

A MEAL FIT FOR A KING

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FUNCTION OF THE NEO-BABYLONIAN DYNASTY IN
THE DAILY OFFERINGS



BY

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Date: 07-08-2017

Master Thesis Classics and Ancient Civilizations: Assyriology

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Abstract

Palace and temple have always been subject to scholarly interest. The first represents the political power of any given land or country, while the latter serves as an entry point into the marvelous world of the religious organization of any given culture. Though studying these separate institutions on their own is of great importance, it is even more interesting to study the area in which the interests of both institutions meet. Such studies can show how both parties have to deal with each other's interest and have to adapt their own to guarantee a fruitful cooperation. This thesis consists of such a study, researching the relationship between the Babylonian palace and temple in the context of the daily offerings while focusing on the specific role of the king and his priests. With this study I hope to fill in the blanks that are present in this field of study, since this relation has been examined, but not in the context with which this thesis is concerned.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. dr. Caroline Waerzeggers for all the help she has offered me in the process of writing this thesis. It was through our conversations, either in the context of her lectures or in the context of our talks about my thesis, that I got inspired to study this specific topic. It is due to her advice and helpful suggestions (both on the level of contents as well as on the language in general) that I could finish my thesis and develop the necessary skills needed to perform Assyriological research. She functioned as my mentor in Leiden, helping me to find my way in the field of Assyriology, for which I am very grateful.

Secondly, I would like to thank dr. Julia Krul, with whom I had the opportunity to converse in the context of her lectures on Babylonian priesthood. It was thanks to her lectures that I could structure my thoughts on the rich and vast corpus of priestly texts. Her comments on my final paper for the aforementioned course have helped me to improve my English and Akkadian. I would also like to thank dr. Bram Jagersma, who offered me the opportunity to find my way in the wondrous world of the Sumerian language, a language that is perceived by most as a difficult language to master. While I would not want to claim in any way that I have mastered the Sumerian language, it is through his teachings that I could grasp the grammatical structures and understand the Sumerian texts relevant for this master thesis. Last (but certainly not least) of all, I would like to thank my partner and best friend, Marije van der Steege, for bearing with me through this period of writing one of the most exciting projects I have ever written.

Introduction

'I was solicitous to provide more lavishly than before for the regular offerings of my lords Marduk and Zarpanītu', is how Nebuchadnezzar piously lists all the precious products that he offered to his divine lords, literally a meal fit for a king. It reflects on the efforts of the king to show his audience how generous he was towards the gods and how the wealth that he created in Babylonia allowed him to offer such a varied meal to his divine lords. It points towards the importance of the regular offerings in the ideology of the king, a topic that this master thesis will be concerned with. In this thesis I will argue that the participation of the king in the regular offerings was indeed an important one, but that it entailed more than the crown donating the necessary goods to the temple.

The past few decades have shown renewed interest in the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and their relationship to the temples, but there are still many aspects of this relationship that have not yet received the scholarly attention they deserve. With this thesis I hope to fill in one of the gaps in the research on the role of the king in the daily offerings, focusing on the relationship between temple and palace and crown and priesthood. It would be an interesting addition to the field and it would balance out the studies on this relationship in the context of the various festivals and other calendar related peculiarities.

Research Questions

The central question of this thesis is: how did the king participate in the palace-temple relationship in the context of the daily offerings? To answer this question, several sub-questions are needed. These sub-questions are concerned with the mythological background of the authority of the king and the daily offerings themselves, the organization of the daily offerings and the way in which the king controlled the organization of the temples. To answer these questions I will use the framework as suggested by Waerzeggers in her book on the Pious King, which establishes a triangle of interdependence between gods, king and priests.

State of the Art

This thesis is concerned with expanding our knowledge about the lower end of the triangle (see Fig. 1),¹ namely, the relationship between the king and the priests. This will be done by studying their relationship in the context of the most important ritual performed in the Mesopotamian temple: the daily offerings to the gods. While much of the scholarly attention focuses on festivals and special events on the cultic calendar of Mesopotamia, much of the evidence that is known to us points out that it was rather the daily cult that was seen as the most important aspect of ritual.² Not only do the

¹ As proposed by Waerzeggers (2011).

² Waerzeggers (2011) p. 61

priestly sources, like contracts, administrative tablets and ritual texts, point this out, but it was also the main focus of the royal inscriptions of the kings of Babylonia.³

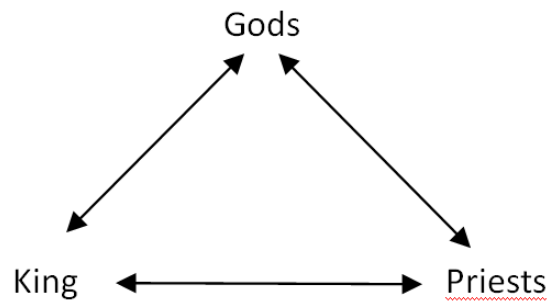


Fig. 1: the triangle of interdependence between gods, king and priests

In the study of the relationship between the king and the priesthood - be it in the context of the daily offerings or in any other theme - it is important to be aware of the diverse and difficult structures that are part of this relationship, a relationship between the two most important institutions of the Babylonian society. On the one hand, the king and his palace formed institution that represented political power in Babylonia, while on the other hand it was the temple that held the authority of the religious aspects of society.

Waerzeggers (2011) has addressed the relationship in her chapter on the pious king, exploring the way in which king and priest interacted with each other. The triangle as presented above was the result of her conclusion. Exploring this triangle into greater depths, focusing on a specific aspect of the palace-temple relationship, will allow us to gain more insight into the way in which the king positioned himself towards the cultic centers and the priests performing the rites. This study will not only add to our understanding about the politics that were involved in organizing and maintaining the daily offerings, but will also show how different socio-political events influenced the relationship. Studying the relationship throughout the whole of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty allows one to go in depth, but without losing the broader aspects of influence.

Recent years of Assyriological research have given us much information about the Neo-Babylonian period and the dynamics between the different socio-economic and religious factions present. The study by Frame (1992) gives a sketch of the political landscape in which Nabopolassar was to found the Neo-Babylonian empire, discussing much of the factors that would prove to be important for understanding many of the later developments within this new world empire. Jursa (2010) continues this trend, first initiated by the important work of Van Driel (2002), with a study on the economic history of Babylon in the first millennium BCE. It is Jursa's study that sheds light on the important relation between the different institutions and their economic significance.

In the research of the temples and their priesthood, it was McEwan (1981) who published an important study on the topic of 'priest and temple' in the Hellenistic period. The aim of this study was

³ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 61

to add to the general understanding of the socio-economic history of Babylonian society during the Hellenistic period. Making the priest and his temple the focus of study allowed McEwan to make use of the rich corpus of cuneiform evidence, most of which were directly or indirectly linked to the place of worship. Even though the study of McEwan focuses on the Hellenistic period, it is still a study that can be used to examine older periods as well, since it is stated in his introduction that one of the sub-goals of his research is to examine in how much priesthood as known from older periods continued unchanged.

Other important publications on Babylonian temples and their priesthood are the study on the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbar Temple by Bongenaar (1997), on the Ezida temple of Borsippa by Waerzeggers (2010) and the study on the pantheon of the Eanna temple of Uruk by Beaulieu (2003). Present in all studies on the respective temples is a discussion of the temple's administrative system and a prosopographic study of the priestly families involved in the worship performed. While Bongenaar focuses more in depth on the administrative system of the temple, it is Waerzeggers who also discusses the worship performed at the respective house of worship in detail. Her chapter discussing the topic of worship is divided into two parts. First, the daily worship is discussed and secondly the worship during the festivals.

Closely related to the administrative system of the temples is the way in which the priesthood itself was organized. It is most important to understand the internal dynamics of the priestly organization, to comprehend the relation between the king and the priests and the organization with which the king had to deal. While the studies mentioned above do touch upon the subject - some more extensively than others - it are other scholars who are more focused on uncovering the complex system behind priestly organization. The study by Waerzeggers and Jursa (2008) deals with the way in which priests were initiated into their offices. The publication shows how various factors, like fatherly descent and physical purity, played an important role as measuring rod for the suitability of the candidate for his duties as priest. The importance of the first factor is well emphasized in Jursa (2012) on the priesthood of the first Millennium BCE, who points out that fatherly descent was one of the factors that caused priests to become a separate social class, a class that the priests themselves wanted to keep isolated from other members of society.

When a priest was initiated he became a member of the so called 'prebend system', a system which entailed that the initiated priest was allowed to participate in the worship at the temple. It is Bongenaar who is often being referenced to as having written an important work on the prebend system and its possible origins (Bongenaar, 1997). More recent studies on the topic are the studies by Waerzeggers (2010), Jursa (2012) and Beaulieu (2003). These studies show the complexity of the system in which the priests had to function and the way in which the prebends themselves were organized. The aforementioned studies all look at the prebends on macro-level, while other studies like the study by Zawadzki (2006) and Frame and Waerzeggers (2011) look at specific prebends and

their interactions within the prebendary system. It is fruitful to take these studies into account, since they show how diverse and complex the system was with which the king and his royal administration were interacting, giving reason to the deeper meaning of the cultic interaction between temple and palace.

The most important research on the relationship between the Babylonian palace and temple has been conducted by Kleber and Waerzeggers. Kleber (2008) discusses the interaction between king and priests, focusing on the Eanna temple in Uruk. Her research ranges from listing building projects to reviewing the way in which the royal officials functioned within the temple administration. Kleber (2012) builds upon this, but adds a dimension by explaining how the palace was able to use the administrative system as organized by the temple. Waerzeggers (2011) studies the same aspects, but focuses on the relationship between king and priests in the context of the temples as centers of worship, rather than centers of production. This thesis will follow a similar line, taking all different aspects involved into account.

The Corpus

The corpus under study consists of a wide range of different texts. While the main focus of the thesis is the king and his relationship to the cult, it is unfortunate that no royal archive has yet been discovered. The only royal texts that have been discovered are highly ideological and are therefore hardly usable for reconstructing actual historical events. They are, however, usable in the discussion on the role of the daily offerings in the royal ideology of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. The inscriptions will be discussed to determine the royal interest in the offerings and how they could be used to legitimize the reign of the king to whom the inscriptions belong.

Fortunately, the temples have left us with a more numerous corpus of cuneiform tablets. The numerous administrative tablets from the archives of Babylon, Borsippa, Uruk, and Sippar have enlightened us about the socio-economic situation of the Neo-Babylonian empire. It is therefore that the sources used in this thesis will mostly belong to this genre of texts. Additional texts, like judicial and ritual texts will also be taken into account. Since the daily offerings belong to the rituals performed in the Neo-Babylonian temples, it is likely that ritual texts are fruitful to study. Unfortunately, the text itself, TCL 6, 38, is not written in the Neo-Babylonian, but in the Seleucid period and its originality is doubted. Therefore, its use is with caution.

The administrative texts do not only enlighten us about the socio-economic situation in which the relationship between palace and temple was established, but also shows us the dynamics with which all the participants had to deal. Letters show us how the different parties interacted with each other and judicial texts reflect on their relationship when one was to fail his tasks. It also shows how the different interests of the king and his royal officials met the interests of the priests and how each of the participants acted according to their own personal agenda.

Although we are fortunate to have such a vast corpus of texts, it is unfortunate that there are no known royal archives to either support or disavow the reconstruction made from, what is, mostly a priestly view on the situation. The priestly texts can be used to gain more insight in the historical value of the royal inscriptions, but the royal view has to be reconstructed by the Assyriologist from the sources available.

1. The Mythological Foundation

This chapter will give an overview of the relationship between humans and their gods and the mythological foundation of this relationship. Due to the fact that the relationship and its mythological importance are constantly emphasized in the daily cult and temples of Mesopotamia, it is important to include a discussion on its themes and relevance. Furthermore, it is important to consider the mythological and divine origins of the king and his kingly task, to fully understand how he gained his authority and how he could keep his authority by showing interest in the daily cult.

This section will start with a discussion on the creation of humanity and the origins of the Mesopotamian cult. Whilst more than one myth on creation exists, *Enuma Eliš* will be taken as the main myth on which the cult and its prebendary system are built. Other myths will be taken into account, mostly because of their significance in showing the way in which humans had to position themselves to their gods. The next part of this chapter consists of a discussion of the divine statue, the medium through which divine presence was represented in the temples. This was the main focus towards which all cultic activity was geared. After the discussion on the creation of the cultic statue, the discussion will continue on the ritual that was performed to bring it to life and its relation to the king.

1.1 The Mythological Origins of Cult and Kingly Task

The Mesopotamians asserted that in the earliest times and again after the flood, kingship descended from heaven. It is this phrase that states that the office - rather than the superhuman put into office - was divine. However, the majesty, awe and sanctity of the one who represented the community before the gods, was established in Mesopotamia as in other civilizations.⁴ In the myth of Etana, the story is told that humans were lost and lacked all direction; there was no king to lead them. The only place where the royal insignia of kingship was known was in heaven before the heavenly king Anu. In order to bring order to the human life, Enlil bethought himself to institute a king as shepherd for the people. This example shows that royalty is something that was not of human origins, but was bestowed onto someone selected by the gods.⁵

In the first millennium BCE this idea of selection of the king by the gods had evolved into the idea of the gods appointing, fashioning and nurturing each individual king, ordaining him with the beneficiary role he played in society.⁶ It was his task not only to lead the people as a rightful shepherd, but also to make his people prosper. Prosperity for the people was gained by taking care of the temples and cities within his realm. It is explicated in a hymn to Nebuchadnezzar II that by doing so, the king was fulfilling a wish uttered by Marduk. It was this ordination that formed the basis of the

⁴ Frankfort (1978) p. 237

⁵ Frankfort (1978) pp. 237-238; Yet the discussion on the nature of Mesopotamian kingship remains an uncertain one. While the office of king was divine, the king himself was not. For the most recent discussion on this topic, see the volume edited by Brisch (2008).

⁶ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 730

religious program that was reported in the royal inscriptions of the kings of the first millennium, reporting their pious deeds and efforts to support and protect the sanctuaries of the gods.⁷ Good care of the gods resulted in prosperity for the human worshippers, following the binary Mesopotamian theological ideology that was closely linked to an 'I give in order that you give' mentality.

1.2 Enuma Eliš

One of the myths that recount the story of how the universe was created and how the king was ordained his divine task is the myth of Enuma Eliš. The importance of this myth echoes through the kingly ideology and was recited during the New Year's Festival.⁸ The myth can be divided into two manuscript traditions, one Assyrian and one Babylonian tradition, with the first being the most numerous.⁹ The earliest Assyrian tablet known to us is dated to the 9th century BCE. The oldest Babylonian tablet stems from far later times and is mostly dated to the late Babylonian period. Some are even from the Parthian period.¹⁰

Despite the fact that the Babylonian versions are much younger than the Assyrian versions, I would like to suggest that we can appoint the Babylonian version as the 'original' version and *Vorlage* for the later copies. This is based on the fact that Marduk, the national god of Babylonia, is presented as the main protagonist of the story.¹¹ This is further supported by an alternative Assyrian version, in which the writer tried to replace Marduk with the Assyrian state-god Aššur.¹²

The story itself is written on seven tablets, of which the fifth tablet is the most relevant to this thesis. Tablet IV ends with Marduk dividing Tiamat's body into the waters below and the waters of heaven, all according to his clever scheme (lines 136-142). Afterwards, he measures the Apsû and builds the Ešarra, a replica of the Ešgalla.¹³ Within this new build temple he places the shrines of Anu, Enlil and Ea (lines 143-146). Tablet V starts with the creation of the heavenly abodes for the gods and the establishment of the seasons and general structure of the flow of time.

The gods watch his deeds in awe and are jubilant and happy. Anšar publishes his new title, 'the victorious king', while the other gods give him gifts and kiss his feet. During the coronation he is anointed and receives a crown and a scepter of prosperity and success (lines 77-99). Afterwards, Lahmu opens his mouth and speaks a benediction, in this case for guidance to prosperity and success, stating that Marduk is to be the caretaker of their shrines and that they - the gods - will do as he commands (lines 114-115). The coronation is finalized in tablet VI, from line 95 onwards. The gods assemble and swear an oath, amongst which are the lines:

⁷ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 730

⁸ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 61

⁹ Lambert (2013) p. 3

¹⁰ Lambert (2013) p. 3-4; also see Lambert (2013) for the problems of this substitution.

¹¹ For the rise of Marduk in the Mesopotamian pantheon and its growing importance see Lambert (2013) pp. 249-265.

¹² Lambert (2013) p. 4

¹³ Possibly the explanation for why the new temples should be built on the foundations of the temples of old.

Let him shepherd the black-heads, his creatures
 Let them tell of his character to future days without forgetting.
 Let him establish lavish food offerings for his fathers,
 Let him provide for their maintenance and be caretaker of their sanctuaries,
 Let him burn incense to rejoice their sanctums.
 Let him do on earth the same as he has done in heaven
 Let him appoint the black-heads to worship him
 The subject humans should take note and call on their gods,
 Since he commands they should heed their goddesses,
 Let food offerings be brought [for](?) their gods and goddesses,
 May they(?) not be forgotten, may they remember their gods,
 May they . . . their . . . , may they . . their shrines.
 Though the black-heads worship someone, some another god,
 He is he god of each and every one of us!
 (Lambert 2013; VI: 107-120)

These are the lines that stand at the base of the daily cult and the royal ideology of the Babylonian kings. As Marduk is to perform these tasks in the divine realm, it is the king who has to perform them in the human realm. He was to shepherd his people and establish lavish food offerings for the gods, the fathers of his divine protector Marduk. He had to provide for their maintenance and take care of their sanctuaries. In addition to the offering of the food, they have to rejoice the sanctums by burning incense. This probably resulted in the auxiliary activities, like the recitation of prayer.

1.3 The '*Do ut des*' Principle

According to Mesopotamian religion,¹⁴ the gods created humans to take over their work.¹⁵ While the range of myths is wide and never offers a single explanation for creation, the general theme of the creation of humans to work for the gods is almost always present. While humans performed labors for the gods, it was not a one way process. In return for their work, humans were given divine blessings.

For that reason, the human-god relationship was characterized by functional interdependence.¹⁶ It is this functional interdependence that shows the underlying, characteristically Mesopotamian, '*do ut des*' principle.¹⁷ The precise service that the humans had to perform before the gods was supplying them in their needs, making up the ritual cult performed in the temple. The king's task, as ordained to him by the gods even before he was born, was to supply the temples with

¹⁴ Ranging from the Sumerian stories of creation, like the 'Hoe and the Plough' to Babylonian creation motives in myths like 'Atrahasis'.

¹⁵ Hundley (2013) p. 211

¹⁶ Hundley (2013) p. 211

¹⁷ 'I give in order that you give' - Oppenheim (1977) pp. 186-193; Linssen (2004) p. 132

sufficient means to perform their rituals. In the temple all cultic activity was geared towards the divine statue.¹⁸

1.3.1 The Divine Statue

At the centre of Mesopotamian religion stood the divine statue, a sculpture that was created out of precious wood to represent divine presence in the human world. While its core was wooden, all parts that were not covered with cloth or other decorations were plated with gold. In addition to the gold, the eyes and beard of the statue were fashioned out of precious stones, giving them a characteristic look. While one would expect the eyes and facial expressions to express the characteristics and mood of the statue, it were the paraphernalia that actually did. These paraphernalia ranged from small decorations on the garments, to additional accessories like belts and hair bands.¹⁹

Since the statues were shaped like human beings in shape and size,²⁰ it becomes clear that the Mesopotamians envisaged the cult in an anthropomorphic way. The gods lived in the temple, being represented by the statues. For this reason, the statues become an extension of the god and focal point for sacrificial activity.²¹ It is this very aspect that is referred to in later Judeo-Christian religious texts, emphasizing the fact that those who worshipped statues and idols of their gods are worshipping empty idols.²² Yet, to the Mesopotamians they were not mere empty idols. They were shells in which the gods could take their abode. It were not the statues themselves that they were worshipping, but the gods that lived within them.

1.3.2 The Mīs Pi Ritual

In order to make the statues fit for the gods to live in, they had to be consecrated. This was done through two nocturnal and highly secret rituals of consecration,²³ called the washing and opening of the mouth (*mīs pī* and *pīt pī*). There are indications that the statue was already animate before the ritual of consecration was completed. The priest would ask the statue to go before Ea, the god of craftsmanship with a happy heart already after the first washing and opening of the mouth. It is to be assumed that the next parts of the ritual served to reach a state of 'perfection' for the functions that the statue had gained. The priest would bring the statue to the various places and would recite various prayers and incantations. It was furthermore emphasized that the statue was made according to a

¹⁸ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60

¹⁹ Oppenheim (1977) p. 185; see Beaulieu (2003) p. 21 for a list of the paraphernalia and different decorations that were put on the garments used during the *lubuštu*-ceremony. Beaulieu also gives a clear explanation of the relation between the symbolism of the decorations and their relationship to the specific god.

²⁰ While Oppenheim touches upon the fact that some statues had other shapes, like the bull-shaped son of Šamaš and some peripheral gods, they do make up the exception, rather than being the general trend. – Oppenheim (1977) p. 184

²¹ Linssen (2004) p. 12

²² One of the famous texts doing this, is the Bēl and the Dragon narrative, in which Daniel shows that the statue is not in fact alive, but that others are consuming the food offered to him (Daniel 14:23–30); also see Jacobsen (1976).

²³ Oppenheim (1977) p. 186; Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60

divine plan and that it was made with human materials by a craftsman acting in full consideration of the divine.

At the end of the ritual the priest would whisper in the ears of the statue, stating that the statue was now part of the cult and was counted amongst the statues of the gods, his brethren. Now that the statue had reached its state of perfection, it could enter the temple. On the way to the temple, the priest cleaned its path with holy water and asked the statue to be a good *lamassu* to the temple.²⁴ The statue was consecrated and the priest could make it enter the temple. Now that the statue was consecrated, it was ready to be entered by the god and therefore to be worshipped, meaning that it would need satisfaction for all its needs.²⁵

While Waerzeggers observes the consecration here was a ritual that brought the actual statue to life,²⁶ I would like to agree on Oppenheim's interpretation,²⁷ of the statue becoming a receptacle of the divine presence. In this sense, the statue remains inanimate, but it is made fit as a medium for the deity to receive its offerings through. This interpretation is probable due to the mobility of the god and constant fear of the Mesopotamians for the god to leave the temple. If the statue was to be a living thing, it would remain a living thing after the god left, which of course causes a problem in interpreting what divine presence actually entailed. In any case, the statue was now consecrated and fit to serve as a medium through which the needs of the specific god, for whom the statue was crafted, could be satisfied through the daily rituals performed by the cult. One of these needs was the need for food and drinks.

1.3.3 Priest, King and the Divine Statue

It is to be noted that the king had no role in consecrating the divine statues, despite his role as guardian of the cult. Here, I would like to argue that his absence is to be explained from the fact that the king lacked the necessary connection to the gods. It was the priests who had a special bond with the gods, a bond different than the one between the king and the gods.²⁸ It is therefore, due to this special bond, that the priests are the ones who could consecrate the statue and make it enter the temple and cella.²⁹ Yet, the ritual remains relevant to the discussion. Waerzeggers (2011) notes that a similar washing of the mouth was performed at the initiation of priests and coronation of the kings. Through this ritual they reached the same bodily-perfection as the gods, creating a special bond between all three parties.³⁰

²⁴ Hundley (2013) pp. 242-245; A '*lamassu*' is a house god that is said to protect individuals. This already gives an impression of the function that the statue is to serve.

²⁵ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60; also see Matsushima (1992) p. 210

²⁶ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60

²⁷ Oppenheim (1997) p. 186

²⁸ See 7.4.1.3 for a detailed discussion on this aspect of the relation between priest and king.

²⁹ Cf. the role of the high priest in the New Year's festival, where he is to make the king enter the cella of Marduk.

³⁰ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 745; also see Waerzeggers (2011) p. 745 for the discussion on and references to the royal statues in the Neo-Babylonian temple-cult.

2. The Daily Cult

Within worship performed at the Babylonian temple, two broad types are to be distinguished. The first type was the daily care and feeding of the gods, while the other type consisted of the religious festivals.³¹ While both types were aimed at the same goal, namely to serve the gods, the relationship between the gods, priests and general public was different at both occasions.³² During the daily routine the gods would remain in the cella, only to be visited by the ones who had the right privileges,³³ while during the *akītu*-festivals the statues would be taken out of the cella on a parade through the city, visible to all who wanted to see their gods. It was also during the latter that the king took on a public role in the worship of the gods, whereas he would play a more passive role during the daily worship of the gods, supplying and protecting their cult.³⁴ The main focus of protection and supplication was the daily meal.

2.1 The Daily Meals

One of the most important aspects of the daily cult was the serving of the daily meals of the gods,³⁵ an activity that was performed by all major temples in a similar fashion. The gods were served four meals (*naptanu*) in two sessions of worship during the course of a regular day.³⁶ In the morning, the gods were served a main meal (*rabû ša šeri*³⁷) and second meal (*tardennu*³⁸ *ša šeri*). In the evening they received the main and second meal of the night (*rabû lîlâti* and *tardennu lîlâti*).³⁹ While these titles give the impression that the meals were different in content, it was rather the quantity of the meals that distinguished the two courses.⁴⁰ The meals served consisted of beer, bread, meat and other additional foodstuffs,⁴¹ like fish, but it were the first three that made up the pillars of the sacrificial cult.⁴² All courses were served in front of the statue⁴³ and together with the prayers and auxiliary activities like opening the gates, constituted the daily regular worship.⁴⁴

³¹ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60

³² Waerzeggers (2011) p. 60

³³ The fact that this rule was very strict, is reflected in that even conquering kings were only allowed to worship the local deity from the outside, see Oppenheim (1977) p. 186

³⁴ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 730

³⁵ The first scholar to truly embrace this was Oppenheim, who wrote an important essay on the feeding of the gods. See Oppenheim (1977) 'The Care and Feeding of the Gods'.

³⁶ Each being related to other events in the daily program, like the opening and closing of the gates.

³⁷ Alternative terminology includes 'meal of the morning' (*naptan šeri*), which includes both the main and second meal (*rabû ša šeri* and *tardennu ša šeri*).

³⁸ Literally, 'subsidiary', meaning it supplements the main course.

³⁹ Also referred to as 'cool of the day' (*kaš ūmi*).

⁴⁰ Waerzeggers (2010) p. 113; Oppenheim (1977) p. 188

⁴¹ Kozuh (2013) p. 52

⁴² Waerzeggers (2010) p. 114

⁴³ Linssen (2004) p. 130

⁴⁴ Waerzeggers (2010) p. 113, regularity is indicated by both '*ginû*' and '*sattukku*'.

2.1.1 TCL 6, 38 and the Daily Meals

Unfortunately, the number of sources about the daily meal as prepared and served in the Neo-Babylonian period that have reached us, is extremely limited. Despite this, we do have a fairly complete tablet from Hellenistic Uruk, a tablet that describes the process of the daily offering. The tablet itself is dated to the first half of the second century, but is supposed to be a copy of an earlier tablet that Nabopolassar carried off from Uruk to Elam.⁴⁵ The tablet was recovered by an exorcist so that the cult could continue as it had been performed in earlier times. The references to Nabopolassar give the idea that the tablet contains instructions as given in the Neo-Babylonian period. Yet, due to its 'dubious content' it is not certain to what extent this tablet can really serve as evidence of how the daily cult and food offerings were precisely organized.⁴⁶

2.1.2 Continuation of the Daily Meal

TCL 6, 38 opens with the arrangement of the liquids on the offering table. The opening line states, that the instructions are to be used for the entire year, on a daily basis. The phrase 'every day of the entire year' (*ūmišam kal MU.AN.NA*)⁴⁷ gives the impression that it is an ongoing process that is not to be interrupted, even in the case of a festival. The emphasis on the continuation is also seen in tablets related to TCL 6, 38, namely TU 39 and TU 40, which are, just like TCL 6, 38, compositions from Hellenistic Uruk. These tablets form a compositional whole and give instruction for the *akitu*-festival as celebrated in *Tašritu*, the seventh month of the Babylonian cultic calendar.

The relevant lines of these tablets state that the main meal is still being served, despite the additional offerings that belong to the festival.⁴⁸ TU 39 gives instructions that are concerned with the meat of the daily meal (TU39 obv. line 8) and it gives instructions on how to arrange and clear the meal of the evening and morning (TU39 obv. lines 14-15). TU40 has a similar line, stating that 'the meal will not be cleared' (TU40 obv. lines 14-15). While the exact meaning of 'the meal' is not clear, since the adjacent lines are missing, we can reconstruct its meaning by filling in the missing lines with the help of TU39. TU39 has similar lines that also state that 'the meal will not be cleared'. Here, however, it is told in the context of the serving of the main and second meal of the morning and evening.⁴⁹ Taking this data and the statements made in RAcc and BM 32485 into account, one can

⁴⁵ Linssen (2004) p. 172; the motive of a 'bad' king carrying off the rites of the daily cult fits in with other compositions in which kings caused disruption (*batlu*), cf. 'The Sun-God Tablet' (Woods, 2004). Fortunately, in the case of the temple in Uruk, there was an exorcist (Kidin-Anu), who saw the tablet and copied it, restoring the rites to their original state. While this story seems to be highly ideological, legitimizing the priesthood of Uruk, it still gives us an idea of how the daily meal was served.

⁴⁶ See the discussion in Waerzeggers (2011) pp. 115-118

⁴⁷ Obv. 1; this line is also included in the lines of the instructions for the baker. He is to deliver flour to the temple-enterer for the whole year (TCL 6, 38 obv. lines 42-43). If we follow the theory that TCL 6, 38 consists of different compositions, we can constitute that the continuation was emphasized in the wide range of texts that were concerned with the instructions for the daily offering.

⁴⁸ Cf. RAcc 127-154 and BM 32485, which state that the temple enterers and lamentation priest will continue their rites as usual (lines 37-40), idem for lines 184-187.

⁴⁹ TU39 rev. lines 3-6 and rev. lines 10-12

conclude that the continuation of the daily offering was held in high regard, even during the festivals. This gives the impression that the daily cult was seen as something more important than the festivals.

2.2 The King and the Daily Offerings

The continuity and regularity of the meals was held in high regard. Kings often boast the fact that they protect the offerings and guarantee their continuation, while priestly contracts include clauses that are to guarantee priestly participants and suppliers to ensure this as well.⁵⁰ The reason for the emphasis on its regularity, but foremost, its continuity, is the fact that the prosperity and economic health of the land was often measured through these daily offerings.⁵¹ During good times the offerings and rituals would flourish, while during bad times the offerings would cease. These times of either flourishing cult or ceasing of the offerings are often related to the quality of the rule of a king.

Good examples of the relation between the king and either the continuation or disturbance of the daily offerings, are to be found in *kedurrū's* and royal inscriptions. The latter is a genre that requires a judicious and critical approach, since they are, by their very nature, documents of self-praise. This was already established for the Assyrian royal inscriptions and it can also be said about their Babylonian counterparts.⁵² The difficult thing about the Babylonian situation is that kings and palaces have only left a very limited and highly ideological corpus of texts.⁵³

Since the Babylonian inscriptions are not annalistic texts like the Assyrian ones, historical and historiographical data conveyed in Neo-Babylonian inscriptions is modest. Yet, their historiographical value should not be ignored.⁵⁴ The goal of the inscriptions was to present an image of the ruler in the way in which he wished to appear before his contemporary and future audience. The way in which he composed this inscription, using a specific structure, literary conventions and an archaizing script, may throw light on the historical context in which it was composed and the purpose it served.⁵⁵

In the case of the Neo-Babylonian kings, it meant portraying them as wise and pious kings. The generosity of the king towards the gods and their temples and the theme of gifting was one of the most occurring themes in inscriptions. This theme of generosity that was so often articulated in the inscriptions composed by the kings was part of the Southern-Mesopotamian tradition of kingship.⁵⁶ The kings from Southern Mesopotamia would offer buildings and offerings in return for divine favor.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 61; for the priestly clauses, see Kozuh (2013) p. 54ff

⁵¹ Waerzeggers (2010) p. 113

⁵² Da Riva (2013) p. 1

⁵³ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 725

⁵⁴ Da Riva (2013) p. 1

⁵⁵ Da Riva (2013) p. 3

⁵⁶ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 726; that it was characteristic to the southern, Babylonian tradition, also becomes clear from the works of 'foreign' kings over Babylonia. During the Assyrian domination over Babylon, Esarhaddon claimed the throne, which was then probably seen as a province of Assyria. During his rule, he decided to rule as a true king of Babylon and engaged in various building projects and showed favor to the land - Frame (1992) p. 214. Also pointed

By neglecting the other characteristics that were used by others to describe their role as king, like the king as shepherd and the king as warlord, it was this very specific theme of the king as temple-builder and worshipper that turned into their main characteristic of virtue and self-representation.⁵⁸ It was also due to this negligence of other kingly characteristics that the Neo-Babylonian kings rarely referred to their confrontations with their enemies and military success. They wanted to be remembered for their piety and wisdom. That these were the characteristics of preference is shown in the use of epithets. One of the more popular epithets was *idān zānināti* 'the one with providing hands'. The verb *zanānu* 'to provide' had the special connotation of providing the temple with the means necessary to perform their worship, especially foodstuffs.⁵⁹ Through the enormous popularity of this specific epithet, we can conclude that securing the wellbeing of the temples and their gods was seen as the principal and most important task of the king.⁶⁰

2.3 Representation of the Daily Offerings in Royal Inscriptions

2.3.1 Nabopolassar

The period between 689 and 627 BCE can be described as a period of political weakness and disunity. Only three kings had ruled Babylonia, of which one was an Assyrian king proper and two were dependent on the Assyrian king.⁶¹ It was the momentum that built up during this low point in the history of the Babylonia that led up to the founding of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. It was partly sparked by an increasing and common negative response to Assyria, which helped to unite the different tribes that formed the population of Babylonia.⁶² It was Nabopolassar who fought the Assyrians and evicted them from Babylonian soil. He went on and defeated them, laying the foundation of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.⁶³

As the founder of a new empire, it was Nabopolassar's task to rebuild the cities of old, cities that had been victim to internal struggle. This is reflected in his inscriptions where civic construction dominates over the construction of religious buildings. The constructions of quays, walls and river support were aimed at establishing normality in his newly claimed cities.⁶⁴ It is noted by Da Riva, that the references to building activity are limited to Babylon and Sippar. She also adds the fact that it is very limited in number, compared to the later members of his dynasty.⁶⁵

out by Frame, is that the puppet king Šamaš-šuma-ukīn also tried to fit into the Babylonian frame of kingship. He granted a prebend in Sippar and carried out building projects. Both kings probably did this to ensure their safety and proclaim their power and generosity - Frame (1992) pp. 214-217

⁵⁷ Pongratz-Leisten (2015) pp. 104-105

⁵⁸ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 726

⁵⁹ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 729; also see the use of *zanānu* in line 110 of tablet VI of Enuma Eliš.

⁶⁰ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 729

⁶¹ Frame (1992) p. 214; p. 261

⁶² Frame (1992) p. 261

⁶³ Frame (1992) p. 202

⁶⁴ Da Riva (2013) p. 3

⁶⁵ Da Riva (2013) p. 3

Da Riva explains this fact by pointing out that the main focus of Nabopolassar's inscription were the facts that he was appointed by the gods and defeated the Assyrians with their support. This ties in with the fact that Nabopolassar, as founder of a new dynasty, had to create a new ideology with which he wanted to identify himself.⁶⁶ Instead of creating a fictional kinship with former Babylonian kings to find legitimization, he chose to legitimize his kingship through divine appointment, a trait that was characteristic for Mesopotamian rulers with a doubtful pedigree.⁶⁷

While Da Riva argues that Nabopolassar does not link himself to the Babylonian kings of old, it is to be said that he actually does. While he does not directly refer to them as being his precursor, he does use their literary '*topoi*' to legitimize his cause. The theme of gifting, a theme typical of the Southern Mesopotamian region, is well present, as is the general structure of the Old-Babylonian royal inscriptions.⁶⁸ Da Riva does add to her argument that Nabopolassar adopts elements from other traditions to construct his own frame of self-representation. One of these elements was the extensive use of well-established epithets, like 'Šar Babilī' and 'Šar māt Sumeri u Akkadi'⁶⁹

2.3.2 Nebuchadnezzar II

The westward expansion of the Neo-Babylonian Empire began under king Nabopolassar, but was completed by his son and heir to the Babylonian throne, Nebuchadnezzar II. The exact way in which the newly founded dynasty organized their dominion over the west is debated, but it is certain that some strategic points, like Karkemiš and Harrān were under permanent Babylonian control, while smaller towns were incorporated in a system of vassal states.⁷⁰ Although the exact way of political organization remains debated, it is certain that the booty and taxes from the west filled the coffers of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty to a significant amount. It can be said that the early dynasty caused the land to flourish and made it enter a golden age, an age that did not end until the defeat of Nabonidus by Cyrus the Great at the end of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.⁷¹

The golden age of Babylonia allowed culture to flourish and artistic creativity to emerge.⁷² In this same line the Babylonian kings could spend the contents of their treasury on building projects and restoring the old cultic centers, as often explicated in their building inscriptions.⁷³ As already seen in the chapter on Nabonidus,⁷⁴ it was Nabonidus' main focus to restore the land, rather than spend his wealth on religious centers. Under Nebuchadnezzar II however, the cultic centers were the subject of the royal construction plans. Amongst these building projects are those of the Etemenanki

⁶⁶ Da Riva (2013) p. 4; not only because of the interrupted Babylonian royal tradition, but also due to the Assyrian dominion, that might have shattered the Babylonian ideology.

⁶⁷ Da Riva (2013) pp. 4-5

⁶⁸ That Nabopolassar was grasping back to elements of the Old-Babylonian period is also proven by the fact that he re-instates the *šangū* as royal official (see n. 136)

⁶⁹ Da Riva (2013) p. 12

⁷⁰ Jursa (2010) p. 2-3

⁷¹ Jursa (2010) p. 3

⁷² Waerzeggers (2011) p. 59

⁷³ Jursa (2010) p. 3

⁷⁴ See 2.1.3.1

Ziggurat, Esangila, Jādaqu and Ziggurat of Borsippa.⁷⁵ This change in mentality towards spending resources on building projects might be the result of stabilization in the land. Nabopolassar had already invested his resources in the projects needed to restore the land, leaving Nebuchadnezzar with a relatively stable country to rule.

In general one can detect continuity and intertextuality between the inscriptions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, especially within the clauses introducing both kings:

I am Nabopolassar, the šakkannaku of Babylon, the king of Sumer and Akkad, the pious prince, designated by Nabû and Marduk, the humble, the reverent, whose heart is well versed in the worship of god and goddess, the provider of Esagil and Ezida, who is ever solicitous for the divine rituals of the great gods.

(Da Riva 2013, Napl C31/1 and C31/2 I: 8-18)

I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the loyal shepherd, the favourite of Marduk, the august city-ruler, beloved of Nabû, the pious prince, who regularly follows the ways of Marduk, the great lord, the god his creator, and of Nabû his loyal heir, who loves his kingship, the learned, the able one, who loves their divine majesty, who pays attention to their lofty command, the wise, the expert, who reveres god and goddess at the invocation of their mighty name, the intelligent, the pious, the provider for Esagil and Ezida, the foremost heir of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.

(Da Riva 2012, WBA I: 1-22, WBC I: 1-22)

Both kings emphasize their piety towards the gods and their role as suppliers of the temples. The difference in thought occurs in the so called 'inūma-clauses' of both inscriptions. Nabopolassar refers to his role as the elected king who had to defeat the Assyrians by stating that:

When on the orders of Nabû and Marduk (...) I killed the Subarean (Assyrian) and turned his lands into tells and ruin heaps (...)⁷⁶

Whereas Nebuchadnezzar emphasizes his divine appointment as provider of the temples:

He (Marduk) handed over to me the shepherd-staff which keeps people safe , and instructed me to act as provider; I am constant and unceasingly (dedicated) to my lord Marduk.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ For the text dossiers concerned with these building projects, see Kleber (2008) pp. 135-136 (Etemanki Ziggurat); pp. 136-137 (Esagila); pp. 137-140 (Jādaqu) and pp. 161-164 (Ziggurat of Borsippa).

⁷⁶ Da Riva (2013) p. 88

⁷⁷ Da Riva (2012) p. 43

An important addition to the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and therefore the genre of Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions is the addition of the mentioning of the regular offerings. These listings mention how the king improved the amounts of foodstuffs offered to the gods and how he was the one who provided the temples with materials of the highest quality. For Nebuchadnezzar it was the offering table that reflected in miniature the richness of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, but while it was surely a literary topos, the statements made were not entirely unfounded, since they do exceed the amounts of rations mentioned in the older *ḫudurrū's*.⁷⁸ A good example of one of these is the list of offerings from the Wadi Brisa inscription:

I was solicitous to provide more lavishly than before for the regular offerings of my lords Marduk and Zarpanītu: daily 2 fattened "unblemished" gumāhu-bulls; 1 fine and unblemished bull, whose limbs are perfect, whose body [has no] white spot; 44 fattened sheep, fine zulluhū-breed; [inclusive] of what (pertains) to the gods of Babylon: 4 ducks; 10 doves; 30 marratu-birds; 4 ducklings; 3 bandicoot rats; a string of apsû fish, the best things of the marsh; profuse vegetables, the delight of the garden; rosy fruits, the bounty of the orchard; dates; Dilmun-dates; dried figs; [raisins]; finest beer-wort; ghee; muttāqu-cake; milk; the best oil; labku-beer, nāšu-beer; reddish grain; wine, purest wine; wine of Izalla, of Tu'immu, of Zimiri, of Hilbūnu, of Arnabānu, of Sūhu, of Bīt-Kubati, of Akšak [and] of Bītāti: (all this) I provided, more lavishly than before, as the table spread of my lords Marduk and Zarpanītu.

(Da Riva 2012 WBA IV 23-44; WBA IV 45-55)

The list gives an overview of all the rich products that Nebuchadnezzar offered to his lords, Marduk and Sarpanītu. Despite the fact that this presentation does not reflect reality, it does give us information on what the kings wanted to emphasize and perceived as being the most important ingredients of their offerings. The pillars of the offering-cult, meat, bread and beer, are well discussed in the text and reflect the same amount of status as their counterparts in the actual temple cult. The importance is also supported by the fact that the prebends that were concerned with these products were the most prestigious.⁷⁹

The offering of the eggs as part of the 'pride of the marsh' has been confirmed by YBC 5159, a tablet edited by Beaulieu.⁸⁰ It gives a list of the gods that are to receive eggs as part of their offerings. While the tablet does not bear a dating formula, it can be dated to the sixth century based on its paleography. Not only does it confirm the fact that luxury goods were offered to certain gods, as mentioned in the inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, but it also confirms the fact that the kings could offer certain luxury products to their preferred gods. It is only in texts mentioning the Esagil and Ezida temples that egg offerings are attested. They lack in texts from Uruk and Sippar. Even though a

⁷⁸ Waerzeggers (2010) p. 114; still, the priestly archives give a less colorful recension of these statements.

⁷⁹ Waerzeggers (2010) p. 114

⁸⁰ Beaulieu (1991)

text is known from Seleucid Uruk, in which eggs are being offered to Anu, Antu and the gods of Bīt-Rēš and Irigal, it is not probable that eggs were offered at this temple during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.⁸¹

2.3.3 Amēl-Marduk

The lack of primary evidence from the reign of Amēl-Marduk, son of Nebuchadnezzar II, complicates the study on his interactions with the temples. His name is mostly attested in administrative tablets bearing dating formulae with the mentioning of king Amēl-Marduk.⁸² While it helps to estimate the year in which Amēl-Marduk ascended the throne and when he was assassinated, it does not give us detailed information about his further interactions with the priests and temples. The only administrative change known to be initiated by Amēl-Marduk is the re-instatement of the *šatammu* of the Eanna temple, restoring the original order of *qīpu - šatammu - tuṣṣar ajakki*.⁸³ The reasoning behind the re-instatement is uncertain. It is probable that Amēl-Marduk needed the support from the Urukian elites, as is seen in the reign of Nabonidus. It is often stated that Amēl-Marduk was an unpopular king, making the assumption a likely one. The royal inscriptions known from the reign of Amēl-Marduk are scarce and the only information that can be gained from them is that Amēl-Marduk preferred the epithet 'muddiš ša Esagil u Ezida'.

2.3.4 Neriglissar

The fourth king in the dynasty of the Neo-Babylonian kings is Neriglissar. The number of texts from his reign is relatively high, considering that he only reigned for four years. Despite the high number of texts, they are hardly of any historical significance, at least, if one was to write a biography about the king.⁸⁴ While the inscriptions are highly ideological, they do shed light on some historical aspects. Their primary context, for example, shows that the bricks inscribed for Neriglissar were part of actual building projects. Bricks have been found on the banks of the Euphrates and in the Euphrates bridge. This shows that they were part of some kind of repair of these locations.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it shows the interest of Neriglissar in the daily offerings and the religious duties of the king in general.

Neriglissar was a usurper with powerful connections in the higher echelons of the Neo-Babylonian society. He was a powerful and wealthy land owner and was mentioned in the Hofkalender as being in charge of the *bīt simmagir*.⁸⁶ In addition to his power and wealth, he also managed to marry the daughter of king Nebuchadnezzar. It was only logical that he would seize the throne after the assassination of Amēl-Marduk, an assassination of which Neriglissar was possibly the

⁸¹ Beaulieu (1991)

⁸² For text editions of these texts, see Sack (1972) pp. 47-118

⁸³ Kleber (2008) p. 11

⁸⁴ Da Riva (2013) p. 12

⁸⁵ Da Riva (2013) p. 12

⁸⁶ Da Riva (2013) p. 14

instigator.⁸⁷ The vague circumstances in which Neriglissar claimed the throne caused his support to be divided. He was the first Babylonian king that had married into the royal family and his ascension was one caused by murder.

This resulted in a change in temple officials in temples where the support for his cause was minimal at best.⁸⁸ In the Eanna this resulted in a new *šakin tēmi*, a new *qīpu* and a new *šatammu*. The office of *šatammu* was given back to the previous *šatammu*, Zēria, showing that the change of officials was all but by natural causes.⁸⁹ It only affected few of the higher echelons of the temple administration, since the *ša rēš šarri* Nabû-šarru-ušur remained active in the temple.⁹⁰ The reasoning behind this administrative change was that Neriglissar needed the full support from the elite in the cities, support which he could gain by putting his own trustees into office.

This process of gaining support and legitimizing his claim to the throne is also noticeable in the way in which Neriglissar phrased his sentences in his inscriptions. He adopts the way in which his predecessors invoked the gods as the ones who would guarantee his legitimacy and organizes his texts in such a way, that they point at a divine plan in which Neriglissar was to be selected as the new king. He was a man with the means necessary to carry out the will of the gods.⁹¹ He was rewarded for his efforts in the past, efforts that had lead up to his position as wealthy and powerful man. He was the man that the gods appointed to be king, but being king meant that he also had to fulfill his royal duties and that he had to complete his religious duties.⁹²

These religious duties are well attested in the writings of Neriglissar. The writings reflect a king that wanted to stress his legitimacy and the fact that he really possessed all the features that were necessary to function as a Babylonian king. He constantly stresses his religiosity and reverence towards the gods, to an extend that exceeds his predecessors.⁹³ While it is true that Neriglissar does not list in any way how he donated more lavishly than ever the foodstuffs to the temple,⁹⁴ he does elaborate more on how he regulated and protected the offerings. A good example of this is the Esagil inscription from Babylon:⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Da Riva (2013) p. 12; also see Sack (1994) p. 26

⁸⁸ Sack (1994) p. 27

⁸⁹ Kleber (2008) p. 12

⁹⁰ Kleber (2008) p. 340

⁹¹ Da Riva (2013) p. 16

⁹² Da Riva (2013) pp. 16-17

⁹³ Da Riva (2013) pp. 18

⁹⁴ Though he does imply abundant offerings, see the Esagil inscription (I-9) in Da Riva (2013).

⁹⁵ BM 113233 + BM 32550

The enclosure wall of Esagil facing north (an area) in which the ramkūtu-priests (and) kiništu-priests of Esagil reside, whose foundations a former king had laid, but did not finish building, and which, because of the terracing, had become too low, its wall had become weak, its structure was no longer strong, its thresholds were not solid. To keep the busaggû-meals ritually pure, to arrange the šuluhhu-ritual, to keep the taklīmu-offerings pure for the lord Marduk and to bring to completion the regular offerings, so that no omission or negligence occur.

(Da Riva 2013, NerGI C21 II: 18-32)

Nerglissar shows that he acts like he is expected by the gods. The foundations of former buildings are renewed and the walls are being built in order to protect the offerings to the gods.

2.3.5 Nabonidus

Nabonidus was the last king of the Neo-Babylonian to rule over Babylonia. His rule has been of interest due to the many peculiarities, like his residence in Teiman and absence from Babylon. The inscriptions known from his reign do follow the general framework of his predecessors, serving the same purpose of legitimizing his reign and gaining support. The first topic, legitimization, is well attested in his inscriptions. Nabonidus did not belong to the line of descendents of the kings of the dynasty, but migrated from Harran to Babylon after the destruction caused by the Nabonidus, probably serving the king at his court.⁹⁶ Connections at the court allowed Nabonidus to seize the throne by assassinating the rightful heir of Nerglissar, Labaši-Marduk, two months after his ascension on the throne. While it is not certain if Nabonidus himself instigated the assassination, it is certain that he became king.⁹⁷

Ascending the throne under such circumstances meant that Nabonidus had to establish his legitimacy, something that was also seen in the inscriptions of Nerglissar. Nabonidus reviews the reigns of both Amēl-Marduk and Labaši-Marduk in an unfavorable way,⁹⁸ stating that they forgot to honor their fathers.⁹⁹ He emphasizes the fact that kingship was not on his mind, but that Marduk elected him to be king. While he does not want to doubt the god, he shows his uncertainty about his ascension to the throne to Marduk. He continues by reviewing the history of the empire, dividing his inscription into three parts. The first part reviews Babylonian history, from the reign of Sennacherib to the reign of Nabonidus. Part two reviews the deeds of Nabonidus, with part three is concerned with Nabonidus' intention to restore the Ehulhul. The latter is presented as the logical outcome of Babylonian history, making the reign of Nabonidus legitimate as well.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Beaulieu (1989) p. 77

⁹⁷ Beaulieu (1989) p. 90; see Beaulieu (1989) pp. 90-93 for the role of Belshazzar

⁹⁸ Inscription 1 (Col IV 34-42 and Col V 25-34)

⁹⁹ Beaulieu (1989) p. 78

¹⁰⁰ Beaulieu (1989) p. 105

2.3.5.1 The Reforms of Nabonidus

Despite the fact that Nabonidus has put much effort into his inscriptions, it is unfortunate that the daily offerings are only mentioned few times and with seemingly little interest. He mentions that he offered more precious offerings than the kings before him, but chooses a different topic to continue on.¹⁰¹ Yet, in practice he acted with more interest in the cult. These interests resulted in the reforms of Nabonidus, which entailed a list of cultic changes in the Eanna temple in Uruk. As seen throughout this thesis, Nabonidus did not trust the temple of Uruk. He put more officials into the temples, tightening his control of the center of worship.¹⁰² The most well known text is YOS 6, 10. The document lists orders transmitted by the *rab unqāti* to Nabû-šar-ušur, a royal servant. The document is dated to the first year of Nabonidus and gives the following discourse:

As it was done in the time of Nebuchadnezzar,¹⁰³ give the regular offerings to the brewers (and) bakers, as (it is done) in the Esagil and the Ezida and (give) plots of land to the rab banê of the lady of Uruk, as (it is done) for the rab banê of Bêl and Nabû. Put the breast of the big sheep (from the meal) of the morning into the king's box. Give to the 'entrants' six sheep breasts and the flour of the fixed offerings. Give to Nabû-šum-lišir, descendent of Epeš-ili, one thick shoulder cut of meat (as it is given) to an 'entrant'. Plaster the double gates of the Eanna just as it was of old, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabû-bāni-aha and Balātu, sons of Arad-Nabû, descendents of the 'oil presser for regular offerings' shall not enter the Eanna (anymore). Entrust their prebends to a rab banê. Gather the porridge for the day (of the offerings) of the king in the Eanna. Shave (ritually) ten (more) fishermen, in addition to the fishermen (who are already) in the Eanna. Put the rations of the king's daughter into the king's box.¹⁰⁴

(Beaulieu 1989)

The text shows Nabonidus great interest in the Eanna temple and the rites performed there. He makes use of his right to organize prebends and initiates ten more fishermen into office,¹⁰⁵ while at the same time denying two prebend members access to the temple. He puts the Eanna temple on the same line as the Esagil and Ezida temples, which indicates that the Eanna temple might have had the right to organize the offerings and distribution themselves freely, to a certain extend. Now, everything is centralized.

¹⁰¹ Langdon (1912) Nbn no.1, Col III: 37

¹⁰² Kleber (2008) p. 297

¹⁰³ See Beaulieu (1989) pp. 123-124 for the discussion on Nabonidus' interest in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁰⁴ For the share of the king's daughter in the remains of the offerings as novelty, see Kleber (2008) p. 280 and Beaulieu (1989) pp. 121-122

¹⁰⁵ Cf. WBA IV 58-59 in Da Riva (2012)

2.3.6 The Development of a Topos

The daily meal became an important part of the royal inscriptions. Nebuchadnezzar was the first king to take it into use and use it as a way to legitimize his reign and reflect on the wealth that his kingship had brought the Babylonians. Neriglissar, the first king to ascend the throne from outside the line of heirs, used it as a way to legitimize his ascension to the throne. He was a man with wealth and power and could therefore ensure the continuation of the cult.

2.4 Royal Share in the Reminders of the Daily Meal

After the meals of both the morning and evening had been presented to the gods, both meals would be distributed. It was generally perceived by the Babylonians that the gods would take the essence instead of fully consuming the food presented to them, leaving a remainder. This remainder was divided amongst the king and the prebends, making sure that nothing would go to waste.¹⁰⁶ The food was blessed by the touch of the divinities to which it was presented, meaning that if it was put to waste the blessings would be lost.¹⁰⁷ The first and foremost recipient of the food was the king. It was an ancient prerogative of the king to be the first to receive the best parts of the offerings, ever since the Old-Babylonian period.¹⁰⁸ The actual deliverance of the leftovers by the temple to the king was therefore the proof for the submission to - and acknowledgement of - the legitimacy of the king.¹⁰⁹ The actual consumption of the meat was given great meaning, as indicated by the fact that even if a king was absent the box would still be sent for consumption. A good example of this is the period in which Nabonidus resided in Arabia and the box would still be delivered to him, despite the great distance.¹¹⁰

The importance of the quality, punctuation and actual deliverance of the deliveries to the king is emphasized in several sources of different natures. One of these texts is BIN 1, 25, which belongs to an exchange of letters between Urukian officials in the context of a building project:

The king is near! Why do you interrupt the *sellī tabnīti*? Bring it thrice a month to the king! And why are *Iqīšāya* and brother annoyed, saying: "Nobody cares about us"? I write you about the following: give them your entire ration, yours and all that is available to you (...) Why do you butcher a sheep from the steppe for the *sellī tabnīti* of the king? (...) Do not neglect the regular offerings and the *sellī tabnīti* of the king take care and perform the service of the gods and king. Butcher a fattened sheep for the *sellī tabnīti* of the king!¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Scurlock (2006) p. 44; one of the tablets that shows how precise the priests were in distributing the leftovers is BBS no. 36, for the translation see Scurlock (2006) p. 44

¹⁰⁷ A blessing that would otherwise be transferred to the one consuming the food - Oppenheim (1977); for a comparison of this aspect of sharing food with the gods, see Kleber (2008) p. 293 n. 843.

¹⁰⁸ Van Driel (2002) p. 55

¹⁰⁹ Van Driel (2002) p. 69

¹¹⁰ Kleber (2008) p. 293

¹¹¹ Kleber (2008) p. 303; translated from the original German.

This text shows us some important aspects about the delivery of the remainders to the king. First, that it was delivered thrice a month, meaning that the king would receive at least one portion each ten days. The explicit mentioning of this time-frame in which the basket had to be presented shows the importance of its punctuality. The second point of interest is the quality of the meat and its relation to the regular offerings. The writer heeds the addressees that they are not to neglect the regular offerings and the *selli tabniti* of the king as they did before, by slaughtering a sheep of the steppe, instead of the intended fatted sheep. Kleber (2008) notes here that the sheep of the steppe was part of the herd that was led from pasture to pasture on the open field. This made the meat of lesser quality, due to the excessive movement of the animal and therefore of cheaper quality than its fattened equivalent.¹¹² It also shows that the quality of the meat and the meat that was sent to the king had to be of equal quality supporting the argument of a special link between the king and his gods.

A second group of text that shows the importance of the delivery and mostly the importance of the right amounts of meat delivered are PTS 2097 and GCCI 1, 238. The first gives a list of allotments divided according to the system as fixed during the first year of the reign of Nabonidus,¹¹³ the second is a list according to which the meat is to be distributed to the king.¹¹⁴ The first text has the keeper of the royal seals (*rab unqāti*) reminding the new *bēl piqitti*, Nabû-šarri-ušur, that he has to put the share of meat of the king into the box in order to send it to the palace.¹¹⁵ It shows that even a high official of the king, the *bēl piqitti*, was reminded of his duty to send the remainder of the meal to the king. It was held in high regard. The second text lists the leftovers that are to be send to the king:¹¹⁶

2 sūtu of cake; 2 akalu of sesame oil;
 1/2 qû of Telmun dates;
 qû of fine billatu beer;
 2 akalu of prepared(?) salt
 and a sweetcake;
 5 mutton cuts (namely) 2 shoulder cuts,
 2 rumps and 1 r[ib roast];
 1 turtledove o [o o o].

The list contains many of the delicacies that were served to the divine statues, yet, it is the distribution of the meat cuts that is of interest. It shows that, together with the beer, the most precious parts of the offerings were sent to the king.

¹¹² Kleber (2008) p. 303

¹¹³ Beaulieu (2003) p. 98; see Fried (2004) p. 42

¹¹⁴ For the text edition and the discussion on whether the distribution as attested in the text was fictional or a revival of the Old-Babylonian tradition, see Beaulieu (1990)

¹¹⁵ Fried (2004) pp. 41-42

¹¹⁶ Beaulieu (1990)

2.4.1 Distribution of the Meat, a Royal Prerogative?

It was discussed above that the king had special rights in the distribution of the remainders of the daily offerings; yet, it is to be discussed to which extent these rights were really a royal privilege. Kleber (2008) already discussed this by pointing out that similar baskets were also delivered to the crown-prince,¹¹⁷ *šatammu* and *tupšar ajakki*.¹¹⁸ A good example in which the share of the other officials in the remainders of the divine meal is explicated is YOS 21, 92. This tablet was part of an exchange of letters between the *tupšar ajakki* Nabû-tabni-ušur and Gimillu. The *šatammu* Marduk-bēšunu and *tupšar ajakki* Nabû-tabni-ušur were sent to Opis to assist on a building project. It becomes clear from the letter that they expected their share in the offerings to be sent to the building site:¹¹⁹

You say to me: "I will send five selli tabniti with the reinforcement troops." Why did you not bring them here?

It becomes clear from this evidence that the share in the remainders of the divine meal was originally a royal prerogative. This prerogative might have originated from the fact that the king was the most important provider of offerings,¹²⁰ but evolved into a prerogative for those who were involved in temple activity in general. Whereas the king held the first right to the remainders in earlier times, he could choose freely on what aspects he would spend the resources. It had a political aspect, allowing the king to use the remainders in all kinds of relations to other socially high placed officials.¹²¹ Whether or not the system of distribution, in which officials were entitled to a set amount of remainders as the result of development from the king giving resources to officials as part of their relation, is to be debated. It does show, however, that the relationship between the king and his officials changed. The king had to give a set amount of remainders to his officials to retain his control over the temple.

2.5 The Emesal prayers

The daily meals were accompanied by prayers, sung in the Sumerian dialect called Emesal. During the first millennium, the Emesal prayers began to play an important role in rituals and were performed by the cultic singer, or *kalû*. While there are four genres of Emesal prayer, only two, the *Balaḡ* and *Èršema*, are relevant for the daily cult.¹²² The *Balaḡ* and *Èršema* prayers were performed in front of the statues of the gods, during the performances of other cultic activity, like the opening of the gates

¹¹⁷ See Oppenheim (1977) p. 189 for the example of remainders being sent to Belshazzar.

¹¹⁸ Kleber (2008) p. 302; she therefore proves the arguments made by Oppenheim (1977), that the enjoyment of the remainders of the offering table would be an exclusive right of the king, to be wrong.

¹¹⁹ Kleber (2008) pp. 301-302

¹²⁰ While *niqê kârîbi* 'offerings by believers' are attested, the *niqê šarri* 'offerings by the king', are more widely attested amongst the sources - Van Driel (2002) p. 55

¹²¹ Van Driel (2002) p. 55

¹²² Gabbay p. 103; see Linssen (2004) pp. 31-32 for a discussion of the '*takribtu*' that were performed on a daily basis in Hellenistic Uruk (TU48).

or the offering of the foodstuffs.¹²³ They were performed by a *kalû*, who sung the prayers to the god while being accompanied by music. The prayers themselves contain laments mourning the destruction of temples and cities, mostly those of old.¹²⁴

Characteristic for these prayers, were the long litanies that were repeated each time the name of the deity addressed in the prayer or addressed in the ritual, changed. For this reason, naming certain cities and certain gods must have been of great theological significance. This also becomes clear, from the fact that the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian prayers were canonized, having a fixed list of names of deities in a fixed order.¹²⁵ Interestingly enough, these prayers seem to have originated in Babylonia, due to the strong emphasis on Marduk, Babylon and the Babylonian temples. Prayers from areas other than Babylonia show the same emphasis, which indicates that textual fixation was strong.¹²⁶

2.6 The King and the Performance of Prayer

While the king had no active role in the performance of prayers during the daily cult, it is important to touch upon his participation in prayer during special occasions. Showing how the king participated in the cult will shed light on the cultic function of the king in general. The evidence will show that the king only participated in the cult when the people needed representation before the gods or when a disaster struck the land as punishment for a sinful king. These were occurrences in which the roles of priest and king reversed and the king would take on an active role in the representation before the gods.

2.6.1 The Confessing King

When a king performed an action that was perceived to be sinful, he had to confess to the god whose divine law he had trespassed. This sinful behavior often led to catastrophe in the land, therefore, the king was often held responsible for periods in which the land was struck with misfortune. It is of course logical that the king was held responsible for the misfortune, since he was the representative of the gods on earth. The catastrophe was the result of displeased gods, therefore, during these periods he had to recite an Èršahuṣa-prayer, to cause the heart of the stressed god to be at peace again.¹²⁷

¹²³ The content of the prayers often reflects on the cultic activity to which they were related. The prayers called 'come out like the sun' (dUTU-GIN₇ È-TA) and 'it reaches earth like day' (U₄-DAM KI ÀM-ÚS), for example, show that these prayers were related to the sunrise and were therefore probably performed during the opening of the gates or in combination with the morning meal - Gabbay p. 104; therefore, the titles are not always literary metaphors, but also reflect on the physical aspect of the ritual.

¹²⁴ While Gabbay argues that this destruction is caused by the god leaving his temple, Maul argues that the destruction is caused by an undefined enemy; see Maul (2005) p. 11

¹²⁵ This changed during the Achaemenid period, in which local traditions start to appear in the Emesal prayers - Gabbay p. 109; this might be due to the shift of power to a foreign leader. This shift in power might have given the local authorities the change to adapt their religious practices to local needs, the needs to honor their own god. Gabbay (2014) links the fall of Babylon with the fall of Marduk and his theology, linking the rise of local traditions with the rise of a 'religious-vacuum' that accompanied the fall.

¹²⁶ Other deities, like the sun-god Šamaš, which was mostly worshipped in Sippar, could be recognized through the characteristics of Marduk - Gabbay (2015) p. 107-108

¹²⁷ Gabbay (2015) p. 24

During the confession of the king, the king was to recite prayers belonging to the genre of lamentations (*šigû*). Whilst he was reciting the prayers and performing the ritual actions, it was the *kalû* who would support the king by bringing some additional offerings and the recitation of additional lamentations. At the end of the ritual the king was expected to recite Èršahuṇa-prayers and to speak to several gods.¹²⁸

The description of this ritual gives the impression that the king has caused the god, or gods, to distress with the result being misfortune in the land. To resolve this, he had to perform certain ritual actions, with the help of the *kalû*. First, he had to recite prayers, to bring the heart of the god back to peace. While it is not certain whether the king himself was able to recite Emesal or even read Emesal, Maul (1988) suggests that the *kalû* would recite the prayer over the shoulder of the king.¹²⁹ In this case, the prayer is recited, indirectly by the king. Apparently it would not have mattered whether the king recited the prayer himself, or got help from a ritual-specialist, as long as the king would be in contact with the one reciting it.¹³⁰ This fact also stresses the fact that kings needed the priests to guide them in their contact with the gods. The *kalû* helped the king to deliver his supplication to the gods.

2.6.2 Recitation by King and Kalû in Apotropaic Rituals

2.6.2.1 In case of a natural disaster

Closely related to the recitation of prayer during royal confession, is royal participation in prayer when a natural disaster or potential period of disease occurred. The texts I am citing here, are concerned with recitation of prayer when an earthquake shook the land or when disease threatened the horses and militia of the king.

2.6.2.2 In case of an Earthquake

When such a disaster occurred, the king had to ritually clean himself and recite lamentations (*šigû*) and recite Èršahuṇa-prayers to several different gods. While he recites the prayers, the *kalû* would bring offerings to the gods while singing Balaṇ-prayers. In addition to this, he cuts a piece of the king's hair and places this on enemy territory.¹³¹ The exact reasoning behind this gesture is not made clear, but it would be probable that the *kalû* would transfer the misfortune over from his king, to the king of the enemy land.

¹²⁸ Maul (1988) p. 30

¹²⁹ Maul (1988) p. 53

¹³⁰ For the further discussion on 'Let the King Recite' (*ana šarri tušadbab*), see Black (1991) p. 24-25. He takes into account the translation by Maul (1988), 'You will have the king recite' and the grammatical difficulties that are paired with such interpretation.

¹³¹ Maul (1988) p. 32

2.6.2.3 In case of a disease threatening the kings men

When disease threatened the kingly troops or horses, the king had to recite several prayers. Among these prayers was an Èrřahuņa-prayer, related to purity and cleanness of heaven and earth.¹³² During this purification ritual, the kalû would bring several offers while reciting Balaņ- and Èrřema-prayers.¹³³

2.6.3 Active Role of the King in the Prayers

When looking at the similarities between these prayers, it becomes clear that the king's role in performing the prayers was an active role. Not only did he have to be present, he also had to recite the prayers and perform cultic actions. Whether or not the king did actually recite the prayers, assuming that he was able to read and speak in Emesal, he had to take an active role in their recitation. Even if the *kalû* had to recite the prayers over the shoulder of the king, we can still constitute that recitation by the king was an important aspect.

2.6.4 Active Role of the King During Festivals

The New Year's Festival (*akitu*), was celebrated twice a year. Once is the month Tařrîu and once in the month Nisannu, in the seventh and first month respectively. It was one of the oldest festivals with it being attested in evidence dated to the Fara-period. The purpose it served was to re-instate the ruler and assure the people another prosperous and peaceful year.¹³⁴ It was during this festival that the roles between king and priest were reversed. In the normal situation, it was the king who could initiate into or remove the priests out of office. He was the human reflection of Marduk in the human realm, the assigner of prebends. Now, it was the priest who had to initiate the king. RAcc 127-154 and BM 32485 give the best description of the interaction between the priest and the king.¹³⁵

The tablets give a description of the fifth day of the festival, the day on which the temple is purified and the king will be re-instated. Before the king enters the cella, the temple has to be purified by the exorcist. He purifies the temple with the carcass of a sheep, which he drops in the river after ritual. Since the carcass is now impure, the exorcist is seen as impure as well. He cannot re-enter until after the festival (lines 353-360). When the temple is purified, it is the high priest will enter to make several offerings, amongst which are twelve regular offerings. After the offerings, the high priest will clear the table and pray to Marduk in order that his heart may be rejoiced for the one that he takes by the hand (lines 385-403). After the high priest has cleaned the offering table, he calls in the craftsmen who take the offering table to the river. Here, the king is placed before it, probably to eat together with Nabû. When Nabû has left, they will bring the king to the Esagila. The craftsmen leave. (lines 404-414).

¹³² The Sumerian names of these prayers are 'AN KUG-GA' and 'KI KUG-GA', which literally translate to 'Pure Heaven' and 'Pure Earth', showing a relation to purity in times of disease.

¹³³ Maul (1988) p. 31

¹³⁴ Linssen (2004) p. 71

¹³⁵ For a description of the king and his interactions with the public and the gods after the negative confession, see Waerzeggers (2011) pp. 731-732

When the craftsmen have left the temple, the king is brought in before Bēl. When the king is in the presence Bēl, it is the high priest who takes the tokens of his kingship, namely, his crown, scepter and weapon, laying them before Bēl (lines 415-418) and leaving the king in a state of liminality. The king is now in a state, where he is neither king nor a normal peasant. He is in a state in-between. His tokens are returned to Marduk and are only returned to the king if Marduk is willing to give them back. The high priest strikes the king on the cheek and pulls his hair. The king is forced to sit on his knees and say the following words to Marduk:

I have not sinned, lord of the lands, I have not neglected your divinity
I have not ruined Babylon, I have not ordered its dissolution
I have not made Esagila tremble, I have not forgotten its rites
I have not struck the cheek of any privileged subject
I have not brought about their humiliation
I have been taking care of Babylon, I have not destroyed its outer walls¹³⁶

It is here, that the king gives his negative confession.¹³⁷ All the tasks that were bestowed upon him, are completed and he did not neglect his tasks in any way. After the king has made its confession, it is the high priest who says words of comfort and returns the royal insignia's back to the king. The high priest slaps the king once more, for an omen. If the king sheds a tear, Bēl will be disposed, if no tear flows, Bēl is angry and the king will fall. After the ceremony it are both the king and priest that recite a final blessing, the link between gods and king is once again restored.

It is shown from this example, that when the people of Babylon needed to be represented before the gods in a critical moment where the channel though which they received their blessings was to be restored, it was the king who had to actively participate in the rites. This was already shown in the prayers that had to be recited by the king when dangers were to threaten the land. In this role, it also becomes clear that the king now needed the priest to be re-instated. He needed the priest to enter the cella, the most inner sanctum of the temple, where absolute purity was a requirement to enter and he needed the priest to gain the ultimate confirmation from his lord, Marduk.¹³⁸

2.7 Meal and Prayer: Theological Purpose

To understand the importance of the continuation of the daily cult, one must discover the deeper theological values of the rites that were performed. For the Mesopotamian situation, this meant intermediation between gods and humans. The systematic procedure through which this goal was

¹³⁶ RAacc 127-154 + BM 32485 lines 423-428 in Linssen (2004)

¹³⁷ For the relationship between the negative confessions and the privileged citizens, see Pongratz Leisten (1997); See 3.2.1 for the importance of the stable relation between the different institutions.

¹³⁸ Also see Waerzeggers (2011) p. 732

reached had its own rationale. This rationale, or theological concept, is represented in the cultic reality, as well as in the mythology behind the rituals.¹³⁹

Even the king, who was the elected of the gods, could not appeal directly to the gods. He needed a medium through which he could offer his gifts and even his troubles. This medium was formed by an intermediate chain, consisting of the cultic singer, the *kalû* (Sumerian: GALA), the prayers and offerings and the instruments associated with the recited prayers. Theologically, the *kalû* (stemming from the Sumerian 'GALA') could cross the boundary between men and the gods, representing the king offering his gifts and supplication.¹⁴⁰

As to purpose, the offerings and supplications of the king served to appease the hearts of the gods (*nub libbi*). This purpose is often reflected in the terms occurring at the end of the compositions. Here, the terminology ranges from 'to calm the heart' (ŠA_HUG) to 'to pacify the mind' (BAR_SED).¹⁴¹ While the prayers themselves do not mention specific enemies or kings, Gabbay (2015) argues that they are rather constant reminders of the potential destruction that interruption of the cult can cause. I would like to push this argument further and state that besides this, it is a timeless, i.e. unspecified, reminder to the kings of the potential danger of interruption. By leaving the king's name blank, it is easier to fit the contemporary king within the profile of the literary king mentioned in the prayer that is being recited.

The destruction addressed in the Emesal prayers is caused by theophany, which means that the deity is showing himself or leaves his sanctuary. The latter is expressed with the verb 'È', 'to go out'.¹⁴² This theophany can either be maleficent or benevolent, but in either case it affects the world. The manifestation itself occurs in two phases. First, the deity announces his decision to appear, whilst secondly appearing, often in the form of a disastrous event. This divine manifestation is also a moment of divine concealment. A deity can only appear at one place at once. For this reason, the deity could only give his divine favor to one party, excluding it for another. It is due to this binary theological system that it was important for kings and priests to pray to the god to keep his presence in their temple or to cause the gods to support their army. If the gods would go to the enemy, one's own land would be vulnerable.¹⁴³ In the case of ritual failure, the gods would get angry and cause destruction to the land. It is due to that exact reason that the continuity and perfection of the offerings is so heavily emphasized in both royal as priestly writings.

¹³⁹ Gabbay (2015) p. 19

¹⁴⁰ Gabbay (2015) p. 19

¹⁴¹ Gabbay (2015) p. 15

¹⁴² Gabbay (2015) p. 19-21; in the mythological world this is expressed by the deity travelling from the divine realm into the natural world. In the physical realm, this is represented by the god leaving the cella, entering the courtyard.

¹⁴³ Gabbay (2015) 21-23

3. Royal Control over the Centers of Worship

The importance of a stable relation between palace and temple is reflected in the interdependency between both institutions. As a ruler, the king strove to limit the power and influence of one of the organizations that had traditionally controlled resources and housed many members of the higher echelons of society.¹⁴⁴ Priest and temple formed a bulwark of power and pride of the elite which under normal circumstances would promote stability. If, however, the royal politics were perceived as being harmful to Babylonia and its citizens, then the administrative centers of both city and temple could turn into centers of resistance. It is therefore that the king tried to limit the negative effects of decentralized power by keeping tight control over the higher layers of temple administration.¹⁴⁵

3.1 Royal influence on Temple Hierarchy and the Royal Officials

During the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, which started under Nabopolassar, adaptations were made in the organization of the temple administration. Around the start of his reign it was Nabopolassar who made a change in temple administration and the ranking between the temple officials occupying the administrative offices. The ranking between these officials is to be determined by their appearance and the order of their appearance in official documents and legal contracts.¹⁴⁶ Before the reign of Nabopolassar, the *šatammu* and *qīpu* made up the administration of the temple and they were mentioned in that exact order.¹⁴⁷ The first represented the cultic regulations, while the latter represented royal interest in the temple affairs. During the reign of Nabopolassar until the reign of Cyrus, the *šatammu* of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar disappears and the king installs a new official representing the cultic affairs of the temple, namely the *šangu*.¹⁴⁸ Now the order in which the officials appear changes as well. Now the *qīpu* was the most important temple official, making royal interest the most important aspect of representation in the temple.¹⁴⁹ It was once again during the reign of Cambyses that the order of officials changed so that the *šangû* became the most important temple official.¹⁵⁰

There are several possible reasons for the change in hierarchy under royal influence. The first is the shift in politics. As seen, the *šatammu* of the Ebabbar temple was replaced with a *šangû*. The reasoning behind this shift might be the shift in politics that took place after the fall of the Assyrian empire around 628/627 BCE. It was during this period that Nabopolassar founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire, an event that was sparked by an increasing and common negative response to

¹⁴⁴ Fried (2004) p. 47

¹⁴⁵ Kleber (2012) p. 176

¹⁴⁶ Mainly in witness lists - Fried (2004) p. 17

¹⁴⁷ Bongenaar (1997) p. 6

¹⁴⁸ Bongenaar (1997) p. 11

¹⁴⁹ Bongenaar (1997) p. 7

¹⁵⁰ Bongenaar (1997) p. 7

Assyria.¹⁵¹ As a result, Nabopolassar removed all possibly pro-Assyrian officials from office, replacing the sitting *šatammu* with a new functionary, the *šangû*.¹⁵²

Political change and personal ties of the king to specific temples also had their influence on individual functions of officials serving the temple. During the reign of both Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II, royal control over the Eanna temple of Uruk had been rather loose. Kleber argues that this is due to the personal ties of both kings to Uruk, since the dynasty had originated there.¹⁵³ This fact is supported by the introduction of new officials in the Eanna temple during the 26th regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar, in the year that most of the priests with which Nebuchadnezzar had personally interacted during his younger years went out of office.

The administrative change entailed Nebuchadnezzar introducing six royal courtiers (*ša rēšû*) at mid-level temple administration. While introducing these new officials allowed Nebuchadnezzar to engage more efficiently in his ambitious building projects, it also had its impact on the way in which the already scarce resources were distributed amongst temple personnel, as proven by the exchange of letters between the *qipu* and *šatammu* of the Eanna temple.¹⁵⁴ Kleber proposes that the conflicts of the sorts might have led to the abolishment of the office of *šatammu*, leading to a severe loss of prestige and influence for the Urukian elite.¹⁵⁵ The latter is supported by a noteworthy reversal in the eleventh year of the reign of Nabonidus. It was Nabonidus who had abolished the office *šatammu* again, even though it was re-instated during the reign of Amēl-Marduk, as a result of his distrust in the priestly elite of the Eanna temple. Yet, in the eleventh year of his rule, Nabonidus reversed this change and re-established the office of *šatammu*, possibly due to the threat of the rise of power of Cyrus and his need for support in Uruk.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Frame (1992) p. 261

¹⁵² This is probably an attempt by Nabopolassar to bring back the old temple-functionary that had been active in the cultic centers in the Old Babylonian period. By doing this he is restoring ancient Babylonian values and linking these to his heritage - Bongenaar (1997) p. 11

¹⁵³ Kleber (2012) p. 172

¹⁵⁴ Kleber (2012) p. 172

¹⁵⁵ Kleber (2012) p. 172; see Kleber (2012) p. 173 for a similar case with the scribes of the Eanna

¹⁵⁶ Kleber (2012) p. 173

3.2 The Importance of Royal Control over the Temple

By controlling the temple administration it was possible for the palace to use the administrative system as organized by the temple. In the smaller towns it was the temple who dealt with local administration, whereas they only did parts of the administration in bigger towns.¹⁵⁷ It was during the reign of Nabopolassar that this two folded pattern of administration emerged. Due to the fact that the temple functioned as the only institution in the smaller towns, it was the high priest who functioned as chief administrator besides his cultic duties.¹⁵⁸

Functioning as administrator in either of the institutions - be it the palace or the temple - meant supervising a complex and rich stream of goods. The temple was one of two of the most important land owners in the empire, with the palace being the other. Like the palace, the temple could apportion land to dependants or rent it out to free farmers in exchange for the yield of the farmed land, either in kind or silver.¹⁵⁹ A second stream of income was generated by the king, who had to fulfill his duty as supplier of the temples. While this stream of gifts from the capital to the countryside must have been significant, as implied by the royal inscriptions, it unfortunately left only little traces of evidence.¹⁶⁰ These streams of goods and the entire economic structure of the temple were first and foremost meant for the upkeep of the extensive process that made up the daily offerings. They were therefore meant to support the gods.¹⁶¹ Parallel to the stream of goods from palace to temple stood a stream of money and taxes from temple to palace. The royal officials in charge of ensuring that the goods were actually delivered and that taxes were paid, were the members of the royal administration.

3.3 Royal control over Prebends

Royal control over the prebends was firm. It already started with the initiation of a new priest, where the potential candidates had to appear before a board with members representing the king. Via this board, the candidates had to ask permission to proceed with their process of consecration.¹⁶² The *šatammu* and his colleagues had to safeguard the cultic regulations surrounding the initiation, while the king, via his representative, could promote, remove or confirm anyone he wanted.¹⁶³ This royal

¹⁵⁷ Kleber (2012) p. 171; despite the fact that the temple was only part of a greater system of administration in the larger cities, its highly sophisticated system was still intertwined with civil administration - Oelsner et al. (2003) p. 918

¹⁵⁸ Kleber (2012) p. 171

¹⁵⁹ Jursa (2010) p. 29; the most important form of labor performed for the temple was the so called '*ilku*' service. Temples were obligated to recruit persons for the service of the king. In return for their service they would receive a salary paid in kind, mostly a part of the yield of the land that they had farmed - Oelsner et al. (2003) p. 920

¹⁶⁰ Jursa (2010) p. 67

¹⁶¹ Jursa (2010) p. 54

¹⁶² Waerzeggers (2008) p. 18; even though the candidates were applying for a minor post within the prebendary system, the tablets were sealed by members of the higher echelons, namely the *šatammu* and *zazakku* of the king.

¹⁶³ Waerzeggers (2008) p. 18

prerogative had originated in the Old Babylonian-period, in which the king served as most important supplier of the temples.¹⁶⁴

3.3.1 The Prebend System

At the basis of the daily cult and temple worship stood the members of the prebend system. The prebendal system was a complex system in which individuals held a promise of income, literally a share (*isqu*) in temple worship as a whole. This income was given to them in return for their efforts in the acts of worship, delegated by the temple.¹⁶⁵ Although the exact origins of the prebendal system are unknown, it is probable that it originated from the system of giving remuneration to the cultic personnel. Since this is a very basal way of giving people a reward for their efforts, it is to be assumed that it originated in different places, at different times.¹⁶⁶ It became a central feature of Mesopotamian priesthood during the second millennium and reached its maturity in the Neo-Babylonian period. In the process of reaching its maturity, specialization among the priests increased. The system became more complex.¹⁶⁷ To become part of the prebendary system in the function of priest,¹⁶⁸ one had to first and foremost possess a share (*isqu*) in temple worship. Prebends could be acquired through family relations, i.e. inherit them, or they could be bought, or could be gained as payment of a debt. While the latter two did occur from time to time, family transmission was the most favorable option.¹⁶⁹ Due to this, the social composition remained stable.¹⁷⁰

Second most important was the purity of a potential candidate.¹⁷¹ The physical purity of the candidate was measured in the bath-house, where he had to strip down for inspection. After the inspection was deemed successful by the cultic experts conducting it, the candidate was shaven and washed while a series of purification rites and incantations were performed. Upon completion, the candidate would be taken into the temple in a solemn procession where the candidate, upon arrival, would take on an active role in the ritual.¹⁷² The most well-known and important texts describing the

¹⁶⁴ Van Driel (2002) p. 55

¹⁶⁵ Pirngruber and Waerzeggers (2011) p. 111

¹⁶⁶ Van Driel (2002) p. 55

¹⁶⁷ Pirngruber and Waerzeggers (2011) p. 111; see the discussion on the function of the different non-prebendary weavers (*išarutu*) and the prebendary bleacher, in Zawadzki (2006), to see how some functionaries might have lost their prebendary status when the system of prebends became more complex. Zawadzki proposes this for prebends related to crafting clothes, but it could also be true for other areas of prebendary expertise.

¹⁶⁸ For the discussion on what constitutes a priest, or even a Babylonian priest, see Waerzeggers (2010) and Waerzeggers (2011).

¹⁶⁹ In any case, the bloodline of the potential priest had to be pure. It was necessary that the candidate descended from a priestly family.

¹⁷⁰ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 744

¹⁷¹ Purity here means both *physical* and *mental* purity; while the rites of initiation did not differ that much, it is to be noted that the initiation rites of the priests who entered the closed areas was different from those who did not. The *Nešakku* and *Pašišu* priests had to undergo a ritual in which they were shaven (*gullubu*) to make sure they were ritually pure. It is assumed that diviners (like the *bāru*) did not have to undergo a same rite, since they would not enter the cella. Therefore, purity was related to contact with the gods. Only those who were the most pure, were allowed to see and feed the gods - see Waerzeggers (2008) p. 3-4

¹⁷² Waerzeggers (2008) p. 3

ritual of priestly initiation during the first millennium BCE is a text translated and commented on by Borger, a text which he called 'Weihe eines Enlil-Priesters'.¹⁷³

The text itself describes the way in which the candidates for the office of *nešakkeu* and *pašišu* priests undergo various inspections to investigate whether they meet the physical and mental qualifications to fill the position.¹⁷⁴ Despite the fact that this text only focuses on the *nešakkeu* and *pašišu* priests, it is Waerzeggers (2008) who argues that priests in positions other than that of an *erib-biti* had to be consecrated as well. The evidence that Waerzeggers uses, lists a range of other professions, like bakers, fishers, oxherds and brewers. She argues that the consecration of these priests might be the result of their possession of (part of) an *erib-biti* prebend, but prefers the interpretation of their purity being part of the requirement to be able to enter the inner temple.¹⁷⁵ While this is a likely explanation for why the priests who were not directly concerned with presenting food before the deities had to be consecrated, another reason might be applicable as well. The products offered directly to the gods needed to be pure. Therefore it would be probable that those who were concerned by producing these goods needed to be consecrated. While we have evidence for this in the case of bread (the bakers), fishermen and brewers, we should also expect date gardeners to be consecrated.

3.3.1.1 The Royal Prebends

The king owned several prebends, most of which were of higher standards like the butchers and bakers prebends. As with every prebend, the tasks of the prebends of the king needed to be performed as well. The king would hire persons to perform this service.¹⁷⁶ In general, it was the temple administration that would take over the service of the king. A good example of the 'generalverpachtung' of the service of the king in the royal prebends is TCL 12, 57,¹⁷⁷ a so called 'zwiegesprächsurkunde'¹⁷⁸ from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II in which a, presumably, royal official claims to lease the service of the king.¹⁷⁹ It is interesting to notice that he aims his speech towards the

¹⁷³ Löhnert (2010) p. 183

¹⁷⁴ Löhnert (2010) p. 183; Löhnert gives a description of the ritual on p. 185f. The text itself describes the actions in a style that reflects incantations. The candidates are shaven and their nails are clipped. When the candidates were deemed pure, they received a pure cloth and turban after which they were ready to be escorted to the temple.

¹⁷⁵ Waerzeggers (2008) pp. 14-15

¹⁷⁶ Kleber (2008) p. 288; the person performing this duty would receive a share in the prebends income, either in kind or silver.

¹⁷⁷ Also see chapter 3.5.3 for the discussion of hiring externals for the performance of ones prebendary duties.

¹⁷⁸ This name derives from the characteristic way in which this type of text was written. The one who claims the service lists the services he wants to lease, to which the owner answers either positively or negatively. This format is also attested in the context of 'regular' prebends, cf. YOS 20, 3 a contract from Hellenistic Uruk.

¹⁷⁹ Kleber (2008) p. 288; the assumption of his role as being 'royal' is based on his later role as *šakin tēmi* in Uruk (from the reign of Neriglissar onwards to the reign of Nabonidus).

qipu, indicating that he might be the royal official who was responsible for the actual lease of the royal prebends.¹⁸⁰

The contract, TCL 12, 57,¹⁸¹ gives the following discourse:

The box (quppu) of the king,¹⁸² that is present in the Eanna, together with the box (quppu) of the office of šatammu, the totality of the days of the king, the brewer, baker, butcher, oil-presser, land-measurer and kettle-heater prebends, the totality of the prebends of the king and the šatammu, as much as is available in the Eanna and the prebends of the king.

Another interesting aspect is the way in which the kings organized the collection of their prebendary income. In YOS 6,10 it is Nabonidus who appoints the *ša reš šarri bēl piqitti* of the Eanna to collect the pappasu of the royal prebends, income that could otherwise be seen as income of the temple itself.¹⁸³ It again was a case of trusting the temple with resources.

3.3.1.2 Royal Influence on the Initiation of Priests

The king kept tight control over the composition of the prebends by obligating potential candidates - or priestly boards suggesting the initiation of a candidate- to register themselves with the royal administration of the temple.¹⁸⁴ Textual evidence shows that the candidate was first introduced to the *šatammu*, who initiated an inquiry into the background of the person who was to be initiated. A good example of such an investigation is YOS 7, 167,¹⁸⁵ a text from the Eanna temple which Waerzeggers labels as an 'inquest text'.¹⁸⁶ In this text it is the *šatammu* who investigates whether the candidate is indeed the owner of a prebend and whether his mother was pure (*elletu*). It is quite possible that the *šatammu* would gain his information from an assembly of members of the same prebend or family of the candidate, since they are the ones answering the *šatammu*.¹⁸⁷

If a candidate passed the inquiry with success, he still needed royal confirmation. This final confirmation was given by a royal official, who acted on behalf of the king. It was the exclusive right of the king to supply the temple with new (cultic) personnel, by granting them income.¹⁸⁸ A text in which the interest in the initiation of a priest is seen, is in PSBA 15, 417, an inquest text from the

¹⁸⁰ Another text that supports the fact that the *qipu* was to manage and organize the prebends of the king is BM 114679, in which it is stated that the income of the prebend is given to the *qipu*, due to the absence of the one who was expected to perform the service. As trustee of the king, this task would naturally befall the *qipu*.

¹⁸¹ For the text edition, see Kleber (2008) pp. 288-289; the text presented here is translated from the original German.

¹⁸² According to Kleber, 'quppu' means income in this context.

¹⁸³ If the temple organized and performed its service. - Kleber (2008) p. 292

¹⁸⁴ The Persians introduced a tax that had to be paid on the initiation rite. By levying a tax they could trace the dynamics and composition of the Babylonian priesthood - Waerzeggers (2010) p. 348; also see Waerzeggers (2008) p. 19

¹⁸⁵ Also see OIP 122, 36 in Waerzeggers (2008), in which the *šatammu* performs a similar inquiry.

¹⁸⁶ Waerzeggers (2008) p. 6

¹⁸⁷ See BM 82732/no.1 and BM 87298/no.2 in Waerzeggers (2008) for examples in which the boards of specific prebends propose a possible candidate for initiation.

¹⁸⁸ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 742

Esagil in Babylon. The text states that the board declared to the royal commissioner that four named persons are qualified to be initiated in the service of a deity. The tablet is sealed by the *šatammu* and *zazaku*, the latter being the representative of the crown. Waerzeggers (2008) points out that the presence of the *zazaku* is remarkable, since the tablet is concerned with the initiation of a person into a minor cult. She argues that it shows that that even minor cults and the initiation of their priests was something of utmost importance,¹⁸⁹ ultimately showing the king's interest in the priestly composition. This was an aspect in which the influence of the king was limited.

3.3.1.3 Royal Limitations in the Influence on the Priesthood

Despite the fact that the king had tight control over the temple and its priesthood, it is also shown in the evidence that the influence of the king had its limits. One of the instances in which this limitation is shown, is in the royal decision to end a prebend's lifespan. While the king had the right to end a prebend's lifespan, it only occurred in exceptional cases, due to the political sensitivity of such actions.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, removing the priest from his office meant severing the special bond that the priest had with the deity that he served.¹⁹¹ Jursa argues that this limitation was the result of the king's need to guarantee the ideological fiction that underscored the temple offerings, namely that the cult had continued since primordial times.¹⁹² Intervening with the priesthood, and therefore intervening with the link between humans and the gods, could have severe consequences. These consequences are addressed in the Uruk Prophecy and warns the reader for the negative effects of intermingling with the priestly composition.¹⁹³ Assigning the wrong priests to a certain god or goddess will lay the land to waste.¹⁹⁴

Not only does this show that the king had to keep a certain distance from the cult, but it also shows his incapability to act directly in the context of the divine. While the king could change the organization of the administrative body of the temple at will, he was limited in intermingling in the composition of those who had contact with the gods. This shows an important aspect of the interdependence between the priests and their king. The king needed the guidance of the priests when interacting with his gods. This concept is possibly the result of the idea that the king was elected by the gods, but could not serve as a priest, an idea that originated in Babylonia in the first millennium BCE.¹⁹⁵ This Babylonian idea of kingship evolved from the Mesopotamian concept of an ideal city consisted of a combination of temple and palace, housing a divine and human king, the first being the

¹⁸⁹ Waerzeggers (2008) p. 18

¹⁹⁰ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 744

¹⁹¹ This special bond is furthermore emphasized by the fact that installing a new priest needed the approval of the gods, hence the fact that extispicy was part of the rites of initiation - Waerzeggers (2011) p. 744

¹⁹² Jursa (2012) p. 152

¹⁹³ for its historical setting see Beaulieu (1993)

¹⁹⁴ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 744

¹⁹⁵ Schaudig (2010) p. 158

city god and the latter being a human ruler. In Assyria the king was still the high priest of the god Aššur, while all cultic functions in Babylonia were taken over by Babylonian priesthood.¹⁹⁶

3.4 When Ritual Fails

Complex rituals like the rituals performed in the Mesopotamian temples, were susceptible to failure. The complex network of professionals that constituted the cult needed individual professionalism. Failure at one of the sections would endanger the production or ritual actions of the higher levels of the chains of production. In the case of the daily meals, where raw products were turned into meals for the gods, this would mean that administrative failures could lead to interruptions (*batlu*). Furthermore, on a more individual level, farmers, gardeners and others in charge of the production of raw materials could fail to deliver good quality products that were directly served to the gods, causing a shortage in the produce needed for the meals. In the examples below, it will be shown that every chain was susceptible to failure. This section is concerned with ritual failure and the contract clauses that were to prevent these ritual failures.

3.4.1 Internal failure

The importance of proper continuation of the daily meals is also emphasized in the safe clauses that are embedded in contracts, to prevent ritual from failing. Within the realm of failure that could occur during the performance of ritual activity, we can distinguish between three types, as discussed by Ambos (2007):¹⁹⁷

1. ritual failure brought about by the gods, refusing to accept an offer
2. ritual failure brought about by the gods, interrupting the offer ritual
3. ritual failure brought about by humans, failure through mistakes

For this thesis, only the third type of ritual failure is relevant, since human failure was what the priests wanted to prevent by using clauses that would safeguard them from ritual failure. Furthermore, it was in these cases of ritual failure that the king had to partake in the judgment of the ones that were responsible for the mistakes.

3.4.2 Priests Safeguarding the Continuation

It was the task of the qualified priests to prepare and perform the offerings in a correct way, all according to an established system. The correct performance of the offerings depended on several different aspects, with the most important ones being the punctuality and quality of the offerings. Other aspects were the abundance, purity and perfection of the materials offered.¹⁹⁸ It was during the process of transition from storage to expenditure that the relation between human action and ritual

¹⁹⁶ Schaudig (2010) pp. 157-158

¹⁹⁷ Ambos (2007) p. 25

¹⁹⁸ Waerzeggers (2011) pp. 61-62

fulfillment became clear. A result of this heavy emphasis on ritual punctuality and perfection was that prebends would stipulate against failure, by including judicial clauses in their contracts with the ones performing the service.

An example of these safe clauses is to be found within YOS 7, 90, a contract between the Eanna temple in Uruk and their prebendary fishermen.¹⁹⁹ The contract states that the fishermen are responsible for the deliverance of around 3000 liters of fish and the good quality of the fish. If they fail to deliver the right amount of fish, as clearly stated in the contract, or the quality of the fish is below standards, they will have committed a crime against the gods and the king.²⁰⁰

Another interesting example is given in a juridical document from Neo-Babylonian Uruk.²⁰¹ In this document a royal date gardener (*rab banê*) is being punished for delivering rotten dates to the Lady of Uruk. The function of the royal date gardener was to deliver the fruit to the functionaries who would offer them to the gods. The functionaries were probably the ones to make a report of the bad quality of the delivered dates to the authorities of the Eanna temple.²⁰²

Because the dates were rotten (*keûm be'ešû*) they could not be offered to Ištar (*lā iqrubû*). Because of the defect in the quality of the dates and the result of not being able to offer them as part of the daily meal of Ištar, the offering was ceased (*baṭalu iškunuma*).²⁰³ It was for this reason that the gardener, Anum-šumu-lišir, was put into chains. His dates were sealed to serve as evidence to proof his guilt.²⁰⁴ To make sure that the offerings would continue and that Ištar would receive her meal, the officials took dates and other fruits from the temples storage to offer them.²⁰⁵ This shows that the upper level personnel were responsible for continuing the offerings when the lower levels failed to do so.

Documents related to the trial of Anum-šumu-lišir are also known. One of the witnesses from the document in which Anum-šumu-lišir was accused of his crime, Šamaš-zēri-ibni, took responsibility for Anum-šumu-lišir, together with another man. Anum-šumu-lišir was released from his shackles and was to be presented at the day of his judgment 'when the royal official in charge of the Eanna summoned him'.²⁰⁶

That not only the lower echelons of the prebendary system were included within this strict notion of safe-guarding the quality and punctuation of their delivered products, is shown by several texts concerning the bakers and brewers prebends. In TCL 13, 221, a protocol detailing the duties of the prebendaries preparing the sacred meal for Ištar, Nanāya, Bēltu-ša-Reš and Ušur-amāssu, it is

¹⁹⁹ See YOS 7, 90 in Kleber (2004) p. 142; also see Kozuh (2013) p. 56

²⁰⁰ Kozuh (2013) p. 56

²⁰¹ YBC 3981 (YOS 6, 222); see Holtz (2014) p. 17-19 for the text edition.

²⁰² Holtz (2014) p. 17

²⁰³ Kozuh (2013) p. 57

²⁰⁴ Holtz (2014) p. 17; the dates were sealed by the temple officials - Kozuh (2013) p. 57

²⁰⁵ Kozuh (2013) p. 57

²⁰⁶ Holtz (2014) p. 17

stated that the nineteen bakers and other food preparers are held responsible for the cooking of the meal and its quality.²⁰⁷ The text continues with: 'if they cause an interruption or cook a bad meal, they will pay whatever fine the officials of the Eanna desire'.²⁰⁸

3.4.3 External Failure and Shifting the Blame to the Outside

Not all suppliers of temple products were priests. Some products, mostly those which functioned as raw materials for final ingredients of the divine meal, were delivered by suppliers from outside the temple. It was in times of economic stress and possible interruption of the cult that these suppliers from outside could be held responsible for possible failure. In 528 BCE, the temple of Uruk threw a banquet that caused the temple supplies to get in disarray. It took eighteen months to recover from this event. Leading up to the banquet, the language seen in the contracts with outside suppliers changes and starts to show the stress that the prebendaries must have felt.²⁰⁹

Examples of these contracts are BM 114557 and NCBT 648, both contracts with the temple's sheep contractors. They obligate the supervisor of the sheep contractors to deliver 150 sheep for sacrifice. If they failed to do so, they would be punished for a crime against the governor of Babylon.²¹⁰ These contracts typically link the supervisor, an outsider, to the offerings. This shows that in periods of economic stress, the temple would shift the responsibility of the continuation of the offerings to the contractor class. Not only did this add a sense of urgency, it also shows that the temple would use contractors as fail-safe when needed.²¹¹

What all these texts have in common is the fact that if the prebendaries failed to guarantee the quality of their produce, they would be severely punished. Anum-šumu-lišir was put into fetters, while the bakers of the Eanna would have to pay a fine of which the officials would decide the height. The fact that the officials themselves had freedom in deciding the height of the fine, shows that the crime committed, a crime against the gods and the king, was a serious one. Bongenaar (2000) even argues that if the priests committed such a crime, they risked their private wealth.²¹² Kozuh (2013) argues against this statement, by stating that this measurement is not found within the available material on punishment.²¹³

3.4.5 Punctuality of the Offerings

Another important expectation that the prebendaries had to live up to, was the timely delivery of their produce. As already shown by the example in YOS 6, 222, in which a gardener presented rotten dates to the meal, it were the officials that had to guarantee the continuation of the offerings. The fact that the officials stepped in to make sure that the offerings were performed at the right time, show the

²⁰⁷ Beaulieu (2003) p. 174-175

²⁰⁸ Kozuh (2013) p. 57

²⁰⁹ Kozuh (2013) p. 54

²¹⁰ Kozuh (2013) p. 54

²¹¹ Kozuh (2013) p. 54

²¹² Bongenaar (2000) p. 76

²¹³ Kozuh (2013) p. 57

importance of their punctuality. Other texts that explicate this fact are contracts between prebendaries and persons who would conduct the performances linked to their prebend. While the most well known example of this is the *ēpišānūtu*-contract, it is to be noted that the term is not strictly limited to this class of documents.²¹⁴

A good example of a text in which the guarantee formula for punctuality is included is BM 102033, an *ēpišānūtu*-contract written in Borsippa during the reign of Cyrus.²¹⁵ It entails Bēl-iddin putting 10,5 days of his prebend at the disposal of Marduk-šumu-ibni for performing (*ana ēpišānūti*) until the end of the agreement. With the transfer of the service itself comes the transfer of the responsibility of the service. Now Marduk-šumu-ibni is responsible for the correct performance of the service, meaning that he has to approach the meal without interrupting the service or distorting the punctuality.²¹⁶

If a prebendary was to fail the delivery of a given product on time, punishment was to follow. It is in TCL 13, 162 that one encounters a clause emphasizing the punishment that will be put on the delinquent:²¹⁷

Before the 1st day of the month Addaru in the 3rd year of Cambysis, king of Babylon, king of the lands, Zēriya, son of Nanaya-ēreš, the chief herdsman, shall bring 355 lambs for the whole year from the remainder owed by him and from the remainder owed by the herdsmen, his workers, and give them for the regular offerings of the Lady-of-Uruk starting on the 1st day of the month Šabāṭu. If he does not come and give (the lambs), he will bear the penalty of the king.

(Beaulieu 2003)

The herdsman is given a clear deadline for the delivery of the remaining lambs. As seen in the text, he is also responsible for the lambs that are still owed by his workers. If he fails to deliver the lambs before the first day of the month Addaru, he will cause the regular offerings for the Lady-of-Uruk in the month Šabāṭu to cease, resulting in a penalty of the king.

²¹⁴ For the full discussion of this type of document, see Waerzeggers (2010) pp. 177-179

²¹⁵ Cf. the text editions of BM 26569, BM 109875, BM 94699, BM103474 and BM29441 in Waerzeggers (2010); while all are concerned with the brewers' prebend of the Ezida temple in Borsippa, not all documents are *ēpišānūtu*-contracts, yet, they all put a similar emphasis on the punctuality of the service given to the one who is to perform the performance.

²¹⁶ Waerzeggers notes here that the inclusion of the guarantee formulas indicates that the ones to whom the service was given were expected to perform temple service - Waerzeggers (2010) p. 413; it is remarkable that the inclusion of the guarantee formula of punctuality is not included in similar contracts of the bakers' prebend. In these contracts it is only the purity of the product that is emphasized. This might be due to the fact that it was a given fact that a product had to be delivered at the right time, but that is up for discussion. For examples of these contracts, see BM 294553, BM 29110 and BM 29444 in Waerzeggers (2010).

²¹⁷ Cf. NCBT 648 and YOS 7, 163 in Beaulieu (2003), in which similar deliveries have to be made. Here, the punishment is to be determined by the governor of Babylon.

3.5 The King as Judge and Judgment by the Royal Officials

Now that we have discussed the basis on which members of the temple cult could be prosecuted, it is important to consider how the king was involved within this process and how judgment and punishment were put to practice. Waerzeggers (2011) argues that it was the king's task to ultimately guarantee the continuation and quality of the offerings,²¹⁸ forcing him to show active interest in the arbitration of cultic negligence.²¹⁹ In a letter found in the context of the Neo-Babylonian scribal curriculum,²²⁰ an Old Babylonian situation is sketched in which the ideal priest is telling the king about his colleagues who are committing a crime against the gods. For this crime, the sacrilegious priests are to be burnt and roasted. The king Samsu-Iluna intervenes and saves the temple from evil.²²¹

Even though Waerzeggers rightfully describes the letter as being apocryphal, there is much more information to be distilled from it. First, the fact that it was included in the scribal curriculum is telling. This means that the scribes got to know the consequences of sacrilegious behavior against the gods. These informed scribes, who could become part of the priestly collegium, were therefore also informed about the actions to perform when they encountered such abominable behavior. In this way, the king could implement his royal propaganda into the members of the cult at an early stage. Secondly, as rightfully pointed out by Waerzeggers (2011), it shows how the ideal correspondence between temple, priests and king was to be conducted.²²² Here, I would like to argue that it can serve as evidence in the question whether Neo-Babylonian kings were also sent letters by priests in the case of cultic misbehavior. While we do not have any letters that were actually sent, we do have letters in the case of the Neo-Assyrian king.²²³ Through the evidence of the apocryphal letter, composed in the Neo-Babylonian period, we might conclude that a similar correspondence might have existed.

3.5.1 Judgment of Errors in Practice

While the documents above show that the practitioners of religious actions had to make sure that the produce they delivered to the temple was pure, it is also shown that when they failed to do so, a penalty would follow. The interesting thing, however, is that the king was not the one who would decide how the delinquent was punished. In the case of Anum-šumu-līšir, who was put in shackles by the *šatammu*, the delinquent was waiting for his judgment by the temple official. The bakers, who had to guarantee their good care for the food, would be fined by the temple administration.

This shows that the king had no direct influence on the process of punishment, yet he did have his indirect influence on how the ones trespassing divine law would be punished. The temple administration, as shown above, consisted of the *šangû* (or *šatammu* in the bigger sanctuaries) and the

²¹⁸ See chapter 3.5 for the consequences of ritual negligence and failure.

²¹⁹ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 741

²²⁰ An apocryphal letter, set in the Old Babylonian period. For the text edition, see Al Rawi and George (1994).

²²¹ Waerzeggers (2011) p. 741

²²² Waerzeggers (2011) p. 741

²²³ See the letter sent about Pūlu, who turned the temple upside down - Cole and Machinist (1998).

qipu. While the *qipu* was an official that was installed by the king, the *šatammu* was a member of the temple personnel that was promoted to a higher function, mostly from the function of temple-scribe. It is due to this that Kozuh (2013) argues that the judgment made by the temple administration is one of mixed interests.²²⁴ On the one hand, I would argue, the king would have the benefits of keeping a strict eye on temple affairs and would have the opportunity to show his authority through the *qipu*. In general, it would show that the king safeguarded ritual purity. The temple on the other hand, could filter out potential dangers to the cult.

²²⁴ Kozuh (2013) p. 58; he adds to this the fact that the social standing of the prebendaries also played an important role in how the priests were punished. He states that due to their high status, real punishment was out of the question. Their deep and local roots would have been a reason for this, since capitally punishing them would result in the higher layers of society rebelling, or at least organizing protests against the king.

Discussion

When discussing the function of the king in the daily offerings, it is important to keep several aspects in mind. First, the king had to fulfill the obligations of kingship as described in the myth *Enuma Eliš* and as seen in the negative confessions that the king had to recite during the New Year's Festival when he was to be re-instated in the office of king. Part of his function must therefore have been theological. The king had to supply the cult with the necessary goods and needed to protect the temples and their priests to ensure the continuation of the daily meal. The support of the king to the cult must have led to legitimization of the reign of each of the Neo-Babylonian kings.

Here, I would like to argue that the legitimization of the reign of each of the kings was mostly, but not entirely, linked to the daily offerings and the way in which a king interacted with the cult. Nebuchadnezzar, a direct descendent of king and founder of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Nabopolassar, uses the daily offerings and his improvement of the offerings to mirror the wealth of the land. His pious actions have led up to the gods giving fertility to the land. This changes with the reign of Neriglissar, who was not the rightful heir to the throne, but ascended by murdering the son of Nebuchadnezzar, Amēl-Marduk. Neriglissar instead uses the daily meal to legitimize his somewhat vague means of ascending the throne. By emphasizing his pious actions, he wants to show that he was a man possessing the means necessary to fulfill the duties of the office of king.

Secondly, the interaction between the king and the priests was underscored by socio-political motivations. The kings held tight control over the temples and were not hesitant to change the administration when necessary. This is mostly seen when a new king ascended the throne and needed the support of the higher echelons of society, of which the priests were prominent members. The relevant texts show how the different kings interacted with the temples, indicating that a significant part of the interactions was based on mutual trust. Nebuchadnezzar only changed the administration of the Eanna temple when his trustees, with whom he had worked in the past, went out of office. Nabonidus however made some significant changes as soon as he ascended the throne. This trust, I would like to argue, entailed the kings trusting the priests with the stream of goods that was part of the daily offerings. Royal officials had to ensure that the right amounts of leftovers of the daily meal and income of the royal prebends were sent to the palace.

Furthermore, it was of the utmost importance that the king could trace the developments in the social composition of the priests. Priesthood had been a privilege to the more important families of the cities, making them an important player in the social landscape of Babylonia and while the king had significant control over the administrative layers of the temples, his control over the priesthood itself was limited. By keeping tight control over the process of initiation, the king could balance out his lack of control over priesthood. He could not sever the link between the gods and the priests that were already in office, but he could control the ones who were entering priesthood.

Conclusion

This thesis was concerned with studying the role of the Neo-Babylonian kings in the context of the daily offerings, examining the aspects relevant to the daily cult. The role of the king was ordained by the gods and was to reflect Marduk's performance of the tasks he accepted when he received his sovereignty over the gods in the myth of Enuma Eliš. The task that Marduk had to perform was to lead his people to prosperity and success. He could achieve this by acting as caretaker for the shrines of the gods, as stated by Lahmu in the myth of Enuma Eliš. This role as caretaker was further explicated in the oath that the gods pledged to Marduk. He was the one to establish the great food offerings for his fathers and he had to maintain and protect them. While Marduk was the one who had to establish and maintain the offerings, he was not the one who had to perform them. For their performance, he had to appoint people to take care of the actual rituals.

On earth, the task of establishing and maintaining the offerings was ordained to the king. He was elected by the gods, even before he was born. In cultic reality, this meant that he was the one who had to supply the temple with the necessary means to perform their rituals and protect them from potential danger. It was first and foremost the task of the king to guarantee the continuity of the divine task given to him by his lord Marduk. In addition to this, he had to appoint people to perform the actual cultic rituals. This would result in the complex system of prebends. Because of the fact that the king himself was not a priest, he did not have the necessary connection to the gods to offer his foods directly to his superiors. He needed cultic specialists that could cross the boundary between the divine and human realm. It were the priests who were able to provide the gods with the offerings and supplication of the king.

For this reason, it is to be concluded that the function of the king during the daily cult was an external one, one that showed a certain degree of exclusion from the rites that were performed. His only task was to supply (*zanānu*) the temple with the necessary products to be able to perform their offerings and maintain and guarantee the quality of its continuation. If something was to go wrong, or went wrong, it was the king who had to solve the problem; he was the one who had to judge the delinquents involved in the cultic error. In practice, however, for the most part the royal representatives actually performed the judgment. The ultimate goal was to appease the hearts of the gods and receive the divine blessings from them.

The role of the king changed from a passive to an active one when the country had to be directly represented before the gods. The first and most clear example of this is the role of the king during the New Year's Festival. During this festival, the roles of king and priests were reversed. The priest would remove the royal insignia and take the king into the cella of Marduk, to make him recite the 'negative confessions'. This meant that the king had to swear that he had taken good care of the city of Babylon. After his confessions, the high-priest would hit him on the cheek. If Marduk was

pleased with the king and gave a sign of good fortune to the high-priest, he was allowed to re-instate the king.

Another example of the king taking an active role in the cult was during prayers that were concerned with general threats to the land. If the land was struck by an earthquake, it was seen as a sign that the king had sinned. In this case, he had to perform a lamentation prayer. The Èršahuṇa-prayer served the purpose to ask the gods for forgiveness and to get them to be at peace again. This gives the impression that the king had caused the gods to be enraged, by breaking their divine law. It is interesting to note here, that while the king is directly 'speaking' to the gods, he still needs a *kalû* to bring offerings and give these extra gifts directly to the gods. This indicates once more that the king had a different link with the gods than the priests.

On a different, less religious level it can be stated that the daily cult, with special emphasis on the daily meal, served as a measuring rod with which completion of the divine mandate of the king could be measured. It was through the pious deeds of the king that the land received fertility. If this fertility was gained, the land would overflow with produce, resulting in overflowing offering tables. The well-being of the people was an outward sign and the ultimate proof that the king had fulfilled his divine duty. Pushing the argument further, one could say that the royal inscriptions used the daily meal to legitimize the king's position as ultimate, human authority over the Babylonian region. They were the pious leaders, chosen by the gods. In return for their divine election, they would give them gifts, in the form of buildings and foodstuffs, prayer and music, just like the Old-Babylonian kings before them.

It was Nabopolassar, a non-Babylonian, who first created this way of legitimizing his kingship. The divine election was chosen to hide his uncertain pedigree, the deeds of gifting to link himself to the Old-Babylonian kings. The lack of mentioning of the divine offering is explained by an analysis of the socio-economic situation in which he founded his empire. He had to rebuild his empire and create social stability; he was the one who got divine support and expelled the Assyrians from Babylonian soil. It was not until his son, Nebuchadnezzar II, that the divine meal got its first mentioning in royal inscriptions, written by a king that belonged to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Now, with a great new empire at hand, it was Nebuchadnezzar II who could promote his lavish gifting and use it as an indicator of success. More lavishly than before were the food offerings given to the gods.

Future Research:

Future research could focus on the development of the '*topos*' of the daily offerings in royal inscription from different time-periods, both Babylonian and Assyrian. This would shed new light on the development of the '*topos*' itself, as well as on the aspects that the Neo-Babylonian kings adopted for their inscriptions.

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