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Seven chronicles have so far been discovered of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series. The Series began with the reign of Nabu-nasir (747-734 B.C.) and continued at least until the Persian conquest of Babylon (539 B.C.). Since the chronicles are so closely connected, they are usually treated here as one text.¹² The text is divided by horizontal lines into sections of unequal length and each section usually deals with the events of a single year of a Babylonian king's reign. Due to the fact that most of the preserved chronicles have major lacunae and that some chronicles have been completely lost, there are many gaps in the narrative. The account of the end of the reign of Sargon II and the beginning of Sennacherib's reign is largely missing.¹³ The narration breaks off after the accession year of Shamash-shuma-ukin (669 B.C.)¹⁴ and does not resume until the accession of Nabopolassar (626 B.C.).¹⁵ Nothing is preserved of six regnal years of Nabopolassar (years four to nine inclusively).¹⁶ The narrative is again interrupted at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's tenth year (595 B.C.)¹⁷ and does not resume

until the third year of Neriglissar (557 B.C.).¹⁸ The account of Neriglissar's fourth year as well as the three month reign of Labashi-Marduk is missing.

The Weltanschauung of the authors of this series is parochial in that they are interested only in matters related to Babylonia and, in particular, her king. But this narrow outlook does not affect the manner in which the events are narrated. Within the boundaries of their interest, the writers are quite objective and impartial. This is evident from the numerous times they mention defeats of the Babylonians at the hands of their enemies. The raid on Babylonian cities carried out by Tiglath-pileser III in Nabu-nasir's third year is only one example of many defeats at the hands of the Assyrians which are mentioned.¹⁹ The objectivity of the writers provides a useful rule to follow in instances where other sources contradict the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series. Two notorious examples of this are the battle of Der in 720 B.C. and the battle of Halule in 691 B.C. In each of these cases, as the present author has argued elsewhere, the chronicle's account is to be regarded as the most reliable of all the accounts available.^{20†}

Further, the authors have included all Babylonian kings known to have ruled in this

¹¹ The main points in this section were presented in a paper to the one hundred and seventy-fifth meeting of the American Oriental Society in Chicago on April 15, 1965.

¹² The fact that Chronicles 1 and 7 are slightly different from the other chronicles must be kept in mind (see n. 7 above). But this does not vitiate a treatment of these texts as one group.

¹³ Chronicle 1 ii 6'-18.

¹⁴ This is found in the last section of Chronicle 1 (iv 34-38).

¹⁵ This is where Chronicle 2 begins.

¹⁶ Chronicle 2 breaks off during the account of the third year and Chronicle 3 begins its narration with the tenth year.

¹⁷ This is where Chronicle 5 stops.

¹⁸ This is where Chronicle 6 begins.

¹⁹ Chronicle 1 i 3-5. Other defeats at the hands of the Assyrians are: Chronicle 1 i 19-23; ii 25-30, 45-iii 6; iii 22-24; Chronicle 2:7, 23 f.; Chronicle 3:17 f., 37, 66-68. One defeat at the hands of the Egyptians is mentioned (Chronicle 4:16-18). The conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus II is found in Chronicle 7 iii 12-20.

²⁰ For a full discussion see Grayson, *Studies Landsberger*, pp. 340-342.

period and there is no evidence that they have omitted any important events which have a bearing on Babylonia during their reigns. Every significant event known in this period from sources other than the chronicles (eponym canons, royal inscriptions, letters, business documents, foreign documents) which affects Babylonia is referred to in the chronicle.²¹ Thus one may conclude that the parochial outlook of the authors of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series, although it limits the scope of their narrative, does not in any way distort it.

The conclusion that these are impartial historical documents leads to the question of why they were written. They were certainly intended to be more than chronological aids since a king list would be sufficient for this purpose. As was just stated there is no apparent prejudice or attempt to propagandize in these documents. The writers are obviously not trying to convince their readers of some particular idea as the author of the *Synchronistic History* was. Thus one is tempted to conclude that the documents were compiled from a genuine interest in writing history. It appears that the scribes simply wished to record what had happened in and around their land. We have, therefore, what seems to be history being written for history's sake as early as the eighth century B.C. Of course this history-writing is parochial. But it is not chauvinistic. That is to say, the interest of the scribes is confined to the events that concern Babylonia and her king (thus parochial) but these events are recorded dispassionately (whether shameful or honourable) without any distortion due to national pride.

It now remains to discuss the manner in which this series was compiled. It may be stated immediately that there is no evidence for any connection between this series and royal inscriptions. This is not surprising since Babylonian royal inscriptions are concerned primarily with religious, not secular, events

—the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series is, in a sense, the political annals of the Neo-Babylonian monarchs—and it would be unheard of for a Babylonian scribe to copy information from an Assyrian royal inscription. There is one instance in which Chronicle 1 and the Eponym Canon C^b 6 are strikingly similar. This is the account of the destruction of the cities Larak and Sarrabanu in 704 B.C. by Sennacherib. Although Sennacherib lists many conquered cities, thirty-nine including these two, in his account of the campaign, both the Eponym Canon and Chronicle 1 have chosen to mention only two, the same two!²² This may indicate borrowing on the part of one of these documents or, and this is more likely as will be shown, it may indicate that the two texts had a common source.²³ Although there is another instance in which the text of an Eponym Canon and the text of Chronicle 1 have some similarity, the discrepancies between the two accounts are sufficient to dispel any suspicion of a direct connection.²⁴

There is little evidence of a connection between the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series and the Ptolemaic Canon as far as content is concerned. The only evident similarities are that both documents begin their list of Babylonian kings with Nabu-nasir and both documents use the same short form of Nabu-nadin-zeri's name.²⁵ The fact that the Ptolemaic Canon omits Nabu-shuma-ukin II;²⁶ uses the Babylonian name of Shalmaneser V

²² See Chron. 1 ii 22, C^b 6 in RLA 2, p. 435, and OIP 2, p. 53: 42-47.

²³ It cannot be argued that of the 39 Amukkanite cities mentioned only Larak and Sarrabanu are important. Certainly S/Shapia, which is listed by Sennacherib, is important. In an earlier period it was the centre of the Nabu-mukin-zeri rebellion. Parakmar(r)i, another city mentioned, appears in two letters, CT 44, 67: 4 and Iraq 27 (1965), p. 23 LXXVI: 6, 11. It is possible, however, that Sennacherib in fact only conquered Larak and Sarabanu and the remaining 37 names in his inscription might be sheer embellishment.

²⁴ See the commentary to Chronicle 1 ii 5'.

²⁵ See Appendix B sub Nabu-nadin-zeri.

²⁶ See Appendix B sub Nabu-shuma-ukin II.

²¹ In fact practically every regnal year of each king is mentioned.

while the series uses his Assyrian name;²⁷ does not recognize the rule in Babylonia of Sargon as the series does;²⁸ and reckons the number of years of the interregnum before Esarhaddon and the number of Esarhaddon's regnal years differently from the series²⁹ shows that the source or sources used by Ptolemy certainly had a different point of view from the author of the series.

With regard to other chronicles there is evidence of a close connection between the Esarhaddon Chronicle and Chronicle 1. The relevant portions of the two texts generally agree word for word. However, in some cases Chronicle 1 has additional information which the Esarhaddon Chronicle does not have³⁰ and in two cases the Esarhaddon Chronicle contains no mention of defeats suffered by Esarhaddon (sacking of Sippar in his sixth year³¹ and defeat in Egypt in his seventh year).³² Thus, although there is a definite affinity between the two documents, the Esarhaddon Chronicle is a little more concise and has a definite bias in favour of Esarhaddon. One concludes from this that the author of the Esarhaddon Chronicle used Chronicle 1 as source material or else the authors of both texts had a common source. The second of these two alternatives is the more probable.³³

That the two texts are based on a common source is indicated by the fact that there is some connection between them and the Akitu Chronicle. In the sections of each of these chronicles which appear at the end of Esarhaddon's reign and the beginning of the reign of Shamash-shuma-ukin there is a very close connection. In some cases all three texts have lines which are exactly parallel to one another. In other cases the Esarhaddon Chronicle and Akitu Chronicle have lines not

found in Chronicle 1 (this is virtually the only passage in which the Esarhaddon Chronicle has more information than Chronicle 1).³⁴ Thus none of these three texts could have been the sole source from which the other two derived their information and yet there is a close connection between them.³⁵ One is inclined to conclude, therefore, that there was a common source used by the writers of these three documents.

It seems probable that in fact all of the late chronicles of category A had a common source and that this source was a running account of all important events affecting Babylonia.³⁶ Further, it is probable that this running account is identical with a genre known as astronomical diaries,³⁷ a term which

³⁴ The following chart indicates the points of contact and discrepancy:

CHRONICLE 1	ESARHADDON CHRONICLE	AKITU CHRONICLE
omits	31 f.	= 1-4
omits	33 f.	omits
iv 34-36	= 35 f.	= 5-7
omits	37	8
iv 37 f.	= 38 f.	omits

³⁵ Note that the Akitu Chronicle and Shamash-shuma-ukin Chronicle also have one line in common (Akitu Chronicle 12 = Shamash-shuma-ukin Chronicle 6). It is also possible that the Shamash-shuma-ukin Chronicle has one line in common with the portion of Chronicle 23 that belongs to category A (see the commentary to Chronicle 23 r. 6 f.).

³⁶ A similar proposal was made by Landsberger and Bauer, ZA 37 (1927), pp. 61-65, who thought all chronicles belonged to one series, the evidence being the tendency of the Babylonians to canonize all their learned literature. Wiseman, Chron. pp. 3 f., went farther by suggesting that the preserved chronicles are in fact extracts from one original running account. His evidence was the difference in character between Chronicle 1 and Chronicles 2-6. The former is more comprehensive in period of time but less detailed while the latter are quite the opposite.

³⁷ Cf. Wiseman, Chron. p. 4.

²⁷ See Appendix B sub Shalmaneser V.

²⁸ See Appendix B sub Sargon II.

²⁹ See Appendix B sub Sennacherib.

³⁰ See the commentary to Chronicle 1 iv 21, 23-28, 30-33, 38.

³¹ Chronicle 1 iv 9 f.

³² Chronicle 1 iv 16.

³³ Smith, BHT p. 2, came to the same conclusion.

must be explained before elaborating upon this suggestion. Astronomical diaries are records of various phenomena, each text recording the events of half a specified year. The diaries are divided into sections, each section covering the almost day-to-day events of one month. Most of the phenomena recorded are of an astronomical or meteorological nature but at the end of each section there are statements about market prices, the height of the river, and matters of historical interest. There are several reasons for regarding the diaries and the chronicles as being closely connected.

One reason has to do with the "Nabu-nasir Era". There is a tradition that from the time of Nabu-nasir (747-734 B.C.) official records, particularly of astronomical observations, were available in abundance. This tradition is best attested by Ptolemy who not only began his list of Babylonian kings with Nabu-nasir and used the Nabu-nasir Era in his writings for dating, but also said at one point that astronomical observations were preserved from Nabu-nasir's time onwards.³⁸ The tradition is also alluded to in a curious statement attributed to Berossus by Alexander Polyhistor and quoted from the latter by Syncellos: "Nabu-nasir collected and destroyed the (records of the) deeds of the kings so that the reckoning of Chaldaean kings might start with himself."³⁹ On the basis of this evidence Winckler claimed that the reign of Nabu-nasir marked the introduction of a new calendar.⁴⁰ Kugler later pointed out that such an assertion was unjustified since no mention is made by either Ptolemy or Berossus of a new calendar. Kugler instead argued that one could only conclude from

the evidence that the reign of Nabu-nasir marked the beginning of an era in which detailed records were kept of astronomical phenomena. He attributed the cause of this sudden interest in keeping records to the singular astronomical phenomena which occurred in the first year of Nabu-nasir's reign.⁴¹ Actually the evidence supports the conclusion that detailed records of various things and not just astronomical phenomena were kept from the reign of Nabu-nasir.†

The evidence that astronomical records were sedulously compiled from the reign of Nabu-nasir onwards implies that astronomical diaries (being astronomical records) were diligently written starting with this period. It is now important to note that the Babylonian Chronicle Series begins its narration in the reign of Nabu-nasir. It appears that scribes began compiling astronomical diaries (among other astronomical records) and the Babylonian Chronicle Series about the same time. Or, to be more precise, the astronomical diaries and the source of the Babylonian Chronicle Series began to be compiled in great detail beginning with the reign of Nabu-nasir. This in itself would suggest that the source of the series was astronomical diaries.⁴² Also to be considered is the fact that typologically the two genres are similar (see Appendix A) and in phraseology there are several points of contact.⁴³ Thus there is

⁴¹ F. X. Kugler, SSB 2, pp. 362-371. The Saros Tablet discussed by Kugler is treated in Appendix A.

⁴² The fact that the later portions of Chronicle 23 belong typologically to category A (see Appendix A) suggests that the source of the Babylonian Chronicle Series is at least as old as the earliest period dealt with in this portion of the text. The pattern of category A is first used in Chronicle 23 in the entry that deals with the reign of Merodach-baladan I (1173-1161 B.C.). There is no reason to reject the idea that documents similar to astronomical diaries were compiled as early as the twelfth century B.C.

⁴³ Phrases which the historical narratives of astronomical diaries and the chronicle series of category A have in common are:

a) *ina pāni . . . nabalkutu*. Examples are cited in the note to Chronicle 1 i 35.

³⁸ K. Manitius, *Des Claudius Ptolemäus Handbuch der Astronomie* (Leipzig, 1912) I, p. 183: 6-8. Also cf. O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Princeton, 1952), p. 93.

³⁹ F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 3. Teil, C. (Leiden, 1958), pp. 395f. The passage is also quoted and translated (into German) by F. X. Kugler, SSB 2, p. 363.

⁴⁰ H. Winckler, *Geschichte Babylo niens und Assyriens* (Leipzig, 1892), pp. 121f.

good reason to believe that the source of the Babylonian Chronicle Series (Chronicles 1–13 a) as well as the other chronicles in category A (Chronicles 14–17) and the later portion of Chronicle 23 is astronomical diaries.†

On the question of who wrote these documents there is unfortunately no clear indication but on the question of the material upon which they wrote there is some interesting evidence. This is contained in the colophon of Chronicle 15, the beginning of which reads: "Nonintegrated lines from a writing-board of Urshidazimēni."⁴⁴ This statement shows that at least some chronicle material was inscribed on writing-boards.⁴⁵ The existence of writing-boards was suspected for some time and was finally confirmed by the fortunate discovery of some of these at the bottom of a well at Nimrud. The writing-board consisted of several short boards attached by hinges. On the inner surface of each board was spread a thin layer of beeswax for the inscription. In his publication of these, Wiseman⁴⁶ drew attention to the evidence for various types of texts being written on writing-boards (omens, reports, rituals, administrative documents, etc.). To the types of texts known to have been written on writing-boards may be added chronicles on the basis of the statement quoted above. Since the earliest king mentioned in Chronicle 15

is Shirikti-Shuqamuna (984 B.C.) it also indicates that writing-boards were used as early as the beginning of the first millennium B.C. for the composition of a chronicle of the type within category A.

In conclusion it may be stated that Chronicles 1–7 represent only a small part of a series of late Babylonian chronicles which, like all chronicles of category A, were probably résumés or extracts made from running accounts which were sometimes kept on writing-boards and these running accounts were probably identical with astronomical diaries.⁴⁷ The narrative exhibits a narrow outlook restricted to matters of concern to Babylonia, but within these confines the authors are objective. Their main concern is to record what actually happened. Thus one may use these documents as source material for the history of the period with considerable confidence in their reliability.⁴⁸

b) *ṣalta . . . epēšu*. Examples are cited in the note to Chronicle 1 i 7f.

c) *NAM^{mes}*. See the note to Chronicle 1 i 11.

d) *ITI BI*. See n. 143 below.

Further note the occurrence of the phrase *alteme unma* in Chronicle 13 r. 5 which is a common idiom in astronomical diaries but most peculiar in a chronicle. Also interesting in this regard is the list of commodities and the phraseology in Chronicle 23 (also note Chronicle 10 r. 31 and 35) which is virtually identical with passages in astronomical diaries. See the relevant commentaries for details.

⁴⁴ Chronicle 15: 23.

⁴⁵ In this connection note the interesting statement in copy A of Chronicle 1 i 8 that an event "is not written" and the fact that the section is omitted in copy B. This in itself suggests that these texts are extracts from another source.

⁴⁶ Iraq 17 (1955), pp. 3–13.

⁴⁷ That the chronicles were résumés or extracts from another source provides an explanation for the slightly different format of Chronicles 1 and 7.

⁴⁸ There are, of course, minor scribal errors: Chronicle 1 i 23, 25, 28; iii 7, 13, 31; iv 10, 12, 19–22, 25 f.; Chronicle 2: 21; Chronicle 7 ii 3, 9, 10, 12. See the commentary to these passages.

⁴⁹ Wiseman, Chron. p. 3.

⁵⁰ i 1*.