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Urban Religion in First Millennium BCE Babylonia

Introduction

In ancient Mesopotamia, cities and religion were deeply interconnected.¹ From the very beginning of urban life, religious practice played a key role in the emergence and development of cities; it shaped their location, nature, structure and topography² in such a way that the history of Mesopotamian religion can be studied as an urban history.³ However, as recent critical spatial research has underscored,⁴ the relationship between religion and place was reciprocal: cults and rituals shaped urban settlements and spatial organization⁵ in the same way that the interplay with urban space manifoldly modified religious practice.

In order to scrutinize modifications under urban conditions, religion has to be analyzed as “an (active) agent, preparing and pushing processes of urbanization, as well as a (passive) patient, reacting and adapting to urban conditions and thus becoming part and parcel of urbanity”.⁶ When dealing with city-induced religious change, I follow Jörg Rüpke’s “heuristic grid” of processes,⁷ which are selected by virtue of their relevance to the spatial aspects of religious practices. These practices are defined as “communication with [or concerning] not unquestionably plausible addressees, with actors beyond the immediate situation, with deceased ancestors

¹ This paper is the result of fruitful participation in the online conference *Naming and mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, mobilities, imaginaries*. Toulouse, 10–12 February 2021. I would like to thank C. Bonnet and E. Guillon for their incredible organization in an extremely challenging situation, and J. Rüpke, E. Urciuoli and A. Lätzer-Lasar for welcoming my paper in the session “Urban Religion” and to J. Rüpke for his suggestions and comments. The research was carried out under the auspices of the R+D Research Project of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation PID2019–104191GB–I00. All maps of Babylon (Fig. 1–5) are published here with the permission of Olof Pedersén of the Department of Linguistics and Philology at Uppsala University, for which I would like to express my deepest gratitude. The figures were downloaded in April 2021 from <https://www.lingfil.uu.se/research/assyriology/babylon>. All webpages cited here were last consulted in May 2022.

² Liverani 1986; Wilhelm 1997; Liverani 2013; Baker 2014.

³ van de Mieroop 1997, 215–226; Pedersén *et al.* 2010. For the concepts of “city” and “religion”, see Rau/Rüpke 2020.

⁴ Rüpke 2015; Urciuoli/Rüpke 2018; Lätzer-Lasar/Urciuoli 2021.

⁵ Baker 2014.

⁶ Rüpke 2020.

⁷ See the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume.

or gods”.⁸ As in the case of other cultural practices, communication affects human agency and reshapes social and power relations; it is “spatio-temporal” in that it is forged by spatial configuration and at the same time redesigns space, going beyond the “the immediate and unquestionably given situation (. . .) [and] temporarily and situationally enlarging the environment”.⁹ Moreover, religious communication has a distinct spatial character, that is, it involves place-making (organizing and characterizing space) but also movement across boundaries: it is about dwelling but also about crossing.¹⁰ In addition, the spatial nature of religion is emphasized by the sacralization of places and objects, and by the creation of sacred space by means of physical and rhetorical strategies deployed to conquer the city. Accordingly, religious practice should be considered first and foremost as spatial practice in two apparently contradictory yet related ways: space is religiously occupied by action (sacralization of space), but religion is also action that is not restricted by space but transcends it.¹¹

Finally, as recent studies focusing on the spatial dimension of social phenomena have demonstrated, “spaces are also cultural products (. . .) they become mapped, visitable or even habitable spaces through cultural decisions and practices”.¹² Therefore, the spatial dimension of religion in urban contexts can be scrutinized through a) the “use and production of structurally plausibilizing media” (monumentalization of the urban space; public display and theatricalization of communication with the divine; the adoption of urban technologies, like the use of writing in religious contexts; and growing division and specialization of labor); b) processes linked to the formation of human nodes and networks (individualization of urban actors; formation of religious groups across geographical and family boundaries); c) the interplay between religious practices and time; and d) the development of discourses on the nature of cities beyond one’s own urban environment.¹³

In the following pages I would like to scrutinize the reciprocal relationship between urban space and religion by focusing on Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian period (626–539 BCE). In particular, I will focus on the progressive enlargement of the city and its increasing monumentality; the public display of official religion by means of an urban road network devoted to divine processions; and the use of cuneiform writing to convey the entanglement of religion and urbanity through imperial ideology.

⁸ Rüpke 2015 (see the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume).

⁹ Urciuoli/Rüpke 2018, 126.

¹⁰ Tweed 2006.

¹¹ Rau/Rüpke 2020.

¹² See the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume.

¹³ See the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume.

Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian Period: Building a City and Shaping Imperial Rhetoric under Divine Aegis

Babylon is known as the “gate of god” (Sumerian KA.DINGIR.RA^{ki} = Akkadian *Bāb-ili*) in both Sumerian and Akkadian texts,¹⁴ which demonstrates that the city’s close connection with the divine dates back to its very naming. The ruins of Babylon can be found in present-day Hillah, the capital of the Babil Governorate,¹⁵ some 55 miles south of Baghdad in Iraq. The city, which served for nearly two millennia as a center of Mesopotamian civilization and was for a time the largest urban settlement in the world¹⁶ and capital of an extensive empire, is today a huge open space along the Euphrates, filled with shattered mud-brick buildings and rubble, and dotted with mounds, or tells, of varying sizes and heights: Kasr, Merkes, Homera, Ishin-Aswad, Sahn, Amran and Babil (Fig. 1: Tells of Babylon). The Euphrates has both dominated the landscape around the city and shaped its urban, social and economic development.¹⁷

Even though the earliest evidence for dating the city comes from a series of potsherds from the middle of the third millennium¹⁸ and contemporaneous documents indicate that Babylon was an important center in the times of King Hammurapi (19th–18th centuries BCE), the high groundwater has not permitted modern archaeologists to reach the most ancient levels. As a result, the currently available archaeological information dates to the first millennium BCE, particularly the time of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and the Hellenistic and Parthian periods, because the associated levels are near the surface and extensive excavations could be conducted. Therefore, most of the Babylon that we study today corresponds chiefly to the Neo-Babylonian city, which was enlarged and developed between the end of the seventh and the second half of the sixth century BCE, with some later additions.

Indeed, for such a relatively short span of time, the Neo-Babylonian period has left a large number of constructions and an even larger quantity of texts that record the constructions.¹⁹ These building projects and the documents celebrating them

¹⁴ Babylon had different names, and three of them coincided with the names of city districts: Šuanna, Ka-dingirra (*Bābīlu*) and Eridu (George 1992, 19).

¹⁵ The modern province preserves the ancient name of the mythical city.

¹⁶ A summary of the topography of Babylon can be found in George 1992, 13–29. For the city of Babylon in ancient times and in the historiographical tradition, see André-Salvini 2008; Marzahn/Schauerte 2008; Wullen/Schauerte 2008; Finkel/Seymour 2009.

¹⁷ Pedersén *et al.* 2010, 132–135.

¹⁸ Sollberger 1985; Pedersén 2011.

¹⁹ Da Riva 2008, 110–113.

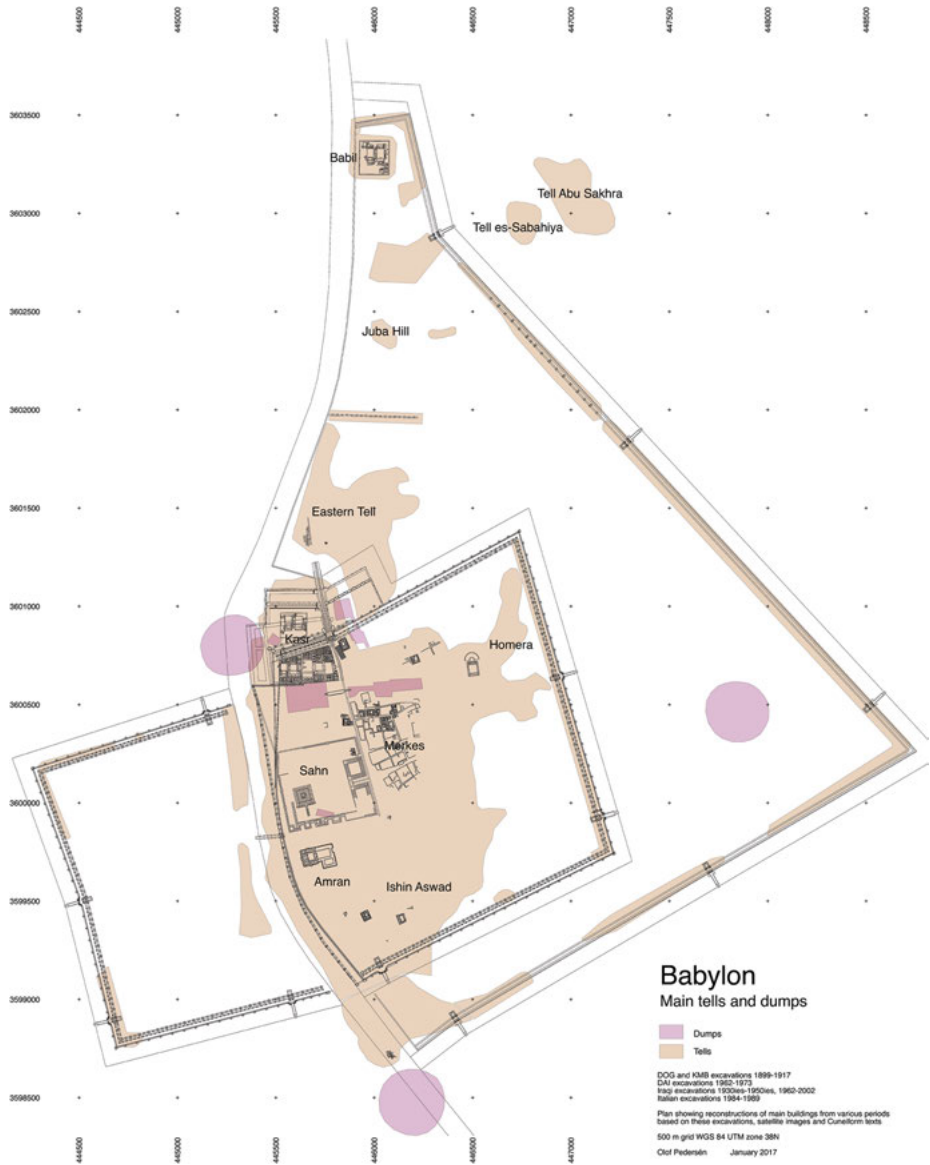


Fig. 1: Tells of Babylon (Babylon500_TellsDumps.pdf).

are an extraordinary case in point for the interplay of religion and urbanity,²⁰ that is, of the space-sensitivity of religious practice, because they illustrate the physical and rhetorical strategies used to conquer and sacralize space in cities. This spatial conquest, as Rüpke reminds us, “is preceded by a selection, (. . .) recognizing and accepting the character of spaces as defined by previous, common or prescribed usage, but it is also modifying the space through performance and thus also changing the future memory of the place. Even religious ‘traditions’ are not simply given but need permanent reproduction and are modified by the micro (and sometimes revolutionary) modifications of the users.”²¹

The frenetic building activity, which took place not only in the capital Babylon but also in other cities of Mesopotamia, was the result of a combination of historical, economic and political factors. In the first decades of the Neo-Babylonian period, building was an imperative in a country where the cities had been devastated by a long civil war. The success of the building programs demonstrated the rulers’ abilities and their divine support. The significance of royally sponsored buildings, however, went beyond ideological and religious considerations: construction was a central feature of the dynasty’s political and economic program. In the first place, it responded to the need for urban renewal: building and rebuilding was a recurrent obligation of Babylonian kings. In a country lacking durable construction materials (stone, timber), any buildings, even large and significant ones such as temples and palaces, were made of sun-dried or baked bricks and were therefore very fragile. On one hand, the maintenance of any construction was a fundamental duty of the reigning monarch: a careful treatment of buildings was indicative of the level of social and political stability in the land. On the other hand, the constant growth of the Neo-Babylonian economy and the expansion of urban centers, particularly Babylon, meant that cities had to expand, and new public structures (gates, walls, bridges, streets, canals) had to be built and maintained. In addition, the Neo-Babylonian building program was reinforced by unprecedented economic development and a massive influx of wealth from the periphery of an ever-expanding territorial empire. Accordingly, building became an expression of territorial conquest; management and control of lands, peoples and resources; and imperial power. Buildings of special significance, such as the temples Esagil and Ezida, the ziqqurats in Babylon (Etemenanki) and Borsippa (Eurmeimnanki), and the Royal Palaces in Babylon, accumulated and displayed goods and wealth amassed in the course of military campaigns. As the territory of the empire expanded, so did the size of its cities and their buildings, which became supreme symbols of universal dominion and material expressions of the reciprocal relationship between religious and spatial practices in the context of a political-ideological program

20 An online edition of Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions can be consulted at RIBo Babylon 7: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/pager>. New editions are forthcoming in Weiershäuser and Novotny 2022 and 2023.

21 See the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume.

whose two main pillars were the monarch's religiosity and his safeguarding of the country and its gods through an intensive program of building works.

King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (605–562 BCE), perhaps one of the most charismatic rulers of all time, boasts in his royal inscriptions that he transformed and expanded Babylon into a “wonder to behold”.²² In the extensive corpus of Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, those composed during his long reign form the largest and most varied group. The abundance of the monarch's inscriptions is due not only to archaeological finds, but also to economic and political considerations, such as the existence of a conscientious building program in a very favorable economic context. Babylonia became a world power under Nebuchadnezzar, reaching its maximum territorial extent, annexing extensive areas formerly under Assyrian control, and curtailing Egyptian influence in the Levant. All these military campaigns had a religious motivation in the background, specifically a need to expand the territory and obtain wealth in order to glorify the gods who had previously granted Nebuchadnezzar support in his political enterprises. Thus, one can read in the inscription of Brisa, which celebrated the conquest of Lebanon WBC IX 13–32:

On that day, Lebanon, the mountain of cedars, the luxuriant forest of Marduk of sweet smell, whose excellent cedars, which not [. . . for the cultic] place(?) of another god, and had not been taken [for the palace] of another king, I cut [with my pure hands] and – the king Marduk had called me (to bring this into effect) – (cedars) which (for) a palace of a ruler [. . .] Babylon [. . .], were fit for a symbol of royalty – (Lebanon) where a foreign enemy had exercised rulership, and whose produce (the enemy) had taken away by force, so that its people had fled, had taken refuge far away. With the strength of my lords Nabû and Marduk, I sent [my armies] regularly to Lebanon for [bat]tle. I expelled its (Lebanon's) enemy above and below and I made the country content. I reunited the scattered people and I brought them back to their place.²³

As a result of these campaigns, an unprecedented amount of raw materials and manufactured goods flowed from distant regions into the great capital of the empire, where the king commissioned the construction of magnificent temples to glorify the deities, built great palaces to celebrate his own might, and established a sophisticated urban infrastructure of streets, canals and city walls. The interdependencies between urbanization processes and religious change are linked to the very essence of the political ideology of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

In order to address the religious framework of Babylonian urban development, it is necessary to become acquainted with the city's size and the spatial configuration of its built environment. In Nebuchadnezzar's time, the urban space inside the city walls (for its outer and inner wall system, see below) occupied an area of

²² Spectators of such wonder are both the gods, to whom the buildings are dedicated, and the people (subjects and enemies alike, present but also future), particularly the urban populations who witnessed the magnificent display of official cult.

²³ Da Riva 2012; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II WBC.

approximately 800 ha.²⁴ The compactness of the settlement is uncertain, because only a very small fraction of the entire site has been studied.²⁵ Nonetheless, we know that Babylon included an inner city surrounded by a double wall system – the inner one was called *Imgur-Enlil* and the outer one *Nemetti-Enlil* – that was pierced by eight city gates bearing divine names and surrounded by massive, wide moats. Most monumental buildings (temples, palaces) as well as some densely populated neighborhoods were located within the inner city.²⁶

The urban area was organized in districts and crisscrossed by streets and waterways that facilitated connections between the different areas and from one bank of the river to the other. Because the inner city was cut in half by the river, which flowed from north to south, bridges and barges connected the two halves of Babylon.²⁷ Since antiquity the course of the Euphrates has shifted to the west and the archaeological remains of most of Babylon's west side are not accessible. In the eastern part stood the districts of *Tê*, *Alu-eššu* (literally “New Town”), *Ka-dingirra* (“Gate of the Gods”, site of the Old Palace; which was designed by King Nabopolassar (626–605 BCE) and enlarged by his successors: see below). *Eridu*, *Šuanna* and *Kullab*.²⁸ *Eridu* was home to the ziqqurat *Etemenanki* and the *Esagil*, the sanctuary of *Marduk*, the city's two most important religious buildings. As for the *Ka-dingirra* neighborhood, it was structured around the north–south axis of Procession Street, which led to the famous *Ištar Gate*.²⁹ The German archaeologist Robert Koldewey, however, excavated only the eastern part of the city, leaving practically unknown the western area (where the districts of *Kummar* and *Tuba*, which are mentioned in diverse textual sources, would have been located).

As noted above, sacred expression is distinctly spatial, as it presupposes the organization and characterization of space. As Rüpke reminds us, “[g]ods [. . .] are made present in acts of religious communication. The primary mode of a more permanent

²⁴ Pedersén 2011, 11.

²⁵ Only some 12 hectares of the site have been excavated, which corresponds to approximately 1.5% of the whole city area (Pedersén 2011, 11), but many surveys and soundings have supplemented the data obtained from excavations. Most of these studies, however, have focused on the monumental areas of the city (temples, palaces, walls, wide streets), to the detriment of residential quarters and marginal areas. The same can be said for the study of written sources that refer to the urban space and experience: scholars have favored texts referring to the great deeds of kings and have seldom been concerned with the experience of ordinary inhabitants (Baker 2011).

²⁶ Non-monumental city districts and houses have not received as much attention as grandiose buildings in monumental districts. However, see Baker 2011; Baker 2014.

²⁷ In the ancient texts the river is called Euphrates or *Arahtu* indistinguishably. The latter was the name of the western branch of the Euphrates that flowed through the city, whereas the eastern branch passed through the neighboring cities of *Kish* and *Nippur* (Jursa 2010, 62, Fig. 1).

²⁸ Some districts were named after Sumerian or Akkadian cities, while others had popular names; see George 1992, 19–21.

²⁹ Both the street and the gate can be seen today, partially rebuilt, in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin.

presence of these types of religious signs is the setting apart of specific places.”³⁰ In Babylon, the intersection of religion and urbanity can be observed clearly in the different cultic places present in the various city districts. These places functioned as landmarks in the urban space, and the festivals and ceremonies organized in and around them drew attention to their respective neighborhoods,³¹ creating a dense topographical mesh of sacred nodes. According to evidence from the topographical texts *Tintir*,³² there were more than 40 temples, as well as many altars, street shrines, stations, etc., in the different sectors of the city.³³ In *Tintir* V 82–88,³⁴ we find a summary of the city’s sacred and topographical features listed on the tablet:

Total: 43 cult-centers of the great gods in Babylon; 55 daises of Marduk; 2 circumvallations; 3 rivers; 8 city gates; 24(!) streets of Babylon; 300 daises of the Iggi and 600 daises of the Anunnaki; 180 shrines of Ištar; 180 stations of Lugalirra and Meslamtaea; 12 stations of the Divine Heptad; 6 stations of Kūbu; 4 stations of the Rainbow; 2 stations of the Evil God; 2 stations of the Watcher of the City.³⁵

Beyond the rectangular area surrounded by the inner walls, there was an extensive space that included not only the inner city but also suburbs with fields and unbuilt land³⁶ that were, in turn, encircled by an outer city wall, which was trapezoidal in layout.³⁷ Unfortunately, the area beyond the inner walls has not been archaeologically investigated, so it is uncertain whether it was as religiously impregnated as the urban center. However, I would suggest that it was, considering, on one hand, the deep entanglement of sacred practice and urban place-making in Babylonia and, on the other hand, the religiously liminal role played by city walls. In the north-eastern sector of the trapezoid in what is today the tell Babil (the highest hill of the site),³⁸ Nebuchadnezzar raised a building that has been called the “Summer Palace” by archaeologists, although it was really an arsenal or defensive structure of the outer city wall (Fig. 2: Areas of Babylon).

The data currently available to study the city of Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian period come, on one hand, from the German excavations of Robert

³⁰ See the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume.

³¹ Such attention was probably garnered through a phenomenon that Richard Lim (see the contribution of Jörg Rüpke in this volume) has called “urban talk”, that is, the spread and exchange of information about religious sites and events through word of mouth.

³² George 1992.

³³ Baker 2011.

³⁴ George 1992, 68–69.

³⁵ There are discrepancies between the full lists and the statistics in the summary section (for example in the number of streets, see below) because in all probability they were compiled independently from each other, based on already existing documents from different traditions, see George 1992, 13.

³⁶ Baker 2009.

³⁷ Pedersén *et al.* 2010, 136f.

³⁸ Pedersén 2021, 13.

Koldewey (1899–1917) and later Iraqi, German and Italian excavations and surveys (Fig. 3: Excavations of Babylon)³⁹ and, on the other hand, from contemporaneous building inscriptions,⁴⁰ some of them found at the site (Fig. 4: Inscriptions of Babylon), as well as thousands of cuneiform clay tablets in archives and libraries⁴¹ and also topographical and metrological texts.⁴²

In recent years, the data obtained from successive excavations in Babylon have been combined with the textual evidence to create a digital model using the architectural programs ArchiCAD and Artlantis, with the aim of analyzing the different construction phases of the city in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.⁴³ The virtual model can be used to study issues related to urban development and planning as well as the impact of historical or environmental factors on the city, including religious features. The virtual model created by O. Pedersén, which integrates archaeological and textual information dated to the Neo-Babylonian period using modern technologies (integrated GIS analysis), allows us to study the development and evolution of Babylon on different historical levels.

Babylon was shaped by cultic practice; from its very name to the diverse elements of its morphology and lived experience, religion impregnated the urban fabric. At the same time, religious change bore a relation to certain social and spatial conditions that prevailed in the city. The two most significant features in the historical evolution of Babylon between the end of the seventh century and the middle of the sixth century BCE are the progressive enlargement of its size and the continuous increase in its monumentality. Both aspects are linked to the role of Babylon as capital of a huge territorial empire ruled by monarchs whose official discourse was based mainly on two key aspects: on one hand, religious piety and ritual concern and, on the other hand, the fulfilment of extensive building programs aimed at the well-being of both the gods and their imperial subjects.⁴⁴ Indeed, the two aspects are intertwined: the worship of the gods is expressed in the construction and magnificence of their temples, which in turn ensure their support. In many cases, the gods' support is gained through military conquest, and military conquests in turn bring wealth in the form of tribute and booty from the periphery of the empire to the center. And wealth is what one needs to pursue an effective building program.

All these elements (economy, military, religion and ideology) are related and appear articulated in the construction of royally sponsored buildings in urban

³⁹ For a comprehensive study of the results from the different archaeological investigations in the city, see Pedersén 2021.

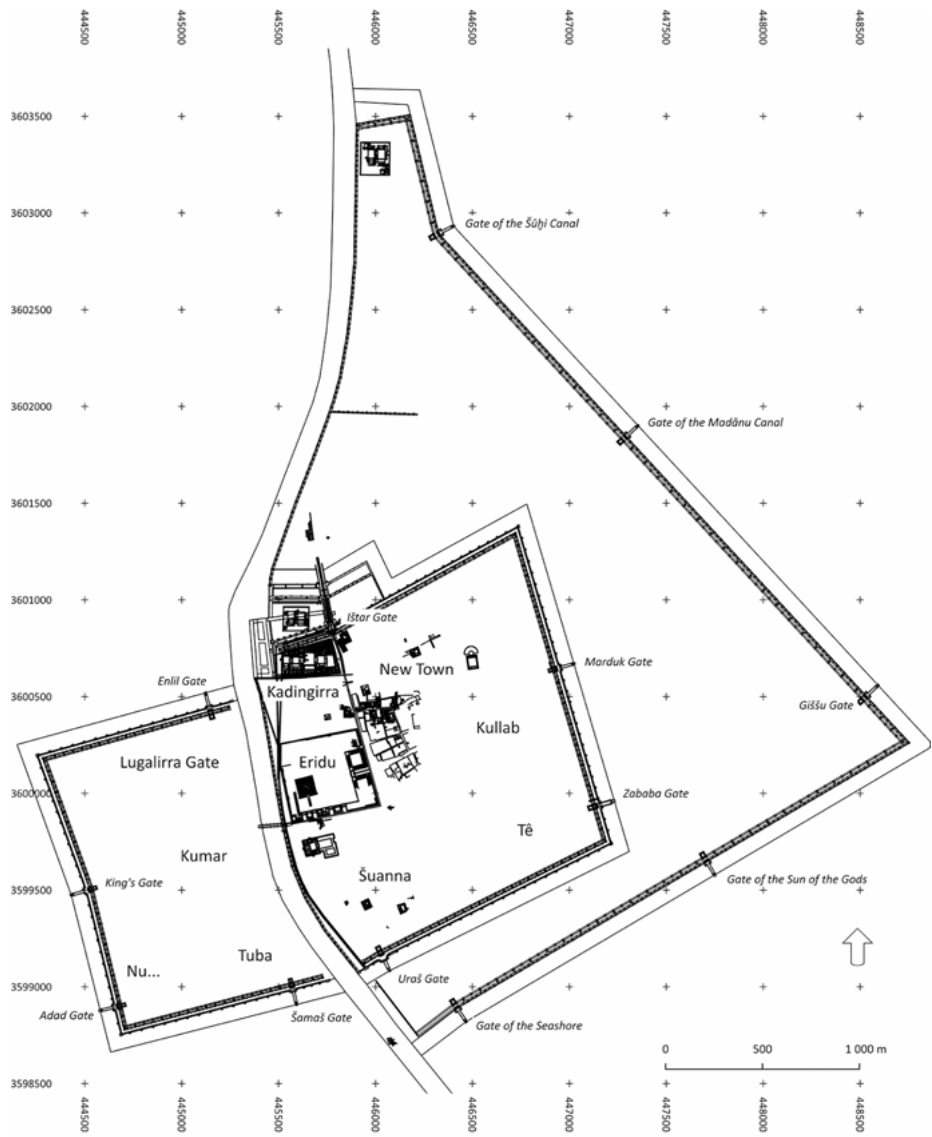
⁴⁰ Da Riva 2008.

⁴¹ Pedersén 2005.

⁴² George 1992; George 1995.

⁴³ Pedersén 2011.

⁴⁴ Da Riva 2008; Da Riva 2018. It is important to highlight that the king of Babylonia had the monopoly of commissioning religious buildings.



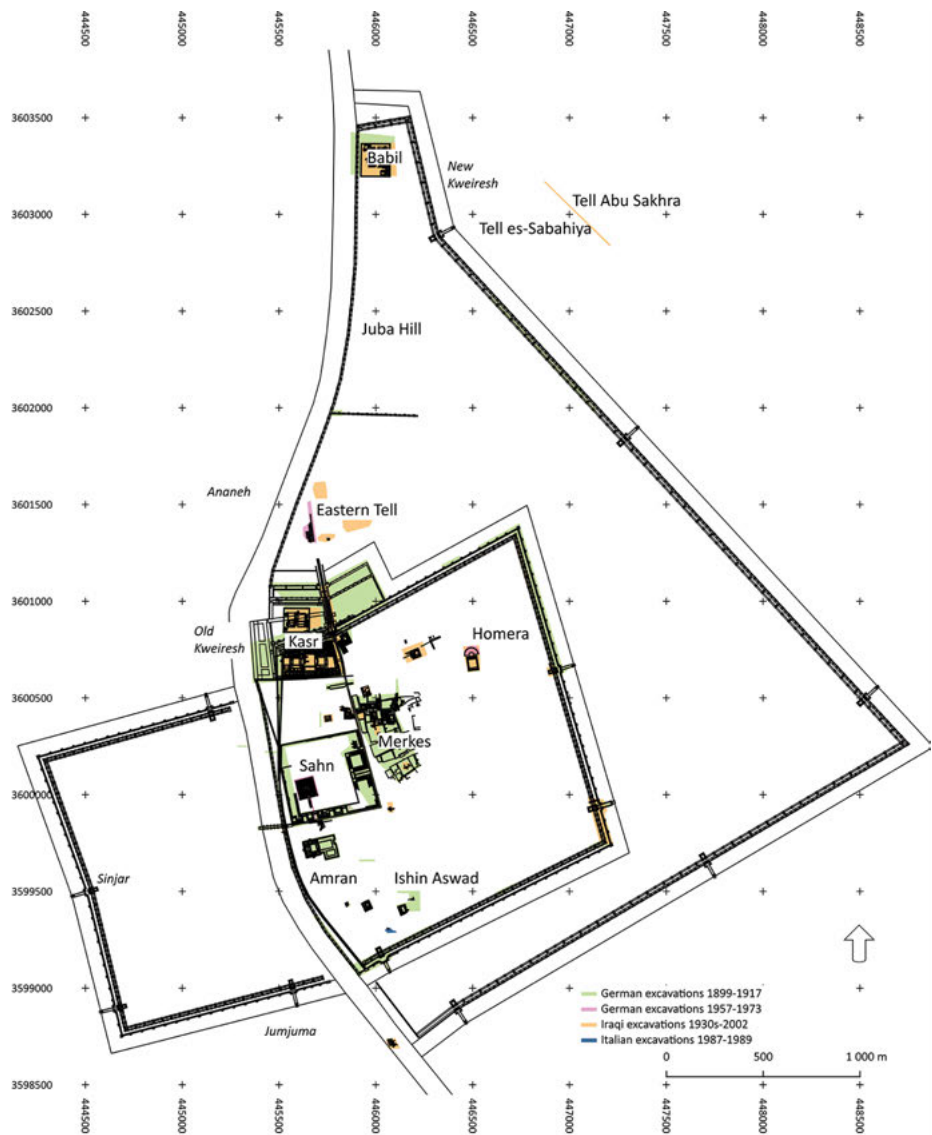
Babylon

City Areas and City Gates

Plan showing reconstructions of main buildings from various periods based on excavations, satellite images and cuneiform texts
500 m grid WGS 84 UTM zone 38N
Olof Pedersén September 2020

DOG and KMB excavations 1899-1917
DAI excavations 1962-1973
Iraqi excavations 1938-2002
Italian excavations 1984-1989

Fig. 2: Areas of Babylon (Babylon500_Areas_2.1).



Babylon

Excavations, Tells, and Modern Villages

Plan showing main excavations from various periods based on these excavations, satellite images and cuneiform texts
500 m grid WGS 84 UTM zone 38N
Olof Pedersén September 2020

Fig. 3: Excavations of Babylon (Babylon500_Excavations_1.4).



Babylon

Royal Inscriptions from All Periods

Plan showing reconstructions of main buildings from various periods based on excavations, satellite images and cuneiform texts
500 m grid WGS 84 UTM zone 38N
Olof Pedersén September 2020

DOG and KMB excavations 1899-1917
DAI excavations 1962-1973
Iraqi excavations 1938-2002
Italian excavations 1984-1989

Fig. 4: Inscriptions of Babylon (Babylon500_Inscriptions_1.5).

contexts. These ideas are deeply rooted in Babylonian tradition, where the symbolic aspects of royal ideology find their monumental materialization in architecture. The firmness and stability of a building (temple, palace, wall, gate, etc.) reflects imperial cohesion and the solidity of a kingship, while a dilapidated construction is a clear indication of a country in decline, led by a poor ruler who is bereft of divine favor. If the buildings are successful, the monarch clearly enjoys the support of the gods.

Thus, the construction of a royally sponsored building goes beyond a mere architectural task to become a challenge and a political test of sorts. For this reason, the commission of building works was one of the most important duties of the Babylonian king towards the gods and towards the people, and most of the ideological compositions from the Neo-Babylonian period (the royal inscriptions) deal with building works in urban contexts. These inscriptions were produced to celebrate the construction or restoration of politically and religiously significant public buildings and infrastructure (temples, palaces, city walls, bridges, canals, streets and roads, etc.) not only in the city of Babylon, but also in other leading political and religious centers of the land.⁴⁵

The evolution of Babylon's urban model in the period transformed religious practices, inasmuch as the expansion and growing magnificence of the city, its buildings and its infrastructure afforded a new spatial arena in which to perform religious practice. These sacred spatial practices can be explored in relation to the urban space from the viewpoint of the archaeological remains and from the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions. To test the Urban Religion approach in this particular context, I will focus on the development of the network of public streets in order to show the deep interdependency of religion and urban planning.

The Streets of Babylon

The extent and layout of Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period is not well known. As noted above, the site has only been partially excavated and the documentary sources on the urban topography are not as detailed as one might wish. However, textual references and archaeological evidence from the German and Iraqi excavations point to the existence of a network of public streets that linked the different city districts and gates and allowed the movement of people, animals, goods and

⁴⁵ For this reason, Neo-Babylonian inscriptions are not rich in historical data. They contain hardly any direct factual information and, of course, are not so exciting as Neo-Assyrian texts, whose narration of royal military exploits lends a dynamism to the texts that is seldom found in other documents of the Mesopotamian historical tradition.

divine images.⁴⁶ However, the actual configuration and layout of the street network, even the actual identification of the city gates, is poorly known.⁴⁷

Secondary streets and main streets leading to temples, sacred places, etc. (together with other components like spatial organization, the presence of public powers, and processional routes) are fundamental elements of the built environment and play a crucial role in the spatial arrangement of cities and the synergies that lead to the creation of sacred space within urban contexts.⁴⁸ Administrative and economic documents point to a hierarchical ranking in the mesh of Babylonia's urban thoroughfares, distinguishing between major and minor public streets: *sūqu rapšu mūtaq ili u šarri* or “broad street, way of the gods and the king”; and *sūqu qatnu mūtaq nišē* or “narrow street, way of the people”.⁴⁹ However, this dual perception of urban streets has so far only been attested in the first millennium BCE in Babylon.⁵⁰ Babylonian houses and monumental public buildings lacked addresses in the modern sense of the term. However, the main streets did have names, which were directly connected to the dynamics of religious practice in most cases: major public streets were often identified as the processional routes of specific deities. Accordingly, in the royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, one finds references to “the wide street Ištar-lamassi-ummāniša, the thoroughfare of the great lord Marduk” (WBA VII 45–46), and to “the wide street Nabû-dayyāan-nišišu, thoroughfare of Nabû the son of the prince” (WBA VII 49–50).⁵¹ These streets, and many others, are known from archaeological and textual sources. Most of them are located in the inner city of Babylon, because this area has been the object of archaeological interventions and because the topographical landmarks mentioned in the documents are concentrated in the urban center, even though streets continued beyond the double wall system.⁵²

The topographical features of the inner city are the concern of the *Tintir* series, which is the most important cuneiform source for reconstructing the layout and

⁴⁶ Pedersén 2021, 201–232.

⁴⁷ See the critical approach to topographical reconstructions of the city in Baker 2019.

⁴⁸ Urciuoli 2021, 33.

⁴⁹ See CAD M/2, 297–298.

⁵⁰ Baker 2011, 537. In addition to wide and narrow streets, blind alleys gave access to houses (Reuther 1926, 64–77; Baker 2019). The evidence suggests that good houses were located in the main streets of Babylon (Baker 2011, 542–543).

⁵¹ See Da Riva 2012.

⁵² Other streets were associated with urban features outside of the inner city, such as the road leading to the Akitu temple, which is mentioned in the Brisa inscription WBA V 41–52: “For the coming of the lord of the gods, the pre-eminent lord of lords, from the anchorage of the (processional barge) Maumuša to Esiskur (the Akitu temple), (the endpoint of) the processional street of the great lord Marduk, the lord who increases abundance, I placed tall firs right and left. The platform of Esiskur, the (end-point of the) processional street of the great lord Marduk, I made its smell as sweet as a grove of pure cedars.” (Da Riva 2012).

configuration of the city at the end of the second millennium (edition in George 1992). A comparison of this material with the topographical information provided by first millennium archaeological data and textual sources, such as everyday documents and royal inscriptions, shows that the general layout of the city changed very little from the twelfth to the fifth/fourth centuries BCE. These changes, moreover, seldom affected sacred places, which stubbornly tended to persist in their engagement with urban space.

The cuneiform tablet *Tintir V* lists features of the inner city of Babylon, such as temples, shrines of Marduk, walls, rivers/canals, city gates, quarters, etc. In lines 62–81, for instance, one finds the name of 20 streets:⁵³

Street: “He hears his seeker”	the Wide Street;
Street: “Bow down, O haughty one”	the Narrow Street;
Street: “May the arrogant not flourish”	the Street of Babylon;
Street: “His protection is good for the feeble;”	
Street: “What god compares to Marduk; Do not [. . .];”	
Street: “Nabû is the judge of his people”	the Street of the Uraš Gate;
Street: “Zababa is the destroyer of his foes”	the Street of the Zababa Gate;
Street: “Marduk is the shepherd of his land”	the Street of the Marduk Gate;
Street: “Ištar is the guardian angel of her troops”	the Street of the Ištar Gate;
Street: “Enlil is the establisher of his kingship”	the Street of the Enlil Gate;
Street: “Sin is the establisher of his lordly crown”	the Street of the King’s Gate;
Street: “Adad is the provisioner of his people”	the Street of the Adad Gate;
Street: “Šamaš is the protection of his troops”	the Street of the Šamaš Gate;
Street: “Pray, that he may hear . . .”;	
Street: Street of Damiq-ilišu;	
(Street:) Four Ways;	
Street: Street of the Divine Heptad;	
(Street:) Street of the Divine Twins;	
Street: “Gladden(?) his land! Worship is his gift!”;	
Street: “He listens to the distant”	the Street of Marduk.

It is interesting to note that most of the names of the main streets are related to the gods and refer directly to their patronage of the monarch and of his people, land, troops, kingship, crown, success in battle, etc. All the street names are directly associated with divine assistance and support provided by the gods as reward for the king’s religious zeal and his steadfastness as a builder.

The network of main streets in the inner city of Babylon can be roughly located by means of the eight gates (most of which have not been excavated) of the double wall system from which the streets started, but the location of the gates and the streets is not based on archaeological evidence, as our knowledge is mostly based on the texts, so their layout is uncertain. Moreover, the Ištar Gate is the only securely identified; the

⁵³ George 1992, 66–69, commentary pp. 358–367; see also Baker 2019.

identifications of the other gates are far from certain. The eight gates are also mentioned in *Tintir* V, 49–56:⁵⁴

City Gate: “The enemy is abhorrent to it”	the Uraš Gate;
City Gate: “It hates its attacker”	the Zababa Gate;
City Gate: “Its lord is shepherd”	the Marduk Gate;
City Gate: “Ištar overthrows its assailant”	the Ištar Gate; ⁵⁵
City Gate: “Enlil makes it shine”	the Enlil Gate;
City Gate: “May its founder flourish!”	the King’s Gate;
City Gate: “O Adad, guard the life of the troops!”	the Adad Gate;
City Gate: “O Šamaš, make firm the foundation of the troops!”	the Šamaš Gate.

Some of the main streets that start from the city gates are attested in cuneiform texts, such as the Way of Nabû, running from the Esagil to the Uraš Gate in the Šuanna district in the south of the city; the street to the Zababa Gate in Tê (SE); the street to the Marduk Gate in the east, where the central wide segment may be the Wide Street mentioned in the text above, between Kullab and New Town; and the street to the Šamaš Gate in Tuba, on the western bank of the Euphrates.

At present, only one main street has been the object of intense archaeological studies, namely the Ay-ibûr-šabû (“May the arrogant not flourish”), the processional way of Marduk running north from the Esagil temple, passing through the eastern wall of the Etemenanki enclosure and the South Palace, and crossing the Ištar Gate (near where the street changed its name and was known as Ištar-lamassiummānīša (“Ištar is the guardian angel of her troops”),⁵⁶ before continuing north along the eastern wall of the North Palace. In addition, some 500 meters of a west-east axis of a thoroughfare, which runs from the Euphrates bridge along the southern precinct of the ziqqurat, has been documented by means of trenches.⁵⁷

Ay-ibûr-šabû could be identified by means of royal inscriptions by Nebuchadnezzar found in the course of excavations, some of them *in situ*, such as the inscribed limestone blocks from the upper layers of street (LBI 1 and LBI 2) that bear two versions of the same inscription.⁵⁸ For the sake of simplicity, I will only refer to one of them here:

[Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, son of Nabopolass]ar, king of Babylon, am I. (As for) the stre[et of Babylon (Ay-ibûr-šabû), for the proc]essional street of the great lord, the god Marduk,

⁵⁴ George 1992, 66–67, commentary pp. 336–343; Baker 2019.

⁵⁵ This is the only city gate identified and dated (to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar) by means of a cuneiform inscription found *in situ* by the Germans at the beginning of the twentieth century, see George 1992, 339.

⁵⁶ George 1992, 364.

⁵⁷ Pedersén 2021, 204–206.

⁵⁸ LB2 can be found online in RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 005. Similar inscriptions have been found in the breccia flagstones of the street (BP1), see Da Riva 2008, BP1; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 007.

[I beautified] (its) access way with slab(s) of stone quar[ried from the mountain(s)]. O Marduk, my lord, grant me a [long] [life]!].⁵⁹

For the purposes of this article, it is very interesting to note that the limestone slabs were written in archaizing (Old Babylonian) script⁶⁰ in four to eleven lines in keeping with the antiquarian ideology and appeal to tradition that were common to the monumental inscriptions of the period. In some cases, they bear Neo-Assyrian inscriptions on the other side, which means that the Babylonian kings reused ancient inscriptions when rebuilding or enlarging the street.⁶¹

Further documentary evidence of the street's building works comes from inscriptions commemorating repairs and enlargements of the South Palace and the eastern canal of Babylon, the Libil-ḫegalla, which flowed along the southern side of the palace (Fig. 5: Center of Babylon).

Thus, in the Nebuchadnezzar inscription referring to works on the canal, we can read about the construction of a bridge over the waterway C22 I 10–II 12:

(As for) Libil-ḫegalla, the eastern canal of Babylon, which had a long time ago turned into ruins, become clogged with eroded earth, and filled with silt deposits, I sought out its (original) site and (then) (re)built its embankments with bitumen and baked brick from the bank of the Euphrates River to Ay-ibūr-šabû. On Ay-ibūr-šabû, the street in Babylon, I constructed a bridge over the canal for the processional street of the great lord, the god Marduk, and widened (its) access way.⁶²

Apparently the bridge's lavish decoration matched the magnificence and splendor of the processional streets that crossed it, as the Brisa inscription WBC IV 12*–27* indicates:

As for Libil-ḫegalla, the eastern canal [of Babylon], which since distant days [had been abandoned]: I sought out its course, and rebuilt [its (*u*)*sukku*-wall] with bitumen and [baked brick]. On Ay-[ibūr-šabû], the street [of Babylon, I constructed] a canal bridge for the processional street [of the great lord Marduk], and I covered in bronze the (elements made of) *musukkannu*,

⁵⁹ Da Riva 2008, LBI 1; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 006.

⁶⁰ The Neo-Babylonian inscriptions were drafted in two kinds of cuneiform script: contemporary and archaizing. The former corresponds to Neo-Babylonian script, whereas the latter corresponds to an archaizing form inspired by Ur III or Old Babylonian, for example, the script found in the Code of Hammurabi. The “Neo-Babylonian” signs are very similar in shape to those used in administrative documents of the 7th–6th centuries BCE. Thus, one cannot speak of a “monumental” Neo-Babylonian writing that was exclusive to royal inscriptions and similar texts. The archaizing script imitates the signs used in monumental Old Babylonian texts; rather than a spontaneous script, it is consciously archaizing. The scribes therefore had to learn this old script, and while studying the signs they also learnt the Old Babylonian variant of Akkadian and the archaic use of signs, grammatical and syntactic peculiarities, etc. which they sometimes reproduced in the inscriptions (Da Riva 2008; Da Riva 2012).

⁶¹ Da Riva 2008, 40.

⁶² Da Riva 2008, C22; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 035.

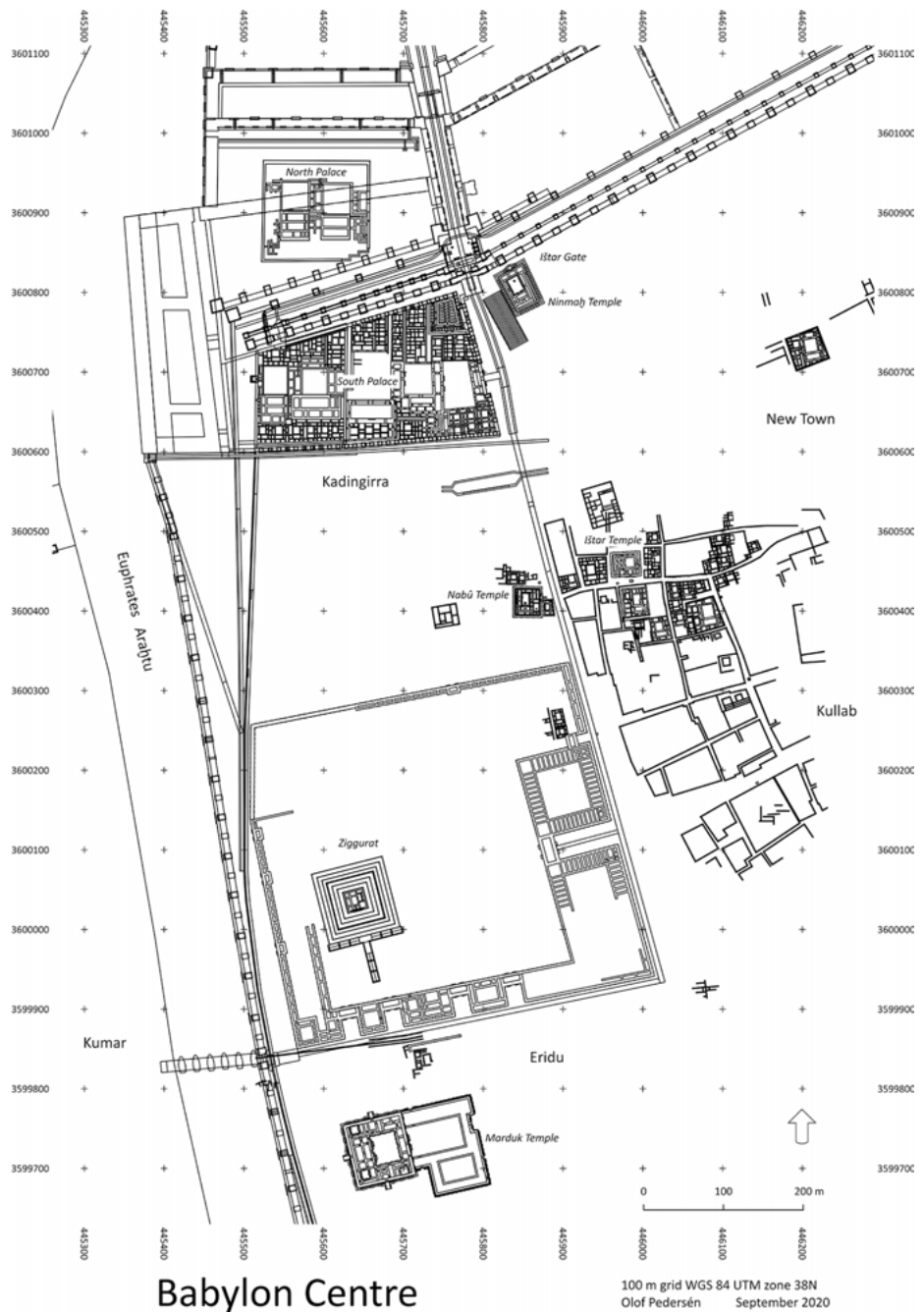


Fig. 5: Center of Babylon (Babylon100_Centre_6.2).

[the eternal wood], (of) [mighty] cedars, (and of) huge firs, and (laying) them three deep, [one] on top of the [other] <I created its span>. [I improved] the road [with bitumen] and baked brick.⁶³

The Ay-ibūr-šabû was a fundamental urban axis linking the northern and southern sections of the inner city on the eastern bank, from the area of the Esagil temple and the ziqqurat up to the palaces and further north towards the Akītu temple beyond the city walls. However, it was even more important in its religious and mythological function as a thoroughfare in the processions of Babylon's patron god,⁶⁴ particularly the processions that took place on the days of 8 and 11 Nisan during the New Year Festival (Akītu). The sacred functionality of the street is revealed by its befitting epithet *uruh akīti* "road of the Akītu(-temple)",⁶⁵ because it was the setting of the first segment of the procession, which covered the distance from the Esagil, the temple of Marduk, to the Ištar Gate.

The Akītu was celebrated at the beginning of the year, between 1 and 11 Nisan.⁶⁶ According to the sources, gods came from different cities to visit Marduk in Babylon during the festival, when grandiose processions, "physically constrained and topographically oriented mass mobility",⁶⁷ crisscrossed the urban space and the high priest of the Esagil recited the Babylonian epic poem *Enūma eliš*.⁶⁸ *Enūma eliš* celebrates Marduk's triumph over the sea monster Tiamat and his elevation to the head of the Babylonian pantheon, replacing Enlil. The re-enactment of the creation myth orchestrated the cultic activity and the public religion's representations in the city for the duration of the ceremony,⁶⁹ when the cultic processions, which took place in the city's streets and along the Arahtu, displayed the cultic paraphernalia among the urban populations.

The textual evidence mentioned above has been confirmed during the archaeological excavations. The Germans opened trenches and documented more than 1,000 meters of the street, and the Iraqis have uncovered approximately 800 meters of it.⁷⁰ The archaeologically documented sections of the street attest to its complex and sophisticated structure, which features several layers, including a foundation of bricks, in some sections probably dating to the reign of Nabopolassar or the

⁶³ Da Riva 2012; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II WBC.

⁶⁴ Pongratz-Leisten 1994.

⁶⁵ Da Riva 2008, C36; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 032 II 34.

⁶⁶ For the sequence of the different ceremonies, see Black 1981, 42–48; Zgoll 2006, 21–42; Cohen 2015, 400–401.

⁶⁷ Urciuoli 2021, 33.

⁶⁸ Lambert 2013.

⁶⁹ The socio-political significance of the New Year Festival, and its cultic and cosmic dimensions have been studied by many scholars. Among the recent studies, which do not all coincide in their interpretation, one could mention Bidmead 2002; Zgoll 2006; Ristvet 2014, 153–158; Cohen 2015, 389–408; Kosmin 2018, 31–42; Debourse 2022.

⁷⁰ Pedersén 2021, 201; see also George 1992, 359–361.

beginning of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and an upper level made up of several thousand blocks of limestone and reddish breccia stones, in some cases inscribed with cuneiform texts.⁷¹

While the precise date of the processional thoroughfare is not known, an Old Babylonian building was found in the street area. Given that Andrew George dates *Tintir* to the twelfth century BCE⁷² and the text mentions the street, it is reasonable to suppose that the street must date at least to the Middle Babylonian period. In any case, the oldest possible date for the street depends on the dating of the *Tintir* text, so the argument becomes circular. Based on epigraphic evidence, however, we know that some paving stones that make up the street date to the Neo-Assyrian period, while others date to the Neo-Babylonian.⁷³ In the East India House Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II,⁷⁴ the king records the continuation of a building project begun by his father Nabopolassar (626–605 BCE), ST V 12–20: “From Du-ku Kinamtartarede, the Dais of Destinies, to Ay-ibūr-šabû, the street of Babylon opposite Ka-sikilla, he (Nabopolassar) beautified the access way of the processional street of the great lord, the god Marduk, with slabs of breccia.”

Apparently the works of Nabopolassar were limited to the first segment of the processional way (leading from the Dais of Destinies to the main gate of the temple, Ka-sikilla, located on the eastern side of the Esagil compound, connecting with the processional way running north to south), whereas the segment from the temple to the Ištar Gate was completed by his son,⁷⁵ ST V 38–53:

(As for) Ay-ibūr-šabû, the street of Babylon, I filled (it) in with a higher infill for the processional street of the great lord, the god Marduk. I improved Ay-ibūr-šabû, from Ka-sikilla to Ištar-sākipat-tēbīša, with slabs of breccia and slabs of stone quarried from the mountain(s) to be the processional street of his divinity and (then) I adjoined (it) to the part that my father had built and beautified the access way.

While there are no inscriptions of Nabopolassar that can corroborate this information, it is not unreasonable to think that one of the first building projects of the founder of the dynasty would have been work on the processional way of the national god in the imperial capital.⁷⁶ Not only did Babylon stand in need of the restoration and reconstruction of urban infrastructure, but it was also a pressing issue symbolically for an upstart warlord and tribal ruler who became king of Babylon by force of arms, profiting from the appropriate social and military connections⁷⁷ but

⁷¹ Pedersén 2021, 211.

⁷² George 1992.

⁷³ Pedersén 2021, 232.

⁷⁴ Da Riva 2008, ST; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 002.

⁷⁵ George 1992, 360.

⁷⁶ Da Riva 2013, 2–13.

⁷⁷ Jursa 2014; Levavi 2017.

attributing his success to divine aegis.⁷⁸ Therefore, the maintenance and embellishment of Ay-ibūr-šabû was not only a religious duty, but also a political obligation.

Such an infrastructure needed continuous conservation. Both the archaeological evidence and the documentary sources confirm the modifications undergone by the processional street during the Neo-Babylonian period.⁷⁹ The archaeological investigations have made it possible to identify the levels of the street and, accordingly, to establish their chronological sequence. In addition, the resulting data can be compared with the textual sources, since the construction, renovation and upkeep of this important, sacred, urban arterial thoroughfare is often mentioned in the royal inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II. In the East India House inscription mentioned above, the king refers to the repaving of the street, and the same information can also be found in the Brisa inscription WBA VII 43–53:

From Ištar-sākipat-tēbīšu to Ka-sikilla, (in) the wide street Ištar-lamassi-ummāniša, the thoroughfare of the great lord Marduk; (and) from lkkibšu-nakar to Nabû's entrance in Esagil, (in) the wide street Nabû-dayyāan-niṣiṣu, thoroughfare of Nabû the son of the prince, I made a massive infill, and improved the road with bitumen and baked brick.⁸⁰

A highly detailed account of successive works on the processional street is the subject of C214, a cylinder found *in situ* during the Iraqi excavations, I 8–II 7:

At the time, the broad streets of Babylon, whose interior(s) had become too low – (as for) Nabû-dayyāan-niṣiṣu, the street of the Uraš Gate, and Ištar-lamassi-ummāniša, the street of the Ištar Gate, I filled (them) in with six cubits of infill for the processional street(s) of the great lord, the god Marduk and the god Nabû, the triumphant heir, the son beloved by him, and beautified (their) access way(s) with bitumen and baked brick. For a second time, (and) more than before, I filled (them) in with eighteen cubits of infill and improved (their) access way(s) with bitumen and baked brick. For a third time, I filled in Ištar-lamassi-ummāniša with a large seventeen-cubit infill. (In total) I filled Ištar-lamassi-ummāniša with a high forty-one-cubit infill and broadened (its) access way.⁸¹

From the dedication of the text it is clear that the reconditioning of the street was theologically linked to the New Year Festival. As C214 II 7–II 24 indicates: “O great gods who go in procession on the way to the Akītu(-house) on Ay-ibūr-šabû with the god Marduk, the king of the heavens and netherworld, say good thing(s) about me in the presence of the god Marduk, the great lord.” According to the inscription, therefore, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar witnessed three successive infillings to raise

⁷⁸ Beaulieu 2003; Da Riva 2017. In his inscriptions, Nabopolassar presents himself as a man whose deep piety has earned him divine assistance; thus, the king affirms in his inscription C12/1 8–12 (Da Riva 2013, 54ff.; RIBo Nabopolassar 07): “Šazu/Marduk (. . .) perceived my intentions and he placed me, me the insignificant one who was not even noticed among the people, to the highest position in my native country. He called me to the lordship over land and people (. . .).”

⁷⁹ Pedersén 2021, 216–217, 220–222, 224.

⁸⁰ Da Riva 2012; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II WBA.

⁸¹ Da Riva 2008, C214; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 034.

the street: first by 6 cubits (3 m); then by 18 cubits (9 m); and finally by 17 cubits (8.5 m), making a total of 20.5 m, which roughly accords with the archaeologically attested street levels 5, 4 and 1 “within a deviation of a few decimeters”.⁸²

These religiously justified “infilling” projects in the street modified the urban morphology of Ka-dingirra, the monumental sector of the city, because they lifted the processional way several times and it became necessary to raise the surrounding buildings that had ended up below street level. Several street levels have been archaeologically documented, and they seem to be dated to different restoration works during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.⁸³ The Ištar Gate, some temples in the area, and the bridge over the eastern canal mentioned above had to be reconstructed, and even the royal palace (South or Old Palace) had to be rebuilt, as Nebuchadnezzar mentions in the East India House inscription, ST VII 34–56:

In Babylon, the city of my choice that I love, (as for) the palace (. . .) which Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, the father who engendered me, had created with (sundried) brick(s) and taken up residence inside, its foundation(s) had become weak on account of flood water (and) the gates of that palace had become too low as a result of the raising (of the level) of the street (s) of Babylon.⁸⁴

Incidentally, the royal palace built by Nabopolassar to the south and west of the Ištar Gate, named in the texts of Nebuchadnezzar as the “palace in the Ka-dingirra district” after the area where it stood, often appears in the texts because Nebuchadnezzar expanded and restored it around his seventh year,⁸⁵ before he decided to build a new palace. In the East India House inscription, Nebuchadnezzar justifies the new construction and the ensuing modifications of the urban plan in the following terms, ST VIII 27–IX 2:

In Babylon, the private chambers of my residence were not decorous enough for my status as king. Because worshipping the god Marduk, my lord, was present in my heart, in order to widen the residence of my royal majesty, in Babylon, the city (under) his (Marduk’s) protection, I did not change its street(s), displace its dais(es), nor block up its canal(s). I searched far and wide for (the site of a new) *kummu*-building and, so that no arrow (during) battle can come close to Imgur-Enlil, the wall of Babylon, 490 cubits distance outside of Nēmetti-Enlil, the outer wall of Babylon, I built two strong embankments with bitumen and baked brick (and) a wall like a mountain. I fashioned a baked brick structure between them and, on top of it, I built a large *kummu*-building as the residence of my royal majesty with bitumen and baked brick to a great height. I added (it) to the palace of my father and in a favorable month,

⁸² Pedersén 2021, 75.

⁸³ Pedersén 2021, 71, 73, 74.

⁸⁴ Da Riva 2008, ST; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 002.

⁸⁵ According to the date mentioned in the Prism, a royal inscription in which the construction of the palace is mentioned, see Da Riva 2014.

on an auspicious day, I secured its foundation on the surface of the netherworld and raised its superstructure as high as a mountain. I completed its construction in (just) fifteen days⁸⁶ and made the seat of my lordly majesty resplendent.⁸⁷

Thus, Nebuchadnezzar justifies the building of the New Palace on the grounds that the Old Palace was too small for him, and claims that a complete renovation of the building was difficult to undertake without altering the main plan of the town, which might have been considered sacrilegious towards Marduk and the city under the god's aegis. Given that the eastern canal and some constructions (probably buildings of significance, but there are no archaeological data about them) were located just south of the Old Palace, any enlargement of the building to the south would have meant altering the course of the waterway and the ground plans of the buildings. Nor could the palace be expanded to the north, because of the inner city's double wall system. In addition, the Arahtu canal flanked the palace on the west, so that no expansions to the river were possible. Finally, an enlargement to the east would have meant altering the layout of the Procession Street of Marduk, and that would not have only been considered irreverent, but it was obviously difficult to undertake as well, given the street's previous maintenance works that the king had commissioned. For these reasons, Nebuchadnezzar had to build a new seat of government and residence, the North Palace, outside of the double wall system, beyond the Ištar Gate.

To Sum Up: Babylonian City-Scape and Religious Agency

Documentary sources and archaeological data alike demonstrate the increasing size and monumentality of Babylon in the middle of the first millennium BCE. The city's well-organized public space served as the setting in which the Neo-Babylonian kings displayed political and religious paraphernalia linked to their ideologies of territorial conquest and world dominion. Under the protection of the gods, particularly that of Marduk, the supreme deity of the national pantheon, the kings commissioned the building and embellishment of temples, palaces, city gates and ramparts, turning the urban space into a backdrop for processions and cultic journeys.

All these buildings are celebrated in the royal inscriptions, texts that on the one hand represent the Babylonian monarch in his religious function and in dialogue with the gods, and on the other illustrate how the space was appropriated by those

⁸⁶ The figure of fifteen days simply expresses speed, the construction must have taken at least ten years.

⁸⁷ Da Riva 2008; RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II 002.

who could understand the texts, either reading them or having them read aloud for them.

In addition, the impact of Babylon's topography on the organization and structure of religious festivals is an aspect that must be considered in order to understand their ideological context and social impact. The dialectic between city and religious practice in Babylon is a crucial element in understanding royally sponsored interventions in the urban space, which facilitated both the dimensional organization of the festivals and their temporal arrangement.

These interventions demonstrate the capacity of religion to create dynamic space, which is fundamental to understanding new uses and meanings, both real and imaginary, that become attached to a particular location.⁸⁸ Religious festivals were performed all over the city, both inside temples and outside of sacred spaces, and their expected participants were not only the king and the priests and members of the clergy mentioned in the texts, but also the citizens of Babylon. The different urban settings in which the festivals took place indicate both their cultic complexity and their deep social impact. The ceremonies (e.g. processions, rituals, chants and songs) appropriated the urban space and created an imaginary one beyond the physical locations of the festivals, thereby organizing and ritualizing the streets, the city districts, the rivers and canals, and the double wall system that marked the limit between the realm of order inside the city and the domain of chaos beyond. These spatial practices can be detected analyzing the archaeological remains of buildings and urban infrastructures as well as the rhetoric of the inscriptions commissioned by the kings to celebrate the constructions of such buildings and structures, confirming the validity of the Urban Religion approach to show the interdependency of religion and urban planning in an expanding empire.

List of Abbreviations

C and number (C12, C22, C214, C36)	Cylinders with inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar (Da Riva 2008)
LB1	Limestone Block with inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar (Da Riva 2008)
RIBo	The Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online (RIBo) Project
ST	Stone Tablet, East India House Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar (Da Riva 2008)
WBA	Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa (Lebanon), version in archaizing cuneiform script (Da Riva 2012)

⁸⁸ Urciuoli/Rüpke 2018, 127.

WBC

Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa (Lebanon), version in contemporary cuneiform script (Da Riva 2012)

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Web Resources

- The Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online (RIBo) Project (RIBo Babylon 7)*: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/pager> (seen 31.05.2021)
- Digital Model of Babylon (O. Pedersén): <https://www.lingfil.uu.se/research/assyriology/babylon/> (seen 31.05.2021)

