

Univerzita Karlova

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav starého Předního východu

Bakalářská práce

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The Development and Transformation of Temple Institutions
of the 1st millennium BC

Praha, 2023

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Abstrakt AJ

The aim of this thesis is to establish a historical overview of the happenings at the site of Sippar and its main temple of Ebabbar on the verge of Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods through a compilation of available and published textual sources. At the moment, translating and researching unpublished texts is not necessary to achieve the thesis's aim and thus will remain omitted and only later it shall be expanded upon during the author's future research. As such, the author is going to address and merge the most notable information from the currently published literature in order to compile a thorough summary of the happenings at the site of the ancient city of Sippar that is up to date. As a result, the thesis hopes to give the reader the ability to navigate oneself in the history of Sipparean temple of Ebabbar throughout the end of Neo-Babylonian period with the primary focus on the institution's continuity and discontinuity and thus to serve as a reference point, guiding the reader to further, more specifically oriented literature. The question of where the change was prevalent and where it was ephemeral is going to be conveyed using several examples.

Keywords: Sippar, Ebabbar, Neo-Babylonian period, Achaemenid period, 1st Millennium BCE, religious traditions, temple officials

Abstrakt ČJ

Cílem této práce je, na základě analýzy dostupných a publikovaných textových pramenů, vytvořit historický přehled o dění na lokalitě Sippar a v jeho hlavním chrámu Ebabbar na sklonku novobabylonského a achaimenovského období. Překlad a zpracování nepublikovaných textů momentálně nejsou pro dosažení cíle práce nezbytné, a proto zůstanou opomenuty. Teprve časem bude výzkum obohacen o tento prvek při dalším autorově výzkumu. Autor se bude zabírat a slučovat nejpozoruhodnější informace z aktuálně publikované literatury za účelem sestavení důkladného a aktuálního přehledu dění na lokalitě starověkého města Sippar. Ve výsledku doufá, že práce poskytne čtenáři schopnost orientovat se v dějinách sipparského chrámu Ebbabar v průběhu celého novobabylonského období s primárním zaměřením na kontinuitu a diskontinuitu této instituce, a tedy poslouží jako rozcestník, navádějící čtenáře k další, konkrétněji zaměřené literatuře. Otázka, kde změna převládala, a kde byla efemérní, bude zodpovězena prostřednictvím několika příkladů.

Klíčová slova: Sippar, Ebabbar, Novobabylonská říše, Achaimenovská říše, náboženské tradice, chrámový personál, 1. tisíciletí př. n. l.

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1.Introduction

In the course of the work, the author is going to outline the situation of the temple institution of Sippar-Yahrurum, the Ebabbar temple during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods with the aim to outline the change occurred.¹ This city specifically, as the naming of Sippar may be confusing and not always entirely clear, is located at the present-day archaeological site of Abu-Habba and is not to be confused with its “sister” city at the present-day site of Tell ed-Dēr, which is also often referred to as Sippar. The issues associated with this phenomenon, and the problems related to the continuity and discontinuity itself, will be noted and then further elaborated through a survey and analysis of the available secondary literature and should serve as an overview of available information on the subject, as the author would like to pursue the topic in more detail in the future. These secondary sources rely heavily on four different categories of information media, which are outlined in more detail in the chapters 1.1.2.-1.1.4. and then further elaborated upon in the body of research from the chapter 2. onwards.

1.1.Methodology - Approach to Individual Sources

1.1.1. Thesis Structure

The layout of the chapters follows the general pattern mentioned here in 1.1.1. As a part of the introduction the reader is going to read about methodology and all the available sources in 1.1.2.-1.1.4. Then the reader is to be introduced in the chapter 1.2.-1.4. with the city of Sippar and few remarks about its temple Ebabbar, followed by an historical overview of both Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, ending with previous research on the site. In the chapter 2. the research questions are to be examined, ultimately resolved in chapter 3. in the conclusion. All of the the below mentioned chronological dates, if it is not stated otherwise, are taken from Van De Mieroop’s publication *A History of the Ancient Near East*.² The later used outline of

¹ This work has been written to provide an answer to such a question and while it does not aim to completely uplift this mystery, as that would require more research, it at least aims to come close to providing a general understanding of whether anything changed in this particular location in the Ancient Near East during the course of the above-mentioned transition period. Whether the changes made had ensured the smooth continuation of normal life, or whether, on the contrary, they ended what was before and began something new.

² Van De Mieroop 2007.

all the occupations of the staff of the Ebbabar Temple follows the same line as the PIHANS 80 publication *The Neo-Babylonian Ebbabar Temple at Sippar* from Bongenaar.³

1.1.2. Contemporary Sources

1.1.1.1. Cuneiform Tablets

The first category, and at the same time the most important category for any research related to ancient Mesopotamia, are the cuneiform tablets. These clay tablets, mostly of smaller dimensions, bear inscriptions in cuneiform - a type of writing recording primarily two ancient languages. Cuneiform had earned its name from the Latin *cuneus* (wedge) from its wedge-shaped stylus impressions into the wet clay.⁴ This type of writing system appears around 3200 BC⁵ initially to record the Sumerian language.⁶ Later, the predominant language depicting events of the Near East became Akkadian, which was a member of the Semitic family of languages.⁷ Tablets only rarely survive up to this day *in situ*, but the original place for them would be in baskets, boxes or vessels.⁸ When stored properly, they would form archives or libraries. One of which was found at Ebbabar intact where a large number of tablets were found *in situ*, still neatly organized on shelves.⁹

The problem with tablets is that using their full potential would mean having to go through and translate many texts.¹⁰ For this reason, this thesis has set out to exploit these resources through the use of secondary literature, as is going to be stressed abundantly on the following pages of this thesis.

³ Bongenaar 1997.

⁴ Edzard 1980, 544.

⁵ Finkel and Taylor 2015, 6.

⁶ Although, the Sumerian language being the first language recorded in cuneiform is not accepted by everyone. Jagersma (2010, 15) suggests that the cuneiform script was invented for the Sumerian language, on the contrary Monaco (2004, 277-282) leaves the question open.

⁷ Huehnergard 1997, 155-170.

⁸ Finkel and Taylor 2015, 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰ During the BA studies the author had no chance to study the Neo-Babylonian dialect of Akkadian and its script. As a result, the author does not feel entitled to translate these texts as of yet.

1.1.1.2. Royal Inscriptions

The second category is royal inscriptions. These are inscriptions made by the ruler or another member of his royal family to celebrate and communicate his achievements to the world, to his subjects, and to the gods.¹¹ These inscriptions, as will be seen below, of course, mostly carry royal propaganda tendencies and portray events in an idealistic form. For this reason, they should be viewed with more restraint than the clay cuneiform tablets mentioned above, which in turn were often made to record administrative acts. A greater degree of attention will be paid to the Darius's Behistun inscription in the chapters mentioning the early years of the reign of the Persian ruler, because of its importance in filling in the holes in the historical context of its period. It goes without saying that the rulers were able to produce a large number of objects during their reigns on which they engraved their inscriptions.¹² The vase with Xerxes's dedicatory inscription mentioned later in the thesis may serve to provide an example from a site that closer to us, Sippar. Here many remnants of buildings in a form of bricks bearing royal inscriptions could be found in the past. Even so, the fact remains that the most enduring royal inscriptions are found engraved in more durable materials - in stone, which distinguishes them from cuneiform tablets. It is worth mentioning quickly that the Achaemenid royal inscriptions are also written in cuneiform, but in several languages, of which Akkadian is only one. The others traditionally consisted of Old Persian, and Elamite - the languages of the core of the empire. More rarely, Egyptian and Aramaic: the first has been used in the Egyptian Satrapy and the latter as a kind of "lingua-franca" of the Achaemenid Empire.¹³ Looking at the information we are able to draw from these sources it goes without saying that for the purposes of this paper it is impossible to omit them.¹⁴

1.1.3. Ancient Authors

Another source available to us are the works of ancient authors. Unfortunately, these are mostly dubious at best, as many ancient authors write about events they learned second hand and retold them for their contemporary audience. Sometimes we even find that the same event is described by several authors who contradict each other, continuing to make any

¹¹ Prosecký 1999, 194.

¹² These inscriptions do not appear just in stone but also, for example, on bricks, vessels, etc.

¹³ Kent 1950, 6.

¹⁴ The sources have been consulted in translation. Bibliographical references are provided in the footnotes.

possible reconstruction of the actual events difficult. An example taken from events dated to Alexander Hellenistic period is the recount of the death of the court historian Kallisthenes of Olynthus, described by Ptolemy and Aristoboulos. According to Arrian,¹⁵ one states that he was tortured and later hanged,¹⁶ while the other describes his passing away due to natural causes.¹⁷ While this example may not speak for all the others, it illustrates the potential issues quite well. With this in mind, it is usually necessary, if possible, to relate events to another primary source that matches and supports the sequence of the events described.

1.1.4. Other Artifacts

The final, smallest category for our topic is artifacts and other finds of material culture.¹⁸ These are objects that speak to us not through the text written on them, which they often lack, but through the purpose and function of the object. These are everyday objects and objects of a cultic nature. Despite the lack of findings with a specific place where the objects came from and therefore only indirectly linking them to Sippar, there was also an attempt to cover this group in the thesis, at least marginally. This has been done in order to outline the situation more closely to the reader.

1.2. Sippar and Ebabbar

1.2.1. Sippar, the Twin Cities

The ancient city of Sippar is currently located approximately 30 kilometres south of Bagdad. The elusive term of “Sippar” may refer to two different settlements, often given a name of the “twin cities”. They are today located in between the Euphrates and Tigris River approximately 5 kilometres apart, both located in Northern Babylonia. The south-western city called Sippar-Yahrurum is to be identified with the modern Tell Abu-Habbah while the north-eastern city of Sippar-Amnânium is in line with the modern location of Tell ed-Dēr. Although the two cities were technically separate entities, they were much intertwined and had even

¹⁵ Arrian 4.14. For English translation see Chinnock 1884, 231-233. For Czech translation see Bělský 2010, 153-154.

¹⁶ In this passage Arrian records the story about Kallisthenes’s death as described by Ptolemy.

¹⁷ In the same paragraph Arrian (4.14) also reports the fate of Kallisthenes based on Aristoboulos.

¹⁸ The author is aware of cuneiform tablets being artifacts as well, however, their importance deserves another chapter on itself.

shared one single irrigation system.¹⁹ As a result, one can imagine that there has been a possible inhabited part between the two cities strengthening the relationship between these two entities²⁰ – ultimately making it the so-called “twin-city” that it is often referred to as. However, since Sippar-Yahrurum could pride itself with the temple of the sun deity Šamaš,²¹ a deity immensely worshipped during all of Mesopotamian history, Sippar-Yahrurum may have been considered of more religious influence out of the two. That said, Sippar-Amnânum still played an important role in this “twin relationship” as a manufacturing center.²²

The age of the city of Sippar can be grasped from the first glance at Sumerian King List,²³ one of the most important textual sources in terms of establishing relative chronology and political history of the area. Sippar, according to SKL,²⁴ was among the cities entrusted with kingship before the Great Flood. The list followed the path of kingship, starting with its descent from heaven to the earth, at the behest of the gods, through the cities of the alluvial plain.²⁵

Moreover, not only was Sippar one of the most culturally rooted centres of Mesopotamia, but it was also the seat of one of the most prominent deities – Šamaš (Utu in Sumerian). As a sun-deity, one of the astral gods, he embodied the bright light and warmth of the Sun. Furthermore, he was the one who travelled across the daytime sky and journeyed through the netherworld during the night, as a personification of the Sun itself.²⁶ During the day, he would be able to see all the affairs taking place on earth, thus the original and, therefore, true information would always reach him. His knowledge of earthly events earned him the epithet *mudu mimma šumšu*, “one who knows everything.”²⁷ During the night, he was supposed to play a role of judge of the dead in the netherworld. Such a function of his can be clearly seen

¹⁹ Mahmood 2006, 49.

²⁰ Mahmood 2006, 22.

²¹ Role of Šamaš is to be discussed further below.

²² Mahmood 2006, 49.

²³ For the full text translation see *CDLI Literary 000371 (Sumerian King List) composite artifact entry* (No. P479895). Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI). <https://cdli.ucla.edu/P479895> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

²⁴ All the abbreviations can be found in the Abbreviation List at the end of the dissertation, before the Bibliography.

²⁵ It is a clay prism that is inscribed on all four of its sides in two columns. The “List” is a combination of myth and real historical information and as such is not always reliable and is a matter of many discussions up to this day. Prosecký and Rahman 1999, 195.

²⁶ Black and Green 1992, 182-184.

²⁷ Hruša 2015, 56.

on the well-known Code of Hammurabi,²⁸ which is coincidentally supposed to have its original home at the city of Sippar.²⁹ The lunette on top of the stela shows Šamaš handing over the ring and rod to the king, possibly handing him the dominance over the world.³⁰

Šamaš, however, does not only appear on the steles of famous rulers as a means of justifying the sovereign's power, but also as an important figure in a multitude of literary texts, judging much more than just the disputes of mortals, as for example in the mythological text about the dispute between the eagle and the serpent, where he appears as the resolver of the dispute.³¹

1.2.2. The Temple

The temple institution has been one of the most important and influential entities in the Ancient Near East since the beginning of history. It was the temple that helped to unify the society on a religious level and had redistributive power.³² On paper, it was seen as the primary authority housing a deity on earth and, therefore the temple has used, and has been used by the palace, to project authority and maintain a hierarchical order to avoid the dissatisfaction of the given deity.³³

As an abode of a god and his divine family, the temple of every major city had its irreplaceable place within the society. The temple of Šamaš at Sippar, the Ebabbar, and to a lesser extent the shrines of his divine family members, is one of the institutions whose importance was non-negotiable, for the judge Šamaš was the embodiment of light and, as such, the opposite of darkness, which in turn was the embodiment of chaos and disorder – a concept that is known to us from many different religions.³⁴ His subjects and people from afar would often bring offerings in order to gain the favour of the deity.

²⁸ CDLI contributors. Codex Hammurapi. Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. <https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/postings/185> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

²⁹ So Kovačević 2022, 71-82: "The Code was carved in a stone pillar and it was found by M. Morgan in 1901. This masterpiece of a human's thought, almost four millennia old, was engraved in the stone of Babylon (Hammurabi) for the temple of Sippar (now the ruins of Abu Dhabi near Baghdad). An undamaged inscription of the Code is kept in the British Museum."

³⁰ The meaning of the ring and rod is still discussed. For more introductory information see Whatham, 1905, 120-123.

³¹ Hrůša 2015, 56; Haul 2000.

³² Liverani 204, 82.

³³ Hundley 2015, 205.

³⁴ Janák 2005, 164.

The temple, at least in Babylonia, was located on an artificial mound higher than the other buildings and was primarily consisted of a shrine in a rectangular room with an entrance on the longer side,³⁵ essentially resembling a common residential house of that time.³⁶ The shrine had the image of a deity in the form of a statue on a raised throne.³⁷ Over time, other rooms, buildings and courts were layered one by one onto the core of the temple and the whole complex began to grow in scale and sophistication. Definitely, the most distinguishable out of these has to be a ziggurat³⁸ appearing during the Early Dynastic period.³⁹ The elevated position of the shrine and temple as such was necessitated by the religious definition, as a link between heaven and earth (*axis mundi*),⁴⁰ located somewhere in the middle. This was also the case for the mountains on which cosmic structure the temples were built and often identified with.⁴¹ The Babylonian ziggurat in Babylon, the Etemenanki, bore this idea right in its name: "House of the foundations of heaven and earth". Practically, it would not be unprecedented to think that the ancient people needed a taller structure inside the city's premises to have a safe place against floodings of both Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as the Mesopotamian lowlands are particularly flat.

But surprisingly, despite its obvious importance, this institution, and its inner functioning, is still in some periods shrouded in mystery and it is not yet as fully understood. The institution of the temple has changed throughout history, just as the political entities around it have emerged and dissolved, adapting to the new rulers who have laid claim to the territories surrounding the city. One of these transition periods is the shift between the Neo-Babylonian period and the Achaemenid reign and leaves us wondering, what has changed.

³⁵ Hrůša 2015, 74.

³⁶ Charvát and Nováková 1999, 140-142.

³⁷ Hrůša 2015, 74.

³⁸ Originating from akkadian *zaqāru*, meaning "to build high", see CAD *zaqāru* sub Z, 444.

³⁹ Charvát and Nováková 1999, 140-142.

⁴⁰ Hundley 2015, 204.

⁴¹ Keel 1997, 113.

1.3. Historical Overview

1.3.1. The Neo-Babylonian Period

The difficulty of examining this period in the regions of Mesopotamia as a whole should be addressed. As best put by P. Briant in his book from 2002 the field of Assyriology faced certain problems and began with a delay when compared to other fields:

“... the history of the Achaemenid Empire remained largely *terra incognita*. It had been abandoned both by Assyriologists (for whom the fall of Babylon to Cyrus in 539 long marked the end of history) and by Classicists (who “kidnapped” Near Eastern history as of Alexander’s landing in Asia in 334). In a way, squeezed between “eternal Greece” and “the millennial Orient”, tossed between Hellenocentrism (from Aeschylus to Alexander) and Judeocentrism (Cyrus refracted through the prism of the Return from the Exile), Achaemenid history did not exist as a distinct field of study.”⁴²

For this reason, the thesis tries to give at least an abbreviated view of the historical events from as many sides as possible for the reader's best possible grasp of the issue at hand without siding with one or the other.

The expression Neo-Babylonian⁴³ period refers to a period of the reign of a Chaldean dynasty over the lands of Babylonia and its peripheries. At the beginning of this period, the Neo-Assyrian⁴⁴ empire was defeated by a coalition of both Chaldeans and Medes, whom were in good terms, also thanks to a marriage⁴⁵ policy bounding the two parties.⁴⁶ As a result of this alliance, there were few who were able to successfully oppose the coalition,⁴⁷ thus an era of relative stability and prosperity could flourish once again over the lands of Babylon. Perhaps close to that what was last achieved in the Middle-Babylonian⁴⁸ period by the Kassites, at least to such an extent.⁴⁹

This period is characterized by many expeditions into the Levant led by Neo-Babylonian kings, mainly Nabopolassar (626-605 BC) and his son Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BC). There, the lands were subjected and served as a source of revenue for the benefit of

⁴² Briant 2002, 4.

⁴³ From now on the term “Neo-Babylonian” will be referred to as NB; (see Abbreviations)

⁴⁴ From now on the term “Neo-Assyrian” will be referred to as NA; (see Abbreviations)

⁴⁵ Waters 2022, 142; Briant 2002, 24.

⁴⁶ Edzard 1980, 291-297.

⁴⁷ Beaulieu 2016, 1-5.

⁴⁸ From now on the term “Middle-Babylonian” will be referred to as MB; (see Abbreviations)

⁴⁹ Liverani 2014, 364.

Babylon, the wealth must have been quite considerable, since the people of the ancient Levant were known to be skilful merchants, over whom many empires attempted to establish a stable dominion, including the previous Neo-Assyrian⁵⁰ and the following Achaemenid empire. The last king Nabonidus (555-539 BC) has likely shared the same ambition as his predecessors, as his journeys into the Tayma oases could be perceived as an attempt to open new trade routes,⁵¹ making the lands of Babylonia even more prosperous.

According to the information that we have available it seems that these were not times of stagnation, but rather expansion in every way. This has resulted in many building and renovation activities of the king. Many temples, including the temple of Ebabbar,⁵² have been renovated during the NB era several times, leaving them in a prosperous state.⁵³

In addition, it is worth mentioning that some sources⁵⁴ lead us to believe that Nabonidus, the last ruler of the Chaldean dynasty, was not particularly favoured by his priesthood and, as an extend, his subjects in general. Nabonidus was most likely not a native of Babylon and, therefore, he had spent a lot of time outside of the city, pursuing other interests.⁵⁵ Those interests must not have aligned with the interests of the Marduk priesthood at home, especially since some of the inscriptions in Harran left behind by Nabonidus venerate a god Sin as a central religious figure.⁵⁶ Surely this must have been at least concerning already during the reign of Nabonidus, if not unacceptable or even “heretic”.⁵⁷ However, he is truly blamed for these “whims” only after the arrival of his successor, Cyrus the Great (559-530 BC).⁵⁸ Of course, Cyrus the Great was not of Chaldean origin, he was a Persian and the founder of the Achaemenid Empire,⁵⁹ a foreign conqueror. This made it necessary for him to have Nabonidus defeated, but as usual, the defeat must not only have taken place on the battlefield, but also on a certain propaganda level. Most of the sources about Nabonidus' reign come from Babylon, from the reign of Cyrus the Great, just like the famous Cyrus Cylinder; an inscribed

⁵⁰ From now on the term “Neo-Assyrian” will be referred to as NA; (see Abbreviations)

⁵¹ Beaulieu 1989, 149-150.

⁵² Beaulieu 1989, 15.

⁵³ Beaulieu 2018, 227.

⁵⁴ Namely Babylonian Chronicles of the period (ABC) and the Cyrus Cylinder, for translation see Hallo and Younger 2003.

⁵⁵ Spek 2014, 24.

⁵⁶ Liverani 2014, 542.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Wiseman 2003, 247.

⁵⁹ Waters 2022, 1.

cylindrical clay tablet.⁶⁰ That causes a certain bias in favour of the new dynasty. These texts, therefore, should be approached with an open mind.

1.3.2. The Persian Period

The Chaldean dynasty might have been the last native dynasty for the lands of Babylon and Akkad, but for certainty, it did not mark the beginning of any substantial decline. During the Achaemenid rule of Cyrus II and Cambyses II over the lands previously under NB rulers, there must have been only a bare minimum of substantial changes as it was not in early Achaemenid policy.⁶¹ Nevertheless, even if Babylonia maintained its past prosperity to some extent,⁶² it's quite heavy exploitation for the benefit of the empire is undeniable. According to Herodotus, Babylon was the most heavily taxed satrapy under the rule of Darius I. The payment would have consisted out of a thousand talents of silver and five hundred castrated boys.⁶³ It was during the reign of this king, Darius, that the satrapies had undergone some, more substantial, changes and much was reformed. So much as he may be perceived as a “second founder” of the Achaemenid empire. His story can be grasped mainly from the Behistun inscription⁶⁴ (DB) carved into the rock of the sacred mountain Bagastan located in the Kermanshah province in the modern Iran. However, its real historical value has always been contested, and to this day, it is a subject of many scholarly discussions.⁶⁵ All in all, the consensus nowadays, is that Darius I was an usurper, who would have made some changes out of necessity in order to establish himself as the rightful ruler.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this does not mean that his achievements should be discredited, on the contrary – he had laid foundations for the working of the Achaemenid empire for the roughly two centuries to come.⁶⁷

Naturally, the Babylonian satrapy had undergone a lot of changes under such a reformer king; however, initially not prompted by the Achaemenids, but rather because thanks to the

⁶⁰ For more information see Kuhrt 1983, 83-97.

⁶¹ Spek 1982, 278-283.

⁶² Jursa 2011, 443.

⁶³ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.92.1

⁶⁴ For a quick introduction see Lendering, 1997; “Behistun” at Livius <https://www.livius.org/articles/place/behistun/> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

⁶⁵ Briant 2002, 409.

⁶⁶ For some examples see Briant 2002, 123, 131, 138.

⁶⁷ Darius had conducted a great number of building projects to make the inner workings of the empire more efficient; see Herodotus, *Histories* 2.158 for his canal building project linking the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea. See Herodotus, *Histories* 5.52-53 for information about the Darius's Royal Road; for its efficiency see Diodorus, *World history* 19.17.5-6.

intervention of Babylon. Starting from the reign of Darius I⁶⁸ and continuing into the reign of his son Xerxes I,⁶⁹ Babylon produced several ephemeral local kings, who identified themselves as the sons of Nabonidus and thus successors to the Chaldean dynasty trying to revolt from their Persian overlords. The revolts were suppressed and Babylon and its neighbouring cities, including Sippar and many others in Northern Babylonia, were punished.⁷⁰ As for Sippar, at first, Achaemenid rulers changed the elite families overseeing the temple institutions in the given city.⁷¹ Later, we can see gradual decline in the temple archives culminating in a complete abandonment of the archive of Sippar in 484 BC under the rule of Xerxes I. He had ceased the support for the temples of Northern Babylonia and instead started favouring the temples down the Euphrates in the Southern Babylonia.⁷² One of such temples was the temple of Eanna in Uruk with its chief deity An, an old deity worshipped for millennia in Mesopotamia. This god would once again gain on importance in this and the subsequent Seleucid period.⁷³

1.4. Overview of the Previous Archaeological Research on the sites of Abu Habbah and ed-Dēr (Sippar)

Years 1879-1882 have marked a series of several excavations around the Near East conducted by an Assyriologist Hormuzd Rassam, who on behalf of Trustees of the British Museum supervised many important sites of the time. His work underlines the first real excavation, and subsequently also identification, of the sites of Tell ed-Dēr (Sippar-Amnānum) and Tell Abu-Habbah (Sippar-Yahrurum). For our research purposes, the most notable find of Rassam is an astonishing number of clay tablets uncovered at Tell Abu-Habbah in between the January 1881 to October 1882. This group of some 30 000⁷⁴ ancient texts is today often referred to as “the Ebabbar archive” and, to this day, remains largely unpublished as they have not been studied thoroughly; mainly thanks to their discouraging amount and the work that would have been necessary to go through them.⁷⁵ That often leaves us with only copies for most of them.

⁶⁸ For the rebellions under Darius I see Briant 2002, 105.

⁶⁹ For the rebellions under Xerxes I see Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 150-173.

⁷⁰ Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 163.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Beaulieu 2018, 189 – 206. Moreover, the ceased support then had an impact on what deities had gained on importance during this period.

⁷³ Beaulieu 1992, 54.

⁷⁴ Charvát 1999, 335-336.

⁷⁵ Oppenheim 1985, 529-587.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the last few years have been favourable for its further research as some isolated texts are getting published through journals more often than before.⁷⁶

Rassam published his excavation work in a book called *Asshur and the land of Nimrod* in the year 1897 and as we have no reports with any substantial information from his archaeological works, this publication proves to be a valuable source of information for shedding at least some light on the background, and *in situ* situation, of some artifacts. A good example would be “The Sun-God Tablet” of Nabû-apla-iddina.⁷⁷ Another notable source is Rassam’s paper *Recent discoveries of ancient Babylonian cities* later published in TSBA8.⁷⁸

As a result of Rassam’s excavations, most of the tablets have been moved to the British Museum, where they have remained to this day and have eventually been catalogued, and assigned a brief content wise notation, in several catalogues by Erle Leichty.⁷⁹ That had ultimately led to an expansion of previously published available material by Strassmaier,⁸⁰ Evetts,⁸¹ and Thompson.⁸²

After Rassam's excavations at Sippar, other surveys were conducted in the following decades. The results are variously published by Hilprecht,⁸³ and Budge,⁸⁴ the latter having conducted a survey himself instead of relying solely of Rassam’s material.

According to Walker and Collon,⁸⁵ Hilprecht’s *Explorations in Bible lands during the 19th century*⁸⁶ derives from the above mentioned reports of Rassam and Pinches,⁸⁷ while Scheil’s *Une saison de fouilles à Sippar*⁸⁸ and Budge’s *By Nile and Tigris*⁸⁹ and *The rise and progress of Assyriology*⁹⁰ are “inaccurate, poorly understood, and overall best left ignored”.⁹¹

⁷⁶ For an example see Waerzeggers 2016, 73-85.

⁷⁷ Woods 2004, 23-103.

⁷⁸ Rassam 1885, 172-197. For more thorough list of documents available, informing us on the situation of Rassam's excavations, it is recommended to consult Walker and Collon 1980, 93-94. Together with the introductory overview of Leichty 1986.

⁷⁹ Leichty 1986; 1987; 1988.

⁸⁰ Strassmaier 1892.

⁸¹ Evetts 1892.

⁸² Thompson 1906.

⁸³ Hilprecht 1903.

⁸⁴ Budge 1920.

⁸⁵ Walker and Collon 1980, 93-94.

⁸⁶ Hilprecht 1903, 266-277.

⁸⁷ Rassam 1885, 172-197; Pinches 1885, 347-357.

⁸⁸ Scheil 1902, 79.

⁸⁹ Budge 1920, 314-316.

⁹⁰ Budge 1925, 132-136.

⁹¹ Walker and Collon 1980, 93-94.

But despite this, their work brought to the surface another number of tablets from both sites of Abu-Habbah and Tell ed-Dēr, for example, the tablets now in Istanbul that has been excavated by V. Scheil on behalf of the Istanbul Imperial Museum.⁹² Different institutions working on the site over the years and number of illegal excavations,⁹³ as well as the great number of the tablets, can illustrate the scattered nature of the textual corpus of the Ebabbar now on display in museums all around the world.

More recent archaeological works on the sites are consisted out of the Belgian expedition in 1970s situated in Tell ed-Dēr and areas in its immediate vicinity, effectively exploring Sippar-Amnânum and the area between the “twin cities”.⁹⁴ The results were published by L. De Meyer and his assistant M. H. Gasche.⁹⁵ Abu-Habbah (Sippar-Yahrurum) has been excavated by Walid al-Jadir and Zuhair Rajib Abdullah under University of Baghdad since 1978, essentially until now, albeit with some gaps around the years 1980-2000.⁹⁶ Because then, Iraq has been involved in several wars, which had consequently halted the possibility of any excavation work. After the 2000, the Iraqi team has been joined by the German Archaeological Institute. As of now, some old findings from Abu-Habbah that were previously left unpublished, are now under the attention of the scholars.⁹⁷

As illustrated above, the number of archaeological research is perhaps not as scarce as it is in other surrounding areas such as Tell Ibrahim (ancient Kutha). Moreover, the amount of textual evidence coming from the city of Sippar, dating from Old-Babylonian to Neo-Babylonian period, makes up a large margin of available sources when trying to reconstruct the everyday life and functioning of the temple institution.

This archive has been a point of further interest only in the last few decades, as it has been partly overshadowed by an archive of the Eanna temple at the city of Uruk. This may be due to the fact that Eanna archive provides more information about the legal matters.⁹⁸ Out of all the scholars who have tackled the topic through their publications it is worth mentioning

⁹² Adali and Frahm 2021, 5-17.

⁹³ The abundance of illegal excavations could very well depend on the proximity of the city of Baghdad. For more information about the topic see Emberling and Hanson 2008.

⁹⁴ Charpin 1988, 13-32.

⁹⁵ De Meyer 1980.

⁹⁶ Salih 1987, 153-154.

⁹⁷ For an example see Fadhil and Jiménez 2019, 155-176; Fadhil and Jiménez 2021, 191-230; Fadhil and Jiménez 2022, 229-274.

⁹⁸ Bongenaar 1997, 2.

the works of Strassmaier⁹⁹ and the catalogues of E. Leichty,¹⁰⁰ which made it possible to navigate through the large amounts of Sipparean tablets. Then MacGinnis¹⁰¹ and Jursa,¹⁰² as well as Bongenaar,¹⁰³ Zawadzki,¹⁰⁴ and Waerzeggers¹⁰⁵ for the information about the archive and its content. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of these scholars, much of the tablets remain practically untouched – not because the lack of material to study, but the exact opposite. The quantity of material itself is astonishingly daunting, while the work of going through it often promises unsatisfactory results. Which is also mentioned by Oppenheim among others.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Strassmaier 1892.

¹⁰⁰ Leichty 1986; 1987; 1988.

¹⁰¹ MacGinnis 1995.

¹⁰² Jursa 2018, 63-72.

¹⁰³ Bongenaar 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Zawadzki 1996.

¹⁰⁵ Waerzeggers 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Oppenheim 1985, 529-587.

2. Change and Continuity

2.1. Historical Outline of the Ebbabar Temple Institution

The city of Sippar, or rather Abu-Habbah, is nowadays shaped by two tells protected by a prominent rectangular levee.¹⁰⁷ The main landmark was none other than the ziggurat located in the southwestern mound inside the religious quarter, together with the Sipparaean temples.¹⁰⁸ Its counterpart, therefore, the northeastern mound, covers the city proper.¹⁰⁹

As was briefly mentioned above, the most important deity of Sippar was the Sun god Šamaš and, as an extent of his influence, so was his temple Ebabbar (“The White / Radiant Temple”). The Sipparaean temple is not to be confused with the other Ebabbar temple of the same deity in Larsa (modern Tell Senkereh), a city in Southern Babylonia venerating Šamaš as well. However, unlike the one in Larsa, which had only survived in its grandeur only until the 11th century BC,¹¹⁰ the temple of Sippar survived at least to the beginning of the 5th century BC.

As a general rule, two possible reasons for discontinuation with any temple are either its destruction or its abandonment. In terms of the Sipparaean Ebabbar, there seem to be no signs of destruction leaving only the latter option satisfactory. The sudden end of the archive in the 5th century BC could be interpreted as the temples would have willingly, or perhaps forcefully, been taught to write on materials other than the cuneiform tablets for the sake of convenience. This material could have been more perishable than the clay tablets and naturally could not have survived to this day.¹¹¹ As a result of that it may look like there is a link with the break in the archives – the cuneiform tablets had served their role in the past and have outgrown its usefulness, while the new Aramaic was easier to learn, to use and to store. Nevertheless, we know, from Babylonian sources, that there are other possible options for its gradual abandonment; those will be elaborated upon further below.

It may be assumed that the situation under the reign of Darius I and his son Xerxes was perhaps not optimal for the Babylonian satrapy because of the introduction of self-proclaimed

¹⁰⁷ Gashe and Janssen 1997, 47-49.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Margueron 1997, 331-333.

¹¹¹ Bae 2004, 1-20.

Babylonian kings, originating from a priestly class.¹¹² These kings tried to present themselves as descendants of Nabonidus, or at the very least establish a link to the Chaldean dynasty via assumed royal names.¹¹³ The first troublemaker king from Babylon, Nidintu-Bêl, incited a revolt against his Persian overlords at the beginning of Darius's I reign, a week after Bardiya¹¹⁴ was killed.¹¹⁵ For the sake of simplicity, it shall be assumed that the account of what Darius gives us in DB can be indeed accessed with some sort of credibility.¹¹⁶ Darius mentions excessively, in the first §15 paragraphs of the Behistun inscription, that Bardiya who he opposed was an impostor and an usurper, unrightfully ruling from March 11 to September 29, 522 BC,¹¹⁷ who acted as the real Bardiya. From the point of view of Darius, the real one was a son of Cyrus II and the brother of the then deceased king Cambyses II.

The above mentioned Nidintu-Bêl came to be known as Nabuchadnezzar (III) to the Babylonians.¹¹⁸ We learn about this ruler with the help of sources not only from Babylon, but also from Borsippa and Sippar,¹¹⁹ where Nidintu-Bêl had assumed the control, at least, over the first two cities.¹²⁰ Sources from these sites newly use the name of the pretender Nebuchadnezzar (III) as a dating formula instead of the rightful Achaemenid king of kings.¹²¹ Nebuchadnezzar (III) is also mentioned in the Behistun inscription amongst other pretender kings from other lands under the Achaemenid rule.¹²² In §16 Darius tells us:

*“Then a certain man, a Babylonian named Nidintu-Bêl, the son of Aniri’, raised a rebellion in Babylon, and he lied unto the people, saying: “I am Nebuchadnezzar (III), the son of Nabonidus.” Then all the people of Babylon went over unto Nidintu-Bêl, (and) Babylon revolted. He seized on the kingdom of Babylon.”*¹²³

Here, and also in the following passages §§ 18, 19¹²⁴ Darius always mentions this pretender under his, presumably, real name of Nidintu-Bêl with these words put into his mouth

¹¹² Nidintu-Bêl / Nebuchadnezzar (III), for example, originated from a prominent Babylonian family (Zazakku family); Jursa 2007, 81.

¹¹³ Briant 2002, 114-122.

¹¹⁴ He is referred to as Bardiya (Old Persian writing of the name); Smerdis (Greek writing of the name); Gaumâta (He is referred to as Gaumâta the Magician throughout the DB).

¹¹⁵ Cameron 1941, 317. Originally mentioned by DB 1.83-96.

¹¹⁶ With respect to the credibility of the sources and Bardiya see Dandamayev 1988, 785-786.

¹¹⁷ Lendering 1997. <https://www.livius.org/articles/person/gaumata-smerdis/> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

¹¹⁸ Oppenheim 1985, 561.

¹¹⁹ Cameron 1941, 316.

¹²⁰ Cameron 1941, 318.

¹²¹ Oppenheim 1985, 561.

¹²² Behistun inscription §§ 16, 19, 20. Translation according to King, 1907.

¹²³ DB 1.73.-81. Translation of the Akkadian version by Leonard William King (King 1907, 169-170).

¹²⁴ DB 1.83-96.

“I am Nebuchadnezzar...” possibly implying his false claim upon the throne further. In passage 20¹²⁵ Darius is able to capture him, again deprived of the name Nebuchadnezzar, and Nidintu-Bêl is subsequently slain. As a result, the revolts were indeed put to an end, but some of the Babylonians, especially those of Northern Babylonia (Sippar, Borsippa, Babylon), must have been held responsible and as a result punished. The nature of these punishments, their extent and their lasting impact on the temple institution will be expanded upon below.

This sequence of events points us to the first visible moment of discontinuity in the area of the temple precinct of Sippar. It marks the first major break between the harmonious relationship of a grateful satrapy with its Persian overlords that was meant to be saved by Cyrus and taken care for by his successors, of course in exchange for tribute. While Persian overlords may have been lenient in terms of religion and overall functioning of a satrapy, as long as it did not affect their imperial ambitions and affairs, they are also known for harsh interventions when someone assumed them unnecessary.¹²⁶ A good example is the general reluctance of the Persians to restore the city walls,¹²⁷ even if they might have been the ones who had originally destroyed them.

Further on, Behistun inscription shows that Nebuchadnezzar (III) was not the last usurper king who tried to lay a claim, as to Chaldean origin. In § 49¹²⁸ Darius mentions a second revolt cantered around Babylon. This time it was a certain Arakha,¹²⁹ apparently of Armenian origin, calling himself Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabonidus, once again.¹³⁰ This revolt has also been suppressed by Darius as is mentioned in § 50¹³¹ of DB. This time, however, he chooses a less direct approach and sends a certain Intapherenes as a leader of his army tasked with smiting the Babylonian traitors. We are informed that this had truly taken place on the twenty-second day of the month Markâsanaš (November 27th)¹³² in the year 521 BC.¹³³ Arakha and his followers were thus captured and executed in Babylon,¹³⁴ likely as a threat to any other potential usurpers. Importantly for Sippar, it seems that this expedition must have left the inhabitants of the city in a state of weariness as we know that the hold of Sippar fluctuated

¹²⁵ DB. 2.1-4.

¹²⁶ Briant 2002, 152.

¹²⁷ Briant 2002, 23, 578.

¹²⁸ DB 3.76-83.

¹²⁹ Name according to the Old Persian part of the DB.

¹³⁰ DB 3.75-83.

¹³¹ DB 3.84-92.

¹³² DB 3.84-92.

¹³³ Oppenheim 1985, 562.

¹³⁴ DB 3.84-92.

between the rebels and the Achaemenid army.¹³⁵ As a result, as Cameron mentions, the “*news of the capture of Nebuchadnezzar (IV) on the twenty-second day of the eight month was doubtless received with a sigh of relief*”.¹³⁶ That is because the two years after the death of Cambyses II (522-521 BC) marked a time of three revolts in total – two of which were rooted in Northern Babylonia, leaving the people of Sippar among the culprits.

In order to complete the time span of the functioning of the Ebabbar temple between the sixth and fifth centuries BC, one more ruler needs to be addressed. This is none other than Xerxes, the successor and possible co-regent of his father Darius I.¹³⁷ A few years after his father’s death, likely in 486 BC, we observe his “infamous” second year (484 BC); it is possible to notice a clear break in sources, and their absence from the temple archives, not only in Sippar, but also elsewhere.¹³⁸ A stone slab that had been found in Persepolis, usually referred to as the “Daiva inscription”¹³⁹ (XPh), is sometimes thought to describe a certain uprising in Babylonia in the reign of Xerxes. This option would be intriguing whence we know of two rebels¹⁴⁰ from Babylon. Their rebellions can be dated to the year of 484 BC (and, possibly, 486 BC).¹⁴¹ What is described in XPh is a rebel country and its *daivadana* (meaning the house of demons). That, in this case, could just mean a place where foreign deities are worshiped – as Marduk and other Babylonian deities were foreign to the Persians it does not seem unplausible that once under a revolt, the temples of Babylon could be referred to as *daivadanans*. However, this was a year of general unrest and the problems outside of Persia proper took on greater dimensions than just the neighbouring satrapy of Babylon. As a result, these events could very well also be credited to the revolts, which were happening at the time, in Egypt¹⁴² and in Eastern Iran¹⁴³ - not just Babylonia.

Nevertheless, the point of the text stands for our research purposes – there has been turmoil in the empire after the death of Darius I, including in the satrapy of Babylon, once again after what seems to have been 35 years of stable reign under Darius I. What is more this break is unfortunately further inflated by our scarce textual sources from this period. This is

¹³⁵ Cameron 1941, 318.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Problems with co-regency appear to us about both pairs of the first Persian rulers and for a long time they remained only conjectures. Cyrus II and Cambyses II, as well as Darius I and Xerxes I are thus a similar case of possible coregence. See Zawadzki 1996, 171-183.

¹³⁸ Waerzeggers 2018, 1.

¹³⁹ Cameron 1959, 470-476.

¹⁴⁰ Bêl-šimânni and Šamaš-eriba.

¹⁴¹ Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 151.

¹⁴² Herodotus, *Histories* 7.4.

¹⁴³ <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/achaemenid-royal-inscriptions/xph/> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

the case because of the uneven proportions of the tablets from 7th – 4th century, with those to the end of this period being the scarcest. As it is now, we do not have any definite answer to what has happened during the Xer 2; moreover, interpretations on the sudden end of the archive of Sippar (and others) differ. The destruction of the temple institutions and their archives seems to be a reasonable conclusion, as it would make sense that Xerxes wanted to wreak his anger on all temples involved in the rebellions. Note that this would be the 4th inclusion in a rebellion for some, especially northern, Babylonian cities and it does make sense that Xerxes would not see any other way than to get completely rid of these troublesome subjects. The evidence for Sipparean involvement in the second rebellion of Šamaš-eriba can be traced via the tablet LB 1718/ no. 2 as it shows his name in the datation formula. It has been suggested, that his theophoric¹⁴⁴ name might hint us to his Sipparean origin as well.¹⁴⁵ In Xer 4 even the titlature of Xerxes had undergone some changes – from him onwards Achaemenid royal titlature had used the “King of Babylon” only infrequently,¹⁴⁶ to such extent that previous scholars thought it completely omitted from this point onwards.¹⁴⁷ However, the evidence for any destruction has not been found¹⁴⁸ and, as a result, this narrative approach is to be considered false until proven otherwise. For that reason, it seems that this is a case of gradual decline to which of course, the rebellions had no favourable effect but were not the direct cause. Nor was likely the archives “evolution”, as was discussed above. This may however all be opened to criticism as new Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian documents may show up anytime and change our perception on the topic. For the temple of Ebabbar in Sippar, specifically, the archive has likely been in gradual decline for some time, even before this “break” year of 484 BC.¹⁴⁹

In addition, it is also worth mentioning that Šamaš was not the only deity attested and venerated in Sippar, he was but one of many,¹⁵⁰ as was usual among the ancient cities. What differentiated him from the rest in this specific scenario was the economic wealth of his temple. No temples nor deities show up in the textual sources found in the archive of Ebabbar show as numerous as Ebabbar and the name of Šamaš as well as the frequent appearance of theophoric names of the city’s inhabitants.¹⁵¹ Šamaš-šuma-ukin (“Šamaš has established the name”)¹⁵²

¹⁴⁴ An example together with a more thorough explanation is provided below.

¹⁴⁵ Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 153

¹⁴⁶ Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 151; Briant 2002, 543.

¹⁴⁷ Waerzeggers 2003/2004, 151.

¹⁴⁸ Briant 2002, 545.

¹⁴⁹ Jursa 2018, 63-72.

¹⁵⁰ Šin, Marduk, Ea, Adad, Nergal, Ištar to name a few. All had their own individual temples in Sippar. Harris 1975, 142-153.

¹⁵¹ Harris 1975, 144. (Harris’s work is mostly based on OB sources)

¹⁵² Frahm 2005, 47.

was a Babylonian vassal king of Neo-Assyrian Empire¹⁵³ and Assurbanipal's (668-627 BC) brother,¹⁵⁴ his name states a good example of such a theophoric name in practice.

2.2. Restorations and Temple Maintenance

Now that the outline of Ebabbar's functional, and unsteady years has been established, the thesis may investigate the topic with more depth in mind. As has already been briefly mentioned above, knowing about when renovations and restorations of certain buildings took place is one of the witnesses of the usage, or abandonment of the building. Since most of the buildings in Mesopotamia, including even those of religious importance, like temples were built of mud brick,¹⁵⁵ they had to be restored about every few decades. As the reigns of the most relevant rulers for our chosen period of history are quite long it should, for a fully functioning temple, mean that some renovations should have taken place under at least every other ruler.

At first, it is necessary to begin with the king Nabonidus of the NB period and see whether his restoration works differ from that of the first two important NB kings before him. As has been mentioned above, Nabonidus had different religious views than his predecessors, Nabopolassar and Nabuchadnezzar II, in a way that he pursued the exaltation of Sin (Sumerian Nanna) at the expense of Marduk, who was considered a chief deity perhaps from the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (1126-1105 BC), some six centuries prior.¹⁵⁶ However, the Sin Marduk problem does not seem to have any substantial implications for the temple of Ebabbar. So much as the restorations at Sippar take place even when the king had been in his self-imposed exile in the Teima oasis in Arabia later during his reign. In his absence, his son Belshazzar acted as a co-regent of Nabonidus and carried on official tasks.¹⁵⁷ This can be seen from his letter to then *šangû* of Sippar Mušešib-Marduk, where he asks for the temple Ekurra of Bunene¹⁵⁸ to be purified.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Van De Mieroop 2007, 255.

¹⁵⁴ Van De Mieroop 2007, 268.

¹⁵⁵ Pongratz-Leisten 2021, 638.

¹⁵⁶ Sommerfeld 1982; Black and Green 1997, 128-129.

¹⁵⁷ Beaulieu 1989, 63.

¹⁵⁸ For Bunene as son of Šamaš see Black and Green 1992, 52, 182-184. For Bunene's mother Aya see Black 1992, 173.

¹⁵⁹ Beaulieu 1989, 11.

Prior to his stay in Teima, in the so called “Nabonidus Cylinder” found at Sippar, Nabonidus informs us of his reparations, making it an ideal example to illustrate his approach towards the temple reparations. The buildings in need of substantial repair were:

- temple of Ehulhul, the sanctuary of the moon god Sîn at Harran
- temple of Ebabbar in Sippar-Yahrurum
- temple of Eulmaš, the sanctuary of the warrior goddess Anunitu, in Sippar-Amnânum

In the passage [ii.47-iii.21] which is concerned with Ebabbar, Nabonidus even mentions the prior restoration done by other rulers. When repairing a temple in ancient Mesopotamia it is necessary to build the temple according to the gods will, meaning the original foundation has to be found and only after the restorations may begin.¹⁶⁰ According to Nabonidus, Nabuchadnezzar (II), 45 years earlier, apparently tried to locate the original foundations but had ultimately failed to do so. That had left Nabonidus troubled and fearful of displeasing the gods.¹⁶¹ However, unlike Nabuchadnezzar, Nabonidus seems to have been on better terms with the gods. After reinstalling the image of Šamaš elsewhere to a safe location and removing the debris of the present temple, he truly was able to locate the foundation deposit of Narām-Sîn, all the way from the Akkadian period, 18 cubits under the ground. He boasted that no other king before had seen this deposit in three thousand and two hundred years,¹⁶² even though all of the NB kings were interested in the “history” behind the monuments.¹⁶³ Afterwards we are informed about the re-building process of both the temple Ebabbar and its adjacent ziggurat Ekunanunga both of which were made exactly to Šamaš’s liking owing to the Narām-Sîn inscription.¹⁶⁴ This inscription is then anointed in oil and put back to its original place, so any other great king after Nabonidus may rebuilt the temple in all its splendour once again.

With the temple finally finished in passage [iii.11-21] Nabonidus asks Šamaš for his favour in return:

[iii.11-21] *O Šamaš, great lord of heaven and the netherworld, light of the gods - your fathers - offspring of Sîn and Ningal, when you enter Ebabbar your beloved temple, when you take up residence in your eternal dais, look joyfully upon me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, the prince your caretaker, the one who pleases you and built your*

¹⁶⁰ Ellis 1968, 13.

¹⁶¹ [ii.47-iii.7]

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Goossens 1948, 149-159.

¹⁶⁴ [ii.47-iii.7]

*august chapel, and upon my good deeds, and every day at sunrise and sunset, in the heavens and on the earth, make my omens favorable, accept my supplications and receive my prayers. With the scepter and the legitimate staff which placed in my hands may I rule forever.*¹⁶⁵

What this shows us is that even though Nabonidus continued the tradition with undoubted pious manner just like Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar before, since he belongs to the same dynasty as the other two kings, he does not share their same place of origin and has struggled with the primacy of Babylon, and as an extent Northern Babylonia and Sippar.

What comes after is made known to us through the classical authors and the historical accounts they managed to record. These included Herodotus,¹⁶⁶ Berossus¹⁶⁷ as well as Xenophon.¹⁶⁸ However, we have another source of information, namely the domestic one - from Babylon this situation is preserved by the Babylonian chronicles¹⁶⁹ and even a cylinder from the time of Nabonidus.¹⁷⁰

Very much as it was with Nabonidus before ... and very much as it will be with the rulers Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes, Cyrus's life is hidden in stories whose veracity cannot be verified today, until we have more contemporary sources to compare historical realities. In the meantime, we can speak of Nabonidus as a king who almost heretically favours another deity; of Cyrus as a ruler who against all odds built the cornerstone of the Achaemenid Empire and liberated Babylon; of Cambyses as a ruler with a hot temper and not an overweening love and respect for foreign religious customs. And lastly, of Darius as a liberator and a sort of "re-founder" of the great Persian Empire; and of his son as the king who lost against Greece in the fifth century. All these narratives are however too simple and straightforward as the informed reader can recognize immediately. Cyrus was therefore no exception, which, together with the paucity of evidence and contemporary sources, shows some difficulty for us discerning the true events taking place. After all, we do know about "well known" Cyrus's arrival in Babylon from many different authors and sources.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Translation made by Beaulieu from <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/nabonidus-cylinder-from-sippar/> (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

¹⁶⁶ Herodotus, *Histories* 1.188-91.

¹⁶⁷ Burstein 1978, 28.

¹⁶⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.5.7-32.58.

¹⁶⁹ Grayson 1975, 109-10.

¹⁷⁰ Sippar cylinder of the third regnal year (553 BC).

¹⁷¹ Grayson, 1975, 106; Nabonidus's Sippar Cylinder; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 7.4.16.

Of Sippar specifically, we know that it was besieged and subsequently defeated on 10 October¹⁷² by Cyrus's troops in chase of Nabonidus, who had retreated there from the city of Opis. All in all, the question remains: "What changed with the arrival of Cyrus the Great for the city of Sippar?" perhaps Cyrus would hold a grudge against a city that hold a defence against his army.

It is difficult to find an answer to the question of how Cyrus felt about the city. However, what can be found, is the outcome of his siege. According to available sources, among which is ABC 7,¹⁷³ Sippar surrendered without a fight, meaning the casualties must have been close to none, possibly not leaving "bad blood" on any side of the local conflict.

This chapter began with the premise of pointing out the restorations of the temple of Ebabbar and through it establish a line of continuous use of the temple. Unfortunately, there seems to be no hard evidence for a restoration under Cyrus nor, for that matter, any subsequent Achaemenid king. However, if we take into account previous restorations of the temple, including restorations older than those of Nabonidus, we learn that 26 years passed between the restorations of Nabopolassar (625 BC) and Nebuchadnezzar (599 BC). Subsequently, approximately 57 years elapsed between the Nebuchadnezzar's (599 BC) and Nabonidus's (542 BC) repairs. Given that Nabonidus's repairs were made in such a way that virtually the entire Ebabbar temple was rebuilt, we can conclude that it was in a state where superficial repairs were not enough, but it was still functioning. Therefore, the limit of the latest possible repairs can be inferred something around sixty years. Now, Nabonidus, since his reconstructions at Sippar, reigned for another three years until the arrival of Cyrus the Great, from which the temple restorations do not appear in written sources until Xer 2 (484 BC), when the archive disappears. So, if we look at the period between these two points, we find that it is some 58 years. The implication is that either the temple must have been in a state of disrepair towards the end of its life, which is unlikely as there appears to be some favouritism of Cambyses II for this city, or the temple must have been repaired during this period as well in order to function.

It is likely that the temples had undergone some form of maintenance under the subsequent rulers, since it has been Cyrus's policy to seek close cooperation of the Babylonian

¹⁷² Grayson 1975, 109-10.

¹⁷³ https://web.archive.org/web/20181226073018/http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus3.html (Last accessed: 2023, August 8).

institutions without apparent discontinuity in order to avoid conflict.¹⁷⁴ We know that lot of people were in fact not affected by the political shift in the lands of Mesopotamia, during the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius, the inhabitants could continue under their current professions.¹⁷⁵ This “continuity” had reached not only, for example, craftsmen and scribes, but also individuals assuming the highest positions of the temple institutions.

Sippar seems to have been a city which was also favoured by Cyrus’s son Cambyses, whose presence can be traced in there. Perhaps similarly to Nabonidus and his son Belšazar, who was ruling Babylon in Nabonidus’s stead when he was in the west, Cambyses was also appointed a ruler of Babylon¹⁷⁶ for a short time during the reign of Cyrus. According to some dating formulas on clay tablets, we can even see that Cambyses was Cyrus’s co-regent,¹⁷⁷ if only for a while.¹⁷⁸ Evidence for this can be seen in Sippar as well, for example in BM 74480 the dating formula goes as follows: “^m*Kam-bu-zi-ja* lugal e.ki a ^m*Ku-ra-áš* lugal kur.kur.meš” meaning “Cambyses, king of Babylon, the offspring of Cyrus, king of the Lands”. Apart from these scattered and scarce sources there is not much more to go on to form satisfactory picture of Cambyses rule – let alone the situation under him during his reign. This, of course, excludes and disregards the information given to us by the ancient authors like Herodotus.¹⁷⁹ They describe Cambyses as a classic king gone mad who would go on a massive rampage over his hurt ego, rather than a real historical figure which may have lived, even if possibly flawed.¹⁸⁰ This narrative is refuted by the continuous appearance of dedicatory stelas of Apis bull by the aforementioned king¹⁸¹. As the story tells he had killed the bull and therefore would not have any reason to aid the enclosure of the Ptah temple any further. Given this, the matter of Cambyses’s madness will not be discussed any further. Although, it is worth mentioning that Cambyses shows up as somewhat “ignorant” of other religious traditions. In the Nabonidus Chronicle he supposedly enters the temple of Nabû Enigpakalammasummu in Babylon, clothed in an Elamite dress and armed with spear and quiver.¹⁸² What exactly “Elamite dress” means however, is unclear in this context. In first millennium, it seems that it

¹⁷⁴ Beaulieu 2002, 71.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Oppenheim 1985, 558-559.

¹⁷⁷ Zawadzki 1996, 171-183.

¹⁷⁸ Oppenheim 1985, 558.

¹⁷⁹ Herodotus, *Histories* 3.89; 3.13.4; etc.

¹⁸⁰ Briant 2002, 55.

¹⁸¹ Colburn 2021, 77.

¹⁸² Oppenheim 1985, 554.

would refer to a garment, tied at the waist, with medium-length sleeves and a pleated back skirt.¹⁸³

Good or bad, Cambyses was ultimately withdrawn from the role of Babylonian king for reasons unknown to us and replaced by Gubaru,¹⁸⁴ a general of Cyrus who had helped in conquering the city. After, in what was Cyrus's fifth year it would actually seem that Cambyses had moved to Sippar from Babylon. His presence and the influence of his actions there are unfortunately not known apart of a few texts mentioning the activity of the crown prince's subordinates. An example of this is Strassmaier.¹⁸⁵

From Cam 5 (524 BC) to Xer 2 (484 BC) virtually nothing significant links the royal presence to Sippar, other than some legal documents found at the Ebabbar archive from their reigns.

2.3. The Case of the Stolen Vessels

Now, above, the situation has been covered from a point of view that portrays the Achaemenid overlords in a rather positive manner. To summarise some of the things that have already been stated, and some that are still to be mentioned, we may say that:

- There seems to be no massive destruction that would have occurred during the conquest and the subsequent "occupation" led by Cyrus.¹⁸⁶
 - What is more, he was later held in high esteem and enjoyed unified respect.¹⁸⁷ Which was definitely rare, for the Achaemenid rulers, especially considering the latter as Cambyses and Xerxes, who are only rarely described in a positive manner. His conquests are mostly grasped from the account of what Herodotus gives us. We are given a description of the conquests of Sardis in Lydia (I.46-94.) and the later one of Babylon (I.177-200), of which both do not indicate unnecessary bloodshed. To support these statements, we may once again consult the Cylinder that witnesses Cyrus's efforts to establish relations of collaboration

¹⁸³ Navrátilová 2022, 176-177.

¹⁸⁴ Oppenheim 1985, 559.

¹⁸⁵ Strassmaier 1890, no. 199.

¹⁸⁶ Briant 2002, 43.

¹⁸⁷ Briant 2018, 135.

with both political and religious figures of Babylonia.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, he is known to have rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, all of which has been paid by the king.¹⁸⁹

- People could freely occupy the positions they have occupied in the NB era.
 - To give an example, we know of a certain Marduk-šum-iddina, who was employed in the Sippar temple fulfilling the position of *šangi*¹⁹⁰ from Nbn 15 all the way until Cyr 7 without break.¹⁹¹
- There seems to be no religious pressure from the Achaemenid side, and they even go as far as to support the Babylonian “foreign” religion as the NB kings before. To an extent that they claim that some of the NB kings before them were negligent of their duties.¹⁹²
 - Once again, the Cylinder of Cyrus mentions that he is the one to restore Babylonia to its full economic potential after the damages of Nabonidus.¹⁹³ We also know that the continuity, in some way, has been prevalent even after Cyrus’s death. Cambyses is at least known to attend religious ceremonies in Babylonia.¹⁹⁴
- Better infrastructure and stability – Babylon and its satrapy were located in the middle of the empire, meaning it must have enjoyed the benefits of safety. Furthermore, trade must have flourished as well, as Babylon the satrapy was in the middle of Sardis and Susa, leaving it close to the Royal Road build by Darius I.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, all these positive aspects of the rule of Achaemenids do not change the simple fact that they were foreign overlords. They would not have primarily done all these things to support the Babylonian culture and its people, but simply because it was the easiest way to gain access to the resources that could potentially be exploited from this satrapy. Leaving aside the tribute mentioned by Herodotus above, it seems that the severity of the temple obligations had increased. A simplified picture is that the temples could have experienced increased obligatory taxes. Moreover, they may have been asked to send their craftsmen to help with the Persian

¹⁸⁸ Briant 2018, 136.

¹⁸⁹ Ezra 6.2-5.

¹⁹⁰ The title is further discussed below.

¹⁹¹ Bongenaar 2016,12; for more general idea also see Briant 202, 71.

¹⁹² For translation see Hallo and Younger 2003; For continuity in religious rituals see the example of Cambyses II in Oppenheim 1985, 554-559.

¹⁹³ Briant 2018, 137.

¹⁹⁴ Oppenheim 1998, 554.

¹⁹⁵ Briant 2002, 171.

building projects in the Achaemenid mainland and to add salt to injury, the rulers no longer supported the temple institutions monetarily.¹⁹⁶

No matter the positives, we have mentioned an undeniable occurrence of revolts during the Achaemenid rule. At this time, we can observe the culmination of the arising fiscal pressure at the level of ordinary citizens, who were caught up in the chaotic situation after the deaths of Cambyses II and Bardiya in 522BC. The Persian empire faced a crisis and an uncertain future for the first time. Therefore, it is only natural that many communities around the empire would be divided by those who saw the opportunity to seize power, and those who continued to support the Achaemenid empire. As such, the inhabitants of Sippar, a city always influenced and overshadowed by events in Babylon, would experience the discord firsthand.

A tablet from the Dortmund collection no.32 marked Dar 10-VII-07 matches the situation described above perfectly. It mentions a crime of theft, that has occurred in the first year of Darius – three items in total were stolen from the Ekunanunga, the Sipparean ziggurat. Those three items, in addition to the fact that they were of course stolen from a site of religious importance, were quite valuable as well. All of them were containers (*šulpu*, *makkasu* and *šappu* vessels), that were made out of silver, a metal of a very high commercial value at that time. However, the culprit remained elusive and as a result, the priesthood of the temple was issued to either find him or pay for the stolen property themselves.¹⁹⁷ Fortunately for them, a certain minor priest called Nabû-nāšir was caught in a suspicious attempt to trade “white silver” away.¹⁹⁸ We know that for this he was ordered to pay 30 times the value of the silver cultic vessels, but what had happened to him afterwards and if he was able to get this amount of silver to undo the damages done to the temple institution – we do not know.¹⁹⁹ The matter of the outcome is however not as relevant to us as is the existence of it itself. According to Waerzeggers, the text’s vagueness may be related to the fact that the priesthood, or anyone for that matter, may have not known about the circumstances that have led to the disappearance of these vessels.²⁰⁰

After all, if this would have happened in Dar 1, therefore in 521 BC, it would happen shortly after the deaths of Cambyses and Bardiya and the above mentioned rebellion of Nidintu-Bêl (Nebuchadnezzar (III)) in which Sippar was a willing, or perhaps not so willing, supporter. In

¹⁹⁶ Briant 2002, 73. For a similar situation in Roman Egypt see Arnold 1999, 225-275.

¹⁹⁷ Waerzeggers 2016, 78.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 79.

the end it is clear that the two years 522-521 BC marked a chapter of unrest among the city's inhabitants.

2.4. Families

2.4.1. Temple Staff and the Situation before Darius the Great

Before we get into the issue of “families” and their connection to what was happening in Sippar, a few words about the structure of the temple and all the professions for which the temple precincts found a use. These matters are mainly dealt with by prosopography, a science concerned with a select group of people over and the study of their lives. Research questions include questions about their birth, death, marriage, family, social origins, place of residence, education, wealth, religion and anything else that can be reliably linked to the person in question.²⁰¹

The Ebabbar temple had a multitude of different officials, who were responsible for both cultic and administrative activities of the institution. Out of them the highest positions were held by a certain *šangû*, a position which had in Chaldean and Achaemenid periods replaced previous position of *šatammu*.²⁰² This title was known in the most major NB cities,²⁰³ as a chief administrator, which was complemented by the *qīpu*, known to be the “resident” of Ebabbar.²⁰⁴ To determine which position was of greater importance is to find out in which order they appear in the administrative text. There, the first position is sure to have more weight in terms of influence, at least in theory. This sounds great on paper, but in practice we encounter the order changing, depending on the ruler in power. For example, the reign of Nabopolassar all the way to the reign of Cyrus sees the ordering in a *qīpu* of Ebabbar first, *šangû* of Sippar second,²⁰⁵ while the latter king Cambyses onwards has the ordering reversed: *šangû* of Sippar first, *qīpu* of Ebabbar second.²⁰⁶ It does not help that their job description is also not entirely clear. However, it seems likely that *qīpu* was present in Sippar to act as the king's representative and, therefore would have been and outsider unlike the *šangûs*, who can be traced to Sipparean prominent families, of which an example is to be provided below. Why had the changes

²⁰¹ Stone 1971, 46-79.

²⁰² A position's name that has been used throughout the period of Assyrian control, see MacGinnis 1995.

²⁰³ MacGinnis 1995, 21.

²⁰⁴ Bongenaar 1997, 6.

²⁰⁵ MacGinnis 1995, 23.

²⁰⁶ Bongenaar 1997, 7.

happened? That is another question that proves difficult to answer, and the preceding *šatammu* matter even goes back to a period preceding the timespan of this thesis, but some parts of the story's mayes and may nots could be stated to sate the curiosity, thanks to the wonderful parallels they make.

During the time of a certain Šamaš-šuma-ukin, a vassal king of Assyria, who had unsuccessfully attempted to free himself and Babylonia from the Assyrian overlords, Sippar has been involved in the revolt once again. In that time, when the Assyrians were to reinstall their rule over Sippar, the *qīpu* might have been subordinate to *šatammu*, as they had formed a direct line to Babylon.²⁰⁷ In a sense, when the Assyrians came back, they might have wanted to “weaken” this link so that it would not become an issue in the future anymore. Later, during the beginning of the NB/Chaldean reign and its first ruler Nabopolassar's fight for independence, the title would be renamed to its former *šangû* state, while reinstalling *qīpu* to the foremost position, bounding the temple of Sippar to Babylon once again in an act of power consolidation. This was officially reversed once again in Dar 2²⁰⁸ and the *šangûs* were to reclaim their long-lost place in the sun. As stated above, the reasons for the changes may as well be speculations, but it is appealing to say that in Dar 2 Darius may have tried to sever the link of Sippar with the city of Babylon the same way that his predecessor overlords would have done.

The temple, of course, had other staff to take care of, after it was the largest economic unit in the city. Other than the *šatammu* / *šangû* administrators and the *qīpu* “residents”, scribes (mostly referred to as *tupšarru*) are undoubtedly an integral part of the temple staff. To further follow the outline that has been given to us by Bongenaar,²⁰⁹ we may as well mention all the other occupations that he was able to find. That includes courtiers of Sippar (*ša-reš šarri*), treasurers of Ebabbar (*ša muhhi quppi*, chief of the prison (*rab bīt kīli*) and the chiefs (*rab ...*). The prebendaries of the temple present us with the “temple enterers” (*erīb bītī*), the bakers (*nuhatimmū*), brewers (*sirāšû*), oil pressers (*sāhītu*), exorcists (*āšipūtu*), boatmen (*malāhūtu*), singers (*nārūtu*), butchers (*tābihu*) among others. Other than the personnel of the temple we encounter craftsmen, oblates (people who were devoted to the temple), and even slaves, the largest group among the temple employed as a whole.²¹⁰ The people of this “craftsmen” group included textile workers, carpenters, leather workers, reed workers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths

²⁰⁷ MacGinnis 1995, 24.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Bongenaar 1997.

²¹⁰ Bongenaar 1997, 296.

and others working with the basic and bare materials.²¹¹ As for the slaves, they could come from far away, in NB period several groups of Egyptians appear in the inner city.²¹² They have likely ended there as a result of the campaigns led by Nebuchadnezzar II and his run-ins with the Egyptians in the Levant.²¹³ What this tells us is only that the situation in Sippar could have been multi-ethnic long before the seemingly “united” empire by the Achaemenids.²¹⁴

2.4.2. Temple Staff and the Situation after Darius the Great

With that settled, we may finally revisit the previous issue at hand - the revolts and examine them further, this time finally seeing implications that they had for the inhabitants of the city.

The question of “willingness” and “unwillingness” of Sippar’s involvement in the uprising is a question that may be discussed for a long time thanks to its complex nature. For now, however, it is sufficient to see this problem as a witness of a lack of any uniform support neither for the uprisings nor for the Persians. Therefore, it can be assumed that the community was divided after the events of 522-521 BC.

Back at the beginning of the 6th century BC, mainly the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus, many were attracted by the flourishing economy of Sippar. This has, of course, included many Babylonians and their families, who could have afforded to move north into the city. In time, the Babylonian community grew larger and perhaps influential, but refrained from getting substantially involved in the governance of the city, as the majority of high-ranking positions were held by traditional, old Sipparean families anyway.

All of this was subjected to change some 80 years later, when the immigrant families were to gain much more importance. It was when the office of the temple administrator was to be assigned to a member of the Ša-našišu family.²¹⁵ A man of this family had assumed the position of *šangû* after Bēl-uballit (Cyr 7 - Nbk IV 1), who was, in a manner, representant of the old indigenous family considered to be supporting the then recent uprisings. The Persian government had over the course of the following years naturally supported the family that was loyal to them, and not the old one whose loyalty had been questionable in the past. The fact

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Bongenaar and Harring 1994, 59.

²¹³ Dandamaev, Powell and Weisberg 2009, 227.

²¹⁴ Dandamaev, Powell and Weisberg 2009, 66.

²¹⁵ Bongenaar 1997, 15.

that the family was of non-Sipparean origin and therefore going against the standard, traditional succession, was perhaps thought to be a fitting punishment by the Achaemenids.

The old Šangû-Ištar-Babili family has been replaced by Ina-Esangila-lilbur (Dar 1 – 12) and held on tight for an approximate 33 years, until Dar 33. The length is quite considerable since it means that this family was in the office only for about 20 years shorter than the previous local one. Ina-Esangila-lilbur and his successor Guzānu (Dar 13-Dar 24) did not however finish their careers on the position of *šangû*, as later in their lives they were promoted to the office of Babylonian governors.²¹⁶ This had of course linked the family with Babylon even further. In Dar 25-28 Nabû-balassu-iqbi took after the office – this was probably to be expected as all of these three had shared the same fathers name (Nabû-šum-ukin) likely making them brothers.²¹⁷

In Dar 33 the influence of the family must have waned. However, from Dar 33 to the reign of Xerxes, a man from a different family (Marduk-bēl-napšāti from Šangû-Šamaš family) has been installed into the office.²¹⁸ As has been repeatedly stressed above, the years after the beginning of the reign of Xerxes mark a period in which a lot of things become blurry, prosopography included.

The prosopographical method of studying the archive gives us a lot of information to go through, unfortunately it is not in the scope of this thesis to go through the preceding onomastic data available. Unfortunately, our transitional period and its data are not flawless. In general, administrative documents did not include many affiliation elements for a fairly simple reason: people were familiar with each other and, in the case of administrative matters, two scribes communicated with each other on a regular basis.²¹⁹ Among the important information concerning the individuals are, for example, the data about the familial affiliations, especially when regarding the *šangûs*. When we have a clear picture of who was the person's father, for example, we can make assumptions that the three people mentioned, with the same patronym, were most likely brothers from the same family. This kind of information can be recorded in the lists of witnesses. Names belonging to the people of higher status are always mentioned first and people of the same family are usually clustered together.²²⁰ Thus we were

²¹⁶ Bongenaar 1997, 15.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 16.

²¹⁹ Zawadzki 1990, 18.

²²⁰ Zawadzki 1990, 20.

able to trace information about the appearance of a new elite family, probably formed by three influential brothers originally from Babylon.

2.5. Artifacts

Until now we have drawn our information mainly from cuneiform tablets, royal inscriptions and the works of ancient authors. This leaves the question of whether we have other sources of information = artifacts in Sippar. The answer, unfortunately, is rather gloomy, since apart from a few seals, which we can only assume originally came from the town and then, through undocumented sales and purchases, made their way to another location, there is not a whole lot worth mentioning.

A shining example is aragonite vase (BM 91594) from the reign of Xerxes. It is a certain almost 30 centimetres high calcite vase in a relatively poor condition, whose characteristic feature is the removed Egyptian cartouche on its side.²²¹ The likeness is not surprising, a very similar vessel was also found in the ruins of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, i.e., in western Turkey and the then Carian satrapy. The exception is that this vessel bears the short inscription "Xšayâršâ Xš vazraka", i.e. "The great king Xerxes". Since similar inscriptions have been found on other vessels of similar type, it can be assumed that the Sippar vessel would belong to the same category.²²²

As can be seen, the Sippar vessel as such does not tell us much, thus perfectly representing the underwhelming other material culture finds from this site.

²²¹ De Meyer 1980, 99.

²²² Lendering, 1997. A Jar with the Name of King Xerxes. Livius.
<https://www.livius.org/sources/content/achaemenid-royal-inscriptions/a-jar-with-the-name-of-king-xerxes/>,
(Last accessed: 2023, August 8).



Figure 1. Alabastron BM 132114 © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 2. Jar BM 91594 © The Trustees of the British Museum.

However, this does not mean that Sippar as such is a site empty of finds, on the contrary, several very famous finds have been found on the site, such as the so-called “world map” and the aforementioned Sun Tablet. Unfortunately for the research for the Persian period and the period closely preceding it, no significant finds have come from this period so far

which is of course not indicative of Sippar producing items on a smaller scale.

Nevertheless, I would like to mention for or the sake of completeness, at least marginally, what other findings may the reader encounter. Were one to decide to go through the British Museum collection, the location of the majority of the finds from the excavations carried out by Hormuzd Rassam, aside from numerous tablets and material dating to other earlier periods, he would mostly find bricks (e.g. BM 90319), from which some bearing leftovers of inscriptions, mostly of NB ruler Nebuchadnezzar II.²²³ After him, none of the rulers indicate the existence of such a large number of described bricks, we know about the bricks inscribed by Cyrus the Great from the city of Ur²²⁴ (BM 118362), then about the bricks of Darius I from the eastern Susa (DSk and DSl) and from Xerxes from Persepolis of Appadana (XPg). If one examines the finds and quantities, there may of course be a kind of decline of this tradition in Mesopotamian cities under Persian leadership, but for lack of further examples of the bricks described, no sudden conclusions should be drawn. Other than that it would be damaged pottery (e.g. BM 91021), perhaps some amulets (e.g. BM 22464)²²⁵ and few of the so

²²³ Hameeuw, Gorris and Tavernier 2015, 89-101.

²²⁴ Inscribed bricks from this ruler have been found only in the cities of Ur and Uruk in Southern Mesopotamia. Oppenheim 1985, 553.

²²⁵ Budge 1930, 94, 97. or Budge 2017. (Newer edition of the same publication).

characteristic cylinder seals from Mesopotamia (e.g. BM 89304). The scarcity of the latter at Sippar may be surprising as, interestingly enough, the cylinder seal once again enjoyed an increase in popularity during the Achaemenid times, after the NB and NA periods preferred to use the stamp seal.²²⁶

²²⁶ Collon 1987, 90.

3. Conclusion

The thesis began with the basic idea of plotting change in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. As outlined in the course of the thesis, this can only be answered to a certain extent due to the lack of materials that would be needed to answer the question conclusively and definitively. As far as administrative texts and royal inscriptions mentioning reconstruction work on the temple at Sippar during the reign of the Achaemenians are concerned, there is minimal to none at all, so in this respect one can only guess in what direction the situation actually developed. As has been seen, other evidence of material culture remains undiscovered and the minimum we have does not tell us much. However, the situation is not as dire as it might seem. Many administrative tables are coming to light by the minute, and with them our deeper understanding of what the people must have been going through during this period, not just in Sippar but throughout the Babylonian satrapy. After that thesis has gone through the historical events, there is no doubt that Sippar was closely connected with the happenings in the neighboring cities of northern Babylonia. For the most part, events in Babylon directly affected the political situation, and the political attitude of the people of Sippar, for good or ill in the long run. We know that in the middle of Persian rule under King Xerxes, Babylonian influence shifted southward, to the old, originally Sumerian cities such as Uruk. This of course had wider implications not only in terms of political developments but also in the interconnected religious situation. In order to answer the question, it is important to first discuss the reason for the change of inclination for southern Mesopotamia at the expense of the northern one. Several revolts against their Achaemenid overlords have been mentioned in the thesis. It is probable that the situation may have been more difficult for the common man, but whether it was so untenable that revolt is the only way out is both difficult to answer and unlikely. The attitude of the Persians towards their satrapies has been mentioned many times in the work itself, which cleverly sought the apparent immutability of the local system and its institutions, albeit strictly for the good of the heart of the empire and not necessarily for the good of the population - which is not unexpected, the empire seldom truly prioritised the general wellbeing of its citizens over its own interests. Thus, whatever Babylon's ancient prestige may have been and whatever the Persian rulers' fascination and respect for Babylonian culture may have been, the fact remained that the Babylonians were still their foreign subjects with a primary obligation to pay taxes and send off resources, both material and human labor, to the Persian mainland and to enrich the cities of Persia such as Susa, Pasargadae and

Persepolis, perhaps culturally as well as monetarily. However, as mentioned above, it is hard to imagine a situation so unbearable for ordinary people to unite and incite resistance against the Achaemenians. This leaves the possibility that the revolts were instigated by the remnants, or even the new Babylonian elite to which, with the promise of re-establishing a domestic ruling class, many people joined and identified with such an idealistic vision. The sheer number of different revolts and struggles for liberation in this territory speaks volumes about what it meant for the people of this period to be part of an independent entity - not for nothing does the thesis make note of the revolt of Šamaš-šuma-ukin against Assyria and the similarities found. What is possible, then, is that the main change in this period did not stem from the cruelty, exploitation and/or greed of their Persian overlords, but perhaps paradoxically from the intransigence of the Babylonian elite. It must be pointed out that Northern Babylonia was not the only part of the empire that tried to break away from the Achaemenid Empire at every opportunity it got. The Egyptian satrapy is also infamous for all revolts, more or less at the same time as the Babylonian ones - when a ruler dies and the throne is passed to the next ruler. Therefore, it is unbelievable that revolutionaries and "false" kings could actually think that disengagement was not impossible, as well as a total dismemberment of the Achaemenid Empire at any time. If only because of the specific example of the Babylonian satrapy and the affection of the Persians for it - see the title "king of Babylon" of the first Persian rulers, it is probable that for the normal person life was almost unchanged, and the higher-ranking loyal officials and dignitaries may have rejoiced when the information first reached them that they could leave their offices unscathed. The moment when any substantial changes have started taking roots was the moment when the people to which the Persians payed a special affection and a form of respect have started to revolt. This was resulted fairly quickly and at first the changes only existed to lower the influence of the people, and the perhaps the places they represented, responsible for the disloyal acts. Unfortunately for the common people of Northern Babylonia the revolts and disloyal attitude towards the Persians did not cease and continued until the whole satrapy had possibly met up with the anger of Xerxes I around 484 BC, marking the moment when we lose all information about the archive of Ebbabar and thus encounter an apparent "break" in the countinuity of the period.

In conclusion, the Achaemenids have strived for continuity wherever it was possible as it was beneficial for them. The discontinuity becomes only apparent when Babylon takes a stance against them and even then, the results seem to be mild. This shows that the intent of the Persians was not to make changes at all and the initiators of change were the inhabitants of

the satrapy itself. Then, under Xerxes in 484 BC everything suddenly fades away and we have no information available.

List of Abbreviations

Journals, series and texts are cited to the usual Assyriological conventions.²²⁷ Achaemenid inscriptions follow this convention: first letter is the name of the king, second letter is the name of the place, third letter is used in the case where there are several inscriptions from the same ruler on the same place. They are usually consisted out of three letters. (X (Xerxes) P (Persepolis) h (Designated letter for the find))

Journals and Series

Akkadica	Akkadica. Périodique bimestriel de la Fondation Assyriologique Georges Dossin
AuOr	Aula Orientalis
BAM	F. Köcher, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (http //cdli.ucla.edu/)
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
NABU	Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
TSBA	Transactions by Society of Biblical Archæology
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete , und Vorderasiatische Archäologie

Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions

DB	Behistun Inscription
DSk	Inscribed Brick by Darius from Susa, designated inscription letter “k”
DSl	Inscribed Brick by Darius from Susa, designated inscription letter “l”
XPh	Daiva Inscription

²²⁷ For more, please consult the list of abbreviations made by CDLI (CDLI contributors. (2023, August 8). Abbreviations. Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. <https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/abbreviations>)

Historical Abbreviations

Ach	Achaemenid
MB	Middle-Babylonian
NA	Neo-Assyrian
NB	Neo-Babylonian

Abbreviated Names of Kings – Usually Used in Designating Regnal Years

Bar	Bardiya
Cam	Cambyses (II)
Cyr	Cyrus (II)
Dar	Darius (I)
Nbk	Nebuchadnezzar (II)
Nbk III	Nebuchadnezzar III
Nbk IV	Nebuchadnezzar IV
Nbn	Nabonidus
Ner	Neriglissar
Npl	Nabopolassar
Xer	Xerxes (I)

Written Sources

ABC	A.K. Grayson, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles
CH	Codex Hammurabi
SKL	Sumerian King List

Dictionaries

CAD	A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian
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