

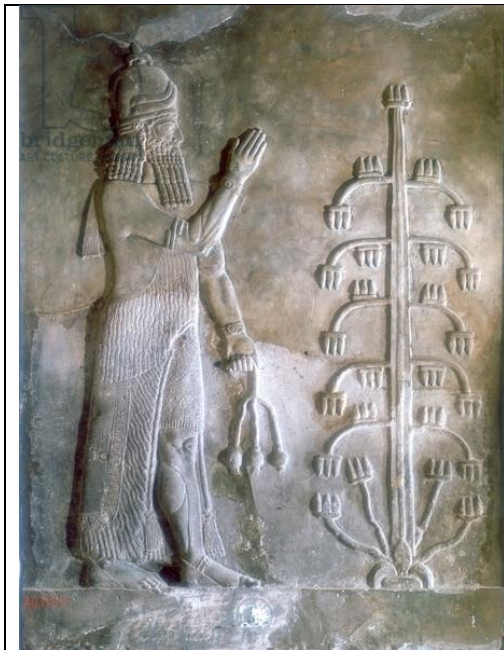
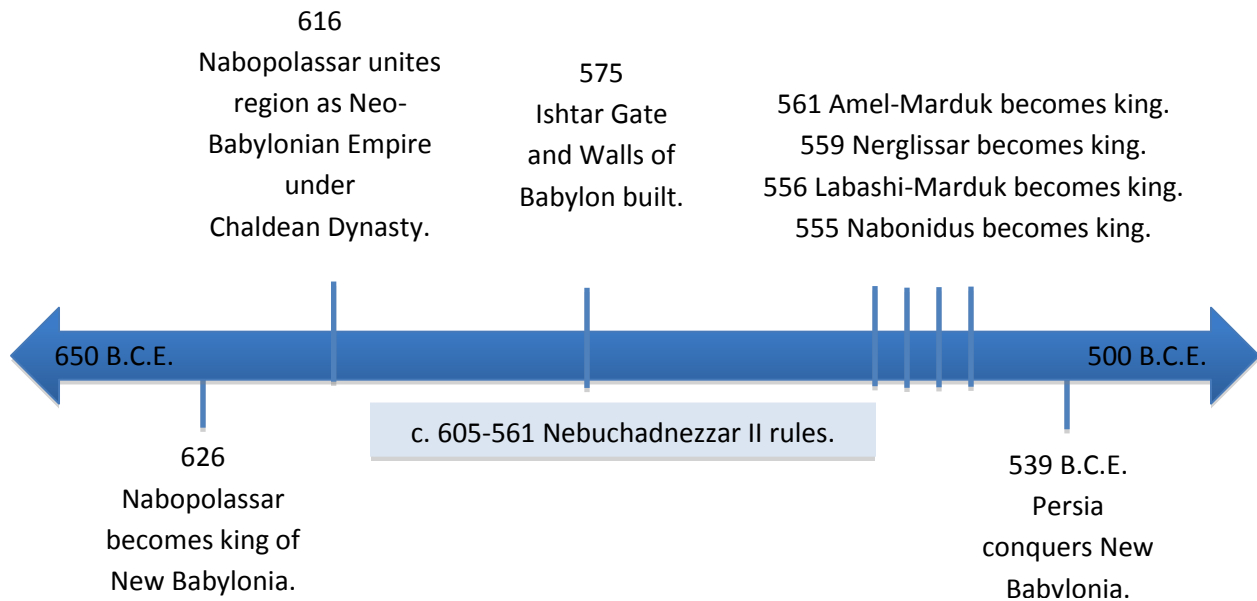
The Neo-Babylonian Empire

New Babylonia emerged out of the chaos that engulfed the Assyrian Empire after the death of the Akkadian king, Ashurbanipal. The Neo-Babylonian Empire extended across Mesopotamia. At its height, the region ruled by the Neo-Babylonian kings reached north into Anatolia, east into Persia, south into Arabia, and west into the Sinai Peninsula. It encompassed the Fertile Crescent and the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys.

New Babylonia was a time of great cultural activity. Art and architecture flourished, particularly under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, who determined to rebuild the city of Babylonia. His civil engineers built temples, processional roadways, canals, and irrigation works. Nebuchadnezzar II sought to make the city a testament not only to Babylonian greatness, but also to honor the Babylonian gods, including Marduk, chief among the gods. This cultural revival also aimed to glorify Babylonia's ancient Mesopotamian heritage. During Assyrian rule, Akkadian language had largely been replaced by Aramaic. The Neo-Babylonians sought to revive Akkadian as well as Sumerian-Akkadian cuneiform. Though Aramaic remained common in spoken usage, Akkadian regained its status as the official language for politics and religious as well as among the arts. The Sumerian-Akkadian language, cuneiform script and artwork were resurrected, preserved, and adapted to contemporary uses.



Timeline of the Neo-Babylonian Empire



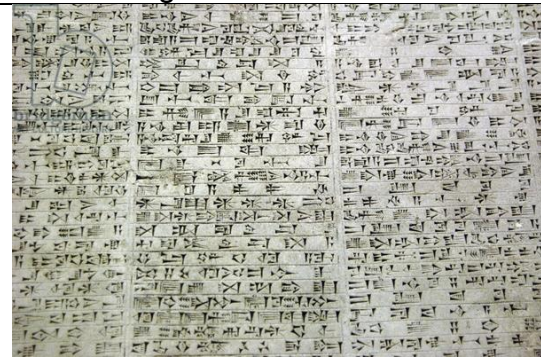
Sargon I, king of Mesopotamia who reigned c2334-c2279 BC. Founder of the Akkadian Semitic dynasty. Sargon standing before a tree of life. Stone relief. Louvre, Paris. | Universal History Archive/UIG | Bridgeman Images

The image of King Sargon 1 shows an earlier stone relief in the Akkadian tradition, from c. 2334-2279 BCE



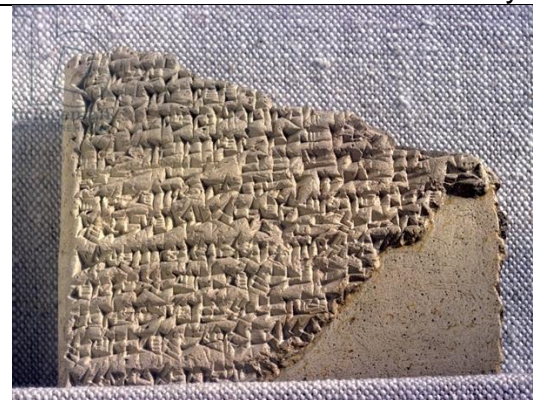
Ishtar Gate | Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Germany | Photo © Tarker / Bridgeman Images | Bridgeman Images

Built under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar II, the Ishtar Gate guarded the entry to the Processional Way (the central road) of Babylon. It stood more than 38 feet tall, and featured bas reliefs of lions, bulls and dragons set against blue brick. The gate was dedicated to the goddess Ishtar, an ancient Akkadian goddess of love and war. Under the Akkadian Empire, Ishtar rose to prominence in Mesopotamian religion, replacing the earlier Sumerian goddesses Inanna.



Cuneiform tablet. King Nebuchadnezzar II (630-562 BC). Chaldean dynasty. Detail. | Exposition Louvre | Photo © Tarker / Bridgeman Images | Bridgeman Images

This tablet, created during Nebuchadnezzar II's reign, records information in the revived Neo-Babylonian cuneiform script.



Cuneiform tablet with the history of the birth of King Sargon of Akkad, 3rd millennium BC (clay) | Ancient Art and Architecture Collection Ltd. | Bridgeman Images

This tablet piece gives the history of the birth of King Sargon of Akkad in the ancient Akkadian cuneiform.

