

58) The Baz(za) Chronicle (BM 46090 = 81-7-6, 538) — The British Museum houses a great number of chronicle fragments from Mesopotamia. Most of them are published and edited by A.K. Grayson (1975) and Jean-Jacques Glassner (2004). A study of the provenance of these chronicles is provided by Caroline Waerzeggers (2012). A new edition of the Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period (BCHP, in a preliminary version made available online at livius.org) is now in the final stage of preparation in a volume, to be published by Irving Finkel, Reinhard Pirngruber, Bert van der Spek and Kathryn Stevens (ed.), in the SBL Series *Writings from the Ancient World*, containing these chronicles, the historical sections of the astronomical diaries (including a number of unpublished undated diaries) and a few other documents of historical interest, such as the Antiochus Cylinder, the Babylonian King List and the Uruk King List.

One chronicle fragment, identified by Irving Finkel, cannot be included in this volume as it clearly does not report events of the Hellenistic period. It mentions a king of Babylon who leads a campaign against the land of Baz(za). Although the reported events concern the pre-Hellenistic period, it is quite well possible that the text was written in the Hellenistic period (cf. Waerzeggers 2015). The chronicles that arrived at the British Museum between 1876 and 1884, were accompanied by large numbers of astronomical texts from the Hellenistic and Parthian Esangila temple (Waerzeggers 2012: 291, quoting Clancier 2009: 190-1). This chronicle might then be part of a group of texts with reworked or newly composed content concerning Babylonian history with a message for the present time (see e.g. Goldstein 2010; Da Riva 2017). This idea may find support that Bazza still existed in the Parthian period; see below commentary to l. 4’.

We present here a first edition without much commentary, inviting specialists to interpret the document. The tablet is a small fragment of a larger document. The text is interrupted by rulings as is usual in chronicle texts. It is broken on all sides, the reverse is lost. It is not easy to calculate the length of the missing parts, especially at the right hand side. Two dots (..) means approximately one sign; three dots (...) indicate a break of indetermined length. Lines 2’ and 7’ give an indication of the loss at the left side.

Text

1’: [... ..] x x x x x GUR NU *ih*-[...]

2’: [MU x ITU x U₄ x.]KAM LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} u UN^{mes}-šú ana KUR b[a²-ri-ni GIN-ik (?)]...

3’: [... ..]x UN^{mes}-šú *iš-bat-ma* KUR *ba-ri-ni di-i*[k²-ta-šú i-duk (?)]...

4’: [... ..]ÍD² *mar-ra*-tú *i-ti-iq-ma* ana KUR *ba-az* GIN-ik URU *ba-a*[z²]...

5’: [... ..]x¹-šú *hu-bu-ut* KUR *ih-tab-tú* LUGAL-šú [...]

6’: [... ..] *hāt²-t*u² šá *ra-ma-ni-šú* ana *lib-bi uš-te-la* ina IT[U...]

7’: [MU y ITU AP]IN² U₄ 10^dUTU u DINGIR^{mes} šá ZIMBIR^{ki} dINNIN ZIM[BIR^{ki} ...]

8’: [... ..] IT]U GU₄ U₄ 2.KAM^dUTU ana É.[...]

Translation

1’: [... ..] x x x x x returned. He did not [...].

2’: [Year x, Month x, Day x] th, the king of Babylon and his people (soldiers) [went] to the land of B[arini (?)]...

3’: [... ..]x his people he captured and the land of Barini he de[feated...]

4’: [... the Bitter Se]a ? he crossed and to the land of Baz he went. The city of Ba[z he captured...]

5’: [... ..] x x, the booty of the land he plundered, its king [...]

6’: [... ..] fea[r ? he heaped? upon him. In the Mon[th x...]

7’: [Year y, Month Arah]amna (=VIII) ?, day 10, Shamash and the gods of Sippar, Ishtar of Si[ppar...]

8’: [... ..] In the mo[n]th Ayaru (II), day 2, Shamash [returned/went] to the temple [X...]

Commentary

1’ Signs are visible, but reading remains difficult.

2’ This is the first line after a ruling, which might indicate that a new year of reign was reported here. Unfortunately the ‘King of Babylon’ is not named and we could not find a suitable candidate. One is inclined to think of a Neo-Babylonian king, such as Nabonidus, who campaigned in Arabia (see comments to line 4’), but earlier Babylonian kings may also come to mind, as well as the Assyrian kings, who were also king of Babylon, like Esarhaddon. The geographical name of the land at the end of the line is not preserved. Traces of one sign are visible, i.e. two horizontal wedges. They may be the traces of *ba* (cf. line 3’)

3’ The land of Barini is unknown to us. It is not present in Zadok 1985. One might speculate that Barini renders the Arabic name of Eastern Arabia that was historically *Al-Bahrain* until the 18th century. The island of Bahrain was called Dilmun in cuneiform texts and Tylos in Greek.

4’ The land of Baz has been the subject of many studies (see e.g. Brinkman 1968: 160, n. 970; Grayson 1975: Leichty

2011: 20, note at text 1: iv 53). Brinkman identifies at least two and perhaps three separate regions named *Bazu/Bāzu* (*Bazzu*) in the Neo-Assyrian sources, i.e. in eastern or north-eastern Arabia, NW and NE of Assyria. One option is a region in Northern Arabia at the coast of the Gulf near Bahrain. The Babylonian chronicles mention Bazza (*ba-az-za*) twice. In Babylonian Chronicle ABC 1: iv 5 it is reported that the army of Assyria captured Bazza (*Ba-az-za*; no determinative for city or land; cf. Zadok 1985: 73) in the fifth year of Esarhaddon, month Tashritu (VII) and in the Esarhaddon Chronicle ABC 14: 13 the same event is recorded, here with the determinative URU, 'city'. Bazza might be the accusative tense of *Bazzu*. We have some hesitation how to read the name in this chronicle. The four upright wedges (2+2 on top of each other) may render the sign *za*, but they may also be part of the sign *az*, where it can be inscribed at the right end of the sign or in the middle. If we look at the way *Ba-az-za* was written in Chronicle ABC 1: IV 5 (Grayson 1975: Plate XIII) it closely resembles the way the name it is written here.

The restoration 'Bitter Sea' (= Persian Gulf or Mediterranean) is indicated by the information that the king might have crossed the sea to reach Baz. Baz (written *Ba-a-zu*) is also mentioned in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon himself, where it is stated that it was located in a far and dry country. Significantly the verb *etēqu*, 'to cross over' (*e-ti-iq*) is mentioned there as well (Leichty 2011: 20, text 1: iv 58). Bazza may thus be located in the river area on the Persian Gulf or on the island of Bahrain.

One very late reference to Bazza may be found in an astronomical diary from the Parthian period (AD -125A), where mention is made of Bazzanians in Mesene on the Persian Gulf. The text runs as follows:

15: [ITU BI] [U₄¹ 2^{kám} lí_{mu}-<ma>-'ir KUR URI^{ki} TA E^{ki} È U₄ 5.KAM *al-te-e šá* [ú² UN⁷]^{mes} *ba-az-za-ni-ta-a šá ina* [D A^{mes}-šá-an ZI [x x x x x¹ [... ..] [x x TA? x¹ [... ..]

16: [... ..] *dī¹-ik-tú ina ŠÁ-šú-nu DÜ-' BADs.BADs-šú-nu ina* ^{gīs}TUKUL GAR-' URU BI *iḫ-pu-ú u iš-lu¹-lu-ú*

15: [That month] day 2 (= March 30, 126 BC), the satrap of Babylonia went out from Babylon. Day 5 (2 April), I heard that the Bazzanitan [people] who [made²] a revolt in the river(area)² of Mesene x x x x x [... ..] .. from .. [... ..]

16: [... ..] massacred them and brought about their defeat in battle. This city (Bazza ?) they destroyed and plundered. (Quoted from Van der Spek *et al.*, *forthcoming*)

The island of Bahrain was part of the kingdom of Mesene as we learn from a Greek inscription found in Bahrain: 'In the name of King Hyspaosines and of Queen Thalassia, Kephisodoros, strategos of Tylos and of the Islands (has dedicated) the temple, to the Dioscuri Saviours, in ex voto' (Gatier, Lombard, Al-Sindi 2002). The death of king Hyspaosines is reported in AD -123A: 19', where it is reported that 'Thalassia, his sister and wife' (*t¹ ta-la-si-'a NIN¹ u DAM-šú*) put her young son on the throne.

Another option is the city of Baz (or Baš) mentioned in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, who built a temple there (See Zadok 1985: 70-2 for the references). Four times the temple is mentioned after the Ebabbar temple of Sippar.

6' *ḫattu ramanišu*: (Leichty 2011: 21, text 1: iv 74) cf. inscription of Esarhaddon concerning a king of Bāzu: *ḫa-at-tu ra-ma-ni-šú im-qut-su-ma*, 'fear fell on him'.

7'- 8' This seems to mention a removal of statues of gods from and to a temple. We know that Nabonidus removed statues from several Babylonian cities to Babylon, but exactly the gods of Sippar stayed in their temples (ABC 7: iii 11-12). If mention is made of a return, line 8' can be restored as É.[BABBAR]; if it refers to abduction to Babylon, one might think of É.[SAG.ÍL]. Note that the month name of line 8' is earlier in the calendar than that in line 7'. So Month II of line 8' either refers to the next year or is a reference to a removal of statues earlier that year.

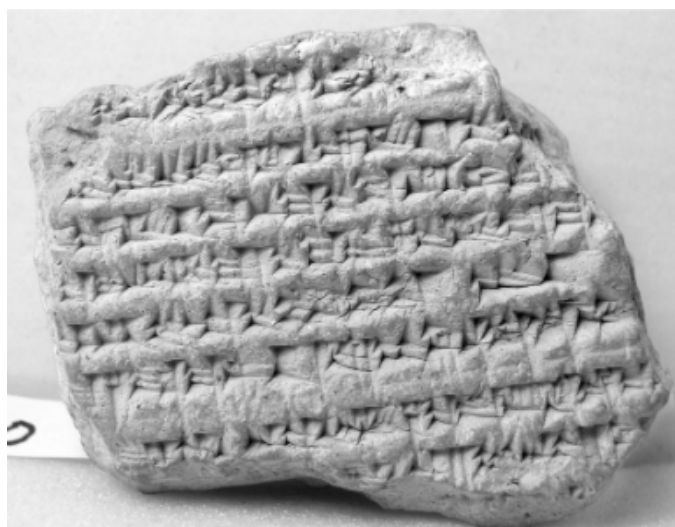


Photo: Bert van der Spek

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