

The Size and Significance of the Babylonian Temples under the Successors.

[Trial version]

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Introduction

“Moving on to Babylon Alexander was met by Mazaeus, who had taken refuge in the city (*urbs*) after the battle (of Gaugamela). He came as a suppliant with his grown-up children to surrender himself and the city. Alexander was pleased at his coming, for besieging so well-fortified a city would have been an arduous task. (...)

[19] A large number of the Babylonians had taken up position on the walls, eager to have a view of their new king, but most went out to meet him, [20] including the man in charge of the citadel (*arx*) and the royal treasury (*regia pecunia*), Bagophanes. Not to be outdone by Mazaeus in paying his respects to Alexander, Bagophanes had carpeted the whole road with flowers and garlands and set up at intervals on both sides silver altars heaped not just with frankincense, but with all manner of perfumes. [21] Following him were his gifts – herds of cattle and horses, and lions, too, and leopards, carried along in cages. [22] Next came the Magi chanting a song in their native fashion, and behind them were the Chaldaeans, then the Babylonians, represented not only by priests, but also by musicians with their national instrument. (The role of the latter was to sing the praises of the Persian kings, that of the Chaldaeans to reveal astronomical movements and regular seasonal changes.) [23] At the rear came the Babylonian cavalry, their equipment and that of the horses suggesting extravagance rather than majesty.

Surrounded by an armed guard, the king instructed the townspeople (*oppidani*) to follow the rear of his infantry; then he entered the city on a chariot and went into the palace (*regia*). The next day he made an inspection of Darius' furniture and all his treasure, [24] but it was the city itself, with its beauty and antiquity, that commanded not only the attention of the king, but of all the Macedonians. And with justification. Q. Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander*, 5.1.17; 19-24 (translation John Yardley, Penguin Classics)

“The reason why he [Darius III] fled towards Media [after the battle of Gaugamela] was that he thought Alexander after the battle would take the route to Susa and Babylon, since all of it was inhabited and the road itself was easy for the baggage trains, and besides, Babylon and Susa were the obvious prize of the war, whereas the route to Media was not easy for a large force. [3] Darius was not mistaken, for leaving Arbela Alexander at once advanced on the road to Babylon. He was already near Babylon, and was leading his force in battle order, when the Babylonians came to meet him in mass, with their priests and rulers, each section of the inhabitants bringing gifts and offering surrender of the city (*polis*), the citadel (*akra*) and the treasure (*ta chrēmata*). [4] On entering Babylon Alexander directed the Babylonians to rebuild the temples Xerxes destroyed, and especially the temple of Bēl (*Bēlos*), whom the Babylonians honour more than any other god. He appointed Mazaeus satrap (*satrapēs*) of Babylon and Apollodorus of Amphipolis general (*stratēgos*) of the troops left behind with Mazaeus, and Asclepiodorus son of Philo to collect the taxes (*tous phorous*). [5] (...) At Babylon too he met the Chaldaeans, and carried out all their recommendations on the Babylonian temples (*ta hiera ta en Babylōni*), and in particular sacrificed to Bēl, according to their instructions.”

Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, III 16. 2-5 (translation P.A. Brunt, Loeb Classical Library [Brunt translated *Bēlos* erroneously as *Baal*])

“The temple of Belus (*ho tou Bēlou neōs*) was in the centre of the city (*en mesēi tēi polei ... tōn Babylōniōn*), unequalled in size, and made of baked brick with bitumen for mortar; [2] like the other shrines of Babylon (*ta alla hiera ta Babylōniōn*), **Xerxes** had razed it to the ground (*kateskapsen*) **when he returned from Greece**; and Alexander had it in mind to rebuild it, some say on the original foundations, and that for this reason he ordered the Babylonians (*tous Babylōniōus*) to remove the earth (*ton choun ekpherein*); other say that he even wished to make it even larger than the old one. [3] But since those charged with the work had been slack in handling it after his departure [in 331 BC], he planned to complete it now with the help of his entire army. The god Belus had a large endowment of land and gold from the Assyrian kings, [4] from which in old times the temple was kept in repair and the sacrifices were offered to the god, but at that time the Chaldaeans were in enjoyment of the revenues, as there was nothing on which to spend the surpluses. All this made Alexander suspect that they did not desire him to enter Babylon, so that the rapid completion of the temple would not deprive them of the benefit of these moneys.”

Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander* VII 17. 1-4 (Loeb)

“After this [= the building of the palace] she [= Semiramis] built in the centre of the city (*en mesēi tēi polei*) a temple of Zeus (*hieron Dios*) whom, as we have said, the Babylonians call Belus. Now since with regard to this temple the historians are at variance, and since time has caused the structure to fall in ruins, it is impossible to give the facts concerning it. But all agree that it was exceedingly high, and that in it the Chaldaeans made their observations of the stars, whose risings and settings could be accurately observed by reason of the height of the structure. [5] Now the entire building was ingeniously constructed at great expense of bitumen (*asphaltēs*) and brick (*plinthos*), and at the top of the ascent Semiramis set up three statues of hammered gold, of Zeus, Hera, and Rhea. (...) [9] But all these were later carried off as spoil by the Persians, while as for the palaces and other buildings, **time** has either entirely effaced them or left them in ruins; and in fact in Babylon itself but a small part is inhabited at this time, and most of the area within its walls (*entos teichous*) is given over to agriculture.” Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, II 9.4-5, 9 (translation C.H. Oldfather, Loeb)

“They [the Chaldaeans] told their envoys also to urge upon the king [Alexander] that he must under no circumstances make his entry into the city; [2] that he could escape the danger if he re-erected the tomb of Belus which had been demolished by the Persians, but he must abandon his intended route and pass the city by” Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, XVII 112.1-2.

“Alexander carried off with him all the wealth in Persis to Susa, which was also full of treasures and equipment; and neither did he regard Susa as the royal residence (*to basileion*), but rather Babylon, which he intended to build up still further; and there too treasures lay stored. (...) [10] **At all events, Alexander preferred Babylon, since he saw that it far surpassed the others, not only in its size, but also in other respects.**” Strabo, *Geography*, XV 3. 9-10; translation H.L. Jones, Loeb Classical Library)

“Here too is the tomb of Belus, now in ruins, having been demolished by **Xerxes**, *as it is said*. It was a quadrangular pyramid of baked brick, not only being a stadium in height, but also having sides a stadium in length. Alexander intended to repair this pyramid; but it would have been a large task and would have required a long time (for merely **the clearing away of the mound (*hē chous*) was a task for ten thousand men for two months**), so that he could not finish what he had attempted; for immediately the king was overtaken by disease and death. None of his successors cared for this matter; and even what was left of the city was neglected and thrown into ruins, partly by the **Persians** and partly by **time** and by **indifference of the Macedonians** to things of this kind, and in particular after Seleucus Nicator had fortified Seleuceia on the Tigris near Babylon, at a distance of about three hundred stadia therefrom. For not only he, but also all his successors, were strongly interested in Seleuceia and transferred the royal residence (*to basileion*) to it. What is more, Seleuceia at the present time (*nun*) has become larger than Babylon, whereas the greater part of Babylon is so deserted that one would not hesitate to say what one of the comic poets said in reference to the Megalopolitans in Arcadia: “The Great City is a great desert”. Strabo, *Geography*, XVI 1.5.

“Secondly [= as second example of Seleucus’ piety], when he founded Seleuceia on the river Tigris and brought to it Babylonian colonists (*Babylōniou ... synoikous*), **he spared the wall of Babylon as well as the sanctuary of Bel**, near which he permitted the Chaldaeans to live.” Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I 16.3 (Loeb)

“The temple of Jupiter Belus in Babylon is still standing (*Durat adhuc ibi Iovis Beli templum*) – Belus was the discoverer of the science of astronomy; but in all respects the place has gone back to a desert, having been drained of its population by the proximity of Seleucia, founded for that purpose by Nicator not quite 90 miles away, at the point where the canalised Euphrates joins the Tigris.” Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, VI 121-122.

When trying to figure out the condition of the city of Babylon in the days of Alexander on the basis of the classical sources, one is confronted with a set of difficulties. We have in the first place to reckon with reports of Greek authors before Alexander, like Herodotus and Ctesias. Since the contemporary authors are lost, we have for the period of Alexander to resort to writers of much later centuries like Diodorus Siculus (ca. 30 BC), Strabo (ca. 64 BC – after AD 21), Curtius (1st century AD), Pliny (AD 23/4 – 79), Pausanias (fl. c. AD 150), Arrian (c. AD 86-160). These authors in their descriptions of Babylon mix information they gathered from early authorities like Herodotus and Ctesias, authors of the Hellenistic age and reports of their own age.

What emerges from the later authors is that the city by 30 BC (Diodorus' floruit), the city of Babylon had declined. The palaces and other buildings (which buildings?) were in ruins. The city was inhabited and the walls were still there. A great deal of the area was turned into arable land. If Pliny is to be believed, the temple of Bel was still standing in the first century A.D. This building must have been Esagila, since all classical sources agree that the ziqqurat (*pyramis; taphos tou Bēlou*) had been destroyed by the time of Alexander. The destruction of the temple tower is confirmed by excavations (Wetzel 1957: 30-31).

It is very probable that the palace of Nebuchadnezzar was in ruins in the first century BC. Excavations show us that in the Parthian period (but note that "the Parthian period" covers 367 years: 141 BC – AD 226) common people settled in the area and built houses and graves there. This is more or less confirmed now by a Babylonian chronicle of the 130s BC, which mentions people who were living in the palace.

Chronicle concerning Bagayash, the brother of the king, *peliganes, politai* and "people who live in the palace." (130s BC)

A. BM 35229+35518+35621
 B. BM 35189+46018+46216 (Sp. III, 295+81-7-6,464+81-7-6,678)
 (Joins by Irving Finkel)

A.
 3' [... ..]x x x *iq-bi ana* x [... ..] AN.NE /šá\ *a-da-nu i-ki-ma* {eras.?²} *šú-nu-tú* ERÍN-
ni ^{gis}TUKUL.M[EŠ²]
 4' [... ..] UN.M[EŠ² KUR GA.NAG.MEŠ-šú-n[u u D]AM².MEŠ-šú-nu *ú-maš-ši-ru-ú nap-har-šú-*
nu UD.D[U.MEŠ (. . .)]
 5' [... ..]x *a-na šu-zu-ub-bu* KÙ.G[I] A.MEŠ *as-ra-a-tú ù pa-ši-ra-a-tú* x [... ..]
 6' [... ..]ŠÀ].TAM É.SAG.ÍL ^{lu}A.MEŠ E.[KI ^{lu}IR.MEŠ LUGAL *lu*\ UN.MEŠ *i-šu-tu* TA ^{lu}*pu-l[i-*
te-e]
 7' [... ..]U]N.MEŠ *šú-nu-tú šá ina* É¹.GAL.MEŠ LUGAL *a[š-b]u-ú nap-har-ri-iš ik-kil-lu na*
 x x *ri* x [... ..]
kai ta loipa

Translation

3' [... ..]x x x *he spoke to* x [... .. *in the*] afternoon² at the appointed time he took
 them away. The army, weapons x[. . . .]
 4' [... ..] the peop]le of the land, their sucklings, [their wi]ves, they released. All of them
 wen[t out (. . .)]
 5' [... ..]x in order to save the go[ld² of] the captive and the released people² x(x)[. . . .
 ..]
 6' [... ..] the sha]tammu of Esagila, the Babylonians, the slaves of the king and a few
 (other) people with the *pol[itai]*
 7' [*did battle*] these [pe]ople, who [li]ve in the royal palaces, all of them [raised²] a cry of
 distress [.]

etcetera

This was certainly not the case yet in 187 BC, when Antiochus III stayed for at least two weeks Babylon, lived in the palace, made sacrifices to the Babylonian gods, and visited the royal garden on the West bank (AD III, p. 330-333, no. –187 'rev. 3' - 18').

The walls of Babylon were still standing and functioning in 123 BC. In that year the gates of the wall could be closed because of the fighting with the Arabs who surrounded the city (cf. AD III, p. 298/9, no. –122 D 'rev' 9'-10'). This means, that if the story of Diodorus (XVII 115.1) that Alexander tore down the city wall to a distance of 10 stadia (= 2 km) in order to use the baked tiles for the funeral pyre of Hephæstion is true, the walls must have been rebuilt.

If we look at the reason for the decay of Babylon, the authors present three: the Persians (in particular Xerxes), time (*chronos*), and neglect of the Macedonian kings. Of these explanations “time” is probably most correct. Cities built with mud and baked bricks are very vulnerable for decay and need constant repair. If repairs are neglected, walls and buildings will gradually crumble off. This means that the main buildings, i.e. walls, palace and temples *were* kept in regular repair, if they continued to be in use. The walls were in reasonable condition in 123 BC, possibly even in the time of Diodorus and Pliny. The palace was in good shape in 187 BC, exactly 400 years after the Babylonian captivity of the Judaeans by Nebuchadnezzar, whose royal robe was still kept in the treasure house of the temple (AD II p. 323-333, No. –187 A ‘Rev. 11’). That reconstructions on the palace were carried out in the Persian as well as in the Hellenistic period is confirmed by excavations (Wetzel 1957; Hauser 1999). To remain in our transition period: Darius III as well as Alexander stayed in the palace. Darius was there on the eve of the battle of Gaugamela (Curtius IV 9.2), Alexander stayed there after the battle of Gaugamela for over a month and again a period of one or two months at the end of his life. The real decay of the palace must have started in the Parthian period, when the kings apparently did not use the palace anymore so that common people occupied the site. The palace suffered the fate of the palace of Diocletian in Split, which has now turned into a city instead of a palace.

It is the main objective of this paper to get an idea of the size and significance of the city of Babylon in the early years of the Macedonian occupation, i.e. from Alexander to Seleucus I.

Temples

The cuneiform documents show the existence of the following temples in Hellenistic Babylon (cf Boiy 2000: 93-101):

The main temple: Esagila, temple of Marduk (*passim*).

Other temples:

Egišhuranki, temple of Belet Ninua, simply called temple of Bēlet Ninua (AD II, p. 454sq, No. –171 H Obv. 12’ (SE 141))

Egishnugal, temple of Sin (ABC 11: 6’, 7’, 9’ = BCHP 5: 9, 10, 12 (SE 25³); AD III, p. 216/7, no. –132B r. 26 (SE 179).

Enitenna, temple of Sin (ABC 11: 6’, 7’, 9’ (not noticed) = BCHP 5: 9, 10, 12)

Eturkamma, temple of Ishtar of Babylon = temple of Beltia (BRM I 99: 26; CT 49 153: 3; 155: 3; 164: 3 (Parthian period); AD I, p. 190/1, no. –328, r. 24’ (25 Nov. 329 BC)

Esabad, temple of Gula on the west side of the Euphrates (Tuba district) (BCHP 8: r 17’; Rahimesu archive 93 BC)

Ehursagsikilla, temple of Gula, = Egalmah? (cf. George 1992: 305-6; part of Esagila: George 1993: 102) (BRM I 99:27; CT 49, 150: r. 24)

Ehursagkuga, temple of Gula (BRM I 99: 28; CT 49, 150: 25 (=Rahimesu Archive)

Ehursagtilla, temple of Ninurta in Babylon, George 1993, p. 102, no. 489; Temple of Ninurta (AD II, p. 234, no –198B r. 13; coll. George 1997, no. 18)

Enamtila, temple of Enlil in Kumar district on the west side of the Euphrates (AD II, p. 94/5, no. –234: 12 (SE 77)

Day-One-Temple = Akitu temple[?]; first attestation: AD II, p. 202, no. –204C: r 17; et passim.

Temple of Anunnitu (Text on Arses and Alexander: Van der Spek 2003, p. 300, no. 2: 7’)

Temple of Ea (^dBE) (AD II, p. 426, No. –175, Obv. 9’-10’ (SE 136);CT 49, 152:9)

Temple of Madanu (CT 49, 157: 6-8)

Temple of Nabu-sha-Harê (AD III, p. 502/3, no. –77B r. 16’)

Temple of Nergal (CT 49, 187: 4’; AD III, p. 256/7, no. –126B r. 10’; p. 320, no. –118A: 21)

Temple of Ninlil (BRM I 99: 45)

Temple of Zababa and Ninlil (BRM I 99: 2)

Esagila.

Esagila was the main temple of Babylon, the temple of the head of the pantheon, Marduk. Esagila was probably the name of the entire temple complex in the city quarter Eridu in Babylon. This includes in the first place the *ziqquratu* (temple tower) called Etemenanki. It is likely that when in documents the removal of the debris of Esagila is mentioned (in chronicles, diaries and administrative documents – see below), it will be first of all the removal of the mound of Etemenanki, as was ordered by Alexander the Great. However, we should not press the argument too far: clearing the dust of Esagila is a continuing concern due to the regular decay of mud brick walls. See for instance chronicle BHP 8 (BM 32266; date lost): r 22' [ITI BI SAHA]R.HI.A *šá ma-la-k[u] šá^dEN i[d-de-e-ku-']*, “[That month, deb]ris of the procession road of Bel was re[m]oved.” In the astronomical diary AD I, p. 356/7, no. – 266A: 13' “removing of debris of the small court yard” (*de-ku-ú šá SAHAR.HI.A šá KISAL.BÀN.DA; 5.II.45 SE = 30 April 267 BC*). In 93 BC 20 shekel of silver was expended for the removal of debris of some road (CT 49, 163 = Van der Spek 1998, no. 22: 6-7). In the same year 3.5 *mahat* = 3.5 obols was spent for the removal of dust from the roof of the Day-One-temple (CT 49, 154 = Van der Spek 1998, no. 16: 9-11). These texts are from the so-called Rahimesu Archive, which testify to the regular repair of doors and walls.

A second argument for the assumption that the term Esagila includes more temples, is given by Andrew George on the basis of the regular occurrence of a gate called KÁ DUMU.NUN.NA *šá É.SAG.GÍL*, “The Gate of the Son of the Prince of Esagila.” George (1992, p. 397) assigns this gate to Eturkamma, the Ishtar temple, on the basis of BTT 6: rev. 19 where it is called “the outer gate of Ishtar.” Cf. also Boiy 2000, p. 93-4.¹

A third argument may be found in the fact that the board of Shatammu (president of the temple) and kinishtu (temple board of temple functionaries) of Esagila acts as a kind of city council for the Babylonian population (cf. Van der Spek 1987).

On the basis of the information in the classical sources one might ask the question whether the temple of Marduk was still standing. Had it not been razed to the ground by Xerxes after his suppression of two revolts by the Babylonian pretenders Bel-shimanni and Shamash-eriba? The question of the date of these revolts and the destruction of the temple and the suppression of the cult of Marduk by Xerxes has been a hot issue in the last decades, and I do not want to repeat this discussion. A few main points though. The date of the revolts, given by M. San Nicolò (1934) and F.Th de Liagre Böhl (1962) as the 2nd year of Xerxes' reign, has been questioned recently by Robert Rollinger (1993: 218-226), who argued that it is impossible to suggest any date and by Pierre Briant, who – on the basis of Arrian VII 17.2 - suggested that the second revolt took place after Xerxes' return from Athens, hence 479 BC (Briant 1992). The revolts are not reported in the Greek sources, but the destruction of the temple by Xerxes or “Persians” is given by late authors as Strabo and Arrian and modern scholarship has connected the two events. The information as given by Arrian and Strabo was generally believed and confirmation was found in a report in Herodotus that Xerxes had removed a statue from the temple, which was supposed to be the main cult object. (Hdt I 183). First doubts have been expressed by Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin White (1987). They correctly pointed to the fact that many scholars, starting with Olmstead, had been careless readers and easily quoted each other without check. Herodotus only says that Xerxes removed

¹ As a matter of fact, I am not quite convinced by this argument. It may well mean that it was the gate *leading* to the temple of Ishtar. Likewise, there was a Madanu Gate in Eturkamma, the temple of Ishtar (Van der Spek 1998 no. 13 = CT 49, 150: 23; Van der Spek 1998, no. 18 = BRM I 99:26).

a certain statue of a man (*andrias*) and thereby killed a priest who tried to prevent it. What kind of statue is not mentioned (it might have been the statue of a Babylonian king; it was *not* a cult statue). Herodotus, however, stresses the fact that a cult statue (*agalma*) of Zeus (=Marduk) was still standing in his time (Kuhrt, Sherwin-White 1987: 71-2). It must be noted that Herodotus nowhere says that Xerxes destroyed the temple or ziqqurat. In addition, cuneiform evidence from the later Achaemenid period until the end of the cuneiform documentation in the later Parthian period, attests to the fact that Babylonian cult practices continued (cf. Kuhrt 1987; Rollinger 1993: 53-66; Linssen 2004). A destruction of the temples by Xerxes cannot be confirmed by contemporary sources. The information on it is late and may well have been distorted or even invented. I suggested that the invention was first made by the Babylonian astrologers who urged Alexander to rebuild “the tomb of Belus, which had been demolished by Persians” (Diod. xvii 112.3), in order to make the fate of Babylon look like the fate of Athens in 480 BC (Van der Spek 2003: 334, n. 17). The fact that Arrian says that Xerxes demolished the temple “when he returned from Greece” suggests the same connection between the destruction of Athens and Babylon.

However, in a recent article Caroline Waerzeggers (AfO forthcoming²) again stood up for the old theory that the revolts are best to be dated to Xerxes’ second regnal year and that Babylon was punished by serious suppressive measures against the Babylonian religious elite. Her main argument is that in the second year of Xerxes many temple archives in Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar and Kish came to an end. This can hardly be a coincidence. Of special interest is that the ending of archives was not universal. It concerned archives relating to the Babylonian temple elite, consisting of prebend holders. Other archives which covered year 2 or started later “belong to a new class of *homines novi* whose social world and economic interests were far removed from those of the Babylonian aristocrats whose archives break off in the summer of Xer. 02. In traditional Babylonian society these entrepreneurs occupied a lower position (none of them seems to have had or used a family name), but their success derived from their association with the Persian conquerors.” Furthermore, the south of Babylonia (Uruk) is not affected by “the end of archives.” This is explained by the fact that the sphere of influence of the pretenders did not reach that far.

I find the argumentation of Caroline Waerzeggers extremely interesting and convincing. It explains a lot of phenomena in a satisfactory and coherent way: the fact that *many*, but not *all* archives ended; the fact that the archives in question ended suddenly in the second year of Xerxes. It also put a few salient factors of the cuneiform material of the Hellenistic period in a new light, when we compare the texts from Uruk and Babylon.

1. In Babylon the use of the *tria nomina*, mentioning family ancestors, has become exceptional, while in Uruk the practice remained common.
2. From Uruk a huge amount of prebend texts (sales, leases) is preserved, from Babylon none. In Babylon administrative texts concerning rations (*kurummatu*) abound, increasingly paid in money, not in kind. The only text concerning a prebendary holder from Babylon I know, is CT 49, 160 = Van der Spek 1998, no. 24: 9 (^{lit}EN.MEŠ GIŠ.SUB.BA.MEŠ). The text in question, dating to 93 BC, is a lease of the right to collect and administer the income of the cashbox of the Day-One-temple, where it is stated that the lease does not appertain to the rights of the prebendaries. This kind of prebend differs substantially from the right to the leftovers of the sacrificial meals of the gods, as is still common in Uruk and Nippur (for two prebendary texts from Nippur dating to 154 and 152 BC: see Van der Spek 1992: 250-260).

However, what “the end of archives” does **not** imply is the *destruction* of the temple in the second year of Xerxes. The suppression of the revolt may have caused some damage to the city, but a systematic destruction of the temple tower would require a massive effort as is

² I am very grateful to Caroline Waerzeggers that she gave me her manuscript prior to publication.

proven by the application of 10.000 troops by Alexander *to complete* the job (and even he did not complete it, as we shall see below). It is much more likely that the suppression concerned people involved in the uprising, rather than buildings. The tower may gradually have started to decay due to lack of interest of the Persian kings after Xerxes for the maintenance of the temple, so that indeed time (*chronos*) was the main enemy of the tower. However it may be, Herodotus knew nothing about destruction. He described the ziqqurat as still standing in his time (*es eme*) and says that a temple was on top of it (I 181). If the temple were destroyed, it would give us another argument that Herodotus never visited Babylon (cf. Rollinger 1993). If Herodotus would have heard *something* about Babylon, he would certainly not have overlooked the destruction of the temple; a comparison with Athens would certainly have appealed to him as well.

It may even be the case that the temple tower was *never* finished, as was suggested by Von Soden (///). Evidence for that may be found in Genesis 11, where we read that the people of Shinar (Babylonia) said “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.” (11:4), a definition which seems to be quoted from Nebuchadnezzar’s building inscriptions. As is well known, the building was not finished, because the LORD confounded their language (which may be a rendering of the fact that in Babylonia a lot of languages were spoken due to the Assyrian and Babylonian deportation policy). The fact that Nebuchadnezzar claims that he finished the building, is not an objection to the theory. These inscriptions were made before and deposited in the foundations. The main objection against this theory is, *mirabile dictu*, that Herodotus assumed that the *ziqqurat* was complete and in good condition.

Later generations blamed Xerxes for the bad state of preservation of the tower and hence dated it to the latter’s return from Greece, as if he repeated his destruction of Athens.

Whatever the case: the sanctuary of Marduk, i.e. Esagila *stricto sensu*, still stood in the days of Alexander and still functioned. It must be noted that the religious function of the *ziqqurat* was not very important for the cult. The god lived in the temple and received there his daily meals (offerings). The tower may be compared to towers of churches. The daily offerings in the temple, however, were still made; several rituals were observed at least until the end of the record of the astronomical diaries in the first century BC, but probably longer (Linssen 2004; Geller 1997).

The temple tower will indeed have been in a bad state of preservation, and, posing as a good Babylonian king, whose task it was to maintain the temples, and because he was indeed susceptible to the advice of the Babylonian astrologers that he could avoid his death by restoring the temple, Alexander decided to rebuild the temple tower completely. The decision is recorded in connection both with his first and with his second visit to Babylon. Arrian reports that Alexander ordered the repair of “the temples, Xerxes destroyed” (plural!) and in particular the temple of Bel, right after his arrival in Babylon in October 331 BC (Arr. *Anab.* iii 16.4). This information may be confirmed by a message sent by Alexander from Sippar to the Babylonians, as reported by the Astronomical diaries (AD I, p. 178-9, no. –330 A r. 3’-15’; cf. emendations in Van der Spek 2003: 298-9), esp. 4’-5’.

- 3’ [I]TU BI TA I E[N]
 4’ ana E.KI GIN-ku um-ma /É.SAG.ÍL\ [.....]
 5’ u DUMU.MEŠ E.KI a-na NÍG.GA É.SAG.ÍL [.....]
 6’ /UD\ 11.KAM ina URU UD.KIB.NUN.KI *ṭè-e-mu šá^mA-l[ek-sa-an-dar-ri-is]*
 7’ [um-m]a² a-na É.MEŠ-ku-nu ul er-ru-ub UD 13.KA[M]
 8’ [KÁ.SÍ]KIL.LA KÁ ka-mi-i šá É.SAG.GÍL ù .. [.....]

9' [... ..] UD 14.KAM ^{lu}ia-ma-na-a-a MU-tim GU₄ [.....]
 10' [.. TI] (blank) LUGÚD.DA.MEŠ ^{uzu}ME.HÉ.ME[Š.....]
 11' [UD ..-KAM ^m]A-lek-sa-an-dar-ri-is LUGAL ŠÚ ana E.KI K[U₄?]
 12' [ANŠE.KU]R.RA.MEŠ ù ú-/nu-ut\ [.....]
 13' [... ..] u DUMU.MEŠ E.KI u UN./MEŠ\ [.....]
 14' [... ..] KU]Š ši-piš-tú ana [.....]
 15' [... ..]x um-ma x[.....]

3' That month (VII = Tishri), from the 1st until [..... . *On the nth day Greeks*]
 4' came to Babylon (saying) as follows: “Esagila [*will be restored*]
 5' and the Babylonians to the treasury of Esagila [*their tithe will give.*”]
 6' On the 11th day (18 October 331) in Sippar an order of Al[exander to the Babylonians
 was sent]
 7' [as follow]s: “Into your houses I shall not enter.” On the 13th day (20 October 331)
 [Greeks entered]
 8' [the Sikil]la gate, the Outer gate of Esagila, and [*they prostrated*]
 9' [*themselves*]. The 14th day (21 October), these Greeks a bull, [.....]
 10' [n] short [ribs, n] fatty tissues (of the intestines as sacrifice) [.... sacrificed.]
 11' [On the nth day] Alexander, the king of the world, entered Babylon [...]
 12' [... Hor]ses and equipment [...]
 13' [...] and the Babylonians and the people [of the land ...]
 14' [...] a parchment letter to [the Babylonians ...]
 15' [...] as follows: [“...]

I admit that my restorations of lines r 4' and 5' are highly speculative, but they are fitting in with the context, conform to Arrian's message and also conform to cuneiform documents relating to tithes given to the temple for the removal of the dust of Esagila during Alexander's reign and well before his return to Babylon in 323 BC. A reference to removal of debris is made in a tantalizing mutilated tablet, which also mentions Arses, Alexander and the temple of Anunitu (Van der Spek 2003, p. 300, no. 2).

It is Arrian's contention, however, that nothing came of the restoration of the temple and that the restoration of the temple was sabotaged by the Babylonian priests, who did not like to use the own resources of the temple: “The god Belus had a large endowment of land and gold from the Assyrian kings, from which in old times the temple was kept in repair and the sacrifices were offered to the god, but at that time the Chaldeans were in enjoyment of the revenues of the god, as there was nothing on which to spend the surpluses” (Arr., *Anab.*, VII 17 3-4). This representation of the conditions of the rebuilding of the temple tower is interesting in many respects, as it slyly conceals, but after careful reading discloses the fact, that Alexander by his order to rebuild Etemenanki actually did nothing, gave not a penny subvention, but probably ordered that tithes of the landed estates, once given by the Assyrian (and Babylonian) kings (hence not Alexander), had to be used for the clearing of the site of Etemenanki and the subsequent rebuilding of the tower. It is like the Minister of Education of the Kingdom of the Netherlands who signed a treaty in Bologna to the effect that the Anglo-Saxon Bachelor-Master system should be introduced in Dutch universities, drank a glass of Champaign and subsequently did nothing. Alexander left Babylon after 34 days (Curtius V 1. 39), left a garrison of Macedonian soldiers and a spendthrift treasurer, Harpalus, who spent the treasures to give himself and his concubines a good life. All this drove up prices of food and wages to an extreme height (cf. Badian 1961; Van der Spek 2000). Though Alexander did nothing, the tithes were indeed used for the removal of the debris of Esagila, as is known from

several administrative documents. We have four such documents and they testify to the fact that at least the people mentioned here donated a lot of money:

CT 49, 6 (6.XI. year 6 Alexander = 5 Febr. 327 BC)	
Baruqā, the slave of Nabarzanu:	60 shekel
CT 49, 5 (5.XII. 9 Alexander = 5 March 327 BC)	
Iddin-Bel, son of Bagaparta	120 shekel
[60 shekel for Belet-Akkadi-....., his son + 60 shekel for Sinumarsu [?] , the parchment scribe of Theodotus [?]]	
Bel-šuma-lišir-šu, son of Shumija [?]	62.5 shekel
Marduk-belšunu, son of Bel-iddina	20 shekel
Bel-ahhe-ušur, son of Bel-ušuršu	5 shekel
Stolper 1993: 68-70 (18.X.11 Alexander = 26 January 325 BC)	
Rumahat-Bel, the parchment scribe of the house of the <i>mašennu</i> , on behalf of Ati'-Bel, head of ...	124 shekel
Jursa 1997: 133, no. 31 (<i>n.VI.12</i> Alexander = September 325 BC)	[<i>x shek</i>]el
Tanittu-Bel, son of Šulum-Babili (less than 1 mina = 60 shekel)	

These documents are well known, but nobody, including myself, ever realized how much money these people donated. The three simple documents, of which the amount of money is preserved, record a total of 391.5 shekels of silver, donated by only 7 persons= 55 shekel on average. Four people gave 60 shekel, one even 124.

We happen to know, thanks to a document published by Michael Jursa, that the wages of the people who did the work on the removal of the debris of Esagila amounted to 4 shekel per month (Jursa 2002, p. 120-121). This document is dated to 321 BC, and wages may have been high in that period. It was a time of inflation and high food prices, so in 327 the situation may have been different. However that may be, a donation of 60 shekel is enough to maintain 15 workers during one month. The total of these simple three documents was enough to pay 97 workers for one month. The donators probably were tenants of part of the temple land, given by “the Assyrian kings” encumbered with the obligation to pay tithes (*bīt ritti* or *bīt ilki*). Another explanation might be that the “tithes” were simple voluntary donations (discussion Jursa 1998: 86-90). Whatever the case: though the Babylonians could have done more (possibly the tithes were donated, but the work had not yet started), Alexander had done nothing.

When Alexander returned, the “Chaldaeans” will have reminded Alexander of his promise to rebuild the city, thereby adding the threat that Marduk could become angry and cause his death, if he failed to fulfill his promise. Alexander proved susceptible to these warnings and indeed now ordered 10,000 soldiers to work on it (cf. Arrian VII 17.3; Diodorus XVII 112.1-3; Strabo, *Geogr.* XVI 1.5). Alexander did not get the job finished. His untimely death may have been one reason, but his efforts to remove part of the wall of Babylon for the erection of a funeral pyre for Hephaestion will not have helped either (Diod. VII 115.1), nor the work on the port of Babylon destined to harbour the fleet which had been built for the conquest of Arabia (Arr. *Anab.* VII 19.3-6).

Whatever the case: the work continued. The just mentioned administrative document recording wages paid to labourers dated to 321 BC shows that. The chronicles and the astronomical diaries also mention frequently the removal of the dust of Esagila. The first diary

in question concerns August 322 BC: AD I, p. 226-7, no. –321: rev. 14' SAHAR.HI.A šá É-sag-gíl a<na> BAL.RI^dUTU.ŠÚ *id-de-ku-ú*, “the debris of Esagil was removed to the opposite west bank.” This is in conflict with the archaeological data, which suggest that the rubble was removed to the Homera area (Wetzel e.a. 1957:2). However, both things may have happened.

The Babylonian chronicles also refer to the removal (or sometimes the occasional interruption in the work) of the debris of Esagila. Primo, the so-called Diadochi Chronicle (= ABC 10; but see now also BHP 3 on <http://www.livius.org> > ancient Mesopotamia) obverse line 25 = 6', referring to the 4th year of Philip = 320/9 BC; reverse 13', referring to year 7 of Antigonus = year 6 of Alexander IV = 311/0 BC [mentioning the fact that in that year the rubble was *not* removed] and year 7 of Alexander IV = 310/09 BC [possibly again mentioning the interruption in the removal of the debris, apparently due to the continuous fighting between the troops of Antigonus and Seleucus during these years]. Secundo, Chronicle BHP 5: 5 (= ABC 11:2), probably dating to 287/6 BC, also refers to the removal of the debris or the interruption of it. If some of the chronicles indeed refer to the interruption of the removal of the debris, one must conclude that the normal state of affairs was that work on it continued.

The man who made the final effort in removing the debris of Esagila, and who showed real interest in Babylon and its temples, was Antiochus I. He resided in Babylon as crown prince from 293 BC (or perhaps earlier) until the death of his father in 281 BC. As king he retained his interest in the city. Antiochus was in fact ruler of the greater part of Asia before he became king. His father Seleucus seems to have lost interest in the eastern parts of his empire and was apparently longing for return to Macedonia, “his land” (ABC 12: r. 3'). The chronicles of this period mainly concern activities of Antiochus, the crown prince, not the king.

It is generally assumed that the foundation of Seleucia (date unknown; somewhere between 305 and 300) caused the rapid decay of Babylon. We discussed the relevant classical sources. To a certain degree it is true. If Babylon really had been chosen capital of the Seleucid empire, it would have grown in population, size and number of buildings, etc. Now it turned to a provincial city, though with a glorious past and as a centre of science (cf. paper Beaulieu). Nevertheless, the kings continued to visit Babylon and continued to reside occasionally in Nebuchadnezzar's palace. But even if one assumes that there was a great drain from Babylon towards Seleucia, one should keep in mind that a city cannot be built in one day or one year. For decades the city must have been a building excavation, a place full of mud, noise and unfinished buildings and roads, hardly a nice place for a king or prince to live in. So it is quite reasonable to assume that for the time being Babylon *in fact* remained the capital of the Seleucid empire or at least of the Upper Satrapies. Recently published Babylonian chronicles indeed attest that Antiochus, the crown prince and co-ruler with his father Seleucus, preferred to live in Babylon rather than in Seleucia. He showed interest in the maintenance of the Babylonian temples. At the same time he also made work of the resettlement of Macedonian colonists from Babylon to Seleucia.

For sake of convenience I reproduce here the transliterations and translations of the relevant chronicles. The commentary you may find on www.livius.org > ancient Mesopotamia.

BHP 5. Antiochus, the crown prince, and the temples of Sin (ABC 11).

Rm 757+BM 32440 + 32581 + 32585+32410+unnumbered fragment.

Previous editions

16' *ina maš* x x [. ITI GAN] ITI BI U[D ...KAM]
 17' ^{lú}UN.MEŠ KUR *i[a'*] x EGIR-šú *a-a-x* [.]
 18' [..] UD 18 KAM šá ITI [.] -*ka-an* x x [.]
 19' ITI ZÍZ ITI BI U₄-*mu* NU ZU ^m[.]
 20' *lana*\ URU *Se-lu-uk-ia-a* [.]

Translation

1 /Year 20^{+5?}, month Elūlu (VI)\. That month A[ntiochus, the crown prince.....]
 2 in the city of Bashī above the city [.]
 3 Month Tašrītu (VII). That month a certain ..[.....]
 4 [.]/ x x \ [.] /x x x \ [.]
 5 [.....] That year debris of Esagi[la was (not[?]) removed]

 6 [Year 26[?], month ..]. That month, the 20th day, Antiochus, the [crown] prince
 7 [entered Babylon. Day 2]7, [they moved] the animals to the [east (or: west)] side (of
 8 the river) to outside regions/for putting out to pasture.
 9 [Month .., ..]th [day], the crown prince at the instruction of a certain Bab[ylonian]
 10 [performed] regular [offerings] for Sin of Egišnugal and Sin of Enit[enna].
 11 [Antiochu]s, the son of the king, [entered¹¹] the temple of Sin of Egišnugal and in the
 12 tem[ple of Sin of Enitenna]
 13 [and the s]on of the king aforementioned prostrated himself. The son of the king
 14 [provided] one sheep for the offering
 15 [of Sin and he bo]wed down in the temple of Sin, Egišnugal, and in the temple of Sin,
 16 En[itenna].
 17 [That month, the son of the king] departed [fr]om Babylon to Bit Gura. Month [...
 18 That month]
 19 [the *epi*]states[?] [led] his troops out[of] Seleucia
 20 [to] towards the king [. . .]. anoi[nted[?] . . .] /Month\ [. . . That month
 21 [.] gold [.]

ca. 16 lines missing

Reverse

Lacuna of ca. 4 lines

1' [. Month Kislīmu (IX). That month], 28th day, water in[to]
 2' [. Month Ṭebētu (X). That month], 28th day, P[ol]yteudas[?], the Greek,
 3' [.]. Month Šabaṭu (XI). That month, [day 2]8th, Antiochus, the son of the
 4' king,
 5' [.] the herdsman[.] to the city of Bit Gur[a']
 6' [. the anima]ls on the [east (or: west)] side [.]
 7' [Month ..]. That month Antiochus, the crown [prince],
 8' settled⁹ [the Mace]donians, as many as there were in Babylon, [whom king
 9' Alexander[?]
 10' [into Babylon] had forced to enter, from Babylon [into Seleucia]
 11' [which is o]n the Tigris. .. [.] x [.]
 12' [.] x a heavy taxation (share of the yield) upon Babylon [he imposed]
 13' [That month, Antio]chus, the crown princ[e] .. [.]

- 12' [Year x, mo]nth Arahsamna (VIII). That month, the 20[+th] day. [Fro]m² 10 pure sheep [... ..]
- 13' [... ..] as ration² to the Babylo[nians. Fro]m² the 10 sheep aforementioned [... ..]
- 14' [they provid]ed²; within [Esa]gila /to Bel, Nabu and Beltia(?)\
- 15' [... ..] .. É [... ..] day 22t[h] [... ..]
- 16' x [... ..]. That month, day [...th,].
- 17' The people of the land x[... ..] [... ..]
- 18' [Month ... That month], 18th day of month [... ..] [... ..]
- 19' Month Shabaṭu (X). That month, on an unknown day, PN[... ..]
- 20' /to\ Seleucia [... ..]

The most interesting information from this chronicle is that Antiochus, the crown prince, visited Babylon, showed interest in two temples of Sin and sacrificed there according to Babylonian practice, at the instruction of a certain Babylonian, probably the shatammu. The second point is that Antiochus started the resettlement of Macedonians from Babylon to Seleucia. They were probably destined to increase the number of Macedonian citizens (*polītai*) in the new city. That the city had a more or less Macedonian constitution is indicated by the fact that an *epistates* was appointed there and that the council of elders was called *peliganes* (“Bagayasha chronicle”, unpublished; cf Van der Spek forthcoming). At the same time a heavy taxation (*miksu dannu*) was imposed on the Babylonian population. About the reason one can only speculate: war effort, food for the Seleucians, the fact that the *phoros* imposed on the Macedonians had now to be paid by the remaining Babylonians. Note that king Antiochus imposed new taxes in 274 and 273 as well (cf Doty 1977; Van der Spek 1993; AD I, p. 344-7, no. -273B r. 30’-32’; 36’-38’)

BCHP 6. The Crown Prince and the “Ruin of Esagila”.

BM 32248 + 32456 + 32477 + 32543 + 76-11-17 unnumbered (joins by I. Finkel)

Description of the tablet

The present state of the tablet is made up of five fragments, joined by I. Finkel. The left and right edges are preserved and measure ca. 2.5 cm thickness. The width of the tablet is 10 cm. and the lines contain ca. 14 – 18 signs. The broken upper edge measures 4 cm, the lower 2.8 cm, which indicates that possibly the upper half of the tablet is lost, and that not much is missing from the bottom end. The length of the tablet, as preserved, is 11 cm.

The tablet in question is really a strange tablet in various respects. The tablet looks like a chronicle, but the reverse lines 3’ff look more like the minutes of a court proceeding. The tablet is very clumsily written with crude, large and badly written signs. It may have been a school text or a draft note of events of two years, later to be used for a real chronicle or to be inserted in an astronomical diary.

No date is preserved, nor a royal name. The crown prince (DUMU LUGAL, *mar šarri*), however, is most likely Antiochus, son of Seleucus I. The addition (*šá bīt redûti*), made in BCHP 5, is not used in the preserved part of this tablet, so the tablet may be dated between the period ca. 302 (when the first elephants arrived from India) and 281, when Seleucus I was killed. It seems most likely, however, that the tablet dates to the time after 293, when Antiochus was appointed co-ruler with his father, with special authority in the Eastern part of the empire, i.e. east of the Euphrates. Antiochus spent much of his time in Babylon and the chronicles testify his activities.

Transliteration

Obverse

- 1' [... ..]x-nu [(..)]
 2' [... ..] ana E.KI
 3' K[¹?].MEŠ x šá^dEN
 4' ana^{lú}D[UMU.M]EŠ E.KI [^{lú}UKKIN šá É.SAG.]GÍL S[UM]-in u PAD^dINNIN
 5' ina muh-hi ni-ip-lu šá /É.SAG.GÍL[x iš-k]u-nu ina muh-hi ni-ip-lu
 6' šá É.SAG.GÍL in-da-qut GU₄/MEŠ.H[^{lú}I.A[?]ù] PAD^dINNIN GIM GIŠ.HUR
 7' KUR Ia-a-ma-nu DÛ-uš^{lú}/DUMU\LUGAL [^{lú}ERÍN.ME]Š-šú^{gís}GIGIR.MEŠ-šú
 8' (v) AM.SI.MEŠ<-šú> SAHAR.HI.A šá É.SA[G].G[ÍL i]d-de-ku-ú
 9' x[x.ME]š[?] ina maš-ka-lan[?] É.SAG.GÍL GU₇- [ITI] BI UD 17[?].KAM
 10' IZI ŠUB /ina qé-reb ERI.DU₁₀\.KI ana tar-ši /x\ [x ina]/lib\bi ÛR[!]-šú GÁL
 11' ITI SIG ITI B[^{lú}I] X [.. ..]X ÍD MAŠ.GÚ.GÀR
 12' /i\bir-ma a-na [.. ..] a-la-ku iq-bi il-lik ana | EGIR-šú GUR-ur
 13' [I]TI KIN ITI BI [^{lú}ia-a-ma]-na-a-a ina KA LUGAL ana m[u]h-hi
 14' [x É.SA]G.GÍL É.ZI.D[A] /É[?]\.MEZ[?].LA[M[?] ma]-ha-zi x [.. ..]
 15' [.. ..]x ITI ŠE ITI [BI ..] ^{lú}DUMU E.KI LÚ.ME[Š]
 16' [.. ..] E.KI.MEŠ X[.. ..]
 17' [.. ..] KA MAH/IL [.. ..]

broken off (3 lines missing ?)

Reverse

(3 lines missing ?)

- 1' [... ..]x x x 8 UR[U.MEŠ]
 2' [... ..]i-n]a É.GAL 5^fkal-ba-t[im[?]]

 3' [... ..] x x DÛ[?] LÚ i-te[?]-ri-šú-pa-ta-n[u[?]]
 4' [... ..]p] i[?]-ri[?]-il[?]-tum ana a-kal kar-ši-šú GIN-m[a]
 5' [... ..] /x x[?] ak\ ka-' - i ki-' ú-bal-laṭ n[ap-šá-ti-š]ú
 6' [x x x x x ina[?] ta-az-z]i[?]-im[?]-tu ki-' KI-šú ú-ra-du [..]x
 7' [.. ..]d]a-tu-na-' ib-šá-' \
 8' KI KU A MA[?]- x [.. ..] x-na-tum li-bi[r]-'
 9' ana É.LAGABxIM.MEŠ lu-mur[?] x [.. ..]x MEŠ X [.. ..] x (x)
 10' lu mar-ri ki-' ma-re-šá-nu ŠEŠ [.. ..]M]URUB₄[?]lúDUMU LUGAL
 11' ul-la lu NE-ti ik-kil GAR-ma KI [.. ..] i-dab-bu-ub
 12' um-man-ka šu-nu^{lú}DUMU LUGAL^{??} ana É [^{lú}um-man-nu li-t]e-ru-ub
 13' e-ru-ub ana É^{lú}um-man-nu šá hi[-ṭa i-pu-šú lu-ú a]m-hur
 14' um-man-na-a ki-i ú-še-e[l-lu-']x KU₄-ub
 15' el-la-mu-ú-a^{lú}LAGABxIM.M[EŠ]á]š-bu-' GÍR.MEŠ
 16' a-man-na-ku-nu^{lú}/LAGABxIM\M.EŠ x[.. ..]x.MEŠ-ka LUGAL-ú-tú
 17' [x da]n[?]-na-at /il/ka/tum\ x[.. ..]t]ú[?] šá pe-tu-tu É.GAL
 18' [.. ..]K]I.MEŠ gab-bi^{lú}NUN
 19' [.. ..]i-nu-ú hi-ṭu-šú
 20' [.. ..]u ZU u dan-nu-um

Little, if anything, missing.

Translation

- 1' [... ..] .. [(..)]
 2' [... ..] to Babylon
 3' wi[th^{??}] .. of Bēl
 4' to the Bab[ylonia]ns (of) [the assembly of Esa]gila he [gav]e and an offering

5' on the ruin of /Esagila\ they²¹ [arran]ged. On the ruin
 6' of Esagila he fell. Oxen [and] an offering according in the Greek⁷ fashion
 7' he made. The son of the king, his [troop]s, his wagons,
 8' (and) <his> elephants removed the debris of Esagila.
 9' /x x\ on the empty lot of Esagila they ate. That [month], 17² day,
 10' a stroke of lightning /within Eridu\ against the x [*building*] in the middle of its roof
 took place.
 11' Month Simanu (III). Th[at] month [.] x [. . .]x the Tigris
 12' he crossed and he said to go to [.]. He went, (but) he returned.
 13' [Mo]nth Ulūlu (VI). That month, [Gre]eks at the command of the king to [. . .]
 14' [. . . Esa]gila, Ezid[a] /E³\.mez².la[m², san]ctuaries x [. . .]
 15' [. . .]x Month Adar (XII). [That] month, the Babylonians[. . .]
 16' [.] Babylonians x[. . .]
 17' [.] [. . .]

broken off (3 lines missing ?)

reverse

(3 lines missing ?)

1' [.]x x x 8 cit[ies]
 2' [.] in the palace 5 bitche[s . . .]

 3' [Month . . . That Month, PN] x x the x-official (???) [*into Babylon*]
 4' [*entered. PN. with a se]cret²* in order to denounce him (= the official) went and
 5' [*to the son of the king spoke*] as follows: “When he (=you?) will spare [hi]s l[ife²]
 6' [. . . com]plaint²; when they will descend² with him [. .]x
 7' [.] they will be present
 8' [.] they may cross.
 9' Into the house of the metalworkers (or : rebels) he may make an inspection² [.]
 . . . x (pl.) x [.] . (pl.) x x
 10' or he may . . .^{??} *When the mistreatments²* x(x)[. in] front of² the son of the
 king²
 11' at a certain time he will raise a cry of distress and against [PN] will say
 (litigating):
 12' “These are your^(sg) workmen, the son of the king in the house [of the workmen may]
 enter.”
 13' I entered into the house of the workmen; whom *a cr[ime had done]*, I received.
 14' When they too[k away] my workmen [. . ,] x I/he entered.
 15' Before my arrival the metal workers (or: rebels) [li]ved [in]. The daggers
 16' of your^(pl.) workmen^{!??}, the metal workers (or: rebels), x[had.] your [. . .][?] (of)
 kingship
 17' [x x]x x[.] x of the opening^{??} of the palace
 18' [.]x x all of them, the prince
 19' [.] x x x his crime.
 20' [.] . . . capable and strong.”

Little, if anything, missing.

This text is of prime importance for the understanding of the reconstruction of the temple. Antiochus is reported to have made sacrifices on the ruins of Esagila, i.e. probably the mound of Etemenanki. He probably made the offerings in the Babylonian fashion. Suddenly, however, an accident happened: the prince fell on his face, probably due to the broken ground. The verb in question is *in-da-qut*, perfect of *maqātu*, “to fall down”. At first sight one is inclined to see in this expression a pious prostration of the king for the gods. This interpretation, however, is probably wrong. In the first place, the proper word for that act is the verb *šukēnu*, like it is used very often in astronomical diaries and chronicles of this period. Secondly, the verb *maqātu* has quite another connotation. It rather refers to accidents, to collapse. The CAD gives the following translations: “to fall down; to collapse; to fall to the ground, into a pit; to fall upon something; to swoop down, to suffer a downfall,” all very negative in tone. In only a few instances a meaning in the sense of “prostrating oneself” is attested. It occurs in the Amarna letters, in which the Akkadian has got strong West-Semitic influences, and it is always followed by *ana šēpē*, “for the feet of”. (CAD Š3, p. 242-3, s.v. *maqātu* 1.c.2’). So the conclusion must be that Antiochus simply fell on his face when he tried to perform offerings on the ruin of Esagila. It was recorded by the scribe, since it had to be considered a very bad omen. That it was a bad omen in Greek perception is illustrated by Plutarchus, who mentioned a bad omen for Antigonos, just before the battle of Ipsos (301 BC): “Moreover, Antigonos, when his phalanx was already forming and he was leaving his tent, stumbled and fell prone upon his face, injuring himself severely; but he rose to his feet, and stretching out his hands towards heaven prayed that the gods would grant him victory, or a painless death before his defeat.” (Plut. *Demetrius* 29.2)

As a matter of fact, Antiochus reacted in the same manner. After the incident he made an offering “in the Greek fashion”. Greeks were not accustomed to prostrate themselves for the gods. They prayed standing up with their hands raised, as Antigonos did. Secondly, his stumbling may well have raised his anger, so that he wished to remove the rubble of the temple once and for all as soon as he could and in a grand and royal manner: with wagons and with elephants.

It is the first time that we expressis verbis hear about offerings made “in the Greek fashion”. It occurs later in BHP 9 (=ABC 12): rev. 6’-7’ (SE 31, the last year of Seleucus I (280 BC)), in BHP 11 (SE 66 = 246/5 BC), in BHP 18 B 21’ and in the Astronomical Diary concerning year SE 143 (169 BC). It reminds us to the fact that even if a Seleucid king made offerings in an indigenous temple, he not necessarily conformed to local traditions.

So it seems that the clearing of the site of Etemenanki was now finished at last, at the instruction of Antiochus, with the employment of his army and his elephants. The rebuilding could start. The reverse of the tablet is very difficult to understand. It seems to concern a conflict between workmen, in which the crown prince is asked to intervene.

There is more evidence that not only debris was removed, but active building activities were pursued in the period when Antiochus I was king. The astronomical diaries report about year 37 SE (275-4 BC): “That year, a large number of bricks for the reconstruction of Esa[gila] were moulded above Babylon and below Babylon” (AD I, p. 347, no. -273B: r.38’). In this year Antiochus was in Sardes, but in the next year he went to Syria in order to fight against Ptolemy I who had invaded that country (AD I, p. 345, no. -273B r. 29’-30’). It may have been then that Antiochus I in Syria conceived the idea of reconstructing Esagila and Ezida, if we may believe the last extant royal inscription from Mesopotamia: “When I conceived the idea of (re)constructing Esagila and Ezida, I formed with my august hands (when I was) in the land of Hatti (Syria) the (first) brick for Esagila and Ezida with the finest oil and brought (it with me) for laying of the foundation of Esagila and Ezida. And in the month Addaru, the 20th

day, the 43rd year [= 27 March 268 BC], I did lay the foundation of Ezida, the (only) true temple of Nabû, which is in Borsippa” (translation ANET³: 317).

In any case in SE 41 (271/0) BC Antiochus was still encamped in Syria (AD I, p. 355, no. – 270B r. 18), but the inscription seems to imply that he laid down the first brick in 268 BC in Borsippa in person.

8. Chronicle concerning a service field (*bīt ilki*) in the Juniper garden.

BM 32266 = 76-11-17, 1994

Description of the tablet.

The fragment is the lower left part of a larger tablet. The lower left edge is preserved and has a thickness of 2 cm. as has the worn out lower edge. The broken upper edge measures 3.5 cm. The written surface of the obverse measures 5x5 cm, of the reverse 6x6 cm. Not too much is lost on the right sides: see Rev. lines 21’ and 22’.

The script of the tablet has a resemblance with the other documents of the early third century and it is likely that this tablet belongs to the same group.

Lacuna

- 1’ [... .. M]EŠ šá^d [... ..]
 2’ [... ..] x il x [... ..]
 3’ [... .. a-n]a PAD.^dIN[NIN [... ..]
 4’ [... ..] u[?] DUMU[?] LUGAL ana E.KI [... ..]
 5’ [...] x x x šá LUGAL ana muh-hi KÛ.BABBAR [... ..]
 6’ [...] at x x u šu-kut-tum KÛ.BABBAR [... ..]
 7’ /ina\ É dul-lu.MEŠ IGI.MEŠ u x [... ..]
 8’ ina GIŠ.KIRI₆ ŠEM.LI ina É il-[ki [... ..]
 9’ ina É il-ki il-lak[?] ana É [... ..]
 10’ ù 2 LÚ /TU.É\.[ME]Š x [... ..]
 11’ traces

Reverse

- 12’ [¹ú TU.É.MEŠ[?] x[?] x x qu-um x
 13’ u 1+en^{lu} E-man-na-a-a ana É li\ki šá /^d [... .. a-na]
 14’ ši-pir DINGIR.MEŠ-ú-tu šá ina l[ib-b]i É x [... ..]
 15’ TA ki-di-šú id-ke-e ITI x ITI BI x [... ..]
 16’ [b]i-ki-tum u si-ip-du ina É il-ki [GAR.MEŠ ... KÁ.MEŠ]
 17’ É.SA.BAD TAB-ú x x x TA NA₄ u x [... ..]
 18’ [T]A UD 22 šá ITI ZÍZ EN TIL ITI ŠE ina lib-bi ina É i[l-ki]
 19’ [ina GIŠ.KI]RI₆ ŠEM.LI pa-na-at KÁ.GAL^dURAŠ E[N[?]]
 20’ [h]a-ri-šu EN muh-hi A.MEŠ ina lib-bi ta-[mir-tum]
 21’ [TAR.MEŠ] ina il-šu EZEN u ri-iq-du ina É [il-ki GAR.MEŠ]
 22’ [ITI BI SAHA]R.HI.A šá ma-la-k[u] šá^dEN i[d-de-e-ku-’]

23’ (traces)

remainder lost

Translation

Lacuna

- 1’ [... ..]s of the god [X [... ..]
 2’ [... ..] [... ..]
 3’ [... .. fo]r the offe[r]ing of [... ..]
 4’ [... ..] and[?] the son[?] of the king to Babylon [... ..]

5' [... ..] of the king⁷ concerning the silver [... ..]

6' [...] and silver jewellery [... ..]

7' /in\ the workshops they received and x[... ..]

8' in the Juniper garden in the service estate[... .. the service (*ilku*)]

9' in the service estate he will perform.² To the [...] temple/estate⁷ [... ..]

10' and 2 temple enterers x [... ..]

11' (traces)

Reverse

12' [the] temple enterers

13' and a certain Greek to the service estate of the /god\ [... .. for]

14' the service to the gods, which within the [...] temple/estate⁷ x[... .. *people*]

15' from its environment he mustered. Month x. That month [... ..]

16' weeping and mourning in the service estate [he/was established. The gates of]

17' Esabad they locked. x x x with⁷ stone and x[... ..]

18' [fr]om 22 Shebat (XI) until the end of Adar (XII) within the se[rvice] estate

19' [in] the Juniper [Gard]en in front of the Uraš Gate t[o⁷ the]

20' [a mo]at to the water in the *ir[rigated land]*

21' [they dug.] In joy a festival and dancing party in the [service] estate [was held].

22' [That month, deb]ris of the procession road of Bel was re[moved].

23' traces
remainder lost

Commentary

The nature of this tablet is not easy to establish. In view of line 22' it seems to be a chronicle, but the rest of the tablet more looks like a kind of court proceeding and has much in common with chronicle BHP 6. The substance of the conflict seems to be that a certain Greek mustered people (temple personnel) who worked on a service estate of a temple were mustered (for the army). The complaint may have been that the service was supposed to be done for the temple, not the king. The story has a happy end thanks to the digging of a new canal for the irrigation; possibly not more than a mere eyewash.

It is difficult to date this tablet. It seems that chronicles BHP 5 (ABC 11), 7 (ABC 13A) and this one were written by one and the same scribe. All three have the same peculiar spelling for the word "Greek" as ^{lu}*E-man-na-a* (BHP 5: rev. 2'; BHP 7: rev. 5' and this one rev. 13'), instead of the common ^{lu}*Ia-man-na-a-a*. Furthermore in two chronicles mention is made of India (BHP 5: obv. 14 and 8: obv. 14). The removal of the debris of Esagila is mentioned in two of the documents (5: obv. 5; 8: rev. 22'). Finally the Juniper Garden is mentioned in BHP 7: rev. 8 and BHP 15: obv. 8 and rev. 19. All three may then deal with Antiochus, the crown prince (BHP 5: Obv. 6, 10, r. 3', 6' and 11'; 7: r. 10' (name alone); 8: obv. 4' (title alone (?)). Chronicle BHP 6 also concerns Antiochus, the crown prince, but in this document the word "Greek" is spelled ^{kur}*Ia-a-ma-nu* (obv. 7').

The spelling ^{lu}*E-man-na-a-a* is also attested in Astronomical Diary No. –324 A Obv' 15, unfortunately in a broken context, concerning months I – VI of the 12th year of Alexander the Great = 7 April to 30 September 325 BC. The name of that scribe is partly known: he was the astronomer [...]-Bel⁷, son of Mušallim-Bel, probably the same person or the brother of Bel-apla-iddin, son of Mušallim-Bel, descendant of Mušezibu = possibly Belephantes, the Chaldaean astrologer who warned Alexander the Great for his predicted death in Babylon (Van der Spek 2003: 333). The writing with ^{lu}*E-ma-na-a-a* is attested in an administrative document (BM 79001) dated to year 4 or 5 of Antigonos.

Obv. 7'

É *dul-lu* (*bīt dulli*) can be either “cultivated field” or “workshop(?)” (CAD D p. 177 s.v. *dullu* in *bīt dullu*). It seems that in this broken context the interpretation workshop is to be preferred in view of the mentioning of silver jewelry in the previous line.

Obv. 8', 9', Rev. 13', 16', 18'

bīt ilki, “real estate encumbered with an *ilku* obligation” (CAD I/J 81a s.v. *ilku* A in *bīt ilki*). *Ilku* refers to “services performed for a higher authority in return for land held”; “delivery of part of the yield of land held from a higher authority, also payment in money or manufactured objects in lieu of produce.” (CAD I/J, p. 73, s.v. *ilku* A). The word is well known since the Old Babylonian period (*bīt ilki* not attested after the OB period). In more recent periods of Mesopotamia history, in the Murashû archive from Nippur (end of 5th century BC), the word was used an annual tax levied on military fiefs in lieu of military obligations (cf. Stolper 1985: 25). The expression *ilku alāku* = to perform the *ilku* duty, referring to military or other obligations or to deliveries (CAD I/J s.v. *ilku* A p. 76-78 *passim*); see also CAD A1, p. 309, s.v. *alāku* 3c, “to serve, to do service.”

Obv. 8', Rev. 19'

The Juniper garden occurs very often in Late Babylonian documents. It was an important garden in which important buildings were located, like the Council house of the Shatammu and the Kinishtu. It occurs in the astronomical diaries in the following passages:

AD I, no. –277 C Obv. 3' (VIII 30 SE = 22 Oct. – 19 Nov. 278 BC; broken context)

AD I, no. –270B Rev. 15' (24 XII 41 SE = 24 March 270 BC: the ritual of the covering of the kettle drum performed in this garden.

AD II, no. –240 Obv. 7' (VIII 71 SE = 1 – 29 Nov. 241 BC; thieves are interrogated in the Juniper Garden, and convicted.

AD II, no –168 A Rev. 19' (VIII. 143 SE = 15 Nov. – 13 Dec. 169 BC; Location of “the old store house (*bīt bušē*)”. Valuables are moved to[?] the “new store house” which is located adjoining the east wall of the old store house. In chronicle BHP 8 this storehouse is apparently also at issue.

AD III, no –140 A Rev. 8' (24 III 171 SE = 4 July 141 BC; broken context. Possibly visited by Antiochos, son of Ariobarzanes, who was appointed General of Akkad by the new Parthian conquerors.

AD III, no. –93 A Rev. 25 (V 218 SE = 31 July – 39 Aug. 94 BC; location of the *bīt milki*, “the House of Deliberation”, where the shatammu and the kinishtu met and received letters from the king.

AD III, no. –79 Rev. 4' (II 232 SE = 28 April – 27 May 80 BC; the shatammu, the “Babylonians” = the kinishtu, and valuables are mentioned in a broken context. The storehouse and the House of Deliberation were apparently still there.

Administrative documents:

The Rahimesu Archive:

CT 49, 150 (= Van der Spek 1998c, no. 13): 23 – 26 (1 XI 218 SE = 24 January 93 BC): “the Juniper Garden, surrounding the temple,” probably referring to the temple mentioned before: Eturkamma, the temple of Ishtar. Same formula in BRM I 99 (= Van der Spek 1998c, no. 18) : 26-28 (14 XII² 218 SE = 15 April 93 BC)

From this chronicle we learn now (if correctly read) that the Juniper garden, containing the House of Deliberation, the Store House (old and new), and the temple of Ishtar of Babylon, was situated near the Urash Gate. There was also room for a so called “service estate” (*bīt ilki*)

Rev. 17

Esabad, “House of the Open Ear”, temple of Gula, goddess of healing and a patroness of doctors, in west Babylon (George 1993, p. 137, no. 944). As we noted above, there were two other temples of Gula in Babylon.

9. The last years of Seleucus I (SE 29-31 = 283/2 – 281/0 BC)

BM 32235 (76-11-17, 1962) with BM 32957 (78-6-31, 46) (no join)

Previous editions.

ABC 12; CM 33; TBH 197-200

Description of the document

From this document two non-joining fragments survive, which cover the same lines on the reverse. The fragments come from just below the middle of the tablet. BM 32235 is the left part and is inscribed on both sides. The preserved left edge measures 2.3 cm, the broken right side 3.5 cm. The length of the tablet is 5.5 cm, the dividing line of the obverse is 3.2 cm., the longest line of the reverse measures 4.3 cm. BM 32957 is the reverse of the right part of the tablet (the obverse is broken away). The height of the tablet is 4.7 cm, the preserved lines measure 3 cm. The lost part between the pieces measures c. 1 (bottom)-3 cm (top).

Transliteration

- 1' x x x x x [
 - 2' *ina ma-la-ku šá* É.SAG.[IL ...
-
- 3' MU 30.KAM ITI SIG ITI BI ...
 - 4' [*i*]d-ke-e-ma ana KUR x[...]
 - 5' /^{lú} Ia-a-ma-na-a-/a[...]
 - 6' UD.DU-ma ina E./KI\ x [...]
 - 7' ^{lú}GAR TA [...]
 - 8' É.SAG.I[L ...

lacuna

Reverse

lacuna

-
- 1' MU 3[1.KA]M I[TI .. ITI BI ERIN.MES-šú LUGA]L TA KUR *Sa-p[ar-du]*
 - 2' *id-ke-e-ma* A.A[B.BA] KI-šú *ú-še-bi[r-ma]*
 - 3' *ana* KUR *Ma-ak-ka-du-nu* KUR-šú [(...)^{lú}ERIN[?]].MES TA ^{lú}ERIN.MES-[šú]
 - 4' *si-hi ana muh-hi-šú is-hu-l'* [-ma PN GA]Z-šú ITI BI TA UD [.. KAM]
 - 5' EN UD 11.KAM ^{LU}ERIN.MES KUR [.. ..]*a-gim šu-ut* AB i- [...]
 - 6' [PAD.]^dINNIN GIS HUR KUR *Ia-a-ma-n[u a-di* GU ⁱ]UD.KIB.NUN.KI DU .[MES]
 - 7' NINDA.HI.A *ina lib-bi* GU₇-l' [-ma TA]*ib-bi* UD.DU.MES-*ni*
 - 8' ITI ŠU ITI BI /UD 12⁺[.KAM] *šá* KUR *Ba-ah-tar*
 - 9' [x] x LUGAL *ú-*[.....] ITI BI /UD 14[?].KAM\
 - 10' [x x] x [.....]

broken off.

Translation

Lacuna

- 1'
2' in the procession road of Esag[ila ...]
-
- 3' Year 30, month Siwan (III). [That] mon[th king Seleucus]
4' mustered [his troops⁵] and to the land of [..... he marched to⁷]
5' the Greek [.....]
6' he went out and in Ba[bylon⁷]
7' the governor (*šaknu*) from/with [.....]
8' Esag[ila]

Lacuna

Reverse

Lacuna

- 1' Year 3[1], m[onth ... That month, the king] mustered² [his troops] from the land of Sa[rdes]
2' and he made [his army] cro[ss] the se[a (...)] with him [and]
3' to the land of Macedonia, his land, [he went. Troop]s⁷ with [his] troops
4' rebelled^{pl} against him [and PN ki]lled^{sg} him. That month, from day [..]
5' to day 11, the troops of the land of [.....]*agim* [(verb).]
6' They made [an of]fering in the Greek fashion [(in the ...) on the bank of the] Euphrates [(and)]
7' they ate bread within it [and] they went out from it.
8' Month Tammuz (IV). That month, day 12², [*Elephants*] of the land of Bactria
9' [x] x the king ...[..... arrived. Month ...]. That month, day 14²,
.....

Commentary

This document is in so far of interest for our subject, in that it records something about the procession road of Esagila (removal of dust?); Seleucus' wish to return to Macedonia "his land" (cf. Briant 1994), the death of Seleucus, the offerings "in the Greek fashion" accompanied with "they ate bread within it", probably referring to the Greek practice of sacrificial meals. I would like to invite readers to explain the land of [.. ..]*a-gim*.

The number of personnel in the temple.

Not only the buildings, but also the number of people working in the temple give information on the size and significance of temples. We have some information about the number of personnel in early Hellenistic Babylon thanks to the so-called Esagila archive, i.e. a collection of ration lists of the Late Achaemenid – early Hellenistic period (Boiy (2000) 215-243; Jursa (2002). From Beaulieu's paper we learn that at least 14 astronomers were in service in the transition period (year 6 of Alexander IV?). A cuneiform ration list, dated to the 6th year of Antigonos, i.e. 312/1 BC, lists 50 lamentation priests, adding that it concerns only half of the number (CT 44, 84). Thus 100 of these people were in the service of the temple. Three ration lists preserve the names of 34 millers. As late as 93 BC a scribe of the millers is recorded, who receives money for the purchase of 540 litres of barley, to be used in one month, i.e. 18

litres a day (Van der Spek (1998a) no. 11: 7-9; 13: 8-11; 18:5-8). In addition the millers receive 2.5 shekel (ca. 5 drachms) as monthly wages (ibid., next lines).³ Some idea of the riches of the temple of Ezida is given by Astronomical diary concerning SE 9+10:

AD I, p. 248, No. -302/301 Rev' 5-6 (BM 34616 (= Sp. II 95) + BM 45901 (=SH.81-7-6, 334) Month VIII 9 SE = 28 Oct. – 26 Nov. 303 BC.)

5 1 ME 13 GUN KÙ.BABBAR 2 GUN KÙ.GI šá^dAG šá ina IGI x[.....]
6 É um-ma-nu u SILA.MEŠ šá BAR.SIP.KI [i]t-tar-ru-ú x[.....]

Translation

5 113 talents of silver, 2 talents of gold of Nabû, which was at the disposal of the temple [....]
6 the craftsmen's house and the streets of Borsippa were returned [.....]

The amount of money equals 478,800 shekels of silver (at a gold : silver ration of 1:10), which is enough to feed an army of 18,620 soldiers during a year, even at the extreme high price of 14 litres for a shekel current in 309 and 308 BC (cf. van der Spek 2000: 302).

Destruction of the temples and city

It is difficult to assess how much Babylon did suffer from the heavy warfare that took place after the death of Alexander. The Diadochi chronicle mentions a lot of street fighting and it will have damaged the city. Several times plundering, weeping and mourning are mentioned. The Successors liked it to use the water in their strategy. It is reported about Eumenes and Seleucus (Diod. XIX 13.1-5). If my interpretation of the Diadochi Chronicle is correct, Seleucus used water to capture the city as well.

ABC 10 = BHP 3 reverse

1' [... ..] x x [... ..]
2' [BAL.RI^dUTU.U]D./DU\A u BAL.RI^dUTU.ŠÚ /šá[?] BAR[?] [... ..]
3' [^mSi-lu-uk]-ku iq-bi um-ma MU 7.KAM ^mAn-ti-g[u-nu-su] ^{lú}GAL.ERÍN.MEŠ MU 6.KAM ^mA-lik-sa-an-dar A-šú šá]
4' /KI.MIN u\ ^mSi-lu-uk-ku ^{lú}GAL ^{lú}ERÍN.MEŠ ŠID.MEŠ ITI S[IG₄]
5' ^mSi-lu-uk-ku ^{lú}ŠÀ.TAM É.MES.LAM it-ta-[... ..]
6' É.GAL ŠU^{II}-su NU KUR ITI BI 30[?] GÚ[?].UN[?] KÙ[?].BA[BBAR[?]] /šá[?] [... ..]
7' ITI NE ^mSi-lu-uk-ku áš-šú ša-bat É.GAL la-na[?][... .. ina A.MEŠ/kima a-bu-bu]
8' is-pu-UB-ma ÍD UD.KIB.NUN.KI NU is-kir lana muh[?]-hi[?] [... ..]
9' ina lib-bi ip-qid /ITI KIN\ ^mSi-lu-uk-ku TA É.KI ana [... ..]
10' šá ina muh-hi ÍD MAŠ.GÚ.GÀR NIM.MEŠ ana UD.DU lana\ Pa-ar-s[a.KI]
11' ITI APIN ṭab-ti ù /x-tum\ [?]ana IGI KÚR.MEŠ /im\ [x x] x x x [.. ..]

³ The fact that a scribe was needed for the administration of the millers suggests that still a large number of millers were in function. The amounts, however, are small and suggest that there were only few millers left in the temple service. The solution of this problem may be that these expenses, made out of the offertory box of a temple, were only made for the daily offerings for the gods (18 liters per day) and not for feeding the temple personnel, and that the wages were only paid for this particular job.

- 12' ^{lú}ERÍN KUR *Gu-ti-i ù* ^{lú}ERÍN.MEŠ /AN\ DU-x x/a-na\ [... ..] x x [... ..]
 13' MU BI [SA]HAR.HI.A šá É.S[AG]-Í[L] l[a[?] id-de-ku-ú]

Translation

- 1' [.. ..] x x [.. ..]
 2' [the ea]st [bank] and the west bank ... [.. ..Month I/II]
 3' [Seleu]cus spoke as follows: “You will^{pl} count^{l.4'} year 7 of Antig[onus the general as year 6 of Alexander, son of]
 4' *idem* and\ Seleucus, the general.” Month Sim[annu (III = 31 May – 29 June 311)
]
 5' Seleucus [.. ..]ed the shatammu of Emeslam [.. ..]
 6' He did not capture the palace. That month, 30 talents of silver, which/of [.. ..
]
 7' Month Ab (V = 29 July – 27 Aug.). Seleucus, in order to capture the palace, to [GN went, the *defences* with water/like a deluge]
 8' he levelled (??) and he did not dam the Euphrates. Against [the palace[?] he set out and captured it; Patrocles *as general*]
 9' within it he entrusted. Month Elūlu (VI = 28 Aug. – 25 Sep.), Seleucus from Babylon to [.. ..]
 10' which (is) on the Tigris went up. In order to make a sortie to *Pers[is he defeated the troops of the land of Gutium and the troops of ...]*
 11' In the month Marcheshwan (VIII = 26 Oct. – 24 Nov. 311) there was goodwill and in respect to the enemies[.. ..]
 12' The troops of the land of Gutium and the troops of the /X\ [.. ..
]
 13' That year, debris of Es[ag]i[l] [was] n[ot^l removed]

Comments

The reverse of the tablet (probably column IV of a four-column tablet) describes the war between (troops of) Seleucus and (troops of) Antigonos for Babylon. Diodorus Siculus 19.90-92 and 100.3-7 has a brief description of the events, as if everything had taken place in 312 BC. In fact the struggle extended over a longer period, 311-308 or even longer (Cf. Van der Spek 1992: 243-250) and Antigonos seems to have taken part in person (cf. Wheatley 2002). In the month Nisan of 311 BC Seleucus returned from Egypt in Babylon and before month Siwan (III), i.e. before 31 May, he introduced a new dating system on the basis of regnal years of king Alexander IV (since 317 BC), adding his own name in the dating formula as “general”. Note that did not refer to his position as *satrap* of Babylonia, but as “general” *tout court*, hence claiming that he had taken over Antigonos’ title “*strategos* of Asia”. Small wonder that Seleucus was not included in the peace treaty of 311 BC. Antigonos seems for a while to have taken over the countryside of Babylonia, appointing there a satrap of his own in competition to Seleucus’ position. The struggle must have had a devastating effect on the city and countryside of Babylon. The commodity prices rose to incredible heights, as is remarked by the chronicler (Cf. Van der Spek 2000 and Van der Spek & Mandemakers 2003)

3'-4'

For the restoration: cf. Oelsner 1974: 136f n. 33; Van der Spek 1992: 245f; Stolper 1990; Geller 1990: 2 n. 8. The lines refer to a new dating system introduced after the capture of Babylon in the end of May 311 B.C. After the expulsion of Antigonos, Seleucus took the title “*stratēgos*”. Since it is evidently intended as a succession to Antigonos as “*stratēgos*” in the previous dating system, no other interpretation is possible that Seleucus considered himself the new “*stratēgos* of Asia”, a claim probably accepted by none of the other Diadochi, so that it did not even enter the literary tradition.

5'

it-ta-[...] at the end of the line can be derived from a dozen verbs and any restoration would be speculative. The *shatammu* of Emeslam (temple of Nergal in Cuthah) must be object of the verb.

6'-8'

describe Seleucus' attempt to capture the palace. Cf. Diod. 19.91.4.

8'

The first sign is written over an erasure, but it seems to represent GIŠ = *is/iš/iz*. Grayson reads *iz-bu-ub-ma* (from *zabābu*) "was in a frenzy." However, the relevant attestations of the verb referenced in CAD are N-stem, come from a collection of terrestrial omens, *Šumma ālu*, and describe the behaviour of horses. Geller therefore prefers to read *iš-bu-ub-ma* (from *šabābu*), "to spread wings," and explains: "the latter term can simply mean 'to fly' ... which is normally metaphoric for fleeing as well; cf. the analogous term *naprušu* 'to fly, to flee' (Geller 1990: 2 n. 11). However, this metaphoric use of *šabābu* is not attested in the dictionaries. Seleucus is not necessarily the subject of the sentence. Since all these translations convey no real meaning we suspect that a scribal error is made. We suggest reading *is-pu-un*¹. Three arguments may be presented for this emendation. 1. All three signs are written over other signs, as so often in this chronicle. Our scribe was fairly careless. 2. The translation makes sense. *Sapānu* means "to level, to devastate, to destroy, to smooth," and especially used in relation with water (A.MEŠ) and deluge (*abūbu*). So we suggest that Seleucus levelled something (defences) with water from the Euphrates and that he afterwards neglected to dam the Euphrates, so that the land was inundated. Note that the two sentences are interconnected by the use of the enclitic *-ma* after *is-pu-UB*. This means that the damming of the Euphrates in this context has nothing to do with the damming of the Pallacottas. As a matter of fact, the diaries record the damming of the Pallacottas canal in months VI and VII, not V. 3. Our scribe seems to have difficulties with the sign *ub*: in obv. 8 he possibly wrote *ub* instead of *ur*; here it is *ub* instead of *un*. Perhaps he used the word *abūbu* in the previous line and became confused about that.

9'

Patrocles had been established as general (*stratēgos*) of Babylonia by Seleucus (Diod. 19. 100.5)

9'-10'

Diod. 19.92: Seleucus crossed the Tigris in order to oppose Nicanor, the general (*stratēgos*) of Media and Persis, who was aided on his turn by Persians under their satrap Evager (Euagros, possibly Euagoras, satrap of Aria (Diod. 19.48.2)). Seleucus was victorious in this confrontation: Evager died and Nicanor fled.

11'-12'

Wiseman's /// suggestion to read *tab-ti u su-lum-mu-u* ("friendship and peace") is impossible in view of the traces. This phrase probably does not refer to the peace treaty of 311 between Antigonos, Ptolemy, Lysimachus and Cassander (Diod. 19.105.1). It rather reflects the fact that after the death of Evager "most of his soldiers went over to Seleucus", who "was comporting himself in a way graciously to all" (Diod. 19.92.4-5)

The distress of Babylon in the period of the early successors can also be viewed from the prices mentioned in the astronomical diaries. The prices jump to extreme heights, up to 7.5 litres for a shekel or even only 6 litres (1 *sutu*) according to the Diadochi chronicle. Yet, Babylon seems to have recovered. The prices of the period between 300 and 140 BC are mostly quite acceptable, in the 290s 180 litres (1 *kur*) for a shekel (cf. Van der Spek 2000).

Conclusion.

This paper is unfinished. It intends to show some of the features of the city of Babylon in the time of Alexander and the early successors. The city must have retained a lot of its ancient glory and it appealed to the fantasy of Alexander. He considered it a worthy residence for his new empire and he had certainly in mind to aggrandize it, but not much came of it. The fighting after his death must have damaged the city. Seleucus I, possibly inspired by jealousy of Ptolemy's Alexandria, ordered to build a new city as well, which should be the new royal residence. Yet, Babylon did not fall into oblivion. Alexander and the successors probably admired the ancient buildings and the science of the astronomers. Antiochus I seems really to have tried to restore and rebuild ancient temples like Esagila and Ezida, as is testified by his royal inscription from Ezida, by his offerings on the site of Etemenanki and the final clearing of the site. He must have stayed quite often in Babylon, especially when Seleucia was not a

nice place to live. At the same time he really took efforts to make the foundation of Seleucia successful as a Macedonian foundation by removing the Macedonian settlers/garrison soldiers from Babylon to it. Antiochus, however, was no saint. He paid respect to the city and its past as long as it fitted him. He could also disregard ancient traditions by making sacrifices “in the Greek fashion” and he imposed heavy taxes as he saw fit.

Later classical sources tell that quite some land within the city walls was given over to agriculture. That feature is not unique for Babylon, but with the decline of the population, the use of arable land within the city will have increased. Perhaps we have to understand “the service estate” (*bīt ilki*) in the Juniper Garden accordingly. The estimate of the real size of habitation and population remains very hazardous.

It is my impression though that Babylon retained a lot of prestige during the entire Seleucid period. Antiochus IV (or III?) even introduced a new Greek colony, which survived at least into the 2nd century AD.

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ABC = Grayson 1975

AD I, II, III = Sachs, Hunger 1988, 1989, 1996

BCHP = Van der Spek, Finkel, forthcoming; cf. www.livius.org > ancient Mesopotamia.

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