

Araştırma Makalesi/ Research Article

Hatti and Judah Campaigns in the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle

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Abstract

The New Babylon/Late Babylon periods have been considered a type of pivotal period as they shaped the process both before and after them and they recorded the periods with chronicles. Previous sovereign powers in Mesopotamia slowly losing their power and the unrestrainable struggle of Meds and Persians for power in the East created an opportunity for the rebirth of Babylon in this process. This situation followed a development phase depending on the visionary decisions of the Babylonian kings and taking advantage of suitable political conditions. Particularly Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, after him, showed great effort to increase and preserve the acquisitions of Babylon. Absolute sovereignty in the geography of the East Mediterranean constituted the main political course that shaped this struggle. Battles fought and frequent campaigns to this end were initiated primarily in the Hatti geography (roughly Southern Anatolia-North of Damascus. Both the geographical convenience and rich resources made it necessary to render the

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Babylonian rule permanent in this geography. The political and military power attained in the Hatti geography facilitated safe access of the Babylonian army to the south, the Levant Territory. Besides, the control of the Syria-Palestine line would prevent Egypt, another significant power of the period, from forming a source of threat to Babylon. The campaign route that Nebuchadnezzar developed in this context and the main problems in implementing the policy he followed resulted from the Kingdom of Judah in the Levant and the rebellion started by this kingdom. In this study, in which the campaigns organized by Nebuchadnezzar to the Hatti and the Kingdom of Judah after that and the siege of Jerusalem during these campaigns were specifically discussed, the royal chronicles were used as the main source.

Keywords: Ancient Eastern Mediterranean, Neo Babylon, Cicia, Jerusalem.

Nabukadnezar Kroniği'nde Hatti ve Yahuda Seferleri

Öz

Yeni/Geç/Son Babil Dönemi hem kendilerinden önceki hem de kendilerinden sonraki süreci şekillendirmesi ve dönemin kronikleriyle kayıt altına alınmasını sağladıkları için bir tür eksen devri olarak kabul edilmiştir. Mezopotamyalı eski egemen güçlerin yavaş yavaş güç kaybettiği, doğuda Med ve Perslerin dizginlenemeyen iktidar mücadelelerinin yaşanmaya başlaması, bu süreçte Babil'in yeniden doğuşu için fırsat yaratmıştır. Bu durum Babilli kralların ön görülü kararları, uygun siyasi koşulların değerlendirilmesine bağlı bir gelişim evresi izlemiştir. Özellikle Nabupolassar ve ardından oğlu Nabuchadnezzar (*nabū-kudurri-uşur*) Babil'in kazanımlarının artırılması ve korunması adına büyük mücadele vermiştir. Bu mücadeleyi şekillendiren temel politik izlemi Doğu Akdeniz coğrafyasındaki mutlak egemenlik oluşturmıştır. Bu doğrultuda gerçekleştirilen savaş ve sık düzenlenen seferler öncelikle Hatti coğrafyasıyla (kabaca Güney Anadolu-Şam kuzeyi) başlatılmıştır. Hem coğrafi elverişliliği hem de öz kaynak zenginliği bu coğrafyadaki Babil hakimiyetinin kalıcı kılınmasını zorunlu hale getirmiştir. Hattı coğrafyasında sağlanan siyasi ve askeri güç, Babil ordusunun güvenli bir biçimde güneye, Levant Bölgesi'ne erişimi kolaylaştırmıştır. Ayrıca Babil için Suriye-Filistin hattının kontrolü, dönemin diğer önemli gücü olan Mısır'ın bir tehdit unsuru olmasını engelleyecektir. Nabuchadnezzar'ın bu kapsamda geliştirdiği sefer rotası ve izlediği politikayı uygulama aşamasındaki temel sorunlar Levant'ta Yahuda Krallığı ve bu krallığın çıkardığı ayaklanmalardan kaynaklanmıştır. Nabuchadnezzar'ın Hatti ve ardından Yahuda Krallığı'na düzenlediği seferler ve bu seferler içerisinde özellikle Babil'in Kudüs Kuşatması üzerinde durulan bu çalışmada, temel kaynak olarak krala ait yıllıkardan yararlanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eski Doğu Akdeniz, Yeni Babil, Kilikia, Kudüs.

Introduction

Ensuring domination over the South Anatolia and East Mediterranean geography, which became a tradition starting from the Akkadians, was also adopted by the Assyrians and Babylonians, which were other political elements in Mesopotamia. Continuation of this traditional foreign policy was maintained within the framework of deportation/population transfer, another traditional practice. Before examining these practices, a general view of the presence of Babylon in Mesopotamia was presented. In this context, Babylon III (New Babylon-Chaldean) became one of the significant city-states in South Mesopotamia following the collapse of the Ur Dynasty. The city, which was named KÁ.DINGIR.RA in Sumerian and *bab-i ilim* "door to god" in Akkadian, preserved its socio-cultural richness both throughout the Ancient Babylonian State and after the collapse of the Babylonian State and was recorded as Babel in holy books.¹

In the analysis of the early second millennium BC from a political and demographic perspective, as much as the sources are available, it is seen that the general political and geographical movements of the period were shaped by large and small city-states starting from Susa and reaching the Mediterranean coast and the political struggle and trade among these states. It is seen that these city-states sometimes became natural political powers in parallel with their commercial and geographical convenience. This geographical advantage brought these city-states commercial and therefore political superiority over time. Along with the second wave of the Samite migration of Amurru origin (Buccellati, 1966: 8), Babylon aimed to become the dominant authority in Mesopotamia by overcoming powerful political elements such as Larsa, Ešnunna, and Mari, which were among other centres that continued their existence as city-states in Mesopotamia. In the early second millennium BC, when Ur III Dynasty lost its authority and political influence on Sumerian and Akkadian settlements, it has been possible to claim that the Kingdom of Isin could maintain its political dominance in Mesopotamia over the geography with its being ruled by an administrator supported by Ur III. The South Mesopotamia geography, which was dominated by the kingdoms of Isin-

¹ Ignace Gelb, "The Name of Babylon", *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies* I, 1979, p. 1-4.

Larsa and large families in Babylon, had to struggle against the political dominance of Assyrians in the north strengthened by trade networks.²

According to the limited sources on the rise of the First Babylonian Dynasty (1894-1595 BC) that approximately started in 1894 BC with Sumu-Abum and lasted to the period of Sin-muballit (1812-1793 BC), Hammurabi's father, in Mesopotamia, where cultural maintenance of Sumerian and Akkadian high civilization was ensured, Babylon tried to protect its existence among the political elements such as Isin-Larsa and Elam in the south and Ešnunna, Assyria, and Mari kingdoms in the north. Based on records in the few documents accessed, the administrators of the Babylonian city-states made interventions mostly to ensure domestic stability in this process. It is known that the founder king Sumu-Abum of Amurru and his successor Sumu-la-El/Sumulael implemented certain developmental activities to protect Babylon both militarily and economically from the struggles experienced among city-states in Mesopotamia.³

It is seen that Babylon was not an important figure in the political arena of Mesopotamia in the periods of Sabûm/Sabium (1844-1831 BC), April-Sin (1830-1813 BC), and Hammurabi's father Sin-muballit, and Babylon struggled for existence in the periods of these kings just like other Ammurru kingdoms. Although it has been accepted that Babylon was one of the cities that occasionally became a significant power in the geography of Mesopotamia just like its contemporary states such as Isin, Larsa, Ešnunna, and Mari until the period of Hammurabi, the 6th king of the First Dynasty, it became a dominant power in the geography of Mesopotamia with the rule of King Hammurabi. Hammurabi, who captured many of his contemporary kingdoms in the Old Babylonian Period⁴ described himself as the king of Sumer and Akkadia, the ruler of the world." In addition to Hammurabi's diplomatic skills and military endeavors, the contribution of the socio-economic practices he implemented in his country to the rise of Babylon cannot be denied. Transferring the lands supported with agricultural and commercial activities and owned by the palace in

² Marc Van de Mieroop, *Eski Yakındoğu Tarihi* (MÖ 3000-323), çev. Sinem Gül, Homer Kitabevi, İstanbul 2018, p.76.

³ Dominique Charpin, *Hammurabi of Babylon*, I. B. Tauris, New York 2021, p. 78.

⁴ Amelie Kuhrt, *Eskiçağda Yakındoğu I*, İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2010, p. 102; Joan Oates, *Babil*, Arkadaş Yayınları, Ankara 2015, p. 11.

exchange for a service or rent, with the condition that the property rights belong to him, that is, a socio-economic administration where manorial/fief system was applied and ensuring legal guarantee under laws show that Hammurabi supported his foreign policy with a strong domestic policy. In the prologue of the famous law articles which Hammurabi stated that he prepared with the power and authority granted by gods and that he was bestowed with all his authority by gods, he indicated that he was supported by almost all gods in the Babylonian pantheon. The last king of the Old Babylon, Samsu-Ditana, could not stand against the raids of the Hittites, which was a political structure of Indo-European origin in Anatolia, under the lead of their king Muršili I, starting from Anatolia and extending toward Syria, and Babylon fell under the hegemony of the Hittites. The Old Babylon period⁵, which started approximately in 1894 BC, ended in 1595 BC.

In the process named the Middle Babylon/Kassites, Babylon went under the rule of Kassites (Sea Country Peoples), which are believed to be a foreign dynasty arriving from the Zagros Mountains or the northwest. This dynasty, which ruled Babylon for about 365 years, was recorded within the scope of God Marduk and his wife Goddess Sarpānitum cult and required temple activities related to the cult. The prominent kings of this dynasty who were politically significant figures were King Karaindash and his son Kadeshman-Harbe, and in the periods of these kings, they tried to strengthen their sovereignty over Elam and Sutus, as well as establishing diplomatic relations with Egypt regarding the issue of Syria. It was King Kadeshman-Enlil II who developed successful diplomacy with Egypt in the final years of the Kassites⁶, and after the period of this king, the dynasty could not handle the political power balance developing in favour of the Assyrians in the north.

The General Political History of the New Babylon

The period between 626 and 539 BC has been named as Late Babylon or New Babylon period.⁷ In this period, significant developments were

⁵ Marc Stolen, *Studies in Old Babylonian History*, Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut İstanbul 1976, p. 33.

⁶ Kemal Balkan, "Babil'de Feodalizm Araştırmaları Kas'lar Devrinde Babil", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1/2, Ankara 1943, p.48.

⁷ Johan Oates, *Babil*, Arkadaş Yayınları, Ankara 2015, p. 217; Jack Finegan, *Archaeological History of The Ancient Middle East*, Taylor&Francis, 2019, p. 13.

experienced in the period of Nabopolassar (626-604 BC), who saved Babylon from the Assyrian hegemony, Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BC), who aimed to widen the borders of the Babylonian Land, and Nabonid (556-539 BC), who was the last king of the Late Babylon period, respectively. Among the most significant achievements of Nebuchadnezzar, who joined battles and campaigns in the period of his father, Nabopolassar, were his capturing most of the area in northwest Mesopotamia up to the Urartu borders, his success in the Carchemish war against Egyptian forces, and his domination over the north of today's Syria.

Nebuchadnezzar, who ascended to the throne of Babylon after his father's death in 604 BC, fortified his sovereignty by organizing campaigns to the Hatti geography (South Anatolia-North Damascus) in his first year of rule. According to the chronicle dating back to the king's first year on the throne, the campaign on Hatti took place in April, and the king moved south from the Land of Hatti to the Kingdom of Judah (*Iahudu*) in May. Relevant expressions are as follows:

"[15-18] *šattu* I-KÁM (^{m.d})*nabu-kudurri-u-šu-ur ina (arah) šimani ummani(ni.MEŠ)-ša id-ki-e-ma a-na* (^{māt})*hat-tú illik-ma adi (arah)kišlimi ina* (^{māt}) *hat-ti Sal-ta-niš ittallak*(ME) *šarrni*(MEŠ) *sá* (^{māt})*hat-tú ka-li-šu-nu a-na pani-šu illiku*(ME)*-nim-ma bi-lat-su-nu kabittu*(tu) *im-hur a-na (al)iš?-qi?l-il-lu-nu illik-ma ina (arah)kislimi* [erasure?] *iš-ša-bat-su ...* ¹⁵⁻¹⁸) In the first year of Nebuchadnezzar in the month of Sivan he mustered his army and went to the Hatti-territory, he marched about unopposed in the Hatti-territory until the month of Kislev. All the kings of the Hatti-land came before him and he received their heavy tribute. He marched to the city of Askelon and captured it in the month of Kislev..."⁸

Based on the experience he gained in the campaigns and wars he previously joined, the king followed a foreign policy involving abolishing the influence of Egypt in the East Mediterranean and making his sovereignty over South Anatolia permanent. In this regard, the king organized a campaign to the Hatti geography, and with the abundant trophies he gained here, he extended the campaign to the East Mediterranean line. When the king arrived in Ashkelon, he came out victorious from the struggle he had against the Judah Kingdom, and with

⁸ Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 BC) In the British Museum*, The Trustees of The British Museum, London 1956.

a historically well-known punishment, he decided to exile the people here toward Babylon. It has been claimed that this decision was a part of a comprehensive strategy, rather than aiming at the Kingdom of Judah or its people. Hatti formed a corridor for Babylon in its passage to the East Mediterranean. The Kingdom of Judah was seen as a natural base for the Palestine line that needed to be fortified well against Egypt in the south⁹. In this context, during his rule, Nebuchadnezzar tried to make his sovereignty permanent through the campaigns he organized toward the Hatti and Judah lands. Following his campaigns toward Hatti between 604 and 601 BC, he headed toward the Judah geography¹⁰ over Hatti.

Nebuchadnezzar's Jerusalem Chronicle

The king's progress to the Judah Kingdom over Hatti in 601 BC was moved forward with the capture of the port and the hinterland, as far as it could be understood from the chronicles. With the superiority in centres such as Ashdod, Gaza, and Sidon changing in favour of Babylon, Egypt's desire to dominate the region was restrained.¹¹ However, when he wanted to sustain his success in the Egyptian lands, Nebuchadnezzar had to return to Babylon with a heavy defeat. The Hatti campaign organized by the king in 599 BC also aimed to strengthen his dominance over the military and commercial bases before starting the East Mediterranean campaign. In fact, the king would organize a campaign to the Judah geography over Hatti a year later. Statements regarding the Jerusalem expedition and its route, dated to the king's 7th year on the throne, are recorded in the chronicle with the following statements:

^{"11-13)} *šattu VII-KÁM (arah)kislimi šá akkadi(KI) umman(ME)-šá id-ki-ma a-na (mât) hat-tú illik-ma ina muhhi al ia-a-hu-du iddi-ma ina (arah)addari umu II-KÁM ala iṣ-ša-bat šarra ik-ta-šad šarra šá libbi-šú ina lib-bi ip-te-qid bi-lat-ša kabittu(tí) il-[qa-am-m)a ana babili(KI) ulterib(ib)...*¹¹⁻¹³⁾ In the seventh year, the month of

⁹ Şeyma Ay-Arçın, *İsrail ve Yahuda Krallıkları Tarihi, Ayışığı Kitapları*, İstanbul 2016, p. 84.

¹⁰ Donald J. Wiseman, "Babylonia 605–539 B.C.", *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 3, Part 2: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.*, J. Boardman et al. (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 229-251; Koray Toptaş, "Yeni Babil Devletinin Sürgün Politikası", *Eski Yakındoğuda Sürgünler*, ed. İrfan Albayrak, Bilgin Yayınları Ankara 2020, p. 242.

¹¹ Avraham Malamat, "New Record of Nebuchadnezzar's Palestinian Campaigns", *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 6, No. 4, 1956, p. 246; Okay Pekşen, "Asur ve Babil Kralları Tarafından İsrail ve Yehuda Krallıklarının Halklarına Uygulanan Sürgünler", *İlkçağlardan Modern Döneme Tarihten İzler*, Ed. Osman Köse, Berikan Yayınevi, Ankara 2018, p. 24.

Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his troops, marched to the Hiatti-land, and encamped against (i.e. besieged) the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own choice (lit. heart), received its heavy tribute and sent (them) to Babylon..."¹²

This campaign is referred to in the literature as "the Victory of Jerusalem". The king started this campaign over Hatti, continued his progress to Sur city, and reached the geography of the Judah Kingdom. Here, he abolished the rule of King Yahoyakim and sieged Jerusalem. During this siege, he exiled the defeated king and his people toward Babylon. Zedekiah¹³ was brought to the throne of the Judah Kingdom, believing that with this exile, people would be managed under a traditional demographic order. As the king appointed to the Judah kingdom and the people did not behave as expected from them and due to the Egyptian threat, Nebuchadnezzar had to organize another campaign to this geography again.

In 596 BC, the king organized a campaign to the Hatti geography and Carchemish, an important center of this geography, and aimed to strengthen safe access to the Kingdom of Judah, the main route. In 584 BC, he organized yet another campaign to prevent rebellions in the Judah territory and to protect the region against Egypt and punished Zedekiah and his people heavily, which meant another exile process for the people. Nevertheless, the king's punishment did not prevent the rebellions in the region, so he had to organize another campaign to the region in 582 BC. As a result of this campaign, the rebellious people were sent to exile again. The main factor in Nebuchadnezzar's exile policy was to prevent rebellions. However, this approach did not help to establish peace in the region. On the contrary, it affected the demography of other geographies during the exile. The records of rations provided to the king and his

¹² Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 BC) In the British Museum*, The Trustees of The British Museum, London 1956.

¹³ Albert, K. Garyson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Winona Lake, 1975, p. 101; Edward Lipiński, *A History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and Judah*. Leuven, Peeters 2020, p. 62.

subordinates upon their arrival in Babylon and kept in the royal archives give an idea about the process after the exile.¹⁴

The king died in 562 BC, following the process in which he carried most of his activities to the center of Babylon. The period between the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 BC and Nabonid's ascending to the throne witnessed a power struggle between Nebuchadnezzar's successors and the notables of Babylon. In this process, his son, Amel-Marduk (561-560 BC), who ascended to the throne immediately after Nebuchadnezzar's death, was assassinated by Neriglissar, so he reigned only for one year. Other than a few records regarding the campaigns he organized toward Lidya when he ascended to the throne of Babylon and some development activities, no detailed information about the three-year rule of Neriglissar (559-556 BC) was found. Following the death of Neriglissar, his son, Labaši-Marduk (556 BC) ascended to the throne. However, he was killed by the Babylonian commanders and notables, who claimed that he was too young to rule. They also supported Nabonid's ascendance to the Babylonian throne. During his reign between 556 and 539 BC, Nabonid also adopted an expansionary policy toward the West as his father did and tried to control the trade in the East Mediterranean¹⁵. As soon as he ascended to the Babylonian throne, the king organized campaigns toward the West heading to Hama, Mount Taurus, and Cilicia.

Conclusion

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Neo-Babylonian Period, like most non-Mesopotamians who became superpowers before him, turned his attention to the Hatti geography and then to the Eastern Mediterranean, with its own resources and ease of passage. To this end, he established domination primarily over the Hatti geography and the north of the Levant. Unlike the demographic diversity of this area including South Anatolia partially, although the geography of the Northeast

¹⁴ Avraham Faust, "Deportation and Demography in Sixth-Century B.C.E. Judah", in *Interpreting Exile: Interdisciplinary Studies of Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, B. E. Keller- F. R. Ames - J. L. Wright (eds.), Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2021, p. 91-103.

¹⁵ Salih Çeçen-Nurgül Yıldırım, "Babil Siyaset Geleneğinde Kutsal Mirasın İhlali "Babil Kralı Nabonid'in Dinî Reform Girişimleri", *Eski Yakındoğu'da Miras Algısı*, edt İrfan Albayrak, Bilgin Yayınları, Ankara 2021, p. 195.

Mediterranean which Babylonian kings wanted to protect against Egypt hosted many peoples who depended on commerce, mostly Jewish people constituted the population of the Judah Kingdom in this area. It is seen that this demographic dominance was not the main factor targeted by exile or genocide policies. The violation of its sovereignty and this violation becoming routine must have been perceived as a great threat to Babylon, and in this regard, they adopted a method that was previously applied to different people. It is also seen that in the invasion of Jerusalem, which was also invaded in different periods (596, 594, 582 BC) for totally political reasons, population transfer policy was applied to the rebellious people. Moreover, it was noted in the Egyptian records (Merneptah Stele/Israil Stele) before the New Babylon Period that the Jewish people were destroyed and faced extinction. Stating once more the importance of the accurate evaluation of the concepts and events used in such texts, it can be claimed that the Jerusalem Chronicle increased the prestige of Babylon by revealing the weakening effect of Babylon over Egypt and registering its power in its own geography. Because the presence of Assyria in the central region of Babylon and the Med and Persian forces in the east during this period should not be forgotten, and this success should be examined as a historical process with different dimensions that cannot be associated only with measures taken for a certain segment of a people for the purpose of authority.

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