



Activity One: The Nabonidus Chronicle

Introduction

The Nabonidus Chronicle is a cuneiform tablet currently housed in the British Museum. It is part of a series of chronicles written on clay tablets by the Babylonian priesthood designed to keep a record of key events. The majority of the surviving documents appear to have been written when the Persians controlled Babylon (probably sometime between 500 and 400 BC), but they cover earlier events. In all likelihood, the texts that survive are copies of earlier documents which were made close to the events that they describe. Indeed, it seems that the priests kept regular records which, every few years, were written up into the more permanent documents that survive to today. The records were kept within the temple, but the extent to which they were read and consulted, or available for public consultation, is unclear.

The surviving chronicles cover different periods of Babylonian history; the Nabonidus Chronicle records events that took place during the reign of King Nabonidus. The text describes how the king lived away from Babylon, for a time at least, but also provides information about the rise to prominence of the Cyrus, King of Persia. Like many of the clay tablets from Babylon, the Nabonidus Chronicle is partially broken and the lines which (presumably) described Nabonidus return to Babylon are lost.

Note: Both this text and the Verse Account (Text 3) refer to Nabonidus' son acting as Crown Prince and fulfilling important functions. Other contemporary documents indicate that his name was Belshazzar.



Figure 1: The Nabonidus Chronicle, Source - [The British Museum](#)

Text

The text can be found online; http://www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus_1/babylon02.html.

Starter Activity

Make a list of the pros and cons of this source. You should consider questions such as: 'how likely is this source to be reliable', 'what kind of information does this source reveal?' and 'what kind of information can I not get from this particular source'.

Think particularly about **who** wrote the source, **why** they produced it, and **how** it was composed.

Further Reading

More information about the Nabonidus Chronicle can be found in the following places:

- The British Museum [website](#).
- [Wikipedia](#)

A full list of Mesopotamian chronicles can be found, with translations, at [livius.org](http://www.livius.org).