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# Neo-Babylonian Period Texts from Babylonia and Syro-Palestine

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## I. Texts from the Neo-Babylonian Period: 626–539 BCE

The Neo-Babylonian kings brought the locus of cuneiform culture back to its homeland. Indicative of the event is the conspicuous effort they made to relive the golden days of Babylonian independence. The kings frequently boast of resurrecting the religious and political agendas of their forebears, and in many cases their inscriptions are written in an archaizing script and language. To be sure, this doctrine was greatly facilitated by the artifacts they discovered during their many building projects (see Winter 2000).

Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions provide relatively little information concerning historical events. Most commemorate monumental building projects, above all the renovation of temples. Like all Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, they are written in a language that is heavily theological and propagandistic, so they do offer considerable insight into the social and religious ideology of the crown. In structure they are fairly simple. They open with the royal titulary then proceed to describe the setting for the event commemorated. After narrating the event, the inscriptions generally conclude with a prayer to the appropriate deity; the consistency of this last feature distinguishes them from other royal inscriptions from Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, given their limited values for historical reconstruction, one must supplement these inscriptions with other contemporary sources, above all administrative texts (mostly from temples) and the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series, which details the major military campaigns of the kings year by year.

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### A. Nabopolassar 626–605 BCE (Studevent-Hickman)

143. The restoration of the Babylonian inner wall named Imgur-Enlil ("Enlil has consented")

Nabopolassar acceded to the throne of Babylon amidst the chaos that followed the death of Kandalanu, the Assyrian puppet-king in Babylon. Almost nothing is known about his background, but within 10 years he successfully united Babylonia and expelled the Assyrians. With the help of the Medes, his forces dealt the final blow to the Assyrian empire in 609 BCE.

One of the most interesting monumental inscriptions from Nabopolassar's reign describes his restoration of the inner city wall of Babylon, the wall Imgur-Enlil ("Enlil has consented"). The restoration likely took place between 622 and 612 BCE (al-Rawi 1985: 2); the commemoration begins with the king's requisite epithets:

*Nabopolassar, the king of justice;  
the shepherd called (to rulership) by Marduk;  
the one fashioned by Ninmenna, the exalted princess, the queen of queens;  
the one (to whom) Nabu and Tashmetu stretched their hands;  
the prince, the beloved of Ninshiku.*

Nearly all royal inscriptions invoke the divine realm for the royal titulary, but it is not always clear why specific deities are selected and presented the way they are. Their personal relationship to the king, tradition, the context of the inscription, and other factors were certainly at play. In the above case, the presence of Marduk; Nabu, his son; and Tashmetu, Nabu's wife; is understandable: alongside Zarpanitu, Marduk's wife, these are the chief deities of the Babylonian state. But the mention of Ninmenna and Ninshiku (a manifestation of the god Ea) is more puzzling. Both of these deities are from cities in Babylonia's deep south, which may suggest that Nabopolassar was from that region (Beaulieu 2003: 307 nn. 3, 5). It cannot be excluded, however, that their presence reflects other agendas.

The inscription turns to an autobiographical sketch of the king and the setting for the building of the wall. Although the section says little about Nabopolassar's background – he claims to be a native Babylonian from the humblest origins – it does refer to his ousting of the Assyrians and the context for the rebellion.



*When, in my childhood – I was the son of a no one – I would seek out the shrines of Nabu and Marduk, my lords; (when) my mind was focused on establishing their rites and completing their cultic procedures; when my attention (lit. “my ears”) was on truth and justice; Shazu, the lord who knows the hearts of the gods of heaven and the netherworld,<sup>1</sup> who constantly examines the behavior of humankind, examined my heart and appointed me, the meek one who was undiscovered among the people, to (a position of) prominence in the country in which I was born. He did indeed call me to the lordship of the land and the people and caused the benevolent Lamassu<sup>2</sup> to walk beside me. He fulfilled whatever I undertook. He made Nergal, the mightiest of the gods, walk beside me. He killed my adversaries, felled my enemies.<sup>3</sup> As for the Assyrian who ruled the land of Akkad because of the anger of the gods and harassed the people of the land with his heavy yoke, I, the feeble one, the wretched one, the one who seeks out the lord of lords, with the mighty strength of Nabu and Marduk, my lords, eliminated their footsteps from the land of Akkad and caused (the people) to cast off their yoke.*

The switch from singular to plural in reference to the Assyrian(s) is interesting. It is possible that the former refers to a specific king: likely Sennacherib, whose complete destruction of Babylon was seen almost universally as an affront to the cosmic order (*History* 237–8). Also worth noting is the issue of divine abandonment. The text clearly states that the Assyrian ruled the people “because of the anger of the gods.” It was a common belief in ancient Mesopotamia that foreign occupation or destruction of a city was a function of divine punishment, the patron deity having abandoned the city because of some transgression by the population or the king. In any event, it is well established that Nabopolassar ousted the Assyrians, and it is in the context of this expulsion that he receives his commission for the city wall.

*At that time, I, Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, the one who pleases Nabu and Marduk – because Imgur-Enlil, the great wall of Babylon . . . had grown decrepit and fallen down, (because) its wall had eroded from rain and heavy downpours, (and because) its base had piled up and become a mound of ruins – mustered the troops of Enlil, Shamash, and Marduk (and) made them bear the hoe, imposing corvée duty (upon them).<sup>4</sup>*

Babylon had clearly fallen into a state of disrepair under the Assyrians, and the “time of troubles” that followed the death of Kandalanu surely contributed to its decay. The amount of labor needed for the project is in fact suggested. The inscription states that Nabopolassar mustered “the troops of Enlil, Shamash, and Marduk,” clearly a reference to the populations of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon itself, the respective cities of these deities.

After defining the borders of the area to be excavated, the inscription connects the project to its past, even to its cosmic foundations.

*I removed the dirt that had accumulated and checked and inspected its (i.e., Imgur-Enlil’s) old base. I verily laid its brickwork in the original location. Indeed, I established its foundation on the edge of the netherworld.*

Cosmic descriptions of temple architecture are well attested in ancient Mesopotamia (see, e.g., Edzard 1987). For the Neo-Babylonian kings this imagery is often connected specifically to the region’s history. An example of this is found in the section dealing with the burial of the foundation deposit.<sup>5</sup>

*I, Nabopolassar, the obedient, the submissive, (the one) who reveres Nabu and Marduk, the shepherd who pleases Šarpanitum (Marduk’s wife), who inspects the old foundations of Babylon, who discovers the original brickwork,<sup>6</sup> who reveals the original eternal ground, who takes the hoe of the Igigi, who bears the corvée basket of the Anunaki, who built Imgur-Enlil for Marduk, my lord – so no future king should revoke my precious words, so no future matter should be brought up against my pronouncement, (I swore) by the life of Marduk, my lord, and Shamash, my god: “(Woe to me) if my words are not true but false.” On that day I found a royal statue of (a king) who had gone before me, who had restored this wall, (so) I indeed placed it with my statue in a secure place in the great foundation platform for all eternity.*

As noted by Beaulieu (2003: 308 n. 17), the oath formula is very similar to those used by the Sargonic kings (see Chapter 2, the Old Akkadian period texts, in this volume). It is therefore possible that the statue found by Nabopolassar contained the very oath that he is now taking. Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of the king whose statue he found.

The conclusion of this inscription is unique. Instead of a prayer it contains instructions to a future ruler, drawn from the Akkadian wisdom literature, particularly legends concerning the Sargonic king Naram-Sin.

*To the king of the land – be he a son or a grandson – who follows me and whom Marduk calls for rulership of the land: You should not concern yourself with might and power. (Instead) seek out the shrines of Nabu and Marduk in your heart that they may slay your enemies. Marduk, the lord, keeps check of utterances and inspects the heart. The foundations of the one who is loyal to Bel (i.e., Marduk) will be firmly established. The one who is loyal to the son of Bel (i.e., Nabu) will last forever. When this wall grows old and you remove its decay, just as I found an inscription of a king who preceded me and did not alter its location, (so should you) find the inscription (bearing) my name and set it in the (same) place as your inscription. By the command of Marduk, the great lord, whose pronouncement cannot be changed, may the utterance of your name be established forever.*

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#### B. *Nebuchadnezzar II: 604–562 BCE (Studevent-Hickman)*

Nebuchadnezzar II – hereafter Nebuchadnezzar – is by far the most famous Neo-Babylonian king. According to classical sources he is the architect of the “Hanging Gardens of Babylon” (one of the ancient wonders of the world), for which there is very little contemporary evidence. He is best-known for his destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and deportations of the Judean population (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 24–25). Together these represent one of the defining events of the biblical tradition; indeed, the Babylonian Exile fundamentally transformed the role of law and textual interpretation in ancient Jewish life.

The basic historicity of the biblical account is corroborated by native Babylonian sources. The similarities between 2 Kgs 24: 10–17 and the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series are quite remarkable. The latter places the siege of Jerusalem and the largest wave of deportations in Nebuchadnezzar’s seventh regnal year. (See Arnold Chronicle 5 below.)

Judah had been a problem for the Babylonian kings for years, so the siege of Jerusalem was important enough to be the only event recorded for this year. The identifications of the deposed king and his replacement are not provided by the chronicler; however, from the biblical account the two may be identified as Jehoiachin and Mattaniah respectively, the latter renamed Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24: 17). These identifications are secured by several Neo-Babylonian administrative texts.

#### 144. Administrative texts from Babylon concerning King Jehoiachin of Judah

Among the thousands of administrative tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period are four texts discovered in the vaults of king Nebuchadnezzar’s palace in Babylon (Weidner 1939: 924). These texts record disbursements of oil to captives from various nations. Among them are Jehoiachin, the exiled king of Judah; several members of his family (cf. 1 Chr 3: 17–18); and other functionaries from Jerusalem.

32 pints (15 liters) (of sesame oil) for Jehoiachin king of Judah

5 pints (2.5 liters) (of sesame oil) for [the 5] sons of the king of Judah

8 pints (4 liters) (of sesame oil) for 8 men of Judah: 1 pint (1/2 liter) each

Although not historical texts proper, these records are clearly indispensable for reconstructions of both Mesopotamian and biblical history. Without

these texts we would have no extra-biblical evidence of Jehoiachin’s life in exile – indeed, of his being in exile at all. Along with the others, Jehoiachin was clearly cared for by Nebuchadnezzar’s administration. He receives 30 times as much oil as his sons and the “men of Judah”; this discrepancy has generated considerable discussion. Since, according to the Bible, Jehoiachin was 24 years old at the time,<sup>7</sup> some have suggested that his sons would have been very young and thus received considerably less. Others have argued that Jehoiachin received favorable status in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. It is impossible to resolve these issues with the evidence now available.

All other details concerning Jehoiachin’s activities in exile are found exclusively in the Bible (see Berridge 1992: 663 for a list of attestations and discussion).

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#### 145. The court and state document of Nebuchadnezzar II

One of the most remarkable texts from the Neo-Babylonian period is an eight-sided prism found in the central palace of Nebuchadnezzar. The only known example of a Neo-Babylonian prism, it summarizes the major renovations conducted during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and the establishment of cultic procedures for various deities. It dates to his seventh regnal year, the same year in which he took Jerusalem. The text has been restored extensively by Unger; his suggestions are followed for this translation.

*As for the Ezida, I adorned its form.*

*As for Nabu and Nanaya,*

*in joy and celebration,*

*I made them dwell within it.*

*Daily, one fattened sacrificial bull, a blemishless bull,*

*(and) 16 choice sacrificial lambs,*

*for (the statues) of the gods of Borsippa;*

*an allocation of fish, fowl . . .*

*the finest from the marshland;*

*honey, butter, milk without fat,*

*beer, and pure wine;*

*at the offering table of Nabu and Nanaya,*

*my lords, I provided more lavishly than before.*



*The proper offerings for Nergal  
and the goddess Laš, the gods of Emeslam, I established.  
The regular provisions of the great gods I made abundant,  
increasing their proper offerings from the earlier offerings.*

A list of the temples that Nebuchadnezzar renovated follows. The entirety of these measures are summarized in a section that introduces Marduk, whose role in the establishment of the empire is made very clear. Extensive offerings to Marduk in his temple Esagila<sup>8</sup> are then listed, as is a brief note concerning the renovation of a fortifying wall around the palace. The section concludes with a prayer to Marduk.

*I then raised my hand; to the lord of lords,  
to Marduk, the merciful, my supplications went forth:  
"O lord of the lands, Marduk, hear the utterance of my mouth!  
Let me be fully content in my palace, which I built!  
Let me reach old age within Babylon!  
Let me enjoy a ripe old age!"*

The most interesting aspect of this text, at least with respect to the Judean exile, is its conclusion. Immediately following the prayer to Marduk is a basic wish for the lands to undertake corvée labor for the building of Nebuchadnezzar's palace. The text provides a remarkable list of the officials "whom Nebuchadnezzar had commissioned" for his works, namely the high court officials, the "great ones of the land of Akkad (i.e., Babylonia)," and priests and governors from various cities. The first high court official listed is Nabu-zer-iddinam, the chancellor. He is the very Nebuzaradan who purportedly burned the entire city of Jerusalem and deported the remainder of the population when Zedekiah rebelled (see 2 Kgs 25: 8).

Direct matches with the biblical narrative, such as those offered here, are extremely rare. They provide an exciting insight into the ways each may be used for the reconstruction of history.

### C. Nabonidus: 556–539 BCE

The last king of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty – indeed, the last ruler of an independent Mesopotamian state – was Nabonidus. Very little is known about his background, but his blatant exaltation of the moon-god Sin, the patron deity of Ur, which included the installation of his daughter Ennigaldi-Nanna; his relationship to his mother; and his sojourn in the Arabian peninsula all make him an extremely colorful character in Mesopotamian history. He was clearly not related to Nabopolassar's dynasty but may have served as an official under these kings. He usurped the throne from Labaši-Marduk, the son of Neriglissar, in 556 BCE.

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#### 146. The autobiography of Adad-guppi (Melville)

Adad-guppi was the mother of Nabonidus, the sixth and last king of the relatively short-lived Neo-Babylonian dynasty, which had been founded by Nabopolassar upon the expulsion of the Assyrians from Babylonia in 626 BC. The first two kings of the dynasty, Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, established the Babylonian Empire, but were followed by a quick succession of three weak rulers, the last of whom, Labaši-Marduk, was deposed and presumably murdered in 556 BC after ruling a scant month. At this time, Nabonidus, who was not of royal descent, managed to seize the throne and garner enough support to keep it. As a usurper, Nabonidus needed both to establish himself as a *bona fide* Babylonian king in the eyes of his subjects, and also to justify his actions in theological terms. He could explain away his non-royal origins and usurpation by insisting that the gods chose him – a pious and just man – to reestablish a true Babylonian kingship because the ruling dynasty had become weak and irreverent. Many of Nabonidus' royal inscriptions are, therefore, "apologies," designed to represent him and his actions in the best possible light (Kurht 1994: 598). Although the Adad-guppi inscription is written in the first-person as an autobiographical account of her long, one hundred and four year life, there is little doubt that it was, in fact, composed *after* the remarkable lady's death. Therefore, it is in the context of Nabonidus' self-promotion (Longman 1991: 101; Beaulieu 1989: 209) that we must first consider the autobiography of Adad-guppi. The text is not only a thinly veiled political justification, however, but also functions as a didactic literary work, promulgating pious behavior and devotion to the gods, especially Sin.

Two fragmentary copies of the Adad-guppi text survive: Pognon published a first, badly preserved exemplar in 1907, and Gadd published a second, more complete copy in 1958. The text was originally inscribed on two stelae displayed at the temple of Sin in Harran, presumably to commemorate its rebuilding by Nabonidus, and it contains our most explicit information about Nabonidus' origins and family history. The beginning of the inscription includes an oblique reference to the destruction of Harran, the last Assyrian hold-out, in 610 BC: "In the sixteenth year of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, Sin, king of the gods, became angry with his city and his temple and went up to heaven. The city and the people in it went to ruin." Since it was the Babylonians who sacked Harran and its temples, the author of our text tactfully omits mention of the human perpetrators, instead attributing the



city's downfall to Sin, its patron deity, who abandoned his city in anger. According to this view, the city's sad state was the natural outcome of divine abandonment rather than the result of war. In the aftermath of Harran's ruin, Adad-guppi claims to have made every effort to maintain Sin's cult and to appease his anger. When the Ehulhul (the temple of Sin in Harran) was destroyed, it is likely that the statues of Sin and his coterie of gods (Ningal, Nusku, and Sardannunna) were removed to Babylon, the capital of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty,<sup>9</sup> and that among the spoils of war, Adad-guppi (and possibly her son) were also taken south at this time, though it is not clear in what capacity. It has often been assumed that Adad-guppi was the high priestess of Sin at the Ehulhul in Harran, but there is no evidence to support this, and the text itself only claims that she was a devotee of this god (Longman 1991: 98; Beaulieu 1989: 68–75).

If we follow the chronology included in the text and do a little math, we see that Adad-guppi was born in 649/648 BC and would have been at least 39 years old – therefore, almost certainly already a mother – when Harran was destroyed. She died in 547 BC (the ninth year of her son's reign) and so must have been a whopping 95 when he took the throne. Nabonidus himself would have been in his sixties when he became king – an old man by Mesopotamian reckoning. Adad-guppi's official position at the Babylonian court is never stated, nor is her husband identified, although several of Nabonidus' inscriptions identify him as someone named Nabu-balatsu-iqbi (possibly an Assyrian official in Harran?) (Beaulieu 1989: 68). According to our text, Adad-guppi served three Babylonian kings and was responsible for introducing her son to their service. Both mother and son were apparently favored by these kings, whom they served wholeheartedly. The text makes a point of Adad-guppi's pious attention to the kings' funerary cults, in spite of the negligence shown by their less worthy successors, Amel-Marduk and Labaši-Marduk. The emphasis on piety in Adad-guppi's autobiography serves two purposes: first, it validates Nabonidus' kingship through his mother and her relationship to Sin; second, it disseminates the social message that all people should revere the gods. Good behavior may be rewarded; Adad-guppi attained extreme old age because she earned it through devotion to her gods.

Over the course of his 17-year reign, Nabonidus made major theological changes, perhaps attempting to shift cultic prominence, and thereby political power, from Marduk (historically the head of the Babylonian pantheon) and his temple, to Sin. Scholars have struggled to interpret this huge change, but it seems most probable that Nabonidus was motivated by political expedience as well as religious belief. On the one hand, his mother had a long-standing connection to the god, at least as a lay-devotee, and may truly have passed on her reverence to her son. On the other hand, the Sin-connection provided Nabonidus with a convenient and completely fresh means to explain and promote his rule. Since Nabonidus usurped the throne, it was in his best interest to establish his own power base, and by promoting Sin and his

cult, Nabonidus aimed to do just that. At the same time, it is probable that he actually recognized his good fortune as originating with his mother's personal god, Sin. According to Adad-guppi, she and Nabonidus promised to repay their success by (among other things) rebuilding the Ehulhul in Harran. In spite of the text's claim that Adad-guppi lived to see the reconstruction of the temple accomplished, other evidence indicates that the Ehulhul was not repaired until at least the fifteenth or sixteenth year of Nabonidus' reign, thus a good six or seven years after Adad-guppi's death (Beaulieu 1989). What appears to us as a glaring contradiction is nonetheless fully in keeping with Mesopotamian literary conventions and the royal practice of dating events to suit situational requirements.

In spite of the political, theological and moral lessons to be found in Adad-guppi's autobiography, there is little to evoke the woman herself, yet she could certainly claim to have achieved more than most. Having come from a modest (or at least non-royal) background, she eventually served in some official capacity at the Babylonian court, subsequently became queen mother, and managed to retain all her faculties into extreme old age. Reaching such a venerable age, while not unheard of in ancient Mesopotamia, would have been a rarity nonetheless. The indomitable Adad-guppi remains one of the only women in Mesopotamian history (as far as we know) to have received such public recognition.

*I am Adad-guppi, mother of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, who reveres Sin, Ningal, Nusku and Sardannunna my gods, who from my childhood sought their divinity. In the sixteenth year of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, Sin, king of the gods, became angry with his city and his temple and went up to heaven. The city and the people in it went to ruin. I sought after the shrines of Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sardannunna, worshiped their divinity and took hold of the robe of Sin, king of the gods. Night and day, all day without stopping, I continuously sought their great divinity, so that as long as I lived I was the devotee of Sin, Shamash, Ishtar, and Adad in heaven and earth. The good things that they gave to me I gave back to them day and night (for) months and years. I took hold of the robe of Sin, king of the gods, night and day my eyes were fixed on him. In prayers and veneration I bowed before them praying thus, "May your return to your city happen so that the black headed people may worship your great divinity." In order to calm the heart of my god and my goddess, I would not wear a fine wool dress, gold or silver jewelry, a new garment, nor would I let perfume or sweet oil touch my body, (but) I wore a torn garment and my clothing was sackcloth. I sang their praises; the veneration of my city and my goddess were established in my heart. I kept their watch; I did not leave out anything good that I could bring before them.*

*From the twentieth year of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, in which I was born, until the forty-second year of Ashurbanipal, the third year of Assur-etil-ilani, his son, the twenty-first year of Nabopolassar, the forty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, the second year of Amel-Marduk, the fourth year of Neriglissar, for 95 years I kept seeking after the shrine of the great divinity of Sin, king of the gods of heaven and the netherworld. He looked happily on me (for) my good deeds. He heard my prayers, consented to my*



words, (and) the rage of his heart was appeased. To Ehulhul, the temple of Sin in the midst of Harran, his favorite dwelling, he became reconciled and decided to return. Sin, king of the gods, looked upon me and called Nabonidus, my only son, for the kingship. The kingship of Sumer and Akkad from the border of Egypt on the upper sea to the lower sea, all the lands he entrusted (to him). I lifted up my hand to Sin, king of the gods, reverently in prayer and prayed thus, "You called him to the kingship and you pronounced his name. By order of your great divinity, may the great gods go at his side, may they cause his enemies to fall. May you not forget Ehulhul and the completion of its perfect foundation." When in my dream, his hands were set on (me?), Sin, king of the gods, spoke thus to me, "With you, I will place the return of the gods and the habitation of Harran in the hands of Nabonidus, your son. He will build Ehulhul and he will complete its work. He will make Harran more perfect than it was before and he will restore it. He will grasp the hand of Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sardamuna and cause them to enter Ehulhul." The word of Sin, king of the gods, which he spoke to me, I paid heed to and I myself saw (it done). Nabonidus, my only son, my offspring made perfect the forgotten rites of Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sardannuna. He built anew Ehulhul and completed its fabric. Harran he made more perfect than it was before and he restored it. He took the hands of Sin, Ningal, Nusku, and Sardannuna from Babylon, his royal city and made them dwell in the midst of Harran, in Ehulhul, their favorite abode with joy and delight. What previously Sin, king of the gods, had not done and had not given to anyone, he did for love of me, who revered his divinity and seized the hem of his robe. Sin, king of the gods, raised my head and established for me a good reputation in the country. Long days, years of contentment he multiplied for me. From the time of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the ninth year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, (my) son, my offspring, Sin, king of the gods, made me live one hundred and four good years in the awe which he set in my heart. I myself, the sight of my two eyes is sharp and my comprehension is excellent, my hands and feet are healthy and my words are well chosen, food and drink agree with me, I am in good health, my heart is full. My descendants to the fourth generation, I have witnessed their existence and I am replete with extreme old age. Sin, king of the gods, you looked upon me with favor and you have made my days long, (therefore) let me entrust (to you) Nabonidus, king of Babylon, my son. As long as he lives he shall not sin against you. Appoint to him the good protective spirits that you appointed to me and who caused me to attain old age, and do not tolerate sin and transgression against your great divinity, but may he revere your great divinity.

During the 21 years, the 43 years, and the 4 years in which Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, and Neriglissar, king of Babylon, ruled; during the 68 years I behaved respectfully towards them and I served them. I introduced Nabonidus, (my) son, my offspring to Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, and Neriglissar, king of Babylon. Day and night he served them and did whatever made them happy. He established my good name before them and they promoted me as if I had been their daughter, their (own) offspring.

Later they (Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar) died. No one among their sons and no one among their people or their nobles, whose goods and properties they increased when they promoted them, established incense offerings for them. I, every month without stopping, (wearing) my good clothes, made for them all the funerary offerings: [ . . . ], fattened sheep, bread, high quality beer, [ . . . ], oil, honey, and fruit, and I fixed for them regular, sweet-scented, luxuriant offerings and continuously set them before them.

(The last part of the text, which is very fragmentary, describes Adad-guppi's funeral and ends with an exhortation to future readers. Possible restorations are in brackets.)

*In the ninth year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, she died (lit. went to her own fate) and Nabonidus, king of Babylon, (her) son, her offspring . . . interred her body . . . fine [garments], a . . . mantle, gold, fine stones, [valuable] stones, precious stones, fine oil, her body . . . they put in a hidden place. He slaughtered fattened sheep before it. He assembled [the people] of Babylon, Borsippa with [the people] living in distant areas, [kings, princes], and governors from [the border] of Egypt, the Upper Sea, to the Lower Sea. He [had them] mourn and . . . they made lamentation. They cast [dust?] on their heads for 7 days and 7 nights; they murmured; their clothes were cast off. On the seventh day, the people of the entire land cut their hair. Their clothes . . . their clothes boxes in their places(?) . . . in a meal . . . He accumulated filtered perfumes. He poured fine oil on [their] heads. He caused their hearts to rejoice, he made their minds . . . They went back to their homes.*

*You, whether a king or a prince . . . Sin, king of [the gods], lord of the gods of heaven and earth . . . Day and night (seek) his great divinity. Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar, lords [of heaven and earth] who . . . the ones who dwell in Esagila and [Ehulhul] . . . and pray (to the gods) in heaven and earth . . . the command of Sin and Ishtar, the one who saves . . . keep your descendants safe [forever and ever].*

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147. The installation of En-nigaldi-Nanna, daughter of Nabonidus, as high priestess of Nanna at Ur (Studevent-Hickman)

In conjunction with Nabonidus' exaltation of Sin came a major religious and political move. In the second half of his second regnal year, Nabonidus renovated the Egipar, the residential quarters of the *entu*-priestess of Nanna in Ur, and installed his daughter En-nigaldi-Nanna in the office. The procedure, specifically the latter step, is most often associated with Sargon, the founder of the Akkadian empire, who installed his daughter En-hedu-ana to the same position (*History* 62). However, *entu*-priestesses are attested as late



as the Post-Kassite period, suggesting that at least the office was perpetuated whenever possible.

The installation of En-nigaldi-Nanna took place in the second half of Nabonidus' second regnal year. Of particular interest is the use of provoked and unprovoked omens in the process. The inscription, interestingly enough, skips the royal titulary and goes directly to the setting.

*When Nanna desired an entu-priestess, the son of the prince (i.e., Nanna) revealed his sign (to) the world. Namra-sit<sup>10</sup> made manifest his firm decision; to Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, caretaker of the Esagila and the Ezida, the reverent shepherd, who continually seeks out the sanctuaries of the great gods; Nanna, the lord of the tiara, who bears the portent for the inhabited world, made his sign known. Because of the desire for an entu-priestess, in the month of Ululu, on the thirteenth day of the month "the work of the goddesses,"<sup>11</sup> the Fruit (i.e., Nanna) was eclipsed and set while eclipsed. "Sin desires an entu-priestess" was thus his sign and decision.*

The eclipse of the moon described here is critical to the date of the event and the chronology of Nabonidus' reign in general. It took place on September 26, 554 BCE (hence the latter half of the year).<sup>12</sup> The meaning of the eclipse was either supplied or confirmed by the omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil*, but not without considerable discussion between Nabonidus and the scholars of his day.<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to say that the installation of En-nigaldi-Nanna met with some opposition, so Nabonidus was quick to confirm Nanna's request.

*I, Nabonidus, the shepherd, the one who worships him (lit. "his divinity"), did revere his firm command and become attentive. Because of the desire for an entu-priestess I sought out the sanctuaries of Shamash and Adad, the lords of divination (i.e., extispicy), and Shamash and Adad answered me with a firm "yes". In my divination they wrote a favorable omen,<sup>14</sup> an omen (concerning) the desire for an entu-priestesses, the desire of the gods. I repeated (the inquiry) and checked the message, and they answered me with an omen more favorable than before.*

*I (then) performed an omen concerning the daughters of my relatives, but they answered me with a no. A third time I made an extispicy concerning a daughter of my (own) issue, and they answered me with a favorable omen.<sup>15</sup> I was attentive to the word of Sin, the exalted lord, the god who fashioned me, and the command of Shamash and Adad, the lords of divination, and installed a daughter of my own issue in the office of high priestess and named her En-nigaldi-Nanna.*

Just as Nabopolassar discovered a statue of an Akkadian king during his restoration of Imgur-Enlil (see above), Nabonidus discovered several artifacts during his restoration of the Egipar. Yet, again, the objects prove both informative and appropriate for the task at hand.<sup>16</sup>

*Since the rites of the entu-priestess were forgotten a long time ago and their (lit. "its") application was not known, I sought counsel daily. The appointed time arrived and the gates were opened to me.<sup>17</sup> I discovered an old stele of Nebuchadnezzar (I), son*

*of Ninurta-nadin-shumi, a former king, which had an image of the entu-priestess fashioned on it. Moreover, her insignia, her clothing, and her jewelry were recorded<sup>18</sup> (on it) and brought (these texts) into the Egipar. I brought out the ancient tablets and writing boards and restored the panels as they were (restored) in the past.<sup>19</sup> I fashioned a stele, her insignia, and the utensils of her residence anew. I inscribed it (lit. "wrote on it") and set it up before Sin and Ningal, my lords.*

The passage has several linguistic difficulties, but the general sense is clear. A more comprehensive account of the Egipar's condition before its restoration follows.

*At that time the area of the luxurious foundation in the midst of the Egipar, the pure cella, the place of the rites of the office of high priestess, had become a heap of ruins. Wild date palms (and) a fruit orchard were growing in its midst. I cleared the trees and removed the dirt that had collected.<sup>20</sup> I looked over the structure and discovered its foundation platform. I looked at the writing of the names of the kings of the ancient past in its midst. I looked at an old inscription of En-ane-du, the entu-priestess of Ur, the daughter of Kudur-Mabuk, the sister of Rim-Sin, the king of Ur, who renovated the Egipar and restored it, who surrounded with a wall the resting place of the ancient entu-priestesses alongside the Egipar. (Thus) I built the Egipar anew as (it was) in the past.*

The text then goes on to iterate the consecration of Nabonidus' daughter and the extensive increase of offerings to Sin and Ningal (cf. the text of Nebuchadnezzar above). The section is indeed valuable, for it mentions the offices associated with the household. It is important to remember that temple households in Mesopotamia were economic households as well. It also reminds us that the Egipar was part of a larger structure, the Egishnugal, the temple of Nanna in Ur.

The text concludes with a typical prayer.

*May Sin, the gleaming deity, the lord of the tiara, the light of humankind, the exalted god, whose utterance is true rejoice in my accomplishments and love my kingship. May he grant me a lasting life and ripe old age as a gift. Let him raise no one to rival me. With each new month may propitious signs be revealed. May the crown of kingship remain firmly on my head forever. Establish the throne of my lordship for days to come. When you renew yourself each month let me let repeatedly see your propitious sign. May Ningal, the exalted mistress, speak well of me before you. May En-nigaldi-Nanna, (my) daughter, the beloved of my heart, come before you that her utterance may be true. May her deeds be pleasing; she will be a true entu-priestess. May she have no sin.*

## Bibliography

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