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R.J. (Bert) van der Spek

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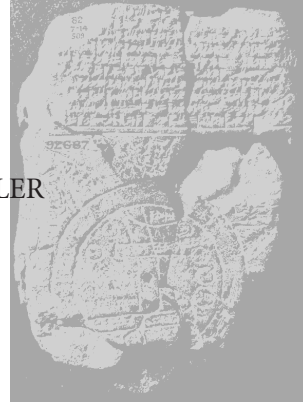
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Geert De Breucker

BEROSSUS AS A BABYLONIAN CHRONICLER AND GREEK HISTORIAN

R.J. VAN DER SPEK



Marten Stol began his career in Classical Studies and so in this Festschrift I should like to present a study of an ancient Babylonian cuneiform scholar who also read Classics.¹ The name of this scholar who lived in Babylon in the early Hellenistic period was Bel-re'ûshunu,² whose name means "The Lord is their shepherd," and who is better known in its Latinized Greek form: Berossus. He was an ancient historian interested in both Near Eastern and Greek history, reading Babylonian historiographic texts and the works of Greek historians. He wrote a history in Greek about Babylonian culture and history and, possibly, he composed Babylonian chronicle texts as well. In this essay I shall endeavor to shed light on Berossus' place in Babylonian and Greek historiography and science and in the academic circles in which he lived.

Babylonian Chronicles and Historiography

A chronicle is a continuous register of events in chronological order. The events are simply enumerated in terse, often paratactic, sentences and the primary interest is in exact dating. A chronicle does not contain narrative; has no exposition about cause and effect; and offers no general background. It is a data base of facts about the past. Many civilizations produce these kinds of texts, but the purpose is not always the same. The Greeks had a chronographic tradition; the Romans had their *Annales Maximi*; Eusebius wrote his *Chronica* to prove the antiquity of the Bible.

As chronography is writing about the past, chronicles can be viewed as historiography. The word "historiography," however, has led to endless discussions about what it is supposed to be. Is historiography any writing about the past or is it

¹ For their valuable comments on the issues presented in this essay, I express my gratitude to Irving Finkel, Michael Seymour, Caroline Waerzeggers, Julian Reade, Jona Lendering, Jaap-Jan Flinterman, and Gerard Boter.

² Rather than *Bel-re'ûšu*, as is the usual reading. Cf. Van der Spek 2000: 439.

a literary or scientific genre that has to obey to certain rules? Many authors subscribe to the last assumption and then try to distinguish real historiography from other kinds of history writing, which contributes a great deal to the confusion. Fornara (1983:1) distinguishes “historical writing” (general term) from “history” (specific type, exemplified by authors such as Herodotus and Thucydides). He does this on the basis of Felix Jacoby’s distinction in Greek historiography between *Genealogie*, *Ethnographie*, *Zeitgeschichte* (rephrased “history” by Fornara), *Horographie* and *Chronographie*. According to Van Seters (1983: 2) “all historical texts may be subsumed under the term *historiography* as a more inclusive category than the more particular genre of history writing.” The narrower definition of “history writing” is further defined by five criteria that I need not repeat here (Van Seters 1983: 4–5). Hence Van Seters’ “history writing” comes close to Fornara’s “history,” but differs from the latter’s “historical writing.”

The second, but related discussion is where and when the genre of historiography was created. The point is pertinent because it depends how “historiography” is defined. The answers given—it all started with Herodotus, with the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, with the Hittite annals and treaty prologues, or with Babylonian chronicles—are so different because the interpretation of historiography diverges so widely.³

Herodotus is most commonly credited as the inventor of historiography, primarily because it was perceived that way already in the Classical period. Cicero, *De Legibus* 1.5.5 called him *pater historiae*, although he added that Herodotus’ work is full of fabulous stories. Yet Herodotus’ personal research and his reference to different sources are generally appreciated for what they are, as is his excellent narrative style. Hence Herodotus is the standard, and as there is no equivalent for Herodotus in the Near East, there could not have been “real historiography” in the East.⁴

Actually, it was only at a later period that historiography was recognized as a genre. *Historiē* in Herodotus means “investigation,” as in the Latin *Naturalis Historia*. Herodotus refers to his own work as a description of *ta genomena ex anthrōpōn*, “what came to pass by the hand of man” and *erga megala te kai thōmasta* “great and miraculous deeds” (I *Prooemium*). Herodotus is perhaps the creator of a new genre, but the new genre was not yet clearly demarcated from other kinds of writing about the past. Herodotus saw himself in a way as continuing the work of Homer. Homer also wrote about the past, about the conflict between Asia and Europe (Hdt I 3–5; II 113–120). Yet Herodotus has, probably intentionally, his own

³ See for a discussion Van Seters 1983.

⁴ See for a recent study about “the first real historians” Grabbe 2001, who concludes: “Thus, if someone asks, ‘Who were the first historians?’ I would have to answer, ‘It depends on your definition of ‘historian.’’ But if you ask, ‘Who were the first critical historians?’ the answer is definitely the Greeks.” (Grabbe 2001: 181).

approach. He writes not in verse, but in prose. The gods hardly have direct influence on man's actions, and Herodotus' source is not the inspiration of the Muse, but his own research (*opsis*, "eyewitness information," *akoē*, "oral information" and *gnōmē*, "understanding," II 99), though this claim may be questioned (Fehling 1989).⁵

The ancient Mesopotamians had no word for history or history writing. Yet the Mesopotamians did write about their past, contemporary as well as distant; and they did so in different ways: in epic (Gilgamesh and the Tukulti Ninurta Epic), in king-lists, in royal inscriptions, in building inscriptions, and, last but not least, in chronicles.⁶

Are the Babylonian chronicles to be defined as historiography? In view of the many uncertainties I prefer not to give a precise definition of historiography. There are so many forms in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past: oral poetry of bards, myths, king lists, royal inscriptions, historical epics, chronicles, moralistic-historical texts, biographies. In my teaching of "Ancient historiography" (the historical writing of the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome) I usually present a ladder of characteristics of historiography in a more or less ascending scale of sophistication, and then establish, for the sake of comparison, which features fit a particular text and which not. These characteristics are:

1. It is about the past.
2. It is about the deeds of human beings.
3. It is based on evidence (either accounted for, or not).
4. It tries to explain (in religious or secular terms).
5. There is a certain distance between author and object of study; pursuit of detachment.
6. It is narrative.
7. It has a well-defined theme.
8. It has a single, well-defined author, preferably known by name.
9. It is written with a historiographic aim: history for history's sake.
10. It is published.
11. It tries to make sense of human history; it conveys meaning.

The advantage of this list is that it releases us from the question as to whether or not a certain type of writing is the work of "real historians," and gives us a tool with which to judge and compare these genres. The disadvantage is that it is composed from the teleological perspective of Herodotus, or even modern historiography.

⁵ Aristotle first distinguished history from poetry (*Poetica* 8. 1451b).

⁶ For a study of Assyrian and Babylonian historiography, see Grayson 1980.

The Neo-Babylonian Chronicles

The Neo-Babylonian Chronicles are a very intriguing manifestation of Babylonian historical writing. They are a collection of documents constituting a data base of historical facts in strict chronological order. Chronicles are not narrative; there is no story, no plot, no introduction or conclusion, nor is there any attempt to explain, to find causes and effects, to see relations between recorded events. The main interest is in chronology and the facts described mostly concern the king: his accession, his battles, his attitude toward the temple cult, his illnesses, and his death. Plagues and famines are other recurrent topics. The later chronicles tend to go into greater detail than do the earlier ones. A striking feature of the later chronicles and the related astronomical diaries (see below) is their interest in juridical matters.⁷

The Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles have been collected and edited in a single volume by A.K. Grayson (1975b). Grayson distinguishes within this collection a “series” of texts, viz. the “Babylonian Chronicle Series” (nos. 1–13b) and other chronicles. This series is subdivided into the “Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series,” covering the period from Nabonassar (747–734 BC) to the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (539 BC) (nos. 1–7), and the “Late Babylonian Chronicle Series,” covering the Persian and Hellenistic periods (nos. 8–13b). The other chronicles are supposed not to belong to this series (ABC 14–24). After this edition a new chronicle was edited by C.B.F. Walker (no. 25 = Walker 1982). A new edition of Mesopotamian chronicles has been produced by Glassner (2004, nos. 16–37). The chronicles of the Hellenistic period are being published by I.L. Finkel and the author of this article (BCHP). This collection contains eleven previously unpublished chronicles. The latest chronicles are from the Parthian period, i.e., after 141 BC.

Actually, there is only slight evidence for a constructed “series” *stricto sensu*. The evidence is based on the use of catch-lines, in which the last line of one tablet is identical to the first line of the next. ABC 3: 76 = ABC 4: 1; ABC 4: 27–28 = ABC 5: 1–2a. ABC 5: 25–26 looks like a catch-line as well, but the contiguous chronicle is not preserved. These three chronicles cover the period from the tenth year of Nabopolassar (616 BC) to the eleventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (594 BC). ABC 6 deals with one year only: the third year of Neriglissar (557 BC) and there is no indication of the use of catch-lines. Chronicle ABC 7, the “Nabonidus Chronicle,” is broken at the beginning and at the end. It again covers a longer period, probably the entire reign of Nabonidus (555–539 BC). It may have contained catch-lines. ABC 2, a small tablet in the form of a conventional contemporary business document, covers the accession year of Nabopolassar to his third year (627–624 BC) and did not

⁷ Esp. BCHP 6 rev., 12:9', 15, and 17. Cf. the recurrent references to judicial verdicts in the astronomical diaries, especially as regards thefts of temple property.

contain catch-lines. Chronicle 1 is a special case. It is preserved in three versions of which the largest is ABC 1A (BM 92502), a two-column tablet covering a very long period running from the third year of Nabonassar (745 BC) to the accession year of Shamash-shuma-ukin (669 BC). It is the only chronicle with a colophon that contains explicit information that the document was the first part of a series:

First section (*pīrsu rēštū*), written, checked and copied according to its original (*kīma labīrišu*). Tablet of Ana-Bel-eresh, son of Libluṭu, descendant of Ur-Nanna. Hand of Ea-nadin, son of Ana-Bel-eresh, descendant of Ur-Nanna. Babylon, 'month', [day *n*]+6, 22nd year of D[ari]us, king of Babylon and (all) the lands. (ABC 1 IV: 39–43; Brinkman 1990: 85)

Grayson assumes that ABC 2–7 is the continuation of this series. Brinkman expresses serious doubts, and with reason (Brinkman 1990). ABC 2–6 are smaller, one-column documents in the shape of business documents and ABC 2 and 6 are not by any means evidently part of a “series.” ABC 7 is again a large two-column tablet, which might be section three or four of the series, but it did not contain a colophon and it only covers the reign of Nabonidus. The last column of this tablet ends with a blank space, with room for a colophon, but there is not one. Grayson assumed that the last two lines (IV: 8'–9'), which are written after a small blank line, may be a catch-line (Grayson 1975b: 111), but what remains does not support this suggestion.

Thus the evidence for an “official” series is limited to ABC 1 and 3–5, which probably do not belong to the same series. In addition, ABC 1 is preserved in several copies that were far from identical (cf. Brinkman 1990). It may well be that documents ABC 2–6 or 2–7 and possibly 14 (the Esarhaddon Chronicle) are constituents for the editions of larger summary chronicles like ABC 1. It is also possible that the “series” (a consecutive series of documents) started under the Neo-Babylonian period and that a summary chronicle was produced to cover the period of the Assyrian domination (ABC 1).

It is hard to ascertain when this later compilation was made. The copy of the “first section” was composed in 500 BC, the twenty-second year of Darius I. The first section covered 76 years (745–669 BC), but not all years have an entry. If the second tablet was as large, it may have continued until the fall of Assyria. These two tablets then would contain the domination of Assyria over Babylon. Resistance against Assyria by Babylonians and Elamites is a recurring theme. The Neo-Babylonian empire is subsequently covered in a series of smaller documents that recorded more details and presented facts about every regnal year (ABC 2–7). It is not known whether a compilation like ABC 1 was ever made from these. One would like to know which “original” document Ea-nadin used in 500 BC. I suggest that the date of composition might be the early Neo-Babylonian period, but the earlier Achaemenid period cannot be excluded.

Apart from a “series of chronicles” several other kinds of chronicles have been composed that may have been the source for the composition of larger texts. Documents like ABC 6 and 9, dealing with one year only, are not excerpts from larger chronicles (as supposed by Wiseman 1956: 4, Grayson 1975b: 12, n. 36 and Glassner 2004: 43), but the rough materials to be used for larger compositions. The smaller documents in the form of business documents contain information that is left out in the larger compositions. Most of the preserved Hellenistic chronicles belong to the type of the smaller business tablets.

Between the chronicle about the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire (ABC 7) and the next chronicle is a considerable gap, and this gap is even longer than Grayson assumed. ABC 8, which Grayson assumed to deal with the reign of Xerxes, actually deals with Darius III and the advance of Alexander the Great (330 BC).⁸ Hence the first tablet following ABC 7 is ABC 9, a small tablet, inscribed on one side only, referring to month VII of year 14 of Artaxerxes III (345 BC), nearly two centuries later. Most chronicles of the later period are small documents concerning a brief period. As far as preserved, they contain neither colophons nor catch-lines. There is only one larger tablet, possibly also divided into two columns at each side: the Diadochi Chronicle (ABC 10 = BCHP 3). This tablet describes the eventful years after the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) until the final victory of Seleucus over the troops of Antigonus Monophthalmus (308 BC). These tablets are not part of a regular series; instead, they constitute an irregular collection of chronicle notes, probably composed not long after the events described.

The beginning of the Neo-Babylonian chronicle “series” starts with Nabonassar and this seems not to be a contingency of tradition, since other serial texts start with Nabonassar as well, especially texts relating to astronomy. In his reign a new impetus was given to astronomical research. This tradition is echoed in the Classical tradition in various ways, e.g., in the fact that Claudius Ptolemy’s *Canon of Babylonian kings* started with Nabonassar (747–734)⁹ and the idea that a new era supposedly had started on 26 February 747 at midday (Hallo 1984/5, 1988). There are more arguments for the idea that the reign of Nabonassar was the starting point of two probably parallel enterprises: the daily record of celestial phenomena in the astronomical diaries (Sachs and Hunger 1988–96) and the compilation lists of lunar eclipses (cf. e.g. Sachs and Hunger 2001, no. 1, starting with the eclipse of 6 February 747 BC; cf. Hallo 1984/5 and 1988; more evidence in Oelsner 2003: 86–7). Glassner is cautious in accepting the attribution of all this to Nabonassar (Glassner 2004: 111–113), but admits: “During the first millennium, intellectual life was

⁸ It has been reedited in Van der Spek 2003: 301–310 and as BCHP 1.

⁹ Nabonidus’ first regnal year was 747/6, thus his accession year was 748/7. This year is as yet unattested. Brinkman 1984: 39 n. 195.

marked by the development of a new branch of historical research. The Neo-Babylonian chronicles by their greater chronological precision, their style, and their choice of subject, contrast with previous historiography.” (p. 111)

At the same time other chronicles were made about the remote past (pp. 84–88), the focus of which differed from the above-mentioned chronicles. A minor difference with the chronicles of the recent past is that the chronology was less precise, that is, by reigns rather than by regnal years. The topics are the same in both: wars, the accession of kings, the death of kings, civil disturbances, and the interruption and alteration of cult practices. A major difference is that the authors of the remote past chronicles wanted to explain events. They were not satisfied with simply mentioning numerous facts. The *explanans* is the retributive will of Marduk. “In other words, the chronicles exemplify an attempted interpretation of events of human history, according to which they were the consequences of divine anger aroused by some impious deed of a human ruler” (Glassner 2004: 85).

In my view the Neo-Babylonian collection chronicles about the recent past. Although it is not narrative, it does not have well-known authors, it does not discuss sources, and it has no interest in causality. Its merit is that it is an objective enumeration of facts, not dictated by royal ideology. The most remarkable fact, especially in the light of Near Eastern historiography, is that it is extremely secular. Although the authors certainly have an interest in the vicissitudes of the temple and its cult, there is not a single reference to an action of any god: no support of Marduk for the enterprises of the king, no punishment of rebellious people by angry gods. The only exception might be in the chronicle concerning the invasion of Ptolemy III into Babylon in 246/5 BC (BCHP 11, “the Ptolemy III chronicle”) where it is stated that the Ptolemaic troops, “who did not fear the gods,” entered Esagila, the temple of Marduk. However, even this can also be regarded as the recording of fact, as the Ptolemaic officials made offerings in Greek rather than in Babylonian fashion (cf. BCHP 11, commentary).

Another salient feature is the distance between author and object of study. There is hardly any judgment of kings, favorable or negative. Victories and defeats are mentioned as dry facts; no effort is made to suppress defeats of Babylonian kings. A striking example is the record of the battle of Der (720 BC). After the death of Shalmaneser V, the Assyrian king and overlord of Babylonia, the Chaldaean Merodach-baladan II had ascended the throne in Babylon with Elamite support. Sargon of Assyria tried to reconquer Babylon but was defeated by an Elamite army. Though both Sargon and Merodach-baladan claimed victory, the Babylonian chronicle made it soberly clear that the Elamites were the real victors and that Merodach-baladan arrived too late at the battlefield (ABC 1 I: 33–37).

If we take a look at the above-suggested ladder of historiographic writing, the following features apply to the series: 1, 2, 3 (but not accounted for), 5, and possibly 9. As mentioned above, the secular character of the documents is particularly strik-

ing. In the greater part of the ancient historiographical texts religion plays a major role. In the royal inscriptions the gods are presented as major actors in the historical process; historical epics like the Tukulti-Ninurta epic are made in order to acquire divine sanctioning of royal policy; certain earlier chronicles were composed in order to show how the gods favor those kings who respect, foster and support the cult of the gods in temples. Nothing of this can be found in the Neo-Babylonian chronicle series. In no instance do the gods play a role, nor is there any suggestion of divine support or wrath.

All this brought Grayson, the editor of the Assyrian and Babylonian chronicles, to the conclusion: "Thus one is tempted to conclude that the documents were compiled from a genuine interest in writing history. . . . We have, therefore, what seems to be history being written for history's sake as early as the eighth century B.C." (Grayson 1975b: 11). In my view, as I shall show below, it was history for the sake of divination. To serve this research it was necessary to make exact records of historical facts, so that the pursuit of divinatory science could go hand in hand with the study of reliable and well-dated historical facts.

The Babylonian Chronicler and His Sources

Several proposals have been made about the sources of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle series. One of the most noteworthy theories is that the astronomical diaries must be so considered (Grayson 1975b: 12–13). These astronomical diaries are, like the chronicles, a running record of various phenomena. Most of the phenomena recorded are of an astronomical or meteorological nature but at the end of each monthly section there are statements about market prices, the height of the river, and matters of historical interest.¹⁰ Grayson stresses the fact that the diaries series and the chronicle series started about the same time. "This in itself would suggest that the source of the series was astronomical diaries" (Grayson 1975b: 13).

Brinkman (1990: 95–7) casts doubt upon the assumption that the diaries were the source of the chronicles. He argues that there is only one known entry shared between an astronomical diary (ADI 44/5 no. 651 IV 18'–19') and a chronicle (ABC 16: 13–16) and as these entries exhibit (slight) differences in information and terminology, verbal derivation is disproved. The close affinity of subjects recorded in the diaries and the chronicles is, however, suggested by newly discovered diaries and chronicles. The conflict between Seleucus and Antigonos in the month Abu (Aug./Sep.) 310 BC is reported in Astronomical Diary AD I 230/1 no. 309: 14 and the Chronicle of the Diadochi BCHP 3 r. 14'–15' in comparable wording; cf. in the same context reference to requisition of barley and dates in AD I 230/1 no. 309: 11–12 and BCHP 3 r. 29'–30'. Conflicts in Babylon in 163 BC, in which the Greek com-

¹⁰ The sections with historical information concerning the Hellenistic period are collected by Del Monte 1997: 1–182.

munity took part, were described in similar phraseology for the month Abu in a diary (AD III 26/7, no. 162 r. 11–12) and for the month Tashritu in the Greek Community Chronicle (BCHP 14). Though verbatim quotations still cannot be indicated, the shared style of writing and the shared choice of topics is now much more evident.

Another intriguing theory is Finkelstein's proposition that the Assyrian and Babylonian lists of omens are the sources of the chronicles (Finkelstein 1963). The omen texts contain *apodoses*, statements concerning historical events that are supposed to be the result of ominous events mentioned in the *protases*. This is an interesting proposal, as the chronicles clearly do have much in common with the phraseology of the omens. Yet it is not satisfactory as there is a lot of material that has no parallel in the omens. The same is true for the astronomical diaries.

Yet both theories are valuable. The similarity between omens, prophecies, chronicles, and diaries is striking. They share the interest in the fortunes of kings, temple cult, plagues, famines and portents. They share the predilection for the use of archaic geographical names, such as Gutium for countries in the East, Hatti for Syria, Hani for Macedonia, Meluhha for Egypt. These expressions occur widely in the omens. This could be explained by the fact that these texts were composed at an early date, but this feature also makes the omens useful for application regardless of time. In order to create a bond between omens and historical events, many topographical indications are given in the same archaic terms in chronicles and diaries. It must be stressed, however, that the chroniclers were not consistent in their use of geographical names. They could use a normal contemporary designation, followed a few lines later by an archaic one. To give an example: in the Fall of Nineveh Chronicle (ABC 3) Media is called kur *Ma-da-a-a* in lines 23, 24, 28, but in lines 38, 59 and 65 the Medes are suddenly referred to as *Umman-manda*, barbarous hordes known from the third millennium BC. It has been suggested that the ancient designations like *Umman-manda*, *Guti*, and *Hanaeans* had negative connotations (Zawadzki 1988: 383; Glassner 2004: 39). In my view we must be cautious about this. One of the salient features of the chronicles is their detachment. The *Umman-manda* are mentioned as a people who came to the aid of Nabopolassar, the king of Akkad (ABC 3: 59, 65).

Diaries and chronicles also share the use of prolepsis, the inverted word order that is typical for omen texts and prophecies. Compilers of omens liked to mention the object of the portents first, before the prediction, even if this would contravene the normal Akkadian subject-object-verb word order, as in the following examples: *šarram māssu ibbalakassu*, "the king, his country will rebel against him, *ummanam nakrum usannaq*, "the army, the enemy will subdue (it)," *ālam išatum ikkal*, "the city, fire will consume (it)."¹¹ We see this word order also in the chronicles and dia-

¹¹ For references and discussion see Jeyes 1989: 41; Van der Spek 2003: 328. See also next note.

ries: *Iš-tar-ḫu-un-du* lugal nim *Ḫal-lu-šú šeš-šú iṣ-bat-su-ma* ká *ina igi-šú ip-ḫi*, “Ishtar-hundu, the king of Elam, Hallushu, his brother, took him and he shut the door in his face” (ABC 1 II: 32–33); ^d30.šeš.meš.su *šār kur Aš-šur dumu-šú ina si-ḫi gaz-šú*, “Sanherib, king of Assyria, his son killed him in a rebellion” (ABC 1 III: 34–35); ^m*Iš-tu-me-gu erín-šú bal-su-ma*, “Astyages, his troops rebelled against him” (ABC 7 II: 2); lugal erín.meš-šú *ú-maš-šir-ú-ši-ma*, “the king (=Darius III), his troops left him” (AD I 179, no. -330: 17’; cf. Van der Spek 2003: 297–8)¹²; Dynastic prophecy V 5: lugal *šá-a-šú¹⁰ša-re-[ši...]*, “That king (=Arses), a eunuch (=Bagoas) [will murder]” (Van der Spek 2003: 314, 316).

What I suggest here is that there was not a distinct group of historians or chroniclers who used omens or diaries as their sources. Perhaps the authors of the chronicles were the same people as the students and composers of omens, diaries, and astronomical texts. They all belonged to the circle of Babylonian scholars who were tied to the temple, and had some kind of specialization (but not a rigid one), such as scribe of Enuma-Anu-Enlil, *kalûs* “singers,” *āšipus*, “exorcists”¹³ and others, all of them more or less *homines universales*. The main objective of all these Babylonian scholars, as I see it, was divination.¹⁴ Divination in Babylonia was a science, not the work of animated prophets (Rochberg 2004).

These scholars, “Chaldaean” as they were called by the Greeks, were famous for their science even outside their own country, in the Greek and Roman worlds, in Israel, Egypt, and even India.¹⁵ In this university of divination some specialization will have emerged. Just as in modern medicine there are cardiologists, neurologists, and gynecologists, the “university of divination” at Babylon had astronomers, mathematicians, chroniclers, compilers, and copyists of omens, compilers of lists of kings, prices, weather phenomena, etc. As every individual has particular abilities, some may have been versed in astronomy, others in mathematical texts, and others in writing chronicles, but they all belonged to the same circles. So it may have been that some of the scholars who made observations of the starry sky wrote the diaries and inserted historical information, specialized in astronomy and wrote astronomical cuneiform texts, while others revealed a predilection for collecting historical information. In this pursuit they may have developed an interest in

¹² The relevant omen (lugal illat.meš-šú tak₄.me(š)-šú, “the king, his troops will abandon him”) is given in the Babylonian astrological calendar for lunar eclipses in months III, VIII and X (Labat 1965, § 72:3; § 73:7 and 10).

¹³ Cf. Farber 1987; Rochberg 2000: 367; Glassner 2004: 48.

¹⁴ That the astronomers and astrologers were the same people has convincingly been argued by Francesca Rochberg (2000).

¹⁵ Astronomers/astrologers, cf. Walker, ed. 1996, Pingree 1997, 1998, Pingree and Hunger 1999, Rochberg 2004: 237ff.; cf. Isaiah 47:10–13, Daniel 2:2. For the other scholarly professions in Berossus’ time, see De Breucker 2003b.

recording important events of the past “with a historiographic aim, history for history’s sake.”

One might make a comparison with modern students of theology. Though this academic study originated as a “study of God” and students today usually start with the intention of becoming a minister or priest, many eventually become historians of, e.g., the history of Israel. How many Assyriologists, like Marten Stol, began study out of interest in the “Umwelt” of the Bible and ended up in writing dissertations such as “Studies in Old Babylonian History”? In the same way ancient students of Babylonian divination will, in due course, have become specialists in astronomy or historiography. And like modern scholars they pursued their goal in a secular way. The astronomical and historiographical texts lack any suggestion of divine intervention. This does not mean, as Drews correctly observes, that the chroniclers lost their faith in the intervention of gods or the usefulness of divination. Rather they assume all events to be divinely ordained and therefore none is singled out as especially so (Drews 1975: 45). In the same way some modern scholars who write secular historical or Assyriological texts attend services in church on Sunday. One of these Babylonian scholars must have been Berossus.

Berossus

We do not know many chroniclers by name. The chronicles only seldom have colophons with names. Chronicle ABC 1 has a colophon, dated to 500 BC, but the scribe mentioned there, Ea-nadin, son of Ana-Bel-erish (the owner of the tablet), son of Libluṭu, descendant of Ur-Nanna, was probably the copyist, not the author of the tablet, unless the phrase *kima labirišu šaṭirma baru u uppuš*, “written according to its original, checked and collated” is to be understood in the sense that it was an extract of a set of smaller but more detailed chronicles. A second name is Nabukašir, son of Ea-iluta-ibni, the owner (and author?) of a one-column tablet (*giṭṭu*, ABC 15) with “non-integrated lines from a writing-board of Urshidazimēni” (mu.mu nu téš.a.me ta ugu^{gis}da^m Ur-ši-da-zi-me²-ni²), a chronicle with random references from the reigns of Ashshur-nadin-shumi (699–694), Shamash-shumaukin (667–648), Shirikti-shuqamuna (985), and Nabu-shuma-ishkun (760²–748 BC).

Another chronicler whom we know by name is Berossus (*Bel-re’ūshunu*), who, in three books, wrote a history of Babylonia (*Babyloniaca* or *Chaldaica*) from the beginning of the world up to his own time. He wrote it in Greek, but it is clear that he had access to chronicles, king lists, *Enuma Elish*, the Sumerian story of the flood, about Ziusudra (Xisouthros) and other cuneiform documents (Cf. Schnabel 1923, Komoróczy 1973). Apart from history he was also interested in astronomy and astrology.

It remains very difficult to establish facts about Berossus’ life. He was born during the reign of Alexander the Great (331–323 BC); he was “priest of Bel”; and he

dedicated his book to Antiochus I in the third year of his reign (278 BC).¹⁶ According to tradition he moved to the island of Cos and settled a school there.¹⁷ He is even supposed to have had a statue in Athens.¹⁸ His move to Cos may be legendary, but such movements were not uncommon. Diogenes of Babylon moved from Babylonia to Athens and to Rome; Herodicus of Babylon moved to Athens;¹⁹ Archedemus from Tarsus worked in Athens and finally settled in Babylon.²⁰ Hellenistic scholars were often more cosmopolitan than some of their modern counterparts. Berossus must have been versed in Babylonian science, transmitting some of it in his work. He will have started as a Babylonian scholar and reader or writer of chronicles. The style of chronicles is clearly visible in parts of his work. De Breucker (2003b) has given a good overview of the kind of scholars operating in late Babylonian Uruk and Babylon.

There is an old debate as to whether Berossus the historian was the same person as Berossus the astronomer-astrologer. Felix Jacoby in his renowned collection of fragments of lost Greek historians (FGrH) distinguished Berossus the historian, author of the *Babyloniaca* (FGrH 680, F. 1–14), from (Pseudo-)Berossus of Cos, author of another work, possibly called *Chaldaica* (FGrH 680, F. 15–22) concerning Chaldaean wisdom, in particular astronomy and astrology. Jacoby's arguments in support of this distinction are unknown due to the fact that his commentary on this volume was never written. Yet the idea has been accepted by Amélie Kuhrt (1987: 36–44). Her main argument is that the astronomical knowledge attributed to Berossus is not typically Babylonian and that it is better to assume that certain Greek astronomical theories were given more weight by adding a Babylonian flavor: mentioning a well-known Chaldaean expert, Berossus. After all, the Babylonians were the traditional source of astronomical and astrological science. A second argument for the assumption of two Berossuses is that the *testimonia* associated with Berossus, the astronomer, come from quite different authors (Vitruvius, Seneca, Pliny) from those who quote the historical sections (Josephus and Eusebius).

Though this argumentation explains a few aspects of the survival of the work of Berossus, it is not compelling. As I hope to show in this study, the work of astronomers, astrologers, divinatory experts, and historians was closely intertwined. The authors of chronicles, king-lists, astronomical diaries, and other divinatory texts

¹⁶ Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 36.

¹⁷ Vitruvius, *De Architectura* IX 6.2.

¹⁸ Plinius, *Naturalis Historia* VII 123. For text editions and commentary, see F. Jacoby, FGrH 680 (Greek), Burstein 1978, Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996 (English), Schnabel 1923, Komoróczy 1973, Drews 1975, Kuhrt 1987, De Breucker 2003a, 2003b (studies).

¹⁹ That Diogenes was a Babylonian and not a Greek can be derived from Plutarch, *De Alexandri Fortuna* I 5.328D.

²⁰ Plutarch, *De Exilio* XIV 605B.

belonged to the same intellectual circle. So it is *à priori* likely that Berossus was versed in astronomy as well as in history and it is very possible that he discussed both matters in his writings, either in two separate works or, more probably, in one. The fact that different aspects are handed down by different authors is not surprising as those different authors had their own different interests. Jewish and Christian authors were interested in king-lists and chronicles in order to prove the accuracy and antiquity of the Hebrew Bible; reference to astrological matters would lead them astray from their argument. In contrast, philosophers and scientists such as Seneca and Vitruvius had more interest in Babylonian wisdom and science and were not at all interested in tedious lists of unintelligible royal names.

That a great deal of the Greek world view is detectable in the astronomical-astrological quotations from Berossus can be explained in two ways. First, it is to be expected that a non-Greek who started to write in Greek for a Greek audience would be influenced by Greek thought and expressly wish to write according to Greek parameters. The fact that Berossus presented a comprehensive world history in narrative style and that his authorship is acknowledged better fits Greek than Mesopotamian tradition.²¹ The adaptation of Greek thinking by an oriental scholar is clearly visible in the work of the Phoenician Zeno of Citium, the Jew Philo of Alexandria, and many others, and is thoroughly discussed by Kuhrt (1987: 47–48) as regards Berossus himself. Secondly, Kuhrt's argument that a lot of material has been falsely attributed to Berossus by later authors is certainly acceptable. This may have been done already by the excerptors of Berossus, such as Posidonius of Apamea (135–50 BC), Alexander Polyhistor (c. 65 BC), and Abydenus (second or third century AD).

There are other signs of Greek influence in Berossus' work. The frequent use of the word "Chaldaeian" for "Babylonian" or "Babylonian priest or scholar" is the result of Greek preference. This terminology started with Herodotus and in no way reflects native Babylonian usage. The Chaldaeans (*Kaldāja*) were a tribe settled in the Gulf region and no Babylonian—and certainly no Babylonian scholar—would style himself *Kaldāja*. The royal house of Nebuchadnezzar may have been of Chaldaeian extraction, but the evidence is limited to a cuneiform document of the Hellenistic period in which Nabopolassar was called "king of the Sealand."²² Hence

²¹ De Breucker 2003a.

²² Brinkman 1984: 110, n. 551. For the Hellenistic text involved, a description of the daily offerings in the temples of Uruk (TU 38 = AO 6451), see now Linssen 2004: 172–183. For a study of the colophon and its religious and political implications, see Beaulieu 1993: 47. In this colophon Nabopolassar, "the king of the Sealand," is accused of having stolen the ritual from Uruk to bring it to Elam. In the reigns of Seleucus I and Antiochus I it was reportedly returned, hence in the time when Antiochus was in Babylon as co-ruler with his father (294–281), when Berossus worked in Babylon.

it is foreign usage, found only in Greek and Latin sources and in the Hebrew Bible. According to Abydenus Nabopolassar was *stratēgos* of Sarakos (Sin-shar-ishkun) (FGrH 680 F 7d, Eus. 1.18.16–26 [Syncellus]). If so, Nabopolassar may have been an Assyrian governor, though possibly of Chaldaean background.

The fact that Berossus deliberately criticized his Greek predecessors (Berossus *apud* Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I 142) is also a typical Greek phenomenon. Greek historians felt themselves at one time successors to their forerunners, but also stressed that they did better. Hecataeus of Miletus criticized “the stories of the Greeks” in general (FGrH 1 F 1a) and of Hesiod in particular (FGrH 1 F 19). Herodotus criticized Homer (implicitly I 3) and Hecataeus of Miletus (explicitly II 143; VI 137). Thucydides (I 22.4) claims that he did not indulge in fabulous stories (as Herodotus had done) and Ctesias criticized Herodotus’ knowledge of Persia heavily (FGrH 688 F 8). Berossus has felt obliged to correct Greek legends about the foundation of Babylon by the Assyrian queen Semiramis.²³

Berossus’ work as chronicler is best studied on the basis of the fragments preserved by Josephus in *Contra Apionem*, I 135–137; 146–153.²⁴ Josephus is the oldest surviving source for the quotation of Berossus’ historical work that might have had a parallel in the Babylonian Chronicles. Unfortunately it is uncertain whether Josephus quoted directly from Berossus (which is, in any case, what he expressly asserts in *C.Ap.* I 129, 134, 142, 145) or that he knew Berossus only via the intermediate writer Alexander Polyhistor, who was born in Miletus c. 105 BC, but worked in Rome and acquired citizenship from Sulla in c. 80 BC. Polyhistor’s work contained compilations of wonder stories of various lands and peoples, and works on Egypt, the Chaldaeans, and the Jews.²⁵ If Josephus really quoted from the work of Polyhistor, one must account for the possibility of “corrections” and “additions” by this author, such as the use of the word “Chaldaean,” or the story about the Hanging Garden of Babylon. Yet the passages in Josephus about the history of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar probably did not differ much from Berossus’ work as they betray “chronicle style,” as I aim to show herewith.

²³ See also Polybius’ defamation of Timaeus in book XII 23–28, esp. XII 25c where Polybius criticizes Timaeus’ fault-finding in the work of others. For an elaborate discussion of the phenomenon, see Marincola 1997: 225–236. For polemic against Herodotus in the Hellenistic period, see Murray 1972. Murray, I believe incorrectly, assumes that Berossus did not read Herodotus (see below).

²⁴ These quotations are found also in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* X 220–28.

²⁵ That Josephus borrowed his quotations through the work of Polyhistor was argued by Schwarz (1897: 315), Schnabel (1923: 166–168), and followed by Verbrugghe and Wickersham (1996: 29), but questioned by Kuhrt (1987: 34–35: “the question must remain unsolved”).

Josephus, *C.Ap.* I 135–137 is paralleled by the Babylonian chronicle concerning the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II, ABC 5: 1–11. Berossus certainly did not translate this document into Greek, but the main issues conform to it. A brief survey of the topics involved shows this.

- Nabopolassar stayed home and his son Nebuchadnezzar set out against an Egyptian army in Syria (I 135 = ABC 5: 1–2).
- Nebuchadnezzar effected a complete victory and conquered the region (I 136a = ABC 5: 3–8).
- Having reigned 21 years Nabopolassar died (I 136b = ABC 5: 9–10a).
- Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon and ascended the royal throne (I 137 = ABC 5: 10b–11).

Then Josephus' account of the campaigns breaks off.

- I 138 suddenly discusses the settlement of the captives, which more or less presupposes a report of the subsequent campaigns against Syria and Judah in the later years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign in the remainder of the chronicle (Judah in ABC 5: r. 12–13). That something of the sort indeed was in Berossus' account is implied by *Jos. C.Ap.* I 145: "The assertions that were made above concerning the temple at Jerusalem, that it was burnt down by the Babylonian invaders."
- Josephus resumes Berossus' account, derived from the chronicles, in I 146 starting with the death of Nebuchadnezzar. The relevant chronicle is not preserved, but must have been the chronicle that continued after ABC 5. The last sentence (ABC 5: r. 25–26) is apparently a catch-line, which will have duplicated the first line of the next one. The first preserved chronicle is ABC 6 concerning the third year of Neriglissar. This chronicle is of a different type to ABC 5. ABC 6 is a chronicle written on a tablet in the shape of a business document. As I have argued above, this kind of chronicle was probably the basis of larger chronicles (like ABC 1) covering more years. Whatever the case, ABC 6 reports a campaign of Neriglissar to Syria and Asia Minor, which is absent in Josephus' account.
- Chronicle ABC 7, the "Nabonidus Chronicle," recounts the reign of Nabonidus from his accession year to the first (few?) year(s) of Cyrus. This chronicle parallels Josephus *C.Ap.* I 149–153. §149 reports the accession of Nabonidus (*Nabonnēdos*), which must have been described at the beginning of the chronicle, which is so badly mutilated that a comparison is impossible. Berossus also mentions the building of a new quay wall, which is missing in the chronicle.²⁶ Then Josephus' quotations from

²⁶ But present in the so-called Dynastic Prophecy. See below.

Berosus jump to Nabonidus' 17th year, when Cyrus conquered Babylon (I 150–153). To be more exact: § 150 actually summarizes Cyrus' conquests before the 17th year ("having subjugated the rest of the kingdom") and mentions his march on Babylonia. The first battle between the armies of Nabonidus and Cyrus, Cyrus' victory and Nabonidus' flight is recounted in ABC 7 III: 12b–14 and *C.Ap.* I 151.

- The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus is recounted in ABC 7 III: 15–18 and *C.Ap.* I 152, the capture of Nabonidus in ABC 7 III: 16 and *C.Ap.* I 152–153. The main difference in this respect is that according to Berosus Nabonidus was captured in Borsippa, whereas the chronicle situates it in Babylon. There is no reason to question that Berosus presented this information, as there is no reason why Josephus would have invented it. It is not really in contradiction with the Nabonidus Chronicle, which states that Nabonidus retreated and afterward was captured in Babylon (ABC 7 III: 16'). The retreat of Nabonidus may have been in the direction of Borsippa and he would have been kept in prison in Babylon. Both the Chronicle and Berosus report that a great battle was fought outside Babylon and that the Babylonian army was defeated. Since Nabonidus retreated to Borsippa, Babylon could be taken without battle (ABC 7 III: 15–6). Herodotus' story about the siege of Babylon by Cyrus' must be false and Berosus deliberately corrected the "Father of History" here (Herodotus I 178, 188–91; III 152, 159).²⁷
- Berosus relates that Nabonidus was pardoned by Cyrus and allowed to live in Carmania for the rest of his life (I 153); the chronicle has no information about his fate, but the exile may have been mentioned in the mutilated last part of the chronicle. We have, however, reflections of these things in the Dynastic Prophecy. This is a text about the history of Babylonia from the fall of the Assyrian Empire until Alexander the Great or the early Hellenistic period. This document must have been composed in Berosus' lifetime. The history is set in prophetic terms: the verbs are in the durative tense and no names of kings are given, but the composition must surely be regarded as *vaticinium ex eventu*, much like Daniel 11.²⁸ Berosus and the Dynastic Prophecy tell us that Nabonidus was captured, spared, and sent to another country. The text of the prophecy is as follows:

²⁷ See below at n. 36.

²⁸ The Dynastic prophecy was first published by Grayson 1975a, later commented on by Lambert 1978. For a new edition, see Van der Spek 2003: 311–340.

A king of Elam (= Cyrus) will set out. He will [take] the royal scepter [from him (=Nabonidus)], he will remove him from his throne and he will seize the throne, and the king whom he made rise from the throne, the king of Elam will change his place. In another land he will settle him. That king will be stronger than (= prevail over) the land (Babylonia) and all the lands [will bring] tribute [to him]. During his reign Akkad (= Babylonia) [will live] in security.²⁹

Another correspondence between Berossus and the Dynastic prophecy concerns the building activities of Nabonidus:

In his reign the walls of Babylon abutting on the river (*ta peri ton potamon teichē*) were magnificently built with baked brick and bitumen.” (Jos. *C. Ap.* I 149)

bād *ina* e.ki (erasure) [...], “A wall in Babylon (erasure) [*he (=Nabonidus) will build...*]” (Dyn. Proph II: 15').³⁰

Structure and Focus

Not only the content, but also the structure and focus of Berossus' work, remind us of the Babylonian chronographic texts. Of each king the number of regnal years is mentioned, the manner of the king's death, and the circumstances under which the next king ascended the throne, e.g.:

It happened at this time that his father Nabopolassar fell ill and died in Babylon, having ruled 21 years. (Jos. *C. Ap.* I 136).

This passage is also an example of shared interest of more detail. The preoccupation with illness is a recurring feature of both the chronicles and Berossus. Besides Nabopolassar's illness (I 135 and 136), the illness of Nebuchadnezzar is reported by Berossus (I 146):

Nebuchadnezzar...became ill and died; he was king for 43 years; his son Evil-Merodach took hold of the kingship.

The death of Nebuchadnezzar is not preserved in any chronicle, but the phraseology is well known, as, e.g., in chronicle ABC 1 I: 11–13:

²⁹ Dynastic Prophecy II 17'–24'; Van der Spek 2003: 316. That Cyrus deposed the former king and settled him in another country is reported by Berossus *apud* Eusebius, *Prēp. Evang.* IX, 41. The statement of Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VII.5.29–33, that the king died, must be wrong. The story about the death of King Belshazzar in Daniël 5: 30 may have had a Greek background.

³⁰ The wall is mentioned in Astronomical Diary I 264/5, no. 293, r. '14, hence in Berossus' lifetime (294 BC).

The fourteenth year: Nabonassar became ill and died in his palace. For 14 years Nabonassar held the kingship of Babylon. Nadinu, his son, ascended the throne in Babylon.

Other examples to be mentioned: the illness of the Elamite king Humban-nimena (ABC 1 III: 21–22; died, 25), the illness and death of king Humba-haldashu I (ABC 1 III: 30–31), contrasted with his son Humba-haldashu II, who “died without becoming ill and still appearing healthy” (ABC 1 IV: 11; ABC 14: 16). Esarhaddon fell ill on the way to Egypt and died (ABC 14: 29). According to ABC 7 I: 14 King Nabonidus became ill in his third year, but recuperated.

The astronomical diaries exhibit the same interest in the health of kings. About the Parthian king Mithradates I the following is reported:

[... g]ig-šú mi-šit i-mi-šid-su [...],
 [...] his sickness, a stroke hit him [...] (AD III, p. 182/3, no. –136B 16').

The illness of King Hyspaosines of Mesene is the subject of diary AD III, p. 282/3, no. –123A: 18':

u₄ 5.kam šá iti an-na-a gig-ma u₄ 9.kam ina gig-šú nam.meš,
 the 5th day of this month he became ill and on the 9th day he died of his illness
 (=11 June 124 BC).

Another point of interest in both Berossus and the chronicles is rebellion. In Berossus' account the “satrap”³¹ of Egypt, Coele-Syria, and Phoenicia rebelled against Nabopolassar (Jos. *C.Ap.* I 135–36); Neriglissar plotted against Evil-Merodach (146); Labashi-Marduk (Laborosoarchodos), son of the former, was killed by his “friends” with a conjuration (148). Rebellions also occur in the chronicles. “Nadinu (Nabu-nadin-zeri) was killed in a rebellion” (*ina si-ši gaz*, ABC 1 I: 14); “Kudurru (Kudur-Nahhunte), king of Elam, was taken prisoner in a rebellion and killed” (*ina si-ši ša-bit-ma gaz* ABC 1 III: 14); “The tenth [year: The king of Akk]ad (= Nebuchadnezzar) stayed home. From the month Kislev (IX) until the month Tebet (X) there [was] a rebellion in Akkad (*bar-tú ina kur 'uri'.ki*)” (ABC 5: r.21').

Berossus tells us that Nebuchadnezzar, on arriving in Babylon, “found the administration in the hands of the Chaldaeans and the kingship preserved for him by the best (sg) of them (*diatēroumenēn tēn basileian hypo tou beltistou autōn*)” (*C.Ap.* I 138). We do not know who the best man of the Chaldaeans was. He may have been the leader of the temple organization, the *shatammu*. The expression *diatēroumenēn tēn basileian*, “having protected the kingship” probably is a literal

³¹ Berossus could not have found this word in a chronicle. There were no “satraps” in the Neo-Babylonian empire and there was certainly no satrap of Egypt. In Berossus' time, however, “satrap” was the normal word for governor of a province. Berossus claimed that Nebuchadnezzar ruled Egypt (Jos. *C.Ap.* I 133).

translation of the expression *šarrūtu našāru*, “to protect the kingship of.”³² The Greek word (*para*)*tērein* is used also as translation of *našāru* in the context of “watching” the stars (Van der Spek 2003: 333).

Preoccupation with a small army is also present in both Berossus and the chronicles: Nebuchadnezzar “with a few of his followers (*oligostos*) set out directly for Babylon across the desert” (Jos. *C.Ap.* I 137); Nabonidus “had to flee with a few followers (*oligostos*) to Borsippa.” (151) The chronicles and diaries exhibit the same interest: the Alexander and Darius Chronicle (ABC 8 = BCHP 1: 5’): [... erin]-meš-šú *i-šu-tu ta* ^{lu}erín.me[š.], “[...] his few [troop]s with the troops [of ...]” (probably referring to the small army with which Alexander the great pursued Darius III); Astronomical Diary AD III p. 150, no. 140C: r. 33’: Antiochos, the general of Babylonia, was arrested by the Seleucians, *ina* ^{lu}erín.meš *i-šu-tú iḫ-liq-ma*, “but escaped with a few troops” (141 BC); cf. AD III, p. 208, no. 132A: 2’; AD III, p. 502, no. 77B r. 14’.

Certain other expressions remind us of terminology in the astronomical diaries and chronicles, e.g., the regular use of the verb *paratattein*, “to draw up forces” (I 136, 151) resembles the regular use of *kašāru* in the chronicles (ABC 3: 3; 5: r.8; 6:5).

Another example is the use of the word *apotympanizein*, “to crucify on a plank,” in I 148: “Because of Laborosoardochos’ evil ways, his friends (*philoí*) plotted against him, and he was crucified on a plank.” As the verb in question is derived from the word *to tympanon*, an instrument of torture or execution, one is tempted to compare this to the frequent use of the *simmiltu ša maš’altu*, “the rack of interrogation” used when accused criminals were interrogated under torture.³³ So one might suggest that the “friends” put the king on the rack of interrogation, tortured him, and afterward put him to death. Hence, “having put him to death” (*apolo-menou de toutou*) is mentioned only in the next sentence. (149)

In summary, we propose that Berossus was familiar with the Neo-Babylonian chronicles and that he used them for his history. This did not prevent him from making his own additions and interpretations, such as the claim that Nebuchadnezzar ruled Egypt. In this respect he resembled Greek historians of his age such as Cleitarchus and Onesicritus, who were not afraid of embellishing their histories with marvels and legends, as we shall see below.

³² Cf. CAD N/2 p. 41, s.v. *našāru* 7b 2’, esp. Borger 1956: 43 I 51: “(The Assyrians) who had sworn with water and oil to protect my kingship (*ana našar šarrūtia*).”

³³ *simmiltu ša maš’alti*, “rack (lit. ladder) of interrogation”: AD II, p. 426, no. 175 B rev. left edge: 2; p. 476, no. 168A rev. 18’; AD III, p. 30, no. 161 A₁, A₂ ‘obv.’ 25’ (cf. Del Monte 1997: 85 and Van der Spek 2001: 449); p. 152, no. 140 C rev. 38’). Cf. for *maš’altu* alone: BCHP 3:30 = ABC 10: 11’(!). Note, however, that all these attestations date from the Hellenistic period.

Berosus' Description of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace.

As noted above, Berosus did not rely on chronicles only. The section preserved by Josephus *C.Ap.* I 139–141 on Nebuchadnezzar's building activities is derived from the royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar. At the same time it is a polemic against Herodotus, who wrote his *Histories* briefly before 425 BC, and Ctesias, who wrote his *Persica* early fourth century BC.

As a matter of fact, it must be concluded that Berosus knew the content of Nebuchadnezzar's Basalt Stone Inscription.³⁴ One might ask how it is possible that Berosus knew royal inscriptions, most of which were written on clay cylinders buried in the foundation of major buildings. The interesting feature of this inscription is that it is inscribed in archaic Babylonian cuneiform on a black basalt plate of 70 × 70 cm and 10 cm thick. It was found c. 1800 and published in 1803. Probably it was not deposited in a foundation, but stored in the palace or another building. Fortunately six such stone tablets have been found in a regular excavation in Nimrud in 1957. Leaning against the south wall of room NE 26 of Fort Shalmaneser were six limestone tablets, the largest 66 × 42 cm, five of which bore versions of the Wall of Calah inscription of Aššurnasirpal II and the sixth one of Shalmaneser III. The room proved to be a repository of miscellaneous furniture (Oates 1959: 101; Oates 1961: 14; cf. the Shalmaneser stone: Yamada 2000: 73–74).

But even if Berosus could not have consulted this Basalt Stone inscription, he may have had a clay copy at his disposal, as clay copies apparently existed.³⁵ Comparison of both accounts reveals their similarity. The most striking detail is the assertion that the palace had been built in fifteen days, which only occurs in Berosus and this royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar.

³⁴ Or "East India House Inscription," now on display in the British Museum. Edition: Langdon 1912, 120–141 (no. 15)), referred to by Reade 2000: 199.

³⁵ UET 8 103 (royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar from Ur) and CT 34 23–25 (Nabonidus). Cf. Hallo 2006: 191, nn. 38 and 39.

JOSEPHUS
CONTRA APIONEM I

139. “He then magnificently decorated the **temple of Bel** and the other temples with the **spoils of war**.

He strengthened the old city,

and added a new one outside,

and, in order to prevent the possibility in any future siege (of access being gained) to the city by a diversion of the course of the river,³⁶ he enclosed the inner side of the city with three lines of enclosing walls (*periboloi*), and the outer city with three also. Those of the inner city being of baked brick and bitumen (*ex optēs plinthou kai asphaltou*), those of the outer city of brick alone (*ex autēs tēs plinthou*).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR
BASALT STONE INSCRIPTION

I 1–II 39: Prologue. **Spoils of war** mentioned in II 30–39.

II 40–III 64: Redecoration of Esagila and Etemenanki, the **temple of Bel**; III 65–IV 6: temples of Borsippa; IV 7–48: Bit Akiti (New Year’s festival temple), temples of Ninḫursag, Nabû, Sin, Shamash, Adad, Gula, Nin-Eanna in Babylon; IV 49–65: temples of Marbiti, Gula, Adad, Sin in Borsippa.

IV 66–VI 21: Nebuchadnezzar completes the work of his father Nabopolassar, the construction of the city walls Imgur-Enlil and Nimitti-Enlil, the Procession Street, quay-walls, city gates.

VI 22–38: Nebuchadnezzar makes a large extension to the city enclosed by the so-called “Osthaken” built with bitumen and baked brick (hence not brick alone).

VI 39–56: “In order that no merciless enemy should ever reach the borders of Babylon, I had the country surrounded by waters as vast as the mass of the sea, so that to cross them was as (difficult as) crossing the heaving ocean, the brackish lagoon, (and in order that) no dike break occur there I piled up a wall of earth around them and surrounded them with quays of baked brick. I strengthened the defenses skillfully and I made the holy city of Babylon a fortification.”³⁷

³⁶ Berossus criticizes Herodotus here. In book I 191 Herodotus describes the way by which Cyrus found access to the city by diverting the Euphrates, so that the bed of the river became fordable. Berossus here expressly argues that this is impossible. And, indeed, Berossus explained that Cyrus took Babylon without battle and did not need to divert the Euphrates.

³⁷ A closer parallel to this passage can be found in another Nebuchadnezzar inscription: “My own father surrounded the city twice with a wall (made of) bitumen and fired bricks along its

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140. After walling the city on this grand scale and adorning the gateways in a manner worthy of their sanctity,

he constructed a **second palace** (*hetera basileia*) adjoining the **palace of his father**. It would perhaps be tedious to describe the height (*anastēma*) and general magnificence of this building,

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VI 57–62: Rebuilding of Ṭābi-ṣurṣu, the wall of Borsippa, with bitumen and baked brick.

VI 63–VII 33: New introduction of Nebuchadnezzar as caretaker of Esagila and Ezida, lover of the palaces built before the time of Nabopolassar. “More than Babylon and Borsippa I did not embellish any city” (VII 32–33).

VII 34–VIII 18: Description of the reconstruction of the **old palace** (Koldewey’s (1931) “Südburg”), “between the Imgur-Enlil wall and the Libil-ḫegalla canal, the Eastern Canal from the bank of the Euphrates to Ay-ibūr-shabû (the Procession street)” (40–46) with bitumen and baked bricks (*agurri*), which Nabopolassar had built with unbaked bricks (*libitti*).

VIII 19–IX 21. Description of the **new palace** outside the city walls (Koldewey’s (1932) “Hauptburg,” Berossus’ *hetera basileia*). In order to do this Nebuchadnezzar extended the walls of Babylon at a distance of 490 “ground-cubits” from the Imgur-Enlil wall and he made two quay walls with bitumen and baked bricks and made these walls high like a mountain (VIII 42–51). “Within these (walls) I built a brick structure (*pí-ti-iq a-gur-ri*). On top of it I built high a great cella (*ku-um-mu ra-ba-a*) as my royal residence with bitumen and bricks. With the palace of my father I connected it. In a favorable month, on a propitious day I laid its

moat, but I built a third strong wall (running) alongside the other, made of bitumen and bricks and connected it everywhere to the wall my father had constructed.” Langdon 1912: 72, No. 1 II: 24–27.

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except then that it was completed in **fifteen days** notwithstanding its immense and imposing proportions.

Within **this** palace (*en de tois basileiois toutois*) he erected high **stone** terraces (*analēmmata lithina hysēla*) and gave it the appearance very similar to **mountains** (*tēn opsin apodous homoiotatēn tois oresi*);

by planting it with all kinds of trees he accomplished and constructed the so-called Hanging Garden (*ton kaloumenon kremaston paradeison*), because his wife, having been brought up in Media, had a passion for mountain surroundings” (Translation adapted from H.St. J. Thackeray, *Loeb Classical Library*).³⁹

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foundation in the depth of the netherworld and raised its top high as a mountain (*re-e-ši-ša ú-za-aq-qi-ir hu-ur-sa-ni-iš*)” (52–63)

VIII 64–IX 2. “Within **fifteen days** I finished its construction and I made the residence of my lordship resplendent.”³⁸ Follows a description of the use of various kinds of wood, cedar (“strong cedar wood, the product of high mountains”) and cypress, silver gold and lapis lazuli (IX 3–18). “I surrounded it high as a mountain with a strong wall made of bitumen and baked bricks” (19–21).

IX 22–28. “Next to the wall of baked bricks I made a big wall with strong **stones** (*abnū*), quarried in the big mountains, and I raised its summit as a **mountain** (*ki-ma šá-di-im*).”

³⁸ One wonders if just maybe the story of Genesis 1:1–2:3 that God created the world in only six days and rested on the Sabbath is a pun on just this claim. The 15th of the month and a period of 15 days was in Babylonian language *šapattu* or *šabattu*. It is generally assumed that the Hebrew word Sabbath is derived from this word, although it refers to the 7th day. So, while Nebuchadnezzar needed 15 days (a *šapattu*) to complete his palace, the Israelite God needed only half of it to create the entire cosmos. Note that according to Diodorus II 9.3 Semiramis built an underground passageway under the Euphrates in seven days.

³⁹ It is to be noted that in the version as given by Abydenus *apud* Eusebius *Chronica*, ed. Schoene 1875 p. 38, FGrH 685 F 5, translation Burstein 1978: 27, 3.2b the garden is mentioned only after the description of Nebuchadnezzar’s waterworks (water reservoir, canal above Sippar, sluices, dykes near the Red Sea [Persian Gulf]), the foundation of the city of Teredon as a defense

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IX 29–44. As a conclusion the building of palace and city are summarized: “That house I made a spectacle (*ana tabrāti*) and I filled it with luxury for all the people to look at (*ana dagālu kiššat niše*). Dignity, awe and fear for the radiance of my kingship surround it. (...) The holy city of Babylon I strengthened like a mountain (*hursaniš*).”

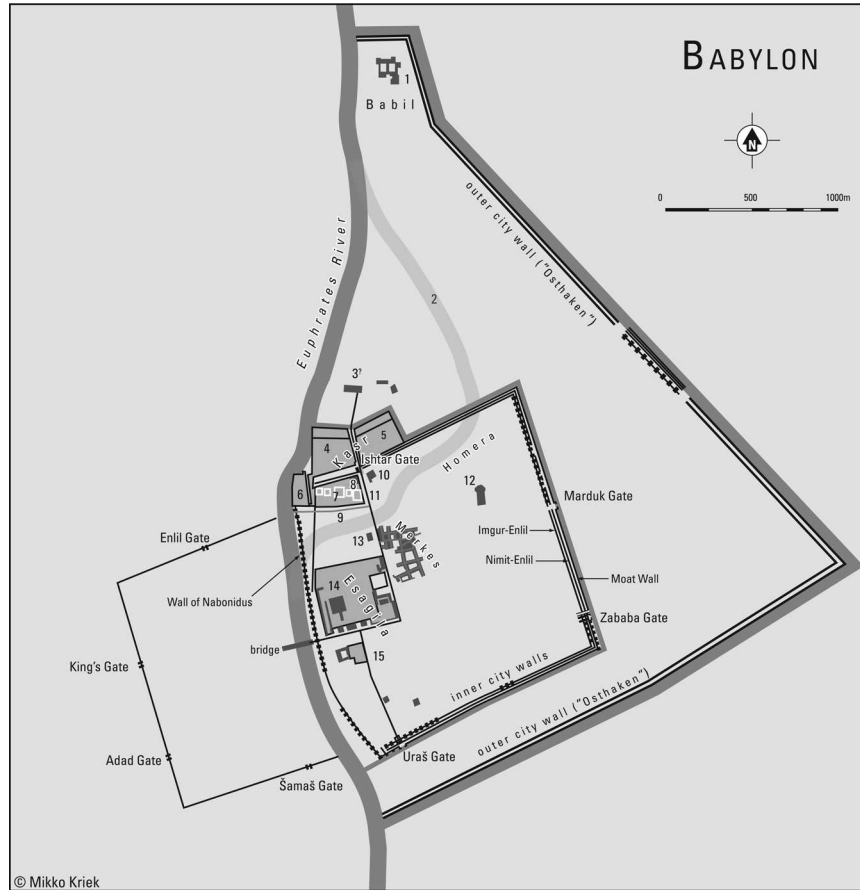
IX 45–X 19. Epilogue: prayer to Marduk.

As one can see, the parallels between the two accounts are striking. Berossus’ version is little more than a summary of the Basalt Stone Inscription with one crucial exception: the description of the “Hanging Garden” that is supposed to be “in this palace,” i.e., the new palace of Nebuchadnezzar (the so-called “Hauptburg”) on the hill now called Kašr. The only vague parallel in this respect we might detect in Nebuchadnezzar’s inscription is the statement that this palace looked like a mountain, was a spectacle (*ana tabrāti*; *ana dagālu*, cf. Greek *theama*⁴⁰), and that a wall of stone was erected. But Berossus, who closely followed the royal inscription, suddenly introduced something new: a hanging garden (*paradeisos*) constructed for a home-sick wife.⁴¹

against the attacks of the Arabs, and only then: “and he adorned his palace with trees, naming it the Hanging Garden.”

⁴⁰ The “wonders of the world” (*thaumata*) were originally styled “spectacles” (*theamata*, *spectacula*). This point is discussed by Rollinger 2005: 159. In the Nebuchadnezzar inscription Langdon 1912, no. 14 II 2–3 the palace itself is called a “showpiece”: *é.gal é ta-ab-ra-a-ti ni-šim ma-ar-ka-su kur (3) ku-um-mu el-lu at-ma-nim šar-ru-ti-ja*, “The palace, showpiece for the people, the bond of the land, the pure cella (*kummu*), the abode of my kingship.”

⁴¹ The expression *kummu gi-gu-na-a-tim ra-b[a-a ...]* in a fragmentary cylinder Berger 1973: 304 II 4 has led to the speculation that this structure was the Hanging Garden: CAD G 70 s.v. *gigunû*, cf. Wiseman 1985: 56–57, Rollinger 2005: 204. The use of the words *kummu* and *gigunû* is interesting as they normally are used for cellas in or on top of temples or temple towers. Nebuchadnezzar, however, uses these words for his own living quarters, which is a subtle indication of his divine status. There is, however, not the slightest indication that these words have anything to do with a garden.



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 1: Summer Palace | 6: Western Outwork | 11: Procession Road Ay-ibur-šabū |
| 2: Alleged riverbed in the time of Herodotus | 7: Southern Palace (Nabopolassar) ("Sudburg") | 12: Greek Theatre |
| 3: New Year's Festival Temple | 8: Vaulted Building ("Gewölbebau") | 13: Temple of Nabū-ša-harē |
| 4: Northern Palace (Nebuchadnezzar) ("Hauptburg") | 9: Libil-hegalla Canal | 14: Etemenanki Temple Tower |
| 5: Eastern Outwork | 10: Ninmah temple | 15: Marduk temple Esagila |

Plan of Babylon

Berosus and the Hanging Garden of Babylon

For this particular story Berosus could not make use of cuneiform sources. In the thousands of tablets from Babylonia not a single tablet with information on a separate construction called “Hanging Garden” has ever been found, and it can hardly be expected that some day a completely unparalleled royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar will turn up containing a description of such a construction. Langdon’s standard edition has 48 inscriptions concerning the king’s building activities and none contains a reference to the garden. If it would have been so important and miraculous, it would have been inscribed in great detail. So the conclusion must be that Nebuchadnezzar did not build this.

There are more arguments that a garden like this was never built. An elaborate description of the city of Babylon, containing names of walls, streets, and buildings is preserved, but the garden is not mentioned (George 1992).⁴² The astronomical diaries with their numerous references to temples, palaces, walls, and gardens contain not a single reference to the Hanging Garden. Herodotus knows nothing of this wonder of the world. Xenophon did not mention it, neither in his *Anabasis* nor in his *Cyropaedia*, and it is very uncertain whether Ctesias knew it. Arrian’s history of Alexander the Great, which is based on the eyewitness accounts of Ptolemy I and Aristobulus, spends not a word on it. The Hebrew Bible has not a single allusion to it, though it would have figured nicely in prophetic judgments of Babylonian decadence. The authors who describe the entry of Alexander the Great into Babylon in 331 BC and his death in 323 BC do not speak a word about the Hanging Garden in relation to this. Plutarch’s surprise that Alexander the Great did not enquire of a Persian ambassador at his father’s court about the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, but rather asked about roads and the military organization of the Persian empire (*Moralia* 342B), may simply be explained by the fact that the Greek fable about the Hanging Garden did not yet exist.

There were certainly (royal) gardens in Babylon, as there were in all Mesopotamian capital cities. A royal garden is mentioned in Plutarch (*Alexander* 76), in Arrian’s report of Alexander’s death (*Anabasis Alexandri* VII 25.3), and in an astronomical diary concerning the visit of Antiochus III to Babylon in February 187 BC (AD II 332/3 no. 187A r.12). As I have argued elsewhere, this garden was situated on the west bank and Alexander had to cross the river to reach it, hence it was not

⁴² This argument is in itself not compelling. The text mentions daises, city gates, walls, rivers, streets and city quarters. As far as preserved, the text does not contain descriptions of palaces. In addition, George (1992: 13) suggests that the original document was compiled in the twelfth century BC. It is remarkable though that the text was copied far into the Hellenistic and even Parthian periods. One fragment has a colophon dated to 61/60 BC (BM 33491 + 33826(a); p. 71). Another piece (BM 34798; p. 31) is inscribed with an excerpt from the beginning of Tablet I with cuneiform on the obverse and a transcription into the Greek alphabet script on the reverse. Later George (1997: 137–145) published a tablet from Babylon containing Tintir I 1–51 dated to 100 BC.

within the palace (Van der Spek 1995).⁴³ Another large park, the Juniper Garden, is often mentioned in the Astronomical Diaries and administrative documents (cf. Van der Spek 2006: 175–76). It was situated in the south of the city and contained temples of Gula. AD I 190/1, no. 328: r. 24' mentions a garden between Esagila and Eturkalama.

Archaeologists have tried to find the Hanging Garden, but since many sites have been suggested for its location by archaeologists who took the story at face value, it must be concluded that there is no conclusive archaeological evidence for any location (for a discussion see Finkel 1988 and Rollinger 2005: 153–7). All efforts to find it outside the “Hauptburg,” like Koldewey’s “Gewölbepark” in the “Südburg” (Koldewey 1912: 99–107; 38–64; 1931, 38–64),⁴⁴ and Wiseman’s (1985: 56–9) and Reade’s (2000) reconstructions at the bank of the Euphrates must be rejected on the basis of Berossus’ information that the garden was within the palace of

⁴³ Wetzel, Schmidt, and Mallwitz (1957: 24–25) proposed that Alexander resided in Babil, the Summer Palace. The only basis for this is the story that Alexander, when he was fatally ill, crossed the Euphrates to go to a garden, which is supposed to be impossible from the main palace (Kašr). Reade (2000:215) followed this proposition. He argued that Alexander in his final days crossed the Euphrates to reach the royal garden (= the Hanging Garden in his perception) from Babil to Nebuchadnezzar’s main royal residence (Kašr). I regard this for the moment to be unlikely. First, it would be necessary to assume that the Euphrates flowed between Babil and the main palace (Kašr), which has been convincingly refuted by Rollinger (1993: 148–166). Rollinger’s view is strongly supported by Oelsner 1999/2000, who thoroughly discussed the archaeology of Babylon in the Late period. If the Euphrates really flowed between the palace and the temple complex, the Nabonidus wall must have been washed away, which is not the case. In addition, the astronomical diaries refer in AD I 264/5 no. 293 r. 14' to “the rear side of the wall of Nabonidus on the bank of the river” (July 294 BC). From Diary AD II 332/3 no. 187A: r. 12' it appears that Antiochus III had to cross the Euphrates from the New Year’s temple to the west bank in order to reach the royal garden, whereas it was not necessary to cross the river in order to reach that temple, although in the case of a changed riverbed the Procession Street would have been intersected by the Euphrates river (cf. AD II 202/3 no. 204C: r. 17, Antiochus III visits the New Year’s temple on the 8th of Nisan SE 107 (205 BC)). Secondly, Reade’s own idea that the garden was located on the bank of the Euphrates in Nebuchadnezzar’s time would not have been true in the time of Alexander. Finally, the descriptions in Arrian (VII 25) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 76) hardly match the description of the Hanging Garden, except for the word *paradeisos*, which is very general indeed. In the *paradeisos*, where Alexander stayed for a few days, there was a bathing-room (*loutrōn*), a bedchamber (*thamos* or *kamara*), a swimming pool (*kolymbēthra*), and an *oikia* (house, not exactly the word for a palace) with an open court yard (*aulē*), where the generals had to wait (*diatribein*), while lower officers had to stay outside the doors. The palace (*ta basileia*) is on the other side of the river. If the garden in which Alexander spent his last days were the Hanging Garden, part of the Royal Palace of Nebuchadnezzar, the authors probably would not have missed that. However, further research on the Babylonian palaces as mentioned in the chronicles, astronomical diaries, and Greek and Latin sources is required.

⁴⁴ The “Gewölbepark” (vaulted building) was a place where administrative documents were stored: Pedersén 2005: 111–127.

Nebuchadnezzar, the “Hauptburg,” and Diodorus’ and Curtius’ assertion that the garden was right in the center of the palace (see below). Hence, Stephanie Dalley’s conclusion that there was no “Hanging Garden” in Babylon seems justified. Whether her suggestion that it should be sought in Nineveh is acceptable is another question (Dalley 1994⁴⁵).

For the sake of comparison to Berossus’ version it is good to take a closer look at the main accounts given by Greek and Roman authors: Diodorus Siculus (first century BC), Q. Curtius Rufus (first century AD) and Strabo (c. 64 BC–after AD 21), who drew on earlier authors such as Ctesias of Cnidos (fl. c. 400 BC) and Cleitarchus (fl. c. 300 BC).

Diodorus II 10.

There was also, beside the acropolis (*para tēn akropolin*), the Hanging Garden, as it is called, (*ho kremastos kaloumenos kēpos*), which was built, not by Semiramis, but by a later Syrian king (*tinōs hysteron Syrou basileōs*) to please one of his concubines; for she, they say, being a Persian by race and longing for the meadows of her mountains, asked the king to imitate, through the artifice of a planted garden, the distinctive landscape of Persia. The park (*paradeisos*) extended four plethra on each side, and since the approach of the garden sloped like a hillside and the several parts of the structure rose from one another tier on tier, the appearance of the whole resembled that of a theatre. When the ascending terraces (*anabaseis*) had been built, there had been constructed beneath them galleries (*syringes*) that carried the entire weight of the planted garden and rose little by little one above the other along the approach; and the uppermost gallery, which was fifty cubits high, bore the highest surface of the park, which was made level with the circuit wall of the battlements of the city. (...) The roofs of the galleries were covered over with beams of stone (*lithinai dokoi*) sixteen feet long, inclusive the overlap, and four feet wide. (...) And since the galleries, each projecting beyond another, all received the light, they contained many royal lodgings (*diatai basilikai*) of every description. (...) Now this park (*paradeisos*), as I have said, was a later construction [i.e. later than the time of Semiramis]. (Translation C.H. Oldfather, *Loeb Classical Library*)

⁴⁵ Criticized by Rollinger 2005: 172–198. Cf. Brodersen 2007⁷, who is also skeptical about the existence of the hanging garden.

Curtius Rufus V 1.31–35

They (the Babylonians) also have a citadel (*arx*) twenty stades in circumference (...). On top of the citadel (*super arcem*) are the Hanging Gardens (*pensiles horti*), a miracle well known thanks to the fables of the Greeks (*vulgatum Graecorum fabulis miraculum*). They are as high as the top of the walls and owe their charm to the shade of many tall trees. The columns supporting the whole edifice are built of rock (*saxo pilae...instructae sunt*), and on top of them is a flat surface of squared stones strong enough to bear the deep layer of earth placed upon it and the water used for irrigating it. So stout are the trees the structure supports that their trunks are eight cubits thick and their height as much as fifty feet; (...). (...) this edifice survives undamaged (*inviolata durat*). (...) from a distance one has the impression of woods overhanging their native mountains. Tradition has it (*memoriae proditum est*) that a king of Syria reigning in Babylon (*Syriae regem Babylone regnantem*) had built this structure, out of love for his wife (*amore coniugis*) who missed the woods and forests in this flat country and persuaded her husband to imitate nature's beauty with a structure of this kind. (Translation John Yardley, *Penguin Classics*)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Curtius apparently had a very garbled view of the city of Babylon. He assumes that the city had been built by Semiramis, and “not by Belus, as most have believed, whose palace is still to be seen there” (*Samiramis eam condiderat, non, ut plerique credidere, Belus, cuius regia ostenditur* Curt. V 4.24). Curtius then describes the city walls, the city area, the Euphrates embankments, and the stone bridge over the river. Then he describes the citadel (*arx*) with hanging gardens on top of it (*super arcem*). As Curtius does not describe the temple, we must assume that Curtius, or his source, presumably Cleitarchus, had changed the description of a “temple of Zeus (*hieron Dios*) whom, as we have said, the Babylonians call Belus” (Diod. II 9.4) into a royal palace. Another option is to interpret the *regia* of Belus as the Summer Palace (Babil). In Strabo XVI 1.5 the building is characterized as “the tomb of Belus” (*ho tou Bēlou taphos*). Hence, the uninformed reader would have to distinguish between the city, esp. the walls, built by Semiramis, a palace, built by Belus, and a citadel, built by a Syrian king. This error does not exist in Diodorus. It has been Schnabel's (1923: 40–43) contention that Cleitarchus here criticizes Berossus' opinion that Bel had first built the wall of Babylon (Abydenus, FGrH 685 F 1; Burstein 1978: 17, no. 5). It seems a little forced to circumscribe a hardly read author as “most authors” (*plerique*), while exactly in the context of Berossus' description of the Hanging Gardens it is Nebuchadnezzar, not Bel, who gets the credit for Babylon's major buildings: the temple of Bel (*to Bēlou hieron*), walls, and palace. It is more likely that Curtius here criticizes what is told by Diodorus (I 28.1), that it was Belus who, coming from Egypt, had founded Babylon as a colony. This story probably comes from Hecataeus of Abdera, but may have been a more widespread legend, as Belus was considered the son of Aegyptus. We find Belus as builder of Babylon still in Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII 6 23: “the citadel was founded by the very ancient king Belus.”

The idea that the garden still existed in Curtius' time is discussed by Rollinger 2005: 200–2. Rollinger argues that the seven wonders (*thaumata*) of the world originally were considered “showpieces” (*theamata*, as in Strabo XVI 1.5) so that the survival is part of the tale. It is in conflict

Strabo XVI 1.5

... this (the city walls) and the Hanging Garden (*ho kremastos kēpos*) are called one of the Seven Wonders (*theamata*) of the World. The garden is quadrangular in shape, and each side is four plethra in length. It consists of arched vaults (*psalidōmasi kamarōtois*), which are situated, one after another, on checkered, cube-like foundations. The checkered foundations, which are hollowed out, are covered so deep with earth that they admit of the largest trees, having been constructed of baked brick and asphalt—the foundations themselves and the vaults and the arches. The ascent to the uppermost terrace roofs is made by a stairway; and alongside these stairs there were screws, through which the water was continually conducted up into the garden from the Euphrates by those appointed for this purpose. For the river, a stadium in width, flows through the middle of the city; and the garden is on the bank of the river. (Translation H.L. Jones, *Loeb Classical Library*)

Diodorus' description is an episode in the description of the major buildings of Babylon, supposedly constructed by Semiramis, queen of Assyria (Diod. II 7.2–10.6). This description, which is based on the *Persica* of Ctesias, is full of mistakes and for the most part legendary. It says that the length of the wall was 360 stades according to Ctesias, but 365 according to Cleitarchus (II 7.3), that the height of the wall was 50 fathoms (*orgyiai*) [c. 200 m] “as Ctesias says,” but 50 cubits (*pēcheis*) [c. 25 m], as “some later writers” have recorded. There was a bridge over the Euphrates, which is correct, of 5 stades [c. 1 km] long (II 8.2), which is incorrect, and it is stated that Semiramis built two palaces, one at each end of the bridge, which is absolute nonsense. Actually, on the east end of the bridge was the Esagila temple complex and on the west end probably nothing particular. It is supposed by Ctesias that the greater palace of the two was on the west bank and consisted of three levels surrounded by a circuit wall, of which the second was circular in form (*kykloterē*). The middle circuit wall would have enclosed an *acropolis* twenty stades in circumference (II 8.6), repeated in Curtius V 5.31. None of this conforms to the archaeological evidence, despite the efforts of, among others, Koldewey (1912/1990: 136–140) and Bigwood (1978) to make some sense of it. The palaces on both sides of the river are supposed to have an underground connection.⁴⁷ Semiramis would have

with the generally accepted, but wrong, perception of Babylon as a city in ruins. Hence, the text cannot be taken as evidence that the gardens still existed in Curtius' lifetime.

⁴⁷ For this it was necessary to invent a new bed of the Euphrates that only in the time of Herodotus and Ctesias would have flowed between the Summer Palace (Babil) and the main palace (Kaṣr) and then again between the Kaṣr palace and the Esagila complex. Even if correct, there was no bridge between these palaces, nor an underground passageway. The entire modern interpre-

made this after having diverted the river into a square reservoir (II 9.1–3). After this a description is given of “the temple of Zeus whom, as we have said the Babylonians call Belus” (II 9.4–9). This turns out to be a fabulous description of the temple tower Etemenanki. As a final miracle, indeed numbered as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, Diodorus records the erection of a huge *obeliskos*, a stone pillar, 130 feet tall, from Armenia in the main street of Babylon (II 11.5).

Between all these fantastic records figures the description of the Hanging Garden, which is supposed to be “alongside the acropolis” (*para tēn akropolin*), which was, as we have seen, the middle ring of the palace.⁴⁸ In Curtius’ version it would have been “on top of the citadel” (*super arcem*).

It is surprising that so many scholars have defended the existence of a Hanging Garden for which the evidence is so thin. What can be said about the exploits of Semiramis, the tunnel under the Euphrates, the palace as three concentric circuits, the obelisk, the bridge as a connection between two palaces, fantastic long and high walls, can be said about the Hanging Gardens: they belong to the realm of the *fabulae Graecae* about the East. More people should take into account Finley’s warning: “The ability of the ancients to invent and their capacity to believe are persistently underestimated.” (Finley 1985: 9)

As noted above, modern scholarship attributes the episode about the Hanging Garden not to Ctesias, but to Cleitarchus. Cleitarchus was the son of the Greek historian Deinon, the author of a now lost *Persica*. He lived in the early Hellenistic period and worked in Alexandria. He probably never visited Babylon. He wrote a history of Alexander the Great, a work that was used widely in Antiquity, but was at the same time criticized because of its legendary anecdotes. The composition is generally dated to the last decade of the fourth century BC, but some authors propose a date after 281 BC.⁴⁹

Boncquet (1987: 95–96) enumerates the main arguments for the attribution of the episode concerning the Hanging Garden to Cleitarchus:⁵⁰ (1) the height of the uppermost gallery is given as 50 cubits, as high as the circuit wall of the city, which was measured as 50 cubits by “later historians,” but 50 fathoms by Ctesias (see above); (2) mention is made of a “Syrian king,” apparently meaning an Assyrian King, a mistake that was never made by Ctesias, while Cleitarchus indeed calls Sardanapallos ruler of the “Syrians” (*apud* Athenaeus XII 530A; FGrH 137 F 2);

tation is critically discussed by Rollinger 1993: 148–166; cf. Van der Spek 1995, wherein I argue that the Euphrates was in its normal Neo-Babylonian bed at the time of Alexander.

⁴⁸ Hence all efforts to find the Hanging Garden outside the center of the palace compound do not fit this description either.

⁴⁹ Cf. Prandi 1996: 66–71, Badian 1965. Cleitarchus almost certainly wrote before Ptolemy, Bosworth 1997. For a late date: Pearson 1960: 212–242.

⁵⁰ See also Schnabel 1923: 34–37; Prandi 1996: 122–123.

(3) Diodorus and Curtius (V 1.32) use the present tense in this description, whereas Diodorus uses the aorist in the description of the other buildings; (4) Diodorus situates the Hanging Garden *para tēn akropolin*, “alongside the acropolis” (cf. Curtius V 1.32 *super arcem*), a term that Diodorus supposedly does not use elsewhere in his description of Babylon; (5) the *phasi*, “they say,” in Diod. II 11.1 probably refers to the same later historians as mentioned in Diod. II 7.4.

Argument (1) is valid, but not compelling. Diodorus says that the height of the uppermost gallery of the garden was 50 cubits making the highest surface of the park (*paradeisos*) level the circuit wall. However, one might also argue that Diodorus was only consistent in using the 50 cubit measure in relation to the Hanging Garden.⁵¹ Curtius does not mention the height of the garden, but says only that the height of the trees of the garden was 50 cubits. The general idea apparently is that the garden was built so high that it could be seen from outside. Argument (2) makes sense, but it should be noted that Ctesias used the term *Syria grammata* for the cuneiform script of the Behistun Inscription (Diod. II 13, cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VII 3 17). Argument (3) makes no sense, as the rest of the description is explicitly referred to as exploits of Semiramis, while Diodorus explicitly excludes the Hanging Garden from her actions. Argument (4) is simply not true. As we have seen, above the middle circuit of the palace was called *akropolis* by Diodorus, *arx* by Curtius; on the contrary, this observation favors an attribution to Ctesias. Argument (5) is also of limited value, as this phrase does not refer to the entire description of the Hanging Garden, but only to the statement that the concubine of the Syrian king who built the garden was Persian by race, longed for her homeland, and asked the king to imitate this landscape by making a garden. In addition, *phasi*, “they say,” like *memoriae proditum est*, “tradition has it,” probably is no more than the *caveat* of the original author that the story is of a legendary nature. Hence we must conclude that there is no certainty about the origin of the garden story. From the fact that the version of Curtius, of whom we know that he used Cleitarchus,⁵² resembles so much Diodorus’ account, we can assume that Cleitarchus had a description of the garden, whether or not taken from Ctesias.

It has sometimes been suggested that the assertion that it was not Semiramis who built the garden, but a Syrian king, was Cleitarchus’ correction of Ctesias (Jacoby 1922: 2054; Schnabel 1923: 39).⁵³ The suggestion, however, is unnecessary.

⁵¹ Suggestion Michael Seymour (London).

⁵² Baynham 2004: 74–81, 139. However, as Ctesias was hugely influential and widely copied and Diodorus was also commonly copied and very widely known, there is a good chance that Curtius had access to all three versions (Ctesias’ original, Cleitarchus’ alternative version, Diodorus’ edit). Suggestion M. Seymour.

⁵³ Rollinger (2005: 164 n. 59) argues that this is unlikely, because the legend of the nostalgia of the Median princess demanded a male ruler. But this means only that the entire attribution to

If the entire story of the garden, including the role of the homesick queen, would derive from Ctesias, the simple conclusion is that Ctesias asserted that all buildings were made by Semiramis, except the Hanging Garden, which he had to attribute to a later Assyrian king, since the nostalgia of the king's wife or concubine was tied to the legend of the garden.

Whatever the case, Diodorus expressly states that he used both Ctesias and Cleitarchus, as well as other authors, for his description of Babylon (II 7.3) and it will be difficult to decide which part came from what author. The passage about the Garden may be a conflation of both accounts. It is clear that Cleitarchus had written a description of Babylon, which he largely copied from Ctesias with few "corrections." He corrected the length of the walls (from 360 to 365 stades) and rationalized the height of the walls from 50 fathoms to 50 cubits. So it is possible that Ctesias also has a story about the Hanging Garden, including the role of a later Assyrian king, but that for some reason Diodorus here followed Cleitarchus' account (Prandi 1996: 123).⁵⁴ One might speculate that Ctesias had a version of the Garden story in which it had been built by Sardanapallus, or perhaps even by Cyrus; in which the Iranian princess was a wife who was of Median, not Persian, extraction; and in which the park was called *paradeisos* rather than *kēpos*. It may have had a more Persian flavor as Ctesias was working at the Persian court. The idea that its constructor could have been Cyrus actually occurs in a corrupt text in Pliny *Naturalis Historia* XIX 49: *sive illos (sc. horti pensiles) Semiramis sive Assyriae rex Cyrus fecit*, "either Semiramis, either king Cyrus of Assyria made them (the Hanging Gardens)." A minority of the manuscripts read *Syrus* instead of *Cyrus*, which comes closer to the Cleitarchus variant.⁵⁵

All in all, it is difficult to decide whether or not Ctesias had an account of the Hanging Garden. When looking for the earliest certain reference to this wonder of the world, it is safer not to go beyond the work of Cleitarchus.

Strabo's description of the Hanging Garden is presented as part of the description of Babylon, which contains the following items: the city walls, the Hanging Garden, and the "tomb of Belos." No information is given concerning kings or queens who built them. Strabo is the only one who locates the garden on the bank of the river. Though the Augustan geographer has slightly adapted the story, the main characteristics are the same: the structure is quadrangular in form, four plethra at each side, and has arched vaults.

the Syrian king, including the legend of the nostalgia, would have been a Cleitarchan invention.

⁵⁴ Joan Bigwood (1980) argued that Diodorus adapted his sources to a greater extent than is usually assumed.

⁵⁵ Rollinger 2005: 164, n. 62 quotes an emendation by Julius Sillig (1853): *sive illos Semiramis Assyriae regina sive alius rex Syrus fecit*, "either Semiramis, the queen of Assyria, or another Syrian king made them." One might also suggest a simpler emendation: *sive illos Semiramis sive Assyriae rex sive Cyrus fecit*, "either Semiramis, or an Assyrian king or Cyrus made them."

Josephus' description of the Hanging Garden, attributed to Berossus, resembles the description as given in Diodorus II 10 and its derivatives in so many details that it is hardly possible to believe that we have here two independent sets of sources, as Rollinger argues.⁵⁶ Both authors call the garden *kremastos paradeisos* (Diod. II 10.1 *kēpos*, but *paradeisos* in 2 and 6); both mention the fact that it was built by the king because his concubine (so Diodorus) or his wife (so Berossus and Curtius) longed for the mountainous region of Media (Berossus) or Persis (Diodorus). Both mention stone terraces that gave the impression of a hill side (*prosbasis oreinē*, "mountainous approach," Diod. II 10.2; *opsis ... homoiotatē tois oresi*, "the appearance very similar to mountains," Jos. *C. Ap.* I 141). Both state that it was a stone construction (*lithinai dokoi*, "beams of stone," Diod. II. 10.4; *analemmata lithinai*, "stone terraces," Jos. *C. Ap.* I 141).

But who was first? It has been Schnabel's contention that Diodorus' description originated with Cleitarchus, who, in turn, derived the role of the "Syrian" king from Berossus (Schnabel 1923: 65). In order to reach this conclusion he argues at length that Cleitarchus wrote his book on Alexander after 261 BC (Schnabel 1923: 43–65). Schnabel's reasoning is accepted by Pearson (1960: 230–1), even though Schnabel himself rejected it in an appendix to his book (p. 246).

However, Cleitarchus' dependence on Berossus is hard to accept for more than one reason. First, it is unlikely that Cleitarchus had read Berossus, as he firmly maintains Semiramis' role and knows nothing of Mesopotamian history. Second, Berossus argues that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had built the garden. This can hardly have been transmitted as a Syrian (= Assyrian) king. It has correctly been argued that in this respect the Greeks confused the terms Assyrian, Syrian, and Babylonian,⁵⁷ but if Cleitarchus really had read Berossus he would not have done so. In addition, Schnabel's interpretation of Curtius' *Syriae regem Babylone regnantem* as "Syrer aus Babylon" is certainly wrong. The correct translation is "king of (As)syria reigning in Babylon." Possibly Ctesias and/or Cleitarchus had Sardanapallos in mind or they simply invented a male ruler in order to account for the legend that it was built to please an Iranian wife or concubine.

Since it is now generally accepted that Cleitarchus wrote before Berossus (cf. n. 49), it is virtually certain that Berossus/Josephus' description of the garden is sim-

⁵⁶ Rollinger (2005) distinguishes two groups of sources concerning the garden: (1) "Die von Berossos unabhängige Textzeugnisse" (p. 159–165). To this category belong first and foremost the description of Diodorus of Sicily (II 10) and the parallel account of Curtius (V 5.31–35), followed also by Strabo (XVI 1.5) and Pliny (*NH* XIX 49). (2) "Die auf Berossos zurückgehende Zeugnisse." This tradition is followed by Alexander Polyhistor, Josephus, Abydenus, and Eusebius. In addition, he argues that the description of Berossus as preserved in Josephus *Contra Apionem* I 141 is the oldest testimony (p. 167), which, of course gives it a certain authority as Berossus was an inhabitant of Babylon and a Babylonian.

⁵⁷ Rollinger 2005: 178, with references (n. 117).

ply an adaptation of the Ctesias/Cleitarchus version in order to show that the “later Syrian king” to whom this text attributes its construction was, in fact, Nebuchadnezzar. Thus it is paradoxical that Rollinger (2005: 167) claims that Berossus’ version is the oldest tradition concerning the garden, although he ascribes the accounts in Diodorus and Curtius to Cleitarchus and regards Pearson’s late date for Cleitarchus as difficult to accept (cf. n. 56).

The question then must be: How did the Hanging Garden episode enter the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus, even though the author must have understood the legendary nature of the account?

The simplest answer is that it was not in Berossus’ account at all, but was added by Alexander Polyhistor, who must have been disappointed not to have found the most renowned Babylonian building in Berossus’ writings. Polyhistor wrote in particular about miracles and would dearly have missed the tale about the Hanging Garden, by then accepted as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Possibly it was Polyhistor, not Berossus, who found it “tedious to describe the towering height and general magnificence” of the palace, but instead preferred to include the well-known fable in his time of the Hanging Garden. That there was even more in Berossus’ (and Polyhistor’s) original account is suggested by Abydenus’ excerpt of Berossus, in which a great deal of building activity by Nebuchadnezzar is described between the description of the palace and the Hanging Garden (cf. n. 39). Josephus also will have considered most of this “tedious to describe.”

However, we should first examine the hypothesis that Berossus himself was the writer of this episode and that the story existed already in Greek oral or written tradition in Berossus’ time. That it was a Greek fable was admitted by Curtius (see above). As stated above, the earliest surviving account of the garden derives from Cleitarchus. From whom Cleitarchus derived his account is uncertain. He may have found it in the *Persica* of his father Deinon (but this is pure speculation); he may have adapted it from an account written by Ctesias; or he may simply have invented it. Authors such as Onesicritus, who wrote an encomiastic account of Alexander, and Cleitarchus were not averse to inventing fabulous stories, as they did with Alexander’s meeting with the Amazons; nor were Deinon and Ctesias.⁵⁸

We know that Berossus tried to correct the statements of the Greek historians (Jos., *C.Ap.* I 142), one of whom must have been Ctesias. If Cleitarchus, indeed, published his work before 301 BC, our Babylonian scholar may have read his book.

⁵⁸ The ancient’s capacity to invent is ironically illustrated by the account of Plutarch concerning the Amazons’ episode in the campaign of Alexander the Great: “It is said, too, that many years later, when Lysimachus (former general of Alexander) had become king, Onesicritus was reading to him the fourth book of his history, in which there is an account of the episode. Lysimachus is said to have smiled gently and said, “Where was I at that point?” (Plutarch, *Alexander*, 46.4; translation Heckel and Yardley 2004: 198).

Now Berossus felt obliged to inform his readers that it was not the Assyrian queen Semiramis who had built Babylon, but the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Similarly it is conceivable that he wished to stress that it was not an Assyrian king or Cyrus who had built the Hanging Garden within the palace, but rather Nebuchadnezzar, the builder of the palace. In order to make this correction, Berossus even had to invent a Median wife for Nebuchadnezzar. In another passage, as recorded in Eusebius' *Chronica*, Berossus disclosed the name of the king's wife: Amytis, the daughter of Astyages, "leader and satrap of the Medes."⁵⁹ This cannot be correct, as according to Ctesias (FGrH 688 F9) Amytis was indeed the daughter of Astyages, but the wife first of Spitamenes and then of Cyrus the Persian (cf. Verbrugge and Wickersham 1996: 57, n. 38). In addition, Astyages was not yet born when Nabopolassar was alive and when Nebuchadnezzar was young. It once again sets the Hanging Garden in the realm of legend, maybe a legend concerning the Median wife of Cyrus the Great. Berossus (or Polyhistor) tried to historicize the legend with his *pia fraus*, but by doing so rather proved that it was a legend. There may have been an additional wish to give an Iranian wife to Nebuchadnezzar. It would mean that Alexander the Great (with Roxane) and Seleucus I (with Apamē) went in the footsteps of their great predecessor!

Does this fable have a kernel of truth? If it is somehow referring to any Babylonian structure, it can be no more than a fairy-tale description of Nebuchadnezzar's palace itself (the "Hauptburg") and not a description of a separate garden. This is more or less suggested by Abydenus' description "and he adorned his palace with trees, naming it the Hanging Garden." (cf. n. 39 above) Diodorus mentions royal dwellings (*diatai basilikai*) in the galleries. Curtius relates that the garden was made "on top of the citadel" (*super arcem*). In his description of Babylon Strabo describes only the city walls, the Hanging Garden, and the *ziqqurātu* ("the tomb of Belos," described as a pyramid). Since a description of the palace is conspicuously lacking, it would seem that the palace and the garden are one and the same structure. The fact that Strabo locates the garden at the bank of the river accords well with this assumption. Nebuchadnezzar's palace was located at the east bank of the Euphrates. Plutarch relates that Harpalus (overseer of Babylonia during Alex-

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Chronica* (Armenian version), ed. Karst, p. 14 (FGrH 680 F 7c (34)). The text seems corrupt here: "After Samoges (=Shamash-shuma-ukin) Sardanapallos succeeded to the rule over the Chaldaeans for 21 years. He (must be Nabopolassaros) sent troops to the assistance of Azdahak (Astyages), the tribal chieftain and satrap of the Medes, in order to obtain a daughter of Astyages, Amuhean, as wife for his son Nebuchadnezzar." It is assumed that there was a lacuna in which the ascension of Nabopolassar was mentioned. In the time of the Byzantine excerptor Syncellus, however, this corruption existed already; Syncellus in his version of this same story asserts that Alexander Polyhistor called Nabopolassar "Sardanapallos" (FGrH 680 F 7d). Did Polyhistor make this mistake perhaps on purpose in order to make Nebuchadnezzar an Assyrian king, so that the story of the homesick queen would better fit Cleitarchus' version?

ander's absence) decorated the palace and the covered walks (*ta basileia kai tous peripatous*) with Greek plants (Plut., *Alexander* 35.15, *Moralia* 648c–d; Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.* IV 4.1).

Some expressions in Nebuchadnezzar's own description of his palace might have provoked the illusion of a terraced garden. It looked like a mountain; precious wood from all countries was used for its construction; and it was richly adorned. Perhaps some tall plants were planted in the building; colored reliefs with trees may have adorned it. In addition, the palace was built outside the (inner) city walls. All this may have given rise to the fairy tale of a Hanging Garden that looked like a mountain and that was made for a homesick queen. The story may well have started in the Persian period and have been attributed to Cyrus and his Median wife Amytis. This would explain the use of the Persian word *paradeisos*.

According to the evidence, the description of the Hanging Garden as attributed to Berossus must derive from a Greek written source, which, in turn, may have been invented from Persian fairy tales concerning the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. It is possible that Berossus already knew this tradition, but the assumption that Alexander Polyhistor added this fable as an appendix to what he had found in the work of Berossus cannot be dismissed.

Berossus' Dedication of His Work to Antiochus

The Babylonian scholar Berossus lived and worked in the first decade of the third century BC. In that period crown prince Antiochus, son of Seleucus I, who was appointed co-ruler (294 BC⁶⁰), lived and worked in the city of Babylon.

Many chronicles are preserved concerning Antiochus, BCHP 5–9. According to these inscriptions, Antiochus had a keen interest in the city of Babylon. He made offerings in two temples of Sin in Babylon: the Egishnugal and the Enitenna (BCHP 5). He made offerings on the site of the Etemenanki and finished the removal of the rubble of the temple complex with the help of elephants and wagons (BCHP 6). The Dynastic Prophecy, discussed above, was written in this very period. Berossus probably knew this text or may have written it himself. On 12 Adar of year 43 of the Seleucid era, that is March 27 268 BC, Antiochus laid the foundation of the Ezida temple in Borsippa and the last preserved royal inscription, the Antiochus Cylinder, written in archaic Babylonian script, was deposited in its foundation.

Conclusion

Berossus was a man of his time, educated, a Babylonian scholar well versed in Mesopotamian literature. He was familiar with all types of cuneiform literature, king-

⁶⁰ The first tablet with a date mentioning both Seleucus and Antiochus is BM 109941, dated to 1 Arahsamnu 18 SE = 18 November 294 BC. Cf. Oelsner 1986: 271 and Boiy 2004: 138.

lists, the *Enuma Elish*, the Ziusudra story of the flood, Babylonian chronicles, royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar. He was the colleague of the composers of chronicles, prophecies, royal inscriptions, and astronomical diaries. He, himself, may have been the author of some of these texts. He also was versed in Greek historiography, and he wrote with the express purpose of joining this discourse. The conceptual basis of his writing was Greek and he criticized other authors' ideas in a Greek manner. In his endeavor to keep up with the Greeks he even followed and adapted legends well known to his Greek audience.⁶¹ With his knowledge of Babylonian, Sumerian, Aramaic, and Greek language and culture he was the ideal advisor to the king.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Grayson 1975b.
AD I–III, V	Sachs and Hunger 1988, 1989, 1996, 2001.
BCHP	Van der Spek and Finkel 2004.
FGrH	Jacoby, F. 1923–1958.

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⁶¹ Although some of these legends may not be the work of Berossus at all, but the embellishment of later excerptors.

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