Bongenaar 1997: 26–27).

An example of a prebendary family moving from Babylon to Sippar is the lineage of Erība-Marduk, who belonged to the family Šangû-Ištar-Bābili. This family probably moved to Sippar during the early reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, while his brother Nabû-mukīn-zēri remained in Babylon.¹²⁶ Erība-Marduk was active from the seventh to the 28th year of Nebuchadnezzar II.¹²⁷ It seems that he held an important position in Ebabbar, as two letters show that he worked directly under the *qīpu*.¹²⁸ Evidence indicates that during the generation that followed Erība-Marduk, four of his five sons owned a large number of prebends, including the position of brewer of Šamaš and other prebends in the sanctuaries of Anunnītu, Gula, Marduk, and Šarrat-Sippar. Furthermore, all of the sons held important administrative positions in Ebabbar: Marduk-šumu-iddina held the position of *šangû*, while the other four sons were college scribes of Ebabbar.¹²⁹ The ability to acquire those prebends and administrative positions was probably owed in part to Erība-Marduk's connection with the royal household (manifested by his relationship with the *qīpu*), as well as the lineage of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, who was from the same family (Šangû-Ištar-Bābili) that owned many prebends in the sanctuaries of Anunnītu, Gula, Marduk, and Šarrat-Sippar, and held the position of *šangû* of Sippar around the same time.¹³⁰

Uruk

During the early period of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, prebendary families from Babylon were sent by the crown to Uruk as the representatives of the state.¹³¹ Descendants of the family Dābibī, who originated in Babylon, were appointed as the *šatammu* and *ṭupšar ayakki* during the reign of Nabopolassar and the early half of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (Table 10).¹³²

¹²⁶ He is attested in BM 30571 (the thirteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar II) (Wunsch 1997/1998: No. 1).

¹²⁷ Bongenaar 1997: 436 and 486; Da Riva 2002a: 366.

¹²⁸ BM 49909 and BM 79323 (CT 22, 35–36). For the transliteration and translation, see Levavi 2018: Nos. 194–195.

¹²⁹ Bongenaar 1997: 444.

¹³⁰ Bongenaar 1997: 443. Šamaš-zēru-ibni is attested in the fourteenth year of Nabopolassar, see Bongenaar 1997: 441. When this family moved to Sippar is unknown.

¹³¹ There is no evidence that families of a clear Babylonian origin existed in Uruk that pre-date the Nabopolassar Revolt. For the families of northern origin in Uruk during the Persian period, see Kessler 2004.

¹³² The data for this table comes from Kleber 2008: 33, 35.

Table 10: The *šatammu* of Eanna and the *ṭupšar ayakki*.

The <i>šatammu</i> of Eanna			The <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>		
Name (first and paternal)	Family	Period	Name (first and paternal)	Family	Period
Nabû-kudurrî-ušur = Kudurru	—	5 Npl–9 Npl	Marduk-šākin-šumi/ Bēl-šumu-iškun	Dābibī	0 Npl–7 Npl
Marduk-šākin-šumi/ Bēl-šumu-iškun	Dābibī	10 Npl	Nabû-nādin-šumi/ Bēl-šumu-iškun	Dābibī	10 Npl
Nabû-nādin-šumi/Bēl-šumu-iškun	Dābibī	15 Npl–3 Nbk	Marduk-ēter/Bēl-šumu-iškun	Dābibī	15 Npl–7 Nbk
Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin	Nūr-Sīn	4 Nbk–19 Nbk ¹³³			
Marduk-šāpik-zēri	Rab-banê	20 Nbk–23 Nbk			

From the 20th year of Nebuchadnezzar II, the position of *šatammu* of Eanna was transferred to the descendants of Rab-banê,¹³⁴ a local family in Uruk. In the meantime, the position of *šākin ṭēmi* of Uruk was always held by major local families from Uruk, namely Ḥunzû and Gimil-Nanaya.¹³⁵

The kings planted families from Babylon in the Eanna temple to facilitate surveillance and control of the temple, and thus of the entire city. This was a result of the long-lasting pro-Assyrian stance held by the city before the Nabopolassar Revolt. This kind of policy came at the cost of the interests of the local elites, causing anger towards the state. For example, the Urukian priests may have composed the Tammuz Lament during the Neo-Babylonian period to express hostility towards Babylon. As Lambert argues, this text blames Marduk for the demise of Tammuz, the spouse of Ištar, describing “conflict between Babylon and (apparently) the rest of Babylonia.”¹³⁶ Hostility towards Nabopolassar was also expressed in the Uruk Prophecy, in which he was described as a malevolent king.¹³⁷

133 For a detailed historical reconstruction surrounding this *šatammu* of Eanna, see Jursa and Gordin 2018: 51.

134 The family name of Marduk-šāpik-zēri is unknown, but he was probably the father of the following *šatammu* of Eanna, Marduk-bēlšunu/Marduk-šāpik-zēri/Rab-banê.

135 Anu-aḥu-iddin (7 Npl–10 Npl); Marduk-šumu-ušur/Nabû-šumu-iškun/Ḥunzû (15 Npl); Šamaš-zēru-iqīša/Marduk-šarrāni/Gimil-Nanaya (2 Nbk–4 Nbk); Marduk-eriba/Zērūtu (17 Nbk–19 Nbk). For the details, see Kleber 2008: 38.

136 Lambert 1983: 214.

137 In the Uruk Prophecy, Nabopolassar is not identified as a king of Uruk and he is described in a negative light.

Larsa

Priestly families from Sippar were probably sent to Larsa to help with cultic affairs, since the god Šamaš was worshipped in both cities.¹³⁸ In the archive of Itti-Šamaš-balātu from Larsa, dated from 22nd year of Nebuchadnezzar II to the eighth year of Cyrus, several descendants of the family Šangû-Šamaš/Šangû-Sippar are attested.¹³⁹ Šangû-Sippar and Šangû-Šamaš were probably alternative names for the same family, which was a powerful family in Sippar and held prebends in Ebabbar throughout the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.¹⁴⁰

7.2.3 Revitalisation of the Countryside

Upon the establishment of the dynasty, one of the most important tasks of the crown was to redevelop the economy. As an agrarian society, irrigation networks were the foundational infrastructure of the economy. In their royal inscriptions, Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II mention that they did construction work on different canals. Nabopolassar claimed that he restored the Nār-Šamaš in the countryside of Sippar.¹⁴¹ Nebuchadnezzar II mentioned his work on Libil-hegalla, the eastern canal of Babylon.¹⁴² Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar II carried out a large-scale reclamation project to develop the agriculture to the north of Sippar, probably early in his reign. The most important part of this project was the construction of the Nār-šarri, which connected the Euphrates with the Tigris.¹⁴³ Nebuchadnezzar II built the “Median Wall” north of this canal to keep out intruders. The construction of this canal changed the landscape in the North, providing a large amount of arable land. In the South, the Eanna temple was involved in building a dam in the Sealand during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.¹⁴⁴

The land-for-service system was employed to develop the economy on the newly reclaimed land.¹⁴⁵ The subjects of this system partially came from among

¹³⁸ Beaulieu 2019: 14.

¹³⁹ One of the texts is YBC 3544, published as YNER 1, 5; also edited in Beaulieu 1991a: 61–62.

¹⁴⁰ Bongenaar 1997: 447–463.

¹⁴¹ See the inscriptions of Nabopolassar RINBE 1/1 Npl 14 (C21 and B7).

¹⁴² MacGinnis 2018b: 43. For the wording in the inscriptions, see Da Riva 2012: 52.

¹⁴³ Jursa 2010a: 326–334; Eanna was engaged in the construction of the Nār-šarri in the area of the Raqqat-Šamaš, the “Swamp of Šamaš” during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (Kleber 2008: 166–173).

¹⁴⁴ Kleber 2008: 159.

¹⁴⁵ Part of the land was given to temples with the *ħansû* land allotment schemes. It is evident that the *ħansû* land allotment schemes were conducted in Sippar to assign land to the Ebabbar temple during the early years of the dynasty. CTMMA 6, 178 also records that Nabopolassar

the deportees,¹⁴⁶ who were allocated a piece of land and bore the responsibility to do service for the state.¹⁴⁷ There were at least 15 settlements of deportees in Babylonia. These settlements were usually named after the original cities of the deportees. Such settlements included Ĥindanu,¹⁴⁸ Gabalīn,¹⁴⁹ Ālu-ša-lūQu-raba/ma-tu-ú-a,¹⁵⁰ Ālu-ša-Nērebāyi,¹⁵¹ Ĥamat(ta) (Hamath),¹⁵² Ĥaz(z)atu (Gaza),¹⁵³ and Āl-Yaḥūdu (the city of Judah).¹⁵⁴ These settlements were notably located in the region of Nippur.¹⁵⁵

A similar system may have been established in the countryside of Uruk. This is supported by a text (YBC 4022) dated to the 39th year of Nebuchadnezzar II from the Eanna archive. This text was probably a tithe list, recording varying quantities of dates due from several individuals. The names of these individuals include at least 16 Arabian names, several Aramaic names, and two Judean names.¹⁵⁶ This indicates that different ethnic groups were settled in the region of Uruk, who were responsible for paying tithes to the Eanna temple. It is likely that these settlements in the countrysides of Nippur and Uruk were already there since the early years of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, because deportations are attested in that period.¹⁵⁷

bought a large piece of land from private individuals and gave it to a temple, may have related to the *ḥansū* land allotment schemes.

146 There is also the possibility that Babylonian deportees to Assyria (or their descendants) returned to Babylonia after the fall of Assyria. However, the state measures to resettle them remain unknown.

147 Most of the evidence for the land-for-service system during the first millennium Babylonia comes from the Persian period. For the studies of this system, see Stolper 1985; van Driel 2002: 226–273; Jursa 2011a, esp. 435–437.

148 See Zadok 1977: 12.

149 See Zadok 1985: 135.

150 See Zadok 1977: 17.

151 See Zadok 1985: 18, 238.

152 Pearce and Wunsch 2014: 313, s. v. Ĥamat.

153 See Zadok 1985: 29, 158; Pearce and Wunsch 2014: 313, s. v. Ĥazatu.

154 There were three deportations of Judeans during the early period of the sixth century BC (598, 587, and 582 BC). An archive from that town dated to the sixth and fifth centuries has been found (Joannès and Lemaire 1996; Pearce 2006; Abraham 2005/2006 and 2007; Pearce and Wunsch 2014: 312, s. v. Āl-Yaḥūdu; Alstola 2020; Wunsch 2022)

155 Deportees from Gezer were settled near Sippar. See Jursa 1998: 107–108.

156 For the details of the text, see Jursa and Zadok 2020: 30–35.

157 There were three deportations of Judeans during the early period of the sixth century BC (598, 587, and 582 BC). There were also deportations of Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Syrians into Babylonia.

It is possible that the Neo-Assyrian system of *kišru* was used during the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁵⁸ The *kišru* system was imposed to levy soldiers from among the deportees, who were assigned a piece of land and therefore bore the responsibility for state service. A *rab kišri* (interchangeable with *rab hanšē*) is attested as a captain of 50 chariot troops. BM 116230, a tablet from Carchemish dated to the Neo-Assyrian period, shows that this official was assigned to a village or villages, probably also a district of a town, from which he would collect people for various state service, such as cooks and soldiers.¹⁵⁹

7.2.4 The Emergence and Migration of the Entrepreneurs

In the context of first millennium BC Babylonia, entrepreneurs can be defined as a group of propertied urban dwellers who did not rely on agricultural holdings, but engaged heavily in business, primarily agricultural production and trade, rent farming, and tax farming. They were motivated primarily by the desire for profit and took risks in the course of their business activities,¹⁶⁰ therefore they participated actively in the running of business companies. Some were either prebend holders themselves,¹⁶¹ or were from a prebendary family but did not inherit any of the prebends.¹⁶² While they had small-scale wealth, the prebendary affairs (if any) did not completely occupy their time. Perhaps because the income of the prebend was too little, they chose to take risks to get involved in business when they saw an entrepreneurial opportunity. Others were from the secular sphere, who gradually accumulated wealth by doing small-scale business. Certain members of these non-priestly families were appointed as officials at some point, by fostering a connection with the royal household.

¹⁵⁸ van Driel 2002: 308–310. The *kišru* system was a prototype of the *hatru* system employed by the Achaemenids.

¹⁵⁹ For the official *rab kišri*, see Postgate 1974: 221, 225–226, and 360–362.

¹⁶⁰ This is in contrast with the rentier type, which owned reliable income from mostly inherited positions in institutions and property but rejected turning it into capitals to avoid economic risks. For more details on the rentier and entrepreneur types, see Jursa 2010a: 282–294 and 764–766.

¹⁶¹ Evidence shows that some prebend holders in Borsippa chose to become entrepreneurs, others did not (Wunsch 2010: 46).

¹⁶² Inheritance law in Neo-Babylonian dynasty favoured the eldest son, who would inherit twice as much as his brother, or half of the legacy if there were more than two sons (Wunsch 2010: 56). For a detailed examination of the inheritance law in the first millennium, see Wunsch 2020.

The emergence of the entrepreneurs was rooted in the particular social and economic conditions of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. When the dynasty was established, a lot of arable land was developed and granted to institutions and officials. A gap was generated between the supply of a dependent workforce and the demand for labour for cultivating these lands. This gap resulted in a remarkable increase in hired labourers, who were paid market wages in silver money.¹⁶³ Furthermore, entrepreneurs contracted the lands from various institutions and officials and rented them out or hired people to work on them. In this way, the institutions could have stable income from these lands and the entrepreneurs could profit from the contracts while bearing some risks. This function of being an intermediary, working “at the interface between the institutional and the private economy,”¹⁶⁴ fits well with one of the most widely accepted definitions of entrepreneurs by Joseph Schumpeter: an innovator and a gap filler.¹⁶⁵

Jursa distinguished four types of entrepreneurs: rent farmers on institutional land, rent farmers on the land of officials and Persian nobles, entrepreneurs in the “land-for-service” sector, and entrepreneurs in the management of lands of institutionally unattached landowners.¹⁶⁶ Apart from agricultural management, some entrepreneurs also engaged in long-distance trade. The archive of Itti-Šamaš-balātu and his son (583–531 BC) in Larsa provides an example of an entrepreneur engaged in tax farming, tithe farming, and rent farming. Itti-Šamaš-balātu and his son were tax farmers providing workmen/soldiers to the royal administration. They were also tithe collectors of the Ebabbar temple in Larsa and lessees of royal land. Furthermore, they acted as the agent of the administrators or business partner of state officials (in a private capacity).¹⁶⁷ The family of Itti-Šamaš-balātu were “new men” backed by the state administration,¹⁶⁸ taking a part in the developing economy of Larsa, which was revived by Nebuchadnezzar II in the early part of his reign. Another much more modest example of an entrepreneur in the early years of the dynasty is the career of Šulaya, the first generation of the famous Egibi family during the reign of Nabopolassar and the first half of Nebuchadnezzar II’s reign. He was engaged in commodity trade, slave purchases, and house rentals.¹⁶⁹

163 For the large scale of the use of freeborn hirelings in state building projects, see Dandamayev 1987 and 1988; Jursa 2010a: 660–680; 2014c: 177–185; 2015a.

164 Jursa 2014b: 38.

165 Jursa 2010a: 286.

166 Jursa 2010a: 193–204.

167 For the relevant documents, see Beaulieu 2000: 49–61.

168 Beaulieu 2000: 63; Wright 1994: 194–195.

169 For the texts pertaining to Šulaya, see van Driel 1985–1986: 50–53.

Rent farming and tax farming required establishing a good relationship with the owners of the land and the officials in charge of the taxation. Entrepreneurs had to make an effort to form and maintain such relationships, which cost them a lot of money; for instance, giving presents, incentives, or bribes, and networking.

In Search of Economic Opportunities

With the transformation of land in the countryside into farms, entrepreneurs were mobilised to take economic opportunities. Families from Babylon and Borsippa came to take a part in the developing economy of Sippar during the early period of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Documents attest to the migrations of branches of the families of Šāhit-ginê, Maštuk, Ša-nāšišu, Arad-Nergal, and Nap-pāhu from Babylon to Sippar. These families came to Sippar during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II and may have all settled in the same neighbourhood. At first, they constituted an immigrant network in Sippar, since it was difficult to be accepted into the local social world, but by the reign of Nabonidus, some of them were able to marry local women in Sippar. Their main activities focused on Sippar, but they still kept contact with the ancestral home. For example, Marduk-rēmāni was from the third or fourth generation of the family Šāhit-ginê that moved to Sippar from Babylon. He still maintained a fifth of his business affairs in Babylon and kept in touch with his extended kin in Babylon and other cities. He and his father managed to marry a daughter from a local prebendary family of Sippar, while his sister and son had marriages with families in Babylon.¹⁷⁰

The relocation of these entrepreneurs was sponsored by the state. The royal household and officials were among the most important contributors to their business, providing capital through loans or partnerships and supplying the means of production by contracting their land to the entrepreneurs. Royal and state officials were active in the social network of those entrepreneurs. They acted as witnesses in lawsuits or contracts. The connection between them and these Babylonian entrepreneurs can also be shown by the fact that the entrepreneurs bought properties in the same neighbourhood as the royal and state officials. Most of the evidence is from the archive of the Šāhit-ginê family, which moved from Babylon to Sippar to engage in the Sipparian economy.¹⁷¹ The mayor

¹⁷⁰ Some Babylonian families deposited their archives in the same place. This means that they may have lived in the same neighbourhoods, or that they may have used the same storage facilities. This is further supported by a tax and corvée unit called “the Babylonians” in Sippar. For the settlement and integration of the Babylonian families that moved to Sippar and specifically, Marduk-rēmāni of the family Šāhit-ginê, see Waerzeggers 2014: 45, 47–48, and 53–60.

¹⁷¹ Waerzeggers 2014: 49–51.

of Sippar (*hazān Sippar*) was a partner of the business firm of one member of the Šāhit-ginê family.¹⁷² The father of Marduk-rēmāni, descendant of Šāhit-ginê, leased crown land. Furthermore, a royal merchant loaned money to Marduk-rēmāni. At some point, Marduk-rēmāni even bought a house in Sippar neighbouring a courtier and a major-domo of the crown prince. Another compelling example is the Ša-nāšišu family in Sippar, which originated from Babylon and had a close relationship with the governor of Babylon. As a result of that relationship, they were able to work for the governor of Babylon as tax farmers in Sippar.¹⁷³

Political Intervention

The king transplanted entrepreneurial families from Babylon to Uruk and Borsippa, making them priests and governors, in order to counter the power of the local communities and promote centralisation. These families were chosen by the king because the king fostered and secured their loyalty.

During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, entrepreneurial families from Babylon were relocated to Uruk, where they acquired prebends. For example, the family of Bêl-suppê-muḥur, descendant of Bêl-aplu-ušur,¹⁷⁴ and a branch of the Egibi family,¹⁷⁵ held the baker's prebend in the Eanna temple exclusively. Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, descendant of the Babylon Nūr-Sîn family, held the position of *šatammu* of Eanna from the fourth year to the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar II.¹⁷⁶ The Nūr-Sîn family fostered a close relationship with the royal household when one member of this family, Iddin-Marduk, secured royal support for his successful entrepreneurial career.¹⁷⁷

Another possible case is the Basia family in Borsippa during the reign of Nabopolassar. This family, which did not have significant status in the community of Borsippa, produced the first *šākin tēmi* of Borsippa of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. This was a unique case, since the most prominent families of Borsippa, such as the families of Ilia, Nūr-Papsukkal, Arkāt-ilāni-damqā, and Kidin-Nanaya, monopolised the highest positions of the government and the temple Ezida in

172 MR 8. For a discussion of this partnership, see Waerzeggers 2014: 81–82.

173 Their tax farming operated on a considerable scale because they employed a slave to collect taxes (Waerzeggers 2014: 51).

174 The archive is published by Kessler 1991: 63–191.

175 The archive will be published by Kessler (AUWE 28). It is described by Jursa 2005: 147.

176 For the details of the historical event that the family Nūr-Sîn was planted by the state in Uruk, see Jursa and Gordin 2018.

177 Wunsch 1993. There are texts attesting to the fact that he leased royal land to do rent farming. See Jursa 1995/1996: 257–258.

Borsippa before the reign of Nabopolassar (Table 11).¹⁷⁸ Unlike these families, the family of Basia were not frequently attested in the Borsippian priestly archives and were isolated from the prebendary community.¹⁷⁹

Table 11: The *šākin tēmi* and *šatammu* of Ezida in Borsippa.

Reign	<i>šākin tēmi</i>		<i>šatammu</i> of Ezida	
	Name	Family	Name	Family
Šamaš-šumu-ukīn	Nabû-bêl-šumāti; Nabû-šumu-ušur (or Nabû-nādin-aḫi)	Ilia	Nabû-nādin-šumi	Nūr-Papsukkal
Kandalānu	Marduk-nāšir	Nūr-Papsukkal	Nabû-aplu-iddin;	Nūr-Papsukkal
	Nabû-zēru-līšir	Arkāt-ilāni-damqā	Zēr-Bābili = Nabû-zēr-Bābili-ukīn	
Nabopolassar	Nabû-aḫḫē-bullit	Basia	Nabû-šumu-iškun;	Ilia
	Marduk-zēru-ibni	Kidin-Nanaya	Nabû-šumu-līšir; Nabû-balāssu-iqbi	

A closer look at the texts pertaining to the family of Basia reveals that they may have originated from Babylon and had a close connection with the royal household. This can be deduced from the evidence about the career of Šumu-ukīn, son of Bêl-zēri, descendant of the Basia family.¹⁸⁰ During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, Šumu-ukīn is attested as an entrepreneur in Babylon.¹⁸¹ During this period, he established ties with royal officials. For instance, he leased the private land of a scribe of the palace in the village of Ḫarrubati in the Nippur region, partnering with a certain Šillaya.¹⁸² During the reign of Neriglissar, Šumu-ukīn moved from Babylon to Uruk for the position of royal representative in Uruk.¹⁸³ During the

¹⁷⁸ Frame 1984.

¹⁷⁹ The family of Basia was excluded from or on the margins of the marriage network of Borsippian priestly families (Still 2019: 39, n. 53).

¹⁸⁰ On Šumu-ukīn's career, see Cocquerillat 1968: 92–96, and especially Hackl, Janković, and Jursa 2011: 177–179.

¹⁸¹ The *harrānu* contracts of Šumu-ukīn have been found (e.g., TCL 12, 40, dated to the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar II).

¹⁸² BIN 2, 109 (PTS 2046) (the accession year of Amēl-Marduk). Cf. Sack 1972: No. 34 (78); Kessler 2005: 279, n. 15.

¹⁸³ *bêl piqitti ša Neriglissar/šarri* (e.g., TCL 12, 64 (the first year of Neriglissar), TCL 12, 66 (the second year of Neriglissar) and NBDM 4 (the third year of Neriglissar)).

reign of Nabonidus, he was in charge of the rent of the arable land of the Eanna temple.¹⁸⁴ After he established himself in Uruk, he still travelled to Babylon occasionally,¹⁸⁵ because his business relied heavily on his ties to the capital and the royal household.

The policy of transplanting entrepreneurial families from Babylon in different cities seems to have ceased around the middle of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, who instead sent more royal officials to the local governments and temples. These officials began to share and sometimes take over the jobs of the local elites to strengthen royal control. For this reason, the transplanted families began to lose their royal support. For example, the Nūr-Sîn family in Uruk was eventually ousted by the Urukian community.¹⁸⁶

184 He was titled with *ša muhhi sūti* and *rab ikkarāti* (TCL 12, 73 and YOS 6, 40). See Hackl, Janković, and Jursa 2011: 187 and n. 29.

185 Hackl, Janković, and Jursa 2011: 179.

186 For the details of the historical event whereby the family Nūr-Sîn was ousted by the Urukians, see Jursa and Gordin 2018.

8 Royal Ideologies

Up to the latter half of the first millennium BC, a collection of traditional methods to legitimise the kingship in the royal inscriptions had been formed.¹ The early Neo-Babylonian kings carefully made a selection and highlighted a few of them to further their political interests and address the main concerns of the audience, generated from the socio-political climate of that period.²

Since this chapter only deals with the formative phase of the dynasty, I only focus on the inscriptions of the first two kings. There are not many inscriptions of Nabopolassar—just seven brick inscriptions and eight cylinder inscriptions, while the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II amount to more than one hundred—more than thirty brick inscriptions, about fifty cylinder inscriptions, and a large number of inscriptions on other media.³ In this chapter, I discuss how the Neo-Babylonian kings selected, emphasised, and omitted traditional themes in the pursuit of creating an ideological discourse for their new dynasty.

8.1 Nabopolassar as the First King

The major difficulty that Nabopolassar faced in terms of legitimacy is that he was not eligible to use the most frequently used theme: descent from a royal blood-

1 The traditional themes of kingship included the king as divine descendant, pious worshiper, ruler of the universe, righteous shepherd, strong warrior, and so on. For the royal ideology of the early Neo-Babylonian period, see Brinkman 1974.

2 Some of the themes were chosen as a standard practice but were not connected to the particular circumstances the early Neo-Babylonian kings faced, for example, divine genealogy. For example, Nebuchadnezzar II claimed divine parentage in his inscriptions. For example, he stated in the inscription RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST) (col. I, lines 23–25): “As soon as the lord, the god who created me, the god Marduk, brought me into being (and) fashioned my form inside (my) mother . . .” This is reminiscent of the inscription of the Assyrian king Adad-nārārī II (911–891 BC): “Great gods, who take firm decisions, who decree destinies; they properly created me, Adad-nārārī, attentive prince, [. . .], they altered my stature to lordly stature, they rightly made perfect my features and filled my lordly body with wisdom” (RIMA 2 Adad-nārārī II A.0.99, lines 5–7). This means that the king’s “soul” and body were believed to have been divinely made, adequate and perfect to be a king. There are two levels in terms of Nebuchadnezzar II’s parentage—he has a father on earth, Nabopolassar, and he has a father in heaven, Marduk—both of which contribute to his legitimacy to be the king of Babylonia. For a detailed discussion of divine parentage of kings, see Oshima 2014: 195–208.

3 Da Riva 2008: Appendix 1.

line.⁴ However, he used his origin to his advantage. Nabopolassar claimed that he was “the son of a nobody,”⁵ “the insignificant (one) who was not even noticed among the people,”⁶ and “the weak one, the powerless one.”⁷ He also emphasised the fact that he was a native of Babylonia.⁸ In doing so, he deliberately avoided mentioning his and his family’s pro-Assyrian history.⁹ Therefore, Nabopolassar covered up this Assyrian connection by claiming to be a native of Babylonia and to have come from the lower classes of society.

On the other hand, his inscriptions continued the themes of the Babylonian royal inscriptions during Assyrian dominance. For example, the king was depicted as the “avenger of Akkad.”¹⁰ This rhetoric is already attested in the inscriptions of Nabû-apla-iddina (c. 886–855 BC),¹¹ and was continued by Marduk-apla-iddina II (721–710 and 703 BC).¹² One of the latter’s inscriptions (RIMB 2 Marduk-apla-iddina II B.6.21.1) was probably taken as a model for Nabopolassar’s inscriptions.¹³ The text describes Assyrians as the “evil enemy” (line 9), who ruled over the land of Akkad because “the great lord, the god Marduk, had turned away in divine wrath from the land of Akkad” (line 8). In one of Nabopolassar’s inscriptions, the Assyrian

4 This theme is discussed by Lambert 1974.

5 RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), line 4 (Da Riva 2013a: 62) and RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, line 8 (Da Riva 2013a: 96). For more on the use of this expression, see Da Riva 2013a: 4–5.

6 RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), line 10 (Da Riva 2013a: 62) and RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, lines 17–18 (Da Riva 2013a: 96).

7 RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), line 19 (Da Riva 2013a: 62) and RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, line 32 (Da Riva 2013a: 96).

8 In the *Imgur-Enlil* inscription (long version), he emphasised the fact that he was born in Babylonia (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, line 19: “in the country in which I was born”) (Da Riva 2013a: 96).

9 Nabopolassar’s father, Nabû-kudurrī-ušur, may have been governor of Uruk during the reign of Kandalānu. As the highest official of the pro-Assyrian city, he had a close relationship with Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria. It is also likely that Nabopolassar served Ashurbanipal’s son, Sin-šarru-iškun, as, according to Berossos, he was sent by the latter to suppress a revolt in the Sealand. For the details in this respect, see section 3.1.2.

10 Beaulieu 2003b: 1. As Da Riva (2017a) points out, this theme may have influenced the later Achaemenid and Hellenistic tradition and was transmitted and adapted in the historical literature of that period, such as *Declaring War*, *Letter of Sin-šarru-iškun to Nabopolassar*, and *The Nabopolassar Epic*.

11 The Sun God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina, col. II, line 29: *ana tu-ur gi-mil*, “to avenge Akkad” (Woods 2004: 84).

12 Sheriffs 1988: 26.

13 Although this inscription was found at Nimrud, it originated from Uruk, since the inscription commemorates the royal activities in that city. Considering Nabopolassar’s connections to Uruk, it is not surprising that this inscription heavily influenced his inscriptions.

ians are the enemies “who had ruled Akkad because of divine anger and had oppressed the people of the country with his heavy yoke.”¹⁴ Moreover, Marduk-apla-iddina II was praised as “he defeated the widespread army of Subartu and shattered their weapons. He brought about their overthrow and prevented them from treading on the territory of the land of Akkad.”¹⁵ Similarly, Nabopolassar was ordered by Marduk to achieve the independence of Babylonia and destroy the land of Assyria.¹⁶ Nabopolassar declared: “With the mighty strength of my lords Nabû and Marduk, I chased them out of Akkad, and I had (the Babylonians) throw off their (the Assyrians’) yoke.”¹⁷

It is also noticeable that both Marduk-apla-iddina II and Nabopolassar refer to the Assyrians as Subartu. For example, in the inscription RINBE 1/1 Npl 06 (C31), Nabopolassar boasted: “I killed the Subarean (Assyrian) and turned his lands into tells and ruin heaps” (col. I, lines 25–27).¹⁸ Subar(t)u was an ethnic term for tribal populations north of Babylonia as well as a geographic term for “North.” This is similar to the use of the word Gutu for the East, though it originally designated the tribes dwelling east of Babylonia.¹⁹ These ethnic terms were linked to the Babylonians’ negative views of nomads as uncivilised and irreverent. In the Weidner Chronicle, Marduk took the kingship away from the Gutu, because “the Gutu, who were complained about, showing no fear of god, they did not know how to properly perform divine rites (and) ordinances.”²⁰ In other words, the impiety of the Gutu resulted in the illegitimacy of their kingship. The Weidner Chronicle promotes the idea that when the god was angry, nomadic people would rise up to rule the land. Therefore, the use of Subartu to designate Assyria could have been an intentional practice to alienate the Assyrians and delegitimise their dominance over Babylonia.

14 RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, lines 28–31 (Da Riva 2013a: 96). Furthermore, one inscription of Nabopolassar (RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 [C12], lines 17–18) depicts the Assyrians as “who from distant days had ruled the entire people and had oppressed the people of the country with his heavy yoke” (Da Riva 2013a: 62).

15 RIMB 2 Marduk-apla-iddina II B.6.21.1, lines 17–18.

16 RINBE 1/1 Npl 13 (B6), lines 6–12: “When the great lord Marduk gave me land and people to rule over, he ordered me to plunder my enemy’s land” (Da Riva 2013a: 43); RINBE 1/1 Npl 06 (C31), col. I, lines 25–27: “I killed the Subarean (Assyrian) and turned his lands into tells and ruin heaps” (Da Riva 2013a: 88).

17 RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), lines 20–21 (Da Riva 2013a: 62).

18 Da Riva 2013a: 88.

19 Hallo 1957–1971: 716–718.

20 Weidner Chronicle, line 64: *qu-tul-ú ša ta-zi-im-te DINGIR pa-la-ha la kul-lu-mu par-ši u* ^{giš}*ĜUR.MEŠ šu-te-šu-ra la i-du-ú*. The transliteration and translation follow Adali 2009: Appendix 1.18.

8.2 Devotion

As has long been argued, the Neo-Babylonian king was primarily depicted as a pious worshiper. This was translated into divine election as a theme of legitimisation: “The gods, particularly Marduk, have chosen the king for his pious behaviour to rule the land.”²¹ This legitimacy was based on the idea that the authority and power of the king came with the right and responsibility to provide for the gods. Such a view is promoted in the *Enūma Eliš*, where Anšar gives Marduk the responsibility of providing for the gods when he became king of the gods:

Enūma Eliš, Tablet VI, lines 109–111 (words of Anšar):²²

109 *li-kin ana AD.MEŠ-šú nin-da-bé-e ra-bu-tú*
 110 *za-ni-nu-us-su-un li-pu-šá li-pa-qi-da eš-re-es-su-un*
 111 *li-še-ši-in qut-ri-in-ni ta-a-ši-na liš-reš-šá*

Let him establish lavish food offerings for his fathers, Let him provide for their maintenance and be caretaker of their sanctuaries, Let him burn incense to rejoice their sanctums.

The idea that kingship came with the role of cultic caretaker also appears in a previous passage (Tablet V, lines 113–116).²³ Later, this task was transferred to human beings as subjects:

Enūma Eliš, Tablet VI, lines 114–116:²⁴

114 *ba-'ú-la-tum lu hi-is-su-sa il-ši-na li-iz-zak-ra*
 115 *ep-šu pi-i-šu ^diš-ta-riš li-pi-q-qa*
 116 *nin-da-bé-e li-in-na-šá-a il-ši-na ^diš-tar-šin*

The subject humans should take note and call on their gods, since he [Marduk] commands they should heed their goddesses, Let food offerings be brought [for](?) their gods and goddesses.

The command of Marduk to provide for the gods was repeated in the inscriptions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II:

RINBE 1/1 Npl 14 (C21), col. I, lines 5–9:

5 *i-nu ^dAMAR.UTU EN GAL-ú*
 6 *a-na za-na-an ma-ḥa-zi*

21 Da Riva (2018: 28). For the earliest employment of the theme of divine election in Babylonia, see Beaulieu 2013: 5–6.

22 The transliteration and translation follow Lambert 2013: 116–117.

23 Lambert 2013: 102–104.

24 The transliteration and translation follow Lambert 2013: 116–117.

- 7 *ud-du-šu eš-re-e-ti*
 8 *úr-ta-šu ka-bi-it-<ti>*
 9 *ú-ma-'i-ra-an-ni*

When the great lord Marduk gave me his solemn command to provide for the cultic centres (and) to renovate the sanctuaries.

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126B (WBA), col. II, lines 1–3:

- 1 *ši-bi-ir-ru mu-ša-al-lim ni-ši*
 2 *ú-ša-at-mi-ḥa qá-tu-ú-a*
 3 *za-ni-nu-ut-su e-pé-eš ú-ma-^ler^l-an-ni*

He (Marduk) allowed my hands to grasp the rod that protects the people (and) he commissioned me to act as the one who provides for him.

This command also appears in a hymn of praise to Nebuchadnezzar II, in which the Esagil and Ezida temples are cited as representatives of the various cult centres.²⁵

The theme that the divine election was conditional upon the religious piety of the king was also adopted in chronicles and historical literature. The chronicle ABC 20 connects the cultic transgressions of the king with dynastic collapses in the past.²⁶ As mentioned above, kingship was said to be revoked from the Guti, because they were not pious.

Since the king's main task was to provide for the temples, he had to demonstrate to the deities and to his human subjects that he fulfilled this task. The royal inscriptions served this very purpose. In fact, the main content of the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions is the (re)building of temples and infrastructure, along with providing supplies for the temples.²⁷ The phrase *zānin* Esagil u Ezida, “provider for Esagil and Ezida,”²⁸ was frequently used as a royal epithet.²⁹ In the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II discovered so far, this title was used more than 50 times, just a bit less frequently than the basic title “king of Babylon.”³⁰ Similar

²⁵ Strong 1898: 157.

²⁶ For the editions, see Grayson 1975a: 152–156; Glassner 2004: 268–273.

²⁷ The building of infrastructure, such as city walls, streets, and canals, is always attributed to royal provisions for the cult of the deities in the royal inscriptions (Waerzeggers 2011: 726–727). For the different contents of Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions and their distribution, see Da Riva 2008: 108–113. For the archaeological evidence of those building activities, see Finkel and Seymour (eds.) 2008 and Pedersén 2021. For the textual evidence from administrative texts, see Beaulieu 2005; Kleber 2008. This theme is already attested during the third millennium BC (Renger 1976–1980; 1980–1983).

²⁸ The form *zānin* + sanctuary appears regularly in second and first millennium royal inscriptions.

²⁹ Da Riva 2008: 94.

³⁰ For the attestations of these two titles in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, see Da Riva 2008: 102–103.

phrases, such as *mukīn sattukkī*, “establisher of the regular offerings,” *idān zāni-nāti*, “the one with providing hands,” *mutaḥḥid sattukkī*, “multiplier of regular offerings,” and *mušarriḥ igisē*, “giver of wonderful gifts,” were also used.³¹ In an inscription concerning work done in the temple of Kish, Nebuchadnezzar II asked the god Zababa to provide a report to Marduk about his fulfillment of the mission to provide for the temples.³² Nebuchadnezzar II was often boasting of the abundance of the offerings he provided for different gods. The commodities of the daily offerings for Marduk and Zarpanītu were proudly detailed:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 019 (C34), col. I, lines 16–28:

- 16 *ša u₄-um 1-en GU₄.MAḤ.E ma-ra-a GU₄.ŠU.DU₇*
 17 *44 zu-lu-ḥe-e da-am-qū-tim*
 18 *qá-du-um ša DINGIR.DINGIR é-sag-íl ù DINGIR.DINGIR ba-bi-lam^{ki}*
 19 *nu-ú-num iṣ-šu-ru ú-šu-um-mu pe-la-a si-ma-at ap-pa-ri-im*
 20 *dī-iš-pa-am ḥi-me-tim ši-iz-bi du-mu-uq ša-am-nim*
 21 *ku-ru-un-num da-aš-pa-am ši-ka-ar SA.TU.UM*
 22 *ka-ra-nam e-el-lu ka-ra-nam^{kur}i-za-al-lam*
 23 *^{kur}tu-u'-im-mu^{kur} ši-im-mi-ni^{kur} ḥi-il-bu-nim*
 24 *^{kur}a-ra-na-ba-nim^{kur} su-ú-ḥa-am*
 25 *^{kur}é-ku-ba-tim ù^{kur} bi-ta-a-tim*
 26 *kī-ma me-e na-a-ri la ni-bi-im*
 27 *i-na^{giš}BANŠUR^dAMAR.UTU ù^dzar-pa-ni-tum*
 28 *EN.MEŠ-e-a lu ú-da-aš-ša-am*

Every day: one fattened prize bull, (one) uncastrated bull, forty-four fine *zuluḥḥū*-sheep, along with (everything) that (pertains to) the gods of Esagil and the gods of Babylon: fish, bird(s), *ušummu*-rodent(s), egg(s) — the best thing(s) from the marshes — honey, ghee, milk, the best oil, sweet *kurunnu*-wine, “mountain beer,” the pure(st) wine, (and) wine of the lands Izalla, Tu’immu, Šimminu, Ḥilbūnu, Arnabānu, Sūḥu, Bīt-Kubāti, and Bitāti — like the waters of countless rivers — I copiously provided (all of this) for the table of the god Marduk and the goddess Zarpanītu, my lords.

Another occasion to show the king’s ability and success in his principal mission was the Akītu festival,³³ when the king would display all the gifts for the gods, who were brought to Babylon to join the divine assembly.³⁴

Fear of the gods and care of the cultic ordinances were the two other motifs when the role of the king as a pious worshipper was described in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions. For example, the verb *palāhu*, “to fear,” appears six

31 For the titles of Nebuchadnezzar II, see Da Riva 2008: 100–103.

32 Waerzeggers 2011: 730.

33 For the Akītu festival, see Zgoll 2006; Debourse 2022.

34 Schaudig 2001: No. 3.3a, col. IX, lines 1’–40’ (527–528).

times in one inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 [ST]), with the object being the divinity and lordship of the gods.³⁵ Nabopolassar attributed his legitimacy primarily to his care of the cultic ordinances:

RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), lines 4–6:³⁶

- 4 *ì-nu-um i-na mé-eš-ḫe-ru-ti-ia DUMU la ma-am-ma-nim a-na-ku-ma*
 5 *ina à-aš-ra-at ^dna-bi-um ù ^dAMAR.UTU EN.MEŠ-e-a aš-te-né-^la ka-a-a-nim*
 6 *šú-ut ku-un-ni pa-ar-ši-šu-nu ù šu-ul-lu-mu ki-du-de-šu-un i-ta-ma-a ka-bít-ta*

When I was young, although I was the son of a nobody, I constantly sought in the sanctuaries of my lords Nabû and Marduk. My mind was preoccupied with the establishment of their cultic ordinances and the complete performance of their rituals.

In reality, the king's concern for the cult was reflected in numerous royal letters to the temple administrators with orders to take care of the gods.³⁷ It was also indicated by the king's presence in trials of cultic negligence.³⁸

8.3 Conservation

Antiquarianism has long been noted as one of the features of the Neo-Babylonian royal ideology.³⁹ In the royal inscriptions, the kings were described as restorers and revivers of tradition. For example, Nebuchadnezzar II was called the *muddiš ešrēti ili rabūti*, “renewer of the temples of the great gods.”⁴⁰ The royal restoration of temples and rites were sometimes described as *kīma labīrimma*, “exactly like in the past,”⁴¹ and *eli ša ūm pāni šūturu*, “greater than ever before,”⁴² which seems to be contradictory. However, *labīru* refers to the beginning of the history,

³⁵ Col. I, line 10 (third person stative form of Gt-stem); col. I, line 39, col. I, line 50, and col. ii, line 11 (first person stative form of Gt-stem); col. I, line 38 and col. ix, line 58 (nominal form).

³⁶ It is an inscription on clay cylinders recording the restoration of Eḫursagtila, the temple of Ninurta in the Šuanna district of Babylon. Most of the cylinders were found in the ruins of the temple. For the temple Eḫursagtila, see George 1992: 313–314; 1993: 102; Pedersén 2021: 150–153.

³⁷ Jursa 2014d: 106.

³⁸ Beaulieu 2003a: 129–130, 168–169, 175; Kleber 2008: 68–71.

³⁹ Antiquarianism can be already observed at the end of the second millennium. However, it reached its extreme level during the Neo-Babylonian period (Beaulieu 1994: 40). Talon (1993: 423) has argued that the Neo-Babylonian kings relied essentially on their role as performers of correct rituals and restorers of temples for the legitimisation of their kingship. Also see Vanderhooff 1999: 41.

⁴⁰ E.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 014 (C213//C200), col. I, line 5.

⁴¹ E.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 032 (C36), col. III, line 3; 100 (C38), col. I, line 94.

⁴² E.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 032 (C36), col. III, line 19; 100 (C38), col. III, line 46.

when the gods designed and built the cities, along with the temples and cult,⁴³ while *pāni* refers to human history, when imperfection occurred and gradually damaged, sometimes destroyed the divine plan.⁴⁴ Therefore, the king restored the buildings and cults according to their original divine designs, which would be greater than at any point in human history, since their original designs were perfect. In other words, the older the foundations of the buildings and the cults, the closer to perfection they were, because there was less human interference and degradation.

“The past” was an especially appealing concept for the elites of the Neo-Babylonia dynasty, as Babylonia had suffered a great decline during the end of the second millennium and the early first millennium BC. The upper class was greatly affected by the disruption of social and economic institutions, which was caused by political instability and the arrival of tribal populations. This was seen as far from the perfect world the gods designed at the beginning of history.

The idea that the past was better may have also been connected to the abandonment of the idea that the kingship was transferred cyclically from city to city. These transfers of power naturally resulted in alternating periods of stability and instability. Since the end of the second millennium BC, Marduk’s supremacy was established, and his city became the only legitimate city to host the kingship. Therefore, the kingship would no longer be transferred to other cities, resulting in the cancellation of the cycles of prosperity. Without the possibility of creating a new cycle with the hope of a better future, the monarchy was forced to look to the past, to the beginning of time when Marduk established civilisation and guaranteed prosperity.

The Neo-Babylonian scribes of the royal inscriptions used several methods to depict the king as a restorer and reviver of tradition. First, they archaised the cuneiform script to establish a continuity between the past and the present.⁴⁵ By imitating the signs used in inscriptions from the Ur III to the Old Babylonian period,⁴⁶ the current king was molded into those great kings who left a positive

⁴³ For the ancient Mesopotamians, civilisation, which is part of the cosmic order, was created by the gods once and for all at the beginning of history. Any change that occurred later was not part of the divine plan and had to be adjusted. For the creation and adjustment of the cosmic order by the gods, see Lambert 1972: 67 and Steinkeller 2017: 10–17.

⁴⁴ Schaudig 2010: 151.

⁴⁵ Da Riva 2008: 76–79. Both archaising cuneiform and contemporary Neo-Babylonian were used for the royal inscriptions. It is rare to have inscriptions written in both scripts (for the examples, see Da Riva 2008: 77, n. 236).

⁴⁶ The Kassite signs were not used, because the Kassite dynasty did not acquire the same fame and the status as a model dynasty as the dynasties from Ur III to Old Babylonian dynasty (Da Riva 2008: 77).

memory. For instance, there is a preference for archaising script in the royal inscriptions of Nabopolassar. Of his eight inscriptions on cylinders, six were written in archaising script.⁴⁷ The use of archaising cuneiform declined during the reigns of the following kings. It was used much less frequently in the cylinder inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Sumerian ceremonial names for temples are used in the inscriptions. For example, the temple of Ninurta at Babylon, Eḫursagtila, is written in the Sumerian ceremonial name, *é-PA.GÍN-ti-la*, in one inscription of Nabopolassar (RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 [C12], line 22).⁴⁹

The process of the restoration activities of the king was detailed in the royal inscriptions: first, the old foundation would be excavated; second, the king would carefully inspect the foundation, as well as any inscribed bricks or steles left by previous kings; finally, the building would be constructed on the old foundations, according to the original plan.⁵⁰ One such example is the inscription describing the rebuilding of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar by Nebuchadnezzar II:⁵¹

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 104 (B26), lines 17–30:

- 17 *i-na pa-le-e-a* EN *ra-bu-ú*^dAMAR.UTU
 18 *a-na É šu-a-ti i-ir-ta-šu sa-li-mu*
 19 IM.LÍMMU.BA *ú-ša-at-ba-am-ma*
 20 SAḪAR.ĪIA *qé-er-bi-šu is-su-uḫ-ma*
 21 *in-nam-ra ú-šu-ra-a-ti*
 22 *ia-a-ti*^{md}AG-ku-dūr-ri-ú-šur
 23 LUGAL KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} *re-e-šu pa-li-iḫ-šu*
 24 *a-na e-pé-šu É šu-a-ti*
 25 *ra-bi-iš ú-ma-'e-er-an-ni*
 26 *te-me-en-šu la-bi-ri*
 27 *a-ḫi-iṭ ab-re-e-ma*
 28 *e-li te-me-en-ni-šu la-bi-ri*

⁴⁷ See the tables 5 and 6 in Da Riva 2008: 78–79. Another example of using archaising script for royal inscriptions is the Antiochus cylinder in Seleucid period. On this, see Corò and Da Riva 2024.

⁴⁸ See the tables 5 and 6 in Da Riva 2008: 78–79.

⁴⁹ George 1992: 314.

⁵⁰ Schaudig 2010 has collected examples of detailed descriptions of restoration activities in Neo- and Late Babylonian periods.

⁵¹ It is interesting that Nabonidus claimed that because Nebuchadnezzar II did not excavate the original foundation of Ebabbar, the temple suffered premature ruin. Nabonidus himself claimed to have discovered the foundation deposit of Narām-Sîn of the Old Akkadian dynasty and rebuilt the temple according to it. See Beaulieu 1994: 39 and Schaudig 2010: 155–161.

- 29 SAĤAR.ĤI.A *el-lu-ti am-ku-uk-ma*
 30 *ú-ki-in li-ib-na-as-su*

(it was) during my reign, (that) the great lord, the god Marduk, had compassion towards that temple. He raised the four winds, removed the earth inside of it, and (thereby) its ground plans could be seen (again). He greatly commissioned me, Nebuchadnezzar (II), the king of Babylon, the servant who reveres him, to build that temple. I examined (and) checked the original foundation(s) and (then) spread out ritually pure earth over its original foundation(s) and (thereby) secured its brickwork.

Nabopolassar also detailed the restoration process in the Imgur-Enlil cylinder inscription.⁵²

RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. III, lines 4–10:

- 4 *ḥa-’-iṭ te-me-en-na la-bi-ri ša ba-bi-lim^{ki}*
 5 *mu-ut-tu-ú SIG₄ šá à-aḥ-ra-tim*
 6 *mu-uš-te(!)-eš-bi ki-gal-lu reš-ti-i ša du-ur UD.MEŠ*
 7 *ša-bit^{giš}AL ša^di-gi_A-gi₄*
 8 *za-bil tup-šik-ku ša^da-nun-na-ki*
 9 *e-piš im-gur-^dEN.LÍL*
 10 *a-na^dAMAR.UTU EN-ia a-na-ku-ma*

The one who inspects the ancient foundations of Babylon, the one who finds (inscribed) brick(s) from the past, the one who carries out the work on the original, eternal foundations, the one who seizes the hoe of the Igigi, the one who carries the *tupšikku*-basket of the Anunnaki, the builder of the Imgur-Enlil for Marduk, my lord, I.

Terms relating to ancient times were frequently employed in descriptions of restoration activities.⁵³ These words convey the notion that Babylonia was built at the dawn of history and its traditions were created by the gods according to their perfect design. Nebuchadnezzar II stressed the importance of not changing the original designs of cities and buildings. For instance, when he considered building a new palace—the North Palace, he was careful not to alter religious buildings and infrastructure in Babylon’s sacred centre:

⁵² It is an inscription on a large three-column clay cylinder found in a clay foundation box deposited by Nabonidus in Babylon’s inner wall Imgur-Enlil between the Ištar Gate and Emaḥ, the temple of the goddess Bēlet-ilī. This inscription records Nabopolassar’s restoration of a section of this wall.

⁵³ E.g., *ištu šātim*, “from the distant time” (e.g., RINBE 1/1 Npl 03, col. II, line 9); *ultu ūm šāti*, “from the distant day” (e.g., RINBE 1/2 Nbk 084 [C028], col. II, line 4’); *labūru*, “old” (e.g., RINBE 1/2 Nbk 102 [C24], col. II, line 2 and line 4); *ša labār dūr ūmē*, “which has grown old for eternal days”; *labāriš alāku* “to become old” (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 032 [C36], col. III, line 38 and 048, col. I, line 6’).

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), rev., col. VIII, lines 27–41.⁵⁴

- 27 *i-na KÁ.DINGIR.RA*^{ki}
 28 *ku-um-mu mu-ša-bi-ia*
 29 *a-na si-ma-at šar-ru-ti-ia*
 30 *la šu-um-ša*
 31 *aš-šum pu-lu-úḫ-ti* ^dAMAR.UTU EN-ia
 32 *ba-šu-ù li-ib-bu-ú-a*
 33 *i-na KÁ.DINGIR.RA*^{ki}
 34 *URU ni-ši-ir-ti-šu*
 35 *a-na šu-un-du-lam*
 36 *šu-ba-at šar-ru-ti-ia*
 37 *su-uq-šu la e-nim*
 38 *BÁRA-šu la ú-ni-iš*
 39 *pa-la-ga-šu la e-es-ki-ir*
 40 *ku-um-mu ra-ap*-ši-iš*
 41 *aš-te-e'-e-ma*

In Babylon, the *kummu*-building of my residence was not decorous enough for my status as king. Because reverence of the god Marduk, my lord, was present in my heart, when I widened (lit. “in order to widen”) the residence of my royal majesty in Babylon, the city (under) his (Marduk’s) protection, I did not change its street(s), displace its dais (es), nor block up its canal(s). I searched far and wide for (the site of a new) *kummu*-building.

The role of the king as restorer of the past was also conveyed by adopting the epithets of model kings from Babylonian history and by referencing their inscriptions. Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II used traditional Babylonian royal epithets from the third millennium BC, such as *iššakku*, “(city) ruler,” *šakkanakku*, “viceroy,” and *šar māt Šumeri u Akkadi*, “king of the land of Sumer and Akkad.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ḫammurabi’s epithets were frequently adopted.⁵⁶ Even prior to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, the inscriptions of Ḫammurabi and his law code were used as models for royal inscriptions. The Neo-Babylonian kings followed this tradition. For example, a royal oath and the use of the Š-stem of *nasāku* in the inscription of Imgur-Enlil cylinder of Nabopolassar were inspired by the inscriptions of Old Akkadian kings and the Code of Ḫammurabi.⁵⁷ Three inscriptions of

⁵⁴ It is an inscription on two complete and one fragmentary limestone tablets, recording Nebuchadnezzar II’s construction of the North Palace, located northwest of the Ištar Gate outside the city walls and immediately next to the processional way. It also records his other building activities at Babylon and Borsippa.

⁵⁵ For the titles and epithets of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, see Da Riva 2008: 99–103.

⁵⁶ Vanderhooft 1999: 16–18.

⁵⁷ Beaulieu 2003b: 3–4.

Nabopolassar (RINBE 1/1 Npl 04 [C23], 14 [C21], and 15 [C22]) use vocabulary and phrases from the royal inscriptions of Ḫammurabi.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II contain passages from the Code of Ḫammurabi verbatim.⁵⁹ Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II effectively molded themselves into the image of Ḫammurabi by obliquely referring to his inscriptions and the law code.

8.4 Contemplation and Humility

There is a striking contrast between the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions in terms of the expression of the king's ego. The strength and power of the Assyrian kings were expressed explicitly and exaggeratedly in various forms, such as the descriptions of battles and hunting activities. Allusions to mythological texts compared the king to the gods who fought chaos prior to the creation of the ordered universe.⁶⁰ In contrast, the Neo-Babylonian kings chose to remain humble and rely on the gods whole-heartedly. The advice to blindly follow the gods at the cost of one's personal ego was given by Nabopolassar in the Imgur-Enlil cylinder inscription:

58 The sequence of titles *šarru dannu šar Bābili šar māt Šumeri u Akkadī* is used in RINBE 1/1 Npl 04 (C23) (col. I, lines 2–3) and 15 (C22) (col. I, lines 2–4). Da Riva notes that the use of these three titles is uncommon, since Neo-Babylonian kings usually only used one title in the presentation section of the inscriptions (Da Riva 2013a: 72). A sentence concerning the work on the Euphrates in Sippar from Ḫammurabi's inscription was borrowed in RINBE 1/1 Npl 14 (C21) (Da Riva 2013a: 70). In the inscription RINBE 1/1 Npl 15 (C22), Da Riva notes more phrases alluding to the inscriptions of Ḫammurabi, such as the epithet “who made the foundation of the land firm” *mukīn išdī māti*, (Da Riva 2013a: 72.) and “the one (to) whom awe-inspiring Erra allowed to obtain his desire” *ša Erra rašubbu ušakšidūšu nizzassu* (Da Riva 2013a: 73). The epithet *narām Aya* “beloved of Aya”, which is exclusive to this inscription, was used in one of the inscriptions of Ḫammurabi (RIME 4 Ḫammu-rāpi E4.3.6.2, Akkadian version, line 33). *šarru dannu* was an “Assyrian” title. This use has been understood to relate Nabopolassar himself to the late Assyrian king. However, this sequence was frequently used by Ḫammurabi in his inscriptions, for example, RIME 4 Ḫammu-rāpi E4.3.6.14, Sumerian version, lines 10–12 and Akkadian version, lines 3'–6' and RIME 4 Ḫammu-rāpi E4.3.6.16, lines 13–15.

59 Berger 1973: 94–95; Schaudig 2001: 32; Hurowitz 2005: 521; Da Riva 2012: 24–26. The Code of Ḫammurabi was still well known in this period and even later. For example, a commentary on the law code was found on a Late Babylonian fragment (Barmash 2020: 274). A copy of the prologue of the law code from Sippar in the Persian period states that the scribe copied the text from a stele in Susa and the latest copy of the law code can be dated to the fourth century BC (Barmash 2020: 273).

60 For a detailed analysis of *Enūma Eliš* being the model for Sennacherib's account of the battle of Ḫalule, see Weissert 1997.

RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. III, lines 22–26:

- 22 *ma-na-ma* LUGAL *ma-ti-ma lu* DUMU *lu* DUMU.DUMU
 23 *a-lik ár-ki-ia* šá^dAMAR.UTU *a-na be-lu-ut* KUR *i-nam-bu-ú zi-kiš-šú*
 24 *šá e-mu-qí* ù *da-na-nu e taš-du-<ud>* ana ŠÀ-ka
 25 *áš-rat* ^dAG ù ^dAMAR.UTU *ši-te-'e-ma*
 26 *li-na-ru ga-ri-ka*

Any king, at any time, whether a son or a grandson who will succeed me (and) whose name Marduk will call to exert rulership of the country, do not be concerned with feats of might and power, (but) strive for the sanctuaries of Nabû and Marduk and let them destroy your enemies.

Nabopolassar's dismissal of "feats of might and power" may have been a reference to the hubris of the boastful Assyrian kings. His attitude echoed the message of the Cuthean Legend of Narām-Sîn, which conveys that a proper ruler should be faithful to the gods, rather than satisfying his own ego. According to the story, Narām-Sîn chose to fight against invaders, despite omens telling him to do the opposite. Narām-Sîn's thoughts after he consulted the gods reveal that his choice was based on his ego:

Cuthean Legend of Narām-Sîn, Standard Babylonian Version (manuscript B), lines 79–83:⁶¹

- 79 *ki-[a]-am aq-bi ana* ŠÀ-*bi-ia um-ma lu-u ana-ku-ma*
 80 *a-a-ú* UR.[MAĜ *bi]*-*ra*¹ *ib-ri*
 81 *a-a-ú* UR.BAR.[RA *iš-a]* šá-*il-tu*
 82 *lul-lik ki-i* DUMU *ḥab-¹ba-ti ina me-gir¹ ŠÀ-bi-ia*
 83 *ù lu-ud-di šá* DINGIR-*ma*¹ *ia-a-ti lu-uš-bat*

Thus I said to my heart (i.e., to myself), these were my words: "What lion (ever) performed extispicy? What wolf (ever) consulted a dream-interpreter? I will go like a brigand according to my own inclination. And I will cast aside that (oracle) of the god(s); I will be in control of myself."

Narām-Sîn preferred to take on the role of a predator, as was traditionally expected of a warrior king. As a result, he suffered great consequences: for three years, he sent numerous troops to fight with the Ummān-manda, but "none of them returned alive." At the end of the text, a warning is issued about the proper behaviour when the gods tell you not to fight your enemies:

⁶¹ The transliteration and translation follow Westenholz 1997: 348 and 317.

Cuthean Legend of Narām-Sîn, Standard Babylonian Version (Manuscript B), lines 160–165:⁶²

160 BÀD.MEŠ-ka tuk-kil!

161 *hi-ra-ti-ka* A.MEŠ mul-li

162 *pi-sa-an-na-ti-ka* ŠE.AM-ka KÙ.BABBAR-ka NÍG.ŠU-ka NÍG.GA-ka

163 [*ana URU dan*]-nu-ti-ka šu-rib

164 [^{g15}TUKUL.MEŠ-ka ru]-¹ku¹-us-ma túb-qa-a-ti e-mid

165 [*qar-ra-du-ti-ka*] ú-šur pu-ut-ka šul-lim

Strengthen your walls! Fill your moats with water! Your chests, your grain, your money, your goods, your possessions, bring into your stronghold! Tie up your weapons and put (them) into the corners! Guard your courage! Take heed of your own person!

Thus, the message of the Cuthean Legend of Narām-Sîn was the opposite of the practice of the Neo-Assyrian kings.

The Neo-Babylonian kings also avoided using Assyrian-style epithets, which may be related to this negative opinion of the royal ego. There are four epithets that are undeniably Assyrian: *šarru rabû*, “great king,” *šarru dannu*, “mighty king,” *šar kiššati*, “king of the world,” and *šar kibrāt erbetti*, “king of the four quarters.”⁶³ These epithets were rarely used in the Neo-Babylonian inscriptions.⁶⁴ Despite the frequent campaigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, their royal inscriptions contain surprisingly few military reports, as these represent expressions of the physical strength and power of the king.⁶⁵ Even on the occasion that military achievements are mentioned in the inscriptions, the details of campaigns are either omitted or briefly summarised.⁶⁶ For instance, Nabopolassar

⁶² The transliteration and translation follow Westenholz 1997: 364–365 and 329. Lines 163–165 are reconstructed according to manuscript G.

⁶³ These epithets, although used by the Assyrians, originate mostly in the third millennium BC and were adopted by the Old Akkadian kings.

⁶⁴ Nabonidus is an exception, who used all four epithets. Nabopolassar used *šarru dannu* (mighty king) in two of his inscriptions (RINBE 1/1 Npl 15 [C22], and 04 [C23]), which alludes to the war with Assyria. Another common thing for the inscriptions referring to the war with Assyria (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], 04 [C23], 06 [C31], and 15 [C22]), is the mention of the god of war, Erra (RINBE 1/1 Npl 04 [C23], 06 [C31], and 15 [C22]), who was otherwise rarely attested among other Neo-Babylonian inscriptions. These inscriptions were probably composed around the conquest of Nineveh or Ḥarran. See Da Riva 2013a: 76–77. For the royal titles of each king of the dynasty, see Da Riva 2008: 99–107.

⁶⁵ As previously discussed, the main content of the royal inscriptions concerned the building activities of the king. Da Riva (2008: 28) notes that this focus is deviated considerably from the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, which focused on the military achievements of the king.

⁶⁶ For example, the destruction of Assyria in Nabopolassar’s inscriptions (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], 06 [C31], 07 [C12], and 15 [C22]), and the conquest of Lebanon in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II at Brisa (RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A and 126B [WBC and WBA]).

was depicted as a hero and avenger of Akkad, but there are no descriptions of the battles: only the most basic and routine expressions were adopted, such as turning the enemy lands into tells and ruin heaps.⁶⁷

The ritual in which the king's work was approved by Marduk during the Akītu festival emphasises the ideology of the suppressed ego of the king before the gods. The ritual began with the removal of the royal insignia of the king. After entering the inner sanctuary, the king was slapped by the priest of Marduk and forced to kneel in front of the statue of the god. He was then required to make a “negative confession” to atone for improper royal conduct.⁶⁸ After this confession, the priest delivered the message that Marduk would bless him and guard his rule and then restored his position. Finally, another slap was given to the king as part of a divination ritual—if the king produced tears as a result of crying, Marduk showed favour to him.⁶⁹ This public humiliation of the king, which involved kneeling before the god, confessing, being slapped, and crying, was necessary in order for him to be approved for another year of kingship.

8.5 The Narrative of Imperialism

The attitude of contemplation and humility influenced the narrative of imperialism in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II. As I have discussed above, there is no doubt that the Neo-Babylonian dynasty was a territorial empire, which enjoyed hegemonic power in Syria and the Levant. Imperialism was conveyed explicitly in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II. For example, Nebuchadnezzar II claimed:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 001 (MS 2063), col. II, line 16–col. III, line 7:⁷⁰

Col. II:

16 [ku-ul-la]-¹at¹ ma-¹ti-ta¹-an

17 [gi-mi-ir?] ¹ka? ma?-al?-ki?¹

18 [ša a-na na]-¹ra-am ^dAMAR.UTU¹

⁶⁷ E.g., RINBE 1/1 Npl 06 (C31), col. I, lines 25–27: “I killed the Subarean (Assyrian) and turned his lands into tells and ruin heaps” (Da Riva 2013a: 88).

⁶⁸ Pongratz-Leisten 1997.

⁶⁹ Kuhrt 1987: 33.

⁷⁰ It is inscribed with archaizing Neo-Babylonian script on two fragments of a stone stele, recording the restoration of Etemenanki, the ziggurat of Marduk at Babylon, and Eurmeiminanki, the ziggurat of Nabû at Borsippa. There is also a relief in the upper part, depicting Nebuchadnezzar II standing in front of the ziggurat, Etemenanki, as well as two ground plans of temples. For a detailed discussion of this inscription, see George 2011b. On the authenticity of the stele, see George 2024. Also see Pedersén 2023.

- 19 *i-na* [nap]-ḥar ni-šī da-ad-mi
 20 ʿre¹-e-ša-a-šu-nu ú-ul-ʿla¹-[a]
 21 ʿiš-tu ti-a-am-ti¹ e-li-ʿti¹
 22 [a-dī ti-a-am-ti] ʿšap¹-li-ti
 23 [MA.DA.MA.DA ru-qá]-ʿa¹-ti
 24 [ni-šī da-ad]-mi
 25 [ra-ap-ša-a-tim LUGAL.MEŠ ša-dī-i]
 26 [ne-su-tim ù na-gi-i bé-e-ru-tim]
 27 [ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-ti]

Col. III:

- 1 [e]-ʿli-tim ù¹ ša-ap-ʿli¹-[tim]
 2 ʿša¹ ʿd¹ AMAR.UTU ʿbe¹-[lī]
 3 ʿa?¹-[na ša]-ʿda-ad¹ sé-er-ʿde¹-[šū]
 4 ʿšé¹-[er]-ʿra?-et¹-[si-na]
 5 [ú-ma]-ʿal¹-[lu-u]
 6 [qá]-ʿtu-ú¹-[a]
 7 ʿad-ka-am¹-[ma]

I mustered [. . . in all] lands everywhere, [every] single ruler [whose] head had been raised up among the totality of the people of the inhabited world [to be the one loved] by the god Marduk, from the Upper Sea [to the Lo]wer [Sea, the fa]r-off [lands, the wide-spread people of the inhabited wor]ld, [kings of remote mountains and distant islands that are i]n [the Upp]ler and Low[er] S[eas, wh]ose [le]ad-[rop]e(s) the god Marduk, [my] l[ord, p]l[ac]ed in [my ha]nd t[o pu]ll [his] chariot pol[e].

In the inscription commemorating the building of the Etemenanki, the king is said to impose work on “the kings of far-away districts in the midst of the Upper Sea, the kings of far-away districts in the midst of the Lower Sea, the governors of Ḫatti, Nēberti-Purattu” (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 [C41], col. III, lines 13–21).

Furthermore, various terms designating (the population of) the world are used with regards to the subject of the king in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, such as *nišī rapšāti*, “widespread peoples,” *kiššat nišī*, “the totality of peoples,” *kal dadmū*, “all inhabited regions,” (*kal*) *tenēšēti*, “all humanity,” and *nišī kibrāti arbāti*, “peoples of the four regions.”⁷¹

However, the royal inscriptions rarely mention the battles through which this territory and sphere of influence was acquired.⁷² This was a result of the humble attitude promoted by the Neo-Babylonian kings. This attitude also governed the exploitation of imperial rhetoric. It was a traditional view that territo-

71 Vanderhooft 1999: 35–36.

72 The chronicle ABC 5 enumerates Nebuchadnezzar II’s annual campaigns in the West until his eleventh regnal year. The chronicle “illustrates militaristic attitudes and accomplishments” of Nebuchadnezzar II (Vanderhooft 1999: 40).

rial expansion served to implement order over chaos. In the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, the myth of the divine combat between order and chaos was used as a model to describe royal campaigns.⁷³ During the Neo-Babylonian period, the imperial rhetoric of “order versus chaos” continued, with the remote conquered regions depicting subdued chaos.⁷⁴ The difficulty of reaching these remote areas is emphasised in royal inscriptions:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), col. II, lines 12–27:

- 12 *i-na tu-ku-ul-ti-šu šir-ti*
 13 MA.DA.MA.DA *ru-qá-a-ti*
 14 *ša-dí-im né-su-ú-ti*
 15 *iš-tu ti-a-am-ti e-lí-ti*
 16 *a-dí ti-a-am-ti ša-ap-li-ti*
 17 *úr-ḥu-um áš-ṭu-tim*
 18 *pa-da-nim pe-ḥu-ti*
 19 *a-ša-ar kib-si šu-up-ru-su*
 20 *še-e-pi la i-ba-aš-šu-ú*
 21 *ḥa-ra-nam na-am-ra-ša*
 22 *ú-ru-úḥ šú-ma-mi*
 23 *e-er-te-ed-de-e-ma*
 24 *la ma-gi-ri a-na-ar*
 25 *ak-mi za-’i-i-ri*
 26 MA.DA *uš-te-ši-ir-ma*
 27 *ni-šim uš-ta-am-mi-iḥ*

Through his (Marduk) exalted support, I repeatedly travelled (through) far-off lands, remote mountains, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, difficult paths, obstructed roads, where access was blocked (and) approach was not possible, difficult road(s), (and) arid (lit: “thirsty”) path(s), and I killed insubmissive, bound enemies, put the land in order, and made the people prosper.

⁷³ Annus 2002: 94–101. Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 290. For a detailed analysis of *Enūma Eliš* being the model of Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Ḥalule, see Weissert 1997. The hunting theme of the royal images during the Neo-Assyrian period was also based on the mythical combat between order and chaos, with the wild animal being a symbol of chaos. The Assyrians parallelised hunting and warfare, beginning with the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1115–1077 BC) at the end of the Middle Assyrian period. The connection of the two accounts provided the warfare with a cosmic dimension, which defined warfare as the process of spreading the cosmic order to uncivilised foreign countries, the realm of chaos. Following this trend, the hunting theme (the king stabbing a lion) became the image of the royal seal beginning with the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) (Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 250–258). For a discussion of the royal hunt in the Assyrian state ideology, also see Annus 2002: 102–108.

⁷⁴ Other symbols of the realm of chaos in royal inscriptions include wild animals and products from foreign regions, especially the cedar trees from Lebanon.

This is also emphasised in the conquest of Lebanon through the context of the difficulty of approaching the area:

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. IX, lines 33–38:⁷⁵

- 33 *ša ma-na-ma LUGAL ma-aḥ-ri la i-pu-šu*
 34 *ša-di-im za-^laq^l-ru-ú-tim e-eb-tu-uq-ma*
 35 *NA₄.NA₄ ša-di-^lim¹ ú-la-at-ti-ma*
 36 *ú-pa-at-ta-a né-er-bé-e-ti*
 37 *ma-la-ak* ^{GIS}EREN.MEŠ *uš-te-te-ši-ir*

(I did something) that no king of the past had done: I cut through the high mountains, crushed the mountain stones into pieces, and opened up passes (to) prepare (the quickest) course for the (transport of) cedars.

This topos is very ancient, already attested in Lugal-zage-si's Vase Inscription, in which the god Enlil helped to make the roads to remote areas for the king.⁷⁶

While the Neo-Babylonian kings continued the imperial rhetoric that territorial expansion is a result of the triumph of order over disorder, the king was depicted as a merciful saviour who protected people and put them in order, rather than a victorious warrior king. Therefore, their imperialism was not described in terms of conquest and violence, but protection and justice, with a lack of aggressiveness. The conquest of new territories was framed as bringing the population under the protection of Babylon. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar II was depicted as a protector and benefactor of all humanity.⁷⁷ One of the best examples of this is the narrative of the conquest of Lebanon:

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. IX, lines 23–52:

- 23 *ša* ¹⁴KÚR *a-ḥu-ú i-bi-lu-[ma]*
 24 *i-ki-mu-u ḥi-ši-ib-[šu]*
 25 *ni-ša-a-šu ip-pa-ar-ša-a-ma i-ḥu-ša né-^lsi-iš¹*
 26 *i-na e-mu-qú* ^dAG *ù* ^dAMAR.UTU *EN.EN-e-a*
 27 *a-na* ^{kur}*[a-ab-na-nu a-na [ta-ḥa]-^lza¹*
 28 *ú-sa-ad-di-ru* [¹⁴ERIM.MEŠ-*ia]*
 29 *na-ka-ar-šu e-li-iš ù šá-ap-li-iš*
 30 *as-su-uḥ-ma li-ib-ba ma-a-ti 'ú-ṭe₄-eb¹*
 31 *ni-ša-a-šu sa-ap-ḥa-a-ti ú-^lpa-aḥ-ḥi-ra-am-ma¹*
 32 *ú-te-er áš-ru-uš-ši-in*
 . . .

⁷⁵ It is inscribed on a rock in Brisa (in Lebanon). There is also a relief depicting Nebuchadnezzar II standing in front of a tree, probably a cedar. Another inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II accompanied with a relief is also preserved at the same location.

⁷⁶ RIME 1 Lugal-zage-si E1.14.20.1, col. I, lines 36–46 and col. II, lines 1–11.

⁷⁷ Vanderhoof 1999: 41.

- 47 UN.MEŠ *qé-re-eb*^{kur} *la-ab-na-nu*
 48 *a-bu-ri-iš ú-šar-bi-iš-ma*
 49 *ʿmu¹-ga-al-li-tu la ú-šar-ši-ši-[na-ti]*
 50 *aš-šum ma-na-ma la ha-ba-li-š[na]*
 51 *ʿša¹-lam šar-ru-ti-ia da-rí-ʿa¹-[ti]*
 52 *[ú-ša]-ʿaš-bi-it¹ [i-na . . .]*

(Lebanon,) where a foreign enemy had exercised authority [and] taken [its] produce away by force so that its (Mount Lebanon's) people had fled and had taken refuge far away. With the strength of the gods Nabû and Marduk, my lords, I regularly sent [my troops] to Mount Lebanon to (do) [batt]le. I forcibly removed its (Lebanon's) enemy everywhere (lit. "above and below") and increased the welfare of the land. I gathered the scattered people and I brought them back to their (original) place(s) . . . I made the people (living) on Mount Lebanon dwell (as safely) as in a meadow. I did not allow (any) troublemaker(s) to harass [hem]. So that nobody will oppress [them, I s]et up an image of my enduri[ng] royal majesty.

This text is one of two texts in which Nebuchadnezzar II admits that he sent armies into battle.⁷⁸ However, he is also depicted as a merciful ruler who saved Lebanon from an "enemy" (probably Egypt).⁷⁹ Furthermore, this text adopts the metaphor of the king as a shepherd and the subjects as sheep, by describing the result of the military conquest as letting the people of Lebanon lie in safe pastures. The royal scepter was identified as a peaceful tool, which kept the people safe. This is in great contrast to the Neo-Assyrian royal scepter, which was usually defined as a weapon used to conquer the enemy. Nebuchadnezzar II also applied the rhetoric depicting the king as a just ruler in an international context, which had only been used in a domestic context before.⁸⁰ In this way, the Neo-Babylonian kings adopted the theme of king as guardian and purveyor of cosmic order, without emphasising the strength and war-like character of the king.

That the king was depicted as a merciful protector, deprived of war-like qualities, in the narrative of imperialism accords with the non-aggressive image of the state god Marduk in royal inscriptions. The two most frequent categories of epithets used for Marduk in royal inscriptions are: (1) the granter of kingship (e.g.,

⁷⁸ The other one is RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST).

⁷⁹ This practice is reminiscent of that of Ur-Namma of the Ur III period. In the prologue of the Laws of Ur-Namma, the king claimed that he "liberated" (š_u-bar) the people of Sumer and Akkad, and "restored freedom" (ama-ar-gi₄) of several cities which were under the control of Anšan (von Dassow 2011: 211).

⁸⁰ Vanderhooff 1999: 43–44.

the lord of Babylon, the lord of the king, and the creator of the king); (2) the supreme god of the pantheon (e.g., the great god/lord, the king of the gods, the lord of lords, the Enlil of the gods, and the king of heavens and earth).⁸¹ At times, Marduk was also attributed with other characteristics. He was called *igigal ilī*, “the wisest of the gods,”⁸² *āšir kibrātim*, “the guide of the (four) regions,”⁸³ and *ittušib nuhšu*, “the one who increases abundance.”⁸⁴ The adjective *rēmēnū*, “merciful,” was also used multiple times to describe Marduk.⁸⁵ In this way, Marduk’s mercy was emphasised to correspond with the ideology of imperialism for protection and justice.

Marduk was rarely depicted as a mighty warrior. Only one inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II uses the noun “hero” and the adjective “mighty” to describe Marduk.⁸⁶ This contrasts with the image of Aššur in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, whose strength and terror was highlighted. For example, in one inscription of Sargon II, Aššur is said to have as weapons a net and axes, and to go personally at the king’s side, crushing any enemy and foe.⁸⁷ Other inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian kings claim that *emūqi širāte ša Aššur*, “the superior strength of Aššur,”⁸⁸ accompanied the king in battle, and that hearing about *danān Aššur Nabū Marduk*, “the might of Aššur, Nabū, and Marduk,”⁸⁹ caused the kings of distant areas to submit to Assyria. It is also worth noting that in one inscription of Nabopolassar concerning war with Assyria, Marduk is said to have provided help by ordering Nergal to assist Nabopolassar, rather than himself.⁹⁰

81 Adjectives to describe his supremacy are attested too: *ašarēdu*, “the foremost one” (e.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 [ST], col. II, line 2), *kabtu*, “the important one” (e.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 [ST], col. II, line 2); *šurbū*, “the supreme one” (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 [C41], col. I, line 31).

82 E.g., RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), col. II, line 3 and 034 (C214), col. II, line 9.

83 RINBE 1/1 Npl 04 (C23), col. II, line 14 (Da Riva 2013a: 75).

84 RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. III, line 25, and 126B (WBA), col. V, line 45.

85 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 (Prism), col. V, line 10; 014 (C213 // C200), col. II, line 10; 019 (C34), col. III, line 44; 033 (C014), col. I, line 7; RINBE 1/2 Nbk 066 (B12), line 4. In two inscriptions, this word was used to describe the command of Marduk (RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 [ST], rev., col. X, line 2; 023 (C35), col. III, line 47)

86 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 027 (C41), col. I, line 32 (*dānim*, “mighty”); 33 (*qarradu*, “hero”).

87 RINAP 2 Sargon II 065, lines 117–122.

88 RINAP 2 Sargon II 065, line 415.

89 RINAP 2 Sargon II 007, line 111.

90 In an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II from Uruk commemorating the reconstruction of Eanna, Ištar is called to “be the protection of my troops (and) march my side so that (I may) kill my enemies” (Da Riva and Novotny 2023: 10).

RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), lines 15–16:

15 ^dnè-iri₁₁-gal dan-dan-ni DINGIR.MEŠ ú-ša-li-ik i-da-a-a

16 i-na-^rar¹ a-[a]-^bil¹-ia ú-ša-am-qì-it ga-ri-ia

He (Marduk) had Nergal, the strongest among the gods, march at my side; he killed my enemy, he defeated my adversary.

The almost total absence of the war-like characteristics of Marduk in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions is surprising, as Marduk's martial qualities were his most prominent feature in *Enūma Eliš*,⁹¹ which was the foundational myth for the supreme status of Marduk in the Babylonian pantheon. The Neo-Babylonian practice to ignore Marduk's war-like characteristics in royal inscriptions coincided with its narrative of a peaceful and merciful imperialism.

Following the imperial expansion and the establishment of provincial administration in Syria and the Levant, royal monuments were made in present-day Lebanon towards the end of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.⁹² These monuments “are expressions of political power and function as markers of territorial dominion and as statements of imperial control.”⁹³ So far, they can be found in Nahr el-Kalb,⁹⁴ Brisa,⁹⁵ Wadi as-Saba, and Shir as-Sanam (Figure 10).⁹⁶ In Nahr el-Kalb, there are fragments of two inscriptions but no relief is preserved. Two inscriptions are well preserved in Brisa, each of which is accompanied by a relief. In Wadi as-Saba, there are two reliefs, one of which has some illegible remains of an inscription. Although there is one inscription in Shir as-Sanam, it is almost illegible. However, there is a clear relief.

The location of Nahr el-Kalb is significant, because Egyptian and Assyrian kings already carved their monuments in that specific location when each of

91 For the weapons of Marduk and the battle with Tiamat in *Enūma Eliš*, see Tablet IV (Lambert 2013: 84–95).

92 Da Riva 2012: 20. Other Neo-Babylonian royal monuments in the West were established by Nabonidus: Ḥarran (Ḥarran Stele and the Ḥarran Inscription of Adad-guppi': Schaudig 2001: 486–499; 500–513 = RINBE 2 Nabonidus 47; 2001); Jordan: Sela (Da Riva 2020 = RINBE 2 Nabonidus 55); Saudi Arabia: al-Ḥā'it (Hausleiter and Schaudig 2016 = RINBE 2 Nabonidus 54) and Tayma (Schaudig 2021 = RINBE 2 Nabonidus 56).

93 Da Riva 2018: 19.

94 Da Riva 2009.

95 Da Riva 2012.

96 Da Riva 2013b.

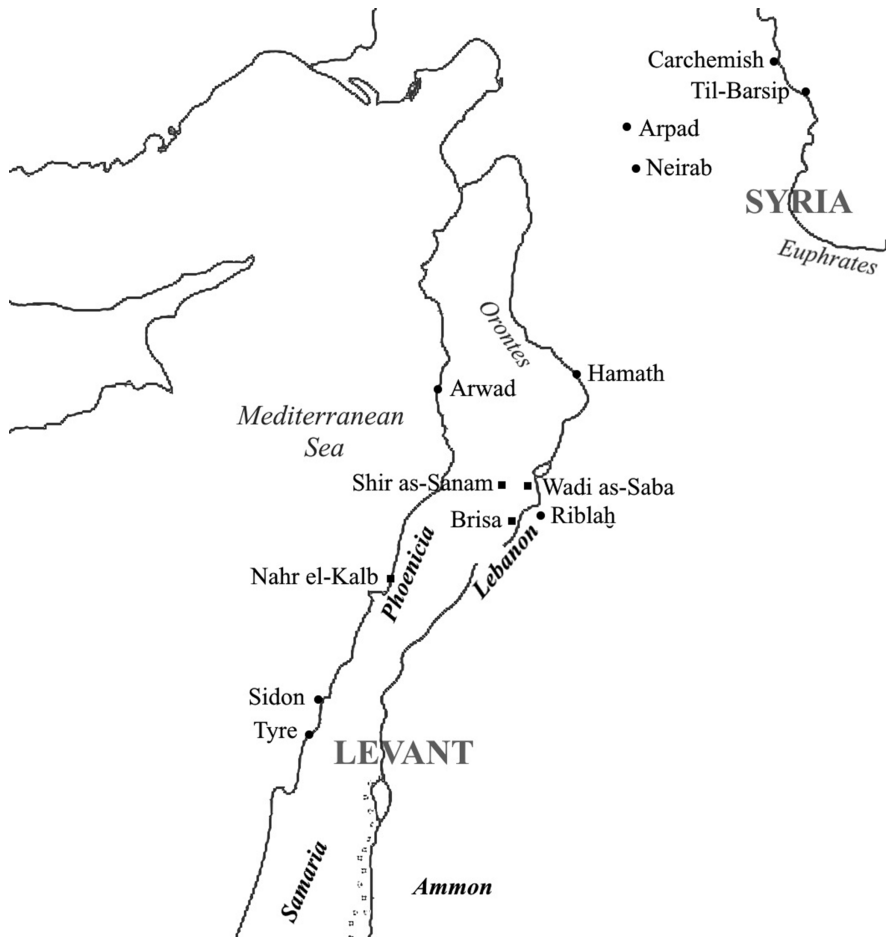


Figure 10: Rock relief sites of Nebuchadnezzar II in Lebanon.

them enjoyed hegemonic power in the Levant. Nebuchadnezzar II placed his own monuments next to the existing ones of Assyrians and Egyptians.⁹⁷ Centuries earlier, there was an Assyrian practice of reviving or reclaiming the legacy of the political and imperial force of Egyptian monuments. This was exploited by the Babylonians to put forward the narrative of succession to the Assyrian great

⁹⁷ Da Riva 2009: 36–37; 2017b: 18–19; Ben-Dov 2021: 356.

power. This transferred the area into “a place of social memory,”⁹⁸ recording the history of the succession of hegemonic power.

In the reliefs, Nebuchadnezzar II was depicted wearing a typical first millennium BC Babylonian crown and royal garment.⁹⁹ Garments of the same style were worn by Šamaš-šumu-ukīn in the “modelled pseudo-seal”¹⁰⁰ and by Nabonidus in some steles.¹⁰¹ There were three poses adopted by the king in the reliefs: (1) worshipping the divine symbols (Wadi as-Saba 2 and Shir as-Sanam);¹⁰² (2) fighting with a lion (Wadi as-Saba 1 and Brisa WBA¹⁰³); and (3) standing in front of a tree (Brisa WBC).¹⁰⁴ As Da Riva points out, the worshipping scene features the most important Neo-Babylonian theme in royal inscriptions—devotion to the gods, which was adopted for all of Nabonidus’ steles.¹⁰⁵ The image of the king fighting a lion was a typical royal scene found in Assyrian palace reliefs and royal seals. Nebuchadnezzar II adopted this scene to legitimise his rule as the rightful successor of the Assyrians.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the image of the king standing in front of a tree is an isolated example in Babylonian art.¹⁰⁷ It appears that the tree has only horizontal branches without any leaves. This is a typical depiction of cedar trees, also used in the Assyrian relief in Gate C in Balawat.¹⁰⁸ The cedar tree had long ago acquired a mythological dimension. In the Epic of Gilgameš (Tablet V), the protagonist travelled to the Cedar Forest, defeated the keeper Ḫumbaba, and cut down the cedar tree.¹⁰⁹ Along with the spread of the epic, the cedar tree prevailed as a symbol of heroic achievement in the ancient Near East. The cedar tree was also connected to imperialism through the inscriptions of Sargon of Akkad and literary works about this king.¹¹⁰ He was seen as an ideal monarch and his

98 Da Riva 2009: 37. On the significance of Nahr el-Kalb as a place of social memory, see Volk 2008 and 2009.

99 Da Riva 2010: 180–181; 2013b: 94.

100 Da Riva and Frahm 1999–2000: 159

101 Börker-Klähn 1982: Nos. 263–264, and 266.

102 The divine symbols are moon, sun, and star, representing Sîn, Šamaš, and Ištar. For the image, see Da Riva 2009, Fig. 27.

103 With archaising Neo-Babylonian script. For the image, see Da Riva 2009, Fig. 26.

104 With contemporary Neo-Babylonian script. For the image, see Da Riva 2012: 150, Fig. 5.

105 Da Riva 2010: 179; 2013b: 94.

106 Da Riva (2010: 179) claims that the motif belonged to a “Western” pictorial language and symbolism, which acquired a better understanding among the western audience.

107 Da Riva 2010: 180.

108 For the image, see Schachner 2007: 176, Abb. 115.

109 George 2003(I): 466–470.

110 For the legends of kings of Akkad, see Westenholz 1997.

legends were passed down not only in Akkadian but also in Sumerian and Hittite.¹¹¹ Furthermore, his royal inscriptions were continually copied by scribes in later periods.¹¹² The conquest of Lebanon's cedar forest by Sargon of Akkad was already a literary motif in the very early second millennium BC. This is confirmed by an Old Assyrian pseudo-autobiography of Sargon found in a merchant's archive at Kültepe:

Kt j/k 97, lines 47–50:¹¹³

47 . . . *ša-du-a-am hu-ma-nam ú-ša-zi-iz*
 48 *a-ši-ni-šu am-ḥa-sú-ma ki-ma*
 49 *sí-ki-tim i-ba-ri-šu-nu ṣa-al-mi*
 50 *ú-ša-zi-iz*

I struck Mount Amanus in two and set up a representation of myself between them as a peg of ownership.

This motif was also used in the royal inscriptions of the king of Mari, Yaḥdun-Līm,¹¹⁴ and Assyrian kings, such as Tiglath-pileser I¹¹⁵ and Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC).¹¹⁶ Different wooden materials mentioned in the building activities and offerings were used as a symbol for imperialism. This connection of exotic wooden materials and imperial control was explicit in the following passage from an inscription of Tiglath-pileser I:

RIMA 2 Tiglath-pileser I A.0.87.1, col. VII, lines 17–27:¹¹⁷

17 ^g*e-re-na* ^g*tas-ka-ri-na*
 18 ^g*al-la-ka-ni-iš i-na* KUR.KUR.MEŠ
 19 *ša a-pe-lu-ši-na-ti* GIŠ.MEŠ
 20 *ša-tu-nu ša i-na* LUGAL.MEŠ-ni
 21 AD.MEŠ-*ia maḥ-ru-te ma-am-ma*
 22 *la íz-qu-pu al-qa-am-ma*
 23 *i-na* ^gKIRI₆.MEŠ KUR-ti-*ia*
 24 *az-qu-up ù* GURUN ^gKIRI₆

111 Westenholz 1997: 1–3.

112 Gough 2006.

113 The transliteration and translation are based on George 2003(I): 467–468 with modifications from the author.

114 RIME 4 Yaḥdun-Līm E4.6.8.2, lines 34–40

115 RIMA 2 Tiglath-pileser I A.0.87.3, lines 16–18; 26–28.

116 RIMA 2 Ashurnasirpal II A.0.101.66, lines 6–8.

117 The transliteration and translation follow RIMA 2 Tiglath-pileser I A.0.87.1.

- 25 *aq-ra ša i-na KUR-ti-ia la-áš-šu*
 26 *al-qa-a*^{gis}KIRI₆.MEŠ KUR^da-šur
 27 *lu-ú uš-me-li*

I took cedar, box-tree, Kanish oak from the lands over which I had gained dominion – such trees which none among previous kings, my forefathers, had ever planted – and I planted (them) in the orchards of my land. I took rare orchard fruit which is not found in my land (and therewith) filled the orchards of Assyria.

Cedars served this very same purpose in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, who claimed that he was the first king in the history to be able to acquire the cedars in Lebanon:

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. IX, lines 13–19:

- 13 *i-na u₄-mi-šu*^{kur}*la-ab-na-nu ša-^lad¹*^{gis}[EREN]
 14 *qí-ša-tim*^dAMAR.UTU *šu-um-mu-^luḫ-tim*¹
 15 *ša i-ri-ís-su ṭa-a-bu*
 16 *ša*^{gis}EREN.MEŠ *ši-i-^lru-ti*¹
 17 *[a-na eš(?)]-^lre-e-^lti* DINGIR *ša-nim-ma ^lla¹ x x x*
 18 *[a-na É.GAL] LUGAL ša-nim-^lma¹ la ib-^lab-ab-lu-ma¹*
 19 *[ina ŠU.II-ia e]l-^lle-^lti ^lak^l-kis-^lsa¹-ma*

At that time, (with regard to) Mount Lebanon, the [cedar] mountain, the luxuriantly abundant forest of the god Marduk whose scent is pleasing, whose tall cedars had not been . . . [for the san]ctuary of another god (and) not been taken [for the palace of] another king, I cut down (cedars) [with my pu]re [hands].

Nebuchadnezzar II boasted that cedar was widely used as a building material in the temples, for example, the ziggurat Etemenanki of Marduk (RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126B [WBA], col. IV, lines 10–22) and the temple of Nabû, the Ezida (RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126B [WBA], col. VI, lines 4–27).

8.6 Centrality of Babylon

Babylon's supremacy was established along with the religious reform that promoted Marduk as the supreme god of the pantheon since the Kassite dynasty, especially in the Isin II period, when Nebuchadnezzar I returned the statue of Marduk from Elam.¹¹⁸ This development was consolidated by the royal ideology of

118 The religious reform to promote Marduk as the supreme god of the Babylonian pantheon required two aspects of transformation: (1) the replacement of Enlil and Nippur by Marduk and Babylon; (2) the switch of the mode of circulation of kingship from city state to city state to the concept of an eternal kingship since the beginning. The first aspect was manifested by the devel-

Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II. Through the description of Babylon in the royal inscriptions as primeval, excellent, and unrivaled, its supreme status among other cities is justified and emphasised in order to serve the centralisation of the state. Four aspects were used to convey this ideology: (1) Babylon was built by the gods; (2) Babylon was the bond of the heavens and the underworld; (3) Babylon's supremacy occurred at the beginning of the time; (4) Babylon was a wonder to behold.

Divine Construction

There is a traditional mythological theme that the city of the supreme god was built by the gods.¹¹⁹ Thus, Neo-Babylonian inscriptions attributed the building of Babylon to the gods. For example, in the Imgur-Enlil cylinder inscription (RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32]), Nabopolassar alludes to the construction of Babylon by the gods in *Enūma Eliš*.

RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 [C32], col. III, lines 1–10:

- 1 ^dAG-IBILA-ÛRU *áš-ri kan-šú*
- 2 *pa-li-iḫ* ^dAG ù ^dAMAR.UTU
- 3 *re-é-um mu-ṭib šá* ^dPA₄.NUN.AN.KI
- 4 *ḫa-²-iṭ te-me-en-na la-bi-ri ša ba-bi-lim^{ki}*
- 5 *mu-ut-tu-ú* SIG₄ *šá à-aḫ-ra-tim*
- 6 *mu-uš-te(!)-eš-bi ki-gal-lu reš-ti-i ša du-ur* U₄.MEŠ
- 7 *ša-bit* ^{giš}AL *šá* ^di-gi₄-gi₄
- 8 *za-bil tup-šik-ku ša* ^da-nun-na-ki
- 9 *e-piš im-gur-*^dEN.LÍL
- 10 *a-na* ^dAMAR.UTU *EN-ia a-na-ku-ma*

Nabopolassar, the humble one, the submissive one, the worshipper of Nabû and Marduk, the shepherd who makes Panunanki (Zarpanītu) happy, the one who inspects the ancient foundations of Babylon, the one who finds (inscribed) brick(s) from the past,

opment that Marduk and his city Babylon gradually took over the roles of Enlil and Nippur. The second aspect can be shown by *Enūma Eliš*, introducing Marduk as the creator of the universe and eternal king of the gods, therefore his city Babylon as the eternal seat of kingship. This religious reform started during the Kassite period, when an Akītu festival was held in Nippur to ease the transition. Until the Isin II dynasty, the titles of Marduk such as king of the gods (*šar ilī*), lord of the lands (*bēl mātāti*), and king of the heavens and the underworld (*šar šamē u eršeti*) started to be used in the royal inscriptions (Sommerfeld 1982: 185). For the details of the religious reform, see Lambert 1992; Sallaberger 1997; Oshima 2014: 71–73, Tenney 2016; Finn 2017: 42–52, and Abusch 2020: 99–106.

¹¹⁹ Sheriffs 1988: 21–22.

the one who carries out the work on the original, eternal foundations, the one who seizes the hoe of the Igigi, the one who carries the *tupšikku*-basket of the Anunnaki, the builder of the Imgur-Enlil for Marduk, my lord, I.

Here, Nabopolassar is called “the one who seizes the hoe of the Igigi, the one who carries the *tupšikku*-basket of the Anunnaki” when he rebuilt the Babylon wall. This is meant to remind the reader that the Anunnaki built Babylon and Esagil for Marduk in *Enūma Eliš*.¹²⁰

***Enūma Eliš*, Tablet VI, lines 45–64.**¹²¹

- 45 *ul-tú te-re-e-ti nap-ḥar-ši-na ú-ma-'i-ru*
 46 *ana* ^d*a-nun-na-ki šá AN-e u KI-tim ú-za-'i-zu is-qat-su-un*
 47 ^d*a-nun-na-ki pa-a-šu-nu i-pu-šu-ma*
 48 *a-na* ^dAMAR.UTU *be-li-šú-nu šu-nu iz-zak-ru*
 49 *i-*^d*nanna be-lí šá šu-bar-ra-ni taš-ku-nu-ma*
 50 *mi-nu-ú dum-qa-^ra¹-ni ina maḥ-ri-ka*
 51 *i ni-pu-uš pa-rak-ku šá na-bu-ú zi-kir-šu*
 52 *ku-um-muk-ku lu-ú nu-bat-ta-ni i nu-šap-ši-iḥ qir-bu-uš-šu*
 53 *i nid-dí pa-rak-ku ni-me-da a-šar-šú*
 54 *ina u₄-me šá ni-kaš-šá-da i nu-šap-ših qir-bu-uš-šu*
 55 ^dAMAR.UTU *an-ni-tu ina še-me-e-šú*
 56 *ki-ma u₄-mu im-me-ru zi-mu-šú ma-'diš*
 57 *ep-šá-ma KÁ.DINGIR.MEŠ^{ki} šá te-ri-šá ši-pir-šú*
 58 *lib-na-at-su lip-pa-ti-iq-ma pa-rak-ka zuq-ra*
 59 ^d*a-nun-na-ki it-ru-ku al-la*
 60 *šat-tu iš-ta-at li-bit-ta-šú il-tab-nu*
 61 *šá-ni-tu MU.AN.NA ina ka-šá-dí*
 62 *šá é-sag-íl mé-eḥ-ret ZU.AB ul-lu-u re-ši-šú*
 63 *ib-nu-ú-ma ziq-qur-rat ZU.AB e-li-te*
 64 *a-na* ^d*a-nim* ^dEN.LÍL ^d*é-a u šá-a-šú ú-kin-nu šub-tú*

After he (Marduk) had arranged all the decrees and had distributed incomes among the Anunnaki of heaven and netherworld, the Anunnaki opened their mouths and addressed their lord Marduk, “Now, lord, seeing you have established our freedom, what favour can we do for you? Let us make a shrine of great renown: Your chamber will be our resting place wherein we may repose. Let us erect a shrine to house a pedestal. Wherein we may repose when we finish (the work).” When Marduk heard this, he beamed as brightly as the light of day, “build Babylon, the task you have sought. Let

¹²⁰ Sheriffs 1988: 23–24.

¹²¹ The transliteration and translation are based on Lambert 2013: 112–113 with modifications from the author.

bricks for it be moulded and raise the shrine!" The Anunnaki wielded the pick. For one year they made the needed bricks. When the second year arrived, they raised the peak of Esagil, a replica of the Apsû. They built the lofty temple tower of the Apsû. And for Anu, Enlil, Ea, and him they established it as a dwelling.

Another possible literary allusion in the Imgur-Enlil inscription of Nabopolassar is made to the series *Tintir = Bābilu* (Tablet V). The passage in question details pieces of infrastructure in the city of Babylon, including its streets and districts, to demonstrate that Babylon was the creation of gods:

***Tintir = Bābilu*, Tablet V, lines 89–90:**¹²²

- 89 ká-dingir-ra^{ki} SA₇.ALAM dingir-gal-gal-e-ne
90 ba-bi-li bu-un-na-an-né-e DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ

Babylon, the place of creation of the great gods!

The Imgur-Enlil inscription of Nabopolassar appears to reference *Tintir = Bābilu* where different titles of the Babylon wall are listed.¹²³ Compare the following excerpts, which contain similar terminology and phraseology:

***Tintir = Bābilu*, Tablet V, lines 82–88:**¹²⁴

- 82 ŠU.NIGIN 43 ma-ba-zu DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ
83 lib-bi KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} 55 BÁRA.DIDL^d AMAR.UTU.KE₄
84 2 kir-bu 3 ÍD.MEŠ 8 KÁ.GAL.MEŠ 24 SILA E^{ki}
85 5 GÌŠ BÁRA ^di-gì-gì u 600 BÁRA ^da-nun-na-ki
86 3 GÌŠ UB.LÍL.LÁ ^dINANNA 3 GÌŠ man-za-za ^dlugal-ir₉-ra u ^dmes-lam-ta-è-a
87 12 KI.GUB ^dIMIN.BI 6 KI.GUB ^dkù-bu
88 4 KI.GUB ^dTIR.AN.NA 2 KI.GUB DINGIR.ḪUL.A 2 [KI].^lGUB^l MAŠKIM.URU

Total: 43 cult-centres of the great gods in Babylon; 55 daises of Marduk; 2 circumvallations; 3 rivers; 8 city gates; 24 streets of Babylon; 300 daises of the Igigi and 600 daises of the Anunnaki; 180 shrines of Ištar; 180 stations of Lugalirra and Meslamtaea; 12 stations of the Divine Heptad; 6 stations of Kūbu; 4 stations of the Rainbow; 2 stations of the Evil God; 2 stations of the Watcher of the City.

RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. II, lines 13–17:

- 13 tūr šum-du-lu ša ^di-gì₄-gì₄
14 ki-sal-lu pal-ka-a ša ^da-nun-na-ki
15 mé-lit ša-ma-mi sim-mi-lat ga-an-šir

¹²² The transliteration and translation follow George 1992: 68.

¹²³ George 1992: 368.

¹²⁴ The transliteration and translation follow George 1992: 68–69.

- 16 'na¹-an-za-az ^dlugal-gir-ra ù ^dmes-lam-ta-è
 17 ib-rat šá ^dINANNA šar-rat ra-bi-tim

The wide courtyard of the Igigi, the broad patio of the Anunnaki, the stairway to heaven, the ladder down to Gansir, the station of Lugalirra and Meslamtaea, the outdoor shrine of the great queen Ištar.

The choice of the gods named for the titles of the Babylon wall was made carefully to remind readers of the text *Tintir = Bābīlu* (Tablet V), which promoted the supreme status of Babylon.

The Bond of the Heavens and the Underworld

From the third millennium BC, Nippur, as the city of Enlil, held supreme status and was titled with “the bond of the heavens and the underworld” (dur-an-ki in Sumerian, *markas šamê u eršeti* in Akkadian).¹²⁵ During the Isin II dynasty, the supreme status of the triad of Enlil, his city Nippur, and his temple Ekur was taken over by the new triad of Marduk, his city Babylon, and his temple Esagil.¹²⁶ This process began with the syncretism of Marduk and Enlil, and by extension Nippur and Babylon, as shown by the following text:

KAR 8, col. II, lines 6–9:¹²⁷

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6 'nibru ^{ki} uru ^d en-lil-lá | <i>ni-ip-pu-ru URU ^dIDIM</i> |
| 7 tin-tir ^{ki} ša-ge túmu-ke ₄ | <i>ba-bi-lu bi-bil lib-bi-šú</i> |
| 8 nibru ^{ki} tin-tir ^{ki} | <i>ni-ip-pu-ru ba-bi-lu</i> |
| 9 umuš-bi dil-àm | <i>ṭè-em-šu-nu 1-ma</i> |

Nippur is the city of Enlil; Babylon is his favourite. Nippur and Babylon, their meaning is the same.

Another piece of evidence for this syncretism is the names of the double walls of Nippur and Babylon, which originated as early as the Isin II dynasty.¹²⁸ While the walls of Nippur were called Imgur-Marduk, “Marduk showed favour,” and Nēm-etti-Marduk, “Bulwark of Marduk,” the walls of Babylon were called Imgur-Enlil, “Enlil showed favour,” and Nēm-etti-Enlil, “Bulwark of Enlil,” essentially equating Marduk and Enlil.

¹²⁵ For the texts referring to this name for Nippur, see George 1992: 261–262.

¹²⁶ Oshima 2014: 71; Tenney 2016: 160–161.

¹²⁷ The transliteration and translation follow Lambert 1992: 123–124.

¹²⁸ Tenney 2016: 161.

The title “bond of the heavens and the underworld” was also taken over by Babylon in *Tintir = Bābilu* (Tablet I).¹²⁹

***Tintir = Bābilu*, Tablet I, line 6:**

6 sa-an-na^{ki} KIMIN *mar-kās AN-e*
Šuanna Babylon, the bond of the heavens

***Tintir = Bābilu*, Tablet I, line 35:**

35 ùz-sag an-ki-a KIMIN *mar-kās AN-e* [ù KI-tim]
Uzsag-ankia Babylon, the bond of the heavens and the underworld

***Tintir = Bābilu*, Tablet I, line 51:**

51 dim kur-kur-ra^{ki} KIMIN *ri-kis ma-ta-a-ta*
Dim-kurkurra Babylon, the bond of the lands

In the royal inscriptions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, this role of Babylon was consolidated by describing the city as: (a) the spacial position between the heavens and the underworld; (b) the place of the divine assembly.

a. Central Position in the Universe

In the myth of *Enūma Eliš*, it is Marduk’s desire that Babylon was created as the navel of the universe, binding the heavens and the underworld:

***Enūma Eliš*, Tablet V, lines 117–124.**¹³⁰

117 ^dAMAR.UTU *pa-a-šu i-pu-uš-ma i-qab-bi*
118 an DINGIR.DINGIR AD.AD-šu *a-ma-tum iz-zak-kar*
119 *e-le-na ap-si-i šu-bat ḥaš-ma-ni*
120 *mé-eḥ-ret é-šar-ra šá ab-nu-ú a-na-ku el-ku-un*
121 *šap-liš áš-ra-ta ú-dan-ni-na qaq-qar-šá*
122 *lu-pu-uš-ma bi-ta lu-ú šu-bat la-le-e-a*
123 *qir-bu-uš-šu ma-ḥa-za-šu lu-šar-šid-ma*
124 *ku-um-mi lu-ud-da-a lu-kin šar-ru-ti*

Marduk opened his mouth to speak, and addressed the gods his fathers: “Above the Apsû, the emerald (?) abode, opposite Ešarra, which I built for you, beneath the celestial parts, whose floor I made firm, I will build a house to be my luxurious abode. Within it I will establish its shrine, I will found my chamber and establish my kingship.”

¹²⁹ The transliteration and translation follow George 1992: 37–41.

¹³⁰ The transliteration and translation are based on Lambert 2013: 104–105 with modifications from the author.

The interpretation of Babylon being in the middle position is based on the descriptions “above the Apsû” and “opposite Ešarra.” The Apsû was the underground water, so Babylon should be built on the surface of the earth. Ešarra was the temple of Enlil, and located in the lower heaven,¹³¹ so Babylon should be built to the height of the lower heaven. Combining these two descriptions, Babylon’s position was between the earth and the heavens, with the bottom touching the Apsû and the top touching the heavens.

Nabopolassar alluded to the myth of *Enūma Eliš* with regard to Babylon’s spatial position in the cosmos.¹³² The wall of Babylon, Imgur-Enlil, was called *tarbašu šumdulu ša Igiḡi, kisallu palkâ ša Anunnaki, mēlit šamāmī, simmilat Gaṣṣir*, “the wide courtyard of the Igiḡi, the broad patio of the Anunnaki, the stairway to heaven, the ladder down to Gaṣṣir (the entrance to the netherworld).”¹³³ Igiḡi and Anunnaki were sometimes used as synonyms, but not in this case. They should be understood as the minor gods of the heavens and the minor gods of the netherworld, respectively, as in *Enūma Eliš* (Tablet VI, line 69).¹³⁴ Therefore, the wall of Babylon was shared by the gods of the heavens and the gods of the netherworld. The inscription also calls the wall of Babylon *kinnâ zaqru ša šitnunu šamāmī*, “the high mountain peak which rivals the heaven,”¹³⁵ and describes the base of it as being *ina irat kigalla*, “on the breast of the netherworld.”¹³⁶ This corresponds to the descriptions “above the Apsû” and “opposite Ešarra,” as previously discussed. This spatial mythology was also referenced by Nebuchadnezzar II, who claimed that he secured the foundation of Babylon *meherat Apsî*, “directly on the Apsû,” and raised the top of Babylon *šadâniš*, “as high as a mountain.”¹³⁷

b. Place for the Divine Assembly

The most important occasion of divine assembly was the Akītu festival when Marduk decreed the destinies of the universe,¹³⁸ and Babylon was chosen to host this festival. This is revealed in *Enūma Eliš*:

131 For the organisation of the universe, see Lambert 2013: 196–200.

132 Sheriffs 1988: 24.

133 RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. II, lines 13–15 (Da Riva 2013a: 96). Al-Rawi (1985: 7) notes that the phrases used here are reminiscent of the myth of Nergal and Ereškigal.

134 Lambert 2013: 193.

135 RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. II, line 11 (Da Riva 2013a: 96).

136 RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. II, line 39 (Da Riva 2013a: 97).

137 RINBE 1/1 Nbk 012 (C27), col. II, lines 18–20. The same sentence also appears in RINBE 1/1 Nbk 021 (C025//C013//C016), col. II, lines 30–32; and a similar one in RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. V, lines 12’–14’. On the mountain metaphor of monumental buildings in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, see Da Riva 2025: 346–347.

138 For the Akītu festival, see Zgoll 2006; Debourse 2022.

Enūma Eliš, Tablet V, lines 125–130:¹³⁹

- 125 *e-nu-ma ul-tu ap-si-i tel-la-a ana pu-^rru-si?-i¹*
 126 *áš-ru-uš-šu lu-u nu-bat-ta-ku-un ana ma-ḥar pu-ḥur-^rku¹-un*
 127 *e-nu-ma ul-tú šá-ma-mi tur-^rra-da¹ ana pu-^rru¹-[si-i]*
 128 *áš-ru-uš-šu lu nu-bat-ta-ku-un ana ma-ḥar pu-ḥur-ku-un*
 129 *lu-ub-bi-ma šum-šu KÁ.DINGIR.^rRA^{1ki} É.MEŠ DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ*
 130 *i-si-in-nu qir-bu-uš ^rda?¹-[x] ni-ip-pu-šu ši-i nu-bat-tum*

When you come up from the Apsû to make a decision, this will be your resting place before the assembly. When you descend from heaven to make a decision, this will be your resting place before the assembly. I shall call its name ‘Babylon’, ‘The Homes of the Great Gods’. Within it we will hold a festival, that will be the evening festival.

For this reason, the walls of Babylon were referred to as *mūšē nērebi ša Igigi u Anunnaki*, “the exit and entry of the Igigi and Anunnaki gods” in Nebuchadnezzar II’s inscriptions.¹⁴⁰

The Supreme City in the Earliest History

As part of the religious reform to promote Marduk, Babylonian theologians established a theory that the supremacy of Marduk, and therefore the supremacy of his city Babylon, occurred at the beginning of history. The notion that Babylon was the very first city built by the gods was promoted during the Kassite period. At that time, Babylon became known as “(the) primeval city” (*uru ul = āl šātī*).¹⁴¹ The syncretism of Babylon and Eridu, which was traditionally believed to be the first city, contributed to this idea.¹⁴² The idea that Marduk and his city were supreme for a very long time is presented in the Weidner Chronicle: Marduk was in charge of the legitimacy of the kings of Sumer and Akkad, who originated from different cities, such as Enmerkar, king of Uruk, Puzur-Nirah, king of Akšak, Sargon and Narām-Sîn, kings of Agade, and Šulgi, Amar-Sîn, and other kings of Ur.¹⁴³ These kings are dated to the third millennium BC, before the establishment of the Old Babylonian dynasty, when Marduk became the state god for the first time.

¹³⁹ The transliteration and translation are based on Lambert 2013: 104–105 with modifications from the author.

¹⁴⁰ RINBE 1/1 Nbk 024 (C012), col. F, lines 4¹–5¹.

¹⁴¹ Boissier 1932: 98, line 4.

¹⁴² For the promotion of Babylon as the first city during the Kassite period and the equation between Babylon and Eridu, see Lambert 2013: 200.

¹⁴³ The chronicle ABC 19 (Grayson 1975a: 145–151; Glassner 2004: 263–269). On the chronicle within the tradition of the “catastrophe of Ibbi-Sîn”, see Schaudig 2019: 113–173.

The theory that Marduk and his city already enjoyed a supreme status in the earliest history was also adopted in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), rev., col. VII, lines 9–25:

- 9 *pa-na-ma ul-tu u₄-um ul-lu-ti*
 10 *a-di pa-le-e*
 11 ^dAG-IBILA-ú-šu-ur LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki}
 12 *a-bi a-li-di-ia*
 13 LUGAL *ma-du-ti a-lik maḥ-ri-ia*
 14 *ša i-lu a-na šar-ru-tim*
 15 *iz*-ku-ru zi-ki-ir-šu-un*
 . . .
 23 *i-na i-si-ni₇ zag-mu-ku*
 24 *ta-bé-e* ^dEN.LÍL DINGIR.DINGIR ^dAMAR.UTU
 25 *i-ru-bu a-na qé-er-bi šu-an-na^{ki}*

In the past, from distant days until the reign of Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, my father who engendered me, the many kings who came before me whose name(s) the god(s) had called to be king . . . During the festival of the New Year, (during) the setting out of the Enlil of the gods, the god Marduk, they entered Šuanna (Babylon).

According to this inscription, kings before the Neo-Babylonian dynasty had already acknowledged Marduk's position as the head of the pantheon and his role in appointing and approving kings, which took place during the Akītu festival.

A Wonder to Behold

Among all other cities in the region and beyond, Babylon was unrivaled in political status, wealth, and appearance. First, Nebuchadnezzar II's inscriptions emphasize that Babylon was chosen as the only city of royal residence:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), rev., col. VIII, lines 19–26:

- 19 *áš-šum né-me-du šar-ru-ti-ia*
 20 *i-na URU ša-nim-ma*
 21 *la i-ra-am-mu ŠĀ*
 22 *i-na ka-al da-ad-mi*
 23 *ul ab-na-a at-ma-nu be-lu-ti*
 24 *ma-ak-ku-ru si-ma-at šar-ru-ti*

- 25 *ul áš-ta-ak-ka-an*
 26 *qé-er-bi ma-ti-ta-an*

Because (my) heart did not desire the seat of my royal majesty to be in (any) other city (than Babylon), I did not build myself a lordly abode in all settlements, nor did I store property befitting a king in all lands.

Neo-Babylonian kings also boasted about Babylon's great wealth. Nebuchadnezzar II frequently discussed the fact that a large amount of tribute from the vassals of the Empire was delivered to the capital yearly:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), col. II, lines 30–39:

- 30 KÙ.BABBAR KÙ.GI *ni-si-iq* NA₄ *šú-qú-ru-ti*
 31 *e-ra-a* ^{gis}MES.MÁ.KAN.NA ^{gis}EREN
 32 *mi-im-ma šu-um-šu šu-qú-ru*
 33 𒄩.É.GÁL *ru-uš-ša-a*
 34 *bi-ši-ti ša-dī-im*
 35 *ḫi-iš-bi ta-ma-a-tim*
 36 *ip-ti ka-bi-it-ti*
 37 *i-gi-sa-a šu-um-mu-ḫu*
 38 *a-na URU-ia KÁ.DINGIR.RA*^{ki}
 39 *a-na maḫ-ri-šu ú-še-ri-im-ma*

I had silver, gold, precious (and) valuable stones, copper, *musukkannu*-wood, cedar, anything that is valuable, red-gold produce, the yield of the mountains, the wealth of the seas, substantial tribute, lavish gift(s) brought into my city, Babylon, into his (Marduk's) presence.

Furthermore, Babylon was given an astonishing appearance through Nabopolassar's and Nebuchadnezzar II's building projects.¹⁴⁴ Nebuchadnezzar II named his South Palace *ekallu bīt tabrâti nišī*, "House of the Wonderment of the People." In one inscription, Nebuchadnezzar II told the god Marduk: "I have made no city more resplendent than your city, Babylon."¹⁴⁵ The capital became the symbol of royal power, and the fame of the city became the vehicle of the influence of the king. Domestically, the reputation of the capital contributed to centralisation, while abroad it served the Babylonian imperialism. Babylon's fame as the greatest city in the world was celebrated by Nebuchadnezzar II:

¹⁴⁴ Foreign carpenters and builders came to the capital to participate in the various building projects. They are attested in the archive of the South Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II (Pedersén 2005a: 111–127, Archive N1; Pedersén 2005b; Jursa 2005: 60; Jursa 2007b; Pedersén 2009; Alstola 2020: 60–63).

¹⁴⁵ RINBE 1/1 Nbk 02 (ST), col. IX, lines 54–56.

RINBE 1/2 Nbk 126A (WBC), col. IX, lines 3–10:

- 3 [iš-tu] ti-a-am-tim e-li-ti
 4 [a-di] ti-a-am-tim ša-ap-li-ti
 5 [MA.DA].MA.DA ka-¹la-ši-na¹
 6 [ša ^dAMAR].UTU EN ia-a-ti i-qí-pa-[an-ni]
 7 ¹i-na kul¹-[lat] ma-ti-¹ta-an¹ gi-mi-ir ¹kal da¹-[ad-mi]
 8 URU TIN.TIR^{ki} a-na re-še-e-ti ú-[še-ši]
 9 i-na ma-ḥa-zi-¹šu¹ ši-i-[ri]
 10 šu-um-šu a-na ta-na-da-a-ti ¹aš-ku-un¹

I ma[de] Babylon pre-eminent [from] the Upper Sea [to] the Lower Sea, (in) all of [the la]nds [that the god Mar]duk, my lord, gave me, in the tota[l]ity of] all lands (and) every single in[h]abited settlement]. In his (Marduk's) exa[lted] cult centre, I made its name (Babylon) worthy of praise.

8.7 King of Justice

There is a traditional view that the king's shepherdship (*rē'ūtu*) rested in the duty to maintain the cosmic order, including cultic and social order. In various texts—for instance, the Sumerian *Etana Myth* and the Akkadian debate poem *The Date-palm and the Tamarisk*—kingship was created after the cities. The gods planned the city and then sought for a king to protect and maintain it.¹⁴⁶ The task of maintaining a well-functioning civil society ensured the proper provisioning of the gods. Therefore, maintaining social order was foundational to cultic order and was seen as the execution of justice.¹⁴⁷

This manner of defining a just king can be traced back to the Early Dynastic period.¹⁴⁸ The earliest examples are Enmetena and Uru-iningina, rulers of Lagaš. They are described to have released people from debt slavery and corvée labour as a task of restoring the social order. During the Old Babylonian period, this ideology was expressed through the Code of Ḥammurabi, in addition to *andurārum*¹⁴⁹ and *mīšaru*-edicts, continuing the practice of royally decreed social reforms.

¹⁴⁶ Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 206–210.

¹⁴⁷ Another trope relating to the duty to maintain social order is that the king was equipped with the knowledge of a proper cosmic order (Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 274). This trope was expressed through the depiction of the wise king in royal inscriptions.

¹⁴⁸ Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 58.

¹⁴⁹ Charpin 1987.

Nabopolassar emphasised that his attention to social justice was one of the reasons Marduk chose him as king.¹⁵⁰ In some inscriptions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, the king is referred to as a “king of justice,”¹⁵¹ equipped with a just scepter.¹⁵² Nebuchadnezzar II is attributed with the role of director of the proper life and morality and a guardian for the civilised life:

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 011 (Prism), col. IV, lines 6'–12':

6' *ni-šim* ^r*ra*¹-*ap-ša-a-ti* *ša* ^dAMAR.UTU *bé-e-la*
 7' *ú-ma-l* ^a*l*¹-*lu-ú* *qá-tu-ú-a*
 8' *in* ^{tè}-^r*em*¹ *ša* ^d*é-a* *i-ši-ma-am*
 9' *in* ^r*da*¹-*am-qá-a-ti*
 10' *aš-te-ne-e'-e-ši-na-a-ti*
 11' *ús-su* *ki-i-l*^r*na*¹ *ri-id-dam* *da-am-qu*
 12' *ú-ša-aš-l*^r*bi*¹-*it-si-na-a-ti*

(With regard to) the widespread people whom the god Marduk, my lord, had entrusted to me, through the understanding that the god Ea had bestowed upon me, with good intentions, I constantly sought them out (and) directed them to the proper way of life (and) good behavior.

RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), col. II, lines 28–29.¹⁵³

28 *ra-ag-ga* *ù* *še-e-num*
 29 *i-na* *ní-ši* *ú-še-es-si*

I drove away the criminals and villains from the people.

Because of Nebuchadnezzar II's desire to depict himself as a just king, he frequently refers to the Code of Hammurabi in his inscriptions.¹⁵⁴ Nebuchadnezzar II also carried out a series of legal reforms, such as standardisation of the oath

150 RINBE 1/1 Npl 03 (C32), col. I, line 14: *a-na kit-ti* *ù* *mi-ša-ri* *ba-ša-a* *uz-na-a-a*: “My attention was directed towards justice and righteousness.”

151 This title was rare among Neo-Babylonian kings (Beaulieu 1989: 4). Nabopolassar is given this title in RINBE 1/1 Npl 07 (C12), line 1, and 03 (C32), col. I, line 1 (Da Riva 2013a: 62 and 95). For the use of this title by Nebuchadnezzar II, see Da Riva 2008: 102. A new inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II from Uruk published by Da Riva and Novotny (2023) also contains this title (RINBE 1/2 Nbk 118 [C310]).

152 For example, RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), col. I, line 45: ^{gš}NÍG.GIDRU *i-ša-ar-ti*, “a just scepter”. This term also appears in the Sun God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina (col. III, line 8) (Woods 2004: 85).

153 Also see RINBE 1/1 Nbk 002 (ST), rev., col. IX, lines 33–37: *bal-ti* *uz-zu* *pu-luḫ-ti* / *me-lam-me* *šar-ru-ti* / *i-ta-ti-šu* *sa-aḫ-ra-a-ma* / *ra-ag-gu* *la* *i-ša-ra* / *ul* *i-ba-a'* *qé-re-eb-šu*: “Dignity, fury, reverence, (and) brilliance of kingship surround it so that criminals (and) the unrighteous cannot enter inside it.”

154 Berger 1973: 94–95; Schaudig 2001: 32; Hurowitz 2005: 521; Da Riva 2012: 24–26.

formula in legal documents,¹⁵⁵ creation of the notary institution, and change of the land sale formularies.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, he created a *bīt dīni*, “court-house,” in Babylon for the centralisation of jurisdiction.¹⁵⁷ The royal judges placed in charge of this institution were attested in the second half of his reign.¹⁵⁸

It has been suggested that the text “King of Justice,” preserved from the Seleucid period, deals with Nebuchadnezzar II and his legal endeavors.¹⁵⁹ Followed by cases where the king rendered judgements, the text describes the king composing a code of law with his judgements, drawing up regulations, and rebuilding a court-house. This text contains many parallels with the royal inscription Si(ppar) 4+5 from Sippar,¹⁶⁰ which also celebrates a king who composed a law code for his land. These two texts share a common theme and contain three exact same turns of phrase. Therefore, they may have been written in the same intellectual context.¹⁶¹ However, the identification of the king in the latter text is uncertain. The text designates Babylonia as Karduniaš (col. II, line 20), a term used from the Kassite period until the seventh century BC. This points to a Sargonid king, who took Ḥammurabi as a model to gain more support from the Babylonians.¹⁶² Three Neo-Babylonian kings, Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Nabonidus have also been suggested,¹⁶³ but there is no decisive evidence which king is the royal figure of the text.

155 Sandowicz 2012: 42–45.

156 Baker and Wunsch 2001; Baker 2011.

157 Sandowicz 2009.

158 This text is still unpublished but identified by M. Sandowicz (Jursa and Gordin 2018: 48).

159 This text also borrows passages from the Code of Ḥammurabi (Lambert 1965; Schaudig 2001: 579–588; Hurowitz 2005: 507–516). It is disputable who was the protagonist of the text. Nabonidus and Nebuchadnezzar II have been suggested. For the explanation that Nebuchadnezzar II, rather than Nabonidus, was the king this text describes, see Lambert 1965: 2–3; Jursa and Debourse 2017: 85, n. 21.

160 For a new edition, see Frazer and Adali 2021.

161 Frazer and Adali 2021: 255–256.

162 Frazer and Adali (2021: 253–254) explain the use of this term as Nabonidus’ affinity with Assyria.

163 In favour of Nabopolassar is the mention of the work on the temple Eḫursagtila. Nabopolassar is the only king who is known to have done work on this temple. In favour of Nebuchadnezzar II is his interest in Ḥammurabi and his law shown in his inscriptions. In favour of Nabonidus is his interest in the monuments of Ḥammurabi and the parallels between phrases found in the text and his other inscriptions (Frazer and Adali 2021: 251–254).

9 Conclusions

This monograph surveys Babylonian history during the transitional period between 631 and 585 BC, from the end of Ashurbanipal's reign to the first half of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. This period witnessed the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the formation of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, after which the Neo-Babylonian Empire reached its mature stage with consolidated territorial control, administrative systems, and state ideologies. The main focusses of the monograph are the unfolding of the Nabopolassar Revolt, the processes and consequences of the Babylonian imperial expansion, the way in which the new dynasty administered its territory, and the interventions and royal ideologies adopted during the early years of the Neo-Babylonian rule. These historical factors contributed to the various transformations in Babylonia politically, economically, socially, and demographically.

War of Independence and the Fall of Assyria

After the suppression of the Šamaš-šumu-ukīn revolt, Kandalānu was established as a puppet king in Babylonia, while the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, directly appointed governors to Babylonia. In order to have stable control over Babylonia, the Assyrians made efforts to reduce the power and influence of the tribes while retaining political fragmentation in Babylonia. After the death of Ashurbanipal (631 BC), instability occurred in Assyria. In the same year, his son, Aššur-etel-ilāni, ascended the throne with the help of Sīn-šumu-lišir, the chief eunuch of Ashurbanipal. In 628 BC, another son of Ashurbanipal, Sīn-šarru-iškun, usurped the throne. Aššur-etel-ilāni retreated to Nippur, a city in central Babylonia which traditionally served as an Assyrian frontier. In the following year (627 BC), Nabopolassar revolted, taking southern Babylonia as his power base. Later, Sīn-šumu-lišir replaced Aššur-etel-ilāni and joined the competition for the control of Babylonia in 626 BC, although his power was terminated in the same year. After this, Nabopolassar and Sīn-šarru-iškun were the main competitors for the control of Babylonia. By 620 BC, Nabopolassar was able to keep Sīn-šarru-iškun out of Babylonia, successfully achieving independence from Assyria.

Nabopolassar took further steps to eliminate the Assyrian state. The success of this endeavor largely relied on the assistance of the Medes. Although the Assyrians suffered from the war with Nabopolassar in Babylonia, the Assyrian heartland was able to muster sufficient defence. The failed attack of Nabopolassar against Assur in 615 BC proved that Nabopolassar did not yet have a strong enough army to conquer Assyria. However, the arrival of the Medes completely

changed the dynamic, tilting the balance in favour of the Babylonians. This alliance managed to fell Nineveh in 612 BC, and Ḥarran in 610 BC.

One of the important factors for the failure of Sîn-šarru-iškun to suppress the Nabopolassar Revolt was the instability that occurred in Assyria. There were multiple revolts in Assyria when Sîn-šarru-iškun was busy dealing with Nabopolassar. The first revolt occurred in Raqmat, a town in Ḥanigalbat, in 625 BC. Although Nabopolassar went to help the rebels, Sîn-šarru-iškun was able to quell the rebellion. The consequence of the second revolt was more severe. In 623 BC, Sîn-šarru-iškun launched an offense and the Assyrian army was marching triumphantly to Nippur. This offense was apparently halted by a revolt from the West, resulting in a very short-lived usurpation of the Assyrian throne. Although Sîn-šarru-iškun suppressed this revolt eventually, it seems to have caused significant damage to his army and he was unable to return to Babylonia in the following years. From 622–620 BC, Sîn-šarru-iškun's influence in Babylonia steadily declined. While the last document dated to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun in Babylonia is from 621 BC, date formulae according to the reign of Nabopolassar predominated in Babylonia.

The elites of the Babylonian cities also played a significant role in the war of independence. Their political standing, based on their own interest, had huge impact on this political competition, since they could organise their own military force to join the effort of a political competitor. There is evidence of infighting among the Babylonian elites. One such instance occurred in Sippar in 626 BC, when Sîn-šumu-lišir replaced Aššur-etel-ilāni in Nippur and joined the competition to control Babylonia. He successfully controlled Babylon and caused a schism of the Sipparian elites in the Ebabbar temple—one party remaining loyal to Sîn-šarru-iškun as before, while the other pledged loyalty to Sîn-šumu-lišir. Another one occurred in Uruk during 623–621 BC. In 623 BC, Sîn-šarru-iškun's army rescued Nippur from Nabopolassar's siege. At the same time, the pro-Assyrian party in Uruk expelled Nabopolassar's supporters and fended off Nabopolassar. This episode lasted until 621 BC when Nabopolassar was able to capture the city and reinstall his supporters in their offices. Such infighting revealed the ambitions and loyalties of the Babylonian urban elites during political turmoil. They were not simply pushed around by the military force of the contenders but were active players in this political game.

Furthermore, it is difficult to evaluate the role of the tribal population in the Nabopolassar Revolt, because there is a lack of documents that can shed light in this respect. However, it can be surmised that their role was somewhat significant, especially the tribes in the South. There are several reasons: (1) there was an anti-Assyrian tradition among the tribal populations (especially the Sealand and the tribe of Puqūdu), who possessed great amount of military strength and became the main military force to resist the Assyrians during the period of Assy-

ian dominance. Making them allies of Nabopolassar would be one of the key factors to ensure the success of the revolt. (2) The family of Nabopolassar was among the local elites in Uruk during the period of Assyrian dominance and was ousted later by their peers who were backed by the Assyrian king. Naturally, they were familiar with the political dynamics of the South and presumably were able to take advantage of them, allying the anti-Assyrian tribal populations. (3) Nabopolassar started his revolt in the South, because the first city under Nabopolassar's control that was documented is Uruk and a Seleucid document refers to Nabopolassar as the king of the Sealand. (4) The tribes acquired considerably high status in the state administration after the establishment of the dynasty. For example, the two highest officials in the central administration were the *simmagir* and *šakin tâmti* (or *šakin māti*). They were two tribal leaders with their own jurisdiction: an eastern Babylonian province and the Sealand, respectively. Both of them also wielded power on a national level. These favours granted by the Neo-Babylonian kings were probably rewards for their contributions in the Nabopolassar Revolt and exchange for them to continue supporting the dynasty. (5) The tribal populations were an important part of the army accompanying Nebuchadnezzar II to expand the territory of the Empire. These five factors make it reasonable to assume that the tribes held a vital role in the Nabopolassar Revolt.

Imperial Expansion

The Neo-Babylonian dynasty expanded its territory into Syria and the Levant. This territorial expansion was mainly attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II, who campaigned in the Levant frequently early in his reign. This process can be divided into three stages. The first stage (607–605 BC) involves the defeat of the Egyptians in Carchemish. During the second stage (605–595 BC), Nebuchadnezzar II established vassals in the Levant by conquest. During the final stage (595–575 BC), there were revolts against the Babylonian rule, which Nebuchadnezzar II was able to suppress.

After these stages, the Levant was under the stable control of the Neo-Babylonian state, which established a new system of administration and royal propaganda for its periphery. There is evidence of a provincial system in the Ḥabur Region and the Upper Euphrates. Governors of various locations in these regions are attested in Neo-Babylonian documents. There is also plenty of evidence concerning Tyre. Babylonian troops were garrisoned in Tyre from the 31st year of Nebuchadnezzar II to the accession year of Amēl-Marduk (574–562 BC), and an agricultural settlement to provide for them was established on the Levantine coast. It is likely that Tyre became part of the province of Qadesh. In the southern Levant, frequent warfare caused ruralisation and depopulation.

Afterwards, new administrative and economic centres (with agricultural satellite settlements) were established. The Babylonians also set up military garrisons there to ensure political stability.

Administration and Centralisation

The Babylonian heartland was formed on a tripartite structure: the royal household, the tribes, and the traditional Babylonian cities. Therefore, the state administration consisted of three parts: royal court officials, tribal leaders, and local nobles from each city.

The basic administrative unit was a regional network which consisted of a large urban centre and its satellites. The organisation of the temples in each network adopted the same satellite system. The temple of the central city supervised and financed the temples in the minor urban centres. Sometimes, the personnel of the dominant temple held prebends, or other strong economic ties, in the subordinate temples. In the centre, the highest civic official was called the *šākin tēmi* (governor) and the highest administrator of the main temple was called the *ša-tammu* (bishop). In the satellite cities or towns, the highest civic official was called the *ḫazannu* (mayor) and the highest administrator of the temple was called the *šangû* (high priest). There were seven cities in which the main temple had a *ša-tammu*: Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Uruk, Dilbat, Kish/Ḫursagkalama, and Marad. A prism of Nebuchadnezzar II attests to several *šangûs* of minor urban centres, such as Dēr, Dūr-Yakīn, Limītu, Mādakalšu, Nēmed-Laguda, Kullaba, Udannu, Larsa, Kissik, Bakuššu, and probably Ur. While there is abundant evidence for the networks centred around Babylon and Uruk, there is a lack of information for the regional networks in central and eastern Babylonia.

Temple and private archives from traditional Babylonian cities reveal the state effort for centralisation on three levels. Firstly, on the level of royal ideology, the status of Babylon as the nation's capital was legitimised in the royal inscriptions in various ways. Babylon was depicted as a city that was built by the gods at the beginning of the universe, was at the centre of the universe as the bond of the heavens and the underworld, acquired hegemony in the earliest history, and was a wonder to behold. On the level of religion, the state gods, Marduk and Nabû, were promoted and there was an effort to standardise cultic practices, as was especially evident in Sippar and Uruk. On the administrative level, the monarch placed people that were dependent on the royal household in local religious institutions. Priestly and entrepreneurial families from Babylon and Borsippa were relocated to other cities. Members of these families were promoted as priests and administrators in temples, counterbalancing the power of the local elites. This policy may have ceased in around the middle of the reign of Nebu-

chadnezzar II, who instead sent more royal officials to the local governments and temples. These officials began to share and sometimes take over the jobs of the local elites to strengthen state control.

Economic Revival

Since the reign of Kandalānu, Babylonia experienced an economic revival and there was a structural change in the Neo-Babylonian economy. Before this period, the basic model of the ancient Mesopotamian economy was the *oikos* model: the economy of the public institutions dominated society, the vast majority of the population was affiliated with those institutions, and redistribution was the basic model of all economic transactions. The Neo-Babylonian period witnessed several breaches of this model: (1) enlargement of the private sector, (2) free markets of land, commodities, housing, and labour, and (3) a monetised economy.

This development benefited from the improvement of the climate and various state policies, which contributed to the expansion of the institutional economy, continuation of entrepreneurial activities, and development of the countryside. Firstly, the royal household made efforts to recover the institutional economy. There were frequent building activities in the cult centres to restore and expand their properties. Along with the relocation of prebendary families to restore the cults, land allotment schemes were carried out to increase the size of the temple economy. This expanded institutional economy enlarged a gap between the supply of a dependent workforce and the demand for labour for cultivating these lands, creating and sustaining a need for rent farmers. Other types of entrepreneurial activities, such as tithe farming and tax farming, were also increased during the Neo-Babylonian period. The state also invested heavily in the irrigation networks in the countryside, restoring and expanding the arable land. Part of this land was claimed by the royal household and granted to temples and officials, while the rest was subject to the land-for-service system, whereby deportees from the periphery were relocated to work.

Social Developments

Neo-Babylonian society experienced several developments based on the new political and economic conditions. The demographic landscape changed due to multiple deportations into Babylonia carried out by Nebuchadnezzar II. The deportees were settled in the countryside of Nippur in towns typically named after their former residences, such as Ḫindanu, Gabalīn, Ālu-ša-^{lu}Qu-ra-ba/ma-tu-ú-a, Ālu-ša-Nērebāyi, Ḫamat(ta) (Hamath), Ḫaz(z)atu (Gaza), Āl-Yaḫūdu (the city of Judah). Combined with foreign merchants, craftsmen, and royal officials of foreign origin,

West Semitic names feature in archival documents from various Babylonian cities.

There were also developments in the social life of the elite class, one of which was the emergence and prevalence of family names. The practice of using a family name can be traced back to the Kassite period, but became much more popular during the eighth and seventh centuries BC. This phenomenon was rooted in the downward social mobility caused by political instability and conflicts with tribal populations. Babylonian urban elites sought to remain or recover their elite status by adopting a family name which signalled the (previous) prestige and influence of the family. That is why most of the family names were the names of influential ancestors or their institutional positions. This practice was the manifestation of an elite identity formed in an extremely insecure environment.

On the other hand, new elites rose and began to infiltrate the old elite circle, a process which began prior to the establishment of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. One new kind of elite emerged from the tribal populations. The tribes bore significant political weight and tribal leaders often assumed the Babylonian throne, becoming the main military opposition to the Assyrians during the Assyrian dominance. Upon the formation of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, tribal areas were integrated into the state with tribal leaders as the governors of each tribe. Two particular tribal leaders, with the official titles *simmagir* and *šakin tâmti* (or *šakin mâti*), wielded authority well beyond their own jurisdiction, on a national level. Neriglissar was attested as the *simmagir* during the early years of the dynasty, while Ea-dayyân was the *šakin tâmti*. Another new kind of elite comprised the entrepreneurs who accumulated significant wealth through their rent farming and tax and tithing on royal, institutional, and high officials' land. These entrepreneurs were usually backed by the royal household, and some were even able to acquire positions in the government and temples. They also tried to gain more social prestige by forming marriages with members of priestly families.

Legitimisation of Kingship

Upon the formation of the state, its first priority was to establish the legitimacy of the king. Fortunately, there were abundant royal rhetorics, already formed in the long history of ancient Mesopotamia, for the Neo-Babylonian kings to choose and exploit. For instance, Nabopolassar employed the image of the king as the avenger of Babylonia. This trope was often used by Babylonian kings under the domination of the Assyrians, which was the same context for the rise of Nabopolassar. Therefore, Nabopolassar's inscriptions attributed the king's legitimacy to his heroic deed of expelling the Assyrians.

Throughout the inscriptions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, the main royal image is that of the pious king, a devoted worshipper of the gods. This trope was foundational to the ideology of kingship in the tradition of ancient Mesopotamia. Most of the inscriptions of these two kings are building accounts, which describe the building of not only temples and shrines but also urban and rural infrastructure as endeavours to provide for the gods. This theme founded the depiction of the king as contemplative and humble before the gods, which was particularly emphasised in the Neo-Babylonian period. The advice to blindly follow the gods at the cost of the royal ego was given by Nabopolassar in the *Imgur-Enlil* cylinder inscription. The Neo-Babylonian kings also avoided using Assyrian-style epithets, which may have been thought of as expressions of the royal ego. Despite the frequent campaigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, their royal inscriptions contain surprisingly few military reports, as these represent expressions of the physical strength and power of the king. Even on the occasion that military achievements are mentioned, the details of campaigns are either omitted or briefly summarised. This humble attitude also underpinned the imperialism promoted in the ideology of these first two kings. The king described giving protection, delivering justice, and providing resources for the gods as the sole purposes of conquest, without stressing the war-like qualities of the king, as the Assyrians had done.

Another important aspect of the early Neo-Babylonian royal ideology was antiquarianism. By referring to the most famous kings and intertextualising their inscriptions, the royal inscriptions often invoke the past of Babylonia, which was thought to feature political stability, social order, cultural prosperity, and international hegemony. Antiquarianism was particularly important to the legitimisation of the king and the formation of the state. On the one hand, it helped to construct a national identity shared by the population of Babylonia (“Sumer and Akkad”). On the other hand, it appealed to the elites whose prosperity relied on hierarchy and order. Long-term instability and frequent warfare caused significant damage to the elite class. Emulating the past served to restore the traditional social structure, where institutional elites enjoyed political, social, and economic privileges.

The historical narrative offered in this monograph spans the transition from the Neo-Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian period. It details the processes of the Nabopolassar Revolt and the fall of Assyria, as well as imperial and domestic developments during the formative stage of the Babylonian Empire. The rise of the Babylonian Empire not only changed Babylonian society, but also transformed the international landscape of the ancient Near East.

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