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„Of Priests and Kings: The Babylonian New Year Festival in the Last Age of Cuneiform Culture“

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Céline Debourse BA MA

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*Say it's only a paper moon*
*Hanging over a cardboard sea*
*But it wouldn't be make-believe*
*If you believed in me*

*- Yip Harburg (1932)*

# Foreword

This Ph.D. dissertation was written between winter 2016 and spring 2020 at the University of Vienna under the supervision of Prof. Michael Jursa. It would not exist in its current form without the help of a number of people and I gladly take this opportunity to thank them here.

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# Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this book follow those listed in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie*. Additional abbreviations:

| | |
|---|---|
| ADART | Sachs & Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts* (partly online at http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/adsd/corpus ) |
| AF | Akītu Festival (Oshima, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*) |
| AQi | Abū-Qubūr inscriptions |
| BCHP | Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *Babylonian Chronographic Texts from the Hellenistic Period* |
| BNJ | Brill's New Jacoby (https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby ) |
| CM | Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* |
| DCCLT | Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Lexical Texts (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/corpus ) |
| DLL | Divine Love Lyrics |
| EZ | Ekur-zākir |
| HALOT | Koehler & Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* |
| LB | Late Babylonian (331 BC -80 CE) |
| LBPL | Late Babylonian Priestly Literature |
| LSC | Long Sixth Century (626-484 BC) |
| MNB | Musées nationaux B, Louvre |
| NA | Neo-Assyrian (934-609 BC) |
| NB | Neo-Babylonian (626-539 BC) |
| Nbk | Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) |
| Nbn | Nabonidus (555-539 BC) |
| NeK | Nahr el-Kalb (Nebuchadnezzar II inscription; NeKA/NeKC) |
| Ner | Neriglissar (559-556 BC) |
| NKJV | New King James Version (Bible translation) |
| NYF | New Year Festival |
| OB | Old Babylonian |
| P | CDLI-siglum |
| RINBE | Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire |
| SLU | Sîn-lēqi-unninni |
| ST | Stone Tablet (Nebuchadnezzar II inscription) |
| WB | Wadi Brisa (Nebuchadnezzar II inscription; WBA/WBC) |

# I Introduction

*Figure 1: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Gloomy Day*
(1565, oil on wood, 118 x 163 cm, Vienna, KHM, inv. Gemäldegalerie 1837)

In the year 1565 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525-1569) finished a painting that was part of his *Labours of the Months* series.[1] *The Gloomy Day* depicts a landscape in early spring (February-March) when the thaw has set in and changed the world from a calm snowy white to a dreadful muddy brown. A storm has just passed over the village, as shipwrecks still float aimlessly in the large stream while the sky in the distance is starting to clear. As is characteristic for Bruegel's work, the viewer's eye is drawn into the painting by the depth of the landscape, but is interrupted in that process by a small scene depicted in the foreground, where a set of figures is seen in action. Two persons are busy repairing the damage done, cutting branches to cover the hole in their roof – visible just down on the left. In contrast, three others are seen carelessly eating waffles, drunkenly swaying on their feet. The smallest of them, a young boy, has a paper crown on the head and a cushion tied around the waist. The trio appears out of context in the serious, sinister scene, with their mock-king outfits and festive mood, as if the changes of the world do not touch them.

[1] *The Gloomy Day*, https://www.khm.at/de/object/89f0fd5c92/ (last accessed 23.01.2020).

✷✷✷

Like the other surviving paintings of the series, *The Gloomy Day* depicts not only the labours characteristic of the season, but also the entertainment to which people resorted at that time of year and which, more than the work to be done, marked the change of the seasons: after the summer harvest, people gathered to eat and rest,[2] and after the winter's meagre hunt, the hunters found solace in the warmth of the fire or by skating on the frozen river.[3] Similarly, the end of winter (*Vorfrühling*) was heralded by the carnival, when excessive livestock was eaten and peasants could be king for a day. More than anything, Bruegel's *Gloomy Day* attests to the persistence of traditions that mark the transition of the seasons and the cyclical nature of the world, as today the carnival is still celebrated at the end of February or beginning of March.

One of the most ancient and also longest attested traditions that celebrates the start of a new seasonal cycle is the Mesopotamian *akītu*-festival. Originally, it was celebrated twice a year, marking the beginning of the first and the seventh months respectively in the Mesopotamian calendar. Later on, the *akītu*-festival evolved into a true New Year Festival (NYF), the celebration of which took place in the capital of the empire and involved the participation of the king and all the gods of the land, while more local versions of the festival may have been observed in other months. The *akītu*-festival is attested in sources from the early third millennium BC to the end of cuneiform culture around the beginning of the common era. The endurance of this tradition for almost three thousand years demonstrates that the festival was an integral and essential aspect of cuneiform culture.

The *akītu*-festival was of crucial importance not only to ancient Mesopotamians, it is also famous in modern scholarly circles. It is no exaggeration to claim that every Assyriologist has some conception of the festival and also Biblicists, anthropologists, sociologists and scholars of ritual and religion have been involved in the study of the festival. Some twenty years ago, the scholar of ritual studies, Catherine Bell, stated that "it may be one of the most frequently analysed rituals in all scholarship"[4] and since then studies on the topic have only multiplied. Today, after more than 130 years of research on the topic, we are left with a more or less fixed and delimited idea of what the *akītu*-festival was; how, when and where it was celebrated; and what its cultic, ideological and theological meaning was. Why, then, would I endeavour to undertake yet another study on the topic?

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[2] *The Harvesters*, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/19.164/ (last accessed 23.01.2020).
[3] *Hunters in the Snow*, www.khm.at/de/object/b83aac23b9/ (last accessed 23.01.2020).
[4] Bell 1997: 17.

Research on the *akītu*-festival originated more than a hundred years ago with the publication of a number of texts that contain guidelines for the performance of certain rites in Esagila at the beginning of the year. These NYF texts reached the western European museums in the second half of the 19th century in batches of tablets which included a high number of dated astronomical tablets, by means of which it became clear that these manuscripts stemmed from Late Babylonian Babylon.[5] The first comprehensive edition of the NYF texts followed in 1921 and remained to be used until a re-edition by the hand of M. Linssen appeared in 2004.[6] Subsequently, these NYF texts have served to reconstruct large portions of the festival and they are crucial for our understanding of the meaning and purpose of it. Yet, despite their importance in the study of the NYF, in essence the NYF texts are poorly understood, which has led to a number of assumptions that nevertheless can and need to be queried.

A first assumption relates to the fact that the NYF texts are preserved only in manuscripts that date to the Late Babylonian period. It is an often repeated statement that the Late Babylonian temple ritual texts are copies of texts composed at a much earlier date. The exact date and place of redaction of those "originals" remain undetermined, however. A second assumption, then, refers to the reason why such copies existed in the Late Babylonian period. It is generally taken for granted that the existence of these texts proves the quasi-undisturbed continuity of the cultic tradition in Babylonia from the Neo into the Late Babylonian age (see below for a definition of these chronological terms).[7] Thus, the NYF in the Neo-Babylonian period is reconstructed on the basis of the LB NYF texts and, vice-versa, Neo-Babylonian evidence is used to supplement the Late Babylonian sources.

My aim in this dissertation is either to confirm or to invalidate these assumptions. First, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of the sources commonly used to study the Babylonian NYF in the first millennium BC. In other words, how did we arrive at this concept of the *akītu*-festival as we know it today? Which sources lie behind which elements or concepts? Second, more attention should be paid to the NYF texts themselves in order to determine how these texts fit into the picture sketched above. In which context were these texts created? Matters of language may fix the texts in a certain timeframe, but also recurrent ideas, motifs and concepts may prove helpful to recover the framework in which the NYF texts originated. Third, it should

[5] Clancier 2009.
[6] Thureau-Dangin 1921: 127-154 (*Racc.*); Linssen 2004: 215-237.
[7] Linssen (2004: 167-168): "Admittedly, these literary texts [i.e. the ritual texts; CD] are copies of older compositions" and "The Babylonian cults practiced in the temples of Uruk and Babylon in the Hellenistic period are, as far as we can see in the sources, not different from those in the pre-Hellenistic times."

be asked what the purposes of and reasons behind the existence of the NYF texts and, by extension, the whole corpus of Late Babylonian temple ritual texts are. Why and for which purpose were these manuscripts written down in the Late Babylonian period? In other words, how do they relate to the Late Babylonian reality? The answers to those questions will change not only the way we think about the Babylonian New Year Festival, but also how we see the last age of cuneiform culture.

## I.1 Definitions and conventions

Before beginning, a few notes on methodology and terminology are due.

The **chronological framework** of the topic under study is, broadly speaking, the first millennium BC, which may be divided according to the etic labels for the dynasties that consecutively ruled over Babylonia: the Neo-Assyrian period (NA; 934–609 BC), within which the Sargonid period (721–609 BC) can be distinguished; the Neo-Babylonian period (NB; 626–539 BC); the Persian or Achaemenid period (539–331 BC); the Graeco-Macedonian period (331–141 BC), including the Seleucid period (311/305–141 BC); and finally the Parthian or Arsacid period (141 BC–80 CE).[8] Alongside those chronological designations, another system will be used to indicate periods based on socio-economic trends, viz. the Long Sixth Century (LSC; 626–484 BC), the Late Achaemenid period (484–331 BC) and the Late Babylonian or Hellenistic period (LB; 331 BC–80 CE). Events that fall outside this chronological framework will be specified when mentioned.

Regarding the definition of **ritual**, my methodological sympathies are with Ronald Grimes in the sense that, instead of trying to define the term as a universal concept, we should approach "ritual" as a heuristic to group together practices that share common elements.[9] Thus, when I speak of temple rituals in Babylonia, I mean sequences of discrete acts ("rites") that together intend to accomplish one goal and are set within the context of the care and worship of the gods in the temple. The word "festival" is used to indicate a sequence of rituals and rites which are performed over one or more days, which combined form a unified whole and aim to fulfil the same purpose(s).[10] This understanding of ritual and festival implies that, while a festival or a ritual is of itself unique, it may consist of elements that occur in other festivals or rituals too ("interrituality").[11] A temple **ritual text**, then, gives information about the performance of a

[8] The end date is based on the latest datable cuneiform tablet; see Hunger & de Jong 2014.
[9] Grimes 2014; see also Delnero, *forthcoming*: Chapter 6.
[10] See also Krul 2018: 7.
[11] See also Koubková 2016; Gladigow 2004 and below, page 204.

temple ritual, either in prescriptive or descriptive form. Within a ritual text we can still distinguish between, on the one hand, the actions to be undertaken (*dromena*, *agenda*) and, on the other, the words to be spoken or sung (*legomena*, *dicenda*).

A Babylonian **temple** is a building (complex) that served as the residence of a god and his family and court.[12] Aside from different cellas, where the statues of gods resided, a temple consisted of courtyards, storage rooms, kitchens and workshops etc. In the Babylonian context, "temple" can also refer to an economical institution, the main purpose of which was the care and feeding of the gods.[13] Important temples in the following discussion are: Esagila, temple of Marduk in Babylon; Ezida, temple of Nabû in Borsippa; Ebabbar, temple of Šamaš in Sippar; Eanna, temple of Ištar, and Bīt Rēš, temple of Anu, in Uruk.

Other terms that need specification are "priest" and, by extension, "priesthood". In a Babylonian context, **priests** are "persons who mediated contact with the gods as part of their positions in the institutionalized cult in Babylonian temples. The intensity of mediation could vary enormously – from direct participation in the actual rites around the cult image, to the delivery of offerings for the sacrificial table and the provision of security for the temple grounds. The positions that generated these activities were linked to the ownership of titles, prebends, obtained by inheritance, personal appointment, or another form of acquisition."[14] Consequently, the **priesthood** is a group of people which is clearly defined by initiation and connection to a specific temple and which, despite its outwardly displayed coherence, is marked by a substantial internal differentiation due to divergent levels of initiation and economic diversity.[15]

Texts will be cited either by their museum number and latest publication (e.g. BM 34113 (Debourse & Jursa 2019)) or by their conventional publication code or title (e.g. TU 38; Marduk Ordeal).[16] Because of their online availability, texts published in the SAA, RINAP and ADART

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[12] Sallaberger 2013: 519-524; Beaulieu 2013: 524-527 (RlA 13 7/8 s.v. Tempel).

[13] Jursa (2010: 54): "The principal role of a Babylonian temple, for example, was neither as a large, complex and more or less autarkic household designed to maintain all those who worked within it, nor was it primarily an economic entity whose resources, including compelled labour, mostly benefited a small exploitative elite, the priests: its principal raison d'être was quite simply to act as the economic support base for the cult of the gods. It would be reductionist to see this fact as a matter of mere religious or ideological superstructure hiding, or rationalizing, the 'hard facts' of social and economic life: inequality, hierarchies, political domination, and so forth."

[14] Waerzeggers & Jursa 2008: 1 note 1. See also Jursa 2013b; Waerzeggers 2011b; and Still 2019 on the NB priesthood as social group withing Babylonian society.

[15] Jursa (2013b: 162) "Es handelt sich um eine durch die Initiation und die Bindung an ein Heiligtum klar definierte Gruppe, deren Kohärenz und Abgrenzung nach außen wohl stärker ist als Binnendifferenzierungen sozialer Natur aufgrund von unterschiedlichen Graden der Initiation und aufgrund von ökonomischen Unterschieden."

[16] See the indices for lists of all referenced sources.

series will be cited by their SAA, RINAP and ADART numbers respectively without each time referring to the specific publication title in question.[17] These will be added to the bibliography, nonetheless.

## I.2 Contents and prospects

This dissertation is organized in seven broad chapters, including this introductory **Chapter I**.

In **Chapter II**, the *status quaestionis* is presented by means of a survey of three, partly overlapping, topics of interest in modern research: the history of the *akītu* or New Year Festival in Mesopotamia, from the Early Dynastic to the Parthian period (II.1); the schedule of the twelve days of the Babylonian New Year Festival (II.2); and the symbolic meanings and functions of the festival (II.3). This summary of the state of the question is concluded by a concise critical reflection, in which I want to point out in more detail the most pressing problems and questions with which the rest of this work is concerned.

In **Chapter III**, I present an overview of the textual sources for the Babylonian NYF in the first millennium BC. The source material is structured, first, chronologically, i.e. by taking into account separately the Neo-Assyrian period (III.1), the Long Sixth Century (III.2) and the Late Babylonian period (III.3), and, second, by genre, including correspondence, administration, royal inscriptions and cultic and literary texts. Each section also contains a short summary of the most important aspects of the *akītu* or New Year Festival, in which continuity and disruption are highlighted. In two intermezzi, two specific matters will be touched upon in more detail. First, I reflect on the meanings and uses of the phrase "taking Bēl by the hand" (*qātē Bēl ṣabātu*). Second, the Day One Temple (é ud 1$^{kam}$) in Hellenistic Babylon will be investigated.

**Chapter IV** contains a re-edition of the ritual texts that contain instructions for the NYF. The six NYF texts (DT 15, DT 114, BM 32485+DT109, MNB 1848, BM 41577 and BM 32655/BM 32374) are transliterated, normalized and translated, the details of which are further explained in the critical apparatus that accompanies each text. All the manuscripts can be dated to the Seleucid period, while the date of creation of the compositions is less clear upon first view. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the NYF texts follows in **Chapter V**. It is based on four different approaches: a study of the linguistic features of the corpus (V.1); a consideration of the paratextual notes and material aspects (V.2); an analysis of the ritual instructions, mostly from an historical perspective rather than from that of ritual theory (V.3); and an examination

[17] http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus (last accessed 12.02.2020); http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/corpus/ (last accessed 12.02.2020); http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/adsd/corpus (last accessed 12.02.2020).

of the prayers, with a strong focus on intertextuality (V.4). The aim of these analyses is to confirm the hypothesis that the NYF texts were created in the Late Babylonian period by Babylonian priests of Marduk.

In **Chapter VI**, more attention is given to the context in which the NYF texts were produced. I start by giving a concise history of the Late Achaemenid and Late Babylonian period (484 BC–80 CE) in Babylon (VI.1). After that, four textual corpora that were created in LB Babylon are explored and set in light of each other: the temple ritual texts (VI.2), the Astronomical Diaries (VI.3), the Babylonian chronicles (VI.4) and the historical-literary texts, including Berossos' *Babyloniaka* (VI.5). It will be made clear that, despite their fundamental differences, the texts of these four corpora share an interest for particular themes revolving around good and bad kingship, the prominence of Marduk and the indispensability of his priesthood in Babylon. In the final sections of this chapter, I will show how the historical conjunctures that gave rise to this Late Babylonian priestly literature in Babylon have parallels in the textual production in other LB cuneiform and Hellenistic priestly communities. Finally, **Chapter VII** will take the form of a summary of the dissertation.

# II Status Quaestionis

It is no exaggeration to claim that the Babylonian New Year Festival is one of the most widely studied rituals *tout court*.[18] Not only Assyriologists and biblical scholars have been enthralled by the phenomenon for over a century; philosophers, anthropologists and scholars of ritual theory and religion alike have expressed their fascination. This combined effort has resulted in a more or less accepted image of what the *akītu*-festival celebrated at the New Year in Babylon during the first millennium BC consisted of. The consensus today is that it was a twelve day-long festival, which included activities such as the recitation of Enūma Elîš, the slapping of the king by a priest, the travel of Nabû and other deities to Babylon, and a procession of those gods led by Marduk and the king towards the *akītu*-house located outside the city. Its main purpose was the renewal of established order, including the legitimation of kingship and a decreeing of fates for the country. Moreover, even though *akītu*s were celebrated at different locations, the main festival at Babylon served to start the New Year with a celebration of the city's patron god Marduk as head of the Babylonian pantheon and to reaffirm the king as ruler of the land.

It is important to realize, however, that the Babylonian New Year Festival was not a static cultic and theological concept that remained unchanged over the centuries. Too often the historical reality stays hidden behind this construct of twelve days that relies strongly on an amalgamation of sources from different times and places and with a varying degree of historical value.[19] Evidently, many problems come with this approach. Before addressing those (Chapter III), it is necessary to review the state of the question. Since the NYF has been studied by scholars of so many different fields, it serves to approach the issue from different perspectives. In the following chapter, I start by giving a concise overview of the history of the *akītu* or NYF, from its first attestations to its heyday in the first millennium BC and remnants of it in the common era. Second, a summary of the course of events of the Babylonian festival as it is accepted today is presented. Lastly, the different interpretations and meanings that have been read in the festival will be discussed.

## II.1 History of the New Year Festival

The *akītu* or New Year Festival is attested in Mesopotamia for more than two millennia, from the Early Dynastic period into the Parthian age; remnants of it survived in the wider Near East

[18] So too claims the ritual theorist, Catherine Bell (1997: 17).
[19] Sic also Sommer 2000: 82-83.

during the first centuries CE and a version of the festival has been revived by today's Assyrian population.[20]

The earliest references to the *akītu*-festival stem from **Early Dynastic** (mid-third millennium BC) Ur, where the seventh month of the local calendar was called á-ki-ti.[21] Most probably, the month was named for the festival rather than the other way around.[22] While a few sources refer to the observance of the "festival of Ur" at for example Adab and Umma during the **Sargonic** period, the abundance of material comes from **Ur III** and **Old Babylonian** (late third to early second millennium BC) sites. In Ur, an á-ki-ti was observed in spring (first month) and autumn (seventh month); the moment of celebration could differ in other cities, where the festival was adopted and adapted to the local cultic calendar. The occurrence of the festival at a six-month interval has been linked to different phenomena. The oldest idea, that an á-ki-ti was celebrated at the beginning of the administrative and cultic year respectively, has been dismissed.[23] Instead, two other developments can explain the double observance of the festival. The first involves the name given to the festivals, in particular in OB sources: the festival of the seventh month was called ezem-á-ki-ti šu-numun, "*akītu* of the barley seed season" (*Aussaatfest*); the one observed in spring ezem-á-ki-ti še-kíĝ-ku$_5$, "*akītu* of the reaping season" (*Erntefest*). Thus, the celebration of the *akītu* was related to both the grain harvest on the one hand and the sowing of new crop on the other.[24] The second interpretation does not necessarily have to exclude the first. Possibly the *akītu*s marked another semi-annual event: the occurrence of the spring- and autumn equinoxes. Ur was the city of Nanna, the Moon god – it is possible that a festival related to the lunar reality. The autumnal equinox in particular was an important moment for the moon: daytime shortened and nighttime lengthened, giving a higher degree of visibility or "visible superiority"[25] to the moon compared to the sun. Thus the á-ki-ti of the seventh month can be explained as a celebration of the triumph of Nanna.[26] Yet, it does leave the *akītu* of the first month unexplained. Perhaps then, the ritual served to counteract reality: while the sun was

[20] A historical overview of the festival is given by Cohen 1993: 400-453 and 2015: 99-106 and 389-408.
[21] For the earliest history of the *akītu*-festival, see Cohen 2015: 99-106 and 1993: 400-453; Sallaberger 1993(2011): 170-190. The etymology of the term á-ki-ti/*akītu* remains unkown, see CAD A/1 s.v. *akītu* and Cohen 2015: 99-100.
[22] Sic Sallaberger 1993(2011): 187.
[23] Sallaberger 1993(2011): 174-175.
[24] Sallaberger (1993[2011]: 174-175) adheres importance especially to this interpretation but does not dismiss the second one.
[25] Cohen 2015: 78.
[26] This interpretation was refuted by Hunger (1996: 777): "I am not convinced of the existence of the 'equinox-year,' […]. The idea of the moon and the sun vying for time in the sky should have found expression in some cultic or mythological text, if it were such a dominant concept in the cultic calendars. I know of no such competition between Sin and Šamaš."

superior over the moon in the sky, in the cult Nanna was still the main deity of the city. During the earliest phase of observation of the festival, the *akītu* cannot equivocally be equated with the New Year, since, even though the *akītu* of the first month could be designated as such, in Ur the focus lay on the festival of the seventh month, which is technically not at the beginning of the year. Still, Sallaberger stated: "Anstatt von einem einzigen 'Jahresanfang' zu sprechen, müssen wir eher von zwei Polen, die jeweils für sich einen 'Jahresanfang' bilden, ausgehen."[27] Thus, the earliest *akītu*-festival should be interpreted as the cultic marker of a new cycle of six months, be it agricultural or astronomical.

Information about the *akītu*-festival becomes very scarce for the second half of the second millennium. Rare attestations of the observance of an *akītu* stem from **Kassite** (second half second millennium BC) Nippur. Some scholars wish to read them as celebrations of an *akītu* at Nippur itself, although Babylon as the scene for the event described cannot be excluded as a possibility.[28] Essential is the use of a specific date formula that includes *elê šarri* ("coming/going up of the king) and/or *arād šarri* ("coming/going down of the king"),[29] which Biggs has interpreted as referring to the coming of the king to Nippur from Babylon for the celebration of the New Year, because all mentions refer to a date between 29/XII and 2/I.[30] However, Brinkman is more careful: "Because of the distribution of the month and day dates for *arād šarri* and *elê šarri* and because *elê* can also be translated as "going up" (to Babylon or elsewhere), it would be difficult to draw conclusions about the king's presence in Nippur at the exact time for the celebration of the New Year festival."[31] Thus, we cannot univocally state that the *akītu* about which these texts speak, took place at Nippur; it could just as well have been at Babylon (or another location). The same ambiguous image emerges from two other documents from Kassite Nippur.[32] An offering list features an *akītu* on 8/I and another one on 24/II.[33] Whereas the second entry refers simply to an "*akītu*", the former mentions "*akītu*: Temple of Marduk". A temple of Marduk is attested at Nippur in this period;[34] however, it could just as well be a reference to the temple at Babylon. The second document lists allotments of sheep, the first one of which says "8 rams – allotment of the king – *akītu* – Babylon".[35] This points in

[27] Sallaberger 1993(2011): 175.
[28] Tenney 2016; Cohen 2015: 394-395.
[29] Brinkman 1976: 411-414.
[30] Biggs 1965: 96 note 11; followed by Cohen 1993. One exception only mentions the twelfth month and omits the day.
[31] Brinkman 1976: 414.
[32] Tenney 2016.
[33] CBS 10616 obv. 12' and 16' (Tenney 2016: 162-177).
[34] Tenney 2016: 168 with references.
[35] CBS 11536 obv. 1 (Tenney 2016: 177-178).

the direction of an *akītu*-celebration at Babylon rather than at Nippur. Nevertheless, with the present evidence, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the question of whether the festival meant here took place at Nippur (yet including Marduk and the king) or at Babylon during this period. It was a formative phase for the evolution of Marduk from local deity at Babylon to national head of the pantheon, subsuming the characteristics of Enlil at Nippur, and we should see these references in that light.[36] Aside from that, one should note the moment at which the *akītu*s that could possibly have taken place in the city of Babylon were celebrated in this period: almost all dates centre around the beginning of the year.

Curiously enough, more evidence about the NYF at Babylon in this "dark age" can be found in a **Middle Assyrian** ritual text.[37] It gives instructions for rites to be performed by the (Assyrian) king for Marduk.[38] It has been dated to the period between the reigns of Tukuli-Ninurta I and Ninurta-tukul-Aššur.[39] As Pongratz-Leisten sensibly remarked, the prescriptions clearly refer to a festival celebrated at Babylon, since "it is hard to imagine that at any time in Assyrian history any divinity could rival Aššur to such a degree in the official cult of the city."[40] The fact that the Babylonian *akītu* was observed by Assyrian kings is supported too by a – much later – inscription of Sargon, saying that he led Marduk and Nabû in procession.[41] Nevertheless, the focus on Babylon and Marduk shifted to Assur and Aššur from the reign of Sargon onwards. The first possible observance of an *akītu*-festival in Assyria is dated to the reign of Sennacherib:[42] shortly after his destruction of Babylon in 689 BC, the king dedicated personnel to the *akītu*-house "of the Steppe" (Nineveh) in the year 683 BC, showing that the temple was in use at that time.[43]

The adoption and adaptation of the Babylonian *akītu*-festival in the Assyrian cult was a longer process, the start of which seems to have been made under Sargon II. **Sargonid** (722-612 BC)

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[36] See also Tenney 2016.
[37] An earlier reference to the *akītu*-festival in Assyria occurs in an Old Assyrian letter from Šamši-Adad to his son Yasmah-Adad, in which the ruler asked his son to dispatch horses to the capital for the celebration of the *akītu.* ARM 1 50 (Durand 2000 no. 965: 112).
[38] VAT 16435 (Köcher 1952; translation Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 383-384). The text does not explicitly state that it was to be used in the New Year Festival, but the mention of the *parak šīmāti* (Dais of Destinies), Marduk and a procession make it very plausible that it is to be set in that context.
[39] Van Driel 1969: 54.
[40] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 385. The first editor, Köcher (1952), connected the ritual to Tukulti-Ninurta and placed its performance in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta, whereas Van Driel (1969: 54) and Cohen (1993) set it in the context of the city of Assur.
[41] "(In) the month Nisannu, the month when the Lord-of-the-Gods goes out in procession, I conducted Marduk, the great lord, (and) Nabû." Annalen lines 330-331 (Fuchs 1994: 156 with translation 332; translation here from CAD B 193).
[42] This part is largely based on Barcina 2017. See also Nielsen 2018: 104-114; Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 416-426 and 407-416; Frahm 1997: 284-286.
[43] SAA 12, 86.

scholars included it in the 'new' ritual cycle of the months Šabāṭu, Addaru and Nisannu, which formed "a complex whole centered on human and divine kingship."[44] A large part of the Neo-Assyrian literary production and theological discourse of this period focussed on the appropriation of Babylonian elements in the Assyrian imperial ideology, thus strengthening the Assyrian imperial claim.[45] In that sense, "the New Year festival must be regarded as the ideal means to achieve both a cultic *Anschluss* between Assyria and Babylonia, and a way to convey Assyria's might."[46] The *akītu* became part of a discourse aiming at legitimizing "changed political arrangements."[47] Moreover, different *akītu*-festivals were instated at different locations in Assyria, the festival thus being "a kind of symbolic territorial lynchpin"[48] which could connect different centres of the Assyrian heartland and be mirrored in the larger empire, especially in Babylonia. Yet, as section of a greater ritual complex centring on the eleventh and twelfth month of the year and the first month of the next, the *akītu*'s observance in the city of Assur was of greater importance than that of other *akītu*-celebrations at different instances and locations.[49] As state ritual it served to affirm the king in his position and to consolidate the existing social and civic order for another year.[50] In that sense, the *akītu*-festival celebrated in the beginning of Nisannu in the city of Assur can be considered as New Year Festival.

While his father did everything in his might to destroy the power of Babylon, Esarhaddon adopted a policy of reconciliation between both nations by aiming at creating "a single national image".[51] The celebration of the *akītu* in Babylon had been interrupted when Sennacherib had godnapped the statue of Marduk in 689 BC.[52] Just as the departure of Marduk was inscribed (and thus justified) in a theological discourse created by Assyrian scholars,[53] his return to Babylon too was carefully prepared and staged. In correspondence between scholars and the king, we receive glimpses of what happened behind the scenes, such as an incident that took

[44] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 409.
[45] See Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 418 (with literature). The "reconceptualization of Aššur's theology" is visible in five actions: the rewriting of Enūma Elîš with Aššur as protagonist; the use of the logogram AN.ŠÁR to write Aššur's name; the transformation of the cultic topography of Assur, including the addition of a dais of destinies to the Aššur temple and the building of the *akītu*-house; and the introduction of the *akītu*-festival in the Assyrian capital. The composition of the Marduk Ordeal should also be seen in this light (Barcina 2017: 109-110; Frahm 2011a: 349-360).
[46] Barcina 2017: 124.
[47] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 419.
[48] Barcina 2017: 96.
[49] See Cohen 1993: 425-427 with references.
[50] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 426.
[51] Porter 1993, Chapter 6.
[52] These issues are discussed by Nielsen 2018: 94-104.
[53] A.o. inspired by the historical memory of Nebuchadnezzar I, see Nielsen 2018: 104-114. See also Frahm 2011a: 349-360.

place in Labbanat, where a man delivered a message given to him personally by Bēl and his consort while he was escorting them (to Babylon?).[54] Two omen queries show how diviners were worried about the transport of Marduk by boat: "[On the … of the month Ayyar of] the [c]om[ing year …], [should they load the statue of the great lord Marduk] on the boat [in the Inner Ci]ty, and should he g[o to B]abylon […]?"[55] In a building inscription, Aššurbanipal speaks of the refurbishment of Esagila and the return of the gods therein.[56]

The return of Marduk to Babylon in 669 BC is described more extensively by Aššurbanipal in his "School Days Inscription". The god is reminded of his love for Babylon and asked to travel back to his home city:

> "During my first regnal year, [whe]n Marduk, the lord of everything, [placed] in my hands the lordship of […], I seized the hem of his great divinity, frequented his places of worship, and constantly prayed to and beseeched his great divinity concerning the journey of his divinity, (saying): 'Remember Babylon, which you yourself destroyed in your anger. Relent and turn [your] att[ention] back to Esagila, the palace of your lordship. You have abandoned your city for too long and have taken up residence in a place not befitting you. You are indeed the supreme one of the gods, O Marduk. Give the command to travel to Šuann[a] (Babylon)!'"[57]

When the god agreed, Aššurbanipal sent his brother Šamaš-šuma-ukīn to accompany him back to Babylon.[58] Promptly, the gods of Babylonia left their abodes and hurried to Babylon to welcome Marduk home. This homecoming took on the form of an *akītu*-festival, because Šamaš-šuma-ukīn "took the god by the hand" and Nabû came over from Borsippa.[59] It has been suggested that the Neo-Assyrian composition called "the Exaltation of Nabû" was created for this exact event.[60] Still, the event took place in the month of Ayyāru (II) and no mention of the *akītu*-house is made. However it may be, it is clear that with the return of Marduk to Babylon, the New Year could be celebrated in the appropriate fashion again.[61] The Assyrian king's participation in the festival would only have strengthened his claim to authority over Babylonia.

The New Year Festival remained of central importance for royal legitimation in the **Long Sixth Century** (612-484 BC). It was a royal prerogative to build and renovate the *akītu*-houses, the Dais of Destinies and other cultic locales, as can be gleaned from multiple references to such

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[54] SAA 10, 24.
[55] SAA 4, 264, see also SAA 4; 265.
[56] Aššurbanipal 10 (Prism T) i 21-26.
[57] Aššurbanipal 73 (School Days Inscription) obv. ii 26'-32'.
[58] The return of Marduk under Šamaš-šuma-ukīn is also attested in the Babylonian chronicles ABC 14 34-36 (Esarhaddon Chronicle) and ABC 16 1-4 (*Akītu* Chronicle).
[59] See below, footnote 221.
[60] Barcina 2017: 93 note 9, contra Lambert 2013: 346.
[61] Note, nevertheless, how none of the sources relating the return of Marduk by Šamaš-šuma-ukīn mentions the resumption of the NYF.

activities in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions.[62] Furthermore, the king participated in the processions during the festival, by "taking Bēl by the hand"[63] and providing gifts to the gods.[64] More circumstantial evidence can be gleaned from administrative sources. A telling case was made for the events that took place at the beginning of Nisannu in Borsippa.[65] It could clearly be shown that Nabû was prepared for his journey to Babylon in that period. Smaller *akītu*-festivals were probably observed outside of Babylon; there are mentions of *akītu*-houses in Dilbat for Uraš; at Nippur for Marduk, Ninurta and Sîn; at Uruk for Anu, Bēltu-ša-Uruk and Uṣur-amāssu; and at Sippar for Bēlet-Sippar.[66] Aside from the *akītu* of Nisannu (the "New Year Festival") celebrated in Babylon, there is evidence for an *akītu* of Tašrītu.[67] Very little about the actual events of the festival is known for this period apart from the defining element: the procession of gods going to the *akītu*-house and returning to the city after a given period of time.

Unsurprisingly, the sources remain silent about a cultic celebration of the New Year in Babylonian cities from the beginning of the reign of Xerxes until approximately the middle of the third century BC. The repercussions of the Babylonian revolts and the subsequent events that led to the End of Archives in 484 BC are also visible in the cultic workings of the large temple institutions of Northern Babylonia, including Esagila in Babylon, where the prebendary system as it had existed in the Long Sixth Century was no longer present.[68] It is unlikely that any large-scale festivals were held at this time. During the **Seleucid and Parthian** (331 BC–80 CE) age, different cultic traditions co-existed in Babylonia: the one in Uruk was focussed on Anu and Antu, celebrating an *akītu* in both the first and the seventh month, and the one in Babylon for Marduk and Zarpānītu included New Year's rites in Nisannu. In the same time frame a compelling document from southern Egypt can be placed. The Papyrus Amherst 63 contains an Aramaic text in Demotic script and includes clear references to the Babylonian *akītu*-procession, aside from a number of Judaic and other ancient Near Eastern cultic traditions.[69] Despite many uncertainties related to its context of creation, the papyrus shows the

[62] See below, Chapter III.2.2.
[63] The expression will be discussed below, page 70.
[64] See below page 62.
[65] Waerzeggers 2010: 119-130. See below Chapter III.2.1.1.
[66] Cohen 2015: 390; references in CAD A/1 269-270.
[67] Ambos 2013: 130-132 with references.
[68] Hackl 2013. For 484 and its repercussions, see most recently Waerzeggers & Seire 2018.
[69] Van der Toorn 2018.

survival of the idea or the memory of the Babylonian NYF through space and contact with other traditions.[70]

In the **first century CE** the cuneiform sources go quiet, but evidence for the survival of the *akītu*-festival has been sought in peripheral material.[71] New Year's traditions in surrounding regions have sometimes been linked to the Babylonian NYF, but it is questionable in how far such a link can be substantiated historically.[72] A more solid indication of cultic continuity can be found at first century Palmyra, where scenes reminiscent of Enūma Elîš and/or the procession of gods during the *akītu*-festival were depicted on a bas-relief in the temple of Bēl.[73] A Syrian Christian writing in **fifth century** Edessa mentions with disdain the pagan rites, vaguely reminiscent of the Babylonian *akītu*-procession, still celebrated in the city.[74] Rites for the month of Nisannu in Harran are described by two **early Islamic** writers and could go back to the Mesopotamian tradition.[75] **Today**, the Assyrian population has revived the *akītu* or spring festival (*Kha b-Nisan*), a twelve-day event that ends on the first day of April, with parades in traditional costumes and parties.[76]

## II.2 The reconstructed twelve days

The *akītu* celebrated by today's Assyrians is directly based on what Assyriologists have reconstructed. There is a general agreement about the length and schedule of the festival, with minor variations, due to different interpretations of the same source material. In the following section, I give an overview of what is known as "the Babylonian New Year Festival" or the *akītu*-festival celebrated at the beginning of Nisannu in Babylon.[77] The different problems and

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[70] Much less clear is whether the Papyrus may be seen as evidence for a specific ritual reality that included these elements of the NYF.
[71] See Geller 1997: 53-55.
[72] Pace van der Toorn 1991. Similarly, it is doubtful whether the festival of Elagabal in third century Rome can be connected directly to the Mesopotamian *akītu*-tradition besides the shared phenomenon of "procession of gods". The extravagant emperor Elagabalus introduced a festival for the Syrian god Elagabal=Sol Invictus in which "he placed the sun god in a chariot adorned with gold and jewels and brought him out from the city to the suburbs." The other gods of Rome joined in the procession and spent the day in a special temple on the Palatine Hill, from which they returned the next day. (Herodian, *Roman History* 5.6.6.)
[73] Dirven 1997 and 1999: 146-153.
[74] Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* XXX, see Geller 1997: 54. The similarities to the NYF are limited to the fact that a procession takes place and that it concerns "pagan" rites.
[75] Ibn al-Nadīm and Al-Birūn, see Geller 1997: 54-55.
[76] Aprim 2004. The festival was reintroduced along with the "traditional Assyrian" calendar in the mid-1950's in an upsurge of Assyrian nationalism. It was not recognized by state governments world wide until very recently.
[77] The described course of events of the New Year Festival combines the accounts of: Cohen 2015, Zgoll 2006, Linssen 2004, Bidmead 2002, Pongratz-Leisten 1994, Cohen 1993, Çağirgan 1976. It is given here for the sake of presenting the status quaestionis of the New Year Festival and will be critically re-evaluated in the following chapters. A list of the sources used can be found in the indices. The festival at Assur was obviously different and will not be discussed here. See Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 407-426 and 1994, *passim*.

questions related to this reconstruction will be discussed in section II.4. The sources commonly used for this reconstruction will be evaluated in Chapter III.

*Table 1: Course of events, based on Zgoll 2006*

| **Day** | **Events** |
|---|---|
| 1 | preparations |
| 2 | customary rites |
| 3 | fashioning figurines |
| 4 | presentation of scepter to king – recitation of Enūma Elîš |
| 5 | purification of the temple – arrival of Nabû – vindication of the king |
| 6 | Nabû kills enemies |
| 7 | dressing of the gods |
| 8 | divine assembly – procession to the *akītu*-house |
| 9 | omina? – celebration |
| 10 | gift giving |
| 11 | returning procession – second divine assembly |
| 12 | return to home cities |

In Esagila, "in Nisannu, on the **first day**, at dawn, the *mubannû* (official who arranges the offering table) comes down to the courtyard of Bēl with a key."[78] With that key, the priest opened the access to a cistern and he proceeded to throw something in it.[79] Meanwhile, sacrificial animals were delivered at the *akītu*-house.[80] Aside from that, the gods outside of Babylon prepared to travel to the capital. In Borsippa, Nabû and Nanāya were the subject of rituals that were connected to the *akītu*-festival of Babylon.[81] There is mention of singing by the *kurgarrû* and the songstress, after which gates are purified by means of smearing oil on them. Mirrors and the *pišannu*-box[82] are brought in. Finally, the bedchamber of Nabû and Nanāya is invoked and a holy water basin is prepared.

**Day two** to five, and possibly day six and seven as well, all started in the same way: at a specified time of the night the Elder Brother (*aḫu-rabû*) rose, washed himself with river water, removed the curtain in front of Bēl and entered in the deity's presence.[83] Then he recited a prayer, after which he opened the gates for the *ērib-bīti*s, the singers and the lamentation-priests to "perform their rites as usual". In the meantime, the main gods of Borsippa, Sippar and Uruk were the subject of extensive clothing ceremonies, which points to their imminent departure on day five.[84]

[78] Çağirnan 1976: 1 lines 1-2.
[79] Perhaps the key itself, as suggested by Linssen 2004: 80.
[80] AB 244 line 30-31 (van der Spek 1998: 234-235; McEwan 1981b: 132-134); YOS 3, 25.
[81] BM 40790 (Da Riva & Galetti 2018).
[82] In *pišannu*-boxes, the personal belongings of deities were kept (Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 196).
[83] Days 2-7 are described in the NYF texts, see Chapter IV.
[84] See below, chapter III.2.1.

On the **third day**, after the sequence of events leading to the opening of the gates as described above, the Elder Brother called for a group of craftsmen (a carpenter, goldsmith, weaver and metalworker) and instructed them to fashion two figurines, the details of which are specified in the ritual text, except for what or whom exactly they must represent. They were to be placed in the temple of Madānu until the sixth day of the festival and to be fed with that god's leftovers.[85] Ezida, Ebabbar and Eanna underwent ceremonies "for the well-being of the temple", which included singing and the smearing of oil on doors.

In modern research, the **fourth day** is often considered to be the beginning of the actual new year: after the usual recitation of prayers to now both Bēl and Bēltīya, a blessing of Esagila in its capacity of earthly image of the *ikû*-star followed, and since "the heliacal rising of the Iku-star [sic] would have occurred on the eastern horizon just before dawn on Nisannu 4",[86] the blessing of the star marked the beginning of the new year.[87] After the completion of the morning rites, the tiara of Anu and the throne of Enlil were covered and the high priest recited the full text of Enūma Elîš to Marduk.[88] Meanwhile, the king went to the Nabû *ša ḫarê* temple (called E-niggidri-kalamma-summa, "House which bestows the sceptre of the Land") to receive the sceptre of kingship.[89] After his visit to the Nabû-temple in Babylon, the king went to Borsippa to accompany Nabû in his procession to Babylon where, according to Cohen, the god entered his cella Ezida in Esagila.[90]

On the **fifth day**, after the observation of the morning rites, the Elder Brother ordered an exorcist to purify Esagila and Ezida (Nabû's cella in Esagila) while he himself was not present. That was done by sprinkling water, smearing oil on doorposts, burning incense and hitting a drum. In a second stage, a slaughterer beheaded a sheep and its carcass was subsequently used to further cleanse the temple. Both the sheep's carcass and its head were disposed of by throwing them in the Euphrates. Moreover, the exorcist and slaughterer were instructed to leave

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[85] NYF1, reverse V-VI.
[86] Bidmead 2002: 60.
[87] Van der Toorn 1991: 332. See also below, page 226.
[88] Day 4 is described in NYF2, 3 and 4.
[89] This is not found in the ritual texts but is gathered from the combination of the following three sources: Babylon-Stele VII 23-29 (Schaudig 2001 3.3: 526); ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) III 25 (Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/ [last accessed 19.08.2019]); IM 142109 line 29 (al-Mutawalli 1999).
[90] Cohen 1993: 438 based on WBC IIa 1-5 //WBA III 46-51 (Da Riva 2012: 44-45). In this royal inscription, the day on which Nabû entered Ezida in Esagila is not specified; the text merely says "at the New Year for the *akītu*-festival" (*ina zagmukki rēš šatti ana isinni akīti*). Nonetheless, since the fourth day of Nisannu is considered to be the "actual" New Year, this event was placed on that day by Cohen. Because this is hard to reconcile with other sources, others have not followed him in that assumption.

Babylon for the duration of the festival.[91] After that, the Ezida-cella was further prepared for Nabû's arrival: a golden canopy was draped over the baldachin structure and a final cleansing "cry of distress" was uttered. A prayer and a meal were presented to Bēl, the leftovers of which were brought to Nabû who had just arrived by ship from Borsippa at the Uraš-gate.[92] Meanwhile, the king was brought to Esagila. In front of the cella of Bēl, the high priest removed his royal insignia and slapped the king's cheek. The ruler was now brought before the god and, on his knees, had to pronounce a "negative confession": he declared not to have hurt Babylon, its inhabitants, its temples or its god Marduk. When he was finished, the high priest returned his regalia and slapped him again: it would be a good omen if tears came to his eyes; if not, Bēl had been angered. At the end of the fifth day, the high priest and the king went out into the Grand Courtyard of Esagila to prepare a bull sacrifice.[93]

The **sixth day** probably started in the same way as day two to five had begun, with the Elder Brother rising and washing himself, followed by a recitation of prayers to Bēl and Bēltīya. According to another New Year Festival text,[94] Nabû went to Eḫursagtilla, the temple of Ninurta, on this day, where he symbolically killed the two figurines that had been fashioned on the third day of Nisannu. Aside from that, gifts were brought to the gods, as was the case for the following six days.[95] In Borsippa special rites for Nanāya and Uṣur-amāssu were celebrated in Eturkalamma – note the absence of Nabû at this point.[96]

The events of the **seventh day** of Nisannu are largely unknown. In Borsippa, a clothing ceremony was held for Nanāya.[97] A ritual text from Uruk for the *akītu*-festival of the seventh month Tašrītu mentions a clothing ceremony for the seventh day.[98] Therefore, it has been suggested that in Babylon in Nisannu this was the case too. The clothing ceremonies prepared the gods for the events of the following day.

On the **eighth day** of Nisannu all the gods that had previously come to Babylon assembled at the Dais of Destinies to decree the fates, so a Nebuchadnezzar-inscription tells us.[99] The king

[91] NYF4 II-V.
[92] NYF3 VI; VAT 13834+ (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 13: 244-246); Neriglissar C23 I 33-40 (Da Riva 2013: 129-130, 133).
[93] NYF3 VI.
[94] NYF1 VI.
[95] Commentary on Enūma Elîš I-VII 53'-54' (Frahm & Jiménez 2015: 312).
[96] BM 40790 III.
[97] BM 40790 III 26-28.
[98] TU 39-40 (Linssen 2004: 184-196).
[99] East India House Inscription: Sackler Nbk obv. ii 64-iii 18 (Wallenfels 2008: 280-281, 290-291) // ST ii 54-iii 12 (Langdon 1912: 124-127).

provided meat offerings for Bēl and Bēltīya in Esagila,[100] after which the gods' procession to the *akītu*-house began, accompanied by the king, priest and singers. At the different stages of the procession prayers were sung by the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*.[101] Zgoll remarked that a *ḫarû*-ritual was performed on this day.[102] It involved the king's race, the opening of the *ḫarû*-vat and the performance of a battle by cultic actors.[103]

Bidmead argues that the procession to the *akītu*-house took place on the **ninth day**.[104] In fact, there is no information available for this day and most scholars assume that Marduk and other gods were residing in the *akītu*-house already. This was certainly the case for the **tenth day**, for which it is said that the gods were feasting in the *akītu*-house, receiving offerings and being lavished with gifts.[105]

In the morning of the **eleventh day** of Nisannu the celebrations in the *akītu*-house were still going on,[106] but later that day the gods returned to Esagila for a second decreeing of destinies at the Dais of Destinies.[107] With this event the festival in Babylon was concluded and the visiting gods could return to their homes. In Borsippa, Nabû and Nanāya were involved in a wedding ceremony (*ḫadaššūtu*) on this exact day.[108] Some scholars include the **twelfth day** in their reconstruction of the festival as well, for the conclusion of the period of gift-giving mentioned and the return of the other gods to their cities.[109]

## II.3 Meanings and functions

> "Certainly, the history of interpretations of the Akitu festival demonstrates that definitions of ritual are also historical creations, and such historically determined definitions may or may not adequately describe what the annual festivities of ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon were all about."
>
> (Bell 1997: 20)

[100] BCHP 12 (Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_01.html [last accessed 4 September 2018]).
[101] K 9876+ (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 8: 228-232).
[102] VAT 16435 (Köcher 1952: 192-202); Zgoll 2006: 34-37.
[103] Zgoll 2006: 58-60.
[104] Bidmead 2002: 94-95. She bases her argument on the Neo-Assyrian ritual text K 9876+ (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 8) in which the prayers to be recited at different stages of the procession are presented. Yet, the day for observing these rites is not mentioned in the text, thus it remains unclear on what evidence her argument is based. See also Kuhrt 1987a: 35 and Berger 1970: 156.
[105] Ebabbar-Ekurra Cylinder II 27-34 (Schaudig 2001 2.4 1: 358-362); Babylon-Stele IX 4'-30' (Schaudig 2001 3.3: 514-529).
[106] SBH VIII (= VAT 662+663; Matsushima 1987: 158-161; Çağirnan 1976: 168-182; Unger 1931 no. 13: 264-270).
[107] East India House Inscription, see footnote 99.
[108] SBH VIII; TU 39 obv. 4-5; BM 40790 III 31.
[109] Bidmead 2002: 106; Cohen 1993: 440.

The most studied questions regarding the NYF are why the festival was celebrated and which symbolic purposes it served.[110] Some earlier scholars have searched to give one all-encompassing theory that explains the festival as a whole (unity theory), while others have focussed on specific aspects of it, resulting in a layering of meanings (conglomerate theory).[111] While many of those interpretations are valid, it should be emphasized that not only the form of the NYF, but also its meaning and function depended on its historical context: "It represented current ideas, turned into religious practice: consequently the festival was dynamic and was adapted to local circumstances."[112] Below, the different meanings and functions of the Babylonian NYF will be discussed by topic, although, admittedly, most interpretations are dependent on one another.

### II.3.1 Time and space

The Babylonian *akītu*-festival served as a marker for the beginning of the year and as such had a calendrical function.[113] This does not mean that "*akītu*-festival" is a synonym for "NYF", as was made clear above: while the *akītu*-festival observed at Babylon during the first millennium BC is unmistakably a celebration of the New Year, i.e. the beginning of the twelve month calendar,[114] earlier and other *akītu*-festivals are less clearly connected to a calendrical moment. As already mentioned above, the first *akītu*-festivals seemed to have been connected to agricultural and astronomical elements, which explains why it was celebrated twice a year. It may have been connected to the vernal and autumnal equinox,[115] and it marked the beginning of the harvest and sowing season respectively.[116] Black claims that the agricultural meaning was still present in the first millennium as the *akītu*-procession can be considered to be a "cultic picnic", by which he meant that the procession out into the open country, where the *akītu*-temple was located, was an "attempt to celebrate or ensure the success of the spring harvest of barley".[117]

The Babylonian NYF did not only serve as an indicator of time, it also marked a specific space: the land of Babylonia and its capital Babylon. Black pointed out that initially, the festival may have been observed only locally to celebrate the patron deity of the city, but later it developed

[110] Summaries can be found in Zgoll 2006; Sommer 2000; Bell 1997: 17-20; Black 1981.
[111] Black (1981) was the one who used the terms "unity theory" and "conglomerate theory".
[112] Dirven 1999: 152.
[113] Black 1981: 50-51.
[114] As was the one in the city of Assur, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 416-426.
[115] Cohen 2015: 101-102. Also Robson 2004: 82 "The centrality of the lunar cycle was affirmed and strengthened each new year with the performance of the Epic of Creation, in which creation, destruction, and renewal were prominent themes."
[116] Sallaberger 1993(2011): 174-175; Cohen 2015: 100-101; Zgoll 2006: 45-47.
[117] Black 1981: 56.

into a state festival; a development that is connected with the rise of that city in the political landscape of Mesopotamia. During the festival, Marduk renewed his choice for Babylon as dwelling place and the order of the country of Babylonia was ensured for another year.[118]

### II.3.2 Myth and ritual

In modern research, the strongest focus lies on the theological and mythological ideas expressed in and strengthened by the NYF. The tendency is to adopt a myth-ritualist approach and consider the NYF as an expression of, above all, the myth of Enūma Elîš. The form which this connection between ritual and myth took in the festival remains debated.

Many of the oldest interpretations of the NYF centred around the imprisonment, death and resurrection of Marduk as read in (or better, into) the text nowadays known as the Marduk Ordeal.[119] In combination with the story of Enūma Elîš, it was concluded that the festival celebrated the return of Marduk as vegetation deity after his stay in the netherworld by re-enacting his passion and resurrection, and in particular his heroic victory over the forces of chaos as described in Enūma Elîš. The return of Marduk would enable a new season of vegetation to start. Order was temporarily undermined in order to re-establish it – expressed in the role of the king, who atones for the sins of the people with his negative confession –[120] and only after Marduk's liberation by his son Nabû, does he conquer the forces of chaos represented by Tiāmat in the form of the procession to the *akītu*-house.[121] However, von Soden showed that the Marduk Ordeal cannot serve as a reliable source for the Babylonian New Year Festival, since it is a piece of Assyrian propaganda against Babylon.[122] Hence, the earliest interpretation of the festival had to be abandoned.

Nevertheless, while it was clear that the Marduk Ordeal did not give a real but rather a polemic image of the festival, it was and remains to be widely accepted that the NYF and Enūma Elîš follow the same plotline and that both myth and ritual have as main theme the victory of order over chaos. There is no consensus, however, about the way in which this story was expressed in the ritual.

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[118] Zgoll 2006: 69-70.
[119] SAA 3, 34 & 35: 82-91. Thus Zimmern 1918, Langdon 1923, Pallis 1926, Labat 1939, Frankfort 1948, Gaster 1950.
[120] This unique passage in the NYF texts is discussed *in extenso* below, page 256 and in Debourse, *forthcoming*.
[121] See also Black 1981: 48 for references.
[122] Frahm 2011a: 349-360; Von Soden 1955.

Some authors put emphasis on the first part of the festival that took place before the procession of the gods, and see the NYF as a sort of carnival. The first to suggest this was Langdon, who compared the NYF to the Greek Sakaia as they are described by Berossos:

> "Berossos says in the first book of the Babyloniaka that a festival called Sakaia is celebrated in Babylon for five days, beginning on the sixteenth day of the month Loos. During these days it is the custom that the masters are ruled by their slaves and that one of them, who is clothed in a robe similar to that of a king, manages the house. He is also called 'zoganes'."[123]

The idea was picked up again more recently by Auffarth.[124] To him, the NYF was a "Fest der verkehrten Welt", symbolized by the slapping of the king by a priest and the gods' leaving the city:

> "Die Umkehrung der Ordnung wird durchgespielt, der König abgesetzt, die Götter verlassen die Städte, die Arbeiter haben frei. Die Reinigung und die Rechtfertigung des Königs sind die kultischen Akte, um den Gott wiederzugewinnen, den Segen auf die Stadt zu bringen. Unglück, wie Hungersnöte oder Niederlagen im Krieg, sind nicht verursacht von den bösen Kräften von außen, sondern sie haben ihre Ursache im eigenen Fehlverhalten, in der Vernachlässigung des Götterkultes oder der Verletzung der Gerechtigkeit in der Gesellschaft. Der drohende Untergang, den das Schöpfungsfest durchspielt, ist die Frage nach der Legitimität der Herrscher."[125]

However, it is generally not accepted that such a drastic reversal of elements happened during the festival. As Ambos observed, there is no cuneiform evidence for momentary reversal of social order in Babylonia.[126]

What remains implicit in these interpretations, is the role of Enūma Elîš, but it is clear that the underlying assumption is that the carnival served to symbolize the descent into chaos that would later be conquered and replaced by order. In a similar vein, Sommer read the events of the fifth day as a destruction and subsequent rebuilding of the temple.[127] The fire (incense) and water used in an exorcistic ritual symbolize the demolition of the temple; this image is strengthened by two recitations, on the one hand the "cry of distress" (*ikkillu*) and on the other the "negative confession" of the king, in which the king says that he did not ruin the temple.[128] Yet, after the destruction, the gods rebuild the temple, which represented the whole world. In that sense, "the festival actuates an ongoing victory of order over disorder."[129] The latter part of the festival, including the processions to and from the *akītu*-house, echoed "the basic pattern of the return

[123] BNJ 680 F2.
[124] Auffarth 1991. See also Frankfort 1948: 315-328.
[125] Auffarth 1991: 55.
[126] Ambos 2013: 86-89. See also Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 75-77.
[127] Sommer 2000.
[128] Sommer 2000: 85-89.
[129] Sommer 2000: 89.

and banishment of chaos".[130] As such, the NYF's function was ultimately connected with the story of Enūma Elîš, which was explicitly expressed by reciting the myth on the fourth day of the festival, before the symbolic destruction and rebuilding took place.

Differently, Lambert claimed that the connection between the New Year Festival and Enūma Elîš was explicitly present not merely as recitation but in the form of a cultic drama or re-enactment of (part of) the myth during the festival.[131] To him, the procession of gods was a dramatic expression of the battle of Marduk against Tiāmat. His argument was largely based on two texts. In one of his inscriptions, Sennacherib described how the battle of – in this case – Aššur and his posse against Tiāmat was depicted on the bronze doors of the *akītu*-house in Nineveh.[132] Moreover, the topographical list Tintir contains an entry about the seat of Marduk in the *akītu*-house, a seat which is called Tiāmat.[133] Cohen subscribed to Lambert's vision of the NYF as re-enactment of the myth, yet applied it to the second, returning procession, which in his eyes gave expression to "the triumphant moment when the god first entered and claimed his city."[134]

The idea of the NYF as re-enactment of Enūma Elîš was criticized by van der Toorn.[135] He claims that interpreting Marduk sitting on a seat called "Tiāmat" as a battle between the two gods is "stretching the evidence" and that, moreover, "[o]ne is not entitled to draw conclusions about ritual practice from mere ornamentation, as any informed visitor to a mediaeval cathedral can tell."[136] Aside from that, he doubts that the recitation of Enūma Elîš on the fourth day of the festival can serve as conclusive evidence for its central role in the festival, since the myth was also recited during another festival.[137] The most compelling evidence, viz. the Sennacherib-inscription about the gate of the *akītu*-house at Nineveh, remains unmentioned by van der Toorn.

As Pongratz-Leisten has shown, the arguments pro and contra cultic drama rest on a rather arbitrary interpretation of the source material.[138] In fact, based on the available sources we cannot tell whether the myth was enacted or not. A more nuanced picture is sketched in the

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[130] Sommer 2000: 91.
[131] Lambert 1963.
[132] As is described in a building inscription of Sennacherib (Sennacherib 160). See also Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 2: 207-209; Lambert 1963.
[133] Tintir II.1 (George 1992: 44-45).
[134] Cohen 1993: 440.
[135] Van der Toorn 1991: 336-339
[136] Van der Toorn 1991: 338.
[137] Notably, the Kislīmu ritual BM 32206+ (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[138] See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 74.

studies that wish to interpret the NYF as a rite of passage that follows the plotline of Enūma Elîš rather than literally re-enacting the myth. In those interpretations, there is no descent into chaos with a subsequent re-establishment of order; rather an object goes through the three phases of separation, liminality and incorporation. The largest difference with the carnival, is the fact that in a rite of passage, an object is deprived of its status to be reaffirmed in it, whereas in the carnival status is reversed.

Van der Toorn, in fact, sees the New Year Festival as a compilation of multiple rites of passage, or as he wishes to call them, "rites of confirmation".[139] To the standard three phases of separation, liminality and incorporation he added an explicit point of departure, to which the object of the ritual returns in the last stage. A first rite centred around the king who is given the sceptre by Nabû (point of departure), then has his regalia taken away (separation), is humiliated (liminality) and regains his dignity (incorporation). Nabû too performs a rite of confirmation by travelling to Babylon (point of departure), spending the night in a city gate (separation), killing the two images (liminality) and going to Esagila (incorporation). A third rite of confirmation occurs in the last days of the festival, in which the gods assemble in Esagila (point of departure), go into procession to the *akītu*-house (separation), stay there (liminality) and return to Esagila to have a second assembly (incorporation). In all three of these ritual sequences, the state in which the actors are at the point of departure is confirmed in the last phase.

Pongratz-Leisten too regards the New Year Festival as a rite of passage, in particular the part involving the *akītu*-house. She mentions that Marduk undergoes a "change of status" when he travels from the "orderly city" (separation) to the "place of liminality" which is the *akītu*-house; his return to the city entails the "(re-)establishment of order" (incorporation).[140] The rite of passage thus follows the same plotline as encountered in the myth of Enūma Elîš, a link which is explicitly expressed only in the recitations of the *kurgarrû* and the *assinnu* during the procession.[141] The interaction of ritual and myth thus demonstrates the symbolic purpose of the New Year Festival: "Die Intention sowohl von Mythos wie auch Ritual im Neujahrsfest liegt in der Erklärung und Re-etablierung der bestehenden Ordnung und in der Inbesitznahme Babylons als Kultort."[142] Zgoll, in the latest discussion on the connection between Enūma Elîš

[139] Van der Toorn 1990: 17ff.
[140] Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 75.
[141] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 426: "My emphasis is on the notion of myth as plotline and on the process of mythologization versus myth as a closed narrative, which allows ritual to be flexible in its adaptation of mythic traditions;" Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 74-75.
[142] Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 75.

and the NYF, came to the same conclusion.[143] To her, the NYF is not a re-enactment of Enūma Elîš in the strict sense of the word; rather, both are connected on an intertextual ("*interaktional*") level, sharing the same symbolism and structure.[144] Both are expressions of the same ideas in a different format.

Several scholars have pointed out the fact that the *akītu*-festival is much older than Enūma Elîš.[145] This means that the explicit connection between the myth and the ritual must have been created at a time when both were present in cuneiform culture. Pongratz-Leisten has suggested that the link was forged much later than would be expected, and that the creation of the interconnectedness between *akītu*, Enūma Elîš and kingship should be sought in the time of Sennacherib or later.[146] This issue will be discussed in more detail below.[147]

### II.3.3 Royal legitimation

> The main purpose of the festival was for the ruler to be reaffirmed in his office by the gods, and for his people to be assured of another peaceful and prosperous year. During the festival this divine approval and assurance was celebrated by the whole community.
>
> (Linssen 2004: 71)

The NYF is also understood as one of the tools for promoting royal ideology *par excellence*.[148] That is evident from the many references to the festival in the royal inscriptions – which themselves are also of ideological nature – of the (late) Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings.[149] Two episodes of the festival in particular have been crucial in determining which role the king played in the ritual. In this case too, however, the same sources have led to different interpretations that cannot always be reconciled with each other.

The first appearance the king makes in (the reconstructed version of) the NYF is in the ritual known as the "humiliation and negative confession of the king". On the fifth day, the king arrives in the temple, where he is brought to the cella of Marduk. He does not enter, but waits outside while the high priest removes his royal insignia and puts them on a seat in front of the deity. The king is slapped in the face and made to kneel before the god, where he pronounces

[143] Zgoll 2006: 43-44.
[144] Zgoll 2006: 58.
[145] Dirven 1999: 152; Black 1981: 50.
[146] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432-434.
[147] Chapter V.3.3.
[148] Bidmead 2002, *passim*; Zgoll 2006: 61-68; van der Toorn 1991: 332-335; Frankfort 1948: 318-333. For the Neo-Assyrian *akītu* and royal legitimation see Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 407-426; also Finn 2017: 163-167.
[149] See below, respectively Chapters III.1.1 and III.2.2.

his "negative confession": he declares that he did not do any harm to Babylon, its inhabitants, Esagila and Marduk. The scene ends with the priest returning the regalia to the king.[150]

The second episode in which the king plays a role is the procession of the gods. On the eighth day, he "takes Marduk by the hand" and leads the procession to the *akītu*-house, where he lavishes the gods in offerings and gifts.[151] It is especially the public nature of the procession that makes it into a tool for royal legitimation. At this occasion, the king would have been able to display the treasures he had acquired during his military campaigns.[152] Kings' willingness to invest and their claims to have participated in the festival show the ideological importance of it. The consensus is that by participating in the rites, the king was reaffirmed in his office. This means that the symbolism of those rites expressed a renewal of his kingship in the eyes of the gods and the people alike.

It is less clear how this was symbolically achieved and which role the king assumed in order to be reinstated in his office. It has been suggested that the king took on the guise of Marduk. This connection was first seen in the older interpretation of the NYF that considered the festival as the expression of the death and resurrection of Marduk. In this context, the humiliation ritual represented the moment of Marduk's death: the king became the dying god. While this part of the festival is no longer interpreted in that way today,[153] the idea that the king represented Marduk was retained to explain his role in the procession. In that instance, he embodies Marduk who does battle with Tiāmat. This is suggested by a structural parallelism between the ritual and Enūma Elîš: in the myth, the gods assemble a first time to choose Marduk as the hero who will fight Tiāmat; then, Marduk goes and slays the goddess; finally, the gods convene a second time to hail Marduk as king of the gods. In a similar way, the *akītu*-procession is framed by two assemblies of gods at the "decreeing of destinies": at the first decreeing of destinies, the king-as-Marduk is chosen to lead the procession/battle; after the return of the gods, a second decreeing of destinies takes place, where the king-as-Marduk is hailed as king.[154] The effect is double: both king and god are affirmed in their position of prime ruler amongst humans and gods respectively.

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[150] An in-depth analysis of the humiliation and negative confession of the king is offered in Debourse, *forthcoming*. See also below, page 256.
[151] For a discussion of the phrase "take the god by the hands" see below, page 70.
[152] Black 1981: 46.
[153] See, explicitly on this point, Black 1981: 54 and Zgoll 2006: 56.
[154] Zgoll 2006: 65-66. The parellelism between myth and ritual is much more explicit in the Neo-Assyrian sources, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 420-426, she also stated that "[t]he mythological connotations of the procession in Aššur are more or less identical to those of the procession in Babylonia, the only major difference being the substitution of Aššur for Marduk as the champion who defeats Tiāmat" (420).

Another interpretation states that the king acts simply as high priest of Marduk during the festival: by fulfilling his cultic duties, the god will bless his reign.[155] In this sense, the negative confession served to emphasize the fact that "he has faithfully fulfilled the sacred duties of kingship and priesthood entrusted to him."[156] The slapping would show whether Marduk had blessed his reign for another year: if tears showed, the god would be pleased; if not, he would bring about his downfall. During the procession, the king's role remained unchanged and he acted as the chief priest of the patron deity of Babylon, Marduk.

Similar to that interpretation is the idea that the king acted in the capacity of governor ("Statthalter") of Marduk.[157] His humiliation was compared to the rite of passage in which the royal officials were reinstated in their office during the Assyrian coronation ritual: both rites involved the removal of insignia and kneeling before the higher instance. By acting thus, the king confirmed the ultimate power of Marduk, before representing him in the battle/procession.

A final interpretation does not consider the NYF to be a means for royal confirmation, but rather for rectification of the king. The nuance was added by the anthropologist Jonathan Z. Smith, who regarded the Babylonian NYF of the first millennium BC as a means to rectify the monarch in a world where the rightful king was not on the throne.[158] As such, it could not be dated before the time of Sargon II, "the earliest conqueror of Babylon consciously to adopt the Babylonian pattern and etiquette of kingship and under whose rule, for the first time, one encounters texts which speak of the pattern of Assyrian protection of the rights and privileges of the 'free citizens' of Babylon."[159] At this point in time, the ritual served the Babylonians as a mechanism to cope with an incongruity: there was a king on the throne, but he was not Babylonian. How could the gods agree with his kingship and not lead the country into misery? Thus, by performing the New Year Festival, the Babylonians managed to rectify the situation by letting the king swear that he had not committed the sins of a foreign ruler and that he had taken care of Babylon as a Babylonian king would do. A similar conjecture was made by Michalowski, who read the negative confession in light of Assyrian destructions of Babylon, saying that it "can be paraphrased as 'I am not Tukulti-Ninurta, I am not Sennacherib'."[160]

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[155] Black 1981: 54.
[156] Black 1981: 54. See also Pongatz-Leisten 1997, who explains the negative confession as a declaration of responsibility ("Rechenschaftsbericht") of the king vis-à-vis the citizens of Babylon and their temples.
[157] Zgoll 2006: 61-64.
[158] Smith 1976.
[159] Smith 1976: 5. For the concept of *kidinnūtu* in the NYF, see also Pongratz-Leisten 1997a. She came to similar conclusions regarding the date of the text (see also below).
[160] Michalowski 1990: 393. See also Ambos 2013: 136.

According to Smith, "the Babylonian Akitu festival [is] best described in terms of repetition of the past nor of future fulfilment, but rather in terms of a difficult and incongruous present; this present supplies the chief content of the text and delimits its function; there is an almost casuistic dimension to [this] document – which may be best described as 'application'; this incongruity is surprising in the light of past precedents – but it may only be addressed, worked with, and perhaps even overcome in terms of these same precedents."[161]

In summary, the Babylonian NYF is widely known today as a ritual for royal legitimation that took on the form of the myth of Enūma Elîš. The twelve-day long event was celebrated at the beginning of the year to reaffirm the king in his office and ensure prosperity for the land.

## II.4 If there are altars, there must be gods: problems and questions

> *Timokles*: See whether I frame this syllogism logically, and whether you can capsize it in any way. If there are altars, there must also be gods; but there *are* altars, *ergo* there are gods. What do you have to say to that?
> *Damis*: After I have laughed to my heart's content, I'll tell you!
> *Timokles*: Well, it looks as if you would never stop laughing; tell me, though, how you thought what I said was funny.
>
> Loukianos – *Zeus Tragodos*

The description of the state of the question above indicates that the NYF is widely and well-studied. Yet, despite the relatively large amount of attention paid to the subject, many problems are still present, some of which have been acknowledged by scholars, some of which have not. Some of those problems relate to the fact that the subject of the NYF has been studied for quite a long time: the earliest comprehensive studies on the topic appeared in 1926.[162] Since then, new discoveries have added to our knowledge of the festival, but it should be admitted that many of our ideas concerning the NYF date back to 1926 or even earlier. Recently, more light has been shed on the development of the Assyrian NYF;[163] the same should be done for the Babylonian variant.

Another and perhaps more pressing issue is the question of what we actually refer to when we talk about "the Babylonian NYF". Based on the available source material, we have reconstructed the NYF as an event that lasted twelve days, served specific purposes relating to kingship and renewal and carried symbolic meaning, yet it is never explicitly defined when and where this festival was celebrated. The picture of the Babylonian NYF that is numerously cited and referred to – too often to list here – is a still image. It was created by means of an abundance

[161] Smith 1976: 19.
[162] Pallis 1926 and Zimmern 1926.
[163] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 416-426; see also Barcina 2017.

of sources that are diverse in nature and intention, stem from various places and times and are sometimes not well understood by modern scholars. In other words, it is not possible to reconstruct the schedule of the NYF for any single period of time based on synchronic sources only: Hellenistic "copies" of ritual texts are combined with Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, Neo-Assyrian correspondence and the occasional reference in administrative and literary texts and only in that way can we come to "the Babylonian NYF". When was this twelve-day long Babylonian NYF celebrated? How did it come to be? Did it remain unchanged for centuries during the whole first millennium BC?

To answer these questions, we need to take a step back and consider the sources on which our ideas about the NYF are based. In order to do so, we must let go of what we think to know about the NYF; in other words, for the sake of the argument, we must deconstruct the twelve-day schedule and put every piece of information back in its original historical context. Aside from that, we must be wary of basing our work on unproven assumptions. As historians we often revert to structural imagination, that is, when we fill the gaps left in our story by the evidence with logic, empathy or by using the sources at our disposal a little more creatively.[164] While these methods are accepted and should be used to avoid the drafting of dry lists of facts instead of the writing of (hi)stories, we should be aware of the fact that we use them in the first place. Moreover, we must be careful not to cross the boundary to wishful thinking, as in the (parodic) dialogue cited at the beginning of this section: the existence of altars only proves that gods exist if one assumes that gods exist in the first place.[165]

By historicising the sources for the NYF, a historically more accurate account of the NYF can be gained. However, in some cases it proves not to be easy to understand the sources with which we are dealing. The most problematic sources in the study of the NYF are the ritual texts stemming from Hellenistic Babylon. These compositions give detailed instructions for the performance of rites and prayers during the first days of Nisannu and thus play a crucial role in our understanding of the NYF. It is commonly assumed that they are copies of older originals and can safely be combined with older material. Nevertheless, this has never been demonstrated. Moreover, even if this assumption would be correct, the texts' being copied in the Hellenistic period gives rise to a number of questions: When and where would the original

[164] Examples of acceptable historical imagination: a first letter of Caesar is written from Gaul, the next dated one was sent from Rome – we can therefore assume that Caesar travelled from Gaul to Rome; or, letters from soldiers to their families after the battle of Waterloo include many requests for new boots, which has led historians to conclude that it must have been raining that day.
[165] See Parker 2011: 12 with note 28.

version of these texts have been redacted? Why was a text describing a state ritual in which the king participated still copied in an age of foreign domination? Was the NYF still celebrated in the same way in Hellenistic Babylon as it was in the presumed "earlier time" of composition of the ritual texts? Until now, no answers have been sought to these questions.

The purpose of this dissertation is threefold: first, I aim to make a first step in the direction of an analysis that shows the Babylonian NYF as a historically dynamic event rather than as a static cultic concept. In the following chapter (0) the sources for the Babylonian NYF in the first millennium BC are presented in chronological order and according to "genre". The aim is to gain a global understanding of the principles and structure of the NYF in the different settings in which it appears. It will be shown that, while some continuities can be discerned, considerable changes occurred in the way the New Year in Babylon was celebrated throughout time. Moreover, the Late Babylonian period will prove to be most difficult to understand, in the sense that we encounter contradicting accounts of the NYF, most noticeably concerning the involvement of the king. Second, I wish to gain a better understanding of the Hellenistic ritual texts from Babylon that give instructions for the ritual of the New Year. A new edition is provided in chapter IV, followed by an analysis of the texts and the rituals they describe in chapter V. This analysis will put the NYF texts firmly in the historical framework of the Late Babylonian period. Third, it will be investigated which reasons lie behind the creation of the NYF texts in this late age of cuneiform culture and which purposes they may have served (0). They will be set in light of other LB cuneiform corpora, with which they share a number of features and motifs that do not occur before this time.

# III Textual sources for the Babylonian New Year Festival during the 1st millennium BC

References to the New Year or *akītu*-festival can be found in an abundance of primarily written sources that stem from several different historical contexts. Even the Epic of Gilgameš contains mentions of the festival, for example in tablet XI, when Ut-Napištim recounts the building of the arc:

> "For the workmen I butchered oxen, every day I slaughtered sheep. Beer, ale, oil and wine [I gave my] workforce [to drink], like the waters of a very river! They were celebrating as on the feast-day of the New Year itself! (*isinna ippušū kī ūmi akītimma*)"[166]

Clearly, we should be wary of this variety in the source material and approach every possible source with a critical eye. The reference in the Epic of Gilgameš just cited, for example, is less relevant in the study of the Babylonian NYF during the first millennium BC than the ritual texts from Hellenistic Babylon, which in turn can only cautiously be used to speak about the Neo-Babylonian *akītu*-festival. It is therefore necessary to contextualize the possible sources and relate them to contemporary material in order to see the historical dynamics which may have influenced the NYF rather than to simply extract the "facts" about the NYF the sources may contain and compile them into a perfect but virtual still image.

This calls first for a chronological division of the material. Information about the Babylonian NYF in the first millennium BC is found in three main periods: the Neo-Assyrian period, more specifically the Sargonid era (722–610 BC); the Long Sixth Century (626–484 BC);[167] and the Late Babylonian period (331 BC–80 CE), which can be divided in the Hellenistic (331–141 BC) and Parthian (141 BC–80 CE) eras. It should be noted from the start that there are no sources for the NYF stemming from the period between 484 and the arrival of Graeco-Macedonian rule in Babylonia; the trend is that cultic and scholarly evidence for these years is generally scarce.[168] A chronological division entails a geographical distribution too: sources from the Neo-Assyrian period stem mostly from Assur and Nineveh; those from the LSC come from Sippar, Uruk and Borsippa, aside from Babylon; and the Hellenistic and Parthian sources are in most cases either from Babylon or Uruk.

[166] Gilgameš XI 71-75 (George 2003/1: 706-707). Also in tablet II 265-271 and III 31-34, when Gilgameš promises to celebrate the festival twice after he returns from his mission against Humbaba (George 2003/1: 457-458; 568-569; 574-577).
[167] Jursa 2010: 5. After this "LSC".
[168] Ossendrijver 2019.

Another necessary distinction is based on "genre", even if it is only in broad terms. Information about the NYF can be gleaned from: royal inscriptions, letters, administrative documents, chronicles, Astronomical Diaries, ritual and other cultic texts, commentaries, epics and histories. To some of those corpora a high degree of historical accuracy and factuality can be ascribed, while others are more biased and have primary motives other than conveying the facts. Some sources are thus relevant for *what* they tell us about the NYF, giving quite accurate details concerning its performance and occurrence, while the interest of others lies in the fact *that* they mention the festival, which reveals the importance of the festival in certain domains of cuneiform culture.

It is necessary to emphasize one last time that the Babylonian New Year Festival as it is referred to in literature today is a construct of modern research which combines all possible sources that mention it, allude to it or relate to it. By mixing and matching texts and other source material, a still image of the festival was created that was subsequently used to study Babylonian religion and ideas of kingship, and to compare it with similar events in neighbouring and contemporary or even distant (in time and space) cultures. Therefore, the historical development of the Babylonian New Year Festival and the dynamics behind it have largely been ignored.[169]

In this chapter, I will re-evaluate the sources that are commonly used to study the New Year Festival celebrated at Babylon in the first millennium BC. The material is divided as described above: first according to time/space and second according to genre. It is not my aim here to scout the sources for "facts" about the NYF, like pieces of a larger puzzle; instead, the focus lies on distinguishing which kind of sources exist for a given period of time, in which context they were created and what they tell us about the NYF, in order to establish in broad terms the similarities and differences discernible over time. It will soon be made clear that, while there is clear continuity between the NA and LSC sources, considerable changes appear in the LB source material.

## III.1 Neo-Assyrian: Sargonids and the Babylonian NYF

The earliest source that directly relates to the Babylonian NYF is preserved, most surprisingly, in a Middle-Assyrian manuscript.[170] It describes offerings and recitations performed during a procession of Marduk led by the king. At one instance, it mentions the Ubšukinakku, the "Dais of Destinies", suggesting that we are dealing with a description of (part of) the *akītu*-procession.

[169] In contrast to the Neo-Assyrian New Year Festival, which was extensively studied in its historical context by, most importantly, Pongratz-Leisten (1994 and 2015).
[170] VAT 16435 (Köcher 1952).

The fact that an Assyrian text mentions Marduk and not Aššur makes it clear that it concerns an event at Babylon.[171] Still, this text stands on its own and it is not until the reign of Sargon II that the *akītu*-festival is mentioned again in Assyrian sources.[172]

Moreover, although we are confronted with an abundance of sources from the reign of Sargon onwards, only few of them equivocally tell us something about the Babylonian *akītu*-festival. The reason for this is that the rulers of the Sargonid dynasty adopted the *akītu*-festival in their own cultic calendar and adapted it to fit their ideological discourse aimed at legitimising their imperial rule. Aside from that, the actions of Sennacherib which led to the destruction of Babylon and the abduction of its patron deity Marduk were cause for an interruption of the observance of the NYF in that city for some time. Yet, even if most NA sources relate Assyrian practices rather than the tradition from Babylon, we may presume that the most important elements from the festival as performed at Babylon were maintained and, therefore, these texts can in broad terms and with much caution be used to study the Babylonian festival as well. The relevant sources are: royal inscriptions, correspondence, scholarly compositions, ritual and other cultic texts and administrative records. Only few of those texts directly relate information about the festival celebrated at Babylon.

### III.1.1 Royal inscriptions

Only one Neo-Assyrian king refers directly to the Babylonian NYF in his inscriptions. At two instances, Sargon says to have taken part in the procession of Marduk in Babylon in the year 710 BC. The event can be framed in the context of the king's stay in that city during his campaign against Merodach-Baladan II.[173] While Sargon was not the first Assyrian king to participate in *akītu*-rituals,[174] he was the first to mention it in his inscriptions, which in this case shows his willingness to strengthen bonds between Assyria on the one hand and Babylonia on the other.[175]

> "Als der Nisannu anbrach, der Monat, (in dem) der Herr der Götter aus (seinem Tempel) kommt, da ergriff ich die Hände des großen Herrn Marduk (und) der Nabû, des Königs über die Gesamtheit von Himmel und Erde, und führte die Prozession zum Bīt-Akītu vollständig durch."[176]

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[171] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 385; contra Köcher 1952 and Cohen 1993: 418, who both situated the described festival in Assyria, viz. in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta or Assur respectively.
[172] See also Barcina 2017: 94 with note 19; Maul 2000.
[173] Barcina 2017: 96.
[174] In the Assyrian Eponym List, Tiglath-Pileser III is said to have participated in the *akītu*-festival of Babylon two times. It also mentions the participation of Sargon (https://www.livius.org/articles/concept/limmu/limmu-list-858-699-bce/ [last accessed 08.08.2019]).
[175] Barcina 2017: 97.
[176] Annalen lines 320-321 (Fuchs 1994: 156 with translation 332).

> "In Babylon, dem Kultort des Enlil der Götter, zog ich mit jubelndem Herzen (und) strahlendem Gesicht freudig ein, ergriff die Hand des großen Herrn Marduk und führte die Prozession zum Bīt-Akītu vollständig durch."[177]

The immediate successors of Sargon shifted their focus regarding the *akītu*-festival from Babylon to Assyrian cities. The festival of Babylon is not mentioned again; instead, the NA sources refer to Assyrian *akītu*-temples and -festivals.

While Aššurbanipal later would ascribe the initial building activities in the *akītu*-temples of Nineveh and Harran to Sargon, none of the latter king's inscriptions corroborates that claim.[178] The first king to mention his building activities in *akītu*-houses in Assyria is Sennacherib. Multiple monuments found in Nineveh and Assur, both in the *akītu*-houses there and elsewhere, celebrate Sennacherib as builder of the *bīt akīti*.

> "I built [E]šaḫulezenzagmukam, "House of Joy and Gladness for the Festival of the Beginning of the Year". At the time of the festival of the *akītu*-house, I celebrate annually [i]nside it *with* prayer and expressions of my humility before god and goddess and for my [lord]ly pleasure."[179]

In many of the *akītu*-house inscriptions, Sennacherib is described as the one who fashioned statues of a retinue of gods, which "fits very well with a hypothetical assembly of the gods at both *akītu*-houses."[180]

> "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, the one who fashioned image(s) of the deities Aššur, Anu, Sîn, Adad, Nergal, Ištar of Bīt-Kidmuri, Bēlet-ilī, and the (other) great gods, I: with white limestone, I laid the foundation(s) of the *akītu*-house, the residence of Aššur, my lord."[181]

While the king repeated at multiple instances in his inscriptions that he was continuing an old (Assyrian) tradition, it is generally accepted that the custom to celebrate *akītu*-festivals was borrowed by the Sargonids from Babylonia.[182] This is very clear in the well-known inscription describing the bronze doors of the *akītu*-house at Nineveh – which the king claims to have forged himself:

> "Acco[rding to] the command that the gods Šamaš and Adad gave me through divination, I depicted on this gate an image of [(the god) Aššur, who] is going to fight [Tiāmat], (showing) the bow as he carries (it), in the chariot which he rides, (and) the Deluge [which he has h]arnessed, (and) the god Amurru as the driver who rides with him."[183]

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[177] Große Prunkschrift 140-141 (Fuchs 1994: 231, 352).
[178] Barcina 2017: 100 with note 48. One letter from Sargon's correspondence refers to the *akītu* of Sîn in Harran however (SAA 1, 188).
[179] Sennacherib 37 (Nergal Gate Inscription) rev. 4'-11'.
[180] Barcina 2017: 12.
[181] Sennacherib 172; see also Frahm 1997 T 142: 175-176.
[182] Barcina 2017: 102.
[183] Sennacherib 160 5-9. See also Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 2: 207-209; Lambert 1963.

In this inscription, Aššur takes the stead of Marduk in the cosmic battle against Tiāmat as we know it from Enūma Elîš. The story of the battle traditionally served to glorify Marduk as head of the Babylonian pantheon *par excellence*, but in the Assyrian version of the myth, as in the described scene on the gate of the *akītu*-house, Aššur can claim all the credit.

In the year 683 BC, Sennacherib dedicated 126 people as personnel to the *akītu*-house of the steppe (Nineveh).[184] From that moment onwards, the temple was ready to be used in *akītu*-festivals. It is not entirely clear, however, whether Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, celebrated the festival at Nineveh. While he refers in a few of his inscriptions to building activities in *akītu*-houses,[185] only one inscription of his mentions an *akītu*-festival, not in Nineveh but at Arbela for Ištar:

> "[…] Ulūlu, 17th day, […] before them […] they were bringing their offerings in good time […with] far-reaching intelligence (and) vast understanding […] I seated them inside the *akītu*-house (and) […] their […] I placed before [them insi]de the *akītu*-house […]x, ten sheep, ten fowl, seven homers of wine, four homers of […] …, groats, this image, for [their] divine meal, […]. … of my lord … […] I made [offerings] to their [… … I laid its foundations] and secured [its] brickwork. […] … I brought in; like […]… residence of relaxation of […] returning … together with the gods, her counsellors, [… I br]ought her in and placed her in a [peaceful] dwelling."[186]

This is also the first inscription that provides a piece of information about what exactly went on in the *akītu*-house: the king presented offerings. Similar information can be gathered from Aššurbanipal's inscriptions:

> "I made Aššur and Mullissu, the gods who support me (and) fulfil my heart's desire, enter inside and mad[e] (them) celebrate an *akītu*-festival. I offered sumptuous offerings before them (and) presented (them) with my gifts. Aššur and Mullissu, who raised me from childhood (and) protected my kingship, will enter that *akītu*-house and celebrate joyous festivals."[187]

The silence regarding the Babylonian NYF in the inscriptions of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon is broken by Aššurbanipal, indirectly at least. In a few of his inscriptions, he refers to the return of Marduk to Babylon in a procession led by his brother Šamaš-šuma-ukīn. Marduk's homecoming meant that the festival could be resumed and suggests that it had not taken place in Babylon since his abduction by Sennacherib in 689 BC.

> Exorcist(s) … […], lamentation-singers […] with *manz*[*û*-instruments (and) *ḫalḫallatu*-instruments], singers with instruments [*were singing*] the praise of [his] lordshi[p]. Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, (my) favourite brother whom I dedica[ted to the god Marduk], taking the hand of his great divinity, was marching be[fore him].[188]

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[184] SAA 12, 86.
[185] Esarhaddon 54 (Collective Text), 55, 1013.
[186] Esarhaddon 54 rev. 25-39.
[187] Aššurbanipal 10 (Prism T) v 50-vi 11.
[188] Aššurbanipal 73 (School Days Inscription) o iii 2'-6'.

From the NA royal inscriptions can be gleaned that the NYF at Babylon was so central to the topic of Mesopotamian kingship that, at first, Assyrian kings participated in it and, later, they claimed it as their own Assyrian tradition in order to strengthen their imperial claim.

### III.1.2 Correspondence

Whereas the royal inscriptions provide details mostly about the building of *akītu*-houses, the correspondence between the king and his scholars informs us mainly about the *akītu*-processions. One can trace more clearly what happened "behind the scenes", since the king was informed every time gods moved in and out of their respective *akītu*-houses. The fact that the king was supposed to accompany the processions, but could not always be there in person to accompany the gods, is clear from the references to the royal garment, which could substitute for the king in his absence:

> "[The gods] of Kurba'il set off (for the *akītu*-temple) under my [directi]on, and the garments of the king go (along)."[189]
>
> "On the 17th day Sîn sets off and takes up residence in the *akītu*-temple. Let the king, my lord, order that they give the garments. I should br[ing them] with me. The penitential psalm will be [per]formed ov[er them], he will bless the king, [my lord], and give a life of dis[tant d]ays to the king, [my] lord."[190]

More than the royal inscriptions, the letters between kings and scholars show how there were a number of *akītu*-festivals celebrated for different gods in different cities at different moments:[191] for Aššur in Assur, Ištar in Nineveh, Sîn in Harran,[192] Adad of Kurba'il,[193] Adad of Kilizi,[194] Nergal of Tarbiṣu,[195] Nabû and Tašmetu in Assur's Ezida,[196] the Lady of Akkad,[197] Ištar in Milqia,[198] Ištar of Arbela.[199]

References to the *akītu*-festival of Babylon specifically are rare. In a letter written to Sargon II, a scholar expresses his gratitude for being allowed to participate in the "festival of Bēl":

> "[As to what the king my lord wro]te to me "come [to my presence in Nisan]" – the work will be fini[shed] by the [..th] of intercalary Adar; I shall leave Dur-šarruken on the 5th of extra Adar and shall be in the presence of the ki[ng my lord] even before the month of Nisan. That the king my lord [invited me] to Babylon, that I am going to see Bel and present a votive gift to Bel [on

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[189] SAA 10, 339 obv. 9-rev. 8.
[190] SAA 10, 338.
[191] See also Pongratz-Leisten 1997b: 246.
[192] SAA 1, 188 and SAA 10, 338.
[193] SAA 10, 339.
[194] SAA 13, 189.
[195] SAA 10, 340.
[196] SAA 13, 130 and 134.
[197] SAA 10, 353.
[198] SAA 13, 149.
[199] SAA 13, 152.

> behalf of the king my lord], that I am going to see the face [of the king my lord] and kiss the ground [before the king, my lord]"[200]

Another letter contains the question what to do with the "festival of Bēl" of the seventh month Tašrītu in the case of an intercalary month, since that would mean that the festival was to take place a month later than usual:

> "[Concerni]ng the intercalation [of] the year [about which the k]ing said as follows "let us add an intercalary Elul" – the matter is now settled. [May the kin]g my lord live forever on account of that! [The king, my lo]rd knows that Bēl is dressed (for the festival) [on the 7]th of Tašrītu; on the 8th day the gate (of the temple) is kept open and the procession of Bel sets out as in the month Nisan."[201]

The latter letter has served to prove the existence of a second *akītu*-festival in Babylon, one celebrated in the seventh month Tašrītu, aside from the one observed in Nisannu. It should be noted that the word *akītu* is not used in this letter and a more implicit reference to the procession of Marduk is used to create the parallel.

### III.1.3 Scholarship and cult

Under the reigns of Sennacherib and his successors, but perhaps starting with Sargon already,[202] the Mesopotamian cultic landscape underwent considerable changes that required legitimation and explanation. This process can be read in a number of scholarly and cultic texts that were composed by scholars active at the Assyrian royal court.[203] Two decisions of Sennacherib in particular had far-reaching consequences for the *akītu*-festival in both Babylonia and Assyria. First, Sennacherib undertook a thorough reform of the Assyrian cult, not only by building new temples in new locations,[204] but by introducing new rituals and festivals too. Barcina has suggested that "he incorporated the *akītu* of Nisannu regardless of the existence of previous kingship rituals held in Šabāṭu and Addāru,"[205] which resulted in a ritual cycle that linked "the royal ancestor cult with the king's re-investiture and the *akītu*-festival to define the king's role in the cosmic scheme."[206] Second, the destruction of Babylon in 689 BC and the subsequent abduction of (the statue of) Marduk led to an interruption of the festival in that city, seeing that it could not be observed in absence of the city-god.

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[200] SAA 1, 131 rev. 2'-12'.
[201] SAA 10, 253 obv. 15-rev. 7. See, similarly, SAA 13, 60.
[202] As argued by Barcina 2017.
[203] See, in particular, Pongratz-Leisten 2015.
[204] In his inscriptions, Sennacherib claims explicitly to have built the *akītu*-house outside of the city in contrast to his predecessors. Esarhaddon, in contrast, emphasizes the fact that he did not deviate from earlier plans of the temples he rebuilt. See Novotny 2014.
[205] Barcina 2017: 102.
[206] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 407.

A number of NA compositions reflect and justify these changes. Marduk-kabti-ilāni, *šangû* of Aššur during the reign of Sennacherib, composed a set of texts that provided instructions for the king in the context of diverse rituals, one of which was the *akītu*-festival.[207] The prescriptions were for the seventh and eighth day of Nisannu and, surprisingly, were not bound to a particular location; the line saying "whether [the king] is in Nineveh, Calah, or in an enemy country" reflects a high degree of pragmatism. Another text, recording cultic reforms and religious practices at Assur, describes what was supposed to happen on the second day of Nisannu.[208] The text is quite broken, but one can read how preparations are being made for a procession of Aššur to the *akītu*-house, where he does not seem to remain, however. The same can be read in a manual for the chanters of the Aššur temple:

> "In Nisan, [on the 2nd day, Aššur rises and sits down in the Ak]ītu House. You set up a fire-brick [and sing "…"]. After it, "[Defiled] A[psû" a *takribtu*; "Importa]nt one, go about!" an eršem[ma-lamentation … . After it the s]heep offering. On the 11th day, A[ššur rises and] sits down [on] his se[at in Ešarra]. You set up a fire-brick [and sing "Lord, a]t [your entering (your) house]" "[You are] Lord" [*šuillakku*] to Aššur. "Queen [of] all lands" [*šuillakku* t]o Mullissu."[209]

While the ritual texts cited above define the actions to be performed during the *akītu*-festival, another group of texts served to explain those actions in light of a larger theological framework. The so-called cultic commentaries interpret ritual in terms of myth.[210] Pongratz-Leisten has claimed that this was the time in which the *akītu*-festival and Enūma Elîš became inextricably linked, both portraying Aššur (and the king who embodies him) as the triumphant warrior against the outside forces of chaos.[211] There is indeed one cultic commentary that compares the rites in the ritual text SAA 20, 15 for the 7th and 8th day of Nisannu with sections of Enūma Elîš.[212] Other commentaries work the other way around and cite lines from the myth which are subsequently linked to a ritual.[213]

> "(As) Diĝir-Esiskur may he dwell aloft in the house of prayer" (Ee VII 109)."Let the gods bring their presents before him" (Ee VII 110): the gifts that are given in the month of Nisannu from the sixth day to the twelfth day; it is as if (literally: like) it is said concerning Zababa. […] … Bēl, who sits in the Akītu (house) (on) the eighth day, presents and gifts. According to another tablet.[214]

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[207] SAA 20, 15. See also Barcina 2017: 103-104; Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 422-425.
[208] SAA 20, 53. See also the similar texts SAA 20, 52 and 54.
[209] SAA 20, 12 rev. 19-26; see also Maul 2000.
[210] See Frahm 2011a: 339-344; also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432-434.
[211] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432.
[212] SAA 3, 37. See also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 422-426.
[213] Frahm & Jiménez 2015; Lambert 2013: 135-138; Frahm 2011a: 113-114.
[214] Commentary on Enūma Elîš I-VII lines 53'-54' (Frahm & Jiménez 2015: 312-313). See also Gabbay 2016: 253-254.

The best-known "cultic commentary", however, is the Marduk Ordeal.[215] It "aims at what one could describe as a heretical 'relecture' of the ritual acts performed during the *Akītu* festival celebrated in Babylon."[216] In a way, it "parodies" the Babylonian *akītu*-festival and Marduk's role in it, by representing Marduk as prisoner who has to undergo the river ordeal. This text fits within a discourse that aims to justify Marduk's abduction and the entailing disruption of the *akītu*-festival in Babylon.

It is no wonder, in this light, that the Assyrian libraries contain copies of Tintir, Enūma Elîš and ritual texts relating the *akītu*-festival of Marduk.[217] They will have served as models for the creation of new Assyrian texts.[218] Yet, those texts possibly fit within the context of the later reconstruction of Babylon and the return of Marduk too. After Sennacherib's death, Esarhaddon started a program that would reconcile Assyria and Babylonia not only politically but also cultically. Barcina has rightfully observed that "Esarhaddon regarded the New Year festival as a kind of symbolic territorial lynchpin that, through the king, would connect all cultic centres in Assyria, mirroring the reality in Babylonia."[219] For that to work, the NYF in Babylon had to be resumed, which could not happen before Marduk had been returned.

It is possible that the text known as the "Exaltation of Nabû" was written on the occasion of the return of Marduk.[220] It describes a procession from Assur(?) to Babylon, in which different gods participated, including Nabû.[221] As such, it is very reminiscent of the account found in the School Days Inscription of Aššurbanipal cited above.

### III.1.4 Administrative documents

A last type of Neo-Assyrian documents, the content of which is difficult to assess, consists of lists of exceptionally high quantities of foodstuffs and other objects combined with officials'

[215] SAA 3, 34 and 35.
[216] Frahm 2011a: 352.
[217] E.g. K 3446+ (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 12: 240-243); Sm 1720 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 5: 217); VAT 9418 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 7: 221-227). For Tintir see George 1992: 32. For Enūma Elîš see Lambert 2013: 1-134.
[218] This is not to say that these texts were present in the Neo-Assyrian libraries only to serve as models; they were also in the library simply for the same reason the other thousands of texts were there – Babylonian literature being *the* literature gathered and studied there.
[219] Barcina 2017: 96, contra Pongratz-Leisten 1997b.
[220] VAT 13834+ (Lambert 2013: 346-349; Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 13: 244-246). See also Barcina 2017: 92-93 with note 9. The same would then be true for a similar text K 6606+ (Lambert 2013: 509).
[221] The return of Marduk is recorded in an inscription of Aššurbanipal. There it takes on some characteristics of an *akītu*-procession, which it most probably was not. Aššurbanipal 73 (School Days Inscription) iii.

titles.[222] Parpola suggested that they are accounts of food and gifts that were distributed at the royal New Year's reception, though that must remain speculative.[223]

In summary, the Neo-Assyrian sources are the first to shed some light on the Babylonian NYF during the first millennium BC. They show the importance of the festival in the Babylonian world, not only through the Assyrians' willingness to participate in it (in the case of Sargon), but also, and mostly, because of their eagerness to adopt the concept and integrate it into their own ideology. Moreover, the forced disruption of the festival in Babylon obtained by the removal of Marduk too shows the ideological power the NYF held in Mesopotamia. The Assyrian sources should be approached very carefully when it comes to reconstructing the Babylonian festival, however. Even though it is clear that Assyrian scholars took the Babylonian tradition as a model, they reshaped it to fit the Assyrian context into which it was inserted.[224]

Nevertheless, a few general characteristics of the *akītu*-festival can be discerned in these texts, without needing to retroject them from later sources. In all likelihood, they applied to both the Assyrian and the Babylonian version of the festival. First, in Neo-Assyrian times, "*akītu*" was not an unequivocal synonym for "New Year Festival", not even in the case of Babylon. There is slight evidence for a second *akītu*-festival in that city in the seventh month Tašrītu. Nevertheless, the festival celebrated at the cultic capital Assur took place at the beginning of the year and may thus be described as New Year Festival. Second, about the Babylonian *akītu* the Neo-Assyrian source material mentions only the *akītu*-festival of Babylon and does not record anything about other Babylonian cities where the festival might have taken place. This shows how this festival was of particularly large importance. It is probable that other Babylonian cities observed *akītu*-festivals, however, since the Assyrians built *akītu*-houses in many Assyrian cities and they modelled their *akītu*-concept after the Babylonian tradition. Still, as stated above, the parallel cannot be taken for granted and may have been an Assyrian innovation. Third and linked to the previous observation, is the fact that when the Babylonian *akītu*-festival is mentioned, Marduk and Nabû are the divine protagonists of the festival. Fourth, the most typical event of the *akītu*-festival was the procession of gods to the *akītu*-house: almost all the sources mention either the temple or the procession or both. Lastly, not only the content

[222] Mattila 1990.
[223] Mattila 1990: 16.
[224] See also Pongratz-Leisten 1997b: 245.

of the sources, but also their nature points to the fact the *akītu*-festival was essential in the royal ideology: participation in the *akītu*-festival and enabling its taking place were crucial obligations for kings.

## III.2 Long Sixth Century: kings and temples

During the Long Sixth Century the *akītu*-festival at Babylon remained a tool for royal legitimation as can be observed not only in the royal inscriptions, but also in the emergent historiographical tradition. While the festival at Babylon was celebrated at the New Year and exalted the king, the national god Marduk and the Babylonian empire, the administrative documents of other temple cities show the observance of local *akītu*-festivals at other moments in the year which revolved around the local patron deity. As such, a continuity – in broad terms – with the Neo-Assyrian *akītu*-tradition can be observed regardless of the differences in the source material. Aside from that, the (dated) administrative records demonstrate cultic constancy throughout the sixth century BC and in spite of the Persian conquest. Only in the final years of Darius' and the first years of Xerxes' reigns do we notice changes.

There are four groups of sources that give information about the NYF in the Long Sixth Century: administrative texts, royal inscriptions, chronicles and cultic texts. They show how the NYF was a phenomenon that was not restricted to the temples but was deeply embedded in Babylonian culture, scholarship and royal ideology.

### III.2.1 *Akītu* in the temple administrations

Three temple institutions and their personnel have left archives that contain documents that can circumstantially be linked to the NYF: Ezida in Borsippa, Ebabbar in Sippar and Eanna in Uruk. The evidence relates the travel of the respective main deities of those cities at the beginning of Nisannu and even though their destination remains in most cases unmentioned, it is safe to assume that they were travelling to Babylon to participate in the *akītu*-procession. Aside from that, the documentation also contains traces of local celebrations of an *akītu*-festival at other moments of the year. Clear cases have been made for Borsippa and Sippar, whereas the information regarding Eanna in Uruk is more ambiguous.

#### III.2.1.1 Borsippa

In the archives of Borsippean priests, one can see the mechanics behind Nabû's departure to and return from Babylon during the *akītu*-festival of Babylon, when the regular cult in Ezida was temporarily interrupted.[225] The four stages of preparation, voyage, absence and return of

[225] Waerzeggers 2010: 119-134.

the god can be traced by means of short references and specific offerings taking place during the period 1-11/I. While the regular cult continued during the preparatory phase,[226] it was suspended when Nabû left his temple.[227] Other rituals replaced it, however.

A clothing ceremony (*lubuštu*) was held for Nabû on the first day of the year; his mistress Sutītu received new attire on 2/I. These ceremonies served to prepare the statue of a deity for its upcoming participation in a (public) festivity. On 5/I Nabû finally left for Babylon. What happened on the intermediate days is not mentioned, but regular offerings continued to be performed and one can imagine that further preparatory rites (cleansing, purification) were carried out. The trajectory which Nabû followed to Babylon can largely be reconstructed by means of information found in the royal inscriptions (see below, p. 62). One station is mentioned in the archival texts, though: the area "between the curtains" (*ina birīt šiddi*).[228] It was the privilege of the brewers of the Ilia-family to perform the special beer-offering made in *namzītu*-vats at this occasion.[229]

The fact that Nabû indeed left Borsippa is confirmed by the absence of references to the performance of the regular daily cult for the period 5-11/I.[230] The attestation of special rituals is indicative too. Sacrifices were made to the Standard of the Divine Shield on the days of Nabû's departure and return; this object was activated in order to protect the deity at these precarious moments. The Divine Shield itself received offerings as well, and the rarity of this phenomenon stresses the exceptionality of the occasion. Some texts attest to the sending of travel provisions and offerings to the Divine Chariot, both of which indicate too that Nabû was on a journey. The fact that Nabû travelled alone – or rather, without his consort Nanāya – at this time can be accounted for by an innovation implemented under Darius I.[231] It was custom that meat cuts be sent to the king, but during the time of 5-11/I of the years Dar 18-20 the texts record that cuts of the offerings of Nabû and Nanāya were now sent to Apamû, the Persian queen. Moreover, special *harmilu*-cuts from the offering for Nanāya solely were added, which would mean that Nanāya received special offerings during that time. As Waerzeggers has pointed out, the parallel is pleasing: the queen who stayed at home received a privileged

[226] Waerzeggers 2010: 122.
[227] Waerzeggers 2010: 125.
[228] BM 29419 obv. 5-6 (Waerzeggers 2010 no. 1: 367-370).
[229] Waerzeggers 2010: 123-124.
[230] Waerzeggers 2010: 125-129; go there for references.
[231] The difficult reading of the Neo-Assyrian ritual text K 9876++ line rev. 27' (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 8: 228-232) is rather irrelevant in this discussion, since it is removed too far in time. See also Waerzeggers 2010: 122 note 540.

treatment, while her husband travelled to attend the festival at Babylon. It remains questionable, however, whether Darius participated in the NYF in reality.

Nabû's return is not explicitly mentioned in the archives of the Borsippean priests, but from 11/I to 17/I another ceremony took place in Borsippa that required his presence. It concerns the sacred wedding ceremony, which is mentioned in non-archival sources,[232] but a reference to offerings to the sacred Bed is very suggestive in this light.[233] In contrast to Sippar and Uruk, discussed below, there is no evidence for a local version of the *akītu*-festival in Borsippa during the Long Sixth Century.

III.2.1.2 Sippar

Evidence for the *akītu*-festival in the Sippar-documentation is twofold: on the one hand, it attests to increased ritual activity at the time of the festival in Babylon, and on the other, it documents the celebration of an *akītu*-festival in Sippar itself too.

In their study of the animal offering lists from Ebabbar, Tarasewicz and Zawadzki found that there is a clear increase of bull offerings for the period 2-11/I, which corroborates with the dates found in the documents from Borsippa.[234] Similar as in Borsippa, the Divine Chariot received sacrifices, although the ones attested in Borsippa were bloodless in contrast to the bulls given in Sippar.[235] Those offerings, together with the attestations of *lubuštu*-ceremonies,[236] would suggest that at least Šamaš travelled during that time. However, the documents relating to the presumed days of travel (sometime between 7/I and 11/I) include Šamaš in the list of deities within Ebabbar to whom the offerings are presented.[237] It remains unclear whether or not Šamaš visited the festival in Babylon, but the evidence is slightly in favour of his regular attendance there.

One document is of particular interest because it establishes a more direct link between Ebabbar and Esagila during this period. VS 6 11 contains two lists: the one of the obverse enumerates the sacrificial animals provided by the king (Nabopolassar in this case) in the month Nisannu (of his 14th regnal year); the one on the reverse is similar but has a broken heading of which

[232] Most importantly the ritual calendar SBH VIII (Matsushima 1987).
[233] Waerzeggers 2010: 129 with note 576.
[234] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019: 159-164.
[235] This difference is probably due to the nature of the material; it clearly shows the gaps in our knowledge.
[236] Bongenaar 1997: 306. A *lubuštu*-ceremony is recorded for the 7th day of Nisannu in BM 65636 rev. 6'-7' (Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019 no. 361: 660-662).
[237] Similarly, there is a text among the Borsippa-documents that mentions offerings to both Nabû and Nanāya (instead of Nanāya alone) during the period in which the god was presumably in Babylon. See Waerzeggers 2010: 128.

only the word "Esagila" can be read.[238] Tarasewicz and Zawadzki suggested that the animals listed on the reverse were delivered by the Esagila temple to Ebabbar as "a form of support enabling the Ebabbar temple to maintain the established limit of offerings" and "to stress a special relation to the highest gods of the Babylonian pantheon with the leading couple of the Sippar pantheon".[239] It seems to be no coincidence that the chosen time for re-establishing bonds with both the royal household and the main temple of Babylon was during the *akītu*-festival.

Several documents mention the "regular offering of the *akītu*" (*ginê akīti*, once *ginê ša bīt akīti*).[240] Curiously enough, they are related to the second month Ayāru and all fall in the period 8-14/II. Other elements appearing in the documentation show that on those days an *akītu*-festival was effectively celebrated in Sippar: there is a clothing ceremony (*lubuštu*) on 10/II and travel provisions are mentioned at multiple instances, suggesting that the god(s) went into procession.[241] Gods from other cities came to visit during this *akītu*-festival and received offerings as well: two texts mention sheep offerings provided by the king for Bēl, Bēltīya, Ea, Nabû, Tašmētu and Nergal for 13/II.[242] They played a marginal role, however, and sometimes offerings are made to the cella (*bītu*) or pedestal (*šubtu*) of Marduk and Zarpānītu rather than to the god pair itself, which points to the fact that they themselves had not travelled north.[243]

Little can be said about the symbolic meaning of the Sippar *akītu*-festival or how it related to the festival at Babylon. Some things can be deduced from the bland administrative texts, nevertheless. First, it is telling that the festival at Sippar was not celebrated simultaneously with the one at Babylon. This fact shows that the *akītu* of Babylon held such great prestige and importance that it had to be respected in the local cultic calendars of other cities at this time. Second, aside from offerings to gods and the *ginû* of the *akītu*-temple, the texts document sacrifices to the deified *ūmu* (Day), *kittu* (Truth), *mīšaru* (Justice) and *dayānu* (Judge), all of which are manifestations of Šamaš' divine power.[244] In that sense, the *akītu*-festival of Sippar celebrated Šamaš as head of its pantheon rather than that it marked the beginning of the year.

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[238] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019 no. 26: 255-257.
[239] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019: 163.
[240] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019 nos. 48, 53, 322, 121. Some documents just mention *ginû*, which the editors have related to the *ginê akīti* too. See Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019 nos. 1, 14, 17 and pages 175-176.
[241] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019: 176-178.
[242] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019 nos. 48-49: 290-295.
[243] It would also seem that the visiting gods received lesser sacrifices, see Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019: 185.
[244] Tarasewicz & Zawadzki 2019: 198.

III.2.1.3 Uruk

Textual evidence from the LSC for an *akītu*-festival at Uruk on the one hand and the Urukean gods' participation in the festival at Babylon on the other is scant. Nevertheless, the references to multiple *akītu*-houses – one for Bēlet-ša-Uruk and one for Uṣur-amāssu – show that there must have been *akītu*-celebrations.[245] The extensive (re)building program of the *bīt akīti* is well-documented in a dossier consisting of documents recording expenses related to the building activities and is studied by Kleber.[246] The texts are dated between Ner 3 and Nbn 8. Not only the length of the period during which the construction works took place show that the works were of considerable size, so too does the number of hirelings mustered daily, which varied between 80 and 100 a day.[247] The supervisors carried the title *ša muḫḫi dulli bīt akīti*. At this time the *akītu*-house at Uruk was thus not simply restored, but was actually built or built anew.

Only a few documents relate activities taking place in the *akītu*-house, all of which are dated to months other than Nisannu. An administrative record of the allotment of dates mentions *maššartu* deliveries of dates in the month Ulūlu for the offerings of Urkayītu in the *bīt-akīti*.[248] A Neo-Babylonian letter from Uruk contains an order to deliver sacrificial animals at the *akītu*-house on the third day of Addaru.[249]

Very little evidence can be found for the travel of Urukean gods to Babylon at the occasion of the NYF there. In contrast to the records from Borsippa and Sippar, no clothing ceremonies (*lubuštu*) are recorded for the month Nisannu,[250] nor offerings to the Divine Chariot,[251] nor the preparation of travel provisions. Two texts could tentatively be connected to the return of deities after having participated in the *akītu*-festival in Babylon. The first is an administrative document dated the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, which records the expenditure of ten sheep given to the *kinaštu* (members of the temple assembly) of Babylon and Borsippa, "who had come with the gods from Babylon".[252] The text is dated to 22/I which is suggestive in the context of the NYF: the last editors submitted that the travel from Babylon to Uruk could have

[245] Bēlet-ša-Uruk: YOS 7, 89 (Beaulieu 2003: 170-171); Uṣur-amassu: BIN 2, 31//YOS 9, 74//BM 113205 (Brinkman 1969). The identification of the buildings is not so straightforward. See Kleber 2008: 173 note 480.
[246] Kleber 2008: 173-178. See also Jursa 2010: 668 with note 3489. It remains unclear which building should be identified as the *bīt akīti* mentioned in this dossier (Kleber 2008: 177-178).
[247] Explicitly PTS 2298 (Kleber 2008: 174) but also the work rosters containing names of supervisors combined with numbers (Kleber 2008: 175-176).
[248] Beaulieu 2003: 264.
[249] YOS 3, 25 (Oppenheim 1967: 190). For more about the *ḫarû*-ceremony, see Zgoll 2006: 34-37.
[250] See Beaulieu 2003: 17-21.
[251] See Beaulieu 2003: 295.
[252] UCP 9/1 42 (Zaia & Cauchi 2019).

taken ten days, assuming they left on 12/I after the *akītu*-festival.[253] Second, a letter from Uruk recounts how Nanāya and the Lady-of-Uruk returned from Borsippa to Uruk by boat, again accompanied by a collegium of priests from Babylon (*kinaltu*).[254] As is customary, the letter is undated and the event cannot with certainty be ascribed to the first month.

A study of the tabular sacrifice records of the LSC showed that there was an increase of sheep sacrifices between 8/I and 11/I in Eanna, which is reminiscent of the situation in Sippar, where there were also substantially more bull sacrifices during the period of the *akītu* of Babylon (cf. above).[255] The fact stands on its own, however, and remains meaningless in absence of other evidence.

The evidence from administrative sources is in most cases circumstantial: in the case of Ezida there is a clear interruption of the regular cult during the period of the NYF of Babylon, while for Ebabbar and Eanna the material is more ambiguous. In other words, Nabû regularly travelled to Babylon to attend the *akītu*-festival, while this was perhaps not yearly the case for Šamaš and Ištar. In contrast, the documents from both Sippar and Uruk show that there was a local variant of the festival – in Sippar explicitly through the mentions of the *ginê akīti*, in Uruk through the building project of the *akītu*-house – while for Borsippa such a local festival cannot be read in the available documentation.

### III.2.2 Royal inscriptions

A large part of the reconstruction of the NYF is based on what Neo-Babylonian kings wrote in their royal inscriptions. In those texts, they boast about their building activities in and gifts to the temples of the land. To emphasize the importance of those actions, they provide detailed explanations of what happened in the temples. The *akītu*-festival is mentioned in several inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, Neriglissar and Nabonidus.[256] Although cultic matters are touched upon in the Cyrus Cylinder, the NYF is not mentioned in this penultimate cuneiform royal inscription.[257]

#### III.2.2.1 Nebuchadnezzar II

Three inscriptions from Nebuchadnezzar II mention the *akītu*-festival: the Wadi Brisa twin inscription, the East India House inscription and a cylinder inscription.

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[253] See Zaia & Cauchi 2019.
[254] YOS 3, 86 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 15).
[255] Robbins 1996: 69.
[256] To refer to the relevant texts, I use the abbreviations listed by Da Riva 2008.
[257] Schaudig 2001: 550-556.

The monumental twin inscription of Wadi Brisa includes several details about the *akītu*-festival.[258] In his account of the renovation of Ezida, the cella of Nabû in Esagila, the king explains which purpose the sanctuary served:

> "Ezida in Esagila, the cella of Nabû on the courtyard, wherein Nabû, pre-eminent heir, arriving in procession from Borsippa at the festivities of the beginning of the year for the *akītu*-festival takes up residence."[259]

The same is repeated further on, with less detail nevertheless, when the renovation of Nabû's temple in Borsippa is described:

> "I made (it) shine like daylight for the coming and going of Nabû the son of the prince, when he approaches Babylon."[260]

Not only temples were renovated; the processional barges of both Marduk and Nabû were extensively decorated by Nebuchadnezzar too to be used in the NYF:

> "At the festivities of the beginning of the year (*ina zagmukki rēš šatti*) I installed Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, inside it (the boat) and I had him go in procession to the magnificent festival of his august *akītu* (*akītaša ṣirti*)"[261]
>
> "At the festivities of the beginning of the year for the *akītu*-festival of Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, Nabû, the pre-eminent heir, arrives in procession from Borsippa to Babylon in the má.íd.ḫé.du$_7$."[262]

The inscription also includes a list of offerings which are yearly provided to Marduk and Nabû on the occasion of the NYF:

> "(For) their wonderful festivities, their grand *akītu*-festival: with gold; silver, precious stones; splendid (things); bright *ṣapšu*, yield of mountain and sea; my most precious possessions; powerful "unblemished" *gumāhu*-bulls; fine *zuluhhû* (sheep); fattened sheep; *pasillu*-sheep; *gukkallu*-sheep; string of Apsû fish; wild birds; geese; ducks; *marratu*-birds; doves; bandicoot rats; eggs; the best things of the marsh; profuse vegetables, the delight of the garden; rosy fruits, the bounty of the orchard; dates; Dilmun-dates; dried figs; raisins; finest beer-wort; white honey; ghee; *muttāqu*-cake; milk; the best oil; reddish abundance, luxuriant plenty, the best of the lands; countless libations of beer; wine as if water; yearly (all that) constantly passed across in front of them in plenty and abundance."[263]

The East India House inscription (ST) is known from three duplicates.[264] It reviews the building works accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, most prominently the construction of his

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[258] WBC//WBA. The preserved portions of the Nahr el-Kalb (NeKC//NeKA) twin inscriptions are very similar but the parts where the *akītu*-festival could have been mentioned are lost. See Da Riva 2012 and 2009.
[259] WBC IIa 1-5 //WBA III 46-51 (Da Riva 2012: 44-45).
[260] WBC IIIb 31-33 // WBA VI 47-50 (Da Riva 2012: 49-50).
[261] WBC IIIa 12-17 // WBA V 31-36 (Da Riva 2012: 47-48).
[262] WBC IVa 33 // WBA VII 29-35 (Da Riva 2012: 51).
[263] WBC VII 10-31//WBA XII 1'-5' (Da Riva 2012: 57-58).
[264] Da Riva 2008. No full edition of the text exists, but it is in preparation in the context of the RINBE-project of the University of München https://www.en.ag.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/research/rinbe/index.html (last accessed 31.07.2019). One of the duplicates was published by Wallenfels 2008; there are some difficulties in the translation nonetheless.

new North Palace. One section is dedicated to the works carried out in Esagila and Ezida. It is there that we find a reference to the NYF:

> "Du-ku Ki-namtartarede, the throne-dais of destinies in Ubšu-ukkinna, in which during the New Year Festival at the beginning of the year (*ina zagmukki rēš šatti*), on the 8th and 11th days, Lugaldimmerankia, the ruler of the gods, resides, and in which the gods of heaven and underworld kneel to pay reverent heed to him, and stand before him to decree as the destiny of my life a destiny of everlasting days – that throne-dais, the throne-dais of kingship, the throne-dais of the Enlil-ship of the prince Marduk, wisest of the gods (I plated with gold …)."[265]

Nebuchadnezzar furthermore renovated the *akītu*-temple, as we can read further in the text:

> "Esiskur, (the temple of) the august *akītu*-festival, of the Enlil of the gods, Marduk, set up for the rejoicings and jubilation of the Igigi and Annunaki in the outskirts of Babylon, I made fast like a mountain with bitumen and baked bricks."[266]

The processional barge makes an appearance in this inscription too:

> "The má.íd.hé.du$_7$, his princely conveyance, the processional barge of the New Year Festival, the festival of Babylon, its *karû* (and) the cabin therein I plated with an overlay of gold and stone."[267]

Finally, one cylinder inscription of Nebuchadnezzar includes a passage concerning the NYF as well:

> "For the coming and going of Nabû, the son of the lord of the gods, who walks (in procession) to Babylon, I made that gate shine like daylight. The chapel of destinies, dwelling place of Nabû, the warrior, the son of the prince, where at the New Year Festival, at the beginning of the year, on the 5th and 11th day, on the way to Babylon and on the way back (to Borsippa), Nabû, the triumphant heir takes residence upon it […]."[268]

### III.2.2.2 Neriglissar

The Royal Palace Inscription of Neriglissar is preserved in eight duplicates.[269] This king claims to have renovated the Ubšukinakku, the "Shrine of Destinies", in Ezida in Borsippa. His inscription is very reminiscent of the cylinder inscription of Nebuchadnezzar cited above. It gives the same dates for Nabû's processions to and from Babylon.

> "The shrine of destinies inside the Ezida – which at the New Year Festival, at the beginning of the year, for the *akītu*-festival, at (the time of) the procession of Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, Nabû, the true heir, moves in procession to Babylon, on the 5th and 11th day, on the way to Babylon and on the way back (to Borsippa), [Nabû, the triumphant heir] takes residence upon it – [that a former king] had made of silver, I overlaid with bri[ght gold] and ornaments of divine splendour."[270]

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[265] Sackler Nbk obv. ii 64-iii 18 (Wallenfels 2008: 280-281, 290-291) // ST ii 54-iii 12 (Langdon 1912: 124-127). Translation George 1992: 287.
[266] Sackler Nbk obv. iv 23-29 (Wallenfels 2008: 284, 291) // ST iv 7-13 (Langdon 1912: 128-129).
[267] Sackler Nbk obv. iv 15-22 (284-284, 291) // ST iii 71-iv 6 (Langdon 1912: 128-129).
[268] C36 II 7-10 (Da Riva 2013: 134-135 note on lines 35ff.).
[269] C23; Da Riva 2013: 124-135.
[270] C23 I 33-40 (Da Riva 2013: 129-130, 133).

### III.2.2.3 Nabonidus

Nabonidus' inscriptions tell us different details about the NYF. He does not mention processions but instead refers to the gifts and offerings he has brought to the gods in the *akītu*-house.

> „Vor Marduk und Zarpānītu, Nabû und Nergal, meinen Göttern, und den Göttern allen, die thronen im Zingel des Festhauses des erhabenen Königs der Götter, des Herrn der Herren, zu Zagmuk, dem Anfang des Jahres, dem Akītu-Fest, zu (blutigen) Opfern (und) Röstmehl(-Opfern), Ed[ad]ihengal zu versorgen und den Herrn der Herren anzuflehen, sei ich des Wandels unverwandt, in Ewigkeit mögen sie jauchzen (über meine Taten), meine Regierungszeit mögen sie … segnen mein Königtum!"[271]

> "Am 10. Nisan, als der König der Götter, Marduk, und die Götter von Himmel (und) Erde in Esiskur, dem ‚Haus des Segens', dem Akītu-Festhaus der Enlil-Würde, die Wohnung aufgeschlagen hatten, [Silber und Gold …] habe ich nun Bēl, Nabû und Nergal […] als freiwillige Geschenke dargebracht."[272]

His inscriptions also refer to gifts presented upon the gods' return from the *akītu*-house in their regular dwelling:

> "Nachdem ich das Akītu-Fest durgeführt hatte, Bēl und Mār-Bēl (wieder) habe wohnen lassen in ihrer angenehmen Wohnung, brachte ich prächtige Gaben in sie hinein."[273]

Moreover, in even starker contrast with his predecessors, Nabonidus makes mention of *akītu*-houses in cities other than Babylon, as for example in Dilbat:

> "Für Uraš, den überlegen starken Herrn, baute ich das Akītu-Festhaus seiner Ruhe genau wie früher aufs Neue."[274]

In the end, the question of the reliability of the royal inscriptions as historical sources remains.[275] Inherently, these inscriptions are of ideological and propagandistic nature: their main purpose was clearly "to present the image of the ruler in the way he wished to appear before his present and future audiences (that is, in this world and the next)."[276] It is therefore meaningful that the *akītu*-festival makes an appearance in some of the inscriptions, for it shows that the festival was of importance for royal ideology. While both Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar recount their building and renovation activities in the context of the processions that took place during the NYF, Nabonidus focusses on the gifts and offerings he presented to the

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[271] Ebabbar-Ekurra Cylinder II 27-34 (Schaudig 2001 2.4 1: 358-362). The *ilāni siḫirti <bīt> akīti* ("all the gods of the *akītu*-house", "Götterschar des Neujahrsfesthaus") are also mentioned in the Ebabbar Cylinder II 49-50 (Schaudig 2001 2.9: 384-394).
[272] Babylon-Stele IX 4'-30' (Schaudig 2001 3.3: 514-529).
[273] Babylon-Stele IX 42'-47' (ibid.).
[274] E'igikalamma Cylinder II 3-4 (Schaudig 2001 2.5 1: 362-370).
[275] Tadmor 1997 and 1981; Peerapat Ouysook of the University of Cambridge is currently studying the historical validity of some accounts in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions.
[276] Da Riva 2013: 2.

gods. This apparent change can be explained in two ways: either Nabonidus did not undertake building projects in the temples that were connected to the *akītu*-festival and therefore did not mention the processions, or – and far more likely – the procession did not take place. Indeed, Nabonidus was absent from Babylon for the longer part of his reign and he could therefore not have taken part in it. This shows how the king's presence at the festival was of vital importance, especially for the processions. Aside from that, New Year and *akītu* are inextricably linked in these texts, as is shown by the numerous references to *zagmukku* and *rēš šatti* in the context of the *akītu*. The *akītu*-festival of Babylon was thus the Babylonian NYF.

### III.2.3 Chronicles and the *akītu*-festival

It is important to draw attention to the fact that some Babylonian chronicles as well are used as sources of information about the New Year Festival. However, since the recent studies of Caroline Waerzeggers on the subject,[277] it is clear that we have to be careful: we cannot simply assume that the chronicles are contemporary to the events they describe and preserved in mere copy.

Mention is made of the New Year Festival in ten chronicles, half of which belongs to the group of chronicles stemming from Babylon and the other half of which comes from Borsippa, according to the division made by Caroline Waerzeggers.[278] The Borsippa-texts are dated to the Neo-Babylonian period whereas those from Babylon were written in the Late Babylonian period. Some scholars have used the Weidner Chronicle as a source for the New Year Festival; it is not included here because "this text falls outside the chronicle genre as understood by most authors."[279] The Borsippean chronicles will be discussed here, while the ones from Babylon will be treated in more detail at two instances below.[280]

In Waerzeggers' classification, fifteen chronicles are classified as originating from Borsippa.[281] In general, they exhibit an interest in the past, with a few exceptions that can be termed

[277] Waerzeggers 2012 and 2015a. See also Wessels 2016, who wrote an MA-thesis under the supervision of Waerzeggers.
[278] Waerzeggers 2012. Pace Bidmead 2002: 146 n. 58. The Weidner Chronicle notes that Amar-Sîn changed the offering customs for the *akītu*-festival of Esagila and was therefore predestined to die (lines 65'-67'). However, Amar-Sîn ruled in the third millennium BC when Babylon and the *akītu*-house probably did not yet exist. See Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-19-weidner-chronicle/ (last accessed 08.08.2019).
[279] Waerzeggers 2012: 289.
[280] References to the NYF in Chapter III.3.3 and motifs and incentives of redaction in Chapter VI.4.
[281] ABC 2-6, 14-16, 20A, 20B, 24, 25, Fs. Grayson nos. 1-3. The provenance was deduced from the location of the tablets in certain collections of the British Museum, which contain high numbers of tablets belonging to private archives of Borsippean families (Waerzeggers 2012: 289-292).

"annalistic histories" of contemporary events.[282] The 'historical' chronicles focus on the one hand on a past that was situated in Borsippa, with topics such as the Isin II Dynasty (the period in which the construction of Ezida took place) and the protection of rights of Borsippean citizens, but also by emphasising the prominence of Nabû, for example when it comes to the New Year Festival. On the other hand, however, a more general – or even, Babylon-oriented – history is described, one that highlights Marduk's role as supreme deity and reflects on the nature of kingship. Yet, the recounting of a Babylonian rather than a Borsippean history served the local communities just as well, since the underlying idea was that Borsippa, in the capacity of Babylon's sister-city, enjoyed equal prestige as the capital.

These chronicles have the form of business contracts, being one-column landscape or oblong tablets. Some fragments are preserved on school tablets, which could indicate the purpose of those texts as educational material.[283] It remains difficult to set a date for the redaction of the Borsippa-chronicles and there have been no studies about the question of whether or not they are copies of older texts composed at or shortly after the time they recount. In some cases, it is possible to trace the sources that were used to reconstruct the history, such as Old Babylonian year names.[284] The manuscripts themselves seem to stem from private archives belonging to people connected to Ezida; the latest text is dated to the mid-6th century BC. It should be mentioned that the chronicles reflect topics that occur in other texts that stem from the Borsippa-collections and to which it is easier to ascribe a date of composition in the Neo-Babylonian period.[285]

The New Year Festival occurs in five chronicles from Borsippa. Most often, (a variant of) the line "Nabû did not come from Borsippa for the procession of Bēl and Bēl did not come out" is used to indicate that the festival was not observed. It is not surprising that the chronicles in this way "assigned a more active role to Nabû" than the chronicles from Babylon.[286]

- Eclectic Chronicle (ABC 24)

The Eclectic Chronicle is called thus because it gathers entries about different events without a clear connection between them and dating from the reign of Marduk-šāpik-zēri (11th century BC) to a period after the reign of Šalmanesser V (9th century). The New Year Festival is

[282] Waerzeggers 2012: 294. The ones relating a more recent history are: ABC 2, 4, 5, 6; perhaps also ABC 3 (Fall of Nineveh).
[283] Leichty & Walker 2004.
[284] Waerzeggers 2012: 294.
[285] Waerzeggers 2012: 295-296, most importantly scientific texts related to astronomy.
[286] Waerzeggers 2012: 296. Still, the phrase occurs in chronicles from Babylon too, see below page 86.

mentioned at one instance, when the text states that "Eriba-Marduk, descendant of Marduk-šakin-šumi, took the hand of Bēl and the son of Bēl in his second year."[287]

- Šamaš-šuma-ukīn Chronicle (ABC 15)

This chronicle is "a compilation of vignettes about kings living in different centuries",[288] most importantly Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, but also the earlier kings Širikti-Šuqamunu (10th century BC) and Nabû-šuma-iškun (8th century BC). Aside from political history, it recounts cultic events too, such as the fact that Nabû-šuma-iškun failed to celebrate the New Year Festival in his fifth and sixth regnal year: "The fifth year and the sixth year of Nabû-šuma-iškun, Nabû did not come for the procession of Bēl."[289]

- Esarhaddon Chronicle (ABC 14)

This text gives a year-by-year overview of the reign of Esarhaddon and recounts the accession of his sons Aššurbanipal and Šamaš-šuma-ukīn. About the New Year Festival, it states that "for eight years under Sennacherib, for twelve years under Esarhaddon, twenty years altogether, Bēl stayed in Assur and the *akītu* festival did not take place. Nabû did not come from Borsippa for the procession of Bēl."[290] This chronicle is often used as evidence for the resumption of the *akītu*-festival at Babylon under Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, because the text recounts the return of Marduk to Babylon in the month Ayāru of the accession year of Šamaš-šuma-ukīn.[291] Even though this was not a New Year celebration, the return of Marduk takes on some features of an *akītu*-festival, such as the travel of different gods to Babylon to accompany Marduk home.[292]

- *Akītu* Chronicle (ABC 16)

The *Akītu* Chronicle is a small text that records in which years the festival was not celebrated from the year of Babylon's destruction by Sennacherib (689 BC) up until the reign of Nabopolassar. It starts with a passage similar to the one found in the Esarhaddon Chronicle cited above and is therefore a continuation of that text, albeit a very short one. Interestingly, it does not say explicitly that the NYF was resumed after the return of Marduk, although its

[287] Rev. 9'-10'. The line numbers cited all refer to the editions of Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber on http://www.livius.org/sources/about/mesopotamian-chronicles/? (last accessed 7 September 2018). For the phrase "to took Bēl by the hand" see below page 70.
[288] Waerzeggers 2012: 293.
[289] Line 22.
[290] Lines 34-36.
[291] Line 5-8.
[292] See also Zaia & Cauchi, 2019. See also above, page 26.

inclusion of the 17th-20th regnal years of Šamaš-šuma-ukīn as years of non-observance makes clear that this was indeed the case.

- Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle (ABC 5)

The Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle, which is also known as the Jerusalem Chronicle, covers the period 605-594 BC. In contrast to the four chronicles discussed above, and to the Borsippean chronicle-corpus in general, this text is less "historical" in nature since it is more or less contemporary with the events it relates. The most cited part of the text is the capture of Jerusalem in 597 BC; however, it also mentions that the king went into procession with Marduk to celebrate the *akītu*-festival in his accession year: "In the month of Nisannu he took the hands of Bēl and the son of Bēl and celebrated the *akītu*-festival."[293]

One of the most remarkable aspects of the chronicles is the fact that they record the non-observance of the NYF more often than the observance of it. While the texts do not explicitly accord any value judgement to these statements, it is rather obvious that it was a bad thing when the NYF did not take place. That can be explained by the fact that interruptions of the cult were generally not supposed to happen. Moreover, since the *akītu* was so closely related to kingship, the chronicles put the kings who failed to celebrate it in a negative light. Many of the kings who did not observe the festival were in (a later) historical-literary tradition portrayed as "bad kings", such as Nabû-šuma-iškun, who in the Hellenistic period was characterized as one of the ultimate bad kings.[294] "It seems that ABC 15 is an early manifestation of this tradition, as it attributes the oldest known reference to a disrupted *Akītu* festival in the chronicle corpus to the reign of this king."[295] Also Sennacherib, the destroyer of Babylon, can be put in this list.

For other kings, it is less clear why they would be included in the list of bad rulers, e.g. Šamaš-šuma-ukīn and Nabopolassar (in ABC 16). In these cases, however, more information is provided as to why the NYF did not happen: there were "insurrections", there were "hostilities and warfare". In a sense, the chronicles excuse the kings in question for their failing to celebrate the *akītu*. Two of the Borsippean chronicles unambiguously state that the NYF took place; by doing so, they place Eriba-Marduk and Nebuchadnezzar in a favourable light.

Most scholars have followed Grayson in the assumption that "information about the [New Year's] festival is usually accurate and reliable" in the chronicles,[296] even though that seems

[293] Obv. 14.
[294] The Crimes and Sacrileges of Nabû-šuma-iškun (Cole 1994).
[295] Waerzeggers 2012: 394.
[296] Grayson 1970: 170.

highly unlikely for most of the sources summarized here, because of the distance in time between the moment of redaction and the described event. One exception can be noted: the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle seems overall historically reliable. The tablet can be dated to the Neo-Babylonian period; thus the text is more or less contemporary to the recounted phenomena. Apart from that one, we must be more careful in our assumption that the Borsippean chronicles should inform us adequately about the observance of the New Year Festival in the period which they *describe*. They can, however, convey information about the period in which they were *written*. Bidmead was not wrong to say: "The importance of the *akītu* for the chronicler cannot be overstated."[297] Apparently, the performance of the New Year Festival was to the chroniclers of equal significance as the political and other historical events they chose to describe.

### III.2.4 Cult and literature

Finally, a few texts that could be termed "cultic" and relate information about the NYF have only been found in LSC versions. All of them are clearly based on older models, however. BM 47902+ can on palaeographic grounds be attributed a sixth century date rather than a Late Babylonian one.[298] The fragment relates the events that took place in the *akītu*-house, as the prayer addressing Nergal with "Why are you not seated in Cutha" indicates: the deity was in Babylon in the *akītu*-house, gathered with other gods there, and thus absent from his home.[299] VS 24 nos. 108-110 contain lists of gods that go with Bēl to the *akītu*-house.[300] Another cultic text that is explicitly related to the *akītu*-festival is the *šu'illa-prayer* to Marduk VAT 8411 (and its duplicates) – its colophon states that it is to be performed "in the month Nisannu, on the 11th day, when Bēl (returning) from the *akītu*-house enters Esagila."[301] These texts are all very similar to Neo-Assyrian texts of the same type, which shows they go back to older versions.[302]

An historical-literary text which makes mention of the New Year Festival is the Verse Account of Nabonidus, a propagandistic text that was composed in or after the reign of Cyrus.[303] The

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[297] Bidmead 2002: 146.

[298] Contra Lambert 1997: 52. Characteristic, for example, is the sign MEŠ which has a clear NB form in which three "Winkelhaken" stand on a straight horizontal line rather than a diagonal one. Note also the formulation in line IV 7 *annû naqbīti* etc. which is different from the common *naqbītu annâ* found in the NYF texts (see also below page 175). Part of the text furthermore reduplicates a section from a Neo-Assyrian tablet, K 9876+ (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no.8: 228-232).

[299] Explicit in the Neo-Assyrian version K 9876+ rev. 34' (see footnote 298), where the instruction accompanying the similar prayer reads "when Bēl is seated on the bára.maḫ in the *akītu*-temple, this is recited towards Bēl".

[300] Pongratz-Leisten 1994 nos. 10-11: 236-239 (VS 24 109 and 110 are duplicates; VS 24 108 and 109 may belong to the same tablet [van Dijk 1987: 14]).

[301] VAT 8411 rev. 34-37 (Maul 1998).

[302] See van Dijk 1987: 14 and Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 1: 206.

[303] Schaudig 2001: 563-578. Ivo Dos Santos Martins is currently writing a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Leiden about the Verse Account.

first part of it concerns Nabonidus' devotion to the moon god, for which he decided to build a temple. In this context, he says:

> "When I will have fully executed what I have planned, I shall lead him by the hand and establish him on his seat. Yet till I have achieved this, till I have obtained what is my desire, I shall omit all festivals, I shall order even the New Year Festival to cease!"[304]

The author of the Verse Account states that Nabonidus abolished the Babylonian NYF. While we know from the king's own inscriptions that this is not true, the author of the Verse Account may have taken the fact that Nabonidus did not come to Babylon for the NYF procession as proof of his assumptions. In this composition, the decision of the king regarding the NYF is used to portray Nabonidus in a negative way and this may have had precedence over conveying the historical facts.

In summary, the amount of attestations in different genres shows how the Babylonian NYF was an integral part of Babylonian religious, cultural and social life during the Long Sixth Century. A few elements concerning the festival can be distilled from this overview. First, the terms "New Year Festival" and *akītu* are undoubtedly synonyms at this time when it comes to the festival in Babylon. We find the words *zagmukku*, *rēš šatti* and *akītu*, sometimes accompanied by the word for "festival", *isinnu*. The word *akītu* appears regularly and refers either to the festival or the temple; in the latter case it is most often preceded by *bīt*. Second, attestations of *akītu*-festivals other than the one celebrated in Babylon are rare outside the corpus of administrative texts. Only Nabonidus refers to the *akītu*-house of Uraš in one inscription. The focus on the festival in Babylon shows how "*akītu*" was inextricably linked to that city in the Babylonian mentality. Third, both Marduk and Nabû played a prominent role in the festival. Thus, both Babylon and Borsippa together come to the fore in the source material, with a number of texts actually stemming from the latter city.

Fourth, the different sources are almost all concerned with the same event: the *akītu*-processions, be it the journey from Nabû between Borsippa and Babylon or the processions to and from the *akītu*-house. Clearly this was the most important aspect of the festival, which can be explained in many ways: it may be the most crucial symbolic/ritual act; it may be connected to the dangerous nature of bringing the gods out of their temples, thus emphasising the successful completion of that endeavour; or it may simply be the procession's public and festive

[304] II.3 (Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/anet/verse-account-of-nabonidus/).

nature; and probably it was the combination of all elements that made this into the characteristic event of the NYF.

Lastly, Babylonian kingship and the *akītu*-festival of Babylon were intertwined at this time. Without venturing into a symbolic interpretation of it, the fact is that kings were supposed to and did in fact contribute to the festival, in the form of offerings, gifts and their participation in the procession. Nabonidus' refraining from mentioning anything related to the *akītu*-procession while he was absent from Babylon can serve as an *argumentum ex silentio*.

Nabonidus was the last king in Babylon to mention the *akītu*-festival in his inscriptions. The administrative material regarding the NYF continues quasi-unchanged until the end of the reign of Darius I. Then, we are confronted with a silence of the sources: the End of Archives in 484 BC marks a clear rupture in the material concerning the NYF.[305] We are left with a gap of more than 200 years after that date and only after the establishment of the Seleucid dynasty had taken place, do the sources mention cultic activity at the beginning of the year again.

[305] For the state of the question regarding 484 BC, see Waerzeggers & Seire 2018.

*Intermezzo 1: The phrase "taking Bēl by the hand"*

While the Akkadian language knows many different words and phrases to express the act of going in procession, the one most commonly associated with the NYF is *qātē Bēl ṣabātu*, "to take Bēl by the hands".[306] The exact interpretation of the phrase remains contested and it is unclear whether it is a mere technical expression or if it carries a symbolic value. A few issues should be considered in this discussion: when and where is the phrase attested? When and how does it refer to the *akītu*-procession? Is its meaning (whether symbolic or technical) always the same? Who performs the action and who is subjected to it?

What stands to reason is the fact that *qātē ṣabātu* is used to denote the movement of gods from one place to another. In contrast to some other idioms expressing movement, the gods are here the object of someone else's action, which can also be expressed by using causative forms of intransitive verbs. It is, however, an important observation that the choice for this particular phrase might be motivated by the fact that it puts the spotlight on the person moving the gods rather than on the gods themselves.[307]

Pongratz-Leisten listed five different nuances of the movement of gods expressed by *qātē ṣabātu*: (1) procession of gods during a festival; (2) installation of a god in a new temple; (3) installation of a god in a renovated temple; (4) return of a god in its original temple; (5) godnapping.[308] While these nuances are valid, it seems unnecessary to differentiate between the different occurrences in such a way. *Qātē ṣabātu* does not actually signify the going in itself, but rather indicates the removal of a god from its seat/temple and its subsequent installation in another dwelling place. This is the general technical meaning that fits all occurrences.

When gods aside from Bēl/Marduk (and Nabû) are seized by the hand, it is always specified where they are introduced. In those cases, the phrase does never refer to the *akītu*-procession, but to another instant in which a deity was introduced in a temple (be it because of renovation or for another reason). Notably, the phrase occurs as such in inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian kings Sargon, Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal, and in those of Nabonidus, who used the monuments of Aššurbanipal in particular as model for his own inscriptions.[309]

[306] Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 153-188.
[307] Also Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 172.
[308] Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 171-174.
[309] Mayer 1998.

In some cases in particular, the phrase refers to the procession of gods that took place during the NYF, when they were brought to the *akītu*-house. In those instances, the object is always Bēl/Marduk (and Nabû). The clearest occurrence can be found in two inscriptions of Sargon II, where it is stated not only that Sargon took Bēl by the hand, but also that he introduced him in the *akītu*-house.[310] Here, the use of the expression adheres to its general meaning outlined above. Another clear example appears in the Jerusalem Chronicle and reads: "In the month Nisannu, he [Nebuchadnezzar II] took the hands of Bēl and the son of Bēl and celebrated the *akītu*-festival."[311] In this case, the temple to which the gods are brought is not mentioned, but the occasion of the procession is clarified.

More difficult are those instances in which the phrase stands on its own, which is most often the case in the chronicles from the Long Sixth Century and in the Assyrian Eponym List.[312] There, the exact meaning cannot be derived from the context and must therefore lie within the phrase itself. It is taken for granted that when the expression "to take Bēl/Marduk by the hand" stands on its own, it refers to the *akītu*-procession. However, that is not always the case. Case in point is the account of Marduk's return, retold in an inscription of Aššurbanipal: Šamaš-šuma-ukīn is said to have grasped Marduk by the hand and after the journey from Assur to Babylon, a final mouthwashing is performed and the (new) statue of Marduk enters Esagila.[313] Indeed, in the *Mīs pî* ritual the same phrase appears whenever the statue of the god is moved from one place to another.[314] A similar story can be found in the so-called Eriya Stone Tablet, where it is recounted how Nebuchadnezzar I waged war against Elam on behalf of two priests of the god Eriya, whom the Elamites had taken away, and after destroying the country, he "grasped the hand of Bēl and he carried Eriya with Bēl into Babylon."[315]

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[310] Annalen lines 320-321 (Fuchs 1994: 156 with translation 332) and Große Prunkschrift 140-141 (Fuchs 1994: 231, 352).
[311] ABC 5 obv. 13 (https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-5-jerusalem-chronicle/ [last accessed 23.07.2019]).
[312] ABC 1B, ABC 24, Assyrian Eponym List.
[313] Aššurbanipal 73 o iii 8'.
[314] Nineveh-version: lines 65, 95; Babylon-version: lines 5, 12, 59, 60.
[315] NKU I 3 obv. 11-12 (Paulus 2014: 511-514). While the inscription has been said to genuinely stem from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (cf. Nielsen 2018: 27), it is doubtful whether that is true. As shown here, the phrase *qātē Bēl ṣabātu* is otherwise attested only in Late Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian sources. This is not the only element that does not fit such an early date: the formulary mistakes, especially in the curse formula, stand out too, as well as the fact that this would be the earliest occurrence of the use of $^{d}$en to denote Marduk (Sommerfeld 1982: 177). Another indication is the remarkable form of the object ("Kudurru-ähnliches Objekt", Paulus 2014: 511): Paulus concluded that this is neiter a real *kudurru* nor even a copy of a juridical document, but an amalgation of different pieces of text. It remains unclear when this possible forgery was concocted and to what ends exactly. In any case, a Neo-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian date cannot be excluded, therefore this instance of *qātē Bēl ṣabātu* does not disrupt the thread of the present discussion.

In a similar vein, instead of a god returning from exile, *qātē Bēl ṣabātu* is also used once to denote the opposite in the story of the godnapping of Marduk's statue by Sennacherib.[316]

In all the occurrences discussed until now, the constellation of the action is similar: one deity is grasped by the hand by a king in a publicly visible procession.[317] That this was the 'proper' format becomes clear from a processional omen in which the protasis starts with "if the king seizes the hand of the god" – there are no other omens with different subjects.[318] This changes, however, in the Late Babylonian period: at that time, the expression is only used in temple ritual texts from Uruk. The king, as subject, is accompanied by one or multiple deities and in some instances by the *mašmaššu*-priest. Moreover, now also objects are grasped by the hand, such as the Sceptre of Kingship, the torch or the kettledrum. While on the one hand, this expresses the fact that those objects were divinized, on the other it also emphasizes the material nature of the gods who are taken by the hand.

The instances in which the phrase *qātē Bēl ṣabātu* refers in itself to the *akītu*-procession are very limited. Only two Babylonian chronicles and the Assyrian Eponym List use it as such. Still, it is enough evidence to suggest that the phrase carried a symbolic meaning which was inextricably linked to or exactly the same as the meaning of the *akītu*-procession. Moreover, it was used only to refer to the NYF taking place in Babylon, with the protagonists Bēl and Nabû.[319] Even though the descriptions of the *akītu*-processions of Anu and Ištar of Uruk respectively include this phrase, the texts add whereto the gods were brought (the *akītu*-temple) and/or use it to describe movements to other sanctuaries as well. Moreover, these Late Babylonian occurrences might well have been modelled after the earlier version of the phrase, which links it to the NYF. Note in that light that most texts from LB Babylon use different vocabulary to denote the *akītu*-procession (*alāku*, *aṣû*).

The CAD gives different interpretations of the idiom *qāt*(*ē*) *ṣabātu*.[320] A different meaning is found mainly in prayers, where the phrase means "to help someone, to guarantee security": gods are often begged to take their petitioner by the hand. It also occurs in letters and royal inscriptions, where a person/the king claims to have taken someone by the hand, i.e. to have

[316] Babylon-Stele I 14'-15' (Schaudig 2001: 516, 523).
[317] With the exception of the *Mīs pî* ritual, in which the subject remains unnamed and is addressed in the second person singular. The difference can perhaps be explained by the confined nature of this particular ritual, compared to the public nature of the procession in which kings took part.
[318] CT 40 40, 83 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 18: 257-265).
[319] Also explicitly noted by Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 172.
[320] CAD Ṣ 30-32 s.v. *ṣabātu*.

helped them in a certain way. Bidmead entertained the idea that the phrase in the context of the NYF might be understood in the same way, but eventually proposed a different interpretation.[321] Nevertheless, the difference need not be so substantial.

The movement of a god from one place to another was a precarious situation. Many things could occur during public processions that were not only ominous, but also genuine threats to the (statue of the) god. Therefore, during processions the gods had to be appeased to prevent them from releasing their wrath. Perhaps we should understand *qātē ṣabātu* in that light: with this action, the king showed that he guaranteed the security of the god. The exact words used, "taking someone by the hand", are reminiscent of how parents hold their children's hands while walking in a gesture of protection. Similarly then, the gods could be asked to do the same – it seems most likely, in fact, that this was the original use of the phrase, and that kings took it on to use in their inscriptions.

This interpretation is especially fitting for the cases in which the phrase stands on its own. When kings brought a god back from exile, the god would have been distressed and in need of reassurance. That was done, amongst other things, by this gesture. In the NYF, the hand grasping became a symbolic act depicting the renewed promise of the king to take care of Marduk. This interpretation furthermore explains why it is only the king who can seize a god by the hand:[322] who else would have been qualified to promise protection to a god? In the Late Babylonian period the symbolic meaning of the phrase had faded to become just a technical expression for the movement of a god or deified object from one place to another. Alternatively, the symbolic meaning remained unchanged, but could now also be applied to non-royal subjects.

[321] Bidmead 2002: 154-162. Her final interpretation was that the phrase gave expression to a contract between king and god.
[322] With the exception of the *Mīs pî* ritual.

## III.3 Late Babylonian

Material concerning the Babylonian NYF has come down from the Hellenistic and Parthian periods too. The fact that these sources exist, is one of the factors that have led to the assumption that the Late Babylonian cult was not different from the cult observed in earlier times.[323] However, the nature and scope of the source material is very different at this time in comparison to the other periods discussed above: no sources emanate from the king; instead the material stems from a purely priestly context. Moreover, new genres are adopted and developed, most conspicuously the Astronomical Diaries (ADART).[324] In the following, an overview is given of the sources that are generally used to prove the undisturbed continuity of the cultic tradition of the NYF in Babylon. For the sake of the argument, it should be stated beforehand that the evidence is very meagre and should be treated with much caution. A critical re-evaluation will be given in Chapter VI.

### III.3.1 Primary sources

Late Babylonian primary evidence for the NYF is largely circumstantial: because it is assumed that the NYF took place from the first to the eleventh of Nisannu every year, it is concluded that recorded ritual activities falling in that time span refer to the festival. Nine sources dated to the reigns of nine different kings of the Seleucid and Arsacid dynasties provide possible information about the festival: seven Astronomical Diaries, one chronicle and one administrative text. These sources are generally accepted to be accurate accounts of historical events. Naturally, a certain bias remains noticeable, most clearly in the selection of which events are recorded and which are not.[325]

Since the participation and involvement of the king is one of the main elements that come to the fore in the earlier sources for the Babylonian NYF, modern scholars have sought to prove the presence of the king in Babylon at the moment of the New Year. One Diary explicitly mentions king Antiochos III (no. 4); another speaks of the children of king Seleukos II (no. 1); and a contemporary chronicle mentions Seleukos III (no. 3). The recorded presence of the king in Babylon at the moment of the NYF is one of the criteria based on which the texts in question have been used as source for the NYF, since the participation of the king is crucial for the correct observance of the festival. Other elements of importance are references to the procession

[323] Da Riva 2019a and 2019b; Linssen 2004; Boiy 2004: 277-287.
[324] The Astronomical Diaries will be refered to as ADART + no. All references relate to the online publication of the volumes by Hunger & Sachs (1988-2006) under http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/adsd/corpus (last accessed 04.02.2020).
[325] A discussion of the subjective focusses of the Diaries and Chronicles respectively is offered in Chapters VI.3 and VI.4 respectively.

to the *akītu*-house or the attestation of more generic cultic activities. The corpus of sources below is dated to the period between 246 and 78 BC. An overview in chronological order is given below.[326]

- no. 1: ADART no. -245A

Dated to 246 BC/66 SE, reign of Antiochos II Theos. It mentions that on the eleventh day of Nisannu of that year, three of Antiochos II's children went to Esagila (note that the verb is broken). It has been suggested that their father accompanied them.[327] This could refer to a royal visit to the temple in the context of the New Year Festival. Nota bene: Antiochos II had only two sons, Seleukos II and Antiochos Hierax; Apama is his eldest daughter.

> **obv. 12** That month on the 11th day […] **13** […] … [… S]eleukos, Antiochos and Apama his children to Esagil … […]

- no. 2: ADART no. -226A

Dated to 227 BC/85 SE, reign of Seleukos II Kallinikos. Line 4' on the obverse mentions recitations; line 22' and 23' mention the binding of a sheep and something with a *lilissu*-drum and incantations, a combination of actions that is vaguely reminiscent of the activities of day 5 of Nisannu as described in NYF4 (see below, page 138).

> **obv**. **4'** […] recited incantations, male and female … […]
>
> **obv**. **22'** […] they bound[?] a sheep, the *lilissu*-drum **23'** […] recited incantations

- no. 3: BCHP 12 ("Seleukos III Chronicle")[328]

Dated to 224 BC/88 SE, reign of Seleukos III Soter Keraunos. By order of the king, money for eleven oxen, a hundred sheep and eleven ducks was taken from the royal treasury and given to the *šatammu* of Esagila for food offerings on the eighth day of Nisannu. The rest-portions were to be divided amongst the lamentation-priests and the *šatammu*. The order was sent to the royal judges and citizens of Seleukia and carried out by the *šatammu.*

This chronicle attests to a royal interest and, to some degree, involvement in the New Year Festival. However, it is remarkable that the royal treasury (*bīt šarri*, basilikon) did not give the sacrificial animals for the offerings, but the money to provide them. Perhaps that had to do with

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[326] Not included in this discussion, but sometimes used in studies on the New Year Festival, is ADART no. -187A, which relates a visit of Antiochos III to Esagila and the Day One Temple (Joannès 2014: 459; Del Monte 1997: 67-68). However, the month in which this happened is broken, but it must have been in the ninth, tenth or eleventh, since the text resumes with the twelfth month. See also Madreiter 2016: 119-122.

[327] Linssen 2004: 85. He interprets the passage to refer to the king and his three "sons" returning from the *akītu*-house to Esagila, based on the traditional schedule of the New Year Festival.

[328] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_01.html (last accessed 06.09.2018). BCHP 12 = ABC 13b.

matters of purity, of which the Crown was thus aware (or maybe problems with these matters had arisen at an earlier stage). The giving of money is exceptional here, since the Seleucid rulers rarely made monetary gifts, but rather made payments in kind.[329] It should also be noted that the communication between king and temple was not direct, but that the (royal) institutions of Seleukia-on-the-Tigris served as intermediary.[330]

> **3'** [Year] 88, Seleukos (III Keraunos) king, month Nisannu. That month, 8th day, a certain Babylonian, the *šatammu* of Esagila, provided **4'** [for the x] x of Esagila, at the command of the king, in accordance with the parchment letter that the king had sent before, **5'** [wi]th money from the royal treasury from his own estate: 11 fat oxen, 100 fat sheep **6'** (and) 11 fat ducks for the food offering within Esagila, **7'** for Bēl, Bēltīya and the great gods and [f]or the service of the ki[ng] Se[le]ukos **8'** and his sons. The aforementioned portions of the oxen and the sacrifical animals **9'** he designated to the lamentation-priests and the *šatammu*. To the judges of the king and the citizens **10'** [to] Seleukia he sent (it).

- no. 4: ADART no. -204C

Dated to 205 BC/107 SE, reign of Antiochos III Megas. This text has been understood as one of the most explicit references to the New Year Festival. It recounts how the king, accompanied by officials(?), goes to Esagila, where he makes offerings, and then goes to the Day One Temple, where again offerings are made, this time for Ištar of Babylon and the "life of king Antiochos".[331] It has been suggested that the text describes in fact how Antiochos accompanied Marduk on his procession to the *akītu*-house. In the reconstructed course of events,[332] day eight is the day on which the outgoing procession took place. Furthermore, the king went to the Kasikilla, a gate of Esagila, from where Marduk went out into processions.[333] There is also mention of a *ḫarû*-offering, which Zgoll connected to the procession to the *akītu*-house.[334] Note that the *akītu*-temple is not mentioned in this text; instead, the author refers to the Day One Temple (é ud 1kám). Based on this occurrence, van der Spek has argued that both names should be understood to refer to the same temple. Nevertheless, that remains doubtful, as will be discussed below.[335]

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[329] Monerie 2018: 322 note 104.
[330] Contra Sciandra 2012: 226-227 note 5, who claims the order was sent to the *šatammu.*
[331] See Pirngruber 2010 about Hellenistic ruler cults in Babylonia.
[332] See above II.2.
[333] George 1992: 421: "[Kasikilla is] the principal point of entry into the temple complex. Through it, on great occasions of ceremony, the king would enter the precinct to visit Marduk, or Marduk leave his temple in procession." An interpretation of the king entering Esagila instead of departing from it seems very implausible (see also Boiy 2004: 278-279).
[334] Zgoll 2006: 34-37. Her discussion rests on the combination of this text with the Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary SAA 3, 37, the Middle Assyrian ritual text VAT 16435 (Köcher 1952) and the Neo-Assyrian ritual text VAT 8882+10464 (SAA 20, 15).
[335] See below, page 82.

> **rev. 14** That [month (Nisannu)], on the 8th day, king Antiochos (III) and the [...] **15** went out [from] the palace […] to the Pure Gate [of] Esagila: the *ḫarû* of the year […] **16** Esagila before them he made. Of[ferings…] Marduk […] **17** […] of their descendants they placed. They/He entered the Day One Temple [and] **18** [offerings to Bēl, Bēltīya and] Ištar of Babylon and the life of king Antiochos they/he made […][336]

- no. 5: ADART no. -170A

Dated to 171 BC/141 SE, reign of Antiochos IV Epiphanes. It is a very broken note mentioning offerings in the month Nisannu. Tentatively those could be connected to a celebration of the New Year.

> **obv. 1'** […] sacrifices […]

- no. 6: ADART no. -161A$_{1-2}$

Dated to 162 BC/150 SE, reign of Antiochos V Eupator. It records an unknown event – offerings of sheep perhaps – at the *dudê*-gate of Esagila on the tenth and eleventh of Nisannu involving both Babylonians and Greeks (*puliṭe*). The gates of the temple were a typical place of interaction between Babylonian priests and royal authorities: Clancier submitted that meeting there ensured that unauthorized people would not enter the sacred spaces, yet also meant that the encounter took place on "Babylonian ground".[337]

> **obv. 27'** On the 10th and 11th day … […recit]ed (and) the remainder of the Babylonians … sheep[?] […] **28'** in the *dudê*-gate of Esagila to […] citizen […] **29'** in the *dudê*-gate of Esa[gila …]

- no. 7: ADART no. -140A

Dated to 141 BC/171 SE, reign of Mithridates I. This text has been used to demonstrate that the gods who lived within Babylon only travelled to meet Marduk on the eighth day of Nisannu (in contrast to gods who lived in other cities).[338] In that case a form of the verb *ṣabātu* should be reconstructed in the break, so that the line says that someone took Ištar of Babylon by the hand. As such, the present text would record the procession(?) of Ištar of Babylon to(?) the Gula-temple and from there onwards to another place on the eighth day of the first month. Note, however, that many actions could involve hands. In particular in connection with the divine meal, hands of gods could be washed.

> **obv. 21** […] the 8th day, after the minor cultic meal of the morning, the hands of Ištar of Babylon […] … […] **22** [… minor] cultic meal[?] the hands of Ištar of Babylon from the gate of the Gula-temple […] … […]

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[336] Translation based on Pirngruber 2010: 535-536.
[337] Clancier 2012c: 312-315.
[338] Zgoll 2006: 30 note 96.

- no. 8: Administrative text AB 244[339]

Dated to 92 BC/219 SE, reign of Mithridates II. It records payments for the deliveries of sacrificial sheep at the Day One Temple in the twelfth month (and the intercalated twelfth month), as well as in the first month in the *akītu*-temple, at the main gate and at an unknown location in Babylon.[340] This text shows that the Day One Temple was presumably not the same as the *akītu*-temple, since the occurrence of both names within one text would have been cause for confusion.

> **obv. 5-16** Expenditures: 21 shekel of silver for a fund without interruption for supplementary payment of offering sheep of the Day One Temple for the period 15.XII.218 to 15.XII2.218 […] 2 shekel for supplementary payment of 3 offering sheep, of which one in the *akītu*-temple, one in the Main Gate and one in the […] Gate of Nabû is sacrificed on 11.1.219 […]

- no. 9: ADART no. -77A

Dated to 78 BC/234 SE, reign of Orodes I. It mentions the *šatammu* of Esagila and a festival (*isinnu*) in the first month. The exact day(s) on which this took place is/are broken.

> **obv. 10'** […] … the administrator of Esagila **11'** […] … That month … **12'** […] … feast …

As becomes clear from the survey above, the references to the observance of the New Year Festival in Late Babylonian Babylon are indirect and ambiguous. None of the texts refers directly to the *akītu* or NYF. The often fragmentary state of the texts is problematic, but so too is the fact that they mostly speak of things that we do not encounter in the festival's schedule as outlined above, the most prominent of which are the locations mentioned and the participation of certain (groups of) people. The involvement of the king is key, still it remains a questionable element: do the sources naming the king indeed refer to his participation in the festival? A re-evaluation of the material will be presented in Chapter VI.

[339] Van der Spek 1998 no. 23: 234-235; Mc Ewan 1981b: 132-136.
[340] For the Day One Temple, see further below.

*Intermezzo 2: The Day One Temple*

There is an ongoing debate about whether or not the Day One Temple (é ud 1$^{kam}$) is simply another name for the *akītu*-temple or an entirely different temple.[341] The earliest attestation of the temple name is found in an Astronomical Diary from the year 205 BC.[342] It appears in the context of a visit of Antiochos III to Esagila and the Day One Temple on the eighth day of Nisannu. Van der Spek understood this as a clear reference to the NYF, thus equating the Day One Temple with the *akītu*-house.[343] As far as one can tell, the name *bīt akīti* is not used in the Diaries, which would explain the use of "Day One Temple" as a simple replacement. However, the *bīt akīti* does still appear in administrative texts from the Seleucid and Parthian eras, although the Day One Temple is much better attested.[344] One text is especially problematic, because it records payments for the deliveries of sacrificial animals both to the Day One Temple and to the *bīt akīti*.[345] If they are one and the same, it remains difficult to explain why two names to designate the same building would be used within the same text.[346]

More information about the Day One Temple can be gleaned from administrative sources.[347] It becomes clear that the temple functioned in the same way as many other temples. Two types of prebends are attested: porters (*atû*) and cleaners (*muremmiku*).[348] Texts record deliveries of sacrificial sheep for the regular offerings (*ginû*) to take place.[349] The Day One Temple had a treasury with considerable riches, as the mentions of the "*irbu*, the cashbox and the *pānātu* of the cashbox of the Day One Temple" show.[350] One texts refers to the *bīt ḫilṣi* of the Day One Temple and this is very significant.[351] In Neo-Babylonian times, the *bīt ḫilṣi* of Eanna is especially well-attested. According to Joannès, the *bīt ḫilṣi* was a part of the main temple of a city in which specialized people prepared aromatic plants to be used in

[341] In favour of them being the same: Boiy 2004: 85-86; van der Spek 1998: 225. Against: Jursa 1997: 131 note 16; McEwan 1981b: 135.
[342] ADART no. -204C, rev. 14-18. See above no. 4.
[343] Because on the eighth day in the virtual reconstruction of the festival, the procession of gods left for the *akītu*-house. Sic also Boiy 2004: 86.
[344] The following texts in the Raḫīm-esu archive mention the Day One Temple: van der Spek 1998 no. 13, 14, 18, 21, 23, 24.
[345] AB 244, no. 8 above (van der Spek 1998 no. 23: 234-235; McEwan 1981b: 132-136), dated to 93 BC. Note also how the *bīt akīti* is mentioned within a timeframe that fits the NYF (11$^{th}$ of Nisannu) and how the sacrifices are labeled as exceptional (although they are remarkably few), thus fitting a rare occasion, whereas for the Day One temple regular offerings for the twelfth and intercalary twelfth month are recorded.
[346] Note also the suggestion of Mitsuma (2008) to consider the Day One Temple as the temple of Ištar of Babylon.
[347] In particular the Rahimesu-archive, see van der Spek 1998 and McEwan 1981b.
[348] Van der Spek 1998 nos. 13 and 18.
[349] Van der Spek 1998 nos. 18, 22 and 23.
[350] Van der Spek 1998 no. 24. See also the Gold Theft Chronicle BCHP 15, in which a is described how a person stole gold from the Day One Temple, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-15-gold-theft-chronicle/ (last accessed 22/06/2019).
[351] Van der Spek 1998 no. 14.

(especially magico-medical) rituals.[352] In both Uruk and Sippar, this building was associated with an important female deity of the city in question. Furthermore, it seems that the location of the building was in close proximity to a garden in which the plants to be used were cultivated.

For the Seleucid-Parthian period, two *bīt ḫilṣi*s are attested in Babylon: one is linked to the Esabad, temple of Gula, the other to the Day One Temple.[353] It is no coincidence that such a structure was connected to the temple of Gula, who was the goddess of medicine. More remarkable is that it can be found in the Day One Temple as well. As remarked above, in Neo-Babylonian times the *bīt ḫilṣi* was part of the main temple of a city, for example Eanna in Uruk or Ebabbar in Sippar. There may have been two *bīt ḫilṣi*s in NB Uruk, as one administrative text suggests;[354] if that is true, then the two *bīt ḫilṣi*s in Babylon are less uncommon. Still, it does not explain the connection of a structure, that normally belongs to the most important temple of the city, to the barely known Day One Temple – the connection to Gula's temple is obvious. Since the *bīt ḫilṣi* was located in a garden in NB Uruk, Joannès suggested that the LB *bīt ḫilṣi* may have found a place close to the Juniper Garden.

That would be very significant: the Juniper Garden was the location where the most important temple institutions of Babylon were located in the Hellenistic period (the temple of Ishtar, Eturkalamma; the Esagila libraries;[355] economic buildings such as the treasury;[356] administrative buildings; the "house of the judges").[357] As such, the Juniper Garden formed the centre of traditional Babylonian life in the Hellenistic period, as opposed to the Graeco-Macedonian centres such as the theatre. Note, in this light, that Esagila is rarely used in the Diaries to refer to a *location*; rather, it is a designation detailing an aspect of a person or another place, e.g. the *šatammu* of Esagila, the gates of Esagila; in other words, Esagila was used to refer to an institution rather than to a location.[358] Esagila was only in name connected with Babylonian power; the centre *de facto* was the Juniper Garden. If the *bīt ḫilṣi* connected to the Day One Temple was indeed located in the Juniper Garden, that would mean that the

[352] Joannès 2006b: 87 "une partie spécialisée du sanctuaire *principal* [emphasis CD] où des desservants qui ont titre de *šangû* ou d'*ērib-bīti* de ce bâtiment, traitent les produits odorant."
[353] Joannès 2006b.
[354] NCBT 377 (Joannès 2006b: 82; Beaulieu 2003: 18, 203).
[355] Clancier 2009: 107-213. Probably, different buildings in the Juniper Garden housed library-texts, thus Clancier (2009: 205) speaks of "les fonds de tablettes littéraires et savantes du sanctuaire de Bēl-Marduk." For convenience, I will use the term "Esagila libraries" throughout the dissertation when I refer to those collections of texts.
[356] See, for example, ADART no. -168A rev. 19'.
[357] Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 195-197.
[358] Diaries with translations containing "in(side) Esagila": no. -182A rev. 40' (uncertain); -245A obv. 13' (broken context); -249B rev 3' (broken context); -105B obv. 30' (placing of? clay in Esagila).

Day One Temple had its place there too. What is more, the earlier references of *bīt ḫilṣi* in other Babylonian cities make clear that it was a structure within a larger temple complex. The phrase *bīt ḫilṣi ša* é.ud.1$^{kám}$ also points in that direction.[359] This, together with the other characteristics of the temple encountered in the administrative texts, make it very plausible that the Day One Temple was an important sanctuary situated within the Juniper Garden, and therefore part of the core institutions of traditional Babylonian power in Hellenistic Babylon.[360]

In the Diaries, most mentions to the Day One Temple cannot have referred to the NYF, since they do not relate to the month Nisannu.[361] In fact, it seems unlikely that the Day One Temple was connected to a specific festival, first because of its regular function as attested in the administrative texts, and second because it could be used in any month of the year. What stands out in the accounts in which it appears, is the fact that large groups of people tend to go to the Day One Temple, often consisting of a mix of native Babylonians and Greek institutions and people. Thus, we find the king,[362] the Babylonians, the assembly of Esagila, the *šatammu*, the governor (*epistatēs*) of Babylon, the commander of the troops, and the *politai*.

The most recorded activity taking place at the Day One Temple is the performance of sacrifices.[363] It is not always clear who is the subject, but often it seems to have been a royal delegate or delegation or the king himself. The sacrifices are made in honour of Ištar of Babylon, sometimes including Bēl and Bēltīya or "for the life of the king". The different objects in ADART no. -171 might be revealing:

> "That month (V?), the 11th, the commander of the troops of […] entered Babylon. The 13th, to the temple […] he made 6 sacrifices to Bēl (and) Bēltīya, the great gods [and for the life] of the kings (lugal$^{meš}$). That day, he entered the Day One Temple. In? front of Ištar of Babylon (and) the crowns of the great gods which are set up in it, he performed 3 sacrifices for Bēl, Bēltīya, Ištar of Babylon, the great gods, and for the life of the kings, and prostrated himself."[364]

[359] Van der Spek 1998 no. 14.
[360] More evidence can perhaps be found in ADART no. -79 obv. 4'-6', which mentions both the Juniper Garden and the Day One Temple in what may be one event.
[361] Sic also Linssen 2004: 85 note 457.
[362] Antiochos III is quite certainly the one entering the Day One Temple in ADART no. -187A; it is less clear in ADART no. -204C: the subject is broken, and the expression "[sacrifices for] Ištar of Babylon and the life of king Antiochos" speaks against the king as subject. Were he the subject, the line would have read "his life", as is the case in ADART no. -187A.
[363] ADART no. -126A rev. 4 mentions the interruption of sacrifices in the Day One Temple.
[364] ADART no. -171B, rev. 1'-7'.

This is the only instance in which an offering is made for the life of multiple kings instead of a single king (or a king and members of his family). Perhaps that was due to the fact that Antiochos IV Epiphanes was at the time of writing in co-regency with his nephew (also called Antiochos), son of his brother Seleukos IV.[365] Other periods of co-regency in the Seleucid dynasty do not seem to have had any effect on the phrase, though.[366] Maybe in this case the expression did not relate to specific kings, but to kings in general. Another object of the sacrifices were the crowns of the gods. Crowns were symbols of power: like the crown of the king was a sign of his kingship, the crown of the gods demonstrated their divinity. Taken together, both the changed phrase and the reference to the crowns of the gods point to the fact that the Day One Temple was a location where two forms of power met: terrestrial and divine.

The problem is that we do not know what the function of the *akītu*-temple was, making it hard to compare the Day One Temple to the *akītu*-house. Some have gone as far as to claim that the only reason why the gods went to the *akītu*-house, was to be able to return to the city.[367] The essence of this temple was therefore that it lay outside of the city. The same cannot be said with certainty about the Day One Temple; in fact, as discussed above, it seems that its location was in the centre of Babylon. The involvement of kings with both temples is the only comparable element. However, whereas it is quite clear that Seleucid and Arsacid kings and their retinue performed offerings in the Day One Temple, it is not so obvious what role the king played in the *akītu*-house other than bringing the gods there in the procession during the NYF.

The name of the temple remains hard to explain. Unlike other Mesopotamian temples, the name does not sound very ceremonial, but rather pragmatic.[368] A first possibility is that it refers to something that happened within the temple on the first day of every month. The first day of the month had some weight in the cultic calendar. In a study of the number of animals sacrificed per day in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, Robbins established a monthly pattern of an

[365] Antiochos IV was heir to the throne of Antiochos III, but was kept hostage by the Romans when his father died, so instead of him his brother Seleucos IV succeeded their father to the throne. When Seleucos IV was killed in 175 BC, his son was supposed to follow after him but Antiochos IV seized the throne for himself and installed another son of Seleucos IV (called Antiochos) as co-regent. For the chronology of these reigns see Parker & Duberstein 1956: 23.
[366] See Parker & Dubberstein 1956: 22-23 for the reigns of Seleucid kings.
[367] Cohen 2015: 391 compares it to the child's riddle "why did the chicken cross the road?".
[368] In this sense, it is reminiscent of the NYF texts that do not internally designate the ritual they describe as *akītu*: in the catchphrase, the following tablet was referred to by the day on which the ritual was to be performed. Here too a pragmatic approach is preferred over a ceremonial one. See below.

increase on the first, second, seventh and fifteenth day of each month.[369] The same days appear in the ritual texts LKU no. 51 and TU 48.[370] They seem to be related to the phases of the moon. However, as Robbins remarked, the first day of the month (first visibility) was not celebrated as extensively as other moon phases in Neo-Babylonian Uruk.[371] This might have changed in the Hellenistic period, but that is hard to tell. At that time, the authors of the Astronomical Diaries carefully noted when the new moon was visible again to mark the beginning of each month.[372] This too gives the temple name a pragmatic rather than a ceremonial ring.

Another possibility is that we should understand the "First Day" as a reference to the first day of the year in the context of the NYF, although the New Year was traditionally referred to in other terms such as *akītu*, *rēš šatti*, *zagmukku*. A different interpretation of the temple name was proposed by Kosmin.[373] He stated that "the sanctuary's very name points to its celebration of and identification with an inaugural moment, a first beginning of time."[374] In other words, rather than referring to a cultic act repeated on a recurring first day (of the year, of the month), Kosmin proposed that the name refers to a unique moment in time and that the temple carrying that name functions as a monument to commemorate that moment. He therefore proposed that "the é ud.1.kám, the Temple of Day One, may have been founded or repurposed to commemorate in cult the first beginning of the Seleucid empire—that is, the idealized Seleucid Era epoch of 1st Nisannu 311 BC."[375] This interpretation is tempting in light of the close interaction between on the one hand Seleucid kings and their officials and on the other the Babylonian priesthood at the Day One Temple. A more thoroughgoing investigation of the matter, including all of the available material, remains a desideratum, nonetheless, for which the present space does not allow.[376]

[369] Robbins 1996, especially 78-79.
[370] Beaulieu 2003: 373-378; Thureau-Dangin 1922. See also Linssen 2004 with references to the first day of the month in sections II.2-3.
[371] Robbins 1996: 79.
[372] The length of the lunar month varies between 29 and 30 days; therefore, the first visibility of the new moon is of importance to determine the beginning of a new month. The phraseology used in the Diaries is "month N, 1st (of which followed the) 30th (of the preceding month)" or "month N, 1st (of which was identical with the) 30th (of the preceding month)".
[373] Kosmin 2018: 38-41.
[374] Kosmin 2018: 41.
[375] Kosmin 2018: 41.
[376] A number of problems stand in Kosmin's interpretation (pace Kosmin). First, he considers the Day One Temple and *akītu*-house to be one and the same (or the former being a part of the *akītu*-complex). Second, he undervalues the Arsacid-period evidence in favour of his understanding of the Day One Temple as a locality of Seleucid worship. Third, he does not question or put in context the participation of the Seleucid kings in the Babylonian NYF. These matters will be discussed by myself in a forthcoming review of Kosmin's book.

In conclusion, I would submit that the Day One Temple is not the same temple as the *akītu*-house. It was in use throughout the year (perhaps with a specific celebration on the first day of every month), while the *akītu*-house was the scene for only one occasion in Babylon. The former was probably located inside or close to the Juniper Garden, which lay "between Esagila and Eturkalamma",[377] while the main characteristic of the *akītu*-temple was its location outside of the city's walls. Moreover, the mention of both temples in one text cannot be ignored in the discussion. It is true that both temples seem to have been visited by kings, but very few cultic details are known for either of them. Lastly, the reference in the Diaries about Antiochos' visit to the Day One Temple on the eighth of Nisannu cannot serve as evidence for his participation in the NYF and the equation of the temple with the *akītu*-house, since the temple was an important locus of royal and Babylonian interaction at other moments in the year as well.

[377] ADART no. -328 rev. 24' (I 184-191).

### III.3.2 Scholarship and cult

From the two large Late Babylonian centra of cuneiform culture, Uruk and Babylon, stem a number of scholarly and cultic texts relating to the NYF. It is commonly assumed that these texts are copies of or at least heavily draw on earlier compositions.

The corpus of ritual texts stemming from Late Babylonian Uruk includes one ritual text meant for the celebration of the NYF in the month Nisannu and two others for the *akītu*-festival of the seventh month Tašrītu. The former, KAR 132, informs us about the procession of Anu to the *akītu*-house; it was suggested by Thureau-Dangin that it concerns a procession on the seventh day of Nisannu, since another ritual text from Uruk includes the line: "The street processional way, the procession-ships and the *akītu*-temple. The arranging and clearing of the meal of the morning and the evening, as for the seventh day of the month Nisannu ditto."[378] This latter composition gives the details for the first and then sixth to eleventh days of the *akītu*-festival of the month Tašrītu in Uruk. Because exactly those days are lacking in the ritual texts for the festival in Babylon, this composition has served as an important source in the latter's reconstruction. In addition, there is BRM 4, 7, a sort of ritual text which in very short notes gives instructions for the recitation of prayers – mentioned by incipit – at certain stations of the procession.[379] A last ritual text from Hellenistic Uruk to be mentioned is TU 42, which details a procession of Ištar to her *akītu*-house, but the month in which this happened has not been preserved.[380]

From Babylon stems a corpus of six texts revolving around the rituals of the New Year. They include detailed instructions for the ritual actions to be performed on day 2 to 6 or 7 of Nisannu and are therefore essential for our understanding of the NYF. However, those "NYF texts" are poorly understood by modern scholars and remain in need of a critical edition. They will be studied extensively below (Chapters IV and V ). Aside from those, there are other ritual texts from LB Babylon that concern the NYF. In contrast to the six texts mentioned above, they relate events that were supposed to happen in Borsippa.[381] They both revolve around Nanāya and Nabû in particular, with the inclusion of Uṣur-amāssu and Mār-bīti. Perhaps they should be read as a manual for the rites preparing Nabû for his participation in the New Year Festival at Babylon, while also making clear what should happen with his consort in his absence.

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[378] TU 39 obv. 14-15 (Linssen 2004: 188).
[379] Linssen 2004: 209-214.
[380] Linssen 2004: 245-251.
[381] Da Riva & Galetti 2018. These first editors of the texts rather see them as describing rituals that happened at Babylon.

Calendariums provide the same kind of information as ritual texts, although they are generally less detailed.[382] One such calendar which is relevant here comes from Babylon. SBH VIII,[383] a Hellenistic text, mentions events that happened on the tenth and eleventh day of Nisannu, but probably involving Nabû, not Marduk:

> "On appelle [le mois de Nisannu] du nom de "roi des cieux et de la terre". ... la purification. Il se dirige vers ... . ... il revêt le vêtement de la souveraineté et porte le rayonnement surnaturel. ... Il se dirige vers le Temple de la Prière. ... celui qui demeure sur la terre et aux cieux. ... on les fait entrer successivement devant eux ... . Au 11e jour, ils célèbrent (l'un après l'autre) la cérémonie dans la Temple de la Prière. ... *apkallu* ... il se hâte à la cérémonie du marriage."[384]

Aside from those ritual texts, there is one Neo- or Late Babylonian composition which comments on the clothes and accessories worn by an unidentified subject during the period from the fifth to the eleventh day of Nisannu; each piece of clothing is equated with a deity.[385] George's suggested interpretation was that during those seven days, a priest with the title *kulu'u* and part of the personnel of Anunnîtum of Babylon accompanied Marduk in the processions and the preparations to those. "The apparel that he wears very appropriately represents and symbolizes the assembly of the gods subservient to Marduk; it does not include in that number the king of the gods himself, for Marduk travels under his own identity."[386]

A last text to be included, is BM 32654+38193. It was published by Lambert under the title "Enmešarra's Defeat".[387] The exact nature of the tablet remains difficult to grasp: the largest part of the tablet contains what seems to be an epic narrative concerning Enmešara and his seven sons. However, the final column gives a list of deities that travel with Marduk to the *akītu*-house in the same fashion some Neo-Assyrian cultic texts do. About this section, Lambert remarked: "It could not have served as instructions to help in the observation of the rites [of the New Year Festival] and does not therefore belong to the other preserved accounts of this ritual."[388]

### III.3.3 Historical chronicles

Twenty-seven chronicles stem with relative certainty from the Late Babylonian Esagila libraries in Babylon.[389] The largest part of them recounts events that happened after Alexander

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[382] For definitions, see below Chapter VI.2.
[383] Matsushima 1987: 158-161; Çağirnan 1976: 168-182; Unger 1931 no. 13: 264-270.
[384] SBH VIII I 1-8 (Matsushima 1987: 158-159).
[385] BM 54312 (George 2006).
[386] George 2006: 180.
[387] Lambert 2013: 281-298 and plates 44-49.
[388] Lambert 2013: 283.
[389] They are: ABC 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13A, 13B, 17, 22, 23, Fragm. 2, BCHP 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and an unpublished fragment BM 46060. Their origin is based on text-internal elements (focus on

the Great's arrival, in other words, the texts are contemporary with the events which they describe. They show many affinities with the Astronomical Diaries, both physically and thematically, and were thus clearly created in the same context.[390] However, other chronicles from this group are historical in nature and are thus less easy to link with the Diaries.[391] They are often considered to be late manuscripts of earlier compositions. Yet, most probably, they were – just like their Diary-like counterparts – products of the community that created and maintained the Late Babylonian libraries of Esagila. The motifs in and reasons of creation behind these LB chronicles will be discussed in depth in Chapter VI.4.

The Babylon-chronicles have been preserved in only fragments that used to belong to large library tablets, often with multiple columns on both sides. Furthermore, they are more literary in nature than the Diaries; especially the 'historical' chronicles develop literary motifs such as 'the priest as hero', 'priests and their knowledge', 'the king as supporter of the cult', 'good versus bad rulership', etc.[392] The New Year Festival is mentioned in four chronicles from this group. In contrast to the references in the chronicle-corpus from Borsippa, the texts are more concerned with Bēl, with the correct observance of the cult, and they put more emphasis on the role of the king.[393]

- Chronicle P (ABC 22)

The nature of Chronicle P is not entirely clear: as Caroline Waerzeggers suggested, it is perhaps better to consider it as a historical epic.[394] It is concerned with several historical episodes from the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC, in particular with conflicts between Babylonia, Assyria and Elam. Finkel, van der Spek and Pirngruber suggested that it is perhaps a Babylonian adaptation of the Assyrian Synchronic Chronicle.[395] The *akītu*-festival is not mentioned as usual, but it is stated that the statue of Marduk remained in Assyria for 66 years after Tukulti-

Babylon) and museum archaeology. The provenance of three other chronicles is less clear (ABC 1A-C), though they do probably stem from Babylon (see also below). See Waerzeggers 2012: 288.

[390] Waerzeggers 2012: 297; in contrast to the Borsippean chronicles, that do not relate to the Diaries. See also Tuplin 2019: 107-111.

[391] ABC 7, 17, 22, 23, Fragm. 2 in addition to ABC 1A-C and perhaps ABC 9 (Artaxerxes III) as well. Note, however, that the Diaries also contain historical sections (Pirngruber 2013).

[392] See Jursa & Debourse 2020.

[393] Waerzeggers 2012: 296.

[394] Waerzeggers 2012: 288 n. 15.

[395] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-22-chronicle-p/. For the Synchronic Chronicle, see: http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-21-synchronic-chronicle/?.

Ninurta I had abducted it, which implies that the festival could not have taken place as it should.[396]

- Religious Chronicle (ABC 17)

The Religious Chronicle is also one of the few chronicles from the Babylon-group which are not concerned with events that happened contemporaneously with the time of redaction. Because of its secondary interest in political events, it was categorized by Glassner as "chronique hypothétique".[397] It provides an overview of religious and ominous happenings that took place in Babylon in the eleventh and tenth centuries BC. At multiple instances it is mentioned that Nabû did not come to Babylon and Bēl did not come out, meaning that the *akītu*-festival was not observed.[398]

- Nabonidus Chronicle (ABC 7)

Another chronicle that forms an exception in the Babylon-group because of its interest in the past, is the Nabonidus Chronicle. It recounts the reign of Nabonidus and how he was overthrown by Cyrus; in doing so, the author sketched them both as opposed examples of kings: Nabonidus is portrayed as a bad ruler, amongst other things because he did not usually participate in the New Year Festival; and Cyrus, who did go into procession with Bēl, is shown as a better king.[399]

- Chronicle 1B

Chronicle 1B is rather difficult to categorize. Because of its overlap with Chronicle 1A, which contains a colophon stating that it was copied by an inhabitant of Babylon around 500 BC, it probably stems from Babylon, but dating the tablet remains difficult.[400] Whereas ABC 1A informs about events that happened in the period from Nabû-nāṣir to Esarhaddon, 1B limits itself to the reigns of Nabû-nāṣir to Šamaš-šuma-ukīn.[401] Only in the latter it is mentioned that Sargon took Bēl by the hand.[402]

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[396] IV.5'-6'.
[397] Glassner 1993: 232ff.
[398] II.16-18; III.4-6; III.8-10; III.13-15.
[399] II.5-8; II.10-12; II.19-21; II.23-25; III.5.; III.8; III.25-28.
[400] Waerzeggers 2012: 292.
[401] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-1b-from-nabu-nasir-to-esarhaddon/.
[402] II. 15'.

In summary, the documentation regarding the Babylonian NYF in the LB period differs greatly from that of earlier periods, both in the kind of sources available and in what they recount. The question is whether this is due to mere documentary changes or to actual differences in the cult. For example: it comes as no surprise that there are no LB sources that derive from the king, as was the case in the NA and NB periods, because there was no longer a native Babylonian king. In that sense, it is remarkable that some of the ritual texts include the king as a participant in the NYF. In fact, it seems to be a general trend that the information about the NYF in the LB sources is different in contemporary, chronicle-like documents vis-à-vis prescriptive, historical or narrative accounts.

A first feature is that the word "*akītu*" appears only very rarely, just like other terms denoting the New Year. Only one contemporary record refers to the *akītu*-house; otherwise the term is exclusively used in texts recounting events in the past. Second, while the texts that recount a part of Babylonian history refer to the procession of the gods, as was the focus of the NA/LSC material, the prescriptive and contemporary sources talk about offerings and other ritual activities that took place inside the temple. Third, the role of the king in the festival is minimal in the contemporary sources in contrast to its prominent place in the historical chronicles (as is the general trend in the LB sources). A thing that all the LB sources have in common is that we now receive more insight in who else, besides the king, participated in the NYF: the ritual and historical texts mention a number of priests, most prominently the *aḫu-rabû*; the Diaries include the *šatammu*, but also "the Babylonians" and the *politai*.

## III.4 Summary and outlook

The survey of sources above makes it clear that we cannot maintain our long-standing ideas about the continuity of the Babylonian NYF nor can we speak of such a thing as "the" NYF. For no moment in time can we reconstruct the basic structure and principles of the festival celebrated in Babylon at the New Year based on contemporary sources only. Furthermore, a number of differences is discernible in the available material, not only between the NA and the NB sources, but even stronger between the NB and the LB material. The end of the Long Sixth Century forms a prominent rupture, after which a period of decline is attested through the silence of the sources, followed by a time of revival or "renaissance". Clearly, the Babylonian NYF changed over time and was heavily influenced by its historical context, despite the inherent conservative nature of ritual.

One thing is undeniably true: the basic concept of the Babylonian *akītu* or NYF was an integral part of cuneiform culture during the whole first millennium BC, as it can be found in cuneiform

texts dating from the Neo-Assyrian to the Parthian periods. On the one hand, many sources attest to the cultic observation of the New Year and the performance of the *akītu*-festival, in both Assyria and Babylonia, while, on the other hand, *akītu* became part of the cultural memory of those nations. While a basic general concept of the festival seems to have lasted throughout time, the actual performance took different forms in diverging settings. As such, one should distinguish between an abstract notion of the NYF and the festival that was actually performed. In a way, the ancient Mesopotamians did the same, as is clear in the adoption of the festival by the Sargonids. It especially becomes visible in the sources from the LB period, when there is a clear discrepancy between what we learn about the New Year from contemporary sources on the one hand and on the other from cultic and historiographical compositions.

The similarities between the NA and LSC material are manifold. Many of the sources emanate from the king (or at least the circle of scholars around him) and also those that do not show the involvement of the king in the festival. Aside from that, it is clear that one should distinguish between the *akītu*-festival of the capital and those of other cities. While the latter served a local purpose of elevating the main god of the local pantheon, the former had a state-wide aim: to celebrate the head of the national pantheon, to mark the New Year and to reaffirm the king as ruler of the empire. Within that picture, the focus remained on Babylon, the ultimate seat of the *akītu* and Mesopotamian kingship. Whereas evidence before this time is slight (to say the least), it is undeniable that from the Sargonids onwards the *akītu* became a crucial factor in the royal ideology. This continued under the Neo-Babylonian kings. It explains the high concentration of references to the procession: this was the moment when everyone could see the bond between god and king being re-established. There was no stronger proof of a king's legitimacy than that.

While during the first half of the first millennium BC the idea of the NYF on the one hand and its actual performance on the other remained quite close to each other, they seem to be two separate things in the LB period. The following can illustrate that: one of the main purposes of the festival was to present the king as a ruler of whom the gods approved; therefore, kings participated in it, sponsored it and made sure that it could be celebrated – all of that can be read in the NA and LSC sources. However, in the LB sources, the contemporary texts only rarely mention royal involvement, while the scholarly and cultic discourse continued to present the NYF as a festival for royal legitimation. As such, there is a sense of incongruity in the LB source material that we do not find in the earlier texts.

As was shown in this chapter, a large number of sources are available to study the Babylonian NYF throughout the first millennium BC. Nevertheless, one group of texts is of extreme

importance for our understanding of the festival, since they give a detailed account of the events that happened before the procession of gods took place. These ritual texts are generally dated to a moment in the first half of the first millennium BC, although all the known manuscripts date to the Hellenistic period. It is assumed that they were used in the cult and that the rituals they contain were performed exactly as is described. The problem is that the NYF texts, as we can call the texts of this corpus, have never been subjected to close scrutiny, which means that we fail to grasp their function and remain in the dark about their context of creation. In the following chapters, the NYF texts from Babylon will be studied extensively, in order better to understand their purpose, context of creation and relation to other sources for the Babylonian NYF in the first millennium BC.

# IV The New Year Festival texts

The Babylonian New Year Festival texts are most famously known as the composite text published by François Thureau-Dangin in his *Rituels accadiens* (1921: 127-154).[403] He combined the tablets DT 15, DT 109, DT 114 and MNB 1848 to create one manuscript with less – but still a considerable amount of – lacunae. That composite text has hitherto been used to study the ritual which it describes. It was translated again by Ebeling,[404] Sachs,[405] Çağirgan,[406] Castellino,[407] Farber[408] and Mark Cohen[409]; small fragments of the text are cited throughout Assyriological literature by means of the *Racc*. line numbers.[410] In 2004 Marc Linssen re-edited the composite text with the addition of one tablet (BM 32485) that was joined to DT 109.[411] His translation in English and the new edition are only in few instances different from Thureau-Dangin's. An improvement was the inclusion of a small critical apparatus. Up until today the composite text created in *Racc*. with Linssen's addition remains to be used as such and has not been detangled. In Table 2 below is shown how the different manuscripts relate to the composite text published in 2004.

*Table 2: Concordance manuscripts – composite text Linssen 2004*

| NYF manuscript | Composite text line numbers (Linssen 2004) |
|---|---|
| DT 15 I | 1-40 |
| DT 15 II | 41-79 |
| DT 15 V | 154-187 |
| DT 15 VI | 190-216b |
| DT 114 u.e. | 216c |
| DT 114 I | 217-234 |
| DT 114 II | 265-279 |
| DT 114 V | 434-440 |
| DT 114 VI | 472-478 |
| BM 32485+ I | 235-264 |
| BM 32485+ II | 283-307 |
| BM 32485+ V | ∅ |
| BM 32485+ VI | 441-471 |
| MNB 1848 u.e. | 429-430 |
| MNB 1848 II | 259-300 |
| MNB 1848 III | 301-343 |
| MNB 1848 IV | 344-384 |
| MNB 1848 V | 385-428 |

[403] The earliest published texts were DT 15 and DT 114 in Rawlinson 1891, followed by DT 109 in Craig 1895, and MNB 1848 by Dhorme 1911. Other early editions include: Martin 1903, Hehn 1906, Zimmern 1906.
[404] Ebeling 1926: 295-303.
[405] Sachs 1955: 331-334.
[406] Çağirgan 1976: 2-39.
[407] Castellino 1977: 735-743.
[408] Farber 1987: 212-223.
[409] Cohen 1993: 441-447.
[410] To be mentioned: Pallis 1926, Zimmern 1926, Furlani 1940, Frankfort 1948, André-Leicknam 1982, Bidmead 2002, Oshima 2011.
[411] Linssen, M. J. H. 2004. *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon. The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (CM 25). Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Another text included in the corpus of NYF texts is BM 41577. It was published by Andrew George in the Lambert Festschrift, where he identified it as NYF text because of the many similarities to the *Racc*. text.[412] A few differences are noticeable as well; they are pointed out below in the notes on the lines in question.

Finally, two more manuscripts are included. BM 32655 is, in fact, quite different from the texts mentioned above: it cannot straightforwardly be designated as ritual text.[413] Yet, the composition clearly belongs in a cultic context and in particular fits within the frame of the NYF as we can read it in the NYF texts. In addition, it shares all the characteristics of the corpus as they are explained below. Very recently, a small fragment that duplicates part of BM 32655 was brought to my attention: BM 32374 can be added here as well.

Thus, the main corpus discussed in this book consists of seven fragmentary manuscripts, not more.[414] Six of those can be found in the British Museum, one in the Louvre collections. They are kept in collections that contain high numbers of astronomical texts from Hellenistic and Parthian Babylon, which have been linked to the Late Babylonian Esagila libraries.[415] In all probability, the corpus of NYF texts discussed here stems from that location as well. A late date of the manuscripts is furthermore supported by palaeographic and orthographic features, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.1.1.

Shared provenance is one of the reasons why these texts form a delineated corpus. Another is the fact that they "have their own linguistic conventions",[416] an essential criterion in defining "sets" of ritual texts. They use formulae that are unique, such as the description of the rising and bathing of the Elder Brother at the beginning of each day or the way they describe that the rites have to be performed as usual. In addition, they make use of a rather confined set of stock phrases, both in the ritual instructions and the prayers. Moreover, the texts include many references to specific moments of the day or night, a feature that they do not share with other ritual texts, but rather with the astronomical corpus. Another exceptional characteristic is that

[412] George, A. 2000. "Four Temple Rituals from Babylon." *Fs. Lambert*, 260-270.
[413] Jursa, M. & Debourse, C. 2017. "A Babylonian Priestly Martyr, a King-like Priest, and the Nature of Late Babylonian Priestly Literature." WZKM 107, 77-98. The text is mentioned by Oshima 2011: 109 as AF 12, where it is wrongly designated as BM 36255.
[414] In fact, there are six fragments, since DT 114 is certainly part of the same tablet as BM 32485+. However, because it does not join directly to it, I discuss it separately.
[415] Clancier 2009: 212-213; Pirngruber 2019.
[416] George 2000: 261.

the prayers are labelled as secret lore, a label normally used only for scholarly texts.[417] Lastly, the authors of the NYF texts coined some new words and new forms of existing verbs; unique to the corpus is, for example, the temple name é.$u_4$.ul.

Another shared feature is the way the tablets look. All can be reconstructed as large tablets with three columns on each side, separated by vertical lines, containing a text that was divided into sections by means of horizontal lines. It should be noted that none of the tablets has been fully preserved: they all broke in half, leaving us with one and a half column of either the left- or right-hand side. Such a large tablet format suggests that one should consider them as library tablets, a fact that is confirmed by some other shared diplomatic characteristics. Even though the writing is very large, it is also very neat and readable. The lay-out of the texts was done carefully enough, such as in the case of bilingual prayers in which the second, Akkadian, line was indented. The use of the DIŠ-sign to mark the beginning of a new "day" and the inclusion of catchphrases at the end of the tablets indicate an internal structure, a sequence of tablets in a series, as some colophons make explicit when numbering the tablet. All those things point to the fact that the texts were written as a series of tablets to be stored in the Esagila libraries.

Lastly and most importantly, all texts presented here relate to the same cultic context of the New Year Festival: they specify what was supposed to happen at the beginning of Nisannu and include the essential protagonists of the Elder Brother, Bēl, Bēltīya and the king.[418]

In the following pages, a new edition of five of the text fragments will be presented – BM 32655 has been published very recently and will not be re-edited here, but for completeness a transcription and translation are provided. The composite text created by Thureau-Dangin is disentangled, not because it is wrong, but because it obscures some issues that I wish to deal with. An important question is: how do the different manuscript relate to one another? Especially in the case of MNB 1848 this is important to consider, since it overlaps partially with DT 114 and BM 32485+. Is there a way to explain the fact that there were multiple copies of the same ritual text in the same library context? Other issues at hand are the problematic designations of two manuscripts as 22nd and 23rd tablet of an unknown series, or the excessive length of the description of day 5 compared to days 2-4.

[417] Lenzi 2008a: 208-210.

[418] The two texts recently published by Da Riva & Galetti are not included here, because they only meet some of the criteria listed here: they do relate the beginning of Nisannu, but sketch a cultic context in Borsippa with Nanāya as main divine protagonist and without the Elder Brother; they are part of BM-collections linked to the Late Esagila libraries though. However, they do not use the language typical for this restricted corpus and have a different tablet format. They are simply too different to be included here.

For each tablet, a concise overview of the formal features is given, followed by a transcription, normalisation, translation and commentary. Differences vis-à-vis the latest edition (NYF1-4 Linssen 2004; NYF5 George 2000) are marked with an asterix. The choice to include a normalisation, even though it comes with many problems, has to do with readability of an already dense transcription. Some details about the process: case endings are represented in their LB form, even if other vowels may have been used by the scribe; the convention of *-u* for nominative and accusative and *-i* for genitive is followed.[419] Names of temples, gods, stars, constellations etc. are represented with an initial capital letter and in the way we read them, thus é.sag.(g)íl becomes *Esagila* in normalisation. $^{d}$en is rendered $^{d}$*bēl* to differentiate with en (*bēl*). When spelling is too divergent from grammatical accuracy, brackets are used to indicate superfluous signs {x} or missing signs <x>. [x] are fully broken signs, ˹x˺ partially visible signs. Signs written in capital letters have either a technical meaning (DIŠ) or are part of a broken context and cannot be given any certain reading. Akkadian is written in italics, Sumerian and Sumerograms in normal type. Regarding the Sumerian, it should be noted that at most instances it is left untranslated, for the simple reason that it is often "unverständlich"[420] or perhaps even "hocus pocus"[421], see also below, page 170.

| **NYF number** | **Museum number** | **Page** |
|---|---|---|
| NYF1 | DT 15 | 99 |
| NYF2 | DT 114 | 117 |
| NYF3 | BM 32485+DT109 | 124 |
| NYF4 | MNB 1848 | 138 |
| NYF5 | BM 41577 | 156 |
| NYF6 | BM 32655//BM 32374 | 167 |

[419] See also Jursa 2004: 3 with note 15: "Given the vagaries of the writing system, normalising Neo-Babylonian always entails a certain degree of arbitrariness."
[420] Farber 1987: 213 note on line.
[421] George 2000: 268 note on line II 16'.

## IV.1 DT 15

DT 15 (BM 92704) is the left part of what was probably a six-column tablet (i.e. three columns on each side). Parts of the upper and lower, and the left edge are preserved. Virtually the whole of column I and VI are intact; column II and V are partially there; and column III and IV are missing. Measurements of the tablet as conserved are: 21,1 cm high; 9,9 cm wide; 3,5 cm thick (plano-convex). Column I is 6,9 cm wide, whereas column VI is 6,4 to 6 cm wide (it becomes more narrow towards the end). Of column II only 2,4 cm and of column V only 3 cm of width are preserved. The writing is large and very deeply impressed; typical for this hand is that verticals are very long, sometimes running down through multiple lines. Signs are placed in such a way that they fill out the width of the column, but the tablet is not very densely filled up. The columns are on both sides separated by a double vertical line. Between column I and II the first of the two lines is hardly visible because it is not respected. There is also a vertical line before column I and – though barely visible – before column VI. Horizontal rulings divide different sections of the text; they are generally respected. At the end of the text about 1/5 of column height is left blank. There is a colophon mentioning the tablet number of the present tablet and a catchline referring to the following.

IV.1.1 Transcription

**Obverse I**[422]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | [(DIŠ)] *ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 2$^{kam}$ 1 danna ge$_6$ |
| 2 | 2 | [$^{lú}$]šeš.gal zi-*ma* a$^{meš}$ íd tu$_5$ |
| 3 | 3 | [*ana*] igi $^{d}$en ku$_4$-*ma* $^{túg}$gada.lal *ina* igi $^{d}$en |
| 4 | 4 | [*i*]-*de-ek-ku ana* $^{d}$en šùd.bi dug$_4$.ga |
| 5 | 5 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu za-pa-áĝ-bi ĝiš-bu e-ne |
| 6 | 6 | $^{d}$en *šá ina uz-zi-šú ma-ḫi-ir* nu tuk$^{ú}$ |
| 7 | 7 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára-sig$_5$-ga umun-ĝu$_{10}$ kur-kur-ra |
| 8 | 8 | $^{d}$en lugal *dam-qa* $^{d}$en kur.kur$^{meš}$ |
| 9 | 9 | kár-kár á-dúru-na ki-a-a nu zu |
| 10 | 10 | *mu-tir* silim$^{me}$ *šá* diĝir.diĝir gal.gal |
| 11 | 11 | en-a-ni umun-ĝu$_{10}$ a-na umun-ĝu$_{10}$ an ḫuĝ-ĝá |
| 12 | 12 | $^{d}$en *šá ina né-kel-mi-šú ú-šam-qit dan-nu-tú* |
| 13 | 13 | diĝir bára lú-lú diĝir bára lú-tuk-a |
| 14 | 14 | $^{d}$en lugal$^{meš}$ zálag lú$^{tú}$ *mu-za-ʾ-iz is-qé-e-tú* |
| 15 | 15 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš-ĝu$_{10}$ šu ĝiš-ĝál-la ú aga ki-in-nir |
| 16 | 16 | $^{d}$en *šub-ta-ku* e$^{ki}$ *bar-sip a-gu-ku* |
| 17 | 17 | [a]n-an-ĝu$_{10}$ an-an šà-bi peš-e |
| 18 | 18 | an$^{e}$ *rap-šu-tú gi-mir ka-bat-ti-ku* |
| 19 | 19 | [($^{d}$)]en *ina* igi$^{II}$-*ku ta-bar-ri gim-re-e-tú* |
| 20 | 20 | [*ina*] ur$_5$.úš$^{meš}$-*ka ta-ḫa-ṭu* ur$_5$.úš$^{meš}$ |
| 21 | 21 | [*ina*] *né-kel-me-ku ta-nam-din ur-tu*$_4$ |
| 22 | 22 | [*ina l*]*a-pa-<ti>-ka ta-qam-mu dan-nu-tú* |
| 23 | 23 | [*l*]*a* gi-*ka ta-kam-mu ina* šu$^{II}$ |
| 24 | 24 | [*ina*] *nap-lu-si-ka ta-ra-áš-šá-šú-nu-tú* arḫuš |
| 25 | 25 | [*t*]*u-kal-lam-šú-nu-tú* zálag *i-dab-bu-bu qur-di-ku* |
| 26 | 26 | $^{d}$en kur.kur zálag $^{d}$*í-gì-gì qa-bu-u* sig$_5$$^{meš}$*<-ku*>* |
| 27 | 27 | *man-nu šá ka-a-šú la i-dab-bu-bu qur-di-ku* |
| 28 | 28 | *la i-qab-bi ta-nit-<ta*>-ku la ú-šá-pa-a* en$^{ut}$*-*ku* |
| 29 | 29 | $^{d}$en kur.kur *a-šib* é.u$_4$.ul *ṣa-bit* šu$^{II}$ *na-as-ku* |
| 30 | 30 | *ana* uru-*ku* e$^{ki}$ *re-še-e* arḫuš |
| 31 | 31 | *ana* é.sag.íl é-*ku suḫ-ḫir* igi-*ku* |
| 32 | 32 | *šá* dumu$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$ $^{lú}$érin *ki-din-nu šu-kun šu-bar-ru-šú-nu* |
| 33 | 33 | 21 mu.šid.bi ùru$^{tú}$ é.sag.íl |
| 34 | 34 | [*pa-li*]*ḫ* $^{d}$en *al-la* $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a |
| 35 | 35 | [*l*]*a ú-kal-lam* |
| 36 | 36 | ˹ta˺ *naq-bit an-na-a* dug$_4$.ga$^{ú}$ |
| 37 | 37 | [$^{giš}$ig$^{meš}$ bad]$^{te}$ $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é$^{meš}$ |
| 38 | 38 | [zi]$^{ú}$ me-*šú-<nu*>* gim *šá gi-na-a* |
| 39 | 39 | [*ina* igi $^{d}$]en *u* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ dù$^{meš}$ |
| 40 | 40 | [$^{lú}$gala$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$]nar$^{meš}$ ki.min |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 41-44 | 1-4 | […] |

[422] The first number counts the lines according to Linssen's edition; the second indicates the number of lines in the column.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 45 | 5 | ˹x˺ […] |
| 46 | 6 | GIŠ ˹x˺ […] |
| 47 | 7 | ki.tuš ˹x˺ […] |
| 48 | 8 | ta *ur*-r*[*a**- …] |
| 49 | 9 | gar$^{an}$ $^{na_4}$kišib ˹x˺ […] |
| 50 | 10 | *ina* aga *šá* $^{d}$60 […] |
| 51 | 11 | *šá* ud 2$^{kam}$ *ina* ug[u …] |
| 52 | 12 | *ina* igi-*šú-nu* gar$^{an}$ […] |
| 53 | 13 | 3-*šú* dug$_4$.ga […] |
| 54 | 14 | *za-ma-nu lem-nu-tú* […] |
| 55 | 15 | *šá ina dan-nu-ti-˹šú˺* […] |
| 56 | 16 | *an-na-a šá ina* e[$^{ki?}$ …] |
| 57 | 17 | *šá* nam.búr.bi […] |
| 58 | 18 | *áš-šú* $^{lú}$kúr *u ḫab-˹bi˺*-[*lu* …] |
| 59 | 19 | $^{d}$en gal$^{ú}$ $^{d}$šú […] |
| 60 | 20 | áš nu búr *i-r*[*u-ur* …] |
| 61 | 21 | nam nu gur *i*-[*šim* …] |
| 62 | 22 | *šá* $^{d}$en en-*iá* […] |
| 63 | 23 | *šá* en kur.kur […] |
| 64 | 24 | *šá* e$^{ki}$ ˹x˺ […] |
| 65 | 25 | *ina qé-reb* ki ˹x˺ […] |
| 66 | 26 | *šá* e.u$_4$.ul […] |
| 67 | 27 | *ub-bu-ub* […] |
| 68 | 28 | gim an$^{e}$ *u* [ki …] |
| 69 | 29 | unug$^{ki}$ *u* e[n.líl$^{ki}$ *qa-ma-a u ka-ma-a*] |
| 70 | 30 | *na-si-iḫ t*[*e-me-en-ši-na na-di ana* a$^{meš}$] |
| 71 | 31 | é.kur$^{meš}$ *šá* [*qer-<bi>-ši-na ú-tu-šu-nu* x …] |
| 72 | 32 | *ma-áš* me-*šú-nu* [*ana u*$_4$*-mu*<$^{meš}$ sud$^{meš}$>] |
| 73 | 33 | *sa-pi-iḫ* gi[š.ḫur-*šu*-(*nu*) …] |
| 74 | 34 | un$^{meš}$ *a-šib* ˹x˺ […] |
| 75 | 35 | géme.géme-*si*-[*na* …] |
| 76 | 36 | *šá* e$^{ki}$ […] |
| 77 | 37 | *šá* é.u$_4$.u[l …] |
| 78 | 38 | ˹*ik*˺*-me-ku-nu*-[*tú*…] |
| 79 | 39 | *ra-ma-tu*-[*nu* …] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 154 | 1 | [26(+x) mu.šid.bi ùru$^{tú}$ é.sag.íl]* |
| 155 | 2 | [*pa-liḫ* $^{d}$en]* |
| 156 | 3 | *al*-[*la* $^{lú}$šeš.gal *la ú-kal-lam*]* |
| 157 | 4 | DIŠ *ina* $^{iti˹}$bár ud˺ [3$^{kam}$ 1 1/3 danna ge$_6$ $^{lú}$šeš.gal] |
| 158 | 5 | ˹zi˺[-*ma**] <a$^{meš}$ íd> tu[$_5$ …] |
| 159 | 6 | *ana* [$^{d}$e]n šù[d.bi dug$_4$.ga] |
| 160 | 7 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d?}$lú-lú […] |
| 161 | 8 | ˹x x x x˺ […] |
| 162 | 9 | ˹x˺ […] |
| 163 | 10 | al […] |
| 164 | 11 | saĝ ˹x˺ […] |
| 165 | 12 | ˹x˺ […] |

166 13 ˹x˺ [x x x] ˹x˺ […]
167 14 umun*-ĝ[u$_{10}$* x x x] ˹x˺ […]
168 15 umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$] ˹sipa˺ id x […]
169 16 [x x x] ˹kur˺ […]
170 17 ˹x˺ [x x (x)] ˹x x˺ […]
171 18 ˹x lu˺ [x x x] ˹x˺ […]
172 19 *na-˹din˺* […]
173 20 umun*-ĝu$_{10}$* ˹$^{d}$en x x x˺ x […]
174 21 *šá* un ˹*ṣal-mat*˺ saĝ.du […]
175 22 *ta-ḫa-*˹x˺ [*a*]*n-na-a* ud* […]
176 23 ˹ta˺ [x x x *an*]-*na-a* ud* […]
177 24 ˹x˺ [x x x (x)] ˹x ud˺ d[i …]
178 25 [x x (x)] ˹x˺ bad [x x] ˹x˺ […]
179 26 [x x (x)] lugal *u* gìr.níta […]
180 27 *ina* ˹ka˺ *ṣal-mat* ˹saĝ.du˺ […]
181 28 *šá* é.sag.íl x* […]
182 29 *šá* e$^{ki}$ uru-*k*[*u* …]
183 30 *ana qa-bu-u* sig$_5$ […]
184 31 $^{giš}$ig$^{meš}$ ˹bad˺[$^{te}$ $^{lú}$ku$_4$$^{meš}$]
185 32 ku$_4$$^{meš}$-*m*[*a* me-*šú-nu* gim *šá gi-na-a*]
186 33 dù$^{m}$[$^{eš}$ $^{lú}$gala$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$nar$^{meš}$]
187 34 k[i*.min*]

**Reverse VI**

190 1 [*e-nu-m*]*a* 1 ½ danna me nim$^{a}$ $^{lú}$gur.g[ur]
191 2 [gù-*ma*] na$_4$ *ni-siq-tú u* kù.gi
192 3 [ta] níg.ga $^{d}$amar.utu *ana* dù$^{eš}$ *šá* 2 nu$^{meš}$
193 4 ˹*ana*˺ ud 6$^{kam}$ *i-na-an-din-šú* $^{lú}$nagar gù-*ma*
194 5 $^{giš}$eren *u* šinig sum-*šú*
195 6 $^{lú}$kù.dim gù-*ma* kù.gi sum-*šú*
196 7 ta ud 3$^{kam}$ en ud 6$^{kam}$ ta *pa-ni* $^{d}$en
197 8 *ana* $^{lú}$gur.gur kun *ana* $^{lú}$kù.dim gaba
198 9 *ana* $^{lú}$nagar zag *ana* $^{lú}$uš.bar ti *an-na-a*
199 10 ta igi $^{d}$en *ana* $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.˹umuš.a˺
200 11 *ana* $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ *um-man ú-šeb-b*[*i-lu*?]
201 12 nu$^{meš}$ *šu-nu-tú* 7 si *la-an-šú-nu*
202 13 1$^{en}$ *šá* $^{giš}$eren *u* 1$^{en}$ *šá* $^{giš}$šin[ig]
203 14 ˹4˺ gín kù.gi *iḫ-zu-us-su-nu*
204 15 ˹4˺ $^{na_4}$duḫ.ši.a *ana muḫ-ḫi-šú-nu i-lu*
205 16 [1$^{en}$] *ina* šu$^{II}$ 150-*šú* muš *šá* $^{giš}$eren ˹*na*˺-[*ši*]
206 17 [šu$^{I}$]$^{I}$-*šu šá* 15 *ana* $^{d}$ag *na-ši šá-nu-ú* [*ina* šu$^{II}$]
207 18 [150]-*šú* gír.tab *na-ši* šu$^{II}$ [10+]5-[*šú*]
208 19 [*ana* $^{d}$a]g *na-ši* túg sa$_5$ *lab-šu-u**
209 20 [*ina e*]-*ri* $^{giš}$gišimmar *qab-li-šú-nu*
210 21 [*rak*]-*su* en ud 6$^{kam}$ *ina* ˹é˺ $^{d}$di.[kud]
211 22 [gar].meš duḫ $^{giš}$banšur *šá* $^{d}$d[i.kud]
212 23 *i-qar-ru-ub-šú-nu-tú* ud 6$^{kam}$ [x (x)]
213 24 $^{d}$ag é.ḫur.sag.ti.la *ina* kur-[*šú*]
214 25 $^{lú}$gír.lá *kar-ri* sag.du-*su-nu* sì[g]$^{as}$-˹*ma*˺

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 215 | 26 | *ina* igi $^{d}$ag *tur-ru* mú$^{meš}$-*nim-ma* |
| 216 | 27 | *ana* šà *tur-ru* šub$^{⌜meš⌝}$ |
| 216a | 28 | im 22$^{kam-ma}$ eme-gir$_{15}$ ul*-⌜e nu ti⌝ |
| 216b | 29 | im *šá* egir-*šú ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 4$^{kam}$ |

IV.1.2 Normalisation and translation

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | [DIŠ] *ina nisanni ūmi* 2 1 *bēr mūši* |
| 2 | 2 | *aḫu-rabû itebbīma mê nāri irammuk* |
| 3 | 3 | [*ana*] *pān* $^{d}$*bēl irrubma gadalû ina pān* $^{d}$*bēl* |
| 4 | 4 | [*i*]*dekki ana* $^{d}$*bēl ikribu annâ iqabbi* |
| 5 | 5 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu za-pa-áĝ-bi ĝiš-bu e-ne |
| 6 | 6 | $^{d}$*bēl ša ina uzzišu māḫir ul īšû* |
| 7 | 7 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára-sig$_{5}$-ga umun-ĝu$_{10}$ kur-kur-ra |
| 8 | 8 | $^{d}$*bēl šarru damqu* $^{d}$*bēl mātāti* |
| 9 | 9 | kár-kár á-dúru-na ki-a-a nu zu |
| 10 | 10 | *mutīr šulmi ša ilāni rabûti* |
| 11 | 11 | en-a-ni umun-ĝu$_{10}$ a-na umun-ĝu$_{10}$ an ḫuĝ-ĝá |
| 12 | 12 | $^{d}$*bēl ša ina nekelmêšu ušamqitu dannūti* |
| 13 | 13 | diĝir bára lú-lú diĝir bára lú-tuk-a |
| 14 | 14 | $^{d}$*bēl šarrāni nūr amēlūti muza*$^{??}$*iz isqēti* |
| 15 | 15 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš-ĝu$_{10}$ šu ĝiš- ĝál-la ú aga ki-in-nir |
| 16 | 16 | $^{d}$*bēl šubtaku Bābilu Barsip agûku* |
| 17 | 17 | [a]n-an-ĝu$_{10}$ an-an šà-bi peš-e |
| 18 | 18 | *šamû rapšūtu gimir kabattiku* |
| 19 | 19 | [$^{d}$]*bēl ina īnēku tabarri gimrēti* |
| 20 | 20 | [*ina*] *têrētika taḫâṭ têrēti* |
| 21 | 21 | [*ina*] *nekelmêku tanamdin ûrtu* |
| 22 | 22 | [*ina l*]*apā<ti>ka taqammi dannūti* |
| 23 | 23 | [*l*]*ā kīnūka takammu ina qātē* |
| 24 | 24 | [*ina*] *naplusika taraššīšunūti rēmu* |
| 25 | 25 | [*t*]*ukallamšunūti nūru idabbubū qurdiku* |
| 26 | 26 | $^{d}$*bēl mātāti nūr Igigi qābû damqāti<ku>* |
| 27 | 27 | *mannu ša kâši lā idabbubu qurdiku* |
| 28 | 28 | *lā iqabbi tanit<ta>ku lā ušappâ bēlūtku* |
| 29 | 29 | $^{d}$*bēl mātāti āšib Eu*$^{?}$*ul ṣābit qātē naski* |
| 30 | 30 | *ana āliku Bābili reše rēmu* |
| 31 | 31 | *ana Esagila bītiku suḫḫir pāniku* |
| 32 | 32 | *ša mārē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šukun šubarrûšunu* |
| 33 | 33 | 21 *šumātu niṣirti Esagila* |
| 34 | 34 | [*pāli*]*ḫ* $^{d}$*bēl alla aḫi-rabî Eumuša* |
| 35 | 35 | [*l*]*ā ukallam* |
| 36 | 36 | ˹*ultu*˺ *naqbītu annâ iqbû* |
| 37 | 37 | [*dalāti ipet*]*te ērib-bītāti* |
| 38 | 38 | [*itebb*]*û parṣēšu<nu> kīma ša ginâ* |
| 39 | 39 | [*ina pān* $^{d}$]*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya ippušū* |
| 40 | 40 | [*kalû u*] *nārū* ki.min |

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | In the month Nisannu, (on) the second day, (at) one double-hour of the night |
| 2 | 2 | the Elder Brother will rise and bathe (in) riverwater. |
| 3 | 3 | He will enter [in] the presence of Bēl and remove(4) the linen curtain in front of Bēl |
| 4 | 4 | He will recite the following prayer to Bēl: |
| 5 | 5 | … |
| 6 | 6 | Bēl, who in his anger has no rival |
| 7 | 7 | … |
| 8 | 8 | Bēl, good king, lord of the lands |
| 9 | 9 | … |
| 10 | 10 | He who returns the favour of the great gods |
| 11 | 11 | … |
| 12 | 12 | Bēl who fells the mighty with his awe-inspiring glare |
| 13 | 13 | … |
| 14 | 14 | Lord of kings, light of mankind, who assigns the lots |
| 15 | 15 | … |
| 16 | 16 | Bēl, your seat is Babylon, Borsippa is your crown |
| 17 | 17 | … |
| 18 | 18 | The wide heavens (equal) the whole of your spirit |
| 19 | 19 | Bēl, with your eyes you observe everything |
| 20 | 20 | [With] your omens you explore omens |
| 21 | 21 | [With] your awesome glare you give command |
| 22 | 22 | [With] your touch you burn the mighty |
| 23 | 23 | You capture the [u]nloyal in (your) hands |
| 24 | 24 | [With] your glance you grant them mercy |
| 25 | 25 | [Y]ou show the light to those who talk of your heroism |
| 26 | 26 | Lord of the lands, light of the Igigi, who speak highly of you |
| 27 | 27 | Who, (when speaking) of you, will not talk of your heroism, |
| 28 | 28 | will not speak your praise, will not proclaim your lordship? |
| 29 | 29 | Lord of the lands, who dwells in Euʾul, who seizes the hand of the fallen |
| 30 | 30 | To your city, Babylon, grant mercy |
| 31 | 31 | To Esagila, your temple, turn your face |
| 32 | 32 | Establish the freedom of the inhabitants of Babylon, the privileged citizens |
| 33 | 33 | Twenty-one lines, secret of Esagila. |
| 34 | 34 | [He who rev]eres Bēl, except to the Elder Brother of Eumuša, |
| 35 | 35 | should [no]t show it (to anyone). |
| 36 | 36 | After he said this prayer, |
| 37 | 37 | he will op[en the gates]. The temple-enterers |
| 38 | 38 | [will come up]. They will perform(39) their rites as usual |
| 39 | 39 | [in front of] Bēl and Bēltīya. |
| 40 | 40 | [The lamentation-priests and] the singers idem ditto. |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 41-44 | 1-4 | […] |
| 45 | 5 | ˹x˺ […] |
| 46 | 6 | GIŠ x […] |
| 47 | 7 | *šubtu* x […] |
| 48 | 8 | *ultu ur-r*[*a-…*] |
| 49 | 9 | *išakkan kunukku* […] |
| 50 | 10 | *ina agê ša* $^{d}$*Anu* […] |
| 51 | 11 | *ša ūmi* 2 *ina muḫ*[*ḫi …*] |
| 52 | 12 | *ina pānišunu išakkan* […] |
| 53 | 13 | *šalūšīšu iqabbi* […] |
| 54 | 14 | *zāmânu lemnūtu* […] |
| 55 | 15 | *ša ina dannūtišu* […] |
| 56 | 16 | *annâ ša ina Bāb*[*ili*ʾ…] |
| 57 | 17 | *ša namburbê* […] |
| 58 | 18 | *aššu nakru u ḫabb*[*ilu …*] |
| 59 | 19 | $^{d}$*bēl rabû* $^{d}$*Marduk* […] |
| 60 | 20 | *arratu lā napšuri īr*[*ur …*] |
| 61 | 21 | *šīmtu lā turri ī*[*šim …*] |
| 62 | 22 | *ša* $^{d}$*bēl bēlīya* […] |
| 63 | 23 | *ša bēl mātāti* […] |
| 64 | 24 | *ša Bābili* […] |
| 65 | 25 | *ina qereb erṣeti* […] |
| 66 | 26 | *ša Euʾul* […] |
| 67 | 27 | *ubbub* […] |
| 68 | 28 | *kīma šamê u* [*erṣeti …*] |
| 69 | 29 | *Uruk u Ni*[*purru qamâ u kamâ*] |
| 70 | 30 | *nasiḫ t*[*emennašina nadi ana mê*] |
| 71 | 31 | *ekurrū ša* [*qerebšina atûšunu* x …] |
| 72 | 32 | *mašû parṣūšunu* [*ana ūmī ruqūti…*] |
| 73 | 33 | *sapiḫ gi*[*šḫuršunu …*] |
| 74 | 34 | *nišū āšib* […] |
| 75 | 35 | *amāssi*[*na …*] |
| 76 | 36 | *ša Bābili* […] |
| 77 | 37 | *ša Eu*[*l …*] |
| 78 | 38 | *ikmīkunu* […] |
| 79 | 39 | *ramâtu*[*nu…*] |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 41-44 | 1-4 | […] |
| 45 | 5 | […] |
| 46 | 6 | […] |
| 47 | 7 | seat […] |
| 48 | 8 | After […] |
| 49 | 9 | he will place. The seal […] |
| 50 | 10 | on the crown of/which Anu […] |
| 51 | 11 | of the second day upon […] |
| 52 | 12 | he will place before them. […] |
| 53 | 13 | He will say […] three times: |
| 54 | 14 | Wicked enemies […] |
| 55 | 15 | who in his might […] |
| 56 | 16 | this, which in Bab[ylon …] |
| 57 | 17 | of a *namburbû* […] |
| 58 | 18 | Because the enemy and the crim[inal …] |
| 59 | 19 | The Great Lord, Marduk […] |
| 60 | 20 | He ut[tered] an irremovable curse […] |
| 61 | 21 | He de[creed] an irrevocable fate […] |
| 62 | 22 | of Bēl, my lord, […] |
| 63 | 23 | of the lord of the lands […] |
| 64 | 24 | of Babylon […] |
| 65 | 25 | on earth […] |
| 66 | 26 | of Euʾul […] |
| 67 | 27 | is purified […] |
| 68 | 28 | like heaven and [earth …] |
| 69 | 29 | Uruk and Nip[pur are burnt and defeated] |
| 70 | 30 | [Their foundation] is uprooted, [thrown into water] |
| 71 | 31 | The temples that [are within them: their gatekeepers …] |
| 72 | 32 | Their rites are forgotten [to distant days …] |
| 73 | 33 | Their regu[lations] are disrupted […] |
| 74 | 34 | The people who dwell […] |
| 75 | 35 | The[ir] servant girls […] |
| 76 | 36 | Of Babylon […] |
| 77 | 37 | Of Euʾul […] |
| 78 | 38 | He has bound you […] |
| 79 | 39 | You are dwelling […] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 154 | 1 | [N *šumātu niṣirti Esagila*] |
| 155 | 2 | [*pāliḫ* $^{d}$*bēl*] |
| 156 | 3 | *al*[*la aḫi-rabî lā ukallam*] |
| 157 | 4 | DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* [3 1 1/3 *bēr mūši aḫu-rabû*] |
| 158 | 5 | *itebbī*[*ma*] <*mê nāri*> *iramm*[*uk* …] |
| 159 | 6 | *ana* [$^{d}$*bē*]*l ikrib*[*u annâ iqabbi*] |
| 160 | 7 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d?}$lú-lú […] |
| 161 | 8 | […] |
| 162 | 9 | […] |
| 163 | 10 | […] |
| 164 | 11 | […] |
| 165 | 12 | […] |
| 166 | 13 | […] |
| 167 | 14 | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ …] |
| 168 | 15 | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$] sipa […] |
| 169 | 16 | […] |
| 170 | 17 | […] |
| 171 | 18 | […] |
| 172 | 19 | *nādin* […] |
| 173 | 20 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$en […] |
| 174 | 21 | *ša nišī ṣalmāt qaqqadi* […] |
| 175 | 22 | [… *a*]*nnâ* […] |
| 176 | 22 | [… *an*]*nâ* […] |
| 177 | 23 | […] |
| 178 | 24 | […] |
| 179 | 25 | […] *šarru u šakanakku* […] |
| 180 | 26 | *ina pî ṣalmāt qaqqadi* […] |
| 181 | 27 | *ša Esagila* […] |
| 182 | 28 | *ša Bābili ālik*[*u* …] |
| 183 | 29 | *ana qābê damqāti*[*ku* …] |
| 184 | 30 | *dalāti ipett*[*e ērib-bitāti*] |
| 185 | 31 | *irubbū* [*parṣēšunu kīma ša ginâ*] |
| 186 | 32 | *ippušū* [*kalû u nārū*] |
| 187 | 33 | [ki.min.] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 154 | 1 | [N lines, secret of Esagila] |
| 155 | 2 | [He who reveres Bēl,] |
| 156 | 3 | exc[ept to the Elder Brother, should not show (it to anyone)] |
| 157 | 4 | In the month Nisannu, (on) the [third] day, [(at) 1 and 1/3 double-hour of the night the Elder Brother] |
| 158 | 5 | will rise [and he will] bathe (in) <riverwater> […] |
| 159 | 6 | To [Bē]l [he will recite the following pra]yer: |
| 160 | 7 | My lord, Lulu […] |
| 161 | 8 | […] |
| 162 | 9 | […] |
| 163 | 10 | […] |
| 164 | 11 | […] |
| 165 | 12 | […] |
| 166 | 13 | […] |
| 167 | 14 | My lord, […] |
| 168 | 15 | My lord, shepherd […] |
| 169 | 16 | […] |
| 170 | 17 | […] |
| 171 | 18 | He who gives […] |
| 172 | 19 | My lord, […] |
| 173 | 20 | Of the people, the black-headed ones […] |
| 174 | 21 | […] t]his […] |
| 175 | 22 | […] t]his […] |
| 176 | 23 | […] |
| 177 | 24 | […] |
| 179 | 25 | […] king and governor […] |
| 180 | 26 | In the mouth of the black-headed people […] |
| 181 | 27 | Of Esagila, […] |
| 182 | 28 | Of Babylon, your city […] |
| 183 | 29 | To the one who speaks in your favour […] |
| 184 | 30 | He will ope[n] the gates. [The temple-enterers] |
| 185 | 31 | will enter. They will perform(32) [their rites as usual] |
| 186 | 32 | [The lamentation-priests and the singers] |
| 187 | 33 | [idem ditto] |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 190 | 1 | [*enūma*] 1 ½ *bēr ūmu išqâ qurqurru* |
| 191 | 2 | [*išassīma*] *abnu nisiqtu u ḫurāṣu* |
| 192 | 3 | [*ultu*] *makkūr* $^{d}$*Marduk ana epēši ša* 2 *ṣalmī* |
| 193 | 4 | *ana ūmi* 6 *inamdiššu naggāru išassīma* |
| 194 | 5 | *erēnu u bīnu inamdiššu* |
| 195 | 6 | *kutīmu išassīma ḫurāṣu inamdiššu* |
| 196 | 7 | *ultu ūmi* 3 *adi ūmi* 6 *ultu pān* $^{d}$*bēl* |
| 197 | 8 | *ana qurqurri zibbatu ana kutīmi irtu* |
| 198 | 9 | *ana naggāri imittu ana išpari ṣēlu annâ* |
| 199 | 10 | *ultu pān* $^{d}$*bēl ana aḫi-rabî Eumuša* |
| 200 | 11 | *ana mārē ummânī ušebb*[*ilū*] |
| 201 | 12 | *ṣalmū šunū*{*ti*} *7 ubān lānšunu* |
| 202 | 13 | *ištēn ša erēni ištēn ša bīni* |
| 203 | 14 | [4] *šiqil ḫurāṣu iḫzūssunu* |
| 204 | 15 | [4] *dušû ana muḫḫišunu illû* |
| 205 | 16 | [*ištēn*] *ina qāti šumēlišu ṣerru ša erēni na*[*ši*] |
| 206 | 17 | [*qās*]*su ša imitti ana* $^{d}$*Nabû naši šanû* [*ina qāti*] |
| 207 | 18 | [*šumēli*]*šu zuqaqīpu naši qāti* [*immi*]*tīšu* |
| 208 | 19 | [*ana* $^{d}$*Nab*]*û naši ṣubātu sāmu labšū* |
| 209 | 20 | [*ina e*]*ri gišimmari qablišunu* |
| 210 | 21 | [*rak*]*sū adi ūmi* 6 *ina bīt* $^{d}$*Madā*[*nu*] |
| 211 | 22 | [*iššakkan*]*ū piṭir paššūri ša* $^{d}$*Ma*[*dānu*] |
| 212 | 23 | *iqarrubšunūtu ūmi* 6 […] |
| 213 | 24 | $^{d}$*Nabû Eḫursagtila ina kašādi*[*šu*] |
| 214 | 25 | *ṭābiḫ karri qaqqassunu imaḫḫaṣma* |
| 215 | 26 | *ina pān* $^{d}$*Nabû turrū inappaḫūnimma* |
| 216 | 27 | *ana libbi turrī innaddû* |
| 217 | 28 | *ṭuppu* 22 eme-gir$_{15}$ ul-e *ul qati* |
| 218 | 29 | *ṭuppu ša arkīšu ina nisanni ūmi* 4 |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 190 | 1 | [When] 1 ½ double-hours of daytime have passed, [he will call for][(2)] the metalworker |
| 191 | 2 | [and] he will give him[(4)] precious stones and gold |
| 192 | 3 | [from] the treasury of Marduk to fashion 2 statues |
| 193 | 4 | for the sixth day. He will call for the carpenter and |
| 194 | 5 | he will give him cedar and tamarisk. |
| 195 | 6 | He will call for the goldsmith and give him gold. |
| 196 | 7 | From the third day to the sixth day from before Bēl: |
| 197 | 8 | the tail to the metalworker, the breast to the goldsmith, |
| 198 | 9 | the shoulder piece to the carpenter, the ribs to the weaver. This [they] will bring[(11)] |
| 199 | 10 | from before Bēl to the Elder Brother of Eumuša |
| 200 | 11 | for the craftsmen. |
| 201 | 12 | Those statues: seven fingers is their size. |
| 202 | 13 | One is of cedar, one of tamarisk |
| 203 | 14 | [4] shekels of gold is their mounting. |
| 204 | 15 | [4] *dušû*-stones will go up on them. |
| 205 | 16 | [One] carries a snake of cedar in his left hand. |
| 206 | 17 | His right [hand] he lifts to Nabû. The second carries a scorpion[(18)] [in the hand] |
| 207 | 18 | of his [left side]. His [rig]ht hand |
| 208 | 19 | he lifts [to Nab]û. They will be robed in red garments. |
| 209 | 20 | Their loins will be [girded][(21)] [with a] palm f[rond]. |
| 210 | 21 | Until the sixth day they [will be placed][(22)] in the temple of Mad[ānu]. |
| 211 | 22 | The leftovers of the offering table of Mad[ānu] |
| 212 | 23 | will be served to them. On the sixth day […], |
| 213 | 24 | when Nabû is arriving at Eḫursagtila, |
| 214 | 25 | the slaughterer will hit their head |
| 215 | 26 | In front of Nabû they will kindle the ashes and |
| 216 | 27 | they will be thrown into the ashes. |
| 217 | 28 | Twenty-second tablet. *Ancient Sumerian*. Not finished. |
| 218 | 29 | Tablet that follows this one: "In the month Nisannu, on the fourth day" |

IV.1.3 Commentary

**Obverse I**

2 · I prefer the reading *aḫu-rabû* over *šešgallu*; for an extensive discussion, see below, page 211.

3 · *gadalû* is a Sumerian loanword, combining gada, "linen" and lá, "to hang". In lexical lists it appears between cultic garments (see, for example, TU 35 iii 42-44). In fact, a *gadalallû* is a priest entitled to wear linen, a *labiš kitê* (CAD G 8; cf. ePSD2 s.v. gadala). For this reason, CAD suggests to interpret the *gadalû* here as dress of the priest which he removed "in order to appear in sacred nudity before the deity" (CAD G 8). However, in the omenseries *Šumma ālu*, several omens relate to the gada.lá é diĝir, "*gadalû* of the temple", and shapes appearing on it (CAD G 8, 2). In that case, *gadalû* is more conveniently translated as "linen curtain". The biggest problem with translating the word here as "curtain" is the verb connected to it: *dekû* is not one of the usual verbs to designate the opening of a curtain, e.g. *nuḫḫu* or *šadādu*. Still, from the context it is clear that we are dealing with a linen piece of fabric that hung in front of or over the statue of the god(s).

4 · *idekku*: the instructions in this ritual text are given in the third person and often the subject(s) are explicitly specified; there are no instructions in the second person (cf. RlA 11: 428 s.v. Ritual), unless when they appear in direct speech.

5-18 · The fact that the prayer in these lines is bilingual is emphasized by the indentation of every second, i.e. Akkadian, line.

5 · umun-ĝu nu za-pa-áĝ-bi is reminiscent of Udug-hul XII 15 where we can read diĝir nu za-pa-áĝ-bi ì-gal-gal-la, "(my father) is not a god, but his voice is loud" (Geller 2016: 402).

12 · *ša ušamqit*: subjunctive is often omitted in the NYF texts, but not always.

16 · $^{d}$*bēl šubtaku bābili barsip agûku*: notice the chiastic structure. Several poetic devises are at work in the prayers of the NYF texts. The structure of this prayer will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.4.1.1.

19-32 · The prayer continues in Akkadian only, a fact that is visually represented by the lack of indentation at this point. Yet, this Akkadian section is clearly still part of the same prayer, because there is no horizontal line to indicate the start of a new paragraph and in the subscript (I 33) the Akkadian lines are included in the total line number. The question is then: why does it continue in monolingual Akkadian?

20 · [*ina*] *têrētika taḫâṭ têrētu* is translated by CAD (Ḫ 160 s.v. *ḫâṭu*) as "you explore further (the implications) of all omina through the omina (you give)". My translation is based on Farber (1987): "[anhand] deiner eigenen göttlichen Weisungen überwachst du (alle andere) Weisungen." It is possible that the double occurrence of $ur_5$.úš in this line expresses some kind of word play; the combination of the signs ḪAR and BAD can result in many other things, though the exact play here escapes me. I do not agree with Cohen's translation of the first $ur_5$.úš as "lungs"; his attempt at reading a sequence of different body parts in lines I 19-23 cannot fully be substantiated (Cohen 1993: 441).

· The orthograhpy *ta-ḫa-ṭu* for *taḫâṭ* is typically Late Babylonian for verbs II-*ū*/*ā*/*ī*.

· Notice the use of the older suffix -*ka* in this line as opposed to the use of the typical Late Babylonian -*ku* elsewhere in this section (cf. GAG 42, j and k). The same holds true for lines I.22-24. This phenomenon reccurs throughout the NYF texts. Attention must also be drawn to the parallel structure of these lines (broken by line 23).

22 · Farber (1987: 213 note on line 22a) suggested to read *la-pa-<ti>* ("to touch") instead of Thureau-Dangin's *lâpu* ("arms", not recorded in AHw and only lexical section in CAD L 97). Still the meaning of the line is problematic, since there are no other attestations of Marduk burning someone with his touch. Cohen (1993: 441) tentatively read "*nose*", in which case the sign before PA should not be read as LA but as àb (=AD), which could possibly be reconciled with what is left of it. However, when the word *appu* appears at other instances in the NYF texts, it is always as $kir_4$ (KA).

25 · We are dealing with asyndetic syntax in this line: the subject of the verb *idabbubū* is not expressed grammatically, but it is clear that it relates to the –*šunūti* of the previous *tukallamšunūti*.

28 · Notice the lack of subjunctive in both verbs.

· *bēlūtku*: Linssen read $^{d}en^{ut}$-*ku*, but the diĝir-sign is clearly missing in both Thureau-Dangin's handcopy and on the tablet itself.

33 · 21 *šumātu*: in the total line number, the bilingual lines are counted per pair and not per line.

34 · é.umuš.a: I prefer this reading of the sanctuary's name over Linssen's e.tuš.a. See below, Chapter V.3.1.4.

36 · *annâ*: the demonstrative pronoun *annû* has become petrified in the NYF texts and takes the form *annâ* regardless of the gender or number of the word to which it should agree. See also George 2000: 269 note on line iii 22 and below, page 180.

38 · *parsēšunu*: the NU is not written, although this was not indicated by Linssen.

**Obverse II**

11 · *ša ūmi* 2: this reference is confusing because the instructions given in this part of the text were meant for the second day of Nisannu and this specification seems unnecessary.

17 · *namburbû*: it is quite uncommon that the name of a ritual or a genre of ritual is mentioned in a prayer (CAD N/1 224). Unfortunately, the line is broken and we do not know what exactly is meant with it here.

20 · *arratu lā napšuri īrur* is a common curse formula in legal texts and royal inscriptions; outside of those corpora it appears only rarely; worth mentioning is the Erra Epic IV 37 (*arrat lā napšuri iššakin ina pīšu*).

29-34 · These lines duplicate part of a text called "Enmešarra's Defeat" (BM 32654+; Lambert 2013: 294 IV.19-25; see below, page 277). There are, however, some differences: DT 15 does not duplicate line IV.23 – Lambert suggests it may have been written on the same line as the previous sentence – and after *nišu* DT 15 writes *āšib* while BM 32654+ has *ša qerebšina* – which does not change the meaning, though. Interestingly enough, the sixth column of the tablet of "Enmešarra's Defeat" describes the procession of the gods to the *akītu*-house.

· This is the only instance in the New Year Festival texts where cities other than Babylon or Borsippa are mentioned. Lambert speaks of the passage as "one of the most spiteful passages of Babylonian literature reflecting inter-cult rivalry" (Lambert 2013: 283).

35-36 · There is a horizontal ruling between these lines, which we should ignore: it is merely a line from the first column that is extended into the second.

38-39 · *ikmīkunūti*/*ramâtunu*: in this prayer, it seems, the evil forces are addressed in the second person plural (cf. line II 14, *zāmânu lemnūtu*). The third person singular refers to Marduk, who defeats them. *Ramâtunu* can be understood as a form of *ramû* B (CAD R 133) "to take up residence, to dwell".

**Reverse V**

1-3 · There is not much space before the date formula of line V.4, leading one to suggest that there could only have been some sort of intra-textual subscript here. It is tempting to reconstruct the lines according to the Geheimwissenkolophon in the first column (I 33-35), where it also appears after the lyrics of a recitation. See also below, page 196.

5 · The lacuna between zi and $tu_5$ is certainly too small to reconstruct zi-[*ma* $a^{meš}$ íd] $tu_5$, as Linssen read. Note that the line was correctly understood by Çağirgan (1976: 9). Most probably we are dealing with an abbreviated form of the formula on the obverse describing the beginning of the second day (I 2-3). For this reason, I do not attempt to reconstruct what exactly came after $tu_5$, even though there probably was a reference to the removal of the linen cloth and to the priest entering into the cella of Bēl. Similarly, it is possible to read *ana* [$^{d}$e]n šù[d.bi $dug_4$.ga] or an abbreviated form *ana* [$^{d}$e]n du[$g_4$.ga].

**Reverse VI**

1 · [*enūma*] 1 ½ *bēr ūmu išqâ*: literally "[when] the day is 1 ½ double-hours high" is a technical expression mostly used in astronomical texts; the writing ME to designate *ūmu* is furthermore typical for LB astronomical texts (CAD U/W 138). See also below, page 181.

8-9 · Strangely enough, the remunerations for four craftsmen are recorded in these lines, while the assignment to only three – not four – of them is described in the previous section.

10-1 · *ana aḫi-rabî ana mārē ummâni*: it is not entirely clear what was supposed to happen with the meat cuts destined for the craftsmen because of the double *ana*. Perhaps they were first brought to the Elder Brother, who then distributed them to the respective craftsmen. Still, the construction seems forced, which could point to a later addition of the phrase *ana aḫi-rabî.*

12 · *ubānu* is more conventionally written ŠU.SI; the writing SI is more typical for astronomical texts to denote a measure of length (Sach & Hunger 1988: 22; CAD U/W 3).

14 ·*iḫzūssunu*: in CAD the word is considered a hapax legomenon *iḫzūtu+šunu*, meaning "mountings" (CAD I 48). The form can also be explained as a locative form *iḫzū+uš+šunu*, which in this case should be read as a nominative. Similar "petrified" locative forms can be found in some late literary texts, see Jursa & Debourse 2017: 79f. note on line 18.

14-15 · The number at the beginning of these two lines is most probably 4: even though it is quite broken, it is clearly a stacked sign.

17 · *qāssu ša imitti*: it is unclear why the scribe did not use the more common formulation *qāt imittīšu* in this instance. Furthermore, he wrote the possesive suffix here as ŠU instead of SU.

19 · *labšū* is written with an *-u* instead of *-ú* to indicate the long vowel.

20 · *eru* is equal to *aru*, "leaf, frond" (CAD A/2 311). Here the a-sound is interchangeable with e-sound.

23 · *iqarrub*: *qarābu* is a late form of *qerēbu.*

25 · *qaqqassunu imaḫḫaṣma*: *maḫāṣu* should most likely be translated with "to strike" instead of "to behead", since the rigid use of language in ritual texts does not really allow for such diverging translations of the same verb in different passages in the same texts (e.g. in NYF4 V 34 *maḫāṣu* is translated with "to strike").

26 · *inappaḫūnimma*: it is unclear why a ventive was added to the verb.

28 · eme-gir$_{15}$ ul-e: it is not easy to understand what is written here. Çağirgan (1976) offered the reading eme-gir$_{14(for15)}$ du$_7$-e but did not translate; Linssen translated as "perfect Sumerian". In contrast, Hunger (1968 no. 182: 65-66) did not read this and retained eme.ku.ul.e and followed Landsberger's suggestion (1933: 177 note 8) that this refers to a specific kind of "Geheimsprache". As such, there are two plausible options to understand what is said here: either the colophon refers to "ancient Sumerian" (eme-gir$_{15}$ ul-e) or to a "…-language" or "wording of …" (*lišān* ..., eme KU.UL.E). Nothing speaks against the first option except the fact that it does not occur elsewhere. The second proposed reading is more problematic, not only because at present no reading for KU UL E can be suggested, but also because the phrase "according to the wording of" was expressed differently in Akkadian, e.g. *libbu šaṭāri ša* …, *kīma pî* …, *šiṭirti* … . Moreover, if EME refers to a kind of technical language or dialect, we would expect it to be followed by a name or title (see CAD L s.v. *lišānu* 4b) or one of the terms listed by the dictionaries. For *lišānu ša* as a technical term in commentaries, see Gabbay 2016: 142-144.

Until a better solution is suggested, I retain the first reading here. Note that the same expression occurs in the colophon of NYF2. See also below, page 203.

## IV.2 DT 114

DT 114 (BM 92686) is the upper left corner of what was presumably a six-column tablet. It is part of, but no join to, BM 32485+ (see below, page 124). Parts of the upper and left edges are preserved. Column I and VI are in their width intact; column II and V are only partially preserved; and column III and IV are lost. Measurements of the tablet as conserved are: 7,9 cm high; 12,1 cm wide; 2,5 cm thick (plano-convex). Column I is ca. 6,4 cm wide, whereas column VI is 6,5 cm. What is preserved in width of columns II is 3,9 cm and of column V 4,5 cm. The script is large and deeply impressed. Signs are written in such a way that they fill out the width of the column, and the tablet is not very densely filled up. The columns are on both sides separated by a double division line, between which there is 1 cm (obverse) or 0,5 cm (reverse) of blank space. There is a vertical line before column I (extended DIŠ-sign); after column VI as well. There are also horizontal rulings, often with cuneiform shaped heads; rulings are generally respected. There is an invocation formula on the top edge. There is a colophon including a curse formula.

### IV.2.1 Transcription

216c u.e. *ina a-mat* $^{d}$en *u* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ *liš-lim*

**Obverse I**

217 1 DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 4$^{kam}$ 1 2/3 danna ge$_{6}$
218 2 $^{lú}$šeš.gal zi-*ma* a$^{meš}$ íd tu$_{5}$ $^{túg}$gada.lal
219 3 *ina* igi $^{d}$en *u* gašan$^{iá}$ *i-de-<ek>-ku*
220 4 šu.íl.lá *an-na-a ana* $^{d}$en *i-na-áš-ši*
221 5 *ana* $^{d}$en šùd.bi dug$_{4}$.ga

222 6 umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$-na umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$-na
223 7 *be-lu gaš-ri* $^{d}$*í-gì-gì ṣi-rì šá* diĝir.diĝir gal.gal$^{l}$*
224 8 umun-ĝu$_{10}$ šúm-šúm umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kešda-ĝu$_{10}$-na
225 9 *be-lu kib-rat* lugal diĝir.diĝir $^{<d>}$šú *mu-kin* giš.ḫur
226 10 alim úl za-pa-áĝ-bi umun-e-ĝu$_{10}$-na
227 11 *kab-tu ṣi-rì šá-qu-u e-tel-lu*
228 12 lá-a-ke$_{4}$ ušumgal nu-ra a-ri-a
229 13 *na-šu-u* lugal$^{tú}$ *ta-mi-iḫ* umun$^{tú}$
230 14 ˹zálag-ga˺ úl-úl zálag-ga úl é-u$_{4}$-ul tuš
231 15 [*nu-u-r*]*i nam-ri* $^{d}$amar.utu *a-šib* é min
232 16 [(x) x x x] ˹x˺ kuš$_{7}$ kur nu tuk
233 17 […] ˹*sa-pi*˺*-nu* kur *a-a-bi*
234 18 […] x ˹e-ne˺

**Obverse II**

265 1 *ina* igi lugal diĝir.diĝir $^{d}$amar.utu *ṣa-bat* [*a-bu-su-nu*]
266 2 *liq-bu-ú ta-nit-<ta*>-ku lu-ša*[*r-bu-u* umun$^{ut}$*-ku*]
267 3 *lid-bu-bu-ú qur-di-ku li-šá-*[*pu-u zik-ri-ku*]

268 4 *ana* $^{lú}$ìr *qa-bu-u* sig$_5$-*ku* t[uku$^{e}$ arḫuš]
269 5 *ina pu-uš-qa u dan-nát ṣ*[*a-bat* šu$^{II}$-*šú*]
270 6 *ina* gig *u ta-ni-ḫu* [*šu-ruk-šú* tin]
271 7 *lit-tal-lak* gì$^{⌜a⌝}$ [*ina*] ⌜*ḫi*⌝-*d*[*a-a-tú u ri-šat*]
272 8 *lid-bu-ub qur*-[*di-ku ana* un$^{meš}$ kal dù.dù.a]

---

273 9 *ana* kisal.maḫ è-*ma* i[gi-*šú ana* im.2 gar$^{an}$-*ma*]
274 10 $^{múl}$aš.iku é.⌜sag⌝.[íl *tam-šil* an *u* ki]
275 11 3-*šú ana* ⌜é⌝.[sag.íl *i-kar-rab*]
276 12 $^{giš}$i[g$^{meš}$ bad$^{te}$ $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é$^{meš}$ *gab-bi*]
277 13 k[u$_4$$^{meš}$-*ma* me-*šú-nu* gim *šá* gì$^{a}$ dù$^{meš}$]
278 14 $^{l}$[$^{ú}$gala$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$nar$^{meš}$ ki.min]
279 15 ⌜x⌝

**Reverse V**

434 1’ ⌜*la ta-pal-làḫ*⌝ […]
435 2’ *šá* $^{d}$en *iq-ṭa*-bi* […]
436 3’ $^{d}$en *ik-ri-ib-k*[*a* …]
437 4’ *ú-šar-bi* umun$^{ut}$-*k*[*a* …]
438 5’ *ú-šaq-qa* lugal$^{ut}$-⌜*ka*⌝ […]
439 6’ *ina* ud èš.èš *e-pu-*⌜*uš*⌝ […]
440 7’ *ina* bad ká *ub-bi-ib* šu* […]

**Reverse VI**

472 1’ ⌜$^{im}$dub 23 eme-gir$_{15}$ ul-e⌝ [nu ti]
473 2’ $^{im}$dub *šá* egir-[*šú*]

---

474 3’ DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 5$^{kam}$ igi.tab *u* igi.ká[r]

---

475 4’ *pa-liḫ* $^{d}$amar.utu *u* $^{d}$*zar-pa-ni-tu*$_4$
476 5’ *ana* šu$^{II}$ nu è *šá ana* šu$^{II}$ è$^{u}$
477 6’ diĝir.diĝir *ma-la ina qé-reb* $^{uru}$e$^{ki}$
478 7’ *ba-šu-u li-ru-ru-šú*

IV.2.2 Normalisation and translation

216c u.e. *ina amat* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya lišlim*

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 217 | 1 | DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* 4 1 2/3 *bēr mūši* |
| 218 | 2 | *aḫu-rabû itebbīma mê nāri irammuk gadalû* |
| 219 | 3 | *ina pān* $^{d}$*bēl u bēltīya idekki* |
| 220 | 4 | *šuillakku annâ ana* $^{d}$*bēl inašši* |
| 221 | 5 | *ana* $^{d}$*bēl ikribu annâ iqabbi* |
| 222 | 6 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$-na umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$-na |
| 223 | 7 | *bēlu gašri Igigi ṣīru ša ilāni rabûti* |
| 224 | 8 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ šúm-šúm umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kešda-ĝu$_{10}$-na |
| 225 | 9 | *bēl kibrāti šar ilāni* $^{d}$*Marduk mukīn gišḫuri* |
| 226 | 10 | alim úl za-pa-áĝ-bi umun-e-ĝu$_{10}$-na |
| 227 | 11 | *kabtu ṣīru šaqû etellu* |
| 228 | 12 | lá-a-ke$_4$ ušumgal nu-ra a-ri-a |
| 229 | 13 | *nāšû šarrūtu tāmiḫu bēlūtu* |
| 230 | 14 | ˹zálag-ga˺ úl-úl zálag-ga úl é-u$_4$-ul tuš |
| 231 | 15 | [*nūr*]*u namru* $^{d}$*Marduk āšib bīt* min |
| 232 | 16 | [x x x x] x kuš$_7$ kur nu tuk |
| 233 | 17 | […] *sāpin māt ayābi* |
| 234 | 18 | […] x ˹e-ne˺ |

216c u.e. By the command of Bēl and Bēltīya, may (this) be well.

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 217 | 1 | In the month Nisannu, (on) the fourth day, (at) 1 2/3 double-hour of the night |
| 218 | 2 | the Elder Brother will rise and bathe (in) river water. He will remove(3) the linen curtain |
| 219 | 3 | in front of Bēl and Bēltīya. |
| 220 | 4 | He will recite this handlifting prayer to Bēl. |
| 221 | 5 | To Bēl he will say the following prayer: |
| 222 | 6 | … |
| 223 | 7 | Lord, most powerful of the Igigi, most supreme of the great gods |
| 224 | 8 | … |
| 225 | 9 | Lord of the four regions, king of the gods, Marduk, who establishes regulations |
| 226 | 10 | … |
| 227 | 11 | Honourable one, supreme one, sublime one, lordly one |
| 228 | 12 | … |
| 229 | 13 | He who wields kingship, he who exerts lordship |
| 230 | 14 | … |
| 231 | 15 | Shining [ligh]t, Marduk, who resides in *the same* temple (= Euʾul) |
| 232 | 16 | … |
| 233 | 17 | […] he who destroys the land of the foe. |
| 234 | 18 | […] |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 265 | 1 | *ina pān šar ilāni* $^{d}$*Marduk ṣabat* [*abbūssunu*] |
| 266 | 2 | *liqbû tanit<ta>ku luša*[*rbû bēlūtku*] |
| 267 | 3 | *lidbubū qurdiku lišā*[*pû zikriku*] |
| 268 | 4 | *ana ardi qābê damqātiku reše* [*rēmu*] |
| 269 | 5 | *ina pušqi u dannati ṣ*[*abat qātēšu*] |
| 270 | 6 | *ina murṣi u tānīḫi* [*šurukšu balāṭu*] |
| 271 | 7 | *littallak ginâ* [*ina*] *ḫidâ*[*ti u rīšāti*] |
| 272 | 8 | *lidbub qur*[*diku ana nišī kal kalâma*] |
| 273 | 9 | *ana kisalmāḫi uṣṣīma* [*pānišu ana ištāni išakkanma*] |
| 274 | 10 | *ikû Esag*[*ila tamšīl šamê u erṣeti*] |
| 275 | 11 | *šalūšīšu ana* [*Esagila ikarrab*] |
| 276 | 12 | *da*[*lāti ipette ērib-bītāte gabbi*] |
| 277 | 13 | *irr*[*ubūma parṣēšunu kīma ša ginâ ippušū*] |
| 278 | 14 | [*kalû u nārū* ki.min] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 434 | 1’ | *lā tapallaḫ* [...] |
| 435 | 2’ | *ša* $^{d}$*bēl iqṭabi* […] |
| 436 | 3’ | $^{d}$*bēl ikribk*[*a* …] |
| 437 | 4’ | *ušarbi bēlūtk*[*a* …] |
| 438 | 5’ | *ušaqqa šarrūtka* […] |
| 439 | 6’ | *ina ūm eššēši epuš* […] |
| 440 | 7’ | *ina petê bābu ubbib qātē* […] |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 472 | 1’ | *ṭuppu* 23 eme-[gir$_{15}$ ul-e *ul qati*] |
| 473 | 2’ | *ṭuppu ša arkī*[*šu*] |
| 474 | 3’ | DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* 5 *bari u saniq* |
| 475 | 4’ | *pāliḫ* $^{d}$*Marduk u* $^{d}$*Zarpānītu* |
| 476 | 5’ | *ana qātē lā ušeṣṣe ša ana qātē ušeṣṣû* |
| 477 | 6’ | *ilānu mala ina qereb Bābili* |
| 478 | 7’ | *bašû līrurūšu* |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 265 | 1 | Intercede [for them] with the king of the gods, Marduk. |
| 266 | 2 | That they may speak your praise, that they may [exalt your *lady*ship], |
| 267 | 3 | That they may talk of your heroism, may [extol your name] |
| 268 | 4 | Grant [mercy] to the servant who speaks in your favour. |
| 269 | 5 | [Seize his hands] in distress and hardship, |
| 270 | 6 | [Preserve his life] in sickness and suffering. |
| 271 | 7 | That he may always go about [in] rejoic[ing and jubilation], |
| 272 | 8 | That he may talk of [your heroism to all people everywhere] |
| 273 | 9 | He will go out to the Great Courtyard and [he will face north and] |
| 274 | 10 | "*Pegasus*, Esagila, [image of heaven and earth]" |
| 275 | 11 | [he will recite in praise] to Esagila three times. |
| 276 | 12 | [He will open the gates. All the temple-enterers] |
| 277 | 13 | [will enter and perform their rites as usual.] |
| 278 | 14 | [The lamentation-priests and singers idem ditto.] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 434 | 1' | Do not fear […] |
| 435 | 2' | What Bēl has ordered […] |
| 436 | 3' | Bēl your prayer […] |
| 437 | 4' | He will magnify your lordship […] |
| 438 | 5' | He will extol your kingship […] |
| 439 | 6' | On the day of the *eššešu*-festivities, perform […] |
| 440 | 7' | During the opening of the gates, purify the hands […] |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 472 | 1' | Twenty-third tablet. [*Ancient*] *Sumerian*. [Not finished]. |
| 473 | 2' | Tablet that follows [this one]: |
| 474 | 3' | "In the month Nisannu, on the fifth day." Collated and checked. |
| 475 | 4' | He who reveres Marduk and Zarpānītu |
| 476 | 5' | should not make (it) available (to others); he who makes (it) available (to others) |
| 477 | 6' | may the gods, as many as there are(7') in Babylon, |
| 478 | 7' | curse him. |

IV.2.3 Commentary

**Obverse I**

1 · DIŠ is in this instance certainly not a sign with meaning; it is extended into a line that runs before the first column, thus being a technical device – perhaps a visual aid to find the beginning of a new day on the tablet. DIŠ occurs at other instances in the NYF texts without being extended into a line. It is, however, surprising that the catchline cited in line VI 3' of this manuscript includes DIŠ in the incipit of the following tablet.

4-5 · There seems to be no reason why the scribe should write twice that a prayer should be recited. This might be a copying mistake.

10 · alim can mean *kabtu*, "honourable".

· NU should perhaps be read as úl, by which the scribe meant $ul_4$ or $ul_6$ to denote *namru*, "bright, shining".

· za-pa-áĝ-bi: zipaĝ means "breath" but also "voice, clamour".

12 · lá can mean *našû* and ušumgal can also be read as *šarru*, as Uri Gabbay remarked to me; see also CAD N/2 82 s.v. *našû* A (lexical section).

14 · Again, NU should probably be read like úl to denote $ul_{4/6}$, "bright, shining".

15 · é.min in the Akkadian line of the bilingual prayer refers to é.$u_4$.ul in the Sumerian line preceding it. Interestingly, it shows that the scribe knew what he was writing in Sumerian, at least he understood enough of it to be able to make this kind of "lazy" abbreviation.

16 · $kuš_7$ denotes *naspantu*, "destruction", from the same root as the participle in the paired Akkadian line *sāpinu*.

**Obverse II**

1-14 · This section is parallelled by NYF4 II 7-24, where the beginning of the lines is broken. What is preserved on both tablets is exactly the same, with the exception of one minor thing: whereas NYF2 II 1 says *ina* igi lugal diĝir.diĝir, NYF4 has [*ina* igi] diĝir diĝir.diĝir.

1-8 · These lines are a continuation of the prayer to Zarpānītu at the end of NYF3 I.

2 · *lušarbû* is a late rendering of the precative form *lišarbû*; note how it contrasts with the surrounding precatives that take the more traditional form.

4-8 · While the previous lines relate to the citizens of Babylon, this section refers to the priest who recites the prayer. There is a strong resemblance with NYF5 IV 4'-19'.

4 · *ana* $^{lú}$ìr *qa-bu-u*: we would expect *qābê* to agree in number, gender and casus with *ardi*. Perhaps the logographic writing ìr prompted the scribe to make this mistake.

**Reverse V**

1' · *iq-ṭa-bi*: it is uncommon to encounter the emphatic *-ṭa* after the guttural *iq-* in Babylonian. Moreover, it is unclear whether we should read the word as *iqṭabi* or as *igdabi*. Parallels can only be found in Hellenistic texts, see below, page 182.

6'-7' · *epuš – ubbib*: the use of imperatives is not very common in ritual texts. All the instructions in the NYF texts are given in the third person. The imperatives here are part of the direct speech, addressed by the Elder Brother to the king.

· Two regular temple rituals are mentioned here: the *eššešu*, a ritual that was observed multiple times per month in Hellenistic times (Linssen 2004: 45-51), and the *pīt bābi*, the opening of the gate ceremony which took place every day at the start of the cultic day (Linssen 2004: 40-41).

7' · šu should not be read as šu$^{II}$: there is some white space behind the sign before the tablet breaks off which shows that "II" was omitted. Nevertheless, it should probably still be understood as *qātē*.

**Reverse VI**

1' · A line should probably be added between Linssen's line 471 (= last line in NYF3 VI) and 472 (= first line in NYF2 VI), since the upper part of line 472 is broken but certainly does not fit what is visible of NYF3 after line 471.

3' · It is remarkable that the DIŠ-sign was included in the incipit of the following tablet, because it served as a technical device in these texts to mark a new entry and therefore seems superfluous in this catchphrase.

5' · *ana qātē lā ušeṣṣe*, literally "he will not let (it) leave from (his) hands"; however, the expression *ina*/*ana qātē šūṣû* means "to be at hand, available" (CAD A/2 371 s.v. *aṣû* 5a3; Hunger 1968 no. 182: 65-66). It relates not merely to the tablet, but to the text it contains as well; see Finkel (2000: 141 n. 11), who translates *ana* šu$^{II}$ nu bí.è as "not for distribution!" Similar warnings can be found on other Late Babylonian texts, see CAD ibid. and Hunger 1968 for references.

## IV.3 BM 32485+DT 109

The joined tablets BM 32485+DT 109(BM 92707) form together the left lower corner of what was probably a six-column tablet. Parts of the lower and left edges are preserved. Only column I is in its width intact; the first few signs of column two are visible; and column VI is broken on its right side. Columns III, IV and V (save for one sign) are broken off. Measurements of the tablet as conserved are: 15,8 cm high; 8 cm wide; 3,2 cm thick at its thickest point (plano-convex). Column I and VI are 6,5 cm wide; what is preserved of the width of column II is 1,3 cm and column V 0,7 cm. The script is quite large and quite deeply impressed (with the exception of groups of multiple smaller horizontals which are remarkably lighter impressed). Signs are spaced out over the width of the column, but the tablet is not very densely filled up. There is a double column division line on the obverse, but the first line is not respected. As traces suggest, there was at least one vertical line between columns V and VI. The beginning of column VI is marked by a vertical line too. There are also horizontal rulings, which are overall respected.

IV.3.1 Transcription

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 235 | 1’ | [x x x x] ˹x˺ […]* |
| 236 | 2’ | […] ˹x x diĝir*˺ […] |
| 237 | 3’ | [x x x] ˹x $^{d}$en*˺ kur*.kur* šub˹$^{tú}$ x˺ […] |
| 238 | 4’ | [x x (x)] ˹$^{d}$en* x x x˺ […] x |
| 239 | 5’ | ˹diĝir˺ x x x x [… *ti*]*m** |
| 240 | 6’ | *e-bir* an$^{e}$ lal$^{ti}$ ki$^{tì}$ |
| 241 | 7’ | *ma-di-di* a$^{meš}$ *tam-tim mu-ur-riš* uru$_{4}$$^{tú}$ |
| 242 | 8’ | *a-šib* é.u$_{4}$.ul en e$^{ki}$ $^{d}$amar.utu maḫ |
| 243 | 9’ | *mu-šim* nam$^{meš}$ *šá* diĝir$^{meš}$ dù.a.bi |
| 244 | 10’ | *na-din* $^{giš}$níg.pa kù$^{tì}$ *ana* lugal *pa-liḫ-ḫi-šú* |
| 245 | 11’ | *ana-ku* $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a e$^{u}$ sig$_{5}$-*ku* |
| 246 | 12’ | *ana* uru-*ku* e$^{ki}$ *nap-šìr* |
| 247 | 13’ | *ana* é.sag.gíl é-*ku re-še-e* arḫuš |
| 248 | 14’ | *ina* ka-*ka ṣir-tú* en diĝir.diĝir gal.gal |
| 249 | 15’ | *ana* igi $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$ *liš-šá-kin* zálag$^{tú}$ |
| 250 | 16’ | ta igi $^{d}$en è-*ma ana* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ šùd.bi dug$_{4}$.ga |
| 251 | 17’ | *gaš-rat i-lat ṣi-rat* $^{d}$15$^{meš}$ |
| 252 | 18’ | $^{d}$*zar-pa-ni-tu*$_{4}$ *na-bat* mul$^{<meš>}$ *a-ši-bat* é.u$_{4}$.ul |
| 253 | 19’ | *kaz-bat i-lá-a-tú šá* izi.gar *lu-bu-ši-šú* |
| 254 | 20’ | *e-bi-rat* an$^{e}$ lal$^{át}$ ki$^{tì}$ |
| 255 | 21’ | $^{d}$*zar-pa-ni-tu*$_{4}$ *šá man-za-zu šá-qu-u* |
| 256 | 22’ | *nam-rat* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ *ṣi-rat u šá-qát* |
| 257 | 23’ | *ina* $^{d}$15$^{meš}$ *ul i-ba-ši* gim *šá-a-šú* |
| 258 | 24’ | *a-ki-lat kar-ṣu ṣa-bi-tat a-bu-tú* |
| 259 | 25’ | *mu-lap-pi-nát* $^{lú}$níg.tuku *mu-šá-áš-rat* $^{lú}$úku |
| 260 | 26’ | *mu-šam-qí-tat* $^{lú}$kúr *la a-dir* diĝir$^{ti}$-*šú* |
| 261 | 27’ | *e-ṭi-rat ka-mi-i ṣa-bi-tat* šu$^{II}$ *na-as-ku* |
| 262 | 28’ | *šá* $^{lú}$ìr e$^{u}$ sig$_{5}$ mu-*ku qí-bi-i* sig$_{5}$-[*šú*] |
| 263 | 29’ | *ana* lugal *pa-liḫ-ḫi-ku* nam-*šú* n[am] |
| 264 | 30’ | *ana* $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$ $^{lú}$˹érin˺ *ki-din-nu šu-ruk-šú-˹nu˺*-[*ti* tin] |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 283 | 1’ | *ana* $^{d}$en [*i-na-áš-šu-u* igi *šá* aga *šá* $^{d}$60] |
| 284 | 2’ | *u* ki.tuš [*šá* $^{d}$*en-lil ku-ut-tu-mu-u*] |
| 285 | 3’ | DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bá[r ud 5$^{kam}$ 2 danna ge$_{6}$ $^{lú}$šeš.gal] |
| 286 | 4’ | zi-*ma* [a$^{meš}$ íd $^{íd}$idigna *u* $^{íd}$buranum$^{ki}$] |
| 287 | 5’ | $^{i}$tu$_{5}$ ˹x˺ […] |
| 288 | 6’ | *i-de-<ek>ku* […] |
| 289 | 7’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-[ne umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-nu-nu] |
| 290 | 8’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ni [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-mu-na] |
| 291 | 9’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ m[a … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára kur-kur] |
| 292 | 10’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ giš-en-na] |
| 293 | 11’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu [za$^{?}$-pa$^{?}$-áĝ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-gíd-en] |
| 294 | 12’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ a-a-al-ni] |
| 295 | 13’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kéšda$^{da}$] |
| 296 | 14’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš é-u$_{4}$-ul] |
| 297 | 15’ | umun-˹ĝu$_{10}$˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu dib-dib] |
| 298 | 16’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ zé-èĝ] |
| 299 | 17’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára tuš-a] |
| 300 | 18’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-ne] |
| 301 | 19’ | $^{d}$d[ìm.me.er.an.ki.a *mu-šim* nam$^{meš}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 302 | 20’ | $^{múl}$m[u.bu.kéš.da *šá* $^{giš}$gidri *u* $^{giš}$gúr *na-šu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 303 | 21’ | $^{múl}$n[un$^{ki}$ *šá er-šu-tú aḫ-zu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 304 | 22’ | $^{d}$[*asar-ri šá-ri-ik* uru$_{4}$$^{tú}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 305 | 23’ | ˹$^{múl}$˺[babbar *na-áš ṣa-ad-du ana* dù.dù.a umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 306 | 24’ | ˹$^{múl}$˺[gu$_{4}$.ud *mu-šá-az-nin* šèg umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 307 | 25’ | […] |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ∅ | 1’ | ˹x˺ […] |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 441 | 1 | *ur-ri u* ˹ge$_6$ *lu*-x˺-[x] ˹x˺ […] |
| 442 | 2 | ˹*šá*˺ e$^{ki}$ uru-*šú* x […] x e x […] |
| 443 | 3 | ˹*šá*˺ é.sag.íl ˹é-*šú* x x˺ [x] bi […] |
| 444 | 4 | ˹*šá*˺ dumu$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$ $^{lú}$érin *ki-di*[*n-nu** …] x *aṣ* […] |
| 445 | 5 | $^{d}$en *i-kar-rab-ku* ˹*ki*-x˺ ˹*a-na*˺ *da-ri*-[*iš*] |
| 446 | 6 | *ú-ḫal-laq* $^{lú}$kúr-*ku ú-šam-qát za-ma-an-k*[*u*] |
| 447 | 7 | *e-nu-ma* e$^{u}$ lugal *ka-bat* kir$_4$ gì$^{ú}$-*šú i-*˹*tar**˺-[*šú**] |
| 448 | 8 | $^{giš}$níg.gidru $^{giš}$gúr $^{giš}$mitum(tukul.diĝir) aga è-*ma ana* lugal š[um$^{(in)}$] |
| 449 | 9 | te lugal *i-maḫ-ḫa-aṣ e-nu-ma* te-*su* [sìg$^{su}$] |
| 450 | 10 | bad$^{ma}$ *di-ma-tu-šú il-lik* $^{d}$en *sa-l*[*im*] |
| 451 | 11 | bad$^{ma}$ *di-ma-tu-šú ul* gin$^{meš}$ $^{d}$en *e-zi-i*[*z*] |
| 452 | 12 | $^{lú}$kúr zi-*am-ma i-šak-kan* šub-*su* |
| 453 | 13 | *e-nu-ma an-na-a i-pu-šú* ki u.u šú.man $^{lú}$šeš.gal |
| 454 | 14 | 40 gi$^{meš}$ *šá* 3 kùš.am nu bar$^{meš}$ |
| 455 | 15 | nu ḫaš$^{meš}$ giš$^{meš}$ *ma*:gar* *rik-su ina e-ri* gišimmar |
| 456 | 16 | *i-rak-ka-as-šú-nu-tú ina* kisal.maḫ ˹pú bad$^{meš}$-*ma*˺ |
| 457 | 17 | *ina* pú *ú-kan* làl ì.nun ì.gi[š … *i*$^{?}$-*naq*$^{?}$-*qa*$^{?}$] |
| 458 | 18 | pa *ina* igi$^{l}$ *nag-be* gar$^{an}$ gu$_4$ babbar *ana* u[gu …] |
| 459 | 19 | lugal izi.gar *ina* gi *ana lìb-bi-šú* ˹*ú*$^{?}$˺-[…] |
| 460 | 20 | *naq-bit an-na-a* lugal *u* […] |
| 461 | 21 | $^{d}$gu$_4$ zálag *nam-ri mu-n*[*am-mir ik-le-ti*] |
| 462 | 22 | *qa-mu-ú šá* $^{d}$*a-*˹*nù* x x˺ […] |
| 463 | 23 | $^{d}$gibil$_6$(ne.gi)˹x-*su**˺ gar$^{nu}$ ˹x˺ […] |
| 464 | 24 | TA U MI *šú-nu-ti ma-ḫa*[*r**…] |
| 465 | 25 | *i-nu-ú ana di-na-ni-*˹*šú*˺* […] |
| 466 | 26 | *a-di-na-ni-šú i-nu-ú* din[gir$^{?}$* …] |
| 467 | 27 | $^{d}$gu$_4$ dù.a.bi-*šú* luga[l …] |
| 468 | 28 | *ana* $^{d}$en kir$_4$* *i-lab**-*b*[*i**-*in** …] |
| 469 | 29 | *e-nu-ma* $^{d}$gu$_4$ x […e$^{ú}$*] |
| 470 | 30 | lugal *ana* <é> *šu-tùm-*˹*mi*$^{?}$* x x x˺ [ …] |
| 471 | 31 | ˹gìr* lugal* x˺ […] |
| Ø | 32 | ˹x x˺ […] |

IV.3.2 Normalisation and translation

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 235 | 1’ | […] |
| 236 | 2’ | […] $^{d}$[…] |
| 237 | 3’ | […] $^{d}$*bēl mātāti miqittuʾ*[…] |
| 238 | 4’ | […] $^{d}$*bēl* […] |
| 239 | 5’ | $^{d}$[…] |
| 240 | 6’ | *ēbir šamê ḫāʾiṭ erṣeti* |
| 241 | 7’ | *mādid mê tâmti murriš mērišti* |
| 242 | 8’ | *āšib Euʾul bēl Bābili* $^{d}$*Marduk ṣīru* |
| 243 | 9’ | *mušīm šīmāti ša ilāni kalâma* |
| 244 | 10’ | *nādin ḫaṭṭi elleti ana šarri pāliḫišu* |
| 245 | 11’ | *anāku aḫu-rabû Eumuša qābû damqātiku* |
| 246 | 12’ | *ana āliku Bābili napšir* |
| 247 | 13’ | *ana Esagila bītiku reše rēmu* |
| 248 | 14’ | *ina amatīka ṣīrti bēl ilāni rabûti* |
| 249 | 15’ | *ana pān mārē Bābili liššakin namirtu* |
| 250 | 16’ | *ultu pān* $^{d}$*bēl uṣṣīma ana bēltīya ikribu annâ iqabbi* |
| 251 | 17’ | *gašrat ilāti ṣīrat ištarāti* |
| 252 | 18’ | $^{d}$*Zarpānītu nābât kakkabāni āšibat Euʾul* |
| 253 | 19’ | *kazbat ilāti ša nūr lubūšīšu* |
| 254 | 20’ | *ēbirat šamê ḫāʾiṭat erṣeti* |
| 255 | 21’ | $^{d}$*Zarpānītu ša manzāzu šaqû* |
| 256 | 22’ | *namrat bēltīya ṣīrat u šaqât* |
| 257 | 23’ | *ina ištarāti ul ibašši kīma šâšu* |
| 258 | 24’ | *ākilat karṣī ṣābitat abbūti* |
| 259 | 25’ | *mulappinat šarî mušāšrat lapni* |
| 260 | 26’ | *mušamqitat nakri lā ādir ilūtišu* |
| 261 | 27’ | *ēṭirat kamê ṣābitat qātē naski* |
| 262 | 28’ | *ša ardi qābê damqāt šumiku qibî damqāti*[*šu*] |
| 263 | 29’ | *ana šarri pāliḫiku šīmtašu š*[*īm*] |
| 264 | 30’ | *ana mārē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šurukšunū*[*ti balāṭu*] |

**Obverse I**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 235 | 1’ | […] |
| 236 | 2’ | […] |
| 237 | 3’ | […] lord of the lands downfall […] |
| 238 | 4’ | […] Bēl […] |
| 239 | 5’ | […] |
| 240 | 6’ | who crosses the heavens, who watches over the earth |
| 241 | 7’ | who measures the water of the sea, who cultivates the fields |
| 242 | 8’ | who dwells in Euʾul, lord of Babylon, supreme Marduk |
| 243 | 9’ | who determines the fates of all the gods |
| 244 | 10’ | who gives the pure scepter to the king who reveres him. |
| 245 | 11’ | I am the Elder Brother of Eumuša, who speaks in your favour |
| 246 | 12’ | To your city, Babylon, be forgiving |
| 247 | 13’ | To Esagila, your temple, grant mercy |
| 248 | 14’ | Through your supreme word, lord of the great gods, |
| 249 | 15’ | may light be set in the presence of the citizens of Babylon |
| 250 | 16’ | He will leave from before Bēl and he will say the following prayer to Bēltīya: |
| 251 | 17’ | Most powerful of the goddesses, most supreme of the goddesses |
| 252 | 18’ | Zarpānītu, most brilliant of stars, who dwells in Euʾul |
| 253 | 19’ | Most luxuriant of the goddesses, whose garment is (like) light |
| 254 | 20’ | who crosses the heavens, who watches over the earth |
| 255 | 21’ | Zarpānītu, whose station is sublime |
| 256 | 22’ | Bright is Bēltīya, supreme and sublime! |
| 257 | 23’ | There is no one like her amongst goddesses |
| 258 | 24’ | She who vilifies, she who acclaims |
| 259 | 25’ | who makes poor the rich and rich the poor |
| 260 | 26’ | who fells the enemy that does not respect her divinity |
| 261 | 27’ | who saves the captive, who seizes the hand of the fallen |
| 262 | 28’ | Speak in the favour of the slave who speaks in favour of your name |
| 263 | 29’ | [Determine] the fate for the king who reveres you |
| 264 | 30’ | Preserve the life of the inhabitants of Babylon, the privileged citizens |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 283 | 1’ | *ana* $^{d}$*bēl* [*inaššû pānu ša agê ša* $^{d}$*Anu*] |
| 284 | 2’ | *u šubtu* [*ša* $^{d}$*Enlil kuttumū*] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 285 | 3’ | DIŠ *ina nisanni* [*ūmi* 5 2 *bēr mūši aḫu-rabû*] |
| 286 | 4’ | *itebbīma* [*mê nārī Idiqlati u Puratti*] |
| 287 | 5’ | *irammuk* […] |
| 288 | 6’ | *idekki* […] |
| 289 | 7’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-[ne umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-nu-nu] |
| 290 | 8’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ni [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-mu-na] |
| 291 | 9’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ m[a … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára kur-kur] |
| 292 | 10’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ giš-en-na] |
| 293 | 11’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu [za$^{?}$-pa$^{?}$-áĝ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-gíd-en] |
| 294 | 12’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ a-a-al-ni] |
| 295 | 13’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kéšda$^{da}$] |
| 296 | 14’ | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš é-u$_{4}$-ul] |
| 297 | 15’ | umun-˹ĝu$_{10}$˺ [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu dib-dib] |
| 298 | 16’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ zé-èĝ] |
| 299 | 17’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára tuš-a] |
| 300 | 18’ | umun-ĝ[u$_{10}$ … umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-ne] |
| 301 | 19’ | *D*[*immerankia mušīm šīmāti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu ḫuĝ$_{10}$] |
| 302 | 20’ | *M*[*ubukešda ša ḫaṭṭu u kippatu našû* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 303 | 21’ | *E*[*ridu ša eršūtu aḫzu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 304 | 22’ | $^{d}$[*Asarri šārik mērešti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 305 | 23’ | [*Mulubabbar nāš ṣaddi ana kalâma* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 306 | 24’ | [*Šiḫṭu mušaznin zunnī* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ] |
| 307 | 25’ | […] |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 283 | 1’ | to Bēl [he is reciting, the front of the crown of Anu] |
| 284 | 2’ | and the seat [of Enlil will remain covered] |
| 285 | 3’ | In the month Nisannu, [(on) the fifth day, (at) 2 double-hours of the night: the Elder Brother] |
| 286 | 4’ | will rise and [(in) river water from the rivers Tigris and Euphrates] |
| 287 | 5’ | he will bathe. […] |
| 288 | 6’ | he will remove. […] |
| 289 | 7’ | My lord […] |
| 290 | 8’ | My lord […] |
| 291 | 9’ | My lord […] |
| 292 | 10’ | My lord […] |
| 293 | 11’ | My lord […] |
| 294 | 12’ | My lord […] |
| 295 | 13’ | My lord […] |
| 296 | 14’ | My lord […] |
| 297 | 15’ | My lord […] |
| 298 | 16’ | My lord […] |
| 299 | 17’ | My lord […] |
| 300 | 18’ | My lord […] |
| 301 | 19’ | D[immeranki who determines fates, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 302 | 20’ | M[ubukešda who carries scepter and ring, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 303 | 21’ | E[ridu who possesses wisdom, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 304 | 22’ | A[sarri who bestows cultivation, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 305 | 23’ | J[upiter who carries a sign for all, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 306 | 24’ | M[ercury who makes it rain, my lord, my lord, be calm] |
| 307 | 25’ | […] |

**Reverse V**

xxx 1’ […]

**Reverse VI**

441 1 *urri u mūši lu*-[…]
442 2 *ša Bābili ālišu* […]
443 3 *ša Esagila bītišu* […]
444 4 *ša mārē Bābili ṣābē kidin*[*ni* …]
445 5 $^{d}$*bēl ikarrabku* […] *ana dāri*[*š*]
446 6 *uḫallaq nakarku ušamqat zāmânk*[*u*]
447 7 *enūma iqbû šarru kabāt appi ginûšu itâršu*
448 8 *ḫaṭṭu kippatu miṭṭu agû ušeṣṣēma ana šarri i*[*naddin*]
449 9 *lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ enūma lēssu* [*imḫaṣu*]
450 10 *šumma dimātušu illikā* $^{d}$*bēl sal*[*im*]
451 11 *šumma dimātušu lā illikā* $^{d}$*bēl ezi*[*z*]
452 12 *nakru itebbâmma išakkan miqissu*

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453 13 *enūma annâ īpušu kī šuššān ereb šamši aḫu-rabû*
454 14 40 *qanê ša* 3 *ammīti lā qalpū*
455 15 *lā šebrūtu išarūtu išakkanma riksu ina eri gišimmari*
456 16 *irakkassunūti ina kisalmāḫi būrtu ipettûma*
457 17 *ina būrti ukân dišpu ḫimētu šamnu* [… *inaqqâ*?]
458 18 *eru ina pān nagbi išakkan alpu peṣû ana m*[*uḫḫi* …]
459 19 *šarru dipāru ina qanê ana libbīšu* […]
460 20 *naqbītu annâ šarru u*(-)[…]
461 21 $^{d}$*alpu nūru namru mun*[*ammir ikletu*]
462 22 *qamû ša* $^{d}$*Anu* […]
463 23 $^{d}$*Gibbilû* …*-su šaknu* […]
464 24 TA U MI *šunūti maḫ*[*ar* ...]
465 25 *innû ana dinānišu* [...]
466 26 *addinānišu innû* [...]
467 27 $^{d}$*alpu kalîšu šarru* [...]
468 28 *ana* $^{d}$*bēl appu ilab*[*bin* ...]
469 29 *enūma* $^{d}$*alpu* [... *iqbû*]
470 30 *šarru ana* <*bīt*> *šutummi* [...]
471 31 *šēp šarri* […]
472 32 […]

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| xxx | 1’ | […] |

**Reverse VI**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 441 | 1 | Day and night may […] |
| 442 | 2 | of Babylon, his city […] |
| 443 | 3 | of Esagila, his temple […] |
| 444 | 4 | [of] the inhabitants of Babylon, the privileged citizens […] |
| 445 | 5 | Bēl will bless you … forever […] |
| 446 | 6 | He will ruin your enemy, he will fell your adversary |
| 447 | 7 | When he has spoken, the king will regain his normal dignity. |
| 448 | 8 | He will bring out the sceptre, ring, mace, crown and [he will give (them)] to the king |
| 449 | 9 | He will strike the king’s cheek. When [he has struck] his cheek: |
| 450 | 10 | If his tears flow, Bēl is favourably-minded |
| 451 | 11 | If his tears do not flow, Bēl is furious. |
| 452 | 12 | An enemy will arise and bring about his downfall |
| 453 | 13 | When he has done this, when (it is) 1/3 (of the double-hour) after sunset, the Elder Brother will arrange(15) |
| 454 | 14 | 40 reeds of 3 cubits (each), unpeeled, |
| 455 | 15 | unbroken, straight and as a ritual arrangement he will tie them together(16) with palm leaves. |
| 456 | 16 | In the Grand Courtyard they will open a hole and |
| 457 | 17 | he will place (it) in the hole. Syrup, ghee, oil […] he will libate?] |
| 458 | 18 | He will place a branch before the bundle. A white bull be[fore …] |
| 459 | 19 | The king […] a torch with a reed into its midst […] |
| 460 | 20 | The following blessing the king […] |
| 461 | 21 | “Divine bull, shining light, who illuminates [the darkness] |
| 462 | 22 | the one who burns, of/who Anu […]” |
| 463 | 23 | Divine fire, his … is placed […] |
| 464 | 24 | These … before […] |
| 465 | 25 | They serve as a substitute for him […] |
| 466 | 26 | As his substitute, they serve […] |
| 467 | 27 | (The recitation) “Divine Bull”: (this is) all of it. The king […] |
| 468 | 28 | before Bēl he will humbly prostrate himself […] |
| 469 | 29 | When [he has recited?] (the recitation) “Divine Bull” […] |
| 470 | 30 | The king to the storehouse […] |
| 471 | 31 | The feet of the king […] |
| 472 | 32 | […] |

IV.3.3 Commentary

**Obverse I**

6' · *ḫāʾiṭ erṣeti*: Farber (TUAT II/2: 216 n. 24) read lal$^{ti}$ for *ḫāʾiṭ*; CAD (Š/1 414 1a6') has lá$^{ku}$ for *šāpiku* "to heap up". Even though both options are possible, I prefer the first one, since it relates more to other epithets that Marduk is given in the NYF texts, e.g. the rather obscure *ina têrētika taḫâṭ têrētu* (where the verb also has a typical LB spelling).

7' · *mādid{i} mê tâmtim*: the same epithet is given further in the same tablet to Zarpānītu and to Marduk invoked as Sirius. For an interpretation of the epithet, go to note on line NYF4 III 9. Note also the typical LB orthography CV-CV to indicate CVC (*di-di*).

· *murriš*, the D-stem of *erēšu*, is a hapax legomenon (CAD E 289 2 s.v. *erēšu* B).

8' · é.u$_4$.ul: UL is clearly written over another sign. In this tablet, there are several small mistakes that were then corrected by writing the correct sign over it.

11' · The speaker of the prayer identifies himself as the Elder Brother of Eumuša, i.e. the cella of Marduk. This is remarkable, because the prayers in the NYF texts otherwise have groups of people as beneficiaries (see below, Chapter V.4.3). At this instance in the text, it moves the attention of the reader to the meta-level of the text.

12'-13' · Notice the parallelism in these lines, with an internal chiastic play between *āliku* (A) *Bābili* (B) and *Esagila* (B) *bītiku* (A).

17' · *i-lat* is a late orthographic rendering of *ilāti*. Moreover, the word is uncommon in late texts and could be an archaism here and in line 19, where it is also written in a remarkable way (*i-lá-a-tú*).

18' · Apparently Zarpānītu also dwelled in é.u$_4$.ul (not mentioned in George 1993 no. 1141).

· é.u4.ul: é is written as a combination of e and é with two small vertical wedges and a double-headed large vertical. This differentiation between É and BIT is typical in late palaeography, but is often not consistent, as is the case in this manuscript.

19' · *kazbat*: the reading *kaz*$^{l}$*-bat* was suggested by Farber (TUAT II/2: 216 note on line 37a).

· *i-lá-a-tu*: notice the rare writing with LAL instead of LA.

21’ · *manzāzu* has many different meanings, amongst which “station, position of a celestial body”, but also “rank, position of deities” (CAD M/1 234 5).

23’ · *ibašši*: ŠI is written over another sign, showing another copying mistake.

24’ · *ākilat karṣi* is an idiomatic expression (CAD A/1 255 6d s.v. *akālu*) that is not typically used for goddesses or even in cultic texts; it occurs more often in letters where it has a stronger meaning of “to slander”. It thus has a negative connotation.

· *ṣābitat abbūti* is an idiomatic expression (CAD Ṣ 24 8 s.v. *ṣabātu*). It is a typical epithet for goddesses to whom one appeals in order for them to intercede with their (powerful) husbands.

· Both the parallel structure and the expressions grant this line literary quality. The two expressions are semantically opposed and express the unpredictable nature of the goddess. Like Marduk, who is described in the NYF prayers as both a punishing and forgiving god, Zarpānītu has a double and inherently contradicting nature: she has the power to put the petitioner in a bad or a good light before her husband, by either talking slander about them or praising them.

25’ · *mulappinat*: the D-stem of *lapānu* is a hapax legomenon (CAD L 81).

26’ · *lā ādir ilūtišu*: confusingly the chain of nominal verb forms attributed to Zarpānītu is interrupted by *ādir* which refers to *nakru*.

**Obverse II**

1’-18’ · These lines are presumably parallelled by NYF4 II 25-42, where the latter half of each line is preserved. There is therefore no overlap, except in between NYF3 II 5’-6’ and NYF4 II 28-29. In the latter manuscript, $^{i}$tu$_5$ appears in interlinear position and *idekki* at the end of a line, not at the beginning as is the case here.

19’-23’· These lines are parallelled by NYF4 III 1-5 where the full lines are preserved.

5’ · *irammuk*: written most remarkably as $^{i}$tu$_5$ both in this manuscript and in NYF4. The explicit notation of the prefix seems to have no use except perhaps to indicate that the logogram should be read as a verb and not as a noun (*rimku*).

**Reverse VI**

1-6 · These lines are spoken by the priest to the king in continuation of the end of NYF2 V. The 2$^{nd}$ person refers to the king, the 3$^{rd}$ person to Marduk.

4 · If we choose to read ˹*šá*˺ before dumu$^{meš}$, then lú is missing.

· Perhaps we can reconstruct $^{lú}$érin *ki-di*[*n-nu* la**] ˹sìg*˺$^{aṣ}$ [te*-*su*-nu**]?

7 · *kabāt appi*: a more common expression is *kabāt qaqqadi*, but it has the same meaning of "dignity". A similar expression is used in NYF6 II 6'. (Pace Sallaberger 2012: 10 note on line 447).

· The upper two wedges of TAR are clearly visible. The LB form is: .[423]

10-12 · In VI 10 *illik* is singular while in VI 11 gin$^{meš}$ is plural, even though they have the exact same subject *dīmātu*. *il-lik* may be explained as late orthography which excludes the last vowel.

13 · *šuššān ereb šamši*: *šuššān*, written as two times U, means in this case 1/3 of the double-hour – i.e. fourty minutes (CAD Š/3 384). Farber read the expression differently, viz. *kī šamaš*(XX) *irbû*(šu$^{u}$) {u}, "when the sun sets". That reading, however, makes things unnecessarily complicated.

14-15 · Note the many Sumerograms in these two lines. In general, the NYF texts contain rather few logographic writings.

15 · giš$^{meš}${*-ma*}: one would expect a verbal form before –*ma*; Stol suggested *našû*, which in the NB period could be written with giš (Linssen 2004: 237 note on line 455). However, this orthography has thus far only been found in texts stemming from the Eanna-archive (personal communication Jursa). It seems more fitting to interpret giš$^{meš}$ as the adjective *išarūti* "straight" and to consider NÍG as the verb *šakānu*(gar) instead of the relative pronoun *ša*. *-ma* would then mistakenly have been added to the word before the verb gar instead of to the verb itself.

· *riksu* should be translated here as "ritual arrangement" instead of "belt".

16 · *i-rak-ka-as-šú*: we would rather expect *i-rak-ka-as-su.*

18 · *eru* denotes the leave of a palm tree, even if it is not specified in this instance.

· *nagbu* is a word that is only attested in lexical lists (CAD N/1 104 s.v. *nagabbu*).

· gu$_4$ babbar may also be read as gu$_4$.ud, "Mercury", both here and in line 21. See also Farber 1987: 223 note on line 242a.

19 · The traces of the sign after *lìb-bi-šú* could be read as RA instead of Ú.

[423] https://labasi.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/tablets/sign/detail/180 (last accessed 21.02.2020).

23 · The signs between $^{d}$gibil$_{6}$ and gar$^{nu}$ lie exactly on the break where the two tablets have been joined. The second one can clearly be read as SU, but the first one is too broken for identification.

24 · TA U MI *šú-nu-ti* can perhaps be read as *ultu* 10 *mūšī šunūti*, "after those 10 nights", but it remains unclear what that could mean in this context.

25-26 · *i-nu-ú*: I understand this word as *innû* from the verb *enû* "to change". *enû* can have the meaning "to serve as a substitute", as does *ana dināniśu* (CAD E 167 s.v. *enû* f).

18-29 · My reading of the reverse of the fragment BM 32485+ diverges greatly from Linssen's. First, it makes most sense to interpret lines 21-22 as the incipit of a prayer, which continues until line 26. The other instances at which $^{d}$gu$_{4}$ is mentioned in this fragment, are merely abbreviations of that incipit; thus, one can understand line 27 as "the whole (text of) 'Divine Bull'" and line 29 as "when the (prayer) 'Divine Bull' (was recited)". Second, it would be too far-reaching to interpret line 28 as someone eating the thigh of the bull; the more plausible reading "he prostrates himself humbly" can be proposed instead.

31 · Linssen proposed to read the first sign as MI, but the second part has too many wedges; therefore, Michael Jursa suggested me to read gìr.

## IV.4 MNB 1848

MNB 1848 (Musées nationaux B) is the right part of what was most probably a six-column tablet that broke in half.[424] This means that the third and fourth column are fully conserved, the second and fifth column partially and the first and sixth not at all. The writing is large and deep. The tablet is overall not very neat and orderly. There are horizontal lines separating different sections in the text, but, most clearly in column V, they are not respected. The columns are divided by vertical lines but those were not at all respected. In fact, it seems that the scribe redrew the line between column II and III at least three times, as traces indicate. Furthermore, it is clear that the layout was not planned, or at least not very well. Column III is much more narrow than column II, causing the lines to fall on the right edge. Interlinear additions are not uncommon, especially in column V there are a few. A catchphrase is written on the upper edge.

[424] I did not have the chance the collate the physical tablet, but was able to study the manuscript by means of the excellent photos made by Louise Quillien, to whom I wish to express my gratitude.

IV.4.1 Transcription

**Upper edge**

429 1 ˹im˺ *šá* egir-*šú*
430 2 ˹DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$˺bár ud 5$^{kam}$

**Obverse II**

259 1 [*mu*]-*lap-pi-nát* $^{lú}$níg.tuku *mu-šá-áš-rat* $^{lú}$úku
260 2 [*m*]*u-šam-qí-tat* $^{lú}$kúr *la a-dir* diĝir-*ti-šú*
261 3 [*e*]-*ṭi-rat ka-mi-i ṣa-bi-tat* šu$^{II}$ *na-as-ku*
262 4 [*šá* $^{l}$]$^{ú}$ìr e$^{u}$ sig$_5$ mu-*ku qí-bi-i* sig$_5$-*šú*
263 5 [*ana* lug]al *pa-liḫ-ḫi-ku* nam-*šú* nam
264 6 [*ana* $^{lú}$dum]u$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$ $^{lú}$érin *ki-din-nu šu*-ruk-šú-nu-tú* tin
265 7 [*ina* igi] diĝir diĝir.diĝir $^{d}$amar.utu *ṣa-bat a-bu-su-nu*
266 8 [*liq-bu-bu*]-˹*ú*˺ *ta-nit-ku lu-šar-bu-u* umun-*ut-ku*
267 9 [*lid-bu*]-*ú qur-di-ku li-šá-pu-u zik-ri-ku*
268 10 [*ana* $^{lú}$ìr] *qa-bu-u* sig$_5$-*ku* tuku$^{e}$ arḫuš
269 11 [*ina pu-u*]*š-qa u dan-nát ṣa-bat* šu$^{II}$-*šú*
270 12 [*ina* gig] *u ta-ni-ḫu šu-ruk-šú* tin
271 13 [*lit-tal-l*]*ak* gì$^{a}$ *ina ḫi-da-a-tú ri-šat*
272 14 [*lid-bu*]-*ub qur-di-ku ana* un$^{meš}$ *kal* dù.dù.a

273 15 [*ana* kisal.m]aḫ è-*ma* igi-*šú ana* im.2 gar$^{an}$-*ma*
274 16 [$^{múl}$aš.iku] é.sag.íl *tam-šil* an *u* ki
275 17 [3-*šú ana*] é.sag.íl *i-kar-rab*
276 18 [$^{giš}$ig]$^{meš}$ bad$^{te}$ $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é$^{meš}$ *gab-bi*
277 19 [ku$_4$$^{m}$]$^{eš}$-*ma* me$^{!*}$-*šú-nu* gim *šá* gì$^{a!*}$ dù$^{meš}$
278 20 [$^{lú}$gal]a$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$nar$^{meš}$ ki.min

279 21 [*e-nu-m*]*a an-na-a i-te-ep-šú*
280 22 [egir *tar-d*]*en-nu šá ki-iṣ u*$_4$*-mu e*$^{!}$*-nu-ma e-liš*
281 23 [ta *re*$^{?}$-*š*]*i*$^{?}$-*šú* en til-*šú* $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a
282 24 [*ana* $^{d}$en] ˹*i*˺-*na-áš-ši ma-la šá* ud *e-liš*
283 25 [*ana* $^{d}$en] ˹*i*˺-*na-áš-šu-u* igi *šá* aga *šá* $^{d}$60
284 26 [*u* ki.tuš] *šá* $^{d}$*en-líl ku-ut-tu-mu-u*

285 27 [DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bá]r ud 5$^{kam}$ 2 danna ge$_6$ $^{lú}$šeš.gal
286 28 [zi-*ma* a$^{meš}$] $^{íd}$idigna $^{íd}$buranum
interlinear: $^{i}$tu$_5$
287 29 [ana igi $^{d}$en ku$_4$] $^{túg}$gada.lal *ina* igi $^{d}$en *u* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ *i-de*$^{!}$-<*ek*>-*ku*
288 30 [*ana* $^{d}$en] šùd.bi dug$_4$.ga

289 31 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e]-ne umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-nu-nu
290 32 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ni …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-mu-na
291 33 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ma …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára kur-kur
292 34 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ giš-en-na
293 35 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu za$^{?}$-pa$^{?}$]-áĝ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-˹gíd˺-en
294 36 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ …] umun-ĝu a-a-al-ni
295 37 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu késda$^{da}$
296 38 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš é-u$_4$-ul
297 39 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu dib-dib
298 40 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ zé-èĝ

299 41 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára tuš-a
300 42 [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-ne

**Obverse III**

301 1 $^{d}$dìm.me.er.an.ki.a *mu-šim* nam$^{meš}$ ˹umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ˺
302 2 $^{múl}$mu.bu.kéš.da *šá* $^{giš}$gidri *u* $^{giš}$gúr *na-šu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹ḫuĝ˺
303 3 $^{múl}$nun$^{ki}$ *šá er-šu*$^{!*}$*-tú aḫ-zu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹ḫuĝ˺
304 4 $^{d}$*asar-ri šá-ri-ik* uru$_{4}$$^{tú}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹ḫuĝ˺
305 5 $^{múl}$babbar *na-áš ṣa-ad-du ana* dù.dù.a umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
306 6 $^{múl}$gu$_{4}$.ud *mu-šá-az-nin* šèg umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
307 7 $^{múl}$genna mul *kit-tú u mi-šar* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
308 8 $^{múl}$an $^{d}$gibil$_{6}$ *ez-zu* umun-ĝu umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
309 9 $^{múl}$kak.s[i *šá*] ˹*ma*˺*-di-di* a$^{meš}$ *tam-tì* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
310 10 $^{múl}$šu.pa en $^{d}$en.lil$^{meš}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
311 11 $^{múl}$ne.ne.gar *šá ina* ní-*šú* dù$^{u}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
312 12 $^{múl}$nu.˹muš˺.da ˹*muš-tab*˺*-ru-u* šèg umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
313 13 $^{múl}$gaba gír.tab *ka-bi-is* gab *tam-tì* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
314 14 $^{d}$utu zálag *kib-rat* umun-ĝu umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
315 15 $^{d}$30 *mu-nam-mir* {*mir*} *ik-let* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ
316 16 umun-ĝu$_{10}$ diĝir*-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ en-ĝu$_{10}$ umun bar-ra-na
317 17 *ana* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ šùd.bi dug$_{4}$.ga
318 18 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ gi$_{4}$-gi$_{4}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ-a
319 19 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kéš-da gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ-a
320 20 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šúm-šúm gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ dùg-dùg
321 21 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ lal-e-en gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ dùg-dùg
322 22 gašan ḫun nu kéš-˹da˺ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šub-a-ke$_{4}$
323 23 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ a-ra-zu gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šub-a-ke$_{4}$
324 24 $^{d}$*dam-ki-an-na bé-lat* an *u* ki gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
325 25 $^{múl}$dil.bad *na-bat* mul$^{<meš>}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
326 26 $^{múl}$ban šub$^{át}$ *dan-nu-tú* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
327 27 $^{múl}$ùz *ba-rat* an$^{e}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
328 28 $^{múl}$ḫé.gál.a mul *nu-uḫ-šú* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
329 29 $^{múl}$bal.téš.a mul *bal-tú* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
330 30 $^{múl}$mar.gíd.da *mar-kàs* an$^{e}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
331 31 $^{múl}$*e*$_{4}$*-ru*$_{6}$ *ba-nát re-*˹*ḫu*$^{!}$˺*-tú* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
332 32 $^{múl}$nin.maḫ ba$^{át}$ tin gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne
333 33 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$-na gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ nu mu-ne
334 34 ta *naq-bit iq-bu-ú* $^{giš}$ig$^{meš}$ bad$^{te}$
335 35 $^{lú}$ku$_{4}$.é$^{meš}$ *gab-bi* ku$_{4}$$^{meš}$*-ma*
336 36 me-*šú-nu* gim *šá* gì$^{a}$ dù$^{meš}$
337 37 $^{lú}$gala$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$nar$^{meš}$ ki.min
338 38 *e-nu-ma* 1 danna me nim$^{a}$ ta *rik-su*
339 39 *šá* $^{giš}$banšur *šá* $^{d}$en *u* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ *šal-mu*
340 40 $^{lú}$maš.maš gù-*ma* é *i-ḫab-ma*
341 41 a$^{meš}$ pú $^{íd}$*ì-diq-lat u* pú $^{íd}$ud.kib.nun.ki
342 42 é *i-sal-làḫ* níg.kala.ga urudu *ina* šà é
343 43 *ú-ḫal-lal* níg.na gi.izi.lá *ina* šà é *uš-ba-ʾ*

**Reverse IV**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 344 | 1 | [é?* *gab*?*]-*bi ú*!*-*ḫab*-*ma** *ana pa-pa-ḫi šá* $^{d}$en |
| 345 | 2 | *u* ˹$^{d}$gašan˺*iá* nu ku$_{4}$ *e-nu-ma ḫu-ub* é |
| 346 | 3 | *šal-mu ana* é.zi.da *ana pa-pa-ḫi* $^{d}$ag |
| 347 | 4 | ku$_{4}$-*ma ina* níg.na gi.izi.lá a.gúb.ba |
| 348 | 5 | é *i-ḫab-ma* é *pa-pa-ḫi* a$^{<meš>}$ pú *ì-diq-lat* |
| 349 | 6 | *u* pú $^{íd}$*pu-ra-át*-tú i-sal-làḫ* |
| 350 | 7 | $^{giš}$ig$^{meš}$ *šá pa-pa-ḫi gab-bi* ì.giš erin tag |
| 351 | 8 | *ina* múru kisal *šá pa-pa-ḫi* níg.na kù.babbar gar-*ma* |
| 352 | 9 | šim.ḫá *u bu-ra-šú ina muḫ-ḫi i-sár-<ra*>-qa** |
| 353 | 10 | $^{lú}$gír.lá gù-*ma* sag.du udu.níta *i-bat-taq-ma* |
| 354 | 11 | *ina pag-ri* udu.níta $^{lú}$maš.maš é *ú-kap-par* |
| 355 | 12 | én$^{meš}$ *šá tùm-mu* é *i-man-nu* |
| 356 | 13 | *pa-paḫ gab-bi* en nigin$^{ti}$-*šú i-ḫab-ma* níg.na duḫ |
| 357 | 14 | *pag-ri* udu.níta *šú-a-ti* $^{lú}$maš.maš *i-na-áš-ši-ma* |
| 358 | 15 | *ana* íd gin$^{ak}$ igi-*šú ana* $^{d}$utu.šú.a gar-*ma** |
| 359 | 16 | *pag-ri* udu.níta *šú-a-tú ana* íd šub$^{di}$ |
| 360 | 17 | *ana* edin è $^{lú}$gír.lá sag.du udu.níta ki.min |
| 361 | 18 | $^{lú}$maš.maš *u* $^{lú}$gír.lá *ana* edin è$^{meš}$ *ma-la* |
| 362 | 19 | *šá* $^{d}$ag *ina* e$^{ki}$ *ana* e$^{ki}$ nu ku$_{4}^{meš}$ |
| 363 | 20 | ta ud 5$^{<kam*>}$ en ud 12$^{kam}$ *ina* edin dúr$^{meš}$ |
| 364 | 21 | *ḫu-ub-bu šá* é $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a nu igi$^{mar}$ |
| 365 | 22 | bad$^{ma}$ *i-mu-ru* nu kù |
| 366 | 23 | egir *ḫu-ub šá* é *e-nu-ma* 1 2/3 danna |
| 367 | 24 | me nim$^{a}$ $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a è-*ma* |
| 368 | 25 | dumu$^{meš}$ $^{lú}$*um-man-nu* dù.a.bi-*šú-nu* gù$^{si}$ |
| 369 | 26 | an$^{e}$ kù.gi ta níg.ga $^{d}$amar.utu |
| 370 | 27 | è-*ma* é.zi.da *pa-pa-ḫi* $^{d}$ag ta ˹$^{giš}$˺*tal-lu* |
| 371 | 28 | *a-di iš-di* é *ir-ri-mu-ú* |
| 372 | 29 | $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a *u* $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ *um-man-nu* |
| 373 | 30 | *ik-kil-lu*$_{4}$ *an-na-a i-qab-bu-u* |
| 374 | 31 | é *ul-la-lu-ú* |
| 375 | 32 | $^{d}$asal-lú-<ḫi> dumu nun$^{ki}$-ke$_{4}$ é-u$_{4}$-ul <dúr-dúr> |
| 376 | 33 | $^{d}$kù-sù $^{giš}$šú-a-na $^{d}$kù-sù dúr-dúr |
| 377 | 34 | $^{d}$nin-a-ḫa-du a-ra-<zu> ĝiš-tuk-tuk |
| 378 | 35 | $^{d}$amar.utu *ul-lal* é |
| 379 | 36 | $^{d}$kù.sù *uṣ-ṣir* giš.ḫur |
| 380 | 37 | $^{d}$nin.a.ḫa.du *i-nam-di* én |
| 381 | 38 | *mim-ma lem-nu šá ina* é *e-ṣu* |
| 382 | 39 | *gal-lu-ú* gal$^{ú}$ *li-nar-ku* $^{d}$˹en˺ |
| 383 | 40 | ki-tuš gar-ra-aš ḫu-ni-ib-da-tar-am$_{6}$ |
| 384 | 41 | $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ *um-man-nu* dù.a.bi-*šú-nu* ká è |

**Reverse V**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 385 | 1 | [*ina** N dann]a* *u*$_{4}$-*mu* $^{lú}$šeš.gal *ana* igi ˹$^{d}$en˺ |
| 386 | 2 | [ku$_{4}$-*ma* $^{túg}$gada.la]l?* *i-de-<ek>-ku* $^{giš}$banšur kù.gi |
| 387 | 3 | [*i-rak-kas* $^{uzu}$k]a.ne$^{meš}$ *ina* ugu gar$^{an}$ |
| 388 | 4 | [… *ina* u]gu gar$^{an}$ 12 *gi-nu-ú ina* ugu gar$^{an}$ |
| 389 | 5 | […kù].gi mun sa$_{5}$-*ma ina* ugu gar$^{an}$ |
| 390 | 6 | [… kù.g]i làl sa$_{5}$-*ma ina* ugu gar$^{an}$ |
| 391 | 7 | […] *ina muḫ-ḫi* gar$^{an}$ 4 *šap-pi* kù.gi |

392 8 [… *ina m*]*uḫ-ḫi* $^{giš}$banšur gar$^{an}$ níg.na kù.gi
393 9 [… *ina*] igi $^{giš}$banšur gar$^{an}$ šim *u* li
394 10 [*ina muḫ-ḫi i-sár-ra*]*q*$^{?}$* geštin *i-na-aq-qí*
395 11 [*naq-bit an-n*]*a-a i-qab-bi*
396 12 [$^{d}$amar.utu $^{(d)}$en] maḫ *šá* diĝir$^{meš}$-*a-nu*
397 13 [*a*$^{?}$-*šib*$^{?}$ é.sag.í]l *ba-nu-ú ki-na-a-tú*
398 14 […] ˹x˺ *ana* diĝir.diĝir gal$^{meš}$
399 15 […] ˹x˺-*ku ra-me ina ka-a-ri*
400 16 [*li-iḫ-du*$^{?}$] *lìb-bi-ku ana ṣa-bat* šu$^{II}$-*ku*
401 17 [*šá** é.s]ískur é *ik-ri-bi*
402 18 [*mu**-*du**]-˹*ú*˺* *šip**-*ri-ku li-iš-šú* sag-*su*
403 19 [ta *na*]*q-bit* e$^{u}$ $^{giš}$banšur duḫ$^{ár}$
404 20 [$^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$] *um-man-nu* dù.a$^{!}$.bi-*šú-nu* gù$^{si!}$
405 21 [$^{giš}$ban]šur *gab-bi ana* $^{lú}$dumu$^{meš}$ *um-man-nu*
406 22 [sum]$^{in}$-*ma ana* $^{d}$ag *ú-šeb-bel-šú*
407 23 [$^{lú}$dumu$^{me}$]$^{š}$ *um-man-nu* ti$^{meš}$-*ma ina* ki.igi$^{!*}$.šú*.{erasure}*.érin*.dù
408 24 [*ina* gú í]d *ku-nát a-mat-su* gin$^{meš}$ *e-nu-ma* $^{d}$ag
409 25 [*ina* ki.igi*.šú*.éri]n*.dù *ina ka-šá-di-šú ana* $^{d}$ag *ú-bar-ru-šú*
410 26 [… $^{g}$]$^{iš}$banšur *ina* igi $^{d}$ag gar$^{meš}$-*šú* duḫ $^{giš}$banšur
411 27 [*ki-ma*] *šá* $^{d}$ag ta $^{giš.má}$íd.da.ḫé.du$_{7}$
412 28 […] ˹*i*˺-*na-áš-šú-nim-ma ina* ugu $^{giš}$banšur
413 29 [gar$^{meš}$] ˹a˺$^{meš}$ šu$^{II}$ lugal dib-$^{?}$-*nim-ma*
414 30 [*ana* é.sag].íl ku$_{4}$$^{meš}$-*šú* dumu$^{meš}$ *um-man-nu ana* ká è$^{meš}$
415 31 [*ana** é* $^{d}$e]n *ina* kur-*šú* $^{lú}$šeš.gal è-*ma* $^{giš}$níg.gidru $^{giš}$gúr
416 interlinear* $^{[giš]}$mitum(tukul.diĝir)
417 32 [(…)] íl$^{ši}$ aga lugal-*ú-ti-šú i-na-áš-ši*
418 33 [*ana* igi $^{d}$e]n *ú-še-reb-šú-nu-tú ina* igi $^{d}$en
419 34 [*ina* ugu k]i.tuš gar$^{an}$-*šú-nu-tú* è-*ma* te lugal sìg$^{aṣ}$
420 35 [luga]l *ana* egir-*šú* gar$^{an}$ *ana* igi $^{d}$en *ú-še-reb-šú*
421 36 […] *u* geštug$^{II}$ *i-šad-dad ina* ki *ú-šá-kam-su*
422 37 [*ana** $^{d}$e]n* lugal 1-*šú an-na-a* dug$_{4}$.ga
423 38 [*ul a*]*ḫ-ṭu* en kur.kur ul *e-gi ana* diĝir-*ti-ku*
424 39 [*ul ú-ḫa-a*]*l-liq* e$^{ki}$ *ul aq-ṭa-bi* bir-*šú*
425 40 [*ul ú-ri*]*b-bi* é.sag.gíl *ul ú-ma-áš* me-*šú*
426 41 [*ul am-da*]*ḫ-ḫa-aṣ* te $^{lú}$*ṣab-bé ki-din-nu*
427 interlinear* [*u*]*l áš-kun qa-lal-šú-nu*
428 42 [*ú-pa-a*]*q ana* e$^{ki}$ *ul a-bu-ut šal-ḫu-šú*

IV.4.2 Normalisation and translation

**Upper edge**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 429 | 1 | *ṭuppu ša arkīšu* |
| 430 | 2 | DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* 5 |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 259 | 1 | [*mu*]*lappinat šarî mušāšrat lapni* |
| 260 | 2 | [*m*]*ušamqitat nakri lā ādir ilūtišu* |
| 261 | 3 | [*ē*]*ṭirat kamê ṣābitat qātē naski* |
| 262 | 4 | [*ša*] *ardi qābê damqāt šumiku qibî damqātišu* |
| 263 | 5 | [*ana šar*]*ri pāliḫiku šīmtašu šīm* |
| 264 | 6 | [*ana mār*]*ē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šurukšunūti balāṭu* |
| 265 | 7 | [*ina pān*] *il ilāni* $^{d}$*Marduk ṣabat abbūssunu* |
| 266 | 8 | [*liqbû*] *tanit<ta>ku lušarbû bēlūtku* |
| 267 | 9 | [*lidbub*]*ū qurdiku lisāpû zikriku* |
| 268 | 10 | [*ana ardi*] *qābê damqātiku reše rēmu* |
| 269 | 11 | [*ina pu*]*šqi u dannati ṣabat qātēšu* |
| 270 | 12 | [*ina murṣi*] *u tānīḫi šurukšu balāṭu* |
| 271 | 13 | [*littal*]*lak ginâ ina ḫidâti rīšāti* |
| 272 | 14 | [*lidb*]*ub qurdiku ana nišī kal kalâma* |

**Upper edge**

| | |
|---|---|
| 429 | The tablet that follows this one: |
| 430 | "In the month Nisannu on the fifth day" |

**Obverse II**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 259 | 1 | [She who ma]kes poor the rich, rich the poor |
| 260 | 2 | [who f]ells the enemy that does not respect her divinity |
| 261 | 3 | [who s]aves the captive, seizes the hand of the fallen |
| 262 | 4 | Speak in the favour [of] the slave who speaks in favour of your name |
| 263 | 5 | Determine the fate [for the ki]ng who reveres you |
| 264 | 6 | Preserve the life [of the inhab]itants of Babylon, the privileged citizens |
| 265 | 7 | Intercede for them [with] the god of gods, Marduk. |
| 266 | 8 | [That they may spe]ak your praise, that they may exalt your *lady*ship |
| 267 | 9 | [That they may tal]k of your heroism, may extol your fame |
| 268 | 10 | Grant mercy [to the servant] who speaks in your favour, |
| 269 | 11 | Seize his hand [in distr]ess and hardship, |
| 270 | 12 | Preserve his life [in sickness] and suffering, |
| 271 | 13 | [That he may always g]o about in rejoicing and jubiliation |
| 272 | 14 | [That he may ta]lk of your heroism to all people everywhere |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 273 | 15 | [*ana kisalmā*]*ḫi uṣṣīma pānišu ana ištāni išakkanma* |
| 274 | 16 | [*ikû*] *Esagila tamšīl šamê u erṣeti* |
| 275 | 17 | [*šalūšīšu ana*] *Esagila ikarrab* |
| 276 | 18 | [*dalāti*] *ipette ērib-bītāte gabbi* |
| 277 | 19 | [*irrubū*]*ma parṣēšunu kīma ša ginâ ippušū* |
| 278 | 20 | [*ka*]*lû u nārū* ki.min |
| 279 | 21 | [*enūm*]*a annâ ītepšū* |
| 280 | 22 | [*arku tard*]*enni ša kīṣ ūmi Enūma Elîš* |
| 281 | 23 | [*ultu rēš*]*išu adi gamirtišu aḫu-rabû Eumuša* |
| 282 | 24 | [*ana* $^{d}$*bēl i*]*naššī mala ša Enūma Elîš* |
| 283 | 25 | [*ana* $^{d}$*bēl*] *inaššû pānu ša agê ša* $^{d}$*Anu* |
| 284 | 26 | [*u šubtu*] *ša* $^{d}$*Enlil kuttumū* |
| 285 | 27 | [*ina nisann*]*i ūmi* 5 2 *bēr mūši aḫu-rabû* |
| 286 | 28 | [*itebbīma mê*] *nārī Idiqlati Puratti* |
| | interlinear: *irammuk* | |
| 287 | 29 | [*ana pān* $^{d}$*bēl irrub*] *gadalû ina pān* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya idekki* |
| 288 | 30 | [*ana* $^{d}$*bēl*] *ikribu annâ iqabbi* |
| 289 | 31 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e]-ne umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-nu-nu |
| 290 | 32 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ni …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-mu-na |
| 291 | 33 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ma …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára kur-kur |
| 292 | 34 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ giš-en-na |
| 293 | 35 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu za$^{?}$-pa$^{?}$]-áĝ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-˹gíd˺-en |
| 294 | 36 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ˹x˺ …] umun-ĝu a-a-al-ni |
| 295 | 37 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kéšda$^{da}$ |
| 296 | 38 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ tuš é-u$_{4}$-ul |
| 297 | 39 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ nu dib-dib |
| 298 | 40 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ zé-èĝ |
| 299 | 41 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára tuš-a |
| 300 | 42 | [umun-ĝu$_{10}$ …] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ e-ne |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 273 | 15 | [He will go out to the Great Courty]ard and he will face north and |
| 274 | 16 | ["*Pegasus*,] Esagila, image of heaven and earth" |
| 275 | 17 | he will recite in praise [to] Esagila [three times]. |
| 276 | 18 | He will open the [gates]. All the temple enterers |
| 277 | 19 | [will ente]r and perform their rites as usual. |
| 278 | 20 | [The lamentation-pr]iests and singers idem ditto. |
| 279 | 21 | [Whe]n he has done this, |
| 280 | 22 | [after the second me]al of the morning, Enūma Elîš |
| 281 | 23 | the Elder Brother of Eumuša recites(24) [from its beginn]ing until its end |
| 282 | 24 | [to Bēl]. As long as he is reciting(25) Enūma Elîš |
| 283 | 25 | [to Bēl], the front of the crown of Anu |
| 284 | 26 | [and the seat] of Enlil will remain covered. |
| 285 | 27 | [In the month Nisann]u, (on) the fifth day, (at )two double-hours of the night: the Elder Brother |
| 286 | 28 | [will rise and (in) water from] the rivers Tigris and Euphrates |
| | interlinear: he will bathe | |
| 287 | 29 | [He will enter in the presence of Bēl.] He will remove the linen curtain in front of Bēl and Bēltīya. |
| 288 | 30 | He will recite the following prayer [to Bēl]: |
| 289 | 31 | […] my lord […] |
| 290 | 32 | […] my lord […] |
| 291 | 33 | […] my lord [king of the lands] |
| 292 | 34 | […] my lord […] |
| 293 | 35 | […] my lord […] |
| 294 | 36 | […] my lord … |
| 295 | 37 | […] my lord … |
| 296 | 38 | […] my lord who dwells in Euʾul |
| 297 | 39 | […] my lord … |
| 298 | 40 | […] my lord … |
| 299 | 41 | […] my lord who sits on the dais |
| 300 | 42 | […] my lord … |

**Obverse III**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 301 | 1 | *Dimmerankia mušīm šīmāti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 302 | 2 | *Mubukešda ša ḫaṭṭu u kippatu našû* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 303 | 3 | *Eridu ša eršūtu aḫzu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 304 | 4 | *Asarri šārik mērešti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 305 | 5 | *Mulubabbar nāš ṣaddi ana kalâma* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 306 | 6 | *Šiḫṭu mušaznin zunnī* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 307 | 7 | *Kayamānu kakkab kitti u mīšari* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 308 | 8 | *Ṣalbatānu* $^{d}$*gibbilû ezzu* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 309 | 9 | *Šiltāḫu mādid mê tâmti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 310 | 10 | *Šupa bēl enlilē* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 311 | 11 | $^{múl}$ne.ne.gar *ša ina ramānišu banû* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 312 | 12 | *Namaššû muštabrû zunnī* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 313 | 13 | *Irat zuqāqīpi kābis irat tâmti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 314 | 14 | *Šamaš nūr kibrāti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 315 | 15 | *Sîn munammir ikleti* umun-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ |
| 316 | 16 | umun-ĝu$_{10}$ diĝir*-ĝu$_{10}$ umun-ĝu$_{10}$ en-ĝu$_{10}$ umun bar-ra-na |
| 317 | 17 | *ana Bēltīya ikribu annâ iqabbi* |
| 318 | 18 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ gi$_{4}$-gi$_{4}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ-a |
| 319 | 19 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ nu kéš-da gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫuĝ-a |
| 320 | 20 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šúm-šúm gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ dùg-dùg |
| 321 | 21 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ lal-e-en gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ dùg-dùg |
| 322 | 22 | gašan ḫun nu kéš-⌜da⌝ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šub-a-ke$_{4}$ |
| 323 | 23 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ a-ra-zu gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ šub-a-ke$_{4}$ |
| 324 | 24 | *Damkianna bēlat šamê u erṣeti* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 325 | 25 | *Ištar nābât kakkabāni* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 326 | 26 | *Qaštu mušamqitat dannūti* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 327 | 27 | *Enzu bārât šamê* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 328 | 28 | *Ḫegalla kakkab nuḫši* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 329 | 29 | *Baltiša kakkab bālti* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 330 | 30 | *Ereqqu markas šamê* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 331 | 31 | *Erua bānât reḫûti* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 332 | 32 | *Ninmaḫ qāʾišat balāṭi* gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ mu-ne |
| 333 | 33 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ gašan-ĝu$_{10}$-na gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ nu mu-ne |
| 334 | 34 | *ultu naqbītu iqbû dālātu ipette* |
| 335 | 35 | *ērib-bitāte gabbi irrubūma* |
| 336 | 36 | *parṣēšunu kīma ša ginâ ippušū* |
| 337 | 37 | *kalû u nārū* ki.min |
| 338 | 38 | *enūma* 1 *bēr ūmu išqâ ultu riksū* |
| 339 | 39 | *ša paššūri ša* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya šalmū* |
| 340 | 40 | *mašmaššu išassīma bītu iḫâbma* |
| 341 | 41 | *mê būrti Idiqlati u būrti Puratti* |
| 342 | 42 | *bītu isallaḫ nigkalagû erû ina libbi bīti* |
| 343 | 43 | *uḫallal nignakku gizillû ina libbi bīti ušbâʾ* |

**Obverse III**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 301 | 1 | Dimmeranki, who determines fates, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 302 | 2 | Mubukešda, who carries scepter and ring, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 303 | 3 | Eridu, who possesses wisdom, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 304 | 4 | Asarri, who bestows cultivation, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 305 | 5 | Jupiter, who carries a sign for all, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 306 | 6 | Mercury, who makes it rain, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 307 | 7 | Saturn, star of truth and justice, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 308 | 8 | Mars, the fierce fire god, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 309 | 9 | Sirius, who measures the water of the sea, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 310 | 10 | Bootes, lord of the Enlils, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 311 | 11 | Aldebaran(?), who is created by himself(?), my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 312 | 12 | Numušda, who makes the rain last long, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 313 | 13 | Chest of Scorpion, who crushes the breast of the sea, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 314 | 14 | Sun, light of the four regions, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 315 | 15 | Moon, who illuminates the darkness, my lord, my lord, be calm |
| 316 | 16 | My lord, my god, my lord, my lord, lord, my king |
| 317 | 17 | To Bēltīya he will say the prayer: |
| 318 | 18 | My lady, …, my lady, be calm |
| 319 | 19 | My lady, …, my lady, be calm |
| 320 | 20 | My lady, who gives, my lady, be good |
| 321 | 21 | My lady, …, my lady, be good |
| 322 | 22 | My lady, …, my lady, … |
| 323 | 23 | My lady, supplication, my lady, … |
| 324 | 24 | Damkianna, lady of heaven and earth, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 325 | 25 | Venus, most brilliant of stars, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 326 | 26 | Bow-star, who fells the strong ones, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 327 | 27 | Goat-star, who watches over the earth, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 328 | 28 | Hegalla, star of abundance, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 329 | 29 | Balteša, star of dignity, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 330 | 30 | Wagon-star, the Bond of the Heavens, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 331 | 31 | Erua, who creates progeny, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 332 | 32 | Ninmaḫ, who gives life, her name is ‘my lady’ |
| 333 | 33 | My lady is indeed ‘my lady’! Is her name not ‘my lady’? |
| 334 | 34 | After he has said the blessing, he will open the doors. |
| 335 | 35 | All the temple enterers will enter and |
| 336 | 36 | they will perform their rites as usual. |
| 337 | 37 | The lamentation-priests and the singers idem ditto. |
| 338 | 38 | When the day has advanced by one double-hour, after the ritual arrangments |
| 339 | 39 | of the offering table of Bēl and Bēltīya are complete, |
| 340 | 40 | he will call for the exorcist to consecrate the temple and |
| 341 | 41 | water from a well of the Tigris and a well of the Euphrates |
| 342 | 42 | he will sprinkle on the temple. The bronze *nigkalagû* he will sound(43) inside the temple |
| 343 | 43 | He will pass the censer (and) torch through the temple. |

**Reverse IV**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 344 | 1 | [*bītu gabbu*] *uḫâbma ana papāḫi ša* $^{d}$*bēl* |
| 345 | 2 | *u* $^{d}$*bēltīya ul irrub enūma ḫūb bīti* |
| 346 | 3 | *šalmu ana Ezida ana papāḫ* $^{d}$*Nabû* |
| 347 | 4 | *irrubma ina nignakki gizillê egubbê* |
| 348 | 5 | *bīt iḫâbma bīt papāḫi mê būrti Idiqlati* |
| 349 | 6 | *u būrti Puratti isallaḫ* |
| 350 | 7 | *dālātu ša papāḫi gabbi šaman erēni ilappat* |
| 351 | 8 | *ina qabal kisalli ša papāḫi nignak kaspi išakkanma* |
| 352 | 9 | *riqqē u burāšu ina muḫḫi isarraqa* |
| 353 | 10 | *ṭābiḫu išassīma qaqqad immeri ibattaqma* |
| 354 | 11 | *ina pagri immeri mašmaššu bītu ukappar* |
| 355 | 12 | *šipātu ša Tummu Bīt imannu* |
| 356 | 13 | *papāḫu gabbu adi siḫirtišu iḫâbma nignakku ipaṭṭar* |
| 357 | 14 | *pagri imerri šuāti mašmaššu inaššīma* |
| 358 | 15 | *ana nāri illak pānišu ana ereb šamši išakkanma* |
| 359 | 16 | *pagri imerri šuāti ana nāri inaddi* |
| 360 | 17 | *ana ṣēri uṣṣi ṭābiḫu qaqqad immeri* ki.min |
| 361 | 18 | *mašmaššu u ṭābiḫu ana ṣēri uṣṣû mala* |
| 362 | 19 | *ša* $^{d}$*Nabû ina Bābili ana Bābili ul irrubū* |
| 363 | 20 | *ultu ūmi* 5 *adi ūmi* 12 *ina ṣēri uššebū* |
| 364 | 21 | *ḫūb ša bīti aḫu-rabû Eumuša ul immar* |
| 365 | 22 | *šumma īmuru ul ellu* |
| 366 | 23 | *arki ḫūbu ša bīti enūma* 1 2/3 *bēr* |
| 367 | 24 | *ūmu išqâ aḫu-rabû Eumuša uṣṣīma* |
| 368 | 25 | *mārē ummâni kalûšunu išassi* |
| 369 | 26 | *šamê ḫurāṣi ultu makkūr* $^{d}$*Marduk* |
| 370 | 27 | *ušeṣṣûma Ezida papāḫ* $^{d}$*Nabû ultu talli* |
| 371 | 28 | *adi išdi bīti irrimū* |
| 372 | 29 | *aḫu-rabû Eumuša u mārē ummâni* |
| 373 | 30 | *ikkillu annâ iqabbû* |
| 374 | 31 | *bīt ullalū* |
| 375 | 32 | $^{d}$*Asallu<ḫi> mār Eridu Euʾul <āšib>* |
| 376 | 33 | $^{d}$*Kusu littu Kusu āšibat* |
| 377 | 34 | $^{d}$*Ningirim* a-ra-zu *išemme* |
| 378 | 35 | $^{d}$*Marduk ullal bītu* |
| 379 | 36 | $^{d}$*Kusu uṣṣir uṣurātu* |
| 380 | 37 | $^{d}$*Ningirim inamdi šiptu* |
| 381 | 38 | *mimma lemnu ša ina bīti eṣu* |
| 382 | 39 | *gallu rabû linârku* $^{d}$*bēl* |
| 383 | 40 | ki-tuš gar-ra-aš ḫu-ni-ib-da-tar-am$_6$ |
| 384 | 41 | *mārē ummâni kalûšunu bābu uṣṣû* |

**Reverse IV**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 344 | 1 | He will consecrate [the whole temple], but will not enter[(2)] into the cella of Bēl |
| 345 | 2 | and Bēltīya. When the consecration of the temple |
| 346 | 3 | is complete, he will enter[(4)] into Ezida to the cella of Nabû |
| 347 | 4 | and with censer, torch, holy water-basin |
| 348 | 5 | he will consecrate the temple and he will sprinkle[(6)] the cella with water from a well of the Tigris |
| 349 | 6 | and from a well of the Euphrates. |
| 350 | 7 | He will fully smear the doors of the cella with cedar oil. |
| 351 | 8 | In the middle of the courtyard of the cella he will place a silver censer and |
| 352 | 9 | he will scatter aromatics and juniper on it. |
| 353 | 10 | He will call for the slaughterer to cut off a sheep's head and |
| 354 | 11 | with the carcass of the sheep the exorcist will smear the temple. |
| 355 | 12 | He will recite incantations of "the house is conjured". |
| 356 | 13 | He will consecrate the whole cella in its entirety and he will remove the censer. |
| 357 | 14 | The exorcist will lift up the carcass of that sheep and |
| 358 | 15 | he will go to the river. He will place his face towards sunset and |
| 359 | 16 | he will throw the carcass of that sheep into the river. |
| 360 | 17 | He will go out to the hinterland. The slaughterer (with) the head of the sheep idem ditto. |
| 361 | 18 | The exorcist and the slaughterer will go out to the hinterland; as long |
| 362 | 19 | as Nabû is in Babylon, they may not enter Babylon. |
| 363 | 20 | From the fifth to the twelfth day they will remain in the hinterland. |
| 364 | 21 | The Elder Brother of Eumuša may not see the consecration of the temple. |
| 365 | 22 | If he sees (it), he is not pure. |
| 366 | 23 | After the consecration of the temple, when 1 2/3 double-hours |
| 367 | 24 | of daytime have passed, the Elder Brother of Eumuša will go out and |
| 368 | 25 | call for all the craftsmen. |
| 369 | 26 | They will bring out[(27)] the golden heaven from the treasury of Marduk |
| 370 | 27 | and they will cover[(28)] Ezida, the cella of Nabû, from the crossbeam |
| 371 | 28 | to the foundation of the temple. |
| 372 | 29 | The Elder Brother of Eumuša and the craftsmen |
| 373 | 30 | will utter this cry of distress: |
| 374 | 31 | They will purify the temple |
| 375 | 32 | Asalluhi, son of Erudi, <who dwells> in Euʾul |
| 376 | 33 | Kusu who dwells on her stool, Kusu |
| 377 | 34 | Ningirim hears the supplication |
| 378 | 35 | Marduk purifies the temple |
| 379 | 36 | Kusu establishes the regulations |
| 380 | 37 | Ningirim casts the spell |
| 381 | 38 | Whatever evil that is in the temple: go forth! |
| 382 | 39 | May the Great Demon Bēl kill you! |
| 383 | 40 | May he expell you to your abode! |
| 384 | 41 | All the craftsmen will go out of the gate. |

**Reverse V**

385 1 [*ina* N *bēr*] *ūmi aḫu-rabû ana pān* $^{d}$*bēl*
386 2 [*irrubma gadalû*] *idekki paššūr ḫurāṣī*
387 3 [*irakkas*] *šumû ina muḫḫi išakkan*
388 4 […*ina mu*]*ḫḫi išakkan* 12 *ginû ina muḫḫi išakkan*
389 5 […*ḫur*]*āṣu ṭābtu umallāma ina muḫḫi išakkan*
390 6 […*ḫurā*]*ṣu dišpu umallāma ina muḫḫi išakkan*
391 7 […] *ina muḫḫi išakkan* 4 *šappī ḫurāṣi*
392 8 […*ina mu*]*ḫḫi paššūri išakkan nignak ḫurāṣi*
393 9 […*ina*] *pān paššūri išakkan riqqê u burāšu*
394 10 [*ina muḫḫi isarra*]*q karānu inaqqi*
395 11 […*ann*]*â iqabbi*
396 12 [$^{d}$*Marduk bēlu*] *ṣīru ša ilāni*
397 13 [*āšib Esag*]*il bānû kīnātu*
398 14 […] *ana ilāni rabûti*
399 15 […] … *rāmê ina kāri*
400 16 [*liḫdu*] *libbaku ana ṣabāt qātēku*
401 17 [*ša Es*]*iskur bīt ikribi*
402 18 [*mūd*]*ê šipriku lišši rēssu*
403 19 [*ultu na*]*qbītu iqbû paššūru ipaṭṭar*
404 20 [*mārē*] *ummâni kalīšunu išassi*
405 21 *paššūru gabbu ana mārē ummâni*
406 22 [*inamdi*]*nma ana* $^{d}$*Nabû ušebbelšu*
407 23 [*mārē*] *ummâni ileqqûma ina* ki.igi.šú.érin.dù
408 24 [*ina kišād*] *nār Kunnat-Amāssu illakū enūma* $^{d}$*Nabû*
409 25 [*ina* ki.igi.šú.éri]n.dù *ina kašādišu ana* $^{d}$*Nabû ubarrûšu*
410 26 […] *paššūru ina pān* $^{d}$*Nabû išakkanūšu piṭir paššūri*
411 27 [*kīma*] *ša* $^{d}$*Nabû ultu Iddaḫedu*
412 28 […] *inaššûnimma ina muḫḫi paššūri*
413 29 [*išakkanū*] *mê qātē šarru ušbāʾūnimma*
414 30 [*ana Esag*]*il ušerrebūšu mārē ummâni ana bābi uṣṣû*
415 31 [*ana bīt* $^{d}$*b*]*ēl ina kašādišu aḫu-rabû uṣṣīma ḫaṭṭu kippatu*
416 interlinear *miṭṭu*
417 32 [(…)] *inašši agê šarrūtišu inašši*
418 33 [*ana pāni* $^{d}$*bē*]*l ušerrebšunūti ina pān* $^{d}$*bēl*
419 34 [*ina muḫḫi*] *šubti išakkanšunūti uṣṣīma lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ*
420 35 [*šarru*] *ana arkīšu išakkan ana pān* $^{d}$*bēl ušerrebšu*
421 36 […] *u uznīšu išaddad ina erṣeti ušakamšu*[!]
422 37 [*ana* $^{d}$*be*]*l šarru* 1-*šu annâ iqabbu*
423 38 [*ul aḫ*]*ṭu bēl mātāti ul ēgi ana ilūtiku*
424 39 [*ul uḫa*]*lliq Bābili ul aqṭabi sapāḫšu*
425 40 [*ul urī*]*b{bi} Esagila ul umašš<i> parṣēšu*
426 41 [*ul amda*]*ḫaṣ lēt ṣābē kidinni*
427 interlinear [*u*]*l aškun qalālšunu*
428 42 [*upāq*] *ana Bābili ul ābut šalḫûšu*

**Reverse V**

385 1 [At N double-hours] of the day, the Elder Brother [will enter(2)] in the presence of Bēl
386 2 [and] he will remove [the linen curtain]. [He will arrange(3)] the golden offering table
387 3 He will place roasted meat on it;
388 4 he will place [… o]n it; he will place twelve regular offerings on it;
389 5 he will fill […of go]ld with salt and place (them) on it;
390 6 he will fill [… of gol]d with honey and place (them) on it;
391 7 he will place […] on it. Four golden *šappu*-containers
392 8 he will place […o]n the offering table. A golden censer
393 9 he will place [… in] front of the offering table. [He will scatter(10)] aromatics and juniper
394 10 [on it]. He will make a libation of wine.
395 11 He will say [th]is [prayer]:
396 12 [Marduk] most exalted [lord] of the gods,
397 13 [who dwells in Esagi]la, creator of stability,
398 14 […] to the great gods
399 15 […] … who sits at the quay
400 16 [May] your heart [rejoice] over the taking of your hand.
401 17 [To Es]iskur, the House of Prayer,
402 18 may he who knows your craft direct his attention.
403 19 [After] he has said [the bles]sing, he will clear away the offering table.
404 20 He will call for all the [crafts]men.
405 21 [He will giv]e(22) the whole offering table to the craftsmen
406 22 and he will have (them) take it to Nabû.
407 23 [The crafts]men will take (it) and to the place *where the people perform the covering of the face (rite)*
408 24 [to the bank] of the Kunnat-amāssu-canal they will go. When Nabû
409 25 arrives [at the place *where the people*] *perform* [*the covering of the face (rite)*], they will present it to Nabû.
410 26 […] offering table in front of Nabû they will place. The leftovers of the offering table
411 27 [as soon] as Nabû from the ship Iddahedu
412 28 […] they lift (it/them) up and on top of the offering table
413 29 [they will place it]. They will move water for the hands in front of the king and
414 30 they will make him enter [into Esag]ila. The craftsmen will go out through the gate.
415 31 When he arrives [at the temple of B]ēl, the Elder Brother will go out and the scepter, ring,
416 interlinear: mace
417 32 [(…)] he will lift up. He will lift up the crown of his kingship.
418 33 He will make them enter [in the presence of Bēl]. In front of Bēl
419 34 he will place them [on] the seat. He will go out and strike the cheek of the king.
420 35 He will place [the king] behind him. In the presence of Bēl he will make him enter.
421 36 […] and his ears he will pull. He will make him kneel to the ground.
422 37 The king will say this once [to Bēl]:
423 38 [I have not sin]ned, lord of the lands, I have not neglected your divinity.
424 39 [I have not rui]ned Babylon nor ordered its dissolution.
425 40 [I have not] made Esagila tremble nor forgotten its rites.
426 41 [I have not stru]ck the cheek of the *ṣābē kidinni*
427 interlinear: [no]r brought about their humiliation
428 42 [I have taken care of] Babylon, I did not destroy its outer walls.

IV.4.3 Commentary

upper edge · The placing of the catchphrase on the upper edge of the tablet is remarkable and is most probably due to bad redaction, see below, page 195.

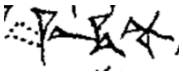
**Obverse II**

1-6 · This section is exactly parallelled by NYF3 I 25'-30'.

6 · *šu-ruk-šú-nu-tú*: although the manuscripts and the handcopies in *Racc*. clearly show that the first sign is ŠU, both Çağirgan and Linssen read ŠÚ (upper image NYF4, lower image NYF3).

7-20 · This section is parallelled by NYF2 II 1-14 almost exactly except for *šar ilāni* in NYF2 II 1 versus *il ilāni* here.

19 · *parṣēšunu*: The scribe did not write ME but PI. Thureau-Dangin copied the two obliques before the vertical with dotted lines.



22 · *kīṣu* is generally interpreted here as "afternoon, evening"; however, it makes more sense to read it as "morning, dawn" (CAD K 445), considering the fact that what comes before this statement is a description of the morning rites (Streck 2012: 402) and that the statement is introduced by the words "after having done this", which would not indicate a whole day.

24 · *Enūma Elîš:* UD is a typical writing for *enūma* in ritual and omen texts (CAD I s.v. *inūma* 160 1. j).

II.25-III.5 · This section is parallelled by NYF3 II 1'-23'. While here the first half of the column is missing, in NYF3 only the first signs are preserved. We can thus almost fully reconstruct this section. However, while in NYF3 II 5' $^{i}$tu$_5$ is clearly written on a new line, here in line 28 it is interlinear, written tinily under $^{id}$buranum. It is remarkable, though, that both NYF3 and NYF4 include the unusual morphophonological complement *i-* before the logogram, and that both write *i-de-ku* instead of *i-de-ek-ku*.

29 · *i-de-ku*: DE has only one horizontal instead of two.

33 · Here, one can see clearly how the scribe redrew vertical column division lines multiple times, since there are four of them, all of which were not respected. Column III is considerably more narrow that column II and many lines fall on the right edge. Apparently, the tablet was not very well planned, considering also the interlinear $^{i}$tu$_5$ mentioned above.

31-42 · Note how the scribe wrote umun-ĝu every time a little bit more sloppy – human nature!

**Obverse III**

1-16 · (and III 24-33 as well) Oshima considers these prayers to be written in an "Akkadian unilingual form with Sumerograms" that "use Sumerian words in Emesal dialect quite unlike the common Sumerograms which are normal in Emegir" (2011: 106). "Hence, one might ask whether these prayers could have been originally composed in Sumerian or a bilingual form, which the scribe/high priest, however, could not or did not copy in full from an older manuscript probably because many of the Sumerian words were no longer available to him." (2011: 107) However, the structure "Sumerian name of star/constellation/planet + Akkadian epithet + Sumerian invocation" can be explained in another way. Stol (1989) used the term "sacred 'philology'" and showed how the star-names are explained by means of the Akkadian epithets. The combination of Sumerian and Akkadian thus does not exhibit the scribe's incompetence, but rather the opposite: he managed to explain the names in one way or another. For this, common epithets of Marduk and Zarpānītu respectively were used, but also orthographic and phonological play. See below, page 282.

3 · nun$^{ki}$ is commonly read as Eridu, but it could also be Babylon, which would make more sense in this context (George 1992: 251ff.).

· *eršūtu* is actually written *er-su-tu* (Thureau-Dangin did not copy the second vertical of SU). CAD included it under a separate lemma (CAD E 318 s.v. *eršūtu* A), explaining it as a hapax legomenon related to the adjective *eršu* "wise" (CAD E 313).

4 · Asarri is one of the fifty names of Marduk in Enūma Elîš (VII, 1; see Linssen 2004: 236 note on line), but it is unclear why the scribe would break the sequence of stars/constellations/planets here.

5 · *Mulubabbar*: the reading of $^{múl}$babbar is based on a Greek gloss (μολοβοβαρ), see Gössmann 1955 no. 276. The word was not included in the dictionaries.

· *ṣaddu* is translated in CAD as "ominious sign of the planet Jupiter" (CAD Ṣ 56 b 2'). The epithet is almost similar to one found in the "List of Stars and Deities" where Jupiter thas the epithet *nāš ṣaddu ana dadmī* ("he who carries the sign for the inhabited world"). See below, page 286.

6 · *mušaznin zunnī*: it is not very common that *šuznunu* has the object *zunnu*, which is basically a tautology (CAD Z 43 s.v. *zanānu* B).

31 · Erua: The sign A has one vertical followed by three instead of two verticals on top of each other (not copied as such by Thureau-Dangin).

· *ba-nát*: the sign I has the rare reading nát here, see Stoll 1989 note 1.

34-35 · Notice how in this tablet as well there is a difference between BIT (one small vertical, two large ones) and É (two small verticals, one large one).

**Reverse IV**

1 · The first line can be reconstructed on the basis of what follows. The upper horizontal of the sign Ú in *uḫâb* was not copied by Thureau-Dangin.

9 · *isarraq* is written *i-sár-qa*. Probably one should amend it to *i-sár-<ra>-qa* and consider it a present tense with ventive (as is often the case in these late texts, the *m* of the ventive is omitted). Another way to explain it, is that there was confusion between *qa* and *raq*, though it is not entirely clear why (both are forms of šal though, *raq* = šal and *qa* = šál).

20 · The number 5 here is written without KAM.

32-33 · dúr-dúr was written at the end of line 33 but slightly above the line. It should probably be reconstructed at the end of line 32 as well.

38 · *e-ṣu* is a unique form of *aṣû* and is translated as an imperative, yet the imperative of *aṣû* in Neo-Babylonian is *iṣi* (GAG §106 m; see also GAG §103 n where this form is mentioned)

**Reverse V**

1 · The presence of $u_4$-*mu* indicates that we can expect a time indicator here and since the verb *šaqû* (nim) is not present, I suggest *ina* N *bēr ūmi*. This fits with the short horizontal in front of UD, which is then the last part of BU (*bēru* = danna = kaskal-gíd).

15 · *rāmê ina kāri*: I follow Çağirgan in this reading, contra Linssen.

16 · *ana ṣabāt qātēku*: possibly, we might read *ana ṣābit* (*ṣa-bít*) *qātēku* as well, i.e. "May your heart rejoice for the one taking your hand".

18 · I understand the phrase *lišši rēssu* here in the idiomatic use of *našû* with *rēšu*, "to pay attention, to honour, to exalt" cf. CAD N/2 s.v. *našû* 6d; contra Linssen. The suffix on SAG refers to the temple Esiskur (another name for the *akītu*-temple) mentioned in the preceding line.

· *šipriku* has until now been read as *ašriku*, but it seems very unlikely that *ašru* would be written with $AŠ_{(1)}$. Better, the vertical wedge preceding AŠ must be added to make ME, here read as *šip*-. The *šipru* of Bēl is a reoccurring topic in NYF6, in which the word appears not less than five times in only 16 lines of text. See also the LB pseudo-epigraphical letter, part of the LB historical-literary corpus, BM 34716 (rev. 10-11; Jursa & Debourse 2020: 274-276): "We will not change [the craft] of Marduk, who [gifted] cuneiform only to the Babylonians and Borsippeans and whose craft neither enemy nor stranger should see" ([*ù* $^{lú}$*n*]*ak-ri u a-ḫu-ú la i-na-ṭal-lu ši-pir-šú ul nu-šá-an-ni* [*šipiršu*]). Based on those other occurrences in LB texts,

Michael Jursa suggested to reconstruct *mūdû* in the break before *šipriku.* This would also fit the remaining traces before ME.

20 · dù.a is actually written like BIT (copying mistake?)

23 · ki.igi.šú.érin.dù: the reading here is very tentative and was suggested to me by Michael Jursa. What comes after KI should probably be interpreted as a Sumerian name. Whereas the last two signs (érin dù) are quite clear, what comes before that is not directly obvious. *Pānu katāmu* is attested elsewhere (CAD K 298 s.v. *katāmu* 1b2). Presumably, the same name should be reconstructed in the break at the beginning of line 25.

25 · *ubarrûšu* is most probably a form of *burrû*, "to announce, to usher in" (CAD B 331); the D-stem of *bâru* (CAD B 125 A) has the specific meanings of "to establish the true legal situation by a legal procedure" or "to find (in math.)"; *barû*, "to watch over" (CAD B 115 A) does not seem to be used in the D-stem.

26 · The last signs of this line run across the first signs of column IV.

31 · For the reconstruction in the break at the beginning of the line, I follow Sallaberger (& Schmidt 2012), who suggested either *ana* é or *ana* ká.

· [giš]mitum(tukul.diĝir) is interlinear rather than written on a new line.

37 · Based on Sallaberger's suggestion to read *ana* igi $^{d}$en at the beginning of the line, I suggest to read *ana* $^{d}$en instead, which follows the other instances in the NYF texts when a prayer is recited to Bēl.

39 · Note the writing *aq-ṭa-bi* with two emphatics following each other. This a phonological feature that is only found in a small number of Late Babylonian texts, see below, page 182.

41 · Note the rather rare syllabic writing of *ṣābē*. At other instances the writing $^{lú}$érin is used.

· *aškun qalālšunu*: following the sequence of the text, I submit that nothing else but *ul* came before *aškun qalālšunu* and that this is another case in which the scribe wrote something on the interlinear level rather than on a new line.

## IV.5 BM 41577

BM 41577 is the right-hand portion of a six-column tablet. Parts of the right and upper edges are preserved. Column I and VI are lost and only half of column II and V are still there. The writing is large and deeply impressed. The lines are filled out over the width of the tablet, but there is some whitespace in between signs. Vertical lines divide the columns and horizontal lines separate different sections of the text. These lines are overall respected by the scribe. A remarkable feature is the label *asar kalûti* written on the right-hand side of the Sumerian prayer in column III: to be able to read it, you have to turn the tablet a quarter turn to the right. For the edition and translation of this text, I am greatly indebted to Andrew George's first edition (2000: 260-270), to which only very few changes – marked with an asterix – could be suggested.

### IV.5.1 Transcription

**Obverse II**

1' […] x
2' […]-*ub*/*bi*
3' […] ˹x˺ kur
4' […] $^{d}$15$^{meš}$
5' […] x-*di*

---

6' [… *ana** ká* *pa*]-*pa*-*ḫi šá* $^{d}$en
7' [… *i*]-*na*-*as*-*suk*
8' […] a$^{meš}$
9 [pú* $^{íd}$idigna *u* pú*] $^{íd}$buranun
10' [é* *i**-*sal**-*làḫ**]$^{?}$ $^{lú}$gala$^{meš}$
11' [*u* $^{lú}$nar$^{m}$]$^{eš}$ *ana* $^{d}$en *u* gašan$^{iá}$
12' [šìr$^{?meš}$*-*ma** $^{l}$]$^{ú}$ku$_{4}$.é$^{meš}$
13' [ku$_{4}$$^{meš}$*-*ma* me-*šú*-*nu*] gim *šá* gì$^{a}$ dù$^{meš}$

---

14' [*ina* N dann]a* *u*$_{4}$-*mu naq*-*bit an*-*na*-*a*
15' [*ana* $^{d}$en 3]-*šú* dug$_{4}$.ga

---

16' […] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ sipa lú-lú
17' [… umun-ĝ]u$_{10}$ nu mu-na
18' [… umun-ĝ]u$_{10}$ an-ki-ke$_{4}$
19' [… umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára] ˹kur-kur˺

**Obverse III**

1 […]
2 [x+]˹1 mu.šid.bi ùru é.sag.gíl˺

---

3 [*pa*-*liḫ* $^{d}$e]n *al*-*la ma*-*ri*-*šú*
4 [*la*] *ú*-*kal*-*lam*
5 [*a*-*sa*-*a*]*r ka*-*lu*-*tu*

---

6 [ku$_{4}$$^{u}$]$^{b*}$-*ma ana pa*-*pa*-*ḫi šá* $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$
7 [*ana*] $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ *an*-*na*-*a* 3-*šú* dug$_{4}$.ga

---

8 [gašan-ĝu$_{10}$] $^{d}$innin-na gašan $^{d}$innin kur-kur
9 ˹gašan-ĝu$_{10}$˺ $^{d}$innin sipa saĝ-ĝi$_{6}$ gašan

10 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$innin e-sír ḫúl gašan
11 gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$innin sila-a sìg gašan
12 gašan-ĝu $^{d}$innin sìg-ga ḫúl gašan
13 a-rá kur-ra a-sír-ra du-mèn
14 a-rá šu-an-na a-sír
15 a-rá kur-kur-ra a-sír
16 a-rá ĝiš-nu-gál uru$_{16}$ a-sír
17 a-rá sír-ra a-sír
18 ĝišumun-na ĝiš-naĝ a-sír
19 alim-ma MIN a-sír
20 mud an-ki gašan kur-kur-ra

---

21 *a-sa-ar ka-lu-⌜tu⌝*

---

22 ta *naq-bat an-na-a iq-bu-ú*
23 gim 1 danna me *ana* šú $^{d}$utu $^{lú}$šeš.gal
24 šu$^{II}$-*šú ana* egir-*šu* gar-*ma ana* igi $^{d}$en
25 ku$_{4}$-*ma ina* igi $^{d}$en gub$^{az}$-*ma*
26 *u ki-a-am ana* igi $^{d}$en dug$_{4}$.ga

---

27 ⌜$^{d}$en gal$^{ú}$ $^{d}$amar.utu *a-šib*⌝ [é.u$_{4}$.ul]

**Reverse IV**

1’ [x] ⌜x x⌝ […]
2’ [*b*]*a-ma-at* […]
3’ *ina* ḫé-nun : ḫé-gál […]
4’ *šá* $^{lú}$ìr *da-bi-bi qur-⌜di-ku šu⌝*-[*zi-ib na*]*p*-[*šat-s*]*u*
5’ *ana ṣa-bit* $^{gi}$dub$^{bi}$-*ku šu-ruk-⌜šú⌝ ḫi-is-sat*
6’ *šá qa-bu-u* sig$_{5}^{ti}$-*ku qí-bi-ma* sig$_{5}$-*šú*
7’ *li-iḫ-lu-ul gat-ta-šú lit-tal-lak*
8’ *ri-bit* uru-*šú*
9’ *ṣa-bit* šu$^{II}$ *na-as-ki*
10’ *mu-bal-liṭ* $^{lú}$ug$_{5}$
11’ *šá ina šip-ti-šú ú-da-ap-par lem-nu-tú*
12’ *šá a-sak-ku* dab-*šú-ma ik-kal* su-*šú*
13’ *ši-pat-ku šá* tin *ta-nam-di-šum-ma*
14’ *tu-da-ap-par* gig-*šú*
15’ *šá du-uš-mu-ú ṣa-bit*
16’ $^{gi}$dub *ši-me-e tés-lit-su*
17’ *ina* gig *u ta-ni-ḫu ṣa-bat* šu$^{II}$-*šú*
18’ *li-ta-ma-a nar-bi-ku*
19’ *ana* ùg$^{meš}$ dagal$^{meš}$

---

20’ *a-sa-ar a-ši-pu-tu*
21’ *ma-ʾ-diš ú-ṣur*

---

22’ [*u*]*ṣ-ṣa-am-ma ana* igi $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$
23’ [*ki*]-*a-am* dug$_{4}$.ga

---

24’ [$^{d}$*zar*]-*pa-ni-tu*$_{4}$ *na-bat* mul$^{meš}$
25’ [*a-ši-b*]*at* é.sag.gíl
26’ [*gaš-rat*] *i-lat ṣi-rat* $^{d}$15$^{meš}$
27’ […]-⌜*in*⌝-*šá ú-nam*-[*mu*]

**Reverse V**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1’ | […] x |
| 2’ | […] x ku kur-⌜*ma*⌝ |
| 3’ | […] x *kap-pi* |
| 4’ | […] x *ti ma* |
| 5’ | […] x $e^{ki}$ |
| 6’ | […]-*nu* |
| 7’ | […] x-*uš* |
| 8’ | […]-⌜*ub*⌝ |
| 9’ | […] x abzu |
| 10’ | […] $sig_5$ |
| 11’ | […] ˹$^{d}$˺amar.utu |
| 12’ | […]-*ṣab* |
| 13’ | […]-*pu-uš* |
| 14’ | […] x |
| 15’ | […] x x |
| 16’ | […] x |

IV.5.2 Normalisation and translation

**Obverse II**

1' […]
2' […]
3' […]
4' […] *ištarāte*
5' […]

6' [*... ana bāb pa*]*pāḫi ša* $^{d}$*bēl*
7' […*i*]*nassuk*
8' […] *mê*
9' [*būrti Idiqlati u būrti*] *Puratti*
10' [*bītu isallaḫ*] *kalû*
11' [*u nār*]*ū ana* $^{d}$*bēl u bēltīya*
12' [*izammurūma*] *ērib-bitāti*
13' [*irrubūma parṣēšunu*] *kīma ša ginâ ippušū*

14' [*ina* N *bēr*] *ūmi naqbītu annâ*
15' [*ana* $^{d}$*bēl šālūši*]*šu iqabbi*

16' […] umun-ĝu$_{10}$ sipa lú-lú
17' […umun-ĝ]u$_{10}$ nu mu-na
18' […umun-ĝ]u$_{10}$ an-ki-ke$_{4}$
19' […umun-ĝu$_{10}$ bára] kur-kur

**Obverse II**

1' […]
2' […]
3' […]
4' […] goddesses
5' […]

6' […at the gate of the] cella of Bēl
7' [he] throws […].
8' […]. [He sprinkles the temple](10') (with) water
9' [from a well of the Tigris and a well of the] Euphrates.
10' The lamentation-priests
11' [and singers] [will *sing*](12') to Bēl and Bēltīya
12' [and] the temple-enterers
13' [will enter and] perform [their rites] as usual.

14' [At N double-hours] of the day, he will recite(15') the following prayer
15' [three] times [to Bēl].

16' […] my lord, shepherd of humanity
17' […] my [lord] is that not his name?
18' […m]y [lord] of heaven and earth
19' […my lord, king] of the lands

**Obverse III**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | […] |
| 2 | [x+]1 *šumātu niṣirti esagila* |
| 3 | [*pāliḫ* $^{d}$*bēl*] *alla mārišu* |
| 4 | [*lā*] *ukallam* |
| 5 | [*asa*]*r kalûti* |
| 6 | [*irru*]*bma ana papāḫi ša* $^{d}$*bēltīya* |
| 7 | [*ana*] $^{d}$*bēltīya annâ šālūšišu iqabbi* |
| 8 | [gašan-ĝu$_{10}$] $^{d}$innin-ĝa gašan $^{d}$innin kur-kur |
| 9 | ˹gašan-ĝu$_{10}$˺ $^{d}$innin sipa saĝ-ĝi$_{6}$ gašan |
| 10 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$innin e-sír ḫúl gašan |
| 11 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$innin sila-a sìg gašan |
| 12 | gašan-ĝu$_{10}$ $^{d}$innin sìg-ga ḫúl gašan |
| 13 | a-rá kur-ra a-sír-ra du-mèn |
| 14 | a-rá šu-an.na a-sír |
| 15 | a-rá kur-kur-ra a-sír |
| 16 | a-rá ĝiš-nu-gál uru$_{16}$ a-sír |
| 17 | a-rá sír-ra a-sír |
| 18 | ĝiš-umun-na ĝiš-naĝ a-sír |
| 19 | alim-ma MIN a-sír |
| 20 | mud an-ki gašan kur-kur-ra |
| 21 | *asar kalûti* |
| 22 | *ultu naqbâte annâ iqbû* |
| 23 | *kīma* 1 *bēr ūmu ana ereb šamši aḫu-rabû* |
| 24 | *qātēšu ana arkīšu išakkanma ana pān* $^{d}$*bēl* |
| 25 | *irrubma ina pān* $^{d}$*bēl izzazma* |
| 26 | *u kīam ana pān* $^{d}$*bēl iqabbi* |
| 27 | $^{d}$*bēlu rabû* $^{d}$*Marduk āšib* [*Euʾul*] |

**Obverse III**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | […] |
| 2 | [x+]1 lines, secret of Esagila |
| 3 | [He who reveres Bēl], except to his son, |
| 4 | should [not] show it (to anyone). |
| 5 | [Compositi]on of the lamentation-priesthood. |
| 6 | [He] will enter the cella of Bēltīya |
| 7 | He will recite the following (prayer) three times [to] Bēltīya: |
| 8 | [My lady], Inana, lady, mistress of the lands |
| 9 | My lady, Inana, shepherdess of the black-headed people, lady |
| 10 | My lady, Inana, the street of joy, lady |
| 11 | My lady, Inana, the way to travel, lady |
| 12 | My lady, Inana, the travel of joy, lady |
| 13 | The path of the mountain (is) the road you travel |
| 14 | The path to Babylon (is) the road (you travel) |
| 15 | The path of the mountains (is) the road (you travel) |
| 16 | The path of skilfully made alabaster (is) the road (you travel) |
| 17 | The path of the … (is) the road (you travel) |
| 18 | *With a bloodthirsty weapon* (you travel) the road |
| 19 | Honoured one, *idem*, (you travel) the road |
| 20 | Creator of heaven and earth, lady of the lands |
| 21 | Composition of the lamentation-priesthood. |
| 22 | After he has spoken these prayers, |
| 23 | when it is 1 double-hour to sunset, the Elder Brother |
| 24 | will place his hands behind his back and he will enter(25) in the presence of Bēl |
| 25 | and he will stand in front of Bēl and |
| 26 | then he speaks as follows in the presence of Bēl: |
| 27 | Great lord, Marduk, who dwells in [Euʾul] |

**Reverse IV**

1’ […]
2’ *bamat* […]
3’ *ina nuḫši* : *ḫegalli* […]
4’ *ša ardi dābib qurdiku š*[*ūzib napšāss*]*u*
5’ *ana ṣābit qanṭuppiku šurukšu ḫissat*
6’ *ša qābê damqātiku qibīma damqātišu*
7’ *liḫlul gattušu littallak*
8’ *ribīt ālišu*
9’ *ṣābit qātē naski*
10’ *muballiṭ mīti*
11’ *ša ina šiptišu udappar<u> lemnūtu*
12’ *ša asakku iṣabbatušuma ikkal<u> zumuršu*
13’ *šipātku ša balāṭi tanamdīšumma*
14’ *tudappar murṣīšu*
15’ *ša dušmî ṣābit*
16’ *qanṭuppi šime teslīssu*
17’ *ina murṣi u tānīḫi ṣabat qātēšu*
18’ *lītamâ narbîku*
19’ *ana nišī rapšāti*

---

20’ *asar āšipūti*
21’ *mādiš uṣur*

---

22’ *uṣṣâmma ana pān* $^{d}$*bēltīya*
23’ [*kī*]*am iqabbi*

---

24’ [$^{d}$*Zar*]*panītum nābât kakkabāni*
25’ [*āšib*]*at Esagila*
26’ [*gašrat*] *ilāti ṣīrat ištarāti*
27’ […] ... *unam*[*mû*]

**Reverse IV**

1' […]
2' Half of […]
3' In plenty : abundance […]
4' pres[erve the life] of the slave who speaks of your heroism,
5' bestow wisdom upon the one holding your stylus ,
6' speak in favour of the one who speaks in your favour,
7' so that though his figure once slunk by (unnoticed), he may yet (openly) frequent
8' the square of his town.
9' (O you) who seizes the hand of the fallen,
10' who revives the dead,
11' who with his spell drives away evil spirits.
12' (The patient) whom Asakku seizes and whose body he consumes:
13' – you cast your spells of life on him and
14' you drive away his sickness.
15' Hear the prayer(16') of the slave who holds
16' the stylus.
17' Seize his hand in sickness and hardship
18' so that he may proclaim your greatness
19' to the numerous people.

---

20' Composition of the exorcist-priesthood.
21' Guard it well.

---

22' He comes out in the presence of Bēltīya and
23' he speaks as follows:

---

24' Zarpānītum, most brilliant of stars
25' [who dwells] in Esagila
26' [most powerful] of goddesses, most supreme of goddesses
27' […] her […] lay waste.

**Reverse V** too broken for translation

IV.5.3 Commentary

In order not to be redundant, I refer the reader to Andrew George's excellent commentary on this text,[425] most of which I will not repeat here. Some of the most important points he makes are the following:

- the Sumerian is difficult to understand and was probably partly "hocus pocus";
- the prayer to Zarpānītu reflects the story of Inana/ Ištar's journey to the netherworld;
- the present text relates both in textual form and cultic context to the other NYF texts.

**Obverse II**

6'-13' · I do not fully agree with George's reconstruction of these lines, since he mixes two episodes found in the other NYF texts. One relates the beginning of the day, when the Elder Brother had to rise and bathe in riverwater, followed by the recitation of a prayer to Marduk. The other describes what happened after the prayer was finished, including the opening of the gates and the entrance of the *ērib-bīti*s to perform their rites as usual. In this instance we are dealing with the latter. Therefore, I would not reconstruct $tu_5$ (*irammuk*) in the lines about river water; another action must have been described here. The other instances in which the Tigris and Euphrates are mentioned in the NYF texts revolve around the sprinkling of water drawn from a "well" (pú) "of the Tigris and of the Euphrates" (NYF4 III 41-43; IV 5-6). In both those cases, the water was sprinkled (*isallaḫ*); I have chosen to reconstruct the passage here accordingly, but, by all means, this remains very tentative. Aside from that, the mention of the *kalû*s and singers comes before the stockphrase describing the rites to be performed as usual and, moreover, the expression *ana* $^{d}$en (line 11') instead of *ana* igi $^{d}$en suggests that they recited or sang something to the deity. Thus, the verb *izammurū* can perhaps be suggested.

· *inassuk*: the verb *nasāku* does not occur elsewhere in the NYF texts, but does appear at multiple instances in the Kislīmu-ritual, when palm fronds are thrown at the gate of the cella of Bēl and Bēltīya (BM 32206+ III 105, 107, 109, 123). In that light, we should perhaps restore *ana bāb papāḫi* $^{d}$*bēl* in line 6'. The verb *nasāku* does appear in a broken context in the privately-owned ritual text edited by Çağirgan 1976: 1.

14' · The presence of $u_4$-*mu* indicates that we can expect a time indicator here and since the verb *šaqû* (nim) is not present, I suggest *ina* N *bēr ūmi*. See also NYF4 V 1.

[425] George 2000: 268-270.

15’ · In accordance with the similar phrase in the other NYF texts, I suggest to read *ana* $^{d}$en instead of *ana* igi $^{d}$en in the lacuna.

16’-19’ · The Sumerian prayer is reminiscent of the prayer found in NYF4 II 31-42 (parallelled by NYF3 II 7’ff.).

**Obverse III**

1 · It is not exactly clear what could have been written in this line, which is broken. I agree with George that it is best to reconstruct III 2 as a Geheimniskolophon according to NYF1 I 33-35, but there nothing comes before it.

2 · Attention should be drawn to the fact that the Geheimniskolophon relates to the prayer rather than to the whole tablet. See also line IV 21’.

3 · *mārišu* written *ma-ri-šú* is striking; we would rather expect dumu-*šú*. The syllabic spelling does occur in Late Babylonian texts from Uruk; see Hunger 1968: 167 s.v. *māru*.

4 · On this tablet, it is very obvious how the scribe filled out the lines, even though he had a lot of space to write the text.

5 · *asar kalûti* < *asarru*(?) (CAD A/2 330). Benjamin Foster (personal communication) suggested me to read *musarû*, “inscription” with the exceptional reading $MU_{14}$ for the sign A (Borger, *MZL* 839). Still, there are a few problems with this reading: first, *musarû* always seems to be written with $MU_{(1)}$; the only variant is with MUŠ (CAD M/2 232-233). Second, the reading of the sign A as $MU_{14}$ occurs mostly in texts from Emar (cf. *MZL*). Because of the uncertainties, I have retained the reading *asarru* for now. See also Jursa & Debourse 2017: 91 note on lines ii 3’-4’; George 2000: 268 note on line iii 5. This term seems to emphasize the written aspect of the text, rather than the oral or performative – in NYF6 it is enumerated together with *nēpešu* and *parṣū*. The explicit mention that a ritual belongs to the *kalûtu* is not uncommon, but is unique to this text within the corpus of NYF texts. See also below, page 200.

6 · Instead of reading $ku_4^{am}$-*ma* (George 2000: 265), I suggest to read $ku_4^{ub}$-*ma*. In the other NYF texts $ku_4$ is never followed by either -*am* or -*ub*, but in the corpus of LB temple ritual texts, $ku_4^{ub}$ does occur, while $ku_4$-*am* never: BM 32206+ II 68, IV 157; BM 32656 IV 6’. Admittedly, both are possible based on the remaining traces before -*ma*.

· The remarkable word order of this sentence, with the verb in initial position (including -*ma*!), may be an indication of a late date of redaction.

21 · This intertextual colophon was written vertically next to the prayer in lines III 8-20 (to read it, you have to turn the tablet a quarter turn to the right). Its position marks the fact that it relates to those lines only.

22 · *naqbâte*: the scribe first wrote *naq-bit*, but changed *bit* to *bat*; "he uses the plural presumably because the prayer is recited three times." (George 2000: 269 note on line) Note, however, the frozen *annâ*.

23 · *kīma* 1 *bēr ūmu ana ereb šamši*: as in the other NYF texts, we are dealing here with a rather technical expression to indicate time. Notice how here too *ūmu* is written with the sign ME, a typical feature of late astronomical texts.

25 · If in the previous line the Elder Brother is leading someone else (expressed by *qātēšu*, *-šu* referring to another person), gub$^{az}$ can also be read here as *ušzaz* "he lets him stand".

**Reverse IV**

3' · The scribe seems to provide us with a glimpse into the workings behind the copying process, by indicating two variants with a *Trennungszeichen* in between. It is a very textual device in a text that is actually meant to be recited. The textual aspect of the prayer is moreover emphasized by lines 5' and 15'-16': the slave who speaks is also the one who writes the tablet, his (written!) prayers should be "heard".

4' · *šūzib napšāssu*: the reconstruction was suggested by George; see also CAD E 425 s.v. *ezēbu* 6b2; more common in the other NYF texts is the expression *šurukšu* TIN. Notice the asyndetic syntax, also in line 6'.

20' · Indeed, the prayer designated as *asar āšipūti* relates to sickness and reminds one of Ludlul (see also George 2000: 269, note on line and below, page 281). It is furthermore composed in Akkadian, in contrast to the prayer labeled *asar kalûti*, which is written in Sumerian with Emesal influence.

## IV.6 BM 32655//BM 32374

The last NYF text was published recently by Michael Jursa and myself.[426] It is added here for completeness, but since our first edition contains the full transcription and an extensive commentary, only the normalisation and translation will be offered here. Furthermore, a new fragment was very recently brought to our attention that duplicates part of BM 32655.[427] The full edition of BM 32374 will be presented elsewhere, but a transcription will be supplied here. BM 32374 line 1' = BM 32655 line II 12'.

### IV.6.1 Transcription of BM 32374

1' […] ˹x˺ […]
2' [*mam-ma-an ši-pir ni-kil-tú* nu] dù-*šú ana* [*ka-a-šú*]
3' [lugal *u* gìr.níta] *la i-maḫ-ḫ*[*aṣ* te-*ka*]
4' [*lu ši-pir ši-pir-ku*] *ana* $u_4$-*mu ṣa*-[*a-tu*$_4$]
5' [lugal *u* gìr.níta] *šá i-maḫ-ḫaṣ* ˹te˺-[*ka*]
6' [lugal kúr-*šú-nu ma-am-ma*] ˹*liš*˺-*kun* bad$_5$.bad$_5$-˹*šú*˺-[*nu*]

---

7' [30 mu.šid.bi *šá ina* ugu i]m.dub
8' […] ˹x x x˺

[426] Jursa & Debourse 2017.
[427] I am very grateful to Enrique Jiménez, who was kind enough to send us this fragment when he encountered it.

IV.6.2 Normalisation of BM 32655

**Obverse? II**

1' […]
2' *aḫu-rabû Eumuša lū nībi šumīkama*
3' *piršātia lū tīde attā* : *asarīa lū mēdâk*[*ka*]
4' *parṣīa lū tīde attā*
5' *šīmtu rabītu ašīm ana kâšu* : *ina urri u mūši epu*[*š* …]
6' *šarru ana kâšu lilbin appi*
7' *ērib-bītāte kalûšunu liqbû damqātika*
8' *bala kâšu sattukku lā uktân iât*[*i*]
9' *piršātia u šuluḫḫīa lū tīde attā*
10' *lū ellētu kīma šamê* : *lū ebbētu kīma erṣeti*
11' *lū namrirruk kīma ūmi* : *lū šipir šipirku kīma šamê*
12' *lū rabi šumku kīma šarri*
13' *mamman šipir nikilti ul ippušû ana kâšu*
14' *šarru u šakanakku lā imaḫḫaṣ lētka*
15' *lū šipir šipirku ana ūmi ṣâti*
16' *šarru u šakanakku ša imaḫḫaṣ lētka*
17' *šarru nakiršunu mamma liškun dabdûšu*[*nu*]
lo.e. 30 *šumātu ša ina muḫḫi ṭuppi u elmeši*
*ša aḫi-rabî Eumuša*

IV.6.3 Translation of BM 32655

**Obverse? II**

1' […]
2' May they call you Elder Brother of Eumuša
3' May you know my secret knowledge ; may my *asaru* be familiar to you
4' May you know my rituals.
5' I have determined a great fate for you ; day and night perform […]
6' May the king humbly revere you.
7' May all the priests speak favourably of you.
8' Without you no regular offerings should be established for me.
9' May you know my secret knowledge and my purification rites.
10' May you be pure as heaven ; may you be clean as the earth.
11' May your aura be as (bright as) the day ; may your work be a work like the heavens.
12' May your name be great like the king's.
13' Let no one treat you deceivingly.
14' Let neither king nor governor strike your cheek.
15' May your work be a work for eternity.
16' The king or the governor who strikes your cheek,
17' may a king who is their enemy defeat them.
lo.e. Thirty lines which are (written) on the tablet and *elmešu*-stone
of the Elder Brother of Eumuša.

# V Analyses

The NYF texts have been studied for over a hundred years and are cited time and again in Assyriological literature and beyond. What is more, an essential part of what is today considered to be "the Babylonian New Year Festival" is based on these texts. There is, however, a considerable problem regarding all that: the Babylonian NYF *texts* have never really been placed under scrutiny; none of the editions includes a thoroughgoing critical apparatus; only very few attempts at contextualizing or dating the compositions have been made;[428] and the problem of their – surprising – (re)creation in Hellenistic times remains largely unaddressed. To prevent arbitrariness, the following list of questions should be asked and answered before one ventures into a study of the New Year Festival based on the NYF texts.

Are the texts what they claim to be or not? In other words, are they authentic or falsified (*falsum*, *fraus*)? A common falsification is the false claim that the source is older than it actually is. Similarly, a fraud may assign a source to an authority from which it did not really stem. Did the source reach us as it was composed, in its original form, or is it a copy? If it is an original, is the scribe also the author (authograph) or has it been written down by a person other than the creator (apograph)? If it is a copy, has it been copied faithfully, perhaps even upon view (*vidimus*), or did the copyist modify it? A general rule states that a copy is always slightly different from its original. Relating to this question is the issue of multiple copies: if there is more than one manuscript of the same text, how do they relate to one another? How does the text relate to the manuscript?

Who made the source? Where does it stem from? When was it created? To answer those questions, one should differentiate between the material and the composition it contains, especially because most Late Babylonian tablets are considered to contain copies of earlier composed texts. What is the content of the text? What information does it include or omit? Is the information reliable? How is the text constructed? Which language(s) does the author use? Which tone? How does the source relate to other sources? Does it contain citations, allusions, paraphrases of other texts (intertextuality)? Is the text in another way derived from other compositions or is it completely new? Why, wherefore and for whom was the source made? What was its target audience? For which purpose was it created? What could it be used for?

[428] The few exceptions are: Smith 1976; Michalowski 1990: 393; Pongratz-Leisten 1997a. They all relate to a small passage in the texts (the humiliation and negative confession of the king, see below page 260).

In the case of the NYF texts, answers to those questions have generally been *assumed* to be as follows: they are Hellenistic copies of texts created some time in the latter half of the second or first half of the first millennium BC in Babylon; they relate to the tradition of Marduk ideology (which was formed in the same time and space), in particular to Enūma Elîš; they are ritual texts made by priests for priests and perhaps also the king, relating instructions for the performance of the rites of the New Year or *akītu* festival celebrated in the first month Nisannu in Babylon. Little or no questions have been asked regarding the texts' transmission history or their purpose and use in the Hellenistic period – an important issue, considering the essential role of the (native Babylonian) king in the ritual.

In this chapter, I want to present an in-depth analysis of different aspects of the NYF texts in order to obtain a well-founded conception of what the texts are and how they may be used by modern historians. Four approaches are chosen. First, I make an analysis of the linguistic and orthographic features of the NYF texts, in which I group elements shared by all texts of the corpus. Second, the paratextual notes, such as colophons and secrecy labels, are discussed, in combination with other material aspects, especially in view of the question of serialisation, the relation of the different copies to each other and the issue of text versus manuscript. Third, the content of the ritual instructions is analysed. I adopt an historical more than a ritual-theoretic approach, by placing the several ritual sequences or rites of which the whole ritual text consists on a "ritual timeline". Fourth, the prayers are placed under scrutiny, with particular attention for modes of text construction and intertextuality. Lastly, I will summarize and combine the findings of those four approaches, with the aim of placing the composition of the NYF texts in a delimited historical frame. This will allow me to set the corpus in light of other, contemporary sources in a first attempt at creating new research possibilities for this corpus (Chapter VI).

## V.1 Philological analysis

It is difficult to date the NYF texts to a particular period in time based on the language they use. This is partly due to the fact that Mesopotamian ritual texts in general use a highly idiomatic language with many repetitions.[429] The same can be said of the NYF texts: they are full of typical "ritual" language as we know it from the corpus of temple ritual texts from Uruk,[430] the Neo-Assyrian royal rituals[431] or ceremonies of "le culte sacramentel"[432] such as *Mīs pî*, *Bīt salā'*

[429] Sallaberger 2008: 428 (RlA 11 s.v. Ritual).
[430] Linssen 2004.
[431] See Ermidoro 2017 (SAA 20) and Parpola 2017 (SAA 20): LXXIX-LXXXI and *passim*.
[432] Bottéro 1998: 327: "Sous cette dénomination, adoptée ici faute d'un terme plus adéquat, et sans le moindre propos de comparatisme, il faut entendre le cérémonial exécuté, non plus, directement et d'abord, pour l'honneur, le service et la satisfaction des dieux, comme dans le 'culte théocentrique', mais pour l'avantage des hommes."

*mê* and *Bīt rimki*.[433] Aside from that, the NYF texts make use of a corpus-specific set of expressions, especially in the ritual instructions. Moreover, as would be expected of cultic compositions, the NYF texts are composed in the standard version of the Babylonian language.[434] Nevertheless, one should put their assumptions aside, as a critical investigation of the texts proves not to be invaluable: aside from a standard form of the Babylonian language, we notice a number of characteristics that occur only after the sixth century BC. In the following chapter, I will give an overview of those late features in the texts' palaeography, orthography, morphology, phonology, syntax and lexicon.[435]

### V.1.1 Palaeography

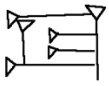
Taken at face value, the NYF texts are a product of late Hellenistic date, at least, that can be said with certainty about the manuscripts, because of the epigraphy used. The form of the cuneiform signs encountered on the tablets are obviously late (late 4th – 2nd century BC), as was acknowledged from very early onwards in modern research:

> "Les tablettes […] proviennent, selon toute apparence, de Babylone ou de la région babylonienne et ne sont pas, autaunt qu'il semble, antérieures à la conquête grecque."[436]

George too explained how some particular signs are clearly late Hellenistic or Parthian in NYF5.[437] A general description and list of Late Babylonian signs has not yet been made, but the online database Labasi serves as an excellent point of comparison for "standard signs".[438] Some typical features are the following (the smaller drawing depicts the usual NB form of the sign):

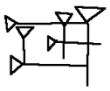
- "open" signs, in which the closing top horizontal wedge is omitted;

KU (NYF3 I 11', *ana-ku*)



[433] Walker & Dick 2001; Ambos 2013; Schwemer 2019 respectively.
[434] Problematic in this sense is the absence of a Standard Babylonian benchmark. Important studies are George 2003 (Gilgameš) and Groneberg 1987 (hymnic literature).
[435] Aspects of Neo- and Late Babylonian grammar are discussed in Hackl 2007; Woodington 1982.
[436] Thureau-Dangin 1921: 1.
[437] George 2000: 260.
[438] https://labasi.acdh.oeaw.ac.at (last accessed 20.11.19). On Labasi, one can find a set of "standard signs" traced in dated documents from the early Neo-Babylonian to Parthian period and stemming from Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Larsa, Nippur, Āl-Yahudu, Uruk. See also Pirngruber 2019; Jursa 2015.

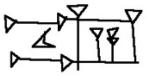
LU (NYF4 IV 39, gal$^{lu}$)



LAGAB (NYF4 V 40, é-sag-gíl)

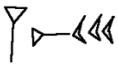
SUG (NYF5 II 7’, *i-na-as-suk*)

NAG (NYF4 III 34, *naq-bit*)



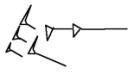
- the diagnostic MEŠ, with its very slanted sequence of “Winkelhaken” and horizontal wedge slid under the vertical or under the sequence of “Winkelhaken”;[439]

MEŠ (NYF4 II 14, un$^{meš}$)



- the typical arrangement of groups of oblique wedges, of which the lower one is always very elongated and the top smaller ones are put rather sequential, in signs like aleph, ḪI, ḪAR, AM, BU, etc.;

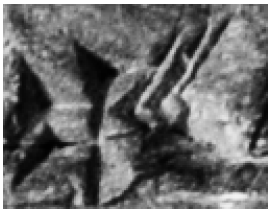
aleph (NYF5 IV 21’ *ma-ʔ-diš*)

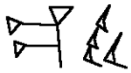


ḪI (NYF4 IV 5, *pa-pa-ḫi*)

ḪAR (NYF4 IV 36, giš.ḫur)

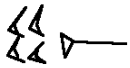
AM (NYF3 VI 12, zi$^{am}$)





[439] Jursa 2015: 188-189.

BU (NYF4 II 8, *lu-šar-bu-u*)



- the differentiation between a sign É and BIT, the former written with two small vertical wedges and one large vertical, the latter with one small vertical and two large vertical wedges. This distinction, however, is not consequently implemented.

BIT (NYF4 IV 34, *naq-bit*)

É (NYF4 IV 35, $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é$^{meš}$)

### V.1.2 Orthography and morphology

Palaeography, nonetheless, can merely be used to date a tablet, not the text it contains. Thus, Thureau-Dangin (1921: 2) nuances his statement, cited above, with the phrase:

> "Bien entendu, toutes ces tablettes, qu'elles aient été écrites sous les successeurs d'Alexandre, ou sous les derniers roi de Ninive ou de Babylone, sont des copies. Il serait assez vain de chercher à fixer l'époque de rédaction première des textes qu'elles nous conservent."[440]

This statement is still largely the consensus in our field today: it is accepted that the language is Standard Babylonian and, presumably, belongs in the 1st millennium BC. Preferably, however, we should try to narrow this down to a more specific period in time, in particular, to the Late Babylonian period (331 BC–80 CE). Because the manuscripts stem from this time and

[440] Thureau-Dangin 1921: 2.

because no precursors are known, the focus should lie on the LB period first; only if such a late date of composition can be dismissed, we can try to find an earlier date of composition. To determine whether the NYF texts were created in the LB period, a control corpus is used, consisting, largely, of Astronomical Diaries, which are dated and cover the main part of that period. In particular the historical sections of those texts, which are more narrative in nature and less technical than the astronomical sections, are helpful. Moreover, if the NYF texts were composed in the LB period, they would have originated in the same context as the Astronomical Diaries. Aside from the Diaries, examples from other LB temple ritual texts from Babylon will be cited to show that similar linguistic features can be found there.

Assyriologists are used to deal with multiple copies of the same text, which has obscured the question of whether the spelling used in cuneiform manuscripts can help in dating the moment of creation of the composition in question. It is unclear to which degree scribes would have adapted ancient manuscripts according to more contemporary orthographic standards while copying them. We can imagine that smaller changes to, for example, possessive and pronominal suffixes, verbal prefixes or case endings, were easily made, whereas others would have meant a more severe intrusion in the "original" text or Vorlage, e.g. adding signs to double consonants (unnecessarily), changing logograms, adding reading aides etc. Since the aim of the Assyriologist is most often to create a composite text rather than to study a composition's evolution throughout time and space, such minor changes tend to get lost in modern studies.

Another problem lies in the fact that not everything which is written equals a spoken linguistic reality, just as not everything which was spoken is written.[441] Therefore, it is often difficult to decide whether a written form represents a change in orthographic custom or in morphological or syntactic rules. For that reason, morphology will be discussed together with orthography; syntax will be examined below.

Although "a thoroughgoing study of Babylonian orthography in the first millennium is a real desideratum,"[442] Streck has summarized seven general principles of cuneiform writing which developed during the course of the first millennium BC: CV-CV for /CVC/; (C)VC-CV for /CVC/; vocally indifferent CV(C)-signs; complementation of CVC-signs; non-notation of vowels; morphophonological writings; the use of aleph to indicate long vowels.[443] Another

[441] Streck 2014: 248: "Die Schwierigkeiten der späten Keilschriftorthographie sind also beträchtlich. Nicht alles, was sprachliche Realität ist, wird auch geschrieben; umgekehrt ist nicht alles, was geschrieben ist, auch sprachliche Realität."
[442] George 2000: 273 note 32.
[443] Streck 2001. See also Reynolds 2019: 133-163.

development lies in the declining use of case endings, first from triptotic singular (*u*/*i*/*a*) and diptotic plural (*ū*/*ī*) to diptotic singular (*u*/*i*/*u*) and the single *ī* for plural; second, to a minimal use of case endings, including some non-writings.[444] On this roughly sketched timeline, the NYF texts can, without a doubt, be placed close to the *Endstadium*.[445]

| | | 1. Stadium | 2. Stadium | Endstadium |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Singular, kurze Vokale (§§ 4.3-6) | Nominativ | *-u* | *-u* | *-0* |
| | Genitiv | *-i* | *-i* | (?*-u* >) *-0* |
| | Akkusativ | *-a* | *-u* | *-0* |
| Singular, kontraktionslange Vokale (§ 4.2) | Nominativ | *-û* | *-û* | *-û* |
| | Genitiv | *-î* | *-î* | ?*-û*/*-î* |
| | Akkusativ | *-â* | *-û* | *-û* |
| Plural maskulin (§ 4.7) | Nominativ | *-ū* | *-ē* | *-ē* |
| | Obliquus | *-ī* | *-ē* | *-ē* |
| *ān*-Plural (§ 4.8) | Nominativ | *-ānū* | *-ānē* | *-ān* |
| | Obliquus | *-ānī* | *-ānē* | *-ān* |
| *ūt*-Plural (§ 4.9) | Nominativ | *-ūtu* | *-ūti* | *-ūt* |
| | Obliquus | *-ūti* | *-ūti* | *-ūt* |
| Femininer Plural (§ 4.10) | Nominativ | *-ātu* | *-āti* | *-āt* |
| | Obliquus | *-āti* | *-āti* | *-āt* |
| Aramäischer Plural auf *-ījā* (§ 4.11) | Nominativ/ Obliquus | | | **-ajjā* > *-ījā* |

*Figure 2: Development of Case Endings in the First Millennium BC (Streck 2014: 285)*

Aside from the aspects listed by Streck, all of which can be found in the NYF texts, several other orthographic/morphologic features can be discerned. An overview with examples is given below.

- CV-CV for /CVC/

Closed syllables, which would generally be written with a CVC sign, are sometimes written with CV-CV instead, which leads to the appearance of a superfluous vowel: *ta-ḫa-ṭu* for *taḫâṭ* (NYF1 I 20); *da-bi-bi* for *dābib* (NYF5 IV 5'); *ma-di-di* for *mādid* (NYF3 I 7'; NYF4 III 9); *be-lu* for *bēl* (NYF2 I 9); *pa-pa-ḫi* for *papāḫ* (NYF4 IV 3; NYF4 IV 27). The same can be observed in other LB temple ritual texts, e.g. BM 32206+: *ú-ra-du* for *urrad* (II 87).

- (C)VC-CV for /CVC/

The form *ḫu-ub-bu* for *ḫūb* (4 IV 21).

- vocally indifferent CV(C)-signs

[444] Streck 2014, summary page 285-286.

[445] An important contribution to this discussion is the study of the language and orthography of the Babylon Calendar Treatise by Reynolds (2019: 121-181). Reynolds has thoroughly proven the LB date of composition of this treatise (page 13-17), which, like the NYF texts, contain earlier material and poetic language on the one hand and typical features of LB on the other. Her study has served as an example for the present chapter.

While in most cases vocal indifference concerns a CVC sign, it can also occur that the vowel in a CV sign within a word is non-representative: *ta-ra-áš-šá-šú-nu-ti* for *taraššīšunūti* (NYF1 I 24). In other LB temple ritual texts, we find this phenomenon too. BM 32656: *mi-iḫ-ri-ku* for *maḫrīku* (III 10); *i-tap-ṭer* for **ittapṭar* (III 20').[446]

- phonetic complements to CVC-signs

Because the vowel in CVC-signs cannot be taken at face-value, sometimes a phonetic complement is added to make the reading clearer: *ú-rib*$^{bi}$ for *urīb* (NYF4 V 40).

- unexpected gemination

As remarked by George, some LB texts include words in which unnecessary gemination occurs. In some cases, this leads to the closure of a short open syllable, which thus becomes stressed, although it is normally considered to be unstressed:[447] *pa-liḫ-ḫi-šú* for *pāliḫišu* (NYF3 I 10'), *pa-liḫ-ḫi-ku* for *pāliḫiku* (NYF3 I 29'//NYF4 II 5). This phenomenon occurs at multiple instances in another LB ritual text, BM 32656: *ú-lal-la* for *ullal* (II 2'); *né-pe-éš-šú* for *nēpešu* (IV 8'; IV 18'), *mu-uṣ-ṣú-lal-lu* for *muṣlālu* (IV 3'); *kal-la-šú-un-nu* for *kalāšunu* (IV 10'); *a-ga-an-num-ma* for *aganumma* (IV 11').

- ommission of vowels

Sometimes after CVC or VC signs the expected following vowel is ommitted in writing: *ta-nit-ku* for *tanittaku* (NYF1 I 28; NYF4 II 8); *ma-áš* for *mašû* (NYF1 32); *i-šár-qa* for *išarraqa* (NYF4 IV 9); *ú-ma-áš* for *umašši* (NYF4 V 40).

- morphophonological spelling

Morphophonological signs add information about the morphological structure of the word/sign to which they are attached rather than purely phonological information: diĝir$^{meš\text{-}a\text{-}nu}$ for *ilāni* (NYF4 V 12). In BM 32206+ we find: tuš$^{meš\text{-}ʾ}$ for *ašbā* (I 17).

- aleph

The aleph sign could be used to indicate long vowels: *ma-ʾ-diš* for *mādiš* (NYF5 IV 21'). In other LB ritual texts we see this as well. BM 32656*: ip-pu-ša-ʾ* (IV 11'). BM 32206+ [*uš-š*]*á-ba-ʾ* (I 16); *il-la-ʾ* (I 18); *iz-zi-zu-ʾ* (II 85); *i-ru-ub-bu-ʾ* (III 90); du$^{ku\text{-}ʾ}$ for *illakū* (III 92); *i-ru-bu-ʾ* (III 101; III 105; III 111); *uš-šá-bu-ʾ* (III 111); *il-lu-ʾ* (IV 161); *i-bi-it-tu-ʾ* (IV 163).

[446] George 2000: 270-280 with notes on relevant lines.
[447] George 2000: 279.

- variation: *u* (not *ú*) to indicate *ū/û*

*lab-šu-u* for *labšū* (NYF1 VI 19); *ba-šu-u* for *bašû* (NYF2 VI 7'); *ku-ut-tu-mu-u* for *kuttumū* (NYF4 II 26*); i-qab-bu-u* for *iqabbû* (NYF4 IV 30)

- case endings
  - no case ending

We find instances in which the case ending is omitted unexpectedly: *ta-mi-iḫ* for *tāmiḫu* (NYF2 I 13); mul *mi-šar* for *kakkab mīšari* (NYF4 III 7); *ik-let* for *ikleti* (NYF4 III 15); pú *ì-diq-lat* for *būrti idiqlati* (NYF4 IV 5); egir *ḫu-ub* for *arki ḫubbi* (NYF4 IV 23).

This phenomenon occurs most often with feminine forms, which are written with a final CVC-sign that does not alow to distinguish between different cases:[448] *naq-bit* for *naqbītu* (NYF1 I 36; NYF3 VI 20; NYF4 III 34, V 19; NYF5 II 14'); *ina dan-nát* for *ina dannati* (NYF2 II 5//NYF4 II 11); *gaš-rat i-lat* for *gašrat ilāti* (NYF3 I 17'); *nam-rat ṣi-rat šá-qát* for *namirtu ṣīrtu šaqūtu* (NYF3 I 22'); *ina ri-šat* for *ina rīšāti* (NYF4 II 13); zálag *kib-rat* for *nūr kibrāti* (NYF4 III 14); *naq-bat* for *naqbātu* (NYF5 III 22); *ḫis-sat* for *ḫissatu* (NYF5 IV 5')

The omission of case-endings occurs repeatedly in the other LB temple ritual texts as well. A few more remarkable examples are the following: BM 32206+ *nap-tan* for *naptanu* (I 44); *ina a-šar-šú-nu* for *ina ašrišunu* (IV 163).

  - genitive singular *-u* instead of *-i*

Streck understood the increasing replacement of the genitive suffix *-i* with *-u* as an Akkadography, in which the nominative form became the *Zitierkasus* for the genitive, or as a replacement similar to the accusative shift from *-a* to -u: zálag lú$^{tú}$ for *nūr amēlūti* (NYF1 I 14); šu$^{II}$ *na-as-ku* for *qāt naski* (NYF1 I 29; NYF3 I 27'//NYF4 II 3); érin *ki-din-nu* for *ṣābē kidinni* (NYF1 I 32; NYF3 I 30'; NYF4 II 6, NYF4 V 41); šà *tur-ru* for *libbi turri* (NYF1 VI 27); *ina ta-ni-ḫu* for *ina tānīḫi* (NYF2 II 6//NYF4 II 12); *ina* ka-*ka ṣir-tú* for *ina amātika ṣīrti* (NYF3 I 14'); *a-ki-lat kar-ṣu* for *ākilat karṣī* (NYF3 I 24'); *ṣa-bi-tat a-bu-tú* for *ṣābitat abbūti* (NYF3 I 24'); *ina ḫi-da-a-tú* for *ina ḫidâti* (NYF4 II 13); *ki-iṣ* $u_4$*-mu* for *kīṣ ūmi* (NYF4 II 22); *šá-ri-ik* uru$_4$$^{tú}$ for *šārik mērēšti* (NYF4 III 4); *na-áš ṣa-ad-du* for *nāš ṣaddi* (NYF4 III 5); mul *kit-tú* for *kakkab kitti* (NYF4 III 7); šub$^{át}$ *dan-nu-tú* for *mušamqitat dannuti* (NYF4 III 26); mul *nu-uḫ-šú* for *kakkab nuḫši* (NYF4 III 28); mul *bal-tú* for *kakkab bālti* (NYF4 III 29); *ba-nát re-ḫu-tú*

[448] A similar way of writing in absolutes is found in a Late Babylonian text from Uruk describing the goddess Antu, see Beaulieu 2019: 240-242 with note 21: "A copy of an earlier text would more likely (though not systematically) adhere to traditional orthography."

for *bānât reḫûti* (NYF4 III 31); pú *pu-ra-át-tú* for *būrti Puratti* (NYF4 IV 5); dumu $^{lú}$*um-man-nu* for *mārē ummâni* (NYF4 IV 25, 29, 41; NYF4 V 20, 21, 23, 30); *a-sa-ar ka-lu-tu* for *asar kalûti* (NYF5 III 5, 21); *šá du-uš-mu-ú* for *ša dušmê* (NYF5 IV 15'); *ina ta-ni-ḫu* for *ina tānīḫi* (NYF5 IV 17'); *a-sa-ar a-ši-pu-tu* for *asar āšipūti* (NYF5 IV 20'); gim $u_4$*-mu* for *kīma ūmi* (NYF6 II 11'); *ši-pir ni-kil-tú* for *šipir nikilti* (NYF6 II 13'); *ana* $u_4$*-mu ṣa-a-tu*$_4$ for *ana ūm ṣâti*(NYF6 II 15'); *ina* ugu *el-me-šú* for *ina muḫḫi elmeši* (NYF6 Rd.).

- unusual vowel to indicate case ending

In a few instances, the case seems to be indicated by the "wrong" vowel: lugal *dam-qa* for *šarru damqu* (NYF1 I 8); *šá gi-na-a* for *ša ginê* (NYF1 I 38); *ṣi-rì* for *ṣīru* (NYF2 I 11); *nu-u-ri nam-ri* for *nūru namru* (NYF2 I 15); *ina pu-uš-qa* for *ina pušqi* (NYF2 II 5//NYF4 II 11).

- pseudo-mimation

As opposed to the mostly late form the case endings take in the NYF texts, sometimes mimation occurs, which should be considered here as an archaising mechanism. Typical is the ending -*tum*, which can however still be understood as -*tu*$_4$: *ur-tu*$_4$ (NYF1I 21); $^{d}$*zar-pa-ni-tu*$_4$ (NYF2 VI 3'; NYF3 I 18', I 21'; NYF5 IV 24'); *ṣa-a-tu*$_4$ (NYF6 II 15'). In the Kislīmu-ritual BM 32206+ we find: [… *ṣa*]-*al-ma-am* (I 11).

- hybrid possessive construction

In a few cases a possessive construction consists of a construct state followed by *ša*: *ana* dù$^{eš}$ *šá* for *ana epēši ša* (NYF1 VI 3); egir *ḫu-ub šá* for *arki ḫubbi ša* (NYF4 IV 23). This might also be understood simply as a spelling without case ending.

- pronominal suffixes

Pronominal suffixes in the NYF texts mainly take late forms, most prominently -*ku* for -*ka* and -*šunūtu* for -*šunūti*.[449] Moreover, the female forms -*ki* and -*ši*/-*ša* are sometimes replaced by -*ku* and -*šu*, showing the relatively small importance of the final vowel. Still, in a few instances in the prayers, the older pronoun -*ka* appears, but never consequently: ur$_5$.úš$^{meš}$-*ka* (NYF1 I 20); *la-pa-<ti>-ka* (NYF1 I 22); gi-*ka* (NYF1 I 23); *nap-lu-si-ka* (NYF1 I 24); ka-*ka* (NYF3 I 14'; in this case, the choice of suffix may have been influenced by the preceding ka).

[449] See GAG §42 j.

- independent pronouns

Also independent pronouns have a typically late form, most clearly *kâšu* for *kâši* and *šuātu* for *šuāti*.[450] Like the suffixes, feminine independent pronouns are interchangeable with male ones: gim *šá-a-šú* for *kīma šâši* (NYF3 I 23'). A rather remarkable example is nu$^{meš}$ *šu-nu-tú* for *ṣalmū šunu* (NYF1 VI 12).

- late precative

The prayers in the NYF texts contain some petitions expressed in precatives. While almost all take a SB form with prefix *li-*, in one instance we find a post-7$^{th}$ century BC form with a prefix *lu-* for the Š-stem: *lu-šar-bu-u* (NYF2 II 2//NYF4 II 8).[451]

- prefix *ta-* 3$^{rd}$ person f. sg.

The use of the prefix *ta-* to indicate the 3$^{rd}$ person feminine singular shows influence from Aramaic in vernacular Babylonian. Its use in a Standard Babylonian text may be an indication of a late date of composition. No feminine forms are used in the NYF texts, but some other temple ritual texts do include them. BM 32206+: *ta-nam-di* (III 102) *ta-šaṭ-ṭár* (III 102); and *passim* in BM 32482+,[452] BM 40854+ and BM 40790.[453]

- omission of determinative

At some instances in the NYF texts an expected determinative is omitted, such as in the writing of the goddess Bēltīya as gašan$^{iá}$ instead of $^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$ (NYF2 I 3; NYF5 II 11') or in the omission of lú before dumu (NYF1 I 32; NYF3 VI 4; NYF4 IV 25; NYF4 VI 30).

- petrified forms

A typically late petrified form found in the NYF texts is *an-na-a* for *annâ* (NYF1 I 36, II 16, VI 9; NYF2 I 4; NYF3 VI 13, VI 20; NYF4 II 21, IV 30, V 11, V 37; NYF5 II 14', III 7, III 22), which is used instead of any other form of the demonstrative *annû*.[454] While the use of the form *annâ* to indicate either nominative, accusative or genitive of *annû* is attested from the NB period onwards, it was not used to the exclusion of other forms at that time.[455]According to Streck, it became more frequently used under influence of the Aramaic status emphaticus.[456] In

[450] See GAG §41 i.
[451] See GAG §81 c. But note *li-šá-pu-u* in the following line!
[452] Da Riva 2019a.
[453] See also Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 205 note on line I 13'.
[454] George 2000: 69 note on line III 22.
[455] CAD A/2 140 s.v. *annû* n.
[456] Streck 2014: 254-255.

the Astronomical Diaries, the petrified *annâ* is attested only from 138 BC onwards, although admittedly, there are no other attestations of any form of *annû* in the corpus before that date.[457] Other LB temple ritual texts also make exclusive use of this frozen form: BM 32656 (IV 8'; IV 18') and BM 40790 (II 17'; II 26'; III 8).

Another ossified form might be found in *iḫ-zu-us-su-nu* (NYF1 VI 14). In CAD the word is explained as a hapax legomenon *iḫzūtu+šunu*.[458] It is more likely, however, that we are dealing with a petrified locative ending to the word *iḫzu+uš+šunu*, which in this case was used as a nominative, however. Similar forms of this type occur in LB historical texts[459] and in the LB Calendar Treatise.[460]

- unconventional and "late" spelling

The NYF texts contain some examples of spelling, about which it cannot be said with certainty whether they are simply mistakes or rather just unconventional: *ana* $^{lú}$ìr *qa-bu-u* for *ana ardi qābê* (NYF2 II 4/NYF4 II 10 and other examples with *qabû*); *i-rak-ka-as-šú-nu-tú* for *irakkassunūti* (NYF3 VI 16); *il-lik* for *illakū* (NYF3 VI 10) *a-bu-šu-nu* for *abbūssunu* (NYF4 II 7; unless the author meant to use the word *abu*, but that would be a mistake, since the expression is *abbūtu ṣabātu*)[461]; *ú-šá-kam-su* for *ušakmassu* (NYF4 V 36).

Further occurrences of unconventional spelling can be found in the choice for specific logograms. An unparallelled writing is gì$^{a}$ to denote *ginâ* (NYF4 II 13; II 19; III 36; NYF5 II 13') and gì$^{ú}$ for *ginû* (NYF3 VI 7).[462] Otherwise curious is $^{i}$tu$_5$ to write *irammuk* (NYF3 II 5'//NYF4 II interl. after 28): perhaps the scribe wanted to make sure that the reader understood the logogram as a verb (*irammuk*) and not as a noun (*rimku*); in that case it works as a morphophonological spelling.[463] There is also bad$^{ma}$ for *šumma* (NYF3 VI 10; 11; NYF4 IV 22), more common in omen catalogues.[464] Sometimes the scribe used a spelling commonly found in late astronomical texts, instead of the more conventional logogram: ME for *ūmu* instead of UD (NYF1 VI 1; NYF4 III 38; IV 24; NYF5 III 23); SI for *ubānu* instead of ŠU.SI (NYF1 VI 12).

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[457] ADART nos. -137A rev. 9'; -124B obv. 2'; -123A obv. 18'.
[458] CAD I-J 48.
[459] See Jursa & Debourse 2017: 79-80 note on line 18.
[460] Reynolds 2019: 138.
[461] CAD Ṣ 24 s.v. *ṣabātu* 8 (in combination with *abbūtu*).
[462] George 2000: 268 note on line ii 12'-13'; *Racc*. 136 note 1.
[463] Borger *MZL* no. 567 s.v. ŠU-NAGA.
[464] CAD Š/3 275-276, see also Fincke 2006-7: 135.

Finally, the choice of the scribe not to write a logogram but to use syllabic spelling instead is sometimes surprising: *ma-ri-šú* instead of dumu-*šú* (NYF5 III 3); *ṣab-be* instead of érin for *ṣābē* (NYF4 V 41; note the double *-bb-* to indicate the long *ā*).

### V.1.3 Phonology

The NYF texts are written in the Babylonian dialect of the Akkadian language and there is little that seems unconventional in terms of phonology aside from the following two exceptions.

- *iq-ta-* to *iq-ṭa-* (or *ig-da*?)

The perfect of the verb *qabû* is in the NYF texts typically written with emphatic *-ṭ-* following *-q-*: *iq-ṭa-bi* (NYF2 V 2'); *aq-ṭa-bi* (NYF4 V 39). This feature is exceptionally rare in Babylonian, but occurs in some other LB texts, amongst which are a second century letter (BaM Beih. 2 113: 20) and a number of historical-literary texts, sparking the idea that these texts stem from the same scribal school.[465] Earlier dated Babylonian texts do not display this feature, making this a clear marker for a late date of origin.

- A and E

In the NYF texts, we sometimes notice a shift between the a- and e-vowel. The verb *qerēbu* transforms into *qarābu*: *i-qa-ru-ub* (NYF1 VI 23); *aru* becomes *eru*: *e-ri* (NYF3 VI, 15). In BM 32206+, we find the use of *neḫēsu* for *naḫāsu*: *né-eḫ-su* (III 93); and *e-le-e* instead of *a-le-e* (*alû*; III 102).[466]

### V.1.4 Syntax

The syntax in the NYF texts is mostly simple and unexceptional. We can discern some differences between the sentence structure in the prayers on the one hand and in the ritual instructions on the other. Typical for the prayers here is that a god is invoked with a sequence of relative clauses introduced by *ša* and with active participles ([subject] – active ptc. – object). Aside from those phrases, there are petition clauses in which the initial position is occupied by a precative or imperative.

In the ritual instructions, most sentences are built along an SOV pattern, although we do also encounter a few sentences with the verb in the initial position (NYF2 V 4', 5'; NYF4 V 33;

[465] BM 26 (Jursa & Debourse 2017: 84); BM 35322 and BM 45684 (Grayson 1975a nos. 5 and 9 respectively; see also page 49).
[466] Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 102 note on lines.

NYF5 II 6'; III 6; IV 22').[467] Aside from simple SOV sentences, we find subordinated sentences introduced by the following subjunctions: *enūma*, *kī*, *ultu*, *šumma*, *mala ša*. They are treated in more detail below. The subjunctive is used irregularly in both prayers and ritual instructions and, aside from that, it often remains unclear whether the scribe intended to indicate a weak ending or a subjunctive, as the vowel added could indicate both. Still, in many cases it is undeniably absent. This fits with the general tendency to omit final short vowels in Late Babylonian and as in the examples cited above, we do not know whether this development was merely orthographical or not.

- *enūma*

The appearance of the subjunction *enūma* in this corpus is remarkable, since it is not usually found in Neo-Babylonian or Late Babylonian texts, in which it is most often replaced by *kī* (here only NYF3 VI 13).[468] Nevertheless, here it occurs quite regularly in the ritual instructions to conclude a ritual sequence and introduce the following one. In fact, *enūma* seems to be part of specific formulations: (1) *enūma* X *bēr ūmu išqâ* ([NYF1 VI 1]; NYF4 III 38; NYF4 IV 23); (2) *enūma annâ īpušu/ītepšu* (NYF3 VI 13; NYF4 II 21); (3) *enūma* X *iqbû* (NYF3 VI 7; probably also NYF3 VI 29, but the verb is broken). In these phrases, *enūma* is followed by a preterite or a perfect. There is one other occurrence where this is different and a stative is used (NYF4 IV 2).[469]

The use of *enūma* in the NYF texts can be explained by the fact that the subjunction is typically associated with rituals and is common in ritual texts. Many ritual texts start with the word, e.g. *enūma igār bīt ili iqâpu*, "when the wall of the temple buckles" (the building ritual of the lamentation priest),[470] and because ritual texts were often cited by their first line, the association of *enūma* with the genre must have been evident. This is also suggested by the few times the word *enūma* makes an appearance in the Astronomical Diaries. Although we would not expect the word to occur in those late texts, it appears five times in total. In two entries a ritual is cited by its incipit starting with *enūma*:

> itu bi u$_4$.10.kám […] [$^{lú}$]maš.maš$^{meš}$ *u* $^{lú}$lagar$^{meš}$ *šá* é.sag.gíl *né-pe-šú šá* ***e-nu-ma*** […] *lìb-bu-ú šaṭ-ri ina pa-ni-šú* dù$^{u'}$

[467] Note that in the NYF texts, mostly in the ritual instructions, sentences do not always concur with lines on the tablet and enjambement occurs often. Therefore, verbs as the first words of a line are not always the first word in the sentence.
[468] CAD I-J 159 s.v. *inūma*; see also Hackl's list of subjunctions in Late Babylonian letters (2007:16-32).
[469] The verb in the *enūma*-sentence in NYF4 IV 24 is perhaps part of the broken signs or not even there.
[470] Ambos 2004: 177-195; Linssen 2004: 100-109 and 283-305.

> "That month, the 10th day […] the exorcists and lamentation priests of Esagila performed the ritual of '**When** […]' that is written in front of it."[471]

> itu bi ge$_6$ 1 […] *né-pe-šú šá* ***e-nu-ma*** $^{d}$im *ana* é.gal […]
> "That month, night of the first, […] the ritual of '**When** Adad to the palace' […]"[472]

Another Diary uses the word *enūma* not to cite a known ritual text but actually as a subjunction of time to indicate when the rituals it mentions took place:

> itu bi ***e-nu-ma*** *né-peš šá* diĝir$^{meš}$ […]
> "That month, **when** the rituals of the gods […]"

> ge$_6$ 17 17 ***e-nu-ma*** *né-peš ana* ugu [...]
> "Night of the 17th (and) the 17th, **when** the ritual upon […]"

> itu bi 1 3 7 15 16 ***e-nu-ma*** *né-pe*-[...]
> "That month, on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 15th, 16th, **when** the ritua[l …]"[473]

These are all the occurrences of *enūma* in the ADART. In other words, *enūma* appears in the Astronomical Diaries only in relation with rituals. This very specific use of *enūma* is indicative of the sociolect of the authors of the Diaries, who clearly associated the word with rituals and therefore must have known those rituals to a certain degree. Moreover, this goes to show that *enūma* cannot serve to date the NYF texts to a period before the 6th century BC, because the word was essentially part of the ritual jargon and more widely associated with rituals.[474] In fact, it may even have been used so prominently in the NYF texts in order to give them more ritual authenticity.

Furthermore, one sentence in the NYF texts shows that the author(s) were confused about its use, because the subjunction is used in a wrong way:

> *enūma* $^{d}$*Nabû* [*ina* ki.igi.šú.éri]n.dù *ina kašādišu ana* $^{d}$*Nabû ubarrūšu*
> "When Nabû arrives [*at the place where the people*] *perform* [*the covering of the face (rite)*] they will present it to Nabû"[475]

Here there is a superfluous *enūma*: *ina kašādišu* should fully replace the temporal subordinated sentence, including the subjunction. The author(s) of this text were thus unable to use this "fancy" *enūma* correctly.

- *ultu*

While the form *ultu muḫḫi ša* is more common in Neo- and Late Babylonian, *ultu* does occur alone as well to introduce temporal clauses.[476] In the NYF texts, it seems to overlap in use with

[471] ADART no. -270B rev. 15'-17'.
[472] ADART no. -256 obv. 19'-20'.
[473] ADART no. -229B obv. 6', obv. 11', rev. 13'.
[474] See also CAD I-J 160 s.v. *inūma* 1j: "and *passim* in these [ritual; CD] texts".
[475] NYF4 V 24-25. Quite certainly, the lacuna does not contain a verbal form that goes with *enūma*.
[476] Hackl 2007: 31 and 107-110.

*enūma* and mostly occurs in the expression *ultu naqbītu*/*naqbâte iqbû* (NYF1 I 36; NYF4 III 34; V 19; NYF5 III 22). One exceptional example may be found in NYF4 III 38-39:

> *enūma* 1 *bēr ūmu išqâ ultu riksū ša paššūri ša* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya šalmū mašmaššu išassīma*
> "when the day is one double-hour high, after the ritual arrangements of the offering table of Bēl and Bēltīya are completed, he will call for the exorcist".

Here, the *ultu*-sentence includes a stative, although we would expect a simple preterite as in the preceding *enūma*-sentence.[477] Moreover, it is unclear why the two temporal subordinated sentences would not have been connected by a simple conjunction ("and") instead of using another temporal subjunction. The most reasonable explanation would be that the order of events was (1) completion of offering arrangements, (2) correct time of the day is reached, (3) the exorcist is summoned. Therefore, the *ultu*-sentence expresses an action that took place before the one found in the *enūma*-sentence and thus depends on a verb in the preterite form, which allows for a stative in the dependent clause.

- *šumma*

While *šumma* had fallen completely out of use in the quotidian variants of Neo- and Late Babylonian,[478] priestly scribes frequently would have come upon the word in their studies of omen compendia.[479] Moreover, as Uri Gabbay suggested, the ancient scribes might have understood *šumma* as a "noun without a syntactical connection to the following clause" in which case "it would function similarly to ÉN before incantations and prayers, where it indicates the beginning of an entry belonging to a certain genre."[480] It would seem that the three occurrences of this subjunction in the NYF texts (NYF3 VI 10, 11; NYF4 IV 22) were directly inspired by such scholarly lists, as is suggested by the use of the logogram BE to write *šumma* in all three instances, a spelling typical for such lists.[481]

- *mala ša*

*Mala* ("as much as") usually functions as a relative particle with words that allow for quantification, but in the Neo- and Late Babylonian language it tends to be replaced by *ša*.[482] *Mala* appears alone once in the NYF texts (NYF2 VI 6'), but twice it is complemented with *ša* (NYF4 II 24-25; IV 18-19). There, *mala ša* stands on its own without antecedent, in which case

[477] As the verb in the subordinated *ultu*-sentence dependent on a preterite would usually take the *iprus*-form (Hackl 2007: 108).
[478] In the corpus of letters studied by Hackl, it is replaced by *kī* (Hackl 2007: 24 and 67).
[479] There are multiple LB copies of large omen compendia such as *šumma izbu* (De Zorzi 2014).
[480] Gabbay 2016: 71.
[481] CAD Š/3 275-276, see also Fincke 2006-7: 135.
[482] Hackl 2007: 28 and 45.

*mala* may be interpreted as taking on the role of an indefinite pronoun.[483] In this interpretation, *mala ša* would mean "everything that". However, a better translation in the contexts in which it occurs in the NYF texts is "as long as" or "while".[484] As such, it seems that we should understand here *mala ša* as a singular subjunction.

### V.1.5 Lexicon

The number of different words used in the NYF texts is confined. Both the ritual instructions and the prayers are very repetitive and draw mostly on a delimited set of expression and words, which is typical for both genres.[485] However, we can notice a few deviations from this rigid language. Aside from that, the NYF texts contain a number of hapax legomena and rare words as well as both archaisms and 'late Babylonianisms'.

- prayer language

The prayers consist largely of epithets and stockphrases usually found in (Marduk) prayers.[486] The most occurring noun in the NYF texts is possibly Bēl ($^{d}$en). Typical phrases are: *rēmu rašû* (NYF1 I 24, 30; NYF2 II 4//NYF4 II 10; NYF3 I 13';); *qāt naski ṣabātu* (NYF1 I 29; NYF3 I 27'//NYF4 II 3; NYF5 IV 9'); *pānu suḫḫuru* (NYF1 I 31); *balāṭu šūruku* (NYF2 II 6//NYF4 II 12; NYF3 I 30'//NYF4 II 6); *napšuru* (NYF3 I 12'); *damqātu qabû* (NYF1 I 26; V 29; NYF2 II 4//NYF4 II 10; NYF3 I 11', 28'//NYF4 II 4; NYF5 IV 6'; NYF6 II 7'); *šīmtu šâmu* (NYF3 I 29'//NYF4 II 5; NYF6 II 5';); *qurdu dabābu* (NYF1 I 25, 27; NYF2 II 3, 8//NYF4 II 9, 14; NYF5 IV 4').[487]

Still, intertextual links with other corpora are clearly present and lead to the use of unusual vocabulary; they will be discussed below (chapter V.4.1).

- ritual language

The NYF texts contain typical ritual language which we know from other Akkadian ritual texts. It concerns specific activities including (1) the preparation and removing of offerings: *qerēbu* (*qarābu*), *šarāqu*, *paššūru paṭāru*, *paššūru rakāsu*, *naqû*, *mullû*; *dišpu*, *ḫimētu*, *šamnu*, *tardennu*, *riqâtu*, *burāšu*, *ginû*, *ṭābtu*, *šappu*, *nignakkû*, *karānu*; (2) the recitation of prayers: *qabû*, *manû*, *karābu*; *ikribu*, *šuillakku*, *naqbītu*, *šipātu*; (3) the process of purification: *šamnu*

[483] See also Hackl 2007: 45.
[484] See also CAD M/1 s.v. *mala* d.
[485] "Ritualtexte gebrauchen wie andere Fachtexte eine klare Prosa mit spezifischen Fachausdrücken und Idiomen, die Sätze sind einfach gebaut" (Sallaberger 2008: 428; RlA 11 s.v. Ritual). A glossary of the Akkadian words in the NYF texts can be found in index VIII.3.
[486] For the characteristics of Bēl and Bēltīya respectively found in the NYF texts, see below page 293.
[487] For comparison, see dictionaries under the respective lemata; see also Oshima 2011: 437-460 (indices).

*lapātu*, *kuppuru*, *ḫâbu*, *ramāku*; *mê qātē*; (4) the cultic loci: *bītu*, *papāḫu*, *kisalmāḫu*; (5) and the cultic agents: *ērib-bīti*, *kalû*, *nāru*, *mašmaššu*.[488]

Nevertheless, some ritual actions that we know from other rituals are expressed with different words in the NYF texts: *našû* in the meaning "to recite" (NYF4 II 24-25); *gadalû dekû*, "to open the *gadalû*-curtain", instead of using other verbs like *nuḫḫu*[489], *šadādu*[490] or *nasāku*[491]; *dalāti petû* instead of *bābu petû*; *piṭir paššūri*, "rest offerings" (NYF1 VI 20; NYF5 IV 8).

Some of the ritual instructions are less "ritual" in style and contain rather technical information about the fashioning of the statues or the division of offerings. These are the parts relating to the assignments of the *mārē ummâni*, who are called upon (*šasû*) by the Elder Brother.

- hapax legomena, archaisms, 'late babylonianisms'

There are some words and phrases that stand out, because they are very rare or occur only in the NYF texts: *asarru* (NYF5 III 5, 21; IV 20'; NYF6 II 3');[492] *mulappinat* (D-stem of *lapānu*; NYF3 I 25'//NYF4 II 1);[493] *murriš* (D-stem of *erēšu*; NYF3 I 7');[494] *eršūtu* (NYF4 III 3);[495] *gimrētu* (NYF1 I 19); *šuššān* (NYF3 VI 13);[496] the formula *parṣēšunu kīma ša ginâ ippušū*;[497] and the temple name é-u$_4$-ul.[498]

We also encounter words that can only be explained as archaisms, both in the ritual instructions and in the prayers: *kīam* (NYF5 III 26; IV 23'; also BM 32656 III 4');[499] *nagbu* (NYF3 VI 18);[500] *burrû* (NYF4 V 25);[501] *turru* (NYF1 VI 26, 27);[502] *kazbu* (NYF3 I 19');[503] *ṣaddu* (NYF4 III 5);[504] *šalḫû* (NYF4 V 42);[505] *narbû* (NYF5 IV 18');[506] *šuluḫḫu* (NYF6 II 9');[507] *namrirrū*

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[488] Compare with the list of technical terms in the NA state rituals in Parpola 2017: LXXIX-LXXXI See also Linssen 2004: 129-165.
[489] TU 45 obv. 14 (Linssen 2004: 283).
[490] BM 32206+ I 7 (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 93)
[491] BM 40790 *passim* (Da Riva & Galetti 2018).
[492] Jursa & Debourse 2017: 91 note on line II 3'-4'; George 2000: 268 note on line iii 5. See also below, page 200.
[493] CAD L 82 s.v. *lapānu* 2.
[494] CAD E 289 s.v. *erēšu* B 2.
[495] CAD E 318.
[496] CAD Š/3 384.
[497] George 2000: 261.
[498] George 1992: 390-391.
[499] CAD K 325.
[500] CAD N/1 104 s.v. *nagabbu*.
[501] CAD B 331.
[502] CAD T 472 s.v. *tumru*.
[503] CAD K 310.
[504] CAD Ṣ 56.
[505] CAD Š/1 243.
[506] CAD N/1 350. The word occurs in the colophon oft he LB ritual text from Uruk, TU 38 (rev. 44; Linssen 2004: 175).
[507] CAD Š/3 260.

(NYF6 II 11’);[508] but also *enūma* and *šumma*, discussed above. The use of these ancient words should not be taken as an indication of the age of the NYF texts, at least not as far as the period of use of the archaisms is concerned. Instead, they show how the author(s) wanted to give these texts an aura of antiquity. This is very clear from the fact that typically late Babylonian vocabulary found its way into the composition as well: *alla* (NYF1 I 34; V 3; NYF5 III 3);[509] *kīṣu* (NYF4 II 22);[510] *nikiltu* (NYF6 II 13’);[511] as well as the “invocational” formula *ina amat* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya lišlim* (NYF2 u.e.), which is only attested from the late fourth century BC onwards.[512]

Other LB temple ritual texts also contain a number of hapax legomena and Late Babylonianisms. BM 32206+: *kiniṣtu* and *kulluš* are Aramaic loanwords (III 113);[513] the verb *i-kát-ti-il* is otherwise unknown (II 62).[514] BM 32656: *agannûmma* (from *agannû*; IV 12’).[515] BM 40790 includes a number of hapax legomena referring to textiles and clothing and to cultic officiants, e.g. *ḫullālānītu* (I 10’; II 12’; also BM 40854+ IV 9’).[516]

A specific set of ‘late’ words in the NYF texts are those that relate to time and, by extension, astronomy. The idioms used to express time occur in the same form in the ADART. A few examples are given below:

> *ina* $^{iti}$*nisanni*(bár) *ūmi* 2$^{kam}$ 1 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(ge$_6$)
> *ina* 17 *mūši*(ge$_6$)[517]
>
> [*enūma*] 1 ½ *bēr*(danna) *ūmu*(me) *išqâ*(nim$^{a}$)
> *in* 1 *bēr*(danna) *ūmu*(me) *išqâ*(nim$^{a}$)[518]
>
> *kīma*(gin) 1 *bēr*(danna) *ūmi*(me) *ana ereb šamši*(šú $^{d}$utu)
> *in* 1 *bēr*(danna) *ūmi*(me) *ana ereb šamši*(šú $^{d}$utu)[519]

As has been noted already above, not only the same words and expressions are used in both text types, they are also written in the same way. Other links to astronomical texts can be found in the references to the constellation of Pegasus (and the planet Mercury?) in the ritual instructions or the use of the names of celestial bodies and their epitheta in two prayers in

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[508] CAD N/1 237.
[509] CAD A/1 350.
[510] CAD K 445.
[511] CAD N/2 220.
[512] Oelsner 1986: 210 with notes 779 and 829. See also below, page 195. Admittedly, this is more relevant for dating the manuscript than the text.
[513] Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 90.
[514] Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 101 note on line.
[515] George 2000: 279 note on line.
[516] Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 203-204 note on line.
[517] NYF1 I 1 and ADART no. -225 rev. 5.
[518] NYF1 VI 1 and ADART no. -86A rev. 11’.
[519] NYF5 III 23 and ADART no. -226B rev. 9’.

NYF4.[520] A last example is the word *manzāzu* (NYF3 I 20'), which means "abode" or "rank" but also "position of celestial body".[521] The appearance of this technical astronomical jargon in the NYF texts is unparallelled in other ritual texts.

### V.1.6 Sumerian

Until now I have discussed some of the orthographic and grammatical features of the Akkadian used in the NYF texts as far as they are relevant for matters of dating. However, aside from Akkadian, the texts also include Sumerian (mostly Emesal), either in monolingual or bilingual prayers. Whereas the Babylonian text is overall clear, the same cannot be said about the Sumerian sections of the texts. Most editors have refrained from offering a translation of the monolingual parts and for bilingual prayers only the Akkadian lines can be found in translation. Farber, for example, explained at multiple instances in his edition that the Sumerian was too "unverständlich" for him to be able to offer a translation;[522] George put it as follows: "The Sumerian of this liturgy is not completely understood and may be partly *hocus pocus* [sic]."[523]

Especially remarkable is the lack of correspondence between the Akkadian and Sumerian lines in the bilingual prayers.[524] Moreover, not one prayer is fully bilingual; the dual structure is given up after a few lines in favour of monolingual Akkadian. The problematic nature of the Sumerian can be explained in two different ways: either we are incapable of retracing the steps that the ancient author(s) made in the process of creation, or the ancient author(s) were incapable of writing correct Sumerian, either due to the fact that the manuscripts from which they copied contained errors or because they composed the Sumerian from scratch and did not master the language well enough.[525]

Many cultic texts were known in bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian form from the Old Babylonian period onwards. Important genres that could be bilingual are the Balaĝs, Eršemas and Eršaḫuĝas, but also incantations in rituals such as *Mīs pî* could be bilingual.[526] Two principal mechanisms were at work in those compositions: either the base text was Sumerian and translated into Akkadian or the text was orginally written in Akkadian and then transposed to Sumerian. In the former case, the Akkadian translations were generally Standard Babylonian

[520] For a discussion, see below page 282.
[521] Rochberg 2007: 437.
[522] Farber 1987: 213, 214, 217, 218.
[523] George 2000: 268 note on lines ii 16'ff.
[524] Sic also Oshima 2011: 103.
[525] See also Oshima 2011: 103-104.
[526] For Balaĝs and Eršemas see Gabbay 2014 & 2015 (1st millennium BC) and Delnero, *forthcoming* (2nd millennium BC); for Eršaḫuĝas see Maul 1988; for *Mīs pî* see Walker & Dick 2001.

with few stylistic features as well as straightforward and simple orthography.[527] The Akkadian reading remained very close to the original meaning of the Sumerian, even though not all translations were done word-for-word: contextual (preciser translations) or stylistic (e.g. inversion of words) changes could occur.[528] Only in rare cases did the scribe deviate from the original meaning of the text, for example, when giving a nonliteral exegetical translation.[529] When the Sumerian is a translation of an original Akkadian text, this is often visible in Akkadian influence in the Sumerian grammar.[530] Yet, even though clearly 'affected' by their Akkadian counterpart, the Sumerian lines were in those cases not fully corrupt or incomprehensible.[531]

The same cannot be said about the Sumerian passages in the NYF texts. It would be a severe understatement to claim that the Sumerian was flawed merely because it was added after the composition of the Babylonian prayer was finished. The mistakes and incomprehensibilities do not rhyme with the assumption that the NYF texts had older forerunners that had been created at some moment in the first half of the first millennium BC. While Sumerian was no longer a language spoken in daily life at that time already, there is countless evidence for the fact that it was well-enough understood to create something of meaning. For example, a bilingual hymn, created in the Neo-Assyrian period and stemming from the house of the *āšipu*s in Assur, contains flawed Sumerian, but almost all of the unusual forms can be explained in light of the Akkadian text; their meaning can therefore be understood.[532] That is different in the NYF texts, where most of the Sumerian lines cannot be translated on their own nor in connection with their Akkadian counterparts.

Somehow we have to account for the inclusion of this "hocus pocus" Sumerian in the NYF texts. We should not suspect the authors of the NYF texts to have wanted to write a mostly incomprehensive language. Moreover, it is not the case that Sumerian was no longer understood at this time: texts such as Balaĝs, Eršemas and Eršaḫuĝas but also other Sumerian compositions were still copied and translated in the LB period and citations with relevant explanations appear in LB commentaries. Perhaps the solution lies in the fact that the NYF texts are not part of the *kalûtu* but were to be used (and were possibly also composed) by the Elder Brother, who was not as skilled in the Sumerian language. Indicative for this is the very repetitive nature of –

[527] Groneberg 1987.
[528] Gabbay 2014: 282-284.
[529] Gabbay 2014: 284-286.
[530] Maul 1988: 4-7.
[531] Maul 1988: 7. See also Cavigneaux & Ismail 1998.
[532] IM 92995 (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1998).

especially the monolingual – prayers (umuĝ-ĝu$_{10}$) and the use of both "cliché" phrases and simple translations that would have been easy to memorize for the Elder Brother. Furthermore, the Emesal-dialect, though not fully implemented in these Sumerian fragments, was still heard on a daily basis in the cult in the LB period, since the performance of laments was part of the daily cult.[533] The author(s) of the NYF texts might have based the Sumerian fragments on what they had heard rather than what they had read.[534] In any case, it is clear that the authors of the NYF intended to write correct and meaningful Sumerian, but were simply not able to do so, contrary to some of their contemporary colleagues.

Still, why was the Sumerian added if the authors were not capable of using the language correctly – a problem of which they must have been aware, to a certain degree? Furthermore, if the Sumerian was so important, why was less than half of the Babylonian prayer translated in the case of bilingualism? Perhaps better sense can be made of the unintelligible Sumerian if we consider it as a tool to grant a flavour of antiquity, and thus authority, to the texts rather than as being really part of them.[535] Sumerian was a linguistic marker for the traditional liturgy in Babylonian temples, even at this late stage, so whenever a new text to be used in that liturgy was composed, it had to meet the preconditions set by the cultic tradition. The creation of a new text would be legitimated by the inclusion of the ancient language.

### V.1.7 Summary

In summary, enough philological evidence can be gathered to suggest a late date of composition of the NYF texts. Although they largely conform to a SB version of the Babylonian language, they contain a number of late elements that cannot be ascribed to mere copying processes, such as the inclusion of specifically 'late' vocabulary, the systematic use of the petrified form *annâ* and the use of 'wrong' pronouns. On top of that, the "hocus pocus" Sumerian cannot be ignored in this discussion and points in the same direction. This conclusion does not *per se* conflict with the appearance of older words and syntax, because this can be explained, in part, as pertaining to a language typically used in Babylonian ritual texts (e.g. *enūma*, *kīam*); as an exhibition of knowledge (*šumma*); or as a mechanism to make the text appear older than it is. Moreover, as will be shown below, there are some demonstrable instances of intertextuality with older texts, which may account for the use of ancient words as well.

[533] Gabbay 2014: 159-160.
[534] Personal communication with Uri Gabbay.
[535] Oshima 2011: 104.

For now, I submit that the composition of the NYF texts is not much older than the manuscripts that have preserved it and must therefore date to the period between the late fourth and early second century BC. This conclusion can be corroborated by the contents of the texts, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

## V.2 Analysis of the paratextual notes and material aspects

The NYF texts contain a number of different paratextual notes that detail aspects of both the text and the tablet. These notes appear on edges, at the end of the text or within the text, often at the beginning or ending of a single section. In most cases, these remarks are separated from the text itself by a horizontal ruling or by their position on the tablet, although there are exceptions. In combination with the material aspects of the tablets, the paratextual notes are revealing not only for the context of creation and conservation of the tablets, but also for their intended purpose and use.

### V.2.1 Material aspects

#### V.2.1.1 General material aspects

In all likelihood, all the NYF texts were originally large tablets of approximately 20x20 cm with three columns on each side, separated by vertical lines – all the manuscripts are broken, however. The lay-out of the text was done very carefully: different sections are divided by means of horizontal rulings; in bilingual prayers the second, Akkadian, line is indented; and the text is justified according to the column width. In some cases, the scribe used the sign DIŠ to mark the beginning of a new day, which may have served as a tool to simplify searches within the text. The use of paratextual notes such as the sum of lines or colophons also indicates the care taken in the redaction of the tablet. The script is large, neat and easy to read.

Amongst the NYF texts, NYF4 stands out as a rather sloppy manuscript. First, there are a number of interlinear injunctions (II 28-29; IV 32-33; V 31-32; V 41-43), where the scribe had crammed one or multiple words in the space between two lines because they did no longer fit on the line to which they belonged. Second, almost every line in column III falls off the edge because the column is much more narrow than column II. Third, vertical division lines are not respected and some sections of text are not demarcated with a horizontal ruling. Fourth, some signs are unclear and clumsy. Fifth, the catchphrase should not be on the upper edge. All of these features point to the fact that the scribe did not plan his tablet carefully enough.

#### V.2.1.2 NYF2-3//NYF4

Some attention should be paid to the correlation between the two manuscripts that contain identical sections of text: NYF2-3 and NYF4. Both tablets are severely broken, but part of the preserved text is duplicated in the two of them. In fact, it seems that both tablets contained the exact same text, only NYF2-3 is bigger than NYF4 and contains some 20 lines more. Thus, even though the first column of NYF4 is not preserved, it can be reconstructed that it started at the exact same point as NYF2-3, but because its columns are shorter, it did not end at the exact

same point as NYF2-3.[536] In other words, both tablets started with the instructions for day 4 and continued with the instructions for day 5. Both tablets contain a catchphrase indicating that the tablet that followed contained more instructions for day 5. This is an interesting feature that shows that within the series of the NYF texts, the distribution of the text over different tablets was not fixed. Unfortunately, the colophon of NYF4 has not been preserved, so we cannot tell whether this tablet was numbered as is the case for NYF2-3. Still, even if both manuscripts had the same tablet number, the different amounts of text they contained show that for this series, the same tablet number would not always refer to the exact same part of the text. If they had different numbers, that would be proven too.

It is remarkable that, even though the text is not structured in the exact same way on the respective tablets, they contain the *exact* same text, with only one minor variant writing.[537] Even the curious orthography $^{i}$tu$_5$ to denote the verb *irammuk* is maintained in both manuscripts. This strongly suggests that one of the tablets is a *vidimus*, a copy made upon sight, of the other. The question is then which one of both was the earlier recension. I would argue that NYF4 was the older version, mainly because the layout of the text on the tablet is so badly done. As mentioned above, column III is much more narrow than column II, which causes the text to "fall off" the edge. Aside from that, there are several interlinear injunctions, where the scribe did not have enough space to write the full sentence on one line. The appearance of (part of) the colophon on the upper edge may also be due to bad redaction (cf. infra). If this tablet was a copy of another text, we would assume that the scribe would have been able to plan how much space he needed to write everything down. NYF2-3, in contrast, is neatly placed on the tablet, and even though its colophon does not indicate that it was copied, the similarity of it to the colophon of NYF1, which does mention how it was "collated and checked", would suggest that it was, in fact, a copy. In the case of NYF4 we are dealing either with an inexperienced scribe (which seems unlikely, considering the relative difficulty of the text) or with a written version of a dictated text or with a "draft". It would not be all that remarkable that the first draft of a document was preserved in the Esagila libraries alongside the finished version. For some ADART, "preliminary" versions were kept after the final manuscript had been drafted.[538]

[536] See the appendix for a visual comparison of both tablets.
[537] NYF2 II 1 *ina* igi lugal diĝir.diĝir versus NYF4 II 7 [*ina* igi] diĝir diĝir.diĝir. Obviously, we cannot speak for the broken parts.
[538] Pirngruber *forthcoming*.

### V.2.2 Notes on the upper edge

Two of the NYF tablets carry a note on the upper edge. On NYF2, we find an "invocational" formula:[539]

> *ina amat* $^{d}$*bēl u* $^{d}$*bēltīya lišlim*
> By the command of Bēl and Bēltīya: may (this) be well.

The formula is attested on scholarly texts from Late Babylonian Babylon and from Uruk, in which Anu and Antu rather than Bēl and Bēltīya are invoked.[540] Aside from scholarly tablets, the formula can be found in some rare cases on Astronomical Diaries[541] and on legal agreements stemming from (the vicinity of) Babylon, most prominently marriage contracts.[542] It always appears on the upper edge and is therefore unrelated to the proper "colophon", which comes at the end of the text.[543] According to Hunger, *lišlim* could relate to both the tablet ("möge die Tafel heilbleiben") or the performance of the ritual or transaction ("möge es gut gehen").[544] Yet, I tend to agree with Martha Roth, who argued that the line was written as an "expression of the scribe and scribal activity" rather than as a wish for the ritual or transaction to go well, which explains its odd placement on the upper edge of the tablet, separated from the main text.[545] Importantly, the formula is not attested before the Late Achaemenid period.[546]

NYF4 too carries a note on its upper edge:

| | |
|---|---|
| *ṭuppu ša arkīšu* | Tablet that follows: |
| DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* 5 | in the month Nisannu, on the fifth day |

The presence of the catchphrase there is difficult to explain. In transcription it has always been added at the end of the last preserved column (V) following the handcopy of Thureau-Dangin.[547] Although it does align with column V on the tablet itself, it is clearly separated from it, since the text does not continue over the edge. It is not easy to account for its location there. A possible yet not so plausible explanation would be that there were only four columns, two on each side of the tablet, instead of the assumed six. Then the note would not be misplaced after the "last" column V (which in that case would be column IV). The problem with this

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[539] Sic Linssen 2004: 235 note on line 216c.
[540] Oelsner 1986: 210 with notes 779 and 829.
[541] ADART nos. -651, -418A, -391, -361, -332A, -286B, -234A, -214, -209E, -176A, -170F, -158A, -142B, -137E, -132C, -118A+B, -112, -107C .
[542] Roth 1988. Go there for text references.
[543] Roth 1988: 3-5, contra Hunger 1968: 12.
[544] Hunger 1968: 12.
[545] Roth compared the formula with the very similar invocation found on Palestinian Jewish marriage agreements (*kətubba*; 10th-11th century CE).
[546] Oelsner 1986: 451 note 779. With the exception of the first real Astronomical Diary, ADART no. -651 (see Steele 2019: 44-45).
[547] *Racc.*: 154. Linssen 2004: 223 line 430.

interpretation is that the text on the tablet would have started in the middle of a prayer, which seems implausible.[548] A better explanation is related to the fact that the whole tablet is quite disorderly structured; especially the reverse is very densely filled: perhaps the scribe did not have enough space at the end of the text to add the catchphrase and thus wrote it on the edge? A last possibility is that, for an unknown reason, the scribe decided to repeat this line from the (non-preserved) colophon on the upper edge. Because column VI is missing, the mystery remains.[549]

### V.2.3 Intra-textual subscripts

Intra-textual subscripts are paratextual notes that appear within the text and give information about a part of the text, in contrast to colophons that come at the end of the text and relate to the text as a whole, the tablet and its relationship to other tablets. Different types can be distinguished: total of lines of a section, secrecy labels, designations of genre and title. As in the case of the other paratextual notes, the intra-textual subscripts provide information about the manuscript and the content of the text rather than about the performance of the ritual. The latter information can be found in the ritual instructions.

#### V.2.3.1 Total of lines

Some intra-textual subscripts appear after prayers and give the total number of lines of those prayers. Two NYF texts include such a note. The first comes after the first prayer of the second day (NYF1 I 33) and is separated from it by a horizontal ruling. While a part of this prayer is bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian, the "matching" verses are counted as single lines, amounting to a total of twenty-one instead of twenty-eight lines. In this case, the total number of lines refers to what needs to be recited and thus shows that only one of both languages of the bilingual part was to be pronounced. Whether it was the Sumerian or the Akkadian variant is unclear. The fact that only part of the prayer is bilingual is perhaps an indication of the fact that only the Akkadian was pronounced.

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[548] The beginning of NYF4 overlaps with NYF3 and NYF2. See above.

[549] The presence of the catchphrase on the upper edge might also have to do with conservation issues: if every tablet had this note on the upper edge, one could stack and order the tablets on the shelves accordingly. Unfortunately, the upper edges of the other manuscripts are damaged or broken. A comparison could be made with other manuscripts belonging to the Esagila libraries, for example the Astronomical Diaries. A few Diaries have a catchline on the upper edge (ADART nos. -567, -453, -381C, -251, -176A, -158B, -107C), to which in some cases the period recorded in the tablet itself is added. Such a device may have made it easier to order and find the manuscripts. See also Cavigneaux & Ismail 1998: 6 note on line 1 of IM 92995 where the first Akkadian line of the bilingual prayer comes before the Sumerian line, instead of the other way around, "für Bibliothekszwecke"; after this the text goes on in the conventional order of Sumerian-Akkadian.

The second intra-textual subscript giving the total number of lines was added because the prayer to which it relates was duplicated on another object as well:

> 30 *šumātu ša ina muḫḫi ṭuppi u elmeši ša aḫi-rabî Eumuša*
> A total of 30 lines that are on the tablet and the *elmešu*-stone of the Elder Brother of Eumuša
> NYF6 lo.e.[550]

It is more or less accepted today that the *elmešu* "stone" was, in fact, amber. Its Sumerian equivalent /sudaĝ/ could also mean "(to be) shiny" and occurred most often in Old Babylonian hymns of praise to deities and kings.[551] Tellingly, the word *elmešu* is not attested outside lexical and literary contexts, which is why CAD designates it as a "quasi-mythical precious stone".[552] As such, *elmešu* seems to be connected to gods and kings. In the Epic of Erra it is named together with the *mēsu*-tree as the materials of which the divine statue of Marduk is made, as becomes clear in the speech of Marduk addressed to Erra:

> "Where is the *mēsu*-tree, the flesh of the gods, suitable for the lord of the uni[verse], the sacred tree, splendid stripling, perfect for lordship, whose roots thrust down a hundred leagues through the waters of the vast ocean to the depths of hell, whose crown brushed [Anu's] heaven on high? Where is the clear *elmešu*-stone that I reserved for […]?"[553]

The same is suggested by an entry in the anatomical lexical list Ugumu, where the *elmešu* is described as an ornament called "splendour" (of the divine statue?).[554]

Apart from that, *elmešu* was also a material used in the middle heavens, where it could be found in the cellas of Marduk and Ištar respectively.[555] The latter is referred to in an oracle record of Esarhaddon, in which Ištar proclaims:

> "I watch in a golden chamber in the midst of the heavens; I let the lamp of *elmešu* shine before Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, and I watch him like the crown of my head."[556]

In this case, *elmešu* is related to kingship and the protection of kings by the gods.[557] This is suggested also by its relation with the *mēsu*-tree as found in the passage in the Erra Epic cited above: the tree has been interpreted as a symbol of kingship too.[558]

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[550] Note that in the colophon of the duplicate BM 32374 reference is only made to the tablet and not to the *elmešu*-stone. It is unlikely that this was mentioned in the (broken) following line, since some whitespace was left open after im.dub where this would have fitted.
[551] For references, see ePSD2 s.v. sudaĝ (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/sux [last accessed 22.08.2019]).
[552] CAD E 108 s.v. *elmešu*.
[553] Erra I 150-154 (Foster 2005: 888). Also Erra I 148.
[554] CBS 19753 (MSL 9, 66 B1; http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/pager#P227852.3 [last accessed 22.08.2019]).
[555] KAR 307 31-32 (Horowitz 1998: 12-13).
[556] SAA 9, 1 o iii 23'-29'.
[557] For the relation between the goddess Ištar and the Neo-Assyrian king, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 334-341.
[558] http://melammu-project.eu/database/gen_html/a0001147.html (last accessed 23.08.2019).

It remains unclear what the exact object here designated as "*elmešu*-stone" was.[559] In contrast to the other attestations, it seems to be an actual object in this case, not something semi-mythical, and it relates to a priest, not to kings or gods. In the Erra Epic, Marduk is said to hang an *elmešu*-stone "on the neck of the sky (Anu)":[560] possibly it was an object worn by the cult statue of the god.[561] Another possibility is that it was part of the priestly attire, which is more likely considering the phrasing of the line. As such it is reminiscent of the pectoral "of the gods" which was worn by the Neo-Assyrian king when he participated in rituals, notably during the *akītu*-festival, and which was set with precious stones.[562] If the high priest was wearing a similar piece, the *elmešu*-stone could have been set in it.

#### V.2.3.2 Secrecy labels

Another type of intra-textual subscripts are so-called "Geheimwissen" colophons or secrecy labels. They appear at three instances (perhaps four) in the NYF texts, right after certain prayers, but not after all of them.[563] The types of secrecy labels used are: *niṣirti Esagila*, "secret of Esagila", which is unique to this corpus;[564] the warning to guard the (content of the) tablet, *mādiš uṣur*, "guard it well"; and the command not to show the tablet to anyone but the Elder Brother or "his son":

> 21 *šumātu niṣirti Esagil*. [*pāli*]*ḫ* $^{d}$*bēl alla aḫi-rabî Eumuša* [*l*]*ā ukallam*
> 21 lines, secret of Esagila. [He who rever]es Bēl should [no]t show (it to anyone) except to the Elder Brother of Eumuša.
>
> NYF1 I 33-35

When discussing this almost fully preserved secrecy label, which appears in the text right after the first prayer of the second day, Lenzi concluded: "it seems possible to interpret the secrecy label in *Racc*. 130:33 as an attempt to characterize all the incantations recited before the door opens each morning as secret."[565] He thus related the use of the Geheimwissen colophon to the performance of the prayers in a confined and restricted space. In other words, the secrecy label did not so much relate to the text as it did to the manner of performance of it. However, taking into account the other instances at which the reader is urged to secrecy, this interpretation does

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[559] The word also occurs in the book of Ezekiel, where it is included in Ezekiel's vision of god: "upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as if it were *gleaming metal* (*ḥašmal*)." (Ezekiel 1:27) See also Bodi 1991: 82-94. The HALOT links the Hebrew word חשמל to the Akkadian terms *ḫašmānu* (CAD Ḫ 142), *ešmarû* (CAD E 366) and *elmēšu*.
[560] Erra IV 43.
[561] Cult statues could be decorated with inscribed stone objects, as in the case of Uṣur-amāssu, whose necklace contained a cylinder seal inscribed with a land grant (AO 7038; Beaulieu 2000).
[562] SAA 20, 15 I 3'. See also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 423-424. The high priest in the temple in Jerusalem wore a pectoral plate too, called *ḥōšen*, described in Exodus 28:15-30.
[563] NYF1 I 33-35; [V 1']; no. 5 III 1-5, IV 21'.
[564] Lenzi 2008a: 208.
[565] Lenzi 2008a: 209.

not hold up: in NYF5 the notes are connected to prayers other than the first one of the day. In that light, the performance of all the prayers would have been secret. Moreover, one Geheimwissen label appears in the colophon at the end of NYF2 (see further below) and thus relates to the whole text, not only the prayers. Aside from that, it seems unnecessary to give additional information as to the manner of performance in a paratextual note, as those kinds of guidelines are usually part of the ritual instructions in the NYF texts. An essential characteristic of colophons is, furthermore, that they relate to a texts' external features rather than to its internal content. For these reasons, it seems better to understand the labels to refer to the text rather than to the manner of performance.

The question is then why these texts were labeled as secret. Lenzi submitted that Geheimwissen colophons generally appear on texts belonging to one of the five scholarly disciplines. As such, they do not mark those texts as special within the scholarly corpus, but rather, they emphasize the secret character of the scholarly corpora as a whole.[566] However, this conclusion meant that the NYF texts formed an exception to that rule, since, according to Lenzi, "they do not belong to the scholarly corpora":[567] the rituals were the responsibility of the Elder Brother. The problem with this interpretation of the secrecy labels is that they might obscure the emic view: while we understand certain texts as "scholarship", they were first and foremost *priestly* lore – it is apparent that the ancient Mesopotamians did not differentiate between those matters to the degree that we do. In that sense, it is less problematic than it seems to fit the NYF texts within the corpus of "secret" texts.

Some attention should be paid to the following secrecy label:

> [*pāliḫ* $^{d}$*bēl*] *alla mārišu* [*lā*] *ukallam*
> [He who reveres Bēl] should [not] show (it to anyone) except to his son
>
> NYF5 III 3-4

Whereas at other instances the Elder Brother is the one who is allowed to see the tablet (*alla aḫi-rabî*), here it is "his son" who is an exception to the secrecy rule.[568] Both George and Lenzi, discussing these lines, submit that the implications of both warnings are the same: "the son mentioned here will follow in his father's footsteps, of course, and so become *šešgallu* [sic] of E-umuša."[569] Indeed, it seems that the title of the Elder Brother could be hereditary,[570] as other priestly functions were. The implication of this secrecy label is, again, that knowledge could be

[566] *Bārûtu*, *āšipūtu*, *kalûtu*, *asûtu*, *ṭupšarrūtu*.
[567] Lenzi 2008a: 208.
[568] For similar examples, see Lambert 1998: 143.
[569] George 2000: 168 note on lines iii 2-4. Lenzi 2008a: 162-163.
[570] Van Driel 2002: 41-42. See also below, page 211.

disseminated within the priestly community, but not outside of it. Furthermore, the unique designation *niṣirti Esagila*, "secret of Esagila", shows that not all Babylonian priests, but only the priests of Marduk were allowed to partake in this knowledge. The use of the secrecy labels thus works in two ways: it demarcates the priesthood of Marduk within the larger group of Babylonian priests and within Babylonian society as a whole (us against them), but more than that, it works as a self-defining tool to show the importance and prominence of the priesthood of Esagila – they labeled the texts themselves in order to assert their own value.

#### V.2.3.3 Categorisation

As high priest, the Elder Brother was probably trained in one discipline initially and secondarily studied the lore of other priestly specialists.[571] That becomes clear from another category of paratextual notes, which occur in only one of the NYF texts (NYF5).

Each prayer on that tablet is designated as eiter *asar kalûti* or *asar āšipūti*. Unsurprisingly, the Sumerian prayers belong to the former category, while the latter refers to the Akkadian prayer, which, moreover, mentions sickness and health, fitting with the responsibilities of the exorcist. The word *asarru* is very rare and, to my knowledge, occurs in only three other places.[572] It appears in the colophon of a Neo-Babylonian copy (impression) of a Šarkališarri-inscription: "Impression from a diorite slab of the *asarru*s which Nabû-zēru-līšir, scribe, found in the *asarru* palace of Narām-Sîn, the king, in Agade."[573] One can furthermore find it in a Neo-Assyrian inventory of texts, where it is listed after *ṭuppu* (tablet) and *egirtu* (one-column tablet) and translated as "diagram".[574] The last attestation is in NYF6, where it stands in opposition to *pirištu* (secret (oral?) knowledge) and *parṣu* (ritual). From all these attestations one can conclude that *asarru* must denote a written text. It could possibly mean "composition" or "manuscript".

It is not uncommon for a LB ritual text to be marked explicitly as lore of a particular priestly profession,[575] yet it is unique that one text belongs to different disciplines. What is more, according to the ritual instructions, it is the Elder Brother, and not the *kalû* or the *āšipu*, who was supposed to recite the prayers marked as *kalûtu* and *āšipūtu*. It seems that the scribe of the

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[571] In Hellenistic Uruk, for example, the office was held exclusively by members of the Ekur-zākir family, who were all *āšipu*s (McEwan 1981a: 10; Hunger 1968: 180 s.v. *urigallu*).
[572] For the reading of the word, see note on line NYF5 III 5.
[573] CBS 16106 (RIME 2.1.5.10; CDLI P227533). I am grateful to Klaus Wagensonner (personal communication) for attracting my attention to this tablet. Perhaps here the reading of *asarru* as *musarû* suggested by Foster seems more appropriate (see note on line NYF5 III 5).
[574] Parpola 1983: 15.
[575] E.g. the building ritual of the *kalû*, marked as *nēpeši ša qāt kalê* (TU 45 obv. 15, rev. 2; Ambos 2004: 190-192).

text wanted to show explicitly that the Elder Brother's competences encompassed skills of both professions. A paralel explanation could be that the prayers labeled as *asar kalûti* and *asar āšipūti* were, in fact, composed for the Elder Brother, but since his was not a traditional scholarly function, the scribe categorized them according to the traditional disciplines. In any case, just like the labeling of the prayers as "secret lore", these notes emphasize the completeness of the Elder Brother's skills; in other words, the Elder Brother is the paragon of priestly competence.

#### V.2.3.4 Title and purpose

A last intra-textual subscript is not related to one of the prayers but to a part of the ritual. For this reason, together with the fact that it is not separated from the main text by a horizontal ruling, it has not been recognized as a meta-textual note.[576] It makes most sense, however, to consider it as that.

> *lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ enūma lēssu* […]
> *šumma dimātušu illakā* $^{d}$*bēl sal*[*im*]
> *šumma dimātušu lā illakā* $^{d}$*bēl ezi*[*z*]
> *nakru itebbâmma išakkan miqissu*
> He will strike the king's cheek. When [he has struck] his cheek
> - if his tears flow, Bēl is favourably minded,
> if his tears do not flow, Bēl is furious:
> the enemy will rise and bring about his downfall
>
> NYF3, VI 9-12

It appears at the conclusion of the "humiliation of the king" episode (NYF3 VI 9-12). After the king has pronounced his "negative confession", the Elder Brother blesses him and gives him his regalia.[577] Then the text states: *lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ*, which would mean that the king is slapped a second time by the Elder Brother after he has regained his power. There are a number of problems with that interpretation. First, we would expect a more explicit textual expression of the repitition of such a significant act, e.g. with a form of *šanû*. Second, the whole act of removing the royal insignia would be undermined if the priest was allowed to hit the king while he was wearing them too. The slapping of the king is the reason why the regalia are removed in the first place: this act entails a removal of status, allowing the priest to take such drastic action as to hit the – normally unassailable – monarch. In other words, the Elder Brother can only perform the humiliation ritual when the king is stripped of his power, which is an essential part of the humiliation.[578]

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[576] Furlani 1940: 124-125 is the only one to allude to it.
[577] Note, nonetheless, that there is a gap of approximately twenty lines in the text at this point (see the Appendix).
[578] See below, page 263.

Therefore, I suggest to interpret the second occurrence of the phrase *lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ* as the title of this specific ritual in the NYF: modern scholars call it "humiliation and negative confession of the king"; ancient scholars knew it as "*lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ*". It was common to refer to a ritual by means of the most prominent action performed during the course of it (e.g. *Mīs pî*),[579] but less so to do that for only part of a ritual.

After the title of this part of the ritual, a binary pair of omens that relate to the ritual in question is added: if tears appear in the king's eyes, Marduk is pleased; if not, the god will be angry and the god will send an enemy to overturn the king's rule. Only few temple ritual texts include omens. One example is a building ritual text from Hellenistic Uruk. At three instances omens are included, which are thematically related to the ritual in question. In that sense, the following omen can be linked to the demolition of the (part of the) temple to be rebuilt:

> "If the earth shakes, an enemy will attack and the dwellings of the land will not be secure."
>
> (TU 45 obv. 16)[580]

In this case, the omens are not so directly related to the ritual in question and it seems that they were added rather as an exhibition of knowledge than as having a real effect on the ritual outcome.[581] A different example is a ritual text with incantations to different stars which presumably took place at night. At several instances throughout the text, astronomical omens are cited, e.g.:

> "[. . .. If a (shooting) sta]r passes from your left to your right: it is not propitious. [(If it) passes (from behind you) t]o (in) front of you: it is propitious. If the Northern Cross(?)-star passes the wagon-star: it is propitious."
>
> (YBC 9863, obv. 10'-11')[582]

In this instance, the ritual outcome is dependent on environmental phenomena, which are, therefore, not induced by humans. It seems that here, the omens relate to the time and space of performance and do not have any effect on the ritual outcome, since if "it was not propitious" the ritual would not take place or be abandoned.[583] In this case, the ritual could be resumed at another moment. The ritual texts that most commonly cite omens were the namburbi-rituals,

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[579] See Walker & Dick 2001: 8-10.
[580] Linssen 2004: 283-292 and Ambos 2004: 190-192. The same theme shown in this omen would have occurred in the laments recited at the building site.
[581] Ambos 2004: 36.
[582] Hallo & Zbikowska 2010: 650-658. The tablet can be dated on palaeographical grounds to the first half of the first millennium BC.
[583] For failure and success of ritual, see Ambos 2007.

which were performed to ward of evil that had been predicted by inauspicious portents, often as they were listed in omen series such as *Šumma ālu* or *Šumma izbu*.[584]

The pair of omens in the NYF texts is similar to the omens found in the building ritual. They were added as a little extra and should not be considered to relate directly to the ritual outcome. If anything, their addition to the text shows the association between the ritual and the omens the author(s) made in their mind. Furthermore, it emphasizes the written aspect of the ritual text and serves to show the broad scholarly knowledge the author(s) possessed. In fact, the whole passage is reminiscent of ritual commentaries, in which a line from the ritual text is cited and subsequently annoted and explained, the line from the ritual in this case being "He will strike the king's cheek" and the "commentary" consisting of the omens. Such a commentary-like intermezzo in a ritual text is not uncommon in the LB period: another example can be found in the temple ritual text BM 32482+, in which the last column takes the form of a commentary on the ritual described in the previous column.[585]

### V.2.4 Colophons

Two of the NYF texts have preserved their actual colophon at the bottom of the last column. A colophon comes at the end of the text and informs the reader about both the full text and the tablet, and their relation to other tablets.

> *ṭuppu* 22 EME.KU.UL.E *ul qati ṭuppu ša arkīšu ina nisanni ūmi* 4
> 22nd tablet. *Ancient Sumerian*. Not finished. Tablet that follows: "In the month Nisannu, on the fourth day."
>
> NYF1

> *ṭuppu* 23 EME.KU.UL.E [*ul qati*] *ṭuppu ša arkī*[*šu*] DIŠ *ina nisanni ūmi* 5. *bari u saniq. pāliḫ* $^{d}$*Marduk u* $^{d}$*Zarpānītu ana qātē lā ušeṣṣe. ša ana qātē ušeṣṣû, ilānu mala ina qereb Bābili bašû līrurūšu*
> 23rd tablet. *Ancient Sumerian*. Not finished. Tablet that follows: "In the month Nisannu, on the fifth day". Collated and checked. He who reveres Marduk and Zarpānītu should not make (it) available (to others). May the gods, as many as there are in Babylon, curse the one who makes it available (to others).
>
> NYF2[586]

These colophons are remarkable in many ways. A first issue is that a lot of information that we would expect to be provided, is left out. Thus, we are not informed about the title of the text,[587] the provenance and nature of its original, the name of the scribe or owner, or the date and place of redaction, all elements which occur not seldom in colophons.[588]

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[584] Maul 1994: 11-13 and *passim*.
[585] Da Riva 2019a: 92.
[586] See also Hunger 1968 no. 182.
[587] Note that at no point are the texts explicitly related to the *akītu* or New Year!
[588] Hunger 1968. In the corpus of ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk, those elements are commonly present.

Second, there is the note EME.KU.UL.E which might be understood as "ancient Sumerian".[589] The difficulty lies in understanding what the scribe could have meant to say by it. Possibly, he had copied the Sumerian sections of the text from older manuscripts, in which case we would have to understand the note at face value. However, most of the Sumerian in the NYF texts is problematic: was the source from which the scribe copied then written in this 'nonsensical' Sumerian as well?[590] Rather, the explicit marking of the text as "ancient" seems to indicate that it was, in fact, the opposite – just like rulers claiming to be the "rightful king" rarely are. It was very clear that Sumerian was an ancient language, so there was no need to point that out explicitly in the colophon. Perhaps the scribe really wanted the reader to think that he was holding a copy of an ancient text and therefore explicitly marked it as "ancient Sumerian". In that case, we could speak of a *pia fraus*.

Third, several parts of the colophon point to the fact that we are dealing with a series: the tablet number, the note saying that the text is "not finished", and the catchphrase.[591] We can only speculate about the content of this series. It is commonly assumed that we are dealing with a series containing ritual texts for the cultic celebration of the New Year.[592] Yet, the tablet for the second day is numbered as the twenty-second tablet of the series: would that mean that there were twenty-one tablets describing the first day? It is not difficult to imagine that there was a number of preparation and purifcation rites to be performed; still, more than twenty tablets seems extravagant.

Another explanation had been suggested by Lambert: "there existed a set of rituals from Esagil covering the whole year."[593] This brings to mind the Neo-Assyrian cultic tradition, which included a ritual cycle revolving around the month Šabāṭu, Adaru and Nisannu.[594] In this light, it would be possible that the instructions for the second day of Nisannu were labeled as the twenty-second tablet of the series. Nevertheless, this cultic cycle is not attested outside of Assyria and we should be extremely careful in assuming that a similar unit can be found in Babylonia. Aside from that, it cannot be dismissed that the series including the NYF texts was not fully cultic in nature: "s[eries] did not have to be internally homogenous in content or style",[595] as, for example, in Enūma Elîš, where the last tablet consists of a list of names for

[589] See above, note on line NYF1 VI 28.
[590] See above, page 189.
[591] All three are typical features that indicate serialisation, see Worthington 2010: 397 (RlA 12 s.v. Serie).
[592] Thus, Da Riva & Galetti (2018: 193), most recently, speak of "the series called eme.gir$_{15}$ du$_{7}$.e".
[593] Lambert 1989: 23-24.
[594] Pongratz-Leisten in Parpola 2017 (XLVII-LXIV); Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 407-426; Maul 2000.
[595] RlA 12: 397.

Marduk, in contrast to the narrative nature of the preceding six tablets. Apart from that, it is a possibility that the NYF texts were simply added to an already existing series that contained twenty tablets or so. Lastly, it may be the case that the series refered to here was a series of prescriptions (and other texts) specifically designed for the Elder Brother not only for the occasion of the NYF but for other rituals as well.

None of these explanations is fully convincing in the case of the NYF texts, however. A neglected problem is the nature of the catchphrases. Usually, the internal structure of a series is not only made clear from the tablet number, but also from the catchline: the first line of the following tablet is cited at the bottom of the previous one. This works for the colophon in NYF1 (*ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 4$^{kam}$), which refers to the fourth day, exactly the first line in NYF2-3//NYF4 (DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 4$^{kam}$). However, the colophon in NYF2-3 refers to the fifth day (DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bár ud 5$^{kam}$), even though this tablet itself already contains part of that day ([DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$bá]r ud 5$^{kam}$).[596] Thus, the catchphrase could not have referred to the first line of the following tablet; rather, it was a reference to that tablet's general content – if we assume that the instructions for the fifth day would have been continued on the (absent) following tablet. This goes to show that "serialisation" is not really the principle at work in the NYF texts.

It is necessary to define the word "series" in this context. Assyriologists tend to understand series as a compilation of multiple texts which are put into a (numbered and) more or less fixed sequence.[597] Series are not created *ex nihilo*, but rather, they gather previously existing material within and place it in a certain and fixed order. Different versions of a series could exist depending on place and time, but series would often become standardized, which means that the sequence (and content too) became more or less fixed. However, this is clearly not the principle at work in the NYF texts. It should be kept in mind that no precursors of the NYF texts are known to us today. As far as we can tell, the author(s) did not attempt to shape an older textual tradition. However, since most literary and scholarly works were (part of) a series in the first millennium BC,[598] this was the format that the authors of the NYF texts knew. A final hypothesis might therefore be that the author(s) wanted to make it seem as if the NYF texts were part of a longer series, whereas in fact they were not.

[596] This line is only preserved in NYF4, but the overlap between both manuscripts suggests that it was also part of NYF2-3. For the correlation of both tablets, see above.
[597] RlA 12: 395-398. See also Rochberg-Halton 1984.
[598] RlA 12: 397.

### V.2.5 Summary

The NYF texts are tablets of considerable size and weight and relative thinness. This makes them quite fragile (as is proven by the fact that they all broke in half) and heavy to handle. When we compare this to other LB ritual texts, it becomes apparent that this is not so unusual: most of the LB ritual texts from Babylon have the same format.[599] The same is true for the corpus of ritual texts from LB Uruk, although there we find a few ritual texts that have the size of a smartphone and could thus easily have been held in one hand.[600] The NYF texts were written by expert scribes, as is shown by the careful script and lay-out of the text. Aside from their size and lay-out, the use of the DIŠ-sign, the intra-textual subscripts and the catchphrase all show that the texts were intended as library texts that could be consulted, studied and stored, rather than be used in the actual performance of the rituals and the prayers they contain. The written aspect of the texts is further emphasized by the use of the cola, the text-internal references to the scribe (cf. infra) and the total of lines mentioned in the colophons.

In the same vein as the use of archaising language (cf. supra), the paratextual notes grant the NYF manuscripts an aura of antiquity that does not actually seem to be real. In particular the note labeling the texts as "ancient Sumerian" is revealing, as it unnecessarily emphasizes the ancientness of the text (if this is how we should understand the phrase). Perhaps the tablet numbers (22 and 23) and the comment saying that they were "collated and checked" cannot be taken to be the truth either and should also be understood as a means to make the texts seem older than they are. In that light, we can consider the NYF texts to be *piae fraudes*: they claim to be something they are not in order to obtain more esteem and authority.

It was not uncommon in the LB period to claim that things were older than they actually were. Antiquarianism is widely present in the compositions made by the priesthood of Anu in Hellenistic Uruk.[601] A notorious example can be found in the colophon to a ritual text detailing the offerings and sacrifices made in the daily cult in the Bīt Rēš:

> "By the hand of Šamaš-ēṭir, son of Ina-qibīt-Anu, son of Šibqāt-Anu. Writing board of the rites of the cult of Anu, of the holy rituals (and) the ritual regulations of kingship, together with the divine rituals of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and the temples of Uruk, the ritual activities of the exorcists, the *kalû* priests, the singers, and all the experts who follow the …, apart from everything that pertains to the apprentice diviners, according to the tablets which Nabopolassar, the king of the Sealand, took away from Uruk, and then Kidin-Anu, the Urukean, the exorcist of Anu and Antu, the descendent of Ekur-zākir, the Elder Brother of the Bīt Rēš, saw those tablets

[599] See below, Chapter VI.2.
[600] E.g. the building rituals of the *kalû*, TU 45 and TU 46 (Ambos 2004; Linssen 2004).
[601] Krul 2018: 79-106; Beaulieu 1992.

> in the land of Elam, and copied them and brought them back to Uruk during the reign of kings Seleukos and Antiochos."[602]

It is generally accepted that this colophon is a pious fraud: there never were any ritual tablets that were stolen by Nabopolassar and taken to Elam, where the scribe would have seen them and copied them in order to take them back to Uruk.[603] By stating that the text was copied from a seventh century BC original, the authors of this ritual text made an authorising claim based on its antiquity.

A final characteristic of the paratextual notes in the NYF texts is their emphasis on the prominence and knowledge of the Elder Brother and by extension of the priesthood of Marduk in Esagila as well. The secrecy labels demonstrate that knowledge of the rites and prayers was a privilege of the Elder Brother. Moreover, the *asarru*-notes stress the fact that the Elder Brother's competences encompassed skills and knowledge of the other sub-branches of the priesthood. Finally, the curse formula and the label "secret of Esagila" make it clear that access to this priestly knowledge was only reserved for the ones who served the gods of Babylon.

[602] TU 38 rev. 43-50 (Linssen 2004: 175-176 and 179; translation Beaulieu 1993: 47).
[603] Krul 2018: 102-106; Da Riva 2017a: 78-79; Waerzeggers 2010: 115-118; Beaulieu 2004: 315-316, 1993: 47-50.

## V.3 Analysis of the ritual instructions

A third way to approach the NYF texts, aside from language and form, is to analyse what the content of the texts is, i.e. what their author(s) wanted to relate. On the one hand, the texts contain instructions about the actions to be performed during the ritual (*dromena* or *agenda*), and on the other, about what to say during the ritual (*legomena* or *dicenda*). This chapter will focus on the ritual instructions; the prayers will be analysed in the next.

As explained in the introduction, I assume that the different ritual instructions prescribed in the NYF texts have, combined, a common goal.[604] Still, every ritual sequence within the festival had its own particular purpose and only the sum of all rites would lead to the success of the festival. Thus, the instructions found in the NYF texts form a comprehensive and unique account that is comprised of several ritual sequences which, of themselves, do not necessarily have to be unique. As such, the festival can be compared to other rituals which can contain similar or even identical ritual sequences. In this context, we can speak of a web of "interrituality".[605] While such a comparison can lead to a better understanding of ritual thought and ritual dynamics in Mesopotamia on the long term, it can also help us to study and contextualize a specific ritual (text), by looking for similarities with and differences from better known and contextualized rituals.

This approach does *not* entail the assumption that the ritual was performed as is described. We should always distinguish between ritual text and ritual performance. Rather, what we read in the text is an imagined cultic reality and, even though those ideas may come very close to actual reality, it is based primarily in a system of thought that is defined by particular rules and values that do not necessarily have to be reflected in reality. Aside from that, it should not be denied that every text is a product of its time and will contain traces of its historical context. In that sense, a tension can arise between the expected reality and the actual reality. In this chapter, I will try to uncover this field of tension present in the NYF texts.

Below, the large ritual complex of the NYF is divided into "ritual sequences" or segments that form a unit of action and purpose. In turn, each sequence consists of multiple smaller rites.[606] Sequences are often visibly outlined on the tablets by means of horizontal rulings, but that is

[604] See above, page 18. Because the texts do not contain the whole festival, the goal cannot be determined.
[605] Gladigow 2004. See also Koubková 2016 with footnote 13.
[606] „Typische Ritualsequenzen seien dadurch definiert, daß sie eine ‚überschaubare' Zahl diskreter ritueller Elemente miteinander verbinden und daß diese Konstellationen in unterschiedlichen komplexen Ritualen vorkommen können" (Gladigow 2004: 59-60). A similar approach can be found in Krul's analysis of the – admittedly much shorter – nocturnal fire ceremony at Uruk (Krul 2018: 136-235).

not always the case. Other criteria are: divine participants, cultic agents, actions, location and moment in time. In Table 3 below, I give a schematic overview of the seven ritual sequences I distinguish in the NYF texts.[607] For each sequence, the most important ritual elements are given. Lacunae are not indicated, not only because I do not wish to speculate about them, but also because my aim is not to study the meaning and function of the whole ritual complex – which would be impossible with the current sources – but instead to explore the ritual sequences independently.

[607] Sequence 1, the beginning of the day, is repeated multiple times within the whole ritual.

*Table 3: Ritual sequences in the NYF texts*

| | ritual activities | location | cultic agent | deity | text |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** waking up Bēl (repeated every day, progressing in time) | | | | | |
| 2/I 1 *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF1 I |
| 3/I 1 1/3 *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF1 V |
| 4/I 1 2/3 *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF2 I-II + NYF3 I 1'-30' // NYF4 II 1-20 |
| 5/I 2 *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF3 II 3'-25' // NYF4 II 27-III 37 |
| x/I x *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF5 II-III 20 |
| | rising and bathing, removing curtain, reciting prayer, (blessing Esagila) | cella of Bēl (and Bēltīya) | Elder Brother | Bēl (and Bēltīya) | |
| | performing rites as usual | cella of Bēl (and Bēltīya) | *ērib-bītāti*, *kalû*, *nārū* | Bēl (and Bēltīya) | |
| 1a | | | | | |
| 2/I [x] | | | | | NYF1 II |
| x/I 1 *bēru* before sunset | | | | | NYF5 III 22-IV |
| | reciting prayer | cella of Bēl (and Bēltīya) | Elder Brother | Bēl (and Bēltīya) | |
| **2** fashioning two figurines | | | | | |
| 3/I, 1 ½ *bēru* after sunrise | | | | | NYF1 VI |
| | instructions for the fashioning of statues | / | Elder Brother, *mārē ummâni* | / | |
| 2a | | | | | |
| 3/I – 6/I | | | | | |
| | rest offerings | temple of Madānu | / | Madānu, two unkown deities | |
| 2b | | | | | |
| 6/I | | | | | |
| | hitting and burning of statues | Eḫursagtila | *ṭābiḫ karri* | Nabû, two unknown deities | |
| **3** reciting Enūma Elîš | | | | | |
| 4/I, after the second meal of the morning | | | | | NYF3 II 1'-2' // NYF4 II 21-26 |
| | reciting Enūma Elîš | cella of Bēl | Elder Brother | Bēl | |
| **4** preparations in Ezida | | | | | |
| 5/I, 1 *bēru* after sunrise | | | | | NYF4 III 38-IV 41 |
| | exorcism and purification | Esagila, cella of Nabû | *mašmaššu*, slaughterer | / | |
| | decoration, cry of distress | cella of Nabû | Elder Brother, *mārē ummâni* | Bēl, Kusu, Ningirim | |
| **5** offerings and Nabû's arrival | | | | | |
| 5/I, 1 2/3 *bēru* after sunrise | | | | | NYF4 V 1-30 |
| | food offering and blessing | cella of Bēl | Elder Brother | Bēl | |
| | presentation of rest offerings | Kunat-amāssucanal | *mārē ummâni* | Nabû | |
| **6** humiliation and negative confession | | | | | |
| 5/I | | | | | NYF4 V 31-42 + NYF2 V + NYF3 VI 1-12 |
| | removal of regalia and slapping | cella of Bēl | Elder Brother, king | Bēl | |
| | negative confession | cella of Bēl | king | Bēl | |
| | reinvestiture | cella of Bēl | Elder Brother, king | Bēl | |
| **7** white bull, divine bull | | | | | |
| 5/I, 1/3 *bēru* after sunset | | | | | NYF3 VI 13-32 |
| | preparing bonfire, blessing | Great Courtyard of Esagila | Elder Brother, king | Divine Bull, Divine Fire | |

### V.3.1 Waking up Bēl

The sequence of events on a regular cultic day in Esagila started with the *dīk bīti*, "awakening of the temple", followed by the *pīt bābi*, "opening of the gate" and the serving of the meals of the morning.[608] Clearly, the days had a different beginning during the NYF: after the priest awoke and bathed, he presented himself before Bēl by removing the linen curtain hanging in front of the cult statue and recited a blessing. When he finished, he opened the doors of the cella and let the temple-enterers, singers and lamentation priests in to perform their usual rites.

#### V.3.1.1 lúšeš.gal

The priest titled lúšeš.gal is the main protagonist in the NYF texts. He not only performs most of the rites, but he is furthermore responsible for the management of the other cultic officials – the *ērib-bīti*s, the *kalû*s, the singers, the *mašmaššu*, the slaughterer and the *mārē ummâni*. From the texts emerges a picture of a priest who is closest of all to Marduk: not only does he address the deity daily in a personally delivered prayer, he is also the one who ranks highest in the cultic hierarchy.

The problem is, however, that we do not know exactly who this priest was: What is his function in the temple? How does he fit in the temple hierarchy? And can we trace him over time? Another issue is related to the reading of the title. In mostly older works, lúšeš.gal is rather read as lùri.gal (*urigallu*),[609] probably to differentiate between the priest and the Sumerian šeš.gal, who is attested in school contexts in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods.[610] Nevertheless, that distinction seems to be unnecessary considering the gap in time between the Sumerian "mentor" and the Babylonian priest; moreover it is confusing in ritual texts where a similar word occurs fairly often – *urigallu*, "the standard".[611] Today, one finds the readings *šešgallu* and *aḫu rabû*.[612] In the dictionaries the word is explained as a Sumerian loanword under the lemma *šešgallu*, but both CAD and AHw refer to the lemma *aḫu* as well.[613] The confusion is the result of the different ways in which the title is written. Sometimes, a phonetic complement *–ú* or *–i* is added, indicating an ending to a contracted or long vowel, thus suggesting a reading *aḫu rabû*.[614] Yet, two instances seem to contradict this, since we also find a writing

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[608] Linssen 2004: 25-39. The exact rites of which these rituals consisted remain largely unknown.
[609] See, for example, in Thureau-Dangin's edition (*Racc*. 127-154) and Pallis 1926: 146-149.
[610] In the meaning of "experienced mentor", e.g. in Schooldays (Edubba'a A) (Kramer 1949; translation Attinger 2002, Edubba'a A, https://zenodo.org/record/2599583#.XbAc1HjVKUk [last accessed 23.10.19]). See ePSD2 s.v. šešgal for further references.
[611] Sic Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 101.
[612] Borger *MZL* no. 535 s.v. ŠEŠ.
[613] AHw/III 1220; CAD Š/2 336-337.
[614] For references, see Linssen 2004: 183 note on line 48. See also CAD A/1 205 s.v. *aḫu* (4c).

$^{lú}$šeš.gál.la[615] and another $^{lú}$šeš.gu.la[616], which have been understood to refer to a reading *šešgallu* or *šešgulû*,[617] but are actually pseudo-Sumerian grammatical forms: gal, gal-la and gu-la can all be read as *rabû*. Moreover, unequivocal writings of these forms do not exist and it is probable that we have here 'learned' variant spellings of $^{lú}$šeš.gal. Lexical lists are to no avail in this situation, firstly because none of them include the $^{lú}$šeš.gal, only the šeš.gal (without lú), and second, because equivalents include both *aḫu rabû* and *šešgallu*. None of those entries seem to refer to the functionary intended here, and rather they have the meaning of "elder brother" as opposed to "younger brother".[618]

Matters are further complicated in the NYF texts, where we find $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a, "the Elder Brother of Eumuša". Were $^{lú}$šeš.gal to be read as *aḫu rabû*, then the attributive adjective would have appeared after é.umuš.a, since regens and rectum in a genitive chain are never separated in Akkadian. In that explanation, only the reading *šešgallu* would be correct (**šešgal Eumuša*). As such, the phrase $^{lú}$šeš.gal é.umuš.a is not easily compatible with the occurrence $^{lú}$šeš.gal$^{i}$ *šá* é.sag in an Urukean text.[619] There, the phrase can unambiguously be read as *aḫu rabû ša bīt rēš*.[620] Perhaps another explanation can be given for the phrase in the NYF texts. Since the exact title of the functionary in question consisted of both a substantive and an adjective, it is possible that in the mind of the writer and reader both words could not be separated. This inseparability would have created a real compound noun and have precedence over the inseparability of regens and rectum in the genitive chain.[621] In conclusion, while evidence can be found for both readings – *aḫu rabû* or *šešgallu* – the occurrences of the term with phonetic complements in the late ritual texts tilts the balance slightly in favour of a reading *aḫu-rabû*, at least in the LB period.

The word $^{lú}$šeš.gal is rarely literally translated. Linssen, following Farber, translated it as "high priest" ("Oberpriester").[622] That is, in fact, more an interpretation than a translation and even though it is not wrong (see below), I would prefer to render the term explicitly as "Elder Brother".[623] This translation reflects the parallel between the Elder Brother in the temple and the elder brother in the household. Evidence from Neo-Babylonian Borsippa shows that priestly

[615] MLC 1866 V 5' (unpublished uranography, remarked by Beaulieu & Mayer 1997: 160 s.v. *šešgallu*).
[616] References in Hunger 1968: 180 s.v. *urigallu*.
[617] AHw/III 1220.
[618] See DCCLT s.v. šeš gal http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/corpus (last accessed 24.09.2019).
[619] TU 38 rev. 48 (Linssen 2004: 175).
[620] Note how the addition of a phonetic complement is used to indicate a long/contracted vowel in general rather than the correct reading of that final vowel.
[621] For compound nouns, see GAG §59.
[622] Linssen 2004; Farber 1987.
[623] A translation "Big Brother" should perhaps be avoided.

clans were organized in *bīt-abi*s, the leader of which was the *aḫu-rabû*; he was the eldest (living) son of the eldest son of the eldest son of the common ancestor and to him would go the inheritance of another member of the *bīt-abi* that died without heirs.[624] In a similar vein, the Elder Brother was the leader of all the *ērib-bīti*s and like the elder brother in the *bīt-abi*, he seems to have been essentially a *primes inter pares* who held special rights in certain situations. To keep this nuance, I prefer to translate the title as "Elder Brother".

The attestations of the Elder Brother are scarce. He appears in hierarchical lists of high officials from the beginning of the first millennium BC onwards, as for example on an eighth century BC *kudurru* from Borsippa:

> "Whoever in the future (contests this agreement), whether a king, a son of a king, a prince, an overseer, a prefect, a judge, a *šatammu*, a governor, an Elder Brother, an *ērib-bīti*, or anyone else […]."[625]

While he appears mostly in sources from Babylon, he is attested once in an inscription of Aššurbanipal, who installed two of his brothers in the office of *aḫu-rabû* in Assur and Ḫarrān respectively:

> "I entrusted Šamaš-šuma ukīn, my favorite brother, with the kingship of the land of Kardunia[š], consecrated Aššur-mukīn-palē'a, my younger brother, as *Elder Brother* of (the god) Aššur, (and) consecrate[ed] Aššur-etel-šamê-erṣetim-muballissu, my youngest brother, as *Elder Brother* of the god Sîn, who dwells in the city of Ḫarrān."[626]

Later, in Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid documents from the Eanna in Uruk, the Elder Brother is listed as witness amongst the *qīpu ša Eanna* and the *ša rēši šarri bēl piqitti ša Eanna* or even as first witness;[627] in documents from the Ebabbar in Sippar as well he is ranked amongst the higher temple officials.[628]

His position in lists of officials shows how his office was one of the "higher functions"[629] in the temple hierarchy from early in the first millennium onwards; yet, it does not say much about the specific contents of his work. However, some references in the lists give a little more information. In PTS 2097,[630] for example, a document reporting a command of Nabonidus to reinstate offerings in Eanna as they were in Nebuchadnezzar's time, the *ša rēši šarri bēl piqitti ša Eanna* addresses several Urukean officials, including – on the second place after the

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[624] Waerzeggers 2010: 81-88. This is, in fact, another argument in favour of a reading of the term as *aḫu rabû*.
[625] VS 1 36 ii 19 (Thureau-Dangin 1919: 141-144; translation CAD Š/2 336). See also OECT 1 20: 3-4 (presumably from 9th century Uruk [Waerzeggers 2010: 45 n. 240]).
[626] Aššurbanipal 72 (Aššurbanipal Assyrian Tablet 1) obv. 12-13.
[627] See Kümmel 1979: 134-135; YOS 7 10, UCP 9 104 no. 45, YOS 6 77, GCCI 2 102.
[628] See Bongenaar 1997: 149-150; 425 and 159-165. E.g. Graziani 1991: 11:9.
[629] Van Driel 2002: 40-42.
[630] Frame 1991 (obv. 3).

governor of Uruk – the Elder Brother "of the *ērib-bīti*" (šeš.gal$^{ú}$ *ša* $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é). Another text, BM 61522,[631] lists the Elder Brother at the head of a group of *ērib-bīti*s ($^{lú}$ku$_4$.é *gab*-[*bi*]), prompting Jursa to conclude that the Elder Brother (Großer Bruder) in Eulmaš was "der neben dem Priester [*šangû*; CD] von Akkad wohl höchste Funktionär im kultischen Bereich".[632] In these instances, it becomes clear that the Elder Brother was indeed a "high priest" – but not the highest – in the sixth century BC: "the *aḫu-rabû* was a temple enterer himself, but, as a 'big brother', was superior to his fellow temple enterers".[633] That also means, however, that the Elder Brother did not fulfill any administrative functions and was "relegated" to the cultic level, in contrast to the *šatammu*, who functioned in both spheres (see below). In other words, the Elder Brother was subordinate to the *šatammu*(bishop)/*šangû*(high priest) during most of the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods.[634] However, after the revolts against Xerxes in 484 BC, the *šatammu* is not attested in Babylon for a period of time, leaving the question of who took over his responsibilities open.[635] Johannes Hackl suggested that, while traditional temple functionaries were *de facto* deprived of any (political) power, cultic matters came to lie fully in the hands of the Elder Brother.[636] As such, the Elder Brother fulfilled part of the function of the then dismissed *šatammu*. It cannot be said with certainty whether he took upon him any other temple-internal affairs, such as administrative responsibilities, but in the cultic hierarchy he now rose to the highest position, replacing the absent *šatammu* or *šangû.*

During the last decades of Persian rule, the office of *šatammu* made a comeback in Babylon. The Astronomical Diaries and administrative documents use the phrase "(PN) $^{lú}$šà.tam é.sag.íla *u* $^{lú}$é$^{ki.meš}$ $^{lú}$ukkin *šá* é.sag.íla" to refer to the principal authorities of Esagila.[637] The Elder Brother, in contrast, appears not once in the archival record or Diaries. A different image comes to the fore in cultic and literary texts, where we find the Elder Brother as a prominent cultic agent in ritual texts from both Uruk and Babylon – the *šatammu* or *šangû* remains unmentioned. This statement needs to be nuanced, nonetheless. The Elder Brother is described as partaking in bigger festivals and rituals, most importantly the New Year Festival.[638] Two historical

[631] Jursa 1996. The text in question stems from the Ebabbar in Sippar but concerns the Eulmaš in Akkad.
[632] Jursa 1996: 203.
[633] Bongenaar 1997: 149. See also TU 41 obv. 33 $^{lú}$ku$_4$.é gal$^{ú}$ (Krul 2018: 113). There is one reference to the Elder Brother of Eanna receiving *maqqû*-containers of sesame to be used for religious ceremonies (NBC 4769: 8).
[634] For a summary of the temple hierarchy in the Long Sixth Century, see Hackl 2013: 286-295 with references.
[635] Hackl 2018: 184.
[636] Hackl 2013: 295.
[637] Hackl 2013: 301. Note the explicit designation "Babylonian" in this formulation.
[638] In Babylon: the NYF texts, BM 32206+ (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3; see below); in Uruk: BRM 4, 7 (Linssen 2004: 209-214), BRM 4, 25.

chronicles from Babylon mention the priest in what seems to be the context of the New Year Festival – note the similarities between both accounts:

> "The king[639] arrived on the eleventh day of the month Ayāru. He slaughtered but did not … the lambs for the procession of Bēl. The sacrifices and table prepared for the god which they had received up to the day of the Akītu festival they offered for four days in Esagila and other temples as in normal times. Until the day of the sacrifices the king did not make a libation nor did the *Elder Brother* make a libation but he did inspect the temple."
>
> (Religious Chronicle II.1-5)[640]

> "The seventh year: The king (was) in Tayma (while) the prince, his officers, (and) his army (were) in Akkad. [In the month Nisannu, the king] did not come to Babylon. Nabû did not come to Babylon. Bēl did not come out. The [Akītu festiv]al [did not take place]. The offerings to the gods of Babylon and Borsippa, a[s in normal times], in Esagila and Ezida were presented. The *Elder Brother* made a libation and inspected the temple."
>
> (Nabonidus Chronicle II.5-8)[641]

Thus, the Elder Brother can indeed be considered to be the "chief sacerdotal officer"[642] in those big rituals, although there are no indications for his participation in the daily cult – cf. the lack of references in archival documents. In Babylon, the priest is sometimes called "Elder Brother of Eumuša",[643] which indicates his close connection to Marduk and explains his important role in the NYF. In Urukean texts, the Elder Brother is connected with the Bīt Rēš ($^{lú}$šeš.gal *šá* é.sag).[644] With caution, one can speculate that the Elder Brother was the main attendant of the cella of the main god of the main temple of a city and that there was an Elder Brother active in each main temple of each big city.[645] That would explain why Aššurbanipal assigned that role to his two brothers in the temple of Aššur and the temple of Sîn in Harrān respectively.

Aside from his cultic activities, the Elder Brother was involved in scholarship, to which his appearance in colophons of scholarly texts from Uruk attests.[646] In Late Babylonian Uruk, the attested Elder Brothers are always members of the priestly-scholarly Ekur-zākir family.[647]

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[639] According to Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber (*forthcoming*) "[i]t is likely that Simbar-šipak (1025-1008) is meant, the first king of the Second Dynasty of the Sealand". http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-17-religious-chronicle/ [19.12.2018].

[640] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-17-religious-chronicle/ (19.12.2018).

[641] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, http://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/ (19.12.2018).

[642] McEwan 1981a: 9.

[643] In the NYF texts and in AQi 1 (Bruschweiler 1989: 153-162, rev. 8'). For the name of the cella of Marduk, see George 1992: 260 and 389-391.

[644] See the colophons of TU 38 and BRM 4, 7 (Linssen 2004).

[645] The evidence cited seems to suggest that the Elder Brother functioned in the two types of hierarchic structures that we find in Neo-Babylonian cities, viz. the *qīpu-šatammu-tupšarrū* and *qīpu-šangû-tupšarrū* (cf. Hackl 2013: 286-295).

[646] TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183), a ritual text describing the daily offerings in the temples of Uruk, and MLC 1866 (unpublished; mentioned by Beaulieu & Mayer 1997), an uranology. See also above, page 198.

[647] McEwan 1981a: 10; Frame 1991: 45-46; Kümmel 1979: 134-135. During the Neo-Babylonian period at least two Elder Brothers in Uruk came from the Gimil-Nanāya family

However, even though the function was hereditary and involved the status of *ērib-bīti*, it seems that it was not a prebend since no $^{lú}$šeš.gal-*ūtu* is attested.[648] Waerzeggers suggested that, instead, the Elder Brother was appointed by the king, as is the case in the inscription of Aššurbanipal cited above.[649]

From the previous discussion it becomes apparent that the Elder Brother was of considerable importance within the Babylonian temple hierarchy throughout the first millennium BC. It should not be overestimated either. Our image of the Elder Brother in the LB period is distorted by the increased number of attestations at that time. Upon careful consideration, however, it is clear that this priest did not become more important in the late age: his responsibilities remained confined to cultic matters involving the main deity and his main festival, the NYF.[650]

### V.3.1.2 Time

A unique feature of the New Year Festival texts is their explicit concern with time. Admittedly, the idea, that a ritual would only have its desired effect if it was performed at the appropriate moment, is found in many ritual texts, which indicate whether the described ceremony was to be performed at night, at sunrise or sundown,[651] and/or mention that the performance was to take place on an "auspicious" day.[652] The difference here lies with the fact that the NYF texts mention very specific instances of the day at which the rites had to be performed, expressed in double-hours (*bēru*). In other words, every single ritual sequence was to be executed at a specific and therefore specified moment in time (see Table 4).

*Table 4: Time indications*

| Line | Akkadian | Translation | Ritual sequence |
|---|---|---|---|
| NYF1 I.1 | *ina* $^{iti}$*nisanni*(bár) *ūmi* 2$^{kam}$ 1 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(ge$_6$) | In the month Nisannu, second day, at 1 double-hour of the night | rising and bathing of the *aḫu-rabû*; recitation of prayer to Bēl (1) |
| NYF1 V.2' | DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$*nisanni*(bár) *ūmi* [3$^{kam}$ 1 1/3 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(ge$_6$)] | [1] In the month Nisannu, [third] day, [at 1 1/3 double-hours of the night] | rising and bathing of the *aḫu-rabû*; recitation of a prayer to Bēl (1) |
| NYF1 VI.1' | [*enūma*] 1 ½ *bēr*(danna) *ūmu*(me) *išqâ*(nim$^a$) | [When] 1 ½ double-hours of daytime have passed (lit.: when the day is 1 ½ double-hours high) | the *aḫu-rabû* calls for the craftsmen (2) |

[648] With the exception of the Aššurbanipal-inscription where one reads "$^{lú}$šeš.gal-*tú*" (cf. note 626). Van Driel 2002: 41-42.
[649] Waerzeggers 2010: 46 n. 241.
[650] E.g. in the Kislīmu ritual, the Elder Brother is the one who performs actions that take place within the cella of Bēl or „between the curtains" (BM 32206+; Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[651] An excellent example is *Mīs pî* (Walker & Dick 2001).
[652] Expressed with *šalmu* and *magru* (CAD Š/1 259 e 2 s.v. *šalmu*; CAD M/1 47 s.v. *magru*); see, for example, the Hellenistic building ritual text TU 45 obv. 2 (Ambos 2004: 190-2): *ina arḫi šalmi ina ūmi magri*.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NYF1 VI.7' | *ultu*(ta) *ūmi*(ud) 3$^{kam}$ *adi*(en) *ūmi*(ud) 6$^{kam}$ | From the third to the sixth day | pieces of offerings will go to the craftsmen (2a) |
| NYF1 VI.21' | *adi*(en) *ūmi*(ud) *6*$^{kam}$ | Until the sixth day | both statuettes stay in the temple of Madānu (2a) |
| NYF2 I.1 | DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$*nisanni*(bár) *ūmi* 4$^{kam}$ 1 2/3 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(ge$_6$) | [1] In the month Nisannu, fourth day, at 1 2/3 double-hours of the night | rising and bathing of the *aḫu-rabû*; recitation of prayer to Bēl (1) |
| NYF4 II. 21-22 | [*enūm*]*a annâ ītepšu* [*arku*(egir) *tar*]*denni ša kīṣ ūmi* | When he has done this, after the second meal of the morning | recitation of Enūma Elîš (3) |
| NYF3 II.3' // NYF4 II.27 | DIŠ *ina* $^{iti}$*nisanni*(bár) *ūmi* 5$^{kam}$ 2 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(ge$_6$) | [1] In the month Nisannu, [fifth day, at 2 double-hours of the night] | rising and bathing of the *aḫu-rabû*; recitation of prayer to Bēl (1) |
| NYF4 III.38 | *enūma* 1 *bēr*(danna) *ūmu*(me) *išqâ*(nim$^a$) | When 1 double-hour of daytime has passed | consecration of the temple by the exorcist and slaughterer (4) |
| NYF4 IV. 20 | *ultu*(ta) *ūmi*(ud) *5 adi*(en) *12*$^{kam}$ | From the fifth to the twelfth day | the exorcist and the slaughterer will stay in the open country and not enter Babylon (4) |
| NYF4 IV.23-24 | *enūma* 1 2/3 *bēr*(danna) *ūmu išqâ*(nim$^a$) | When 1 2/3 double-hour of daytime have passed | adorning the cella of Nabû with the golden canopy (4) |
| NYF4 V.1 | [*ina* N *bēr*] *ūmi* | [At N double-hours] of the day | preparation of offerings (5) |
| NYF3 VI.13 | *kī šuššān*(u.u) *ereb šamši*(šú.man) | When (it is) 1/3 of the double-hour after sunset | building of reed-structure by *aḫu-rabû* (7) |
| NYF5 II. 14' | [*ina* N *bēr*] *ūmi* | [At N double-hours] of the day | recitation of prayer (1a) |
| NYF5 III.23 | *kīma*(gim) 1 *bēr*(danna) *ūmi*(me) *ana*(diš) *ereb šamši*(šú.$^d$utu) | When (there is) 1 double-hour before sunset | the *aḫu-rabû* enters in the presence of Bēl and recites a prayer (1a) |

Only one ritual sequence is not introduced by a time indicator: the humiliation of the king (6) (see below, page 260). In fact, this part of the ritual starts rather suddenly after the description of how the offerings should be presented to Nabû by the craftsmen, who then "go out through the gate" (NYF4 V 30). The beginning of line V 31 is broken but not much more than one or two signs can be missing – we can still read the larger part of EN. There is thus not enough space to reconstruct any time indicator with certainty.

There are three types of time indicators: those indicating specific moments during the night (*bēr mūši*), those indicating specific moments during the day (i.a. *bēr ūmu išqâ*) and those indicating duration ([*ultu ūmi*] *adi ūmi*) – all with their respective variations. *Bēru* (written danna [kaskal-bu][653]) is a "double-hour" (120 minutes): in the first millennium BC, the day was subdivided into twelve units of equal length or *bērū*, which is thus the equivalent of two hours in our 24

[653] Borger *MZL* 305.

hour-day. *Bēru* was equally a unit to measure the distance the sun travelled in the sky (30°). Time was thus measured by calculating the distance of the sun in relation to sunrise or sunset.[654]

- Rising times

The exact meaning of the first expression "x *bēr mūši*" is unclear, since it is an abbreviated formulation. Depending on which expression is meant, it refers to an amount of time either before sunrise or after sunset. On the one hand, it could refer to "x *bēr mūšu ana nūri* (*irâh*)"[655], "x double-hours (are left) before morning light" or its variant "*ina* x *bēr mūši ana nūri*"[656]. Considering that the amount of *bēru* grows every day, in this interpretation of the phrase this would mean that the Elder Brother had to rise earlier every day: the distance to sunrise, expressed in *bēru*, would become larger. This is how the rising times unanimously have been understood by modern scholars, although this assumption is never explicitly argued for.[657]

On the other hand, the abbreviation could also come from "x *bēr mūšu illik*(gin)" or variant "*ina* x *bēr mūši*", "at x double-hours of the night", or, more specifically, "at x double-hours after sunset".[658] In this case, the priest would start later every day. Since the NYF texts use the abbreviated form, insights have to be gained from relevant parallels. A plausible candidate is another ritual text from LB Borsippa which discusses the events that took place in Borsippa's temples during the first days of Nisannu, where the editors read:

> [DIŠ] $^{iti}$*nisannu*(bára) ˹*ūm*(u$_4$)˺ 1$^{kam}$ *ina kaṣâti*(gi$_6$.sá) *qí-bit šá* $^{lú}$*kurgarrû*(kur.gar.ra) ˹*šá-ru*˺*-ú šá* $^{lú}$*nāru*(n[ar$^?$ (x)]
> ˹*ina*˺ *muḫḫi*(ugu) 2/3 *bēr*(danna) *mūši*(gi$_6$) *bābu*(ká) *ippette*(bad)$^{te}$*-ma*
> "In the month Nisannu, on the first day, in the early morning, the prayer of the *kurgarrû*, the singing(?) of the singer(?) […]
> At 2/3 double-hours of the night, the gate will be opened and …"[659]

These two lines contain multiple time indicators, two of which are of relevance here: *ina kaṣâti*(gi$_6$.sá) and *ina muḫḫi* 2/3 *bēr mūši*. As the editors of BM 40790 remarked: "[t]he integration of *Racc.* 127-54 [= NYF texts] and BM 40790 offers a nice time progression." Even though the events described took place in Borsippa rather than in Babylon, we can assume a

[654] Streck 2012: 403 (RlA 13/5-6 s.v. Tag, Tageszeiten; see also Streck 2017, RlA 15/5-6 s.v. Zeit). See also CAD B 210-211 s.v. *bēru* 2.
[655] CAD B 210 s.v. *bēru* A2.
[656] E.g. ADART no. -162 rev. 3.
[657] Linssen 2004: 26. Note some exceptions in early editions of the NYF texts: Hehn 1906, Dhorme 1911. However, the more natural way to count would be forward, i.e. progressing, instead of backward, i.e. regressing; the Astronomical Diaries start at the fall of night and continue throughout the night until sunrise.
[658] See, for example, in the Astronomical Diaries ADART nos. -214 obv. 8, -123A rev. 3'. See also CAD B s.v. *bēru* 2a. More examples can be found in the ADART with units other than *bēru*, e.g. ADART no. -225 rev. 5: *ina* 17 ge$_6$, "at 17° nighttime".
[659] BM 40790 II 7'-8' (Da Riva & Galetti 2018).

certain coordination of both cults, around the New Year especially. Furthermore, the Borsippa-text indicates how the phrase in the NYF texts was perhaps to be understood: <*ina muḫḫi*> x *bēr mūši*. Perhaps one does not even have to go looking for a parallel in order to understand the abbreviated phrase in the NYF texts if one understands the first *ina* of the line to relate to both month and day as well as hour: *ina nisanni* <*ina*> *ūmi* <*ina*> x *bēr mūši.*

Based on the translation offered by Da Riva and Galetti, in combination with the general assumption that the Elder Brother rose earlier every day of the NYF, the following sequence could be established:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Day 1 | *ina kaṣâti*<br>2/3 *bēru* | in the early morning (= 1/3 double-hour before sunrise)[660]<br>at 2/3 double-hour before sunrise |
| Day 2 | 1 *bēru* | at 1 double-hour before sunrise |
| Day 3 | 1 1/3 *bēru* | at 1 1/3 double-hours before sunrise |
| Day 4 | 1 2/3 *bēru* | at 1 2/3 double-hours before sunrise |
| Day 5 | 2 *bēru* | at 2 double-hours before sunrise |

Nonetheless, the formulation found in the Borsippa-text is *ina muḫḫi* x *bēr mūši*, "at x double-hours of the night", which suggests a moment in time after sunset rather than before sunrise; for the latter, an extra specification (*ana* zálag or similarly) would have been expected. Conflicting with this reading, however, is the translation of the word *kaṣâtu* understood as "early morning". Since ritual texts follow a linear chronological order, what happened *ina kaṣâti* must have come before what occurred at 2/3 double-hours of the night, i.e., in the evening. *Kaṣâtu* has a root √*kṣi*, "to be cool"; other derivatives have a general meaning of "moment of coolness" either in the morning or evening (*kaṣû*, *kīṣu*).[661] Perhaps the same can be assumed for *kaṣâtu*, which would then refer to "at sunset". Another possibility is that we should read the logograms *ina* $gi_6$.sá as $gi_6$ silim instead (sá = DI = silim): *ina mūši šalmi* could then be translated as "when the night has completely fallen". In both cases, the rising times of the Elder Brother would progress from around sunset onward, resulting in the following progression:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Day 1 | *ina kaṣâti*<br>2/3 *bēru* | at the cooling of the day (at sunset)<br>at 2/3 double-hour after sunset |
| Day 2 | 1 *bēru* | at 1 double-hour after sunset |
| Day 3 | 1 1/3 *bēru* | at 1 1/3 double-hours after sunset |
| Day 4 | 1 2/3 *bēru* | at 1 2/3 double-hours after sunset |
| Day 5 | 2 *bēru* | at 2 double-hours after sunset |

[660] Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 208 note on lines ii 7'-8'.
[661] CAD K 269 s.v. *kaṣû* B and 445 s.v. *kīṣu*.

It clearly makes sense to take sunset as the starting moment for the NYF: the Babylonian day started in the evening, as is made clear in the Astronomical Diaries, for example, which start their accounts with nighttime and move on to daytime.[662] That way, the ritual would start at the exact same moment as the calendrical New Year took place. Many other rituals were performed at night as well, including a procession for Anu in Hellenistic Uruk.[663]

Still, while it is now established that the priest had to rise later every day, it should be explained why that was the case. The reason why his rising hour shifted progressively, has not sufficiently been explained – regardless of the fact that it was believed that it shifted backwards. Linssen related it to the night watches (*šāt urri*): every night was divided into three watches each of two double-hours long.[664] That does not explain why the rising hour progressed/regressed by 1/3 of the double-hour per day. Bidmead suggested to consider the differences in time as "symbolic of the importance of each individual day."[665] There seems to be more to the matter than meets the eye, however.

First, it is unlikely that the rising times of the Elder Brother carried an independent symbolic meaning. Rather, it was the moment at which the god was woken up that mattered. The regular cult revolved around the care and maintenance of the gods, who, like kings by their court, were awoken, clothed, fed and, at certain occasions, entertained. However, since ritual texts address human agents and instruct on their actions instead of focussing on the "actions" of the gods, the moment at which the god was awoken each day remains unclear. We can assume that some time elapsed between the waking of the priest and that of the god, because the former had to bathe and go to the cella of Bēl first. Therefore, a certain calibration should be supposed vis-à-vis the recorded rising times of the priest.

Second, the situation found in the NYF, in which the Elder Brother awoke early in the night and progressively later, was abnormal: the regular cultic day started at daybreak with the *dīk bīti* and *pīt bābi* ceremonies.[666] Yet, the fact that the rising time progresses, indicates that at a given point the situation of normalcy would have been reached again, namely, when the god was awoken at sunrise. On which exact day this was reached, cannot be known, because of the discrepancy between the priest's and the god's rising times. Aside from that, it is not certain

[662] Streck 2012: 403 (RlA 13 5/6). See also Sachs & Hunger 1988: 15.
[663] TU 41 (Krul 2018). See Hunger 1998: 45 (RlA 9 s.v. Nacht).
[664] Linssen 2004: 26.
[665] Pace Bidmead 2002: 110.
[666] Linssen 2004: 25-39.

whether the interval of 1/3 *bēru* was maintained throughout the ritual, as the larger interval between 1/I and 2/I indicates.[667]

Taken together, all this means that during the course of the NYF Bēl would be awoken at a moment in time that progressed from (near) sunset on the first day towards sunrise on the last. As such, the rising times connect two crucial moments of the day. A hypothesis as to part of the underlying rationale of this progression may be offered. At two instances of the year, the time between sunset and sunrise would be as long as the time that elapsed between sunrise and sunset: at the equinoxes, the day was exactly as long as the night and each were six *bēru* long.

From astronomical works such as Enūma Anu Enlil and mul.apin, we know that in the ideal 360-day year, the equinoxes fell exactly in the middle of the first and seventh month, while the solstices happened in the middle of the fourth and tenth month. In other words, the vernal equinox fell on the 15th day of Nisannu.[668] On that day, nighttime and daytime would be equally long – six *bēru*s each. However, the ideal 360-day year was not compatible with reality, which led to a discrepancy between the ideal date of the equinox and the real date of the event. In the Hellenistic period, the vernal equinox would have shifted back and forth between 15/XII and 4/I, and would never have occurred as late as 15/I.[669] Nevertheless, the cultic reality presented in the NYF texts – and in prescriptive ritual texts in general – was an ideal one and, while the 'practical' cultic calendar may have been influenced by and coordinated with astronomical reality, it is more likely that "the yearly festivals were probably still based on the ideal year model described in mul.apin."[670] There is at least one other example that shows how the ideal nor real time reckonings were used in cultic texts in Hellenistic Babylonia: the nocturnal fire ceremony at Uruk (TU 41) was to take place on the night between the 16th and the 17th day of Ṭebētu (month X), as convincingly argued by Krul, who went on to connect it with the winter solstice, an event that would have occurred on the 15th day of the tenth month in an ideal year or between 13/IX and 11/X in reality.[671]

Regardless of the exact date of the vernal equinox, the NYF celebrated at the beginning of Nisannu would have occurred close enough in time to the astronomical event to make it possible

[667] If we may take the starting time in the Borsippa ritual as a reference. Moreover, the rising time for day 3/I is reconstructed and could thus have been different as well.
[668] Steele 2008: 28.
[669] https://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/astro/almagestephemeris_main.htm#calendar (last accessed 07.01.2019). Britton 2002: 44 Figure 7; Neugebauer 1975: 362 Table 3.
[670] Krul 2018: 131. Mul.apin was still copied and used in the Late Babylonian period. See also Stevens 2019: 65-66.
[671] Krul 2018:130-134.

to link the festival with it. I propose that the purpose of the progressing rising times was to reach 6 *bēru*, half of the 24-hour day, to express the perfect balance between day- and nighttime at the equinox.[672] This tentative explanation raises questions, however. First, the extant NYF texts do not contain any explicit reference to the vernal equinox.[673] Nonetheless, this does not necessarily invalidate an attempt at looking for an underlying astronomical reasoning, given the intellectual context of the NYF texts and the visible influence of astronomy in other sections of the texts.[674] Second, if one follows the pattern of a difference of 1/3 *bēru* per day set in the preserved texts, the meaningful 6 *bēru* would have been reached only on 17/I (Table 5: Rising hours (bold attested in NYF texts).

*Table 5: Rising hours (bold attested in NYF texts)*

| **day** | ***bēru* after sunset** | **minutes after sunset** | **exact time after sunset (ca. 18:00)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2/3 | 80 | 19:20 |
| **2** | **1** | 120 | 20:00 |
| **3** | **1 1/3** | 160 | 20:40 |
| **4** | **1 2/3** | 200 | 21:20 |
| **5** | **2** | 240 | 22:00 |
| 6 | 2 1/3 | 280 | 22:40 |
| 7 | 2 2/3 | 320 | 23:20 |
| 8 | 3 | 360 | 00:00 |
| 9 | 3 1/3 | 400 | 00:40 |
| 10 | 3 2/3 | 440 | 01:20 |
| 11 | 4 | 480 | 02:00 |
| 12 | 4 1/3 | 520 | 02:40 |
| 13 | 4 2/3 | 560 | 03:20 |
| 14 | 5 | 600 | 04:00 |
| 15 | 5 1/3 | 640 | 04:40 |
| 16 | 5 2/3 | 680 | 05:20 |
| 17 | 6 | 720 | 06:00 |

However, as has been explained above, the moment when Marduk was awoken remains unknown, but must necessarily have been subsequent to the priest's rising. If the interval between priest's and god's rising was, say, 2/3 of a *bēru*, day 15/I would come out as the day on which Marduk woke up at sunrise.[675] Unfortunately, we remain in the dark about this particular point.

[672] Consider also the reference in the letter SAA 8, 141: ud 15$^{kam}$ *ša nisanni ūmu u mūšu šitqulu*, 6 *bēr ūmi u* 6 *bēr mūši*, "on the 15$^{th}$ of Nisannu, day and night were equal: 6 double-hours of daytime, 6 double-hours of night" (CAD B 211 s.v. *bēru* 2b). See also Streck 2012: 403.
[673] A hidden reference to the vernal equinox may lie in the prayer to Pegasus on the fourth day of Nisannu, see below, page 230.
[674] For example, in the "astronomical prayer", see below, page 282.
[675] And on day 1/I Marduk would wake up at sundown.

Despite its problems, it cannot be denied that the idea of a connection to the vernal equinox is attractive.[676] In the Hellenistic period, erudite priests were highly interested in astronomical studies,[677] and it would be remarkable that no connection at all was made between the traditional moment of celebration of the New Year at the beginning of Nisannu and the spring equinox, the actual or ideal date of which occurred around the same time. What is more, Julia Krul noticed a growing astral dimension in the Late Babylonian cult,[678] and perhaps we may go as far as to claim that there was an increasing *astronomical* aspect to it. At two other instances in the New Year Festival texts there are references to heavenly bodies: once in prayers to Marduk and Zarpānītu, who are addressed with the names of planets and constellations,[679] and as well in the ritual instructions for day 4, when the Elder Brother is supposed to bless Esagila in its capacity of "image of Pegasus".[680]

Moreover, it has been claimed that the very first attested *akītu*-festivals celebrated at Ur in the early third millennium BC were to mark the equinoxes in the first and seventh months.[681] Mark Cohen proposed to interpret the *akītu*-procession of the seventh month as a re-enactment of the triumph of Moon over Sun, since the autumnal equinox marked the moment when nighttime would become longer than daytime. Going out of the city to the *akītu*-house allowed the Moon god to re-enter the city in a triumphant procession. At the spring equinox, the same ritual took place, but rather to counteract reality: in the sky, Sun might have been superior over Moon, but in Ur, Nanna remained the most important deity in charge of the city.[682]

In fact, a similar interpretation of the equinox as moment of "battle" may be found in a Late Babylonian composition. The so-called Babylon Calendar Treatise is a treasure-trove of traditional cuneiform and Late Babylonian scholarship including omens, astronomy/astrology, ritual and mythology, "unified by the theme of foreign enemies invading Babylonia, in particular an enemy called Elam invading the traditional capital Babylon".[683] In this calendar-

[676] Bidmead connected the NYF to the vernal equinox in a different way. According to her, the festival started on the day of the equinox and lasted twelve days, which were representative for the twelve months of the year. This leaves the rising times of the priest unexplained, however (Bidmead 2002: 107-110). See also Robson 2004: 48 and Cohen 1993: 402.
[677] Witnessed by the huge corpus of astronomical texts, especially from Babylon (see Clancier 2009: 159-168 and 410-447), and the growing amount of astronomical commentaries of traditional lore (Wee 2016, 2018).
[678] Krul 2018: 189. See also Krul 2019.
[679] See below, page 282.
[680] See below, page 230.
[681] Cohen 2015: 101-102 and 79-80; Cohen 1993: 401-403.
[682] The idea of moon and sun vying for time in the sky expressed in the oldest *akītu*-ritual was denied by Hunger (1996: 777).
[683] Reynolds 2019: 3. The latest edition with extensive commentary can be found in Reynolds 2019. All three manuscripts stem from the LB Esagila libraries.

like text, the different parties of this human warfare are represented by the gods Marduk (Babylon), Tiāmat (Elam) and Qingu (Subartu). Those deities, in turn, are at several instances syncretized with astral bodies, in typical Late Babylonian fashion. The most common astral reinterpretation for Marduk was the Sun, whereas Tiāmat was represented by the Moon.[684] Thus, this Calendar Treatise revolves around the victory of Babylon over Elam, mythologically mirrored by the battle of Marduk against Tiāmat found in Enūma Elîš and astrologically represented by the victory of the Sun over the Moon, or, in other words, by the spring equinox, when daytime became longer than nighttime.[685]

In conclusion, we may suggest that the progressing rising times of Marduk, which are implicitly related through the progressing rising times of his priest, most probably culminated in the moment of the (ideal) equinox on the 15th of Nisannu. An underlying explanation for this event may have been that it symbolized a moment of battle both in mythology - between Marduk and Tiāmat – and in history – between Babylon and Elam.

- Other time indicators

Aside from rising times, other rites are also set at specific moments for which a variety of designations is used. There is the expression *enūma* N *bēr ūmu išqâ*, literally "when the day is N *bēru* high": in this case, *bēru* explicitly carries the meaning of "distance in the sky" (travelled by the sun), thus representing a moment in time. The same can be said of those time indicators that refer to "*bēru* to sunset". It is, for example, very clear from the use of the preposition *ana* in *kīma* 1 *bēr ūmi ana ereb šamši*:[686] the sun still had 1 *bēru* to travel in the sky before it set. Another exquisite example is *kī šuššān ereb šamši* – a hapax legomenon – in which *šuššān* means as much as "one-third of the double-hour".[687] It is both a graphemic (u.u šú man[=u.u]) and phonetic play (*šušš-* / *šamš-*). Furthermore, there are more relative expressions of time that hinge on previously mentioned (or unmentioned but supposedly performed) rites, such as the reference to the *tardennu ša kīṣ ūmi*, the "second meal of the morning"[688] or even more generally: "after pronouncing this blessing", "after the arrival of Nabû" etc.[689]

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[684] Reynolds 2019: 39.
[685] "The treatise's structure and contents reflect an ideal year incorporating the doctrine of planetary places of secret knowledge (*ašar niṣirtu* [sic; CD]) with Du'ūzu and Ṭebētu solstices, and Nisannu and Tašrītu equinoxes." (Reynolds 2019: 5). The passage concerning Nisannu is severely broken, but it "probably includes an account of Ti'āmat and Marduk's battle" (Reynolds 2019: 6).
[686] Note also the quite uncommon writing šú $^{d}$utu for *ereb šamši*.
[687] CAD Š/3 384.
[688] See also note on line, NYF4 II 22.
[689] See also Linssen 2004: 27. Those general designations were not included in the table above since they do not feature technical terms expressing time; moreover, they do not seem to introduce new ritual segments.

Lastly, there are some references to events lasting several days, expressed with (*ultu ūmi* X) *adi ūmi* Y, "(from day X) until day Y". This is not specific to the New Year Festival texts and similar expression may occur elsewhere as well.[690] Nonetheless, the exact timing of every segment of the festival is unique. While we do find similar time indicators in other ritual texts, they occur only rarely there. Some Neo-Assyrian ritual texts use the phrase *ina* N *bēr ūmi* "at N double-hour of the day".[691] In ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk we also find time indicators, such as: 10 uš[692] *ūmi arku nipiḫ šamši* "forty minutes of daytime after sunrise" in the nocturnal fire ceremony.[693] Still, this remains very restricted and there are no other ritual texts that contain as many time indicators as the NYF texts.

The phrases used to express time and the way they are written in the NYF texts occur much more often in another textual genre: astronomical texts.[694] Indeed, time was expressed by measuring the position of the sun in the sky and therefore it is not surprising that we find more references in that corpus, throughout which there is mention of moments before and after sunrise (kur, but also nim[695]) and sunset (šú).[696] Moreover, as already noted above, some orthographic features of the NYF texts occur more often in the astronomical corpus.[697] This is telling for the Sitz-im-Leben of the NYF texts, since the bulk of astronomical texts stems from the Late Babylonian period.

Finally, no certain answer can be given to the question of how the priest knew when to wake up. In Mesopotamia, time could be told by means of a sundial (not very useful at night) or waterclock. Two double-hours were the equivalent of 1 mina of water flowing from the waterclock.[698] Time could also "be estimated from meridian-crossings of *ziqpu* stars of 'strings'".[699] Perhaps other means, unknown to us, were used, such as the candle clock.

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[690] E.g. in the building ritual of the *kalû*, TU 46, certain actions have to be performed until something is complete (rev. 11-12: "Until that temple is complete, you will not stop performing etc.").
[691] E.g. BBR 39: 2: *ina ½ bēr ūmi ana ṣēri tatârma* "you return to the hinterland at ½ double-hour of the day"; SAA 20, 32 2: *ina* 5/6 *bēr ūmi ina muḫḫi nāri tallak* "at the 5/6th double-hour of the day you go to the river". See CAD B 210-211 s.v. *bēru* 2 for more references in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and letters and Neo-Babylonian correspondence.
[692] A *bēru* was subdivided in 30 uš; 1 uš is therefore 4 minutes (Streck 2012: 403).
[693] TU 41 rev. 28 (Krul 2018).
[694] See also above, page 188.
[695] The orthography nim$^{a}$ for *išqâ* occurs almost exclusively in late astronomical texts (CAD Š/2 19; Neugebauer 1955: 486 s.v. nim "after sunrise").
[696] Neugebauer 1955, *passim*.
[697] See Chapter V.1.
[698] Hunger & Pingree 1999: 46.
[699] Cf. Hunger & Pingree 1999: 139.

### V.3.1.3 Bathing in river water

It seems a superfluous statement that the Elder Brother should wash himself before starting his duties, because one of the general requirements of the initiated priesthood was purity, both physical and mental.[700] Upon their initiation, future priests had to fulfil certain obligations: bodily perfection, right descent, moral behaviour, and adequate training. A number of ritual texts instruct on the purification of priests (at their initiation), amongst them the Old Babylonian "incantations for the purification of a gudu-priest".[701] This collection contains six incantations which are to be recited at different steps of the purification process taking place at sunrise, before the priest entered the temple. Water is one of the elements used:

> "Das Waschwassergefäß Enkis hat meinen Arm, der nicht in Ordnung war, in Ordnung gebracht; hat meine Hand, die nicht in Ordnung war, in Ordnung gebracht; hat meinen Fuß, der nicht in Ordnung war, in Ordnung gebracht."[702]

While Farber associated these incantations with the investiture of the priest, possibly they could also concern the regular cleansing of the priest before entering the temple to perform his duties – the text remains unclear about this matter.

The verb used in the NYF texts is *ramāku*, "to bathe". A well-known derivative is found in the name of the ritual *Bīt rimki*, "(ritual of the) bathhouse".[703] This verb stands alongside *mesû*, "to wash", which occurs in the rituals *Mīs pî*, "mouthwashing", and *Mīs qāte*, "handwashing".[704] While the latter verb denotes the washing of a part of the body, *ramāku* most often indicates a full, immersive bath. Bathing could take on the form of a ritual ceremony (*rimku*) and is attested mostly for gods and for kings, e.g. in the epic of Atrahasis:[705]

> "On the first, seventh, and fifteenth days of the month, I will establish a purification, a bath (*rimka*). Let one god be slaughtered, then let the gods be purified in it."[706]

The bathing of cultic officiants occurs in ritual texts other than the NYF texts too.[707] In most cases, it is specified in which substance the subject bathed; aside from water, urine, blood and sweat are mentioned as well.[708] In this instance, the priest had to bathe in water from the Tigris

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[700] On the necessity of purity see Waerzeggers & Jursa 2008; Sallaberger & Vulliet 2005: 620-622 (RlA 10 s.v. Priester). Entrance to the temple was restricted and there were different gradations of sacred space: "[t]he inner core corresponds to the area of operation of *ērib-bīti* priests, the intermediate area to that of the initiated priesthood, and the outer shell to that of the uninitiated priesthood." (Waerzeggers & Jursa 2008: 17).
[701] A 7479 (G. & W. Farber 2003: 99-114); K 2856+ (Borger 1973b: 70-72). They are discussed in Waerzeggers & Jursa 2008.
[702] A 7479 i 1-4 (G. & W. Farber 2003: 104).
[703] CAD R 111. See Schwemer 2019.
[704] CAD M/2 32. See Linssen 2004: 152-154.
[705] For references see CAD R 356-357 s.v. *rimku* 2b and 357-358 s.v. *bīt rimki* b.
[706] Atrahasis I 206-209 (Foster 2005: 235).
[707] See CAD R 112-113 s.v. *ramāku* 1b.
[708] CAD R s.v. *ramāku* for references.

and Euphrates. While the text does not specify the details of the water in question, we can still assume that a ritual preparation preceded the bathing ceremony. Water used in rituals was usually supplemented with materials that would enhance its purifying effects, including certain kinds of stones and wood.[709]

The wash water was not freshly drawn from the rivers, but was kept in a well within the Esagila precinct. In Tintir we find a mention of a chapel called E-idim(?)-sagga, "House of the Foremost Spring(?)", described as the *šubat idiqlat u puratti ša bīt* [*būrti*], "seat of Tigris and Euphrates of the well-house".[710] A Late Babylonian metrological tablet from Babylon describes the measurements of the well-house (*bīt būrti*) of Esagila; probably, the same chapel is meant here.[711] Despite the attestation of the well-house, the use of river water in rituals is rare – at least, the textual references are.[712] A rare example can be found in Šurpu:

> "He was cleansed, purified, bathed, washed (and) absolved in the pure water of the Tigris and Euphrates"[713]

The reason why the NYF texts are so explicit about the bathing of the priest is probably because it was not the normal course of events. It seems to be the case that priests and other ritual participants were not required to wash themselves completely each time they took part in a ritual, but rather they underwent a more symbolic form of cleansing. Frequently attested in Late Babylonian rituals is the act of handwashing.[714] In the NYF, for example, water "for the hands" is said to be given to the king before entering the temple. Two tools were used in the handwashing ceremony – they were deified objects that resided in their own shrine called Easikilla, "House of Pure Water".[715] The "one giving water for the hands" and the "holder of the water of life" would be brought to the location where they were needed:

> "At dawn, the gate in front of Bēl will be opened. When the water for Bēl is carried in, Nādin-mê-qātē and Mukīl-mê-balāṭi will come down from the cella and in the gate of the cella they will sit in their places."[716]

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[709] Maul 1994: 41-46.
[710] Tintir II 33 (George 1992: 46-47; George 1993 no. 511). See also George 1992: 278-279; 2000: 268 note on lines ii 9'-10'.
[711] MMA 86.11.102 (George 2005a).
[712] For references, see George 1992: 278-279; Goetze 1955: 16 note 58.
[713] *Šurpu* VIII 83; translation CAD R 114 s.v. *ramāku* 4.
[714] Linssen 2004: 152-153. In Judaic tradition, there are two main ways of ritual washing. One is the *neṭila yadayim* (washing of the hands), the other the ritual bath (*ṭevilah*) in a *miqveh*.
[715] Tintir II 37 (George 1992: 46-47).
[716] BM 32206+ II 10-11 (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).

Related to the handwashing was another form of cleansing: the sprinkling of water on persons. In the Urukean NYF, for example, the participants were sprinkled with water "for the hands".[717]

These easier forms of purification occur much more frequently in rituals than the concept of bathing. Therefore, it would seem that the daily bathing of the priest was the exception rather than the rule, which in turn explains why it is included in the ritual instructions in the NYF texts. The extreme caution taken regarding the purity of the Elder Brother occurs at other instances in the text as well, e.g. when the cella of Nabû is purified (see below, chapter V.3.4.1). It underscores the importance attributed to this priestly functionary.

#### V.3.1.4 Entering the cella and removing the curtain

After having purified himself as required, the Elder Brother entered the cella of Bēl and removed the piece of linen fabric that kept him out of sight (*gadalû idekke*).[718] The order of things shows that the *gadalû* must have been located somewhere inside the cella and not at its entrance gate. Curiously, the verb *dekû* seems to be used only here in the meaning of "opening (the curtain)".[719] It raises the question of whether there is a connection to the *dīk bīti* (<*dekû*), the "awakening of the temple" ceremony. While the name of the *dīk bīti* ceremony is attested in Neo-Assyrian and Hellenistic ritual texts as the first ritual of the day, the exact form of the ritual is unknown.[720] A connection between the *dīk bīti* and the removal of the curtain is present in the ritual text BM 40854+, where one reads:

> *dīk bīti kī pīt bābi gadalê takerrik* [sic]
> "awakening of the temple: during the opening of the gate, she will wrap(?) the linen curtains"[721]

Nonetheless, in contrast to the *dīk bīti* which seems to have applied to the whole temple or perhaps the entrance to the cella, the rite here seems to be concerned with that part of the cella of Marduk where the divine statue was kept.[722] Moreover, it seems that the *dīk bīti* was usually performed by the lamentation priests and the singers, as is specified in a ritual text from Uruk.[723]

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[717] TU 40 rev. 4 (Linssen 2004: 190). See also the Kislīmu ritual, where the *mār-ummâni* is sprinkled by the Elder Brother (II 30; Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[718] It seems implausible that *gadalû idekki* meant that the priest removed a linen cloth that he was wearing himself, cf. CAD G 8. See also note on line NYF1 I 3. The *gadalû* is also mentioned – with different verbs – in the ritual text BM 40790 i 6' and *passim* (Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 198).
[719] CAD D 124 s.v. *dekû*.
[720] Linssen 2004: 27-36.
[721] BM 40854+ iv 30' (Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 220).
[722] Sic also Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 203 note on line i 6'.
[723] TU 39 obv. 7 (Linssen 2004: 185). Note also how in the ritual text BM 40790 the opening of the curtains is accompanied by singing of the *kurgarrû* and the singers (BM 40790 i 4', 6', 13', 17'; ii 8'; Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 203 note on line i 4' and *passim*).

In the Babylonian NYF, however, those cultic functionaries entered only after the Elder Brother had concluded his rites in the cella of Marduk.

It is not entirely clear where Bēl and Bēltīya were during this part of the NYF. Bēl's main cella in Esagila was called Eumuša;[724] Bēltīya usually dwelled in Edaranna.[725] However, in the prayers of the NYF texts, both deities are explicitly addressed as *āšib*(*at*) é.u$_4$.ul: they seem to be dwelling together in a cella called Euʾul, "House of Ancient Days", "primordial temple".[726] It is uncertain whether Euʾul and Eumuša are one and the same cella or not,[727] but since not only Bēl, but also Bēltīya are said to be there, they were most likely different structures. Nothing more can be said about Euʾul, however, because the temple name only occurs in the NYF texts.[728]

### V.3.1.5 Reciting an *ikribu*-prayer

The prayers which the Elder Brother recited to Bēl and on some days to Bēltīya as well, are termed *ikribu* (šùd), which can be translated as "blessing", "votive offering" or "prayer".[729] In fact, we would expect the first prayers of the day to be *takribtu*s (written ér)[730] or balags, which were meant to soothe the hearts of the gods to whom they were sung.[731] They were the customary prayers to be recited during the *dīk bīti*.[732] Reciting them was meant to ensure that one would not arouse the anger of the gods when waking them from their sleep. The difference between *ikribu* and *takribtu* may be negligible, however, because they have the same root √*krb*; as Gabbay remarked: "*ikribu* and *takribtu* may represent two different types of prayers, or a general and a specialized word for 'prayer'".[733]

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[724] George 1993 no. 1176. For the reading of the name, see George 1992: 389-391.
[725] George 1993 no. 145.
[726] George 1992: 390-391; George 1993 no. 1141. Uri Gabbay pointed out to me that a fragment from a bilingual Nineveh-tablet contains the temple name é-ud-ul-dù-a, which is equated with é *qud-˹ma*˺ […] "ancient/primordial house" (K 17667 [P402978]). Note, moreover, the reference to the *bīt qudmi ilāni* in a NA building ritual, where it refers to a mythological dwelling place, however (K 2000+ 73; Ambos 2004: 162-163 with note on line).
[727] In the NYF texts, Eumuša is only mentioned in connection with the Elder Brother. It should be noted that Euʾul might be a cryptographic form of Eumuša: m would be read as w, which in turn is interchangeable with aleph, and also š and l are interchangeable.
[728] It can perhaps be restored in the Canonical Temple List, a list of chapels and temples of Marduk (George 1992: 390). In a way, the meaning of its name is reminiscent of the Day One Temple attested in LB texts (see above, page 82).
[729] Oshima 2011: 10 and CAD I 66 s.v. *ikribu*.
[730] For the meaning of the word *takribtu*, I follow Gabbay (2014: 7): "Although it is customary to transliterate the word as *taqribtu* (from *qerēbu*), with the basic meaning 'offering,' it is more likely that this word should be understood as *takribtu* (from *karābu*), 'prayer'." See also CAD T 200; AHw III 1324.
[731] Gabbay 2014: 7 and 159-162.
[732] Linssen 2004: 28.
[733] Gabbay 2011: 71-72. See also Gabbay 2014: 16 with note 6. Note also how the NYF texts from Uruk mention the performance of *takribtu*s, not *ikribu*s (Linssen 2004: 35 and 184-196).

Generally, the prayers of this type were either unilingual Emesal or bilingual Emesal-Akkadian. That is not entirely true for the *ikribu*s found in the NYF texts: they are only partially bilingual and continue in unilingual Akkadian. Moreover, they were not performed by the *kalû*, to whose lore Emesal prayers usually belonged, but by the Elder Brother. It does not seem that these prayers can be considered to be "the regular daily predawn performance of Emesal prayers integrated into the structure of monthly or annual rituals."[734] Perhaps this irregular aspect of the prayers could account for the fact that they are not cited by incipit but instead are written in full in the NYF texts: these were not the normal prayers to be spoken in the morning, but recitations specially composed for and performed at the occasion of the NYF in praise of Bēl and Bēltīya.

V.3.1.6 Prayer to Pegasus, image of Esagila

The sequence of action at the beginning of the day is slightly altered on the fourth day of Nisannu. After having recited the prayers to Bēl and Bēltīya respectively, the Elder Brother went out into the Grand Courtyard and blessed Esagila thrice with the line "*ikû*-star (=Pegasus), Esagila, image of heaven and earth".[735] The association Pegasus–Esagila can be found already in inscriptions of Esarhaddon;[736] probably it was based on a similarity of form between the constellation and the ground plan of the temple: Pegasus is known mostly for its "Square",[737] formed by the four brightest stars in the constellation, on which some strands of stars hang; it is reminiscent of the square temple building, to which two grand courtyards were added.

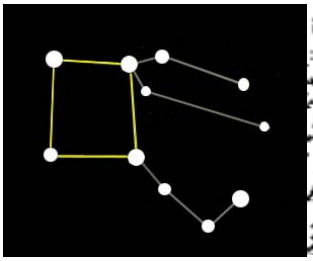

*Figure 3: The constellation Pegasus*
(https://www.solarsystemquick.com/universe/pegasus-constellation.htm)

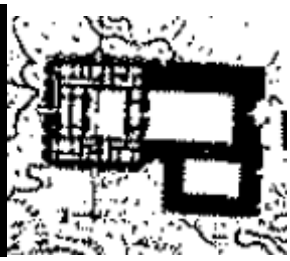

*Figure 4: Groundplan of Esagila (George 1992)*

Moreover, the constellation Pegasus is associated with the New Year. It has been stated that "the actual festival begins on 4 Nisan, as the priest observes the *ikû*-star,"[738] because the heliacal

[734] Gabbay 2014: 162.
[735] Possibly this line is the incipit of a longer prayer, but that remains unclear.
[736] Esarhaddon 104 iii 41b, 105 iv 37b, 111 v 1'. See CAD I 69 2 s.v. *ikû*. The constellation was also more generally associated with Babylon, e.g. MSL 17 no. 22 312.
[737] Thus its Babylonian name *ikû* "square" written (aš-)gán. Sennacherib refers to the *mitḫurtu*, "square" form of the temple's groundplan. See note 736.
[738] Van Der Toorn 1991: 332 n. 7.

rising[739] of Pegasus seems to have occurred during the first month, which means that it would have appeared at dawn at the eastern horizon during the course of the festival.[740] Indeed, there are several references to the connection between the constellation Pegasus and Nisannu in scholarly texts. In Astrolabe B, for example, we can read:

> "'The Field' ($^{mul}$iku) which stands at the rising of the east wind and lies across the Southwind, this star is the star of the New Year (mul sag mu), the forerunner of the stars of Ea."[741]

A reference to the importance of the sighting of the constellation at the beginning of the year can be found in an astronomical "Diviner's Manual":

> "Twelve are the months of the year, 360 are its days. Study the length of the year and look (in tablets) for the timings of the disappearances, the visibilities (and) the first appearance of the stars, (also) the position (*mitḫurtu*)[742] of the *ikû*-star at the beginning of the year, the first appearance of the sun and the moon in the months Addaru and Ulūlu, the risings and first appearances of the moon as observed each month; watch the 'opposition' of the Pleiades and the moon, and (all) this will give you the (proper) answer, (thus) establish the months of the year (and) the days of the months, and do perfectly whatever you are doing."[743]

The constellation Pegasus is not only associated with the month Nisannu and the beginning of the year, but in the late period a connection with the vernal equinox emerges as well. For example, in the text known as "Rules for Playing the Game of Twenty Squares" (BM 33333B), which is actually an astronomical interpretation of the famous game, the heliacal rising of Pegasus is associated with the vernal equinox (rosette 4).[744] This association is explicitly formulated only in Greek and Latin parapegmata dating to the later Hellenistic period.[745] As such, the prayer to Pegasus as image of Esagila may be another hidden reference to the vernal equinox, just like the rising times of the Elder Brother.[746]

#### V.3.1.7 Opening the gates

The second rite of the regular cultic day was the ceremony for opening the gates (*pīt bābi*).[747] References to the *pīt bābi* are abundant in ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk, in which the

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[739] The heliacal rising of a star or constellation "occurs annually when it briefly becomes visible above the eastern horizon at dawn just before sunrise, after a period of less than a year when it had not been visible" ("Heliacal rising", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heliacal_rising#cite_note-2, last consulted 04.01.2019).
[740] Bidmead 2002: 59-60. See also Wee 2018: 858-856 and *passim*. The ancient Egyptian New Year started with the sighting of Sirius (de Jong 2006: 432-438).
[741] Astrolabe B II 1-4 (Horowitz 2014: 37). See also Gössmann 1950: 76-79.
[742] *mitḫurtu* in astronomical context often means "opposition (of sun and moon)" (CAD M/2 138 1c s.v. *mitḫurtu*). It is not entirely clear what it means in the present line *mitḫurti* sag.mu *šá* $^{mul}$aš.gán.
[743] Oppenheim 1974: 205, 57-63. Manuscripts stem from Niniveh and Babylon.
[744] Wee 2018, especially 858-859.
[745] Wee 2018: 867-869.
[746] See above, page 216.
[747] See Linssen 2004: 36-39 with references. The *pīt bābi* is attested from the Old Babylonian period onwards.

(impersonal) expression bad$^{(te)}$ ká$^{(meš)}$ is used most often.[748] In the NYF texts, the word *daltu*, "door", replaces the more common *bābu*, "gate", although the implications of the expression seem to be the same: it "indicates the time in the morning when all the priests and craftsmen who had to perform their usual duties in the temple (*ērib bīti*) were allowed to enter the temple."[749] The reason why the opening of the gates is part of the ritual instructions here, despite its daily occurrence, was the exceptionality of the sequence of events. Thus, in the NYF, the Elder Brother performs a ritual all by himself before the gates are opened – we can assume that, usually, no one performed any cultic duties before the *pīt bābi*. Similarly, the opening of the gates is explicitly mentioned in the ritual texts describing the nocturnal procession at Uruk and the eclipse of the moon ritual.[750] In those rituals too, ritual activities had taken place at night before the usual morning ceremonies.

#### V.3.1.8 Performance of rites as usual

The fact that the NYF texts describe an exceptional cultic situation is shown once more by their including the instruction to perform the rites *kīma ša ginê*, "as usual". Because the author(s) of these texts knew what happened daily in the temple, this short note would be enough for them and their ancient readers to understand what needed to be done. We, modern readers, however, are left in the dark. Still, we can venture an educated guess. Aside from the *dīk bīti* and *pīt bābi* ceremonies, the daily cult consisted of the preparation and serving of the four cultic meals to the gods.[751] The only detailed account of those meals is found in a Late Babylonian ritual text from Uruk,[752] but references to the four-meal structure are abundant already for the Neo-Babylonian period, showing how the four meals were "fundamental to Babylonian temple cult in general".[753] The term used to indicate these four daily offerings was *ginû* – notice the occurrence of the word in *kīma ša ginê*.[754] Aside from food offerings, the daily cult also included the recitation of prayers and lamentations, a fact which explains the presence of the singers and lamentation priests at the opening of the gate ceremony.[755]

It is interesting to note that the regular cult continued during the NYF in Babylon, at least during the days described in the ritual texts. The same was true for Ezida's cult: while Nabû was

[748] Linssen 2004: 37; also in the Hellenistic ritual text from Babylon, BM 32206+ II 10 (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[749] Linssen 2004: 36.
[750] TU 41 (Krul 2018); BRM 4, 6 (Linssen 2004: 306-316).
[751] *naptanu* and *tardennu*. See Linssen 2004: 129-166.
[752] TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183).
[753] Waerzeggers 2010: 113-118 with references to Ezida and other temples, note 509.
[754] Linssen 2004: 162. Mention is made indeed of the second meal of the morning in NYF4 II 22.
[755] Gabbay 2014: 159-160.

prepared for his journey to Babylon at the occasion of the NYF, the regular cult continued to be observed, as is indicated by his receiving a certain type of beer offering (*tilimtu*) that was part of the daily offerings.[756]

In summary, the days described in the NYF texts started differently than the regular cultic day. Still, most elements are reminiscent of the usual ritual sequence that derolled at the beginning of the regular cultic day, although none of them are exactly the same. Furthermore, there are some things that do not seem to occur elsewhere, most importantly the shifting rising times of the Elder Brother. The same mixture of well-established rites and newly attested ritual actions can be observed for the following six ritual sequences as well.

### V.3.2 Fashioning two figurines

Still in the morning on the second day, the Elder Brother calls for different craftsmen and gives them material and instructions for fashioning two small statues. Whom these two images represent, is not said in the text.

#### V.3.2.1 Calling and instructing the craftsmen

The craftsmen for whom the Elder Brother calls are the goldsmith (*kutimmu*), the metalworker (*qurqurru*), the carpenter (*naggāru*) and the weaver (*išparu*); they are also referred to as a group with the term *mārē ummâni*. References to this group of people occur regularly in both administrative and literary-scholarly texts, especially from the Neo-Babylonian period onwards. In ritual texts, they do not appear so often though. The most important and illustrative ritual text in which the *mārē ummâni* play a significant role is the *Mīs pî*-ritual.[757] After a description of preparatory rites in the city, countryside, garden and temple, we find ourselves in the *bīt mārē ummâni* (line 55),[758] where "the god was created" (*ašar ilu ibbanû*). That the *ummânū* are indeed responsible for making the divine statue becomes even clearer later in the text, when the following section is cited:

> "You retire, and you position all the craftsmen who approached that god [before(?) Ninkurra], Ninagal, Kusibanda, [Ninildu] (and) Ninzadim; and (3 lines lost). "(I swear) I did not make (the statue) […]."[759]

The specialists are required to swear before the craft gods (*Handwerkergötter*) that they did not make the statue, but that the deity was instead created by divine hands.

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[756] Waerzeggers 2010: 122.
[757] Walker & Dick 2001.
[758] The Ninivite and Babylonian versions differ: the Babylonian version starts immediately in the *bīt mummi*, the "workshop".
[759] *Mīs pî*, Nineveh Ritual Tablet, 173-179 (Walker & Dick 2001: 65-66).

*Mārē ummâni*, or simply *ummânū*,[760] were a "team of specialized craftsmen,[761] which in most cases consisted of goldsmiths and jewellers",[762] but included the carpenter, weaver, leather worker, slaughterer and stonecutter as well. They were part of the *ērib-bīti*s,[763] since their workshop was located in the temple precinct and, moreover, they were responsible for repairs in all parts of the temple.[764] According to a passage in the Erra-epic, they were a group of people specially created by Ea for the work they had to perform.[765] Indeed, their job put them in the precarious limbo between the terrestrial and heavenly planes, as is very clear in the *Mīs pî*-ritual, in which they are the ones making a god.[766] In the NYF, the *mārē ummâni* appear at three instances: when they are ordered to make two statues;[767] when the cella of Nabû is adorned with the golden canopy;[768] and when they are to bring the offering table to Nabû.[769] Aside from that, a *mār ummâni* is mentioned in the Kislīmu-ritual,[770] and in the kettledrum-ritual from Seleucid Uruk there is mention of the utensils used by different kinds of craftsmen (however not designated by the term *ummânu*).[771]

In the NYF, the *mārē ummâni* are remunerated for their work with meatcuts from the sacrificial animals.[772] It is very rare that a ritual text explains how the officials are to be paid for their work. Exceptions exist, as for example in the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual,[773] or a Middle-Assyrian ritual for Adad, where it is stated which parts of the meat offerings the *šangû*-priest

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[760] The dictionaries do not seem to differentiate between the two and indeed, it is unclear what the difference may have been. CAD U-W 111 s.v. *ummânu* 2; AHw III 1415 s.v. *ummiānu*(*m*).
[761] Berlejung (1998: 112) used the designation "Fachleute und Gelehrte", and indeed, the different contexts in which they appear (note, for example, their appearance in the Uruk List of Kings and Sages [BaM Beih. 2 89; Lenzi 2008b], but also in the rituals discussed here) confirms this: they are people specialized in a certain craft or field.
[762] Bongenaar 1997: 369.
[763] See, especially CT 15 1 (Lambert 1957 Appendix 2); Waerzeggers 2010: 49. In the NYF texts, they are helping to adorn the cella of Nabû.
[764] Berlejung 1998: 113-114 with references.
[765] The craftsmen in the Erra-epic were specially created to approach (the statue of) Marduk. Thus Berlejung: "Ea reflektiert die Schwierigkeit dieser Aufgabe: Das Kultbild Marduks ist für Götter unberührbar, wie also sollten sich ihm Menschen nähern können? Marduk selbst löst dieses Problem: Er gibt den Handwerkern besondere Weisheit, Beständigkeit, Verstand und Reinheit und beteiligt sich so aktiv an seiner eigenen Herstellung." (1998: 114-115).
[766] Berlejung 1998: 114-117.
[767] NYF1 VI 1-11.
[768] NYF4 IV 23-41 (see below, page 247).
[769] NYF4 V 20-30 (see below, page 253).
[770] BM 32206+ (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[771] TU 44 IV 29-35 (Linssen 2004: 255, 259).
[772] About meatcuts, see Joannès 2000b.
[773] SAA 20, 7 II 39-41.

takes.[774] As priests (*ērib-bīti*s), the *mārē ummâni* were usually remunerated through the prebend system; the passage in the ritual text perhaps relates additional payment.[775]

V.3.2.2 The two images

The New Year Festival texts contain quite specific instructions for two statues to be made. They were to be seven fingers high. Both were coated with gold and precious stones. One was made of cedar wood and was supposed to represent a figure holding a snake in his left hand and raising his right hand "to Nabû" (*ana Nabû naši*). The other had a core of tamarisk wood and held a scorpion in his left hand, while raising his right hand to Nabû as well. Both were robed in red garments girded with palm leaves. After they were fashioned, they were to be placed in the temple of Madānu, where they received rest offerings (*piṭir paššūri*) until the 6th day (of Nisannu), when they would be hit on the head (*qaqqassunu imaḫḫaṣ*)[776] by a slaughterer and thrown into kindled ashes in the presence of Nabû, located in the temple of Nergal (Ehursagtila).

- Gods, demons, priests?

The New Year Festival texts do not tell us who the statues represented, so we can only speculate about the matter. First, some scholars wish to see the images as human representations. In CAD, we find a citation of the passage in question under *ṣalmu* with the meaning "figurine used in cult and black magic: of human beings (used in substitution rituals)".[777] Black considered them to be representations of the exorcist and slaughterer who purify the temple on the fifth day.[778] He furthermore interpreted the fact that the statues were beheaded on day 6 as "a surrogate for human sacrifice";[779] although this notion is not typical of the the Mesopotamian belief-system, it could be connected with magic, which in turn is a link to Nabû, who is "particularly associated with secret wisdom, that is magical skill."[780] Bidmead, too, preferred to see the two images as "human effigies".[781] As such, they served as scapegoats for the sins of all the people, in the same vein as the king supposedly atoned for the people's sins in the humiliation ritual. By hitting their heads and kindling them in the fire, they were purified, and in association, the people whom they represented were so too.

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[774] KAR 154 (translation: Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 383-384).
[775] Bongenaar (1997: 368-369) gives a list of rations of the specialized craftsmen travelling from the capital to other temple cities. Local craftsmen were remunerated through the prebend system.
[776] Or beheaded, see note on line NYF1 VI 25.
[777] CAD Ṣ 85 d2 s.v. *ṣalmu*.
[778] See below, page 247.
[779] Black 1981: 55.
[780] Black 1981: 55. Yet, the god primarily associated with magic and skill is Ea, not Nabû. Furthermore, Black gives no positive arguments in favour of his viewing the statues as humans.
[781] Bidmead 2002: 55.

Second, the statues have been envisioned as representations of enemies of divine or demonic nature. Van der Toorn outlines what he thinks happened in the temple of Madānu when Nabû arrived as follows: "Here he (Nabû) symbolically slays two rival deities, represented by gold-coated figurines. Decapitated, the images are bound in fetters and carried to Esagil, where Nabû is warmly welcomed."[782] Zgoll, as well, considered the scene in the temple of Madānu to represent the slaying of enemies by Nabû. However, in this case, the god worked on behalf of his father, executing the death-penalty over enemies of Marduk: "Madānu-Marduk hatte also den feindlichen Gottheiten das Urteil gefällt, Nabû aber die Vollstreckung des Urteils zu übernehmen."[783] The image of Nabû as saviour appears in several compositions, such as the so-called "Exaltation of Nabû", in which it is recounted how he made it happen that "demons (*gallê*) and devils (*namtare*) spontaneously gave up the ghost."[784] Perhaps this is the reason why Bidmead pointed out that the statues could very well have represented demonic beings from the netherworld.[785]

Third, it has been argued that the two figurines embodied a more abstract notion of "evil and threats to humankind".[786] Their association with the snake and the scorpion, both highly venomous creatures, would mark them as such.[787]

Perhaps we should have a closer look at the description of the statues before associating them with circumstantial evidence. There are enough clues in the text to understand that the statues represented gods. First, we know that they were to be fashioned by specialized craftsmen, the *mārē ummâni*, who, as described above, were responsible in particular for the creation of divine cult statues. Second, the figurines were made of very precious materials: fragrant kinds of imported woods, gold, precious stones; and they were to be clad in woven dress, as the involvement of the weaver indicates. Third, the figurines were coated in a layer of gold: the "skin" of gods is described as gold or silver coloured; especially red gold was associated with the divine. Moreover, the brilliance of the precious stones further emphasized their divine nature.[788] Fourth, the statues received leftovers from the offering table of another god, a

[782] Van der Toorn 1991: 335.
[783] Zgoll 2006: 29.
[784] VAT 13834+ with duplicate VAT 10060 (Lambert 2013: 346-349; Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 13). See also Linssen 2004: 80-81 note 420; Pomponio 1978: 121-122. About the role of Nabû in the festival, see below, page 255.
[785] Bidmead 2002: 56.
[786] Bidmead 2002: 58.
[787] Çağirgan 1978: 209.
[788] Thavapalan 2018; Berlejung 1998: 49.

privilege that also befell Nabû during the NYF and that can perhaps be seen as a form of commensality.[789]

If indeed the two figurines represented gods, the question is: which gods? Their small size of seven fingers high (approximately 14,5 cm)[790] could suggest that they were not major gods: evidence strongly suggests that the seize of cult statues of the most important Mesopotamian gods ranged between 30-60 cm high and life-sized.[791] Nevertheless, the restricted measurements are more probably due to the temporariness of the situation: the statues were only to be used during four days. Size can thus not be taken into account when determining which gods the statues embodied.

A better indicator might be the animals which the figurines hold – the snake and the scorpion respectively. It is unlikely that the two animals should be considered as representations of the figures holding them; rather they are attributes or associates of the gods.[792] Many deities are associated with snakes: ten are listed in the Reallexikon.[793] In contrast, only one deity can be linked to the scorpion: Išḫara.[794] Without their name being mentioned, however, we can only guess which gods are represented. It seems more useful to ask what their function was in the ritual.

- Evil enemies or protective deities?

The snake and the scorpion held by the statues in their left hand have always been interpreted as symbols of evil; thus the figures holding them were evil demons or enemy gods. The problem of this interpretation is that both snakes and scorpions are not unambiguously bad in the Mesopotamian worldview.[795] Rather, they are attributed both negative and positive qualities. For example: both animals are highly poisonous and in the worst case a bite or sting could result in death, a characteristic for which they were certainly feared.[796] Yet, at the same time, the

[789] See below, page 253.
[790] 1 *ubānu* = 2,08 cm; cf. Powell 1997: 470 (RlA 7 s.v. Maße und Gewichte)
[791] The only possible (fragment of a) cult statue ever found, stems from Hellenistic Uruk. The wooden torso would have made for a man-sized statue. (https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/wooden-torso-cult-statue-of-ishtar/qQFUOa6h5n3MHg last accessed 09.01.2019; Berlejung 1998: 38 note 204). For a description of the appearance of cult statues, see Berlejung 1998: 31-61.
[792] Whenever major gods are represented, they seem to hold their insignia in their hand(s): "Die Götter halten in ihren Händen ihre Insignien als Zeichen ihrer Macht." (Berlejung 1998: 50).
[793] Ereškigal, Ninazu, Tišpak, Ningišzida, Ištarān, Niraḫ, Inšušinak, Sirsir, Ningirima, Irḫan. Pientka-Hinz 2009: 215; see also Wiggermann 1997. In astronomical texts, the constellation Hydra is linked to three snake-deities respectively: Ereškigal, Ningišzida and Ištaran (Wee 2016).
[794] She came into the Babylonian pantheon from a Hittite tradition, where she was considered a goddess of the oath – since the meaning of her name in Hittite is „treaty, promise". She is attested in astronomical texts, in which she is associated with the sea in the form of the constellation Scorpio (Wee 2016; Pientka-Hinz 2011: 579).
[795] Pientka-Hinz 2009: 202-218 (RlA 12 s.v. Schlange); Pientka-Hinz 2011: 576-580 (RlA 12 s.v. Skorpion).
[796] Pientka-Hinz 2009: 213-214.

creatures were used in medical rituals for healing purposes.[797] Therefore, where the health of people was concerned, snake and scorpion could have either a negative or a positive influence.

Furthermore, their natural habitat in cracks and holes in the ground made snakes and scorpions into a connecting factor between the human world and the netherworld. Inhabitants of liminal spaces were always ambiguous in character, since they could bring in evil as well as protect against it. Consequently, the behaviour of snakes and scorpions was closely watched as they intruded the human living sphere by coming into people's houses. In the omen series *Šumma ālu* multiple tablets were dedicated to the manner of acting of snakes and scorpions respectively.[798] There, too, the apodoses were not always negative, but when they did carry a negative portent, special namburbis could be performed.[799] Remarkably, the sightings of snake behaviour recorded in the omen series are in many instances connected to the month Nisannu.[800]

It is not necessary, therefore, to define the represented gods as evil. Furthermore, just like the animals held in their left hands were assumed to be evil, so the gesture made with the right hand was read as a sign of attack or defence. However, the phrasing of the line, *qāssu ana* $^{d}$*Nabû naši*, does not seem to point to a gesture of attack or defence;[801] rather, it reminds one of hand-raising prayers (šu.íl.lá, *šuillakku*) or simply of a gesture of greeting or blessing.[802]

It even seems that they had, in fact, protective qualities, as can be derived from the clothing they wore, consisting of a red *ṣubātu*-garment (túg), tied with palm leaves. As mentioned above, the colour red is associated with divinity. It is also the only positive colour in the omens related to the cult statue of Marduk when it goes out in procession, as opposed to white, black and green, which give rise to negative predictions.[803] Moreover, in the Marduk Ordeal, Marduk is described as being dressed in red wool.[804] In some rituals (e.g. *Bīt rimki,* Udug-ḫul) the exorcist

[797] Note also the connection between the scorpion and fertility, expressed in the persona of the goddess Išḫara, whose symbol was the scorpion, as goddess of love and fertility (Black & Green 1992[2004]: 110-111). Moreover, the venom of scorpion and snake was sometimes used as a metaphor for the deity's force in Balaĝs, e.g. SBH 7 11-12 (Cohen 1988: 527).
[798] *Šumma ālu* tablets 22-26 (snakes); tablets 30-31 (scorpions).
[799] Maul 1994: 270-303. The namburbis to be performed when snake behaviour portended evil are quite numerous. Namburbis involving scorpions were only performed when the animal had stung (Maul 1994: 344-348).
[800] In particular *Šumma ālu* tablet 22. With a related namburbi ritual titled nam.búr ḫul muš *šá ina* $^{iti}$bára […], attested in the Late Babylonian catalogue of Namburbis from Uruk (SpTU 1, 6; see also Maul 1994: 291-293).
[801] For gestures of divine statues, see Berlejung 1998: 51.
[802] Oshima 2011: 11-12; Wiggermann 1992: 61 s.v. *karābu*. See also CAD N/2 106 s.v. *našû* with *qātu*, or TU 41 obv. 31 (Krul 2018: 113).
[803] Sallaberger 2000: 237 lines 8-11.
[804] Frahm 2011a: 352.

is said to be dressed in red clothing.[805] It would seem, then, that red clothing had positive characteristics, and could perhaps be worn as a protective, apotropaic layer of clothing. The same can be said of the palm leaves used to girt the clothing; palm fronds too seem to have had a protective function in rituals.[806]

After the figurines were made, they were to be placed in the temple of the god Madānu (*bīt Madāni*). We know that there was a temple dedicated to that deity in the Esagila-complex with the name E-rab-riri, "House of the Shackle which Holds in Check".[807] A Neo-Assyrian text lists the names of shrines and gods present in that temple,[808] many of which allude to Madānu's role as divine "prison guard" and judge. Yet, Nabû did not go to the Erabriri: the NYF text tells us he went to Ehursagtila, the temple of Nergal, close to the southern Uraš Gate.[809] Madānu and Nergal appear as a pair in Tintir, where their shrines are listed one after the other and called "House which Lets not Evil Pass" and "House which Lets not Evil Flourish" respectively.[810] Both gods hold in common that they are known to hold evil forces in check; their entourage as well had apotropaic qualities.[811]

- Figurines in ritual

The hitting and burning of the statues too is always interpreted as an indication of the fact that they represented something evil. Yet, it is entirely possible that the destroying of the figurines merely meant that they were no longer to be used and that the ritual was over. The word used to describe the ashes in which they were to be burnt, is quite unusual, but telling: *turru* is based on the root √*tmr*, the verb of which (*temēru*) is specifically used to describe the burying of statues and other *materia magica* after they were used in rituals.[812]

Moreover, the description of the statues and what was to happen to them is reminiscent of other rituals in which figurines were used, such as *Maqlû*, *Bīt rimki*, *Bīt mēseri*, *Šēp lemutti ana bīt amēli parāsu*.[813] In most instances, the ritual texts contain only very few details about the

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[805] For example in *Bīt rimki* lines 25-26 and 86-87 (Schwemer 2019: 46-49; see also page 71 note on lines 32-25). See also the Commentary to Marduk's Address to the Demonss, where the link between the *āšipu*'s red clothing and Marduk's red clothing is made explicitly (Gabbay 2018b: 299-300). See also below at note 815.
[806] Some references are given in CAD A/2 311 s.v. *arû* A. The use of palm fronds in the Kislīmu-ritual may be seen in the same light, see George 2000: 287 note on lines 5-6.
[807] George 1992: 12; George 1993 no. 936.
[808] George 1992 no. 12.
[809] George 1992: 17.
[810] Tintir II 31'-32' (George 1992: 54-55). See also George 1992: 413 note one lines 22'-31'.
[811] Madānu as divine judge and Nergal as ruler of the Netherworld (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/nergal/index.html [last accessed 04.10.19]).
[812] CAD T 335 s.v. *temēru*.
[813] For *Maqlû*, see Abusch 2015. For *Bīt rimki*, see Schwemer 2019. *Bīt mēseri* and *Šēp lemutti ana bīt amēli parāsu* await full publications; see Wiggermann 1992; Borger 1974.

figurines in question, relating only some essential features, including what or whom the statue represented, the material of which they were fashioned and possible attributes. The function of the statuettes differed from ritual to ritual. In *Maqlû* and *Bīt rimki*, the images represented evil forces that exerted influence on the 'patient'; they were either destroyed directly (e.g. by burning) or the evil was reverted back onto them.

In contrast, the images in the rituals *Bīt mēseri* and *Šēp lemutti* portrayed apotropaic gods and creatures that removed and averted evil; amongst the represented beings, we find liminal figures such as monsters and *Mischwesen*, who of themselves would be associated with evil yet functioned as protectors in these rituals. While in *Maqlû* and *Bīt rimki*, the figurines were destroyed in the course of the ritual, in *Bīt mēseri* they were thrown into the river at the end.[814] No statues with fully similar features as the ones described in the NYF texts can be found in either of the rituals involving figurines mentioned above. Yet, some characteristics can be found, such as the dressing of the figures in a red garment and palm fronds,[815] and the use of tamarisk and cedar wood. The use of precious materials such as gold and gemstones does not seem to occur elsewhere.

In conclusion, it remains unclear who exactly the two statues embody. Most probably, they were minor gods that served an apotropaic function. Perhaps they were to safeguard Nabû upon his entry into Babylon. It should be noted that, even though it was quite common that figurines were made in the course of a (magic rather than temple) ritual, it remains unusual that, first, the ritual texts fail to name the portrayed gods and, second, such precious materials were used for these temporary objects.

### V.3.3 Reciting Enūma Elîš

On the fourth day, following the morning rites, the Elder Brother is instructed to go before Bēl and recite the epic of Enūma Elîš in its entirety to the god. During the recitation, the crown of Anu and the throne of Enlil have to remain covered.

The idea that the Babylonian NYF and Enūma Elîš are two sides of the same coin can be found early in Assyriological literature.[816] It has been formulated well before the complete edition of all the manuscripts of the ritual texts, most clearly, at first, in several publications of Heinrich

[814] Wiggermann 1992: 106. It seems that in *šēp lemutti ana bīt amēli parāsu* the statues remained where they had been put during the ritual.
[815] Which, according to Wiggermann (1992: 107), marked their exorcistic function.
[816] For a summary of the state of the question, see the introductory chapter II.3.2.

Zimmern.[817] Two Neo-Assyrian texts formed the base of his theory: K 3476 and K 1356. The former is a cultic commentary concerning the (Assyrian) rituals in the *akītu*-house on the seventh and eighth day of Nisannu, which are equated with episodes of Enūma Elîš.[818] The latter is a building inscription of Sennacherib for the *akītu*-house in Nineveh, on the gate of which he says to have depicted the gods going into battle against Tiāmat.[819] Later, the text known as the Marduk Ordeal was added to the evidence.[820] This spoof on a cultic commentary equally explains the rituals taking place during the NYF in light of Enūma Elîš, but in such a way that the original intention of both the myth and the ritual are reversed: instead of celebrating the exaltation of Marduk, they are now about his downfall.[821] An interesting feature of this last composition is that it mentions that:

> "Enūma Elîš, which is recited and chanted in front of Bēl in Nisannu, concerns his imprisonment."[822]

Further evidence of a connection between the myth and the ritual has been found in an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II, in which the king mentions the decreeing of destinies for his life at the Ubšukkinakku on days eight and eleven of Nisannu respectively:

> "Du-ku Ki-namtartarede, the throne-dais of destinies in Ubšu-ukkinna, in which during the New Year Festival at the beginning of the year (*ina zagmukki rēš šatti*), on the 8th and 11th days, Lugaldimmerankia, the ruler of the gods, resides, and in which the gods of heaven and underworld kneel to pay reverent heed to him, and stand before him to decree as the destiny of my life a destiny of everlasting days – that throne-dais, the throne-dais of kingship, the throne-dais of the Enlil-ship of the prince Marduk, wisest of the gods (I plated with gold …)."[823]

In Enūma Elîš also, the gods convene twice to decree the destinies, once before Marduk's battle against Tiāmat (En.El. II 158-159, also III 60-61; III 118-119) and once after (VI 162-165). A final link between the NYF and Enūma Elîš relates to the name of Marduk's seat as "the Sea" (Tiāmat), on which he sits during the *akītu*-festival.[824]

Based on this evidence, it was concluded and it is still maintained that there is a special connection between Enūma Elîš and the NYF, which took different forms and has been

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[817] Zimmern 1906 (based on a talk given in 1903), 1918, 1926. The last published NYF text, MNB 1848, only appeared in 1911 (Dhorme 1911). The composite text was created by Thureau-Dangin in 1921.
[818] SAA 3, 37. The ritual which it explains is KAR 215+ (SAA 20, 15). See also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 420-426.
[819] Sennacherib 160 5-9. See also Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 2: 207-209; Lambert 1963.
[820] SAA 3, 34 and 35.
[821] Frahm 2011a: 352-354.
[822] SAA 3, 34 line 34 and SAA 3, 35 line 11. See also Frahm 2011a: 353.
[823] East India House Inscription: Sackler Nbk obv. ii 64-iii 18 (Wallenfels 2008: 280-281, 290-291) // ST ii 54-iii 12 (Langdon 1912: 124-127). Translation George 1992: 287..
[824] The text states *ina akīt*, so it remains unclear whether they meant the festival or the temple. NA Commentary on Marduk's Address to the Demons 7 (Geller 2016: 394-395); Tintir II 1 (George 1992: 44-45; see also his commentary on pages 268-269); Lambert 1963.

explained in different manners.[825] Two interpretations are largely accepted today. First, Enūma Elîš is envisaged as the structuring principle behind the festival or, better, in broad lines the festival and the myth represent the same story and, thus, certain ritual actions can be equated with key moments in Enūma Elîš.[826] By referring to the "intermediality"[827] of myth and ritual, the chicken-or-egg discussion can be avoided: it is no longer relevant whether the ritual is structured after the myth or the myth is the narrative retelling of the ritual. Rather, both media draw from a broader pool of ideas and conceptions, which in this case relate to the battle of the supreme deity against the forces of chaos. I will not repeat here how the specific correlation between myth and ritual is perceived by modern scholars in the case of the NYF,[828] since there are several essential problems with this interpretation. First, none of the ancient sources explicitly shows the connection that modern scholars claim exists, except for the Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary, which relates rites of the Assyrian (rather than the Babylonian) *akītu*-festival with Enūma Elîš. Second, we should reconsider the form of the NYF that is used for structural comparisons such as can be found in Zgoll's scheme.[829] As was shown above,[830] the NYF cannot be reconstructed for any given period based on synchronic sources alone. We should therefore be more careful when using this "virtual" festival as a basis for comparison. Moreover, we should beware of falling into a circular argument in which the NYF is reconstructed after the plotline of the myth subsequently to be compared to it. Third, and most importantly, the supposed intermediality between the myth and the ritual hinges on the assumption that the ritual independently symbolizes the defeat of chaos by the champion god, although this is just one of the possible interpretations of (some of) the actions taking place during the course of it.[831]

A second way in which the special relation between the NYF and Enūma Elîš has been perceived, relates to the general importance of Enūma Elîš in the Marduk cult.[832] More than being a story of creation or the overcoming of the forces of chaos, the myth is about the exaltation of Marduk as the one who achieved those things.[833] As such, Enūma Elîš served as a "sacred book" within the context of the Marduk cult. It was suggested that, in analogy to

[825] See also above, chapter II.3.2.
[826] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 420-426 and 432-434; Zgoll 2006: 41-44.
[827] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432; Zgoll (2006: 58) refers to the „interaktionale Beinflussungen" between myth and ritual.
[828] See, extensively, Zgoll 2006: 43-44 and 48-59.
[829] Pace Zgoll 2006: 43-44 Table 3.
[830] Chapter III.
[831] See above, Chapter II.3.2; also Zgoll 2006, Black 1981.
[832] A concise summary of the discussion and references can be found in Gabriel 2014: 70-71.
[833] Gabriel 2014: 245-248.

Christian motifs such as the Last Supper, it had its fixed place in the cult and was recited at different occasions throughout the year, as is attested for the fourth day of the month Kislīmu:[834]

> "While (water) is being sprinkled before Bēl, the singer <will recite> Enūma Elîš for Bēl. At "for Usmû who brought your present as a harbinger" the *mār šalāli* will raise a palm frond and place it on a silver tablet opposite Bēl."[835]

Like the Last Supper, remembered at every Catholic service and observed more elaborately during the Holy Week, the story of Enūma Elîš bore a larger significance at the occasion of the New Year, when the deity exalted in the myth was ritually celebrated. This way, both myth and ritual time after time repeated the supreme importance of Marduk:

> "Das Epos *Enūma elîš* selbst arbeitet mit der wiederholenden Vertiefung des zentralen Kerygmas. Nicht nur einmal, nein immer und immer wieder wird Marduk da zum König ausgerufen, wieder und wieder neu als König bestätigt."[836]

Nevertheless, to use the word "kerygma" in a Babylonian context seems too far-reaching, since it is specifically related to Christian ideas of sin and salvation.[837] While the author(s) of Enūma Elîš do(es) proclaim the greatness of Marduk, there is no question of accepting this proclamation or not; at least, such a conception is not explicitly expressed in the cuneiform sources.

Aside from that, based on the same evidence, some have claimed that there was no specific connection between the NYF and Enūma Elîš at all:

> "[W]e know that the Enūma Elîš was also recited on day 4 of the ninth month Kislīmu in Babylon, which may indicate that it was recited on the fourth of every month. If this is true then obviously there is no special connection of the Epic of Creation with the New Year Festival as W.G. Lambert suggested; we would then have to re-examine the function of Enūma Elîš in this festival, which could alter our present ideas of the festival all together."[838]

A re-evaluation is indeed in place and should include the following considerations. First, the *akītu*-festival is much older than Enūma Elîš and was initially celebrated in different cities for different deities. One could object to this argument that a reform might have taken place at a given moment in time that brought the ritual and the myth closer to one another. The question is then when this reform would have been undertaken. Second, a chronological and formal division of the relevant source material can be made: on the one hand, there are the Neo-Assyrian compositions that weave structural links between the (Assyrian) ritual and the

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[834] Zgoll 2006: 50-51; Bidmead 2002: 67-68.
[835] BM 32206+ II 17-20 (Lambert & Çağirgan 1991-3).
[836] Zgoll 2006: 50.
[837] https://www.britannica.com/topic/kerygma (last accessed 29.10.19).
[838] Linssen 2004: 81 n. 425. Sic also Lambert 1968: 107, but note that he nuances this opinion later (Lambert 2013: 463).

(Babylonian) myth, and on the other, there are Late Babylonian ritual texts from Babylon which simply mention the recitation of the myth in the local cult. Third, if indeed there was such a close connection between Enūma Elîš and the NYF, we could expect an intertextual expression of it in the ritual texts.[839]

The solution lies in a clear separation of the source material and an interpretation accordingly. There does not seem to be any reference to Enūma Elîš and the Babylonian NYF sharing a context before the Sargonid period. Admittedly, the evidence is rather meagre for either of them before that time and, while this should not be taken as an indication of the absence of any relation between both, we should be more cautious in assuming that there was any significant connection between both before that time.[840] What is certain is that both Enūma Elîš and the NYF related to the supremacy of Marduk, albeit in different manners. The *akītu*-festival of Babylon grew out of an earlier *akītu*-tradition which served to celebrate the main deity of a particular city. As such, the festival at Babylon will not have served a different purpose. Moreover, with the rising importance of the city of Babylon as seat of kingship and the entailing rise of Marduk to the head of the national pantheon throughout the second millennium BC,[841] the festival observed there will also have gained more prominence in comparison to other *akītu*-festivals. The creation and standardisation of Enūma Elîš was another effect of this political and theological development, but in contrast to the festival, its creation must have been a conscious act to emphasize Marduk's importance.[842] Seen as such, the myth and the ritual do relate to the same issues, but are not directly connected with each other; rather, they are both elements of a larger discourse concerning the elevation of Marduk.

It would seem, then, that a more direct connection was created by Neo-Assyrian scholars, as can be read in the cultic commentary cited above. This much has been suggested by Pongratz-Leisten:

> "[T]he ritualization of the Ninurta mythology and by extension the Marduk mythology as represented by *Enūma Elîš* and the king's integration in it developed only during the first millennium BCE, possibly toward the end of the history of the Assyrian empire, subsequent to Sennacherib's appropriation of the myth and of the *akītu*-festival as celebrated in Babylon."[843]

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[839] As has been claimed to be true (Zgoll 2006: 48 note 176).
[840] For the sources for the Babylonian NYF, see above, chapter III. The date of origin of Enūma Elîš is heavily contested, see Kämmerer & Metzler 2012: 16-22. The standard version of the epic is attested in manuscripts in Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and Late Babylonian ductus.
[841] The period in which this development took place remains debated, see Lambert 2013: 271- 274; Kämmerer & Metzler 2012: 16-21.
[842] Kämmerer & Metzler 2012: 16-21.
[843] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432.

Indeed, considering the NYF as ritual expression of the myth of Enūma Elîš makes a lot of sense in a Sargonid context, in which scholars worked hard to legitimate the king on both the cosmic level and in reality. Royal action was explained and exemplified in both myth and ritual, which led to the integration of mythic stratagems in the ritual performance.[844] The reason why Enūma Elîš in particular was associated with the *akītu*-festival must lie in the fact that both gave expression to the superiority of Marduk. By appropriating and combining them, the mechanisms to elevate Marduk were transferred not only to the god Aššur, but also to the Neo-Assyrian king, who took on the role of the champion in the ritual.

The web of "intermediality" revolving around the Ninurta-mythology that was created by Assyrian scholars does not seem to have been so strongly present in Babylonia. Neo-Babylonian kings, in contrast to some Neo-Assyrian ones,[845] do not mention or allude to the battle of Marduk against Tiāmat, although the NYF is a recurrent topic in their inscriptions.[846] It is a general feature of the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions "to 'neglect' to mention their military campaigns"[847] and instead focus on the divine election and protection of the king. In that light, it is not surprising that not the battle described in Enūma Elîš, but the decreeing of destinies is referred to instead. This would be the only parallel between myth and ritual alluded to in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, however. It seems, then, that the connection between Enūma Elîš and the NYF was different in the Neo-Babylonian context as compared to the Neo-Assyrian "intermediality" of the myth of warrior god.

Yet, it would be too far-fetched fully to dismiss any connection between the myth and the ritual. After all, both media share one essential idea: the supremacy of Marduk. Moreover, there is evidence for the general importance of Enūma Elîš in the Marduk cult. So much is shown, for example, by the recitation of the myth in different months. We do not know of other, similar compositions being used in the same way in the cult. Note, however, that in the NYF texts also other Marduk literature is directly cited (Enmešarra's Defeat) or alluded to (Ludlul, Erra).[848] Further evidence for the general nature of the relevance of Enūma Elîš in the Marduk cult, rather than for the NYF specifically, may be found in the Commentary on Enūma Elîš I-VII, in

[844] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 433.
[845] See, e.g., Weissert 1997.
[846] See Chapter III.2.2 above. An exception is the Cyrus Cylinder, which hints at a comparison of Cyrus and Marduk with line 17: "Ohne Kampf und Schlacht ließ er (=Marduk) ihn in Bābil einziehen, seine Stadt Bābil rettete er aus der Drangsal (*īṭir ina šapšāqi*)" cf. Enūma Elîš VI 126 "(Marduk, der) die Götter, seine Väter, aus der Drangsal errettete (*īṭiru ina šapšāqi*)" (Schaudig 2001: 555 with note 906).
[847] Da Riva 2008: 28.
[848] See below, Chapter V.4.1.2.

which multiple lines from the epic are explained as ritual acts.[849] For example, Enūma Elîš II 130 is related to a rite in the month Addaru:

> "(This refers to) the *lilissu*-kettledrum, which is [*placed*] before (the god) Ea [on the … n$^{th}$ day] of the month Addaru (XII)[…]"[850]

In a similar vein, the story of Enūma Elîš is, *inter alia*, used to explain rituals taking place throughout the year in Babylon in the Late Babylonian Calendar Treatise from Babylon.[851]

The fact that Enūma Elîš was not particularly relevant for the NYF itself may perhaps also be argued by the small number of intertextual points of contact between the NYF texts and the standard version of the epic.[852] Even in terms of just vocabulary, the results are very meagre.[853] The lack of explicit intertextuality is significant: the texts are not so closely related that they reflect each other. This absence of a recognisable form of Enūma Elîš in the NYF texts has been explained by the suggestion that perhaps a different textual form of the myth was known at the time, because "Enūma Elîš is no fixed concept."[854] That statement goes against the textual evidence, however, which shows that Enūma Elîš was copied in more or less the same form until the Late Babylonian period and was even part of the scribal curriculum.[855]

In conclusion, just like the NYF itself changed over time, the ideas connected to it changed with it. Only the Sargonid evidence shows how the ritual was literally associated with the myth to include the role of the king as embodiment of the warrior god. Outside the Assyrian ideological discourse, no such relation is tangible, and nothing suggests that the NYF itself was structured after the myth. Rather, Enūma Elîš, being the prime composition affirming Marduk in his position as head of the pantheon, was of crucial importance in the Babylonian cult. The NYF, in turn, was the ritual affirmation of Marduk's supremacy and in that light, we should understand the recitation of the myth during the festival.

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[849] Frahm & Jiménez 2015. Copies stem from both Assyrian and Babylonian libraries.
[850] Commentary on Enūma Elîš I-VII 13 (Frahm & Jiménez 2015: 302).
[851] Reynolds 2019 *passim*, but see specifically also page 27: "Celebrating this battle [between Marduk and Tiāmat; CD] in Babylon's New Year Festival as an affirmation of kingship would have fed into the treatise but the motif is developed beyond this ritual context, including ritual throughout the year".
[852] For the comparison, the edition of Lambert (2013) was used.
[853] The relevant similarities are mentioned in the commentaries on the NYF texts above.
[854] Pallis 1926: 232; see also Smith 1976: 7. Dalley (2013: 170-171) explained the lack of direct references to Enūma Elîš in the account of Berossos in this way. Note, however, that her statement that the myth was not found on school texts is incorrect.
[855] Lambert 2013: 4-6; *passim* for the manuscripts. The strongest deviation from the "original" myth is the replacement of Marduk by Aššur in a – very specific – Assyrian context.

### V.3.4 Preparations in Ezida

On the fifth day, the arrival of Nabû is preceded by a purification of his cella Ezida in Esagila and other (unspecified) parts of the temple. While purification of a ritual site is regularly attested in temple ritual texts, we obtain here a more detailed account than usual.[856] The reason why Ezida needed to be cleansed extensively before Nabû's arrival is not specified in the texts, but it was in all likelihood the usual procedure when a sanctuary was put into use. Moreover, moving a deity was a precarious undertaking – as is made clear in the processional omens, which relate events that could happen while a deity was on the move and could result in either catastrophe or prosperity for the land.[857] It could not be risked that the place where Nabû would remain during his stay in Babylon, was tainted with evil forces that would affect the god.

#### V.3.4.1 Exorcism, purification and protection

While temple ritual texts often include rather vague and blunt references to the purification process or exorcism, more detailed accounts can be found in the namburbi rituals and in rituals such as *Bīt rimki* and *Bīt mēseri*.[858] The purification process consisted of two large parts: the removal of lingering evil (exorcism) on the one hand and on the other the protection against future intrusion of wicked forces. Five elements were commonly used in the context of exorcisms: a kid, musical instruments such as a drum and bell jar, grains of cereal, smoke and incense, and water[859]. Maul described the process as follows:

> "Der Beschwörer ging mit einem Zicklein, das 'Ziege, die das Böse vertreibt' (MÁŠ.ḪUL.DÚB.BA = *mašḫulduppû*) genannt wurde, durch das Haus, um mit Hilfe von nicht näher beschriebenen Kontakt- und Übertragungsriten das Unreine bzw. die magischen Schadstoffe auf das Tier übergehen zu lassen. Der Lärm von Trommel(fell) (KUŠ.GU$_4$.GAL = *kušgugalû*) und Glocke? ($^{urudu}$*nigkalgû*) sollte zusätzlich das ‚Böse' erschrecken und in die Flucht treiben. Mit Getreidekörnchen, die ausgestreut wurden, rieb man dann den Fußboden des Hauses ab (*kuppuru*). Durch Beräucherung der Räume mit Fackel und Weihrauch und Versprengen von Weihwasser wurde das Haus anschließend gereinigt."[860]

To replace the removed filth with positively working forces and to protect the house against future invading evil, the gods were pacified and pleased with fragrant incense offerings. The

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[856] For matters of purity and purification in Mesopotamia in general, see Guichard & Marti 2013. In the Hellenistic ritual texts, see Linssen 2004: 147-154.
[857] Sallaberger 2000; Schaudig 2008.
[858] Maul 1994: 97-100. *Bīt rimki*: Schwemer 2019. *Bīt mēseri*: Wiggerman 1992: 105-117; Meier 1941-44: 139-152.
[859] The substance in the *egubbû*-vat is commonly described as water, although it actually was a kind of soft soap or a watery solution thereof (Jursa & Gordin 2019: 44-45).
[860] Maul 1994: 98.

effect of purity was strengthened by smearing the door(post)s with oil, which literally endowed them with a shine of cleanliness, or with bitumen and gypsum.[861]

The events described in the NYF texts do not deviate strongly from what is described above, except for one element: the decapitation and smearing of blood of a sheep. First, the temple was subjected to exorcist rites. Even though the text uses the generic word *bītu*, we can assume that this was that part of Esagila which Nabû would have to cross to reach his own cella. In this section of the temple, water was sprinkled, a bell was sounded and a censer and torch were lit. By doing so, lingering evil was driven in flight, dispersed and removed. Next, the cella of Nabû itself underwent a similar process by sprinkling water and using smoke. When this was done, oil was smeared on the doors of Ezida and incense was burned in the courtyard of the cella. This served to protect the cella from outside against incoming bad influences.

Now, technically, the temple and cella had been exorcised and purified. Nonetheless, another rite followed: a slaughterer was called in to decapitate a sheep and with the carcass the exorcist "purified" (*kuppuru*) the temple, while reciting the incantations of *Tummu bītu*. When this was done, the exorcist and the slaughterer took the body and the head of the sheep respectively, went to the river and threw them in it, while facing westwards. Lastly, both these cultic officials were required to leave the city and go to the countryside (*ṣēru*) until the 12th day of Nisannu.

This is a uniquely detailed description of a remarkable rite that has received little interpretation in modern research.[862] In the few cases where an explanation is provided, the sheep is regarded as a tool to absorb evil and release it elsewhere, just like the water, smoke and grains of barley generally used in exorcisms.[863] However, if this were so, then why was it necessary to kill the animal first? It would have been much easier to let it run through the temple by itself instead of dragging its carcass all the way. In fact, this kind of "scapegoat" is known from other rituals and called *mašḫultuppû*.[864] There must have been a reason to decapitate the animal, an act that will have produced a significant amount of blood.

The closest parallel to this rite can be found in *Bīt rimki*:

> "You slaughter a kid and you purify (*tukappar*) the king. Afterwards, you perform on the king the holy purification rites (*takpirāti tukappar*). When you have brought the purification rites to an end, you take (the materials used in the wiping) outdoors."[865]

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[861] Maul 1994: 99-100.
[862] Delnero, *forthcoming*, Chapter 1 Section 2.2.
[863] Bidmead 2002: 73-74.
[864] Cavigneaux 1995: 53-67. See also note 866.
[865] *Bīt rimki* Ninive-Version 79-81 (Schwemer 2019: 48-49; translation CAD K 179 s.v. *kapāru* A3d and CAD T 85 s.v. *takpirtu* 1a).

In that ritual, a sheep is slaughtered and used to purify the king. Immediately after it follows the exorcistic cleansing of the palace with a *mašḫultuppû*, *mašgizillû*, a "living sheep",[866] a copper bell, a drum and barley seeds. In the NYF, the rite comes after the consecration of the building, however, and concerns the temple instead of a person. Still, it seems to concern a similar act, since the same verb is used in both rituals: *kuppuru*. It literally means "to smear" or "to wipe off", but is often used to denote "to purify" in a ritual context, sometimes in combination with the noun *takpirtu*.[867] The root can also be found in biblical Hebrew, where it has a similar meaning, such as, most famously, in the name of the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur.[868] The book of Leviticus describes the events to take place on that day, amongst which is the smearing and sprinkling of blood of a sacrificial animal on the altar by the high priest:

> "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which *is* for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement (כִּפֶּר) for the Holy *Place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness."[869]

Later on in the biblical text, it is stated:

> "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement (כִּפֶּר) for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement (כִּפֶּר) for the soul."[870]

In the biblical ritual, the sacrificial animal is slaughtered to provide blood, which has strong purifying qualities.[871] The cuneiform texts are not so explicit, but the passages in *bīt rimki* and in the NYF seem to indicate that it was the blood of the slaughtered sheep that was "smeared". If indeed this is true, the exact function of the blood should be determined.

The fact that, during the NYF, the temple was smeared with blood only after the "normal" exorcism had taken place, shows that this was probably not a means to absorb evil. Rather, it follows in line with the previous ritual acts that envisaged to provide the cleansed cella of Nabû with new and positive energy. As such, the blood was to endow the space, which had previously been freed of evil, with apotropaic qualities. This explanation would fit with the episode in *bīt rimki* cited above as well. By rubbing the king with blood, he would remain unaffected by the

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[866] Cavigneaux (1995) points to the possibility that the *mašḫultuppû* and the *mašgizillû* were objects representing goats rather than real goats because of the following "living sheep".
[867] CAD K 178 s.v. *kapāru*. See also Guichard & Marti 2013: 82; Linssen 2004: 148-149.
[868] Albertz 2001; Janowski 2000; Wright 1987: 291-299.
[869] Leviticus 16:15-17 (NKJV).
[870] Leviticus 17:11 (NKJV).
[871] Albertz 2001: 142.

ensuing exorcisms and he would be safe during the course of the long ritual. This is supported too by another part of *bīt rimki*, in which a sheep is killed and its blood is used to smear? (verb broken) the doorposts of the gate of the palace, before the king and the *āšipu* go into the countryside to the seven "houses".[872] It does seem that this form of purification/protection was only applied in the most severe circumstances, since it is only rarely attested.[873]

Another element in support of this interpretation is the instruction to recite the incantations of *Tummu bītu* ("the house is conjured") during the *kuppuru*-rite. *Tummu bītu* appears together with the incantation series Sag.ba sag.ba ("ban! ban!") as the standard incantation to be recited when the bed of the patient was surrounded with an apotropaic circle of flour during an exorcistic ritual such as *Bīt mēseri*.[874] The fact that it is recited during the NYF suggests that the flour was, in that case, replaced by blood.

After the smearing was done, the carcass of the sheep and its head were disposed of by being thrown into the river. This too is not uncommon in Mesopotamian rituals. In the *Mīs pî* ritual, the tools of the craftsman, together with two figurines of a turtle and a tortoise respectively, are bound inside a dead sheep and thrown into the river.[875] In the eclipse of the moon ritual, known from Assyrian and Hellenistic recensions, different tools for protection against evil, including a circle of flour and a *takpirtu*-offering, are thrown into the river.[876] Perhaps one reason for this form of disposal was the connection of river water with Ea, god of the Apsû, sweet water and magic. In this way, the *materia magica* were returned to their origin.[877] This fits with the instruction that this should be done while facing "westward" (literally: "facing sunset", *pānišu ana ereb šamši išakkan*): the setting sun travels towards the netherworld, the realm of Ea.[878]

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[872] *Bīt rimki* Ninive-Version 175-177 (Schwemer 2019: 54-55). Note also the ritual fragment STT 253 7'-8' (Wiggermann 1992: 35-36), where an incantation is cited which can also be found on BM 93078, a bronze lion-headed statue (Campbell Thompson 1904, frontispiece).
[873] For further attestations of the use of blood in Mesopotamian rituals, see Scurlock 2006a: 28-32.
[874] Abusch & Schwemer 2010: 397 note on lines 27'-28'; Schramm 2001: 8-9; Wiggermann 1992: 111-112 note on line 16+x.
[875] *Mīs pî* NR 78-80; BR 8-10 (Walker & Dick 2001: 58; 78). This has been related to the connection of sweet waters with the god Ea, who in the accompanying incantation is invoked as the father/creator of the divine statue (Walker & Dick 2001: 58 note 78).
[876] BRM 4, 6 rev. 37' (Linssen 2004: 307 and 311).
[877] Note also the text A.418 (25-29), in which it is mentioned what should be done when the statue of a god cannot be repaired: "30 minas of copper … 14 minas of tin and the things which belong to that god according to his name, mix together and give him the offering. In a cloth of clean linen you shall bind (these things), you shall tie (them) together with the work of that god who has suffered damage and on a night when nobody walks, before Ea you shall send him." Note of the editors: "The damaged statue […] was probably sunk into the river, the realm of Ea." (Walker & Dick 2001: 234 with note 34)
[878] See Gabbay 2018a: 41.

Another reason for discarding the remains of the sheep in the river could have been to get rid of the evil that it had absorbed.[879] However, as explained above, this was not the main function of the sheep in the ritual, even though it cannot be excluded that it served a double function: while its blood had apotropaic qualities, the carcass would absorb the last remnants of impurity.

Finally, the exorcist and the slaughterer left Esagila for the countryside (edin, *ṣēru*) until the twelfth day, "as long as Nabû is in Babylon".[880] The note following this instruction, saying that the Elder Brother was not to witness the exorcism lest he become impure, makes clear that the officiants of the purification process were considered as hazards and should therefore be avoided. Although the *mašmaššu* and the slaughterer had certainly taken preventive cautions against evil, it could not be risked that they got affected and would soil the extensively purified cella.[881] The twelfth day referred to here has often been understood to be the last day of the festival. However, that is not stated as such, as it only mentions Nabû's presence in Babylon and some rituals could have taken place without him – similar to the ceremonies described in the NYF texts that happened before the deity's arrival. It seems a very drastic measure to send away the exorcist and slaughterer: a similar case of cultic officials having to leave the place they have consecrated is not known to me.[882]

#### V.3.4.2 Decoration

After the consecration of the cella and temple by the exorcist and slaughterer, the Elder Brother called for the *mārē ummâni* to decorate Ezida from the crossbeam to the base (*ultu talli adi išdi*) with a "golden heaven" (*šamû ḫurāṣū*).[883] Like the materials for the two statues to be fashioned on 2/I, the "golden heaven" was to be retrieved from the treasury of Marduk (*makkūr Bēl*). The treasury of Bēl is attested in archival documents from the LSC onwards;[884] the word does not occur often in the Astronomical Diaries – there the expression *bīt busê* is used more regularly instead – but several archival documents from Babylon refer to the temple storeroom and bear

[879] Bidmead 2002: 74.
[880] It remains unclear to where exactly they were sent; the *akītu*-house lay outside the city-walls (*ṣēru*) as well; see Concquerillat 1972.
[881] Evil was considered an almost physical thing that could not be annihilated, but could be broken down and brought away to prevent further affection. See, amongst others, Ambos 2012.
[882] McEwan (1981a: 179-180 note 419) had a different interpretation: according to him, there were two festivals, one within the city's limits and one outside, and the exorcist and slaughterer were then sent to the latter at this moment.
[883] This shows that these *mārē ummâni* were *ērib-bīti*s.
[884] See, for example, the search results on the Nabucco-website: https://nabucco.arts.kuleuven.be/search?query=makkur&query_type=exact_match&submit_search=Search&page=1&per_page=50 (last accessed 29.10.19).

a seal impression with the inscription "níg.ga umun", *makkūr Bēl*, as do two cretulae found in Seleukia-on-the-Tigris.[885]

From the description it is clear that the "golden heaven" was a canopy.[886] It was probably part of a baldachin, as also the use of the word *tallu*, "carrying pole" suggests.[887] The fact that it seems to have been a temporary structure implies the same. Although we do not know how the canopy itself looked,[888] it can be told that it was a very precious object, as is not only obvious from the fact that it was to be retrieved from the treasury of Marduk, but is also shown in a Neo-Assyrian letter, where the sender shows his concerns regarding the object:[889]

> When Ḫulala, the temple-enterer of Šamaš, went away, he took with him the golden heaven (*šamê ša ḫurāṣi*) from Babylon. The priests ($^{lú}$sanga$^{meš}$) of Bēl have […] with him … […] (end of tablet broken) [Having] raised [an attack] against us, they seized the golden heaven on top of it, and brought the heaven here from Esagila.[890]

Nebuchadnezzar II mentions the installation of a golden canopy for Gula in her temple Esabad in Babylon. In this inscription, *šamû* is used to refer to the whole baldachin rather than just the canopy.

> "For Gula, the august princess, who dwells in Esabad, who makes me healthy, who protects my life, I coated with ruddy gold and decorated with precious stones a canopy (*šamê*) of *musukannu*, the eternal wood, and I stretched it over her."[891]

### *V.3.4.3 Ikkillu*

A final act in the preparation of Ezida for Nabû's stay there constituted of the recitation of a "cry of distress" (*ikkillu*) by the Elder Brother and the *mārē ummâni*. Again, we see how the latter were not simple craftsmen, but played a role in the cult.

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[885] See Hackl 2013, *passim*; CT 49 151 line 8 (van der Spek 1998 no. 21: 232); CT 49 161 line 8 (van der Spek 1998 no. 27: 139). For the seal of the treasury of Bēl, see Hackl 2013: 306; Dercksen 2011. References to the *bīt busê* in ADART nos. -330 rev. 5'; -321 rev. 27'; -254 obv. 13'; -182 rev. 9'; -168A rev. 14'; -165A rev. A6'; -132D$_1$ t2.

[886] See also CAD Š/1 348 s.v. *šamû* 2, "canopy".

[887] Fun facts: today, a baldachin can be referred to as "Himmel" in German or "troonhemel" in Dutch. The word "baldachin" itself derives from the name of the city of Baghdad (through Italian) and originally referred to a precious fabric produced there. We should probably imagine it as a freestanding structure in the centre of which the divine statue was placed and put in the back of the cella. The wooden supports could then be used as carrying poles.

[888] It may have been different from "ein großer Vorhang aus blauem Stoff mit goldenen Sternen" (Vera Chamaza 2002: 179 note 1427; Weissbach 1938: 76 note 6).

[889] It remains unclear whether the canopy referred to in the NYF texts was an antique object or not. That this is a possibility, is demonstrated by the fact that the treasury of Marduk still contained a robe of Nebuchadnezzar II in Hellenistic times, according to the Astronomical Diary no. -187A rev. 11'. See also Madreiter 2016.

[890] SAA 17, 8 obv. 9-rev. 5.

[891] WBA IX 34-41 = WBC VI 9-15 (9-13// NeKC2 8-11) (Da Riva 2012: 55 and 88).

The word *ikkillu* usually refers to a loud sound of pain or distress – often collective – and appears in ritual contexts of mourning and lamenting.[892] That is not exactly how it should be interpreted here, however. *Ikkillu* could also relate to the clamour of demons, as is clear in the omen series *Šumma ālu*, where several omens concern the noises heard in a house.[893] Whereas in the omen series *ikkillu* always seems to refer to a bad prediction, in the case of the NYF it can be associated with Marduk, who is called "Great Demon".[894]

In the recitation, three deities of purification are invoked: Marduk-Asalluḫi, Kusu and Ningirim.[895] The former god was generally associated with exorcism, while the latter two were invoked as goddesses of purification. Kusu and Ningirum are mentioned together with the craft gods in the *Mīs pî* ritual.[896] As goddesses of purification, specifically associated with the holy water vessel (*egubbû*), they played a role in the creation of the god, since mouthwashing, one of the acts for endowing the cult statue with life, was performed with water from such a vessel.[897] The goddesses' main function in the ritual was, however, to remove the traces of humans' work in fashioning the divine statue.[898] The same is probably true for the goddesses' involvement in the making of the kettledrum ritual.[899] Similary then, the *ikkillu*-prayer recited by the Elder Brother and the *mārē ummâni* served to distance themselves from their work: the exorcism, purification and decoration of the temple was no longer the work of human hands, but transmitted into divine hands.

### V.3.5 Offerings and Nabû's arrival

After the preparation of Nabû's cella, an offering was presented to Bēl, the leftovers of which were brought to Nabû who had just arrived in Babylon by boat.

#### V.3.5.1 Offerings for Bēl

At a specified moment of the day,[900] the Elder Brother made an offering to Bēl on a golden offering table ($^{giš}$banšur/*paššūru*) with roasted meat ($^{uzu}$ka.ne/*šumû*), regular offerings (*ginû*) and golden *šappu*-containers filled with salt (mun/*ṭābtu*) and honey (làl/*dišpu*); he lighted a golden censer (níg.na/*nignakku*) upon which he scattered aromatics (šim/*riqâtu*) and juniper (li/*burāšu*); he made a libation of wine; and recited a blessing (*naqbītu*).

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892 CAD I-J 57; AHw/I 369. For example, in *Ištar's Descent* 133 (Lapinkivi 2010: 13).
893 *Šumma ālu* Tablet 95 (Rendu Loisel 2016: 296 and *passim*).
894 If that is how we may understand NYF4 line IV 39.
895 For Kusu and Ningirim, see Simons 2018.
896 *Mīs pî* BR 58 (Walker & Dick 2001: 73 and 81).
897 Berlejung 1998: 212.
898 See also above page 233.
899 TU 44 I 16 (Linssen 2004: 252 and 256).
900 The time indicator is broken.

When comparing the foodstuffs offered here to the description of the daily offerings in Hellenistic Uruk,[901] it immediately is clear that we are dealing here with a special, extra offering, because much fewer foodstuffs are prepared. The choice for roasted meat, aside from "regular offerings", indicates the same.[902] Moreover, even though the time of day of this offering is broken in the text, the fact that it is dealt with in such detail in the text speaks in favour of such an interpretation.

Special offerings were not uncommon in the temple cult. An analogy can be found in the nocturnal fire ceremony from Uruk, where Anu and Antu in their astral form are given the following offering:

> "You will set down a golden table for Anu and Antu of Heaven. You will lift up water towards Anu and Antu of Heaven for (washing) their hands and set the table. You will present (a meal of) beef, mutton and various birds. You will put down beer of the best quality as well as pressed wine. You will create a sumptuous arrangement with all kinds of garden fruits. You will sprinkle cedar needles(?) and *maṣḫatu*-flour on the golden incense burners and libate pressed wine from a golden libation vessel."[903]

The prayer that is recited at the end of the preparation of the offering table was another form of offering to Marduk. Unfortunately, the text is broken at this point, but interestingly, this blessing contains the only reference to the *akītu*-house (by its name Esiskur) and a procession[904] in the NYF texts. Supposedly, Marduk had finished enjoying the offerings during the course of the – very short! – prayer, because when the Elder Brother was done speaking, he cleared everything away again and had the *mārē ummâni* take the remainders to Nabû who was about to arrive in Babylon by ship. This procedure may imply hospitality through commensality and at the same time establish a specific hierarchy between the gods who share the same food: like the two statues receive remainders from Madānu and are thus accepted within his circles, yet clearly of lower order,[905] Nabû is welcomed by Marduk through his sharing his food with his son.[906] Note, however, that this is the only attestation of a god sending his leftovers to another god – Babylonian gods would usually eat alone.[907]

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[901] TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183), which gives details about the standard four meals of the cultic day.
[902] The offering of roasted meat has been linked to gods being "in transit", such as in the Hellenistic NYF texts from Uruk (TU 39-40, Linssen 2004: 184-196) and the nocturnal fire ceremony (TU 41; Krul 2018), see Scurlock 2006: 36-37. Roasted meat was also offered at other instances, however; for the opposition of roasted and boiled meat, see Joannès 2008: 32-33.
[903] TU 41 obv. 17-22 (Krul 2018: 116).
[904] If this is how we can understand the line referring to "the taking of your hand" (*ṣa-bat* šu$^{II}$-*ku*, NYF4 VI 16).
[905] See above, page 235.
[906] For matters of commensality (at the NA court) see Ermidoro 2015; Parpola 2004. "Leftovers were not just pure means of support, but conveyed, rather, fundamental symbolic messages: they attested the status of the recipients, their commitment to the gods and the crown." (Ermidoro 2015: 128).
[907] Joannès 2008: 36.

### V.3.5.2 Nabû at the Babylonian NYF

After Ezida in Esagila has been purified extensively, protected against evil and festively decorated, and after Bēl has been pleased with extra offerings, Nabû arrived in Babylon from Borsippa by boat. Upon his arrival, he received what had been removed from Bēl's offering table. However, at this point of the text, the scene suddenly changes back to Esagila, and we do not receive any more details about Nabû.

The oldest attestation of Nabû's participation in the Babylonian NYF can be found in an Old Babylonian letter: "Now […] the *akītu* of Marduk and Nabû" (*inanna akītum ša Marduk u Nabû* […]).[908] More evidence stems from Assyria, where Bēl and Nabû are mentioned together in the context of the Babylonian NYF, e.g. in Sargon's annals and in letters,[909] but in cultic and literary texts too. One of those is a ritual text found in Aššurbanipal's library and is – as stated in its colophon – a copy of a text from Babylon; at the end it describes what should be recited to Bēl when he is in the *akītu*-house:

> "[Bēl, warum] thronst du nicht in Babylon? Warum ist dein Thron [in é.sag.í]l nicht aufgestellt? Nabû ditto. Warum sitzt du nicht in Borsippa? Warum ist dein Thron in é.zi.da nicht aufgestellt? Warum haben sie dich nicht unseren kleinen Nabû genannt? Nanâ und Sutiti, (warum) haben sie *euch*' nicht gerufen?"[910]

The text asks why Bēl and Nabû are not in their usual dwelling place, i.e. Esagila and Ezida (in Borsippa) respectively – the answer lies in the fact that the gods are in the *akītu*-house.[911]

Another Neo-Assyrian composition that has been associated with the presence of Nabû in the Babylonian NYF is the so-called "Exaltation of Nabû", which is known from two duplicates.[912] It is not a ritual text nor a prayer, but a proper literary text written in the past tense with epic qualities, including metre.[913] The text starts with an account of Nabû's journey to Babylon by boat.[914] When he arrived at the Uraš Gate at night, rites were performed and people came to show reverence to the deity. Then follows a broken part, in which there is mention of a dream. The second half of the text relates a scene in Esiskur, where Nabû(?) is placed upon the "seat of rest" and claims to have completed the "rites of purification". He returns to Esagila and sets his feet "on the rolling Sea", after which he is praised by Marduk and Zarpānītu. It remains

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[908] AbB 5 168, 16-17.
[909] See above, page 49.
[910] K.9876+ rev. 21'-27' (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 8: 228-232).
[911] Due to some difficulties with the text, it is unclear whether Nanāya and Sutiti had accompanied Nabû to Babylon, see Waerzeggers 2010: 126-127.
[912] VAT 13834+ and VAT 10060 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 13: 244-246; Lambert 2013: 346-349).
[913] Lambert 2013: 347.
[914] Although the subject's name remains unmentioned, the boat is called Iddaḫedu, like the ceremonial barge of Nabû in the NYF text.

uncertain if this story is about the participation of Nabû in the NYF.[915] Similarities with the account of the return of (the statue of) Marduk in Aššurbanipal's inscription have led to the suggestion that the text was composed upon this occasion rather than in light of the NYF.[916] One explanation does not have to exclude the other, however.

There is also compelling evidence from the Neo-Babylonian period, most prominently from the chronicles from Borsippa, where the standard phrase expressing that the festival did not take place, was: "Nabû did not come to Babylon, Bēl did not go out."[917] Although those phrases mostly occur in chronicles that relate historical events, they do express the general idea that Nabû's participation in the NYF of Babylon was indispensable. The importance of Nabû also comes to the fore in the royal inscriptions, in which the god is often mentioned in connection with the festival and kings boast of the renovation projects they undertook for the different stations of Nabû's processional route.[918]

Furthermore, the archives of the priests of Borsippa dating to the LSC give us glimpses into the rites surrounding Nabû's departure at the occasion of the NYF.[919] There were preparatory rites, which included a clothing ceremony (*lubuštu*)[920] and extra offerings of beer in a *namḫaru*-vat. Moreover, Sutītu, Nabû's mistress, was also dressed in a *lubuštu*-ceremony, which suggests that she would later accompany him to Babylon. It seems, however, that Nanāya remained at home, where she received a "special service" in her husband's absence.[921] Remarkably, the meat of the goddess's offerings during that period was reserved for the queen and thus "a nice parallel was created between Nabû and Nanāya on the one hand and the king and the queen on the other, as the queen too was left at home while her husband attended the New Year festival in Babylon."[922]

On the day of Nabû's departure, a *birīt-šiddī* ceremony was held.[923] The stations of his journey to Babylon can only be reconstructed on the basis of royal inscriptions.[924] Furthermore, on the days when Nabû left or entered his cella, offerings were brought to the Standard of the Divine Shield, which was specifically "activated" at those moments, as it was in other rituals including

[915] See Lambert 2013: 346.
[916] Barcina 2017: 93 note 9. Aššurbanipal 73 (School Days Inscription): iii 2'-18'.
[917] See above, Chapter III.2.3. See also: Pomponio 1978 and 1998-2001; Glassner 2004: 82; Waerzeggers 2010: 119.
[918] See above, page 62.
[919] Waerzeggers 2010: 119-130.
[920] See also Linssen 2004: 51-56, where the data from Borsippa was not included.
[921] Waerzeggers 2010: 126-128.
[922] Waerzeggers 2010: 128.
[923] See also Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 52.
[924] See Waerzeggers 2010: 124-125.

a procession. The Divine Shield itself also received offerings, which was a much rarer phenomenon, and demonstrates how exceptional the celebration was. Finally, when Nabû returned from Babylon on the eleventh day, another festive cycle started in Borsippa, including the sacred wedding ceremony.[925] Unfortunately, there are no cultic texts from the LSC that could give us more insight into the ritual details of the NYF and the role of Nabû in it at that time.

There are, however, multiple compositions from the Late Babylonian period that revolve around Nabû. First of all, there are two mentions of Nabû's arrival in the NYF texts: one in the part describing the statues, another after the ritual purification of his cella in Esagila. Second, there is a ritual calendar text describing how Nabû participates in the New Year Festival and then rushes home for his wedding ceremony:

> "On appelle [le mois de Nisannu] du nom de "roi des cieux et de la terre". ... la purification. Il se dirige vers ... . ... il revêt le vêtement de la souveraineté et porte le rayonnement surnaturel. ... Il se dirige vers le Temple de la Prière. ... celui qui demeure sur la terre et aux cieux. ... on les fait entrer successivement devant eux ... . Au 11e jour, ils célèbrent (l'un après l'autre) la cérémonie dans la Temple de la Prière. ... *apkallu* ... il se hâte à la cérémonie du marriage."[926]

Third, a partly preserved ritual text details the rites that took place in Ezida and Euršaba in Borsippa, amongst others from the first to the eleventh day of Nisannu.[927] The divine protagonists are Nabû, Nanāya and Uṣur-amāssu. The largest part of this section of the text comprises a detailed description of the garments in which Nanāya was clothed during a *lubuštu*-ceremony on the second day. Aside from that, offerings, purifications and rites "for the wellbeing of the temple" (*šalām bīti*) are mentioned. The sixth to eleventh days are related in a few lines which are difficult to understand. A chariot and the *akītu* of Bēl are referred to, although it remains unclear how the two goddesses related to those things: were both of them accompanying Nabû to Babylon, only one of them or none?

Further evidence for Nabû's important role in the Babylonian NYF has been found in Palmyra (first century CE), where a relief on the temple of Bēl depicts two protagonists leading others in battle.[928] The scene has been read as a depiction of the battle against Tiāmat described in

[925] The fact that more rituals followed for Nabû after his return from Babylon, raises the question of whether our conception of the New Year Festival taking place from the first to the twelfth day is actually correct. In order to say that, we should redefine which rites we consider to be part of the festival and which not. It is highly probable that more rites were performed in Babylon as well, after Nabû had returned to Borsippa.
[926] SBH VIII I 1-8 (Matsushima 1987: 158-159).
[927] BM 40790 II 7'-III 32 (Da Riva & Galetti 2018).
[928] Dirven 1997; Dirven 1999: 128-156, in particular 146-151.

Enūma Elîš and therefore been related to the NYF. The two protagonists, then, are Bēl and Nabû, who, in contrast to the Babylonian myth, lead the gods together into battle.

Aside from Nabû, other gods also travelled to Babylon. Specific types of offerings, preparations such as clothing ceremonies, and the mention of a chariot or boat and travel provisions in administrative temple records suggests that Šamaš came over from Sippar and Ištar from Uruk. Deities residing inside Babylon also re-joined Bēl, such as Ištar of Nineveh (Bēlet-Ninua), who dwelled in Egišḫurankia.[929]

Still, the presence of Nabû was crucial for the festival to take place, whereas the attendance of other gods seems to have been less important. So much is clear from the standard phrase in the chronicles ("Bēl did not go out, Nabû did not come"), but also from the care which kings took to maintain and embellish this god's processional route to Babylon. Two theories have been submitted to explain this prominent role of Nabû in the NYF. A secondary reason why Nabû needed to attend the NYF was his function of writing the Tablet of Destinies: when the fates of the land were decided upon the return of the gods from the *akītu*-house, Nabû was the one who inscribed it on the Tablet of Destinies.[930]

The first theory, proposed by Mark Cohen, regards the festival including Nabû as a fusion of two traditions: the *akītu* of Marduk on the one hand and the *akītu* of Nabû on the other.[931] This is based on the idea that one of the original meanings of the *akītu*-festival was to celebrate a city's patron deity. When the festival of Nabû was integrated in the festival of Marduk, the former retained an important place. While this is a plausible theory, it does not explain why the two festivals were merged into one.

The second theory seeks to find a solution to Nabû's role in the NYF in the general rising importance of this deity in the Mesopotamian cult during the first millennium BC and a connection to the crown prince and kingship in general, due to his being the son of Marduk.[932] This relation between Nabû and the king becomes very apparent from the reign of Sargon II onwards.[933] This king, when building his new capital, Dūr-Šarrukīn, not only constructed the

[929] Da Riva & Frahm 1999: 172-174 (Ištar of Niniveh); for evidence from Sippar and Uruk, see above, chapters III.2.1.2 and III.2.1.3. See also Zgoll 2006: 29-33.
[930] Tudeau 2013, http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/nabu/index.html (last accessed 17.10.19). See also George 1986: 141-142.
[931] Cohen 1994: 441. Followed by Da Riva & Galetti 2018.
[932] Pomponio 1998-2001; Lambert 2013: 275-277; Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 96-105. See also Robson 2015, "Nabû, God of Wisdom", http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/nimrud/ancientkalhu/thepeople/nabu/index.html#ref_2 (last accessed 17.10.19).
[933] Robson 2019: 49-97.

temple of Nabû next to the royal palace,[934] but also connected both buildings with a bridge. Later, Aššurbanipal personally identified with Nabû in his aspect of god of knowledge and the scribal art.[935]

Nabû remained of importance for the Neo-Babylonian kings as well, almost all of whom carried names with the theophoric element Nabû. Moreover, in the Nabû *ša ḫarê* temple in Babylon, the ceremonial name of which is É-($^{giš}$níg)-gidri-kalamma-summa ("House which Bestows the Sceptre of the Land"), Nabû handed over the "just sceptre, to rule all the people" to the crown prince.[936] Theological evidence is generally scarce for the Persian period, but later tradition refers to the visit of Cambyses, when he was still crown prince, to the Nabû *ša ḫarê* temple.[937] Nabû remained a popular god with the Seleucid kings, who undertook renovations of his temple in Borsippa.[938] The cylinder commemorating this event is a traditional Babylonian form "imbued with Seleucid monarchic ideology."[939] The preferment for Nabû can be explained by the syncretism between Nabû and Apollo, dynastic god of the Seleucids.[940]

The essential attendance of Nabû in the NYF can thus for some part be explained by his special relation with Mesopotamian royalty in the first millennium BC.[941] From the Sargonid period onwards, the NYF was one of the most prominent tools for promoting royal ideology, which it remained at least until the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire.[942] As tutelary deity of the royal family, Nabû had to be present at the side of his father (Marduk or Aššur), possibly as divine counterpart to the terrestrial crown prince accompanying the king.[943] However, Nabû's link to kingship cannot fully account for his importance in the festival and rather it should be seen in light of a more general pairing of Marduk and Nabû in Babylonian theology.

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[934] As was also the case in Aššur, Kalhu and Nineveh (Robson 2019: 49-97).
[935] Livingstone 2007; Frahm 2011b.
[936] Al-Mutawalli 1999; Cavigneaux 1981.
[937] Nabonidus Chronicle iii 24 (Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/ [last accessed 17.10.19]).
[938] Dirven 1999: 136-146 and Chapter V *passim*; see also Beaulieu 2014a.
[939] Kosmin 2014b: 176. See also Stevens 2014; Strootman 2013.
[940] The frequent use of *aplu*, "heir", following the name of Nabû in the Antiochos Cylinder has been understood as referring to Apollo (Kosmin 2014b: 178).
[941] Van der Toorn (1991: 335-336) wished to see the actions of the king performed during the NYF as a parallel for what Nabû does. Others consider the king as embodiment of Marduk/Aššur, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 421-426.
[942] See above, Chapters II.3.3; III.1.1; III.2.2.
[943] In a text dated to Sennacherib's reign, Nabû is not listed among the gods who accompany Aššur to the *akītu*-house, nor is he portrayed as the son of Aššur; that role was fulfilled by Zababa. This seems to have changed later; see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 104.

### V.3.6 The humiliation and negative confession of the king[944]

After the preparations of Nabû's cella in Esagila are done and Nabû himself has set foot ashore in Babylon, our attention is – quite abruptly – brought back to the cella of Marduk, where the following scene unrolls itself. The king is brought in and purifies his hands. The Elder Brother removes the monarch's insignia, which he takes into the cella of Bēl and places on a seat in front of the deity.[945] After having gone out of the cella, the Elder Brother strikes the cheek of the king and makes him enter into the presence of Marduk, where he further humiliates the king by pulling him by the ears and making him kneel to the ground. The king is obliged to pronounce a "negative confession": he swears not to have committed any sins against Marduk, Esagila, Babylon and its inhabitants. Here the first manuscript (NYF4) breaks off and approximately twenty lines are missing. Where the second tablet resumes (NYF2-3), the priest is addressing the king, who is given back his regalia in order to regain his "normal dignity".[946]

Furlani wrote about this particular rite already in 1940:

> "Nessuno vorrà negare, oso sperare, che questa parte del rito per la festa di capodanno, l'umiliazione del re di Babele davanti alla statua di Marduk in Esagil, è ben singolare e strana. Ognuno si porrà di fronte al nostro testo la domanda: Quale è il significato religioso di essa?"[947]

The same remark was repeated more recently by Zgoll, who observes that the humiliation of the king "so gar nicht ins Bild, das man sich aus der zeitlichen Entfernung der Jahrtausende von einem altorientalischen Potentaten macht, [passt]."[948] Indeed, the remarkable character of the humiliation and "negative confession" of the king in light of traditional ideas of Babylonian kingship explains the wide range of different explanations and interpretations which have been built around it.[949]

#### V.3.6.1 Interpretations

Some of the earliest interpretations have been fully dismissed today because they were based on faulty readings of the pertinent texts or because they were proven wrong with our growing (knowledge of the) body of cuneiform sources. In his (in)famous *Golden Bough*, Frazer wrote that the slapping of the king was the remnant of a practice that had existed before historical times, when kings were put to death at the New Year; later, the rulers opted to install a substitute

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[944] This chapter is largely based on Debourse, *forthcoming* ("Debita Reverentia: Understanding Royal Humiliation in the New Year Festival Texts"), where the topic is treated in more detail.
[945] According to Sallaberger & Schmidt (2012), the insignia were not the king's but belonged to Bēl. I will come back to this below, footnote 973.
[946] As explained above, I interpret the "second" slapping and the omens as paratextual notes, see page 201.
[947] Furlani 1940, 125.
[948] Zgoll 2006, 61.
[949] Partial summaries of the topic can be found in Furlani 1940: 119-136; Bell 1997: 17-20; Pongratz-Leisten 1997a; Sommer 2000; Bidmead 2002: 77-86.

on the throne to avoid death.[950] Frazer, followed by Langdon, furthermore connected the ritual to the Greek Sakaia, described in Berossos: "the masters are ruled by their slaves and one of them, who is clothed in a robe similar to that of the king, manages the house."[951] In this carnival-like feast, the king was treated in the most humbling way, to contrast the usual way in which he was approached.[952] The whole festival was seen as a dramatic expression of "the abolition of past time, the restoration of primordial chaos, and the repetition of the cosmogonic act."[953] Recently, Auffarth and Sommer have argued for a similar interpretation of the humiliation of the king in the NYF, as they consider the reversal of elements as a necessary step to confirm and legitimate the common order.[954] The idea of descend into chaos and ensuing order lies close to the death and resurrection that was initially read into the NYF by Zimmern on the basis of the Marduk Ordeal.[955]

The humiliation of the king has also been understood as a ritual repentance for sins.[956] Frankfort, for example, named the fifth day of the NYF the "Day of Atonement", on which the king confessed all of his sins in order to be cleansed so that he could participate in the ensuing rituals.[957] Ambos too considered the slapping of the cheek as an actual punishment for actual sins of the king;[958] Black stated: "The humiliation of the king is a personal humiliation."[959] Furlani understood the digressions mentioned in the negative confession as generic statements that were pronounced to ensure that the king would not be punished by the gods for unknown misdeeds (in the sense of "better to be safe than sorry"). The king's actual sins were written on a separate tablet and, when he was hit, he would be forgiven by Marduk.[960] Within the interpretation of the humiliation and negative confession as a repentance for sins, the focus has also come to lie on the king as some kind of scapegoat, who repents not only for his own sins but for the sins of the whole nation as well.[961]

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[950] Frazer 1890(1922; 2009): 663-666.
[951] BNJ 680 F2.
[952] Langdon 1924; also 1923: 25-26.
[953] Eliade 1949(1954): 57.
[954] Auffarth 1991: 45-55; Sommer 2000: 81-95. In this sense, van der Toorn (1991) speaks of a "rite of confirmation". The idea is revoked by Ambos 2013: 86-89.
[955] Zimmern 1918: 2-20. See above, page 119. For the Marduk Ordeal, see SAA 3, 34-35; also Frahm 2011a: 352-354; von Soden 1955.
[956] Dombart's proposition, that the king is really stating his innocence, was never followed (Dombart 1924: 115).
[957] Frankfort 1948: 315-328.
[958] Ambos 2013: 136.
[959] Black 1981: 54.
[960] Furlani 1940: 129-135.
[961] Gaster 1950(1961): 34-37. Zimmern (1926) too offered this explanation alongside the resurrection-theme.

Pettazzoni was the one who rightfully remarked that we are not dealing with an actual confession of sins because all the statements are negated. He therefore suggested that this "negative confession" served as a magic speech or incantation ("magia della parola") that would prevent the monarch from committing the named transgressions in the coming year.[962] This argument was rationalized by Pongratz-Leisten, who claimed that the negative confession was a "Rechenschaftsbericht": by pronouncing the words of the negative confession, the king showed that he was accountable for the Babylonian nation. Through the rite he was reminded of his ethical and political duties.[963] Bidmead followed this interpretation, explaining the slapping of the cheek in light of Middle Babylonian contracts, in which such an act served to confirm oaths.[964] Zgoll, essentially agreeing with Pongratz-Leisten's understanding of the episode as "Rechenschaftsbericht", added a further nuance by stating that not only did the king express his responsibility to his people, he also showed obedience and subordination to Marduk through the humiliation.[965] The king's humiliation and negative confession were thus nothing more than a formal promise to, on the one hand, Babylon and its inhabitants and, on the other, the gods and their temples to take care of them as he was expected to do.

Finally, the humiliation and negative confession of the king have also been read in light of Babylon's history. The mention of the *ṣābē kidinni* in the negative confession led Pongratz-Leisten to conclude that the text had its roots "in einem realhistorischen Hintergrund"[966]; more specifically that it can be read against the background of power struggles between Assyria and Babylonia in the first centuries of the first millennium BC, culminating in the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib and the city's subsequent reconstruction by Esarhaddon. Similarly, Michalowski saw the episode in the context of Assyrian destructions of Babylon, because essentially it "can be paraphrased as 'I am not Tukulti-Ninurta, I am not Sennacherib'."[967] A similar historical reading of the scene was proposed by Jonathan Z. Smith in 1976.[968] He supposed that the rite was the result of and a mechanism to cope with an incongruous present in which a non-native ruler occupied the Babylonian throne. The Babylonians managed to rectify that situation by submitting the king to a ritual humiliation and letting him swear that he

[962] Pettazzoni 1935: 88-103. Hence his designation of the text as "negative confession".
[963] Pongratz-Leisten 1997a. "Der Rechenschaftsbericht ist somit eine institutionalisierte Form der Rückbesinnung auf die ethische Selbstverpflichtung des Königs innerhalb eines kultischen Kontextes, aber nicht Selbstthematisierung in Form eines Schuldbekenntnisses." (Pongratz-Leisten 1997a: 101).
[964] Bidmead 2002: 77-83 (80 note 113). For the expression *lētam maḫāṣu*, see CAD M/1 74 1b1'.
[965] Zgoll 2006: 63.
[966] Pongratz-Leisten 1997a: 94.
[967] Michalowski 1990: 393. See also Ambos 2013: 136.
[968] Smith (1976: 5): "My own conjecture would be that […] the situation and ideology projected *by the ritual text* [sic] goes back no earlier than the time of Sargon II."

had not committed the sins of a foreign ruler and that he had taken care of Babylon as a Babylonian king would do: "the Babylonian Akitu festival [is] best described in terms of repetition of the past nor of future fulfillment, but rather in terms of a difficult and incongruous present; this present supplies the chief content of the text and delimits its function; there is an almost casuistic dimension to [this] document – which may be best described as 'application'; this incongruity is surprising in the light of past precedents – but it may only be addressed, worked with, and perhaps even overcome in terms of these same precedents."[969]

In summary, there are essentially three interpretations of the humiliation and negative confession of the king during the Babylonian NYF, all of them including a number of nuances depending on the focus of attention: a ritual reversal of elements, which served to re-establish and legitimize the order of the world; the repentance for sins – personal and/or collective – which led to the forgiveness of Marduk; and a ritual reminder to the king to act according to the rules of Babylonian kingship. Aside from that, most scholars agree that this particular rite in the NYF resonates best with the power struggles between Assyria and Babylonia in the latter part of the second and first part of the first millennium BC. Nevertheless, the diversity of interpretations of the humiliation and negative confession of the king shows that we should be mindful of a certain arbitrariness in our approach to the NYF texts.

#### V.3.6.2 Royal humbling in Mesopotamian ritual

The one thing that all the interpretations agree upon, is the fact that the ritual humiliation of the king in the NYF served to re-establish and legitimize the monarch's rule. As such, this ritual is not unique, since similar rites of royal debasement can be found throughout history.[970] In Mesopotamia itself, other rituals of royal humiliation are attested; below the ritual called *Bīt salā' mê* and the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual will be discussed.[971] The question that needs to be addressed is to what extent the rite performed at the New Year relates to those rituals.

- *Bīt salā' mê*

The rite that resembles most the humiliation of the king in the NYF is the ritual of *Bīt salā' mê* (House of Sprinkling Water), which, according to Claus Ambos, was performed during the *akītu*-festival of the seventh month Tašrītu.[972] On the day before his participation in the

[969] Smith 1976: 19.
[970] Similar instances of ritual humiliation of a ruler can be found, for example, in ancient India or in medieval Europe. Annette Kehnel (medievalist) speaks of "a strong tradition of ritually induced states of weakness in a future ruler across different time periods and cultures" (Kehnel 2011, 32 and *passim*).
[971] *Bīt salā' mê*: Ambos 2013; coronation ritual: SAA 20, 7. For other examples, see Gabbay 2014: 174 note 177.
[972] Ambos 2013. Manuscripts of *Bīt salā' mê* stem from Nineveh, Sippar and Babylon (one of which is dated to a king Artaxerxes). The ritual tablet was accompanied by a series of incantation tablets.

procession of gods, the king went through a series of rites that served to absolve his sins and purify him. In order to achieve that, he spent the night in a "prison", deprived of his royal insignia, while reciting prayers to gods of the Nippurean and Babylonian panthea. The next morning, he was re-instated in his office when he was sprinkled with water and was re-invested with his regalia. The *Bīt salā' mê* ritual is thus an obvious *rite de passage*, in which the king went through the three stages of separation, liminality and incorporation. Specifically, this meant that the king experienced a period of "Statusverlust" from the moment at which his insignia were taken away until they were returned to him. In this aspect in particular, the ritual of *Bīt salā' mê* resembles the humiliation of the king in the NYF, in which the monarch's insignia were also removed to denote his temporal loss of status.[973]

Despite this essential similarity, there are a number of considerable differences between both rites. First, Ambos considers *Bīt salā' mê* to be a personal ritual for the king, in which the king settled matters with his personal gods.[974] The humiliation of the king in the NYF, in contrast, is strongly focussed on his role as monarch, as the transgressions enumerated in the negative confession show. Moreover, in as far as *Bīt salā' mê* has to do with kingship, it emphasizes aspects such as the king as shepherd of the people or as warrior, whereas the focus in the NYF lies on the king's cultic duties.[975] Second, many gods from both the Nippurean and Babylonian panthea are addressed in *Bīt salā' mê* and the triad of Šamaš, Ea and Asalluḫi act as judges of the ritual procedure.[976] In the humiliation-rite in the NYF, only Marduk is invoked and he alone decides the fate of the king. Third, it is arguable whether we can really speak of "humiliation" in the case of the *Bīt salā' mê*. The symbolic "Statusverlust" in the form of the removal of the regalia and the night passed in the "prison" do not compare to the slapping of the sovereign and his pronouncement of a humiliating statement that asserted his good behaviour found in the

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While there are abundant references to the celebration of two *akītu*-festivals per year in the third millennium, there are very few attestations in the first millennium BC for the NYF of the seventh month, most of which stem from Assyria (Ambos 2013: 130-134; Cohen 1993: 400-417). The ritual is furthermore described in ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk (TU 39-40, Linssen 2004: 184-214).

[973] A larger number of items is included in the *tillû* or royal insignia in *Bīt salā' mê* (Ambos 2013: 106-112). The four objects mentioned in the NYF text are amongst them: *ḫaṭṭu* ("scepter"), *kippatu* ("ring, loop"), *miṭṭu* ("mace"; used as a synonym for *kakku* in *Bīt salā' mê* [Ambos 2013: 112; also Seidl & Stol 2015 § 2.6]) and *agû* ("crown"). Based on this evidence, I choose not to follow Sallaberger's proposition to regard the insignia mentioned in the NYF as the god's instead of the king's (Sallaberger & Schmidt 2012). His argument was largely based on the fact that only two of the four insignia could be related to kingship, while all four were found with Mesopotamian gods; the evidence in *Bīt salā' mê* nuances this picture now.

[974] Ambos 2013: 135-138.

[975] See Ambos 2013: 112-116.

[976] See also Ambos 2012: 99. The same trio of gods appears in many other rituals, most importantly *Bīt rimki* and *Mīs pî.* In fact, the connection of *Bīt salā' mê* with those rituals is also expressed in the sequence of ritual actions and their specific meaning, most clearly, for example, the use of water as a purifying element (as Shana Zaia pointed out to me).

NYF. In the case of *Bīt salā' mê*, it would perhaps be better to speak of "humbling" rather than of "humiliation".

Fourth, a crucial difference lies in the role of the priest(s) in the respective rituals. In *Bīt salā' mê*, the priests fulfill a practical function by accompanying the king in the ritual that focusses on his persona. Aside from that, there is no explicit contact between the priest and the king, since the purpose of the rite is the absolution of the personal sins of the king by Šamaš, Ea and Asalluḫi. That is different in the humiliation-ritual, where there is a strong connection between the priest and the king, expressed explicitly in the negative confession and in the physical slapping.[977] The king is fully delivered into the hands of the priest at this point of the rite. The agency of the priest is striking, especially when compared to the passive role of the king: at only one instance (perhaps two) is the king subject of an active verb;[978] otherwise he is the direct object of an action performed by someone else – the priest. Thus, he is "made to enter" (*ušerrebšu*) or "made to kneel" (*ušakmassu*); the priest "strikes his cheek" (*lēt šarri imaḫḫaṣ*), "removes" his insignia (*inašši*) or "pulls his ears" (*uznīšu išaddad*). In *Bīt salā' mê*, the king is one of the active participants aside from the *mašmaššu*-priest. He is the subject of active verbs (*inašši*, *imannu* etc.). Priestly agency is minimal and implicit; it is, for example, not stated who removes the king's insignia.

A last difference between both rituals lies in the fact that, while the humiliation of the king in the NYF is but a short episode within the larger festival, *Bīt salā' mê* is a ritual *an sich*: it is described in a series consisting of a ritual tablet and a number of tablets containing recitations. It is furthermore referred to by its title "*Bīt salā' mê*" in Neo-Assyrian correspondence and in catalogues.[979] It has been demonstrated that the ritual could be performed at occasions different than the New Year of Tašrītu, viz. in the context of the royal substitute ritual.[980] This is suggested too by the similarities between *Bīt salā' mê* and *Bīt rimki*, both of which aim at purifying the king. Finally, different versions of the ritual text from diverse periods and places exist. The humiliation-rite, in contrast, is only known from the two overlapping manuscripts

[977] Also the group of *ṣābē kidinni*, about whom the king speaks, must at the time of writing of the tablet for the most part have consisted of priests and their families connected to the traditional Babylonian temples. See below, page 299.
[978] NYF4 V 37 "[…] x lugal 1-*šú an-na-a* dug$_4$.ga" (the king will say this once). The verb in NYF3 VI 7 "lugal *ka-bat* kir$_4$ diš$^{ú}$-*šú i*-x" (the king will [regain] his normal dignity) is not readable.
[979] Læssøe 1955: 19-20. Ambos does not mention the ritual's connection to *Bīt rimki*, that emerges from the evidence gathered by Læssøe. There is clearly a similarity between the rituals, both of which involved the king and reed structures. With the new translation by Schwemer (2019), hopefully some progress will be made here soon.
[980] Ambos 2013: 89-90.

from Seleucid Babylon mentioned above, and is inextricably part of the ritual of the New Year of Nisannu. It is a paragraph in the longer ritual text and could hardly stand on its own.

- The coronation ritual

Another parallel for the humiliation of the king in the NYF has been found in the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual.[981] The following line in particular is relevant here:

> [l]ûsanga *ša aš-šur ina pa-ni-šú-n*[*u* te lugal] *i-maḫ-aṣ*[sic!]
> "The priest of Aššur slaps [the king's cheek] in their presence."
>
> (SAA 20, 7 I 27'-28')

Notably, this section would form a nice parallel to the slapping of the king in the NYF, were it not that the text is broken at exactly this spot. Moreover, as the editor explains, the text is reconstructed on the basis of the NYF text.[982] A previous restoration had been based on another composition: in the cultic commentary on the NA rituals for the New Year, clappers (or other percussion instruments) are said to be hit (*kiskilāte imaḫḫaṣū*).[983] Both reconstructions come with their problems. The reason why the reconstruction based on the commentary cannot simply be accepted is the fact that the commentary does not explain the coronation ritual but another ritual text. Nevertheless, the restoration based on the NYF texts is even more arbitrary and has more far-reaching consequences. Moreover, if the NYF text and the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual text were indeed so closely related, that would mean that they were both at some point present in the same historical and cultic-literary context, and with the current evidence – one manuscript dating to the end of the 2nd millennium BC, the other to the end of the 1st – we have no reason to assume that was the case.

The sole similarity between both rituals lies in the fact that the king is to assume a submissive attitude before the god by prostrating himself before the god:

> "The priest of Aššur slaps [the king's cheek] in their presence and says thus: "Aššur is king, Aššur is king!" He says so [as far as] the Anzû gate. [Having r]eached the Anzû gate, the king [en]ters the House of God. He prostrates himself and rol[ls] (on the ground); he li[ght]s the censers before Aššur, and ascends the dais. He prostrates himself and rolls over."
>
> (SAA 20, 7 I 27'-31')

Nevertheless, even this analogy does not hold up, since in the NYF the king is subjected to the actions of the Elder Brother and is made to kneel, whereas in the coronation ritual the king acts

[981] SAA 20, 7. The Middle Assyrian coronation ritual was recently discussed by Saki Kikuchi in her master's thesis, which unfortunately was written in Japanese. See also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 435-441.
[982] Parpola 2017: 14 note on line I 28': "For the restoration cf. *Racc*. p. 144:419 and 145:449."
[983] Müller 1937: 47-49, followed by CAD M/1 78 3b s.v. *maḫāṣu*. Based on the cultic commentary SAA 3, 37 I 6'. It explains a Neo-Assyrian *akītu* text, SAA 20, 15. See also Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 421-426.

of his own accord and, in fact, is himself the high priest.[984] In other words, the Neo-Assyrian king is the high priest of Aššur and as such, he bows before Aššur as a subject would bow to his lord.

There is another passage in the coronation ritual that has been compared to the ritual humiliation of the king in the NYF.[985] After the king has been crowned, the Assyrian magnates are reinstated in their offices: their insignia are removed and the men prostrate before the king. In the NYF too, the king's regalia are removed and he is made to kneel before Marduk.[986] This similarity notwithstanding, the aspect of penitence, expressed by the king being hit and his negative confession, which is the most prominent aspect in the NYF rite, is fully missing from the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual.[987]

In conclusion, the different instances of royal humiliation or better, humbling, in Mesopotamian ritual differ strongly from one another. The similarities lie, on the one hand, in the basic actions that led to a change of status, such as prostration and the removal of the insignia[988] and, on the other, in the fact that all three rituals relate to the (re)investiture of the king. Despite these generic similarities, the ritual in the NYF remains unique and unparallelled. One element in particular highlights a crucial difference. I have already made the point that, while in both the coronation ritual and *Bīt salā' mê*, the priest's main function is to assist the king in his cultic activities, a unique feature of the NYF is the king's subjection to priestly agency. Interesting in this respect is NYF6, in which the Elder Brother is told by Marduk: "Let neither king nor governor strike your cheek", a very clear reference to the rite in the NYF.[989] Thus, it seems that the priest was allowed to slap the king, but the other way around the action would be unacceptable in the eyes of Marduk. The basic *rite de passage* of royal humbling found in other Mesopotamian rituals is thus transformed into an exhibition of royal subservience and priestly power in the NYF. This interpretation sheds light on the meaning of the negative confession, which is ultimately an expression of the king's assured protection of Marduk's cult, entailing, naturally, his priesthood. The fact that the negative confession is a unique feature of the NYF is thus telling. Finally, we should heed the response of the Elder Brother described in the NYF texts after he has returned the regalia to the king: he is the one reaffirming the royal status of

[984] Kryszat (2008) reads the ritual as *Priesterinvestitur* rather than as coronation ritual.
[985] First by Furlani 1940: 132, then by Zgoll 2006: 61-64.
[986] In that sense, Zgoll proposed to see the Babylonian king as the "Statthalter Marduks", see above.
[987] The difference was also remarked by Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 438.
[988] The high symbolic value of the regalia is illustrated in several Mesopotamian myths, such as the Anzu-myth, in which the Anzu-bird can only seize the Tablet of Destinies at the moment when Enlil has removed his crown to go bathing, or in the Erra Epic, in which Marduk leaves his throne to Erra because his insignia need to be polished.
[989] NYF6 obv. II 14'.

the king, reminding him, so it seems, of his royal duties.[990] This innovation in the NYF texts will be discussed more extensively below.[991]

### V.3.7 White bull, divine bull

The last ritual sequence preserved in the NYF texts is difficult to understand not only because it is badly preserved, but also because it remains unparallelled in the cuneiform sources. The setting is the Great Courtyard of Esagila at night, where the Elder Brother constructs a pyre (implied but not named) out of 40 pieces of reed – each stem 1,5 metres long and perfectly straight – bound together with palm leaves. This bundle is placed in a hole and, after a libation is made and a branch has been placed by it, the king, now, sets the pyre on fire. A white bull is mentioned. The king recites a blessing starting with the words "Divine bull, shining light, who illuminates [the darkness]". Some unclear things happen, the king prostrates himself and leaves to go to the *šutummu*.

The passage is difficult to understand especially because it seems to describe the sacrifice of a bull – at least, so much is suggested by the presence of the bull and the fire.[992] Although animal sacrifice is regularly attested in cuneiform texts, the way in which it was performed remains largely unknown.[993] Parallels to ancient Judaic and Greek customs are readily drawn, but there are only rare instances in Mesopotamian texts that give us detailed insight in what could be considered sacrificial customs. The present passage has been understood as a whole burnt offering (holocaust), a form of animal sacrifice that is sometimes encountered in the ANE.[994] Commonly, goats, lambs or smaller animals like doves and crabs would be tied upon a brush pile composed of fragrant woods and the whole unit would be set on fire.[995] Larger animals – bulls and calves – were killed beforehand and cuts of their meat were burnt in the fire. This last practice occurs mostly in an Assyrian context, where the meatcuts were placed on an incense burner (*ina šēḫti/šēḫāti*).[996] The burning of the heart of a bull in fragrant woods is attested in the Late Babylonian ritual for covering the kettledrum.[997]

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[990] Expressed in imperatives (*epuš*, *ubbib*) and precatives (*lu*). The events that follow the humiliation scene (recorded in the very badly preserved last column of NYF3) seem to include the king prostrating himself before Marduk (VI 28, which was read wrongly by Linssen as *ana* $^{d}$en úr *i-kal* x […] whereas I read *ana* $^{d}$en kir$_4$ *i-lab-*[*bi-in*]).
[991] See Chapter V.5.
[992] Scurlock 2006a: 41; Linssen 2004: 83 note 438.
[993] For sacrifice in Mesopotamia: Krul 2018: 162-173; Scurlock 2006a,b, 2002a,b; Linssen 2004: 154-166; Lambert 1993; Leichty 1993; Limet 1993; Foxvog 1989; Blome 1934.
[994] Scurlock 2006a: 40-42.
[995] See Scurlock 2006a: 40-42 for references.
[996] See CAD Š/2 265 s.v. *šēḫtu* d for references.
[997] TU 44 II 16 (Linssen 2004: 253, 257). Perhaps the heart of a sheep is burned in BM 32206+ I 38 (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 94).

It is clear that the sacrifice in the NYF was not a whole burnt offering, however. The wood used was not suited for this purpose: first, the size of the pyre (approx. 1,5 m high and 60 cm wide)[998] was too small to burn a whole bull and too large for burning just parts of the animal. Second, the use of reed shows that it is unlikely that anything was burnt inside the fire, since that would have produced a smell that was usually covered by incense or fragrant woods – here unmentioned – inside the brush pile. Nevertheless, a fire of reed could be used for roasting;[999] perhaps we should understand the "branch" in the phrase that says that the Elder Brother places "a branch (pa) in front (*ina* igi) of the bundle" as a kind of skewer.

Roasted meat (*šumû*) offerings are regularly attested in Late Babylonian temple ritual texts. Most often they are part of the *niqû*-offerings (sískur), as for example in the building ritual of the *kalû*, where reference is made to the slaughter of sískur sheep and the subsequent presentation of roasted meat, shoulder and fat tissue.[1000] Sískur sheep are also prominently mentioned in the Astronomical Diaries as part of the *nindabû* offering, which was presented by high Greek officials or *politai*.[1001] This kind of sacrifice took place at one of the main gates of Esagila and never in the courtyard. The standard formula was reconstructed by Krul as follows:

> "That day / on day x, the *šatammu* of the Esagil and the Babylonians of the *kiništu* of the Esagil provided him / the aforementioned [official] with one bull and x sacrificial sheep at [one of the entrance gates to the Esagil]. He made a food offering for Bēl, Bēltīya, the great gods, for the life of the king and for his own life. He prostrated himself."[1002]

Interestingly, the person making the offering would prostrate himself (*uškinnu*) after having done so, as also the king in the NYF prostrates himself (*appu ilabbin*) in the ritual under discussion.

Roasted meat does not seem to have been part of the regular offerings.[1003] So much is suggested by the specification of the foodstuff as "roasted" as opposed to the usual (non-roasted) form, for example in the NYF texts when the Elder Brother prepares extra offerings for Bēl,[1004] or in an Urukean NYF text when the offerings for Papsukkal and Kusibanda for the seventh day are described:

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[998] 3 cubits = 150 cm (LB); standard reed stems are between 0,5 and 1,5 cm in diameter.
[999] Streck 2009: 185 (RlA 12 3/4 s.v. Schilf).
[1000] TU 45 obv. 2-3, 10-11, 20-21, rev. 6, 9, 11-12, 17-18, 21-22 (Linssen 2004: 283-292). About sískur (Krul 2018: 162-173; Limet 1993; Lambert 1993: 195.)
[1001] See Krul 2018: 171 note 145 for all the occurrences of this kind of offering in the Astronomical Diaries. See also Jursa 2016: 184.
[1002] Krul 2018: 172.
[1003] The description of the daily offerings in the Bīt Rēš does not specify how the animals, which are listed per meal, were to be prepared (TU 38; Linssen 2004: 172-183).
[1004] NYF4 V 2-3.

> "food and songs, roasted meat, beef and mutton, all the regular offerings, all sorts of fine beer, also drawn wine and milk, date confection, fine mixed beer and *labku*-mixed beer, *tirimtu*-cups(?), *dannu*- and *namharu*-vats"[1005]

In the case of the *niqû*-offering, the meat could be presented to the gods, but it was not a proper meal; rather it served as a "'dedication': the animals' lives were offered up to the deities involved".[1006]

There are other rites, aside from meat offerings, that involved a brushwood pile and a bull. In the nocturnal fire ceremony at LB Uruk, a bull was slaughtered near the Dais of Destinies (in the courtyard) and a priest removed his shoulder and used it to touch the right and left side of the bonfire.[1007] In the ritual for covering the kettledrum, a bull was slaughtered for its skin and its heart was burned while the rest of its body was buried.[1008] In these instances, the animal was not killed to produce a meal for the gods, but rather to act in a more symbolic way. Furthermore, the presence of a living bull in a Babylonian temple ritual is extremely rare and seems to occur only in Late Babylonian ritual texts. A bull is mentioned in the Urukean NYF text, which states that it should be set in place between the curtains (*ina birit šiddi*).[1009] It does not reoccur later in the text, however, so we are left in the dark about why the animal was to be placed there. Another ritual in which a bull appears is the Palmfestival, in which the animal is adorned with garlands and, accompanied by a slave, takes part in several rites.[1010]

Because the text is severely broken at this point, it is not even sure whether the bull was actually killed or not. In fact, we cannot even be certain that the text speaks of a real animal. The signs $^{(d)}$gu$_4$.ud can also be read as *šiḫṭu*, the Akkadian name of the planet Mercury. It is possible that this is a reference to the planet rather than to an animal; this would also fit the description of the bull as "white bull" and "divine bull".[1011] Such an invocation of the planet would not be surprising, as on day 4 the Elder Brother addresses a prayer to the constellation Pegasus as well. Mercury was, together with Jupiter, considered as the "star" of Marduk, as is attested in EAE, for example, where we read:

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[1005] TU 39 obv. 7-10 (Linssen 2004: 185; 188). Rather than reading "roasted meat, beef and mutton for the regular offerings", I would read "roasted meat, beef and mutton, all the regular offerings" ($^{uzu}$*šu-me-e* UZU GU$_4$ *ù* UDU *ka-lu-ú gi-né-e)*.
[1006] Krul 2018: 167.
[1007] TU 41 rev. 6-8 (Krul 2018: 114, 117).
[1008] TU 44 II 16 (Linssen 2004: 253, 257).
[1009] TU 39 obv. 12 (Linssen 2004: 185, 188).
[1010] BM 32206+ (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3). Aside from those, there is the ritual for the covering of the kettledrum, during which a bull was killed to use its hide for the drum. See Gabbay 2018a; Linssen 2004: 92-100.
[1011] The bull in the ritual for covering the kettledrum is equated with the constellation Taurus in its commentary (TU 46; see Gabbay 2018a: 31-33).

> If the star of Marduk becomes visible at the beginning of the year: that year his furrow will appear. (This means) Mercury becomes visible in Nisannu.[1012]

Also, Mercury is the planet that stands closest to the sun, which could be linked to Marduk's name of "calf of the sun", amar utu.[1013] Due to its position, the planet would only have been visible around sunrise or sunset. That fits well with the rite described here, which took place 1/3 *bēru* after sunset and was set in the courtyard, like the blessing of Pegasus was also happening in the courtyard. As such, this final rite would form a nice parallel to the prayer to Pegasus, and both Esagila and its main inhabitant, Bēl, would be praised in their astral form, Esagila as Pegasus and Marduk as Mercury.

### V.3.8 Summary

The seven ritual sequences preserved in the NYF texts are all unique despite the fact that they constitute in part of rites known from other Mesopotamian rituals. The mixture of well-known rites and ritual innovation is apparent especially in the first ritual sequence, consisting of the waking of the priest and his reciting a prayer to Bēl. On the one hand, we find elements of the usual morning rites, such as the drawing of the curtain, the use of Emesal in the recitation and the opening of the gates. On the other, a number of rites does not occur elsewhere, most notably the progressing rising times of the priest and the recitation of a prayer to the constellation Pegasus. These actions are not only innovative in form, but may also symbolize and reflect new ideas. Also the exorcism and purification of the cella of Nabû is characterized by this combination of traditional and less attested aspects. Thus, the regular means of purification are used – incense, water and sound – but the decapitated sheep and the *ikkillû*-incantation applied here do not normally appear in such rituals. Furthermore, the instructions to the craftsmen, included in the second and fourth ritual sequences, are relatively uncommon as well. Here, the text deviates slightly from the ritual context to add technical information instead. The sections in which the *mārē ummâni* are mentioned are noteworthy: they relate the division of offerings, the material for the fashioning of statues and from where it comes, and other technical details.

The sixth ritual sequence, the ritual humiliation and negative confession of the king, remains the most remarkable. Humbling of the king as ritual passenger in a *rite de passage* is known from other instances in Mesopotamian royal ritual, in which a temporary loss of status is implied through the removal of the royal insignia and submission before the god. That is different in the NYF, in which the king is truly humiliated by being slapped by the priest and

[1012] Rochberg 2007: 436.
[1013] Rochberg 2007: 436.

by explicitly having to state that he behaved as he was required to do. Notably the passive role of the monarch stands in stark contrast to the agency of the priest, not only in this specific part of the ritual, but throughout the NYF texts. The main cultic agent of this festival was the Elder Brother.

Historically speaking, most of the cultic events found in the NYF texts are not reflected in other sources. There are two exceptions: the recitation of Enūma Elîš is related in another ritual text as well as in the Marduk Ordeal; and the travel of Nabû from Borsippa to Babylon is attested in numerous sources from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, notably in royal inscriptions. The lack of parallels can only partly be explained by the fact that the rituals took place mostly within the confines of Esagila.

The ritual described in the NYF texts is clearly based in a Mesopotamian cultic tradition. Nevertheless, those traditional elements are adapted to fit a new ritual and stand alongside a number of innovations, the most prominent of which is the connection between the ritual and astronomy. Entirely new and unparallelled is the strict time schedule of the festival. This is indicative for the period in which this text was created: a strong concern for time goes hand in hand with an interest in astronomy, as time was an expression of the distance in the sky travelled by the sun. The bulk of cuneiform astronomical texts stems from the mid-second to the end of the first centuries BC.[1014] This fits with the finds of the philological analysis above.

[1014] Clancier 2009: 310-311.

## V.4 Analysis of the prayers

The NYF texts include several prayers that are fully cited in the text, unlike other temple ritual texts, the most common format of which is a structure of extensive ritual instructions (*dromena*, *agenda*) interspersed with incipits of prayers to be recited (*legomena*, *dicenda*). Only in few cases a single prayer is wholly cited on the tablet, and never all of the prayers.[1015] Another common form of ritual texts is the opposite: the *legomena* are given in full, accompanied by a few concise instructions, most prominently to whom and when the text was to be recited.[1016] To my knowledge, therefore, the structure of the NYF texts is unique.

There are different kinds of *dicenda* in the NYF texts. First, there are 'formal' prayers, which are visually set apart from the ritual instructions by means of horizontal rulings.[1017] They take up most of the space on the tablets, covering half a column each at least. All of them invoke Bēl or Bēltīya and they are pronounced by the Elder Brother only. These prayers were included by Oshima in his book on Marduk Prayers as a sub-group of "Prayers to Marduk and Zarpānītu for the *akītu*-Festivals" (AF 1-12).[1018] Below, the sufficiently preserved Babylonian prayers will be discussed, with a focus on matters of intertextuality, the invoked gods and the beneficiaries.

*Table 6: Concordance AF – NYF texts*

| **AF (Oshima 2011: 104-109)** | **NYF text** |
|---|---|
| AF 1 | NYF1 I 5-32 |
| AF 2 | NYF1 II 14-39 |
| AF 3 | NYF1 V 160-183 |
| AF 4 | NYF2 I 6-18+NYF3 I 1'-15' |
| AF 5 | NYF3 I 17'-30'+NYF2 II 1-8//NYF4 II 1-14 |
| AF 6 | NYF3 II 7'-25'//NYF4 II 31-III 16 |
| AF 7 | NYF4 III 18-33 |
| AF 8 | NYF5 II 16'-19' |
| AF 9 | NYF5 III 8-20 |
| AF 10 | NYF5 IV 1'-19' |
| AF 11 | NYF5 IV 24'-27' |
| AF 12 | NYF6 II 1'-17' |

Second, the NYF texts contain shorter *legomena* that are not visually separated from the instructions, but are still completely written out in the manuscript. Not all of them invoke Marduk and none addresses Zarpānītu. Aside from that, other people than the Elder Brother join in the recitation of them. The first is the "cry of distress" which the craftsmen and the Elder

[1015] E.g. a building ritual text from LB Babylon, BE 13987 obv. 24-40 (Ambos 2004: 180-189; Linssen 2004: 301-305); also BM 32656 (George 2000: 270-280).
[1016] E.g. TU 43 (Linssen 2004: 197-200), a prayer to be recited to Anu during the NYF at Uruk.
[1017] Some prayers are accompanied by an intra-textual subscript, see above page 196.
[1018] Oshima 2011: 102-109. Note, however, that AF 12 is very different in nature from the other prayers in the NYF texts. See below page 304.

Brother utter after the purification of the cella of Nabû.[1019] The second is part of the special offering to Bēl given by the Elder Brother.[1020] The third and fourth are the "negative confession" of the king and the answer of the Elder Brother.[1021] The last one is the very broken prayer starting with the words "Divine Bull".[1022] These shorter recitations are discussed in the relevant sections above.

A third category are incipits of prayers. Most clearly, there is the mention of "*Tummu Bīt*".[1023] The last prayer mentioned in the second category is cited also by means of its first words "Divine Bull" later on in the text.[1024] In one instance, it is not entirely clear whether we are dealing with an incipit or merely a *legomenon* of one line, viz. when the Elder Brother blesses Esagila with the line: "Pegasus, image of Esagila."[1025] Since no prayer with this incipit is known, nothing can be said with certainty. Lastly, in this category we can also include the mention that Enūma Elîš was to be recited from beginning to end.[1026]

### V.4.1 Intertextuality

Just like the ritual instructions clearly relate to an existing Mesopotamian ritual tradition (see Chapter V.3), also the prayers in the NYF texts show influence by the Mesopotamian textual tradition. The similarity to Marduk prayers and Standard Babylonian prayers and hymns in general is not surprising; in contrast, intertextual links with other textual genres are more unexpected and also the lack of intertextuality with, most importantly, Enūma Elîš,[1027] but also with other compositions related to the NYF or *akītu*-festival.

Intertextuality[1028] takes different forms here: citation, allusion, and mixing and matching. In at least one instance we can discern a direct quotation (AF 2); at other instances allusion is made to another work through the use of specific vocabulary and topics (AF 10); but the most common method seems to be a mix of forms, e.g. when direct citations stand next to otherwise unknown passages (AF 6/7). In most cases, we understand that the text has been influenced by other compositions because we happen to know the composition in question. That is not always

[1019] NYF5 IV 31-40.
[1020] NYF5 V 12-18.
[1021] NYF5 V 38-43 and NYF4 VI 1-6.
[1022] NYF4 VI 21-26.
[1023] NYF4 IV 12.
[1024] NYF4 VI 27 and 29.
[1025] NYF2 II 10 // NYF5 II 16.
[1026] NYF5 II 22-24.
[1027] See above, page 240.
[1028] Following Genette, intertextuality is "a relation of co-presence between two or more texts, that is to say, eidetically and most often, by the literal presence of one text within the other." (Genette 1987[1997; 2001]: xviii).

the case, however: irregularities in the grammar or logical order of things can also indicate deliberate borrowing from other, as yet unidentified, texts.

### V.4.1.1 Mixing and matching: AF 1[1029]

At first glance, the first prayer in the NYF texts does not seem very particular. Upon closer consideration, however, there comes to the fore a tension between a well-thought-out structure and a number of structural and semantic inconsistencies in the composition of the text. This is marked foremost by the switch from bilingual Sumerian-Babylonian to monolingual Babylonian, but it is visible in smaller details as well.[1030] This tension could point to the bad integration of borrowed fragments, or, in other words, to mixing and matching of different adoptions from other texts. The prayer can be divided structurally into four sections: 6-18, 19-24, 25-28, 29-32.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | ***$^{d}$bēl*** *ša ina uzzišu māḫir ul īšû* | |
| 8 | ***$^{d}$bēl*** *šarru damqu $^{d}$bēl mātāti* | 1 |
| 10 | *mutīr šulmi ša ilāni rabûti* | |
| 12 | ***$^{d}$bēl*** *ša ina nekelmêšu ušamqitu dannūti* | |
| 14 | ***$^{d}$bēl*** *šarrāni nūr amēlūti muza??iz isqēti* | |
| 16 | ***$^{d}$bēl*** *šubtaku Bābilu Barsip agûku* | |
| 18 | *šamû rapšūtu gimir kabattiku* | |
| 19 | [$^{d}$]*bēl ina īnēku tabarri gimrēti* | |
| 20 | [*ina*] *têrētika taḫâṭ têrēti* | 2 |
| 21 | [*ina*] *nekelmêku tanamdin ûrtu* | |
| 22 | [*ina l*]*apātika taqammi dannūti* | |
| 23 | [*l*]*ā kīnūka takammu ina qātē* | |
| 24 | [*ina*] *naplusika taraššīšunūti rēmu* | |
| 25 | [*t*]*ukallamšunūti nūru idabbubū qurdiku* | |
| 26 | *$^{d}$bēl mātāti nūr igigi qābû damqāti<ku>* | 3 |
| 27 | *mannu ša kâši lā idabbubu qurdiku* | |
| 28 | *lā iqabbi tanit<ta>ku lā ušappâ bēlūtku* | |
| 29 | *$^{d}$bēl mātāti āšib Euʾul ṣābit qātē naski* | |
| 30 | *ana āliku Bābili reše rēmu* | 4 |
| 31 | *ana Esagila bītiku suḫḫir pāniku* | |
| 32 | *ša mārē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šukun šubarrûšunu* | |

Section 1 is the bilingual part of the prayer. It consists of seven pairs of lines; here only the Akkadian is considered. The unity of this section lies not only in the replication of each line in two languages, but also in the repeated use of ***$^{d}$bēl*** ($^{d}$en) at the beginning of the lines; however,

[1029] NYF1 I 5-32.

[1030] The Sumerian sections will be left out of the discussion. For matters of language, both Akkadian and Sumerian, see above, chapter V.1.

only five out of seven lines start with it. Moreover, the second word of each line starts with the consonant Š, except in the last line, where the word beginning with Š is the first and not the second of the line.

Section 1 and Section 2 are linked first by the final repetition of $^{d}$*bēl* and second by the word *gimru*, which occurs both in the last line of Section 1 and in the first line of Section 2. Section 2 consists of six lines that are built in parallelism: *ina* substantive[1031] + verb[1032] + direct object. However, this pattern is broken in line 23, where "*ina* substantive" exchanges places with the direct object. In this way, line 23 interacts with the preceding line 22 alone more than with the whole section. The two lines stand in chiasm to each other (*ina* substantive + verb + object – object + verb + *ina* substantive). A closer connection between both lines is forged by the use of the phonetically similar verbs *qamû* ("to burn") and *kamû* ("to capture"). Also semantically this pair of lines stands out within Section 2: the other lines all have to do with "looking" (*īnu*, *barû*, *ḫâtu*, *nekelmû*, *naplusu*), whereas line 22-23 relate to "touching" (*lapātu*, *qātu*). Aside from this break in the structural and semantic pattern, there is also a curious mix of the older suffix *-ka* with the younger *-ku* in this section. Throughout the rest of the NYF texts, the scribe(s) consistently used *-ku*.[1033]

Section 2 and section 3 are knitted together by the repetition of the suffix -*šunūti*. The internal structure of Section 3 is 2x2 lines and is based on the verbs *dabābu* and *qabû*. Line 25 and 27 both contain *dabābu qurdiku*, although it is affirmative and plural in the first, but negated and singular in the second occurrence. Similarly, line 26 and 28 both have *qabû*, although in different forms. Aside from that, the lines are also paired by other mechanisms: the repetition of the word *nūru* ties line 25 and 26 together and the quasi-enjambment – the rhetorical questions depending on the interrogative *mannu* – serves to bind line 27 and 28 together.

Section 4 starts with a repetition of the idiom *bēl mātāti*, which connects it to Section 3. After this last invocation of the deity, the speaker addresses the deity with three pleas expressed in imperatives. They are tentatively structured as parallelisms, although not as satisfyingly as in Section 2: *ana/ša* + indirect object + imperative + direct object. The indirect objects consist of two parts in apposition; between line 30 and 31 this creates an internal chiasm (your object + name – name + your object).

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[1031] Or substantivized infinitive.
[1032] G Present 2nd person masculin singular.
[1033] With the exception of NYF3 I 14': *ina* ka-*ka*, but here it could be explained as an intentional use of this suffix in light of the preceding ka (*amātu*).

The author(s) of this prayer tried to create an internally coherent text by applying a number of rhetorical devices such as repetition, parallelism and chiasm.[1034] Nevertheless, they seem to have struggled to implement those devices fully and consequently they lose their stylistic power. Aside from the structural deficiencies, the contents of this prayer seem also very mixed. Marduk is given a diversity of epitheta that refer to the following aspects: punishment and deliverance (*ṣābit qātē naski*; *taraššīšunūti rēmu*; *lā kīnūka takammu*), extispicy (*taḫâṭ têrēti*; *tanamdin ûrtu*), ruler of the gods (*bēl šarrāni*; *šarru damqu*; *nūr igigi*), god of Babylon (*šubtaku Bābilu*; *āšib Euʾul*; *āliku Bābili*), decreeing of destinies (*mutīr šulmi*; *muzaʾʾiz isqēti*). In some instances, this is expressed with stock phrases typically found in Marduk-prayers, while in others the epithets are otherwise unknown.[1035] There does not seem to be a specific "theme" or emphasized aspect in this prayer, which is different in, for example, AF 2 and AF 10 discussed below.

The noticeable tension between the care taken by the author(s) in creating a coherent composition and their inability to actually do so – visible in structural, grammatical and thematic inconsistencies – can partially be explained in terms of intertextuality. In the broadest sense, this prayer is modelled after and contains elements similar to other Marduk prayers. More specifically, particular inconsistencies might be due to direct citation from another (unknown to us) source: exemplary is the mixing of both suffixes *-ku* and *-ka* in section 2.

#### V.4.1.2 Marduk literature

Seven out of the eleven prayers preserved in the NYF texts are addressed to Marduk. They consist largely of hymns of praise, along with a short petition.[1036] Remarkably, the prayers contain no thanks or promises.[1037] By invoking and praising Marduk, not only his – widely divergent – characteristics are enumerated, but inspiration is also drawn from his (mythological) deeds. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that we can notice some influence from literary works revolving around Marduk in the NYF prayers.[1038] The two clearest examples will be discussed below.

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[1034] An in-depth investigation of the hermeneutic role played by structuring devices in Akkadian literature and scholarly writing is being conducted by Nicla De Zorzi in the context of the project REPAC "Repetition, Parallelism and Creativity: an Inquiry into the Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Erudition" (2019-2024, University of Vienna, ERC Grant no. 803060).
[1035] See below, page 293.
[1036] About the petition, see below page 299 and page 304.
[1037] For the structure of Babylonian prayers, see Oshima 2011: 14-22; Abusch 1983.
[1038] In a similar vein, George (2000:269) has pointed out that the prayer to Bēltīya in NYF5 III is reminiscent of Inana's Descent to the Netherworld. Because of the problematic Sumerian, the possible connection will not be discussed here, however.

- **AF 2**[1039]

Only the first few words of each line in this prayer are preserved. From what is left, it can be understood that the recitation is more narrative than prayer-like and seems to concern an account about the removal of evil forces from Babylon by Marduk. While the largest part of the text must remain in the dark, a few lines can be reconstructed based on another composition. The ancient author(s) seem to have cited the text directly here.

| **NYF1 II** | **Enmešarra's Defeat (BM 32654+) IV** | **translation** |
|---|---|---|
| | 18 *ištu šamê ilsâ zaqīqu* | A voice proclaimed from heaven |
| 29 *Uruk u Ni*[*purru qamâ u kamâ*] | 19 *Uruk u Nipurru qamâ u kamâ* | Uruk and Nippur are burnt and defeated |
| 30 *nasiḫ t*[*emennašina nadi ana mê*] | 20 *nasiḫ temennašina nadi ana mê* | Their foundations are uprooted, thrown into water |
| 31 *ekurrū ša* [*qerebšina atûšunu* x …] | 21 *ekurrū <ša> qerebšina atûšunu* x […] | The temples that are within them: their gatekeepers… |
| 32 *mašû parṣūšunu* [*ana ūmī ruqūti*…] | 22 *mašû parṣūšunu ana ūmī* [*ruqūti*…] | Their rites are forgotten to [distant] days […] |
| | 23 *ul ikunnū sattukkūšunu* […] | Their regular offerings do not take place […] |
| 33 *sapiḫ gi*[*šḫuršunu* …] | 24 *sapiḫ gišḫuršunu* […] | Their regulations are disrupted […] |
| 34 *nišū āšib* [*qirbišina* …] | 25 *nišū ša qirbišina* [*ašbū*…] | The people who dwell within them […] |
| | 26 *ihbu* […] | … […] |
| 35 *amāssi*[*na*…] | 27 *šallas*[*sina* ...][1040] | Their servant girls/Their booty … |

BM 32654+38193 was published by Lambert under the title "Enmešarra's Defeat". Like the NYF texts, the only manuscript of Enmešarra's Defeat can be found in the BM-collections that contain material from the Late Babylonian Esagila libraries. The content of this tablet is seemingly incoherent: the obverse seems to contain a narrative revolving around the god Enmešarra, his seven sons and their punishment by Marduk. The reverse includes several fragments of diverse nature, divided visually on the tablet by horizontal rulings and intra-textual subscripts: mythological fragments, lists, hymns, all of which seem to relate to Marduk's rule over the gods. It seems likely that the myth of Enmešarra should be understood here as yet another account of Marduk's supremacy.[1041] Therefore, the tablet's unity lies in the fact that it

[1039] NYF1 II 14-39.
[1040] Lambert (2013: 494) explains the difference in this line as follows: "The géme.géme of *Rit. acc*. is taken as a dittography", i.e. SAL-KUR SAL-KUR. Nevertheless, the line in BM 32654+ is broken after the first KUR, so this cannot be ascertained.
[1041] Lambert (2013: 282) dates the text to a time before "the rise of Marduk to headship of the pantheon in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I". It will be argued below that this does not seem to be the case.

anthologizes different works revolving around the rulership of Marduk. Interestingly, the second to last fragment contains an account of the procession of gods to the *akītu*-house.[1042]

The myth of Enmešarra presented in BM 32654+ is a later interpretation of an older narrative about the deity. Enmešarra was the ruler of the gods in primordial times.[1043] In the original myth, his kingship was taken away by Enlil, who was a younger relative of Enmešarra. In that sense, Enmešarra stood model for other gods who were seen as former heads of the pantheon, most prominently Anu, while Enlil could be identified with active heads of the pantheon, especially Marduk.[1044] In the myth on BM 32654+, the actors are Marduk (replacing Enlil) and the 'original' Enmešarra and his sons. However, through association the defeat of Enmešarra at the hands of Marduk can be understood as the defeat of Anu as well.[1045] Furthermore, the debasement of Enlil is implied as well, since Marduk takes his place as the original hero of the story. This latter idea is also stated in the text: $^{d}$*en-líl-ú-tu* ti$^{qé}$ $^{d}$amar.utu, "Marduk took the power of Enlil."[1046]

Despite the fact that Marduk was the protagonist of the story, Lambert asserted that the myth of Enmešarra was not about the exaltation of Marduk over the other gods, because the text states that, after Enmešarra's defeat, his Anu-ship was divided among three gods and not conferred upon Marduk alone.[1047] The gods who are included are Nabû and Nergal, with their respective cities Borsippa and Cutha. The triad Babylon-Borsippa-Cutha occurs regularly in NB and LB sources and should only secondarily be understood in a theological way.[1048] Primarily, it reflects the political and economic reality of those times – a clear example can be found in the "Lehmann text".[1049] Moreover, within this divine triad, Marduk/Babylon stood at the top,

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[1042] BM 32654+ VI 1-14 (Lambert 2013: 296-197).
[1043] Lambert 2013: 283-288; see also Gabbay 2018a: 25-31.
[1044] Gabbay 2018a: 26. Lambert (2013: 289) considered Enmešarra's Defeat as an "ideological forerunner" to Enūma Elîš and syncretized Qingu with Enmešarra. Nevertheless, this would be a deviation from the original mythologem, in which, first, the defeated god and the champion are related and, second, the defeated god had once been the ruler of the gods. Lambert (2013: 287) tentatively reconstructs the kinship of Qingu with Tiāmat, but regardless of the validity of that reconstruction, Qingu cannot be considered as a former head of the pantheon, although he is said wrongly to hold Anu-ship.
[1045] A reference to this version of the myth may also be found in a NA cultic commentary, in which rituals of the month Šabāṭu are explained as Marduk killing Anu and the Pleiades, "the seven sons of Enmešara" (SAA 3, 40).
[1046] BM 32654+ III 18 (Lambert 2013: 292-293). The lordship of Anu, on the other hand, is divided between Nabû (Ninurta), Nergal (Erra) and Marduk (Enlil), see BM 32654+ III 19-20; VI 18-21. Regarding these matters, see Gabbay 2018a: 42-43 note 182.
[1047] BM 32654+ III 20 (Lambert 2013: 292-293). The fact that the text speaks of "Anu-ship" although Enmešarra and not Anu is defeated, shows the association of one deity with the other.
[1048] See Da Riva 2010. Lambert (2013: 282) thought that Nabû and Nergal were mentioned because they were "local gods".
[1049] MMA 86.11.299//BM 47926 (Spar & Jursa 2014: 148). The text documents a land grant by Antiochos II, his wife Laodice and their children to the inhabitants of Babylon, Borsippa and Cutha. See also Monerie 2018: 197-202.

followed by Nabû/Borsippa and Nergal/Cutha, as is shown by the fixed order in which the places and their respective gods are named.[1050]

Furthermore, while the dethronement of Anu and Enlil in favour of Marduk is only implicitly related in the LB myth of Enmešarra's Defeat, it is made explicit in the cited passage about the destruction of Uruk and Nippur.[1051] To quote Lambert, "this announcement is one of the most spiteful passages of Babylonian literature reflecting inter-cult rivalry."[1052] The "rivalry" with Nippur can be explained by the fact that Nippur was the 'original' Babylonian religious capital – just like Marduk replaced Enlil in the Enmešarra myth, Babylon now replaced Nippur. The case of Uruk can best be understood in a Late Babylonian context, when Anu was worshipped as head of the pantheon in that city.[1053] Even though a certain competition between the cults of Babylon and Uruk may have existed before that time,[1054] it will have grown after 484 BC, when the Anu cult was consolidated and fully replaced the worship of Ištar, and flourished after the Macedonian conquest, when the foreign kings showed renewed interest in local temple institutions and one temple's loss would have been the other's gain.[1055] As such, the passage is not only a theological, but also a political statement.[1056]

In BM 32654+ this section is introduced by the words "From heaven a voice proclaimed" (*ištu šamê ilsâ zaqīqu*) – the voice remains anonymous.[1057] Lambert suggested that in the NYF text, the paragraph is part of the curse uttered by Marduk, as introduced in lines II 19-21:[1058]

> $^{d}$*bēl rabû* $^{d}$*Marduk* […] *arrat lā napšuri īr*[*ur* …] *šīmat lā turri ī*[*šim* …]
> "The Great Lord, Marduk, ut[tered] an irremovable curse […], de[creed] an irrevocable fate […]"

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[1050] This is visible in name-giving practices in the LSC, see Baker 2002: 10-11. See also the reference in ADART no. -273B rev. 37': "the people of Babylon, Borsippa and Cutha".
[1051] It remains unclear whether this passage should be included in the myth or not. The appearance of an intertextual colophon in line III 25 would suggest that it did not, but the line is broken.
[1052] Lambert 2013: 283.
[1053] It is therefore unlikely that this section of the text can be dated to the OB period, as was suggested by Lambert (2013: 289). The arguments which he cites do not straightforwardly point to an Old Babylonian origin of the text. Especially the argument of scribal corruption cannot serve to date the text, since it occurs also regularly in Late Babylonian texts, e.g. in the Kislīmu ritual BM 32206+ (Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3).
[1054] A short-lived instauration of Anu by Esarhaddon in Uruk may be related to his encouragment of anti-Babylon (and Marduk) cults, see Ambos *forthcoming*, chapter 7.3; Krul 2018: 14-15. For the Anu cult in LB Uruk in general, see Krul 2018, *passim*.
[1055] See below, Chapter VI.1.
[1056] A similar sentiment is expressed at another instance in the NYF texts when the recitation of Enūma Elîš is described and it is said that the crown of Anu and the throne of Enlil have to remain covered (NYF4 II 25-26//NYF3 III 1'-2').
[1057] For now, no satisfying explanation for this anonymous "spirit" can be given. Lambert (2013: 283) called it the voice of the Destinies, some abstract entity that regulated everything in the universe, including the gods. Yet, that explanation would still have far-reaching implications in the Mesopotamian polytheistic worldview.
[1058] Lambert 2013: 283.

The wording of this passage – although unfortunately it is not well preserved – recalls a passage in the Erra Epic:

> *bēlu rabû* $^{d}$*Marduk īmurma uʾa iqtabi libbašu iṣṣabat*
> *arrat lā napšuri iššakin ina pîšu*
>
> "When the great lord Marduk saw that, he cried 'Woe!' and his heart was hardened. An irreversible curse rose to his lips."[1059]

Perhaps this too is a case of deliberate borrowing. The passage that follows these lines in the Erra Epic includes the account of Marduk who relates how Erra has destroyed Babylon, Sippar, Uruk, Dūr-Kurigalzu and Dēr. However, in the NYF prayer, Marduk has saved Babylon from destruction and – with the citation from the Enmešarra myth – Nippur and Uruk are destroyed instead. An association between Erra and Enmešarra lies in the Sibitti, the Seven: they are the ones who accompany Erra in his destructive mission; they can also be identified as the seven sons of Enmešarra.[1060]

- **AF** 10[1061]

A less direct instance of intertextuality can be found in NYF5. Although there is no direct citation in this case, it is nevertheless clear that allusion is made to *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. Andrew George, when he first published the NYF text in question, remarked that two lines are very reminiscent of Ludlul I 77:[1062]

> *liḫlul gattušu littallak*
> *ribīt ālišu*
> "His figure once slunk by, may he yet (proudly) frequent his town square."
>
> NYF5 IV 6'-7'

> *ša etelliš attallaku ḫalāla almad*
> "I, who walked proudly, learned slinking"
>
> Ludlul I 77[1063]

"The contrast in gait between *ḫalālu* and *atalluku* is neatly voiced in Ludlul I 77 […]. There the sufferer's progression from cutting a dash in public to creeping by in obscurity is the exact opposite of that sought by the supplicant in the present prayer."[1064] Indeed, the dictionaries do not refer to other instances where *atalluku* and *ḫalālu* are opposed in such a way, which makes it likely that the author(s) of the text had the passage of Ludlul in mind when composing this

[1059] Erra IV 36-37 (Cagni 1969: 108-109; translation Foster 2005: 903).
[1060] Black & Green 2004(1992): 162. The sons of Enmešarra being a group of seven is emphasized each time they are mentioned in the myth, lines I 14', II 5', II 11'.
[1061] NYF5 III 27-IV 19'.
[1062] George 2000: 269 note on lines IV 6'-7'.
[1063] Ludlul I 77 (Lambert 1996[1960]: 34-35; translation Foster 2005: 397).
[1064] George 2000: 269 note on lines IV 6'-7'.

prayer.[1065] Perhaps the use of the word *gattu*, "figure", was inspired by Ludlul (II 69) as well; it is a rather rare word that occurs in a few literary texts and royal inscriptions in the meaning of "human body". Lastly, while the NYF prayers refer to the proclamation of Marduk's greatness at other instances, only here the word *narbû* is used; the same word occurs in the final hymn in Ludlul (IV C 6').[1066]

Not only the use of particular vocabulary reminds the reader of Ludlul. The theme of this prayer also brings to mind the Righteous Sufferer, who is weighed down by inadversities of inexplicable origin, including disease, but who is saved by Marduk in the end. In the NYF prayer here, Marduk is hailed as the god who drives away the demon of sickness, Asakku, and restores life. The final hymn in Ludlul too contains references to Marduk as the restorer of life.[1067] Furthermore, the intra-textual subscript, which describes the prayer as belonging to the lore of the *āšipu*, shows again that the prayer has to do with exorcism, magic and healing.

#### V.4.1.3 Astronomy

Intertextual links were woven not only between the NYF prayers and compositions relating to the reverence of Marduk, but also between the prayers and a completely different genre, seemingly unrelated to theology: astronomical compendia. In prayers AF 6 and 7 Marduk and Zarpānītu respectively are addressed as different celestial bodies, which in turn are given characteristics and epitheta, some of which occur in the astronomical compendia Mul.Apin and a related text, the List of Stars and Deities. Once more, this is a unique feature of the NYF texts.

Most stars, constellations and planets invoked here occur in other ritual texts, but there the dynamics are different. They are invoked in their own form, similar to deities addressed, and never equated with one or multiple gods, as is the case in the NYF prayers.[1068] Just like the invoked gods, the heavenly bodies had specific functions in the rituals in question. Examples can be found in *Mīs pî* and *Bīt salā' mê*. Throughout those rituals, offering arrangements were prepared for the major gods, some minor deities (e.g. purification gods) and certain celestial bodies:[1069]

2 *riksē*(kešda$^{meš}$) *ana* $^{d}$sag.me.gar *u* $^{d}$*dele-bat tara-kás*

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[1065] CAD Ḫ 34 and AHW I 309 s.v. *ḫalālu*; CAD A/2 324 s.v. *alāku* 6a1.
[1066] In Lambert's edition, this is line IV 30.
[1067] Ludlul IV C 11' (Lambert 1996[1960]: 58-59 [there line 33]; translation Foster 2005: 408). Note, however, that *muballiṭ mītī* is one of the most common epithets for Marduk in prayers, see Oshima 2011: 64.
[1068] For example, in namburbi-rituals (Maul 1994: 45-46) or in the List of Daily Offerings to gods in the Bīt Rēš at Hellenistic Uruk (Linssen 2004: 172-183).
[1069] Only in the Babylonian version of the *Mīs pî* ritual text, BM 45749 (Walker & Dick 2001: 69-82). For *Bīt salā' mê*, see Ambos 2013. Notice how the celestial bodies are given the determinative 'diĝir' in the *Mīs pî* text, while the *Bīt salā' mê* texts use 'mul'.

You set up two offering arrangements for Jupiter and Venus.

*Mīs pî*, BM 45749 obv. 29

*ana* igi $^{mul}$sag.me.gar *riksa*(kešda) *tarakkas*(kešda$^{as}$)
You set up two offering arrangements for Jupiter.

*Bīt salā' mê*, x+22'

The celestial bodies mentioned in *Mīs pî* are: Jupiter, Venus, Moon, Saturn, Mercury, Sirius, Mars, Libra, the Plough, Bootes, Ursa Maior (Wagon), Erua, She-Goat, Pegasus (Field), Pisces (Swallow and Anunitum), Virgo (Furrow), Fish, Aquarius (Giant), Eridu, Scorpion, and the whole heaven designated as the "paths of Anu, Enlil and Ea".[1070] In *Bīt salā' mê* we find: Bootes, Sîn, Saturn, Jupiter, Sirius, Pleiades, $^{mul}$gu$_4$.an.na, Orion, Eridu, Venus, Mars, Mercury and the three paths.[1071]

Furthermore, it was recently argued by Julia Krul that there was an "increasing astral dimension in late Babylonian temple religion" through which the "astral aspects of major deities were emphasized more strongly in hymns and prayers".[1072] In other words, stars and planets started to play a bigger role in the (daily) temple cult, which was a new aspect in the LB period.[1073] In the nocturnal fire ceremony from Uruk for example,[1074] Anu and Antu are at a certain point described as "the star of the Great Anu of Heaven (and of) the Great Antu of Heaven" (mul $^{d}$60 gal$^{ú}$ *šá* an$^{e}$ *an-tu*$_4$ gal$^{tu_4}$ *šá* an$^{e}$).[1075] When they rose in the nighttime sky, incantations were recited and offerings were made to them. Here the connection between star and deity is very explicit and links the text back to the reality of a rising star in the nighttime sky. The same thing occurs in the NYF texts, when Pegasus is blessed as "image of Esagil" and perhaps when an offering is made to Mercury as star of Marduk, if that is how we may understand the rite in question.[1076]

Yet, in these two prayers in the NYF texts, the dynamics are different: one god is invoked as multiple celestial bodies and the powers attributed to them (expressed in epithets) are in this way also given to the god addressed. In the prayers, this is not explicitly formulated; it does not say "Marduk (is) Dimmerankia" or "Damkianna (is) Zarpānītu". However, the ritual text clearly instructs to recite the prayers to Bēl and Bēltīya respectively. We can thus safely assume that

[1070] BM 45749 obv. 29-36.
[1071] Ambos 2013: 59-63.
[1072] Krul 2018: 189. See also Krul 2019; Schwemer 2015.
[1073] As can be gleaned from the rituals of *Mīs pî* and *Bīt salā' mê*, cited above, astral influence in rituals outside the temple cult occurred earlier in the first millennium.
[1074] TU 41 (Krul 2018).
[1075] Obv. 15.
[1076] See above, page 268.

both deities were called upon by means of star and planet names and perhaps identified with them.

The fact that Marduk and Zarpānītu are identified as celestial bodies is not the only remarkable feature of these prayers. So too are the sources from which the author(s) drew to compose them. Only in some astronomical compendia, such as Mul.Apin,[1077] does one find a similar practice of giving epitheta to stars, constellations and planets. However, the author(s) did not seem to have drawn directly on Mul.Apin itself, but rather on a work that is closely related to it: the "List of Stars and Deities" (5R 46 no. 1).[1078] It should be noted that, in contrast to Mul.Apin which includes gods from the whole Mesopotamian pantheon, the List is particularly strongly focussed on Marduk and Babylon.[1079]

This very explicit borrowing in a temple ritual text from an astronomical text is, to my knowledge, a unique feature. Most probably, the List of Stars and Deities was not the exact text on which the author(s) based the prayer, since some of the writings differ, e.g. mul instead of *kak-ka-bu*, $^{múl}$babbar instead of $^{mul}$sag.me.gar. Moreover, only some of the verses are parallelled in the List, and even though it cannot be excluded that the author(s) of the NYF text composed entirely new verses, it seems more likely that another astronomical list served as example. In any case, it is interesting to consider in more detail how a star or planet was linked to its epithet. At some instances, the association is quite straightforward, the epithet being a simple (Akkadian) translation of the (Sumerian) name. At others, more complicated mechanics were used, such as orthographic or phonological play.[1080] In addition, a more theological explanation can be given for some cases, when it appears that the star or planet in question is connected to Marduk or Zarpānītu through its epithet.

In the following, I explain line by line what the correlation between star or planet name and epithet is, which sources the author(s) drew upon, and if and how the entry can be linked to Marduk or Zarpānītu.

- **AF 6**[1081]

**1 $^{d}$dìm.me.er.an.ki.a *mu-šim* nam$^{meš}$**
*dimmerankia mušīm šīmāti*

[1077] The latest edition of Mul.Apin can be found in Hunger & Steele 2019.
[1078] 5R 46 no. 1 (Weidner 1915: 51-52; Wee 2016: 161-166), and the fragment K.6151 (Jiménez 2013: DOI 10079/vdnck5z).
[1079] Wee 2016: 164.
[1080] See also Stol 1989. He called what we have here a "sacred philology".
[1081] NYF4 II 31-III 16 // NYF3 III 7'-15'.

Dimmeranki, who determines fates

The prayer opens by calling Marduk *Dimmeranki*, "God of Heaven and Earth". Much more common is the epithet *Lugaldimmerankia*, "Lord of all the Gods of Heaven and Earth".[1082] The epitheton "decreer of destinies" is commonly used for Marduk and is narrativized in Enūma Elîš, where Marduk is granted rulership over all the gods.[1083] However, the variation *Dimmerankia* is remarkable, since, in contrast to the commonly used form, it obscures the fact that there are other gods beside Marduk, who rules them all. By using *Dimmerankia*, Marduk is invoked as the (only) god ruling heaven and earth, rather than as the ruler of all the gods of all the regions. Aside from that, this invocation furthermore stresses both spheres of Marduk's influence: not only everything on earth, but also what happens in the heavens – in other words, astronomically – is determined by Marduk. As we will see below, this double sphere of influence is emphasized in the first line of the prayer to Zarpānītu too. In this way, the author(s) set the tone for the astronomically inspired prayer that followed.

**2 $^{múl}$mu.bu.kéš.da *šá* $^{giš}$gidri *u* $^{giš}$gúr *na-šu***
*mubukešda ša ḫaṭṭu u kippatu našû*
Mubukešda, who carries scepter and ring

The association between the star and its epithet can perhaps be explained on the following grounds: kéš-da "to bind" might be associated with *kippatu* "loop"; also mu-bu could be understood as an Emesal form of ĝišbu (*kippatu*). Moreover, scepter and ringlet are two of the royal insignia. In Mul.Apin (I i 19)[1084] and the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 12)[1085], Mubukešda is called the "Great Anu of Heaven, the Great God". In the prayer, a step is thus skipped: Mubukešda (since he is the Great Anu of Heaven) carries the royal insignia. Moreover, by avoiding the name of Anu, Marduk's solitary position as king is emphasized.

**3 $^{múl}$nun$^{ki}$ *šá er-šu$^{!}$-tú aḫ-zu***
*eridu ša eršūtu aḫzu*
Eridu, who possesses wisdom

The epithet can be explained by the fact that the city of Eridu is usually associated with Ea, god of wit and wisdom – amongst other aspects – and similarly, in Mul.Apin (I ii 20) the Eridu-star is related to Ea. Here, nonetheless, Eridu should rather be understood as a name for the city of

[1082] E.g. in Enūma Elîš V 112, 152; VI 28; 139.
[1083] Explicitly in Enūma Elîš III 120-122 and implicitly in the account of creation in tablets IV-VI.
[1084] All references to Mul.Apin refer to the edition of Hunger & Steele 2019.
[1085] All references to the List of Stars and Deities refers to the edition of Wee 2016: 162-163.

Babylon: as George remarked, nun$^{ki}$ occurs as a spelling for Babylon as well.[1086] Eridu thus carries this double meaning, which has as its effect that the attributes of Ea, associated with Eridu, are carried over to Marduk, city god of Babylon.

**4 $^{d}$*asar-ri šá-ri-ik* uru$_4$$^{tú}$**
*asarri šārik mērešti*
Asarri, who bestows cultivation

This is one of the names given to Marduk in Enūma Elîš.[1087] Although it has nothing to do with stars and planets, it was possibly included here for its use of the sign apin (here read uru$_4$, *mēreštu*), which is how the first constellation cited in both Mul.Apin and in the List of Stars and Deities is written too (there read *epinnu*). Note that this is one of only a few direct citations from Enūma Elîš.

**5 $^{múl}$babbar *na-áš ṣa-ad-du ana* dù.dù.a**
*mulubabbar nāš ṣaddi ana kalâma*
Jupiter, who carries a sign for all

This line is closely parallelled in the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 39), where one entry records: $^{múl}$sag.me.gar = *nāš ṣaddi ana dadmī*, "Jupiter, bearer of a sign for the inhabited world". The writing of the planetary name as $^{múl}$babbar occurs not very often and only in Seleucid astronomical texts, compared to the more widely used $^{múl}$sag.me.gar.[1088] The aspect of Marduk as god of divination occurs in other prayers in the NYF texts too, which explains why this entry was chosen here.

**6 $^{múl}$gu$_4$.ud *mu-šá-az-nin* šèg**
*šiḫṭu mušaznin zunnī*
Mercury, who makes it rain

In Mul.Apin (I ii 16, II i 5, II i 38, II i 54, II i 66), Mercury is at multiple points said to be the one "whose name is Ninurta". That may explain why the planet is associated with rain here, because Ninurta had, aside from his more prominent warrior-aspect, to do with farming and cultivation.[1089] On *kudurru*s, Ninurta's symbol is the plough, which is, once again, reminiscent of the first constellation mentioned in Mul.Apin and the List of Stars and Deities. Through its

[1086] 1992: 251ff. Note also how in the "cry of distress" in the NYF texts, Asalluhi is referred to as "son of Eridu" (NYF4 IV 32).
[1087] Enūma Elîš VII 1.
[1088] Gössmann 1955 no. 276.
[1089] Black & Green 1992(2004): 142. Note that *šuznunu zunna* "to make it rain rain" is a tautology and does not seem to occur elsewhere, in contrast to "rain that rains" (with the G-stem of the verb *zanānu*) which we find in extispicy and omen texts (CAD Z 41).

association with Ninurta, the planet Mercury was later also considered as the "star of Marduk".[1090]

**7 $^{múl}$genna mul *kit-tú u mi-šar***
*kayamānu kakkab kitti u mīšari*
Saturn, star of truth and justice

The association between the name of the planet and its epithet can be explained in two ways. First, it may be based on homophony between the Sumerian name of the planet, genna, and the Sumerian word for *kittu*, "truth", which is gi.na.[1091] Second, Saturn's Akkadian name is *kayamānu*, based on the root √*kwn*, "to be firm, established, correct".[1092] A similar understanding of the planet's qualities can be found in Mul.Apin (II i 64): "Saturn, also called the Scales or star of Šamaš." Both the scale and Šamaš are associated with justice. A direct connection between Saturn and Marduk cannot be established here, but probably the planet was included for the sake of completeness, as it is the last "masculine" planet.

**8 $^{múl}$an $^{d}$gibil$_{6}$ *ez-zu***
*ṣalbatānu* $^{d}$*gibbilû ezzu*
Mars, the fierce fire god

The association between the planet and its characterisation as "fierce fire" is based on empirical observation: the planet Mars shines red when it becomes visible. The flashing shine of Mars is also referred to in a Late Babylonian astronomical commentary.[1093] The word *ezzu* not only means "fierce" but also "angry"; it is reminiscent of the furious rage of Marduk related in other prayers in the NYF too.

**9 $^{múl}$kak.s[i.sá] ˹*ma*˺*-di-di* a$^{meš}$ *tam-tì***
*šiltāḫu mādid mê tâmti*
Sirius, who measures the water of the sea

The reason why the constellation Sirius is given this epithet has been explained on empirical grounds as well. Schaumberger asserted that Sirius was the only fixed star that was visibly "sinking" into the sea.[1094] That would, however, not explain why the verb "to measure" is used. Koch, following Papke, explained that the "sea" is a synonym for the milky way: the

[1090] Rochberg 2007: 436; see also above, Chapter V.3.7.
[1091] Stol 1989.
[1092] CAD K 36 s.v. *kajamānu*.
[1093] BM 47529+ 7e (Wee 2016: 137 and 147); see also Geller 2014: 61 and 63, where a different interpretation is given, "a shining star (and) its reddening".
[1094] Schaumberger 1935: 349.

constellation Sirius looks like a measuring rod along the milky way.[1095] The epithet is also used for Marduk in another of the NYF prayers.[1096] The verb *madādu* literally means "to measure" but by extension also means "to survey" or "to stretch".[1097] Read as such, this line refers to the "stretching out of the sea" by Marduk, or, in other words, to the creation of the universe from the corpse of Tiāmat. Aside from that, note that *madādu* can be written as dù, the same sign as the first one in the star name.[1098]

**10 $^{múl}$šu.pa en $^{d}$en.líl$^{meš}$**
$^{múl}$šu.pa *bēl enlilē*
Bootes, lord of the Enlils

In the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 11), Šupa is given the epithets "Enlil who decrees the land's fate: Great One among the Enlil-gods (gal en.líl$^{meš}$), Marduk".[1099] The line here is clearly related to that entry, but again a deeper nuance is added: not only is Marduk the greatest one amongst the gods, he is their lord; he is the lord of the lords of the gods.

**11 $^{múl}$ne.ne.gar *šá ina* ní-*šú* dù$^{u}$**
$^{múl}$ne.ne.gar *ša ina ramānišu banû*
Aldebaran, who is created by himself

The starname ne.ne.gar does not seem to be correct. Gössmann asserted that it was the same as $^{múl}$ne.gi.ne.gar, but that name was probably misunderstood by him: it occurred only once on a broken fragment and part of the name is missing.[1100] Rather, the first three signs should be taken as Girru, the fire-god, and the last two signs as the Akkadian word *dipāru*, "torch". The full name of this star is something along the lines of "Girru, the torch which is in front of Enmešara". Mostly in Late Babylonian astronomical texts, the star is called "Girru, the lamp (zálag, *nūru*) that is in front of Enmešara".[1101] Since Enmešara is associated with the constellation Old Man in Mul.Apin (I i 3), this star can be understood as "a 'bright' star in front of the Old Man".[1102] I suppose that the form used here is a deliberate abbreviation.

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[1095] Koch 1989: 74; Papke 1978: 9. The stick-like form of Sirius is also suggested by its Akkadian name, which means "arrow".
[1096] NYF3 I 7'.
[1097] AHw II 571 s.v. *madādu*. In Arabic the root has only retained this latter meaning (مدد).
[1098] CAD M/1 5.
[1099] In Mul.Apin (I i 12) only the first part is used to describe the constellation; Šupa is associated with Enlil throughout the text.
[1100] K 7069 (CT 26 49; P397006).
[1101] See Wee 2016: 158-159; he refers to a variant where Enmešara is replaced by Ninurta.
[1102] Steele 2017: 31.

According to Lambert, the epithet is based on the phonological association of ne.ne with Sumerian ní.ní, thus explained in Akkadian as "created by himself".[1103] Gössmann stated that we should understand it rather as "der von selber [sic] leuchtet".[1104] The epithet is found in the composition "Marduk's Address to the Demons" (Udug-hul tablet XI 47), where one reads:

> *ana-ku* $^{d}$*asal-lú-ḫi šá ina ra-ma-ni-šú* dù$^{u}$ *ana-ku*
> "I am Asalluhi, who was created by his own decree, am I"[1105]

The choice for this particular epithet can be explained by the fact that Girru was sometimes considered to be the son of Nusku, who himself was associated with fire and light: as such, fire had engendered fire.[1106] So much is suggested too in the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 14), where Girru is equated with Nusku. The reason why this star was included in this prayer may lie in the fact that it was associated with Enmešara, who, as we have seen above, grew to be of prominence in the Late Babylonian Marduk mythology.[1107]

**12 $^{múl}$nu.⌜muš⌝.da ⌜*muš-tab*⌝*-ru-u* šèg**
*namaššû muštabrû zunnī*
Numušda, who makes the rain last long

The association between starname and epithet works in multiple ways: first, Numušda is equated with Adad in Mul.Apin (I ii 27), and, similarly, the star is described as the roaring god (*ilu šāgimu*) in the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 44). Adad is the stormgod, thus the association with rain. Second, there is phonetic similarity between muš.da and *muš-tab* and, in connection with that, Stol wished to explain the epithet as "a positive statement based on the negatively formulated Sumerian nu.mùš.túm 'not ceasing'".[1108] There does not seem to be a specific connection between this star and its epithet and Marduk.

**13 $^{múl}$gaba.gír.tab *ka-bi-is* gab *tam-tì***
*irat zuqāqīpi kābis irat tâmti*
Chest of Scorpion, who crushes the breast of the sea

In Mul.Apin (I ii 15) Chest of Scorpion is associated with Nabû; the Scorpion, in its turn, is equated with the sea in the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 31).[1109] In this light, the phrase may be understood as Nabû, who defeats Tiāmat. We should not take this as a reference as to how Nabû assumed the role of Marduk; rather, Marduk, here called by one of the names of Nabû,

[1103] Lambert 1954-1956: 320.
[1104] Gössmann 1950 no. 301, see also no. 300.
[1105] Udug-hul XI 47 (Geller 2016: 350).
[1106] Black & Green 1992(2004): 145.
[1107] See page 277.
[1108] Stol 1989.
[1109] See also Wee 2016: 133 with note 26.

defeated Tiāmat. Note also that gír sounds like gìr, which is part of the compounds that designate *kabāsu* (e.g. gìr-ús).

**14 $^{d}$utu zálag *kib-rat***
*šamaš nūr kibrati*
Sun, light of the four regions

**15 $^{d}$30 *mu-nam-mir* {*mir*} *ik-let***
*sîn munammir ikleti*
Moon, who illuminates the darkness

It seems that sun and moon were added for completeness. It is important to note, however, that they are referred to with the determinative diĝir. Even more directly than in the case of the planets and constellations, which are themselves associated with different deities, Marduk is here called by the name of two prominent gods: Šamaš and Sîn.

- **AF 7**[1110]

**24 $^{d}$dam.ki.an.na *bé-lat* an *u* ki**
*damkianna bēlat šamê u erṣeti*
Damkianna, lady of heaven and earth

It does not seem to be the case that the invocation Damkianna should be equated with the divine name Damkina ("the true wife"), although it is most likely inspired by it.[1111] Regardless of whether or not it should be understood as such, it is clear that the author(s) interpreted it as meaning "lady of heaven and earth", as the Akkadian epithet indicates. The prayer to Bēltīya thus mirrors the one to Bēl right above, in which also Bēl is invoked as "God of Heaven and Earth".

**25 $^{múl}$dil.bad *na-bat* mul**
*dilbat nābât kakkabāni*
Venus, most brilliant of stars

The exact same entry occurs in the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 40; there mul is written phonetically). The epithet is also used at other instances in the NYF prayers for Zarpānitu.[1112] Venus was the only "female" planet in Babylonian astronomy and because the four "male" ones were mentioned in the prayer to Bēl, it is not surprising that Venus occurs here.

**26 $^{múl}$ban šub$^{át}$ *dan-nu-tú***
*qaštu mušamqitat dannūti*

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[1110] NYFIII 18-33.
[1111] In Enūma Elîš (I 78) Damkina is mentioned as the wife of Ea. Damkina could be written with or without -an.
[1112] NYF5 IV 24'; no. 3 I 18'. It was previously thought that the name of Zarpānītu was based on the Akkadian word *ṣarpu*, "refined silver"; although this is no longer accepted (see Black & Green 1992[2004]: 160), it was possibly a popular etymology that resulted in the use of this epithet for the goddess.

Bow-star, who fells the strong ones

The Bow-star is referred to in Enūma Elîš (VI 83-91), where it is recounted how Anu fixed it in the sky, but also how he called it "his daughter". Therefore, it makes sense that the Bow is associated with Ištar in different astronomical compendia. In Mul.Apin (I ii 7) the star is called the "Elamite Ištar, daughter of Enlil"; in the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 23), which is overall more Babylon-focussed, the Bow is called Ištar of Babylon.[1113] The reason why the star is here equated with Zarpānītu can thus not be explained other than by the fact that the Bow was considered "female"; the same is true for most of the heavenly bodies invoked here. Epithets with *šumqutu* occur regularly in Akkadian literature and are given to both deities and deified weapons.[1114] Several examples can be found in the NYF prayers as well.

**27 $^{múl}$ùz *ba-rat* an$^{e}$**
*enzu bārât šamê*
Goat-star, who watches over the earth

The epithet was explained by Stol as follows: ùz can also be read ud$_5$,[1115] and ud$_5$ sounds similar to u$_6$.di, which is read *barû*. It is not necessary to go to such lenghts to explain the epithet, however. In the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 53), the Goat-star is called "Lady of Divination" (*bēlet bīri*);[1116] the same idea is expressed here, but in different words.[1117]

**28 $^{múl}$ḫé.gál.a mul *nu-uḫ-šú***
*hegalla kakkab nuḫši*
Hegalla, star of abundance

The link is very straightforward: *nuḫšu* is simply the Akkadian translation of Sumerian hé.gál.[1118] The associations found in Mul.Apin (I i 13, *sukal Ninlil*) and the List of Stars and Deities (obv. 9, $^{d}$Ne.zil.lá) do not reveal more here.

**29 $^{múl}$bal.téš.a mul *bal-tú***
*baltiša kakkab bālti*
Balteša, star of dignity

This exact association is also found in the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 45). Two principles are at work here. On the one hand, there is homophony between **Balt**eša and ***balt**u*. On the other,

[1113] Wee 2016: 165 note viii.
[1114] It is given to Marduk in the NYF prayer in NYF1 I 12.
[1115] Borger *MZL* no. 203.
[1116] Note that in Mul.Apin (I i 24), the Goat is related to Gula.
[1117] NYF1 19.
[1118] See also NYF5 IV 3'.

Sumerian téš is translated in Akkadian as *baltu* (=*baštu*).[1119] Balteša occurs twice in the List of Stars and Deities; in the other occurrence the star is equated with Nanāya (obv. 10).

**30 $^{múl}$mar.gíd.da *mar-kàs* an$^{e}$**
*ereqqu markas šamê*
Wagon-star, the Bond of the Heavens

The Wagon is a circumpolar constellation that is visible in the nighttime sky throughout the entire year. Being called the "Bond of the Heavens", it formed the celestial counterpart initially to Enlil's Ekur, which was also called Dur-anki, "Bond of Heaven and Earth", but later this characteristic was transferred to Babylon's Esagila.[1120] In Mul.Apin (I i 15), the Wagon is called Ninlil and therefore associated with a female deity. There may also be a play on similarity of sound between **marg**idda – **mark**as.

**31 $^{múl}$*e$_4$-ru$_6$ ba-nát re-˹ḫu˺-tú***
*erua bānât reḫûti*
Erua, who creates progeny

In the List of Stars and Deities (rev. 46) we find the same epithet for this star. Erua was another name of Zarpānītu as goddess of childbirth (cf. *erû*, "to be pregnant").[1121] The reason why the specific word *reḫûtu* was used is explained by Stol: e$_4$ is a reading of the sign A, which can be read as *reḫûtu*. Ru$_6$ sounds the same as rú, which is the same sign as dù, which can be read as *banû*.[1122] Furthermore, as Wee pointed out, Erua (or Arua) sounds similar to a.ri.a, the Sumerian word for *reḫûtu*.[1123]

**32 $^{múl}$nin.maḫ ba$^{át}$ tin**
*ninmaḫ qā'išat balāṭi*
Ninmaḫ, who gives life

"Bestower of life" is a very general epithet for deities,[1124] but since Ninmaḫ is the mother goddess, the epithet is especially befitting.[1125] The star Ninmaḫ is mentioned in Mul.Apin (I ii 21) without explanation.

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[1119] Borger *MZL* no. 828.
[1120] Huxley 2000: 118. See also CAD M/1 283 s.v. *markasu*.
[1121] Black & Green 1992(2004): 160.
[1122] Stol 1989.
[1123] Wee 2016: 166.
[1124] CAD Q 156 s.v. *qâšu* 2a1.
[1125] Brisch 2013, http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/mothergoddess/ (last accessed 20.03.2019).

In these two prayers, Bēl and Bēltīya are called by the name of stars, constellations and planets. To explain the qualities, characteristics and functions of those heavenly bodies, inspiration was drawn from astronomical compendia. The backbone remained Mul.Apin, but a direct connection with some later Babylonian explanatory works is more explicitly made by the use of similar and, sometimes even, identical explanations. Constellations and planets considered as "male", by association with male gods, were used in the prayer to Marduk; "female" heavenly bodies appear in the prayer to Zarpānītu: there was an established tradition of association behind each of them. A side effect of this borrowing from the star catalogues is that it emphasizes the written aspect of the text – as opposed to the oral one – because some correlations between star name and epithet hinge on orthographic more than on phonetical features.

The theological implications of this prayer go much further: it shows clear henotheistic tendencies, by syncretising Marduk and Zarpānītu respectively with different heavenly bodies which in their turn are usually regarded as specific deities with particular functions. I will come back to this topic below (page 296).

### V.4.2 The gods

The 'formal' prayers in the NYF texts are largely hymns of praise to Marduk and Zarpānītu respectively, and are therefore most prominently focussed on those two deities and their different characteristics. No other gods are mentioned by name in the prayers, although reference is made to "the gods" (diĝir$^{meš}$) in general.[1126]

#### V.4.2.1 Characteristics of Bēl

It is no exaggeration to claim that "Marduk is one of the most complex gods in ancient Mesopotamia".[1127] Sommerfeld described the deity as a "Projektionsfläche", onto which anything could be ascribed and assigned.[1128] It is therefore not surprising that we encounter a number of different characteristics, which sometimes may seem mutually exclusive, ascribed to Marduk in the NYF prayers.

By far the most emphasized aspect of Marduk in the NYF prayers is his **supremacy** over the other gods, e.g. in epithets such as: *bēl šarrāni, nūr igigi, gašri igigi, ṣīru ša ilāni rabûti, šar ilāni* etc. So much is also expressed by citing from the myth of Enmešarra, which is a story

[1126] That is different in the ritual instructions, in which Nabû and Madānu are also mentioned, and in the cry of distress two purification goddesses are invoked.
[1127] Brisch 2016, http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/amgg/listofdeities/marduk/ (last accessed 16.11.19). There is no comprehensive study of Marduk in the first millennium. See Sommerfeld 1982; Oshima 2011.
[1128] Sommerfeld 1990: 369 (RlA 7 s.v. Marduk)

about Marduk defeating the primordial head of the pantheon to take his place. Related to this is Marduk as **creator and ruler of the universe and of universal order**, evoked mainly by the repeated *bēl mātāti*: this is what Ea calls Marduk in Enūma Elîš "because he created the heavens and fashioned the earth."[1129] Other epithets concerning this aspect of Marduk are: *mādid mê tâmti*, *bēl kibrāti*, *bānû kīnāti*, *murriš mērišti*. The astronomical prayer, in which Bēl is called by name of different heavenly bodies, focusses the attention on this god as king of the heavens as well. Connected to this is the depiction of Bēl as the one who **determines the fates and decrees omens**: *muzaʾʾiz isqēti*, *mukīn uṣurti*, *ēbir šamê*, *ḫāʾiṭ erṣeti*, *mušīm šīmāti ša ilāni kalâma*.

Aside from this image of Marduk which is similar to the one found in Enūma Elîš, we also find the **duality** of Marduk's destructive power on the one hand and his grace on the other, typically found in Marduk prayers and in compositions such as Ludlul. While there are epithets that relate independently to one of both aspects (e.g. *ša ina uzzišu māḫir ul īšû*), sometimes they are juxtaposed to create a stronger contrast:

> You capture the [d]isloyal in (your) hands
> [With] your gaze you grant them mercy[1130]

A description of the cruelty of an invoked deity is often included in prayers in the form of a lament and probably served as an exhibition of the deity's power.[1131] Less typical is the direct opposition between the god's punishing and merciful deeds as is the case here. It is characteristic in Marduk prayers and in this dimension, he is reminiscent of Šamaš as he is portrayed in the famous Šamaš hymn.[1132] Marduk is also given the "shine" of Šamaš in multiple epithets, e.g. *nūr amēlūti*[1133], *nūru namru*[1134] etc. His aspect of provider of omens is usually ascribed to Šamaš as well.

Although the ambiguity of Bēl's character is described, greater emphasis is put on his role as **god of redemption and divine healer**. A re-occurring epithet is *ṣābit qātē naski*, "who seizes the hand of the fallen"; a re-occurring request is *reše rēmu*, "grant mercy". Note also how the god is called *šarru damqu*, "good king", an epithet that does not occur in the other prayers studied by Oshima and highlights not only his predominance but also his essential good-

[1129] Enūma Elîš VII 136 (Lambert 2013: 130-131).
[1130] NYF1 I 23-24.
[1131] Delnero, *forthcoming* Chapter 2.4.
[1132] See also Oshima 2011: 61.
[1133] NYF1 I 14.
[1134] NYF2 I 15.

naturedness.[1135] A further nuance of this is Marduk in the form of Asalluḫi, god of **exorcism**. This is expressed by the epithet *ša ina šiptišu udappar<u> lemnūtu,* "who with his spell drives away evil spirits"; moreover, a namburbi ritual – intended to remove evil forces – is explicitly mentioned in one prayer,[1136] although in broken context.

A final concept is Marduk as **god of Babylon**. The most repeated epithet in the NYF prayers is *āšib Euʾul*, "the one who dwells in Euʾul" – this is presumably a shrine in Babylon.[1137] Also the phrase *bēl Bābili* occurs and one line states that "your seat is Babylon, Borsippa is your crown". Borsippa is the only other toponym mentioned besides Babylon; although Uruk and Nippur are referred to in the fragment taken from the tablet of Enmešarra's Defeat, the episode is related to the downfall of those cities, which rather shows the supremacy of Babylon again. In light of Marduk's role as patron deity of Babylon, this emphasis on the city is not surprising. However, the specific attention for this city (and its inhabitants, cf. infra) in all the NYF prayers, to the exclusivity of other places in Babylonia, seems less compatible with our idea of the festival as a state ritual.

#### V.4.2.2 Characteristics of Bēltīya

Not so much is known about Zarpānītu aside from the fact that she was the spouse of Marduk. She is sometimes considered as a pregnant woman and is related to childbirth under the name Eruʾa.[1138] A small fragment published recently by Lambert explains that the goddess was given the town of Zarpan by Enlil, her father, and subsequently presented to Marduk as his wife by Ea.[1139] Her name can therefore be explained as "the one from Zarpan".

Zarpānītu occurs throughout Akkadian literature rarely without her spouse Marduk. Like other female goddesses, she acts as an **intermediary** between others and her husband, either in favour of Marduk, of which an example can be found in the Marduk Ordeal,[1140] or she negotiates for others with him. The latter occurs in the NYF prayers: *ākilat karṣī*, *ṣābitat abbūti*.

Nonetheless, in the NYF prayers Zarpānītu is depicted mostly as a female version of Marduk and attributed similar characteristics often expressed with the same epithets as the ones given to her spouse. Thus, she is described as the **queen of the goddesses**, although in less absolute

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[1135] See the catalogue in Oshima 2011: 443.
[1136] NYF1 II 17.
[1137] See above, page 228.
[1138] Black & Green 1992(2004): 160. Her name could then have been understood as *zēr bānītu*, "creatress of seed".
[1139] K 6794+, "The Town of Zarpānītu" (Lambert 2013: 299-300); for the town of Zarpan, see also George 1992 no. 27: 205-206.
[1140] "Zarpānītu, whose hands are stretched out, prays to Sîn and Šamaš: 'Let Bēl live!'" (SAA 3; 34 obv. 10' and 35 30: 82, 88).

terms as Marduk: *gašrat ilāti*, *ṣīrat ištarāti*, *kazbat ilāti*. She has some power of **prediction**: *ḫāʾiṭat erṣeti*, *ēbirat šamê*. Just like Marduk, she is **double-natured**, between destructive and merciful: *mušamqitat nakri*, *ēṭirat kamê*, *ṣābitat qātē naski*. Finally, she was a **goddess of Babylon**: *āšibat Esagila*, *āšibat Euʾul.*

Another popular folk etymology related Zarpānītu's name to the word *ṣarpu*, "shining silver".[1141] The "**shine**" of Zarpānītu is often related in the NYF prayers: *nābaṭ kakkabāni*, *namrat*, *ša nūr lubūšīšu* – perhaps the "shine" of Marduk, mentioned above, is attributed to him because it is a characteristic of his wife. One epithet should be paid closer attention: *ša manzāzu šaqû*, "whose rank is sublime". The word *manzāzu* is related to the verb *ušuzzu*, "to stand" and can mean different things, amongst which "abode" and "rank" – which are mostly used to translate the word in this occurrence in the NYF texts – but also "position of celestial bodies". Thus, the epithet may also be translated as "whose position in the nighttime sky is high" or "who rises high in the firmament".[1142] The fact that Zarpānītu's most prominent feature in the NYF prayers is her brightness can perhaps be read as an indication of the worship of this goddess as a celestial body and, similarly, of Marduk as well.[1143] So much is suggested by the astronomical prayers in the NYF texts too.

#### V.4.2.3 Theological implications

The NYF prayers reflect certain theological principles, perhaps in greater measure than the ritual instructions, which relate more about the historical and cultic background of the text. Babylonian theology remains a controversial yet understudied subject and therefore, three noteworthy aspects will briefly be touched upon below without going into too much detail.

The first is the astralisation of the divine in the regular temple cult. In Mesopotamia, "[t]he association of god and star seems to be as old as writing itself,"[1144] since the cuneiform sign diĝir, "god", originally represented a star. Rochberg has discerned three modes in which gods and celestial bodies were associated with one another in Mesopotamian thought: first, gods could be identified with certain celestial bodies (astralisation of the divine), most prominently Sîn and Šamaš with the moon and sun respectively, but also Ištar with the planet Venus; second, celestial bodies could be regarded as images of gods, a concept mainly found in celestial omen texts, in which stars and planets were thought to be a form in which the gods manifested; third,

[1141] Black & Green 1992(2004): 160.
[1142] See also Krul 2019: 231.
[1143] For the association between divine radiance and astral luminosity, see Rochberg 2009: 49. For the celestial forms of Marduk specifically, see Rochberg 2007.
[1144] Rochberg 2009: 43.

celestial bodies could be worshipped as divine beings (deification of the astral).[1145] There was no "astral religion" in Mesopotamia, in the sense of worship of the stars and planets detached from their association with actual divinities.[1146]

Already in Enūma Elîš, Marduk is called Nēberu, "the Ford".[1147] Aside from that, he was mainly associated with the planets Jupiter and Mercury.[1148] In the NYF texts, however, he was associated with many more planets, stars and constellations. Moreover, the astralisation of Zarpānītu is also remarkable, since she was rarely worshipped as a celestial body.[1149] Nonetheless, the most innovative aspect in the NYF texts is the fact that the astralisation of the divine became part of the official theology and temple cult of Babylon.[1150] The identification of certain gods with specific celestial bodies (first mode above) was mostly a concept in astronomical scholarship and has left traces in some literary works, but cannot be found in temple rituals before the Hellenistic period. The reversed form (third mode above), in which celestial bodies were deified, occurred in occasional rituals that in most cases took place outside the regular temple cult. Yet, in the NYF prayers, which were to be recited in the context of a yearly, official festival, both Marduk and Zarpānītu were hailed in multiple astral forms.

The second theological principle is a tendency towards abstraction of the divine. The god-pair Marduk-Zarpānītu is referred to as Bēl ($^{d}$en) and Bēltīya ($^{d}$gašan$^{iá}$) exclusively in the ritual instructions, and in the prayers, this remains their most important title.[1151] Although each of both deities is recognized as an independent entity, they do share many characteristics, expressed in the same epithets. As such, they seem to represent respectively the male and female equivalents of the same and ultimate divine principle. This abstraction is further emphasized by the use of the titles Bēl and Bēltīya rather than the gods' names: it dissociates the divine principle from the specific gods who represent it. Moreover, this divine principle personified in the pair Bēl-Bēltīya is given authoritative superiority over the other gods. This can be exemplified by the astronomical prayers, in which the personified heavenly bodies are divided according to gender: Bēl is equated with all male and Bēltīya with all female planets and

[1145] Rochberg 2009.
[1146] Rochberg 2009: 45-46 and *passim*. For some nuance, see Krul 2019: 227.
[1147] Enūma Elîš VII 129 (Lambert 2013: 130-131). See also Pongratz-Leisten 2011: 26-29; Rochberg 2007: 436-437.
[1148] Rochberg 2009: 58-62.
[1149] Krul 2019: 231.
[1150] This idea is formulated by Krul (2019) in the context of Late Babylonian Urukean Anu-cult. See also Krul 2018: 178-190.
[1151] See also Zimmern 1922.

constellations. The heavenly unit is thus divided amongst two – one male, one female – who together hold all power.

A similar idea is evident in Hellenistic Uruk, where Anu and Antu are represented in a similar way.[1152] Already before the Hellenistic period, Antu is primarily seen as the female equivalent of Anu, as expressed in the godlist an=anum:

an $^{d}$*a-nu-um*
an *an-tum*[1153]

Still, this goddess appears only regularly in ritual texts in the Hellenistic period and most often together with Anu as a pair.[1154] In Uruk, this development has been linked to the need to overcome the previous influence of the Marduk cult – and, linked to that, of Babylonian priestly elites – in Uruk and to strengthen the authority of the new Anu cult.[1155]

This brings us to the third theological implication: the NYF prayers show that there was an increasingly more narrow focus of worship. The concepts of henotheism and tendencies towards monotheism remain highly controversial in the Mesopotamian context.[1156] Preference is usually given to interpretations along the lines of syncretism, "hyphenation"[1157] and summodeism. It is difficult to understand the content of some prayers, especially the astronomical ones, in a different way, however. Moreover, only Marduk and Zarpānītu are invoked in these prayers and especially the exclusive prominence of Marduk is strongly emphasized. However, we cannot limit ourselves by the image we receive in the prayers; in the ritual instructions in the NYF texts, other gods are mentioned as well, such as Nabû and Madānu. Outside of the NYF texts, we find other deities in LB ritual texts from Babylon, for example, Ištar of Babylon, and further documentation, e.g. the Astronomical Diaries, shows that other deities were still worshipped in Babylon.

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the group of gods which was actively worshipped, shrunk. Telling in this context is the near absence of the Urukean gods Anu and Antu and of Enlil and his entourage. In that light I would prefer to use the – more pragmatic than anything else – term 'oligotheism' or 'oligolatry' to describe what was happening in the LB temple cult in Babylon; it is the active worship of a specific and confined set of deities – in this case, all belonging to

[1152] Krul 2018: 82.
[1153] An=anum I 1-2 (CDLI P365749).
[1154] See also Beaulieu 1995.
[1155] See below, Chapter VI.6.2.
[1156] It was a central issue in the *Babel und Bibel* controversy, for references see Porter 2000: 211 note 1. See also Krul 2018: 82-83; Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 404-407; Lambert 2013: 264-265; Porter 2000; Parpola 2000 (and the reaction of Frahm 2000-2001).
[1157] Assmann 2004.

the Marduk-*Kreis* – while maintaining the passive belief in multiple other gods and goddesses. Without a doubt, this development was connected to socio-political processes.

One could claim that oligotheism had always been present in Mesopotamian religion because specific gods and their household were worshipped in specific cities: Enlil in Nippur, Šamaš in Sippar, Marduk in Babylon, Ištar in Uruk etc. However, this never went as far as we see it in the NYF texts, which do not mention any god that falls outside the Marduk-family – where are Šamaš, Ea, Sîn? Traditionally, the preference for a specific group of gods would not lead to the negligence of others. This may explain the renewed interest for the myth of Enmešarra over Enūma Elîš here: in the former, Marduk alone defeated the primordial ruler of the gods to take his place and only Nabû and Nergal appear aside from Enmešarra in the story; in the latter, Marduk was acting for and on behalf of the whole Babylonian pantheon, asserting their existence.

### V.4.3 The beneficiaries

As Oshima pointed out, "it seems that Akkadian prayers were generally composed and recited for the sake of personal interests and usually do not concern nationwide problems. […] Most of the requests to gods were offered in order to solve the problem of a 'me' or to achieve 'my' interest, i.e. the suppliant alone."[1158] The prayers in the NYF texts are different from most Marduk-prayers in this sense, because the beneficiary of most of them was a group of people connected to a specific place: the citizens of Babylon. Aside from that, some prayers include personal petitions, almost all of which relate to the priestly speaker or scribe of the texts. The expected beneficiary of prayers recited during the NYF would be the king, yet he is almost completely passed over.

#### V.4.3.1 Babylon and the citizens of Babylon

The prayers in the NYF texts consist mostly of hymns of praise to Bēl and Bēltīya, but all of them close with a petition to the invoked god. In four of them, the requesting party is the city of Babylon or, more specifically, the elite citizens of Babylon.[1159] In an almost formulaic manner, the focus is drawn to the Babylonians: first, Babylon is mentioned; then Esagila; and finally the inhabitants of Babylon.

> *ana āliku Bābili reše rēmu*
> *ana Esagila bītiku suḫḫir pānku*
> *ša mārē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šukun šubarrûšunu*
>
> NYF1 I 30-32

[1158] Oshima 2011: 24.
[1159] Note how they are also mentioned in the negative confession of the king, discussed above, page 260.

*ana āliku Bābili napšir*
*ana Esagila bītiku reše rēmu*
*ina amātika ṣīrti bēl ilāni rabûti*
*ana pān mārē Bābili liššakin namirtu*

NYF3 I 12'-15'

Some parts may be omitted, but a similar idea is clearly implied in the following examples:

*ša Esagila* […]
*ša Bābili ālik*[*u* …]

NYF1 V 27-28

*ana mārē Bābili ṣābē kidinni šurukšunū*[*ti balāṭu*]

NYF3 I 30'

At the time of writing of the NYF texts, i.e. the Hellenistic period, the designation "citizens of Babylon" referred to the group of people that was headed by the *šatammu* and *kiniṣtu* of Esagila, i.e. to the temple community of Babylon.[1160] During the first part of Seleucid rule this elite enjoyed relative political and economic freedom, but over the course of the 2nd century BC, it lost most of its political and administrative functions to the Seleucid institutions governed by the *epistatēs* and the *politai*. In essence, the concept of "citizens of Babylon" was related to the temple and we can assume that many of its members were priests. They are presented here as a coherent body of 'believers'.

Some attention should be paid to the way in which the Babylonians are designated: not only are they literally called "sons of Babylon" (dumu$^{meš}$ e$^{ki}$), they are moreover defined as *ṣābē kidinni*.[1161] The term can be translated as "persons who are under the standard of divine protection".[1162] It is a concept that has to do with cities and citizens' privileges and obligations, in particular in the context of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

By granting specific cities with a set of rights, most importantly exemption from particular taxes and from corvée-duty, the Neo-Assyrian rulers attempted to tie those cities to the Assyrian imperial government, while also creating an atmosphere of competition between those cities, thus preventing the creation of a united Babylonian front against Assyrian rule. As such, the system worked as a kind of precursor to the concept of Roman citizenship. The *kidinnūtu* of Babylon is attested from the reign of Shalmaneser III onwards and appears time and again in

[1160] For the developments described here, see Clancier & Monerie 2014a, 2014b; Strootman 2013; van der Spek 2009.
[1161] The Babylonians are also called *ṣābē kidinni* in the negative confession of the king.
[1162] CAD K 342. *Kidinnu* originally came from Susa, where it denoted the divine standard of a god; it came to symbolize the protection enjoyed by the people gathered under such a standard and from there it received the abstract meaning of "divinely protected". See Tadmor 2011; Bidmead 2002: 50-53; Reviv 1988; Oppenheim 1964(1977): 120-125; Leemans 1946.

royal inscriptions, correspondence and other royal documents like charters.[1163] Several cities were granted *kidinnūtu*,[1164] but especially the inhabitants of Babylon felt they had the right to this status of privilege, as can be read in several letters between "the Babylonians" and Neo-Assyrian kings, as for example in the following letter to Aššurbanipal:

> "When the kings, our lords, did their elementary studies, the gods bestowed great wisdom and magnamity on you. "Dimkurkurra, Babylon, (is) the Bond of the Lands." Whoever enters inside it, his privileged status is secured. Also, Babylon (is) "the *bowl* of the Dog of Enlil". Its (very) name is set up for protection. Not even a dog that enters inside it is killed."[1165]

The Neo-Assyrian kings, in turn, used this eagerness of the Babylonians to their advantage when the political situation became heated. Thus, Aššurbanipal reminded the citizens of Babylon that even though Šamaš-šuma-ukīn had promised them independence from Assyria, it was he and only he who could grant *kidinnūtu* to Babylon:

> "Your brotherhood with the Assyrians and your privileged status which I have established remain valid until the present day; you are close to my heart. Correspondingly, do not listen to his vain words, do not taint your name which is in good repute before me and the whole world, do not make yourself culpable before God."[1166]

It comes as no surprise that this crucial concept of privilege and the political balancing act that came with it left its traces in literary works that were created in the Neo-Assyrian empire. In the "Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur", for example, the mayor of Nippur (*ḫazannu*), upon being attacked by Gimil-Ninurta, cries out that a man of Nippur should not be attacked and that the blood of a member of the *kidinnu* sacred to Enlil should not be shed. This perhaps shows how the status of *kidinnu* also came with physical immunity.[1167] In the Erra Epic, Ishum relates the atrocities that Erra committed, amongst which making the blood of the *ṣābē kidinni* flow like ditch water in the streets.[1168]

Alongside *kidinnu*, other terms were used to designate a status of privilege, probably with slightly different implications.[1169] *Šubarrû* is one of those that appears in the NYF texts too.[1170] It seems to relate more specifically to the freedom of obligation of corvée-work, though when it appears together with *kidinnu* it can tautologically denote a more general status of privilege.

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[1163] Pongratz-Leisten 1997a; George 1992: 265-266. For more references, see CAD K 342 s.v. *kidinnu* and 344 s.v. *kidinnūtu*.
[1164] Viz. Nippur (cf., e.g., SAA 18, 124 obv. 9-14), Borsippa, Sippar, Uruk, Akkad; but also Assur and Harran (Oppenheim 1964[1977]): 120).
[1165] SAA 18, 158 obv. 6-11. See also George 1992: 265.
[1166] SAA 21, 3 obv. 15-24.
[1167] The Poor Man of Nippur line 106 (translation Foster 2005: 934); Reviv 1988: 291.
[1168] Erra Epic IV 33-34 (Foster 2005: 902).
[1169] *andurāru*, *zakûtu*. See Tadmor 2011: 119-120; Pongratz-Leisten 1997a: 89-90.
[1170] NYF1 I 32.

This word too appears in literary texts, most famously in Enūma Elîš , where Marduk is thanked for establishing the *šubarrû* of the gods,[1171] or in the Neo-Assyrian "Advice to a Prince", in which the ruler is warned not to impose forced labour upon the inhabitants of Sippar, Nippur and Babylon, because they hold the status of *šubarrûtu*.[1172]

With the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire, the concept of *kidinnūtu* lost its importance. The few times it is mentioned in Neo-Babylonian sources, it relates to the priesthood of Sîn, which was given special rights by Nabonidus. The members of the privileged group were thus no longer inhabitants of chosen cities; rather, they belonged to a particular religious group.[1173] In the Persian period, then, the word *kidinnu* seems to have related a sort of tax to be paid to Persian landowners: it was no longer a right but a duty.[1174]

The fact that the *ṣābē kidinni* and their status of *šubarrûtu* appear in the prayers in the NYF texts has been used as an argument to date the 'original' version of the NYF texts to the Neo-Assyrian period when this concept was part of the socio-political reality.[1175] What is more, the New Year Festival itself is said to have been the yearly moment of re-establishment of *kidinnūtu* in Babylon(ia) during the Neo-Assyrian period.[1176] It is true that the word *kidinnu* can be written as UBARA, which is a combination of the signs EZEN (*isinnu*, "festival") and KASKAL (*ḫarranu*, "road"),[1177] a combination of elements that is very reminiscent of the NYF's most important event: the procession of gods to and from the *akītu*-house. Yet, both propositions remain tentative.

Until recently, it has been overlooked that *kidinnu*, *šubarrû* and related concepts appear in texts that were not created before or during the Neo-Assyrian period, but much later, when those concepts were no longer politically relevant. However, they are historical texts that relate a past reality in which *kidinnu* still played a significant role.[1178] BM 28825 is a literary-historical letter published by Frame and George in 2005. They believed it is a Late Babylonian copy of an original letter from the scholars of Babylon in answer to a request of King Aššurbanipal to send (copies of) all the texts of the Sumero-Babylonian scribal tradition to Nineveh.[1179] Together

[1171] Enūma Elîš VI 49.
[1172] Advice to a Prince lines 23-30 (Lambert 1996: 112-113).
[1173] Bidmead 2002: 52.
[1174] Reviv 1988: 294.
[1175] Pongratz-Leisten 1997a; Kuhrt 1987a: 37-38; Smith 1976.
[1176] Reviv 1988: 292.
[1177] Borger, *MZL* no. 277; CAD K 342.
[1178] Note also the Dynastic Prophecy (III 23), where *zakûtu*, "tax exemption", is mentioned. See below, Chapter VI.5 for a more detailed discussion.
[1179] Yet I agree with Frahm (2005) that it is rather the opposite: this is a letter from Aššurbanipal to the Babylonians.

with a similar text, BM 45642, the letter formed proof for the text-collecting practices of Aššurbanipal, Frame and George concluded. The word *kidinnu* appears in the passage in which king Aššurbanipal states how he will reward the Babylonians when they do as he asks. However, Frahm correctly pointed out that the letters are part of a larger corpus of "Late Babylonian tablets with copies of messages written by or addressed to earlier kings",[1180] and that – whether or not based on genuine letters – they are pseudo-epigraphical. Ronnie Goldstein claimed that they were written by Babylonian scribes in Hellenistic times to "recall their own cultural heritage […] so claiming their important place in the history of knowledge."[1181]

A second Hellenistic text in which one can find *kidinnu* is BM 34104+, which was published by Grayson as the "Adad-šumu-uṣur epic".[1182] The story is set in Kassite Babylonia, when the Babylonian throne was occupied by an Assyrian puppet-king, put there by Tukulti-Ninurta I. More to the south, Adad-šumu-uṣur was in power. At a given moment, the population of Babylon rebelled against Assyrian domination and supported Adad-šumu-uṣur in his attempt to take control of the Babylonian throne.[1183] To succeed, Adad-šumu-uṣur needed the support of Marduk – whom, we assume, he had neglected while reigning in the south –, so he begged the nobles of Babylon to take him to Bēl so that the god would affirm his royal status. It is in this (very damaged) passage that the word *kidinnu* appears. Afterwards, Adad-šumu-uṣur travelled to Nabû in Borsippa and Nergal in Cutha as well. At each instance, the aspiring king humiliated himself in front of the god by prostrating himself, crying, and confessing his sins. To thank the gods for their support, he made sacrifices and lavished their temples with gifts. In Babylon, renovations were started and in Borsippa, a festival was held. The rest of the text is broken.

Because of these occurrences in later texts, the appearance of the word *kidinnu* in the NYF texts cannot be used as a basis for dating them. What is more, the scene in which the *ṣābē kidinni* are referred to within the Adad-šumu-uṣur Epic shows the closest parallel to the use of the term in the NYF texts, because only there does it occur in the context of a prayer/petition. It goes without saying that no other prayers are known that have the *ṣābē kidinni* as beneficiary. Aside from that, it must not be overlooked that the Seleucid rulers adopted a policy of granting privileges to local communities that is very reminiscent of the concept of *kiddinūtu*. In the

[1180] Frahm 2005.
[1181] Goldstein 2010: 207; see also Jursa & Debourse 2020.
[1182] Grayson 1975a: 56-77. The tablet has been preserved in a very fragmentary state, but in connection to other sources, in particular to the chronicle ABC 25 (Walker 1982: 398-417), the story can be partially reconstructed.
[1183] This interpretation of the text was proposed by De Breucker (2015: 79).

Seleucid empire, it was the aim of cities to gain the status of *hieros kai asylos*, to which many monuments and inscriptions attest.[1184] The Hellenistic concept may have reminded the inhabitants of Babylon of their right to privileges in former times.

#### V.4.3.2 The king

Because it is generally claimed that the NYF is a ritual for royal legitimation, we would expect the king to be one of the beneficiaries in the NYF prayers. Moreover, the focus on the city of Babylon, which is the case in these texts, traditionally means a focus on kingship.[1185] Nonetheless, the king is almost completely absent. It could be argued that this is not surprising, since these prayers were to be recited in a non-public space and were part of what seem to be preparatory rites, and are therefore not included in the section of the ritual that was most connected with royal legitimation – the procession. This argument cannot be sustained, however, by the mere fact that other beneficiaries – the *ṣābē kidinni* – are mentioned here, although it would make more sense if they made an appearance in more public prayers instead as well. Moreover, if the ritual described in the NYF texts had as one of its main purposes to reinstate the king in his office, we would expect the king to be of central importance in the prayers regardless of the context.

In only two prayers the king is included in the list of petitioners.[1186] He does not stand alone, but appears together with the priest and the Babylonians . In these two cases, the same participle is used to describe the king: *pāliḫ*, from *palāḫu*, "to fear, revere". In other words, the king would only gain the favour of Bēl and Bēltīya if he showed reverence to them. No such designations are given to the priest[1187] or the Babylonians. It would thus seem that special emphasis was put on the king's submissiveness to and piety towards the gods. The same is true for the king's role in the ritual itself, in which he is humiliated by the priest.

#### V.4.3.3 The priest (AF 12)

Although most prayers recited during the NYF aim at requesting prosperity for the Babylonians, at some instances another petitioning voice is raised: that of the priest. We know from the ritual instructions that all the prayers recorded in the NYF texts were recited by the Elder Brother, still, in one prayer this is stated explicitly:

*anāku aḫu-rabû Eumuša qābû damqātiku*

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[1184] Knäpper 2018.
[1185] Dirven 2019: 160.
[1186] NYF3 I 10' and NYF3 I 29'.
[1187] The priest is described as *qābû damqātiku/-šu*, which refers in the first place to his pronouncing the hymns of praise to the gods.

NYF3 I 11'

By doing so, the Elder Brother implicitly asks for personal favour of the god. Also the request to instore wellbeing on the one who is speaking the god's praise (*qābû damqātiku*), i.e. the priest, is repeated multiple times in the NYF prayers.

The priest not only appears as the one who speaks; attention is also drawn to the priest as scribe and in this mode, he petitions the deity as well:

> *ana ṣābit qanṭuppiku šurukšu ḫissat*
>
> NYF5 IV 5'

> *ša dušmî ṣābit*
> *qanṭuppi šime teslīssu*
> *ina murṣi u tānīḫi ṣabat qātēšu*
>
> NYF5 IV 15'-17'

Especially the latter examples, in which favour is asked for the scribe, bring a metatextual flavour to the prayers. The written aspect of cuneiform texts is mostly brought into focus in colophons only. While colophons of scholarly and school tablets may contain petitions to the gods to whom they are consecrated, I do not know of other prayers in which the scribe asks for favours.[1188] Above all, it is remarkable that such prayers would have been recited during the NYF, because we do not expect such emphasis to be put on the priest.

This prominence of the priest is explicitly stated in NYF6 (=AF 12). Until now, I have not discussed this text, because it falls outside the categories of paratextual notes, ritual instructions and prayers studied above, although the text was described by Oshima as:

> "part of a prayer or incantation recited in Etuša [=Eumuša; CD], the chamber of Marduk, by Šešgallû-priests [Elder Brother**s**!; CD]. Judging from the contents, this was part of the ritual slapping of the king in front of the cult statue of Marduk on the fifth day of Nisannu."[1189]

Now, this is not exactly what this text is.[1190] We find someone – an "I" (first person singular) – addressing someone else – a "you" (second person singular). The first person singular does not occur in the other NYF prayers, except in the phrase mentioning the Elder Brother cited above.[1191] While it is not immediately clear who this first person is supposed to be, the addressed person is the Elder Brother, as in the first preserved line we read: "May they call you Elder Brother of Eumuša." This is the first clue as to the fact that this text was part of the

[1188] Gesche 2001: 153-161; Hunger 1968.
[1189] Oshima 2011: 109 (AF 12). He wrongly gives the number BM 36255, but clearly BM 32655 is meant.
[1190] The re-interpretation of this text was the work of Michael Jursa. We edited the tablet together in WZKM 107 (2017).
[1191] The king recites the negative confession in the first person.

Babylonian NYF, since that is where the Elder Brother of Eumuša plays the most important role.

Then, the speaker goes on to talk about "my secret knowledge" (*piršātia*), "my *asarru*" and "my rites" (*parṣīa*). Here we may still be thinking of a human scholar, but when he says "I have determined a great fate for you", it becomes clear that the person speaking is Marduk: he is described multiple times as the one who determines the fates in the other NYF prayers. This is the second clue as to why this text belongs together with the other NYF texts: it takes up phrases that occur elsewhere in the corpus. However, while this is certainly the case within the other NYF prayers as well, here a crucial difference is present: expressions that are otherwise used to describe Marduk, are here attributed to the Elder Brother. Thus, the text states, for example: "May all the priests speak well of you" (*liqbû damqātika*). The language used by the god would in other cases serve to express reverence or humility towards gods or kings, yet here the Elder Brother is the object of it.[1192]

What Marduk is doing in this text is more than a blessing of his priest; he eulogizes him. He expresses his dependency on the Elder Brother, saying: "Without you no regular offerings should be established for me". The priest's work is compared to Marduk's creation of the universe: "May your work be a work like the heavens."[1193] Finally and most uniquely, he elevates him over all other humans, even over the king: "May the king humbly revere you". There is a direct link between this eulogy and the humiliation of the king in NYF4, when the text states: "Let neither king nor governor strike your cheek" (*lā imaḫḫaṣ lētka*). This is the ultimate statement showing the priest's supremacy. He is allowed to lay hands on the king and humiliate him, but no king or other political leader is allowed to do the same to him. If they would, an enemy king would bring about their downfall, a warning that is almost similar to the one found at the end of the humiliation-rite, when the omens about the king's tears are cited. The superiority of the priest over the king expressed in this text is almost a political statement, certainly in the time from which this tablet stems.

It is not entirely clear how this eulogy would have fitted in the ritual. Would someone have assumed the role of the speaker, Marduk? Gods are rarely the ones "speaking" in performed texts. One famous example is Marduk's Address to the Demons, which was part of the Udug-hul incantation and ritual series.[1194] In this text, the *āšipu* recited a number of lines, all of which

[1192] See notes on lines in Jursa & Debourse 2017: 91-94.
[1193] See also Jursa & Debourse 2017: 93 note on line II 11'.
[1194] Geller 2016: 340-398.

started with "I am Asalluḫi".[1195] By reciting this hymn of divine self-praise, the *āšipu* identified himself with the god, not only because he was the one who pronounced the god's words, but also because he shared the exorcist characteristics of Asalluḫi.[1196] However, the dynamics are different in NYF6. The Elder Brother does not speak the words of Marduk, he is not identified with Marduk. Someone else will have had to assume Marduk's role if this text was performed. Yet, it is also possible that this composition was not meant to be spoken out loud. The importance of the written text can be deduced from the colophon in NYF6, which states that the eulogy was written "on the tablet and on the *elmešu*-štone of the Elder Brother".[1197] The cola used throughout the text is also a visual feature that only makes sense in a manuscript and has no function in recitation.

### V.4.4 Summary

In conclusion, the prayers in the NYF texts clearly stand in the tradition of Babylonian prayers to Marduk, while at the same time they are innovative and relate to other and newer corpora of texts. It comes as no surprise that they fit well into the Marduk ideology, yet they lift it to a higher level with clear henotheistic/oligotheistic tendencies: the focus on Marduk (and Zarpānītu), Babylon and Esagila is particularly strong. The traditional representation of Marduk as god of punishment and deliverance, as read in Ludlul, stands alongside a pressing image of the god claiming supremacy over the other gods, as expressed in the epics of Enūma Elîš and Enmešarra's Defeat. Marduk is addressed with typical epithets, but also in ways that are unique to this corpus. Several things indicate that the author(s) of the prayers were inspired and influenced by other, newer compositions, most importantly the text of Enmešarra's Defeat, late commentaries and astronomical compendia such as the List of Stars and Deities. A particular feature of these texts is the prominence of the priest, who asks Marduk for personal protection, reveals himself as the one speaking, and is even eulogized by the god in the unusual text NYF6. The king is conspicuously (almost) absent and, in a similar vein as in the ritual instructions, appears only in full submission to Marduk.

[1195] Udug-hul XI 10-107.
[1196] Maul 1994: 41-42.
[1197] See also above, page 196.

## V.5 Conclusion

Already in 1922 Heinrich Zimmern, upon close study of the NYF texts, concluded:

> "Ich möchte darum auch annehmen, daß dieses Neujahrsfestritual, wenigstens in seinem jetzigen Wortlaute, nicht etwa, wie mancher sonstige späte Text, eine sklavische Kopie aus älterer Zeit ist, sondern vielmehr auf der Grundlage älterer Vorlagen eine freie Konzeption des Neujahrsfestrituals für die Priesterschaft des Esagil-Tempels in Babylon aus der spätesten, seleukidisch-parthischen, Periode darstellt."[1198]

The results of the different analyses above show that we should follow his conclusion: the NYF texts, as we know them, are products of Late Babylonian priests active in the temple of Bēl, not copies of a composition that originated in the first half of the first millennium BC. Indeed, the texts include a number of features that draw from "traditional" Babylonian conceptions; nonetheless, they are changed and moulded to fit a new form. On top of that, there are several characteristics that cannot be reconciled with such an early date of composition and can only be understood in a LB context. In short, although the NYF texts obviously build upon the Babylonian cultic tradition, they should be considered as creations that sprung from the minds of Late Babylonian priests.

The author(s) of the NYF texts would have us believe that these texts are late copies of ancient ritual texts providing information about the rites to be performed and the prayers to be recited during the course of the Babylonian NYF. Yet, one cannot take this claim at face value. More than anything, the NYF texts reflect a situation that, to the author(s), was the normative ideal; the specific format of these texts, being of prescriptive nature, allowed the priests to distance themselves from reality and to show how reality should be instead. In other words, the NYF texts can only serve to help us understand that and how the priests who wrote them wanted the ritual to deroll rather than how and that it actually did happen. As such, they are characterized by an inherent tension between what is real and what is wished for. This tension is most pressingly visible in: the representation of the king and the priest respectively and their relation; the unparallelled focus on Babylon and the Marduk-cult; and the opposition of archaising and innovating features.

### V.5.1 Kings and priests

The NYF has traditionally been interpreted as a ritual of renewal and re-institution of kingship. We imagine kings gloriously hailed as they take the hand of Marduk and go to the *akītu*-house, after having gone through a series of purification rites in which their royal superiority was confirmed. In the royal inscriptions we readily perceive the kings' willingness to participate

[1198] Zimmern 1922: 192.

and contribute to the festival. However, in the NYF texts the king is portrayed as anything but glorious: he is passive, submitted, objectified and ambiguous. While he is confirmed in his office through the humiliation ritual, it is emphasized at multiple instances that his power depends on his piety towards Marduk and, intrinsically connected to that, upon his benevolence towards the deity's priesthood. The king is not re-instituted simply by retrieving his regalia; just as important is the speech of the priest who emphasizes that the king will rule only if he maintains his oath. The negative confession is the ultimate expression of this paradigm, which thus is put in the mouth of the monarch himself.

In the other rites, no big role is put aside for the king and in the few actions he performs, he is largely eclipsed by the Elder Brother. This priest is the shining star in the NYF texts: he appears as the chosen one of Marduk, has a personal relationship with the god and is the intermediary between him and others, including the king. Moreover, the Elder Brother alone possesses the exclusive knowledge of the ritual and manages the whole event. His presence is a requirement for the performance of rites and this provides him with a kind of sanctity that is cultivated by taking excessive measures of purification. On top of that, the Elder Brother personally benefits from the ritual: through the performance of the prayers, he asks the gods to grant him their grace. By extension, the whole priesthood of Marduk is put in the spotlight through the repeated reference to the *ṣābē kidinni*.

The elevated role of the priest contrasts starkly with the poor portrayal of the king in the NYF texts. In fact, this is made explicit through the striking of the king's cheek: by this act, the priest assumes a position that the king may never occupy. It is stated twice in the NYF texts that kings should refrain from striking the cheek of the priest. Yet, the Elder Brother may and must perform this act on the king.

The emphasis placed on the required reverence towards Marduk on the part of the king in combination with the elevated role of the priests strongly suggests that the NYF texts were created in a context in which it was not self-evident that the king would assume his cultic duties, with the result that the priests had to substitute for him. As a reflection of their priestly authors' self-image, the NYF texts attest to the heightened importance those priests attributed to themselves because of their new role in the cult. The fact that the king had to be reminded of his duties fits only in the context of foreign rule by, most importantly, a king who did not take it for granted to honour the gods of Babylon. In contrast to what Jonathan Z. Smith stated, the

period of Assyrian overrule should thus be excluded.[1199] Persian or Macedonian kings make better candidates.

### V.5.2 Babylon and Marduk

Connected to the promotion of the priests of Marduk is the narrow focus on the Marduk-cult in Babylon. As Deloucas wrote: "The centrality of Babylon within this festival does exclude peripheral cities of near-equal importance: Uruk and Nippur, vital cities whose city-gods are granted powerful statuses, are seen as antitheses of Babylon due to theological differences."[1200] This message is openly declared in the citation from Enmešarra's Defeat and in the prayers in which Marduk and Zarpānītu respectively are equated with other divine entities. Moreover, when Enūma Elîš is recited, the symbols of Anu and Enlil have to remain covered. This act emphasized the supremacy of Marduk and downplayed the role of those gods in the myth.

Nevertheless, it would be undue to see this as a tendency towards mono- or henotheism in the sense of favorisation of one specific deity. Not Marduk alone, but his divine family and court as well were the focus of cultic attention. Thus, Nabû, too, makes his appearance in the NYF texts. The LB cult in Babylon thus forms a parallel to the LB Urukean cult, where the local pantheon, headed by Anu and Antu, was exclusively worshipped. Yet, whereas the LB Anu-cult is commonly seen as the result of developments that took place after 484 BC, the focus on Marduk in Babylon is often considered as the proof of continuity with the Neo-Babylonian period. It should be admitted that that was not the case, as the theology reflected in the NYF texts is clearly different from what came before: Marduk had always been the patron deity of Babylon, but now he was so to the exclusion of other gods.

### V.5.3 Antiquarianism and innovation

A last characteristic that brings to the fore a tension between ideal and real in the NYF texts is the opposition of archaising and innovating features. While the author(s) wanted to create the impression that the texts were of old age, this did not prevent them from adapting their creation to the standards and expectations of their own time.

Entirely new elements can tell us more about the context of the NYF texts' creation. One innovation is the portrayal of the priest, as described above. Another important innovation is the concern with time, along with the texts' more general connection to astronomy, as it becomes visible in the intertextuality between a NYF prayer and an astronomical compendium

[1199] Smith 1976: 5.
[1200] Deloucas 2016: 70.

or in the relation of some rites to the astral reality. Astronomy was the most prominently practiced scholarly discipline in Babylonia in the second half of the first millennium BC and it is not surprising that this left its mark in other corpora too, such as medicine, magic and, in this case, temple rituals.[1201] The connection between astral sciences and Hellenistic ritual texts has furthermore been shown to exist in the Uruk corpus too.[1202] It is a typical phenomenon of the Late Babylonian period.

In contrast to – or better, perhaps, because of – those Late Babylonian elements, the author(s) used specific tools to endow the texts with an aura of antiquity, but struggled to implement them correctly. The clearest example is the use of Sumerian – specifically Emesal, the language of the traditional liturgy – in most of the *legomena* in the NYF texts: despite the fact that it is of extremely low quality, it was added to render the texts an air of antiquity.[1203] Formal elements fit here too: the tablet numbers and the assurance that the texts were "collated and checked" make it seem as if the tablets were part of an established textual tradition, but i.a. the lack of precursors makes this dubitable. In a similar vein, the format which combines ritual prescriptions and fully written prayers is not attested elsewhere, although the author(s) made use of typical "ritual language" as we find it in other ritual texts. The combination of, on the one hand, highly literary and ancient words and grammar, and, on the other, Late Babylonianisms can be added to the list too.

It may be asked whether the choice of topic – the NYF – was also based on an antiquarian interest. After all, the festival used to be a key element in Babylonian religion and culture and had existed for thousands of years in some form or other. Still, it seems that no proper *akītu*-festival – including the procession of gods and the participation of the king – had been observed in Babylon for some decades by the time the NYF texts were redacted. Possibly, the author(s) of the NYF texts intended to place these compositions in line of the ancient tradition of the festival, but if that were so, they did not do it explicitly, since the texts include no direct references to either *akītu* or the New Year. More than that, it is doubtful whether the ancient NYF itself was actually revived during the Hellenistic period, because the evidence is – to say the least – very scanty.

In that light, we should also question the texts' purpose and reason of creation. Despite the fact that the NYF texts may, in part, provide realistic instructions, they essentially prescribe an

[1201] Krul 2019, Geller 2014.
[1202] Krul 2019 and 2018: 181-190.
[1203] If the note in the colophons of NYF1 and NYF2-3 may indeed be understood as "ancient Sumerian", the antiquity of the text was even more emphasized by its author(s).

impossibility, for what they represent lies between an ideal situation and reality. Thus, as Kosmin asked:

> "Why prescribe an impossibility, and one that could only emphasize the absence, foreignness, and indifference of the reigning dynasty? Were these texts merely 'for the file,' virtual rituals, substitute kings in clay? Did the tablets constitute, at least in part, scribal fantasies of control – note the causative verbs and priestly agency – that gleefully imagined manipulating or humiliating the body of the reigning monarch? Did these tablets, baked for preservation, represent hope for the restoration of a properly engaged Babylonian monarchy, preparing the ground like the flood heroes of Berossus – *rex quondam, rexque futurus*?"[1204]

First, the presence of the king as a cultic agent in the ritual is not reflected in the Hellenistic reality. The Seleucid monarch would only in very rare cases have participated in the local cult and we should not imagine that he let himself be slapped in the face by a Babylonian priest. Second, the Babylonian priesthood's importance as reflected in the NYF texts can only be deemed real as far as they considered themselves, for any outsider would have looked with pity upon this waning and withering community. The need to authenticate their work by granting it a non-existent antiquity shows how, even within their own community, they struggled to establish themselves. As such, the NYF texts can tell us little to nothing about the cultic reality of the Babylonian NYF in the Hellenistic period, let alone about the festival in earlier times. More than anything, they mirror the struggles and hopes of a community that was ever more losing grip on its own traditions and existence and all the while trying to hold on to its values and beliefs, in a world in which no one but them cared about the gods of Babylon.

[1204] Kosmin 2018: 192.

# VI The historical and textual framework of the NYF texts

The tendency within Assyriology has been to study the New Year Festival in the long term, as a continuum, thus considering the NYF *texts* as one of the many sources that tell us something about the festival. However, it has been argued above that the NYF texts can only with much caution be used to prove the continuity of Babylonian cultic traditions or to study the nature of the Babylonian NYF during the Hellenistic period. Instead, attention should be paid to the specific cultural discourse into which the NYF texts are embedded.[1205] While they relate to the cuneiform stream of tradition,[1206] the NYF texts are also products of their time and as such reflect a certain *Zeitgeist*. The previous chapter focussed on exposing the specific setting (late 4th-early 2nd century Babylon) in which the NYF texts were redacted and the motifs and strategies by which that context is made apparent – king and priest, antiquarianism, innovation. In the present chapter I wish to explore contemporary cuneiform corpora in order to anchor those motifs and methods more firmly in a Late Babylonian setting.

It comes as no surprise that the NYF texts share many elements with the larger corpus of Late Babylonian temple ritual texts from Babylon. This is the first corpus that will be discussed. More remarkable is the connection with the Late Babylonian historiographical writings as we encounter them in the (historical sections of the) Astronomical Diaries, the Babylonian chronicles and some historical-literary texts. All of these texts share characteristics that distinguish them markedly from earlier Mesopotamian textual tradition(s). This allows us to see them as a distinct and new discourse specific to the Late Babylonian period, while at the same time they are undeniably part of the tradition of cuneiform culture.[1207] Because their historical context helps us better to understand those corpora, I will start by giving a very concise overview of the history of Babylon in the Late Achaemenid and Late Babylonian periods (484 BC–80 CE).

[1205] Cultural discourse is "the constant reformulation and re-conceptualization of tradition, as enacted by the ancient scholars" (Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 21). Whereas *tradition* "transcended political fragmentation, and cut through various divisions, including linguistic diversity, to unify scribal intellectual worldviews in much of the Near East," (Michalowski 2010: 8) the specific *cultural discourse*, while working within the boundaries of the tradition, was inextricably linked to a historical context.
[1206] About "stream of tradition", see Robson 2019: 10-48.
[1207] Certainly, these texts share a common language as well, but my aim here is not philological. As Michalowski stated: "cultural categories and modes of thought may be found outside the dictionary" (1999: 70).

## VI.1 A concise history of the Late Achaemenid and Late Babylonian periods (484 BC–80 CE)

The traditional approach towards Mesopotamian history is characterized by a periodisation based on political events and the succession of great powers dominating the region: Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Graeco-Macedonian and Parthian. However, change of power did not always result in cultural and socio-economic changes as well as societal developments did not always fuel political change. In fact, the most substantial "breaks" that can be observed in the first millennium did not occur at the moment of dynastic change. Accordingly, the second half of the first millennium BC can broadly be divided in three phases according to socio-economic developments: 484-311 BC; 311-187 BC; and 187 BC-80 CE. The following discussion will focus on the city of Babylon.

### VI.1.1 484-331 BC: Break and recovery[1208]

In 539 BC the Persians, led by Cyrus, conquered an economically and culturally prospering Babylonia. Initially, the new rulers did not implement major changes in the existing social and economic systems, which is shown foremost by the fact that the existing elites remained where they had been under Babylonian rule.[1209] Soon, however, cracks started to show in that continuous unity. A wave of rebellions passed through the Persian empire upon the accession of Darius I (521 BC), after he had murdered (Gaumata-posing-as-)Bardiya, who had taken the throne after Cambyses' death. In Babylonia, too, the people revolted, led by two men claiming to be descendants of Nabonidus and carrying the name Nebuchadnezzar (III and IV respectively).[1210] Their names are attested in dating formulas in administrative documents and in the Behistun inscription, which gives an account of Darius' victory over the two usurpers. The huge rock inscriptions show that the rebellions made their mark on the Persian royal ideological discourse; still, they did not lead to major structural changes on a socio-economical level.[1211]

The biggest change lay in the attitude of the Persian kings towards the Babylonian temple institutions and the urban elites connected to them, as from the reign of Darius onwards we can see a clear disengagement of the Persian kings vis-à-vis Babylonian cult and scholarship on the

[1208] Kings in Babylonia: Xerxes (486-465); Artaxerxes I (464-425); Darius II (423-405); Artaxerxes II (404-359); Artaxerxes III (358-338); Arses (337-336); Darius III (335-331). All dates according to Parker & Dubberstein 1956 and Boiy 2004.
[1209] Jursa 2010: 4-5. That is why the period 626 to 484 has been termed "the Long Sixth Century".
[1210] Beaulieu 2014b; Briant 2002: 97-114; Streck 1998: 206 (RlA 9 s.v. Nebukadnezzar III. und IV.); Zawadzki 1994.
[1211] But note that in Uruk high officials were replaced (Jursa 2010: 4 note 20).

one hand and on the other their exploitation of temple resources.[1212] Fiscal pressure on the Babylonian temple institutions grew higher throughout Darius' reign, due to this king's large building projects at Susa and Persepolis, which required means and manpower, both of which were largely available in the Babylonian temples. Aside from those heavy obligations, prebendary payments seem to have been suspended in at least some Babylonian temples during the final years of Darius' and the first years of Xerxes' reigns.[1213] Moreover, the Crown's appropriation of temple lands and the general trend of monetary inflation led to skyrocketing prices for everyday commodities. This Persian policy not only gave rise to "a massive crisis in the organization of the temple cult"[1214] and equalled a systematic undermining of the economic power of the Babylonian urban elites, but will also have incited a more general anti-Persian sentiment amongst the wider population.

In this climate two new rebellions broke out. While we do not know what exactly happened, our documentation makes it clear that the temple elites from northern Babylonian cities renounced Persian authority and accepted one of two usurpers (Šamaš-erība and Bēl-šimânni) as their leader instead: their names appear in dating formulas instead of Xerxes'.[1215] This time the Persian ruler did not condone the rebellious activities of the Babylonians and took harsh measures to reprimand them. The exact nature of Xerxes' reprisals remains a point of controversy, but despite the fact that we remain in the dark about his specific actions, it is clear that they had a severe impact on the traditional northern Babylonian temple institutions and the strata of society linked to them.[1216] The immediate impact is clear in the near absence of sources and the phenomenon of the "End of Archives": archives from northern Babylonian families which were involved in temples abruptly end in the second year of Xerxes' reign, right after the revolts had taken place.[1217] This shows that – at least in the best case – a severe re-organisation of the social and economic structure of the temple institutions was undertaken, to the depreciation of traditional Babylonian (priestly) families and in favour of pro-Persian persons. In Uruk, families with northern Babylonian ties disappear from the record.[1218] It

[1212] Cyrus and Cambyses interacted with Babylonian priests, as the production of cuneiform royal inscriptions such as the Cyrus Cylinder shows. In later historiographical tradition, Cambyses is mentioned as the last king before Alexander to have parttaken in the Babylonian cult (Nabonidus Chronicle iii 24; Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/ [last accessed 08.01.2020]).
[1213] Jursa 2013a.
[1214] Jursa 2013a: 10.
[1215] Waerzeggers 2003-4.
[1216] See Waerzeggers 2018: 2-5 for a summary of the discussion.
[1217] Waerzeggers 2003-4. The revolts and their consequences are discussed most recently in the papers edited by Waerzeggers & Seire 2018.
[1218] Kessler 2004; see also Hackl & Oelsner 2017.

remains unsure what exactly happened to those people and the consequences for the cult are even more difficult to assess, but it is evident that in the chaos of things, the temple cults must have suffered significantly.[1219]

When archival documentation becomes more substantial again, during the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-423), we are confronted with a changed social and economic landscape in Babylonia, albeit a stable one.[1220] The Crown controlled large parts of the economy itself or through local supporters of Persian rule; the Babylonian upper classes which had played that role until recently, were deprived of any significance. Especially the priestly class, connected to large temple institutions such as Esagila, must have felt the consequences of the abolition of the traditional prebend system (in Esagila). Yet, despite the calamitous context in which they found themselves, the Babylonian priests made an effort to maintain their scholarly work, as far as that was possible. A continuity can be observed in astronomical scholarship between the periods before and after 484 BC and some innovations may have been made in the calendar still in Xerxes' reign. [1221] Nevertheless, this continuity should not be overestimated either and should be seen in light of the bigger context. No scholarly sources are actually dated to Xerxes' reign; we have to wait until the middle of the fifth century BC before priestly-scholarly activity is attested again and only from the fourth century BC onwards is there a more regular production of scholarly texts, most importantly the Astronomical Diaries.[1222] The LB Esagila libraries, partly reconstructed by Clancier, seem to have started to be formed around the same time.[1223] By the middle of the fourth century BC the temple community at Babylon thus seems to have recovered enough to produce and maintain a substantial amount of texts.

Between the Persian conquest (539 BC) and the Empire's defeat (331 BC) the strata of society associated with the major temple institutions, in particular the priestly class connected to Esagila, regressed from being powerful and rich urban elites to a politically marginal and rather confined social group. As Jursa writes:

> "The impact of these acts for the priests cannot easily be overstated when we know that as a whole the priesthood at the time moved towards a self-enclosed 'caste' obsessed with purity of bloodlines and group-internal status distinctions."[1224]

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[1219] For Ebabbar in Sippar, see Jursa (2018: 71): "does this imply that the offering cycles were suspended, at least temporarily?" For Eanna in Uruk, see Kessler 2004. For Ezida in Borsippa, see Jursa 2013a.
[1220] Monerie 2018: 53-79; Pirngruber 2017: 35-66.
[1221] Ossendrijver 2018: 159.
[1222] Ossendrijver 2018. ADART no. -453 is the earliest Diary after 484 BC; the following one is no. -418. For a graphic representation of the evolution of the the production of astronomical texts, see Clancier 2009: 311.
[1223] Clancier 2009. See also Joannès 2000a: 703.
[1224] Jursa, *forthcoming*. See also Still 2019.

Indeed, the drastic changes undertaken throughout this period did not only have an effect on the social and economic planes – the ideological consequences should not be overseen either. The most important role traditionally ascribed to the Babylonian king was that of provider and protector of the temple cults, in particular of Esagila.[1225] Darius and especially Xerxes had acted in the exact opposite manner, by converting the temples into state-controlled factories in which the cult and the priests who maintained it had only a minor role to play. By the Babylonian urban elites that lived under that regime, "Persian imperial power would have been perceived as something to be experienced"[1226] and not as something to be negotiated; the Great king lived in one of his palaces far away and remained a remote figure with whom the Babylonians had no direct interactions.

### VI.1.2 331-189 BC: Euergetism and revival[1227]

The arrival of Alexander the Great (331-323 BC) in Babylonia preluded a period of change, although of itself it did not constitute a substantial break in the region's economic and social structure vis-à-vis the late Achaemenid period.[1228] One essential and crucial difference in comparison with the Persian kings is immediately perceptible, nonetheless: the Macedonian conquest was the start of a relationship of negotiation and exchange between the ruler and ruling institutions on the one hand and on the other the local elites.[1229] Alexander did not just conquer Babylonia; instead, he negotiated with local notables the terms on which this new relationship between ruler and ruled was going to work.[1230] Nevertheless, Alexander's death gave rise to a new crisis that left a profound mark on Babylonian society. War broke out amongst his generals, part of which played out on Babylonian ground (323-305 BC). The wars of the Diadochi weighed heavily on Babylonia and left the region changed and weakened not only economically, but also in terms of the very integrity and functionality of its institutions.[1231] Fortunately, salvation was at hand in the persona of Seleukos.

Although Seleukos was only of secondary importance during Alexander's campaigns, his role in the assassination of Perdikkas was rewarded during the conference at Triparadeisos in 320

[1225] For the principles of Babylonian kingship, see below, page 331.
[1226] Jursa, *forthcoming*.
[1227] Kings in Babylonia: Alexander (III) the Great (331-323); Philippos Arrhidaios (322-316); Alexander IV (315-306); Seleukos I (311/305-281); Antiochos I (281-261); Antiochos II (261-246); Seleukos II (246-226); Seleukos III (226-223). Antiochos III (223-187).
[1228] Monerie 2018: 85-127.
[1229] Monerie 2018: 85-127.
[1230] ADART no. -330 (see van der Spek 2003: 297-299); Arrian *Anab*. 3.16.3-4; Curt. *Hist*. 5.1.17 (see Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 184-185).
[1231] Monerie 2018: 128-173.

BC with the satrapy of Babylonia.[1232] Despite his legitimate claim to the region, Seleukos' power was contested by Antigonos Monophtalmos, who chased the former away from Babylon. During three years Seleukos remained as a guest at Ptolemy's court in Egypt and after the latter defeated Antigonos at Gaza in 312 BC, Seleukos moved back to Babylon and officially founded the Seleucid empire in 311 BC. Yet, he only took the royal diadem in the year 305 BC[1233] – as a consequence, cuneiform texts are dated by Seleukos' regnal year only from 305 BC onwards. However, the date used in 305 BC refers to the seventh regnal year of Seleukos; in that sense, the first year of Seleukos equals 311 BC, although at that time cuneiform texts were still dated by name of Alexander IV:[1234]

> "Year 7 which equals year 1, Seleukos was king."[1235]

Moreover, after Seleukos' death, cuneiform scribes did not start counting the regnal years of his son Antiochos I, but instead kept counting from 311 BC onwards. Thus, the Seleucid Era was created, with its epoch or "year one" in 311 BC – in certain parts of the ANE it was in use until the 6th century CE. The choice for the year 311 BC as epoch granted the city of Babylon a place of importance in Seleukos' ideological program: while in reality, Persian and Median territories were conquered and secured first, it was the return to Babylon that counted as the beginning of the Era.[1236]

The first century of Seleucid rule – give or take a few years – had a positive impact on the Babylonian economy and society. A fundamental continuity with the pre-Alexander period can be observed in the management of cultivated lands, "notamment en ce qui concerne l'exploitation des ressources agricoles et l'imposition d'obligations de service."[1237] This was mainly due to the permanence of agricultural and natural structures. Nevertheless, an essential innovation of the Seleucids lay in their collaboration with and dependency on local institutions. Whereas during the Late Achaemenid period, the Crown had held direct control of the land, the Seleucids invested in and relied on the local communities for the management of the local

[1232] For the history of the Seleucid empire, see Kosmin 2014a; Capdetrey 2007; Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993; with a focus on Babylon: Boiy 2004.
[1233] I.e. after the death of the heir of Alexander the Great, Alexander IV.
[1234] Kosmin 2018: 26-30. Boiy 2011a; 2006.
[1235] Babylon King List obv. 6 (Boiy 2011a: 3).
[1236] See Kosmin 2018: 30-35. While Kosmin connects the importance of Babylon to its function as city of kingship in Babylonian thought, I find it doubtful that this idea would have taken root in Greek-Macedonian mentality to such a large degree. More probable is the preposition of Capdetrey (2007: 25-38) to see the importance of Babylon in the context of Seleukos as legitimated inheritor of Alexander's empire, Babylon being the final seat of Alexander's kingship. This is suggested too by Seleukos' waiting to take the royal diadem until the heir of Alexander had died.
[1237] Monerie 2018: 276.

economy.[1238] The foundation of Seleukia-on-the-Tigris and other settlements did not compromize this, to the contrary, the new settlements were integrated in a similar system, and the division of lands amongst more entities was compensated by donations of royal lands.[1239]

During the third century BC this policy of euergetism found its expression also in building projects, most notably the renovation of Ezida by Antiochos I, and royal gifts to the temples, numerously attested in the Diaries.[1240] However, it should be noted that these were not selfless acts of charity – euergetism was a two-way street.[1241] At this time, the conflict with the Ptolemies over territory in northern Syria and Asia Minor (the first three of the so-called Syrian wars) absorbed most of the Seleucids' time and wealth. It was a matter of practicality to give some independence to local institutions and thus ensure a stability of production and means that could flow back into the Seleucid rulers' hands. The imposed use of counted money over weighed silver can be read in the same light: it was a stabilising and unifying mechanism and worked, just like the Era, for the whole empire.

### VI.1.3 189 BC-80 CE: Turbulence and decay[1242]

The first decades of the second century BC witnessed a major restructuring of the political and administrative systems in Babylon.[1243] A "poliadisation" of the city took place in two broad phases: first, *polis* structures were established in Babylon (ca. 187 BC) and second, tighter control was taken of the existing Babylonian institutions (ca. 160 BC).[1244] Before that time, the *šatammu* together with the assembly (*kiništu*) of the Babylonians had had relative independence in managing their affairs and to some degree the affairs of the city as well. For example: when a sacrilegious crime was committed, the *šatammu* and assembly formed their own court to pass judgement.[1245] From ca. 187 BC onwards, however, a second body of government is attested: the *politai*, led by the *epistatēs*, who convened in the *bīt tāmarti*, the Greek theatre.[1246] Royal messages were now sent to the *politai* rather than to the *kiništu.*[1247] Moreover, a new functionary

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[1238] Monerie 2018: 177-348; Pirngruber 2017: 66-70.
[1239] This is how Monerie (2018: 208-209) understands the donation of royal lands recorded in the Lehmann Text.
[1240] Van der Spek 1994: 19-36.
[1241] Van der Spek 1994. See also below, page 332.
[1242] Kings in Babylonia: Seleukos IV (187-175); Antiochos IV (175-164); Antiochos V (164-162); Demetrios I (161-150); Alexandros I Balas (150-145); Demetrios II Nicator (145-139/8); Mithridates I (141/0-138/7); Phraates II (138/7-128); Antiochos VII Sidetes (130-129); Hyspaosines of Charax (127-124 BC); Mithridates II (124-88); the subsequent kings are difficult to determine, because the cuneiform documentation names all Parthian kings as "Arses" (Boiy 2004: 171); an overview of the sources can be found in Boiy 2004: 184-192.
Note that Arsacid kings are all called "Arses" in the Astronomical Diaries.
[1243] Clancier & Monerie 2014b; Monerie 2014; Sciandra 2012; van der Spek 2009, 2000.
[1244] Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 212; Boiy 2004: 208.
[1245] BCHP 17; see Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 198-199; Clancier 2012a.
[1246] Potts 2011.
[1247] See also Sciandra 2012.

was introduced in the temple sphere: the *zazakku* formed the direct link between temple and Crown and stood at top of the temple hierarchy, higher than the *šatammu*.[1248] When a crime now took place within the temple, royal judges decided the case.[1249]

The tightening of control on behalf of the Seleucids can partly be explained in light of external threats to the Seleucid empire in general and to the region of Babylonia in particular. Most prominently, Rome became a serious contender in the eastern Mediterranean, especially after Antiochos III lost the Battle of Magnesia in 189 BC and had to accept humiliating terms of armistice negotiated in the "Peace of Apamea". Not long thereafter, Antiochos III visited Babylon, where he was lavished with luxurious and expensive items, such as a golden crown and the robe of Nebuchadnezzar.[1250] That these were not so much voluntary gifts as (very welcome) payments of tribute to the royal treasury stands to reason.[1251] Moreover, whereas Babylonia had enjoyed relative peace in the previous century, from the middle of the second century BC onwards the region was the scene of a string of battles and attempts to seize control. Babylonia was conquered by the Parthians, led by Mithridates I, in 141 BC, but two Seleucid kings tried to reconquer it in 139/138 BC (Demetrios II Nicator) and 130/29 BC (Antiochos VII Sidetes) respectively.[1252] Both attempts failed and after a short occupation by Hyspaosines of Characene (128-126 BC),[1253] the Parthians established their rule more firmly, maintaining the *polis* structures. However, the inhabitants of Babylonia were not at peace, since frequent raids of Arab tribes and campaigns of kings of Elymais weakened the country even further.

On a socio-political level, little changed with the arrival of the Parthians. If anything, the system established a few decades before by the Seleucids functioned more smoothly under the new rulers. The satrapy of Babylonia was directly governed by a *strategos* and four subordinate *hyparchoi*, as it had been under the Seleucids. In the city of Babylon itself, power lay with the *epistatēs* and *politai*, while temple-internal affairs of administrative and cultic nature were still largely managed by the assembly of Esagila. A small archive of texts attests to the continued functioning of several temples in Babylon as late as 94-93 BC. The Rahimesu-archive – named after its main protagonist – contains thirty-six lists of income and expenditure and sheds light on the financial management of some temples in Babylon (Esabad, Eturkalamma, temple of

[1248] The title is also attested in earlier periods but designated a different thing (Joannès 1994).
[1249] BCHP 15; see Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 213-214. The developments in Uruk are described by Monerie (2018: 349-381) but ommitted here, as the focus lies on Babylon throughout the dissertation.
[1250] ADART no. -187A rev. 7'-12'. See Jursa & Debourse 2020; Madreiter 2016.
[1251] Madreiter 2016: 120-123.
[1252] For the establishment of Parthian rule in Babylonia, see Clancier 2014: 4-6; Dąbrowa 2005; Boiy 2004: 166-176.
[1253] Schuol 2000.

Zabada and Ninlil, Esagila, Day One Temple).[1254] It also contains references to expenditures for offerings of sheep and libations, showing that the cult was regularly observed.[1255] The observance of the cult is also attested in the contemporary chronicles dating to the Parthian period.[1256]

A few things did change after the Parthian conquest, however, and we should not underestimate the impact these changes had on local communities. First, Babylonia came to be a peripheral region of the Parthian empire, constituting a buffer zone between the Seleucids – and later the Romans – and the Parthians. Earlier, the region had been part of the heartland of the Seleucid and, before that, Persian empires.[1257] Second, and as a consequence of the first change, Arsacid kings were largely absent from Babylon(ia), as also the growing number of citations of royal letters in the Diaries shows: orders were no longer given directly, but sent by letters.[1258] Third, the Parthian kings received different titles than their Seleucid predecessors in cuneiform sources; while the latter were simply titled "king", the former appear in the Diaries as "Great King" or "King of Kings", titles reminiscent of the Achaemenid dynasty.[1259] A fourth change was the implementation of a double dating system, attested until the end of the cuneiform record. Aside from the Seleucid Era (epoch 311 BC), the Arsacid Era was now also used (epoch 247/6 BC).[1260]

These changes, in combination with the now firmly established poliadisation of Babylon and the continuous warfare had a severe impact on the local communities connected to the city's temples. First, it took away most of the political and economic independence which the Babylonians had enjoyed under the early Seleucids. They were now really relegated to the confines of their temples, where they only had a say in matters of cult and (cuneiform) scholarship. However, and second, the absence of financial support from the king in combination with a lack of economic means made scholarly undertakings more difficult to maintain and soon the production of priestly texts started to dwindle.[1261] Third, the withdrawal

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[1254] Hackl 2016; Hackl 2013: 472-475; Jursa 2005: 75-76; Kessler 2000; van der Spek 1998.
[1255] Van der Spek 1998: 253. Less direct references to the continued observance of the cult may be found in contemporary copies of Emesal prayers that were intended "for singing" (*ana zamāri*); see Gabbay 2014: 229-230 with note 4 with references and note 11.
[1256] BCHP 18-20 (Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*).
[1257] Although Babylonia may not have been part of the centre of those empires, it was less peripheral as in Arsacid times. For the Seleucid empire, see the maps showing the "frequency of royal travel" to Babylon in Kosmin 2014a map 5-6: 145-146. In the Persian empire, Babylon was considered to be a royal residence (Briant 2002: 84-85).
[1258] Visscher 2019- 245-252; Sciandra 2012; see also below, page 348.
[1259] Clancier 2014: 7-8.
[1260] Clancier 2014: 5-6; van der Spek 2001: 449-450.
[1261] See also Clancier 2009: 297-317.

of direct royal involvement and interest in the temples will also have had ideological consequences, as in the worldview of the Babylonians, the king was responsible for the maintenance of the gods.[1262] Fourth, the loss of political and economic autonomy might have sped up the process of acculturation of the locals to the settlers. Contrary to what some Assyriologists have claimed, the Babylonian and *polis* institutions were not strictly separated, but possibly Babylonians could become part of the *politai*, if that is how we can understand the use of Babylonian-Greek double names[1263] and the fact that "the compilers of the Diaries could access the theatre where the letters [of the king; CD] were read aloud before the Greek audience, allowing them to quote their content verbatim".[1264]

The Graeco-Babyloniaka texts attest to such processes of assimilation.[1265] This group of clay tablets, inscribed in both cuneiform and Greek script, forms a scrap of evidence relating to the question of the demise of cuneiform writing. The texts on the tablets consist of fragments of Akkadian and Sumerian compositions traditionally learned and practiced in the cuneiform scribal curriculum. The Greek alphabet was used to transcribe the cuneiform signs, in the same way modern Assyriologists use contemporary alphabets to transcribe cuneiform. This group of tablets demonstrates how Babylonian scribes learned both the cuneiform and Greek scripts at the same time, which in turn highlights the multilingual background of those people.[1266] In other words, "the Graeco-Babyloniaka represent their initial forays in converting between the scripts, languages and cultural worlds in which they operated."[1267] Nevertheless, at some point the balance might have tipped in favour of the alphabet. As such, the rapidly decreasing number of cuneiform tablets from the second half of the first century BC onwards shows that cuneiform writing had become superfluous to the communities that had used it for thousands of years and who, themselves, became less and less relevant as well to the world outside the Babylonian temples.[1268]

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[1262] See also below, page 331.
[1263] Monerie 2014: 78-80.
[1264] Sciandra 2012: 241; see also Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 216.
[1265] Stevens 2019: 120-143; Oelsner 2013; Clancier 2009: 245-253; Westenholz 2007; Oelsner 2006; Gesche 2001: 184-195; Geller 1999, 1997, 1983; Knudsen 1995, 1990; Maul 1995, 1991; Black & Sherwin-White 1984; Sollberger 1962; Pinches 1902; Sayce 1902. Some of the Graeco-Babyloniaca stem from the BM-collection with a high number of tablets stemming from the Esagila libraries. According to the latest detailed study of Stevens, they were written some time between the late second and early first century BC, to which I also subscribe.
[1266] The case for a complementary relationship between the scripts, rather than one being primary and the other secondary, was convincingly made by Stevens 2019: 127-133.
[1267] Stevens 2019: 133.
[1268] The last Astronomical Diary dates to 61 BC. Less than thirty cuneiform tablets can be dated between 49 BC and 80 CE (Clancier 2009: 310). The last cuneiform tablet has been dated to 79/80 CE (W22340; Hunger & de Jong 2014). Other attestations of the preference of the alphabet over cuneiform script, or at least of parchment over clay,

This final half millennium of cuneiform culture is often considered as a period of slow decline, but the thousands of texts that were written during this period do not fit into that image. On top of that, the scholarly and literary activities of the Babylonian priests exhibit innovative and original characteristics, not only in the new 'scientific' works like astronomy, but also in the creation of texts that narrativized their own past. In light of the historical developments that took place in the Late Babylonian period, this should not surprise us: there was a clear incentive, if not always also the means, for innovation and creation. In the following chapters, I will explore four corpora of texts that relate and react to their context in the same way as the NYF texts do.

can be found in the colophons of omen tablets of the first century BC that refer to the following tablet that was written on parchment. See Gabbay 2016: 291-292 with note 12 for references.

## VI.2 Temple ritual texts

> "Few temple rituals survive from before the mid-first millennium; the suspicion is that they emerged as a major written genre in the Late Babylonian period because the priesthood felt there was a danger of correct practice being corrupted or forgotten. But insecurity was not the sole motivation. Rituals could also be captured in writing for other purposes, particularly when the need arose to reform practice and introduce new cults."
>
> (George 2007: 155)

The NYF texts are part of the corpus of LB temple ritual texts, which were housed in the Esagila libraries in Babylon. The BM-collections alone contain some fifty or more fragments; unfortunately, not one tablet is fully preserved.[1269] Another corpus of temple ritual texts stems from LB Uruk; the majority of those can be found in the collections of the Louvre, the Vorderasiatisches Museum and the MRAH.[1270] As it is, "[f]ew temple rituals survive from before the mid-first millennium; […] they emerged as a major written genre in the Late Babylonian period."[1271] However, more attention should be paid to what is commonly understood as the "genre" of temple ritual texts.[1272] In modern Assyriological literature, the label "temple ritual text" is given to those texts that provide insider information about temple rituals, be they descriptive or prescriptive. Nevertheless, there is no uniform format for the texts that are designated with this label; in fact, only very few texts are similar to one another. In that light, it would be necessary to differentiate between different categories of temple ritual texts.[1273]

A categorisation could be made by distinguishing between cyclical rituals and rituals that took place at special occasions only. Some temple rituals occurred at regular intervals: daily, monthly, annually, etc. Others only needed to be observed when a specific occasion required ritual framing. Within the first category we can perhaps still distinguish between, what I suggest to call, "calendaria" on the one hand and "festival texts" on the other. A calendarium prescribes the rites to be performed on specific days of multiple, subsequent weeks or months of the year and the rites described do not form a closed unit. These texts are generally not directed at one specific type of priests nor are they very detailed. Aside from that, the internal coherence is not always clear; it may depend on the location (city/temple) or on the deities involved.

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[1269] Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 189 note 1. A large part of them remains unpublished or are only published as hand copy; the material is currently in the hands of Rocío Da Riva and was previously gathered by G. Galetti, a Ph.D. student of Andrew George. Note, however, that the best-preserved texts have been published, and that what is left consists largely of small fragments.
[1270] Linssen 2004; BaM Beih. 2; SpTU; TCL 6 (=TU); *Racc.* See also Clancier 2009: 403-404 and 406-407.
[1271] George 2007: 155.
[1272] See also page 18.
[1273] Note that the subdivision made here is a modern one and serves modern researchers; it is less clear if and how emic readers would have differentiated between them.

For example, the portion that is preserved of the cultic calendar SBH VIII contains prescriptions for the first to the fourth month on the obverse and for the eighth(?) to the tenth month on the reverse.[1274] The text reads as an almost story-like plotline of the most important cultic events that took place in those months, described from a Borsippean perspective and thus involving, most prominently, Nabû. The format is simple: the day of observance is given and the event is described in generic terms. One cannot really speak of instructions in this case, since no cultic agent is addressed or required to do something. In this specific text, the gods seem to be acting of their own accord.

> " (In the month Ayāru) on the seventh day: he (Nabû) goes to Emeurur, to holy Eanna. He goes out into the garden, he enters the garden of Anu and sits down."[1275]

A festival text, then, gives instructions for a festival – a sequence of rituals that together formed a closed unit and the combined effort of which aimed at the same result. The difference to the calendarium lies in the fact that the ritual events in the latter did not form a closed unit of ritual meaning and purpose. As can be expected, establishing to which subtype a given text belongs is not always straightforward, since our manuscripts are broken and incomplete. A (rather arbitrary) criterium could be the amount of days described: a calendarium would include more days than a festival text. This is true for the NYF texts, the so-called Divine Love Lyrics and the Palmfestival celebrated in the month Kislīmu.[1276]

In contrast to these texts that inform about cyclical events, there are also ritual texts that were dedicated to cultic events that did not occur at regular intervals. Because of the specific nature of the event, they address a particular profession. This does not mean that they only address the practitioners of that profession: other priests can be included as well. It is remarkable that all of the rituals recorded in this format were part of the *kalûtu*; there are no LB temple rituals for the *āšipūtu*. Prominent examples are the building ritual texts of the lamentation priests,[1277] the ritual for covering the kettledrum,[1278] and the eclipse of the moon ritual,[1279] all from Uruk. In contrast to the cyclical ritual texts, which are recorded in multi-column tablets or on multiple tablets, the ritual texts of this latter type are often shorter and inscribed on smaller tablets. It should be noted that this type is not attested amongst the LB ritual texts from Babylon.

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[1274] Matsushima 1987: 158-161; Unger 1931 no. 13: 264-270.
[1275] SBH VIII II 23-24.
[1276] For the DLL, see Lambert 1975 and http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/lovelyrics/ (last accessed 03.12.19); for the Kislīmu festival, see Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3 (BM 32206+).
[1277] TU 45 and 46 (Ambos 2004: 190-192; 178-179; Linssen 2004: 283-298).
[1278] TU 44 (Koubková 2016; Linssen 2004: 252-262).
[1279] BRM 4, 6 (Linssen 2004: 306-316).

All in all, it is questionable in how far such a formal approach may be useful, because, within the three categories, every text still follows its own pattern. It is therefore not possible to speak of a unified "set of rituals from Esagil covering the whole year."[1280] Formal similarities are restricted to, e.g., the use of a typical date-formula (*ina* $^{iti}$X ud N$^{kam}$), to which there is also a number of exceptions,[1281] and the fact that all LB temple ritual texts from Babylon are preserved on large library tablets with multiple columns on each side, but that is hardly unique to this corpus.[1282]

The coherence of the corpus of LB temple ritual texts from Babylon lies in the fact that they all share information for the performance of the temple cult in Babylon's temples, most importantly Esagila. More than that, also, they share characteristics and motifs that set them apart from earlier texts of cultic nature.[1283]

### VI.2.1 Single copies, late manuscripts

A first characteristic that is often overlooked, is the fact that most of these texts have been preserved in just one version without precursors.[1284] This could be owed to coincidence, but can also be explained in different terms. In the quote cited at the beginning of this chapter, George includes two reasons for the recording of rituals in writing: a feeling of threat experienced by the scribes and/or the need to reform the cult. Change of the cult and ritual innovation indeed left its traces in the written record, as will be shown in the following case studies.

#### VI.2.1.1 Case study 1: Neo-Assyrian state rituals

The corpus of Sargonid state rituals and other cultic compositions consists of some fifty or more texts, most of which remain without precursors.[1285] Parpola asserted that most of those texts must be copies of versions going back to the Middle-Assyrian period, because they contain the note that they are collated and checked, and because a few rituals survive from that period.[1286] Nevertheless, Pongratz-Leisten has gone to great lengths to demonstrate that the Sargonid state

[1280] Pace Lambert 1989: 23-24.
[1281] See George 2000: 290.
[1282] An exception is BM 32516//BM 41239 (George 2000: 289-299), which is a tablet in landscape format with a single column of text on each side. It is also considerably smaller than the other temple ritual texts.
[1283] The current discussion focusses on the published material, which comprises some fifteen fragments. They are the NYF texts edited here; SBH no. VII and no. VIII; the texts published by George 2000 (BM 32656, BM 32516//BM41239); by Da Riva & Galetti 2018 (BM 40790, BM 40854+); by Da Riva 2019 (BM 32482+); and the Kislīmu-ritual (BM 32206+). The text BM 47902+ (Lambert 1997: 52-56) is not included because its palaeography is obviously older than is the case for the other texts.
[1284] With the exception of two NYF texts (cf. above, page 193) and BM 41239//32516. Still, the duplicates stem from the same chronological context and remain without precursors.
[1285] They are edited in SAA 20 (Parpola 2017).
[1286] Parpola 2017: LXXVIII.

rituals are especially suited to fit that specific historical context, although she admits that they were the end result of a long-term development.[1287] More than anything, they show that tradition was transformed and reinvented to accommodate to a new world view.

Just like the corpus of LB ritual texts from Babylon, the NA state rituals are not serialized or standardized, have different physical formats and address a variety of cultic agents. The unity of this corpus is thus not found in its form; rather, the texts share a common "syntax": all of them give expression to similar ideas revolving around the king in his cosmic function. As was discussed to some extent above, scholars of the Sargonid period worked hard to shape and maintain the royal ideological discourse.[1288] This was achieved, i.a., through the intermediality of myth, ritual and cultic commentary: all three media presented the king as the divine warrior, Ninurta, who secured the cosmic order.[1289] This related to the political reality of the period: the Assyrian heartland was now the centre of a large empire that needed to be consolidated over and over. Accordingly, in those scholarly works the focus came to lie on the person of the king as gravitational centre of the empire. As such, "[t]he Assyrian state rituals of the Sargonid period are a powerful mechanism for publicizing the *body politic* of the king in his cosmic function."[1290]

It is specifically this notion of kingship represented in the NA ritual texts that gives them their unity and connects them to their setting. While the rituals have their roots in Sumero-Babylonian and Hurrian cultic practice, the "ritualization of the Ninurta mythology […] developed only during the first millennium BC, possibly only toward the end of the history of the Assyrian empire."[1291] The cultic reforms that were undertaken to adapt the state cult to the newly forged ideological discourse were written down to consolidate and conserve them. This explains why the Sargonid royal rituals form a delineated corpus of texts which have come down to us in just one version in most cases.

#### VI.2.1.2 Case study 2: LB temple rituals from Uruk

The same has to some degree been acknowledged for an entirely different group of ritual texts, namely the ones stemming from Late Babylonian Uruk.[1292] As such, Julia Krul wrote: "The relative abundance of ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk may well be related to the cultic

[1287] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 379-447.
[1288] See page 53.
[1289] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432-434.
[1290] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 390.
[1291] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 432.
[1292] Contra Linssen 2004, who considered those ritual texts to be copies of older texts.

innovations that took place there during that period."[1293] In fact, the earliest datable ritual texts predate only by little the first rebuilding phase of the Bīt Rēš under supervision of Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos.[1294] As in the case of the temple ritual texts from Babylon and the royal cultic texts from Assyria, most of these Urukean rituals have no precursors. Important exceptions are some of the *kalûtu*-rituals, such as the ceremony for the covering of the kettledrum or the building ritual: for those, there are Neo-Assyrian recensions too, although they are considerably different from the later versions.[1295] This can perhaps be explained by the fact that these texts contain rituals that are specifically part of the lore of the lamentation priest and were performed in locations with restricted access. Moreover, they were less connected to the worship of a specific deity than the other LB rituals from Uruk which all focus on the Anu cult.

Cultic reform is the prime reason for the recording of these LB rituals. The Anu cult had received a considerable boost after 484 BC when the ties with the northern Babylonian elite were cut loose and the cult of Ištar in Eanna was largely abandoned.[1296] Even though the earliest building phases of the Bīt Rēš go back to the early 7th BC century under Assyrian rule,[1297] there is no reason to assume that the Anu-cult as we can read it in the Late Achaemenid and Late Babylonian material existed as such before 484 BC, because Eanna was the main temple of the city of Uruk at that time: the rituals would have been of no use in that context.[1298] There was thus not so much a change *in* the cult but rather a change *of* cult. Therefore, new material was created to fill in the existing lacunae regarding festivals and public rituals.

It is likely that some of the ritual texts relate to an older cultic tradition – *ex nihilo nihil fit*. This is particularly clear in the description of the daily offerings in the temples of Uruk.[1299] As Waerzeggers has shown, the temple administration of Ezida in NB Borsippa records almost the exact same amount and kind of bread offerings for the four meals of the cultic day as TU 38.[1300] In contrast, no antecedents are attested for the beer and meat offerings described in the Urukean ritual text. According to Waerzeggers, this is due to the different perspectives which the ritual text and the priestly administrative texts respectively adopt vis-à-vis the subject. Nevertheless, this change in perspective may be indicative for innovation as well: for example, the fact that

[1293] Krul 2018: 58.
[1294] BRM 4, 7 (Linssen 2004: 209-214) is dated to 252/1 BC (SE 61). TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183) is dated to 292/1-281/0 BC or 280/79-267/6 BC. See Krul 2018: 58 and 32. The first Hellenistic building phase of the Bīt Rēš is dated to 244 BC.
[1295] See Linssen 2004 and Ambos 2004; see also Gabbay 2018a.
[1296] Beaulieu 2019; Krul 2018; Berlejung 2009; Beaulieu 2003: 2.
[1297] Ambos, *forthcoming*.
[1298] This is clear, for example, in the *akītu* texts revolving around Anu.
[1299] TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183).
[1300] Waerzeggers 2010: 115-118.

the focus of the "drinks" sections lies more on all the (golden) vessels in which the liquids are to be presented than on the drinks themselves, could show how this kind of riches was no longer considered to be normal, but had to be made explicit in the instructions.

For other rituals such precedents are unknown, although their authors tried to anchor them in a distant past, for example by reviving deities that had not been worshipped for centuries. Beaulieu speaks in this context of an "antiquarian theology".[1301] This is particularly clear in the colophon of TU 38, which states that the text was the copy of a version found on a wax-board which a certain Kidin-Anu had copied from original tablets that he had seen in Elam.[1302] In this particular case, the colophon served as a *pia fraus* by inscribing the ritual in a non-existent past textual tradition. Although we cannot say with certainty when the Urukean temple ritual texts were created, we can determine a *terminus post quem* (484 BC), since it makes most sense to conclude that they reflect the establishment of a renewed cultic tradition after this significant break.[1303]

VI.2.1.3 A reaction to defeat

As the two case studies above show, temple rituals were written down *en masse* when the historical context gave rise to new cultic, theological and ideological ideas. By committing the rituals to clay, these ideas were literally materialized, substantiated and thus given authority over previous traditions, although every ritual essentially inscribed into that tradition. In other words: "[a]lthough these rituals embody certain views of how the world and society are constructed, they also respond to specific historical situations and are therefore capable of transforming and reinventing tradition."[1304] This fact should not surprise us, because rituals are in essence reactions to and means to deal with a changing and unruly world.

In that light, it is fitting to consider the LB temple ritual texts from Babylon as a similar expression of cultic reform. More than for the Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian Urukean ritual texts, the tendency is to emphasize the continuity of the Marduk cult in Babylon as evidenced by the LB temple ritual texts, however.[1305] Nonetheless, if the existence of other corpora of temple ritual texts attests to change in their respective cults, then how could the ritual texts from Babylon prove cultic continuity instead? Moreover, it is difficult to see the

[1301] Beaulieu 1992.
[1302] Krul 2018: 102-106. For TU 38, see Linssen 2004: 172-183. See also above, page 310.
[1303] The ritual texts' colophons contain the note that they were copied (sometimes specified: from a wax board), collated and checked. This does not indicate that their *Vorlage* was much older than the manuscripts which we have. Presumably, new texts would have circulated and been diffused amongst different priests.
[1304] Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 391.
[1305] Da Riva 2019a and 2019b; Linssen 2004.

Babylonian cult as a continuum in light of historical reality. The Babylonian temple landscape changed considerably and irreversibly after 484 BC, not only in Uruk, where this development is extra visible through the promotion of the Anu cult, but also in Babylon.[1306]

Xerxes' reprisals fundamentally changed the structure and workings of the Esagila temple household. Indicative is the abolishment of the prebendary system, which led to a unification in the system of remuneration: during the LSC, the difference in remuneration between prebendholders and non-prebendaries reflected their dissimilar social status; however, "the shift from prebendary income to fixed allowances within the remuneration system of Esagila undoubtedly reflects a dissolution of social and legal boundaries between prebendaries and non-prebendaries."[1307] Hackl submitted that the priestly class would never have given up their prebendary rights voluntarily, since not only did they largely depend on the prebend's income, the prebend was also a guarantee for prestige and autonomy. Therefore, the dissolution of the prebendary system most likely indicates royal intervention, specifically undertaken after the revolts of 484 BC.[1308]

It is unimaginable that the economical divestment and social degradation of the priestly class of Esagila, reflected in the very phenomenon of the End of Archives and also in the unification of the system of remuneration within the temple household, would not have come with significant consequences for the temple cult. On top of that, we can only start to imagine how such a rupture impacted the affected community in less tangible terms. Such a situation would have formed the ideal impetus for cultic reform, not only out of want but also, and perhaps even more so, out of necessity.[1309] Still, such a mental response would not have followed immediately after the break. Just like we have to wait until the fourth century BC until we have institutional archives again,[1310] the ritual texts stem from the Hellenistic period only. This goes to show that one thing was essential for the temple's activity: royal involvement.

### VI.2.2 The absence of the king and the role of the priest

The king is conspicuously absent in the corpus of LB ritual texts from Babylon – the exception is formed by the NYF texts, in which, as we saw above, the king is portrayed in an ambiguous

[1306] See, most recently, the essays in Waerzeggers & Seire 2018, in particular Hackl 2018. Another but less definitive moment of crisis was formed by the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 BC.
[1307] Hackl 2018: 184.
[1308] It is necessary to remark that the double system of remuneration (prebend versus non-prebend) continued to exist in Uruk into the Hellenistic period (Hackl 2018). It would seem, therefore, that the consequences of the events of 484 had a lesser impact there than in Babylon.
[1309] See also Debourse, *in press*.
[1310] Hackl 2018: 166-172; Beaulieu 1994.

and objectified manner. Only, this does not correspond to the traditional Babylonian view on kingship, in which the king was strongly involved in the temple cult as representative and caretaker of the gods.

VI.2.2.1 Babylonian kingship

Above all and more than anything, the Babylonian king was the "provider (*zānin*) of Esagila and Ezida", at least ideologically speaking.[1311] In the NB dynasty's own inscriptions, this is the most recurring epithet, aside from many others that refer to the monarch's investment in the temple cult.[1312] Also the narratives in these inscriptions focus primarily on royal euergetism towards the temples in the form of building projects and gift-giving. This theme of kingship is so strongly emphasized that it overshadows any other royal quality, such as conqueror of enemy territory or shepherd of the people – royal characteristics that do appear more often in Neo-Assyrian royal propagandistic texts.[1313]

This Babylonian view on kingship not only justified the king's actions,[1314] but also defined his relationship to the temple and its priesthood. In contrast to the Assyrian king, who was a priest himself, the Babylonian king stood outside of the cult, or better, above it. After all, the gods had ordained his task, which was not that he serve them, but rather that he would ensure that they were served.[1315] As such, the king was exempted from performing the service of the gods, as long as he guaranteed its continuity and regularity. That meant that "the temples were sustained by resources allocated by the kings, whose judicial and military authority provided the additional security and stability required for the smooth functioning of the cult."[1316] Aside from that, the monarch's participation in cultic events of public nature would show not only his willingness to support the gods, but also, vice-versa, the gods' approval of the monarch. It is important to note that, while in reality royal action was defined by the triangular relationship king-gods-priest, in the official discourse of the NB dynasty the priesthood is invisible: the relationship is represented as bilateral, between king and gods.[1317]

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[1311] For NB royal ideology, see, above all, Waerzeggers 2015b: 187-189; 2011.
[1312] Da Riva 2008: 94 and 98-107.
[1313] See Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 217-218.
[1314] It has been suggested that the lenghty descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar's embellishments of the temples of Babylon and Borsippa found in the Wadi Brisa and Nahr el-Kalb inscriptions served to legitimate his actions in those far-away regions (Da Riva 2009: 271).
[1315] Waerzeggers 2011a.
[1316] Waerzeggers 2011a: 746. This was very much a *quid pro quo* system: in return for royal beneficence, the temple household paid taxes and supplied work forces for the king's large-scale building projects (Kleber 2008).
[1317] The same holds true for the Neo-Assyrian royal discourse (Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 448-467).

VI.2.2.2 Seleucid royal involvement in the cult and euergetism[1318]

Some modern scholars have suggested that the foreign king still fulfilled his Babylonian cultic duties during the Seleucid period.[1319] The chronicle BCHP 12, for example, has readily been adduced to demonstrate the concern and, to some degree, involvement of Seleucid kings with the traditional cult in Babylon.[1320] Other sources also attest to Seleucid rulers' acts of euergetism towards the temples.[1321] It seems rather naive to think, however, that Seleucid kings would do so solely to please the Babylonian part of their population and meet their ideal vision of kingship. A reconsideration of Seleucid royal euergetism in Babylonian temples seems in place.

After centuries of economic exploitation of and cultic disinterest in Babylonian temple institutions on behalf of the Achaemenid kings, the arrival of Alexander the Great came like a breath of fresh air upon Babylonian society.[1322] While the real transformations took place after his reign, this charismatic ruler set the tone for the century to come. During his first sojourn in Babylon already the king ordered the reconstruction of Etemenanki, the ziqqurrat, that had been disturbed and left useless by Xerxes, as a few classical authors recount.[1323] Indeed, a small group of administrative texts attests to payments made *ana dakê ša eperi ša Esagila*, "to remove the debris from Esagila".[1324] The removal of rubble was done in view of a future reconstruction of the temple tower. Renovations of temple buildings was the royal euergetic act *par excellence* in ancient Mesopotamia for millennia and by starting the works Alexander inscribed himself – consciously or accidentally – in that tradition.

The first Seleucids continued to adopt a policy of benevolence towards local temple institutions. Several documents mention renovation projects and land grants in favour of Esagila and the city of Babylon in particular, but including Borsippa and Cutha as well.[1325] Nevertheless, these benevolent acts were not one-sided expressions of Seleucid grace nor a demonstration of

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[1318] Monerie 2018; Capdetrey 2007: 179-189; van der Spek 1994.
[1319] Linssen 2004; Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993: 38-39.
[1320] Mitsuma 2013; Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993: 203. BCHP 12 recounts that Seleukos III gave money to the Babylonian priesthood to provide sacrificial animals on the 8th of Nisannu. The text is cited above, page 78. It is most commonly included in the discussion concerning the royal cult (Linssen 2004: 127-128).
[1321] Especially towards Esagila, see Monerie 2018: 95-103, 193-205, 320-324.
[1322] In recent years, much work has been done to disclose the mechanics and forms the Seleucid economy adopted in Babylonia and how it differed from the economic regime of the Achaemenids. Most importantly, there are the monographs of Monerie (2018) and Pirngruber (2017), and the Ph.D. dissertation of Hackl (2013).
[1323] Strabo, *Geog*. XVI, 1, 5; Arrian, *Anab.* VII, 17, 1-3; Diodorus XVII, 112, 3. The debate about Xerxes' role in the disruption of the ziqqurrat remains heated (pro: Baker 2008; George 2010; contra: Kuhrt 2014 and 2010; Rollinger *et al.* 2011). In any case, all modern scholars agree that the temple tower lay in ruins at the arrival of Alexander. See also the essays in Waerzeggers & Seire 2018.
[1324] Monerie 2018 fig. 18: 98-100.
[1325] Monerie 2018: 193-205, 320-324.

Seleucid interest in Babylonian royal ideology. The situation was very much one of *quid pro quo*: the Seleucid crown relied heavily on local institutions to help govern and control their territory and exploit its resources:[1326]

> "A la différence des Achéménides aux Ve s. et IVe s., les Séleucides semblent en effet avoir appuyé leur pouvoir sur ces communautés urbaines, qui leur permettaient à la fois de contrôler le territoire et de le mettre en valeur efficacement. […] Cette collaboration comportait également un volet économique: le soutien politique au profit des sanctuaires et la fondation de nouvelles *poleis* impliquaient en effet l'organisation d'un appui matériel de la part de la Couronne, qui passait notamment par la mise à disposition de terres royales au profit de ces communautés."[1327]

It is not surprising, therefore, that a disengagement is clearly observable from the latter half of the 3rd century onwards, when Antiochos III undertook grave reforms that diminished the power of local Babylonian institutions.[1328] No royal donations to Babylonian temples are attested after 200 BC.[1329] The Crown moved the power away from the temples to new centres that were Greek in nature. This process of "poliadisation" resulted in the removal of the royal subsidies on which the Babylonian temples were highly dependent.[1330]

Evidence of Seleucid interest in the temples is thus certainly attested on an economic and political level, but can the same be said for the cult? The pragmatic *quid pro quo*-nature of their relation to the Babylonian temple institutions did not necessarily have to include their willingness to participate in the local cult, as such participation was only required in the Babylonian royal ideology and not as such in the Seleucid one. While some texts record the fact that Seleucid kings or their delegates made offerings in Babylonian temples,[1331] recently Dirven has claimed that "[t]he evidence of the participation of foreign kings in traditional rituals and festivals should not be overestimated either."[1332] First, there are not so many sources recording the actual presence of the king, in person, in Babylon.[1333] Second, most instances of generous offerings can be connected to particular military events and/or the removal of treasure by or gifts to the king or his officers. A well-known example is found in the Astronomical Diary no. -273B, where it is first mentioned that an official "appointed by the king" made a sacrifice

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[1326] Monerie 2018: 193; Capdetrey 2007: 138-139.
[1327] Monerie 2018: 193.
[1328] Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 210-220.
[1329] Except perhaps what is recounted in the Gold Theft Chronicle (BCHP 15, https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-15-gold-theft-chronicle/ [last accessed 25.07.2019]), dated to 161/160 BC.
[1330] Kessler 2005: 270-271.
[1331] For references in the ADART, see Krul 2018: 171 note 145.
[1332] Dirven 2014: 10. For the sources in question, see Dirven 2014: 11 and Krul 2018: 171-172 with note 145. See also van der Spek (1994: 25-36): "Het opvallende is nu dat tempelroof vaak samengaat met vrome weldoenerij."
[1333] Only three Astronomical Diaries, for example, place the king in Babylon, performing ritual actions at each instance (ADART no. -330; II no. -204C; no. -187A; see also below page 347). Three chronicles unambiguously mention the king's participation in the Babylonian cult (BCHP 5, 6, 12; see also below page 351).

of a bull and sheep to Bēl and a few months later another royal official came to bring out "much silver, cloth, goods and utensils from Babylon and Seleukia […] to Transpotamia before the king."[1334]

A similar mechanism may lie behind the offerings made by Antiochos III recorded in BCHP 12 . It took place right after Antiochos' successful campaign in Parthia, Bactria and Gandhara. While it has been ascertained that the king was observing the NYF, it seems more likely that he was celebrating his victory.[1335] Aside from that, the gift of silver for offerings could have served as a means of "thanks" to the community that had most probably had to contribute financially to his campaigns in the form of taxes. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the historical events recorded in the Astronomical Diaries are part of the unusual rather than of the usual happenings in Babylon.[1336] When the Diarists wrote about the presence of the king in the temple, they considered it to be a highly exceptional event. Apart from that, most of the instances in which the foreign king or his delegates are mentioned, they are not performing Babylonian rituals, but rather ceremonies "in the Greek fashion" or "for the life of the king".[1337]

One exception to the general attitude of the Seleucids vis-à-vis the Babylonian cult was Antiochos I. In his capacity of co-ruler he had been installed in Babylon to govern the eastern satrapies of the Seleucid empire. A number of documents attests to this ruler's active interaction with the local priesthood. Most famous is the Antiochos Cylinder, a building inscription from Borsippa's Ezida, in which Antiochos recounts his building initiatives in that temple, as well as in Babylon's Esagila.[1338] Aside from that, a few contemporary chronicles mention Antiochos' participation in rituals in Babylon.[1339] Moreover, perhaps Berossos dedicated his *Babyloniaka* to this Seleucid ruler, although that remains contested.[1340] Nevertheless, despite his willingness to partake in those actions, Antiochos met the Babylonian priesthood only halfway: the Cylinder, being a traditional Babylonian format written in cuneiform, contains a hybrid texts which shows clear Hellenistic influence,[1341] and the rituals in Babylon in which Antiochos participated included some Hellenistic elements as well, e.g. the communal meal, a

[1334] ADART no. -273B rev. 31'-32' (I 336-347). See also van der Spek 1994: 25-26.
[1335] See also Dirven 2014: 12.
[1336] This is stressed in many of the essays gathered by Haubold, Steele & Stevens 2019. See also below in the following chapter.
[1337] See Dirven 2014: 10-11; van der Spek 1994.
[1338] Kosmin 2014b; Stevens 2014; Strootman 2013.
[1339] BCHP 5 (offerings in the temple of Sîn); BCHP 6 (ritual on the "ruin of Esagila").
[1340] De Breucker, commentary on BNJ 680 T2. However, Bach (2013) made a case to identify the ruler as Antiochos II instead.
[1341] Beaulieu 2014a.

typical element of Greek sacrificial rites. In the end, also Antiochos I failed to subscribe to all the notions of Babylonian kingship.

In summary, the Seleucid kings did not meet the requirements of Babylonian kingship. Why would they have put in the effort, after all? They "did not believe that the Babylonian gods had called them to kingship. As a consequence, they no longer felt obliged to take care of them."[1342]

VI.2.2.3 Kingly priests

In light of the absence of a person fulfilling the ideal of Babylonian kingship, it is not astonishing that no role is ascribed to the monarch in the LB ritual texts. In that sense, the king's absence in those texts is a clear indication of the late age of composition of the corpus. Nevertheless, while such a solution may seem practical and straightforward, it created one essential problem: who would now be the provider of the gods? It was crucial that someone would step in to guarantee the worship of Marduk; if not, the consequences would be disastrous for everyone.

One solution was to describe the gods as acting by themselves, without human agency. In the calendarium for Šabāṭu, for example, we find:

> "28th day of Šabāṭu: they come into (Babylon) from Borsippa and spend the night in E-su, the outer part, in the cella of Bēlet-Bābili. Sîn and Ningal spend the night in the chapel of Sîn in E-tur-kalamma. Mār-bīti spends the night in the temple of Madānu. Ninurta, the net of E-šarra, spends the night in the temple of Madānu."[1343]

Much more common, however, is that the ritual texts describe the actions of specific priests (usually in the 3rd person singular). A multitude of them are mentioned; in the Kislīmu-ritual alone thirteen cultic agents appear.[1344] This stands in contrast to other, older ritual texts, in which priests are often addressed in the 2nd person singular.[1345] Moreover, a number of new and revived priestly offices is attested in the ritual texts (cf. below). In this way, a strong focus is put on priestly agency, not only independent from the king, but also instead of the king. In a quite literal sense, the king is written out of the script. As such, the LB temple ritual texts can be considered as the result of a process in which the rules of the cult were rewritten. By being written down, the role of the priests is consolidated. Yet, the ritual texts do not merely show the practical solutions that were necessarily undertaken in absence of a Babylonian king;[1346] more

[1342] Kosmin 2018: 192; Dirven 2014: 14.
[1343] BM 32516//BM 41239 5-9 (George 2000: 293-294).
[1344] BM 32206+; see Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 90.
[1345] E.g. *Mīs pî*, *Bīt rimki*. Sallaberger 2008: 428 (RlA 8 s.v. Ritual).
[1346] By this I do not necessarily mean a king native to Babylonia, but rather one that adhered to the Babylonian royal ideology.

than that, they attest to the incompatibility between an ancient worldview and the present society. This idea is made very clear in the one ritual in which the king does appear: the NYF. In those texts, the Elder Brother, as the chosen one of Marduk, is elevated over the king.[1347] More explicitly than in the other LB ritual texts from Babylon a new ideology is outlined, in which the new role of the priesthood is legitimized. While this ideology is not explicitly present in the rest of the ritual corpus, it is much in evidence in the historiographical texts that will be discussed below.

### VI.2.3 Focus on Babylon

All of the LB ritual texts under discussion concern the cult at Babylon and involve, for the largest part, Babylonian gods. The gravitational centre of it all is Esagila, although also other temples within the city limits as well as sanctuaries in other cities appear too. There is mention of, for example, Borsippa and Kiš, and the inclusion of Cutha is implied through the presence of Nergal. All three towns lie in the close vicinity of Babylon and are thus geographically bound to it.[1348] The triad Babylon – Borsippa – Cutha or, according to their city gods, Marduk – Nabû – Nergal, is attested in NB and LB sources.[1349] Most famous is the so-called Lehmann text (MMA 86.11.299//BM 47926), dated to the year 173/2 BC (139 SE), which records the donation of the right on tithes to "the Babylonians, the Borsippeans and the Cutheans".[1350] The reference to those cities, apart from Babylon, in the ritual texts does not distort the focus on Babylon, in fact, it strengthens it, since in all the case in which a city different from Babylon is mentioned, the gods are either travelling from or towards Babylon, which thus remains of centripetal importance.

This focus on Babylon could be explained simply by the texts' *Sitz im Leben*: the ritual texts discussed here all stem from Babylon. More specifically, it can be argued that they were items in the collections of the Esagila libraries.[1351] It is therefore not surprising that all of them concern the cult at Babylon and involve Babylonian gods. It seems natural that the priests from Babylon focussed on the cult in that city. In the same vein, the Late Babylonian Uruk ritual texts concentrate on Uruk.

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[1347] See above, page 308.
[1348] Borsippa-Babylon ca. 18 km; Cutha-Babylon ca. 40 km; Kiš-Babylon ca. 12 km. See also George 2000: 260 note 7.
[1349] See also above, page 279.
[1350] For the most recent translation, see van der Spek 2016.
[1351] See above, page 324.

Yet, it is exactly this distinction between the cult in Uruk and the cult in Babylon that calls for a more profound explanation, since it is a phenomenon specific to the Late Babylonian period. Before that time, the cults in Uruk and Babylon were essentially connected: while there was certainly a local component, both were part of the national Babylonian Marduk-cult.[1352] This is very clear from the fact that during the NYF, Urukean gods travelled to Babylon to participate in the festival.[1353] The other way around, upon occasion the gods of Babylon visited Uruk as well.[1354] The schism occurred only after 484 BC, when the ultimate impetus was given for the establishment of the Anu-cult in Uruk. Connections with northern Babylonia were cut off, which is visible in the disappearance of northern Babylonian families from the evidence.[1355] The focus came to lie on distinguishing the Urukean cult from its northern Babylonian counterpart, which entailed the creation of a discourse rooted in a local, (invented) ancient tradition and history.[1356] Therefore Late Babylonian Urukean culture can be characterized as a counter-culture, which built its identity by distinguishing itself from its traditional Babylon-focussed surroundings (*distinktiv gesteigerte Identität*), all the while keeping within the confines of cuneiform culture.[1357] Similarly, the focus on Babylon can be viewed as the expression of an "us against them" feeling.

Aside from the similarities with the LB ritual texts from Uruk, there is also a considerable difference vis-à-vis earlier cuneiform texts that concentrate on Babylon. A focus on Babylon generally meant a focus on kingship, since the city had been the political capital in many periods from Hammurapi onwards.[1358] Theologically and ideologically speaking, it was also the seat of Marduk, who bestowed kingship on the human ruler. The absolute most common epithet found in the NB royal inscriptions is *šar Bābili*, "king of Babylon".[1359] However, the theme of kingship is, as described above, non-existent in the LB ritual texts from Babylon. The focus on Babylon had fully become a focus on its gods, its temple and its priesthood. This fits with the

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[1352] Jursa & Gordin 2019 and 2018.
[1353] See Zaia & Cauchi 2019. Some letters refer to this event, e.g. YOS 3, 86 (Pongratz-Leisten 1994 no. 15: 251).
[1354] YOS 7, 20 (Beaulieu 2003: 263-264).
[1355] Kessler 2004.
[1356] On these matters, see below, page 373. See also Krul 2018: 79-106; Beaulieu 1992.
[1357] See Assmann 1997: 151-160.
[1358] Thus, the prologue to the Codex Hammurapi reads: "When the august god Anum, king of the Anunnakū deities, and the god Enlil, lord of heaven and earth, who determines the destinies of the land, allotted supreme power over all people to the god Marduk, the firstborn son of Ea, exalted him among the Igigû-deities, named the city of Babylon with its august name, made it supreme within the regions of the world, and within it established for him eternal kingship whose foundations are as fixed as heaven and earth. At that time, me, Hammurapi, the prious prince who venerates the gods […] the gods Anu and Enlil, to secure the well-being of the people, named my name." (reading based on Roth 1995, https://www.soas.ac.uk/baplar/recordings/the-codex-hammurabi-prologue-i1-49-read-by-albert-naccache.html [last accessed 09.12.19]).
[1359] Da Riva 2008: 98-107.

inclusion of other temple communities that lay in the vicinity of Babylon and interacted with it; when Babylon was the seat of kingship, those other cities could not compete with it, but now that that was no longer true, a sense of solidarity amongst priestly communities found its expression in the ritual texts.

### VI.2.4 Titles and names

The tension between fiction and reality present in the Late Babylonian ritual texts is even more apparent in their use of certain titles and names referring to functionaries or places that – we assume – no longer existed in the Late Babylonian period. The most obvious example is the occurrence of the *nadītu*-priestess in some ritual texts,[1360] e.g. in the Kislīmu-ritual:

> The *nadītu*-priestess …, her reins hitched up, the curtains drawn, and she, seated, will put the *alû*-device by the barley beer. She will write seven inscriptions. She will hold the inscriptions in her left (hand) and the *alû*-device of the barley beer in her right in front of the palm fronds to pour as a libation? <am>ongst the palm fronds.[1361]

The *nadītu*-priestess is attested in Old Babylonian sources mostly from Sippar, but she appears in the Codex Hammurapi as well.[1362] There are no cultic or literary texts that elucidate her cultic function, but some information can be gleaned from correspondence, administration and legal texts. Mainly women from elite families assumed the title and it is clear that she was a respected member of the landowning class. By the end of the Old Babylonian period the *nadītu* disappears from the sources of daily life, but the title is preserved in omen and magic literature, though there she is no longer presented as a respectable person functioning at the core of society but she is rather regarded as a prostitute and sorceress who held a marginal position in society.[1363] Only a few post-OB sources mention the *nadītu* as we know her from OB times. One is the so-called Cruciform Monument, which falsely claims to be a copy of an Old Akkadian grant from the king Maništušu to the temples of Sippar: the mention of a *nadītu* can be explained in light of the forged ancientness of the text.[1364] Another NB text that refers to the *nadītu* is the En-nigaldi-Nanna cylinder of Nabonidus, in which it is described how Nabonidus installs his daughter as high priestess of Sîn, a function which is described with a number of terms including *nadītu*.[1365] It is unlikely that this should be taken as a reference to the actual revival

[1360] BM 32206+; BM 32482+ (Da Riva 2019a).
[1361] BM 32206+ III 13-16 (CD own reading).
[1362] Stol 2016: 587-590; Barberon 2012, 2009: 273-288.
[1363] E.g. *Maqlû* III 44; *Šurpu* VIII 69; see CAD N/1 64 s.v. *nadītu* Ae.
[1364] CT 32 1 iii 28 and 2 iv 7 (Finkel & Fletcher 2016; Gelb 1949).
[1365] En-nigaldi-Nanna cylinder I 17 (Schaudig 2001: 374, 376).

of the office of the *nadītu*, as the mention stands isolated. These NB references to the *nadītu* show that in the cultural memory of the priesthood she lived on as a priestess of ancient times.

It is thus difficult to explain the appearance of the *nadītu*-priestess in the LB temple ritual texts other than in terms of antiquarianism. One thing is remarkable, though. In OB Babylonia, there was a distinct group of *nadiātu* of Marduk, who, in contrast to the *nadītu*-priestesses of other gods, were allowed to marry, yet were to remain chaste.[1366] In some cases, the sister of the *nadītu* would marry the latter's husband to provide children. An interesting stipulation in the marriage contract of the *nadītu*'s sister is that she was required to carry the *nadītu*'s chair to the temple when the priestess had to perform rituals there.[1367] The stipulation points to the importance of the chair in the *nadītu*'s performance. It is therefore remarkable that when the *nadītu*-priestess appears in the Kislīmu-ritual, she is explicitly said to be seated (*ašbat*). One cannot but wonder whether there is a connection with the *nadītu*'s chair in the OB marriage contracts.[1368]

Another example of an antiquarianism is the title *mār eduppê* (written dumu *é-dup-pe-e*), which is in all likelihood an Akkadian rendering of the Sumerian term dumu é-dub-ba-a, "pupil, student" (lit.: "son of the tablet house").[1369] It does not seem, however, that the cultic functionary in the Palmfestival had anything to do with the "student": he seems to be involved in the decoration of a bull with garlands.[1370] In this case, the antiquarianism is limited to the use of the title.[1371]

A question is whether some of the titles that appear as hapax legomena in the ritual texts derive from older titles that had fallen into disuse too or if they are antiquarian creations.[1372] Thus, the priestess called *ḫullālānītu* may indeed have been a "confined one", related to the OB verb *ḫalālu*, as was one of the suggestions proposed by Da Riva.[1373] Similarly, the dumu *šá-la-la* (*māru ša lāli*) who is found in the Palmfestival, has been linked to an official titled dumu la-la

[1366] Stol 2016 Chapter 27.1; Barberon 2014.
[1367] Westbrook 1988: 110 note 41.
[1368] It it not clear how such a tradition would have withstood the test of time, however.
[1369] Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 90-91.
[1370] BM 32206+ I 9-13.
[1371] Perhaps it came to be in association with the *aḫu-rabû* ($^{lú}$šeš.gal), the title of which is also similar to the šeš gal found in an OB school context (see above, footnote 610; also Lenzi 2008a: 208 note 359).
[1372] A number of hapax legomena for, especially female, cultic officiants appears also in LB administrative documents, such as the *pirsātānītu* and the *sakkikuddītu* (Sumerian loanword?), see Jursa 2002: 108-109.
[1373] Da Riva & Galetti 2018: 203-204 note on line i 10'. The word appears only in BM 40790 and 40854+.

who is only found in an Ur III context.[1374] An otherwise unknown *ḫaṭṭaru* makes an appearance in this text as well.[1375]

A similar mechanism may be at work in the names of the cultic locales referred to in the texts. Of particular interest in this light is the occurrence of the ziqqurrat Etemenanki as cultic location in LB ritual texts. Two ritual texts mention the *bīt ziqqurrati*, the "ziqqurrat temple", which was most probably a sanctuary on top of the temple tower.[1376]

> […] will go up to the temple of the ziqqurrat and he will ignite the brazier.[1377]

A calendarium refers to Marduk and Zarpānītu "of Etemenanki".[1378] Yet, Etemenanki was no longer extant in the Late Babylonian period. Both archaeological and textual evidence shows that the tower had been vandalized at some point in time before (or at least, had not been maintained until) the arrival of Alexander the Great in Babylonia.[1379] The outer mantle had been damaged and the staircases had been removed, making it impossible to use and maintain the tower. Multiple Hellenistic texts attest to the clearance of debris from the site of the tower.[1380] Telling also is the "Ruins of Esagila" Chronicle, which describes the ominous fall of the "Crown Prince" (Antiochos I Soter in his function of co-regent) on the ruin of Esagila and, more importantly, how the prince had rubble removed by troops, wagons and even elephants.[1381] While in this case, the tower is not explicitly mentioned, Andrew George submitted that it makes most sense to consider this as a reference to the removal of debris from the temple tower rather than the Esagila-sanctuary itself, the name "Esagila" being used as a *pars pro toto* to denote the whole complex including the tower.[1382] The material that was removed was transported to the eastern part of the city where it was subsequently used to build the Greek theatre. After Antiochos I, the work was ceased and Etemenanki was left a ruin.

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[1374] Heimpel 1995. Nevertheless, a reading *mār šalāli* may be suggested as well.
[1375] See Çağirgan & Lambert 1991-3: 90 and 101 note on lines 68, 157.
[1376] The Kislīmu-ritual (BM 32206+ IV 26) and a ritual concerning the position of cultic images (BM 38293, George 1993 no. 40: 227) For the ziqqurrat temple, see George 1993: 89.
[1377] BM 32206+ IV 25-26.
[1378] SBH VII line 18 (Unger 1931 n. 8: 260).
[1379] Whether or not the tower was partly demolished by Xerxes in his reprisals against the Babylonians after the revolts remains a point of controversy. In favour of this interpretation are Baker 2008 and George 2010, 2005. Against such an explanation are Kuhrt 2010, 2014; Rollinger *et al.* 2011. It should be noted that, even when one does not adhere to a purposeful destruction by Xerxes, the ruining of the temple tower should be explained as a consequence of his actions, which left the Babylonian priesthood and elite unable to undertake the necessary maintenance and restoration of cultic buildings.
[1380] Monerie 2018: 95-103.
[1381] https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-6-ruin-of-esagila-chronicle/ (last accessed 27.05.2019).
[1382] George 2005b: 91.

Two contradicting explanations for the appearance of the ziqqurrat in Late Babylonian ritual texts have been given. On the one hand, the texts have been taken at face-value and used to prove that the temple tower remained in use as a cultic location in the Late Babylonian period.[1383] That seems very unlikely though, since the evidence is convincing enough to suggest that the ziqqurrat was demolished to such a degree that it could no longer serve a purpose in the cult.[1384] On the other hand, the texts have been interpreted to be copies of ancient texts which were created at a time when the ziqqurrat was still in use.[1385] While that might be a reasonable interpretation, this leaves the problem of why those texts were copied at a time when the ziqqurrat lay in ruins unexplained. In that sense, it may be more fitting to assume that the ziqqurrat appears as a cultic locale in the Late Babylonian ritual texts from Babylon as another expression of the tension between an idealized situation and reality.

### VI.2.5 Between invention and tradition

In the conclusion to his study of the Late Babylonian temple ritual texts, Marc Linssen wrote:

> "Having surveyed the textual evidence discussed in the previous chapters we can now conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest that the temple ritual texts do indeed describe the cultic activities as they took place during the Hellenistic period. […] The Babylonian cults practiced in the temples of Uruk and Babylon in the Hellenistic period are, as far as we can see in the sources, not different from those in the pre-Hellenistic times."[1386]

I would like to emphatically question that statement.[1387] Whereas it is undeniably true that *a cult* was actively practiced in a number of Babylonian temples in the LB period, it is, first, extremely unlikely that it was exactly the same as in pre-Persian times and, second, it is doubtful whether the ritual *texts* can tell us something about cultic *practices*.

The integration of Babylonia in the large Seleucid empire, the absence of the king and the loss of Babylonian kingship, the theological schism between Uruk and Babylon, the slow disappearance of the use of cuneiform and Akkadian, and other matters must have had a profound impact on the Babylonian temple institutions. Not only the contemporary situation proved to be problematic; in fact, it was perhaps even an improvement vis-à-vis the centuries before Alexander's arrival, when the temple cult functioned at a low ebb after Xerxes' actions. The caesura in the historical continuum created by the events that happened in Xerxes' second

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[1383] Downey 1988: 10-13; Wetzel 1938: 84.
[1384] The Ruin of Esagila Chronicle does mention an offering on the ruin. It has been suggested that it was part of a building ritual which included the removal of debris (cf. the first line of TU 45 and TU 46 reads "When the wall of a temple buckles: to demolish and restore that temple"; cf. Ambos 2004 190-192 and 178-180; Linssen 2004: 283-298).
[1385] George 2005b: 91; Oelsner 1986: 201-14, 2002: 12 fn. 27.
[1386] Linssen 2004: 167-168.
[1387] Pace Linssen.

regnal year should be given enough consideration. The initial sparsity of the cuneiform sources following these events and the ensuing changes in our documentation are more than indicative. Through the recent attention devoted to the subject, it becomes progressively clear that the temple household underwent fundamental changes that must have affected the cult.[1388] In other words, the cult would have had to be reformed for mere practical reasons, if it was to be maintained and kept going; after all, that was the temples' *raison d'être*.

Although it is partly an *argumentum ex silentio*, the mere fact that the ritual texts were written down is telling, since it seems that this was mostly done when reforms in the cult took place, as the two comparative case studies have shown. In that light, it can be claimed that the LB temple ritual texts indeed reflect the actual cultic practices of the period, to a certain degree. Yet, as such, instead of being witnesses to cultic continuity, as has been claimed,[1389] they attest to changes more than to continuity. The problem was that those practical reforms went against traditional Babylonian ideas about the role of the priest and the king. Responsibilities that the king had borne were suddenly to be shouldered by the priesthood alone.

The priests' new role in the cult had to be accounted for, in some way. Therefore, the act of writing down the rituals served another purpose aside from recording cultic change: "to provide not instruction, but authentication."[1390] Because in Mesopotamian thought authentication came with antiquity, the ritual texts transcend practicality and objectivity as they also inscribe in an ancient tradition that was impossible to implement in reality; they lie on the verge between the possible and the impossible, or better, between reality and ideal. This tension between expectation (in light of Babylonian tradition) and reality is readily perceptible in the ritual texts, particularly in the NYF texts. Furthermore, by inscribing the ritual texts in an older tradition – whether explicitly, as in the NYF texts, or implicitly, through antiquarian methods, – the present is accounted for: it has its roots in the past and is therefore authorized. In other words, the past is used to give meaning to the present.

In one ritual text this is done quite literally, because its author(s) drew inspiration from an historical event – the past, here, becomes very tangible. It concerns a prayer to Šamaš, to be recited in the morning to the rising sun.[1391] The prayer starts with an invocation to the Sun god

[1388] Monerie 2018; Pirngruber 2017; Hackl 2018 and 2013.
[1389] Pace Da Riva 2019a and 2019b; Linssen 2004.
[1390] Parker 2011: 17. While Parker wrote those words to describe Greek ritual texts, they apply in a similar way to the ritual texts under discussion here.
[1391] BM 32656 I 5'-24' (George 2000: 270-280).

as god of justice and divination, but continues with a description of how the enemy, Elam, attacked the country:

> "An aggressor attacked us, plundered our flocks. A wicked enemy came quickly against us, the evil one laid waste our countryside. The foe captured us. His bow was nocked to let the arrows fly. But we ourselves, we did not know how to grasp a quiver. Elam overwhelmed our sacred localities. We did not know the great craft of war, and the Subarian [*was as*] *hostile* to him as a ewe-lamb. Babylon, its loins have been stripped."[1392]

Regardless of the question of whether this episode refers indirectly to Kassite invasions,[1393] the actions of Persian kings Darius and Xerxes,[1394] or another event, it is obvious that this reference to historical events surpasses the limits of the "genre" of ritual texts and forms an explicit link to historical texts, albeit in the form of a lament. This fluid border between ritual texts and historiography is most clearly evidenced in the Babylon Calendar Treatise, which takes on the form of a calendarium but works more like a commentary that establishes a direct link between certain rituals and i.a. historical events, such as in the following example:[1395]

> "On Tašrītu day 6, when fire was lit on top of a brick and it was thrown into the river, instead of the Elamite or the Subarian who would (otherwise) enter Babylon and destroy the city, its brick is burnt with fire and hurled into the water. He (a cultic functionary) performed an apotropaic ritual against destruction. "Nippur, which is destroyed and hurled into water" is said with reference to (this). The *ḫašḫūru*-fruitwood and olive-wood were put on top of the brick. As for the brick that is made as a substitute for the ravaging of the city, it is said regarding (this)."[1396]

More indirect similarities between the LB ritual texts and the late historiographical record from Babylon can be found, as they share the themes of kingship, priesthood and Marduk and his cult. In the following chapters I will discuss, in turn, the historical sections in the Astronomical Diaries, the LB chronicles from Babylon, and the corpus of historical-literary texts which are preserved only in Late Babylonian versions. The focus will lie on content rather than on form, with specific attention for the triangle king-priest-Marduk.

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[1392] BM 32656 I 13'-20' (George 2000: 274, 276).
[1393] George 2000: 271-272.
[1394] Elam could be used as a archaising synonym for Persia (Nielsen 2015: 57; van der Spek 2015: 460-461).
[1395] Reynolds 2019.
[1396] Babylon Calendar Treatise III 9-15 (Reynolds 2019: 200-201).

## VI.3 Astronomical Diaries

> "[T]he authors of the Diaries found subtle ways of bridging the gap between their own hopes and expectations on the one hand and the political reality on the other."
>
> (Visscher 2019: 238)

An Astronomical Diary (*naṣāru ša ginê*, "regular observation") is "a record of observed phenomena carefully chosen from the realms of the celestial, the atmospheric, and the terrestrial."[1397] Almost a thousand such texts have been preserved, dating between 651 BC and 61 BC, with the overwhelming majority of tablets dating to the Seleucid and Parthian periods.[1398] Although a handful of Diaries were found outside of the city,[1399] it is clear that the Diaries were written in Babylon and stored in the Esagila libraries. A Diary consists commonly of five sections: (1) an astronomical section providing information about astronomical phenomena, (2) a list of prices of six commodities – barley, dates, sesame, cress, *kasû*, wool –, (3) a section dealing with the zodiacal signs in which planets were observed, (4) a record of the level of the river Euphrates, and (5) a historical section.

For a long time, the Diaries were considered to be a set of data which Babylonian scholars observed and drily recorded. In recent years, however, great effort has been made to nuance that picture. Specific attention has been paid to how the Diaries fit into the historiography of science, with a focus on their specific purpose.[1400] As Pirngruber explained, there are two interpretations. One approach saw the Diaries as from the beginning onwards purely of astronomical-mathematical nature. It was noticed that the astronomical data did not always result from mere observance, but that predicted phenomena could be recorded too. It seems that everything was calculated: when the event occurred, it was noted, but if it did not, the prediction was recorded with a note saying that no one had been able to witness it.[1401] The second, more nuanced, interpretation reads the Diaries as a corpus with an originally astrological-divinatory purpose, which slowly shifted to a more scientific aim.[1402] This explanation takes the historical sections into account, which remain unexplained in the other approach.

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[1397] Hunger & Pingree 1999: 141.
[1398] The largest part of the Diaries was published by Sachs & Hunger in the impressive series *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts* (abbr. ADART), 1988-2014. Most of them are now available online at http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/adsd/corpus (last accessed 12.06.2019). For an introduction see Pirngruber 2013. The recent volume of papers edited by Haubold, Steele & Stevens (2019) discusses a range of topics regarding the Diaries.
[1399] Steele 2019: 44.
[1400] Rochberg 2004 and 2002; Hunger & Pingree 1999.
[1401] Haubold *et al*. 2019: 3.
[1402] Pirngruber 2013; Rochberg 2004.

For the argument here, the historical sections are the most relevant. It has been stated that initial interest lay with ominous rather than with historical events, although the latter do make an appearance from early onwards as well.[1403] During the course of the fourth century BC, the ominous events became less prominent in favour of "real" historical events.[1404] The understanding of the historical sections too has advanced: it is now clear that information was carefully selected, which not only bears witness to the fact that Babylonian scholars were part of a larger Hellenistic network enabling them to collect amounts of data from which they could pick,[1405] but also entails that certain selection criteria were employed, or in other words, that specific topics were of larger interest than others. In that sense, we can speak of historiography: this careful selection of information resulted in "a narrative that implies a specific historical analysis, which is grounded in Babylonian thought about kingship and the relationship between royal action and priestly action, politics and religion."[1406] The historical sections of the Astronomical Diaries, especially of the later ones, largely focus on topics that make visible the tension between the reality and the expectations of the Babylonian priests, who were the authors of these texts,[1407] in the same vein as we find it in the NYF texts.

### VI.3.1 Priests as recorders of important events

The mere fact that the Diaries exist could actually surprise modern scholars of cuneiform culture. After all, during the first millennium BC, cuneiform scholarship had existed almost exclusively in sponsorship of the reigning king.[1408] The Diaries themselves, for example, were fully systematized during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, probably in connection with the crown's interest in promoting standardization and centralisation of many aspects of religious, social and economic life and government.[1409] Yet, the bulk of Diaries stems from the Late Achaemenid and Late Babylonian periods, when there was not only lack of a native king, but also lack of support from the foreign king. This statement should be nuanced, nevertheless. As Monerie has shown, the early decennia of Hellenistic rule saw a resurgence of royal euergetism in the form of building projects (the removal of debris of Esagila, the refurnishing of Ezida in

[1403] ADART no. -651 (rev. IV 10') records a battle between Assyria and Babylonia.
[1404] Pirngruber 2013: 205, who explains this shift in terms of the scientific paradigm-shift posited by Brown (2000). There was a resurgence of ominous events in the Diaries in the years 133-122 BC, which Pirngruber (2013: 202) linked to the unstable political situation.
[1405] Steven 2019: 213; Visscher 2019: 262.
[1406] Haubold 2019: 285.
[1407] See Robson 2019b.
[1408] Robson 2019a: 48-86.
[1409] For the early Diaries, see Steele 2019. The second quarter of the sixth century BC has been called the "Augustan threshold", highlighting Nebuchadnezzar's policy of state building and imperial consolidation, see Jursa & Gordin 2018 and 2019.

Borsippa cf. the Antiochos-cylinder) and the allocation of local authority to the Babylonian temple elites.[1410] This situation did not last long, however: Seleucid interest in the Babylonian temples quickly dwindled and the political power of the local elites was minimized during the course of the third century BC. Once more, the interdependence between scholars and king that had existed in earlier times had made place for a symptomatic disinterest in Babylonian traditions on behalf of the king, a fact which must have left the Babylonian priesthood in a state of desperation, not only financially but also ideologically.

After all, in the Mesopotamian worldview the systematic functioning of the world had always depended on the king: he was the intermediary between the gods and the people and it was his royal duty to do everything in his might to stem the gods favourable. This included the (re)building of temples, the participation in the cult and, implicitly, the patronising of the priesthood.[1411] Now there was not only a foreign king (a "detail" that might have been condoned), much worse was the fact that the king did not fulfil his duties. In other words, the lack of a native Babylonian king resulted in the loss of native Babylonian kingship, which left an unbridgeable gap between the gods and the people. At this point, the priesthood stepped in.

An illustrative example can be found in the Diary ADART no. -132B-C, which is famous for its report about the prophet of Nanāya.[1412] A "sailor" was preaching in the streets of Borsippa and making offerings to Nanāya; he was followed by a large crowd that participated in the communal meals following the sacrifices – a markedly un-Babylonian practice.[1413] One can imagine that the temple community was alarmed by this person, who proclaimed a faith that stood independent from the temples:

> "'I am the messenger of Nanāya! I have been sent concerning the strong god, the hunter of your gods!'"[1414]

The priests did as they were supposed to do and asked the king for help; in any case, the Diary in question cites a letter sent by the king, who appointed a new general.[1415] The written word of the king, however, had no avail: in the end, the assembly of the temple had to come down to the sailor to make him leave and to urge the people of Borsippa to give up their blasphemous ways. Implicitly, the Diarist, by recording the story in this way, expressed his frustration at the

[1410] See above, page 332.
[1411] See above, page 331.
[1412] Two new editions can be found in Dirven 2019 (by the hand of Eleanor Robson) and Haubold 2019, based on van der Spek 2014: 10-14.
[1413] Jursa 2016: 184-185.
[1414] ADART no. -132B left edge 1 (Robson in Dirven 2019: 181-182).
[1415] ADART no. -132B rev. 23-25.

impotence and unwillingness of the absent king to take on his duties. The true heroes of this story are the priests, who faced the crowds and the crazy (*ṭēnšu išnīma*) sailor when the king refused to take action:[1416]

> "The men of that temple assembly answered [that boatman and the people with him]: 'Retreat to your houses! Return to your cities! Do not give your city to falsehood and blasphemy! Do not bring out the gods (from their temples) like a blasphemous city!"[1417]

Not merely what is recounted in the Diaries adds to the prestige of the Babylonian priesthood; the Diaries themselves can be considered a prestige-project as well. For even though the first Diaries originated in a time when kings still sponsored scholarship, it is clear that the Babylonian priesthood kept record of what was happening long after the kings had lost their interest. The priests must have felt that they were now responsible for constancy, even if it was merely in textual form and therefore undertook to maintain this tradition of recording that had originated as a royal prestige project.

### VI.3.2 Representation of the king

Even though many studies of the historical sections of the Diaries focus on those parts in which the king does something remarkable in Babylon, the majority of references to the king (and by extension, the royal family) mention how the king is not in Babylon. In fact, there are only three attestations of the king's presence at Babylon recorded in the Astronomical Diaries: Alexander's entry in Babylon after the Battle at Gaugamela; what has been read as the participation of Antiochos III in the NYF; and another instance in which Antiochos III made offerings in temples in Babylon.[1418] The special attention paid to these three entries can perhaps be understood in relation to their length: the historical sections recounting the presence of the king at Babylon are considerably longer than the ones in other Diaries.[1419] Aside from that, it is striking that the king is represented as doing what a Babylonian king is supposed to do: partaking in the cult by offering to the Babylonian gods. In a similar vein, the way in which the king is represented while he is absent, conforms largely to the traditional Mesopotamian image of kingship. Thus, the king is shown fighting enemies, who are given archaic names such as "Gutians" or "Elamites", which are reminiscent of accounts of great Mesopotamian kings such as Narām-Sîn or Sargon of Akkad.[1420]

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[1416] Dirven 2019; Haubold 2019: 280-285.
[1417] ADART no. -132B left edge 1-3 (Robson in Dirven 2019: 181-183).
[1418] Visscher 2019: 238. ADART no. -330; ADART no. -204C; ADART no. -187A.
[1419] Note that the historical section in ADART no. -204C is not remarkably long, however, in contrast to the other two sections cited.
[1420] Visscher 2019: 255-261. These 'canonical' enemies are the ultimate Other throughout all the LB text corpora discussed here.

Nevertheless, the accounts about the king's actions and whereabouts show some influence from non-Babylonian traditions as well. Telling is the inclusion of the royal family in the Seleucid Diaries. Such involvement of the members of the royal household is a typical feature in Seleucid texts.[1421] Thus, the death of queen Stratonice, wife of Antiochos I Soter, is mentioned in the Diaries, even when she was no longer the reigning queen.[1422] Another feature are the sacrifices "for the life of the king", often adding "and his wife and sons".[1423] They are attested in the Diaries from the reign of Antiochos III onwards and continue into the Parthian period; yet, only in the Seleucid Diaries is the king mentioned together with his family. These offerings could have served as substitute for the king's actual presence in the Babylonian cult.[1424]

Moreover, in most accounts mentioning the king, he is in places outside of not merely the city of Babylon, but of Babylonia. In fact, "[r]egions beyond Babylonia are mentioned with regard to a very restricted range of events, all of which centre on the ruler."[1425] By relating those far-away events, the authors of the Diaries linked themselves to the wider empire on the one hand and to the king on the other. However, most of all, these accounts emphasize the absence of the king in Babylon and they read as an unfulfilled longing to belong. A further "sense of alienation" can be read in the citation of letters sent by Arsacid kings to the city.[1426] Before the Parthian period, the Diaries described decisions made by the king in paraphrase, but from that time onwards, the messages sent by the king were quoted directly. Since he wrote in the first person, this resulted in an almost tangible presence of the king in the text. By doing so, the authors of the Diaries seemed to have wanted to emphasize the role played by the king in the city in spite of his absence.

Finally, it should be repeated that the Diaries are a compilation of carefully selected events. This is very obvious in the accounts about the king.[1427] In reality, there was no king at Babylon most of time, yet his person is relatively often mentioned in the Diaries. A serious attempt was made at depicting him as a decent Babylonian king, fulfilling his duties for the country. The

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[1421] The same has been pointed out for the Antiochos-cylinder, in which queen Stratonice is included. Cf. Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1991: 83-85. Visscher 2019: 253-254.
[1422] ADART no. -253B$_1$. In this light, the reference to the death of the mother of Nabonidus in the Nabonidus Chronicle, written in the same historical context, may be understood as well.
[1423] Clancier 2011: 752-774; Linssen 2004: 124-128 with footnote 798 for references in the Diaries; Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993: 116-118, 202-210.
[1424] Visscher 2019: 253. For the ruler cult in Seleucid Babylon, see Pirngruber 2010.
[1425] Stevens 2019b: 204.
[1426] Visschier 2019: 245-252; Haubold 2019: 276-277. For a historical assessment of the cited letters, see Sciandra 2012.
[1427] Sic Visscher 2019: 262.

tension between expectation and reality, though, is always underlying the accounts and is most obvious in the fact that the king was not where he was supposed to be: in Babylon.

### VI.3.3 Babylon and Esagila

With nearly half of the total references to places in the Astronomical Diaries, Babylon is by far the most mentioned toponym.[1428] The Diaries are thus clearly "Babylon-centred",[1429] something that should not be taken for granted. It is often explained by the fact that the authors of the Diaries were inhabitants of Babylon. Still, that explanation can only answer the question of why there are so many references to events in Babylon, but not why there are so few to events happening outside the Babylonian heartland.[1430] A part of the answer must be that the Diaries were meant for a Babylon-internal audience. This is clear from the fact that locations within Babylon are never indicated with a toponymic affiliation, whereas locations outside Babylon are always followed by the name of the city, e.g. "the *apadana* in Seleukia": the readers would have had to be acquainted with the topographical features of the city of Babylon to understand what was meant.

Still, not everything is explained in this way, for not only is there a strong focus on the city of Babylon, the Diaries seem to concentrate on a limited set of locations within the city. Kathryn Stevens discovered that most places mentioned are where the king and/or his officials interacted with the local population, with almost half of the references being to Esagila and its gates.[1431] This suggests that there is more at play here than meets the eye: one should not deny the influence of the authors' and intended audience's context (which was in all probability Esagila), but clearly a prominent reason to mention a specific location was also that it was connected to the king. In that light, the limited amount of references to places outside Babylonia can be accounted for too: there was only interest in a foreign location if the king was there.[1432]

The discrepancy between the expected location of the king (Babylon) and his actual whereabouts (not Babylon) is stressed by the Babylon-focus of the Diaries. By emphasising the actions of the king that conformed to Babylonian standards, the authors of the Diaries seem to have tried to evade the problem of his absence, but in the end, they did not succeed.

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[1428] Stevens 2019b: 198.
[1429] Sachs & Hunger 1988: 36.
[1430] Only 16% of places referred to in the Diaries can be found outside of Babylonia, Stevens 2019b: 198.
[1431] Stevens 2019b: 224.
[1432] Briant 2002: 985.

### VI.3.4 NYF and the Diaries

Seven Diary-entries have been read as evidence for the performance of the NYF.[1433] Some tell us about rituals that were observed at the beginning of Nisannu, such as the performance of sacrifices, the recitation of incantations and the playing of a drum.[1434] A few attest to the gathering of groups of people and feasting.[1435] References to the king and royal family have been read as evidence for their participation in the procession of gods.[1436] So too was the Diary mentioning the "[taking of the] hands" of Ištar.[1437] However, the word *akītu* does not appear in the Diaries and the question of whether these few attestations indeed refer to the NYF as we know it from pre-Persian sources remains. On top of that comes the problem of the Day One Temple, which is clearly not the same as the *akītu*-house.[1438] It should be stressed again that the Diaries seem to have recorded exceptional events in the historical sections rather than what was usual. If we were to take these few notes as references to the occurrence of the NYF, then that would mean that the NYF took place only very rarely: it was exceptional enough to record it in the Diaries.

Perhaps more relevant in this discussion are the themes of focus in the historical sections of the Diaries: absence of kingship, prominence of the priesthood and Babylon. The authors of the Diaries had similar interests as the people who wrote the NYF texts. This, together with the fact that both corpora share a specific language,[1439] show that they were created in the same context, as they exhibit the same concerns and issues that relate to an incongruous reality.

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[1433] See above, Chapter III.3.1.
[1434] ADART no. -226A obv. 4', 22'-23'; no. -170A obv. 1'.
[1435] ADART no. -161A$_{1-2}$ obv. 27'-29'; no. -77A obv. 10'-12'.
[1436] ADART no. -245A obv. 12-13; no. -204C rev. 14-19.
[1437] ADART no. -140A obv. 21-22.
[1438] See above, page 82.
[1439] See Chapter V.1.

## VI.4 Chronicles

> "Put within its proper context, the [Nabonidus] Chronicle offers a window on how one particular community in Hellenistic Babylon constructed its past."
>
> (Waerzeggers 2015a: 118)

Closely related to the Astronomical Diaries are the Chronicles from Babylon.[1440] Even though we tend to speak of Babylonian chronicles as a coherent corpus, they "are a miscellaneous, ill-defined group of texts".[1441] Still, some rough divisions can be made: there is a group of chronicles stemming from Neo-Babylonian Borsippean archives and another one from the LB Esagila libraries in Babylon.[1442] Within the group of chronicles stemming from LB Babylon, a broad distinction can be made between contemporary chronicles on the one hand and historical chronicles on the other. The former are texts that describe events that are (roughly) contemporary to their time of redaction, while the latter recount a distant past. As such, the former group can be compared to the historical sections of the Diaries, while the latter lies closer in character to the LB historical-literary texts, which are discussed in the following chapter.

### VI.4.1 Contemporary chronicles

The corpus of chronicles to be published in *Babylonian Chronographic Texts from the Hellenistic Period* (BCHP) consists of twenty texts recounting events that happened sometime between the Macedonian conquest (331 BC) and the reign of Mithridates II (94 BC).[1443] One might suggest to add one more text here, namely the Artaxerxes III chronicle (ABC 9), because the assumed context of this corpus was the Esagila libraries, which was in use from the reign of Artaxerxes II into the first century BC.[1444] Thus, the Artaxerxes III account would fit into that time frame.

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[1440] A direct dependency between both genres should be excluded, however. See Steele 2019: 38-41. It has been suggested that the Diaries could have been a source for the LB Chronicles from Babylon (Waerzeggers 2012: 298; Glassner 2004: 46-47). Pirngruber (2013: 205) suggested that the historical sections of the Diaries slowly replaced the Diaries, which would explain why they became more elaborate. For a study of the overlap in recounted events between both corpora, see Tuplin 2019: 107-111.
For Mesopotamian chronicles, see foremost Waerzeggers 2012, Wessels, *unpublished* and Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber *forthcoming* (BCHP) https://www.livius.org/sources/about/mesopotamian-chronicles/ (last accessed 12.06.2019). See also Glassner 2004 (CM); Del Monte 1997; Grayson 1975b (ABC).
[1441] Waerzeggers 2012: 286.
[1442] Waerzeggers 2012. See also above, page 66.
[1443] Finkel, van der Spek & Pirngruber, *forthcoming*. The translations are accessible online at https://www.livius.org/sources/about/mesopotamian-chronicles/ (last accessed 13.06.2019).
[1444] The choice for a "Hellenistic" corpus is perhaps unfortunate in that sense. For the LB Esagila libraries, see Joannès 2000: 703.

The primary focus of the contemporaneous chronicles is on political and military events.[1445] The chronicler records battles, campaigns, plunder, destruction, death of kings and members of the royal family, and successions of kings. To a secondary degree, attention is paid to cultic and religious events, but almost always in connection to the king or a high royal functionary. Another point of focus are the repair works undertaken mostly in Babylon, in particular to its temples and walls, upon royal initiative (or the lack thereof). A last topic of importance is the establishment of justice and the execution of penalties. In other words: the chronicles seem to follow the actions of the king (and by extension of his power also the crown prince and high officials) and how they affected Babylon in its social, physical and cultic capacities. Aside from that, they relate things that are supposed to be done by the king, but are no longer. In that sense, the chronicles overlap in focus with the historical sections in the Astronomical Diaries.

The focus on the king is extended in the chronicles to include the crown prince (or better, co-ruler) and the king's officials as well. As in the Diaries, the king himself is rarely in Babylon and faraway places are only mentioned when the king is present there. An exception is the crown prince Antiochos I: he spent some years at Babylon when he was co-regent of the eastern parts of the Seleucid empire.[1446] In the chronicles that relate the events that took place during his presence in Babylon, particular attention is given to the participation of Antiochos I in some rituals. Thus, he performed offerings in two temples of Sîn in Babylon at the instruction of "a Babylonian".[1447] In another chronicle, it is recorded how Antiochos fell when he was making offerings on the ruins of Esagila.[1448] The verb used (*indaqut*) indicates that this was not part of the rite in the sense of prostration, but that he literally fell.[1449] This would have been considered very ominous, which could be a reason for recording the event. Aside from that, the event was remarkable perhaps because it constituted a Greek rather than a Babylonian ritual, since the text mentions how the people present shared a meal after the offering. The communal meal was a part of the Greek offering rite, not of the Babylonian.[1450]

The general absence of the king in Babylon may perhaps explain the small number of accounts of cultic events in these chronicles. Telling in this regard are the orders of the king to perform

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[1445] See Wessels 2016: 20 for a tabular overview of the described events.
[1446] BCHP nos. 5 and 6. See https://www.livius.org/articles/person/antiochus-i-soter/ (last accessed 13.06.2019). His activity is not merely limited to Babylon, as the building inscription in Ezida in Borsippa shows. For the Antiochos-cylinder, see Beaulieu 2014a, Kosmin 2014b, Stevens 2014. Two chronicles (BCHP 6 and 7) suggest that Antiochos personally supervized the construction works.
[1447] BCHP no. 5 obv. Who exactly this "Babylonian" is, is unclear.
[1448] BCHP no. 6.
[1449] Sic the note on line obv. 6' https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-6-ruin-of-esagila-chronicle/ (last accessed 13.06.2019).
[1450] Dirven 2014: 10.

rituals on his behalf despite his absence. Twice, offerings are made by order of the king, once in the sixth month Ululu and once in Nisannu.[1451] The latter has been understood as a reference to the NYF, even though the text remains quiet about the reason for the offering.[1452] However, the large size of the offering (11 oxen, 100 sheep, 11 ducks) is an indication for the importance of the event for which it was meant, as is the rare involvement of the king in the cult.[1453] The chronicles contains no other mentions of cultic celebrations that could be linked to the NYF.[1454] Another typically recorded cultic event is the offering for the life of the king[1455] and offerings in the Greek fashion.[1456] The inclusion of those rituals in the chronicles may be due to their exceptional nature in the eyes of the Babylonian priests.

The same temple functionaries are attested in the contemporary chronicles as in the Diaries: the *šatammu*, the *kiništu* and the lamentation-priests. Note that the Elder Brother is not attested once in either corpus. An exceptional example is found in BCHP 1 in which a priest is called by name.[1457] He is the only named Babylonian in the contemporary chronicles. The marking of the death of this individual shows some of the entitlement and pride the authors of the chronicles must have felt at their own work, because otherwise, only the death of kings is recorded. Furthermore, just like the Diaries, the chronicles may have been considered to be a prestige-project which the priests of Esagila undertook in spite of the lack of royal patronage.

Much stronger than the Diaries, finally, the chronicles stress the otherness of the forces at work in the city through the use of names, mostly.[1458] Whenever troops are mentioned, they carry an onomastic or toponymic affiliation, e.g. "Hanaean troops", "troops of the king", "troops of Seleukos", or simply "enemy troops"; people are either named or belong to a specific population group; the chronicles are also specked with personal and topographic names. Through the use of these distinguishing markers, a strong sense of a feeling of "us against them"

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[1451] BCHP no. 6 obv. 13'-14', BCHP no. 12. Note also BCHP no. 14, in which it is said that the *politai* moved to Seleukia-on-the-Tigris at the command of king Antiochos IV.
[1452] See also above, Chapter III.3.1.
[1453] Kosmin (2018: 37-38) related it to the centennial of the Day One Temple.
[1454] The reference to the "festival of Bēl" in BCHP 1 13 cannot have referred to the NYF since it took place in the eighth month.
[1455] BCHP 5 obv. 9, 11; BCHP 12 obv. 6'; BCHP 16 (tithes for regular offerings); BCHP 18B 21'-24', 29'; BCHP 18C 10'; BCHP 19 rev. 9'.
[1456] BCHP 7 rev. 3'; BCHP 18B 21'; BCHP 11 rev. 2': it seems hardly possible that these offerings were performed "withi[n Esagila]", as has been reconstructed. This would be the only reference to Greeks entering Esagila for the performance of a ritual. As stated above, in the Diaries the Greeks never go further than Esagila's gates.
[1457] The Kidinnu mentioned in this chronicle may or may not have been the Kidenas found in the classical record; see Stevens 2019: 55-57 and https://www.livius.org/articles/person/kidinnu-the-chaldaeans-and-babylonian-astronomy/ (last accessed 13.06.2019).
[1458] The description of the Greek *politai* in BCHP 14 is illlustrative. There it serves as an almost literary device for distinguishing those *politai* from the native Babylonians against whom they are fighting.

or "us distinct from them" is created.[1459] This is especially visible in the recurring motif of the movement of persons, troops and goods in and out of Babylon, its palace and temples. Babylon thus remains the centre of focus, from which everything and everyone else is observed.

It remains difficult to ascertain whether this mutual exclusivity was a mere expression of the feeling of and a tool for self-validation or actually the socio-political reality of the time. In this respect, van der Spek has spoken of "apartheid" in the sense that there were (at least) two distinct communities in Babylon – one Babylonian, one Graeco-Macedonian – that mutually excluded each other.[1460] That view has been nuanced more recently by Clancier and Monerie, who see some levels of interaction on the political plane.[1461] In fact, most events recorded in the chronicles attest to moments of contact between the Babylonians and "outside forces".

In summary, the contemporary chronicles share the same *topoi* found in the Diaries, with a focus on the king and the effect of his actions on Babylon, its native inhabitants and its temples. The incongruity between ideal and present is less tangible, though, because the emphasis lay more on military and political events and less on religion and cult. Nevertheless, the chronicles' lack of attention for cultic events can also be understood as a way to circumnavigate the problematic absence of the king in the cult.

### VI.4.2 Historical chronicles

The historical chronicles are of different nature than the contemporary ones, not simply because they recount the past instead of the present, but also because the different motifs recognized in the contemporary chronicles appear more crystallized in the historical ones.[1462] As such, the accounts in the latter are far more contrasted to the contemporary reality, which in turn emphasizes the sense of incongruity experienced by the authors vis-à-vis their own environment. While the past is reinterpreted in light of and used to validate the present, it is clear that the present is no longer the same as the past. The focus of the historical chronicles lies on periods of regime change, which is often explained in terms of a good king replacing a bad king. Good kings are righteous and support the cult (of Marduk especially); bad rulers are evil and neglect the gods and Babylon. When necessary, the priests step in to heroically or martyrlike take upon themselves what the king refuses to do.

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[1459] "Otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such." (Staszak 2009: 43).
[1460] Van der Spek 2001: 453 and 2009:4.
[1461] Clancier 2012c: 323-324; Clancier & Monerie 2014b: 215 note 131.
[1462] The historical chronicles from LB Babylon are: ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle), ABC 17 (Religious Chronicle), ABC 22 (Chronicle P), ABC 23 (Market Prices).

The *Nabonidus Chronicle* is exemplary here. It narrates the transition from Neo-Babylonian to Persian rule, i.e. from Nabonidus to Cyrus.[1463] Assyriologists have long read the composition as Persian propaganda, displaying Cyrus as an example of good kingship while depicting Nabonidus as the ultimate bad ruler.[1464] The distinction is not so black-and-white, however. It is true that the sentiment is clearly anti-Nabonidus, but it is therefore not unambiguously pro-Persian.[1465] Telling is the episode in which the visit of Cambyses to the Egidrikalamasummu is described.[1466] What stands out is the note saying that the crown prince was wearing Elamite dress; probably, that was the reason why this episode was chosen: it was a very inappropriate and even insulting way of acting within the strict Babylonian religious space.

Still, Nabonidus appears as the ultimate villain in this text: not only is he not in Babylon, he furthermore refuses to adhere to traditional mourning and cultic customs. In fact, it is because Nabonidus is not in Babylon that he breaks the rules of the land. When the queen mother dies, the king does not attend the funerary rites, while the prince and some officials do observe the ceremony. Similarly, the absence of Nabonidus resulted in his biggest deficiency: his unwillingness and inability to participate in the NYF. At four instances, the text explains that the festival could not take place because the king was not present. The formulary is as follows:

> "The N$^{th}$ year: the king (was) in Tayma (while) the prince, the officers, and his army (were) in Akkad. The king did not come to Babylon in the month Nisannu. Nabu did not come to Babylon. Bēl did not come out. The *akītu*-festival did not take place."

The interruption of the NYF is also attested in the *Religious Chronicle*, where diverse formulations are used. Despite the form, it is obvious that the prime reason why the festival was interrupted was the absence of the king. In this light, it is remarkable that *Chronicle P* does not contain a reference to the non-observance of the NYF, because it does state that Bēl remained in Assyria for 66 years. The author abstained from specifying what that meant for the cult and for the NYF in particular, perhaps because its interruption was the result of the absence not of the king but rather of the god: in this case, the error lay not with the king, but with the inhabitants of Babylon who had angered their patron god so much that he had left the city.

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[1463] ABC 7. See Waerzeggers 2015a.
[1464] Zawadzki 2010; Kratz 2002: 145; Von Soden 1983: 61.
[1465] Waerzeggers 2012: 105-106.
[1466] iii 24-28. This episode is often read as the participation of Cambyses in the NYF, because it happened on the fourth day of Nisannu. In that case, the crown prince would have participated instead of his father the king, perhaps because the queen had just died, as the chronicle describes. Note, nonetheless, that the temple Egidrikalamasummu is not explicitly linked to the festival; what is clear, is that it is of importance for royal (re-)investiture, as the temple name "House which bestows the sceptre of the land" suggests. The chronicler does seem to have wanted to depict the first Persian rulers as willing to conform to the rules of Babylonian kingship (going to the temple), but shows that they were unable to do so (the Elamite dress).

However, even when kings did not fulfil their cultic duties, the priesthood made sure that the cult could continue "as in normal times". Both the Nabonidus and the Religious Chronicle are very explicit about this fact, giving a prominent role to the Elder Brother.[1467] Sometimes, the execution of their responsibilities formed a threat to the lives of the priests, but this did not prevent them from performing them, as we can read in the Nabonidus Chronicle:

> "Afterwards, Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month, the shield-(bearing troops) from Gutium surrounded the gates of Esagil. (But) interruption (of the rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples there was not, and no date (for a performance) was missed."[1468]

While the priests are always depicted as pious and even heroic, kings are attributed a more ambiguous role. What may come as a surprise in these chronicles, is that the good kings are not always "native" Babylonians. In other terms, being a good Babylonian king was not (really) dependent on a person's descent, but on his actions. Thus, in Chronicle P, the Kassite king Šuzigaš seems to be perceived as evil, because he killed the grandson of the Assyrian king, who performed good works in Babylonia.[1469] Kurigalzu II, on the other hand, was depicted as a good ruler who defeated Elam and Assyria.[1470] Assyrians too are not unambiguously perceived as negative: here as well their actions and not their nationality define them as good kings. Thus, Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur's mention in Chronicle P should be seen in a positive light, because he returned the statue of Marduk to Babylon that had been abducted 66 years earlier by Tukulti-Ninurta I. The latter, in turn, is an absolute vile ruler, who committed all of the worst atrocities a king in Babylon could pursue:

> "He destroyed the wall of Babylon and put the Babylonians to the sword. He took out the property of Esagila and Babylon amid the booty. He removed the statue of the great lord Marduk from his dwelling-place and sent him to Assyria."[1471]

This last example illustrates best how in the historical chronicles the same points of focus appear as in the contemporary chronicles and the Astronomical Diaries. Babylon is the centre of action, a plaything in the hands of kings who are often evil and refuse to take responsibility, but sometimes turn out to be doing the right thing and protect the city's inhabitants and gods. Where kings fail, the priests are always there to ensure continuity and a degree of stability by

[1467] Waerzeggers 2015a: 113-114.
[1468] Nabonidus Chronicle iii 16-18.
[1469] ABC 22 i.8'-9': "He dug wells and settled people on fertile lands to strengthen the guard."
[1470] The land of Elam is presented as one of Babylon's primary enemies. See below.
[1471] Chronicle P IV 4'-6'. Note that exactly these atrocities are the ones that appear in the "negative confession" of the king in the NYF texts, but there they are negated and put in reversed order. See also Pongratz-Leisten 1997a.

providing for the gods. The historical chronicles thus mirror the contemporary situation of the priests who wrote them and inscribe it in a (distant) past, thus legitimising the present.

Even though the historical chronicles under discussion all survive in only a single manuscript which was probably housed in the LB Esagila libraries, they have never really been read within that context.[1472] Worse, they are part of "the master narrative for large tracts of Babylonian history",[1473] even when it is quite obvious that the compositions were not contemporary to the events which they describe. We have to be careful with the information about Mesopotamian history gleaned from these texts, because they were written with a clear bias – as the topics discussed above show – and from retrospect. This has a few consequences, three of which are highly relevant here.

(1) Two of the historical chronicles show close affinity with the Astronomical Diaries, a fact that roots them more firmly in a Late Babylonian framework.[1474] The so-called "Market Price Chronicle" is an unprecedented historical list of market prices in the reign of past kings such as Hammurapi and Nebuchadnezzar I. Although none of the lines are fully preserved, it would seem that the same commodities as the ones recorded in the Diaries are listed: barley, dates, sesame, cress, *kasû*, wool. Thus, the present interest of the Diarists for those commodities was projected onto the past, which makes it highly unlikely that the data represented are real. The second chronicle that is closely related to the Diaries is the "Religious Chronicle", in which ominous and religious events taking place in Babylon around the turn of the millennium are described. As mentioned above, the historical sections of the Astronomical Diaries originally focussed on ominous phenomena, which later diminished in importance, with a resurgence of ominous recordings in the years 133-122 BC which has been linked to the political turmoil and general state of war in which the Babylonians found themselves at that time.[1475] Here too, the chronicle expresses an interest otherwise encountered in the Diaries.

(2) It seems unnecessary to make a distinction between these so-called chronicles and the historical-literary texts discussed below. In fact, it is difficult to keep a strict delimitation of both genres. It has been pointed out repeatedly that the historical chronicles are not dry accounts of events, but exhibit a certain literary quality.[1476] Especially the Nabonidus Chronicle and

[1472] With the exception of the Nabonidus Chronicle, which Waerzeggers (2015a) contextualized and fit into the Hellenistic-period Babylonian discourse.
[1473] Waerzeggers 2012: 285.
[1474] Tuplin 2019: 107-111; Waerzeggers 2012: 297.
[1475] Pirngruber 2013: 202. See the list in Pirngruber 2013: 206-208 for ominous events in the Diaries.
[1476] About the literary quality of the Nabonidus Chronicle, see Waerzeggers 2015a: 106-109; of Chronicle P, see Waerzeggers 2012: 288 note 15.

Chronicle P have a structured plotline that is advanced with different narrative rhythms: moments of fast actions are characterized by a rapid succession of finite verbs, whereas extensive descriptions of places or objects slow the narrative down. Moreover, the careful selection of historical events that are subsequently moulded into patterns shows a genuine historiographic approach to the past as it is encountered in the historical-literary texts as well.

(3) It should be clear that we cannot take the information about the NYF at face value.[1477] Regardless of whether or not the authors of these texts had access to sources giving them accurate information about the festival (such as year names or royal inscriptions),[1478] it is obvious that they made a selection in order to convey a certain message. Therefore, instead of using these late chronicles as sources for the observance of NYF in earlier times, it is much more useful to read them as sources about how the NYF was perceived in the time of the authors. A few things stand out. First, the non-occurrence of the festival is most often recorded. If we assume that the extraordinary rather than the ordinary was written down, then we can conclude that the interruption of the NYF was not perceived as the norm. Second, the absence of the king prevented the festival from taking place, which means that his presence was of crucial importance. The idea of the NYF was thus inextricably linked with the king and by extension with kingship. Third, the most important event of the festival was the procession, since the phrase used to indicate that the NYF had happened (or not) was that "Bēl had (not) come out (*ūṣâ*)".[1479] Linked to this is the fourth characteristic event: the visit of Nabû. His presence at the festival was required too. Note, however, that the Religious Chronicle sometimes omits the part about Nabû.

Fifth, attention should be drawn to the fact that the historical chronicles explicitly call the NYF the *akītu*-festival (*akītu* or *isin akīti*), something we do not encounter in the contemporary chronicles nor the Astronomical Diaries. This remains difficult to explain. It is too easy to ascribe it to mere chance. The exclusivity of the word *akītu* in the historical record could be seen to suggest that the *akītu*-festival was considered to be part of the past but did no longer have a place in the present. The fact that the NYF texts are not labelled as instructions for the "*akītu*-ritual" suggests the same. In turn, we would have to ask why the designation "*akītu*" was no longer relevant for the Seleucid priests. This is even more speculative, but it could be that

[1477] See above, page 89.
[1478] See Waerzeggers 2012: 292-294 for a discussion of the Borsippean chronicles and the sources possibly used by their authors.
[1479] In the Religious Chronicle (ii.2), there is furthermore one reference to the "procession of Bēl" (*aṣê* $^{d}$*bēl*), but since the line is broken it is not undoubtedly clear whether it refers to the *akītu*-procession.

the name was no longer used because the ceremony it described, did no longer exist. It seems reasonable to assume that the *akītu* as it was perceived by the authors of the chronicles, with the presence of the king and Nabû and the procession, was a ritual that could no longer be celebrated in the contemporary present. Because the contents of the ritual had changed considerably, it was not proper to keep using the term *akītu*. In other words, the *akītu* could no longer be observed and had been replaced with another ritual to celebrate the New Year.

## VI.5 Historical-literary texts[1480]

> "The Babylon priesthood engaged in an imaginative, literary (re-)construction of its past and of its role in the present and the future, in response to the new political situation in which the priests found themselves after the fall of the Persian empire.
>
> (Jursa, *forthcoming*)

Even though LB historical-literary texts figure as important sources in the modern reconstruction of Mesopotamian history, they are not well understood as a corpus, a fact that was stated by Grayson in 1975 and is still true today.[1481] These compositions are often assumed to have been copied from older originals,[1482] although no precursors are known for most of them. Furthermore, these texts show very specific interests and are far from being objective. Aside from that, rather than describing long tracts of the historical past, the historical-literary texts focus on periods of regime change: the Late Kassite period, the end of Assyrian rule and the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, as well as its ending.

More recent research has aimed at uncovering the context in which this corpus was made and the motifs and incentives that led to its creation in the first place.[1483] While a full linguistic study of the texts is still in the making,[1484] it has convincingly been argued that the historical-literary corpus as it is outlined below fits fully in the LB framework and was, in the same vein as the temple ritual texts, Astronomical Diaries and chronicles, the product of the Babylonian priesthood of Babylon.[1485]

### VI.5.1 Corpus

The designation "literary-historical" is an umbrella term that covers a range of sub-genres.[1486] A first category consists of what Grayson called "historical epics"; they are "poetic narratives concerned with the activities of kings".[1487] However, they do not focus on royal activity alone and should be viewed as more general "narratives of events in a more or less distinct historical past."[1488] Four histories are set in the Kassite period, three of which relate to the Elamite

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[1480] This chapter is largely based on the article "Late Babylonian Priestly Literature from Babylon", which Michael Jursa and I wrote together (2020).
[1481] Grayson (1975a: xi): "The type of literature, historical-literary, which these compositions represent is poorly known and little studied.".
[1482] Grayson 1975a: 9; Lambert 1994: 67.
[1483] Jursa, *forthcoming*; Jursa & Debourse 2020; Debourse & Jursa 2019; Jursa & Debourse 2017; De Breucker 2015; Waerzeggers 2015a; Frahm 2005.
[1484] This is one of the aims of the project "Late Babylonian Priestly Literature: Ideology in Context" directed by Michael Jursa (Vienna) and Nathan Wasserman (Jerusalem).
[1485] Therefore, it has been termed "Late Babylonian Priestly Literature" by Jursa; more on that below, page 369.
[1486] As enumerated by Grayson (1975a: 4-9): historical epics, prophecies, pseudo-epigraphical letters.
[1487] Grayson 1975a: 7. Foster (2007: 19) calls these texts "royal epics".
[1488] Jursa & Debourse 2020: 259.

invasions of the twelfth century BC,[1489] while another refers to a slightly later period.[1490] The Neo-Babylonian dynasty is treated in three more texts.[1491] A number of published and unpublished fragments can most probably be added here.[1492]

A second category of LB historical-literary texts is formed by the pseudo-epigraphical letters. A few years ago, Frahm drew attention to the fact that we have a growing body of Late Babylonian tablets containing letters written by or addressed to earlier kings, that, moreover, share a number of characteristics.[1493] Most seem to be written on tablets in a landscape format; they contain similar phraseology; they exhibit a degree of poetic language – a fact that calls for an inclusion in the "historical-literary" text group; and they "show a conspicuous interest in royal legitimacy".[1494] Quite certainly, because of their late date, the letters are pseudo-epigraphical, although Frahm proposes that some of them could at least be based on genuine letters. Three letters are set at historically significant moments: two reflect the correspondence between Nabopolassar and the last Neo-Assyrian ruler Sîn-šarru-iškun;[1495] another is attributed to an Elamite ruler.[1496] Three further pieces of correspondence are set in the past but instead of referring to specific historical events, they relate to Aššurbanipal's interest in the knowledge of priests of Babylon and Borsippa and his requests for tablets for his libraries.[1497]

A last historical-literary text, in spite of what its name suggests, is the Dynastic Prophecy.[1498] It was designated as "prophecy" not only because the text is structured as a list of *vaticinia ex eventu* – predictions after the event – but also because some interpret the last event as a real prediction. Others, however, have argued that the whole text refers to past events.[1499] This is also how I understand it here. After some introductory lines, the text describes the reigns of multiple kings in Babylonia, starting with Nabopolassar and ending with the defeat of

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[1489] BM 34062 (a so-called "Kedorlaomer" text; the obverse was re-edited in Jursa & Debourse 2017; Lambert 1994); BM 35496 (another one of the Kedorlaomer texts; Foster 2005: 374-375); BM 35322 (Grayson 1975a BHLT 5: 47-55).
[1490] BM 34104+ ("Adad-šumu-uṣur epic"; Grayson 1975a BHLT 6: 56-77).
[1491] BM 34793 ("Epic of Nabopolassar"; Da Riva 2017a); BM 34113 ("Amīl-Marduk epic"; Debourse & Jursa 2019); BM 45690 ("King of Justice", the protagonist of which is either Nebuchadnezzar II or Nabonidus; Schaudig 2001: 579-588).
[1492] See, for example, Grayson 1975a: 101-107.
[1493] Frahm 2005. Mary Frazer wrote a Ph.D. dissertation on the topic, which remains unavailable at the moment. Texts published in her dissertation are mentioned in Jursa & Debourse 2020, but only the texts available in other publications will be included here.
[1494] Frahm 2005: 44.
[1495] BM 55467 (Gerardi 1986); BM 34637 (CT 51, 73).
[1496] BM 35404 (Foster 2005: 370-371).
[1497] BM 28825 (Frame & George 2005 no. 2); BM 45642 (Frame & George 2005 no. 1); BM 34716 (Jursa & Debourse 2020).
[1498] BM 40623 (Jursa, *forthcoming*; Kosmin 2018: 172-177; Waerzeggers 2015b: 205-208; Neujahr 2012: 58-71, 2005; van der Spek 2003: 311-340; Grayson 1975a: 24-37).
[1499] Jursa, *forthcoming*; Geller 1990: 5-6.

Antigonos at the hands of Seleukos I.[1500] As such, the Dynastic Prophecy is related to the Mesopotamian tradition of king lists, but also stands in sharp contrast to those, since it does not merely provide a dry list of kings' names and regnal years. In fact, it omits the names of the rulers about whom it talks, and instead describes them in terms of the actions they performed. In the description of those actions lies an implicit value judgement, and as such the Dynastic Prophecy distinguishes itself from the king lists.

### VI.5.2 Themes

The motifs discernible in the temple ritual texts, Astronomical Diaries and chronicles are even more markedly present and elaborated upon in the historical-literary corpus. In these texts, the past is presented through crystallized motifs and acts as an idealized reflection of the present or, in some cases, as its exact opposite. Surprisingly, the NYF does not occur as a topic in any of these historical-literary texts.

The element that distinguishes this literature most clearly from earlier historical(-literary) texts, is the fact that two (groups of) protagonists appear in this corpus: kings and priests. In earlier works with a historical topic, kings – and very occasionally high officials as well – are the focus of attention.[1501] More than that, while in historical literature created before the Late Babylonian period the heroic role is almost exclusively put aside for the king, the real heroes in LB historical-literary compositions are the priests whose actions bring the story to a good end. In fact, kings appear to play a rather ambiguous role in comparison with the priests and often need to be kept on the right track by the latter.

Mostly, a king's aptitude to rule was defined by his behaviour towards Marduk. After all, the man who wanted to govern Babylon needed the support of its patron deity.[1502] In other words, kings of the past were regarded as good or bad kings based on their piety. If they neglected the gods, they were bad; they were good rulers only if they paid due reverence to Marduk. This also meant that monarchs who had strayed before could become legitimate if they changed their attitude towards the gods. In one history, Babylonian elites (*banûtu* or *mār banê*) have instigated a rebellion because of king Adad-šumu-uṣur's neglect of them and their gods.[1503] The situation is saved, however, when the king asks the nobles to let him go before the gods and repent for his sins. After this humiliation before Marduk, Adad-šumu-uṣur lavishes gifts on

[1500] Jursa, *forthcoming*; Kosmin 2018: 172-177.
[1501] Jursa & Debourse 2020: 269.
[1502] See above, page 331.
[1503] BM 34104+ (Grayson 1975a BHLT 6: 56-77). See also Jursa & Debourse 2020: 268-269; De Breucker 2015: 78-79.

Esagila, and then continues to Borsippa and Cutha where he does the same for Nabû and Nergal respectively. Similarly, another historical epic tells how Amīl-Marduk refuses to pay attention to the gods and their temples, but at the insistence of a member of the Babylonian elite, he has a change of heart:

> "No longer did he care for son or daughter, there was no family or kin in his heart. He paid no attention to all sweet things (of life), (because) his attention was focussed on establishing the wellbeing of Esagila [and Babylon]."[1504]

The role of the priests, in this context, was to ensure that the king paid his due reverence to Marduk, so that the world would continue to work in the right order. In the Adad-šumu-uṣur history, the king begs the nobles of Babylon (including the priesthood) to let him pray to Marduk and in the Amīl-Marduk story, an anonymous member of the Babylonian elite implores the king to follow the pious example of his father Nebuchadnezzar II. Sometimes, however, kings were beyond saving and were therefore characterized as the ultimate examples of royal viciousness. In those cases, priests would risk their own lives to stand up to the ruler, stepping in to guarantee the continuation of the cult and the protection of the gods, as true heroes. In one of the "Kedorlaomer" texts, for example, the Elamite enemy has invaded Ekur in Nippur and is in the process of sacking the temple when suddenly the divine statue of Ennundagala starts flashing like lightning. When his soldiers flee the scene, the Elamite king orders a Babylonian priest to remove the paraphernalia of the divine statue. The priest, however, refuses to do so, leading to his being tortured on the "wooden rack". Despite all, "the priest had no fear and was not mindful of (his own) life."[1505]

Piety towards Marduk was thus the prime quality of kings, although good kingship included other aspects as well. Because the relationship between king and god entailed the co-operation of Marduk's priests, the benevolence the king displayed towards this social group was just as crucial. This benevolence was expressed through the granting of rights and privileges, the assurance of safety, the maintenance of justice and financial support. The contrast between good and bad kings is very clear in the Dynastic Chronicle: good kings bring riches into Babylon, undertake temple building programs, consolidate the borders of the land, and grant special rights (*zakûtu*) to the Babylonians. Bad kings interrupt the rites in Esagila and plot evil against Babylon. Elsewhere, in a fictitious letter of Nabopolassar to the Assyrian pretender Sîn-šarru-iškun, the Babylonian lists all the wicked deeds the Assyrian has committed, including

[1504] BM 34113 obv. 11'-14' (Debourse & Jursa 2019).
[1505] BM 34062 obv. 30-31 (Jursa & Debourse 2017).

plundering Esagila, killing Babylon's city elders, disturbing the peace and bringing about the defeat of the Babylonians.[1506]

The establishment of justice occurs as a theme most explicitly in the "King of Justice" text, in which a king whose name has not been preserved (Nebuchadnezzar II or Nabonidus) goes out of his way to establish justice as Marduk has ordained:

> "Für ein Gericht der Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit wurde er nicht nachlässig, ruhte nicht bei Nacht und bei Tag, Gericht und Entscheidung, die dem grossen Herrn Marduk angenehm, zum Wohle der Gesamtheit der Menschen und zur Besiedelung des Landes Akkad geeignet sind, schrieb er dauernd mit Ratschluss und Beratung, und Satzungen für die Stadt setzte er zum Guten verbindlich fest."[1507]

Another aspect of good kingship is the privileged treatment of the Babylonians. The special status of Babylon's citizens is emphasized through the recurrent use of the term *kidinnu*.[1508] In one of the pseudo-epigraphical letters of Aššurbanipal to the priesthood of Babylon the king enumerates all the rewards that he will bestow upon the priests if they fulfil his request. Aside from a considerable amount of silver and the promise of fame, the king claims that he will establish *kidinnnu* for the priests and exempt them from corvée labour.[1509] Adad-šumu-uṣur, while confessing his sins and repenting before Marduk, mentions the *ṣābē kidinni*.[1510] Although the context is broken, the fragment shows a few similarities with the negative confession of the king in the NYF, in which the *ṣābē kidinni* are also mentioned. Possibly, *kidinnu* is also referred to in a fragment relating events that happened during the confrontation between Babylonia and Elam in the 12th century BC.[1511]

Kingship and the priesthood's attempts at making kings repent and change their attitude vis-à-vis the gods are not the only points of focus of this literature. Another common thread running through these texts is the exclusivity of skill of the priests as scholars. In other words, the priests of Marduk were the protectors of both the Babylonian cult and of cuneiform knowledge. The fact that a feeling of pride was felt regarding the priesthood's exclusive knowledge of cuneiform lore becomes clear in the pseudo-epigraphical correspondence between them and king Aššurbanipal; in a LB context, these letters will have strengthened the priesthood's sense of purpose and self-confidence. One letter in particular uses strong language to express the divine

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[1506] BM 55467 obv. 1-9 (Gerardi 1986: 34).
[1507] BM 45690 II 22'-27' (Schaudig 2001: 582 and 586).
[1508] See also above, page 300.
[1509] BM 28825 rev. 32-33 (Frame & George 2005: 274-275).
[1510] BM 34104+ obv. II 27 (Grayson 1975a: 70-71).
[1511] BM 35322 rev. III 2-3 (Grayson 1975a: 54-55). Note, however, that a person with the name Enlil-kidinnu is mentioned in this text.

and unchangeable nature of cuneiform knowledge, which was gifted by Marduk to the Babylonians and Borsippeans exclusively:

> [Regarding what the king] wrote about the teaching of the scribal craft to the son of […]: We will not change [the craft] of Marduk, who [gifted] cuneiform only to the Babylonians and Borsippeans and whose craft neither enemy nor stranger should see. Changing (texts written in) cuneiform in Babylon and (their) inspection [by enemy or stranger is an abomination of Marduk.][1512]

In the LB historical-literary texts, the Babylonian past is (re-)constructed as a retrojected continuity of the present. The most pertinent themes revolve around the interaction between kings and priests on the one hand – exemplary in both correct and incorrect forms – and on the other the superiority of the priesthood independent from the ruler.

### VI.5.3 Berossos' *Babyloniaka*

> "Ich denke, dass Berossos versucht hat, mit der Abfassung der Babyloniaka die Interessen seiner sozialen Gruppe, der Schriftgelehrten zu vertreten – ein Unternehmen, dass ich als ein explizit politisches verstehen möchte."
>
> (Bach 2013: 163)

Finally, we should also include amongst the LB historical-literary corpus from Babylon the *Babyloniaka* of Berossos. The work stands out mainly because it was composed in the Greek language rather than in Akkadian and has therefore been preserved only fragmentary through citation and paraphrase in the work of Greek, Latin and Armenian authors.[1513] Yet, despite the language, the *Babyloniaka* are a work of Babylonian historiography like the texts discussed above, not only because it recounts Babylonian history, but also because they contain the same concerns and motifs as the rest of the corpus. The *Babyloniaka* are not fully preserved, but originally consisted of three books, recounting the creation of the world and Babylonian custom (Book 1), early human history before and after the flood (Book 2), and the more recent history from Tiglat-Pileser III to Alexander (Book 3).

What has often surprised modern scholars is the fact that while Berossos clearly based his work on traditional cuneiform lore, he did not merely copy texts and ideas but carefully selected and transformed traditional knowledge to fit specific purposes. The first of those goals was to accommodate to a Greek audience, which is clear not only from his use of the Greek language and his adherence to a typical Greek genre (ethnography),[1514] but also from his dedication of

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[1512] BM 34716 rev. 9-12 (Jursa & Debourse 2020: 274-277).

[1513] For an edition of all the fragments, see De Breucker 2016, http://dx-doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1163/1873-5363_bnj_a680 (last accessed 25.06.2019). I will refer to the relevant passages by their BNJ number. See also the essays in Haubold *et al.* 2013; Bach 2013; Stevens 2019: 94-119.

[1514] Tuplin 2013.

the books to king Antiochos.[1515] Most modern scholars understand this king to be Antiochos I (Soter, 281-261 BC), although a compelling case was made for Antiochos II (Theos, 261-246 BC) by Johannes Bach.[1516] As such, the *Babyloniaka* had a political intent and served partly as a *Fürstenspiegel*, regardless of the question whether or not the work actually reached its intended audience.[1517]

Several examples found in the *Babyloniaka* can be cited to illustrate how Berossos construed an image of good Babylonian kingship that was still accessible to the Seleucid overlords. A first is Berossos' account of Nabopolassar's death and Nebuchadnezzar's subsequent ascent to the throne, immediately followed by a description of the latter king's marvellous construction works in Babylon.[1518] Dillery has shown that the language used by Berossos here is reminiscent of that found in Greek inscriptions – sometimes issued by the Seleucid court – that give accounts of the acts of euergetism of Seleucid rulers.[1519] In this way, Nebuchadnezzar's actions are rendered intelligible to a Greek audience and represented as an example to follow. Aside from familiar language, the account was also made comprehensible through the representation of the father-son pair Nabopolassar-Nebuchadnezzar, who could serve as a model for Seleukos-Antiochos.[1520]

A second instance in which Berossos shows what constitutes good Babylonian kingship is in his list of Neo-Babylonian kings.[1521] He explicitly condemns some kings as having "displayed wickedness" (ἀπολεμένου) or reigning in a "lawless and licentious way" (ἀνόμως καὶ ἀσελγῶς), although he does not say exactly what they did wrong. In contrast, no negative judgement is passed on those kings that came to the throne in rather 'creative' ways. In this way it is made clear that the members of the Seleucid dynasty, even though they did not descend from the Neo-Babylonian one, could still be good Babylonian kings, because descent and ethnicity are irrelevant in light of other royal qualities.[1522]

Aside from notions of kingship, the *Babyloniaka* also reflect on the Babylonian priesthood, whom Berossos presents as the ones who ensure stability and continuity in both political and

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[1515] BNJ 680 T2 and Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangeliae* 10,11,8.
[1516] Bach 2013.
[1517] Bach 2013. Arguments against a direct connection between Berossos and the Seleucid court are given by Stevens 2019: 114-119.
[1518] BNJ 680 F8a.
[1519] Dillery 2013a: 82-85.
[1520] Dillery 2013a: 90; Beaulieu 2007a: 120-132; Kuhrt 1987b: 56.
[1521] BNJ 680 F9a.
[1522] Note the close affinity of this section in Berossos with the Dynastic Prophecy; see also van der Spek 2005: 292-293.

cultural matters. An example is the Flood-episode, which Berossos moulds from a traditional Babylonian *topos* to fit a new purpose: emphasising the importance of priestly knowledge.[1523] An important modification compared to the versions we know from the stories of Gilgameš and Atrahasis is the inclusion of the command of Ea (Kronos) to Xisouthros to "bury all the first and middle and last of the books in the sun city of Sippar" before the flood comes and then to "dig in Sippar and draw out the books which were hidden there" after the flood has ended.[1524] Thus, all the Babylonian lore from before the flood had been preserved because it had been buried in Sippar, which remained untouched by the flood.[1525] With this statement, Berossos "proves" the fact that his knowledge is as old as time; he "emerges from the story as a culture hero, someone who transfers hidden secrets of a sunken past into a new era."[1526] He thus claims authority for the work of the Babylonian priesthood, by granting it with the most ancient antiquity.[1527]

The importance of the Babylonian priesthood in Berossos' work is not only explained in terms of their knowledge of age-old texts and traditions. Another dimension of their role in Babylonian society is hinted at in the account of Nebuchadnezzar's succession to the throne, mentioned above.[1528] Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, died while his son was on campaign in Egypt; when Nebuchadnezzar rushed back to Babylon to assume power, he found "that matters were being managed by Chaldaeans (i.e., the priests of Marduk) and the kingship looked after by the best of them" (τὰ πράγματα διοικούμενα ὑπὸ Χαλδαίων καὶ διατηρουμένην τὴν βασιλείαν ὑπὸ τοῦ βελτίστου αὐτῶν). It seems highly improbable that Babylonian priests would have filled a temporary power vacuum in the Neo-Babylonian empire – certainly, such a function would have been fulfilled by high-placed royal officials and/or members of the royal family. On the one hand, wishful thinking is projected onto the past, in which the priesthood would never have occupied such a crucial place. On the other hand, it reflects the contemporary situation in which Berossos and his peers found themselves: in absence of a Babylonian king,

[1523] BNJ 680 F4a-c. Dalley (2013) asserts, however, that the Flood-story encountered in Berossos was not his personally changing of a traditional motif, but rather he adhered to another Flood-tradition not attested in Gilgameš or Atramhasis. In light of the present discussion, it seems unnecessary to go to such lengths to explain the differences in Berossos' Flood account.
[1524] BNJ 680 F4a. See Bach 2013: 174-176; Lang 2013.
[1525] The fact that Sippar was spared from the Flood is recounted in the Erra Epic (IV 50 Cagni 1969: 110-111) See also Lang 2013: 53.
[1526] Lang 2013: 54.
[1527] Bach 2013: 176. Similarly, Steele has argued that we should read the "so-called astronomical fragments in this light, as part of his promotion of Babylonian scholarship." (2013:109).
[1528] BNJ 680 F8a.

the priesthood performed obligations that normally a king would fulfil, although their role was confined to temple-related matters.

Finally, it would seem that Berossos' attempts at exalting the position of the priesthood were successful as this is what is most emphasized by classical authors. One of the most striking features of the work is the fact that the name of its author has been preserved and found a place in later textual history. Only very few non-royal Babylonians are named in classical sources and, from a Babylonian perspective, the concept of personal authorship is strange. Moreover, it was known and repeated that Berossos was "a Babylonian, a priest of their Bēl" (ἀνὴρ Βαβυλώνιος, ἱερεὺς τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῖς Βήλου);[1529] he was portrayed as "oriental philosopher".[1530] The fact that he was a Babylonian gave weight to his words, which in turn authenticated the work of the authors who cited them. This shows that in the mind of the classical authors, the greatness of Babylonian culture lay in the skill and knowledge preserved and practiced by the "Chaldeans", much more than in the actions of the Babylonian kings.

In summary, similar topics as in other late historiographical texts from Babylon come to the fore in Berossos' *Babyloniaka*. The focus on good or evil kingship and the prominent place attributed to the Marduk-priesthood are especially recognisable in the preserved fragments and cannot be attributed to the selection process of the classical authors, as these were not themes of interest to them.

[1529] BNJ 680 T2.
[1530] Haubold 2013: 34-35.

## VI.6 Summary

### VI.6.1 Late Babylonian Priestly Literature from Babylon

Despite their essential differences, all the text corpora discussed above share a number of specific interests and intentions which, in turn, fix them firmly in a Late Babylonian context.

#### VI.6.1.1 Motifs

The motifs shared by the texts discussed above all revolve around the triangular relationship between kings, priests and Marduk; Babylon is the stage on which the events take place even if, in some cases, this is anachronistically and only subjectively so. In these texts, the interactions between the members of this triad are explained and analysed in light of the past, present and future.

Kings of the present are scrupulously followed in their actions and movements, with particular attention for behaviour that legitimizes them in the eyes of the Babylonians. As Visscher said, kings in the Diaries are "not so much real-life agents as characters in a text, who are portrayed as fulfilling a specific role within it."[1531] In that way, the painful truth is strongly emphasized, however: most of the time, the king is not where he is supposed to be – in Babylon – and does not do what he is supposed to do – worship Marduk and take care of his temple. The absence of the king in almost all of the temple ritual texts – except the NYF texts – affirms this sentiment and shows how the king was written out of the script. In other words, the impression given by the ritual texts is one of a deliberate choice for the exclusion of the ruler on the part of the leaders of the cult, whereas in reality, they did not have much choice. Nonetheless, the attention given to the monarch by the authors of the Diaries and chronicles demonstrates how they still lived with the same old ideas about kingship, despite their new reality. As such, the texts that deal with the present show how priests were taking matters into their own hands, but all the while hopefully awaited and advocated the king's return.

Kings of the past are portrayed as one of two stereotypes: there are evil kings and there are good kings. In its most distilled form, bad kingship comes down to the neglect of the gods of Babylon; good kingship is the exact opposite of that. To depict these ideas, historical accuracy was not necessarily required. Rather, the aims were, first, to explain how Babylonian kingship worked by means of examples and, second, what the role of the priesthood was in this scheme of things. In the most ideal situation, the king would fulfil his obligations and the priesthood would be able to go about its usual business. This meant that the monarch secured a peaceful situation,

[1531] Visscher 2019: 238.

provided justice, brought riches into the country and, most importantly, took care of the gods of Babylon. In this situation, the priests' role was to assist the monarch in his cultic duties and observe the necessary rites and rituals.

However, this model situation became unbalanced when a king did not meet the requirements of his position, i.e. when there was war and injustice and when he refused to pay the appropriate reverence to Marduk. Because in the Babylonian worldview neglecting the gods would unmistakably lead to their releasing their wrath upon humankind, in this scenario the priests were obliged to step in. In this case, priests took upon themselves to ensure the continuity of the cult, despite the lack of royal involvement. More than that, however, they would urge the king to change his behaviour towards the gods – in that sense, bad kings could turn good through repentance. The historical texts contain a number of instances in which priests put themselves in a precarious situation or even risked their own lives to admonish their ruler in order to safeguard the ancient Babylonian cultic tradition. In a way, the NYF texts are of crucial importance within this corpus of LB compositions, as they are the only texts of non-historical nature that deal with the topic of the sinning and repenting king. This makes them exceptional, since none of the texts dealing with the present (and future, in the case of the ritual texts) includes this element.

Whereas the king is always seen through the eyes of the Babylonian priesthood and therefore always portrayed in relation to both them and Marduk, the priests do not only act in regard of the king but also directly in relation to Marduk. After all, they possess an invaluable skill that the monarch does not: they have unlimited access to and profound knowledge of cuneiform lore. Two recurrent topics in the ritual and historiographical texts are the secret nature and divine origin of that cuneiform knowledge and the fact that the priesthood of Babylon (and Borsippa) was its divinely chosen and unique recipient. As guardians of cuneiform culture, the priests occupy a more prominent place than the king in the eyes of the gods – at least, that is what they themselves believed and expressed in these compositions. This idea is corroborated by the mere existence of these texts: the priests were the ones who were suited to record what happened in Babylon and the Babylonian world in the present and the past.

Furthermore, the large majority of events described, whether historical or contemporary, takes place in Babylon. In other words, not only is everything seen from the viewpoint of Babylon, events are also relevant only if they affect or relate to the city in some way. This Babylon-centric perspective is expressed as well in the recurrent *topos* of the privileged status and rights of the inhabitants of Babylon. Despite this strong focus, the northern Babylonian cities in the

close vicinity of the former capital (Borsippa, Kish, Cutha) make some appearances in this LB literature too. Yet, this only reinforces the impression of Babylon as the only city of importance, since they are mentioned solely in relation with Babylon and always in a fixed order in which Babylon takes the first place. The other large centres of cuneiform culture that survived in the LB period, Uruk and Nippur, are largely ignored in these texts.

A last concept shared by all these texts is an interest for history and historiography. Events and people of the past form the subject of a considerable number of texts, not only in the historical-literary texts and historical chronicles, but also in the ritual texts, which are specked with antiquarian elements. Although the Astronomical Diaries and contemporary chronicles relate contemporaneous events, their authors show a similar approach to events and people of the present as to those of the past, by making a conscious selection and perhaps even "historiographical manipulation"[1532] of facts and events.

VI.6.1.2 Purposes and audiences

In light of the motifs that persist in the cuneiform historiographical and cultic texts from Seleucid Babylon, it is clear that these texts were created for multiple audiences and with various purposes. First and foremost, this literature is about, as well as written by and addressed at the priesthood of Marduk. Therefore, it is most fitting to call it "Late Babylonian priestly literature" (LBPL).[1533] This LBPL served to fulfil a number of group-internal purposes, all of which revolved around building and maintaining a strong priestly identity. This literature is a means to show which behaviour was expected of the priests, either through examples from the past, by recording the actions they undertook in the present, or through explicit instructions for the future. More compellingly, however, the LBPL has a strong 'apologetic' intention, affirming and avowing the importance and prominence of the priestly community in the present.[1534] In all branches of LBPL, the undeniable necessity of the priests' work is explained in light of its very ancient roots, its divinely ordained nature and even in the more practical sense: if we do not do it, then who will? Moreover, the LBPL attests to a marked self-consciousness on behalf of the Babylonian priesthood, who with this literature created an instrument for strengthening community bonds and establishing a clear boundary between "us" and "them".

[1532] Tuplin 2019: 105.
[1533] The term was explicitly coined by Jursa (Jursa & Debourse 2017).
[1534] De Breucker 2015: 91; Beaulieu 2007a: 143.

As such, the LBPL surpassed the group-internal aims and also intended to address the Other, the most notable of which was the (non-native) king and, by extension, his representatives. The texts dealing with the past in particular serve as a mirror of princes, showing, on the one hand, the principles of Babylonian kingship through exemplary stereotypes of good and bad royal behaviour and, on the other, the place that should be accorded to the Babylonian priesthood in society. This idea is extended to the texts that deal with the present, in which descriptions of royal behaviour that is in line with Mesopotamian ideas about kingship are strongly favoured over the actual truth of the king's absence, which can only be read through the lines. The explicit exclusion of the king in most ritual texts may be read as a conscious act to show who was in charge in the cultic domain. Whether or not there was a real channel of communication between the Babylonian priesthood and the Seleucid king is less relevant than the fact that the priesthood lived up to the image it had created of itself: they would do what lay in their power to remind the king of his duties and in his absence they would take over his tasks.[1535] Even if Berossos' *Babyloniaka* never reached king Antiochos, the Babylonian author had not intended his work to be read by his own colleagues; instead, by writing it in the Greek language and in a Greek literary form, he aimed to reach across cultural boundaries.[1536]

VI.6.1.3 Reasons and incentives

The motifs and intentions of LBPL can be understood best when read against a Late Babylonian background. In essence, all these texts display how the Babylonian priesthood struggled with the insurmountable incongruity of the situation in which they found themselves: they had to adapt quickly to the new world, but still they held on to their own beliefs and worldview. Two interconnected developments in particular led to this crisis: one the one hand, the absence of a native king – or at least a king who subscribed to notions of Babylonian kingship – and on the other the fact that Babylon was no longer the centre of the known world. Both of these elements clashed with their fundamental and traditional understanding of how the world worked. This tension between what is ideal and what is real, between what is old and what is new, between hope and despair, is what gave rise to the LBPL.

In that light, it seems that we cannot overestimate the impact which the policy of euergetism of the early Seleucids had on the local temple institutions. In the eyes of the Babylonians, the world was lost if kings did not revere their gods. While this is not exactly what the Seleucids

[1535] The cuneiform document BOR 4, 132 records the presence of a Babylonian astronomer at the court of Hyspaosines (Clancier 2007: 33-34); this text shows that it is not too absurd to think that some Babylonians could come into direct contact with the king.
[1536] See also Stevens 2019: 114-119; Jursa & Debourse 2017: 87.

did, their financial support and euergetism formed a stark contrast to the centuries before. This would have been sufficient to serve as an impetus for indulging in the production of a new cuneiform literature. A catalytic moment may have been the presence of Antiochos I (as co-ruler) in Babylon and his interaction with local communities as can be read in the chronicles and the Antiochos Cylinder. For a short moment, the situation was almost as it was supposed to be. However, the slow withdrawal of that royal support from the middle of the third century BC onwards and the ensuing poliadisation of Babylon in the first half of the second century BC resulted in a new crisis for the local temple community, both economically and ideologically speaking. This sentiment of despair will only have been strengthened by the military struggles that resulted in the incorporation of Babylonia in the Parthian empire. This time of crisis may have seen the last efforts to preserve what was now clearly lost.

### VI.6.2 Uruk

> Faced with potential or actual threats to their status and autonomy, these communities needed to assert their rights and identities, and one way in which they did so was by looking back in time, using historical narratives about their past status and treatment as a means of voicing and framing present concerns and future aspirations. The historical writings of Greek and Babylonian local scholars of the Hellenistic period exhibit recurring *topoi* and themes which respond precisely to the realities of Hellenistic imperialism, and arguably served the same purpose: to assert the prestige and status of their community in front of both local and imperial audiences.
>
> (Stevens 2019: 346)

The priestly community of Uruk, the other large hub of cuneiform culture in the LB period, engaged in the creation of a number of texts that show great similarity with the corpus of LBPL discussed above.[1537] These compositions expose how, like their northern Babylonian counterparts, the Urukean priests considered themselves as the guardians of cuneiform culture in an increasingly foreign world.

#### VI.6.2.1 Context

The advantage of the Urukean material lies in the fact that its social context is clearer than in the case of the texts from Babylon, because the LB Urukean libraries were excavated mostly in official digs. Moreover, many tablets from Uruk include colophons, enabling us to assign them to specific text groups, also when they were acquired illicitly.[1538] As such, we know that the members of four families were involved in the production of cuneiform texts in LB Uruk: Sîn-lēqi-unninni, Ekur-zākir, Ḫunzû and Aḫ'ûtu. While not all texts created by these people were found within a temple building and some of them did not even bear priestly titles (see further

[1537] This chapter is largely based on Stevens 2019; Cavigneaux 2005; Beaulieu 1993.
[1538] See Clancier 2009: 25-103.

below), the interconnections between members of these four families shows that cuneiform culture was maintained within the confines of the traditional temple communities.[1539] Moreover, attention has been drawn to the "frequent use of the self-description 'Urukean', native of Uruk"[1540] in the preserved colophons. In other words, the people who wrote cuneiform texts saw themselves as priests and inhabitants of Uruk, a self-identification that is asserted through their writings, as we will see below.

Perhaps the best-known of the LB Urukean priestly families is the Sîn-lēqi-unninni family (SLU).[1541] Its members kept a professional library within the confines of the Bīt Rēš between ca. the mid-4th century BC and the end of the 3rd century BC. They based their ancestry on the famous composer of the Gilgameš Epic,[1542] and are attested in the LSC as scribes and prebend holders in Eanna.[1543] During the Seleucid period, the family held the exclusive rights over the office of lamentation priest, which means that all the *kalû*s of the Bīt Rēš stemmed from this same family. Members of this family engaged in cuneiform scholarship not only concerning their priestly function, but also studied mathematics and astronomy, for example.[1544]

Another well-attested priestly clan of LB Uruk are the descendants of Ekur-zākir (EZ).[1545] Like the members of the SLU-family, they are attested as scribes and holders of priestly offices in LSC Eanna.[1546] During the Seleucid period, a branch of this family maintained a private library in their house, which had previously been inhabited by another family (Šangû-Ninurta). Because members of both families held the office of *āšipu*, the libraries of both families are known together as those pertaining to the "house of the *āšipu*s". The Šangû-Ninurtas were active during the late 5th and early 4th centuries BC and after a short period of no occupation, the house was inhabited by the Ekur-zākirs, the earliest tablet of whom is dated in 322 BC and the latest in 213 BC.[1547] Although these texts were created in a private context, they demonstrate that the EZ-family was strongly involved in the Bīt Rēš not only by being employed as exorcists but also because they – probably exclusively – held the office of Elder Brother.[1548]

[1539] Robson 2019: 229-235; Ossendrijver 2011; Robson 2008a: 240-260.
[1540] Robson 2019: 184-192.
[1541] Clancier 2009: 73-80 and 86-90; Beaulieu 2000; Pearce & Doty 2000.
[1542] In the Catalogue of Texts and Authors, K9717+ (Lambert 1962).
[1543] Beaulieu 2000: 5-8.
[1544] See the graphic in Clancier 2009: 88.
[1545] Clancier 2009: 59-61 and 81-85; Boiy 2010b.
[1546] Robson 2019: 229 with references.
[1547] Clancier 2009: 59-61.
[1548] McEwan 1981a: 10.

Through the documentation of the EZ-family, another family of *āšipu*s is known. Members of the Ḫunzû clan were involved with the descendants of EZ through education: they taught each other's children.[1549]

A last family involved in the production and maintenance of cuneiform scholarship was the Aḫ'ûtu family. Only a few of its members are attested as scribes or owners of cuneiform tablets and their names are never accompanied by a priestly title. Mostly, the people of this family held high civic offices, such as *šaknu* (governor) and *rab ša rēš āli*, but also the priestly function of *šatammu*. Importantly, two of its members undertook large-scale construction works in the Bīt Rēš: Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos' enterprise (244 BC) is recorded in a foundation cylinder;[1550] the second building phase (202/1 BC) was undertaken by Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon, whose name is recorded in inscriptions stamped on bricks.[1551] In contrast to the other families, members of the Aḫ'ûtu often took on Akkadian-Greek or Greek names.[1552] This aspect, in conjunction with the fact that they held high civic offices, suggests a closer connection to the Seleucid administration and may thus reflect "a genuine difference in their socio-political position vis-à-vis the other three scholarly families."[1553] Despite those differences, the involvement of the Aḫ'ûtu family in cuneiform cultural and religious spheres is clear through their building projects and scribal activity. If anything, they functioned as the crucial intermediary between local and imperial institutions.

VI.6.2.2 Corpus

All of those priests participating in the creation of cuneiform texts possessed the same variety of skills that we also find in the LB corpus from Babylon. Thus, aside from writing texts relating to their priestly profession (e.g. rituals texts), almost all of them engaged in the study of the heavens (astronomy/astrology) and some of them had a historiographical interest as well. Moreover, in the same vein as in the LBPL, these texts share specific motifs and purposes. Since a full study of the Urukean material would lead me too far from the main topic of this dissertation, a selection of – perhaps the best-known – texts is discussed below.

- Historiography

[1549] Stevens 2019: 324.
[1550] YOS 1, 52 (Krul 2018: 35 with footnote 131).
[1551] Van Dijk 1962: 47; Krul 2018: 36-7
[1552] Monerie 2014: 82.
[1553] Stevens 2019: 325; see also Monerie 2014: 74-86.

The collection of historiographical works from Uruk is much smaller than its Babylonian counterpart. Still, similar motifs can be discerned in them.[1554] Three texts may serve to illustrate this point: the Uruk (or Šulgi) Chronicle, the Uruk Prophecy and the Uruk List of Kings and Sages. The legible part of the Uruk Chronicle deals with the reign of the Ur III king Šulgi from an Urukean perspective.[1555] In the first lines, Šulgi does what he is supposed to do: he defeats the enemy of Subartu. Immediately after that, however, the king plunders Esagila to finance renovation works in the temple of Sîn in Ur. Then the focus shifts to Uruk, where the worst thing happens:

> "The divine Šulgi, (…) improperly alte[red] the rites of the cult of Anu, Uruk's cultic regulations, the [sec]ret knowledge of the scholars, and put down in writing the [for]ced labour exacted by Sîn, lord of Ur."[1556]

Only divine intervention can stop Šulgi and it is Anu who inflicts disease upon the king to punish him. Although Babylon is mentioned in the Chronicle, the supremacy of Anu makes clear that Uruk is centre stage. Šulgi serves as an example of an evil king: he does not keep the peace in the country; he takes away the privileged status of the citizens of Uruk; he disturbs the regularity of the cult; and he does not respect the work and knowledge of Anu's priests.

Another text that involves examples of good and bad kingship is the Uruk Prophecy.[1557] Like the Dynastic Prophecy from Babylon, this text describes the reigns of anonymous kings as *vaticinia ex eventu*. A series of bad kings all commit the same (ki.min) misdeeds:

> "He will not perform justice for the land; he will not make the (right) decisions for the land. He will remove the ancient protective goddess of Uruk and make her dwell in the midst of Babylon. One who is not the protective goddess of Uruk he will cause to dwell in her sanctuary; he will give to her for a gift those who are not her people. He will impose a heavy tax on the people of Uruk. He will lay Uruk waste; he will fill the canals with mud, and neglect the cultivated meadows."[1558]

In contrast, the last two kings behave in the exact opposite way and restore the city, its cult and its inhabitants to their former glory. Beaulieu proposed that the Prophecy's "purpose was to show to a Seleucid ruler of the first half of the third century the proper royal conduct toward the city."[1559] Elaborating on that, Stevens sees two main reasons behind the creation of the Uruk Chronicle and Prophecy: "first, they could affirm the community's sense of its own identity at

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[1554] See also Robson 2019: 185-190; Krul 2018: 91-106.
[1555] SpTU 1, 2 (https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/cm-48-kings-of-ur/ [last accessed 15.01.2020]).
[1556] SpTU 1, 2 obv. 10, 13-15 (translation Stevens 2019: 351).
[1557] SpTU 1, 3 (Neujahr 2012: 51-54; Beaulieu 1993: 43-44).
[1558] Uruk Prophecy rev. 3-7 (Neujahr 2012: 51-52).
[1559] Beaulieu 1993: 49.

a moment when that identity seemed threatened, and second, they could potentially be used as 'evidence' to put pressure on powerful contemporary actors to continue a pattern of benefaction."[1560]

Both of those purposes lie clearly also behind the Uruk List of Kings and Sages, in which sages (*apkallu*) and scholars (*ummânu*) are paired with kings of Mesopotamian history before and after the flood.[1561] The scribe and owner of the tablet, Anu-bēlšunu, was a member of the Sîn-lēqi-unninni clan and, conspicuously, this ancestor appears in the List as the first scholar after the flood, paired with Gilgameš.[1562] Through the List, the Hellenistic priest places himself in a longer genealogy of scholars that traces its beginnings to the time before the flood. Thus, his own work is set in light of the oldest possible history of Mesopotamia and through that gains strong authority. The List is therefore a solid means for self-confirmation and identity-construction. Aside from that, this composition makes explicit how throughout Mesopotamian history kings and scholars were associated with one another and in this way sets an example for the present: if it had always been so, then why not now? In other words, the List shows that "the scholars deserved a higher level of political influence or support than in fact they were enjoying at the time."[1563]

The historiographical tradition of LB Uruk thus revolves around similar issues and *topoi* as the corpus of LBPL from Babylon: good and bad kingship, antiquity and authority of cuneiform scholarship, supremacy of Anu, and the focus on Uruk. Especially these last two aspects are strongly emphasized in the corpus of temple ritual texts stemming from LB Uruk.

- Temple ritual texts

The SLU-library contained a number of ritual texts that deal with the lore of the lamentation priest, a profession exclusively held by this family's members. Some of these rituals described are known from Neo-Assyrian recensions, e.g. the ritual for covering the kettledrum and its commentary,[1564] and the eclipse of the moon ritual.[1565] Although the rituals are attested in earlier times, none of the Hellenistic versions are exact copies of the Neo-Assyrian texts we know. These texts do not just show that those rituals "became more elaborate",[1566] they attest

[1560] Stevens 2019: 360.
[1561] BaM Beih. 2, 89 (Lenzi 2008b; Van Dijk 1962: 44-52).
[1562] Obv. 12.
[1563] Lenzi 2008b: 161.
[1564] TU 44, BaM Beih. 2, 5 and TU 47 (Linssen 2004: 252-282; Gabbay 2018a).
[1565] BM 134701; BRM 4, 6; AB 249 (Linssen 2004: 306-320; Brown & Linssen 1997).
[1566] Brown & Linssen 1997: 154.

to how socio-historical changes led to cultic developments, most importantly the instauration of the Anu-cult.

Aside from those, one ritual of the *kalûtu* is attested in five manuscripts and seems to have been created in a LB context. Unsurprisingly, this is the building ritual,[1567] which fits well with the developments taking place at Uruk at the time: this is when the Bīt Rēš was constructed.[1568] Curiously, one recension includes the king as an agent, while the others do not.[1569] Moreover, in some lines of the same text, the king is replaced by the "king's hem" (túg-síg, *sissiktu*/*kuzippu*). Typically, this piece of clothing served as a substitute for the king when he was unable to participate in rituals.[1570] This specific ritual text therefore refers to both a king present in person and an absent one represented by his garment.

A number of ritual texts without forerunners were found in the library of the EZ-family. One of those describes the daily offerings in the temples of Uruk (Bīt Rēš, Ešgal, Ešarra).[1571] The quantities and kinds of drinks, bread and meat products are given for each of the four cultic meals, as well as the incipits to the prayers that needed to be recited during the preparation and offerings processes. While the four-meal structure is well attested before the Seleucid period,[1572] some details of the text do not rhyme with what is known about earlier periods. Joannès has pointed out that, while TU 38 instructs to use the golden vessels for every meal on every day of the year, inventories from LSC Eanna indicate that these vessels were taken out of storage only on special occasions.[1573] Another thing that stands out is the "chronological accumulation" of drinks on the offering table, some of which are attested at the NA court and some of which occur otherwise only later in daily life situations.[1574] These things suggest that, while the offerings described in TU 38 had their roots in an ancient cultic tradition, the text itself was an innovation of its Hellenistic scribe. That hypothesis is corroborated by the text's colophon:

> "By the hand of Šamaš-ēṭir, son of Ina-qibīt-Anu, son of Šibqāt-Anu. Writing board of the rites of the cult of Anu, of the holy rituals (and) the ritual regulations of kingship, together with the divine rituals of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and the temples of Uruk, the ritual activities of the exorcists, the *kalû* priests, the singers, and all the experts who follow the …, apart from

[1567] TU 45; TU 46; SpTU 4, 141; BaM Beih. 2, 11 and BaM Beih. 2, 10 (Ambos 2004: 10-13 and 171-197; Linssen 2004: 283-298).
[1568] Krul 2018: 9-78.
[1569] TU 45 (Linssen 2004: 282-292).
[1570] Joannès 2014: 448-449. CAD K 616 s.v. *kuzippu* b.
[1571] TU 38 (Linssen 2004: 172-183).
[1572] Waerzeggers 2010: 113-118.
[1573] Joannès 2008: 35.
[1574] Joannès during his talk at the RAI 65 ("La culture matérielle des pratiques religieuses en Babylonie au Ier millénaire: les offrandes liquides aux dieux").

> everything that pertains to the apprentice diviners, according to the tablets which Nabopolassar, the king of the Sealand, took away from Uruk, and then Kidin-Anu, the Urukean, the exorcist of Anu and Antu, the descendent of Ekur-zākir, the Elder Brother of the Bīt Rēš, saw those tablets in the land of Elam, and copied them and brought them back to Uruk during the reign of kings Seleukos and Antiochos."[1575]

The colophon takes on the guise of a short history about king Nabopolassar. Although the text does not state this explicitly, it alludes to the idea that the cult had been suspended from the moment in which this king had removed the tablets containing ritual instructions until Kidin-Anu found them in Elam, copied them and brought them home. Nabopolassar is thus accused of having interrupted the daily worship of Anu and the other gods of Uruk, and is therefore defined as a bad ruler. In contrast, the priest named Kidin-Anu travelled all the way to Elam and made it possible to resume the ancient cultic traditions. In this way, the scribe of TU 38 explains why this tablet was drafted now, that is, when the ritual texts had miraculously been rediscovered. The modern reader knows, however, that this alleged recovery of the texts was most probably invented to grant the newly created text with (non-existent) antiquity, which in turn strengthened its authority.[1576]

Other ritual texts from the Ekur-zākir library include the ritual instructions for the *akītu*-procession of the seventh month Tašrītu as well as the nocturnal fire ceremony of the tenth month Ṭebētu.[1577] The main event of the nocturnal fire ceremony, linked to the winter solstice, was the lighting of a fire atop the Anu-ziqqurrat, which was subsequently carried around the Bīt Rēš in procession and from there distributed to the smaller sanctuaries and the homes of the people of Uruk. While the ritual has its roots in an older Mesopotamian cultic tradition, the core element is not attested elsewhere. Moreover, the ritual text comprises a number of elements that can be considered forms of either innovation or antiquarianism.[1578] Aside from that, the ritual reflects the socio-historical context in which it was created, as the order in which the fire was distributed expressed a socio-religious hierarchy: atop stood Anu, the Bīt Rēš and its priesthood; then came the smaller temples of Uruk with their respective households; next were

[1575] TU 38 rev. 43-50 (Linssen 2004: 175-176 and 179; translation Beaulieu 1993: 47).
[1576] Krul 2018: 102-106; Beaulieu 1993: 47-48.
[1577] TU 39-40 (Linssen 2004: 184-196) and TU 41 (Krul 2018: 112-118) respectively.
[1578] TU 41 is extensively and excellently discussed by Krul (2018: 136-258). An innovation in this ritual are the offerings to the gods Anu and Antu in their astral aspect (Krul 2018: 178-190); an antiquarian element is the appearance of the god Pisangunug in the pantheon of Uruk: "The primary reason for Pisangunug's inclusion in the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk is probably the fact that his very name evokes his ancient connections with the city. His introduction – or rather re-introduction – was doubtlessly considered a revival of one of the cults that had existed at Uruk 'at the beginning of time', when the city was founded" (Krul 2018: 210).

the inhabitants of Uruk, their houses and families; and last came the people who did not participate, i.e. the people who were not proper Urukeans.[1579]

VI.6.2.3 Uruk versus Babylon

The motifs explored in the texts discussed above and the very nature of these texts show that similar strategies were adopted in both Uruk and Babylon to cope with those cities' integration in the Seleucid empire. Like their northern Babylonian colleagues, the Urukean priests engaged in the creation of texts that confirmed their own importance in the presence in light of the past and that addressed both their own community and their foreign rulers. In the historiographical compositions, kings and priests of the past are cast in roles that serve as examples for the present; so too is the necessity of interaction between both groups. In the ritual texts, the superiority of Anu and his priests is confirmed by their leading role and the near-absence of the king.

Despite those similarities, some crucial nuances and differences can be observed vis-à-vis the LBPL of Babylon, giving expression to diverging ideas and concerns. First and most obviously, the texts produced by Urukean priests promote Anu, the Bīt Rēš and Uruk, rather than Marduk, Esagila and Babylon. Second, the historiographical texts are considerably smaller in number in Uruk than in Babylon and, more importantly, emphasize different aspects. Whereas in Babylon, the focus lies on kings and how they adhere to Mesopotamian principles of kingship, especially regarding the care for the cult, and the priests' attempts at keeping the monarch on the right path, in Uruk the role of the king is rather confined. The fact that kingship is of lesser concern is also made clear in the temple ritual texts. In the *akītu*-texts, the king is amongst the participants, from whom he is not differentiated; in the discussed version of the building ritual, the king is both present and not; in the nocturnal fire ceremony, no king is mentioned: it seems that it did not matter very much whether or not the king participated in those rites.

Third, the priests of Anu present themselves in a different way. As said above, the primary concern of the priests of Babylon was to make sure the king observed the rules of kingship and oppose him when necessary; their role in the LBPL is thus largely – but not solely – defined by their interaction with the ruler. In contrast, the Urukean temple community worked to establish their authority independent from the king and, by extension, from Babylon. This was achieved by emphasizing, on the one hand, the local nature of their scholarship and knowledge and, on the other, its antiquity.

[1579] Krul 2018: 248. Note that Krul does not refer to the people who did not participate in her hierarchy.

Two historical developments can help explain those differences. First, the relatively smaller importance adhered to the loss of royal involvement in the cult by the priests of Uruk is not surprising in light of the level of royal engagement in that city before the LB period. Babylon had been the city of kingship for centuries when it gradually lost that role first under the Persians and second under Graeco-Macedonian rule. Uruk, like other large temple cities in Babylonia, had always had to contend for royal favour and had never obtained it in the same sense as Babylon had. The loss of native kingship was thus less harshly felt in Uruk and fewer attempts at gaining royal attention were undertaken – in the texts discussed above, the impression is that the Urukean priests were not sitting around and waiting for a "good king" to show up. This sentiment may have been expressed explicitly in the Uruk List of Kings and Sages, the last line of which does not refer to a king but to a person named "Nikarchos".[1580] This is most likely a reference to Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos, the governor (*šaknu*) of Uruk who had undertaken the first building project in the Bīt Rēš (244 BC). Surely, the priest who wrote this text did not see Nikarchos as king, but rather acknowledged him for his sponsorship of the cult. In other words, Nikarchos is included in the list of kings and sages because he acts like a native king would: he renovates the temple and invests in the maintenance of the cult.[1581] For the priests it may have seemed that "[i]f imperial interests in Uruk were on the wane, Nikarchos may have been their only and best hope to further their interests."[1582]

Second, the emphasis on the remote antiquity of the local cult in combination with the strong localism can be set in light of the need for legitimation of the Anu cult. In Babylon, traditional seat of the head of the national pantheon during the first half of the first millennium BC, a centuries old cultic tradition was seemingly still observed in the Seleucid period. Although it had undergone considerable changes throughout time, it could easily claim ancientness and therefore the priests felt no need to emphasize this aspect. In contrast, the city of Uruk had witnessed a severe upheaval of its cultic landscape in the LB period, when the cult of Ištar in Eanna was abandoned in favour of Anu in the Bīt Rēš. Although Anu had been associated with Uruk of old and a small Urukean sanctuary was dedicated to the deity before the LB period, the Anu cult that was observed in the Bīt Rēš was essentially new, a recent innovation. Yet, in the eyes of its priests and in the Mesopotamian worldview *tout court*, an institution's authority and legitimacy was based on its antiquity. The Urukean priests undertook considerable efforts to

[1580] Lenzi 2008b: 163-165; van Dijk 1962: 44-52.
[1581] As Monerie (2018: 349-386) has shown, the building works were undertaken on account of the prebendholders in the Bīt Rēš; royal sponsorship seems not to have been substantial, if present at all.
[1582] Lenzi 2008b: 165.

root the Anu cult in the most distant past, both theologically and physically, e.g. by reviving ancient deities and modelling their temples after ancient and esteemed sanctuaries.[1583] The ritual and historiographical texts discussed above attest to the same efforts.[1584]

In this sense, the Urukean scholars may have regarded the northern Babylonian temple institutions as their rivals. As Robson observed, the traditional god of cuneiform scholarship, Nabû, disappeared from the LB Urukean pantheon.[1585] Moreover, whereas earlier it had been customary under scribes to name their children after the god and dedicate their work to him, this was no longer done by the Anu-priests. This stands in stark contrast with the popularity the deity enjoyed in the wider Near East during the late first millennium BC.[1586] Aside from that, the negative view on Nabopolassar, founder of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, may suggest that the Urukean scholars thought that "the rot set in not with the Achaemenids, as we might expect, but with Nabopolassar, son of the last governor of Uruk".[1587] Nevertheless, this rivalry never went so far that all ties with other cuneiform communities were broken by the priesthood of Anu. In fact, it has been thoroughly demonstrated that the Urukeans took part in regional trends and developments and maintained a wide intellectual network including Nippur, Dēr, Babylon and Assyria.[1588] This also shows that the Urukeans consciously emphasized the Urukean nature of their work and working environment and that they made deliberate choices to keep or break with traditions.

[1583] Krul 2018: 79-106; Berlejung 2009; Beaulieu 1993, 1992.
[1584] The smaller number of historiographical texts may also be set in light of the novel character of the Anu cult – if they referred to the Anu cult in the past, they contained an essential lie; if they did not, they did not serve the purpose of this literature.
[1585] Robson 2019: 190.
[1586] Dirven 1999: 128-156; Pomponio 1978: 106-112.
[1587] Robson 2019: 190.
[1588] Summaries can be found in Stevens 2019: 328-323; Krul 2018: 88-90. Studies of the colophons and texts: Gabbay & Jiménez 2019; Clancier 2009: 255-268; Frahm 2002: 89-94.

### VI.6.3 Priestly communities in the Hellenistic empires

> "It is customary to view all of this intellectual activity in late first millennium Babylonia as the stale produce of small groups of traditionally oriented scribes, who stubbornly held on to a dead and outdated culture, while surrounded by a sea of Hellenism. Yet if we take the socio-political context of all this seriously, we also need to consider just how differently cuneiform culture functioned within the multiethnic Persian or Seleucid empires, where it was no longer an integral part of the establishment, but in all probability had acquired the role of a fundamentalist heterodox movement."
>
> (Michalowski 2005: 176)

> "These writings by Seleucid subjects, all situated somewhere between an inward-directed consolation and an outward-facing apology, as between auto-ethnography and local historiography, reproduced their past in a manner in which they could take full possession of it."
>
> (Kosmin 2018: 134)

> "The foreign domination of Egypt had to be accounted for, and yet the notion of lawful kingship also preserved, with its vital role as intermediary between divine and human in insuring the cosmic order (Ma'at) and the favour of the gods."
>
> (Dillery 2013b: 52)

> And I am, as you know, a Jew; and Jerusalem is my country, in which there is erected the holy temple of the most high God. And I have kings for my grandfathers and for my ancestors, the greater part of whom have been called high priests, looking upon their royal power as inferior to their office as priests; and thinking that the high priesthood is as much superior to the power of a king, as God is superior to man; for that the one is occupied in rendering service to God, and the other has only the care of governing them.
>
> Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 36.278

The Late Babylonian priestly literature which originated in Babylon and Uruk is substantially different from earlier cuneiform writings in terms of concepts and motives. Nevertheless, the incentives that gave rise to its creation were not unique to the Babylonian context: other ancient Near Eastern priestly communities within the Hellenistic world found themselves in similar situations which inspired analogous forms of textual output. Although we have to be careful not to draw parallels too readily, a few similarities encountered in other Hellenistic priestly communities will be pointed out below. Exploring these parallels remains a task for the future.

A first parallel may be found with the priests that worked in the traditional Egyptian temples in the Ptolemaic kingdom. In a similar vein as in Babylonia, traditional Egyptian culture retreated to the local temples during the Late Achaemenid and Ptolemaic periods, while the political and economic power came to lie in the hands of "foreign" kings who held different beliefs and worldviews.

At this time a number of literary texts with a historiographical aim were composed by members of the Egyptian priesthood. Amongst them are the Oracle of the Potter, the Oracle of the Lamb

and the Demotic Chronicle.[1589] These three texts take on the form of a pseudo-prophecy and they all relate to the office of kingship, native and foreign, in the distant and recent past, present and future. In the Oracle of the Potter, a man has been accused of blasphemy because he has installed a kiln on the sacred "Island of Helios" and is brought before the king to defend himself. His defence takes on the form of a prophecy, which predicts that initially foreign invaders will rule the land and revert it into chaos, but that eventually these rulers will finish each other off and Egypt will once more be united in glory.[1590] The Oracle of the Lamb recounts a series of *vaticinia ex eventu* that consist mostly of events characterized by disaster and chaos – mention is made of the "Medes" (Persians) and the Greeks – but ends with the prediction of a *Heilszeit* in which "truth will blossom" and the Egyptians will take back what is theirs.[1591] The Demotic Chronicle provides a list of rulers of the 28th-30th dynasties, but rather than stating mere historical facts, it judges these kings on the basis of their actions. Further, the Achaemenids and Ptolemies are mentioned as well and deemed most unfit as pharaohs. The text ends with the coming of a hero who will restore justice and order for Egypt.[1592]

Actual works of history include the *Aigyptiaka* written by the famous "twin" of Berossos, Manetho, [1593] who himself was an Egyptian high priest "of the temples of the idols in Egypt".[1594] He composed a national history in Greek in three books and "based on sacred records" (γέγραφεν γὰρ Ἑλλάδι φωνῆι τὴν πάτριον ἱστορίαν ἔκ τε τῶν ἱερῶν <γραμμάτων>).[1595] Manetho is best known for his unprecedented division of Egyptian history in "dynasties", but not only kings are at the core of his work. The priesthood makes many appearances and sometimes plays a crucial role in the maintenance of peace and order, e.g. in the "Sethos and Harmais episode" (BNJ 609 F9a), in which a priest prevents a *coup d'état* by writing to the absent king that his brother, who had been put in charge of affairs in the monarch's absence, was revolting against him:[1596]

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[1589] See the essays in Blasius and Schipper 2002, specifically for the Oracle of the Potter (Koenen 2002), Oracle of the Lamb (Thissen 2002) and Demotic Chronicle (Felber 2002). The first two are preserved in Greek and the latter in Demotic.
[1590] Hoffmann 2009.
[1591] Quack 2009.
[1592] Thissen 2002.
[1593] This paragraph is largely based on Dillery 2013b. For an edition of the relevant fragments, see Lang 2014, BNJ 609, https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/entries/brill-s-new-jacoby/manetho-609-a609 (last accessed 02.03.2020).
[1594] BNJ 609 T11a.
[1595] BNJ 609 F1//T7a.
[1596] See also Dillery 2013b: 42-47.

> "But the one who had been placed in charge of the temples of Egypt (ὁ δὲ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερέων τῆς Αἰγύπτου) wrote a letter and sent it to Sethos, making clear to him everything and that his brother Harmais had revolted against him."

Besides his *Aigyptiaka*, Manetho composed a number of other works, amongst which are "On Antiquity and Religion", "On Festivals" and "On the Preparation of *kyphi*" (some kind of incense). This shows that, aside from his historiographical interest, Manetho was also concerned with ritual practice and instruction.

A similar concern for correct ritual practice and ritual purity can be found in another type of texts. The so-called Admonitions to the Priests were carved in the walls of the *pronaos* in the temple which the priests crossed when they went from the place where they purified themselves to where they performed their daily rites.[1597] These books in stone consisted of prohibitions and general rules of conduct and moral behaviour. Their specific location in the temple indicates that the priesthood was the sole addressee of these texts and carried the responsibility for the observance of the rules. This idea is supported by the fact that the inscription was written in hieroglyphic script. The Ptolemaic era saw an explosive expansion of the graphemic inventory of hieroglyphic signs, which were often unique to specific temples. Moreover, outside the temples this (form of the) script would not have been used. The only people who could read and understand what the inscriptions stated, were the priests: "Dadurch wird die Hieroglyphenschrift zu einer spezifischen Kompetenz der Priester."[1598]

This innovation in the new temples of the Ptolemaic period was not the only new element. Some modifications were made to the traditional ground plan that reflected more recently arisen issues. The clearest architectural change lay in the addition of multiple zones which one had to traverse before one could reach the inner sanctuary ("*Schachtel-Prinzip*").[1599] As Assmann pointed out, this conveys a sense of "*Profanationsangst*", i.e. the idea that the inner sanctuary had to be protected from the outside, profane world – an idea which fits within the context of growing Hellenisation.[1600] In contrast, these new temples would otherwise follow ancient Egyptian architectural and iconographical traditions – they have even been described as "*gebaute Erinnerung*" or "canon": they architecturally preserve ideas relating to cosmology, theology, mythology and ritual, and as such can be seen as a form of "historiography".[1601]

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[1597] Leroux 2018, Assmann 1997(2000):185-190. The inscriptions are found in the temples of Dendera, Edfu, Kom Ombo and Philae.
[1598] Assmann 1997(2000): 193.
[1599] Assmann 1997(2000): 179.
[1600] Assmann 1997(2000): 179-180.
[1601] Assmann 1997(2000): 177-195: "Der ägyptische Spätzeittempel ist gebaute Erinnerung." (p. 181)

Aside from Hellenistic Egyptian literature and non-written forms of historiography, it has been suggested that the Late Babylonian priestly literature "may possibly serve as a valuable parallel to those strands of postexilic biblical and parabiblical literature that can be associated with a priestly background."[1602] First to come to mind is the so-called *Priesterschrift* (Priestly Source, P), a designation under which specific sections of the Pentateuch (i.e. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium) are gathered that share a concern for ritual, cult, law, purity, history and the crucial role of priests.[1603] Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate about the stages of creation of these texts, although many voices are raised in favour of a largely post-exilic dating.[1604] Because of the many problems that come with the study of these texts, I refrain here from making any further statements regarding possible parallels to the LBPL.[1605]

Parallels have been drawn also between Judean pseudo-prophecies, such as found in the book of Daniel and 1 Enoch, and Babylonian *ex eventu* texts, such as the Uruk Prophecy and the Dynastic Prophecy.[1606] While it remains questionable in how far there was direct influence between both corpora, "one must not underestimate the similarities" between these LB *ex eventu* texts and certain passages in the books of Daniel and 1 Enoch. As Neujahr pointed out: "Both corpora seek to evoke native, authoritative mantic traditions, and associate themselves with the prestige accorded to those traditions, thus enhancing their own claims to authority. Finally, all the texts exhibit the perspective of a native populace fighting against outside rule."[1607]

Aside from that, Daniel 3:31-4:34 shares with the LBPL a very specific interest for the person of king Nabonidus – despite the fact that the biblical book attributes his characteristics to Nebuchadnezzar instead, as a kind of "conflation of two traditions".[1608] Furthermore, an Aramaic text found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls contains the so-called "Prayer of Nabonidus" which relates a similar interest for the person of this king in the form of a prayer spoken by Nabonidus after the "most high God" has cured him from his illnesses.[1609] Based on the fact

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[1602] Jursa & Debourse 2020: 278.
[1603] An introduction can be found in Weimar 2010(2018) and Ska 2006.
[1604] Ska 2006: 159-161.
[1605] The corpus of LBPL is currently investigated in the LBPL-project headed by Michael Jursa and Nathan Wasserman (funded by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung). One of its aims is to make the relevant Babylonian material available in order to open it up for comparison with other ANE priestly literature. http://lpbl.hagitbagno.com/web/ (last accessed 13.03.2020).
[1606] Kosmin 2018: 137-177; Neujahr 2012: 120-151 and *passim*.
[1607] Neujahr 2012: 150.
[1608] Beaulieu 2007b: 138. See also Cavigneaux 2005.
[1609] Waerzeggers 2017. The text can be found here: https://www.livius.org/sources/content/dss/4q242-prayer-of-nabonidus/ (last accessed 10.03.2020).

that Nabonidus was a key figure in the LBPL – amongst others in the Nabonidus Chronicle, Nabonidus Epic and (under the guise of Šulgi) in the Uruk Chronicle – Waerzeggers has suggested that the Aramaic Prayer of Nabonidus (and with it the passage in Daniel) indirectly relate to this LBPL. In other words, "[t]he shared interest in Nabonidus by communities from the Levant to Uruk suggests a connected literary field and common uses of the past."[1610]

Finally, other texts belonging to the Dead Sea Scrolls may be mentioned here as well, such as the "calendrical texts" which provide secret and esoteric information about festivals and priestly courses, historical texts, pseudo-prophecies and religious laws.[1611] All of these texts attest to an active effort to establish and maintain a strong priestly identity and community.

In summary, the fact that the LBPL is inextricably connected to its historical context is shown by the parallels that exist in contemporary native priestly communities in the Hellenistic world, where comparable works of literature were created at this time. Despite their fundamental differences, the historical background of all these priestly communities is characterized by their struggle to survive in the absence of native kingship. The case of Uruk, the other large hub of cuneiform culture in the LB period, forms the clearest parallel, but also the literature created by the Egyptian and Judean priestly communities during the Hellenistic period may serve as possible *comparanda.*

[1610] Waerzeggers 2017: 75.
[1611] https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/learn-about-the-scrolls/scrolls-content (last accessed 10.03.2020). For the pseudo-prophecies in particular, see Neujahr 2012: 153-194.

# VII Conclusion

*Figure 5: Jan Vermeer, The Astronomer*
(1668, oil on canvas, 51x45 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. R.F. 1983-28)

Approximately a century after Bruegel's creation of *The Gloomy Day*, another Dutch painter, Jan Vermeer (1632-1675), painted *The Astronomer* (1668).[1612] As is characteristic for Vermeer, we see a personage absorbed in their activity, the scene lit up by a soft light falling through the stained-glass window on the left. Rather atypical for Vermeer, however, the subject of this painting is a man. His occupation is that of astronomer, as the measuring instruments, books and celestial globe on his table indicate. The astronomer is wearing sumptuous robes – a gift from the imperial court of Japan, the country to which a Dutch astronomer was obliged to pay regular visits at that time, and therefore a symbol of his prestige.[1613] On the wall behind the astronomer hangs a painting. Although only partly visible, we can discern the popular scene of the "Finding of Moses", a reference that Vermeer did not make by accident, since Moses was a symbol of ancient wisdom according to the Bible verse: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."[1614]

[1612] *The Astronomer*, www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/lastronome (last accessed 24.01.2020).
[1613] Hollander 2011.
[1614] Acts of the Apostles 7:22 (NKJV).

Moreover, the monograph on the table in front of the astronomer can by identified as Adriaen Metius' *Institutiones Astronomicae & Geographicae, fondamentale ende grondelijcke Onderwysinghe van de Sterrekonst ende Beschryvinghe der Aerden door het Ghebruyck van de Hemelsche ende Aerdtsche Globen*, opened to Book III which is titled "On the Investigation or Observation of the Stars".[1615] The chapter starts with a discussion of the origins of astronomy:

> "The first observers and investigators of the situation and course of the stars have been, as history points out, our ancestors the patriarchs who through inspiration from God the Lord and the knowledge of geometry and assistance of mathematical instruments have measured and described for us the firmament and the course of the stars." (cited through Welu 1986)

As such, painting and book connect symbolically to give expression to two ideas: first, that the study of the heavens in the present is part of an ancient tradition with its roots in the distant past and, second, that scientific research has always drawn and should therefore continue to draw on inspiration from God.

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The aim of this dissertation was threefold. The first goal was to investigate what modern scholars mean when they speak about "the Babylonian New Year Festival" and to understand the process by which that concept of the NYF was construed. The second goal was to study a specific corpus of texts that are used as sources for the NYF but were never submitted to source criticism in order to disclose the historical framework in which they originated. The third goal was to determine what gave rise to the creation of these NYF texts and which purpose(s) they may have served; in other words, it was asked how they relate to their context of creation.

The dissertation opened with a concise overview of the *status quaestionis* regarding the Babylonian NYF. The first studies on the subject appeared more than a hundred years ago and since then a number of monographs and detailed studies have appeared, alongside which exist countless references and small notes in a wide variety of academic literature. Within this modern scholarly framework there is a general consensus about the form, nature and intention of the NYF with only minor differences in focus and nuance. First, the Babylonian NYF is seen in light of the ancient Mesopotamian *akītu*-festival that originated in the southern city-states in the third millennium BC and was observed in a number of cities throughout Mesopotamian history. Moreover, later cultic traditions found in a Near Eastern context have been linked to the Babylonian NYF. Second, the Babylonian NYF is considered to be an eleven to twelve day long event celebrated at the beginning of Nisannu in Babylon and with a fixed schedule.

[1615] Welu 1986.

Characteristic rites included in it are the recitation of Enūma Elîš, the slapping of the king, the decreeing of destinies by the divine assembly and the procession of gods led by the king to the *akītu*-house. Third, modern scholars largely agree about the functions and meanings of the festival, which not only served to mark the beginning of the year, but also functioned as an expression of the (yearly) renewal of societal order and the re-investiture of the king. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that a special relationship existed between the Babylonian NYF and the myth of Enūma Elîš, although there is no agreement about the exact form this relation took (re-enactment, intermediality, interactionality or kerygma).

In spite of the extensive attention the subject has received, no conclusive answers have been sought to the questions of when and where exactly this festival was celebrated (in this form) and if and how it changed over time. The implicit assumption seems to be that the festival was observed in this form throughout the first millennium BC and has allowed for the use of sources that stem from different periods and places. Nonetheless, a chronological distribution of the source material highlights a number of continuities and changes that took place throughout the first millennium BC. The first clear attestations of a New Year's celebration at Babylon stem from Assyrian sources from Sargonid times – while quite certainly the festival was already observed there before that time, nothing conclusive can be said about it based on the current source material. The NA sources show the importance of the festival in the Babylonian world through the Assyrians' initial willingness to participate in it and their later eagerness to adopt the concept as well as integrate it into and adapt it to their own cultic traditions. The *akītu*-festival celebrated at Assur became an essential part of the rituals that served to legitimate and confirm the king in his office; the NA rulers undertook building projects to construct *akītu*-temples in various Assyrian cities and partook in the procession of gods during the festival. A similar image can be distilled from Neo-Babylonian sources: royal inscriptions and literary and cultic texts focus on the contributions of kings in the festival in the form of offerings, gifts, maintenance of temples and roads and their participation in the procession in Babylon. Evidence for the travel of gods from other large temple cities in Babylonia to the capital for the *akītu*-procession can be found in the local temple administrations aside from attestations of local *akītu*-festivals celebrated in honour of local patron deities. Both the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian sources show that the NYF or *akītu*-festival of the capital was an event of national importance that formed an essential part of the royal ideology. The differences between both periods seem to concern mostly the framing ideological, cultic and scholarly traditions and the geographical locations.

For almost two centuries, between the early fifth and late fourth centuries BC, we are confronted with a silence regarding any cultic celebration of the New Year. When the sources resume in the Late Babylonian period, a very different image of the festival comes to the fore. Only few contemporary documents attest to cultic activity at the beginning of the year, most of which can only circumstantially be linked to the NYF as we know it from the pre-Persian sources. It is questionable in how far these documents can inform us about the Babylonian NYF at that time, although modern scholars have searched for continuities with the pre-Persian period, especially when it comes to the participation of the king and the procession to the *akītu*-house. However, the fact that the Day One Temple is not the same as the *akītu*-temple leaves little evidence for the latter, and the (rarely) attested participation of Seleucid kings in Babylonian rituals at the beginning of Nisannu must be seen in the context of this dynasty's general policy of euergetism towards local (temple)communities rather than as an expression of their willingness to fulfil the obligations of Babylonian kingship. Aside from that, there is the conspicuous absence of the use of the word *akītu* or of other references to the New Year, with the exception of a number of historiographical works newly composed at this time. In these historical texts as well, the role of the king is much more prominent than in the records of contemporary events.

Amongst the LB source material are the NYF texts, a small set of texts that contain prescriptions for the rituals to be performed during the first days of Nisannu. Although they have been preserved only in manuscripts that date to the LB period, it is commonly presumed that they are, in fact, much older compositions that were copied in later times. The reason why this is assumed is mostly the fact that the king is one of the participants in the described ritual, which – so it is thought – makes it unlikely that these texts were created in an age of foreign domination, i.e. in an age in which the king would no longer participate. Nevertheless, an in-depth analysis of the NYF texts disproves this assumption as it can be demonstrated that they were produced by LB priests. Four different approaches were chosen in this dissertation. First, the philological analysis showed that, although the NYF texts largely conform to the Standard Babylonian version of the Akkadian language, they do contain a number of orthographical, morphological, phonological and syntactical features that are much more common in Late Babylonian. Particularly significant as well are the words and expressions generally used in late astronomical texts and the "hocus pocus" Sumerian. In contrast to those LB features, the NYF texts make use of archaic elements as well, both in the syntax and lexicon, which may be explained as typical 'ritual' or 'prayer' language as well as by the fact that there are some instances of intertextuality with older compositions. Second, the paratextual notes and material

aspects of the NYF texts show that these tablets were library texts that could be consulted, studied and stored. The use of catchphrases, tablet numbers and other indications gives the manuscripts the appearance of a series, although it remains unclear of what this series may have consisted. Aside from that, there are specific subscripts that emphasize the secret nature of the texts and thus claim the sanctity of priestly knowledge. All in all, it is rather doubtful whether we may take these paratextual notes at face value. They might perhaps better be considered as tools to grant the texts an aura of antiquity and authority that they do not actually possess.

Third, a historical evaluation of the *dromena* in the NYF texts was made. Seven ritual sequences are preserved in the NYF texts and all are unique despite the fact that they constitute in part of rites known from other Mesopotamian rituals. In other words, the prescribed rituals are on the one hand clearly based on traditional Mesopotamian ideas of ritual and cult but on the other they are characterized by ritual innovation. Several of those innovations anchor the ritual texts in a Late Babylonian context, the clearest example of which is the precise timing of the rituals at specific moments of the night and day, a feature that does not occur elsewhere. Similarly, the ritual humiliation of the king takes on a new form in this festival compared to other attested moments of royal humbling in Mesopotamian ritual: notably, the prominent role of the priest is unparallelled. Fourth, the *legomena* in the NYF texts were analysed regarding matters of text construction and intertextuality. At several instances the author(s) of the prayers were inspired and influenced by other, newer compositions, most importantly the myth of Enmešarra's Defeat, LB commentaries and astronomical compendia such as the List of Stars and Deities. Furthermore, attention was paid to the invoked gods and the beneficiaries of the prayers. It was shown that the focus on Marduk and his *Kreis*, Babylon and Esagila is particularly strong. Similarly as in the *dromena*, the priest takes on a leading position in the prayers, since he is the one who asks Marduk for personal protection, reveals himself as the one speaking and is even eulogized by the god in the unusual text NYF6. The king is conspicuously (almost) absent and, in a similar vein as in the ritual instructions, appears only in full submission to Marduk.

The results of these four analyses show that the NYF texts, as we know them, are creations of Late Babylonian priests active in the temple of Bēl, not copies of a composition that originated in the first half of the first millennium BC. While the texts include a number of features that draw on traditional Babylonian conceptions, these are nonetheless changed and moulded to fit a new form. On top of that, there are several characteristics that cannot be reconciled with such an early date of composition and can only be understood in a LB context. Remarkable is the focus on Babylon and Marduk to the exclusion of cities that do not lie in the close vicinity of

Babylon and of gods that do not belong to Marduk's court. More particular still is the representation of the priest(hood) and the king respectively that is unprecedented in Mesopotamian ritual texts. The king is passive, submitted, objectified and ambiguous. He is largely eclipsed by the Elder Brother, who is the shining star of the festival. The priest is the one who manages the rites and holds the exclusive knowledge for it. More than that, he appears as the chosen one of Marduk and functions as the intermediary between the deity and the king. As such, the main concern underlying the NYF texts is the (balance within the) trilateral relationship between Marduk, the king and the priest(s).

This interest for the relationship between the members of the triad "priest-king-Marduk" also dominates a number of other cuneiform texts that saw the light in LB Babylon and distinguishes them markedly from earlier Mesopotamian textual tradition(s). This allows us to see them as a new and distinctly Late Babylonian discourse, while at the same time they are undeniably part of the tradition of cuneiform culture. A number of these new texts deal with Babylon's past. They revolve around issues relating to Babylonian kingship, with *exempla* of good kings, who worship Marduk, and bad kings, who refuse to pay their due reverence to the gods. More than that, however, these histories focus on the priests, who are portrayed as the heroic guardians of cuneiform culture: they risk everything to make sure that the king fulfils his duties; they are the only ones who have access to the secret and divine cuneiform lore; they are the 'chosen ones' of Marduk. In the texts documenting contemporary events, kings of the present are scrupulously followed in their actions and movements, with particular attention for behaviour that legitimizes them in the eyes of the Babylonians. Nevertheless, this only emphasizes the fact that the king is not where he is supposed to be – in Babylon – and does not do what he is supposed to do – worship Marduk and take care of his temple. In absence of a native king, priests take matters into their own hands, to which the ritual texts bear witness – in a sense, these written prescriptions authenticate the new role which the priests were forced to take on.

This new strand of cuneiform literature was, first and foremost, addressed at as well as written by the priesthood of Marduk in Babylon, which allows us to call it "Late Babylonian Priestly Literature". This LBPL served to fulfil a number of group-internal purposes, all of which revolved around building and maintaining a strong priestly identity. Second, the LBPL surpassed its group-internal aims since it was also directed at the king as a kind of *Fürstenspiegel*. As such, these motifs and intentions of LBPL can be understood best when read against a Late Babylonian background, in which the absence of native kingship, the rapidly diminishing importance of Babylon and the constant threat of war gave rise to subsequent

moments of crisis on different levels. The fact that this LBPL is inextricably connected to its historical context is shown by the parallels that exist in contemporary native priestly communities in the Hellenistic world, where comparable works of literature were created at this time. Despite their fundamental differences, the historical background of all these priestly communities is characterized by their struggle to survive in the absence of native kingship. The case of Uruk, the other large hub of cuneiform culture in the LB period, forms the clearest parallel, but also the literature created by of Egyptian and Judean priestly communities during the Hellenistic period may serve as *comparanda*.

For the Babylonian priests who lived and worked during the Late Babylonian period, the legitimacy of their work lay in its antiquity and its divine nature. In the past, their authority had been drawn mostly from their indispensability in the eyes of the king, whom they protected and advised in all matters divine. In the present, however, the priests' only legitimation could be found in the eyes of their peers and the gods whom they served, as kings no longer heeded the gods of Babylon and thus had no need for Marduk's priesthood. The sources of this time demonstrate how, on the one hand, the priesthood experienced and regulated their lives in absence of a native king, while on the other they endeavoured to maintain their long-standing traditions.

As such, their whole existence was permeated by an essential incongruity or tension between what was real and what should be real. One way in which the priesthood dealt with this incongruity was through the creation of the NYF texts, which present a solution that could restore the balance between Bēl, the king and the priest, but that could never be executed in reality.

# VIII Indices

## VIII.1 Bibliography


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## VIII.3 Glossary of Akkadian words in the NYF texts

This glossary includes all the Akkadian words in the NYF texts in their form found in the CAD as well as names of deities, heavenly bodies, cities and temples (with initial capital letter). Translations are only provided in the case of homophones.

| Akkadian word | Text reference |
|---|---|
| *abālu* | NYF1 VI, 11;<br>NYF4 V, 22 |
| *abātu* | NYF4 V, 42 |
| *abbūtu* | NYF3 I, 24';<br>NYF4 II, 7 |
| *abnu* | NYF1 VI, 2 |
| *adāru* | NYF3 I, 26';<br>NYF4 II, 2 |
| *agû* | NYF1 I, 16; II, 10;<br>NYF3 VI, 8;<br>NYF4 II, 25; V, 32 |
| *aḫāzu* | NYF4 III, 3 |
| *aḫu-rabû* | NYF1 I, 2; I, 34; VI, 10;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF3 I, 11'; VI, 13;<br>NYF4 II, 23; II, 27; IV, 21; IV, 24; IV, 29; V, 1; V, 31;<br>NYF5 III, 23;<br>NYF6 II, 2'; II, lo.e. |
| *akālu* | NYF3 I, 24';<br>NYF5 IV, 12' |
| *alāku* | NYF2 II, 7;<br>NYF3 VI, 10; VI, 11;<br>NYF4 II, 13; IV, 15; V, 24;<br>NYF5 IV, 7' |
| *alla* | NYF1 I, 34;<br>NYF5 III, 3 |
| *alpu* | NYF3 VI, 18; VI, 21 ($^{d}$gu$_4$); VI, 27($^{d}$gu$_4$); VI, 29 ($^{d}$gu$_4$) |
| *ālu* | NYF1 I, 30; V, 28;<br>NYF3 I, 12'; VI, 2;<br>NYF5 IV, 8' |
| *amāru* | NYF4 IV, 21; IV, 22 |
| *amatu* | NYF3 I, 14' |
| *amēlūtu* | NYF1 I, 14 |
| *ammatu* | NYF3 VI, 14 |
| *amtu* | NYF1 II, 35 |
| *amû* | NYF5 IV, 18' |
| *anāku* | NYF3 I, 11' |
| *annâ* | NYF1 I, 36, II, 16; VI, 9;<br>NYF2 I, 4; I, 5;<br>NYF3 I, 16'; VI, 13; VI, 20;<br>NYF4 II, 21; II, 30; III, 17; IV, 30; V, 11; V, 37.<br>NYF5 II, 14'; III, 7; III, 22 |
| $^{d}$*Anu* | NYF1 II, 10;<br>NYF3 VI, 22;<br>NYF4 II, 25 |
| *appu* | NYF3 VI, 7; VI, 28;<br>NYF6 II, 6' |
| *apû* | NYF1 I, 28 Š;<br>NYF2 II, 3 Š;<br>NYF4 II, 9 |

| | |
|---|---|
| *arāku* | NYF3 I, 30’;<br>NYF4 II, 6; II, 12 |
| *arāmu* | NYF4 IV, 28 |
| *arāru* | NYF1 II, 20;<br>NYF2 VI, 7’ |
| *ardu* | NYF2 II, 4;<br>NYF3 I, 28’;<br>NYF4 II, 4.<br>NYF5 IV, 4’ |
| *arku* | NYF1 VI, 29;<br>NYF2 VI, 2’;<br>NYF4 up.e.; IV, 23; V, 35;<br>NYF5 III, 24 |
| *arratu* | NYF1 II, 20 |
| *asakku* | NYF5 IV, 12’ |
| $^{d}$*Asalluḫi* | NYF4 IV, 32 |
| $^{d}$*Asarri* | NYF4 III, 4 |
| *asar(r)u* | NYF5 III, 5; III, 21; VI, 20’;<br>NYF6 II, 3’ |
| *ašabu* | NYF1 I, 29, II, 34;<br>NYF2 I, 15;<br>NYF3 I, 8’; I, 18’;<br>NYF4 IV, 20; IV, 32$^{interl}$;<br>NYF5 III, 27; IV, 25’ |
| *āšipūtu* | NYF5 IV, 20’ |
| *aššu* | NYF1 II, 18 |
| *aṣû* | NYF2 II, 9; VI, 5’;<br>NYF3 I, 16’; VI, 8;<br>NYF4 II, 15; IV, 17; IV, 18; IV, 24; IV, 27; IV, 38; IV, 41; V, 30; V, 31; V, 34;<br>NYF5 IV, 22’; |
| *atta* | NYF6 II, 3’; II, 4’; II, 9’ |
| *ayābu* | NYF2 I, 17 |
| *Bābili* | NYF1 I, 16; I, 30; II, 16; II, 24; II, 36; V, 28;<br>NYF2 VI, 6’;<br>NYF3 I, 8’; I, 12’; VI, 2;<br>NYF4 II, 6; IV, 19; V, 39; V, 42 |
| *bābu* | NYF2 V, 7’;<br>NYF4 IV, 41; V, 30 |
| *bala* | NYF6 II, 8‘ |
| *balāṭu* | NYF4 II, 6; II, 12; III, 32;<br>NYF5 IV, 10’; VI, 13’ |
| $^{mul}$*Baltiša* | NYF4 III, 29 |
| *bāltu* | NYF4 III, 29 |
| *banû* | NYF4 III, 11; III, 31; V, 13 |
| *Barsip* | NYF1 I, 16 |
| *barû* | NYF1 I, 19;<br>NYF2 VI, 3’;<br>NYF4 III, 27 |
| *bašû* | NYF2 VI, 7’;<br>NYF3 I, 23’ |
| *batāqu* | NYF4 IV, 10 |
| *bâ’u* | NYF4 III, 43; V, 29 |
| $^{d}$*Bēl* | NYF1 I, 3; I, 4; I, 6; I, 8; I, 12; I, 14; I, 16; I, 19; I, 34; I, 39; II, 19; II, 22; VI, 7; VI, 10;<br>NYF2 I, 3; I, 4; I, 5; V, 2’; V, 3’;<br>NYF3 I, 4’; I, 16’; II, 1’; VI, 5; VI, 10; VI, 11; VI, 28;<br>NYF4 II, 29; III, 39; IV, 1; IV, 39; V, 1; V, 31; V, 33; V, 35;<br>NYF5 II, 6’; II, 11’; III, 24; III, 25; III, 26; III, 27 |

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|---|---|
| *bēl mātāti* | NYF1 I, 8; I, 26; I, 29; II, 23;<br>NYF3 I, 3';<br>NYF4 V, 38 |
| *bēltīya* | NYF2 I, 3;<br>NYF3 I, 16'; I, 22';<br>NYF5 II, 11' |
| $^{d}$*Bēltīya* | NYF1 I, 39;<br>NYF4 II, 29; III, 17; III, 39; IV, 2;<br>NYF5 II, 11'; III, 6; III, 7; VI, 22'; |
| *bēltu* | NYF4 III, 24 |
| *bēlu* | NYF1 II, 22;<br>NYF2 I, 7 (*be-lu*); I, 9;<br>NYF3 I, 8'; I, 14';<br>NYF4 III, 10 |
| *bēlūtu* | NYF1 I, 28;<br>NYF2 I, 13; V, 4';<br>NYF4 II, 8 |
| *bēru* | NYF1 I, 1; VI, 1;<br>NYF2 I, 1;<br>NYF4 II, 27; III, 38; IV, 23;<br>NYF5 III, 23; |
| *bīnu* | NYF1 VI, 5; VI, 13 |
| *bītu* | NYF1 I, 31; VI, 21;<br>NYF2 I, 15; NYF3 I, 13'; VI, 3;<br>NYF4 III, 40; III, 42; III, 43; IV, 2; IV, 5; IV, 11; IV, 12; IV, 21; IV, 23; IV, 28; IV, 31; IV, 35; IV, 38; V, 17 |
| *burāšu* | NYF4 IV, 9; V, 9 |
| *burrû* | NYF4 V, 25 |
| *būrtu* | NYF3 VI, 16; VI, 17;<br>NYF4 III, 41; IV, 5; IV, 6 |
| *dabābu* | NYF1 I, 25; I, 27;<br>NYF2 II, 3; II, 8;<br>NYF4 II, 14;<br>NYF5 IV, 4' |
| *dabdû* | NYF6 II, 17' |
| *daltu* | NYF1 V, 30;<br>NYF4 III, 34; IV, 7 |
| $^{d}$*Damkianna* | NYF4 III, 24 |
| *damqātu* | NYF1 I, 26; V, 29;<br>NYF2 II, 4;<br>NYF3 I, 11'; I, 28';<br>NYF4 II, 4; II, 10;<br>NYF5 IV, 6';<br>NYF6 II, 7' |
| *damqu* | NYF1 I, 8 |
| *dannatu* | NYF4 II, 11 |
| *dannu* | NYF1 I, 12; I, 22; II, 15;<br>NYF2 II, 5;<br>NYF4 III, 26 |
| *dāriš* | NYF3 VI, 5 |
| *dekû* | NYF1 I, 4;<br>NYF2 I, 3;<br>NYF3 II, 6';<br>NYF4 II, 29; V, 2 |
| *Dimmerankia* | NYF4 III, 1 |
| *dīmtu* | NYF3 VI, 10; VI, 11 |
| *dinānu* | NYF3 VI, 25; VI, 26 (*addinānu*) |
| *diparu* | NYF3 VI, 19 |
| *dišpu* | NYF3 VI, 17; |

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|---|---|
| | NYF4 V, 6 |
| *duppuru* | NYF5 IV, 11'; VI, 14' |
| *dušmû* | NYF5 IV, 15' |
| *dušû* | NYF1 VI, 15 |
| *ebbu* | NYF6 II, 10' |
| *ebēbu* | NYF1 II, 27;<br>NYF2 V, 7' |
| *ebēru* | NYF3 I, 6'; I, 20' |
| *egû* | NYF4 V, 38 |
| *egubbû* | NYF4 IV, 4 |
| *Eḫursagtila* | NYF1 VI, 24 |
| *ekurru* | NYF1 II, 31 |
| *elēlu* | NYF4 IV, 31; IV, 35 |
| *ellu* | NYF3 I, 10';<br>NYF4 IV, 22;<br>NYF6 II, 10' |
| *elmešu* | NYF6 II, lo.e. |
| *elû* | NYF1 VI, 15 |
| $^{d}$*Enlil* | NYF4 II, 26; III, 10 |
| *enû* | NYF3 VI, 25; VI, 26 |
| *enūma* | NYF3 VI, 7; VI, 9; VI, 13; VI, 29;<br>NYF4 II, 21; III, 38; IV, 2; IV, 23; V, 24 |
| *Enūma Elîš* | NYF4 II, 22; II, 24 |
| $^{mul}$*Enzu* | NYF4 III, 27 |
| *epēšu* | NYF1 I, 39; V, 32; VI, 3;<br>NYF2 V, 6';<br>NYF3 VI, 13;<br>NYF4 II, 19; II, 21; III, 36;<br>NYF5 II, 13';<br>NYF6 II, 5'; II, 13' |
| *ereb šamši* | NYF3 VI, 13;<br>NYF4 IV, 15 ($^{d}$utu.šú.a);<br>NYF5 III, 23 (šú.$^{d}$utu) |
| *erēbu* | NYF1 I, 3; V, 31;<br>NYF2 II, 13;<br>NYF4 III, 35; IV, 2; IV, 4; IV, 19; V, 30; V, 33; V, 35;<br>NYF5 III, 6; III, 25 |
| *erēnu* | NYF1 VI, 5; VI, 13; VI, 16;<br>NYF4 IV, 7 |
| $^{mul}$*Ereqqu* | NYF4 III, 30 |
| *erēšu* | NYF3 I, 7' |
| *ērib-bīti* | NYF1 I, 37;<br>NYF4 II, 18; III, 35;<br>NYF5 II, 12';<br>NYF6 II, 7' |
| *Eridu* | NYF4 III, 3; IV, 32 |
| *eru* | NYF1 VI, 20;<br>NYF3 VI, 15 |
| *erû* | NYF4 III, 42 |
| $^{mul}$*Erua* | NYF4 III, 31 |
| *eršūtu* | NYF4 III, 3 |
| *erṣetu* | NYF1 II, 25;<br>NYF3 I, 6'; I, 20';<br>NYF4 II, 16; III, 24; V, 36;<br>NYF6 II, 10'; |
| *Esagila* | NYF1 I, 31; I, 33; V, 27;<br>NYF2 II, 10;<br>NYF3 I, 13'; VI, 3;<br>NYF4 II, 16; II, 17; V, 40; |

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|---|---|
| | NYF5 III, 2; VI, 25’ |
| *Esiskur* | NYF4 V, 17 |
| *eššešu* | NYF2 V, 6’ |
| *ešû* | NYF1 I, 6 |
| *eṣēru* | NYF4 IV, 36 |
| *etellu* | NYF2 I, 11 |
| *eṭēru* | NYF3 I, 27’;<br>NYF4 II, 3 |
| *Euʾul* | NYF1 I, 29; II, 26; II, 37;<br>NYF3 I, 8’; I, 18’;<br>NYF4 IV, 32 |
| *Eumuša* | NYF1 I, 34; VI, 10;<br>NYF3 I, 11’;<br>NYF4 II, 23; IV, 21; IV, 24; IV, 29;<br>NYF6 II, 2’; II, lo.e. |
| *ezēzu* | NYF3 VI, 11 |
| *Ezida* | NYF4 IV, 3; IV, 27 |
| *ezzu* | NYF4 III, 8 |
| *gabbu* | NYF4 II, 18; III, 35; IV, 7; IV, 13; V, 21 |
| *gadalû* | NYF1 I, 3;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF4 II, 29 |
| *gallu* | NYF4 IV, 39 |
| *gamirtu* | NYF4 II, 23 |
| *gašru* | NYF2 I, 7;<br>NYF3 I, 17’ |
| *gattu* | NYF5 IV, 7’ |
| *gibbilû* ($^{d}$gibil$_{6}$) | NYF3 VI, 23;<br>NYF4 III, 8 |
| *gimrētu* | NYF1 I, 19 |
| *gimru* | NYF1 I, 18 |
| *ginâ* | NYF1 I, 38 (*gi-na-a*);<br>NYF2 II, 7;<br>NYF4 II, 13; II, 19; III, 36;<br>NYF5 II, 13’ |
| *ginû* | NYF3 VI, 7;<br>NYF4 V, 4 |
| *gišḫuru* | NYF1 II, 33;<br>NYF2 I, 9; |
| *gišimmaru* | NYF1 VI, 20;<br>NYF3 VI, 15 |
| *gizillû* | NYF4 III, 43; IV, 4 |
| *ḫabbilu* | NYF1 II, 18 |
| *ḫâbu* | NYF4 III, 40; IV, 1; IV, 2; IV, 5; IV, 13; IV, 21; IV, 23 |
| *ḫalālu* (“to slink”) | NYF5 IV, 7’ |
| *ḫalālu* (“to sound”) | NYF4 III, 43 |
| *ḫalāqu* | NYF3 VI, 6;<br>NYF4 V, 39 |
| *ḫaṭṭu* | NYF3 I, 10’; VI, 8;<br>NYF4 III, 2; V, 31 |
| *ḫatû* | NYF4 V, 38 |
| *ḫâṭu* | NYF1 I, 20;<br>NYF3 I, 6’; I, 20’ |
| $^{mul}$*Ḫegalla* | NYF4 III, 28 |
| *ḫegallu* | NYF5 IV, 3’ |
| *ḫidâtu* | NYF2 II, 7;<br>NYF4 II, 13 |
| *ḫimētu* | NYF3 VI, 17 |
| *ḫissatu* | NYF5 IV, 5’ |

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|---|---|
| *ḫurāṣu* | NYF1 VI, 2; VI, 6; VI, 14;<br>NYF4 IV, 26; V, 2; V, 7; V, 8 |
| *Iddaḫedu* | NYF4 V, 27 |
| *Idiqlat* | NYF4 II, 28; III, 41; IV, 5 |
| *idû* | NYF4 V, 18;<br>NYF6 II, 3'; II, 4'; II, 9' |
| *Igigi* | NYF1 I, 26;<br>NYF2 I, 7 |
| *iḫzu* | NYF1 VI, 14 |
| *ikkilu* | NYF4 IV, 30 |
| *ikletu* | NYF4 III, 15 |
| *ikribu* | NYF1 I, 4; V, 4';<br>NYF2 I, 5; V, 3';<br>NYF3 I, 16';<br>NYF4 II, 30; III, 17; V, 17 |
| *ikû* | NYF2 II, 10 |
| *iltu* | NYF3 I, 17'; I, 19';<br>NYF5 IV, 26' |
| *ilu* | NYF1 I, 10;<br>NYF2 I, 7; I, 9; II, 1; VI, 6';<br>NYF3 I, 9'; I, 14';<br>NYF4 II, 7; V, 12; V, 14;<br>NYF5 IV, 26' |
| *ilūtu* | NYF3 I, 26';<br>NYF4 II, 2; V, 38 |
| *immeru* | NYF4 IV, 10; IV, 11; IV, 14; IV, 16; IV, 17 |
| *imittu* ("shoulder piece") | NYF1 VI, 9 |
| *imittu* ("right") | NYF1 VI, 17; VI, 18 |
| *īnu* | NYF1 I, 19 |
| *irtu* | NYF1 VI, 8;<br>NYF4 III, 13 |
| *isqu* | NYF1 I, 14 |
| *išaru* | NYF3 VI, 15 |
| *išdu* | NYF4 IV, 28 |
| *išparu* | NYF1 VI, 9 |
| *ištānu* | NYF4 II, 15 |
| *ištaru* | NYF3 I, 17'; I, 23';<br>NYF4 III, 25;<br>NYF5 II, 4'; VI, 26' |
| *ištēn* | NYF1 VI, 13 |
| *izuzzu* | NYF5 III, 25 |
| *kabāsu* | NYF4 III, 13 |
| *kabattu* | NYF1 I, 18 |
| *kabātu* | NYF3 VI, 7 |
| *kabtu* | NYF2 I, 11 |
| *kakkabu* | NYF3 I, 18';<br>NYF5 IV, 24';<br>NYF4 III, 7; III, 25; III, 28; III, 29 |
| *miṭṭu* | NYF3 VI, 8;<br>NYF4 V, 31[interl] |
| *kalu* | NYF6 II, 7';<br>NYF4 II, 14; IV, 25; IV, 41; V, 20 |
| *kalâma* | NYF3 I, 9';<br>NYF4 II, 14; III, 5 |
| *kalāmu* | NYF1 I, 25; I, 35;<br>NYF5 III, 4 |
| *kalû* | NYF3 VI, 27;<br>NYF4 II, 20; III, 37;<br>NYF5 II, 10' |

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|---|---|
| *kalûtu* | NYF5 III, 5; III, 21 |
| *kamāšu* | NYF4 V, 36 |
| *kamû* | NYF1 I, 23; II, 38;<br>NYF3 I, 27';<br>NYF4 II, 3 |
| *kânu* | NYF2 I, 9;<br>NYF3 VI, 17;<br>NYF6 II, 8' |
| *kapāru* | NYF4 IV, 11 |
| *karābu* | NYF3 VI, 5;<br>NYF4 II, 17 |
| *karānu* | NYF4 V, 10 |
| *karṣu* | NYF3 I, 24' |
| *kāru* | NYF4 V, 15 |
| *kaspu* | NYF4 IV, 8 |
| *kašādu* | NYF1 VI, 24;<br>NYF4 V, 25; V, 31 |
| *kâšû/kâšî* | NYF6 II, 5'; II, 6'; II, 8'; II, 13' |
| $^{mul}$*Kayamānu* | NYF4 III, 7 |
| *kazbu* | NYF3 I, 19' |
| ki.min | NYF1 I, 40;<br>NYF4 II, 20; III, 37; IV, 17 |
| *kīam* | NYF5 III, 26; VI, 23' |
| *kibrātu* | NYF2 I, 9;<br>NYF4 III, 14 |
| *kīma* | NYF1, 38; II, 28;<br>NYF3 I, 23';<br>NYF4 II, 19; III, 36;<br>NYF5 II, 13'; III, 23;<br>NYF6 II, 10'; II, 11'; II, 12' |
| *kīnātu* | NYF4 V, 13 |
| *kīnu* | NYF1 I, 23 |
| *kippatu* | NYF3 VI, 8;<br>NYF4 V, 31 |
| *kisallu* | NYF4 II, 15; IV, 8 |
| *kisalmāḫu* | NYF2 II, 9;<br>NYF3 VI, 16; |
| *kīṣu* | NYF4 II, 22 |
| *kittu* | NYF4 III, 7 |
| *kunukku* | NYF1 II, 9 |
| $^{d}$*Kusu* | NYF4 IV, 33; IV, 36 |
| *kutīmu* | NYF1 VI, 6; VI, 8 |
| *kuttumu* | NYF4 II, 26 |
| *labānu* | NYF3 VI, 28;<br>NYF6 II, 6' |
| *labāru* | NYF4 III, 12 |
| *labāšu* | NYF1 VI, 19 |
| *lānu* | NYF1 VI, 12 |
| *lapānu* | NYF3 I, 25';<br>NYF4 II, 1 |
| *lapātu* | NYF1 I, 22;<br>NYF4 IV, 7 |
| *lapnu* | NYF3 I, 25';<br>NYF4 II, 1 |
| *lemnu* | NYF1 II, 14;<br>NYF4 IV, 38;<br>NYF5 IV, 11' |
| *leqû* | NYF4 V, 23 |
| *lētu* | NYF3 VI, 9; |

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|---|---|
| | NYF4 V, 34; V, 41;<br>NYF6 II, 14'; II, 16' |
| *libbu* | NYF1 VI, 27;<br>NYF3 VI, 19;<br>NYF4 III, 42; III, 43; V, 16 |
| *littu* | NYF4 IV, 33 |
| *lubūšu* | NYF3 I, 19' |
| *madādu* | NYF3 I, 7';<br>NYF4 III, 9 |
| *mādiš* | NYF5 IV, 21' |
| *maḫāṣu* | NYF1 VI, 25;<br>NYF3 VI, 9;<br>NYF4 V, 34; V, 41;<br>NYF6 II, 14'; II, 16' |
| *māḫir* | NYF1 I, 6 |
| *makkūru* | NYF1 VI, 3;<br>NYF4 IV, 26 |
| *mala* | NYF2 VI, 6';<br>NYF4 II, 24; IV, 18 |
| *malû* | NYF4 V, 5; V, 6 |
| *mamma(n)* | NYF6 II, 13'; II, 17' |
| $^{d}$*Ma(n)dānu* | NYF1 VI, 21; VI, 22 |
| *mannu* | NYF1 I, 27 |
| *manû* | NYF4 IV, 12 |
| *manzāzu* | NYF3 I, 21' |
| *maqātu* | NYF1 I, 12;<br>NYF3 I, 26'; VI, 6;<br>NYF4 II, 2; III, 26 |
| $^{d}$*Marduk* | NYF1 II, 19; VI, 3;<br>NYF2 I, 9; I, 15; II, 1; VI, 4';<br>NYF3 I, 8';<br>NYF4 II, 7; IV, 26; IV, 35;<br>NYF5 III, 27 |
| *markasu* | NYF4 III, 30 |
| *māru* | NYF4 IV, 32;<br>NYF5 III, 3 (*ma-ri*) |
| *mārē Bābili* | NYF1 I, 32;<br>NYF3 I, 15'; I, 30'; VI, 4;<br>NYF4 II, 6 |
| *mārē ummânī* | NYF1 VI, 11;<br>NYF4 IV, 25; IV, 29; IV, 41; V, 20; V, 21; V, 23; V, 30 |
| *mašmaššu* | NYF4 III, 40; IV, 11; IV, 14; IV, 18 |
| *mašû* | NYF1 II, 32;<br>NYF4 V, 40 |
| *mātu* | NYF2 I, 17 |
| *medû* | NYF6 II, 3' |
| *mērēštu* | NYF3 I, 7';<br>NYF4 III, 4 |
| *mimma* | NYF4 IV, 38 |
| min | NYF2 I, 15 |
| *miqtu* | NYF3 I, 3'; VI, 12 |
| *mīšaru* | NYF4 III, 7 |
| *mītu* | NYF5 IV, 10' |
| *mû* | NYF1 I, 2;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF3 I, 7';<br>NYF4 III, 9; III, 41; IV, 5; V, 29;<br>NYF5 II, 8' |

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|---|---|
| $^{mul}$*Mubukešda* | NYF4 III, 2 |
| *muḫḫu* | NYF1 II, 11; VI, 15;<br>NYF4 IV, 9; V, 3; V, 4; V, 5; V, 6; V, 7; V, 8; V, 28;<br>NYF6 II, lo.e. |
| $^{mul}$*Mulubabbar* | NYF4 III, 5 |
| *murṣu* | NYF2 II, 6;<br>NYF5 IV, 14'; VI, 17' |
| *mūšu* | NYF1 I,1;<br>NYF2 I, 1;<br>NYF3 VI, 1;<br>NYF4 II, 27;<br>NYF6 II, 5' |
| *nabû* ("to shine") | NYF3 I, 18';<br>NYF4 III, 25;<br>NYF5 IV, 24' |
| *nabû* ("to name") | NYF6 II, 2' |
| $^{d}$*Nabû* | NYF1 VI, 17; VI, 19; VI, 24; VI, 26;<br>NYF4 IV, 3; IV, 19; IV, 27; V, 22; V, 24; V, 25; V, 26; V, 27 |
| *nadānu* | NYF1 I, 21; VI, 4; VI, 5; VI, 6;<br>NYF3 I, 10' |
| *nadû* | NYF1 VI, 27;<br>NYF4 IV, 16; IV, 37;<br>NYF5 IV, 13' |
| *naggāru* | NYF1 VI, 4; VI, 9 |
| *namāru* | NYF2 I, 15;<br>NYF3 I, 22'; VI, 21;<br>NYF4 III, 15 |
| $^{mul}$*Namaššû* | NYF4 III, 12 |
| *namburbû* | NYF1 II, 17 |
| *nakru* | NYF1 II, 18;<br>NYF3 I, 26'; VI, 6; VI, 12;<br>NYF4 II, 2;<br>NYF6 II, 17' |
| *namirtu* | NYF3 I, 15' |
| *namrirru* | NYF6 II, 11' |
| *namû* | NYF5 IV, 27' |
| *napāḫu* | NYF1 VI, 26 |
| *naplusu* | NYF1 I, 24 |
| *naqbītu* | NYF1 I, 36;<br>NYF3 VI, 20;<br>NYF4 III, 34; V, 19;<br>NYF5 II, 14'; III, 22 |
| *naqû* | NYF4 V, 10 |
| *narbû* | NYF5 IV, 18' |
| *nāru* ("river") | NYF1 I, 2;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF4 II, 28; IV, 15; IV, 16; V, 24 |
| *nāru* ("singer") | NYF1 I, 40;<br>NYF4 II, 20; III, 37 |
| *nâru* | NYF4 IV, 39 |
| *nasāḫu* | NYF1 II, 30 |
| *nasāku* | NYF5 II, 7' |
| *nasku* | NYF1 I, 29;<br>NYF3 I, 27';<br>NYF4 II, 3;<br>NYF5 IV, 9' |
| *našû* | NYF1 VI, 16; VI, 17; VI, 18; VI, 19;<br>NYF2 I, 4; I, 13;<br>NYF4 II, 24; II, 25; III, 2; III, 5; IV, 14; V, 18; V, 28; V, 32 |

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| *naṣāru* | NYF5 IV, 21’ |
| *nekelmû* | NYF1 I, 12; I, 21 |
| *nigkalagû* | NYF4 III, 42 |
| *nignakku* | NYF4 III, 43; IV, 4; IV, 8; IV, 13; V, 8 |
| *nikiltu* | NYF6 II, 13’ |
| $^{d}$*Ningirim* | NYF4 IV, 34; IV, 37 |
| $^{mul}$*Ninmaḫ* | NYF4 III, 32 |
| *Nippuru* | NYF1 II, 29 |
| *nisannu* | NYF1 I, 1; V, 4; VI, 29;<br>NYF2 I, 1; VI, 3’;<br>NYF3 II, 3’;<br>NYF4 up.e.; II, 27 |
| *nisiqtu* | NYF1 VI, 2 |
| *nīšu* | NYF1 II, 34; V, 21;<br>NYF4 II, 14;<br>NYF5 IV, 19’ |
| *niṣirtu* | NYF1 I, 33;<br>NYF5 III, 2 |
| *nuḫšu* | NYF4 III, 28<br>NYF5 IV, 3’ |
| *nūru* | NYF1 I, 14; I, 25; I, 26;<br>NYF2 I, 15;<br>NYF3 I, 19’; VI, 21;<br>NYF4 III, 14 |
| *pagru* | NYF4 IV, 11; IV, 14; IV, 16 |
| *palāḫu* | NYF1 I, 34;<br>NYF2 V, 1’; VI, 4’;<br>NYF3 I, 10’; I, 29’;<br>NYF4 II, 5 |
| *pānu* | NYF1 I, 3; I, 31; II, 12; VI, 7; VI, 10; VI, 26;<br>NYF2 I, 3; II, 1;<br>NYF3 I, 16’; I, 16’;<br>NYF4 II, 15; II, 25; II, 29; IV, 15; V, 1; V, 9; V, 26; V, 33; V, 35;<br>NYF5 III, 24; III, 25; III, 26; VI, 22’ |
| *papāḫu* | NYF4 IV, 1; IV, 3; IV, 5; IV, 7; IV, 8; IV, 13; IV, 27;<br>NYF5 II, 6’; III, 6 |
| *parṣu* | NYF1 I, 38; II, 32;<br>NYF4 II, 19; III, 36; V, 40;<br>NYF6 II, 4’ |
| *pašāru* | NYF1 II, 20;<br>NYF3 I, 12’ |
| *paššūru* | NYF1 VI, 22;<br>NYF4 III, 39; V, 2; V,8; V, 9; V, 19; V, 21; V, 26; V, 28 |
| *paṭāru* | NYF4 IV, 13; V, 19 |
| *peṣû* | NYF3 VI, 18 |
| *petû* | NYF1 V, 30;<br>NYF2 V, 7’;<br>NYF3 VI, 16;<br>NYF4 II, 18; III, 34 |
| *piširtu* | NYF6 II, 3’; II, 9’ |
| *piṭru* | NYF1 VI, 22;<br>NYF4 V, 26 |
| *purattu* | NYF5 II, 9’;<br>NYF4 II, 28; III, 41; IV, 6 |
| *pušqu* | NYF2 II, 5;<br>NYF4 II, 11 |
| *qablu* | NYF1 VI, 20;<br>NYF4 IV, 8 |
| *qabû* | NYF1 I, 4; I, 26; I, 28; I, 36; II, 13; V, 29; |

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| | NYF2 I, 5; II, 2; II, 4; V, 2’;<br>NYF3 I, 11’; I, 16’; I, 28’; VI, 7;<br>NYF4 II, 4; II, 10; II, 30; III, 17; III, 34; IV, 30; V, 11; V, 19; V, 37; V, 39;<br>NYF5 II, 15’; III, 7; III, 22; III, 26; VI, 6’; VI, 23’;<br>NYF6 II, 7’ |
| *qalālu* | NYF4 V, 41[interl] |
| *qalpu* | NYF3 VI, 14 |
| *qamû* | NYF1 I, 22;<br>NYF3 VI, 22 |
| *qanṭuppu* | NYF5 IV, 5’; VI, 16’ |
| *qanû* | NYF3 VI, 14; VI, 19 |
| *qaqqadu* | NYF1 VI, 25;<br>NYF4 IV, 10; IV, 17; V, 18 |
| *qarābu* | NYF1 VI, 23 |
| [mul]*Qaštu* | NYF4 III, 26 |
| *qâšu* | NYF4 III, 32 |
| *qatû* | NYF1 VI, 28 |
| *qātu* | NYF1 I, 23; I, 29; VI, 16; VI, 18;<br>NYF2 V, 7’; VI, 5’;<br>NYF3 I, 27’;<br>NYF4 II, 3; II, 11; V, 16; V, 29;<br>NYF5 III, 24; VI, 9’; VI, 17’ |
| *qerbu* | NYF1 II, 25;<br>NYF2 VI, 6’ |
| *qurdu* | NYF1 I, 25; I, 27;<br>NYF2 II, 3; II, 8;<br>NYF4 II, 9; II, 14;<br>NYF5 IV, 4’ |
| *qurqurru* | NYF1 VI, 1; VI, 8 |
| *rabû* (adjective) | NYF1 I, 10; II, 19;<br>NYF2 I, 7;<br>NYF3 I, 14’;<br>NYF4 IV, 39; V, 14;<br>NYF5 III, 27;<br>NYF6 II, 5’ |
| *rabû* (verb) | NYF2 II, 2; V, 4’;<br>NYF4 II, 8;<br>NYF6 II, 12’ |
| *râbu* | NYF4 V, 40 |
| *rakāsu* | NYF1 VI, 21;<br>NYF3 VI, 16 |
| *ramāku* | NYF1 I, 2; V, 5;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF3 II, 5’ ($^{i}$tu$_5$);<br>NYF4 II, 28 ($^{i}$tu$_5$) |
| *ramānu* | NYF4 III, 11 |
| *ramû* | NYF1 II, 39;<br>NYF4 V, 15 |
| *rapšu* | NYF1 I, 18;<br>NYF5 IV, 19’ |
| *rašû* | NYF1 I, 24; I, 30;<br>NYF2 II, 4;<br>NYF3 I, 13’;<br>NYF4 II, 10 |
| *rebītu* | NYF5 IV, 8’ |
| *reḫûtu* | NYF4 III, 31 |
| *rēmu* | NYF1 I, 24; I, 30;<br>NYF3 I, 13’;<br>NYF4 II, 10 |

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| *riksu* | NYF3 VI, 15,<br>NYF4 III, 38 |
| *riqqu* | NYF4 V, 9 |
| *rišātu* | NYF4 II, 13 |
| *saḫāru* | NYF1 I, 31 |
| *salāḫu* | NYF4 III, 42; IV, 6 |
| *salāmu* | NYF3 VI, 10 |
| *sāmu* | NYF1 VI, 19 |
| *sanāqu* | NYF2 VI, 3’ |
| *sapāḫu* | NYF1 II, 33;<br>NYF4 V, 39 |
| *sapānu* | NYF2 I, 17 |
| *sarāqu* | NYF4 IV, 9 |
| *sattukku* | NYF6 II, 8‘ |
| *siḫirtu* | NYF4 IV, 13 |
| *Sîn* | NYF4 III, 15 |
| *šadādu* | NYF4 V, 36 |
| *šakannakku* | NYF6 II, 14’; II, 16’ |
| *šakānu* | NYF1 I, 32; II, 9; II, 12;<br>NYF3 I, 15’; VI, 12; VI, 15; VI, 18; VI, 23;<br>NYF4 II, 15; IV, 8; IV, 15; V, 3; V, 4; V, 5; V, 6; V, 7; V, 8; V, 9; V, 26; V, 34; V, 35; V, 41$^{interl}$;<br>NYF5 III, 24;<br>NYF6 II, 17’ |
| *šalḫû* | NYF4 V, 42 |
| *šalmu* | NYF4 III, 39; IV, 3 |
| *šalūšu* | NYF1 II, 13;<br>NYF2 II, 11;<br>NYF5 III, 7 |
| *Šamaš* | NYF4 III, 14 |
| *šamnu* | NYF3 VI, 17;<br>NYF4 IV, 7 |
| *šamû* | NYF1 I, 18, II, 28;<br>NYF3 I, 6’; I, 20’;<br>NYF4 II, 16; III, 24; III, 27; III, 30; IV, 26;<br>NYF6 II, 10’; II, 11’ |
| *šâmu* | NYF3 I, 9’; I, 29’;<br>NYF4 II, 5; III, 1;<br>NYF6 II, 5’ |
| *šanû* | NYF1 VI, 17 |
| *šappu* | NYF4 V, 7 |
| *šaqu* | NYF2 I, 11 |
| *šaqû* | NYF1 VI, 1;<br>NYF2 V, 5’;<br>NYF3 I, 21’; I, 22’;<br>NYF4 III, 38; IV, 24 |
| *šarāku* | NYF4 III, 4;<br>NYF5 IV, 5’ |
| *šarru* | NYF1 I, 8; I, 14;<br>NYF2 I, 9; II, 1;<br>NYF3 I, 10’; I, 29’; VI, 7; VI, 8; VI, 9; VI, 19; VI, 20; VI, 27; VI, 30; VI, 31;<br>NYF4 II, 5; V, 29; V, 34; V, 37;<br>NYF6 II, 6’; II, 12’; II, 14’; II, 16’; II, 17’ |
| *šarrūtu* | NYF2 I, 13; V, 5’;<br>NYF4 V, 32 |
| *šarû* (adjective) | NYF3 I, 25’;<br>NYF4 II, 1 |
| *šarû* (verb) | NYF3 I, 25’;<br>NYF4 II, 1 |

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| *šasû* | NYF1 VI, 4; VI, 6;<br>NYF4 III, 40; IV, 10; IV, 25; V, 20 |
| *šebēru* | NYF3 VI, 15 |
| *šemû* | NYF5 IV, 16’;<br>NYF4 IV, 34 |
| *$^{mul}$Šiḫṭu* | NYF4 III, 6 |
| *$^{mul}$Šiltāḫu* | NYF4 III, 9 |
| *šīmtu* | NYF1 II, 21;<br>NYF3 I, 9’; I, 29’;<br>NYF4 II, 5; III, 1;<br>NYF6 II, 5’ |
| *šipru* | NYF4 V, 18;<br>NYF6 II, 11’; II, 13’; II, 15’ |
| *šiptu* | NYF4 IV, 12; IV, 37;<br>NYF5 IV, 11’; VI, 13’ |
| *šiqlu* | NYF1 VI, 14 |
| *šubarru* | NYF1 I, 32 |
| *šubtu* | NYF1 I, 16; II, 7;<br>NYF3 II, 2’;<br>NYF4 V, 34 |
| *šuillakku* | NYF2 I, 4 |
| *šuluḫḫu* | NYF6 II, 9’ |
| *šulmu* | NYF1 I, 10 |
| *šumēlu* | NYF1 VI, 16 |
| *šumma* | NYF3 VI, 10; VI, 11;<br>NYF4 IV, 22 |
| *šumu* (“line, verse”) | NYF1 I, 33;<br>NYF5 III, 2;<br>NYF6 II, lo.e. |
| *šumu* (“name”) | NYF3 I, 28’;<br>NYF4 II, 4;<br>NYF6 II, 2’; II, 12’ |
| *šumû* | NYF4 V, 3 |
| *$^{mul}$Šupa* | NYF4 III, 10 |
| *šuššān* | NYF3 VI, 13 |
| *šutummu* | NYF3 VI, 30 |
| *ṣabātu* | NYF1 I, 29;<br>NYF2 II, 1;<br>NYF3 I, 24’; I, 27’;<br>NYF4 II, 3; II, 7; II, 11; V, 16;<br>NYF5 IV, 5’; VI, 9’; VI, 12’; VI, 15’; VI, 17’ |
| *ṣābē kidinni* | NYF1 I, 32;<br>NYF3 I, 30’; VI, 4;<br>NYF4 II, 6; V, 41 |
| *ṣaddu* | NYF4 III, 5 |
| *$^{mul}$Ṣalbatānu* | NYF4 III, 8 |
| *ṣalmāt qaqqadi* | NYF1 V, 21; V, 26 |
| *ṣalmu* | NYF1 VI, 3; VI, 12 |
| *ṣâtu* | NYF6 II, 15’ |
| *ṣeru* | NYF4 IV, 17; IV, 18; IV, 20 |
| *ṣerru* | NYF1 VI, 16 |
| *ṣubātu* | NYF1 VI, 19 |
| *ṣēlu* | NYF1 VI, 9 |
| *ṣīru* | NYF2 I, 7; I, 11;<br>NYF3 I, 8’; I, 14’; I, 17’; I, 22’;<br>NYF4 V, 12;<br>NYF5 IV, 26’ |
| *tallu* | NYF4 IV, 27 |
| *tamāḫu* | NYF2 I, 13 |

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| *tamšilu* | NYF4 II, 16 |
| *tamtû* | NYF3 I, 7';<br>NYF4 III, 9; III, 13 |
| *tamû* | NYF5 IV, 18' |
| *tānīḫu* | NYF2 II, 6;<br>NYF4 II, 12;<br>NYF5 IV, 17' |
| *tanittu* | NYF1 I, 28;<br>NYF2 II, 2;<br>NYF4 II, 8 |
| *tardennu* | NYF4 II, 22 |
| *târu* | NYF1 II, 21 |
| *tebû* | NYF1 I, 2; I, 10; V, 5;<br>NYF2 I, 2;<br>NYF3 II, 4'; VI, 12 |
| *têrtu* | NYF1 I, 20 |
| *teslītu* | NYF5 IV, 16' |
| *tummu* | NYF4 IV, 12 |
| *turru* | NYF1 VI, 26; VI, 27 |
| *ṭābiḫu* | NYF4 IV, 10; IV, 17; IV, 18 |
| *ṭābiḫ karri* | NYF1 VI, 25 |
| *ṭābtu* | NYF4 V, 5 |
| *ṭuppu* | NYF1 VI, 28; VI, 29;<br>NYF2 VI, 1'; VI, 2';<br>NYF4, up.e.;<br>NYF6 II, lo.e. |
| *ubānu* | NYF1 VI, 12 |
| *ummânu* | NYF1 VI, 11;<br>NYF4 IV, 25; IV, 29; IV, 41; V, 20; V, 21; V, 23; V, 30 |
| *ūmu* | NYF1 I, 1; II, 11; V, 4; VI, 1; VI, 4; VI, 7; VI, 21; VI, 23; VI, 29;<br>NYF2 I, 1; V, 6'; VI, 3';<br>NYF4 up.e.; II, 22; II, 27; III, 38; IV, 20; IV, 24;<br>NYF5 II, 14'; III, 23;<br>NYF6 II, 11'; II, 15' |
| *urru* | NYF3 VI, 1;<br>NYF6 II, 5' |
| *ûrtu* | NYF1 I, 21 |
| *Uruk* | NYF1 II, 29 |
| *uṣurtu* | NYF4 IV, 36 |
| *uznu* | NYF4 V, 36 |
| *uzzu* | NYF1 I, 6 |
| *zāmânu* | NYF1 II, 14;<br>NYF3 VI, 6 |
| *zanānu* | NYF4 III, 6 |
| $^{d}$*Zarpānītu* | NYF2 VI, 4';<br>NYF3 I, 18'; I, 21';<br>NYF5 IV, 24' |
| *zâzu* | NYF1 I, 14;<br>NYF4 III, 32 |
| *zibbatu* | NYF1 VI, 8 |
| *zikru* | NYF4 II, 9 |
| *zumru* | NYF5 IV, 12' |
| *zunnu* | NYF4 III, 6; III, 12 |
| *zuqaqīpu* | NYF1 VI, 18;<br>NYF4 III, 13 |

# IX Appendix: correlation NYF2-3//NYF4

(grey/blue = preserved parts)

| DT114+BM32485+ | MNB 1848 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | I | II | | III | |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 13 |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 14 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 15 |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 16 |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 17 |
| 6 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| 7 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 19 |
| 8 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 20 |
| 9 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 9 | 21 |
| 10 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 10 | 22 |
| 11 | 11 | 11 | 17 | 11 | 23 |
| 12 | 12 | 12 | 18 | 12 | 24 |
| 13 | 13 | 13 | 19 | 13 | 25 |
| 14 | 14 | 14 | 20 | 14 | 26 |
| 15 | 15 | 15 | 21 | 15 | 27 |
| 16 | 16 | / | 22 | 16 | 28 |
| 17 | 17 | / | 23 | 17 | 29 |
| 18 | 18 | / | 24 | 18 | 30 |
| 1 | 19 | 1 | 25 | 19 | 31 |
| 2 | 20 | 2 | 26 | 20 | 32 |
| 3 | 21 | 3 | 27 | 21 | 33 |
| 4 | 22 | 4 | 28 | 22 | 34 |
| 5 | 23 | 5 | 29 | 23 | 35 |
| 6 | 24 | 6 | 30 | 24 | 36 |
| 7 | 25 | 7 | 31 | 25 | 37 |
| 8 | 26 | 8 | 32 | 26 | 38 |
| 9 | 27 | 9 | 33 | 27 | 39 |
| 10 | 28 | 10 | 34 | 28 | 40 |
| 11 | 29 | 11 | 35 | 29 | 41 |
| 12 | 30 | 12 | 36 | 30 | 42 |
| 13 | 31 | 13 | 37 | 31 | 43 |
| 14 | 32 | 14 | 38 | 32 | IV |
| 15 | 33 | 15 | 39 | 33 | 1 |
| 16 | 34 | 16 | 40 | 34 | 2 |
| 17 | 35 | 17 | 41 | 35 | 3 |
| 18 | 36 | 18 | 42 | 36 | 4 |
| 19 | 37 | 19 | III | 37 | 5 |
| 20 | 38 | 20 | 1 | 38 | 6 |
| 21 | 39 | 21 | 2 | 39 | 7 |
| 22 | 40 | 22 | 3 | 40 | 8 |
| 23 | 41 | 23 | 4 | 41 | 9 |
| 24 | 42 | 24 | 5 | 42 | 10 |
| 25 | II | 25 | 6 | 43 | 11 |
| 26 | 1 | / | 7 | 44 | 12 |
| 27 | 2 | / | 8 | 45 | 13 |
| 28 | 3 | / | 9 | 46 | 14 |
| 29 | 4 | / | 10 | 47 | 15 |
| 30 | 5 | / | 11 | 48 | 16 |
| | 6 | / | 12 | | 17 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VI | | V | | IV | |
| 1 | 28 | 1 | 24 | 1 | 18 |
| 2 | 29 | 2 | 25 | 2 | 19 |
| 3 | 30 | 3 | 26 | 3 | 20 |
| 4 | 31 | 4 | 27 | 4 | 21 |
| 5 | 32 | 5 | 28 | 5 | 22 |
| 6 | 33 | 6 | 29 | 6 | 23 |
| 7 | 34 | 7 | 30 | 7 | 24 |
| 8 | 35 | 8 | 31 | 8 | 25 |
| 9 | 36 | 9 | interlinear | 9 | 26 |
| 10 | 37 | 10 | 32 | 10 | 27 |
| 11 | 38 | 11 | 33 | 11 | 28 |
| 12 | 39 | 12 | 34 | 12 | 29 |
| 13 | 40 | 13 | 35 | 13 | 30 |
| 14 | 41 | 14 | 36 | 14 | 31 |
| 15 | 42 | 15 | 37 | 15 | 32 |
| 16 | 43 | 16 | 38 | 16 | interlinear |
| 17 | 44 | 17 | 39 | 17 | 33 |
| 18 | | 18 | 40 | 18 | 34 |
| 19 | | 19 | 41 | 19 | 35 |
| 20 | | 20 | interlinear | 20 | 36 |
| 21 | | 21 | 42 | 21 | 37 |
| 22 | | 22 | VI | 22 | 38 |
| 23 | | 23 | 1 | 23 | 39 |
| 24 | | 24 | 2 | 24 | 40 |
| 25 | | 25 | 3 | 25 | 41 |
| 26 | | 26 | 4 | 26 | V |
| 27 | | 27 | 5 | 27 | 1 |
| 28 | | 28 | 6 | 28 | 2 |
| 29 | | 29 | 7 | 29 | 3 |
| 30 | | 30 | 8 | 30 | 4 |
| 31 | | 31 | 9 | 31 | 5 |
| 32 | | 32 | 10 | 32 | 6 |
| 1 | | 33 | 11 | 33 | 7 |
| | | 34 | 12 | 34 | 8 |
| 2 | | 35 | 13 | 35 | 9 |
| | | 36 | 14 | 36 | 10 |
| 3 | | 37 | 15 | 37 | 11 |
| | | 38 | 16 | 38 | 12 |
| 4 | | 39 | 17 | 39 | 13 |
| | | 40 | 18 | 40 | 14 |
| 5 | | 41 | 19 | 41 | 15 |
| | | 1 | 20 | 42 | 16 |
| 6 | | 2 | 21 | 43 | 17 |
| | | 3 | 22 | 44 | 18 |
| 7 | | 4 | 23 | 45 | 19 |
| | | 5 | 24 | 46 | 20 |
| | | 6 | 25 | 47 | 21 |
| | | 7 | 26 | 48 | 22 |
| | | | 27 | | 23 |

## Abstract (English)

The aim of this dissertation is threefold. The first goal is to investigate what modern scholars mean when they speak about "the Babylonian New Year Festival" (NYF) and to understand the process by which that concept of the NYF was construed. The second goal is to study a specific corpus of texts which are used as sources for the NYF but were never submitted to source criticism in order to disclose the historical framework in which they originated. The third goal is to determine what gave rise to the creation of the NYF texts and which purpose(s) these texts may have served; in other words, it is asked how they relate to their context of creation.

The dissertation opens with a presentation of the *status quaestionis* regarding the NYF by means of a survey of its history, schedule, and meanings and functions (Chapter II). Chapter III offers an overview of the textual sources commonly used in the study of the NYF during the first millennium BC. This reconsideration of the source material shows that, while there is a clear continuity with only minor differences between the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, a substantially different image is found in the Late Babylonian sources.

Amongst the LB sources are the NYF texts, which contain prescriptions for rites to be performed at the beginning of Nisannu. Although they are crucial for our understanding of the festival, they have never been placed under close scrutiny. Therefore, a re-edition with critical apparatus is offered in Chapter IV. Chapter V consists of four parts, each of which analyses a different aspect of the texts: language and orthography, paratextual notes and material aspects, ritual instructions, and prayers. The results of these four analyses show that the NYF texts, as we know them, are creations of Late Babylonian priests active in the temple of Bēl, not copies of a composition that originated in the first half of the first millennium BC as is commonly assumed.

In the final chapter (VI), the NYF texts are set in light of their historical and textual framework. A discussion of the contemporary corpora of cuneiform literature intends to show that, despite their fundamental differences, these texts share with each other and with the NYF texts in particular an interest for distinct themes revolving around Marduk, the king and the priesthood. It will be argued that specific historical conjunctures gave rise to this Late Babylonian priestly literature to which the NYF texts belong.

# Abstract (Deutsch)

Diese Dissertation hat drei Ziele: Das erste Ziel ist zu untersuchen, was moderne Gelehrte unter dem "babylonischen Neujahrsfest" (NYF) verstehen und darzustellen, worauf dieses Verständnis beruht. Das zweite Ziel besteht darin, ein bestimmtes Korpus von Texten zu untersuchen, die als Quellen für das Neujahrsfest verwendet werden, aber niemals einer Quellenkritik unterzogen wurden, um den historischen Rahmen darzulegen, aus dem sie stammen. Das dritte Ziel besteht darin, festzustellen, aus welchem Grund die NYF Texte verfasst wurden und welchen Zweck diese Texte möglicherweise erfüllt haben. Mit anderen Worten, es wird gefragt, wie sie sich auf ihren Entstehungskontext beziehen.

Die Dissertation beginnt mit einer Präsentation des *status quaestionis* bezüglich des Neujahrsfestes anhand einer Übersicht zu seiner Geschichte, seinem Ablauf und seiner Bedeutung und Funktion (Kapitel II). Kapitel III bietet eine Übersicht über die Textquellen, die im Allgemeinen für die Studie des Neujahrsfestes des ersten Jahrtausends v.Chr. verwendet werden. Es zeigt zich eine klare Kontinuität zwischen der neuassyrischen und der neubabylonischen Periode, während sich aus den spätbabylonischen Quellen ein wesentlich anderes Bild ergibt.

Unter den spätbabylonischen Quellen befinden sich die NYF-Texte, die Anweisungen für die Durchführung der Rituale am Anfang des Monats Nisannu enthalten. Obwohl diese Texte wesentlich für unser Verständnis des Neujahrsfestes sind, wurden sie bisher nie umfassend und kritisch untersucht. In Kapitel IV wird deshalb eine neue Edition mit kritischem Apparat geboten. Kapitel V besteht aus vier Teilen, die jeweils einen anderen Aspekt der NYF-Texte analysieren: Sprache und Orthografie, paratextuelle Notizen und materielle Merkmale, Ritualanweisungen und Gebete. Die Ergebnisse dieser vier Analysen zeigen, dass die NYF-Texte von spätbabylonischen Priestern verfaßt wurden und keine Kopien von Texten aus der ersten Hälfte des ersten Jahrtausends v.Chr. sind, wie allgemein angenommen.

Im letzten Kapitel (VI) werden die NYF-Texte in ihrem historischen und textuellen Kontext untersucht. Es wird gezeigt, dass unterschiedliche Genres der spätbabylonischen Keilschriftliteratur – so wie auch die NYF-Texte – ein gemeinsames Interesse an bestimmten Themen wie König, Priester und Gott haben, obwohl natürlich auch Unterschiede vorliegen. Es wird auch gezeigt, wie spezifische historische Zusammenhänge zu dieser Late Babylonian Priestly Literature, zu der die NYF-Texte gehören, geführt haben.