

Review of a Master Thesis

Supervisor

Reviewer

Author of the thesis: Ondřej Špaček	Number of the student: 45815418
Title of the thesis: The Development and Transformation of Temple Institutions of the 1st millennium BCE	
Number of pages: 49 of pages in total, including: 37 pages of text, 8 pages of bibliography and abbreviations, 1 pages of index	
The review author: prof. PhDr. Jana Mynářová, Ph.D.	

Brief evaluation of the thesis:

The thesis aims at detecting possible changes within the temple institution in the 1st millennium BCE Mesopotamia. The choice of the subject is motivated by the spark interest of the student in the social transformations connected to the growth of the influence of the Achaemenid empire in the Mesopotamian centres. Since the matter is extremely complicated and studying the effects of such an influence on the entire area would be an impossible task, the student focuses on one centre in particular, and especially on the effects that those political changes had on the main temple of the city. The city of Sippar with its Ebabbar temple is then the case study for this bachelor work. Selecting a single site for the analysis has proven an interesting and clever choice. The site of Tell Abu Habba (ancient Sippar-Yahrurum) is important for the reconstruction of the relationship between the central power and the controlled territories in the alluvium. The city of Sippar was indeed an outstanding religious centre and the archives found during its excavations have yielded a significant number of materials, the majority of which is still unpublished. At first sight, this may be problematic but offers the student the possibility to work on the material for years to come.

As for the structure of the manuscript, the dissertation is neat and clear. It begins by introducing the topic and objectives of the dissertation and providing an in-depth historical and social framework that helps the reader to orient himself in the following pages. The methodology is discussed as well, especially with regard to how the sources have been used and analysed. Špaček's study relies on four different typologies of sources, which are either coming directly from the site or originated in different areas and periods but that referred in particular to the site and the characters dealt with in the dissertation. In total four different categories of sources have been used: cuneiform tablets, royal inscriptions, other artefacts, and ancient authors. All the categories are clearly described by the author in the text, where he also addresses the problems related to the reliability, chronology, and function of such pieces of evidence. The dissertation then moves on to analyse the data in a discursive manner. The chapter contains five sub-chapters in which Špaček presents the efforts of the different rulers in repairing the Ebabbar temple in Sippar and keeping alive its traditions. However, the thesis also uncovers the failed attempts and the ups and downs of this relationship between central power and the temple institution, also showing a much wider range of effects with repercussions on Northern Babylonia and not only Sippar.

In conclusion, the dissertation makes very good use of the available sources and opens up to critical points of view, revealing the ambiguity of the Achaemenid approach to the Babylonian Satrapy, which on its part never completely surrendered and in fact actively showed its dissatisfaction when needed. Convincingly, the thesis maintains that the changes made by the Achaemenid rulers were deemed necessary and therefore urged by the central power, but only when needed and with mild results. On other occasions, a more cautious approach was preferred by the foreign sovereigns. This was achieved keeping alive local traditions, restoring temple buildings, and respecting festivities.

I. Formal criteria

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient
Scientific aspect of the thesis					
Unified form of references, bibliography and notes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient referencing to other scholars' works (suitable scientific practice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal aspect of the thesis					
Structure of the thesis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity of form (Table of contents, division of chapters, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Captions to figures and tables	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language					
Clarity and comprehensibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orthography, grammar, diacritics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scholarly terminology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Form and visual aspect					
Layout, font size	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection and quality of figures, tables and graphs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Commentary on the formal aspects of the thesis: The structure of the dissertation is neat in its formulation. It responds to criteria of clarity and consistency.

II. Subject matter

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient
Structure of the thesis					
Overview of previous studies on the subject (and theoretical background)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logical interconnections within the structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity of argumentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with literature					
Selection of scholarly literature on the subject	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using relevant literature in argumentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical assessment of the literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Methodology					
Formulations of questions and hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection of sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transparency of the criteria for the selection of sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledgment of the limits of the study of the sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results					
Clarity of the hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasoning of the hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integration into scholarly studies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Commentary on the subject matter: The selection of sources has been clearly unfolded. The pieces of evidence have been introduced in the text also mentioning their limits when evident, especially in the case of ancient authors and royal inscriptions. Therefore, the sources have been used extensively, but with a clever critical approach. The cuneiform tablets which are still unpublished have not been taken into consideration, because they go beyond the current required skills of the author. The particular dialect and script of the cuneiform texts have not been introduced in the BA program but will be part of the MA program in the following years. This will give the student the opportunity to deepen further his research in the future. In my opinion, Špaček's excellent work, in the current stage, fits perfectly with the requirement of the BA.

Final result: ¹

Excellent

15.08.2023

Date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Didon' followed by a stylized monogram.

Signature

¹ Excellent – Very good – Good – Insufficient