

Seeing Double in Seleucid Babylonia: Rereading the Borsippa Cylinder of Antiochus I

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For the past couple of decades scholarship on Hellenistic Babylonia has emphasized the vitality, deep-rootedness, and permanence of local cultural traditions and economic structures.¹ Excavations and the ongoing publication of cuneiform archives are bringing to light the flourishing of Babylonian science and historiography, the daily practices of cult, household, and trade, and the uninterrupted endurance of ancient kinship groups.² With this has developed a counter-image of the limited impact and influence of the Graeco-Macedonian kings ruling over Babylonians and the colonists living among them. It has been argued that, religiously, ‘the Babylonians held on to their old Babylonian traditions’,³ and that, politically, there was even a form of apartheid.⁴ Seleucid kingship, in turn, has been held to have managed the empire’s extraordinary size and diversity through limited ambitions for cultural transformation and the role-playing of indigenous, pre-Hellenistic monarchic identities.

* It is a great honour to dedicate this piece to Oswyn, who first set me on the path to Hellas and has continued to offer his generous guidance and support over the years. This paper has benefited immeasurably from the comments and advice of Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Stephanie Dalley, Johannes Haubold, Peter Machinist, Andrea Seri, and Kathryn Stevens, who kindly shared with me her forthcoming paper. Needless to say, all faults are my own.

¹ E.g. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1993), 141–2, 149–61; Sherwin-White (1987); Briant (1990).

² The bibliography is immense; see, e.g., Clancier (2007), 42–54 and (2011).

³ Linssen (2004), 168. ⁴ van der Spek (2009) and Clancier (2007), 56–9.

This scholarly resistance to Hellenization has much to commend it, not least as a salutary rejoinder to the overstatements and imperial over-enthusiasms of the past.⁵ But there is a danger, for Babylon and for the Seleucid state: that the celebration of continuity can reproduce the Orientalist trope of ‘stability and unchanging eternity’,⁶ that insistence on the impermeability of traditions becomes anxiety over cultural purity,⁷ and that the kingdom’s boundary-crossing, supra-Babylonian identity is obscured beneath the code-switching masks of a chameleon king. Furthermore, we should not underestimate the extent to which this image of Babylon is an effect of the systematic bias of our evidence—the Akkadian clay tablets have survived, the Greek and Aramaic papyri or parchments have not.⁸ In other words, climatic conditions have privileged precisely the most conservative and archaizing elements of the Babylonian world. To exaggerate for clarity: Seleucid Babylonia is like Ptolemaic Egypt with only hieroglyphic inscriptions.

The Seleucids did not tread lightly in Babylonia. The satrapy was the first provincial command of Seleucus Nicator, the birthplace of his kingship, and the setting of his dynasty’s myth of origins.⁹ Its territory was colonized, by the foundation of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and several second-tier settlements on the middle Euphrates and the lower stretches of the Tigris, Eulaeus, Hedyphon, and Pasitigris rivers.¹⁰ A Seleucid garrison occupied Babylon from the first,¹¹ a colony was introduced by Antiochus IV,¹² and the scribes recorded its performance of markedly Greek acts (the colonists ‘anoint themselves with oil’,¹³ they celebrate a *pu-up-pe-e* (i.e. *pompē*)¹⁴). Circulated Seleucid

⁵ See, e.g., Oswyn’s appropriately scathing criticisms of Carl Schneider’s *Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus* (Murray, 1969).

⁶ Said (1979), 240.

⁷ For an exploration of such anxieties in Ptolemaic studies, see Moyer (2011), 28–9 and n. 104.

⁸ There are only a few Greek inscriptions or *ostraca* from Hellenistic Babylonia; see *IEOG* #76, #100, #102, #103, and #107.

⁹ *App. Syr.* 53–4; *Diod. Sic.* 18.39.6, 19.55.2–5, 19.91.2; *Arr. Ta met’ Alexandron* F1 35; see Capdetrey (2007), 36–8.

¹⁰ A list of Seleucid colonies in southern Babylonia was appended to Antioch-in-Persis’ recognition at the crowned games of Artemis Leucophryene at Magnesia-on-the-Maeander (*IEOG* #252 = *OGIS* 233 = *IMagn* 61); for Seleucid colonies in the region, see Tschirikower (1927), 84–95.

¹¹ Sherwin-White (1982). ¹² van der Spek (2009).

¹³ *BCHP* 14 Obv. 4. ¹⁴ *AD-168 A* Obv. 15.

coinage generated an unprecedented familiarity with Greek iconographic motifs. In addition, several episodes in the cuneiform *Chronicles* and *Astronomical Diaries* record ruptures in the fabric of local tradition. To give just one example: a scribe records that Antiochus I, while performing a standard Babylonian sacrifice on the Esagila, the main temple of Babylon, fell over and in response, perhaps as to a bad omen, ‘sacrificed oxen in the Greek manner’—a recognizable religious intrusion at the Babylonian cosmic centre.¹⁵ In sum, Seleucid imperialism generated all kinds of contact points between Babylonian and Graeco-Macedonian ideas and practices.

In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that a zone of interpenetration can be identified between the symbolic worlds of the Babylonian priesthood and Seleucid kingship. As the title indicates, this project is inspired by readings of Ptolemaic texts that seek, with more or less success, to identify Egyptian significance in the apparently ivory-tower poetry of Alexandria and other texts;¹⁶ but it is differently articulated—the Seleucid kingdom was hydra- not Janus-headed, i.e. multi-cultural not bi-cultural, and our sources from Babylonia preserve almost exclusively the indigenous perspective. For both reasons, a search for what Susan Stephens has called ‘copresence’—the binary overlapping of indigenous and colonial symbolic systems—can only come from an investigation of the Babylonian priestly responses to the Graeco-Macedonian occupiers. That this was possible and sophisticated is demonstrated by the sadly fragmentary *Babyloniaca* of Berossus, an early third-century autoethnography in Greek by a priest of Marduk, that engaged directly with Seleucid kingship, reworked several cuneiform classics, and responded to Hellenic historiographical conventions.¹⁷ While Berossus is the best case for literary and cultural bilingualism, in this study I hope to demonstrate similar ‘double sight’ in the most conservative-looking Babylonian source of all—the Borsippa Cylinder of Antiochus I.

The Cylinder is a clay foundation text that records, in an archaizing cuneiform script, Antiochus I’s reconstruction of the Ezida temple to the god Nabû in the city of Borsippa, located about ten miles southwest of Babylon on the east bank of the Euphrates. The Cylinder is written in two columns of thirty and twenty-nine lines, respectively,

¹⁵ *BCHP* 6 Obv. 4–7.

¹⁶ E.g. Moyer (2011), Stephens (2003), and Koenen (1993).

¹⁷ Berossus *BNJ* 680, with the commentary of G. de Breucker.

and gives the impression of a neat, symmetrical distribution of signs; a double vertical line down the Cylinder's middle separates the two columns from one another and horizontal rulings in each column divide up the lines of writing.¹⁸ The Cylinder dates itself by the Babylonian calendar and Seleucid Era to 27 March 268.¹⁹ Since its publication by Strassmaier in 1882, the Cylinder has been recognized as an exceptional source for Seleucid imperial policy in Babylonia, late Babylonian religion, and Hellenistic monarchic ideology. It is most easily accessible in Amélie Kuhrt's and Susan Sherwin-White's translation and commentary in *JHS* 111.²⁰ The language and form of the inscription, the activity it recorded, and the rituals it described and encoded are strikingly traditional. It represents Seleucid royal sponsorship of the indigenous priesthood, honouring of the local pantheon, and participation in sonorous ancient rituals. Accordingly, the Cylinder has been treated as the ideal instantiation of the supposedly unpolluted cultural continuity discussed earlier: for Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 'the royal ideology expressed in the text is a totally Babylonian one',²¹ for Teixidor it is 'a true Hellenistic copy of the Neo-Babylonian building texts',²² and for Capdetrey, 'la proclamation de cette reconstruction respecte à la perfection le modèle babylonien traditionnel pour les textes de fondations',²³ and so on. Against this scholarly consensus my chapter argues that the Cylinder is imbued with Seleucid monarchic ideology and artfully reformulated Babylonian tradition within the framework of a genuinely imperial programme. I address four themes—the significance of Nabû, the depiction of the royal family, the selection of textual models, and the Cylinder's geography.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NABÛ

Nabû, whose temple was reconstructed by Antiochus I, was the chief god of Borsippa, patron of scribes and divine wisdom, son of Marduk, and one of the most important deities in mid-late first millennium

¹⁸ On such graphic devices in building inscriptions, see da Riva (2008), 80–3.

¹⁹ i.13–14. ²⁰ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991).

²¹ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), 83. ²² Teixidor (1990), 73.

²³ Capdetrey (2007), 56.

Babylonia.²⁴ How would the Seleucid monarch have identified him? In the standard ethnographic gesture of assimilating the strange to the familiar, the Greeks associated foreign gods and goddesses with their own deities. Basic similarities between the Mesopotamian and Hellenic pantheons permitted such links: Babylon's Marduk (known by his cult title Bēl) was associated with Zeus at least as early as Herodotus.²⁵ Indeed, Berossus' *Babyloniaca* seems to have translated Mesopotamian deities into their Greek equivalents. For example, in his summary of the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enūma eliš*, he writes of Ti'āmat, 'her name in the Chaldaean language is *Thalath*, but in Greek her name is translated *Thalassa*';²⁶ elsewhere, Berossus translated Marduk as Zeus and, according to Agathias, gave Greek names for the other Babylonian gods (τοὺς ἄλλους ἐκάλουν).²⁷ It has generally been agreed, on the basis of abundant post-Seleucid evidence, that Nabû was syncretized with Apollo.²⁸ Strabo identified Borsippa, the home city of the Ezida temple and the Cylinder, as sacred to Apollo and Artemis, i.e. Nabû and Nanaya.²⁹ The temple of the Gaddê at Dura-Europus, a Seleucid colony, housed a gypsum statue of Apollo Citharoedus, identified by a Palmyrene Aramaic label as Nabû (*nbw*).³⁰ Similarly, tesserae from Palmyra label a lyre-playing Apollo as Nabû (*nbw*).³¹ Apollo of Hierapolis-Bambyce, a cult that received benefaction from Seleucus I and Stratonice, was Nabû-like.³² The temple of Apollo in nearby Seleucia-on-the-Tigris was identified in a Parthian bilingual inscription as that of Nabû.³³ The two gods were equated in translations of theophoric names—for example, Barnabous ("Son of Nabû"), from Cilician Nicopolis, took the Greek name Apollinarios.³⁴ Drijvers has even suggested that Nabû's large writing stylus, his characteristic

²⁴ Pomponio (1978). ²⁵ Hdt. 1.181.

²⁶ Berossus *BNJ* 680 F1b = Syncellus, *Chronography*, 49, 19. Thalath is a scribal corruption inspired by the Greek word *thalatta*. G. de Breucker notes that the fourth-century BCE peripatetic philosopher Eudemus of Rhodes, in his version of the *Enūma eliš*, renders the name *Tauthē*.

²⁷ Berossus *BNJ* 680 F12 = Agathias, *Historiae* 2.24.

²⁸ See, e.g., Erickson (2011); Iossif (2011), 250–1; Dirven (1999), 128–46; Bernard (1990), 57–60; Drijvers (1980), 40–75; and Pomponio (1978), 226–8.

²⁹ Strabo 16.1.7. ³⁰ Downey (1977), 1.ii #48, #226.

³¹ Stucky (1971); Pomponio (1978), 223–32.

³² Lucian, *Syr. D.* 36; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.17, 66; see Lightfoot (2003), 456–66.

³³ *IEOG* #86, via assimilation with Iranian Tir; see Bernard (1990).

³⁴ Bernard (1990), 58, *IGLS* I #166.

attribute, could have been identified by Greeks as Apollo's arrow.³⁵ Until very recently a Nabû–Apollo syncretism was not attested from the Seleucid period, but a newly published seal from the great archive building at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, dated between the last quarter of the third century and the first half of the second century BC, depicts an undeniably syncretic image of the two gods (a nude, beardless Apollo-figure holds Nabû's stylus beside Babylonian astral symbols).³⁶ The carving of such an image for a private seal implies an already well-established assimilation of the deities. It is hard to imagine that Seleucid agents or Babylonian priests seeking royal favour did not make this supremely important deity mutually intelligible; crucially, no alternative Greek identification of Nabû is attested.³⁷ So it is almost certain that Babylonian Nabû, recipient of Antiochus' benefaction, would have been understood by the Seleucid court as Apollo.

The Borsippa Cylinder itself may contain oblique confirmation of this syncretism. Nabû is first introduced in column i line 16 as *Nabû aplu širi*, 'Nabû, exalted heir' (i.e. of his father, Marduk). In two other places, the inscription calls him *Nabû aplu*.³⁸ In this period, if the phonology of the Graeco-Babyloniaca is any guide, *aplu* may have been pronounced *apal*.³⁹ While the title is not by itself unusual for this god,⁴⁰ the repetitive insistence on the doublet *Nabû aplu/apal* in the context of a Seleucid-sponsored Babylonian ritual could be intended—an aural indication of the Nabû–Apollo syncretism.⁴¹

If King Antiochus were aware of Nabû's identification with Apollo, as he surely was, then at the same time as rebuilding Borsippa's Ezida he was honouring the favoured god of the Seleucid dynasty. This goes some way to explaining why, of all the temples of Babylonia, he chose to rebuild Ezida. It is well known that Apollo was the patron deity of the Seleucid house and very much associated with the

³⁵ Drijvers (1980), 63.

³⁶ Invernizzi (2004), 37, 59 (Nb 1 and 2).

³⁷ See Pomponio (1978). Nabû's identification with the planet Mercury is restricted to astronomical texts (Arist. *De Mund.* 392a26–27; Apul. *De Mund.* 2, Plin. *NH* 2.39).

³⁸ ii.4 and ii.21–22.

³⁹ Geller (1997), 66, as actually restored for Geller #7 Obv. 6.

⁴⁰ For the epithets of Nabû, see Pomponio (1978), 162–4.

⁴¹ Johannes Haubold, in correspondence, has proposed a parallel to such aural syncretic punning in Berossus' identification of Babylonian Σαραχήρω as the adorer of Hera (ἡ κοσμήτρια τῆς Ἥρας), based on the similarity of -χήρω to Ἥρα (Berossus *BNJ* 680 F13 = Hesychius, s.v. Σαραχήρω). Note that accent placement, unusual for female Greek names, would have eased the identification.

dynasty's legitimacy. Various sources, perhaps deriving from some kind of court-propagated 'Seleucus Romance',⁴² record that support for Seleucus' kingship issued from Apollo's oracle at Didyma,⁴³ that Apollo was Seleucus' biological father and thus founder of the dynasty,⁴⁴ and that he was born with an anchor, the god's sign, as a birthmark.⁴⁵ Epigraphic texts speak of Seleucus as the son (παῖς) of Apollo,⁴⁶ of Apollo as the dynasty's founder (ἄρχηγός τοῦ γένους),⁴⁷ and of the kinship (συγγένεια) between the god and Seleucus' descendants.⁴⁸ The development of this Apollo-myth can be dated to the very end of the reign of Seleucus I⁴⁹ or the beginning of Antiochus I's;⁵⁰ in other words, it was already established by the time of the Cylinder's composition. Furthermore, the reigns of Seleucus I and Antiochus I had witnessed repeated benefactions to the Apollo cult throughout the empire. At the kingdom's western edge, Apollo's temple at Didyma received much benefaction,⁵¹ including the return of its cult statue from Media.⁵² In the distant east, the Seleucid general Demodamas founded altars to Apollo of Didyma on the Iaxartes river.⁵³ Seleucus established the temple of Apollo at Daphne, near Syrian Antioch, as a royal cult; Libanius, perhaps reproducing a narrative from the Seleucus Romance or the cultic foundation narrative, tells how Seleucus

⁴² See Primo (2009), 29–35 and Fraser (1996), 37–46.

⁴³ Diod. Sic. 19.90.1–5; App. Syr. 56. ⁴⁴ Just. Epit. 15.4.3–6; App. Syr. 56.

⁴⁵ Just. Epit. 15.4.3.

⁴⁶ A *paean* to Asclepius from Erythrae (*IErythrai* 205 ll.74–6) hymns 'Seleucus, son of dark-haired Apollo, whom the player of the golden lyre himself begot' (ὄμνειτ' ἐπὶ σπονδαῖς Ἀπόλλωνος κvanoπολοκάμου | παῖδα Σέλευκον, ὃν αὐτὸς γείνατο χρυσ[σ]ολύρας). The argument of Iossif (2011), 246–7 that παῖς here means 'servant' is contradicted by the explicit divine filiation (ὃν αὐτὸς γείνατο).

⁴⁷ OGIS 219 from Ilium (*Illion* 32); OGIS 237 from Iasus (Ma #28); SEG 46 557 from Delphi (see Iossif, 2011, 245–6).

⁴⁸ A letter of Seleucus II to Miletus speaks of the king's πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν συγγένειαν (RC 22 ll.5–6; *IDidyma* 493); Antiochus III consecrated Lycian Xanthus to the Apollonian triad on account of his kinship (*TAM* II.266; Ma #22).

⁴⁹ If *IErythrai* 205 can be dated to the very end of Seleucus I's reign.

⁵⁰ OGIS 219 is now securely dated to Antiochus I and not Antiochus III (Ma, 2002, 254–9 and Jones, 1993).

⁵¹ *IDidyma* 479, 480, 424 (RC 5, OGIS 214). ⁵² Paus. 1.16.3.

⁵³ Plin. *HN* 6.16. While Demodamas was a native of Miletus, and so Didymaeon Apollo his local god, he was engaged in an official Seleucid venture; indeed, the founding of altars on the Iaxartes should be considered a formal gesture of imperial delimitation in Central Asia.

uncovered there one of Apollo's golden arrows.⁵⁴ During the reign of Antiochus I, Apollo came to dominate the reverses of Seleucid precious metal coinage, circulating in Babylonia as elsewhere.⁵⁵

Under Seleucus I and then especially under Antiochus I, the cult of Apollo was officially propagated and sponsored throughout the kingdom. The deity was ancestor, patron, and symbol of the Seleucid house. Antiochus I's decision to rebuild Ezida, temple of 'Nabû *apal*', should be located within this dynastic policy. Certainly, the reconstruction at Borsippa cast Antiochus in the idiom of local kingship, as *roi bâtisseur* and vicar of Nabû. But at the same time, this customary Babylonian action was co-opted to a pan-imperial agenda and given a Seleucid-specific historical significance not seen before. Rather than dissolving his identity into an age-old template, Antiochus was joining parallel though culturally independent religious traditions under a single monarch and empire, both Near Eastern and Greek.

THE DEPICTION OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

The Seleucids' relationship to Apollo highlights one of the major differences between this dynasty and the first millennium pre-Hellenistic kings of Babylonia: ruler-cult. It is well known that the early Seleucid monarchs were worshipped in the Greek western fringe of their empire,⁵⁶ honored as *ktistai* of Seleucid colonies throughout the empire,⁵⁷ and, at least from the reign of Antiochus III, organized into a state-imposed dynastic grouping.⁵⁸ In Babylonia, dynastic cult is epigraphically attested at second-century BC Seleucia-on-the-Tigris,⁵⁹ and a founder cult to Seleucus Nicator may well have been established there from its creation. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White have strongly argued that, in contrast to the colonial population, the indigenous priesthood did not respond to Seleucid kingship in an equivalent manner and that, much as in Achaemenid and Hellenistic Jerusalem,

⁵⁴ Lib. Or. 11.94–99.

⁵⁵ Houghton and Lorber (2002), 115–16, with catalogue.

⁵⁶ See Habicht (1956), 82–105 for the evidence.

⁵⁷ For the Asia Minor colonies, see Habicht (1956), 105–7 and Debord (2003), 282–4.

⁵⁸ See van Nuffelen (2004). ⁵⁹ IEOG #76; see van Nuffelen (2001).

prayers and dedications were offered only *ana balāti ša*, ‘for the life of’, the reigning monarch.⁶⁰ However, more recent research has interpreted an unspecified religious ritual (*dullu*) for the Seleucid family, from the reign of Seleucus III, and the laying out of offerings ‘on (the table) of the statues of the kings’ as evidence of a form of ruler-cult.⁶¹ While these cuneiform attestations post-date the Borsippa Cylinder, official Seleucid coinage struck under Antiochus I and circulating in the region depicted the head of his father, Seleucus Nicator, with the horns of a bull.⁶² In Babylonian religion horned headdresses were an undisputed marker of divine power;⁶³ when worn by kings they indicated deification.⁶⁴ Even the most minimalist reading of the evidence, therefore, would have to acknowledge the presence in third-century Babylonia of images and practices that in some sense assimilated the kings to the divine.

With this in mind, the Cylinder’s depiction of Antiochus, his father Seleucus, and their wife Stratonice is quietly revolutionary. The Cylinder establishes clear parallels between the divine family of Nabû and the royal family of Antiochus. The first of its two columns opens in the standard manner of Neo-Babylonian building inscriptions, giving Antiochus’ name, his titles, his filiation, and ending with the first-person pronoun *anāku* (‘I [am]’).⁶⁵ In the following quotation, the first line transliterates the cuneiform signs (Akkadian syllables in *italics*, Sumerian logograms in roman), the second line normalizes these into Akkadian words (analogy: writing out ‘Mr’ as ‘Mister’), and the third line translates; so, we get:

i.1 *’an-ti-’u-ku-us* lugal gal-ú
Anti’ukus šarru rabû
 Antiochus, great king

i.2 lugal *dan-nu* lugal šár lugal e^{ki} lugal kur.kur
šarru dannu šar kiššati šar Bābili šar mātāti
 mighty king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of lands

⁶⁰ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1993), 202–3.

⁶¹ Clancier (2007), 38–41; Linsen (2004), 124–6.

⁶² Houghton and Lorber (2002), I.114, with catalogue.

⁶³ *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* s.v. ‘Hörnerkrone’.

⁶⁴ The most famous example is the third-millennium Victory Stele of Naram-Sin. The significance of the horns is shown by their addition to a statue of Puzur-Eštar, a late third-millennium ruler of Mari, by a stonemason in the Neo-Babylonian period (see Blocher, 1999).

⁶⁵ For the formula, see da Riva (2008), 93 and Berger (1973), 72–84.

- i.3 *za-ni-in é.sag.íl ù é.zi.da*
zānin Esagil u Ezida
 caretaker of Esagil and Ezida
- i.4 *ibila sag.kal ša ¹si-lu-uk-ku lugal*
aplu ašarēdu ša Silukku šarri
 the foremost heir of Seleucus, the king
- i.5 *^{lu}ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a lugal e^{ki}*
Makkadunaya šar Bābili
 the Macedonian, king of Babylon
- i.6 *a-na-ku.*
anāku.
 [am] I.

Lines 6 to 16 then describe Antiochus' moulding of bricks in northern Syria, transporting them to Borsippa, laying of the temple's foundation, and construction of Ezida. This is followed by a lengthy prayer in the voice of Antiochus to the god Nabû. The structure of Nabû's title and filiation follows that of Antiochus:

- i.16 ... ^dag ibila *ši-i-ri*
 ... *Nabû aplu širi*
 ... Nabû, exalted heir
- i.17 *igi.gál.la dingir^{meš} muš-tar-hu*
igigallu ilāni muštarhu
 wise one of the gods, noble
- i.18 *ša a-na ta-na-da-a-ti*
ša ana tanādāti
 who is worthy of praise
- i.19 *šit-ku-nu ibila reš-tú-u*
šitkunu aplu rēštú
 the first heir
- i.20 *ša ^damar.utu i-lit-ti ^de₄-ru₆-ú-a*
ša Marduk ilitti Erua
 of Marduk, offspring of Erua
- i.21 *šar-rat pa-ti-qát nab-ni-ti*
šarrat pātiqat nabniti
 queen, former of creation.

Nabû's full genealogy is given once more, still in Antiochus' prayer, in lines 3 to 6 of column ii:

- ii.3 . . . *dumu ru-bé-e*
 . . . *mār rubê*
 . . . son of the prince
- ii.4 ^dag ibila é.sag.íl
Nabû apil Esagil
 Nabû, heir of the Esagil
- ii.5 *bu-kúr* ^dasar.ri *reš-tu-ú*
bukur Marduk reštû
 first son of Marduk
- ii.6 *i-lit-ti* ^de₄-ru₆-ú-a *šar-rat*
ilitti Erua šarrat
 offspring of Erua, queen.

One final time, in the prayer's closing sentence at line 22 of column ii, Nabû is named 'foremost heir', (Sumerian *ibila sag.kal* for Akkadian *aplu ašarēdu*).

The Cylinder repeatedly stresses Nabû's filiation. Such an emphasis is not only extremely unusual but, as Kathryn Stevens has demonstrated in a forthcoming article, comes at the expense of the other characteristics of Nabû's divinity.⁶⁶ While this insistent repetition on his status as heir (*aplu*) allows the aural identification with his Greek equivalent Apollo, as has been argued in the previous section, it also establishes a parallel with Antiochus' status as the legitimate heir of Seleucus. Both Nabû and Antiochus are termed *aplu*; each bears the title *aplu ašarēdu*, 'foremost heir', on one occasion. Furthermore, the symmetrical layout of the Cylinder gives visual reinforcement to this correspondence of genealogies—that of Antiochus is found on lines 4 to 5 of column i, the second genealogy of Nabû on lines 4 to 6 of column ii. Glancing across from one column to the other—made simple by the lines ruled horizontally across the Cylinder—one would easily see the parallel and, in line 4 of both columns, even an identical cuneiform sign (Sumerian *ibila*, for Akkadian *aplu*, 'heir') used exclusively for king and god.

⁶⁶ Stevens (forthcoming).

This mirroring of genealogies—the fact that Nabû is related to Marduk as Antiochus to Seleucus—serves to legitimize Antiochus' position as son of the founder-king. It also begins to equate Seleucus with Marduk and Antiochus with Nabû. It has already been shown that Marduk and Nabû were identified with Zeus and Apollo, respectively. So, the Cylinder establishes two sets of equivalences: Marduk–Zeus–Seleucus and Nabû–Apollo–Antiochus.

There is a strong connection between Seleucus and Zeus in literature, cult, and iconography,⁶⁷ but once again the general dearth of sources for the early third century BC obliges us to look forwards. A tale recorded by Pausanias, and most likely deriving from the same Seleucus Romance discussed earlier, linked Seleucus' kingship to Zeus—when the young Macedonian was sacrificing to this god in Pella before crossing with Alexander to Asia, the wood on the altar spontaneously burst into flame and moved towards the statue of Zeus.⁶⁸ Seleucus' epithet 'Nicator' was borrowed from Zeus, and Antiochus I turned his father's burial place at Seleucia-in-Pieria into a *temenos* called the 'Nicatorium'.⁶⁹ The founder-king and chief god are also epigraphically linked. A couple of inscriptions from probable Seleucid *katoikia*i in Asia Minor record dedications to a Zeus Seleucius.⁷⁰ A fragmentary priest-list from Seleucia-in-Pieria, dating to the reign of Seleucus IV (r. 187–175), expressly designates Seleucus I as 'Seleucus Zeus Nicator' and his son Antiochus I, rebuilder of Ezida, as 'Antiochus Apollo Soter'.⁷¹ Finally, Zeus imagery dominated Seleucus I's coinage throughout the empire, juxtaposing on the coins' reverse the king's name, in the genitive case, with the enthroned Zeus. Within Babylonia, the link between Seleucus and Zeus-Marduk would have been even more visible. Seleucus had strong associations with taurine imagery—his horned portrait, as we have seen, appeared on coins struck under Antiochus I and he was also depicted this way in statues.⁷² Marduk was the Babylonian deity most strongly associated with bulls. His horn-crown had been repaired under Alexander in 325⁷³ and his name, in

⁶⁷ See Debord (2003), 282–3, 303 and Hadley (1974), 58–9.

⁶⁸ Paus. 1.16.1; the tale is also recorded, with less detail, by App. *Syr.* 56.

⁶⁹ App. *Syr.* 63; see Cohen (2006), 128–30.

⁷⁰ See Debord (2003), 282; Fraser (1949); and Nock (1928), 157.

⁷¹ OGIS 245 (IGLS III.2.1184): Σελεύκου Διός | Νικάτορος καὶ Ἀντιόχου | Ἀπόλλωνος Σωτήρο[ς].

⁷² Houghton and Lorber (2002), 114, with catalogue; for horned Seleucus statues, see App. *Syr.* 57.

⁷³ Hoover (2011), 205–6.

the Cylinder as elsewhere, was written as Sumerian ^damar.utu, meaning ‘bull calf of heaven’.⁷⁴

There is also evidence for our second set, Nabû–Apollo–Antiochus. Clearest of all is the second-century priest-list from Seleucia-in-Pieria, cited earlier, which names him ‘Antiochus Apollo Soter’. Antiochus I carried through a thorough and noticeable reform of Seleucid coinage that replaced his father’s dominant Zeus typology with Apollo;⁷⁵ this became the stable image on the kingdom’s precious metal coinage for a century-and-a-half. The Cylinder itself parallels Antiochus and Nabû in relation to their respective fathers and so king and god, alone of the Cylinder’s actors, are called *aplu/apal*; the Antiochus *apal* of the Cylinder may be, as we have observed, an aural indication of the king’s identification with Apollo–Nabû. Moreover, lines 7 to 10 of column ii imagine Nabû’s entry into his Ezida. Three different forms of the temple’s name are juxtaposed:

ii.7 é.zi.da é ki-i-ni
Ezida bīt kīni
Ezida, the true temple

ii.8 é ^da-nu-ti-ka
bīt Anūtika
the temple of your Anu-ship.

The Sumerian temple name ‘Ezida’ is here followed by its direct Akkadian translation, ‘true temple’; this translation doublet for Ezida is common in Nebuchadnezzar II’s building inscriptions.⁷⁶ But the third name for Ezida in line 8, ‘bīt Anūtika’, referring to the abstract quality of the Mesopotamian sky god Anu, is new. It is possible that this unusual title was chosen for Ezida because of *Anūtika*’s striking aural similarity to *Anti’ukus*, the name of Antiochus in the Cylinder.⁷⁷ Is this a hint that the Ezida, temple of Nabû, is to be associated with Antiochus?

⁷⁴ While this may be a folk-etymology, it was widely believed; see Lambert (1984), 6–8.

⁷⁵ Houghton and Lorber (2002), 115–16, with catalogue.

⁷⁶ Langdon #1 I.55, #9 II.18, #13 I.35, #15 III.38, #19 VI.4; it is not attested in the inscriptions of Nabonidus, the other great Neo-Babylonian builder.

⁷⁷ The Borsippa Cylinder for Antiochus is one of only two entries in the *CAD* (*The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago*) for a temple being qualified as *Anūtu*; the other, Borger Esarhaddon 74:30, calls Ištar’s Eanna temple *bīt Anūti*, ‘temple of Anū-ship.’ Note that the addition of the second-person pronominal suffix *-ka* in the Borsippa Cylinder, not present in the Esarhaddon text, permits the aural pun with *Anti’ukus*.

These two triangulations of Babylonian god—Greek god—Seleucid monarch are confirmed by the Cylinder's depiction of queen Stratonice. The Cylinder ends with a prayer that the good deeds of Antiochus I, his son Seleucus, and his wife Stratonice be 'in the mouth' of Nabû (ii.21–9). It has already been recognized that the inclusion of a queen in a building inscription is unusual and represents a break with Babylonian tradition;⁷⁸ but her presence in the Cylinder is also marked by further references to ruler-cult.

Stratonice had been the wife of Seleucus I before she was transferred to his son and successor Antiochus I, on the occasion of the latter's appointment as Crown Prince and ruler of the Upper Satrapies.⁷⁹ Like her husbands, Stratonice received cult worship at the kingdom's western fringe. For example, shortly after the composition of the Borsippa Cylinder the Ionian League established a cult for king Antiochus I, his son Antiochus (who had replaced the Cylinder's Seleucus as Crown Prince), and his queen Stratonice;⁸⁰ the king-son-wife order of the royal grouping is identical in Ionia and Babylonia. The cult for Stratonice associated her with Aphrodite. In Smyrna, a famous temple of Aphrodite Stratonice assimilated the queen to the goddess of love.⁸¹ Similarly, Pliny reports a painting by Ctesicles, exhibited at Ephesus, which depicted Stratonice fornicating with a fisherman for whom she had conceived an ardent passion;⁸² it is probable that this is a misunderstanding of a cult painting that depicted the queen as Aphrodite and perhaps attempted to project Seleucid maritime sovereignty. Furthermore, numerous tales depict the queen as highly eroticized. According to Lucian's *De Dea Syria*, Stratonice fell in love with a certain Combabos, who castrated himself to avoid her advances.⁸³ Conversely, Appian recorded Antiochus' deep and unrequited love for Stratonice, his step-mother, a sickness which was only cured by Seleucus passing on his wife.⁸⁴ Within Babylonia, an *Astronomical Diary*, narrating the queen's death, gives her the title *bēltu* (Sumerian gašan), 'lady', 'used of

⁷⁸ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), 83–5.

⁷⁹ For details, see Will (1966), I.88. ⁸⁰ OGIS 222.

⁸¹ OGIS 228 3–4; OGIS 229 12, 70, 83; Tac. *Ann.* 3.63; see discussion of Habicht (1956), 99–102.

⁸² Plin. *HN* 35.51.

⁸³ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 17–27.

⁸⁴ App. *Syr.* 59–61.

goddesses';⁸⁵ Del Monte takes this as evidence of her cult worship in Babylonia.⁸⁶

In the Cylinder, Stratonice is introduced as:

ii.26 *ʿas-ta-ar-ta-ni-ik-ku*

Astartanikku

Stratonice

ii.27 *hi-rat-su šar-ra-at*

hīrassu šarrat

his wife, the queen.

Her titles and name are significant. As Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White observe, the titles *hīrtu* and *šarratu* are used in this period exclusively of female deities; they propose the translations 'divine consort' and 'heavenly queen'.⁸⁷ By themselves such titles for Stratonice elevate heavenwards the male Seleucids in the Cylinder. They also allow the queen to be represented in her notorious double role as wife of both Antiochus I and his father Seleucus I. *hīrassu*, 'his wife' or 'his divine consort', has the possessive pronominal suffix *-šu* ('his'),⁸⁸ and so expressly identifies Stratonice as the partner of Antiochus. But her second title, *šarrat*, 'queen' or 'heavenly queen', without the pronominal suffix linking her to Antiochus, has already been used in the Cylinder's two Nabû genealogies for the goddess Erua, mother of Nabû and wife of Marduk, his father;⁸⁹ just as the Cylinder assimilated Seleucus to Marduk, so it identified Marduk's wife with Stratonice. The two Akkadian titles artfully express Stratonice's complex marital history.

The Cylinder transliterates the name Stratonice as *Astartanikku*. As Del Monte has observed, this is an Akkadianization that deliberately identifies the Seleucid queen with the Syrian goddess Astarte;⁹⁰ elsewhere, her name was transliterated phonetically but meaninglessly as *Astaratniqe*.⁹¹ Astarte was the Syrian goddess of sex and war, cognate with the Mesopotamian deity Ištar and identified with Greek

⁸⁵ AD-253 Obv. B 6.

⁸⁶ Del Monte (1997), 41–2.

⁸⁷ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), 85.

⁸⁸ A third-person suffix following a base ending in a dental (here *hīrat*) resolves to *ss*.

⁸⁹ i.21 and ii.6.

⁹⁰ Del Monte (1997), 42.

⁹¹ AD-253 B Obv. 6.

Aphrodite. This is significant in light of the contemporary assimilation of Stratonice to Aphrodite, discussed earlier. Indeed, the second element of Stratonice's Akkadian name, *-nikku*, recalls the verb *niāku*, 'to have sexual intercourse', and especially the verbal noun *nīku*, 'sex' or 'fornication'.⁹² Translated back into Greek, therefore, Stratonice's name in the Cylinder would mean something like 'Aphrodite sex'. It is hard not to recall Ctesicles' painting and the salacious tales about the queen.

The Borsippa Cylinder deploys genealogies, shared titulature, aural puns, and visual symmetry to construct identities for the Seleucid royal family that parallel the divinities honoured by the building work. Such indirect identifications of kings and queen with gods and goddess are familiar from Hellenistic Greek ruler-cult and Alexandrian poetry. Examples abound, but Theocritus' encomium to Ptolemy Philadelphus offers a pertinent and contemporary instance of both the thorough mirroring of royal and divine worlds and the triangulation between reigning monarchs, Greek gods, and indigenous gods: the poem concludes by paralleling the marriage of Ptolemy and his full sister Arsinoe explicitly with that of Zeus and Hera and implicitly, given the Egyptian context, with that of Osiris and Isis.⁹³

THE SELECTION OF A NEO-BABYLONIAN MODEL

When Hormuzd Rassam, the Iraqi agent of the British Museum, unearthed the Borsippa Cylinder in 1880 he erroneously recorded it as an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II.⁹⁴ This was a felicitous and understandable slip. No building cylinder had been composed for the three centuries following Cyrus' conquest of Babylonia; indeed, the sudden end of private archives in 484 BCE, when Borsippa joined the regional revolt against Xerxes, is evidence for the decapitation of the city's elite and for a violent break in its social and religious history.⁹⁵ Antiochus' Cylinder, therefore, was a conscious act of cultural resurrection. Its form, script, and most of its formulaic phrases looked back to Neo-Babylonian models. While the re-use of pre-existing textual materials

⁹² Consonant doubling, *nīku* → *nikku*, is frequent in Late Akkadian; see von Soden (1969), §20 and §54 5a and 9a.

⁹³ Theoc. *Id.* 17.128–34; see Stephens (2003), 162–70 and Hunter (2003), 192–3.

⁹⁴ Reade (1986), 109. ⁹⁵ Waerzeggers (2010), 9–10.

and the incorporation of passages from older texts was a standard compositional procedure for Mesopotamian scribes,⁹⁶ Antiochus' Cylinder made deliberate and strategic reference to the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II. Two features stand out—Antiochus' titulature and the Cylinder's dating formula.

The Seleucid king is given a bricolage of Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid royal titles: the Neo-Babylonian ones emphasize the builder-king's relationship to Babylonia and its temples ('king of Babylon', 'caretaker of Esagil and Ezida'), the Neo-Assyrian ones ('great king', 'mighty king', 'king of the world') and Achaemenid ('king of lands') stress his imperial identity and the extent of his empire.⁹⁷ All of these are commonplace, with the single exception of *aplu ašarēdu*, 'foremost heir'. As we have seen in the previous section, this title is the point around which Nabû and Antiochus are brought together. The only Neo-Babylonian monarch to have taken it was Nebuchadnezzar II, who, like Antiochus, was the second ruler of a new dynasty; of the dynasty's other kings, Nabopolassar, Neriglissar, and Nabonidus were usurper monarchs who emphasized their divine election over filial legitimacy, and Amēl-Marduk and Labaši-Marduk left no inscriptions from their very short reigns.⁹⁸ In his stamped bricks and building inscriptions, including those at Borsippa, Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly and recognizably used the *aplu ašarēdu* title in a filiation formula that has the identical position and structure as that of Antiochus.⁹⁹ For a priesthood reading and copying Nebuchadnezzar II's inscriptions (see later), the use of the *aplu ašarēdu* title for Antiochus can only have been a calculated recollection of the great Neo-Babylonian king.

Antiochus' Cylinder dates his laying of Ezida's new foundations to 20th Addaru, year 43 (of the Seleucid Era).¹⁰⁰ This marks a further rupture with scribal tradition, for 'as a rule Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions are not dated'¹⁰¹ and the few exceptions used either a day-month or regnal year, but never both.¹⁰² Certainly, the novelty pulled a provincial religious ritual into the kingdom's formal chronological

⁹⁶ Liverani (1981), 226.

⁹⁷ Stevens (forthcoming), 12–15.

⁹⁸ da Riva (2008), 30–1.

⁹⁹ *aplu ašarēdu ša Nabopolassar šar Bābili anāku* (Langdon #1 I.9, #3 I.9–10, #7 I.13, #11 I.8, #13 I.21, #14 I.12, #15 I.20, #16 I.13, #17 I.14, #19 I.21, #21 5, #25 3, #26 3).

¹⁰⁰ i.13–14 (*ina* ¹⁰še ud 20.kam | mu 43.kam).

¹⁰¹ da Riva (2008), 64.

¹⁰² For the exceptions, see da Riva (2008), 68.

framework and echoed the dating formula of official Seleucid documents.¹⁰³ But the year 43 also had special significance in Babylonian history as the length of Nebuchadnezzar II's reign;¹⁰⁴ the number was well known, being mentioned in the autobiography of Adad-Guppi, mother of the last Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus,¹⁰⁵ in the Hellenistic King List from Uruk,¹⁰⁶ and in Berossus' *Babyloniaca*.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Antiochus chose to reconstruct Ezida at the end of the very year in which Seleucid rule in Babylonia reached and surpassed the regnal length of the greatest indigenous monarch.¹⁰⁸ Antiochus' work in Borsippa in year 43, whether as a sort of anniversary honour for Nebuchadnezzar or a demonstration of the ongoing continuity of Seleucid rule, made it impossible not to compare the two kings.

The Cylinder's closing prayer to Nabû made various other borrowings from Nebuchadnezzar II's texts, which there is not space to discuss. The key point is that Antiochus' building inscription did not thoughtlessly copy out generic Neo-Babylonian formulae, but made deliberate intertextual allusion to Nebuchadnezzar II. The choice of Nebuchadnezzar II and his inscriptions as the paradigm for Antiochus and the Borsippa Cylinder fits into a specific, early Seleucid context, in which this monarch was re-imagined as a model or prototype for the new Seleucid rulers. We see this in the fragmentary *Indica* of Megasthenes and the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus.

Megasthenes, author of the most respected Indian ethnography of antiquity, was Seleucus' envoy to the Mauryan kingdom of northern India in the late fourth or early third century BC.¹⁰⁹ He composed

¹⁰³ The Seleucid Era counted from Seleucus I's return to Babylon in 311 BC. It was not restarted when Seleucus I took the royal title and diadem in 305/4, nor when Antiochus I succeeded him. Accordingly, it constituted continuous Seleucid time decoupled from the vicissitudes of reigns and events. It is the greatest and most lasting invention of the kingdom.

¹⁰⁴ I am grateful to Johannes Haubold, who first pointed out the number's significance to me in conversation.

¹⁰⁵ Schaudig (2001), 510 (Stele 3.2 I.31). ¹⁰⁶ *King List* 5 Obv. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Berossus *BNJ* 680 F7c = Eusebius (Arm.); *Chronographia*, F8a = Joseph, *Ap.* 1.134, F9a = Joseph, *Ap.* 1.146.

¹⁰⁸ The twentieth *Adarru* fell only ten days before the end of the Babylonian year and the beginning of the new one. The date also implies Antiochus I's participation at the Babylonian *akitu*, the New Year festival, in which Nabû played a very significant role; see Del Monte (2001), 152.

¹⁰⁹ This standard dating of Megasthenes' ethnography has been questioned, unpersuasively, by Bosworth (1996), but the Seleucid-period dating is to be preferred; see Kosmin (2014), 261–271.

an ethnographic description of Chandragupta Maurya's kingdom that also served as an apology for Seleucus I's ceding of Alexander's conquests in India and the Hindu Kush.¹¹⁰ To establish precedent for Seleucus' withdrawal, Megasthenes listed a series of great rulers who had never conquered India: Egyptian Sesostris, Ethiopian Tearcon, Scythian Idanthyrsus, Assyrian Semiramis, Persian Cyrus, and Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar.¹¹¹ Megasthenes singled out Nebuchadnezzar for the highest praise. We are told that he is more esteemed among the Chaldaeans than even Heracles, whom he outstripped in bravery and deeds.¹¹² Nebuchadnezzar is represented as a great conqueror of the West, who subdued Iberia and Libya right up to the Pillars of Heracles and then resettled the populations on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.¹¹³ Nebuchadnezzar had never previously appeared in extant Greek literature and seems to be Megasthenes' discovery; Herodotus and Ctesias, with their interest in powerful Asian queens, had credited his building work at Babylon to Semiramis and Nitocris.¹¹⁴ So the mighty Nebuchadnezzar of the *Indica* is a new creation of the early Seleucid period and a suitable prototype for Seleucus I, who turned his back on India for victorious and more rewarding westward expansion.

In contrast to Megasthenes' conquering Nebuchadnezzar, Berossus' *Babyloniaca*, dedicated to king Antiochus I, emphasized Nebuchadnezzar's role as heir of Nabopolassar (the dynasty's founder), co-ruler, and great builder, who adorned the temples of Babylonia with the spoils of war. As Amélie Kuhrt has argued, Berossus' text established Nebuchadnezzar as the paradigm of good Babylonian kingship and a clear prototype for Antiochus I, who was also the second king of a new dynasty born in Babylon.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Berossus' quotations from Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions¹¹⁶ confirm that they were being studied during the reign of Antiochus I and made accessible to the king.

¹¹⁰ See Kosmin (2013), (2014), 31–58.

¹¹¹ Megasthenes *BNJ* 715 F11a = Strabo 15.1.6–7.

¹¹² Megasthenes *BNJ* 715 F1a = Joseph *AJ* 10.227; F11a = Strabo 15.1.6.

¹¹³ Megasthenes *BNJ* 715 F1a = Joseph *AJ* 10.227; F1b = Euseb. *Chron.* 1.29; F11a = Strabo 15.1.6. This may be an aetiology for the existence of two Iberias (in the Caucasus and the Spanish peninsula).

¹¹⁴ Hdt. 1.184–185; Ctesias *FGrH* 688 F1b = Diod. Sic. 2.7–9.

¹¹⁵ Kuhrt (1987), 55–6.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Berossus *BNJ* 680 F8a = Joseph, *Ap.* 1.140, where Nebuchadnezzar completes the construction of his palace in fifteen days (συντετέλεσθη ἡμέραις δεκαπέντε), parallels Nebuchadnezzar's building inscription Langdon #15 VIII.64–IX.2 ("In fifteen days I completed its construction").

If the Borsippa Cylinder, like the *Indica* and *Babyloniaca*, turned Nebuchadnezzar II into a typological forebear of Seleucid kingship, this both legitimized Seleucid rule in Babylonia and underlined the Macedonian monarchs' instrumental use of the region's pre-Hellenistic history. We see this dynamic at the New Year *akitu* festival of 188 BC, where Antiochus III, great-grandson of our Cylinder's Antiochus, was presented by the high priest of Babylon's Marduk temple with a golden crown, various valuables, and the royal robe of Nebuchadnezzar II.¹¹⁷ The reuse of Nebuchadnezzar's wardrobe as a tributary gift for a visiting Seleucid ruler marked, like the Cylinder's *aplu ašarēdu* and year 43, both Seleucid recognition of Babylonia's cultural legacy and its co-optation to a dominant imperial agenda.

THE LOCATION OF RITUAL

Finally, the geography of the Borsippa Cylinder is Seleucid, not Babylonian. The royal titulature identifies Seleucus I, but not Antiochus, as *Makkadunaya* ('the Macedonian'),¹¹⁸ the ethnic marks out the dynasty as of foreign origin. More significantly, Antiochus himself is associated with northern Syria. The Cylinder reports that, when the king decided to rebuild Ezida, he moulded the bricks *ina māt Hatti*, 'in the land of *Hatti*' (i.10), and then conveyed them from there to Borsippa. *Hatti* is an archaizing Akkadian word for northern Syria,¹¹⁹ which had already emerged as the Seleucid core.¹²⁰ This imperial location is reinforced by the use of the Syrian goddess Astarte for the transliteration of Stratonice's name (see earlier). The non-Babylonian setting for the brick-making rituals and the subsequent royal journey to Ezida are totally unparalleled in Mesopotamian building inscriptions. They are radical deviations from the centralizing tendencies typical of the genre's geography and fundamentally unlike the dispatch to Babylonia of

¹¹⁷ AD-187 A Rev. 11.

¹¹⁸ *Contra* Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991); Ma (2003), 189; Bickerman (1938), 7. It is clear that *Makkadunaya* refers to Seleucus, for the ethnic label lies between Seleucus' name and the title *šar Bābili* ('King of Babylon'), which has already been used for Antiochus.

¹¹⁹ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), 72; Zadok (1985), 157; *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* s.v. 'Hatti'.

¹²⁰ A key indication of this was Antiochus' burial of his father in the city of Seleucia-in-Pieria (App. Syr. 63).

unprocessed raw materials, like cedar trunks, from peripheral lands. Antiochus comes to visit Babylonia, he does not reside there. The Cylinder, therefore, encodes the dynasty's Macedonian origins, Syrian heartland, and restless mobility. The ultimate effect is to provincialize Babylonia.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to, say, the inscribed civic decrees of Greek *poleis*, Babylonian building inscriptions do not discuss the processes behind their composition or the rituals associated with their display and burial. Furthermore, as the first Akkadian royal building inscription for three hundred years and the last ever composed, as far as we know, the Borsippa Cylinder is an outlier and so incapable of answering important questions. We cannot know the degree of Antiochus I's involvement in the decision to rebuild Ezida or in the composition of the inscription written in his voice; we are not able to identify the Cylinder's author(s)—Berossus is a possibility—or to pin down his political purpose; and we do not know whether Greek priests or rituals played any part in its deposition ceremonies. Even so, it should be clear that the Cylinder, far from being a dusty relic of Babylonian conservatism, demonstrates nuanced cultural interaction and thorough engagement with contemporary Seleucid policies and symbols. Its combination of a carefully selected traditionalism and a subdued innovation allowed it to reconfigure age-old Babylonian religious practice for a new and foreign dynasty.

The Cylinder was composed for Nabû and buried in Ezida at the beginning of the temple's reconstruction. But it was also directed towards contemporaries. We can suppose three audiences. First, an Akkadian-literate scribe or set of scribes composed the Cylinder; it is likely that the text remained accessible to the priesthood even after the Cylinder's burial, for we know that under the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings copies of building inscriptions were deposited in palace archives and temples.¹²¹ Secondly, while presentation of royal inscriptions to a wider audience remains conjectural, it has been persuasively argued that they were read aloud before the public

¹²¹ Porter (1993), 109–12.

on the occasion of their deposition.¹²² For the Borsippa Cylinder, we can presume that this would have included king Antiochus, his court, Ezida's priests, and presumably many of the city's other inhabitants. Finally, buried building inscriptions were expected to be found, studied, and honoured by later monarchs in their own reconstruction of the temple.¹²³ Accordingly, the Cylinder's aural and visual puns should be regarded as, in some sense, public acts. While the text may seem hermetic and its Seleucid allusions involved, it is probable that the Cylinder was recited, translated, and explained for the king. Certainly, we have evidence of Babylonian religion and culture being made comprehensible to Antiochus I: as Crown Prince he made offerings to the moon god Sin 'according to the instructions (*ina qībi*) of a certain Babylonian',¹²⁴ instructions no doubt delivered with commentary in Greek; and Berossos' autoethnography may also have played its role in the king's Babylonian education.

Reading the Cylinder in this way points to two general conclusions. First, the provinces of the Seleucid empire were not walled gardens. Ideas, discourses, symbols could be pan-imperial in content and local in idiom, such as Stratonice's association with Aphrodite in Ionia and Astarte in Babylonia; the Babylonian Chronicles, recording events from Thrace to Bactria, demonstrate awareness of the wider empire. Secondly, Seleucid sponsorship of local cults did not leave traditional religions unchanged. The involvement of foreign monarchs, the requirements of cultural translatability, and the inescapably dialogic nature of the encounter could only bring about or catalyze religious innovation and cross-cultural borrowings. Accordingly, the Borsippa Cylinder should find its place among Seleucid-associated religious developments as varied as the construction of a Babylonian-style temple at Ai Khanoum on the Oxus, a Graeco-Macedonian colony in distant Bactria,¹²⁵ the architectural evolution of Persian fire temples,¹²⁶ and, perhaps most significant of all, Antiochus IV's reforms and persecution in Judea.

¹²² Porter (1993), 109–15 has demonstrated that Esarhaddon's building inscriptions from Assyria and from Babylonia represented him differently and appropriately for each population and that, consequently, they were probably composed to be orally divulged to the public. Oppenheim (1960), 143–4 argues that Sargon II's Letter to Aššur, describing his military campaign in Urartu, was read aloud to the *ālu u nišēšu* ('the city and its people') of the Assyrian capital Assur as part of a victorious royal triumph. See also da Riva (2008), 26–7.

¹²³ da Riva (2008), 27–8.

¹²⁴ BCHP 5 1.8.

¹²⁵ Downey (1988), 65–73.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Hjerrild (1996).

ABBREVIATIONS

All according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition). In addition:

- AD* Sachs, Abraham and Hunger, Hermann (1988). *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia* (Vienna).
- BCHP* Finkel, Irving and Spek, Bert van der (2012). *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period*, published online at <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/chron00.html>.
- BNJ* Worthington, Ian (2012). *Brill's New Jacoby*, published online at <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com>.
- IEOG* Rossi, Canali de (2004). *Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente Greco* (Bonn).
- IGLS* Jalabert, L., Mouterede, R., and Rey-Coquais, J.-P., eds. (1929–). *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris).

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