# ASTRONOMICAL CUNEIFORM TEXTS

**BABYLONIAN EPHEMERIDES** 

OF THE SELEUCID PERIOD FOR THE MOTION OF THE SUN, THE MOON, AND THE PLANETS

# I

Edited by O. NEUGEBAUER

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#### DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF FATHERS

J. N. STRASSMAIER, S.J. (1846-1920)

J. EPPING, S.J. (1835–1894) F. X. KUGLER, S.J. (1862–1929) PIONEERS IN THE INVESTIGATION OF

BABYLONIAN ASTRONOMY

# VOLUME I

# INTRODUCTION

THE MOON

# PREFACE TO THE SPRINGER EDITION

When this collection of Babylonian astronomical texts was published in 1955 (a date omitted by mistake from the title page), it contained all texts of this type that I could lay my hands on. As was to be expected, the past 25 years provided more fragments, identified by A. Sachs and A. Aaboe in the British Museum and listed below. Also, some new joins could be made and some errors of mine corrected. Nevertheless, I think one still can consider the material of 1955 to be representative of what has been preserved of the mathematical astronomy of the Seleucid period.

In the meantime, far more progress has been made in our understanding of Babylonian astronomy, mainly by the publications of Aaboe, Hamilton, Maeyama, Sachs, van der Waerden, and others. As an example, I mention here only the elucidation of the purpose of column  $\Phi$  of the lunar ephemerides (by Aaboe) and the explanation of the method of computing the eclipse text ACT No. 60 (by Hamilton and Aaboe). Some of these advances I have tried to incorporate into my *History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy* (1975), which should be used as a guide to the more recent literature.

My sincerest thanks go to Springer-Verlag for making this work again available to students of ancient astronomy. The Institute for Advanced Study, which together with Brown University has supported my work for more than four decades, has graciously given its permission for this reprint.

Princeton November 1982

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\* JCS: Journal of Cuneiform Studies. + JHA: Journal for the History of Astronomy.

### PREFACE

This edition of Astronomical Cuneiform Texts is intended to furnish the basis for a chapter on Babylonian Mathematical Astronomy in a larger History of Ancient Astronomy. In the present work, however, no attempt has been made to arrive at general historical conclusions, though the introductions to volumes I and II provide the reader with the necessary background of Babylonian lunar and planetary theory.

The publication of this work has been made possible by the generosity of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. The underlying research was begun at the Mathematical Institute of the University of Copenhagen and continued at Brown University and during repeated stays in Princeton. It is only through the support and understanding which I met in these institutions that I have been able to carry out a program of so large a scale. It is with a feeling of sincere gratitude and indebtedness that I conclude these volumes.

It was my aim to reach completeness so far as the special texts under consideration are concerned. Accordingly, I have republished about fifty texts which were previously published by Kugler (1900, 1907), Thureau-Dangin (1922), and Schnabel (1924, 1927). About thirty of these texts have been substantially enlarged by joining new fragments to the already published parts or by adding unpublished columns or sections. The material presented here in its entirety amounts to about 300 tablets and fragments; one may estimate that the present edition contains about four or five times as much material as was known previously. About 170 texts concern the moon; the rest have to do with the five planets, Jupiter being better represented than all the other planets combined. About one-third of all texts come from Uruk; two-thirds, in all probability, from Babylon.

In 1881 the key to the understanding of Babylonian mathematical astronomy was found by Father Epping, S.J., in British Museum tablets which had been identified as astronomical by Father Strassmaier, S.J. Around this time Strassmaier was copying many thousands of texts – tablet by tablet, fragment by fragment – which had been sent to the British Museum in the tens of thousands. Whenever he ran across an astronomical text of a worthwhile size he recopied it for study by Epping and, after Epping's death, by Father Kugler, S.J. It was not until the 1920's that more astronomical texts from Paris and Berlin became available. When I began to work on the present edition in 1935, it was again Strassmaier's material that formed the basis. Strassmaier's notebooks, by that time, were in the custody of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico in Rome; from these notebooks, astronomical texts were extracted by Father Schaumberger, C.Ss.R., for the continuation of Kugler's work. Father Schaumberger not only sent me the copies of relevant texts, but also drew my attention to unpublished astronomical texts from Uruk which were in Chicago at the Oriental Institute. Finally, with the kind help of the late H. Ehelolf, I obtained access to the texts in Berlin.

The work on this material was practically completed in 1945. At that time, contact with Istanbul was reestablished. Dr. F. R. Kraus kindly sent me, from his excellent catalog of about 60,000 texts, a list of more than a hundred astronomical fragments from Uruk, and, subsequently, a microfilm of the texts themselves. Many of these fragments could be joined with one another or with tablets in Paris, Berlin and Chicago. The result was that the Uruk texts became about as uniform a group as the Babylon texts in the British Museum. This entailed almost a complete rewriting of my manuscript, a task which took about three years. In the meantime, it had become clear that Strassmaier's notebooks contained additional material which I had not yet seen. In 1949, on the recommendation of Father A. Deimel, S.J., all of Strassmaier's relevant notebooks were placed at my disposal through the courtesy of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico. Dr. A. Sachs went through some thousands of such copies and identified those which belong to my class of texts. The yield was about 100 new fragments, which, when reduced in number by joins, became 83 more or less complete texts. The photographing of the originals in the British Museum and the working out of the details required more than two years, again resulting in a rewriting of about half of the manuscript.

Strassmaier's notebooks cover only texts with the inventory numbers between BM 32,000 and BM 36,000. He did, however, make notes about similar texts, numbered between BM 45,000 and 47,000, which had been quoted to him by Pinches. Thus it was clear that the astronomical archive had a much greater extent than the part explored by Strassmaier. This conclusion was confirmed in 1952. A travel grant by the Rockefeller Foundation enabled Dr. Sachs to work during the summer at the British Museum. There he was given access to about 1800 sheets of copies of astronomical texts, made by Pinches in the years preceding 1900. Many of these masterly copies duplicated texts which we knew through Strassmaier. But there were also many that were new and that substantially increased our knowledge. For the present edition, about 60 new fragments had to be incorporated, about half of which joined previously known texts.

This process of successive approximation has left its traces on the present edition. Quite a few texts were slowly pieced together from many fragments scattered not only over the different collections of the same museum, but sometimes over two or three museums on different continents. Each new join required the recomputing of hundreds of numbers or changes in the numbering of lines, columns, sections, and texts. There are many texts which went through this process five or six times. In spite of all attempts to keep track of these continuous changes which went on, year after year, it is only too evident that many mistakes must have been made which I have been unable to eliminate. A serious student of these texts must not only be indulgent toward small inconveniences, e.g., in the counting of texts and plates, or with inconsistencies in transcription or translation, but he also must be aware of the necessity of continually checking all possible ramifications of whatever statement he may doubt.

Furthermore, the reader should have no illusions with respect to the completeness of the material. We know the Uruk archive only insofar as it has reached Istanbul and the collections of Berlin, Paris, and the United States. The Babylon archive is now available as far as it was explored by Strassmaier and Pinches, or, on the basis of the original inventory numbers, the material that came to the British Museum between 1876 and 1882. But we have no estimate, *e.g.*, about the contents of the collections of the Iraq Museum and others, while the British Museum promises to produce still more texts as the recently begun process of systematic cataloging proceeds. Indeed it was this prospect which induced me to publish this edition now, at a moment when we have reached the end of Strassmaier's and Pinches' material. Since the present edition has already occupied the main part of my time for research for a period of twenty years, it is clear that the possibility of doubling the source material would jeopardize the publication even of the limited section which is accessible now.

A great debt of gratitude I owe to Mr. D. A. Jonah, Librarian of the Brown University Library, for many years of patience and helpfulness in all my bibliographical requests. And the final task of putting my manuscript into print has been performed by Lund Humphries in London with great skill and with understanding for my exacting requirements.

I wish to express my thanks to the curators and keepers of the following collections for their cooperation and helpfulness; Berlin, Staatliche Museen; Chicago, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; London, British Museum; New Haven, Yale Babylonian Collection of Yale University and Morgan Library Collection; New York, Columbia University Library and The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Paris, Musée du Louvre; Philadelphia, The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. British Museum tablets are published by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

How much I owe to my friend and colleague, Dr. A. Sachs, for his help in all phases of the preparation of this work cannot be explained in a few sentences. For ten years he has read and reread the manuscript in all its stages. There is scarcely a page where his suggestions did not contribute to the clarity of formulation and correctness of detail. During the summer of 1952 and again since September 1953 there was scarcely a day when I did not ask him for collations of texts in the British Museum, for help with photographs and copies or readings. Without him I would never have been able to complete this work.

And finally I should like to express my respect to the shades of the scribes of Enūma-Anu-Enlil, descendants of Ekur-zākir or of Sin-leqē-unninnī, and of all the other scribes who computed and wrote the texts which are published here. By their untiring efforts they built the foundations for the understanding of the laws of nature which our generation is applying so successfully to the destruction of civilization. Yet they also provided hours of peace for those who attempted to decode their lines of thought two thousand years later.

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