

MOTHER OF HER SON: THE LITERARY SCHEME OF THE ADAD-GUPPI STELE

SUNGDUK YUN

Yonsei University, Seoul
13 Songhwaro 124-1201, Pajusi Kyeongido, Seoul, Korea
e-mail: mumkhe@yahoo.com

The inscription on the Adad-guppi Stele is an unusual literary work due to both its innovative structure and its contents describing Adad-guppi as the intercessor for Nabonidus. The literary structure of the inscription was the combination of the three-tier royal inscription (theological 1st person narrative) and a memorial text at her mother's funeral (secular 3rd person narrative). It is a literary invention of Nabonidus's scribes to meet the need of the occasion, and is surely a creative attempt. The mother's role is described as an intercessor for her son: First, she gave birth to Nabonidus and provided an opportunity for him to have a court career. Secondly, the mother led her son to the sincere faith to *Šin* and became the source of his blessings. Thirdly, she worked hard to build a bridge between Nabonidus and the ancient Mesopotamian political ideology, to achieve the legitimisation of her son's ascension to the Babylonian throne. His line of propaganda seemed to work very well for 17 years, which is 8 more years after the death of the queen mother, but it lost its leverage at the appearance of Cyrus, king of Persia.

Key words: Nabonidus, Adad-guppi, literary structure, royal inscription, funerary text, intercessor, propaganda.

The literary world of the ancient Near East was a stage on which male characters played the leading roles, so it was not common to find a literary composition focused on the life of a female human protagonist. Goddesses were merciful mothers, beauties or terrible young women in myths, and historical sources cite a few royal women who appeared to exercise power over male retainers (Teppo 2007a; 2007b; Nemet-Nejat 2014). Still, the absolute majority of literary works focused on the lives of male gods and human beings and their great achievements. This is the cultural atmosphere in which Nabonidus, king of Babylon, left us a long and fascinating story honouring his mother, Adad-guppi. The text, therefore, occupies a unique position in the history of ancient Near Eastern literature.

The text of the memorial inscription of Adad-guppi is special not only because of its main character, but also because of its literary structure and use of literary devices. It is largely the queen mother's first-person narrative on her own life (an autobiography), but it is also supplemented by a third-person report on her funeral service (a funeral text).¹ The text employs the traditional languages of Babylonian royal inscriptions, but it also introduces a few new erudite expressions. The main theme of the text is the colourful life of a mother unfolding through religious and political events, but it cannot be missed that the whole literary project is planned for and by her son. When the son placed the order of this project, traditional literary genres were not suitable for expressing what he had to say, so his scribes decided to create a new literary style to satisfy their patron. The focus of this study is, therefore, on the structural particularities and the literary image of Adad-guppi as testified by Nabonidus in the text of the Adad-guppi Stele. The significance of these literary features will also be questioned in relation to the context of that time period.

The dramatic lives of Adad-guppi and her son Nabonidus were the topic of many scholarly and popular works, but their emphasis was mainly on the religious position of the mother and the usurpation of the son for the Babylonian throne.² In other words, the attention of scholars and other authors was fixed on pursuing after past events and reconstructing history as it was. However, the historical reconstruction of the lives of Adad-guppi and Nabonidus is not the purpose of this essay; rather, it is to analyse the structure and the expressions of the literary work, the memorial inscription of Adad-guppi, and discuss the authorial intention behind it.

I. The Inscription on the Adad-guppi Stele

This inscription is on two stone stelae, regularly called the 'Adad-guppi Stele' (see Gadd 1958, pp. 45–56 and pls. IV–VIII; Schaudig 2001, text 3.2). These fragments were discovered by H. Pognon (in 1906) and D. S. Rice (in 1956) at or near Harran (now Altınbaşak, Turkey), on the western bank of the river Balikh, one of the tributaries of the Euphrates. Since the Stele fragments were found in secondary usage, we cannot be sure about their original provenance. It is assumed, however, that they are two of four stelae erected at the temple of *Sîn*, the moon god, built by Nabonidus.

The content of the text presents the image of a devout mother and her able son, spending a happy and successful lifetime together. Numerous guests and abundant gifts at the queen mother's funeral prove this image, together with the king's generous treatment of the guests. The reality of the fact, however, was not that simple – even far from it. Adad-guppi and Nabonidus were passing through a life of storm and gale.

The reign of Nabonidus and the life of his mother have been a topic quite popular among scholars (see Dougherty 1929; Lambert 1972; Smith 1975; von Soden 1983;

¹ The inscription's literary peculiarity is briefly noted by Gadd (1958, p. 90) as a novel mixture of a funerary and building inscriptions with the purpose of supporting Nabonidus's claim for legitimate Babylonian king.

² See the discussion in section I.

Beaulieu 1989; Kuhrt 1990; Machinist and Tadmor 1993; Schaudig 2001; Beaulieu 2007 and others), so, except for a few events directly related to the content of the Adad-guppi Stele, no further discussion is to be added in this study. According to the scholars' historical reconstruction, the earliest historical event related to the Adad-guppi Stele is the fall of the Assyrian Harran to the hands of the Babylonian-Median army and the destruction of the city and its temple. The text describes this event as a result of the angry *Sîn* abandoning his city, Harran, and his temple, Ehulhul (I:6–9). Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, is believed to have conquered the city in his 16th year (608 BC) and made it a ruin. He seemed to take the statues of *Sîn* and his divine family to Babylon, and this led to the failure to worship *Sîn* and to the ignorance of his cultic rites. This tragedy deeply worried Adad-guppi and probably her son, Nabonidus. It is not clearly explained, however, why they were so closely concerned with the fate of the city, Harran, and its patron deity.

Dhorme suggested that Adad-guppi may have been a high priestess of the temple at Harran (Dhorme 1949). The reasons for his deduction were her love for the city and prayer for its restoration, and finally her burial there after her death.³ In the Adad-guppi Stele, the queen mother identifies herself as a worshipper (*palihtu* and *paliḥassumu*) of *Sîn*, which is derived from the word *palāḥu* 'to respect, honour, venerate' (CAD⁴ P 43). The participial form (Adad-guppi Stele I:1–6; 14–15) of the verb is customarily used for expressing reverence for a god or king, and it is not known to us as a title of religious professional personnel in temples or palaces. The stative form (*palḥāku* in Adad-guppi Stele I:10–11), together with a word about godhead, leads a sentence with no specific ritual connotations and shows the generic nature of the term as well (Beaulieu 1989, p. 73). This expression, therefore, cannot be used to confirm Adad-guppi's religious career.

Her career in the Babylonian palace, however, is better attested. Adad-guppi claims that her job was somehow related to the kings and that she successfully completed her tasks (Adad-guppi Stele II:40–44). During the time of her service for the kings, she must have stayed at Babylon, the capital city. In sum, Adad-guppi certainly had affection toward the city, Harran, but it is not clear if she was born there. She shows particular devotion to *Sîn*, but there is no clear evidence for her working as a priestess in the temple Ehulhul. She lived in Babylon while she served the Babylonian kings.

II. The Literary Structure of the Adad-guppi Stele Inscription

Considering the occasion for which this text was composed, the inscription must be a funerary text. A funerary text as a literary style, however, is not commonly found in ancient Near East, and it is characterised by its brevity and fixed content (see Bottéro

³ There is also a mention of Nabonidus's rule from Omen literature as "Harran Dynasty (BALA-*e* ḥar-ra-an^{ki} [i-šak-kan])". See Grayson (1975a, pp. 32–33).

⁴ All the acronyms used in this paper follow the abbreviations of Roth et al.'s (1956–2010) dictionary.

1982; 1983; al-Rawi 2008). In comparison to this genre, the inscription of the Adad-guppi Stele has much more complex and multi-layered text, a mixture of first-person narrative (sounds like a monumental inscription or an autobiography)⁵ and third-person report. The contents of the inscription can be summarised as follows:

	Introduction	Ref.
1	I am Adad-guppi, the mother of Nabonidus.	I:1–6
	Prayer and response, I	
2.1	<i>Sîn</i> left Harran, but I kept worshiping, praying, managing a humble life, and offering gifts.	I:6–28
2.2	<i>Sîn</i> answered my prayer and called my son, Nabonidus, to the throne.	I:29–44
	Prayer and response, II	
3.1	Stay with my son until he completes the construction of <i>Ehulhul</i> ; vanquish his enemies.	I:44–II:4
3.2	Your son, Nabonidus, will complete the construction of <i>Ehulhul</i> and lead the gods back to the temple.	II:5–12
	Response and prayer, III	
4.1	Nabonidus completed the construction of <i>Ehulhul</i> and recovered the old cult.	II:13–22
4.2	I have happily lived for 104 years.	II:22–34
4.3	<i>Sîn</i> , king of gods, help my son, Nabonidus, not to commit sin and protect him by sending helping angels.	II:34–40
	Addition: Reminiscence of Past Events	
5	I served many kings of Babylon and faithfully fulfilled my duty, and my son also served them and did whatever pleased them.	II:40–III:4
	Funeral	
6	Adad-guppi died at the ninth year of Nabonidus's reign and was buried with a sumptuous funeral.	III:5–43
	Warning	
7	Remember the gods' commands and perform the right cult, then the gods will bless you. If not (or destroy the stele), then they will curse you.	III:44–56

⁵ For this reason Longman (1991) called this text as 'fictional autobiography'.

The text is largely the combination of a theological treatise repeating the theme of ‘prayer and response’ three times and a secular report of the queen mother’s funeral. It begins with the introduction of the narrator, with her name and title (section 1). The self-introduction of a narrator with a name, official title, epithets, and filiation is the typical formula of royal inscriptions. Since Adad-guppi is not a king, she does not have an official title. So she introduces herself by alluding to her son’s name instead: “the mother of Nabonidus, king of Babylon”. Another major element of her self-introduction is of a religious character: her being a “worshipper” of *Šin*, *Ningal*, *Nusku*, and *Sadarnunna*.

The first paragraph with the theme of ‘prayer and response’ tells us the history of the Babylonian empire and the city of Harran, together with a glimpse of Nabonidus’s rise to the throne (section 2). The fall of the Assyrian empire, the dominant power during 9th–7th centuries BC in ancient Near East, at the hands of Medes and Babylonians and the destruction of the city Harran and the temple of *Šin* during the war were theologically reinterpreted. Such disaster did not drive Adad-guppi into despair, however, and she lived a life devoted to *Šin* and kept praying to please the divine heart (section 2.1). In response to her prayer, *Šin*’s anger melted away, and he called Nabonidus to the Babylonian throne, and allowed him to restore the temple Ehulhul at Harran (section 2.2). The godly choice of a king is one of the beloved motifs of Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, but the role of the mother’s prayer was a literary innovation of Nabonidus.⁶

The theme of prayer and response is repeated for the second time (section 3), and the faithful mother wishes that the great gods would accompany her son on either side and protect him (section 3.1). She also asks that *Šin* would not forget her son until he completes the construction of the temple Ehulhul. The response for this prayer was given to her through a dream (section 3.2) in which *Šin* appeared and laid his two hands on her predicting that her son would complete his mission to restore the temple and lead great gods (statues) into it. Adad-guppi listened to this prophecy very carefully and kept it in her mind.

The next paragraph is written with the same theme but with a slight change of order, ‘response and prayer’ (section 4). The reason for the change seems to be a need for a literary or theological wrap-up at this point – *Šin*’s prediction came true – and this change of order creates a certain poetic rhythm at the end of the first half of the inscription (A-B, A-B, and B-A). So the descriptions of Nabonidus’s achievements precede his mother’s prayer (section 4.1): such as his completion of the temple and proper cultic rites, and his personal escort of divine images from Babylon to *Ehulhul* at Harran. As for the queen mother, she is grateful for her 104 blessed years of good health and the happiness of seeing four generations of descendants (section 4.2). Then comes her prayer in which she hands over Nabonidus, her beloved son, to *Šin*, asking to keep him from committing any crime, to protect him with guardian spirits, to deliver him from his enemies’ hands, and to continue worshipping *Šin* (section 4.3).

⁶ A similar motif is mentioned in one of the letters from Assyrian scholars (*SAA* X 188: r. 3–8), but the text clearly has a characteristic of divination.

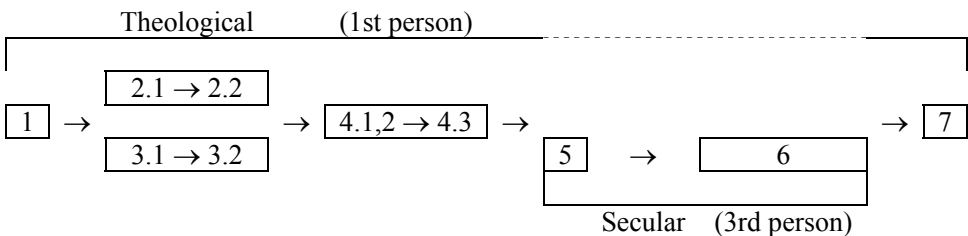
Such a faithful prayer would be a proper ending of a memorial inscription, especially of Babylonian building inscriptions. Since this document was composed at the time of a funeral service, there are a few additional paragraphs.

The first addition is Adad-guppi's memoir, explaining how devoted she was to the former Babylonian kings and how her son grew up and took his position in the palace (section 5). The narrator still tells her story in first person perspective, continuing the literary style from the beginning, but the devout religious ambiance disappears all at once. This is the place where the literary style changes, and this requires an explanation. This part of the document could provide the most valuable information about Nabonidus's rise to the Babylonian throne, but the text is very fragmentary and the remaining sentences are not easy to understand.

The next paragraph gives details on Adad-guppi's death and her funeral (section 6). Now the narrating voice is shifted into the third person singular, and describes the death of the queen mother in the ninth year of Nabonidus and the regal funeral ceremonies and abundant funeral offerings brought by Nabonidus's officials.

At the very end of the text comes the warning (section 7), typically found at the end of Assyrian royal inscriptions. This paragraph alone could also be a short funerary inscription. The warning does not continue the context of the directly preceding sections, but commands the keeping of the great god's ordinances. One who obeys the divine commands will be blessed, but one who breaks them or damages the stele will be cursed.

The structure of the text does not belong to any known literary form of ancient Mesopotamia. The earlier part of the text resembles the royal inscriptions, especially Neo-Babylonian building inscriptions (see Renger 1980–1983, § 9.A): the first person narrative with its introduction, the body text (three sections of the 'prayer and response' theme), and the warning (instead of a prayer). To the latter part, however, the mother's memoir and the report of the funeral are additionally attached (the third person narrative) for special purposes. This means that the text is built on a traditional literary form, but transformed to meet the need of the occasion. The author of the text gives respect to the literary tradition of ancient Babylon, but tries to forge a new form of expression from it. The study of the structure itself shows that the text is struggling between adherence to tradition and the creation of a new trend. The structure can be summarised as follows:



The combination of the theological treatise (1st person narrative) and the secular report (3rd person narrative)

III. The Literary Image of the Mother in the Eyes of Her Son

Adad-guppi is depicted in the text not only as a biological mother who gave birth to her son, Nabonidus, but also as an “intercessor” who helped him to get the throne by introducing her faith to *Sîn* and being a bridge between her son and the great kings of the time.

1. The Intercessor that Gave Birth to Him and Led Him to a State Career

The text of the Adad-guppi Stele starts with an introduction, in which she proudly presents herself as the mother of the Babylonian king (Adad-guppi Stele I:1–6). In other words, Nabonidus wanted his mother’s name engraved in front of his on a stone, commemorating it for generations to come. It stands in stark contrast to the Mesopotamian royal custom of commemorating their parents’ names, where the name of an incumbent king is commonly introduced as a son of a previous king, generally the present king’s father. There are some funerary inscriptions with royal women’s names (Bottéro 1982; 1983; al-Rawi 2008), but they are rather exceptions than customary findings. Since royal inscriptions are an important means of royal propaganda, a newly enthroned king is mostly eager to promote his own name, not to remember his deceased father. Even when one has a great hero as his father, the son stops producing royal inscriptions for his father at his own enthronement. The son tries to show that his own achievements as a new king go beyond those of any previous kings. Nabonidus’s erection of a memorial stele for his mother, therefore, has particular significance in ancient Near Eastern literary history.

Ancient Mesopotamian kings’ descriptions of their parents can be categorised by the distance between the king and his parents. Ashurbanipal of Assyria stands at one end of the spectrum.

<i>ul idi abu u umme ina burki ištaraṭiya arbā anāku</i>	I knew no father or mother; I grew up in the lap of my goddesses (<i>OECT</i> 6, pl. 11, K. 1290: 13 = Langdon 1927; <i>SAA</i> 3, 3:13 = Livingstone 1989)
<i>anāku Aššur-bāni-apli ša la abi u AMA ša turabbī šaqūtu šarrat [ina kirim]meki ša balāṭi taḥtininnima taššuri napištī</i>	I, Ashurbanipal, who have no father or mother, whom you, lofty queen (<i>Mullissu</i>), have reared – you have protected me in your arms which (give) life, you have watched over me (<i>OECT</i> 6, pl. 13, K. 3515: 16f)

Ashurbanipal was one of the Sargonid kings who had great conqueror kings as a father and a grandfather, but here he said he did not know his father or his mother. It is well known, of course, that Ashurbanipal was not the first son of his father, Esarhad-don, and his father was not present at his enthronement (Radner 2003, p. 176). His coronation was closely related to the royalty oath forced by *Naqia-Zakutu*, his grandmother. But it was his father who appointed him as crown prince before his death and prepared his way to the Assyrian kingship. These sentences, therefore, do not deny the

identification of Ashurbanipal's parents, only confess the king's belief that the protection and blessings of gods had played a greater role than the love of his biological parents. Whatever the reason was, Ashurbanipal chooses to disregard his father's name, not to mention his mother's name, and to emphasise divine selection in his becoming a king.

Such a stance reminds us of the tradition of the Babylonian Creation Epic, *Enuma Elish* (King 1902; Kämmerer–Metzler 2012). The creation of the heaven and earth was possible only after the murder of Apsu and Tiamat by their sons, and especially by the heroic fight of Marduk, who sundered Tiamat's body to two pieces, one of which was lifted up to be the heaven and the other trampled down to be the earth. Marduk's confirmation of the universal order by the conquest of the divine world and the creation of the heaven and earth was symbolically founded upon the dead body of the mother.

When a king recognises his family relations, he tries to lean on the authority of former generations, mainly of his father or grandfather. At the head of royal inscriptions, a king introduces himself as a descendant of great ancestors, to highlight the legitimacy of his claim to the kingship on the basis of tradition handed down from old days (maybe from the primeval days when the kingship first came down from heaven). So kings of the legitimate dynasties were proud of their fathers and grandfathers, but they did not remember the names of their mothers. When they did mention their mother, they said as follows:

<i>ištu ibnānni EN Irua Marduk ibšimu nabnīti ina ummu</i>	When the lord and <i>Irua</i> made me, <i>Marduk</i> made my shape in (the womb of my) mother (VAB 4, 122, I:23–25 = Langdon 1912)
<i>anāku Nabium-na'id ... ša Sīn u Ningal ina libbi ummišu ana šīmat šarrūti išimū šīmassu</i>	I am Nabonidus ... whom <i>Sīn</i> and <i>Ningal</i> destined his fate to the fate of kingship from the womb of his mother (VAB 4, 218, No. 1, I:4–5 = Schaudig 2001, text 2.12)

The kings claim that they are blessed by gods and chosen to be kings from the womb of their mothers. While the expression is built basically on the legitimatising authority of these gods, they recognise the mothers' role in a certain way. A mother was a receptacle of a royal seed, when he started his relationship with great gods, which is still not highly appreciated by her son.⁷

As for Nabonidus, the mother–son relationship is portrayed in an entirely different way. The king also asserted the divine call to the kingship by *Sīn* and the greatness of his religious achievements to restore the forgotten rites of the god, but he did not forget to mention his mother's devout life and ceaseless prayer for him. The god's

⁷ An exceptional case is the words of Sargon of Akkad: *ummi enītu abī ul idi* “my mother was a high priestess, my father I did not know” (King 1901, p. 42, l. 2). Sargon sounds like a beloved son of his mother, even though he did not know his father. The position of the high priestess, however, required celibacy, so Sargon's acknowledgment of his mother did not actually contribute to his well-being and that is why Sargon's mother put her son in a basket and threw it into the river Euphrates. Whatever the situation was, this sentence is not included in any historical document, but in the Birth Legend of Sargon. It is possible, therefore, that the whole mother–son relationship was created as a literary work.

decree to appoint him onto the Babylonian throne was rather the direct result of his mother's prayer.

<p><i>suppīya išmû imguru qibītu uggati libbišu inūhma ana É.HÛL.HÛL bīt Sîn ša qirib Ḥarrani šubat tūb libbišu islimu iršū tayari Sîn šar ilāni ippalsannima Nabû-na'id (^dPA.I) mār ēdu šīt libbiya ana šarrūtu imbēma</i></p>	<p>He (<i>Sîn</i>) heard my prayers, he granted (my) saying. The wrath of his heart calmed, and towards <i>Ehulhul</i> the temple of <i>Sîn</i> which (is) in Harran, the abode of his heart's delight, he was reconciled, he had mercy. <i>Sîn</i>, king of the gods, looked upon me, and <i>Nabû-na'id</i>, the only son, the issue of my womb, to the kingship he called (Adad-guppi Stele I:36–40)</p>
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In addition, Nabonidus clearly mentioned his mother's role at the beginning of his career in the Babylonian court. Since she had been working for kings, Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, she was able to get her son a governmental job of some sort.

<p><i>Nabû-na'id mār šīt libbiya ana pān Nabû-kudurri-uššur mār Nabû-apla-uššur u Nergal- šarra-uššur šar Bābili ušzizma urri mūši bēlūtišunu iššurma ša elišunu tābi itepušu kayyāna</i></p>	<p><i>Nabû-na'id</i> (my) son, the offspring of my womb, before Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar and (before) Neriglissar, king of Babylon, I let him stand. Day and night he honoured their authority; whatever was pleasing to them he performed continually (Adad-guppi Stele II:45–48)</p>
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In this way, Adad-guppi was, in the eyes of Nabonidus, the one who shaped him in her womb, opened the door to a decorated career, and consequently to the Babylonian kingship. A son's love of his mother should not be considered anything strange, but Nabonidus's recognition of his love toward his mother was exceptionally extended to identify her as his official patron. Whether his claims about his mother were historically true or not, his decision to erect a stele to commemorate his mother as the one who played the most important role in his ascent cannot be a part of the Babylonian cultural tradition. No Mesopotamian king would be pleased to admit it as a fact. Nabonidus must have had some good reason to remain as 'a son of a mother', prevented from being 'a son of a father'.

2. The Intercessor who Led the Son to Great Gods

What Adad-guppi granted to her son was not just a body and the opportunity to get a job in the Babylonian court. She introduced him to the worship of the moon god, *Sîn*, the lord of the city, Harran.⁸ At the beginning of the Adad-guppi Stele, she introduces

⁸ Van der Toorn (1995) asserts that the only way a widow was positively appreciated by the ancient Babylonian public was to show devout faith to certain deity. It is not clear, of course, when Adad-guppi became a widow.

herself as “a worshipper of *Sîn*, *Ningal*, *Nusku*, and *Sadarnunna*” (Adad-guppi Stele I:1–6). This religious identity comes right after the account of her relationship to the incumbent king of Babylonia. In other words, the most important inheritance of Adad-guppi that Nabonidus wanted to remember was his religious relationship with his mother after their biological relationship. The importance of religion for the mother and son is reflected in other expressions as well.

<i>ina libbi ša ašratu Sîn Ningal Nusku u Sadarnunna ašte'eu palḥāku ilūssun</i>	In the middle of temples I sought after <i>Sîn</i> , <i>Ningal</i> , <i>Nusku</i> , and <i>Sadarnunna</i> and I was worshipper of their godhead (Adad-guppi Stele I:10–11)
<i>sissiktišu ašbatma mušī u urra</i>	I laid hold on his (<i>Sîn</i> 's) hem of the robe, night and daytime (I:12, 17; II:23)
<i>aštene'ea ilūssu rabuti ūmišam la naparkāya</i>	I had ever in mind his great godhead daily, without ceasing (I:13; II:23, 44)
<i>ša Sîn Šamaš Istar u Adad mala balṭāku ina šamē u eršeti pāliḥassunu anāku</i>	As for <i>Sîn</i> , <i>Šamaš</i> , <i>Istar</i> , and <i>Adad</i> , so long as I am alive, I (am) their votaress (both) in heaven and earth (I:14–15)
<i>ēnaya ittišu bašā</i>	My two eyes were with him (I:18)
<i>ina supē</i>	In prayer (I:18)
<i>ina ... labān appi</i>	In ... humility of face (I:18)
<i>kummusāk ina maḥrišun</i>	I bowed down before them (I:19)
<i>ana nuḥḥu lib ilia u ištaria lubušu argamanni šukutti kaspi ḥurāši šubātī eššū riqqī u šamni ṭābi lā uṭaḥḥā ana zumriya šubat naksu labšākuma mušēya saqqummu</i>	In order to comfort the hearts of my god and my goddess, a dress of fine wool, jewels, silver, gold, a new garment, perfumes, sweet oil, I did not apply to my body, (but in) a torn garment I went clothed, my garments were mourner's dress (I:21–25) ⁹
<i>adallal dalīlišun</i>	I proclaimed their praises (I:25–26)
<i>tanittu ālia u ištaria ina libbiya iššakinma</i>	In my heart, I kept the glory of my city and my goddess (I:27)
<i>maššartišunu ašsur</i>	I did all my duty (I:27)
<i>mimmūa damqā lā ēzibma našāku maḥaršun</i>	Anything good of mine I did not omit, but carried it (ever) before them (I:28)
<i>qātāya aššima ana Sîn šar ili palḥiš ina tēmēqa</i>	My two hands I lifted up to <i>Sîn</i> , king of the god, reverently with imploration (I:44–45)
<i>amat Sîn šar ilāni iqbayya atta'idma āmur anāku</i>	The word of <i>Sîn</i> , king of the gods, which he spoke to me, I honoured, and I myself saw (it fulfilled) (II:11–12)

⁹ As for the image here, see van der Toorn (1995, p. 10). Nabopolassar once covered his head with dust and mourned sitting on the ground because of the destruction of temples of Nineveh by Medians (Babylon Stele II:32–41). See Stephen Langdon (1912, pp. 270–289, Nbd Nr. 8) and Schaudig (2001, text 3.3).

The most striking sentence, however, is as follows:

<i>Nabû-na'id šar Bābili mārūa ana Šîn bēliya aqqid adi balṭu lā iḥaṭṭakka</i>	Nabonidus, king of Babylon, my son, to <i>Šîn</i> my lord I have devoted. So long as he is alive let him not offend against you (Adad-guppi Stele II:35–37)
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The verb “to offend” (*haṭū*) is generally used as “to make a mistake” in economic or commercial documents, “to fail or neglect” in religious or omen literature, or “to trespass” on a treaty between two countries, which causes a military campaign (CAD H 156–158). But it is beyond the imagination of ancient Babylonians to mention an offence of their current king. One could allege the sin of a king long after his reign or at the very least after his death. The employment of the verb on the current king in the Adad-guppi Stele – a royal project – is, therefore, extraordinary, and there must be a really good reason to take such a step against the literary tradition of Babylonia. It cannot be said for sure in any way, but considering the weight of Adad-guppi’s and Nabonidus’s faith to *Šîn*, the reason could well be their religious devotion. In other words, Nabonidus willingly gave up the position of absolute infallibility that his predecessors traditionally enjoyed for ages and became a humble individual, and his consent to use the verb in this inscription clearly shows his appreciation of the religious inheritance of his mother.

In order to claim Nabonidus’s devotion as a basis of interpretation for the text of the Adad-guppi Stele, his personal religious preference and his policy of religion should be defined and distinguished. The religious policy of Nabonidus is a major topic for another essay, and the dialogue on this topic needs some more clear-cut evidence, either textual or archaeological. The opponents of Nabonidus and the priests of Marduk’s temple, however, left us very biased documents describing Nabonidus as a heretic king: “Verse Account” (Smith 1924, pp. 83ff, plates V–X; Schaudig 2001, text P1) and “Nabonidus Chronicle” (Grayson 1975b, pp. 104–111). According to these texts, while he was staying at Tayma in the middle of the Arabian Desert, he did not participate in the New Year’s Festival at Babylon; he made a hideous new statue and installed it in *Esagila* instead of the traditional Marduk statue; and he built a big new temple in Harran copied from the plans of *Esagila*. Since such a senseless king was on the throne, according to them, Babylonians were living in distress and willing to open the city gate to receive Cyrus, king of Persia, and his army as liberators. These documents are of course written by the opposition parties of Nabonidus in Babylon under Cyrus’s rule, so their historical validity cannot be highly appreciated. But Nabonidus did stay in Tayma for a long time, leaving his capital city in the hands of his son, and his execution of the national budget must have been largely focused on building temples of the moon god. Even though there are many lacunae in available information to understand Nabonidus’s reign, a tendency of his religious policy toward the cult of the moon god cannot be denied.

It is still not clear if Nabonidus’s devotion to *Šîn* was publicly expressed and caused an offence to the higher court officials and the priests of *Esagila*, the temple of Marduk. If Nabonidus openly showed his devotion to a patron god of Harran, and

squandered the budget of his royal court for the temples of the moon god, the traditional class of nobles and priests at the capital city might have felt a sense of loss or even an urge for a rebellion. This raises the question of what Nabonidus's own understanding of the religious situation was. Nabonidus's inscriptions are generally focused on his building projects and do not refer to specific historical events, but there is one paragraph in the Harran Stele (Gadd 1958, pp. 56–69; Röellig 1964, pp. 218–260; Schaudig 2001, text 3.1) in which he discloses his heart:

<p><i>lā idū ezzessu ša šar ilani Nannari paršišunu imšū'ima idabbubū surrātū u lā kīnātu kīma kalbi ittanakkalū aḫāmiš</i></p>	<p>They did not know the wrath of the king of the gods, <i>Nannar</i>. They forgot their duty, and they talked treason and not loyalty; like a dog they devoured one another (Harran Stele I:18–21)</p>
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The moon god, *Nannar*, who is *Sîn*, was not properly worshipped and his rituals had been abandoned until the time of Nabonidus, which enraged the god. Nabonidus was trying to fix the problem, but those negligent court officials and priests were talking about what they did not understand and planned treason against him. In other words, Nabonidus would not compromise on his personal religious preference, though we are not informed how fundamentally or widely applied it was in reality. At least in this text, he was fully aware of the political conflict and confrontation caused by his preference for the moon god cult, and he expressed criticism on the opposition party and compared them to a dog. Such behaviour is more fitting for a passionate religious leader than for an experienced politician. The image of a heretic king might be a biased portrait of his opposing party, but it seems quite clear that Nabonidus had a clear religious preference and he related it to the inheritance of his mother.

Nabonidus also attempted to transfer devotion for the moon god, bequeathed by his mother, to the next generation. Nabonidus appointed his daughter, *Ennigaldi-Nanna*, as an *entu*-priestess at *Egipar* temple of Ur, which was the temple of *Ningal*, the spouse of *Sîn*. The appointment of a princess to *entu*-priestess was a forgotten custom from the middle of the Old Babylonian period (Stol 2016, pp. 558, 561, 574), but Nabonidus was eager to revive this hoary tradition in order to fulfill the order of the moon god.

<p><i>ašlušma aššu mārāt šīt libbiya têrtu ēpušma šīr dumqi ītappalūinni amāt Sîn bēlu šurbū il bāniya qibit Šamaš u Adad bēlē bīri atta'idma mārāt šīt libbiya ana enūti aššima Ennigaldi-Nanna šumša ambi</i></p>	<p>For the third time, I took omen for the daughter, my offspring, and they answered me auspicious omen. The word of <i>Sîn</i>, very great lord, my creator god, (and) the word of <i>Šamaš</i> and <i>Adad</i>, lords of divination I praised; and I raised the daughter, my offspring, to high priestess-ship; and I called her name <i>Ennigaldi-Nanna</i> (Ennigaldi-Nanna Stele I:20–25, see Clay 1915, pp. 66–75; Schaudig 2001, text 2.7)</p>
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As for Nabonidus's son, Belshazzar, Nabonidus offers the following prayer in the building inscription for the *Egipar* temple at Sippar:

<p><i>yāti Nabû-na'id šar Bābili pāliḫ ilūtikunu rabīti lalē balātu lušbi u ša Bēl-šarri- ušur mār rēštu šīt libbiya šūrikū ūmēšu aj irša'hiḫtu</i></p>	<p>As for me, <i>Nabû-na'id</i>, king of Babylon, worshipper of your great godheads, let me be satisfied with life. And for <i>Bēl-šarri-ušsur</i>, the eldest son, my offspring, lengthen his days (and) may he not commit a crime (Cylinder and Tablet Copy I:34'–38', see Langdon 1912, pp. 242–251; Schaudig 2001, text 2.14)</p>
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Nabonidus here wishes that his son would not commit a crime before the gods. It is the same expression that Nabonidus's mother used, when she prayed for her son to *Sîn*. It means that Nabonidus considered it necessary that the primacy of religious devotion, inherited from Adad-guppi, be passed down to the next generation.

3. The Intercessor who Legitimatised Him in Connection to the Tradition of Royal Succession

Now the mother is given the role of a mediator between her son and one of the ideological stances of Mesopotamian politics in which she is supposed to help him acquire the right of succession. The right to claim the highest authority in the Babylonian court generally comes down from father to son, so many Babylonian kings proudly mention the names of the great kings from the progenitor of their dynasty to their own father as evidence for the legitimacy of their kingship. When this ideology was extended beyond the range of one dynasty, the kingship of ancient Mesopotamia was alleged to have come down from heaven at the beginning of history. It has been succeeded by gods' will from one dynasty to another, and there always was one lawful king to rule over the whole territory of Mesopotamia. The physical exhibition of this ideology appears at the Sumerian King List (Jacobsen 1939; Finkelstein 1963). Since the Sumerians lived in relatively small city-states, there should have been more than one king at the same time. They asserted, however, the continuous succession of the kingship from one king to another, and from one dynasty to the next. So the current king is the representative of the sacred choice of the gods and of the time-honoured tradition from the beginning of history.

The problem is that a king who rose to the throne by coup d'état could not use this ideology to claim his legitimacy. Nabonidus did not have such a fancy lineage. The only thing he could mention about his father, *Nabû-balāssu-iqbi*, was his epithet, *rubû emqû* "wise noble" (see Schaudig 2001, text 2.6 I:35; text 2.10^a I:22'), and he did not have any brother or relatives who would grant him the throne right.¹⁰ For him, therefore, his mother was the only choice that he could use to make a connection to the glorious tradition of ancient Mesopotamian civilisation. At first, Nabonidus decided to fill Adad-guppi's life with faithful behaviours and ardent prayers for the moon

¹⁰ It is said that Nabonidus was the only son of his mother (Adad-guppi Stele I:39–41; II:13–15; also Harran Stele I:7–8 in Gadd 1958, pp. 56–69; Schaudig 2001, text 3.1).

god, *Sîn*. And then the son gave the testimony that his mother's words of prayer persuaded the god who reversed the ordinary tradition of royal succession and chose Nabonidus as a Babylonian king. She could not be a worshiper of Marduk, because the god was the patron deity of Babylon and its traditional royal house. Nabonidus needed another ancient god from the highest rank of the Babylonian divine hierarchy who used to grant the throne right to 'son of nobody' like himself. That is why his mother had to become a devout worshiper of the moon god and the primary base of his royal legitimation, which is a stronger weapon than military or political schemes or negotiations.

Another example of this interesting logic is found in the mother's prayer reported in the text of the Adad-guppi Stele. The mother did her best to stay on her faith to the moon god, refrain from luxurious life style, and wait for *Sîn*'s return to his city, Harran (Adad-guppi Stele I:19–21). Then she pompously counted the years of her devoted life as follows:

<p><i>ultu MU-20-KÂM Aššur-bāni-apli šar māt Aššur ša aldāku adi MU-42-KÂM Aššur-bāni-apli MU-3-KÂM Aššur-eṭīlu-ili mārišu MU-21-KÂM Nabū-apla-uššur MU-43-KÂM Nabū-kudurri-uššur MU-2-KÂM Amēl-Marduk MU-4-KÂM Nergal-šarra-uššur ina 95 šanāti Sîn šar ilāni ša samē u eršēti ša ašrāti ilūtišu rabūti ašte'eu ipšētiya damiqti ḥadīš ippalsannima supīya išmū</i></p>	<p>From the 20th year of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, that I was born (in), until the 42nd year of Ashurbanipal, the 3rd year of <i>Aššur-etīlu-ili</i>, his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar, the 2nd year of Evil-Merodach, the 4th year of Neriglissar – for 95 years, <i>Sîn</i>, king of the gods of heaven and earth, (in) which I sought after the shrines of his great godhead, (for) my good doings he looked upon me with a smile, he heard my prayers (Adad-guppi Stele I:29–36)</p>
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It seems to be a straightforward boast of her many years of dedication, but a closer look at the list of the great kings reveals the fact that both Assyrian and Babylonian kings are mentioned without distinction. In other words, Nabonidus's list of kings, under which his mother kept her way of religious life, is extended over the political borderline between Assyria and Babylonia. *Sîn*'s merciful choice of him as a Babylonian king is not a local issue of Babylonia, but here is interpreted as the continuation of the sacred kingship from Ashurbanipal through Nebuchadnezzar to himself. The regional or dynastic identity of a king is not important, only the ceaseless succession of the kingship from the beginning of history to the present, which is exactly the ideology of the Sumerian King List.

Babylonia had incredibly complicated relationships with Assyria for hundreds of years of its history. Under Neo-Assyrian imperial rule, however, Babylonia lost its independence and became a vassal state or province. The capital city of Babylon was once utterly destroyed by an Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Having advanced in years, did Adad-guppi forget all these historical events? Already sitting on the Babylonian throne for nine years, why did Nabonidus feel a need to remind people these Assyrian

kings in his mother's funeral inscription? It is all because of his lack of normal qualifications to the throne. When he was going to deny the tradition of ordinary royal succession and claim the direct choice of a deity to the kingship, he needed his mother to endure all her life with unperturbed faith. His mother had to be a disciple who was devoted to the moon god for more than a hundred years and a prophetess who heard *Sîn*'s revelation and kept track of its fulfillment. For the same reason, *Sîn*, the moon god of the mother and son, had to be the king of all the other gods and of the entire universe, who had to be interested in having only one legitimate king on the earth without counting his familial or dynastic identity. The image of the mother here is not just a benefactor who arranged a governmental job for her son but a great magician who conjured up the highest god of the universe to help her son to be a part of the everlasting tradition of royal succession.

Nabonidus's eagerness to engraft himself into the ancient tradition can also be found in his other behaviour. It is closely related to the fact that Babylonian temple buildings were made of clay bricks and needed constant repair and restoration. It was the duty of an incumbent king to take care of the temples. Now when a Babylonian king set out a building enterprise, they used to say that they "returned (the temple building) to its (original) place (*ana ašrišu târu*)". Innovations were not welcomed in the Babylonian religious world, but restoration to the original plan was appreciated (Weisberg 1998). Nabonidus was not an exception, but he was the most passionate follower of this ideology. He was eager to conduct an excavation on a temple site and find the ancient building plan or foundation inscriptions. He did not stop there, but invented a new expression to emphasise his great achievements:

<p><i>Ebabbarra šuāti adkema ḥiṭṭassu aḥṭuṭ temmenšu labīri ša Šarru-kīnu šar maḥrī ṭipušu āmurma eli temmenna Šarru- kīnu ṭipuššu ubān lā ašê ubān lā erēbi uššušu addima ukīn libnāssu</i></p>	<p>I raised this <i>Ebabbarra</i>; and I excavated a pit. I saw the old foundation that <i>Šarru-kīnu</i>, my previous king, built; and I lay its base on the foundation (that) <i>Šarru-kīnu</i> built without a finger-wide going out (or) coming in, and I established its brick-work (Cylinder and Tablet Copy I:12'–17')</p>
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Here Nabonidus tries to associate his building work to that of a legendary king, Sargon of Akkad, with whom he does not have any kinship relation. The literary invention of Nabonidus is the expression "without a finger-wide going out or coming in", declaring his sincere resolution to follow the track of his previous kings. Nabonidus's almost obsessive exploration of the relics of ancient kings bought him the title of the first archaeologist ever in the world.¹¹ But we know that his excavation was not conducted

¹¹ Nabonidus's archaeological interest can be found in many other inscriptions. When he dedicated his daughter as an *entu*-priestess of the moon god, he found the stele of Nebuchadnezzar I describing the cult and outlook of the priestess (Ennigaldi-Nanna Cylinder I:29–32). At the time when he restored the *Ebabbar* temple at Larsa, the stele of Hammurabi was found (Cylinder and Tablet Copy I:74'-II:6). The excavation of *Eulmash* temple site at Sippar-Anunitum provided the statue of *Šagarakti-šuriaš*, of which the inscription was fully quoted in Nabonidus's document (Cylinder and Tablet Copy III:40–63).

from academic or antiquarian purposes. Nabonidus was preoccupied with finding ancient building sites and inscriptions in order to solve the persistent problem of legitimacy which he could not dismiss for all his life.

IV. Summary

The inscription on the Adad-guppi Stele is an unusual literary work with both its innovative structure and its contents organised to describe Adad-guppi as the intercessor for Nabonidus. The literary structure of the inscription was a combination of the three-tier royal inscription (theological 1st person narrative) and a memorial text at his mother's funeral (secular 3rd person narrative). It is a literary invention of Nabonidus's scribes to meet the need of the occasion, and surely a creative attempt. The mother's role is planned to make up for the physical, religious, and political deficiency of her son. First, she gave birth to Nabonidus and gave him an opportunity to have a court career. Second, the mother led her son to the sincere faith to *Sîn* and became the source of his blessings. Third, she worked hard to build a bridge between Nabonidus and the ancient Mesopotamian political ideology of 'one legitimate king' over all the earth, and to achieve the legitimisation for her son's ascension to the Babylonian throne, which he could not confirm until the ninth year of his reign. The reason why Nabonidus chose his mother to bear this critical role is the fact that he was a son of nobody, one who did not have any prestigious background to claim royal authority. His line of propaganda seemed to work very well for 17 years, which is 8 more years after the death of the queen mother, but it lost its leverage at the appearance of Cyrus, king of Persia.

An intercessor is a petitioner standing between an authority figure and an individual who does not have ability to solve her or his problem for her or his own. The function of an intercessor is to urge the authority figure to listen to the words of the person in need, voluntarily sacrificing her or his personal interest or desire. In other words, the intercessor must follow a certain way of life in order to keep her or his qualification. Adad-guppi evoked by Nabonidus is, therefore, a sound example of an intercessor. She stood for her son against the Babylonian society and became his bridge to *Sîn*, the king of gods, and the ancient Mesopotamian political ideology. With the purpose of performing her duty, she was said to have worshiped *Sîn* for all her life, offered precious gifts to the god, refused to put on luxuries for herself, and prayed ceaselessly for her son. Since she successfully accomplished her task, her son became the favoured one of gods and consequently the king of Babylonia. In this fashion, the inscription on the Adad-guppi Stele is full of this beneficial image of the maternal intercessor. In addition to the kind and generous female characters in mythological and literary compositions,¹² Adad-guppi should be named as a *Mater Misericordiae* in ancient Near East.

¹² This conclusion goes hand in hand with Harris's (2000) research on gender and aging. According to her, young and beautiful women are generally depicted in positive light because of their

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ability to produce next generation. Aged women are different, because they are independent, dogmatic, and able with their own authority, so they are not submissive to men. The only case in which an aged woman is positively described is when she plays the role of an intercessor (Harris 2000, pp. 98–100).

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