

***LINGERING OVER WORDS***  
***Studies in Ancient Near Eastern***  
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***of William L. Moran***

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THE BABYLONIAN  
CHRONICLE REVISITED.

The next topic for discussion is whether the Babylonian Chronicle belongs to a series and, if so, to which series.<sup>66</sup> The colophon of Chronicle 1A<sup>67</sup> raises the issue:

*Chr. 1A*

iv 39 *pir-su reš-tu-ú ki-ma* SUMUN-šú SAR-<sup>f</sup>*ma ba-ru<sup>1</sup> ú up-pu-uš*

40 *up-pi<sup>m</sup>a-na-<sup>d</sup>EN-KÁM A-<sup>f</sup>šú šá<sup>m</sup>i-ib-lu-<sup>f</sup>tu<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup>The prevailing opinion, that Chronicles 1–13b belong to a single series, has been mentioned above. Sixty years ago, Landsberger and Bauer, with somewhat less chronicle material available to them, advanced a more sweeping, but more nuanced hypothesis (ZA 37 [1927] 61–65, with a table on p. 66). Pointing out the canonical character of Babylonian learned texts, they suggested that many known Babylonian chronicles belonged to a single official series. There were three different types of texts in the series: (1) double-columned Section (*pirsu*) tablets [Chrs. 1A, 1B, 1C, 7]; (2) single-columned tablets, known by catchline to be part of a continuing series [Chrs. 14, 3]; (3) excerpt tablets (*nishu*) [Chrs. 20A, 20B, 24, 16]. Landsberger and Bauer did not attempt to integrate such documents as Chronicle P [Chr. 22] or the Religious Chronicle [Chr. 17] into their scheme. Their distinction of types, though in need of updating and revision, still has merit.

<sup>67</sup>No colophons are preserved in Chronicles 1B and 1C.

- 41 DUMU <sup>m<sup>r</sup>w<sup>r</sup>1.d</sup>ŠEŠ.KI qa-<sup>r</sup>ai<sup>r</sup> m<sup>r</sup>d<sup>1</sup>é-a-MU A-šú šá  
 42 <sup>m</sup>a-na-<sup>r</sup>dEN<sup>r</sup>-KÁM DUMU <sup>m</sup>w-<sup>r</sup>d<sup>r</sup>ŠEŠ.KI TIN<sup>r</sup>.TIR.<sup>r</sup>KI<sup>r</sup>  
 43 <sup>r</sup>TTI<sup>r</sup>[x U<sub>4</sub>.(x+)]<sup>r</sup>6(+)<sup>r</sup>.KÁM MU.22.KÁM <sup>m</sup>da(?)<sup>r</sup>-x-(x)-muš(?)<sup>r</sup> LUGAL  
 E.KI  
 44 [ (x) KUR.KUR

*Translation:*

"First section, written, collated, and 'made' according to its original (tablet). Tablet of Ana-Bēl-ēreš, son of Libluṭu, descendant of Ur-Nanna. Written by Ea-iddin, son of Ana-Bēl-ēreš, descendant of Ur-Nanna. Babylon, month [...], day (x+)6, year 22 of 'Darius(?)', king of Babylon [and/, king of] (all) the lands."<sup>68</sup>

Though the opening words of the colophon, *pirsu rēštū*, "first section," designate this tablet [Chr. 1A] as the beginning of a series, it is by no means obvious to which series the tablet belonged and whether other tablets are known that form part of the same series. Among the rest of the Neo-Babylonian chronicles [Chrs. 2–7], four have reasonably preserved final sections. Three [Chrs. 3–5] of these four have catchlines; and it seems reasonably clear that, since the catchlines in Chronicles 3 and 4 are matched by the opening lines of Chronicles 4 and 5 respectively, one may view these three documents as constituting a series or at least a running text spread over more than one tablet. But none of these chronicles indicates, by way of a colophon, that it is a numbered tablet in a series;<sup>69</sup> nor does Chronicle 1A have a catchline to reveal the opening line of its "second section." Also relevant are the contrasting styles of Chronicle 1A and its supposed successors [Chrs. 2–7]. The latter chronicles deal

<sup>68</sup>This colophon has also been edited by Hunger, *Kolophone*, pp. 56–57 no. 145.

*Notes on the text.* (Line 40) The PN is probably to be read Ana-Bēl-ēreš rather than Ana-Bēl-erešti; cf. the writing <sup>m</sup>a-na-<sup>d</sup>EN-ere(URU)-eš for a homophonous individual in VAS 5 90:17 and Peiser, *Verträge*, p. 150 no. CVII: 1 (84-2-11, 164 = BM 77424, kindly collated by Irving Finkel). (Line 41) Ea-iddin of the Ur-Nanna family is also attested in VAS 3 229:7'. (Line 43) The royal name is very heavily damaged, as can be seen from the photograph in Grayson, *Chronicles*, pl. XIII; none of the signs can be read with certainty ('da' would fit the traces and 'muš' is possible, but the other two signs are quite illegible). The dating of the text depends then in large part on the titulary, which has commonly been regarded as being in general use until the early years of Xerxes I. It is, however, now known in isolated instances at least as late as the fourth and twenty-fourth years of the reign of Artaxerxes I, i.e., 461 and 441 BC (OECT 9 191, W. 19164a in *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 15 [1984] 268, where it occurs as part of the titulary LUGAL *par-su ma-da-a-a* [TIN].TIR.KI KUR.KUR.MEŠ; see Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire* [Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1985], p. 9 n. 25 and Kessler, *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 15 [1984] 262–63). Thus, while the text may still probably be dated in the reign of Darius I (the only Persian ruler of Babylon before Artaxerxes I to have reigned at least twenty-two years), the attribution is not altogether certain. (Line 44) Note that this is not a part of line 43, but a separate line, even if indented. The surface is damaged before KUR.KUR, and it may be possible to restore [LUGA]<sup>r</sup>L<sup>r</sup> (rather than read <sup>r</sup>μ (?)).

<sup>69</sup>In fact, only Chronicle 3 has end material distinct from a catchline: an appeal to one who loves Marduk and Nabu to keep the tablet safe.

with each year in turn, without skipping an entry,<sup>70</sup> whereas Chronicle 1A is selective and omits more years than it treats.<sup>71</sup> When one considers also the large size, two-columned format, neat script, and scribal colophon of Chronicle 1A, it is plain that the text was a carefully made archival copy; in fact, it is explicitly said to have been drawn up by a scribe for his father.<sup>72</sup> Most of the other Neo-Babylonian chronicles are of considerably smaller dimensions,<sup>73</sup> all but one in single-column format,<sup>74</sup> and none has even half as many lines as Chronicle 1A.<sup>75</sup> There is also considerable variety in detail of coverage, with Chronicle 6 taking 27 lines to cover a single year and the reverse of Chronicle 5 covering eight years in 23 lines (an average of 2.88 lines per year); Chronicle 1A is located towards the lighter end of this spectrum (34 years spread over a reasonably preserved 169(+) lines, an average of about 5 lines per year). Although an argument was advanced by Wiseman<sup>76</sup> and repeated by Grayson<sup>77</sup> that Chronicles 1A and 7 were written by the same scribe, physical comparison of the tablets shows that such is not the case: the individual scribal ductus of each text is quite different (the writing in Chronicle 7 is more cursive); and com-

<sup>70</sup>Even in the case of the eighth year of Nabonidus, where content was lacking, the heading "MU.8.KĀM" was entered and a space left blank [Chr. 7 ii 9].

<sup>71</sup>Especially before the reign of Esarhaddon, when the coverage becomes annual (except for his lost ninth year). Note that in Chr. 1A i, covering the years 745–712, only 10 years out of 34 are dealt with (in addition to a paragraph without date, i 6–8). In columns ii–iv, the following years are also skipped: 701, 698–695, 690, 688–682, and 672. If one excludes the final section beginning with Esarhaddon's first year, out of a total of 59 years which could have been mentioned in the preserved text, 21 are treated and 38 are skipped; if one includes the final section, 34 are treated and 39 are skipped—still less than half being included. It is difficult to see how Chronicle 6 (27 lines devoted to a single year, with circumstantial embellishments of detail) could belong to the same series as Chronicles 1–7.

<sup>72</sup>I.e., by Ea-iddin for Ana-Bēl-ēreš. See note 68 above.

<sup>73</sup>Chronicles 2 (52 x 62 x 19 mm), 4 (46 x 54 x 17), and 6 (47 x 60 x 23) are about the same size as sixth-century Neo-Babylonian business documents, with width exceeding length; and Chronicle 15 is of comparable dimensions (45 x 58 x 21). Tablets with length surpassing width are Chronicle 5 (83 x 62 x 28, but its full length is not preserved) and Chronicle 3 (135 x 71 x 24). The only tablet which may originally have been comparable in size to Chronicle 1A is Chronicle 7, for which the maximum preserved dimensions are 142 x 140 x 38 (but only the thickness is likely to be close to its original size).

<sup>74</sup>Chronicle 7 also has two columns per side. BCF 3 (*Chronicles*, pls. XI, XXVI) also has two columns on its surviving side and it progresses from MU. 8 (ii 4') to MU. 10 (ii 7') to [MU. 11 (ii 8)]; but, other than the use of these consecutive date formulae, it is difficult to detect other chronicle elements in this text.

<sup>75</sup>Chronicles 2, 4, and 6 have 41, 28, and 27 lines respectively; tablets 3 and 5 have 78 and 49 (+) lines respectively. Chronicle 7 has fragments of 84 lines preserved; it presumably had more than 100 lines when intact.

<sup>76</sup>*Chronicles*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup>*Chronicles*, p. 9 n. 7, pp. 14, 21.

mon signs such as MU, KÁM, LUGAL, and MEŠ exhibit distinctive forms on each tablet.<sup>78</sup> When one considers the lack of colophon or catchline link between Chronicle 1A and Chronicles 2–7, as well as obvious variations in style and format, there is no clear evidence that they are part of a single series.<sup>79</sup> Chronicle 1A is labelled the opening tablet in a series, but it has yet to be established what this series was and whether there are other surviving tablets.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup>One should also compare carefully the handwriting on Chrs. 2–6 to see whether Wiseman's observations on their similarity (Chronicles 2, 4, and 6 written by one scribe and Chronicles 3 and 5 by another), again repeated by Grayson, are accurate.

<sup>79</sup>Grayson (*Chronicles*, p. 8) argues that one of the reasons that Chronicles 1–7 belong to or are extracts from the same series is that "Chronicle 1 and Chronicles 2–7 have similar characteristic phrases for battle, defeat, retreat, and death...." The actual evidence, however, is quite weak. The phrase for "defeat" cited by Grayson (KI.)BAL(-tum) šakānu, occurs just in Chronicle 1A (i 35, iii 18; ii 45: doubtful [signs heavily damaged and phrase, in context, not preceded by reference to a battle]) and not in Chronicles 2–7 (Grayson, *Chronicles*, p.74). The phrase for "retreat," ina pāni...nabalkutu, occurs in Chronicles 2, 3, 5; but an alleged occurrence in Chronicle 1B ii 11'—ii 3 in Grayson's composite text—is so badly damaged that the main logogram is completely missing and the reading of what little is left of the end of the phonetic complement is ambiguous (Grayson, *Chronicles*, p. 75 transcribes: [ibbalkit<sup>i</sup>]). Thus neither of these two phrases demonstrates a link between Chronicle 1A and Chronicles 2–7. Grayson's distinctive word for "death," šimāti (NAM. MEŠ), serving in place of "he died," occurs six times in Chronicle 1, but only once in the other chronicles under discussion [Chr.5:10]; but the common word for "death" (or "die") occurs six times in this chronicle group [Chr. 1A iii 31, iv 11, 22; Chr. 7 ii 14, iii 22, 23]—so neither use seems distinctive. The phrase for "battle" (or, more aptly, "to fight") šaltā ana libbi...epēšu is attested in a good many chronicles [Chrs. 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4, 7, 20B, 22]; and šalti ana libbi x or ana libbi x šalti is a fairly common seventh-century expression for "battle with" (OIP 2 140:6.12, 141 r. 10; ABL 521 r. 20, 1105:24, 1456:8). This idiom alone is hardly sufficient to create a phrasing link—and demonstrate a series connection—between Chronicle 1 and Chronicles 2–7, especially since the phrase is shared with other non-series chronicles as well. Thus, on closer examination, the cited evidence based on phraseology is exiguous.

Chronological complementarity of Chronicles 1–7, in default of other evidence, does not appear to be a strong argument for a series connection.

<sup>80</sup>Other series connections within the chronicle corpus should also be examined. With the exception of Chronicles 3–5 (linked by catchlines), the evidence is nowhere clear. Even the connection between Chronicles 20A and 20B, which were treated by Grayson as the text of a single chronicle spread over two tablets, is doubtful. Those two chronicles have a single entry in common (20A: 31–36 = 20B: 1–7); but the catchline at the end of 20A not only does not match the beginning of 20B—it does not correspond to any part of the contents of 20B. It is difficult to see why these texts need to be grouped together.

It is difficult in many instances, because of the tablets' state of preservation, to determine which chronicles may originally have had catchlines or colophons. Catchlines survive on Chronicles 3, 4, 5, and 20A; Chronicles 1A, 6, 9, 15, 16, 20B, 21, and 25 definitely did not have catchlines; and the rest are uncertain. Colophons are preserved on Chronicles 1A, 15, and 21 (mostly broken [Ashurbanipal] colophon); brief comments survive at the end of Chronicles 3 (admonition only), 14 (GIGAM.GIGAM, on left edge), and 20A (GIGAM.DIDLI); there are definitely no colophons on Chronicles 4–6, 16, 20B, and 25; and the rest are uncertain. Thus catchlines and chronicles are helpful for establishing that Chronicles 1A, 3, 4, 5, and 20A were parts of series and that Chronicle