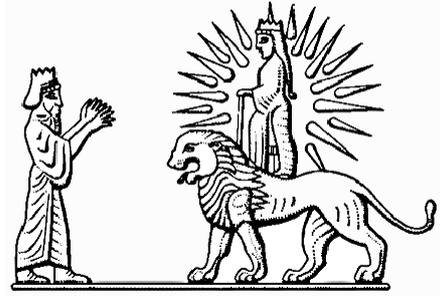


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JOACHIM OELSNER Leipzig

Hellenization of the Babylonian Culture?

On Hellenization of the Babylonian culture much has been said and written. Maybe it seems superfluous to consider the theme for another time. But the opinions on the problem are quite different. Some people hold the position of important influences, and postulate a mixed Babylonian-Hellenistic culture in the Seleucid period (in German: “babylonisch- hellenistische Mischkultur”). Others are more sceptical regarding the Greek influences. Therefore I think it will not be useless, to reflect anew on some aspects of the problem. Let me say it in advance: I am a minimalist in this respect. Nevertheless briefly I will discuss some aspects of the phenomenon “Hellenization.” Other ones will be left out.

Regarding “Mischkultur”: this would mean that there is a inseparable mixture of elements of different origins which is more than a symbiosis. But is this really attested in the sources? And when it is existent, where is it?

First there should be a definition of Babylonian culture. I will not go into details, but say it in a more general way. In my eyes the crucial factor is the existence of the traditional temples with the adoration of the deities, who were revered since millennia in the country, with

the characteristic administrative institutions and their social implications, and – not to forget – the use of the cuneiform script in combination with the tradition of the respective literature – literature in the broadest sense.

A second point should be mentioned. The Babylonian culture defined in this way will be existent above all in those cities of Southern Mesopotamia where it had a long tradition. Therefore only these ones will be considered. In Hellenistic foundations like Seleucia on the Tigris there was another situation which brings about other questions. These will be left out.¹

And thirdly. I don't see a tendency of forced Hellenization by the Seleucid kings in Western Asia. This is in accordance with the tendency of recent research.²

And now: can Hellenization be seen in the sources from Seleucid Babylonia? Yes and no! In this respect one must differentiate between Hellenization in Babylonia and Hellenization of the Babylonian culture. My topic is only the latter one. There is no doubt that the Hellenistic administration to a certain amount affected life and the Greeks living in Babylonia were orientated along the Greek-Hellenistic culture.

¹ Since the days of Eduard Meyer the ideas on Hellenization in the Near East have changed considerably. Nevertheless it holds true that Seleucia was the most important centre of Hellenism in Babylonia and its demolition in 165 A.D. was the death blow to the Hellenism in the region east of the Euphrates, see E.

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Meyer, *Blüte und Niedergang des Hellenismus in Asien* (Berlin 1925), 80 (with the date 164 A.D.).

² See M. Austin, in K. Brodersen (ed.), *Zwischen Ost und West. Studien zur Geschichte des Seleukidenreichs* (Hamburg 1999), 138 and fn. 16.

1. Does the “Babyloniaka” of Berossos written in the Greek language give evidence of Hellenization?

The Babylonian individual Bēl-rē’ûšu, whose name in Greek transmission is turned to Berossos – written in different orthography in the manuscripts – was according to the tradition a priest of Bēl-Marduk, the city god of Babylon. Here we will not discuss the meaning of “priest.” I only will mention that this term often is used in a quite un-precise way. But it must be stressed, that Bēl-rē’ûšu/Berossos was trained in the traditions of Babylonia and without any doubt knew Akkadian (as well as Sumerian in the way it was transmitted in his days) and was able to read – and maybe to write – cuneiform.³

But what was the Babylonian culture like at his time, i.e. in the later 4th century B.C.? Many times you will read that during the Achaemenid period it was on the decline and cuneiform script as well as the Akkadian language were replaced by Aramaic and the “alphabetic” script.⁴ Nobody will deny that Aramaic played an important role. As most of the Aramaic

writings are lost, this can be seen foremost by the Aramaic dockets on cuneiform tablets. But even in the late fifth century where most of them come from, e.g. in the Murašû archive from Nippur only about 10% of the tablets have such dockets.

In recent years archaeological excavations and publications of material in the museums’ stores considerably have enlarged the sources for the later Achaemenid period. Therefore no longer the position can be held that in the fourth century B.C. cuneiform writing was on the decline. Sure, the number of texts from one place and a certain period differs and is dependent from different factors which prohibit the use of statistical methods.⁵

Viewing the material on which Berossos could base his work the situation thus has changed. There exist different groups of literary-religious texts which are contemporary to him. As one example of the last quarter of the fourth century may be

³ The last translation of the fragments of his *Babyloniaca* is G.P. Verbrugge and J.M. Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho. Introduced and Translated. Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor 1996), 11-91. See also A. Kuhrt, “Berossus’s *Babyloniaca* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia,” in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987), 32-56.

⁴ The problem of the use of cuneiform and Akkadian in the second half of the first millennium B.C. (and later) here cannot be discussed. Only two recent statements: M. Blasberg, *Keilschrift in aramäischer Umwelt* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cologne 1997), 158, denies that Late Babylonian was a spoken language; R.J. van der Spek, in J. Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse. The*

Arsacid Empire: Sources and Documentation (= *Historia. Einzelschriften* 122, Stuttgart 1998), 255, discusses the question whether Akkadian still was spoken by a minority of the people in Babylonian cities (on this see R.N. Frye, *OLZ* 95 (2000), 480). Cf. also the remarks on the situation of the Elamite language in Achaemenid times, made by M.A. Dandamayev, *Or.* 66 (1997), 103 (in his review of A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 B.C.* (London and New York 1995), in regard to p. 367).

⁵ One example – the case of Ur: whereas in this city has been excavated a considerable number of cuneiform documents dated to the fourth century B.C. (published by H.H. Figulla in *UET* 4), only a single text is dated to Nabonid (*UET* 4, 36), see J. Oelsner, *AfO* 46/47 (1999/2000), 385.

taken the tablets of Iqīšâ from Uruk⁶ and those of a certain Tanittu-Bêl from Babylon.⁷ The latter group was written in the time of Alexander the Great who died in Babylon in June 323 B.C.,⁸ a number of tablets of the first group is dated to the time of Philip Arrhidaios (323-316 B.C.). By this they evidently may be taken as sources for the ideas current in the time of Berossos.

Both Libraries – and some other ones too – lead to the presumption that the entire range of the Babylonian literary and scribal tradition known in the first half and the middle of the first millennium B.C. still was transmitted in that period. I consciously say “transmitted” and not “copied.” The reasons for this I will give later. We even may go a step further: the texts which are known from the fifth and the early fourth centuries B.C., foremost from Babylon, Borsippa, and Uruk, to a certain amount also from Nippur, prove an unbroken line of transmission.

2. In which sectors of life Hellenization does appear?

Some selected examples may be discussed:

2.1. Interrelations between the Babylonians and the ruling Macedonians: Society and law

Let me start with a citation. After discussing the character of the Babylonian

To sum up: Berossos lived in a world in which Babylonian religion, literature and traditions were alive. To go into details here is impossible.

What has been said in the foregoing in my eyes means, Berossos, even attracted by the Greek culture, was not really Hellenized, but a true Babylonian! Nevertheless he wrote a book in Greek and dedicated it to a Hellenistic king – the Seleucid Antiochos I (281-261 B.C.). Why? The most reasonable explanation – but nowadays not the common opinion – is: he intended to bring near the traditions of his country to the new overlords. Likewise acted Manetho in Egypt at the same time. One can understand that they used for their goal the literary conventions of the readers they had in mind. As was stated recently, Berossos failed in this, because in this respect his book had deficiencies.⁹ Nevertheless, if he is considered a Hellenistic author his book does not prove a Hellenization of the Babylonian culture.

cities in the Hellenistic period Robertus van der Spek writes: “Thus the conclusion must be that Babylonian cities only superficially were hellenised and did not acquire Greek civic institutions although they have had representatives of the Greek government. The Greeks as far as present evidence goes, seem to have had their own separate communities.”¹⁰ This I only can underline as the result of my

⁶ Most of his tablets are published by H. Hunger and E. von Weiher in *SpTU* I-V (Berlin 1976-1998). A collection of all his tablets still is outstanding, for a preliminary one see J. Oelsner, “Die Entwicklung der Kolophone im neu- und spätbabylonischen Uruk,” in M. Dubrocard and C. Kircher (eds.), *Hommage a Doyen Weiss* (Nice 1996), 429-444 (especially p. 439).

⁷ I.L. Finkel, “Muššu’u, Qutâru and the Scribe Tanittu-Bêl,” in P. Michalowski et al. (eds.), *Velles Paraulas. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of*

Miguel Civil (= *AuOr* 9, Barcelona 1991), 91-104.

⁸ Now dated to June 11, see L. Depuydt, “The Time of the Death of Alexander the Great: 11 June 323 B.C. (-322), ca. 4.00-5.00 PM,” *WO* 28 (1997), 117-135.

⁹ See G.P. Verbrugghe and J.M. Wickersham, *Berosos* (above fn. 3), 31-34.

¹⁰ Summary of his study “The Babylonian City” in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, *Hellenism in the East* (above fn. 3), 74.

own studies.

To sum them up. There are cuneiform documents from different places which show that the traditional formularies were used, even if there are some variations.¹¹ But whether these “seem to indicate a desire on the part of the Greek ruler or representative to bring Babylonian practice into line with Greek ideas,”¹² is a matter of dispute and in my eyes an exaggerated statement. Sure, the Greek language was used in some fields and Greek institutions were acting when the interests of the king were concerned. And this means of course that a considerable part of the administrative, juridical and other official documents was written in Greek, always then when royal officials had to act, e.g. by raising taxes. This regards those documents in which the Hellenistic administration – responsible for taxes to be paid¹³ – or the rulers themselves were

involved. On the other hand impressions of seals of Babylonian temple officials have been excavated in Seleucia on the Tigris.¹⁴

There is a good number of interrelations between the Babylonians and the ruling Macedonians which result from the fact, that Babylonia was part of the Seleucid Empire. But these need a study of its own.¹⁵

2.2. Temple architecture

A number of Babylonian sanctuaries was reconstructed during the Hellenistic period, for the most part in the third century B.C. Regarding Esangila in Babylon and Ezida in Borsippa this is proven by a foundation cylinder with a cuneiform inscription,¹⁶ and during the excavations of Esangila remains of Se-

¹¹ Now there exists a considerable number of additions to the documents which had been collected in J. Oelsner, *Materialien zur babylonischen Gesellschaft und Kultur in hellenistischer Zeit* (Budapest 1986).

¹² So G.J.P. McEwan, “Hellenistic Marriage Contracts,” in M.J. Geller and H. Maehler (eds.), *Legal Documents of the Hellenistic World* (London 1995), 26.

¹³ A characteristic example and at the same time the earliest one of an apparently Hellenistic official acting by impressing his seal on a cuneiform document is the slave sale *BRM* 2, 10 from Uruk, dated 2.VI. 37 SE = August 21, 275 B.C. Last edition: R. Wallenfels, *Uruk. Hellenistic Seal Impressions in the Yale Babylonian Collection. I. Cuneiform Texts* (= AUWE 19, Mainz 1994), 9 no. 1, for the different interpretations of the caption see L.T. Doty, *JNES* 38 (1978), 195-197; G.J.P. McEwan, *JNES* 41 (1982), 51-53 (J. Landergott, *AfO* 29/30 (1983/84), 124, is based on the former reading given by A.T. Clay in his copy in *BRM*); see also R. Wallenfels, “Private Seals and Sealing Practices at Hellenistic Uruk,” in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux du Monde Hellénistique. Archivi e Sigilli nel Mondo Ellenistico* (= *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique, Supplement* 29, Athens 1996), 115s. and fns. 19ss. – Considerable numbers of clay bullae, often bearing seal impressions made by officials, have been found in Uruk and Seleucia on the Tigris (from other

places – Babylon, Larsa, Nippur – are known much less examples), see Wallenfels, “Private seals” 114 and fns. 11-14; for Uruk see J. Oelsner, “Siegelung und Archivierung von Dokumenten im hellenistischen Babylonien,” in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux*, 102s. and fn. 10 (regarding exemplars from the Irigal), 108-110 (those from the Rēš). See also Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11), 257s.

¹⁴ Mentioned (with additional literature) in R. Wallenfels, “Private Seals,” 115 fn. 20 sub 2. See also A. Invernizzi, “Archivi Pubblici di Seleucia sul Tigri,” in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux*, 136 and fn. 25. The inscription reads *makkūr Bēl* “property of (the god) Bēl.”

¹⁵ A. Invernizzi, “Seleucia and Uruk: Cities of Seleucid Babylonia,” in U. Finkbeiner et al. (eds.), *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens. Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer* (Mainz 1995), 273-280, discusses the problem of the political status of the two cities.

¹⁶ Easily available transliteration and translation: F.H. Weissbach, *Die Keilschriften der Achämeniden* (= *Vorderasiatische Bibliothek* 3, Leipzig 1911), XXX, 133-135, anew edited by A. Kuhrt, in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, “Aspect of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa,” *JHS* 111 (1991), 75-78. According to col. I ll. 13-16 was the foundation ceremony on 20.XII.43 SE = March 27, 268 B.C.

leucid building activities were identified.¹⁷ In addition to this in the so-called “astronomical diaries” reconstruction or repair work at temples in Babylon more than once is mentioned.¹⁸

As excavations show at Larsa in the Ebabbar sanctuary a building in the traditional way was erected,¹⁹ whereas another Babylonian style temple at Nippur, i.e. the latest building phase of the Inanna temple, is dated by the excavators even later: to the first century A.D. – i.e. to the Parthian period.²⁰

The best known Babylonian temples of the Hellenistic period are in Uruk. Here the Rēš sanctuary of Anu and Antu with a ziqqurrat as well as the Irigal of Nannaya were erected in huge dimensions. The holy complex was completed by an Akītu house outside the city wall whereas Eanna found less interest.²¹ In the excavations were discovered typical Babylonian ground plans. But there is

one element in the Rēš which is interpreted as of Greek origin: a frieze made of glazed bricks and representing Babylonian motifs. But unlike the “procession street” in Babylon, dated by the scholars to the time of Nebukadnezzar II, where these were found at the lower parts of the walls, they evidently must have been attached immediately below the roof, like in the Greek manner. This as well as a glazed brick with a fragmentary Greek inscription, which also seems to be part of the frieze and presumably commemorates the building of the temple, is interpreted by the excavators as Hellenistic influence.²² If this interpretation holds stand, it may result out of Hellenizing tendencies in the leading families of the city who according to cuneiform inscriptions were responsible for the building. But on the other hand the texts show, that these persons in the same way acted as true Babylonians.

¹⁷ See E. Schmidt, “Die Griechen in Babylon und das Weiterleben ihrer Kultur,” *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 56 (Berlin 1941), 810-812, also F. Wetzel et al. (eds.), *Das Babylon der Spätzeit* (= *WVDOG* 62, Berlin 1957, Reprint 1994), 29 f. Summary of the excavation results: Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11), 112-126, see Oelsner, *AfO* 46/47 (1999-2000), 375s.

¹⁸ E.g. AD No. -140C Z. 43 (Marduk gate); -125B Z. 14; -105B Z. 15', -105A Z. 32'/-105B Z. 30', -105A Rs. 3', 21', 38'.

¹⁹ O. Lecomte, “Stratigraphical Analysis and Ceramic Assemblages of the 4th – 1st Centuries B.C.E. E.babbar of Larsa (South Iraq),” in: U. Finkbeiner (ed.), *Materialien zur Archäologie der Seleukiden- und Partherzeit im südlichen Babylonien und im Golfgebiet* (Tübingen 1993), 17-39 (additional literature).

²⁰ E.J. Keall, “Parthian Nippur and Vologases’ Southern Strategy: a Hypothesis,” *JAOS* 95 (1975), 620-632, especially 625 f. and fn. 14; the same, *The Significance of Late Parthian Nippur* (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan 1970); R.L. Zettler, *The Ur III Temple of Inanna at Nippur* (= *Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient* 11, Berlin 1992), 50-55. But cf. E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im alten Mesopotamien* (Berlin 1982), 334s. and fig. 424, who argues in favour of a Seleucid date (approvingly cited by Kose, *Uruk. Architektur IV. Von*

der Seleukiden- bis zur Sasanidenzeit (= *AUWE* 17, Mainz 1998), 417 and fn. 1990). See also Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11), 104-106; S.B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton 1988), 144-147. – If there was a Seleucid reconstruction of Ekur then it is hidden underneath the Parthian fort at that place, for the latter see G. Bergamini, “Parthian Fortifications in Mesopotamia,” *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987), 195-214, especially 205-210 and fns. 26-28, Fig. K-N. The existence of Ekur in late Seleucid times is proven by two cuneiform documents, see R.J. van der Spek, “Nippur, Sippar, Larsa in the Hellenistic Period,” in Ellis, M. de J. (ed.), *Nippur at the Centennial. Papers Read at the 35^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Philadelphia 1992), 250-260.

²¹ See now the final excavation report: A. Kose, *Uruk*, 93-196 (Rēš and ziqqurrat), 197-242 (Irigal), 277-289 (Akītu), 257-276 (Eanna).

²² See Kose, *Uruk*, 23s., 75 sub 5.1.1.1. (inscribed brick), 162, 416. – When the author visited the exhibition of the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago following the Melammu meeting he came upon a relief from Persepolis (inventory number: A 24068) with a frieze of bulls, lions, and rosettes beneath the roof comparable to that of the Rēš. That means, already in the art of the Achae-menids such a feature was used.

In the other sanctuary in the centre of Hellenistic Uruk, the Irigal, there was an Aramaic inscription written on glazed bricks.²³ As one and the same city leader, Anu-uballit, with the Greek surname Kephalon, built both the monuments it is evident that he used three languages side by side. He is a member of that branch of the Aḥūtu clan where the Hellenization of Babylonians best can be seen. As representative of the city administration he had two faces: on the one side he was member of the indigenous Babylonian population, on the other being in contact with the king and the royal administration he had a Hellenistic behaviour. In addition he presumably was married to a Greek woman and his offspring more than once bore only Greek names.²⁴

It also should be mentioned that also a badly damaged stone inscription in Greek was found in the Rēš which maybe of Seleucid date.²⁵ That there are some further objects bearing Greek inscriptions or letters, among them a Greek graffito of a name on brick found in the Irigal,²⁶ will not wonder in a historic environment where different languages were used side by side and real Babylonians also had hellenizing tendencies.

2.3. Religious ideas and cultic institutions

As far as the texts – and this means the cuneiform texts as others are not available – give any information, the religious ideas and cultic institutions in general are a continuation of those of earlier Babylonian periods.

There exists a considerable number of cuneiform texts of religious character, i.e. cultic songs and prayers as well as omens, incantations, rituals and of other literary types (e.g. the Gilgamesh epic).²⁷ In the scientific literature on ancient Mesopotamia often is said “they were copied by the priests and scholars.” Of course it is true that the people who could read and write in general were members of these groups, out of which in all periods of Mesopotamian history the educated persons were recruited. But also one has to ask for the “Sitz im Leben” of these texts. One example: would the position be correct that the late copies of the ritual for the Babylonian New Year’s Festival – some maybe written only in the early first century B.C. – were written by some old fashioned people without any practical benefit? I don’t think so.²⁸

²³ Kose, *Uruk*, 24, 78 sub 5.2.1.1.

²⁴ See L.T. Doty, “Nikarchos and Kephalon,” in E. Leichty et al. (eds.), *A Scientific Humanist. Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs* (Philadelphia 1988), 95-118. – For the historical sources from Babylon which here are treated not in detail see T. Boiy, *Laatachamenidisch en hellenistisch Babylon. Portret van een Mesopotamische stad in een cultureel spanningsveld* (Ph. D. dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Faculteit Letteren, Departement Oosterse en Slavische Studies, Leuven 2000).

²⁵ Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 75 sub 5.1.1.2. It was found in secondary context. Regarding the date, Kose says “Dat. nach den Buchstabenformen eher seleukidisch als partherzeitlich.” But p. 472 sub no. 707 he states: “Buchstabentypen kaiserzeitlich.” I asked Dr. Klaus Hallof, Academia Scientiarum Berolinensis et

Brandenburgensis, *Inscriptiones Graecae*, to have a look at the photo (many thanks for his kindness). With reservations (as the photo as not as clear as one likes, a squeeze would be preferable) he tends towards a Seleucid date.

²⁶ Kose, *Uruk*, 78 sub 5.1.2.8.

²⁷ As far as they were known to the first half of the eighties they are collected in Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11). Meanwhile there is much additional material available.

²⁸ One must not go as far as H. Zimmern, *ZA* 34 (1922), 192, who suspects that not only the exemplars which have come down to us, but also the composition of the texts themselves (F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris 1921), 127-154) are of late date. But nevertheless, we are convinced they were used during the festival!

To the contrary: when the texts had been “copied,” to use the widespread terminology, they must have an actual significance. And that the cults were practiced can be seen by the temple buildings of immense sizes, which otherwise don’t make any sense.

What I will say is: as long as cultic texts were written they were used in the cult of the corresponding deities. But this also means Akkadian still was the language of the religious ceremonies. In the same way it must be stated that the different kinds of omina or incantations were used with the corresponding rites or rituals. By this it is maintained that the religious etc. cuneiform texts which have come down to us are a sign of a corresponding cultic practice and in this way they also corroborate an intact Babylonian culture in the sphere they were destined for.²⁹

By themselves the texts give no information on the number of practitioners of the just mentioned cults. But can one imagine that there were only small groups of them? Then one has to explain why so few people will erect huge temple buildings? The conclusion is unavoidable that the veneration of the Babylonian deities was the religion of a considerable number of the indigenous population – the more as the hints to other religions are scarce. Cults of Aramaic deities anyhow are not attested.

2.4. Identification of Babylonian deities with Greek ones

In the literature on Hellenistic Babylonia from time to time can be read that Babylonian deities had been equated with Greek ones.³⁰ Sure, one may find examples for this phenomenon in the ancient sources, but only in the Greek (and Latin) ones.³¹ In the native tradition such an identification, which would include syncretism, cannot be found. As has been shown, Babylonian deities had been worshipped in the traditional way. But if they are mentioned in Greek texts they may be equated with more or less comparable Greek ones, that means may get an *interpretatio Graeca*. But this is not a sign of “Hellenization” of the native culture. To go into details is precluded in this context.

2.5. People with Babylonian and Greek double names

With persons bearing Babylonian and Greek double names sometimes, but not always, it seems that there is an equation of Babylonian deities with Greek ones too. Whether it is by chance or voluntarily that in such cases the Greek divine name corresponds to the Babylonian one is open to dispute.³² More important in

²⁹ Therefore I can’t agree with F. Rochberg, in J. Marzahn and H. Neumann (eds.), *Assyriologica et Semitica. Festschrift für Joachim Oelsner* (= *AOAT* 252, Münster 2000), 372, when she says, that the series *Enūma Anu Enlil* “may simply have been preserved because it was a central part of the scholars’ tradition.” Why transmit “literature” which is of no use in the daily life?

³⁰ E.g. F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl, in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen 1957), vol. 1, 815; cited also by D.O. Edzard, in H.W. Haussig (ed.), *Wörterbuch der Mythologie 1/1* (Stuttgart

1965), 41 s.v. (the supposed transition of the Marduk cult to Uruk is mere fiction without any base in the sources).

³¹ Eg. Nabû corresponds to Apollo, Nanaja to Artemis: Strabo XVI 1,7, see R. Koldewey, *Das wiedererstehende Babylon*, 5th ed. by B. Hrouda (Berlin 1990), 408 f. On the other hand Damaskios uses the Babylonian divine names like Bēlos (Marduk), see Edzard, *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, 123.

³² See e.g. the Artemidoros/Minnanaios mentioned below sub 2.7 at fn. 52.

this context is the fact that there were persons at all who bore beside their native Babylonian name a Greek one too, or even Babylonians with Greek personal names. As the sources prove, such people lived as well in Uruk as in Babylon (for other places this too is to postulate). Examples are attested well into the Parthian period.

Best known is the situation in Uruk where there are texts attesting families over some generations. Here the situation shows that this kind of Hellenization is restricted to leading clans of the city which at the same time behave like true Babylonians on the one hand and are bound to the government on the other. An example already has been mentioned: Anu-uballit with the surname Kephalon.³³

2.6. Greeks in Babylonia

Of course there were Greeks living in the Hellenistic period in Babylonia. It seems that in Uruk they lived side by side with the native population already in the middle of the third century B.C.³⁴ Above in this communication it also had been mentioned that some of the Babylonians presumably even had been married

to a Greek woman.³⁵ But these phenomena obviously were restricted in their extent. In Babylon, the former capital, highly esteemed by Alexander the Great, a number of Greeks presumably lived in neighborhoods of their own. At least this is the generally held position, which hardly can be opposed. It is the north-eastern part of the city which is interpreted as Greek quarter where there was excavated a Greek theatre. According to a Greek inscription there was also a gymnasium in Babylon.³⁶

It is impossible to get reliable information on the relations between the different population groups from the available sources. But at least there seems to be one example which speaks in favor of the interpretation that Greek people were interested in Babylonian cults. According to my interpretation of a fragmentary cuneiform document excavated in Seleucia on the Tigris a Greek married couple dedicated a slave of their own to a Babylonian sanctuary in Kutha.³⁷ This may be a sign of the attractiveness of Babylonian religion and culture even in the second half of the third century B.C.

Another problem arises with those people bearing Greek names but called "Babylonians" in the Greek literature

³³ Above fn. 24. In the family branch of another Anu-uballit, with the surname Nikarchos, also of the Ahutu clan, the custom of double names is restricted only to his generation. See also the studies by G. Ch. Sarkisjan, "Greek Personal Names in Uruk and the Graeco-Babyloniaca Problem," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 22 (1974), 495-503, and "Grečeskaja onomastica v Uruke i Problema Graeco-Babyloniaca," *Drevnej Vostok* 2 (1976), 191-217. Meanwhile there are known some additions. For Babylon see e.g. a certain Aristeas/Ardi-beltaios: *BRM* 4, 58. Further examples in T. Boiy, *Laatachaemenidisch en hellenistisch Babylon* (above fn. 24).

³⁴ See J. Oelsner, "Griechen in Babylonien und die einheimischen Tempel in hellenistischer Zeit," in D. Charpin and F. Joannès (eds.), *La circulation des biens, des personnes et des idées dans le Proche-Orient ancien. Actes de la XXXVIIIe Rencontre Assy-*

riologique Internationale (Paris, 8-10 juillet 1991) (Paris 1992), 341-347.

³⁵ See at fn. 24.

³⁶ This situation continues into the Parthian period, see S.R. Hauser, "Babylon in arsakidischer Zeit," in J. Renger (ed.), *Babylon. Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früherer Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne. 2. Internationales Symposium der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft, 24.-26. März 1998 in Berlin* (Saarbrücken 1999), 207-239. See also E. Schmidt, "Die Griechen" (above fn. 17), 786-814 (passim); R.J. van der Spek, "The Theatre of Babylon in Cuneiform," in W.H. van Soldt (ed.), *Veenhof Anniversary Volume. Studies presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leiden 2001), 445-456. See also below fn. 54.

³⁷ Newly edited in Oelsner, "Griechen" (above fn. 34), pp. 345s.

like some philosophers or astronomers, e.g. Diogenes the Babylonian, Seleukos the Babylonian, Teukros the Babylonian or Zachalias the Babylonian.³⁸ With the exception of the last one the names are always Greek. What is known about them seems to speak in favor of a Greek education. Generally held is the position they are people from Seleucia on the Tigris and the surname “Babylonian” means “coming from (the region) Babylonia” where Seleucia is situated. But is this interpretation conclusive? I see no way to answer the question, but the idea must not be excluded, the prevailing opinion is due to the fact that most of the modern scholars make a supposition: Babylon was deserted at the time when the persons just mentioned lived. As meanwhile much more on Babylon in the Seleucid and Parthian period is known, the possibility that they come from the city itself more earnestly must be taken into consideration.

And finally the so-called “Graeco-Babyloniaca.” Do they prove Hellenization?

As you know, there is a number of clay tablets – better fragments – which have

cuneiform writing on the one side and transliterations of the Akkadian or Sumerian-Akkadian text into Greek letters on the other.³⁹ Now it is beyond doubt that they originate in the school tradition. But still there is a discussion for whom they were made. In my eyes they were not done for Greeks learning Akkadian or Sumerian,⁴⁰ but for writing Akkadian on soft writing material, foremost leather, parchment or papyrus scrolls.⁴¹ Regarding this question it seems to me that these documents prove the introduction of new technical means to facilitate the transmission of written texts – including the traditional ones. If one will take the term “Hellenization” in an extremely wide sense this may be called a *lingua franca*.⁴² But the traditions transmitted this way were the traditional ones and you must not forget, that soft writing materials also were used for other languages and scripts like the Aramaic one. That some Babylonians who had learned Greek (beginning with Berossos, above 2.1) also would read Greek literature and other writings by this is not excluded. Greek was anyway the official administrative language of the country.⁴³

³⁸ On some of them see S. Dalley, “Scholarship in Seleucid and Parthian Babylonia,” in S. Dalley (ed.), *The Legacy of Mesopotamia*, Oxford 1998, 45-49. The informations on these people given by Greek and Latin writers has been collected and is easily available in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart 1896ss.) under the corresponding headings.

³⁹ Last edition by M.J. Geller, “The Last Wedge,” *ZA* 87 (1997), 43-95. See also Geller, “Graeco-Babyloniaca in Babylon,” in J. Renger (ed.), *Babylon. Focus* (above fn. 36), 377-383.

⁴⁰ A position recently taken into consideration for another time by P. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v.Chr.* (= *AOAT* 275, Münster 2001), 184s. I also would like to modify K. Kessler’s statement to combine the Greek script in the school texts and the necessity to translate official Greek documents of the royal administration, see K. Kessler, “‘In diesem Monat hörte ich’ – Einige Be-

merkungen zu den Astronomical Diaries,” *Isimu* 1 (Madrid 1998), 167-172. To learn the Greek language and script does not require transliterations of Sumerian and Akkadian texts. See the following note.

⁴¹ The problem is discussed in more detail in J. Oelsner, “*Sie ist gefallen, sie ist gefallen, Babylon die große Stadt*” – *Vom Ende einer Kultur* (= *Sitzungsberichte der Sächsischen Akademie Wissenschaften, Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 138/1, Stuttgart/Leipzig 2002), esp. pp. 14-17.

⁴² I don’t hesitate to compare Babylonia and the use of the Greek script for the native languages with the situation in Egypt where (beginning with attempts in the Ptolemaic period) the traditional language was transliterated into Greek letters too. We call this “(Proto-)Coptic,” and there it succeeded due to the historical circumstances as the language of the Christianized population.

⁴³ In the mind of some modern scholars there is a inconsistency. On the one hand they maintain that the

2.7. Hellenistic elements in the Parthian period

Some of the best examples of Hellenization in Babylonia date from the Parthian period (141 B.C. to 224 A.D.). Looking to the remains of the material culture in that period the region looks more Hellenized than before in Seleucid times. I will refer to two fields:

1. Architecture,
2. Greek inscriptions.

Ad 1: Sure, there are non-Hellenized buildings in the Babylonian cities, e.g. the small houses in the sanctuaries of Uruk erected in the Parthian period.⁴⁴ And maybe there was erected a Babylonian style temple in the first century A.D. in Nippur, but at the same place there is a Parthian period “fortress” erected in the first and second centuries A.D. which also looks “Oriental,” even if it is not typical Babylonian.⁴⁵

But on the other hand there are Hellenizing buildings like the so called “Court of Columns” in Nippur⁴⁶ or the

“Parthian villa” in Uruk.⁴⁷ In Babylon likewise there are comparable buildings like the “peristyle house” in the Merkes quarter in Babylon and the pillared street near Esangila. The Greek theatre in that city goes back to the Hellenistic period, but was reconstructed in the Parthian one.⁴⁸

There must be mentioned further buildings in Uruk: the so-called apsis-building of which the purpose at present can’t be determined. First it was discussed as being a mithraeum.⁴⁹ And there is a temple in the Southeast of Uruk, dedicated to an otherwise unknown deity Gareus according to a Greek inscription found in it.⁵⁰

Ad 2: There is a number of Greek inscriptions coming from Southern Mesopotamia. Some of those excavated at Uruk already had been mentioned. Another one, from the just mentioned temple and giving the name of it, is dated to the year 111 A.D.⁵¹ In our context it is important that here too are mentioned persons with double names. That proves that even at the beginning of the 2nd

Babylonian culture had died out and only small groups of old fashioned people adhered to such ideas. On the other hand, the cultural “higher” Greeks should be interested in the remains of a dead culture. But even as now is sure that the Babylonian culture was still alive well into the Parthian period there are no hints to such an interest of Greeks in that foreign culture from Babylonia. That some Greek individuals were interested in it can’t be excluded (see above at fn. 37), but nothing speaks in favor of the idea that this was the origin of the transliterations. They are best understood as a product of the Babylonian school and their “Sitz im Leben” was in it. If a Greek had liked to learn Akkadian he could do this in the same way as a Babylonian school boy. Or should we here see a kind of education for grown up people (in German: *Erwachsenenbildung*)?

⁴⁴ See e.g. Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 122-133, 230-237.

⁴⁵ See above fn. 20.

⁴⁶ The former excavation results summarized in Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11), 101-103. See also

McGuire Gibson, “Patterns of Occupation at Nippur,” in Ellis, M. de J. (ed.), *Nippur at the Centennial. Papers Read at the 35^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Philadelphia 1992), 33-54, especially 50-52 and fig. 11s.; K.Ciuk, “Pottery from Parthian, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Levels at Nippur, Iraq: 1st-9th century AD,” *Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 35 (2000), 57-79.

⁴⁷ Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 343-373.

⁴⁸ See Hauser, “Babylon” (above fn. 36), especially sub no. (7) Homera Südwest, (9) Merkes, (16) Esangila.

⁴⁹ Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 243-251.

⁵⁰ Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20) 291-335. See also p. 416 sub 4d/4e (mentioning Roman architectural elements at these buildings).

⁵¹ See Ch. Meier, “Ein griechisches Ehrendekret,” *BaM* 1 (1960), 104-114; Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 75 sub 5.1.1.3 (pp. 75-78 collection of all the Greek inscriptions and graffiti from Uruk). See also above fn. 25.

century A.D. people lived with an “Oriental” name besides a Greek one. But as Minnanaïos, the oriental name of the dedicator Artemidoros, also is attested as Mīn-Nanaya in documents of the Seleucid period written at Uruk⁵² it is proven that it contains as the theophoric element the Uruk goddess Nanaya. The linguistic affiliation of the father’s name not yet has been identified.⁵³

There are Greek inscriptions from Babylon too, among them one of the Greek theatre of that city.⁵⁴ This is not a surprise. Anyway Babylonians and Greeks – officials, military people, colonists – lived side by side in the Seleucid as well the Parthian period as the sources prove.

To sum up: The Babylonian culture under the Seleucids in general remained the traditional one, and it lasted to the Parthian period. There were mutual contacts between Greeks and Babylonians, especially in the upper classes of the Babylonian society. But in nearly all fields of the cultural life – society and law, architecture, religion – the sources which nowadays are available show an

intact native culture, comparable to that of earlier periods. To a certain amount some Hellenization can be seen in a number of fields, even in Parthian times.

2.8. Problems of (fine) Art(s)

In sections 2.2. and 2.7 were mentioned some objects of architecture. In addition to that there shall be only a short remark to the (fine) art(s). In iconography Hellenistic elements are more evident than in other field of human life. In the glyptic already since the late fifth century B.C. some Greek elements appear and even Greek objects are used by Babylonians, like a seal ring with Greek inscription on a Murašû tablet from Nippur.⁵⁵ In the Seleucid period Greek style seals, Oriental ones, and others showing a mixture of motifs occur side by side on tablets and bullae.⁵⁶ A comparable situation can be observed in the field of terracotta figurines were Greek and Oriental elements also occur

⁵² YBC 11633, ll. 4, 14 (=Oelsner, “Griechen” [above fn. 34], pp. 346s.); *BRM* 2, 52, l. 24.

⁵³ Reflections on its structure in Oelsner, “*Vom Ende*” (above fn. 41), fn. 63.

⁵⁴ Collected in: E. Schmidt, “Die Griechen” (above fn. 17), 814-820; Oelsner, *Materialien* (above fn. 11), 252-255; A. Oppenheimer, *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period* (= TAVO, Beiheft B 47, Wiesbaden 1983), 56-59 nos. 4-9, 11s. More than one exemplar is of Parthian date. – A now lost inscription (Oelsner, p. 252 no. 1) has been reconstructed by J. Reade, *Iraq* 62 (2000), 205. But the reading E[ukratides] of the [and of Babylon] (l. 1) is a mere guess as only an epsilon at the beginning of the name is preserved.

⁵⁵ *TMH* 2/3 pl. 98 no. XXVI (on text no. 148, dated Darius II year 8; the inscription is illegible, but clearly Greek, personal collation; L.B. Bregstein, *Seal Use in Fifth Century B.C. Nippur, Iraq*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1993, is not available to the writer). For further examples of Greek style seals (without inscriptions) see J. Oelsner, “Ausstrahlungen der griechischen Kultur

nach dem Vorderen Orient,” in E. Kluwe (ed.), *Kultur und Fortschritt in der Blütezeit der griechischen Polis* (= *Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur der Antike* 24, Berlin 1985), 119-128; for a collection of impressions from Ur, to a considerable part of Greek origin, see D. Collon, “A Hoard of Sealings from Ur,” in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux* (above fn. 13), 65-84.

⁵⁶ A selection in Wallenfels, *Uruk. Hellenistic Seal Impressions* (above fn. 13), passim; see also the same, *Private seals and sealing practices at Hellenistic Uruk*, in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux*, 112-129. See also M. Rostovtzeff, *Seleucid Babylonia: Bullae and Seals of Clay with Greek Inscriptions* (= *Yale Classical Studies* 3, New Haven 1932). There are examples from other places too (for selected literature see above fn. 13), material from Seleucia on the Tigris is treated in a number of articles of A. Invernizzi and others, for a summary (with literature) see e.g. A. Invernizzi, in M.-F. Boussac and A. Invernizzi (eds.), *Archives et Sceaux*, 131-143.

side by side.⁵⁷ Hellenistic elements in the art of Seleucid and Parthian Babylonia are a topic of its own I am not sufficiently trained in and therefore I will not

treat it in detail. But as a result of my studies it is evident to me that this is a field where the Hellenization goes farther than in other cultural sectors.

3. Conclusions: Was there a Hellenization of the Babylonian culture and can Hellenization be made responsible for the end of the Babylonian culture?

Sure, in Babylonia there was a certain amount of Hellenization, also in the cities with a history of some thousand years. But regarding these Babylonian cities the influence of Hellenism was restricted above all to the higher levels of society, to those people who were more in closer connections to the king and the empire, also as representatives of their cities, than most of the population. But nevertheless one must state: the Babylonian culture principally remained intact during the Seleucid period!

Regarding the epoch after the downfall of the Babylonian kingdom, which may be called “the late Babylonian period,” and the considerations on the end of Babylonian culture positions held in the fifties and sixties of the 20th century

A.D. must be given up:

1. The supposed destruction of the sanctuaries of Babylon (Esangila) and Borsippa (Ezida) by the Achaemenid king Xerxes in recent years has been discussed critically.⁵⁸

2. Even if there occurred such a destruction, cuneiform tradition continued. In the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. the use of that script and the Akkadian language was not restricted to a few isolated groups but was typical – besides the Aramaic one – for most, if not all of the ancient Babylonian cities.⁵⁹

3. If there was an unbroken tradition then it is impossible to speak of a “renaissance” or “late renaissance” (in German: Spätrenaissance)⁶⁰ of the Babylonian culture in the Hellenistic or Seleu-

⁵⁷ Only a few selected studies may be mentioned. For the material from Uruk see Ch. Ziegler, *Die Terrakotten from Warka* (= *ADFU* 6, Berlin 1962), mentioning also literature on objects from other places. For the material from the Babylon excavations see E. Klengel-Brandt, in: A. Invernizzi & J.F. Salles (eds.), *Arabia Antiqua. Hellenistic Centres around Arabia*, Roma 1993, 183-199. Even now it is difficult to make a clear differentiation between Seleucid and Parthian exemplars.

⁵⁸ A summary of this discussion gave the author in his review of R. Rollinger, *Herodots babylonischer Logos (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, Sonderheft 84, Innsbruck 1993)*, in *AfO* 46/47 (1999/2000), 376 f. and fns. 31-39 (with additional literature). The destruction of Ezida in Borsippa and its ziqqurat by an immense fire the excavators now date to the early 7th century A.D. (“in vermutlich sasanidisch-frühislamischer Zeit”), see W. Allinger-Csollich, *BaM* 22 (1991), 387 and fn. 9 (literature).

⁵⁹ The position of W. v. Soden, *Einführung in die Alt-orientalisch* (Darmstadt 1985, 2nd edition 1992), 58

(“nur wenige Urkunden sind aus Babylonien nach 485 außerhalb von Nippur erhalten; das Land verarmte offenbar zusehends”) and others like e.g. E. Heinrich, *Tempel und Heiligtümer* (above fn. 20), 302 and fn. 76 (citing M. Meuleau, *Fischer Weltgeschichte*, vol. 5 (Frankfurt/M. 1965), 348, who denies a more widespread use of cuneiform script and Akkadian language after 400 B.C.), is no longer tenable. The number of texts has increased considerably since the list in J. Oelsner, *WO* 8 (1976), 312-314 fn. 10. A collection of the new material, made available by many scholars, is still lacking.

⁶⁰ This term was liked to be used by German scholars since the fifties, see e.g. H. Schmökel, *Geschichte des alten Vorderasien*, (= *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, 1. Abt., vol. 2, part 3, Leiden 1957), 324; W. von Soden, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen 1957), vol. 1, 812. As there was no break in the tradition as now is evident, there can be no “renaissance” which presumes revitalization of something dead.

cid period. Instead then it had a blossoming under favorable economic and presumably political conditions. The huge temples, rebuilt in the Seleucid period, speak against the often heard assertion that in this period there were only small groups of people which adhered to outdated ideas.⁶¹

4. Even as there took place in Babylonia Hellenization to a certain amount, the Babylonian culture remained more or less intact under the Seleucid rulers. Now it is widely accepted that Hellenization was only superficially and was restricted to the upper classes of the society. A larger percentage of Hellenistic elements occur only in the iconography, where Greek elements can be seen since the end of the 5th century, and in the production of small objects of art (like seals and terracotta figurines).⁶²

5. The end of the Babylonian culture came upon only in the Parthian and maybe the early years of the Sasanian periods. Thus one may conclude that not Hellenization, but Iranization, is to be made responsible for the end of the Babylonian culture.⁶³ In the first centuries A.D. there came up other ideologi-

cal-religious ideas which the last – in the strict sense of the word – Babylonians may have absorbed.

When years ago an Assyriologist stated, in the 6th century B.C. there was “a final burst of Babylonian glory before it sank in the sea of Hellenism,”⁶⁴ this was in accordance with the concepts of that time. But these positions can no longer be accepted because regarding the late sources now at hand there is a much better situation. And these sources prove, that in the Seleucid period Babylonian culture still was alive in the cities and blossomed under favorable circumstances. The end of the Babylonian culture came later. In the Parthian period in some places it survived, other important ones seem to have changed their character (by destruction and resettlement?). But with the early Sasanian period the end had come.⁶⁵

Can be given a general answer to the question I asked in the title of this communication? Was there Hellenization of the Babylonian culture? I will say: only in restricted fields, but in substance the Babylonian ideas and culture remained intact!

⁶¹ Regarding this situation one must be careful in using statements like those that the cuneiform script was used only by small groups of people adhering to outdated ideas (“nur noch in bestimmten sozialen Gruppen,” so formulated by P. Gesche, *Schulunterricht* (above fn. 40), 6 sub d, see also p. 5 sub b). The term “final blossoming (‘letzte Blüte’) under Seleucid rule” is also used by Kose, *Uruk* (above fn. 20), 417.

⁶² For the latter see above sub 2.8.

⁶³ So already Oelsner, *Klio* 60 (1978), 116. This is shown more in detail in Oelsner, “*Vom Ende*” (above fn. 41). See also K. Kessler, *Isimu 1* (Madrid 1998, above fn. 40), 172: “Die Existenz des Esaggila-Heiligtums geht über das Enddatum der erhaltenen Diaries hinaus mindestens noch bis ins 2. Jh. n. Chr.”

⁶⁴ W.G. Lambert, *Iraq* 27 (1965), 4.

⁶⁵ See Oelsner, “*Vom Ende*” (above fn. 41), p. 33 at fn. 125. A further remark seems necessary: if a place was settled in Seleucid-Parthian times, this does not automatically mean that there was a centre of the traditional culture. But as far as the evidence goes in a number of the ancient cities the latter was alive. – In the foregoing the burial customs were left out. In this field there may have intruded some new elements even in the customs of the population living in “traditional ways.” To the remarks in J. Oelsner, “Bestattungssitten im hellenistischen Babylonien als historisches Problem,” *ZA* 70 (1980), 246-257, many additions can be made, especially by the material from Uruk, see R.M. Boehmer, F. Pedde and B. Salje, *Uruk. Die Gräber* (= *AUWE* 10, Mainz 1995). The topic should be studied anew.

ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to the abbreviations of W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, the following ones are used:

- AD A. Sachs and H. Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts*, vol. I-III (Wien 1988-1996) [text number]
AuOr *Aula Orientalis* (Barcelona)
AUWE *Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Endberichte* (Mainz)
JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (London)
SE Seleucid Era (beginning 311 B.C.)
TAVO *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients* (Wiesbaden)