

THE DYNASTIC TABLETS AND CHRONICLES OF THE BABYLONIANS

BY THE EDITOR

CHRONOLOGY is the skeleton of history, and until we can find the correct chronological place for a historical monument it loses a large part of its value. Thanks to the lists of the so-called eponyms, by means of whom the Assyrians dated their years, the chronology of the Assyrian kings has long since been placed upon a satisfactory footing as far back as the tenth century before our era. The dates, moreover, assigned by Sennacherib to Tiglath-Pileser I. (B.C. 1106), and Tukulti-Uras, the son of Shalmaneser I. (B.C. 1290), as well as the lengthy genealogies with which these kings are connected, enable us to extend Assyrian chronology back for another five hundred years, though, of course, with only approximate accuracy.

While our knowledge of Assyrian chronology, however, has thus been tolerably fixed for a long time past, we have had to depend upon the vague and contradictory statements of Greek writers for

our knowledge of the chronology of the older kingdom of Babylonia. Apart from the invaluable table of kings known as Ptolemy's Canon, which belongs to the later period of Babylonian history, and the unsatisfactory list of dynasties excerpted from an epitomist of Bêrôssos, our only monumental authorities for Babylonian chronology were the Assyrian inscriptions themselves, together with a few fragments of a dynastic tablet brought to light by Mr. George Smith and the so-called Synchronous History of Assyria and Babylonia, of which I published a translation in the former series of *Records of the Past* (vol. iii.) This "Synchronous History" was composed by an Assyrian scribe, and consists of brief notices of the occasions on which the kings of the two countries had entered into relation, hostile or otherwise, with one another. Since my translation was published in 1874, another large fragment of the tablet has been discovered, and accordingly I purpose giving a new translation of the whole document in a future volume of the present series. The "Synchronous History" gives no dates, and consequently its chronological value depends upon our knowledge of the respective dates to which the Assyrian monarchs mentioned in it belong.

Within the last few years a number of discoveries due to Mr. Pinches has entirely changed our position in regard to the chronology of the Babylonian kings. As I have already stated, Mr. Smith found among the tablets brought from the royal library of Nineveh

a small fragment which, as he perceived, contained the names and regnal years of the kings of Babylonia, arranged in dynasties. The work to which it belonged must accordingly have been similar to that from which Berossos derived his dynastic list of Chaldean monarchs. Mr. Smith published the fragment, with a translation and commentary, in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, iii. 2 (1874). It is written on both sides, and the tablet once consisted of six columns, each containing about seventy lines. I will call it the "Third Dynastic Tablet."

The next discovery was made by Mr. Pinches six years later among the inscriptions brought from the site of Babylon by the overseer of Mr. Hormuzd Rassam. He found among them a small tablet of unbaked clay, quite complete and inscribed on both sides. It contains the names of the kings belonging to two early dynasties, the number of years reigned by each king being added to the names in the case of the first dynasty. The tablet seems to be a sort of schoolboy's exercise, having been copied from some larger work in order to be committed to memory. The Reverse has been published by Mr. Pinches in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, 7th December 1880, and I will call it the "First Dynastic Tablet."

Another and more important document—the "Second Dynastic Tablet"—was published by Mr. Pinches, with a translation and explanation, in the

Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology, 6th May 1884. This is also a tablet of unbaked clay from Babylonia, and it contains a list of the Babylonian sovereigns, arranged in dynasties, from the first dynasty which made the city of Babylon the capital down to the period of the Persian conquest. The number of regnal years is added to the name of each king and the length of time each dynasty lasted is duly recorded. The names of some of the kings are written in an abbreviated form : this is especially the case with those belonging to the second dynasty.

The list, it will be observed, is confined to the dynasties which reigned in Babylon itself. No notice is taken of the kings and dynasties who ruled in "Accad and Sumer" before Babylon became the capital of the empire. The lost columns of the "Third Dynastic Tablet" show how numerous they were, and the fact is borne out by the bricks and other monuments of early Chaldean monarchs whose names do not occur among the successors of 'Sumu-abi. Most of the kings, indeed, whose names are known to us in connection with the temples they built or restored belonged to older dynasties than those which had their seat in the city of Babylon.

A considerable number of their names is to be found in another tablet brought by Mr. Rassam from Assyria, and published by Mr. Pinches in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, 11th January 1881. A small portion of it had already been published in *W. A. I.*, ii. 65, and had given rise

to a good many false conclusions. The object of this tablet was philological and not chronological; in fact the writer expressly states that the names of the kings were "not written according to their chronological order." He merely wished to furnish the Semitic or Assyro-Babylonian translations of the Accado-Sumerian and Kassite names borne by so many of the early princes, and in some cases of the mode in which the names of Semitic kings were pronounced or written by their Accadian subjects.

Among the latter is the name of Sargon of Accad, the ancient hero of the Semitic population of Chaldæa, who founded the first Semitic empire in the country and established a great library in his capital city of Agade or Accad near Sippara. The seal of his librarian, Ibni-sarru, of very beautiful workmanship, is now in Paris, and has been published by M. de Clercq (*Collection de Clercq*, pl. 5, No. 46), while a copy of his annals, together with those of his son Naram-Sin, is to be found in W. A. I., iv. 34. His date has been fixed by a passage in a cylinder of Nabonidos discovered in the ruins of the temple of the Sun-god at Sippara, and published in W. A. I., v. 64. The antiquarian zeal of Nabonidos led him to excavate among the foundations of the temple in the hope of finding the cylinder of Naram-Sin, who was known to have been the founder of it, and he tells us (col. ii. 56 *seq.*):—

"I sought for its old foundation-stone, and eighteen cubits deep

I dug into the ground, and the foundation-stone of Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon, which for 3200 years no king who had gone before me had seen, the Sun-god, the great lord of E-Babara, the temple of the seat of the goodness of his heart, let me see, even me."

In the opinion, therefore, of Nabonidos, a king who had a passion for investigating the past records of his country, Naram-Sin reigned 3200 years before his own time, that is to say, about B.C. 3700.

Before the rise of the Semitic kingdom of Sargon of Accad, lies that earlier Accado-Sumerian period when Babylonia was still in the hands of a people who spoke an agglutinative language, such as those of the modern Turks or Finns, and had originated the cuneiform system of writing and the primitive civilisation of the Chaldean cities. Relics of this ancient period have been discovered by M. de Sarzec in the mounds of Tel-loh, and the Sumerian inscriptions which they bear are now being deciphered by French scholars, more especially by M. Amiaud. M. Amiaud has been good enough to introduce the historical documents of Babylonia and Assyria to the readers of the present series of *Records of the Past*, by his translations of these oldest memorials of human life and thought in the valley of the Euphrates. If Sargon of Accad lived about B.C. 3800, the kings of Telloh must have flourished as far back as the fourth millennium before our era.

The last chronological document brought to light during the last few years is in many respects the most important of all. This is what has been termed "The Babylonian Chronicle" by its discoverer, Mr. Pinches, who gave an abstract of it in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, 6th May 1884. Since then, the text has been published with a translation and commentary by Dr. Winckler in the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, ii. 2, 3 (1887); it has also been translated by Dr. Oppert. The tablet (which is marked 84. 2-11, 356) was brought from Babylonia and is inscribed on both sides with four columns of text. It was a copy or compilation made by a Babylonian in the reign of Darius from older records, and must have been similar to the document from which Ptolemy's Canon of Babylonian kings was extracted. Like the latter it starts from the era of Nabonassar, B.C. 747.

The chronicle is written from a Babylonian point of view, and must therefore be checked by contemporaneous Assyrian inscriptions. What they describe as Assyrian successes are sometimes passed over altogether or represented as Babylonian victories. The Assyrian kings Tiglath-Pileser III and Shalmaneser IV are not acknowledged under the names they had adopted from two of the most illustrious monarchs of the first Assyrian empire, but under their original names of Pul and Ululâ; Sargon, on the other hand, whose name was that of

the favourite hero of Babylonian legend, is known by the same name in the Chronicle as he is on the monuments of Assyria. At the same time the Chronicle helps us in correcting the inaccuracies of the Assyrian accounts, where, for example, Suzub represents both Nergal-yusezib and Musezib-Mero-dach. In fact, it confirms the judgment, already expressed by Assyriologists, that Sennacherib is the least trustworthy of the royal historians of Assyria.

We are at present ignorant of the precise way in which the Babylonians reckoned their chronology. In Assyria the years were named after certain officers, ordinarily known as eponyms, who were changed each year, and as most of the institutions of Assyria were derived from Babylonia it is very probable that the system of counting time by the names of the eponyms was also of Babylonian invention. How far we can trust the dates assigned to the kings of the earlier dynasties is open to question. The length of reign assigned to the kings of the dynasties of the sea and of Bit-Bazi in the Second and Third Dynastic Tablets do not agree, while the number of regnal years given to the several kings of the first dynasty of Babylon not only plays on the same ciphers but is suspiciously long. On the other hand, the contract-tablets belonging to the time of Khammuragas imply that his reign was not a short one.

There is evidence in a later part of the dynastic lists that at least one name has been omitted. Dr. Winckler has published (in the *Zeitschrift für As-*

syriologie, ii. 3) the commencement of an inscription from Babylonia (marked 83.1-18) belonging to a certain king of Babylon, who calls himself Kuri-galzu the son of Kara-Urus. Dr. Winckler shows that this must be Kuri-galzu II, and that his name ought to occur in the list between those of Kara-Urus and Rimmon-nadin-suma. It is quite possible that other reigns have fallen out in other parts of the lists.

The lacuna in the Second Dynastic Tablet between the beginning of the eighth dynasty and the commencement of the reign of Nabonassar unfortunately prevents us from determining with certainty the date assigned by the compiler of it to 'Sumu-abi. But there are two synchronisms between Babylonian and Assyrian history which may serve to remedy the defect. According to Sennacherib, Merodach-nadin-akhe defeated Tiglath-Pileser I, 418 years before his own conquest of Babylon, that is to say, in B.C. 1106, while the "Synchronous History" makes Assur-bil-kala, the son of Tiglath-Pileser I, the contemporary of Merodach-sapik-kullat, and Assur-dân the great-grandfather of Tiglath-Pileser I, the contemporary of Zamama-nadin-suma, the father of Assur-dân being contemporaneous with Rimmon-[sumanatsir?]. If Merodach-nadin-akhe is the ninth king of the dynasty of Isin, the date of Zamama-nadin-suma will be B.C. 1160, agreeing very well with the period to which the end of the reign of Assur-dân should be assigned. In this case Sagasalti-buryas, who flourished 800 years before Nabonidos, will not

be identical with the Saga-sal[tiyas] of the dynastic list. The reign of Khammuragas will have commenced B.C. 2282, the first dynasty of Babylon establishing its power there in B.C. 2394.

We learn from the inscriptions of Khammuragas that he was the first of his dynasty to rule over the whole of Babylonia. A rival dynasty had previously reigned at Karrak in the south, while the Elamites had invaded portions of the country and probably held them in subjection. Assur-bani-pal states that the Elamite king Kudur-Nankhundi had carried away the image of the goddess Nana from Babylonia 1635 years before his own time, or about B.C. 2285, and contract-tablets refer to the conquest of "the lord of Elam and King Rim-Agu" of Karrak by Khammuragas. A large number of contract-tablets, indeed, belong not only to the reigns of Khammuragas and his son Samsu-iluna, but also to the reign of Rim-Agu, who seems to have been master of the greater part of Chaldæa before his overthrow by the king of Babylon. George Smith was probably right in identifying him with the son of the Elamite prince Kudur-Mabug, who ruled at Larsa and claimed the imperial title of "king of Sumer and Accad."

The rise of the empire of Khammuragas brought with it a revival of learning and literature such as had marked the rise of the empire of Sargon. The calendar appears to have been reformed at this period, and the great native work on astronomy and astrology put into the shape in which it has come

down to us. The reign thus formed an era somewhat similar to that of Nabonassar, and it is therefore curious to see how closely the date I have assigned to it corresponds with that arrived at by von Gutschmidt from classical sources for the beginning of the Babylonian epoch. If the Latin translation can be trusted (Simplicius *ad Arist. de Cælo*, 503 A), the astronomical observations sent by Kallisthenes from Babylon to Aristotle in B.C. 331 reached back for 1903 years (*i.e.* to B.C. 2234). Bêrôssos the Chaldean historian, according to Pliny (N.H. vii. 57), stated that these observations commenced at Babylon 490 years before the Greek era of Phoroneus, and consequently in B.C. 2243. According to Stephanos of Byzantium, Babylon was built 1002 years before the date (given by Hellanikos) for the siege of Troy (B.C. 1229), which would bring us to B.C. 2231, while Ktesias, according to George Syncellus, made the reign of Belos or Bel-Merodach last for fifty-five years from B.C. 2286 to 2231. The fifty-five years of Belos agree with the fifty-five of Khammuragas.

I add here the Canon of Babylonian kings given by Ptolemy in the *Almagest*.

	B.C.
1. Nabonassar (Nabu-natsir), 14 years	747
2. Nadios (Nadinu), 2 years	733
3. Khinziros and Poros (Yukin-zira and Pul), 5 years	731
4. Iloulaïos or Yougaios ¹ (Ululâ), 5 years	726

¹ Yougaios, if it is not due to a corruption of the text, may represent the name of Yagina, the father of Merodach-baladan.

	B.C.
5. Mardokempados (Merodach-baladan), 12 years	721
6. Arkeanos (Sargon), 5 years	709
7. Interregnum for 2 years ¹	704
8. Belibos (Bel-ebus), ² 3 years	702
9. Aparanadios ³ (Assur-nadin-suma), 6 years	700
10. Regebelos (Nergal-yusezib), 1 year	694
11. Mesesimordakos (Musezib-Merodach), 4 years	693
12. Interregnum for 8 years	689
13. Asaridinos (Esar-haddon), 13 years	681
14. Saosdoukhinos (Saul-suma-yukin), 20 years	668
15. Kineladanos (Kandalanu), 22 years	648
16. Nabopolassaros (Nabu-pal-utsur), 21 years	626
17. Nabokolassaros (Nebuchadnezzar), 43 years	605
18. Ilauaroudamos (Avil-Merodach), 2 years	562
19. Nerigasolasaros (Nergal-sarra-utsur), 4 years	560 ⁴
20. Nabonadios (Nabu-nahid), 17 years	556

¹ Filled up according to Alexander Polyhistor by the brother of Sennacherib, by Hagisa or Akises for thirty days, and by Merodach-baladan for six months.

² Called Elibos by Alexander Polyhistor.

³ Assordanios according to Alexander Polyhistor.

⁴ Josephus (from Berossos) here inserts Laborosoarkhodos, the infant son of Neriglissor, for three months.

NO. 1.—TRANSLATION OF THE FIRST DYNASTIC
TABLET FROM BABYLON

OBVERSE

1. 'Sumu-abi, the king : 15 years.
2. 'Sumu-la-ilu, the son of the same : 35 years.
3. Zabû, the son of the same : 14 years.
4. Abil-Sin, the son of the same : 18 years.
5. Sin-muballidh, the son of the same : 30 years.
6. Khammu-ragas,¹ the son of the same : 55 years.
7. 'Sam'su-iluna,² the son of the same : 35 years.
8. Ebisum,³ the son of the same : 25 years.
9. Ammi-satana, the son of the same : 25 years.
10. Ammi-sadugga,⁴ the son of the same : 21 years.
11. 'Sam'su-satana (?), the son of the same : 31 years.
12. 11 kings of the dynasty of BABYLON.

REVERSE

1. (The dynasty of) URU-AZAGGA.⁵ Anman the king.
2. Ki-[AN] Nigas.⁶
3. Damki-ili-su.⁷

¹ The first five names of the dynasty are Semitic. Khammuragas is Kassite or Kossæan, and is interpreted "of a large family." Sin-muballidh may have married a foreign wife.

² "The Sun-god (is) our god," another Semitic name.

³ "The doer," also Semitic.

⁴ Kassite, interpreted "the family is established."

⁵ Uru-azagga is now represented by a part of the mounds of Telloh (the ancient Sirpurla) or its immediate vicinity.

⁶ Nigas was an Elamite word.

⁷ Semitic, signifying "gracious is his god."

4. Is-ki-pal.¹
5. Sussi.²
6. Gul-ki-sar.³
7. Kirgal-dara-mas, the son of the same.
8. A-dara-kalama, the son of the same.⁴
9. A-kur-du-ana.⁵
10. Melam-kurkura.⁶
11. Ea-ga(mil?).⁷
12. 1[1] kings of the dynasty of URU-AZAGGA.

¹ Perhaps to be read in Semitic Sapin-mat-nukurti, "the sweeper away of the land of the foe." The name seems to have been a title.

² Perhaps the Semitic *sussu*, "sixty."

³ In Semitic Muabbid-kissati, "the destroyer of hosts."

⁴ Apparently, therefore, the son of the preceding king.

⁵ Rendered by the Semitic Abil-Bel-u'sum-same, "the son of Bel (the lord) of the treasury of heaven."

⁶ "The glory of the world."

⁷ The last character is partially destroyed. If my restoration is correct, the name would be Semitic and signify "Ea has rewarded."

No. 2.—TRANSLATION OF THE SECOND
DYNASTIC TABLET FROM BABYLON

COLUMN I

The first eleven lines are destroyed.

12. 11 kings [of the dynasty of BABYLON] for [294 years].

13. Anma[n] for [5]1 (years).

14. Ki-AN [Nigas] for 55 (years).

15. Damki-ili[su] for 46¹ (years).

16. Is-ki-[pal] for 15 (years).

17. Sussi, (his) brother, for 27 (years).

18. Gul-ki-[sar] for 55 (years).

19. Kirgal-[dara-mas] for 50 (years).

20. A-dara-[kalama] for 28 (years).

21. A-kur-du-[ana] for 26 (years).

22. Melamma-[kurkura] for 6 (years).

23. Bel-ga[mil?] for 9 (years).

24. For 368 (years) the 11 kings of the dynasty of URU-
AZAGGA.

25. Gandis for 16 (years).

26. Agum-si[pak] his son for 22 (years).

27. Guya-si[pak] for 22 (years).²

28. Ussi his son for 8 (years).

29. Adu-medas for . . . (years).

30. Tazzi-gurumas for . . . (years).

¹ Mr. Pinches' copy gives 36 years.

² Is this king merely a duplicate of his predecessor, the different spelling of the name having caused the annalist to divide one king into two?

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