CHAPTER TWO

NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTROLOGY

The association made in the Greco-Roman world between the profession “astrologer” and the name “Chaldean” is abundantly attested to in Hellenistic literature, and the renown of the “Chaldeans” as expert practitioners of astrology that emerged in the Hellenistic period continued even into late antiquity. Although originally denoting a people or nation, the term “Chaldean” gradually came to be associated with a priestly class.¹ This is the meaning of “Chaldean” understood by the more well-known Greek historians, the earliest of whom was Herodotus (Histories 1.181.5), then Ctesias (Persika 2), and later Diodorus (Bibliotheca Historica 2.29–31). With the Hellenistic period, “Oriental wisdom” took on almost fashionable status, and Babylonian (Chaldean), Egyptian, and Persian (Zoroastrian) traditions—both real and imaginary—became confused within the Greek context.² The earliest history of the Hellenistic association of the name “Chaldean” with the profession of astrologer is difficult to trace.³ But certainly one of the indications that the impetus for Greek developments in astrology derived from Babylonia are the later and numerous references to the learned traditions of “Chaldeans” by Greek and Roman writers.⁴ To explain the actual development of Greek forms of astrology as direct borrowings from Babylonian concepts has so far not been possible due to a complete lack of evidence. Since the theories, methods, and underlying philosophical rationale of Hellenistic astrology do not resemble

¹ An early usage of “Chaldean” to denote a people is attested perhaps as early as the fifth century B.C.E.: Hellanicus Persika: see F. Jacoby, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, Teil 1 (Berlin, 1923), p. 122. no. 4 F 59.
⁴ See HAMA, pp. 612f.
those of Babylonian celestial omens, they have been considered to be
distinctively Hellenistic Greek in origin.

Textual sources for Hellenistic astrology stem largely from the lat-
ter half of the Hellenistic period and therefore reflect the astrology in
its most elaborate Greco-Roman form, furthest removed from con-
tacts with Babylonian celestial divination.\(^5\) On the other hand, the
bulk of our evidence for Babylonian celestial divination dates from
the seventh century B.C.E., and earlier, and derives primarily from the
omen series \textit{Enûma Anu Enlil}, its commentaries, and the reports of the
scholars to the Sargonid kings in which \textit{Enûma Anu Enlil} is cited and
interpreted.\(^6\)

Astrology can be historically differentiated from the branch of Baby-
lonian divination that interpreted celestial signs as portents. As defined
by David Pingree, astrology is “the study of the impact of the celestial
codes-Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed

\(^5\) For the major sources for Hellenistic astrology, see A. Bouché-Leclercq, \textit{L'Astrologie
grecque} (Paris, 1899); Cumont, Boll et al., eds., CCAG (Brussels: Lamertin, 1898–1951),
vols. 1–12; and for an outline of specific authors and texts with complete biographical
and bibliographical information, see D. Pingree, \textit{The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja} (Cam-

\(^6\) For the texts of \textit{Enûma Anu Enlil}, see the following editions available to date [bib-
liography updated]. Tablet numbers are not always known, as fragmentary preserva-
tion sometimes precludes assigning tablet numbers and/or the series was numbered
variously in antiquity: L. Verderame, \textit{Le Tavole I–VI della serie astrologica Enûma Anu
Enlil}, Nisaba 2 (Messina: Dipartimento di science dell’antichità, Università di Messina,
2002); F. Rochberg Halton, ABCD for Tablets 15–22; Erland Gehlken, “Die Adad-
Tafeln der Omenserie \textit{Enûma Anu Enlil}. Teil 1: Einführung.” \textit{Baghdader Mitteilungen} 36
Teil 2. Die beiden ersten Domnertafeln (EAE 42 and 43),” \textit{Zeitschrift für Orientarchäologie
29 (30)}, (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1995);
E. Reiner and D. Pingree, \textit{The Venus Tablet of Ammi-Éaduqa}, Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
2/1, (Malibu: Undena, 1975) [= BPO 1] for Tablet 63, E.Reiner and D. Pingree,
 [= BPO 2], Erica Reiner and David Pingree, \textit{Babylonian Planetary Omens, Part Three}
(Groningen: Styx, 1998) [= BPO 3] for Tablets 59–60, and E. Reiner, \textit{Babylonian Plan-
etary Omens, Part 4} (Leiden and Boston: Brill/Styx, 2005) [= BPO 4] for Tablets 64/65
and other Jupiter Tablets. See also the articles of E. Weidner, “Die astrologische Serie
“Bel”} (Paris, 1908–12), fascs. 1–14; For the Reports, see R. Campbell Thompson,
\textit{The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon} (London, 1900),
vols. 1–2; and S. Parpola, \textit{Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal},