# Babylonia

## Ancient Mesopotamia

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## Assyria

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## Mythology

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## Language

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Babylonia was an ancient cultural region in central-southern Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), with Babylon as its capital. The founder and first king of an independent Babylon was a certain Amorite chieftain named Sumuabum who declared independence from the neighboring city-state of Kazallu in 1894 BC, and was a contemporary of Erishum I of Assyria. Babylonia emerged as a powerful nation when the Amorite king Hammurabi (fl. ca. 1792 – 1750 BC) created a short lived empire out of the territories of the former Akkadian Empire. Babylonia adopted the written Semitic Akkadian language for official use, and retained the Sumerian language for religious use, which by that time was no longer a spoken language. The Akkadian and Sumerian traditions played a major role in later Babylonian culture, and the region would remain an important cultural center, even under outside rule, throughout the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. Babylon as an independent state was founded by and rose to prominence under non native Amorites and spent the most part of its history ruled by their fellow Mesopotamians, the Assyrians or by foreign dynasties such as Kassites, Elamites, Hittites, Arameans, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Parthians.

The earliest mention of the city of Babylon can be found in a tablet from the reign of Sargon of Akkad, dating back to the 23rd century BC. Approximately one hundred years after the collapse of the last Sumerian "Ur-III" dynasty at the hands of the Elamites (2002 BC traditional, 1940 BC short), the Amorites gained control over most of Mesopotamia, where they usurped the thrones of Assyria, Mari, Eshnunna, Ur, Isin, Larsa and other already long established states in Mesopotamia and formed a series of small kingdoms. During the first centuries of what is called the "Amorite period", the most powerful city states in the south were the former Sumerian cities of Isin and Larsa, although Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria united the more northern regions around Ashur and Mari. One of these Amorite dynasties established the city-state of Babylon in the 19th century BC, which would over a hundred years later briefly take over the others and form the first Babylonian empire, during what is also called the Old Babylonian Period.
Babylonia

Periods

Pre Babylonian Era

During the 3rd millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the Sumerians and the Akkadians throughout Mesopotamia, which included widespread bilingualism.\(^1\) The influence of Sumerian on Akkadian (and vice versa) is evident in all areas, from lexical borrowing on a massive scale, to syntactic, morphological, and phonological convergence.\(^1\) This has prompted scholars to refer to Sumerian and Akkadian in the third millennium as a *sprachbund*.\(^1\)

Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as the spoken language of Mesopotamia somewhere after the turn of the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC (the exact dating being a matter of debate),\(^2\) but Sumerian continued to be used as a sacred, ceremonial, literary and scientific language in Mesopotamia until the 1st century AD.

The history of Mesopotamia did not concern Babylon during the 4th, 3rd and early 2nd Milleniums BC era, the main players at varying times during this period being the older, originally Sumerian-Akkadian city states and nations, such Ur, Kish, Uruk, Akkad, Assyria, Mari, Eshnunna, Ekallatum, Lagash, Isin, Larsa, Akshak, Adab, Hamazi and Umma.

Babylon was originally only a minor town, and was part of the Akkadian Empire which united the indigenous Akkadians and Sumerians under one rule, and encompassed the whole of Mesopotamia and colonised parts of Asia Minor, Syria, Iran and Arabia between 2270 BC and 2080 BC. After this, it was ruled by the Sumerian Third Dynasty of Ur until its collapse in the early 20th Century BC. Following the collapse of Sumerian power it was dominated by the Amorite ruled city state of Kazallu. Babylon played no part in Akkadian and Sumerian politics during these periods.

Old Babylonian Era - Amorite Dynasty, ca. 1894–1595 BC

The first independent Babylonian city state was founded ca. 1894 BC by Semites — not by the indigenous Akkadians, but by an Amorite chieftain named Sumuabum who chose the town as his capital.\(^3\) Over the next 60 years, Sumuabum and his successors (Sumu-la-El, Sabium, Apil-Sin and Sin-muballit) gradually conquered a small part of central Mesopotamia. However, when Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC) inherited the throne from his father Sin-muballit, Babylon was still only a small kingdom some 150 kilometers long and 60 kilometers wide,\(^4\) and his kingdom was surrounded by older, larger, more established and powerful kingdoms such as Assyria, Eshnunna, Mari, Elam, Isin and Larsa. Hammurabi set about making Babylon master of Mesopotamia, gradually conquering Larsa, Isin, Mari and Eshnunna deposing their kings, and then entering a protracted struggle for mastery of Mesopotamia with Assyria under its kings Shamshi-Adad I and later his son Ishme-Dagan, finally prevailing in the last few years of his reign, making the Assyrian monarchs such as Mut-Ashkur, Rimush and Asinum succeeding Ishme-Dagan his vassals. He was a very efficient ruler, establishing a bureaucracy, with taxation and centralized
government, giving the region stability after turbulent times, and transforming Babylonia into the central power of Mesopotamia. One of Hammurabi's most important achievements was the compilation of a code of laws that reflected and expanded on earlier codes of law from Sumer, Assyria and Eshnunna. This was made by order of Hammurabi after the expulsion of the Elamites and the settlement of his kingdom. In 1901, a copy of the Code of Hammurabi was discovered on a stele by J. D. Morgan and V. Scheil at Susa, where it had later been taken as plunder. That copy is now in the Louvre.

The Babylonians, like their predecessors, engaged in regular trade with city-states to the west; with Babylonian officials or troops sometimes passing to Syria and Canaan, and Amorite merchants who were of the same stock as Hammurabi operating freely throughout Mesopotamia. The Babylonian monarchy's Amorite identity remained strong throughout the first dynasty. An Amorite named Abi-ramu was the father of a witness to a deed dated to the reign of Ammi-Ditana (1683 BC- 1647 BC), great-grandson of Hammurabi, where he still titled himself "king of the land of the Amorites". The armies of Babylonia under Hammurabi were well-disciplined, and conquered the city-states of Isin, Eshnunna, Uruk and the kingdoms of Assyria and Mari as well as inflicting defeat on Elam.

Babylonian decline

Southern Mesopotamia (unlike the Assyrian north) had no natural, defensible boundaries, making it vulnerable to attack. Hammurabi's son and successor Samsu-iluna found himself beset by rebellion. The native Akkadian Assyrian king Adasi threw off Babylonian rule shortly after the death of Hammurabi, and drove the Babylonians and Amorites from northern Mesopotamia. An adventurer called Iluma-ilu took control of an area roughly corresponding with ancient Sumer and set up his own dynasty there (The Dynasty of the Sealand) which was to last for nearly 300 years. Samsu-iluna was further beset for the rest of his reign by attacks on the remainder of his lands by the Elamites, Kassites, his fellow Amorites and the Sutu, all of which he eventually repelled. Babylon was effectively reduced to the small size it had been before the time of Hammurabi. However, the successors of Samsu-iluna such as Abi-eshuh (1711–1684 BC), Ammi-ditana (1683–1647 BC) and Ammi-saduqa (1646–1626 BC) did manage to keep the remaining Babylonian lands safe until the reign of Samsu-Ditana (1625–1595 BC). He was overthrown during the "sack of Babylon" when king Mursili I, ruler of the powerful Hittite empire of Asia Minor attacked and defeated Babylonia, bringing to an end the Amorite dynasty. After this catastrophic event Babylonia was conquered and occupied by the Kassites, with whom Samsu-iluna had already come into conflict in his 6th year.

The sack of Babylon and ancient Near East chronology

The date of the sack of Babylon by the Hittite king Mursili I is considered crucial to the various calculations of the early chronology of the ancient Near East, since both a solar and a lunar eclipse are said to have occurred in the month of Sivan that year, according to ancient records.

The fall of Babylon is taken as a fixed point in the discussion of the chronology of the ancient Near East. Suggestions for its precise date vary by as much as 150 years, corresponding to the uncertainty regarding the length of the "Dark Age" of the ensuing Bronze Age collapse, resulting in the shift of the entire Bronze Age chronology of Mesopotamia with regard to the chronology of Ancient Egypt. Possible dates for the sack of Babylon are:

- ultra-short chronology: 1499 BC
- short chronology: 1531 BC
- middle chronology: 1595 BC
- long chronology: 1651 BC
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Kassite Dynasty, 1595–1160 BC

The Kassite dynasty was founded by the king Agum II. They were a people who possibly originated in the Zagros Mountains, spoke a language isolate and like the Elamites to the east, were neither Semites nor Indo-Europeans. The Kassites renamed Babylon "Kar-Duniash", and their rule lasted for 435 years. This foreign dominion offers a striking analogy to the roughly contemporary rule of the Hyksos in ancient Egypt. Most divine attributes ascribed to the Semitic Amorite kings of Babylonia disappeared after the beginning of the Kassite dynasty; the title of God was never given to a Kassite sovereign. However, the city of Babylon continued to be the capital of the Kassite kingdom and an important 'holy' city of western Asia, where the priests still wielded much power.

Assyrian Domination

Puzur-Ashur III of Assyria and Burna-Buriash I signed a treaty agreeing the border between the two states in the mid 16th Century BC, and this was followed by a further treaty between Kurigalzu I and Ashur-bel-nisheshu of Assyria in the mid 15th century. However, Babylonia found itself under attack and domination from Assyria for much of the next few centuries after the accession of Ashur-uballit I in 1365 BC who made Assyria once again (along with the Hittites and Egyptians) the major power in the Near East. Babylon was sacked by the Assyrian king Ashur-uballit I (1365 BC – 1330 BC) in the 1360s after the Kassite king in Babylon who was married to the daughter of Ashur-uballit was murdered. Ashur-uballit promptly marched into Babylonia and avenged his son-in-law, deposing the king and installing Kurigalzu II of the royal Kassite line as king there. His successor Enlil-nirari (1330 to 1319BC) also invaded Babylonia and his great grandson Adad-nirari I (1307 to 1275 BC) annexed Babylonian territory when he became king. Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244 to 1208 BC) not content with merely dominating Babylonia, deposing Kashtiliash IV and ruling there for 8 years in person from 1235 BC to 1227 BC, thus becoming the first native Mesopotamian to rule Babylon.

Despite the relative weakness of Babylonia, and the evident reduction in literacy and culture, the Kassite dynasty was the longest-lived dynasty of Babylonian history, lasting until 1160 BC, when Babylon was sacked and conquered by Shutruk-Nahhunte of Elam.

Early Iron Age

The Elamites, perhaps because their efforts of conquest had exhausted them or perhaps because they felt the potential threat from the newly arrived Iranian peoples (the Medes and Persians) in their homelands, did not physically remain in Babylonia for more than four or five years. In 1156 BC Babylon was ruled by a native Akkadian dynasty (Dynasty IV), perhaps for the first time in its history, beginning with Marduk-kabit-ahheshu (1156 BC-1139 BC), a native of Isin. He and his successors Itti-Marduk-balatu and Ninurta-nadin-shumi were rulers of a relatively small and weak kingdom, still largely under Elamite domination. However, upon the accession of Nebuchadrezzar I (1124 BC-1103 BC) Babylonia once more began to assert itself on the world stage. The Elamites
were driven from Babylonia and Elam itself was invaded and defeated. The Semitic Aramean and Sutu tribes which had controlled much of Babylonia were vanquished and brought to heel, and Babylonia once more became master of southern Mesopotamia. Attempts were then made to colonise areas in Aramea (modern Syria), however the Assyrians also had eyes on these lands and Nebuchadrezzar I was defeated by the Assyrian king Ashur-resh-ishu I on a number of occasions for control of this region. After the reign of Nebuchadrezzar I Babylonia once more began to unravel. Enlil-nadin-apli, Marduk-nadin-ahhe and Marduk-shapik-zeri were unable to retain the gains and stability achieved under Nebuchadrezzar I. By the time of Adad-apal-idinna (1067 to 1046 BC) the Sutu and Arameans were once more plundering Babylonia at will. And in 1025 BC the native dynasty then under Nabu-shum-libur was deposed by Kassites under Simbar-shipak.

Between 1025 BC and 977 BC Babylonia was in a state of anarchy, with seven kings divided by three foreign dynasties ruling the land. Dynasty V (1025 BC-1004 BC) was Kassite, this dynasty was replaced by Dynasty VI (1003 BC-984 BC) which was Aramean and Dynasty VII (984 BC-977 BC) which was Elamite.

** Assyrian Rule **

In 977 BC Nabu-mukin-apli (977-942 BC) restored native Akkadian rule to Babylon with Dynasty VIII (977 to 748 BC). However he and his successors ruled a weak kingdom which encompassed little more than the city itself. Babylonia and the whole of southern Mesopotamia came under Assyrian domination during Dynasty VIII. In addition to this, hostile Aramean and Sutu tribes ravaged much of the land during this dynasty, and the Chaldean tribes under Elamite protection appropriated south eastern Mesopotamia for themselves until they were repressed by the Assyrians. During the period of the Neo Assyrian Empire (911 BC – 608 BC), Babylonia spent long periods under Assyrian domination and direct rule. Adad-nirari II began this process in 911 BC by annexing swathes of Babylonian territory for Assyria. During this time it was often the Chaldean tribes from south east Mesopotamia, always backed by their Elamite protectors, rather than the Babylonians themselves, who attempted and failed to lift the Assyrian yoke from their southern brethren.

Dynasty IX begins with Nabonassar, whose rule (from 747 BC) heads Ptolemy’s Canon of Kings. This was originally a native dynasty under Assyrian domination. It was reduced to complete vassalage and fully incorporated into the Neo-Assyrian Empire by Tiglath-Pileser III in 729 BC, and remained under direct Assyrian rule for over a century. However Merodach-Baladan, a Chaldean chieftain from the far south east of Mesopotamia briefly assumed control of the city of Babylon upon the death of Tiglath-Pileser III, before being deposed by the Assyrian king Sargon II in 710 BC. Merodach-Baladan continued to be a thorn in the side of Assyria until he and his Elamite allies were finally defeated in 703 BC. In 699 BC an Assyrian prince Ashur-nadin-shumi was placed on the throne of Babylon.

Babylon was largely destroyed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib during a Chaldean and Elamite inspired revolt in the 7th Century, and was rebuilt by his son and successor Esarhaddon. Esarhaddon placed his own son Shamash-shum-ukin on the throne of Babylon and his younger son Ashurbanipal on the throne of Assyria upon his death. This was an attempt to stabilise and finally unify the two Akkadian states of Mesopotamia. However Shamash-shum-ukin resentful of paying tribute to his brother, became infused with Babylonian nationalism and revolted. A bitter civil war between the two brothers saw Shamash-shum-ukin killed and Babylon sacked, in the process Ashurbanipal destroyed Elam completely and inflicted savage punishment on the tribes of Chaldeans, Arameans, Sutu, Arabs and Nabateans who had supported his brother. After Ashurbanipal's death in 627 BC, the Assyrian kings Ashur-etil-ilani, Sin-shumu-lishir and Sin-shar-ishkun briefly ruled Babylonia. Babylonia remained a part of the vast Assyrian Empire until the 620 BC revolt of the Chaldean king Nabopolassar during the collapse of the Assyrian empire which had been riven with internal civil war.
Neo-Babylonian Empire (Chaldean Era)

Through the centuries of Assyrian domination, Babylonia enjoyed a prominent status, or revolted at the slightest indication that it did not. The Assyrians always managed to restore Babylonian loyalty, however, whether through granting of increased privileges, or military force. That finally changed after 627 BC with the death of the last great Assyrian king, Assurbanipal. Assyria immediately spiralled into a series of brutal and protracted internal civil wars and its new king Ashur-etil-ilani was eventually deposed by an Assyrian general called Sin-shumu-lishir who also briefly claimed the Babylonian throne. Babylonia took advantage of this and rebelled under Nabopolassar, a Chaldean chieftain in 625 BC. Sin-shar-ishkun took the thrones of Assyria and Babylon and belatedly attempted to repress this revolt by invading Babylonia, but his attempts were badly crippled by a huge rebellion in Assyria proper, forcing him to return home. As a result, Nabopolassar was able to finally take Nippur in 620 BC, making him the master of Babylonia. The next four years saw bitter fighting in Babylonia as the invading Assyrians tried to reassert control. Despite Assyrian weakness Nabopolassar was unable to make any inroads into Assyria itself and the fighting continued in the Babylonian heartland. However, in 616 BC he entered into an alliance with the Medes who had also recently freed themselves from Assyrian rule and under Cyaxares attained mastery of the Persians, Manneans and the remnants of the Elamites. Together with the Scythians and Cimmerians they attacked the badly weakened Assyria. This array of enemies proved too much for Assyria in its current state. After four years of bitter fighting Nineveh was finally sacked in 612 BC, the last Assyrian capital Harran fell in 608 BC, and an Assyrian-Egyptian army defeated at Carchemish in 605 BC. The last Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit II disappeared. Babylonia thus became master of Mesopotamia for the first time since the time of Hammurabi.

Nabopolassar was then involved with a struggle with Egypt for control of the lands he had inherited from the Assyrian Empire. The 26th dynasty had been installed by the Assyrians as a vassal dynasty in 664 BC, and had belatedly tried to help Assyria in its last days. After Assyrian resistance appeared to have ended in 605 BC the Egyptians remained, and attempted to wrest former Assyrian colonies from Babylonia.

Nabopolassar was followed by his son Nebuchadnezzar II (604 BC-562 BC), whose reign of 42 years made Babylon the master of much of the civilized world, including the colonisation of Assyria, Aramea (modern Syria), Phoenicia, Israel, Judah, Samarra, parts of Asia Minor and northern Arabia, much of this had been inherited from the Assyrians. Only a small fragment of his annals has been discovered, relating to his invasion of Egypt in 567 BC, and referring to "Phut of the Ionians".

Chaldean domination of Babylonia soon faded however, and it is not clear if Neriglissar and his successor Labashi-Marduk were Chaldean or native Babylonian as they were not related by blood to Nabopolassar and his successors.

Of the reign of the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus (Nabu-na’id), and the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus, there is a fair amount of information available. Nabonidus and his son, the regent prince Belshazzar were actually Assyrians from Harran rather than Babylonians or Chaldeans. Information is chiefly derived from a chronological tablet containing the annals of Nabonidus, supplemented by another inscription of Nabonidus where he recounts his restoration of the temple of the Moon-god at Harran; as well as by a proclamation of Cyrus issued shortly after his formal recognition as king of Babylonia. It was in the sixth year of Nabonidus (549 BC) that Cyrus, the Achaemenid Persian "king of Anshan" in Elam, revolted against his suzerain Astyages, "king of the Manda” or Medes, at Ecbatana. Astyages' army betrayed him to his enemy, and Cyrus established himself at Ecbatana, thus putting an end to the empire of the Medes. Three years later, Cyrus had become king of all Persia, and was engaged in a campaign in Assyria. Meanwhile, Nabonidus had established a camp in the desert, near the southern frontier of his kingdom, leaving his son prince Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur) in command of the army.

In 539 BC, Cyrus invaded Babylonia. A battle was fought at Opis in the month of June, where the Babylonians were defeated; and immediately afterwards Sippara surrendered to the invader. Nabonidus fled to Babylon, where he was pursued by Gobryas, and on the 16th day of the festival of Tammuz, two days after the capture of Sippara, “the soldiers of Cyrus entered Babylon without fighting.” Nabonidus was captured, and the religious services continued
without interruption. Cyrus did not arrive until the 3rd of *Marchesvan* (October), Gobryas having acted for him in his absence. Gobryas was now made governor of the province of Babylon, and a few days afterwards Belshazzar was killed in battle. A public mourning followed, lasting six days, and Cyrus accompanied the corpse to the tomb.

Cyrus now claimed to be the legitimate successor of the ancient Babylonian kings and the avenger of Bel-Marduk, who was assumed to be wrathful at the impiety of Nabonidus in removing the images of the local gods from their ancestral shrines to his capital Babylon. Nabonidus, in fact, had excited a strong feeling against himself by attempting to centralize the religion of Babylonia in the temple of Merodach (Marduk) at Babylon, and while he had thus alienated the local priesthoods, the military party despised him on account of his antiquarian tastes. He seemed to have left the defense of his kingdom to others, occupying himself with the more congenial work of excavating the foundation records of the temples and determining the dates of their builders.

The invasion of Babylonia by Cyrus was doubtless facilitated by the existence of a disaffected party in the state, as well as by the presence of foreign forced exiles like the Jews, who had been planted in the midst of the country. One of the first acts of Cyrus accordingly was to allow these exiles to return to their own homes, carrying with them the images of their god and their sacred vessels. The permission to do so was embodied in a proclamation, whereby the conqueror endeavored to justify his claim to the Babylonian throne. The feeling was still strong that none had a right to rule over western Asia until he had been consecrated to the office by Bel and his priests; and accordingly, Cyrus henceforth assumed the imperial title of "King of Babylon."

**Persian Babylonia**

Further information: Achaemenid Assyria

Babylonia was absorbed into the Achaemenid Empire in 539 BC.

A year before Cyrus' death, in 529 BC, he elevated his son Cambyses II in the government, making him king of Babylon, while he reserved for himself the fuller title of "king of the (other) provinces" of the empire. It was only when Darius Hystaspis acquired the Persian throne and ruled it as a representative of the Zoroastrian religion, that the old tradition was broken and the claim of Babylon to confer legitimacy on the rulers of western Asia ceased to be acknowledged.

Immediately after Darius seized Persia, Babylonia briefly recovered its independence under Nidinta-Bel, who took the name of Nebuchadnezzar III, and reigned from October 522 BC to August 520 BC, when Darius took the city by storm. A few years later, probably 514 BC, Babylon again revolted under the Armenian King Arakha; on this occasion, after its capture by the Persians, the walls were partly destroyed. E-Saggila, the great temple of Bel, however, still continued to be kept in repair and to be a center of Babylonian religious feelings.

It has long been maintained that the foundation of Seleucia diverted the population to the new capital of Babylonia, and that the ruins of the old city became a quarry for the builders of the new seat of government, but the recent publication of the Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period has shown that urban life was still very much the same well into the Parthian age. Christianity entered the region in the 1st to 3rd Centuries AD, gradually replacing Mesopotamian religion, and Babylon was the seat of a Bishopric of the Church of the East until well after the Arab Islamic conquest of the 7th Century.

The name of the satrapy was changed to Asuristan (Assyria) in the Sassanid period. Excepting brief interludes of Roman conquest (Roman Assyria, Roman Mesopotamia; AD 116 to 118), and a longer period of Hellenistic rule (the Seleucid Empire, 330 to 250 BC), Mesopotamia remained under Persian control until the Arab Islamic conquest in the mid 7th century AD.
Babylonia

Babylonia

Babylonian culture

Bronze Age to Early Iron Age Mesopotamian culture is sometimes summarized as "Assyro-Babylonian", because of the close cultural interdependence of the two political centers. The term "Babylonia", especially in writings from around AD 1900, was formerly used to include Southern Mesopotamia's earliest history, and not only in reference to the later city-state of Babylon proper. This geographic usage of the name 'Babylonia' has generally been replaced by the more accurate term Sumer in more recent writing.

Old Babylonian culture

Art and Architecture

Further information: Art and architecture of Babylonia and Assyria

In Babylonia, an abundance of clay, and lack of stone, led to greater use of mudbrick; Babylonian temples were massive structures of crude brick, supported by buttresses, the rain being carried off by drains. One such drain at Ur was made of lead. The use of brick led to the early development of the pilaster and column, and of frescoes and enameled tiles. The walls were brilliantly coloured, and sometimes plated with zinc or gold, as well as with tiles. Painted terra-cotta cones for torches were also embedded in the plaster.

In Babylonia, in place of the bas-relief, there was greater use of three-dimensional figures—the earliest examples being the Statues of Gudea, that are realistic if somewhat clumsy. The paucity of stone in Babylonia made every pebble precious, and led to a high perfection in the art of gem-cutting.

Astronomy

Tablets dating back to the Old Babylonian period document the application of mathematics to the variation in the length of daylight over a solar year. Centuries of Babylonian observations of celestial phenomena are recorded in the series of cuneiform tablets known as the 'Enūma Anu Enlī'. The oldest significant astronomical text that we possess is Tablet 63 of 'Enūma Anu Enlī', the Venus tablet of Ammi-saduqa, which lists the first and last visible risings of Venus over a period of about 21 years and is the earliest evidence that the phenomena of a planet were recognized as periodic. The oldest rectangular astrolabe dates back to Babylonia ca. 1100 BC. The MUL.APIN, contains catalogues of stars and constellations as well as schemes for predicting heliacal risings and the settings of the planets, lengths of daylight measured by a water-clock, gnomon, shadows, and intercalations. The Babylonian GU text arranges stars in 'strings' that lie along declination circles and thus measure right-ascensions or time-intervals, and also employs the stars of the zenith, which are also separated by given right-ascensional differences.

Medicine

The oldest Babylonian texts on medicine date back to the First Babylonian Dynasty in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. The most extensive Babylonian medical text, however, is the Diagnostic Handbook written by the physician Esagil-kin-apli of Borsippa, during the reign of the Babylonian king Adad-apla-iddina (1069–1046 BC).

Along with contemporary ancient Egyptian medicine, the Babylonians introduced the concepts of diagnosis, prognosis, physical examination, and prescriptions. In addition, the Diagnostic Handbook introduced the methods of therapy and aetiology and the use of empiricism, logic and rationality in diagnosis, prognosis and therapy. The text contains a list of medical symptoms and often detailed empirical observations along with logical rules used in combining observed symptoms on the body of a patient with its diagnosis and prognosis.

The symptoms and diseases of a patient were treated through therapeutic means such as bandages, creams and pills. If a patient could not be cured physically, the Babylonian physicians often relied on exorcism to cleanse the patient from any curses. Esagil-kin-apli's Diagnostic Handbook was based on a logical set of axioms and assumptions, including the modern view that through the examination and inspection of the symptoms of a patient, it is possible to
determine the patient's disease, its aetiology and future development, and the chances of the patient's recovery.[8]

Esagil-kin-apli discovered a variety of illnesses and diseases and described their symptoms in his *Diagnostic Handbook*. These include the symptoms for many varieties of epilepsy and related ailments along with their diagnosis and prognosis.[11] Later Babylonian medicine resembles early Greek medicine in many ways. In particular, the early treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus show the influence of late Babylonian medicine in terms of both content and form.[12]

**Literature**

There were libraries in most towns and temples; an old Sumerian proverb averred that "he who would excel in the school of the scribes must rise with the dawn." Women as well as men learned to read and write,[13] and in Semitic times, this involved knowledge of the extinct Sumerian language, and a complicated and extensive syllabary.

A considerable amount of Babylonian literature was translated from Sumerian originals, and the language of religion and law long continued to be the old agglutinative language of Sumer. Vocabularies, grammars, and interlinear translations were compiled for the use of students, as well as commentaries on the older texts and explanations of obscure words and phrases. The characters of the syllabary were all arranged and named, and elaborate lists of them were drawn up.

There are many Babylonian literary works whose titles have come down to us. One of the most famous of these was the Epic of Gilgamesh, in twelve books, translated from the original Sumerian by a certain Sin-liqi-unninni, and arranged upon an astronomical principle. Each division contains the story of a single adventure in the career of Gilgamesh. The whole story is a composite product, and it is probable that some of the stories are artificially attached to the central figure.

**Religion**

Babylonian-Assyrian religion was a mix of Semitic and Sumerian beliefs. Over 3,000 deities are named, but many are different names of the same god. Gods are depicted in art as taller than men and wearing horned caps. There were two types; celestial deities (Igigi) and earthly deities (Anunnaki). The most important were Marduk, Anu, and Ea (the gods of the sky, the heavens, and the ocean, respectively), and Sin, Shamash, and Isthar (the gods of the moon, sun, and planet Venus). Much like the Greek god Uranus, Anu was seldom worshiped in historical times. The king was the chief Earthly representative of the gods; they conferred on him his right to rule, and he also held the ceremonial title of high priest. The gods were held to reside within temple statues where sacrifices and offerings were made to them, and hymns and prayers recited.

The main Babylonian gods were personifications of various natural forces, others were the patron gods of cities. Demons were of huge importance in Babylonian religion; they were held to be the main source of evil that man suffered. They could either be benevolent or malevolent, and man could use magic to call upon or resist their power. Divination and fortune-telling were widely practiced in Babylonia. Similar to most ancient peoples, the Mesopot-amians did not have any significant belief in life after death, nor did their religion have a moral code or require any more than performing regular sacrifices and appeasing the gods.
Neof-Babylonian culture
The brief resurgence of a "Babylonian" identity in the 7th to 6th centuries BC was accompanied by a number of important cultural developments.

Astronomy
Among the sciences, astronomy and astrology still occupied a conspicuous place in Babylonian society. Astronomy was of old standing in Babylonia. The zodiac was a Babylonian invention of great antiquity; and eclipses of the sun and moon could be foretold. There are dozens of cuneiform records of original Mesopotamian eclipse observations. [14]

Babylonian astronomy was the basis for much of what was done in Greek and Hellenistic astronomy, in classical Indian astronomy, in Sassanian, Byzantine and Syrian astronomy, in medieval Islamic astronomy, and in Central Asian and Western European astronomy. [15] Neo-Babylonian astronomy can thus be considered the direct predecessor of much of ancient Greek mathematics and astronomy, which in turn is the historical predecessor of the European (Western) scientific revolution. [16]

During the 8th and 7th centuries BC, Babylonian astronomers developed a new approach to astronomy. They began studying philosophy dealing with the ideal nature of the early universe and began employing an internal logic within their predictive planetary systems. This was an important contribution to astronomy and the philosophy of science and some scholars have thus referred to this new approach as the first scientific revolution. [17] This new approach to astronomy was adopted and further developed in Greek and Hellenistic astronomy.

In Seleucid and Parthian times, the astronomical reports were of a thoroughly scientific character; how much earlier their advanced knowledge and methods were developed is uncertain. The Babylonian development of methods for predicting the motions of the planets is considered to be a major episode in the history of astronomy.

The only Babylonian astronomer known to have supported a heliocentric model of planetary motion was Seleucus of Seleucia (b. 190 BC). [18] [19] [20] Seleucus is known from the writings of Plutarch. He supported the heliocentric theory where the Earth rotated around its own axis which in turn revolved around the Sun. According to Plutarch, Seleucus even proved the heliocentric system, but it is not known what arguments he used.

Mathematics
Babylonian mathematical texts are plentiful and well edited. [16] In respect of time they fall in two distinct groups: one from the Old Babylonian period (1830–1531 BC), the other mainly Seleucid from the last three or four centuries BC. In respect of content there is scarcely any difference between the two groups of texts. Thus Babylonian mathematics remained stale in character and content, with very little progress or innovation, for nearly two millennia. [16]

The Babylonian system of mathematics was sexagesimal, or a base 60 numeral system (see: Babylonian numerals). From this we derive the modern day usage of 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, and 360 (60 x 6) degrees in a circle. The Babylonians were able to make great advances in mathematics for two reasons. First, the number 60 has many divisors (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 20, and 30), making calculations easier. Additionally, unlike the Egyptians and Romans, the Babylonians had a true place-value system, where digits written in the left column represented larger values (much as in our base-ten system: 734 = 7×100 + 3×10 + 4×1). Among the Babylonians' mathematical accomplishments were the determination of the square root of two correctly to seven places (YBC 7289 clay tablet [21]). They also demonstrated knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem well before Pythagoras, as evidenced by this tablet translated by Dennis Ramsey and dating to ca. 1900 BC:

4 is the length and 5 is the diagonal. What is the breadth? Its size is not known. 4 times 4 is 16. And 5 times 5 is 25. You take 16 from 25 and there remains 9. What times what shall I take in order to get 9? 3 times 3 is 9. 3 is the breadth.
The *ner* of 600 and the *sar* of 3600 were formed from the unit of 60, corresponding with a degree of the equator. Tablets of squares and cubes, calculated from 1 to 60, have been found at Senkera, and a people acquainted with the sun-dial, the clepsydra, the lever and the pulley, must have had no mean knowledge of mechanics. A crystal lens, turned on the lathe, was discovered by Austen Henry Layard at Nimrud along with glass vases bearing the name of Sargon; this could explain the excessive minuteness of some of the writing on the Assyrian tablets, and a lens may also have been used in the observation of the heavens.

The Babylonians might have been familiar with the general rules for measuring the areas. They measured the circumference of a circle as three times the diameter and the area as one-twelfth the square of the circumference, which would be correct if π were estimated as 3. The volume of a cylinder was taken as the product of the base and the height, however, the volume of the frustum of a cone or a square pyramid was incorrectly taken as the product of the height and half the sum of the bases. Also, there was a recent discovery in which a tablet used π as 3 and 1/8. The Babylonians are also known for the Babylonian mile, which was a measure of distance equal to about seven miles today. This measurement for distances eventually was converted to a time-mile used for measuring the travel of the Sun, therefore, representing time. (Eves, Chapter 2)

**Philosophy**

Further information: Babylonian literature: Philosophy

The origins of Babylonian philosophy can be traced back to early Mesopotamian wisdom literature, which embodied certain philosophies of life, particularly ethics, in the forms of dialectic, dialogs, epic poetry, folklore, hymns, lyrics, prose, and proverbs. Babylonian reasoning and rationality developed beyond empirical observation.[22]

It is possible that Babylonian philosophy had an influence on Greek, particularly Hellenistic philosophy. The Babylonian text *Dialog of Pessimism* contains similarities to the agonistic thought of the sophists, the Heraclitean doctrine of contrasts, and the dialogs of Plato, as well as a precursor to the maieutic Socratic method of Socrates.[23]

The Milesian philosopher Thales is also known to have studied philosophy in Mesopotamia.

**Legacy**

Babylonia, and particularly its capital city Babylon, has long held a place in Abrahamic religions as a symbol of excess and dissolute power. Many references are made to Babylon in the Bible, both literally and allegorically. The mentions in the Tanakh tend to be historical or prophetic, while New Testament references are more likely figurative, or cryptic references possibly to pagan Rome, or some other archetype. The legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Tower of Babel are seen as symbols of luxurious and arrogant power respectively. A main festival for Babylonians was the Mishtkaru Buylshu, used to ward off evil spirits. Many Babylonians, mostly males, attended this festival at a young age. At this festival, priests would kill, or sacrifice, an animal, usually an ox, to make the gods happy. In return, the gods would presumably give permission to the people at the festival to each obtain an amulet that would protect them for the rest of their lives.
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• Le Journal des Médecines Cunéiformes (published twice-yearly from 2003 onwards)

External links

• Babylonian Mathematics (http://www.math.tamu.edu/~don.allen/history/babylon/babylon.html)
• Babylonian Numerals (http://www-groups.dcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/~history/HistTopics/Babylonian_numerals.html)
• Babylonian Astronomy/Astrology (http://www.halloran.com/babylon1.htm)
• Bibliography of Babylonian Astronomy/Astrology (http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/babylon/babybibl.htm)
• Theophilus G. Pinches, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria (http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/rbaa.htm) (Many deities' names are now read differently, but this detailed 1906 work is a classic.)
• The History Files Ancient Mesopotamia (http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/MainFeaturesMesopotamia.htm)
• Legends of Babylon and Egypt in Relation to Hebrew Tradition (http://fax.libs.uga.edu/BL1620xB7/) and the Fight between Bel and the Dragon, as told by Assyrian Tablets from Nineveh, 1921 (a searchable facsimile at the University of Georgia Libraries; DjVu & layered PDF (http://fax.libs.uga.edu/BL1620xB7/1f/babylonian_legends_of_creation.pdf) format)
• The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria (http://fax.libs.uga.edu/DS71xJ39C/); its remains, language, history, religion, commerce, law, art, and literature, by Morris Jastrow, Jr. ... with map and 164 illustrations, 1915 (a searchable facsimile at the University of Georgia Libraries; DjVu & layered PDF (http://fax.libs.uga.edu/DS71xJ39C/1f/civilization_of_babylonia_and_assyria.pdf) format or Readable HTML (http://wisdomlib.org/mesopotamian/book/the-civilization-of-babylonia-and-assyria/index.html))
• Recordings of modern scholars reading Babylonian poetry in the original language (http://www.speechisfire.com/)