

A Forgotten Royal Hymn to Marduk and Its Historical Background

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The fragment DT 71 from the Kouyunjik Tablet Collection of the British Museum is the right bottom corner of a tablet, probably a single column tablet of unknown length. The manuscript is written in Neo-Assyrian script, but it is very likely a copy of an older text. The language is so-called Standard Babylonian. These facts mean that we can rely on neither its script nor its linguistic characteristics in dating this text to any particular period. As the fragment preserves a small portion of the original text, the exact nature of the text is not certain either. Yet, judging from what has survived, although there is no divine name preserved except for that of Girra, it seems that this manuscript preserves a royal hymn to a male deity, most likely Marduk, commemorating the victory of a Babylonian king over the Elamites with his assistance.¹ It is also possible that this was a part of a narrative text recounting a war against the Elamites.

The text was first edited by H. Winckler, in *Altorientalische Forschungen* 1 (1893–97), 540–42. Later, J. Hehn published his hand copy of this text as well as his edition in “Hymnen und Gebete an Marduk,” *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* 5 (1905), 326–29 and 386–88. His copy is relatively accurate. Since then, DT 71 has been long neglected except for the short discussion by J. Roberts in 1977.² This article is an attempt to up-date the reading and understanding of the text based on a collation in the British Museum and to discuss the historical background of the event described in it.

The article is based on the present writer’s Hebrew University Ph.D. dissertation, *Hymns and Prayers to Marduk*, submitted in 2003. During the process of revision of the dissertation for publication, the edition of DT 71 was excluded because it was no longer relevant to the new focus of the monograph, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk* (Tübingen, 2011).

The manuscript DT 71 was re-collated and photographed during the present writer’s stay in London in summer 2006 as a short-term fellow of the British Academy and the article was completed when he was an Alexander von Humboldt fellow. I am very grateful for generous grants from the British Academy and the Alexander von Humboldt Fund. I would also like to thank my host in London, SOAS and Prof. Andrew R. George, as well as my host in Germany, Altorientalisches Institut, Universität Leipzig, and Prof. Michael P. Streck. The photographs of DT 71 are published here with generous permission of the Trustees of the British Museum. I thank them for their kind permission to collate the tablet fragment and to publish the photographs.

1. J. Hehn clearly considered this text to be either a hymn or a prayer to Marduk because he edited it with other hymns and prayers to Marduk. For further discussion, see below.

2. J. J. M. Roberts, “Nebuchadnezzar I’s Elamite Crisis in Theological Perspective,” in M. de Jong Ellis, ed., *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 19 (Hamden, 1977), 183–87.

It seems that the text was divided into several sections—each section recounts an episode. The first section is too fragmentary to glean even a hint of the content described. A new section starts at line 5'. Lines 5'–8' are written in the precative mode, asking permission to recount the god's heroism. After this plea, the composition first refers to the mercy of a male deity (obv. 9') and then to reconciliation with “me” through “my” prayer (obv. 9'–15')³ while the enemy, most likely the Elamites, speak insolently, probably eliciting the wrath of the god. The god punishes the enemy with total destruction (obv. 16'–rev. 21). This is probably an allusion to a victory against the Elamites, which the author of this composition credits to the triumph of the deity addressed in this text. From line 16', the narrator addresses the god in the second masculine singular (note the prefixes of verbs and pronominal suffixes). In spite of the broken lines, it seems that the rev. 22 is, like obv. 5', the beginning of a new section—another introduction to a new episode that is yet to be recovered.

Below are a new edition of DT 71 (transliteration, translation, and commentary) and a discussion of the possible historical background.

Transliteration

Obverse

- 1'. . . .] × [×(×)]
 2'. . . . TA]R-ri-[ma²]
 3'. . . .] × U₄-e
 4'. . . .] × ^rA²¹ [×]-×-DE-E-šú
 5'. . . . lu-na-²-id-ma i-lut-su lud-b]u-ba [da]n-nu-us-su
 6'. . . . q]u-ru-us-s[u] lud-lul
 7'. . . . lu-na-²-id i-l]ut-su lud-bu-ba dan-nu-us-su
 8'. . . .]-šú qu-ru-us-su lud-lul
 9'. . . . DINGIR² ta]-^ra-a¹-ru ša na-as-^hur-šú qer-bu
 10'. . . .]-^ra¹-a TE-su id-da-a iš-ku-na sa-li-mu
 11'. . . .] ŠÀ-ba-šú ir-šú-ú ta-a-a-ru
 12'. . . . i-nu-ma iš-ta-mu]-^rú¹ un-nin-ni-ia ú-sa^h-^hi-ra ki-šad-su
 13'. . . . ŠÀ-ba-š]u ip-šá-^ha ir-šá-a sa-li-mu
 14'. . . . e-la-m]u²-ú ša la pit-lu-^hu GAL-tu DINGIR-us-su
 15'. . . . a-na²] DINGIR-ti-šú šir-tum iq-bu-ú me-re-e^h-tu
 16'. . . . ik-du]-us-su ^{si}TUKUL-ka a-na e-la-me-e muš-tar-^hi
 17'. . . .] ERÉN^{bi-a}-šú tu-par-ri-ir el-lat-su
 18'. . . . UN.ME]Š² di-šá-a-ti tu-bal-li la-a²-meš
 19'. . . .] GAL-a a-bu-ba-niš tas-pu-un
 20'. . . . t]u-sa^h-ri (text ^HU)-ba tu-šá-ad-di KUR-su
 21'. . . .] × tas-pu-na til-la-niš tu-t[i]r

Reverse

1. . . .] DI[NGIR].MEŠ šá šá-²i-lu
 2. . . .] MU kar-pa-niš ta^h-pi
 3. . . . KUR nu-kúr]-ti šu-u^h-ru-bat bit-lat

3. For further discussion, see below.

4. . . . n]in-da-bu-u pa-ri-is-ma
 5. . . .] × la-mas-su-uš id-dal
 6. . . . n]é-me-eq-šú šu-up-pu-uḫ
 7. . . . KUR nu-kúr-ti] šu-ku-lat ⁴GIŠ.BAR
 8. . . .] × kar-pa-niš taḫ-pi
 9. . . . T]I BALA-a-šú tas-kip
 10. . . .] × ú-šar-ri-ḫa ra-man-šú
 11. . . .] × it-tak-lu e-mu-qu
 12. . . . l]a iḫ-su-sa DINGIR-ut-ka
 13. . . . ik]-šú-du-uš ⁸¹⁸TUKUL.MEŠ-ka
 14. . . .] × KUR nu-kúr-ti ú-ab-bit
 15. . . .] el-ši-iš tu-par-ri-ir
 16. . . . tu-ḫ]al-li-qa ni-ip-ri-šú
 17. . . .] BALA-a-šú tas-kip
 18. . . .] za-ma-na-a tu-ḫal-liq
 19. . . .] zi-kir-ka kab-tum
 20. . . .] *HU* la aš-šu-ru ma-mit-su
 21. . . .] ¹A²¹ *HU* (prob. an error for -ti) tu-bal-li la-²a-meš
 22. . . . lud-bu-b]a dan-nu-us-su
 23. . . . lud-lu]l² zi-kir-šú
 24. . . .] × mug-da-áš-ru
 25. . . .] re-šu-ú-ti
 26. . . . ana²] za-a²-i-ri-ia
 27. . . . lud-lu]l² zi-kir-¹šú¹
 28. . . .] × PA × [. . .
 29. . . .] × [. . .

*Translation*⁴

Obverse

- 1'–4' are poorly preserved.
- 5'. . . . let me *extol* his divinity, let me t]alk about his [st]rength,
 . . .] let me praise hi[s he]roism,
 . . . let me *extol*] his [di]vinity, let me talk about his strength,
 . . .] his [. . .] let me praise his heroism.
- . . . the god² of compa]ssion, whose benevolent attention is near.
- 10'. . . .] my [. . .] he inclined his head (lit. cheek) to me, he established
 peace for me.
 . . .] his heart *found* (lit. got) compassion,
 . . . when he hear]d my prayer, he turned his head (lit. neck) to me.
 . . . h]is [heart] became calm, he *found* (lit. got) peace for me,
 . . . the Elami]tes who were not afraid of his great divinity,
- 15'. . . . against] his magnificent divinity, they spoke insolently.
- . . .] your weapon [*reached* hi]m, the vainglorious Elamite,
 . . .] his army, you scattered his horde,
 . . .] you brought [his] numerous [peopl]e to an end like glowing ashes.
 . . .] The great [. . .], you leveled like a deluge.
- 20'. . . . y]ou laid waste, you had his land be in ruins,
 . . .] you leveled, you turned into a ruin.

4. The words in italics indicate uncertain readings and renderings.

Reverse

1. . . .] go[d]s of the dream interpreters,
 . . .] you shattered like a pot.
 . . . the hostile lan]d is devastated (and) brought to an end,
 . . . f]lood offering is cut off.
5. . . .] his Lamassu-spirit is wandering around,
 . . .] his [w]isdom is overturned,
 . . . the hostile land] is consumed (by) the Fire(-god).
 . . .] you shattered like a pot.
 . . .] his dynasty, you set aside.
10. . . .] he made himself self-important (he boasted?).
 . . .] the strength has been consumed.
 . . .] he [was] not mindful of your divinity.
 . . .] your weapons [r]eached him.
 . . .] the hostile land, it destroyed.
15. . . .] joyfully, you scattered.
 . . . you put a]n end to his offspring.
 . . .] his dynasty, you set aside.
 . . .] you put an end to my foe.
 . . .] your honorable name,
20. . . . whose] oath I did not keep.
 . . .] you brought [*his numerous? people?*] to an end like glowing ashes.
- . . . Let me spe]ak of his strength,
 . . . Let me praise?] his name,
 . . .] mighty,
25. . . .] help,
 . . . against?] my enemy,
 . . . Let me praise] h[is] name,
 28–29 are too damaged to read.

Commentary

Obverse

- 5' / 7'. *lu-na-ad-ma*: Our restoration is merely tentative. We can also expect here other words indicating the act of praising and extolling, like *šamāru* or *zamāru*.
- 10'. *te-su id-da-a*: For the expression, *nadû lētu* “to incline the head as a gesture of listening, of paying attention,” see *CAD L*, 149, *lētu* 1, a), 3', a”.
- 11'. The verb *rašû* would seem to be in the subjunctive.
- 16'. *ik-du]-us-su*: The restoration is merely tentative. One can expect here other verbs with meanings like “to seize, capture” or “to strike, smite,” e.g., *aḫāzu*, *šabātu*, *maḫāšu*, *maqātu*. If our understanding is correct, *elamê muštarḫi*, “the vainglorious Elamite,” must be the Elamite king, Hulteludish-Inshushinak, against whom Nebuchadrezzar I launched his military campaigns, and the pronouns in the third masculine singular in the following lines also indicate him. For further discussion, see below. See also rev. 13.
- 18'. *tu-bal-li la-a'-meš*: For the motif, “killing people” *la'meš* or *kīma la'mî*, both “like a glowing embers,” see *AHw.*, 533b, *lāmu*, *la'mu*.
- 19'. *CAD S* (p. 158b) restores here [*šeḫra u*] *rabâ*, “young and old.”

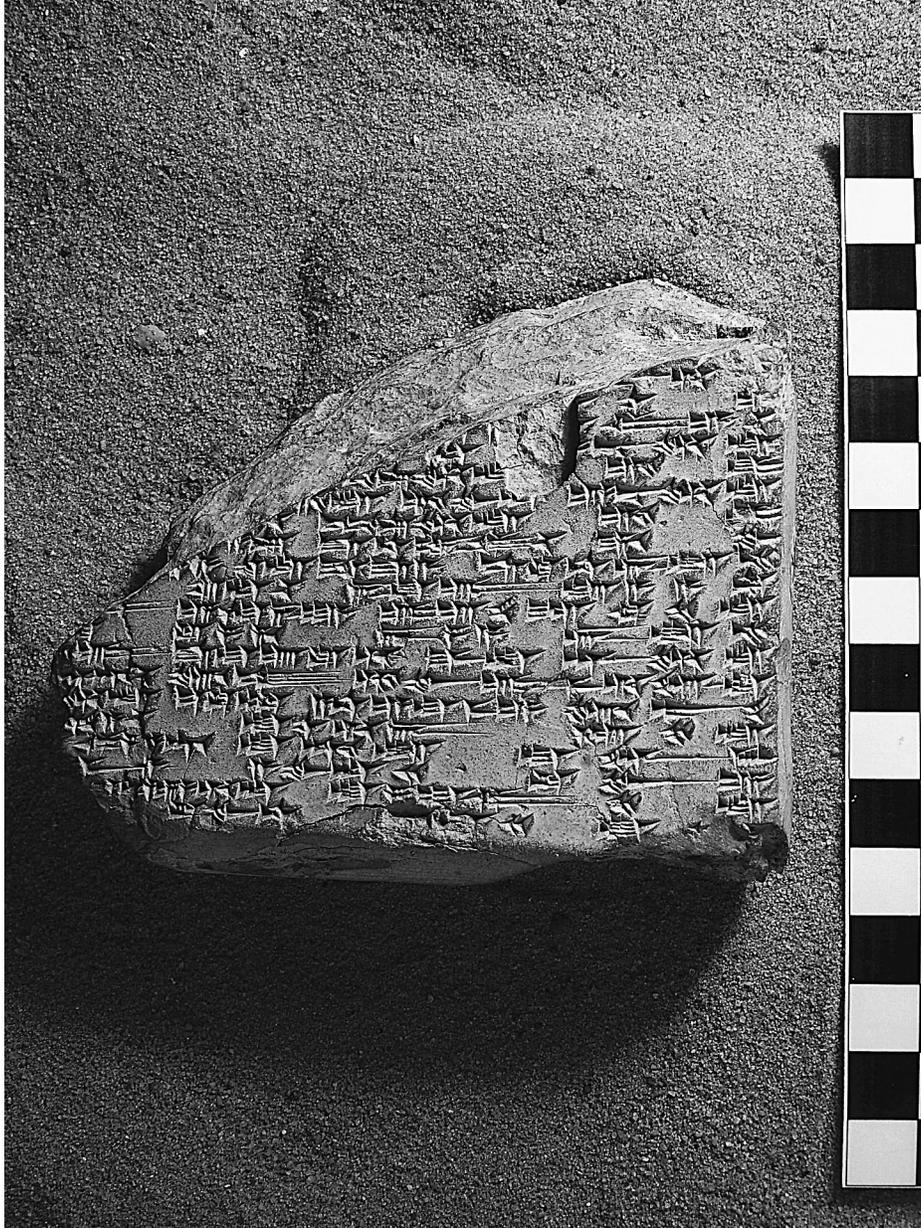


Plate 1. DT 71 obverse. By permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

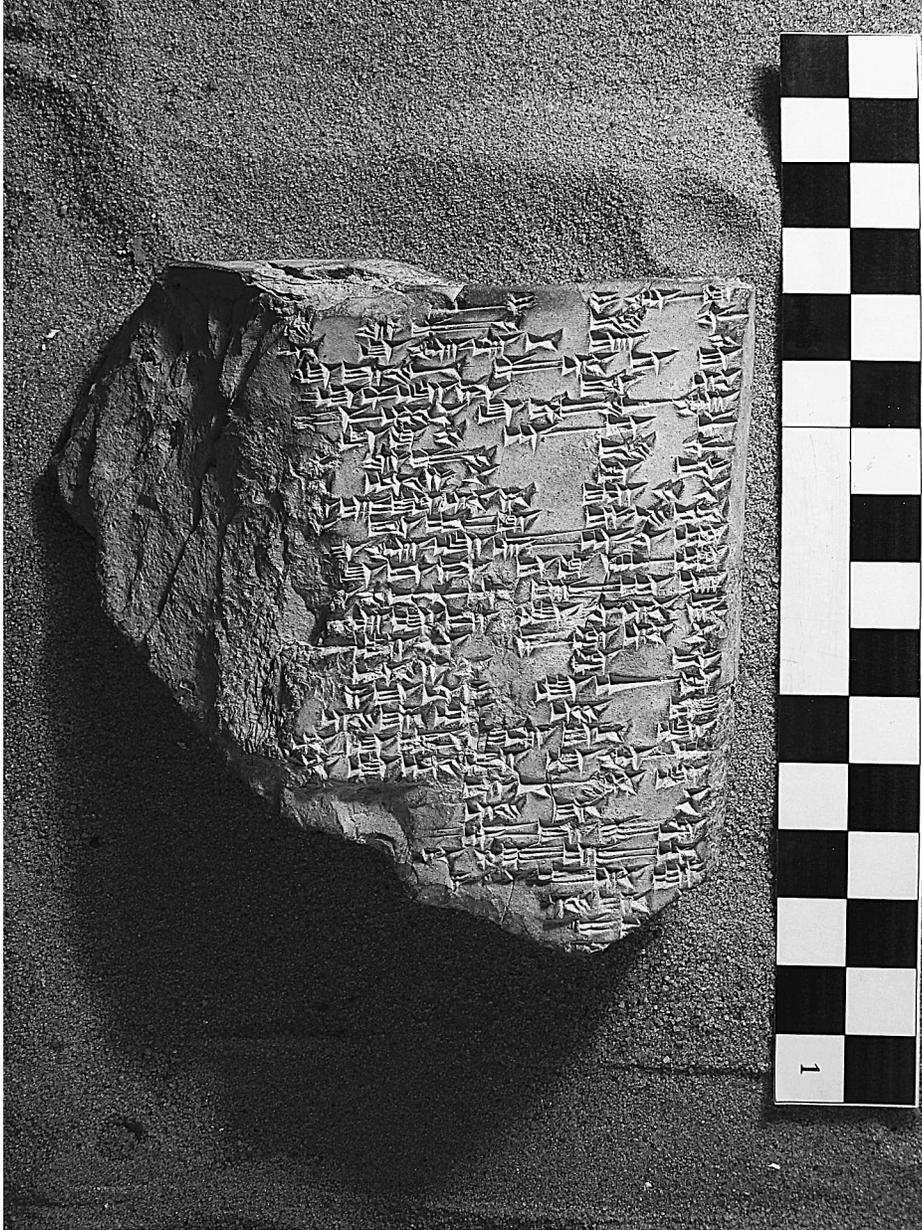


Plate 2. DT 71 reverse. By permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Reverse

1. The rendering of this line is not certain.
2. *kar-pa-niš taḥ-pi* “to destroy the enemy like a pot” is a well-attested expression in the inscriptions of Sargon II, see *CAD K*, 219a, *karpāniš*. However, an expression “to smash something like a pot (*kīma karpati*),” is attested as early as the Old Akkadian period; see *CAD K*, 220, *karpatu* 1 h.
3. The readings of the last two signs *É KUR* are in question. As this section of the text speaks of *šā’ilu* “dream interpreter” (rev. 1); *nindabû* “cereal offering” (rev. 4); and *lamassu* “protective spirit” (line 5), one might consider reading these two signs *é-kur* for α) the temple of Enlil in Nippur, Ekur; β) the place where demons live;⁵ and γ) a general noun for a temple.⁶ Nonetheless, this understanding is problematic because the verb is 3rd fem. sing stative. In addition, if our understanding is correct, this part must refer to the destruction of Elam, not a Mesopotamian city. Thus, here we tentatively suggest taking these two signs as *balûl belû*, “to waste, to come to an end,” the 3rd fem. sing. Gt-stem stative, although no dictionary recognizes the Gt-stem of this verb.
5. *id-dal*: We take the word as *dâlu* “to wander around,” a 3rd masc. sing. Gt-stem, present.
10. The verb *šarāḫu* in the D-stem with *ramānu* would seem, at least in this text, to have the same meaning like its Dt-stem, “to boast of something.”
15. *û-ab-bit*: It seems that the subject of the verb is the divine weapon, as in line 14 above, but “I” (1st sing.), probably indicating the Babylonian king, is still possible.
21. Immediately after the break, the tablet preserves a vertical stroke that can be the head of the upper stroke of the sign *A*. If so, it is very likely that the sign *HU* is an error for the sign *TI*, and this section should be restored, UN.MEŠ *di-šá]*^r*a*¹-ti, like obv. 18’ above.

Historical Background of this Text

As already discussed above, we do not know the exact nature and circumstance of this text because we do not have the complete text. The preserved portion first speaks of reconciliation of “me” through “my prayer” with “him.” As this text refers to “his” divinity, it is clear that the text recounts a reconciliation of a man, most likely a monarch, with a god. On the other hand, there were other people, very probably the Elamites, who did not fear him and spoke insolently against him. As a result, the god devastated the enemy land and its people.

In Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions war is a very common theme. Assyrian kings proudly recounted their military campaigns against other lands. Yet, the Assyrians generally state that the gods, such as Assur, their national god, commanded them to wage

5. For this usage, see *CAD E*, 70.

6. See loc. cit.

a war.⁷ For example, Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) states that the god Assur and other great gods ordered him to expand territory (i.e., the land of Assyria).⁸ Another example is from the reign of Assurnasirpal II (883–859). In one of his royal inscriptions, this Neo-Assyrian king claims that he launched a military campaign to the cities at the foot of Mounts Nipur and Pašate by the command of the god Assur and the goddess Ištar in 883.⁹ In some cases Assyrian kings refer to rituals involving prayers. For example, Shalmaneser I (1273–1244) states that before he waged war against Qutus, who were as numerous “as stars in the sky” and “skilled in murder,”¹⁰ the Assyrian king offered his *Šuila*-prayer. He states that the gods answered “yes.”¹¹ It is very likely that he performed divination to seek their permission to engage in battle. Sometimes Assyrian kings speak of divine support and aid in war. For example, when Tukulti-Ninurta I led his army against Kassite Babylonia, he defeated Kaštiliašu with the trust/support of Assur, Enlil, and Šamaš as well as help from Ištar.¹² Yet, in spite of all sorts of divine involvement in warfare, the Assyrians almost never speak of a god’s “compassion” or “peace” with him as a reason for war.

This motif of “god’s compassion,” “forgiveness,” or “peace,” better suits a military campaign whose main purpose was the recovery of a cult statue that had been taken as booty by a foreign force. The plunder of a cult statue might have been perpetrated for the following reasons. In ancient Mesopotamia the absence of a deity’s cult statue was interpreted as the deity’s absence from his city and was considered an expression of his fury towards the citizens on account of their sins. However, it was believed that when his anger was calmed and he reconciled with the people, the god would return to his city.¹³ Therefore, we can safely suggest that this text recounts an episode in which a deity who was in exile in Elam was brought back to his city as the result of a military action of a Babylonian king or an Assyrian monarch against the Elamites.

There are two candidates who fit the profile: Marduk, who was captured by the Elamite king Kudur-Nanhundi (1155–1150) and was returned to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar I (1124–1103), and Nanaya of Uruk who was returned to Uruk by the Assyrian king, Assurbanipal (668–627).¹⁴ As our text refers to a god, the goddess Nanaya

7. For this subject, see, e.g., B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay of the Idea of Historical as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Gleerup, 1967); B. Pongratz-Leisten, “‘Lying King’ and ‘False Prophet’: the Intercultural Transfer of a Rhetorical Device within Ancient Near Eastern Ideologies,” in A. Panaino, A. and G. Pettinato, eds., *Ideologies as Intercultural Phenomena* (Milan, 2002), 215–43.

8. A. K. Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 13, col. i 46–49.

9. *Ibid.*, 198, col. i 70. For Mt. Nipur, see Streck, *RLA* 9, 566.

10. Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 184, lines 88–90.

11. *Ibid.*, 184, lines 92–94.

12. *Ibid.*, 244, lines 48ff.

13. W. G. Lambert, “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” in W. S. McCullough, ed., *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek* (Toronto, 1964), 9. Note also the discussion on the removal of the gods by the hands of the Assyrians in M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula, 1974), 22–41, esp. 30–41.

14. R. Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Wiesbaden, 1996), 57, A VI 107ff. See also J. A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 1984), 103. For example, *CAD* Š/3 (230) takes this to be a hymn to Marduk by Assurbanipal. For the campaign of Assurbanipal, see Brinkman, *ibid.*, 101–3. It is true

is not relevant. As already suggested by Roberts in 1977, this text should be analyzed in the context of Nebuchadnezzar I's campaign against Elam.¹⁵ There are quite a few texts documenting the event of Marduk's abduction by the Elamites, the war against the Elamites under Hulteludish-Inshushinak (ca. 1120–1110) and his return from exile.¹⁶ Two royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar I blame the misconduct of Enlil-nadin-ahi (1157–1155), his predecessor, and his people during his reign for Marduk's departure.¹⁷ For example, a bilingual inscription of Nebuchadnezzar states that, "At that time, in the reign of a previous kind (Enlil-nadin-ahi), the portents changed. Good departed and evil was constant. The lord (Marduk) became angry and (full of) wrath. He commanded and the land was abandoned by its gods. . . ."¹⁸ While the *Marduk Prophecy* states that it was Marduk's own choice to leave Babylon,¹⁹ an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar recounts that the Elamite king, Kudur-Nanhundi, made Marduk rise from his temple.²⁰ The *Marduk Prophecy* further states that Marduk will reconcile with a future Babylonian king, probably implying Nebuchadnezzar I, after the Babylonian king stabilizes the cultic order.²¹ Another inscription of Nebuchadnezzar I emphasizes that after Marduk accepted his prayer seeking forgiveness and requesting his return to his temple Esagila, Marduk ordered the Babylonian king to take him back to the city of Babylon.²² Despite the failure of his first attempt,²³ Nebuchadnezzar I managed to recover the statue of Marduk with other deities from Elam. While the Kudurru of Šitti-Marduk, the head of a village, Bīt-Karziabku, recounts the bravery of Nebuchadnezzar I and his army,²⁴ the Babylonian king emphasizes that the victory over the Elamites was Marduk's will.²⁵ Together with reference of Nebuchadnezzar I's prayer to Marduk in one of his inscriptions discussed above, this concept—crediting

that some expressions in this text are attested more in the inscriptions of the Sargonic kings, e.g., *nadû lētu* (obv. 10') in the sense of a gesture of paying attention; see Lie, *Sar.* 333 (Sargon); Luckenbill, *OIP* 2, 104 v 46 and 95: 68 (Sennacherib); Borger, *Esarh.*, 104: i 31 (Esarhaddon); or *karpāniš*, "(to destroy) like a pot," is attested only in Sargon's inscriptions except for two examples from this text; see *CAD* K, 219, *karpāniš*.

If this text were written against the background of Assurbanipal's campaign against the Elamites, and if our understanding of this text is correct, we could conclude that this hymn was composed in honor of Nanaya, whose statue was in exile in Elam for 635 years and was brought back to Uruk by Assurbanipal. However, this conclusion is not likely since in DT 71 the deity is addressed using the 3rd m.s. pronoun and Nanaya is a female deity. Note that *CAD* N/2 also identifies this composition as a SB hymn to Marduk; *CAD* N/2, 331–32, *nukurtu*, b), 4'.

15. For the dating this hymn to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I, see Roberts, "Nebuchadnezzar I's Elamite Crisis," 183–87. For the further discussion about relations of this monarch with Elam and references, see Brinkman, *PKB*, 105–10.

16. One can find translations and references of the relevant texts in B. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Bethesda, 2005), 369–91.

17. G. Frame, *RIMB* 2, p. 20, no. 6, lines 4'–5' and p. 26, no. 8, lines 15–16.

18. *Ibid.*, 26, no. 8, lines 15ff.

19. *Marduk Prophecy*, col. I 18'–22'. For an edition, see R. Borger, "Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten," *Bi.Or.* 28 (1971), 5–20. For an English translation, see Foster, *Before the Muses*, 388–91.

20. Frame, *RIMB* 2, 20, no. 6, line 9'.

21. *Marduk Prophecy*, col. II 19ff., esp. col. III 21'–22'.

22. Frame, *RIMB*, 18, no. 5, obv. 1ff. Note also, *ibid.*, 29, lines 9–11.

23. Roberts, "Nebuchadnezzar I's Elamite Crisis," 184 and n. 24. Cf. also, Frame, *RIMB* 2, 20, no. 6, rev. 10b–11.

24. *Ibid.*, 33–35.

25. E.g., *ibid.*, 18, no. 5, lines 11–12 and 21, no. 7, lines 5–10.

a victory over the Elamites to Marduk²⁶—best parallels our text, DT 71. In fact, the *Marduk Prophecy* also predicted a total destruction of Elam.²⁷

Although Nebuchadnezzar I's victory over Elam did not bring long-lasting peace to the Babylonians, it must have boosted their confidence. It is now commonly accepted that in order to celebrate this event, *Enūma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation epic, was composed in Marduk's honor.²⁸ At this time, Marduk became officially recognized as "King of the Gods," replacing Enlil, at least in one official theology of Babylon.²⁹

26. For this one may refer to Albrektson, *History and the Gods*.

27. *Marduk Prophecy*, col. III 22'b.

28. W. Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks: Die Stellung Marduks in der babylonischen Religion des zweiten Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, AOAT 213 (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982), 174. Cf. Lambert, "Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I," 5–6 and also A. R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (Leuven, 1992), 5–6. It is just possible that the priests of Esagila used pre-existing materials, i.e., myths dedicated not only to Marduk but also other deities like Ninurta, in order to "compose" *Enūma Eliš* during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I. Cf. idem, "Ninurta Mythology in the Babylonian Epic of Creation," in K. Hecker and W. Sommerfeld, eds., *Keilschriftliche Literaturen: Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, CRR 32 (Berlin, 1986), 55–60.

29. Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, 182–83; Lambert, "Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I," 9ff., and more recently T. Oshima, "The Babylonian God Marduk," in G. Leick, ed., *The Babylonian World* (New York/London, 2007), 349–50.