Dating conventions

Published by

Robson, Eleanor.
Ancient Knowledge Networks: A Social Geography of Cuneiform Scholarship in First-Millennium Assyria and Babylonia.
University College London, 2019.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/81338.

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Dating conventions

For most of the period covered by this book, Babylonian dating practice used regnal years, counting from each new king’s accession year, while the Assyrians named years after eponym officials, nominated by the kings. The chronology for the first millennium BC is mostly uncontroversial, thanks to copious quantities of accurately dateable celestial observations, which are themselves dated in the ancient manner. The only exceptions are from the final years of the Assyrian empire, in the late seventh century BC, when the order of eponym officials has not yet been firmly established. In the main text, I thus give dates only in years BC, except for the so-called post-canonical Assyrian eponyms marked with an asterisk (see Chapter 3 note 169).

Continuous dating began with the Seleucid Era (se), which was considered to have begun at the spring equinox of Seleucus I’s accession year, 3 April 311 BC. The main text uses only dates BC; in the endnotes and online Table B both se and BC dates are given. Conversions between the two systems were made using R.H. de Gent’s online Babylonian calendar converter at http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal.htm.