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THE NEW YEAR CEREMONIES IN ANCIENT BABYLON: 'TAKING BEL BY THE HAND' AND A CULTIC PICNIC

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One of the impressions one gains most strongly from reading cuneiform texts is the great sense of place which the peoples of Mesopotamia had. History for them was bound up with localities. They believed, though they were wrong, that cities had existed in Mesopotamia from the earliest times—since about 250,000 BC by their own computations. The concept of race was of little importance for them, and almost certainly they were racially very mixed. That much is clear from the names they gave to their children as recorded in the earliest documents. Two languages preponderated—Sumerian and Akkadian—and while it is true that Sumerian was the native language of the southern area, Sumer, it is doubtful if it makes any sense at all to talk about the Sumerians as a separate race, at least in historical times. Certainly there was never a race called the Akkadians. Akkadian is the name given to a group of dialects of which the most important are Assyrian and Babylonian: and the oldest Old Akkadian is about as different from the Babylonian of Nebuchadrezzar as the language of Beowulf from what we speak now. Nobody apart from priests or scholars spoke Sumerian after about the twentieth century BC, but it remained the language of religion, law and education for many centuries to come.

So instead of being identified by race, men were known by their home cities, and the same was true for gods. Many deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon trace their earliest form back to their role as patronal deity of one or another locality. As the fortunes of cities rose and fell with the passing of ages, so did those of the various gods. When Hammurabi became king, the god of his home city, Babylon, whose name was Marduk, had until that time been relatively insignificant compared with the gods who were important in those days, such as An, Enlil and Ea. A thousand years later the position was wholly different—Marduk had usurped the role of An and the titles of Enlil. Ea had been relegated to the position of Marduk's aged parent. Yet arguably Enlil himself was only elevated to *his* earlier position of king of the gods after his home city of

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Nippur had become so important as to become the centre where the hereditary priest-kings of ancient Sumer met in a consultative assembly.

During the Middle Ages of Mesopotamian history, the areas called Assyria and Babylonia, centred on the cities of Ashur and Babylon, rose to become something like nation-states. From then on the patronal gods of their capital cities never looked back. To Marduk, in particular, were ascribed gradually more and more titles and characteristics of other deities until for the people of Babylon, at least, it was easy to believe that he was nothing less than the saviour of the universe and the creator of mankind. This is how he is depicted in the Babylonian Epic of Creation.

The New Year ceremonies at Babylon, and in particular that called the *akītu* (plural, *akiāti* or *akâti*) were *par excellence* Marduk's festival; but related ceremonies were celebrated in other cities and had been celebrated for a very long time. Most of the material here represented derives from the couple of hundred years immediately before the fall of Babylon in 539 BC. Yet a festival called the *akiti* was being celebrated at Ur in the south of Babylonia two thousand years before that, and that is where we must begin.

Administrative documents recording deliveries of animals for sacrifice and special offerings reveal certain details about the festival as it was celebrated at Ur and other cities in early times. The word *akiti* in Sumerian, borrowed from Akkadian, refers both to the festival and to the building in which it was held: in Akkadian the building is usually called *bīt akītim*, that is *akītu* building. This building was always situated in the fields outside the town. At Ur it was at a village near by where there was a temple of Nanna, the patronal deity of Ur. This temple had its own *en*, an important high-priestess of the same rank as the one in Ur itself. Like most *akītu* buildings, it was built near a quay on the canal, and references show that Nanna's statue was transported to the building at least part of the way by barge. In Nippur an *akītu* was held for Enlil and his consort Ninlil. In all cities it appears to have included a sacred ceremony of marriage.

A letter from Mari in the Syrian desert (c. 1780 BC) makes it clear that the *akītu* at Ashur was an important event involving a procession, as teams of horses are to be sent over from Mari, a distance of over a hundred miles, for the occasion.[1] One of Hammurabi's successors as king of Babylon writes in letters on several occasions (c. 1640) that the annual sheep-shearing is to take place at the *akītu* building of Babylon.[2] Thus the building was not exclusively a temple but could be used for other purposes as well. We know of *akītu* buildings in at least seven different towns of varying imporance from north Syria to Babylonia during the first millennium BC, and in neo-Babylonian times there were actually three such buildings at Babylon itself, only one of which was used for the rites of Marduk.

So much for the historical details to be gleaned from the texts. Some help in

unravelling the original significance of the *akītu* may be gained if we can fix the date when the festival was held. But this exercise is immensely complicated for early Mesopotamia by three factors: first, the various cities each had their own calendars, and while these often employed the same month names, they did not always use them in the same order; secondly, a lunar calendar necessitated the frequent, but irregular, use of whole intercalary months, so that the real date of the New Year might vary by as much as two months; thirdly, a number of the months bore names like Harvest Month, Sowing Month and so on, and the vagaries of the calendar meant that these often occurred at the 'wrong' times of the year.

The Mesopotamian year began at about the time of the spring equinox, directly after the barley harvest, except possibly in early times in Assyria and at Ebla (in Syria), where it may have been counted from the autumn.[3] Sometimes a second 'catch' crop could be sown and harvested before the rains began in the middle of September and the main sowing took place. Now at Ur, an *akītu* was celebrated twice a year: in the sixth month, called the Sowing *akītu*, as this immediately preceded the principal sowing of barley; and in the first month of the year, after the barley harvest. This latter was known as the Harvest *akītu* and followed Harvest Month, the twelfth month. At other cities with other calendars, an *akītu* was celebrated in the 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th or 10th month.

The German scholar Falkenstein[4] has argued that the sowing *akītu*, celebrated at sowing time (in our autumn), was the more ancient (principally, it seems, because it took place in the month called *Akītu* Month) and that the so-called Harvest *akītu* results from a postponement, at some date in early history, of the beginning of the year from autumn to spring. There is very little evidence for this. It seems that at Ur the year was sometimes officially counted as beginning in *Akītu* Month (the sixth month) or the month after. But I find unconvincing a presupposition of this argument, namely that agricultural people can be persuaded to alter the time of an ancient and popular festival in accordance with a calendrical nicety that can only have concerned the literate few. If they could be persuaded to celebrate the festival in the spring, they could presumably be persuaded to give up celebrating it in the autumn. But what need is there to insist that either of these ancient festivals is the 'original'? The point here is that an *akītu* at Babylon was celebrated only once a year for Marduk and that the time of it—during the first twelve days of the first month Nisan, round about the spring equinox—corresponds more or less exactly with the much more ancient so-called Harvest *akītu of Ur*.

I return to this later. But now I want to survey in some detail what actually happened at Babylon when the *akītu* and other New Year ceremonies took place in and around Esagil, the name of the temple area of Babylon in which the shrine of Marduk, or Bel, was situated. Bel, meaning Lord, was a title by

which Marduk was often known in neo-Babylonian times. The summary which follows is put together from fragmentary texts[5] of the neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian periods (approximately 1000–600 BC) and from a ritual[6] copied in the Seleucid period (after 281 BC) which covers only the second, third, fourth and fifth days. The last known occasion on which the *akītu* of Bel-Marduk was celebrated was in 538 when Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Persian, 'took Bel by the hand' on his father's behalf. The temples of Babylon were destroyed after a revolt in 482, when Xerxes removed the statue of Bel. In Seleucid times we still hear of two *akītu* buildings in Babylon, but they are dedicated to An and Ishtar. Thus the ritual text, although surviving only in a late copy, records a ceremony which is of considerably older date and which cannot have taken place for at least 200 years.

The *akītu* and other New Year ceremonies were celebrated from the 1st to the 12th Nisan. As observed above, the actual date of 1st Nisan varied from year to year, but was generally fixed to be as near to the vernal equinox (about 21st March) as possible. During the period 626–536 BC it was sometimes as early as 16th March and sometimes as late as 31st April. The first few days consisted of ritual preparations, culminating on the 5th Nisan. The great climax was from the 8th to the 11th. Of the first day's ceremonies we know nothing. On the second day the *šešgallu* or high priest (formerly transcribed as *urigallu*) rises at about 4 a.m., bathes and enters the sanctuary of Bel, where he draws back the linen curtain in front of the god's statue. He prays a secret prayer, ending with the words

> Have pity on your city of Babylon,
> Turn your face upon your temple Esagil,
> Maintain the freedoms of the privileged citizens of Babylon.

Then he opens up the temple and admits the rank-and-file priests, the singers and musicians, who go about their regular duties. A further prayer followed, but the text is badly damaged.

On the third day, a similar sequence of events takes place, and about half-way through the morning the *šešgallu* sends for a smith and a carpenter, who are issued with materials to make two small images which for the next three days will stand in the temple of Madānu the Divine Judge, and be offered food from his table. These are small, wooden, human figures, 7 inches high, one of cedar and one of tamarisk wood, shaped in an attitude of reverence to the god Nabû.[7] They are clothed in red–brown garments.

On the fourth day the *šešgallu* first addresses Bel with a 'raising of the hand' or prayer of intercession. Then, entering the adjacent shrine of Bel's consort, he prays to her, addressing her by her title Beltiya (My Lady) and by her name Ṣarpanītum. He goes out into the courtyard and, facing north, blesses the temple Esagil three times: Field-star, Esagil, image of heaven and earth. Esagil

was regarded as a terrestrial replica of the constellation called the Field-star. Only then are the other clergy admitted. On this same day, the king sets out for Borsippa, a town ten miles to the south-west of Babylon, to fetch the statue of its patronal deity, Nabû, known as the first-born son of Marduk, from his home temple, Ezida. In the cool of the evening, after the offering meal, the *šešgallu* 'offers' to Bel, that is, presumably, recites, the whole Epic of Creation, during which the crown of An and the seat of Enlil, cult objects, remain veiled.

On the 5th six ceremonies take place. After the usual preparation the *šešgallu* enters the shrines and prays at length, in a mixture of Sumerian and Akkadian, to Bel and Beltiya in turn. Both prayers are particularly notable in that they address the deities as a series of constellations or planets, a feature to which I shall refer later.

At about 8 a.m. the second ceremony on the day begins. After the gods have had their breakfast served to them, the *šešgallu* summons a *mašmaššu* or sorcerer to clean and asperge the temple of Bel. The *šešgallu* retires at this point, for if he witnesses the cleaning of the temple he becomes unclean himself. The sorcerer cleans the temple, sprinkles it with water, bangs a sacred drum to drive out the evil spirits and goes round with a censer and lights. But he may not himself enter the sanctuary. This is quite clearly pointed out.

When this is accomplished, he goes to a second shrine within the Esagil area. This is Ezida the shrine of Nabû. It bears the same name as the home temple of Nabû in Borsippa to which the king has gone to fetch the god. Nebuchadrezzar II mentions it in an inscription:

> Ezida in Esagil, the shrine of Nabû, into whose courtyard at the New Year, at the beginning of the year, at the *akītu* festival Nabû the victorious son comes in procession from Borsippa before taking up residence within.[8]

This the sorcerer cleanses in the same way. It is clearly stated that he must go into the sanctuary of this shrine and clean that as well. The sanctuary is vacant as the statue of Nabû has not yet arrived. The sorcerer calls in a slaughterer who decapitates a sheep, with the corpse of which he will purify the temple. (The word used here is *ukappar*, literally 'wipe clean', but often used in the sense of 'make cultically pure'.) He recites spells to cleanse the temple, and then taking the corpse he throws it away into the river Euphrates which flows past the temple. The slaughterer does the same with the sheep's head.

Since the sorcerer is clearly described as purifying the whole sanctuary with the sheep's carcass, and since he was not allowed into Bel's sanctuary, it is evident, and crucial, that the business with the dead sheep concerned the shrine of Nabû, and not that of the deity usually thought of as central to the rites, Bel-Marduk. The sorcerer and the slaughterer are now unclean and must leave Babylon for the country. They may not return until the 12th, when Nabû has left Babylon. The next ceremony, the fourth, also concerns the

preparation of Nabû's shrine. The *šešgallu* returns and calls in the workmen to fetch from the treasury of Marduk a splendid canopy called the Golden Heaven, which is then used to cover Ezida, the shrine of Nabû, 'from the *tallu* to the temple foundations'. Now the *tallu* appears to be a sort of wooden frame on which a canopy might be hung.[9] An Assyrian letter referring to preparations for an *akītu* says

> I have renewed the *tullu* (an Assyrian dialectal form of the same word) and the dragon decoration in which Nabû's statue stands, and I have restored the seat inside the canopy-hangings.[10]

From other sources we learn that the *tallu* was made of cedar and fir beams round which metal bands were fastened and to which fillets were attached. Sydney Smith[11] wanted to interpret this as a sort of sacred Maypole, an attempt to revive nature by sympathetic magic, which was totally absent (he thought) from the Babylonian ritual. Smith thought of the Assyrians as a separate people of West Semitic origin. His views, however, no longer stand, as a number of references to the *tallu* exist in Babylonian sources which make quite clear what its function was: to support the canopy. As they erect the canopy, the *šešgallu* and the workmen chant an incantation.

The workmen depart. It is now time to feed Marduk again. The *šešgallu* offers the food and says a prayer of intercession. Then the workmen are called in once again to take the tables of food away for Nabû, who is just about to arrive by canal at a wharf south of the city walls. The food is set before him as his statue is disembarked from his sacred barge the *Ida-hedu*. The king, who accompanies him, is offered water to wash his hands and is escorted to Esagil by the workmen who remain outside. (Nabû's statue is probably taken off elsewhere for the moment.) The king enters the temple[12] and the fifth ceremony of the day begins. The *šešgallu*, who is in the sanctuary, comes out and divests the king of his staff of office, ring,[13] mace and crown. These insignia he takes into the sanctuary and places on a seat. Coming out again, he strikes the king across the face. He now leads him into the sanctuary and, pulling him by the ears, forces him to kneel before the god. The king utters the formula:

> I have not sinned, Lord of the lands,
> I have not been negligent of your godhead.
> I have not destroyed Babylon,
> I have not ordered her to be dispersed.
> I have not made Esagil quake,
> I have not forgotten its rites.
> I have not struck the privileged citizens in the faces,
> I have not humiliated them.
> I have paid attention to Babylon,
> I have not destroyed her walls . . .

He leaves the sanctuary. The *šešgallu* replies to this with an assurance of Bel's favour and indulgence towards the king: 'He will destroy your enemies, defeat your adversaries', and the king regains the customary composure of his expression and is reinvested with his insignia, fetched by the *šešgallu* from within the sanctuary. Once more he strikes the king across the face, for an omen: if the king's tears flow, Bel is favourably disposed; if not, he is angry.

The final ritual of the day, also involving the king, takes place just before sunset. A pit or cistern is opened up in the temple courtyard, a bundle of reeds is laid in it, and honey, ghee and best quality oil, typical sacrificial items, are poured over them. A white bull is—slaughtered?—the text is broken at this point—before the pit and the king sets fire to the material in it. Together he and the *šešgallu* utter a prayer addressed to the planet Mercury,[14] whose heliacal rising occurs at the New Year in the month of Nisan, and which is called the 'star of Marduk'.

On the following day, the 6th of Nisan, the other gods' statues arrive in Babylon from their home sanctuaries in the surrounding towns. Nabû's is brought to the temple E-hursang-tila, and on its arrival a slaughterer strikes off the heads from the two little human statues dressed in red garments, a fire is lit and they are burnt before the god. (This is not the same slaughterer as assisted in the cleaning of the temple, as he has to remain outside the city at this stage.)

On the 8th (or according to Frankfort, on the 7th),[15] Marduk was ready to come forth from his temple. The next few details are taken from a ritual celebration at Uruk for An and Ishtar in the seventh month, but they are probably very similar to what hapened at Babylon.[16] Someone, probably the priest, offered the god holy water and then sprinkled it over the king and people. The priest, or according to one text from Uruk, the king, [17] went into the sanctuary and poured a libation. The king, 'taking Bel by the hand', brought him out into the courtyard where he was enthroned among the hanging curtains of a canopy. This 'taking by the hand' anticipates the principal 'taking by the hand' which later inaugurates the grand procession. The phrase is often used in chronicles as a shorthand to refer to the whole *akītu* festival. Thus we read: 13th year, Sargon took Bel by the hand.[18] The 'taking by the hand' was not a ceremony in itself, as was suggested by some commentators who saw it as a ritual of royal investiture.[19] It constitutes in the present context no more than an invitation to depart.

Marduk was next led to the Shrine of the Destinies, which, as we learn from an inscription of Nebuchadrezzar II, was where 'at the New Year, at the beginning of the year, on the 8th and 11th days, Lugal-dimmer-an-ki-a, Lord of the gods, rests'.[20] Lugal-dimmer-an-ki-a, that is, the Divine King of Heaven and Earth, is one of Marduk's fifty names, as the gods say in the Epic of Creation (VI, 138ff.):

> Lugal-dimmer-an-ki-a is the name we named him amongst ourselves,
> Whose utterances we elevated above those of his divine forefathers.
> He is lord of all the gods of heaven and earth.

Now this Shrine of the Destinies was in Ezida, the shrine of Nabû in the Esagil area, which was earlier purified and ritually prepared by the sorcerer.[21] In the Shrine of the Destinies Marduk was now acclaimed as almighty in the presence of the other gods, whose statues were gathered there, and invested with supreme authority. This was the occasion of the first ceremony of 'decreeing the destinies'. The second took place on the 11th. On this first occasion, the destinies of the king were determined. 'They determine in there the destinies of distant days, the destinies of my life', writes Nebuchadrezzar.[22] What exactly this involved we cannot know. Maybe oracles and omens for the coming year were published: Babylonian omens were characteristically interpreted as concerning the king directly. Maybe it was a general affirmation of the king's authority. At any rate it serves to underline the importance of the part played personally by the king in this stage of the festival.

Then, [23] according to a fragment of a text describing the ritual, [24] the doors of the shrine were flung open and the priests cried:

> Go forth, Bel! O king, go forth!
> Go forth, Our Lady, the king awaits you!

Our Lady is another title of Bel's consort. The king once again 'took Bel by the hand', and thereby initiated the most popular phase of the festival: the grand procession of all the gods and goddesses along Procession Street, its walls faced with splendid turquoise glazed bricks decorated with mythical monsters of terrifying aspect and indeterminate pedigree. (Procession Street may be seen reconstructed in the Pergamon Museum in East Berlin.) Marduk went forth and the populace knelt before him. The slightest accidental irregularity in the proceedings, even a sudden movement of the horse pulling Marduk's chariot, would be eagerly interpreted as an omen of the divine will. Accompanied by musicians and singers, the vast cortège wound its way past the Hanging Gardens, through the Ishtar Gate, and made for a landing stage on the Euphrates just outside the city walls to the north. This procession could easily be turned by kings into an opportunity for the display of armed forces, tribute and prisoners.

From here it travelled some way by boat, and then, disembarking, followed the broad avenue planted with cedars of Lebanon by Nebuchadrezzar to the *akītu* building. Sennacherib relates how he rebuilt the *akītu* building at Ashur,[25] which stood about 200 yards outside the city walls,[26] and planted a delightful park around it. The bronze doors he had ornamented with scenes depicting the defeat of Kingu from the Epic of Creation, but with Ashur, his own national god as victor in place of Marduk. Excavations have confirmed

his description.[27] All the statues of the gods were installed with great pomp in the building and a lavish banquet ensued.

Scholars differ in their opinions as to whether the sacred marriage between the god and (a priestess representing) the goddess was celebrated here, or in Esagil when the procession had returned to Babylon three days later on the 11th. We know that another sacred marriage, that between Nabû and Tašmētum, took place at night, and it is likely that the marriage of Marduk and Sarpanītum also did.[28] Frankfort thought that it took place at the *bīt akīti* on the night of the 10th.[29] Falkenstein adduced as evidence a religious calendar which states that at the *akītu* building on the 11th there was continuous feasting, and then Marduk 'hurried to the marriage', which Falkenstein assumed took place elsewhere, presumably back in Babylon later that night.[30] But since, relying on an equivocal statement of Nabonidus,[31] a monarch whose devotion was primarily expended on the cult of Sîn and who was notoriously neglectful of that of Marduk, he believed that the gods did not take up residence in the *akītu* building until the *10th* Nisan, by the time all the ceremonies were over there would have been very little time left for 'continuous feasting' before it was time to pack up and go home again. In the epic of Gilgamesh, the aged Ut-Napishti described how, when the building of the Ark was finished,

> I slaughtered oxen for the people,
> Daily I butchered sheep.
> Beer, sesame-wine and date-wine
> The workmen drank like water.
> They had a holiday like the days of the *akītu* festival.[32]

Notice days, plural. The French scholar Thureau-Dangin had already shown convincingly that Marduk was in the Shrine of Destinies on the 8th.[33] It is possible that he remained there overnight, but Labat was probably right to assume that the marriage took place at the *akītu* building, when it was reached, on the 9th or the 10th.[34] On the other hand, a chamber on the summit of the ziggurat of Esagil (the 'Tower of Babel') was called the Bedchamber and it is to this that Herodotus, not always a reliable source on Babylonian matters, refers when he says (I, 181. 5):

> On the summit of the topmost tower is a great shrine, in which there is a fine large couch, richly covered, and a golden table beside it. The shrine contains no image and no one spends the night there except one woman of the country whom the god has chosen—or so the Chaldaeans say, who are priests of this deity. They claim—though I do not myself believe them—that the god enters the shrine in person and takes his rest on the couch.

So the question of when and where the sacred marriage took place is not really settled. Even less do we know about what actually happened. There is *no direct evidence* in the texts that it was consummated by the king representing the god.

A much earlier poetical text appears to describe how one particular king, Iddin-Dagan of Isin (1974-1954 BC) participated in some capacity, but this was in connection with the cult of Dumuzi and Inana, not that of Marduk.[35] The exact location of this rite is also unknown. The reader may recall that a priestess of high rank was in attendance at the *akiti* in ancient Ur. Yet it may well be that in historical times the marriage ceremony was entirely metaphorical.

On the 11th, which was the final day of the festivities, the procession returned to Babylon for a final assembly of all the gods in the Shrine of the Destinies in Nabû's temple. This time the 'destinies of the land' were fixed, and yet another banquet ensued. Next day Nabû's statue was returned to its home in Borsippa, and the other gods were dispersed to their own home shrines. The sorcerer and the slaughterer were free to enter the city once again.

The question will now be asked, what all this was about. Interpretations of the ceremonies have followed two main directions, which I have taken the liberty of characterizing as the Unity theory and the Conglomerate theory respectively. The Unity theory has been developed by H. Frankfort of Chicago,[36] supported to a lesser extent by Th. Jacobsen.[37] Of the New Year Festival, Frankfort writes, 'Its tenor was always the same, and its main features remained a consistent whole.' Essentially, he argues, it celebrates the god Marduk's triumph over the forces of cosmic disorder. As such it possesses what he calls an 'inner logic' which may be set out as follows:

1–4 Nisan	Preparations and purifications
5	A day of atonement for the king. The king, representing the people, descends through humiliation and penance to the level of the suffering god, who is held prisoner in the underworld. (The god's death was not enacted—it was all too apparent.)
7	Nabû and the other gods liberate Marduk,
8	and bestow supreme power on him.
9	The procession symbolises the participation of the community in the victory which is taking place in nature, and renews Marduk's destruction of Chaos.
10	The banquet consummation of marriage celebrate the victory.
11	The determination of destinies follows from this.

Now this may at first flush seem quite convincing as a synthetic explanation of the festival at Babylon in neo-Babylonian times. It has been followed by other writers, for example Georges Roux, and described in far more dramatic terms.[38] But are the death and resurrection of the god here assumed the same as his struggle against and victory over the Chaotic powers? This leads Frankfort to say that 'the word "death" in this context is misleading'. And what has the sacred marriage to do with either? The recitation of the Epic of Creation, because it occurs on the fourth day, has to be explained as 'only an interlude in the general preparation for atonement'. We have seen already that

the cycle of sowing and harvesting in Mesopotamia was rather different from what we West Europeans are used to, so that talk of the rebirth of nature in Nisan, directly after the harvest, is liable to be misleading. Unhappily Frankfort has decided what the festival is 'about' and tried to fit the evidence to his theory. His interpretation has as its principal attraction that it seems to harmonize well with what has been reported from other ancient Near Eastern cultures. This sort of analysis is highly unsatisfactory.

A different sort of explanation, aiming at a historical interpretation, had already been put forward by Labat,[39] following the Dane S. A. Pallis.[40] Labat distinguished two principal and two secondary strands in the festival which were the result of historical accretions over a long period of time. The most ancient, he argued, was a rural agricultural festival. Bel-Marduk is in origin a vegetation deity who dies in autumn and is reborn in spring. To this strand belong the rites of revival, the procession through the fields and the sacred marriage. Secondly, a solar myth celebrating the victory of the sun at the spring equinox over the winter storms is reflected in the victory of Bel over the watery principle Tiamat. Other rites are of essentially urban origin, notably the determination of the destinies, originally the outcome of the god's union with the goddess. Finally, the dramatic element of death and resurrection is to be seen as borrowed from the myth of Tammuz.

I regard this Conglomerate approach as, methodologically, the correct way to go about analysing the New Year ceremonies. The interpretation of them in terms of a single unifying theme does not appear to make sense. Even the Babylonians made a distinction in their nomenclature, speaking both of *zagmukku* (New Year) and *akītu* festivals. But Labat's scheme seems to explain certain features more than once, and others not at all. The rather crude opposition between rural and urban elements is not convincing, and his account of certain points is actually incorrect.

I think the New Year ceremonies must be seen as a complex accretion, over a long period, of a number, probably at least half a dozen, different elements from different rites and cults. This is supported by the historical evidence and is very much in keeping with the syncretistic tendencies observable in other aspects of the cultures of Mesopotamia. Their great powers of absorption were an important factor in their long preservation. I should like to draw attention, also, to certain elements which have not in the past been given enough consideration, in particular the role of the god Nabû.

It will be clear from what has been said above that the ancient *akiti* held at Ur in the first month (and at Nippur in the twelfth) was in origin a festival to celebrate, or to ensure the success of, the spring harvest of barley. It included a procession out to the *akiti* in the midst of the fields, a 'cultic picnic' and a sacred marriage. These elements survived in the later Babylonian festival held at the same time of the year. The *akiti* held in Ur in the sixth month, at sowing time,

may have been an ancient fertility festival. It is irrelevant for our purposes. The *akitu*s celebrated at other times in other cities must also largely be left out of account, as must that held at Ashur in the middle of the twelfth month, Adar, in earlier times, as we do not know enough about them.[41]

On another level the New Year ceremonies are a patronal festival of the city-god of Babylon, Marduk. I have already stressed the importance of this local aspect. The prayers addressed in private to the god asking for his pity on the city of Babylon, the ritual cleaning of the precincts and the enthronement of the god in his own temple all indicate this, and probably date from before ever Marduk was thought of as the supreme deity in the whole pantheon. The elevation of Marduk to his position of supremacy has been convincingly linked with the retrieval of the god's statue from captivity in Elam by Nebuchadrezzar I (c. 1120 BC) and the modest revival of Babylon's fortunes under that prince. The Epic of Creation is dated by W. G. Lambert[42] to about that time, and certain parts of the New Year ceremonies are directly connected with the Epic, namely the recitation of the whole text on the evening of the 4th Nisan and the two events on the 8th and 11th which seem to have developed into symbolic representations of the two divine assemblies described respectively in the 3rd and 4th, and 6th tablets of the Epic. 'Developed', as there is evidence that two similar assemblies took place in the *akītu* of An at Uruk, which can of course have had nothing to do with events in the Babylonian Epic of Creation. On the 8th, after the enthronement of Marduk beneath the canopy in the temple courtyard, his statue joined those of the other gods in the Shrine of the Destinies before they set out on the procession. Three days later, when the procession returned from outside the city, the gods met together again, to decree the 'destinies of the land'. It seems fair to conclude that these two events were seen as mirroring the divine assemblies which take place in the Epic. At the first, the gods confer on Marduk supreme power to fight against Tiamat and her monstrous offspring; at the second, Marduk decrees among other things the building of his temple Esagil in Babylon, and is hailed by his fifty names. But it should be made fully clear that since the composition of the Epic is provisionally dated to the end of the twelfth century (and the oldest surviving manuscripts of it to no earlier than 1000 BC), there is no question that the Epic can be connected with the founding or origin of the festival, which is of far greater antiquity.

To go further than this and try to press other events during the first days of Nisan into a symbolic role as representations of events in Marduk's struggle as depicted in the Epic seems to me unjustifiable. However, the decreeing of the destinies of the land for the year to come suggests a fourth strand of development. These ceremonies took place at the New Year at about the time of the vernal equinox, and some of them seem to be connected with the calendrical aspect of the New Year itself. The ancient prayers offered to Bel-Marduk and

his consort on the morning of the 5th Nisan address them by the names of a whole series of stars, constellations and planets. The strange ceremony in which offerings are made in a pit or cistern in the temple courtyard, on the evening of the same day, is accompanied by a prayer addressed to the planet Mercury, which has its heliacal rising in the month of Nisan and was known as the star of Marduk. The constellation in whose name Esagil is blessed on the morning of the 4th also rises then. (Although this may suggest that the ritual with the pit is in some way connected with the equinox and the New Year, it does not help to explain the significance of the bundle of forty reeds or the white bull.) These features, then, are of calendrical importance.

It is further held by various commentators, and the notion has spread considerably, that the ceremonies are concerned with the death and resurrection of Marduk. This is alleged to be derived from the influence of the cult of Tammuz, who is widely thought of as a Mesopotamian parallel to deities such as Adonis familiar from *The Golden Bough* and elsewhere: the vegetation deity whose annual death and rebirth mirror the passage of the seasons. It is proposed to make a short excursus here, as this is an interesting point, well illustrating the pitfalls one can stumble into. Tammuz is the Hebrew form of the name of the Mesopotamian god whose name is almost always written in cuneiform in its Sumerian form Dumuzi.[43] It is currently thought[44] that originally there were two separate Dumuzis—a female deity worshipped at Kinunir near Lagash, whose feast was celebrated in the sixth month; and the city-god of Bad-tibira, between Lagash and Uruk, who was one of the spouses of Inana, that is Ishtar, the goddess of Uruk. This second Dumuzi was of course male. He was thought to have been a king of Bad-tibira in antediluvian times to whom a reign of 108,000 years was attributed. Later the two Dumuzis became confused in the male person who was known under various names such as Damu, the Shepherd, the Lord, and the Sumerian title Ama-ushumgal-ana 'His mother is a celestial dragon (?)' His sister was Geshtin-ana, the heavenly grape-vine. He personified the power in the sap of trees and plants, especially the date-palm, and the power in milk (hence his title the Shepherd).[45] A prayer to Dumuzi asks him to make oxen and sheep numerous. But he always remained a minor deity whose cult was maintained principally by women. Parents rarely named their children after him, and no magic was cast in his name.

The various stories about Dumuzi centre principally on the liaison with Inana and his imprisonment in the underworld. Zimmern, writing in 1909,[46] described a myth, at that time known only fragmentarily, as follows: 'They try to free him. They eventually succeed—apparently. Tamuz—so we may probably assume—rises again and returns to life.' But, he adds, it is clear that a direct relation to the Adonis myth is '*so far* not to be deduced from the cuneiform sources'. But by 1914, when Langdon wrote his book on *Tammuz and*

Ishtar,[47] he could write more confidently of 'the mysteries of the death and resurrection of the youthful god', and this theme was taken up by many writers. What, the reader may ask, had happened to cuneiform studies in the meantime? The answer is: Langdon had read *The Golden Bough*. He says so in the introduction to his book, which was 'written to supplement the works of Frazer and Baudissin', to 'show the relation of this great cult to Christianity' and to prove that there was more to Babylonian theology than magic and superstition. But even Langdon had to admit that 'the liturgies do not describe the ascent to the upper world but pass at once to a crescendo movement, announcing that the Lord is risen. "Magnified is he, magnified, magnified is the Lord!"'.[48] That particular passage actually reads:

> *mah-am mah-am umun mah-am*
> He is excellent, he is excellent, the Lord is excellent!

which is capable of very wide interpretation.

Unfortunately the notion of Dumuzi as the suffering and resurrected god and as the archetype of the recuperative powers of Nature and of the Euphrates has been perpetuated by works like E. O. James's *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*.[49] When it was published, the full text had already become available of various Sumerian poems about Dumuzi.[50] Inana went down to the underworld. She had previously arranged for divine assistance if she was held prisoner by the Queen of the nether regions. Enki secured her release, but the gods of the underworld cried out

> Who is there who goes up from the underworld, who goes up from the underworld in safety?
> If Inana is going to go up from the underworld,
> Let her give one person for her person.

The heartless Inana gave over Dumuzi into their hands, 'fixing him with a look of death'. Dumuzi tried to escape from the demons by being changed first into a snake. He escaped to his sister's house, where he was nearly caught again, but was changed into a gazelle. Finally the demons cornered him and carried him off to the underworld where he remains to this day as a substitute for Inana. The meaning of this myth is not clear. Was the story of Inana's descent invented in order to explain how Dumuzi came to be a deity of the underworld?

What is clear, however, is that the inaccurate resurrection version of the story of Dumuzi was incorrectly seen as underlying a text which was thought to be a commentary on the New Year festival, edited by the same Langdon in his edition of the Epic of Creation.[51] (An earlier edition, by H. Zimmern, had compared the supposed contents with the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.[52]) The text in question has now plausibly been shown by von Soden[53] (three years before James's book) to be a political propaganda document inspired by the fanatical hatred of the Assyrian king Sennacherib to-

wards the people of Babylon and by his removal of the statue of Marduk to Assyria in 689 BC. The text is indeed similar to some cultic commentaries on rituals, but it is in the Assyrian dialect and was found at Ashur, while they are normally in the Babylonian dialect. They generally end 'The initiate may show this only to initiates, the uninitiated are not allowed to look at it', whereas our text ends with an elaborate curse: 'Whoever erases this tablet or lets it get wet, or, having looked through it, does *not* read it out to an uninitiated person . . .' that is, it is to be circulated as much as possible. It cannot be a copy of a Babylonian ritual commentary, yet it is clearly connected with the New Year ceremonies in Babylon because of its context and mention of certain place-names. In the text Bel-Marduk is depicted as a prisoner who is to be punished by water-ordeal—not, as was earlier misunderstood, held in the underworld. This is a purely philological point—the words for 'mountain' (of the underworld) and 'place of water-ordeal' are distinct, but very similar, in Akkadian.[54] It is clear that 'place of water-ordeal' is intended here from the occurrence of the phrase 'on the bank of the place of ordeal', using a word that can only refer to the bank or lip of a river and not to the ridge of a mountain. Nabû comes from Borsippa and cannot find Marduk. His consort Beltiya searches for him. Because he is under arrest, the cult in the temple has closed and his chariot goes in procession without the god's statue. This is bitter irony. The use of the metaphor of the legal process to represent divine disagreement is not uncommon in Sumerian myths, but the events depicted in this text are so extraordinary that they can have had no part in the normal cultic legend surrounding the New Year ceremonies. There is no reference to Marduk's death or journey to the underworld, and the word *balluṭu*, translated by Langdon as 'restore to life', properly means 'preserve alive' in this context. Sennacherib had destroyed Marduk's temple in Babylon: it was not rebuilt until the reign of his son Esarhaddon. This text, argues von Soden, is an attempt to justify Sennacherib's treatment of Marduk to his own people of Ashur. It is presented as a justified punishment of Marduk through the process of law. While this connection with Sennacherib, however well it fits what we know of the historical circumstances, cannot be absolutely certain, it is none the less conclusively shown, on philological grounds, that the connection with death and resurrection is unjustified. Yet this text has been the sole ground for those interpretations of the New Year festival which present part of the drama as consisting of the resurrection of Marduk along the lines of that formerly envisaged for Dumuzi. Nothing could be further from the truth, and there is no connection at all between Marduk and Dumuzi.

The remaining aspects of the New Year ceremonies can best be disentangled by considering the parts played first by the king and second by the god Nabû. It is usually said that the presence of the king was essential for the festival to place place. This is the impression gained from the chronicles, although it is

clear that if for some reason the king could not be present, some sort of ceremony could still take place in the temple if not outside.[55] Only the king could 'take Bel by the hand' and so initiate the procession out to the fields. A king who was unable to attend the *akītu* of the moon god Sîn at Harran in north Syria was asked in a letter to send a garment of his instead. This may or may not have been the case with the festival at Babylon. Labat's view that the king gradually became more important is difficult to establish as kings in any case gradually acquired more power and there is more evidence from later periods. At Babylon the king's part may be summarized as follows. He travelled to Borsippa on the 4th to fetch Nabû. Returning on the 5th he underwent humiliation and did penitence before Marduk. He participated in the reed ceremony, which may be connected with the spring equinox. He welcomed each of the gods as they arrived in Babylon. He took Marduk by the hand to invite him to the enthronement in the courtyard, thence to the Shrine of the Destinies, and finally led him in the procession to the *akītu* building. After this point his role is unclear. The evidence for his participation in the sacred marriage ceremony is minimal and indirect. It seems to me that in taking the hand of Bel and in leading the procession, the king is performing his ancient function of chief priest of the city's patron god. I do not think the king is here a substitute for the god. A still unedited text, K 3476, which was thought to suggest this is in fact quite unconnected with the Babylonian New Year ceremonies. It describes some other royal ritual.[56] The function of the king as high priest goes right back to the theocratic city-states of ancient Sumer. The annals of the most warlike and seemingly secular of Assyrian monarchs abound with references to the king as priest of Ashur, carrying out the god's bloody orders and claiming reliance on divine aid as much as on the might of his own armies. I think the ceremony in which the king is humiliated before the god must be seen in the same light. There is no evidence whatever to suggest that the king is here a representative of the whole people, chosen to bear its sins. The business with the dead sheep is, as we have seen, totally separate. It does not even take place in the same temple. The humiliation of the king is a personal humiliation. The king insists that he has not harmed the city, damaged the temple of the patron deity, forgotten to have the god's rituals performed, and has not mistreated the city's privileged population. In other words he has faithfully fulfilled the sacred duties of kingship and priesthood entrusted to him. In return, the high priest of the temple assures him that Bel-Marduk will bless him for all his days and destroy his enemies. If the king's tears do not flow, it is an omen that the god is angry and that an enemy will arise and cause the king's downfall. The king's, not the people's. This is a private ritual between the king and the god, not an act of atonement for the whole people. Any account of it which uses the ceremony with the sheep's carcass and the ritual of humiliation to imply that it is a 'Day of Atonement' is highly misleading.

Finally, then, I want to consider the part played by the god Nabû in all this. Nabû's presence in Babylon was just as important for the festival as the king's. This is shown by the chronicles when they say: 'The king did not come to Babylon in Nisan; Nabû did not come; Bel did not go out; there was no *akītu*, but in Esagil and in Ezida the offerings were made as normal to the gods of Babylon and Borsippa.'[57] The rites in Ezida, Nabû's shrine in Babylon, were just as important as those in Marduk's shrine. While he was still at Borsippa, Nabû's shrine in the temple area in Babylon was thoroughly purified and cleansed, including the sanctuary. The sorcerer and slaughterer who performed this, using the body of a dead sheep, were then unclean and had to leave the city for as long as Nabû was present. The two little human statues had been made for Nabû, and their heads were struck off when he arrived. Then they were burnt in the fire before him. It has been suggested[58] that these statues, one of which holds a scorpion and the other a snake, represent two of the eleven monsters spawned by Tiamat, and so a link with Marduk's victory over Chaos. This is incorrect. One of Tiamat's monstrous offspring was half scorpion, half human; another was a particular mythical species of poisonous snake. But they are not the same as these. What the ritual with the statues does suggest very strongly, especially as it is performed by a slaughterer, is a surrogate for human sacrifice. That is very puzzling, as human sacrifice is alien to any orthodox religious notion current in Mesopotamia in historical times. It must be a form of magic and perhaps preserves a more ancient belief. Nabû was particularly associated with secret wisdom, that is magical skill. Is it possible that the statues represent the sorcerer and slaughterer who purified Nabû's sanctuary? We cannot say.

Both the assemblies of the gods, before and after the procession, take place in the Shrine of the Destinies, which was situated within Nabû's shrine. When Nabû arrived at Babylon, guided by the king, he was offered food from the table of Marduk himself. We have seen how a canopy had been erected in his shrine, and it seems likely that he was next enthroned beneath it, in preparation for the assembly, although unfortunately details concerning the reception of his statue are lacking at present.

All this adds up to a rather important part for Nabû, which it is difficult to explain. The supposed attempt to free his father from imprisonment in the underworld has been shown to be philologically and historically without foundation. He is described rather as coming 'to greet him', as we should expect. But how he came to be Marduk's son is not clear, nor is a great deal known of his character. For Hammurabi, in the eighteenth century BC, the patronal deity of Borsippa is another god called Tutu, who was later, for example in the Epic of Creation, identified with Marduk.[59] The earliest mention of Nabû occurs in a year-name of Hammurabi, but only later did he become associated with Borsippa. Then he was called Marduk's firstborn son,

and his consort was Tašmētum or Nanâ. He seems also have absorbed the deity Mūati, who was associated with Dilmun, that is Bahrain. From the beginning of the first millennium Nabû became an increasingly important god for the Babylonians, and his name is used in royal names more frequently, to the detriment of Marduk's. He had his own sacred marriage ceremony at Borsippa[60] and in texts he is described as a god of arcane, magical wisdom and of the intricate cuneiform writing; hence his particular importance for scribes and merchants. His temple, where a cult continued until perhaps the fourth century AD, was sometimes known as the House of the Night, and Strabo, in the first century BC, noticed the large numbers of bats there, which were caught, pickled and eaten by the inhabitants.[61] It would be interesting to know more about this deity and further research is clearly desirable.[62]

That concludes this account of the New Year ceremonies at Babylon. I hope to have given some idea of their diffuseness and complexity, and to have shown how this can be seen to have developed over a long period of time. Certain ancient Jewish practices and ideas allegedly to be found in our own Bible have been compared to this festival, and I am not competent to judge whether the comparison is justified. But I hope to have given a fair picture of the extent of our knowledge of the Mesopotamian side. In particular, I hope to have made it clear that the ceremonies had nothing to do with a dying and resurrected vegetation god or with an act of atonement by or on behalf of the people. Instead I have argued that they were concerned with

(1) an attempt to celebrate or ensure the success of the spring harvest of barley (the 'cultic picnic'),

(2) a patronal festival of the city-god, Marduk, including his enthronement ('taking Bel by the hand'), including (3) symbolic representation of certain episodes in the Epic of Creation,

(4) the marking of the calendrical aspect of the New Year,

(5) the affirmation of the king as high priest of Marduk, owing his kingship to the god: but *not* as a substitute for or representative of the god, and

(6) the reception and enthronement of the god Nabû.

NOTES

1 *Archives Royales de Mari I*, Paris 1945, no. 50.

2 A. Ungnad, *Babylonische Briefe aus der Zeit der Hammurapi-Dynastie*, Leipzig 1914, nos. 83–7.

3 See B. Landsberger, 'Jahreszeiten im Sumerisch-akkadischen', in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8 (1949), pp. 248–97, and H. Hunger, 'Kalender', in *Reallexikon für Assyriologie* 5, pp. 297–303.

4 A. Falkenstein in *Festschrift Friedrich*, Heidelberg 1959, pp. 147–66.

5 Mostly summarized in R. Labat, *Le caractère religieux de la royauté assyro-babylonienne*, Paris, 1939, pp. 166–73.
6 In F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens*, Paris 1921, pp. 129–49; translation, at times misleading, in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 2nd ed., Princeton 1955, pp. 331–4.
7 This reference to a smith and a carpenter has prompted a dubious comparison with Isaiah 44, vv. 9–20.
8 In S. Langdon, *Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften*, Leipzig 1912, Nebuchadrezzar no. 19, col. iii, 47ff.
9 But see also H. Weidhaas in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 45 (1939), 129f., for the non-technical uses of the word.
10 R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters* IX, Chicago 1914, no. 951 (K 189), lines 11ff.
11 In his *Early History of Assyria*, London 1928, p. 123.
12 The text is incorrectly restored in *ANET*, p. 334. The king does not enter the sanctuary—not yet.
13 This is not a finger-ring, but one held in the hand.
14 Not the Divine Bull, as it is mistranslated in *ANET*, p. 334.
15 But an inscription of Neriglissar, according to H. Güterbock in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 40 (1931), pp. 289f., states that the procession left Babylon on the 5th.
16 Thureau-Dangin, op. cit., pp. 86–99.
17 Ibid., pp. 91f., AO 6465 rev. 5ff.
18 A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, New York 1975, Chronicle 1, col. ii, 1′ *f.*
19 Streck and Winckler; *contra*, Pallis and Thureau-Dangin, refs. *apud* Labat, op. cit., p. 175, nn. 140, 141.
20 Langdon, op. cit., Nebuchadrezzar no. 15, col. ii, 56ff.
21 Ibid., Neriglissar no. 1, col. i, 33.
22 Ibid., Nebuchadrezzar no. 15, col. ii, 63ff.
23 (but possibly not until the 9th or even the 10th).
24 K 9876 = no. 6 (pp. 32–7) in P. Jensen, *Texte zur assyro-babylonischen Religion* (Berlin 1915), in E. Schrader (ed.), *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Berlin 1889–1915.
25 See D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia II*, Chicago 1926–7, paras. 435ff.
26 W. Andrae in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 33 (1907), p. 24.
27 Idem, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, Leipzig 1938, pp. 150ff.
28 See R. H. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria*, New Haven 1935, no. 215.
29 Frankfort (see note 36) thought that the sacred marriage of Marduk took place at the *bīt akīti* on the night of the 10th.
30 See E. Unger, *Babylon*, Berlin and Leipzig 1931, pp. 264ff.; Falkenstein, loc. cit., n. 77a.
31 In Langdon, op. cit., Nabonidus no. 8, col. ix, 3ff.
32 Nineveh version, tablet XI, 70ff.
33 Op. cit., p. 147.
34 Op. cit., p. 172 and n. 125.
35 Translations of the text in Th. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, New Haven and London, 1976, pp. 37–9, and more fully in A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, Stuttgart 1953, pp. 90–9.
36 H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago 1948, pp. 313–33.
37 In H. and H. A. Frankfort (eds.), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, Chicago

1949, pp. 168–83, and in 'The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat', in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968), pp. 104–8.

38 *Ancient Iraq*, London: Penguin Books 1964, pp. 360–4.

39 Op. cit., pp. 162–76.

40 S. A. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akîtu Festival*, Copenhagen 1926).

41 The later Assyrian festival, however, may be regarded as heavily influenced by the Babylonian, principally because the king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207) at one time removed Marduk's statue and with it his cult to Ashur, see L. W. King, *Records of the Reign of Tukulti-Ninib I*, London 1904, pp. 96ff., 5–6. After the statue was returned to Babylon, the festival continued to be celebrated for Marduk in Ashur, see F. Köcher in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 50 (1952), pp. 192–202. Ashur's name was actually written into the Assyrian text of the Epic of Creation, see R. Labat, *Le poème babylonien de la Création* (Paris 1935), p. 22. The building-inscriptions of Sennacherib are also instructive, e.g. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records . . .*, II, paras. 444ff.

42 In W. S. McCulloch (ed.), *The Seed of Wisdom*, Toronto 1964, p. 3.

43 It occurs in the form Tammuz in Ezekiel 8, v. 14. It is only once or twice written in cuneiform as Tamuzu.

44 A. Falkenstein, *3ème Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, Leiden 1960, pp. 41–65.

45 According to Th. Jacobsen. *Towards the Image of Tammuz*, Harvard 1970, pp. 73–101.

46 H. Zimmern, *Der Babylonische Gott Tamuz*, Berlin 1909.

47 S. Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, London 1914.

48 Ibid., p. 22.

49 London 1958.

50 See S. N. Kramer in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 5 (1951), pp. 1–17, and subsequently Kramer and Th. Jacobsen in *City Invincible*, Chicago 1960, pp. 89, 94; and Kramer again in *Iraq* 22 (1960), pp. 59–68. Another version of one episode *apud* Jacobsen and Kramer in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953), pp. 160–88, and synthesis in Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, New Haven and London 1976, ch. 2.

51 *The Babylonian Epic of Creation*, Oxford 1923, pp. 34–49.

52 'Zum Babylonischen Neujahrsfest. Zweiter Beitrag', in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Bd. 7, Heft 5, Leipzig 1918.

53 W. von Soden, 'Gibt es ein Zeugnis dafür, dass die Babylonier an die Wiederauferstehung Marduks geglaubt haben?', in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 51 (1955), pp. 130–66.

54 The *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* H, Chicago and Glückstadt 1956 gives *huršānu* (*hursānu*), *plurale tantum*, mountain (region), and *hursānu* (*huršānu*, 2x *huršu*), (place of) ordeal by water. Von Soden's own *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1965–) lists *huršānu*, rarely *hursānu*, mountains, and *hursānu* (*huršānu*), most frequently *hursān*, (place of) ordeal by water.

55 According to the so-called Nabonidus Chronicle (see note 57).

56 Apparently it describes the Assyrian *harû* ceremony. This is the same text referred to by N. K. Sandars, *Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia*, London: Penguin Books 1971, p. 50, where she misleadingly implies that the reed ceremony is described therein.

57 Grayson, op. cit., *Chronicle* 7, col. ii, 5–7.

58 By Sandars, op. cit., p. 46.

59 In the prologue to the Law Code, col. iiia, 10–16.
60 See Unger, *Babylon*, pp. 264–70.
61 *Geography* XVI, 1. 7.
62 See now F. Pomponio, *Nabû: il culto e la figura di un dio del Pantheon babilonese ed assira*, Studi Semitici 51, Rome 1978.

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