Ancient Knowledge Networks

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It can appear at first glance that Assyrian scholarship was predominantly court-based and Babylonian scholarship temple-based, but that is more to do with the nature of the evidence than with any ancient reality. As Chapter 4 showed, a close reading of the Neo-Assyrian royal correspondence reveals that while asûs and barûs had only royal (and perhaps private) clientele, the âšipus and kalûs were at least partly based in the temples as well as in the court, and moved between them. The courtly ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil were also secular in function, though âšipus, kalûs and even the chief priest of Aššur’s temple could write celestial divination reports to the king. Beyond the confines of royal patronage, it is difficult to see how such a calling could be a primary profession, as who would their clientele have been? Outside the royal court, the âšipus of the Baba-šumu-ibni family in seventh-century Assur were attached to the temple of Aššur, while their learned associates the Bel-kundi-ila’i family were scribes of the same institution. At Huzirina, Qurdi-Nergal was a šangû-priest of Zababa and Baba. So although the court was a major source of scholarly support in seventh-century Assyria, it was not the only one, even for the most elite of learned men. Conversely, at the start of Chapter 5 I argued for the presence of scholars at the Babylonian royal court, especially in the early first millennium, up to the end of the sixth century BC. Here I begin by surveying the evidence for scholarly lives and livelihoods in other institutional and social spaces in Babylonia at that time. I focus first on administrative archives and scholarly tablets found in temples, then consider the view from the domestic sphere. We shall see that the relationships between Babylonian temples and scholars – which I have glossed over so far – were in fact more complex than perhaps previously allowed.
I also argued in Chapter 5 that the northern Babylonian urban revolts against Darius and Xerxes in the decades around 500 BC led to large-scale reprisals that could have been fatal for cuneiform culture, and for scholarship in particular, if they had been pursued any further. Even so, the period amounted to a ‘survival bottleneck’ for the scholarly professions, whose effects were felt particularly harshly amongst the communities most closely associated with Nebuchadnezzar’s old Chaldean dynasty and who agitated for its return. In the previous chapter I focused especially on the kings’ subsequent removal of themselves from the long-established cuneiform knowledge network, and to scholarly reactions to that absence from Late Babylonian Uruk. I now consider the real-life consequences for the survivors. How did the social geographies of cuneiform knowledge adapt to this new political reality in different parts of Babylonia? Finally, I test the claim, made in Chapter 5, that the community and its networks really were radically reduced and demonstrate that the extant Late Babylonian evidence is not just an artefact of modern excavation patterns.

Scholars in temples in the long sixth century BC

The ašipu, kalû and barû have all tended to be seen as priests in the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods. For the first two terms, standard dictionaries of Akkadian offer translations such as ‘incantation priest’ and ‘lamentation priest’ while the Realexikon der Assyriologie treats all three professions as cultic personnel. But major new initiatives in the study of Neo-Babylonian priesthood and temple economy now suggest that the situation is not as clear-cut as was once thought. First I shall briefly consider what is meant by the term ‘priest’ at this period, taking Caroline Waerzeggers’ work as my starting point.

Although Assyriology has traditionally defined the priest as a professional intermediary between the human and divine worlds, for Waerzeggers the role of the Neo-Babylonian priest was simply ‘to maintain the cult and to perform the worship of the gods correctly and diligently’. In other words, he (and in the first millennium BC it was always he) had no pastoral role in the community. Waerzeggers bases her arguments on three types of document from the temples themselves. First are those concerning prebends, or rights to shares in temple income in return for cultic service on set days of the month or year. This practice goes back to at least the early second millennium in Babylonia but is not attested at all in Assyria. Second are records relating to the selection and
consecration of priests; and third are royal land grants – the *kudurrus* we first met in Chapter 5. In short, Waerzeggers’ argument goes like this. The king, as the gods’ chosen representative on earth, had the ultimate right to select priests but in practice appointments were based on two criteria: ownership of legal title to the role, in the form of a prebend; and physical suitability (purity, bodily fitness, legitimate descent from a priestly line). It was not enough to have inherited or bought a prebend. Potential priests were also subject to extensive scrutiny of their family backgrounds and physical condition. They then underwent a complex ceremony of purification to prepare them for the role, and had to regularly renew that status through washing, shaving and appropriate dress.

Waerzeggers distinguishes four types of priests: ritualists, as might be expected, who took care of cultic performance; caterers, who provided and prepared the gods’ food and drink; artisans, who looked after the fabric of the temple and the gods’ material needs; and bureaucrats, who controlled and inspected the flow of goods and people coming in and out of the building.⁵ The first group primarily comprised the head priest – *šatammu* in larger establishments, *šangû* in smaller ones – plus the *ērib būti* ‘temple-enterers’, those who were allowed into the inner sanctuaries of the gods, as well as specialist performers. The second and third groups included artisanal professions such as brewers, bakers, oxherds and table-setters, who worked mostly in the outer court(s); plus carpenters and weavers, potters and jewellers. The fourth group contained scribes and measurers, gatekeepers and barbers (who maintained the other priests’ cultic purity). All of these men held prebends in particular specialisms, which spelled out their duties, days of office and remuneration, and all were subject to the social and bodily constraints of priesthood. In smaller temples, individuals might hold prebends in more than one priesthood but prebendary specialism was the norm in the larger ones.

Priests maintained their own workshops and storerooms (*šutummu*) within the temple precinct, where they kept their cultic equipment and clothing, and which could be bought, sold and inherited as private property (Fig. 5.4).⁶ It is reasonable to suppose that priests also kept tablets in their *šutummu*, whether family archives or scholarly works.⁷ The voluminous finds from early, informal excavations may thus come from such structures, or from domestic contexts, or both, as well as or instead of central temple archives.

On the face of it, we should expect the scholarly professions to be highly visible in the prebendary community, not least because of the royal grants and income rights that were given in perpetuity to *āšipus, bārûs* and *kalûs* in the early first millennium BC (Chapter 5). Here, for
instance, are the entitlements that king Marduk-zakir-šumi bestowed on the kalû Ibni-Ištar of Uruk and his descendants in 854 BC (Fig. 6.1): 8

12 kurru of arable land, 2 sātu per ikû by the large cubit (i.e. c. 25 ha): a meadow in Uruk on the bank of the Royal Canal, adjacent to the grain warehouse, next to the Šangû-Priest’s Canal; its short end is Cow Road, and its long side is the opening of the Old Canal (in a) sector (belonging) to no-one.

8 built houses, 2 yards, along with an outbuilding next to the Eanna temple in the Narrow Gate;
the house of Zabdi-li, servant of Mušallim-Marduk of the Amukkanu tribe: his house, his garden and 5 of his family.
1 qâ of bread, 1 qâ of first-class beer in front of the goddess Nanaya;
1 qâ of bread, 1 qâ of first-class beer in front of the goddess Kanisurra;
1 qâ of bread, 1 qâ of first-class beer in front of the gods Anu and Ellil;
bread, first-class beer, mersu-cake, fish, vegetables, enough for three temple-enterers;
four bowlfuls from the Peace-of-the-Temple ritual;
one sheep from before the gods (in general); the neck of a bull (and) the neck of a ram, from the regular offerings and the monthly offerings; the royal offering; the priestly offering;
monthly 2 sātu of barley, is the ration of the temple’s šangû-priest, according to the sātu measure;
from which are withheld the temple’s dues, as much as there is, 1 sātu per kurru (i.e. 1/30th);
from the disbursements a handful, namely 12 akalu (per kurru, i.e. 1/200th);
1 qâ of bread, 1 qâ of first-class beer from the shrine of the god Sin in the courtyard.

The kalûs’ prebend that Marduk-zakir-šumi, king of Babylon, bestowed on Ibni-Ištar, descendant of Hunzu, scribe of the Eanna temple, his servant, always, unto distant days.

There then follows a series of curses that will befall anyone who tampers with the inscription or otherwise attempts to invalidate its legality.
It concludes with a list of half a dozen illustrious witnesses, topped by crown prince Marduk-balassu-iqbi and tailed by its scribe, one Šumu-ušur, a kalû of Marduk. The whole is inscribed on a modestly sized (33 ×
Figure 6.1: A *kudurru*-stone recording Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-šumi’s grant of land in perpetuity to the *kalû*-lamenter Ibni-Ištar in Uruk, c. 850 BC. AO 6684, maximum dimensions 320 × 150 × 50 millimetres. Photo © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Thierry Ollivier.
15 centimetres) but elegantly executed limestone tablet, illustrated with the donation scene and its divine protectors. It was found in illicit excavations at Uruk in the early twentieth century and was purchased by the Louvre Museum in 1914.

The essence of the contract is as follows: Ibni-Ištar receives previously unowned farmland, substantial real estate and slaves as a means to support himself and his descendants quite comfortably. He also receives the right to a fixed quantity of the daily sacrifices after they have been offered to the second-ranking deities of the Eanna temple – not Ištar herself but her immediate entourage – as well as its lesser divine inhabitants, plus a fixed proportion of the temple’s non-sacrificial income. In return for this handsome reward Ibni-Ištar undertakes to perform kalûtu for Ištar in Eanna, on top of his current prebendary roles. As spelled out in a section of the text not translated above, he was already a scribe of Eanna – one of the temple’s most senior administrators – and also a temple-enterer of Nanaya and šangû-priest of the minor goddess Usûr-amassa. Unlike the gifts of land and property that Assyrian kings made to their court scholars, this was not an informal patronage arrangement that could be revoked at any time but a legally binding transfer of ownership in perpetuity, witnessed by divine and elite human onlookers. In this way, the Babylonian kings unwittingly created the mechanism by which cuneiform scholarship could outlive their systematic support for many centuries. Members of the Hunzu family were still writing scholarly tablets and receiving prebendary income in Uruk – albeit as āšipus, not kalûs – until at least the late third century bc (online Table B11).

In this light, we might expect to find abundant evidence for prebendary scholars in Neo-Babylonian temples but in fact it is surprisingly sparse (online Table B2). In Uruk, no scholarly prebends actually appear in the Eanna temple documentation of the long sixth century but, as Martin Kümmel suggests, that does not mean that there were none. We have already seen Ibni-Ištar, recipient of a kalû’s prebend in the ninth-century Eanna. A slightly later scheme for the redistribution of sacrificial meat in Eanna includes both āšipus and kalûs amongst the classes of prebendary recipients. At least some of the regime it describes may still have been operational in the sixth century but that hypothesis remains unproven. The only unambiguous references known to me are from Šamaš’s temple Ebabbar in Sippar in the late sixth century. First, in 527 bc a large quantity of grain is disbursed to an āšipu or an intermediary, representing the surplus of all the offerings for the first three months of the year ‘of the festival of the temple for the ērib bitti and the āšipu’s prebend’. Second, in 510 bc Nidinti-Marduk of the Ilê-i-Marduk family leased the income
of an āšipu’s prebend along with other types of offering to another man, presumably because he was temporarily unable to perform the duties himself. In another document he receives grain ‘from all the offerings of the āšipu of Isin’, either on that person’s behalf or in his own right. We shall return to Nidinti-Marduk later in the chapter, because he and/or his associates also wrote large numbers of medical tablets, many of them clearly scribal exercises.

Next there are scholars known by the title <profession> of <deity>: six bārûs of Šamaš and Adad in Sippar in 604 bc; a kalû of Ištar-Annunitu in mid-sixth-century Sippar; two kalûs of Nabû in late eighth- and late fifth-century Borsippa; and the many kalûs of Ištar-of-Uruk and Nanaya spanning the mid-eighth to mid-sixth centuries. These men clearly played formal roles in temple affairs, but it is impossible to know whether those roles were prebendary. Likewise, Aplaya, the chief bārû who paid a tithe in barley to the Ebabbar in Sippar in 574 bc, must have had a formal connection to the temple. This evidence is still very meagre given the huge size of the extant temple documentation, even allowing for the vagaries of preservation.

Even more inscrutable are titles of the type <profession> of <city>: we have seen an āšipu of Isin mentioned in relation to Nidinti-Marduk above, while a scholarly tablet deposited in Sippar’s E-ulmaš temple was apparently written ‘by dictation from … an āšipu of Nippur’. We cannot deduce from them any social or institutional standing beyond the explicit geographical associations.

**Scholarly tablet collections in the temple**

As that last example hints, scholarly tablets deposited in temples paint a fuller picture of scholarly activity around temples – though again we cannot infer contractual relationships from them. We are used to thinking of temples’ scholarly tablet collections as reference ‘libraries’ of some sort. Recent work, however, has begun to challenge that assumption. For instance, in the mid-1980s an Iraqi team excavated some 400–500 scholarly tablets from pigeonholes in a secluded storage room in E-ulmaš, the small temple dedicated to the sun-god Šamaš’s divine consort Ištar-Annunitu that was annexed to the enormous Ebabbar in Sippar. This find is popularly known as the ‘Sippar Library’ but, as Markus Hilgert has demonstrated, it was probably nothing of the sort. Although only about thirty tablets have published so far, their colophons contain dates ranging from the late seventh to the mid-sixth century bc and feature
kalûs, ašipus and an apprentice barû from several different families (online Tables B3–B5). Amongst them, the descendants of Paharu, Šangu-Akkade and Šangu-Sippar are all well attested in the archives of the next-door Ebabbar as scribes, while many members of the latter family also held brewers’, bakers’ or temple-enterers’ prebends. Hilgert estimates that nearly 30 per cent of the tablets contain passages from the standard omen series, mostly Barûtu, while lexical lists make up another 20 per cent and kalûtu laments a further 12 per cent (Fig. 6.2, Table 6a. Myths and epics comprise just under 10 per cent of the whole, while the remaining 30 per cent of the identified assemblage includes historical texts, hymns and prayers, commentaries, medical, hemerological, astronomical and other works. No rituals, catalogues or school exercises have been identified.

Let us assume, as throughout this book, that the surviving tablets are a reasonably representative sample of what was originally to be found there: that is, that there had been no systematic removal of particular genres at the end of the building’s life, and that surviving tablets held more or less the same types of composition as long-perished writing-boards. Then it is clear that this was not a working library for the use of temple personnel. We have already seen that there is only the slenderest evidence for prebendary barûs in Neo-Babylonian Sippar, so the fact that Barûtu accounts for 17 per cent of the whole assemblage is already curious. Equally, the fact that there are negligible numbers of hymns, prayers and rituals – exactly the sorts of works one would think might be most useful for cultic activity – would be just as difficult to explain away. Conversely, what use would temple ritualists have for large numbers of lexical lists?

Looking in more detail at the content and disposition of the tablets in the pigeonholes – insofar as that data has been published – these suspicions are confirmed. Some of the fifty-six niches in the walls were packed with tablets three rows deep, meaning that most were impossible to browse or access by sight. Conversely, though each niche had room for about sixty tablets stored in this way, some 85 per cent of the room’s storage capacity was left empty (although it is likely, of course, that significant numbers of writing-boards were originally kept there too). Nor is any system apparent in the grouping of tablets in those niches. For instance, Niche 3A contained a copy of Tablet III of the ritual series Mîs Pî, which was used to inaugurate and activate cult statues, plus Tablets I, III, IX and XIII of Lugale, an epic of the god Ninurta whose first-millennium version ran to fifteen chapters. At least three of the four Lugale tablets were made by a certain Nabu-eṭir-napšati of the Paharu family. Similarly,
Table 6a: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in Neo-Babylonian temples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astrological</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomical</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemerological</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns and Prayers</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incantations and Rituals</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omens</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of tablets</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See the note to Table 4b.
° Merges Hilgert’s categories of lamentation with incantations (no rituals); excludes the 103 unidentified fragments.

Figure 6.2: Provisional percentages of scholarly genres in the Neo-Babylonian temples. SE = Sippar E-ulmaš; UE = Uruk Eanna. Source: author.
the room seems to have yielded only Tablets I, II, IV and V of perhaps eleven chapters of the flood myth *Atrahasis*. Three were stored together in niche 6A, the other in niche 1D with, amongst others, a manuscript of Tablet I of the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*. Only two colophons of the *Atrahasis* tablets have been published but they come from disparate sources: Tablet I was ‘written from speech’, while the ašipu Nanaya-apal-iddina, son of Dabibu, copied Tablet II ‘according to its original’. The assemblage also included no fewer than three copies of Tablet III of the eight-part lexical list *Malku = Šarru*, one copy of Tablet I, and none at all of the other six. There is little evidence, in other words, for any systematic approach to the production, acquisition or storage of a ‘library’. Not only are there significant gaps in the collection (which may of course have been filled by writing-boards), but chapters of the same work came from disparate sources, often in multiple copies, and were shelved in no particular order.

Hilgert thus concludes that this find was no ‘temple library’ but rather a ‘tablet depository’ of copies of standard compositions (and not, for the most part, original works), made by educated members of the local elite families and presented to the temple as offerings. This very attractive argument neatly accounts for the tablets’ eclecticism, their apparent disorganisation and the variety of producers and owners. But – at least on the colophons of the tablets published so far – there are no votive inscriptions dedicating the tablet to a deity ‘for the life’ or health of the scribe or a beloved. Such dedications are a distinguishing feature of, for instance, Ashurbanipal’s tablets destined for the Ezida temple in Nineveh, as opposed to the ones written for his personal use (see Chapter 4). They also feature on some of the elementary school tablets of Nabu ša haré’s temple in Babylon (see Chapter 5). Conversely, four of the nineteen E-ulmaš colophons published to date include borrowing clauses – such as ‘Whoever fears Nabu should return (if) lost’ – which are much more typical of domestic scholarly collections like those from Huzirina and Assur. On present evidence then (and much of the detail of this interpretation is bound to change as the whole assemblage becomes available), it is likely that they were not written expressly as votive offerings but found their way to the temple, having been produced for other purposes. Whatever the case, though, it is clear from their find circumstances that these tablets were in storage when the temple was abandoned, not in active use.

The scholarly tablets from Eanna in Neo-Babylonian Uruk tell a similar picture. About 250 were excavated from the northern end of the temple’s main courtyard in 1928–9, scattered amongst a few thousand
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administrative records in a context badly disturbed by prior looters. Due to their fragmentary condition, only about half have been published to date. A few scholarly tablets from the illicit digs can also be identified as Eanna’s property on the basis of their colophons, giving a total available corpus of roughly 140, about eighteen (13 per cent) of which have colophons. As in E-ulmaš, the tablets were produced by and for men of several different families involved in the prebendarist priesthood: the descendants of Dabibu (scribes and šatammus), Ekur-zakir (mostly oxherds), Sin-leqi-unninni (a kalū), Šangu-Ea and Šangu-parakki. Five men identified themselves as āšipus, including one descendant of Šangu-parakki, a family otherwise known as prebendarist oxherds. As the scribe and his father both bore northern Babylonian names – Itti-Marduk-balaṭu and Mušallim-Marduk – it is likely that the Šangu-parakki āšipus did not survive Darius’s temple reforms (see Chapter 5).

Over half of Eanna’s scholarly tablets contain omens, mostly Sakikkû (28 per cent of the whole) and Enāma Anu Ellil (13 per cent), as well as significant numbers of kalūtu and other incantations and rituals (21 per cent). The remaining one-quarter of the corpus consists mostly of small quantities of hymns, medical recipes, lexical texts, literary works and other standard omen series. Also, as in E-ulmaš, the large majority of the tablets are copies of standard works (with originals from Babylon and Borsippa as well as Uruk); only a small handful are commentaries. And amongst the colophons there are just three votives for the life of the scribe, including one dedicated to Ištar-of-Uruk. All three are described as makkār Eanna ‘property of Eanna’ but none are formally excavated tablets. In short, although the Eanna scholarly tablets are fragmentary, partially published and apparently not discovered in primary archaeological context, their collective characteristics are at least consistent with those of E-ulmaš.

Finds from nineteenth-century digs at Babylon and Borsippa also suggest similar scenarios. Surprisingly, only one possible scholarly tablet (and half a dozen tablets of other types) has been found in Esangila itself. But, as Olaf Pedersén notes, this is because the excavation was conducted by tunnelling along the walls rather than by uncovering the floor surfaces of the rooms: much may remain in situ. Nevertheless, votive colophons on tablets from informal nineteenth-century excavations show that several āšipus deposited scholarly tablets in Esangila, on dates unknown. In Borsippa, meanwhile, an āšipu of the Arkat-ilani-damqa family deposited a learned commentary in Ezida ‘for the well-being of his life’. Although the tablet is undated, it must have been copied in the Neo-Babylonian period, as the Arkat-ilani-damqa kin-group
did not survive the ‘end of archives’. At least five other members of this family held *erib-bti* prebends at Ezida, while seven held the office of city governor.\(^{42}\) This clan clearly belonged to the elite of Borsippa.

It appears, then, especially on the evidence of E-ulmaš and Eanna, that scholars could give tablets to temples, just like the trainees in Babylon did (Chapter 5), either as bespoke votive offerings or as ones they had already written earlier. The deposited works are, so far as we can tell, almost exclusively copies of standard scholarly and literary works, rather than commentaries or original compositions. There is no colophon evidence at all that they were intended to form any sort of working library in the temple: no references to reading or use, as we saw in the Baba-šumu-ibni and Nur-Šamaš collections in seventh-century Assyria, for instance (Chapter 4). Rather, these works were kept in deep storage. However, as we shall see, copies of temple tablets also made their way into private collections, so that this storage cannot have been completely inaccessible. Likewise, the find context of the Eanna tablets suggests that at the end of the temple’s life someone took them out and searched through them, looking for useful content. The copyists of those tablets were all from well-connected prebendary families but were not always holders of scholarly titles.

A third set of evidence for the activities of scholars in temples comes from the official documentation of the temple. Four ‘*kalûs* of the Lady of Uruk’ (namely Ištar) appear together in a deposition to the senior officials of Eanna in 531 bc: three descendants of Sin-leqi-unninni, including the *kalamâhu* ‘senior laments’, plus a man of the Iddin-Ellil family. They collectively admit to having performed a public kettledrum ritual against the evil of an eclipse without the permission of the Eanna’s administrator or its royal representative:

> On the 13th day of Simanu (month IV), in the 8th year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king of the lands, when we placed the copper kettledrum at the gate of Eanna, we did not consult with Nabu-mukin-apli, the *šatammu* of Eanna, son of Nadin, descendant of Dabibu, or with Nabu-aha-iddin, the royal official, commissioner of Eanna, about placing the kettledrum (there). And they did not approach us about it until it was time for to remove the kettledrum.\(^{43}\)

A similar document, dated three days earlier, suggests that they – or someone else in Uruk – had also instructed three *kalûs* of Šamaš’s Ebabbar temple in nearby Larsa to do the same:\(^{44}\)
On the 13th day of Simanu, in the 9th year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king of the lands, after sunset the kalûs of Ebabbar placed a copper kettledrum at the gate of Ebabbar and declared, 'Eclipse!' And all the people of Larsa saw our placing of the copper kettledrum.

As Beaulieu and Britton argue, the kalûs had (mis)calculated the date and time of the ritual, resulting in an elaborate, expensive and humiliating fiasco when the eclipse failed to appear to their very public drumming and lamentation. These two documents are revealing in many respects. Most obviously, they show that the kalûs of Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Larsa performed in groups, in the streets of the city as well as in the temple, on the basis of mathematical calculations that they themselves made (for no-one else was held to account for the error). They were answerable to senior officials and the assembly of priests for their actions, and a representative of the crown also took an interest.

Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, though, the Eanna documentation collectively suggests a reason for the lack of clear evidence for scholarly professions elsewhere. Three of the four Uruk kalûs are identifiable in other Eanna documents through their patronyms and family names, and the chief kalû Šamaš-tabni-usur held a ṭūpšar Eanna prebend just like his ninth-century predecessor Ibni-Ištar (online Table B2). Yet these two depositions constitute the only surviving record of their scholarly titles. This fact suggests that scholarly titles were not normally used in administrative documentation or in routine legal contexts such as witnessing. Rather they were reserved for acts of ritual performance – even when those performances went wrong – and for scholarly writing and copying. Finally, as I have argued elsewhere, these depositions hint at an explanation for the universal absence (so far) of any ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil in Neo-Babylonian temple archives or tablet collections. As in the Neo-Assyrian period, outside the royal court celestial observation and prediction was carried out by a variety of scholars but ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil was no-one’s primary profession or identity.

Scholars outside the temples in the long sixth century

It is becoming clear, then, that even when the professions ašipu, bārû and kalû were not demonstrably tied to temple prebends, the men who sometimes used these titles were often also holders of other prebends and/or demonstrably from prebendary families. Likewise, members of those prebendary families could deposit copies of standard scholarly
works in the temple without necessarily claiming scholarly titles. As the Uruk kalûs Ḫbi-Ištar and Šamaš-tabni-ušur demonstrate above, one could perform multiple temple-related functions, using the appropriate context-dependent title as needed. But to what extent were scholarly titles used outside temple contexts? What evidence – apart from the frustratingly uninformative <profession> of <city> – do we have for the secular performance of scholarship in the Neo-Babylonian period?

I have found no evidence at all for asûs in temple contexts and none outside Sippar for barûs. Non-temple documentation is similarly scarce (online Table B2). To date Sippar is the only Neo-Babylonian city where asûs may be attested, possibly as late as the mid-sixth century. One (undated) Sippar man is described as ša bit asê, ‘of/from the house of the asû(s)’. However, given that Asu was a widely attested family name in northern Babylonia until at least the reign of Darius I (r. 522–486), the phrase ‘house of the asû(s)’ is just as likely to be a reference to an ancestral house or kin-group as to a physical building. That is not to say that there were no longer any asûs after the seventh, perhaps sixth, century BC, and, as we shall see, asûtu-healing was certainly still practised. Rather, the asû as a scholarly profession was no longer closely associated with the institutions – by now, essentially just temples and wealthy family businesses – which kept their records in cuneiform.

The family name Baru died out in the early seventh century but there was a bit barê ‘house of the diviner(s)’ near Dilbat – presumably analogous to the bit asê – as late as the mid-seventh century. Likewise, in Borsippa there was a ‘street of the āšipu’s (or āšipus’) house’ on which the temple owned land that it sold to its qēpu (royal resident) during the reign of Darius I. But the phrases <house> / <street> of <profession> are even less revealing than <profession> of <city> for they are just as likely to allude to past associations with scholars as reflect the identities of their current occupants. Slightly more revealing are records of state taxation, which groups of ten or fifty men or households, organised by profession and/or neighbourhood, typically paid collectively. Their contributions of silver, which could be collected directly by tax officials or entrepreneurially by tax farmers, bought hired labourers to work on state projects. For instance, a group of ten āšipus paid ‘bow-land’ tax to an agent of the city governor of Babylon in 510 BC.

In short, the evidence for real-life scholars outside the temple is disappointingly thin. But we should not be surprised by this: the kalûs of Uruk’s Eanna temple demonstrate that the use of professional titles was highly
context-dependent. Much of that context, moreover, seems to belong to the secular sphere. Our best evidence for scholarly practice comes from family archives, whether excavated intact or reconstructed from museum collections after dispersal through the market. For instance, the so-called Bel-remanni or Šangu-Šamaš A archive from early Achaemenid Sippar comprises nearly 300 tablets, roughly two-thirds of which are administrative and one-third scholarly.\(^5\) Dating from c. 570–485 BC, especially from the last few decades of that period, they concern the business and intellectual activities of the brothers Bel-remanni and Šamaš-nasir, sons of Mušebši-Marduk of the very well-connected Šangu-Šamaš or Šangu-Sippar family. Another key figure in the archive is Nidinti-Marduk son of Šamaš-šumu-lišir, descendant of Ileʾʾi-Marduk, whom we met above, who might have been a relative of theirs by marriage. The brothers held prebends in brewing and baking at Ebabbar, as well as prebends for the subsidiary shrine of the gods Adad and Šala, while – as we saw – Nidinti-Marduk was probably a prebendary ašipu. They also owned and leased substantial tracts of land in and around the city.

All ninety or so of the scholarly tablets that have been associated with these men’s administrative records contain medical writings, several in multiple copies. Most are recipes and incantations, in error-prone short extracts, written in rough handwriting and generally without colophons. One set of three duplicate manuscripts, for a recipe to cure rashes, is marked ina pî šaṭîr, literally ‘written from the mouth’, i.e. by dictation.\(^5\) Another three parallel manuscripts in more competent hands, of an incantation against witchcraft-induced phlegm, are ina pî leʾi gabari Babili šaṭîr, ‘written according to (lit. from the mouth of) a wooden writing-board, a copy from Babylon’.\(^5\) Third, a compilation of extracts from the standard plant list Uruanna is annotated, ‘tablet of Bel-eṭeru, ašipu of Marduk’ – perhaps a colleague, teacher or student of Nidinti-Marduk’s.\(^5\)

Together the tablets cover a wide range of traditional asûtu and ašipatu, along with two reference works in the emerging field of ‘astrological medicine’, by which suitable therapies were prescribed according to their associations with particular signs of the zodiac.\(^5\)

In short, the assemblage is clearly a by-product of training and professional practice in the healing arts: it contains very few reference copies of standard works, and a large number of hastily scrawled single recipes and rituals on ‘perfunctorily recycled’ clay, presumably for memorisation or immediate use.\(^6\) The old theoretical division between asûtu and ašipatu is preserved in the formats of the tablets – recipes tend to be written in portrait orientation, with text parallel to the short side of
the tablet, and rituals and incantations in landscape, parallel to the long side – albeit perhaps for practical reasons. Yet the fact that the two disciplines are found together in the same archive, in the same hands, shows incontrovertibly that the āšipu Nidinti-Marduk and his associates dealt as much in ‘physical’ therapies as in ‘spiritual’ ones. It appears too that they were learning, teaching and practising their healing arts on private clientele, outside of the ritual temple setting.

A smaller but remarkably similar archive has been reconstructed from about sixty tablets from late Achaemenid Nippur, belonging to members of the Absummu family. Although they date from c. 425–365 BC – some 60–120 years after the anti-Achaemenid revolts – I shall consider them here as Nippur had played no part in those rebellions. As a result, cultural and intellectual continuity with earlier periods seems to have been much stronger here than in Uruk or northern Babylonia. Paul-Alain Beaulieu argues that the Absummu clan had dominated the prebendary brewing profession at Ellil’s temple Ekur since at least the seventh century; if so, that implies a continuity of at least 200 years. About half of the late Achaemenid archive consists of legal documents and administrative correspondence concerning the family’s private business and their prebendary duties in Ekur, while the other comprises a variety of scholarly tablets. About half contain single medical recipes, incantations and/or short lists of therapeutic and ritual ingredients, but they also include a hymn to Ninurta, a horoscope for 410 BC, planetary observations for the years 365–364 BC, a short lexical extract and some very erudite commentaries. As in the Šangu-Šamaš A family’s scholarly archive, recipes and ingredient lists are all inscribed on very small portrait-format tablets, while all other writings are on larger square or landscape-format tablets. However, the texts themselves do not duplicate any of those in the earlier archive.

The principal protagonists are (Ellil-)Belšunu, son of (Ninurta)-nasir; his sons Ninurta-ahhe-bullīt and Zer-kitti-lešir; and their associate Taqiš-Gula of the Ellil-UŠ-Igigi family. Both Ellil-belšunu and Ninurta-ahhe-bullīt managed the temple’s flocks amongst other business. Ninurta-ahhe-bullīt was almost certainly a prebendary brewer too, as well as manager of the family’s domestic affairs. Ellil-belšunu is also named as an āšipu (online Table B3) and his father as a (prebendary) brewer of Ellil on the colophon to a commentary tablet of Sakikkû, while Zer-kitti-lešir names himself as a tupšarru sehru ‘junior scribe’, at the end of a list of deities involved in merdētu-ceremonies in Nippur’s minor shrines. No scholarly title survives for Taqiš-Gula, owner of two lexical lists and correspondent of the two
brothers. In short, the Absummu men identified principally as brewers in their formal interactions with the temple, yet their scholarly tablets reveal another side of their lives, as healers who did not simply copy texts but who performed therapies too — as evidenced by the many short, ad hoc practical writings found in their collection. Nor were their interests limited to ašipūtu: the horoscope, astronomical text and kalûtu-like writings together suggest a broad range of intellectual engagement.

The data presented here for the geography of Babylonian scholars in the long sixth century is bitty and certainly incomplete (Table 6b). We can do very little with it compared to the rich evidence for social stratification and scholarly mobility in seventh-century Assyria discussed in Chapter 4. The macro-geographical distribution in particular

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>asû</th>
<th>ašipû</th>
<th>barû</th>
<th>kalû</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sippar</td>
<td>House of the asûs(?)</td>
<td>Ebabbar temple prebend; tablets in E-ulmaš temple; familial practice</td>
<td>barû of Šamaš and Adad; chief barû; tablets in E-ulmaš temple</td>
<td>tablets in E-ulmaš temple; kalûtu of Ištar-Annunitu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>active at the royal court (Ch. 5); tablets in Esangila temple; tax-payers</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>(kalû of Marduk) (kalû of Ea?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borsippa</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>tablets in Ezida temple; house of the ašipûs(?)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>kalû of Nabu; tax-payers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilbat</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>House of the barûs(?)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nippur</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>title ‘ašipû of Nippur’; familial practice</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isin</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>title ‘ašipû of Isin’</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruk</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>(active in Eanna temple?); tablets in Eanna temple</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>active in Eanna temple; tablets in Eanna temple; kalûs of Ištar-of-Uruk and Nanaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larsa</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>active in Ebabbar temple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is highly provisional: new epigraphic finds, on site or in the museum, could easily reveal scholarly activity in cities such as Kish, Ur or Kutha. Equally, they could overturn the current impression that asûs and barûs were much less ubiquitous than ašipus and kalûs. Nevertheless, we can provisionally account for this apparent relative scarcity if we assume that, as earlier in Assyria, the Neo-Babylonian asûs and barûs (outside Sippar) were primarily secular and therefore engaged little with the temple documentation that dominates the extant written record of this time. Conversely, the micro-geographical patterns of the ašipus and kalûs are convincingly coherent: the kalûs are found only in the temple and (if earlier kudurru evidence is considered admissible) at the royal court, while the ašipus also served secular clients through familial practice. Even though we can rarely be certain whether either profession was attached to prebendary priesthood, it is clear that both titles were taken by men of prebendary families, and who may themselves have held prebends in other temple offices. Given the inherently part-time nature of all prebendary duties, all men who performed them must have also had parallel secular lives and identities; healing was but one possible component of the portfolio.

**Surviving the anti-Achaemenid revolts: Who, where and how?**

The evidence surveyed in this chapter so far has been heavily weighted towards Sippar and Uruk. That is in large part because those two city’s most important temples, Ebabbar and Eanna, did not survive into the fifth century BC. As discussed in Chapter 5, their archives and scholarly collections yield such rich information about the long sixth century because they were not available for recycling or reuse to later generations. But what of the cuneiform-literate groups that did live on?

We can split the post-revolt fates of Babylonia’s temple communities, and the scholars associated with them, into four groups that closely match the fates of the family archives tracked by Waerzeggers in her seminal article on ‘the end of archives’ (Fig. 6.3). First, as we have just seen, some (culturally) northern institutions, such as Ebabbar and Eanna, never recovered from the purges and their communities disappeared from history. For us, their story ends here. Second, some southern temples were entirely unaffected by the independence movements and the reprisals taken against them. As we saw earlier in this chapter,
Figure 6.3: The fates of the Babylonian temples after the 'end of archives'. Source: Martin Brown.
for instance, the prebendary system of Nippur’s temples survived intact. Third, some cultic communities managed to reorganise and live on, often in substantially different form. Marduk’s temple Esangila in Babylon, for example, was too big – too culturally and too economically important – to be allowed to fail completely, yet the state could not tolerate its former power. Nabu’s temple Ezida in Borsippa and Nergal’s Emeslam in Kutha also belong to this third group. Fourth, one or more entirely new institutions emerged in the aftermath of the revolts, constituted by the survivors of purged temples. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Urukeans regrouped around the Irigal and Reš temples over the course of the fourth century BC and similar scenarios may have played out elsewhere. There is of course also a provisional fifth group: several cities, including Larsa and Ur in the south and Kish and Dilbat in the north, are yet to yield any relevant data though they were apparently all still functioning urban centres well into the Late Babylonian period.\(^7\) Let us therefore take the second to fourth groups in turn.

So far, Nippur is the only city amongst those unaffected by the anti-Achaemenid revolts to have produced any clear evidence on the social geography of scholarship in Late Babylonian period. The long-running American excavations of the 1940s–1980s have not yet yielded any published archaeological contexts that are relevant to this discussion. As mentioned above, the main evidence consists of the reconstructed tablet collection of the Absummu family. We saw there that it documented two generations of men, c. 414–362 BC, some of whom were prebendary brewers and managers of the Ekur temple’s flocks while at least one other practised as a healer and identified as an āšipu. The few dated scholarly manuscripts cluster at either end of the administrative archive’s timespan: the anonymous birth horoscope from 410 BC and Taqiš-Gula’s manuscript of the lexical list Dirī, written in 400 BC, are amongst the earliest documents. The latest include Zer-kitti-lešir’s list of Nippur deities in 365 BC and some anonymous planetary observations three years later.\(^7\)

There are also half a dozen further scholarly tablets, written by prebendary brewers and priests in Late Babylonian Nippur but discovered in Uruk.\(^7\) Amongst the tablets of the Ekur-zakir family (on whom see further below), Eckart Frahm has identified four Nippur commentaries on the omen series Šumma Ālu and Ėnûma Anu Ellil, and the lexical series Aa = nâqu, probably written in the late fourth century.\(^7\) The individuals named in their colophons include a junior āšipu, prebendary brewers and a nēšakku-priest of Ellil. We should probably also add to this list a list of the temples and shrines of Nippur found in the same Uruk house, and a highly arcane commentary on kettledrum rituals, presumably found by
illicit diggers in Uruk but copied by one Ellil-kašir, kalû of Ellil, from a Nippurian copy.\textsuperscript{75}

Two isolated legal records concern the reallocation of prebendary brewing duties in the Ekur temple during the late 150s BC.\textsuperscript{76} They are not in themselves conclusive proof of scholarly activity in the second century, but they at least show that the temple remained functional, and therefore a potential venue for scholarship, until a decade or so before the Parthian conquest. Not long afterwards, Ekur was repurposed as a military garrison. Inanna’s temple, close nearby, remained in operation until at least the second century AD, likely long after the disappearance of cuneiform culture from the city.\textsuperscript{77}

What of the scholars associated with the northern temples of the third group, around Babylon and further north? In Babylon itself, epicentre of the independence revolts, reprisals were harsh and immediate, as shown in Chapter 5. We do not know exactly what Xerxes’ removal of the ziggurat Etemenanki’s staircase meant for the performance of cult, but it must have been devastating, or it would not have been worth doing, and the surviving priesthood would not have lobbied Alexander for its restoration 150 years later. As we saw in Chapter 5, the material fabric of Marduk’s temple Esangila was not maintained by later kings either. It too fell into disrepair and was eventually abandoned. Indeed, as Stefan Hauser points out, by the end of the millennium the Esangila building constructed in Nebuchadnezzar’s time lay at least 5 metres below the surface of the surrounding houses, apparently buried in a deep layer of Greco-Parthian rubble.\textsuperscript{78} Alongside this physical assault, in 484 BC Xerxes also abolished the Esangila temple’s system of prebendary priesthood, along with the leadership roles of šatammu and qēpu, depriving the temple community of its wealth and political influence.\textsuperscript{79} As Heather Baker has argued, the material consequences are also clearly visible in Babylon’s archaeological record.\textsuperscript{80} The grand houses of the wealthy city centre, from the Processional Way to the eastern wall, were largely abandoned at this time and the area – known to archaeologists by the Arabic name Merkes, ‘Centre’ – remained relatively impoverished for centuries.

However, the Achaemenid kings could not allow Marduk’s temple to fail completely. Its income was an important source of taxation revenues, while its collapse might provoke further popular revolts. Xerxes and his successors therefore allowed it to continue in a politically neutered state, playing no part in secular governance. Philippe Clancier and Julien Monerie suggest that the functioning part of Esangila was now reduced to a southern area called the Juniper Garden, known to archaeologists by the Arabic name ‘Amrān ibn ‘Alī (‘Ibn ‘Ali’s Building’).\textsuperscript{81} Clancier thinks it
is also likely to be the source of the British Museum’s copious quantities of Late Babylonian tablets, acquired by informal excavation and purchase from the 1880s onwards, that bear colophons of scholars associated with Marduk’s temple. He argues that they were probably found in similar houses to one which the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft later excavated, in early 1902. Here Robert Koldewey’s team discovered a small family archive plus a few scholarly works, from incantations to mathematical astronomy, the latest of which dates to 206 BC.

Johannes Hackl’s meticulous archival work has shown that after the ‘end of archives’ the temple began to govern itself through a body called the ūpšar u bel piqneti ša Esangila, ‘the scribes and commissioners of Esangila’, comprising representatives from the formerly prebendary professions. By the 420s BC these professions, including ašipus, kalûs and ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil, had organised themselves into guild-like structures, each headed by a kiništu, ‘assembly’ of (some of) their members. Archival records from the fourth century BC show ašipus, kalûs and ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil receiving monthly kurummatu-rations from a bel mindi ‘ quartermaster’, in place of their former prebends. As before, large numbers of individuals were involved, strongly suggesting that the new system still took care of many part-time practitioners and their immediate families (kalûs’ wives and daughters are often included). However, the absence of ancestral names from these records makes it almost impossible to judge how many kin-groups were involved. Hackl argues that this absence marks the absence of the old elite clans from the temple community. Equally, it could well be that, in this particular context, family names were redundant, for instance if particular extended family groups still held monopolies on individual temple professions. If everyone overseen by a particular kiništu were descended from the same ancestor it would be pointless to record that fact in the kiništu’s records. The few surviving dated scholarly tablets from fourth-century Babylon suggest that at least some ancestral names persisted in scholarly circles or, more conservatively, that the practice revived after the restoration of the post of šatammu in c. 360 BC.

For instance, some time after 322 BC, one Bel-apal-iddina, a descendant of Mušezeb, copied an observational diary dated to that year, as well as two sets of instructions for calculating the positions of Venus and Mercury. Both genres were innovations of the period. Bel-apal-iddina never gives a scholarly or priestly title in his colophons but, as we shall see, in later centuries members of his family identified as both kalûs and ūpšar Enûma Anu Ellil. An exact contemporary of his was Tanittu-Bel, son of Bel-aba-uṣur of the Ša-našišu family, who copied
or owned at least fourteen scholarly tablets. Tanittu-Bel’s colophons never reveal his scholarly profession either, but both Irving Finkel and Joachim Oelsner provisionally identify him as an āšipu, as his tablets predominantly comprise therapeutic rituals and incantation series such as Muššuʾu (‘Rubbing’). However, as both also note, a kalû of the same name and patronym received a kurummatu-ration from Esangila in 312 BC, just a decade or so later than the only surviving dates on Tanittu-Bel’s colophons. There is no a priori reason to suppose that a kalû could not also have interests in healing works. In the absence of further evidence Tanittu-Bel’s professional identity must remain unknown but, as before, we can infer that individuals’ cultic roles did not always transfer straightforwardly to their outside lives.

Sporadic attestations of āšipus and kalûs in Babylon continue into at least the mid-third century, in the records of the Abu-ul-ide family of entrepreneurial temple agents and in descriptions of cultic events in chronicles and observational diaries. Both professions continued to receive kurummatu-rations, run their own kiništu-assemblies and take part in the performance of Esangila’s akītu, kislīmu and kettledrum rituals. There is then an evidentiary gap of nearly 150 years – which should probably be put down to the vagaries of preservation – after which the kalûs and ṭupšar Enāma Anu Ellil resurface, as detailed below (online Table B6). It is not at all clear whether the āšipus’ absence from the documentary record of Esangila in these final two centuries BC is significant or circumstantial.

The well-known (reconstructed) archive of the Mušezib family of Babylon, comprising perhaps a dozen tablets, dates to c. 150–115 BC, spanning the final years of Seleucid rule and the tumultuous first decades of the Parthian period. Most importantly for our purposes, it includes two legal decisions of the kiništu of the ṭupšar Enāma Anu Ellil, each of which grant named practitioners the right to land and income in silver in return for regular observational and calculational work. In one case that right was awarded not only on the grounds of the claimants’ technical expertise but also on the basis that their family status trumped that of the current incumbent. The father of the two brothers, Itti-Marduk-balaṭu, had himself served as ṭupšar Enāma Anu Ellil but, most unusually, was not relinquishing his temple service through death. Rather, he had gone to the court of king Hyspaosines (r. c. 141–124 BC) of Characene, now also ruling Babylon (see Chapter 5), u enna agâ ibašši ‘and is still there’. While Itti-Marduk-balaṭu was now being paid ina hišhti ša bab šarri ‘from the resources of the king’s gate’, his sons would receive their annual stipend of 2 minas of silver ina hišhtini ‘from our (the kiništu’s)
resources’. In return they were expected to ‘do everything their father offered: (namely,) make celestial observations and present annual ephemerides tables’, in collaboration with five other named ūpšar Enūma Anu Ellil and any men who may replace them in future. The document states that Itti-Marduk-balaṭu also held the title rab banūtu ‘gardener’, as well as uppudētu ša bitāt ilāni ‘overseer of the temples’ and perhaps too <ša> muhhi āli, something like ‘city supervisor’. Meanwhile one of the ousted men, Nabu-apal-usur, son of Nabu-muṣetiq-uddi, was also a kalû. We can interpret these multiple identities either as continuing evidence for the pluralism we saw in the long sixth century, or as meaning that for at least some men ūpšar Enūma Anu Ellil was a secondary or parallel duty to their primary temple functions, as seems to have been the case in Uruk.

These legal documents, along with many others in the archive, do not give family affiliations. But the genealogy of Itti-Marduk-balaṭu and sons is identical to that found amongst nearly two dozen scholarly tablets of the Mušezebib family, spanning eight or more generations from Bel-apal-iddina in the late fourth century to (a different) Nabu-muṣetiq-uddi in 69 BC. Most record observational and mathematical astronomy, as we would expect from the discussion above, but they also include a tablet of Enūma Anu Ellil, a bilingual incantation, and literary works including Tablet X of the Epic of Gilgamesh, copied for Itti-Marduk-balaṭu by one of his sons. None of the colophons includes any scholarly titles, however, even on the works of mathematical astronomy.

The Mušezebib family were not the only cuneiform scholars of Parthian Babylon. The descendants of Egiba-tila and Nanna-utu also worked with them, and with each other. I have been able to identify some forty tablets that attest to their intellectual interests, each with an extant colophon. Three generations of the Nanna-utu family, some of whom were junior kalûs of Marduk, copied out long bilingual balaggu-liturgies, ana zamāri nashi ‘excerpted for singing’. One member of the Egiba-tila family learned balaggu-liturgies from a Nanna-utu man, while two others drew up tables of mathematical astronomy ana ṣarsa, ‘according to’ (the methods of?) Marduk-šapik-zeri, a ūpšar Enūma Anu Ellil of the Mušezebib clan. An Egiba-tila man is mentioned in connection with the performance of rites, presumably in Esangila, in a diary of 156 BC.

The cuneiform scholarly community around the Esangila temple probably never comprised more than a handful of Parthian Babylon’s estimated 20,000 highly diverse inhabitants. And by the mid-first
century bc, a few generations after the Parthian conquest, it had almost entirely disintegrated. The latest surviving archival records are those of Rahim-Esu, who provided banking services to Esangila, in 94–93 bc. The observational diaries stop mentioning sacrifices and rituals in Esangila in 78 bc, and the last known diary record of any kind is from 61 bc. The last known scholarly colophon and the last horoscope both date to 69 bc. The latest lunar and solar observations are for 41 and 10 bc respectively. The only exceptions are a few badly written almanacs and goal year texts, summary celestial forecasts used in the production of birth horoscopes. As David Brown has convincingly argued, their authors were a few decreasingly cuneiform-literate practitioners who continued to produce these genres well into the first century AD, in order to ‘exploit a shrinking market for old-fashioned astrology in cuneiform’, the last representatives of cuneiform culture.

The other northern temples had much shorter afterlives (online Table B7). At Der, 150 kilometres northeast of Babylon, āšipus and kalûs were active in the god Ištaran’s temple E-dimgal-kalama until perhaps the fourth century bc. At least half a dozen published tablets of liturgical laments and other scholarly works have colophons by such men and their apprentices. Two are expressly stated to be ana zamārišu ‘for his singing’ or ana šusmuri kalē ‘for having the kalûs sing (it)’. However, the Der tablets may have been dispersed already in antiquity: at least one of these tablets is said to have been bought (in modern times) in Babylon, while two more were excavated even further south, at Uruk in a late fourth-century context.

In Borsippa, the prebendary brewer Nabu-kušuršu of the Hušabu family copied at least twenty-four tablets of literary and lexical works during the reign of Artaxerxes I or II (454–453 or 394–393 bc) and deposited them in the Ezida. The Hušabu family is the only line of Nabu’s prebendary brewers attested after the ‘end of archives’. Many, perhaps hundreds, further scholarly tablets now in the British Museum and elsewhere may also come from this temple. The youngest known example is a highly esoteric commentary on temple rituals, copied by Bel-ahhe-iddina of the Eṭiru family in 138 bc, four years after the Parthian conquest. In Kutha, conversely, I know of no Late Babylonian scholarly tablets, but a legal document dating to 186 bc records a decision of the kiššatu of āšipus to reallocate land from a deceased member of their group to the son of another. The witnesses include a kalû, while the rest all take prebendary titles such as kutimmu ‘carpenter’, ṭabihu ‘butcher’ and strāšû ‘brewer’.
The fourth and final group of scholarly survivors to discuss are the southern families of Uruk. They remain visible in the cuneiform record after the collapse of Eanna and the resultant disappearance of their northern colleagues, presumably purged for their ties to the former Chaldean dynasty of Babylon, as discussed in Chapter 5. We can trace the aftermath through the archives of two families of ašipus who successively occupied a single house in post-Eanna Uruk. Their residence, in the southeastern quarter of the city, was excavated in the late 1960s to early 1970s by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, led by Heinrich Lenzen. The house had been rebuilt several times from the late fifth to early fourth centuries BC and again later, perhaps as late as the Parthian period.119 The descendants of Šangu-Ninurta, literally ‘priest of Ninurta’, occupied the house until about 420 BC, when they left behind about 160 scholarly tablets, including fifty-four with colophons.120 Some tablets were preserved in large storage jars but most had been scattered by later burials dug down between the walls. Medical recipes, healing rituals and incantations, and medical, terrestrial and birth omens predominate, as might be expected of a family of healers, but mathematical and metrological works also feature (Fig. 6.4, Table 6c). The most prominent individuals in the archive are Šamaš-iddin, his sons Anu-ikṣur and Rimut-Anu and Anu-ikṣur’s son Anu-ušallim – all traditional Urukean names (online Table B8).121 As I have discussed elsewhere, the younger generations copy for the older men, while Anu-ikṣur in particular creates commentaries on omens for his father.122 One of Anu-ikṣur’s medical tablets was written for him by a Belu-kašir, son of Balaṭu, apparently not a relative, but in general the family do not seem to have had an extensive apprenticeship network like those of their Assyrian predecessors in seventh-century Huzirina and Assur.123

Sometime around 400 BC, the same house was re-inhabited by a different family of ašipus, over at least three generations, who claimed descent from one Ekur-zakir, literally ‘the Ekur temple names’. Like Šangu-Ninurta, the name suggests an origin in Nippur but the kin-group was already well established amongst the prebendaries of sixth-century Eanna as goldsmiths, oxherds and – most suggestively – temple scribes.124 The best-attested family members are Iqišaya (or Iqiša) and his son Ištar-šuma-ereš, named after his grandfather (online Table B9). Iqišaya also had an apprentice, Anu-aba-ūṣur, from the equally venerable Kuri family.125 These men were active in the early Hellenistic period (c. 320–300 BC) but their descendants seem to have lived there until at least the 220s BC (online Table B9).126 Some 230 scholarly tablets can be associated with Iqišaya and Ištar-šuma-ereš’s period of occupation, fifty-eight
Figure 6.4: Percentages of scholarly genres in Late Babylonian Uruk, with further detail of the omen series. ŠN = the late Achaemenid Šangu-Ninurta family; EZ = the early Hellenistic Ekur-zakir family; SR = the Seleucid Reš temple; SU = illicitly excavated tablets from Seleucid Uruk. Source: author.
of which contain colophons, plus a handful of legal documents. While their range of intellectual interests was broadly the same as their Šangu-Ninurta predecessors, the Ekur-zakir men owned proportionally more hymns, incantations and rituals as well as lexical texts, and significantly fewer therapeutic medical texts (the old asûtu) (Fig. 6.4, Table 6c). And where over half of the Šangu-Ninurta men’s copies and commentaries on omen series related to Sakikkû and physiognomic omens, the Ekur-zakirs owned roughly equal proportions of all the major omen genres.

Table 6c: Percentages of scholarly genres in Late Babylonian Uruk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genres’ (data after CAMS/GKAB)</th>
<th>Late Achaemenid Šangu-Ninurta family</th>
<th>Early Hellenistic Ekur-zakir family</th>
<th>In Seleucid Reš temple</th>
<th>Illicitly excavated from Seleucid Uruk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astrological</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomical</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemerological</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns and Prayers</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incantations and Rituals</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omens</td>
<td>25.9°</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Alandimmû etc.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Barûtu</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Enama Anu Ellîl</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Sakikkû</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Šumma Âlu</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Šumma Ikbû</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other omen/unidentified</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of tablets</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See the note to Table 4b.
° The percentages of individual omen series sum to a greater number than this because some tablets have different compositions on obverse and reverse.
We do not yet know if any member of the Šangu-Ninurta family had any legal relationship to a temple, for instance as holders of prebends. The surviving legal documents from the house furnish no evidence, and none of the family’s scholarly colophons mentions any temple affiliation. About half give the writer’s professional title, and about half of those also state their association with the city of Uruk.\textsuperscript{127} It may be that there was not yet any post-Eanna prebendary system in place, but that question is still unresolved. A century later, the tablets of the Ekur-zakir men and their associates do refer occasionally to institutional affiliations: Iqišaya once calls himself an ‘ašipu of Uruk, ērib biti of Anu and Antu’, which seems to make a clear distinction between his scholarly profession and temple-based prebendary duties (but at which temple we do not know).\textsuperscript{128} He also contracted out his duties as a prebendary brewer but, again, the temple context is not specified.\textsuperscript{129} However, by around 200 BC his descendants Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu, and his grandson Mannu-iqapu, both call themselves ‘ašipu of Anu and Antu’ and are clearly associated with the Reš temple.\textsuperscript{130}

Hard evidence for private practice in the Uruk ašipus’ tablets is slim but tangible. As we saw in Chapter 4, Stefan Maul has argued convincingly that in the colophons of the Baba-šumu-ibni family of ašipus in seventh-century Assur the phrase (hanṭiš) nasha ‘(quickly) excerpted’ indicated recipes and rituals being prepared for therapeutic use.\textsuperscript{131} In post-Xerxean Uruk, Anu-iksûr once states that he has ‘excerpted’ a list of therapeutic ingredients, while an anonymous set of instructions for determining the planetary cause of an eclipse has also been ‘excerpted’.\textsuperscript{132} A dozen or so casually written tablets, very different in format to the elegant ‘library’ copies that predominate in the house, also suggest practical use. Their contents include incantations, medical ingredients and horoscopic calculations.\textsuperscript{133}

Iqišaya and his descendants were part of a larger scholarly community in Uruk that survived to c. 140 BC, attested by about 320 scholarly tablets and more than 500 archival records. The large majority of these artefacts, including 180 scholarly tablets, come from illicit diggings at Uruk but there are a few hints as to their findspots. Six tablets owned by Iqišaya were published already in the early twentieth century. It is just possible that they, and others, came from upper levels of the ašipus’ house, which had eroded (or been dug) away decades before formal excavations began in the 1970s. Further, as we saw above, one of the tablets discovered in Iqišaya’s house was owned by his descendant, Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu, who may also have copied or owned a dozen illicitly excavated scholarly tablets in the 210s BC.\textsuperscript{134}
Meanwhile, about 140 fragmentary tablets, including at least ninety scholarly works and thirty archival records, were excavated in 1959–60 from a small room in Anu’s temple Reš, which had already been subject to looting. Amongst them were eight tablets owned by six different members of the Sin-leqi-unninni family, with dates spanning the late fourth to the mid-second centuries BC. Three of these men can be securely identified with the owners and/or copyists of illicitly excavated scholarly tablets; a further two have likely matches with other known Uruk scholars.

However, given how mobile tablets were in antiquity, we should not assume that all of the Ekur-zakir family’s illicitly excavated tablets originally came from the ašipus’ house and the Sin-leqi-unninnis’ from the Reš. If nothing else, this model would not securely locate tablets written by a member of one family for the other, nor tablets written by or for the descendants of Ah’utu or Hunzu. Indeed the just-mentioned Nidintu-Anu son of Anu-belšunu – if we are to believe he was a single personage – owned tablets found in both archaeological excavations. Further, two scholarly tablets are also known to come from excavations at Ištar’s Irigal (or Ešgal) temple, close nearby, which earlier in the twentieth century may have been an additional illicit source of finds.

Whatever their original storage locations, the tablets from Seleucid Uruk clearly show a close-knit community of scholars that functioned over two centuries. It comprised around thirty men from just a few families, who worked closely with each other across familial and professional boundaries. Only members of the Ekur-zakir, Gimil-Anu and Hunzu families were ašipus, contrary to the seven ancestors of Urukean ašipus named in the exercise list discussed in Chapter 5. Descendants of Sin-leqi-unninni had a complete monopoly on kalûtu, while both ašipus of the Ekur-zakir family and kalûs of the Sin-leqi-unninni family could also take the secondary title ṭupšar Enûma Anu Ellil (online Tables B10–B11). However, as in all periods and places we have considered so far, there were also men involved in intellectual production, including members of the politically prominent Ah’utu family, who took no prebendary or scholarly titles (online Table B12).

It is clear too that these titles were closely bound up in temple life. By the mid-third century BC, scholars in Uruk were routinely taking the titles ‘ašipu of Anu (and Antu)’ and ‘(chief) kalû of Anu and Antu’. Two-thirds of the thirty-odd known scribes or owners of scholarly tablets use one or the other (online Tables B11–B12). All four known high priests, šešgallû, of the Reš temple were drawn from the ašipus and ṭupšar Enûma Anu Ellil of the Ekur-zakir family. There is also incontrovertible
evidence that ašipatu and kalûtu were prebendary like many other, better-attested temple professions at the Reš. Just one published legal document relates to the kalûs’ prebend: a quitclaim in which one Rihat-Anu, a descendant of Sin-leqi-unninni, renounces his interest in a prebend he has sold to Aristocrates, son of Nanaya-iddin. The purchaser’s name is noteworthy: not for the bare fact of a man of Babylonian descent choosing to buy a prebend in his Greek name, for that in itself is not particularly unusual. Rather, it is remarkable that a self-identified Grecophile buys a prebend associated with traditional Babylonian scholarship, as no practising scholar ever goes by a Greek name in the cuneiform record of Hellenistic Uruk. This may imply that not all owners of scholarly prebends actually performed the duties associated with them, but – like butchers, bakers and other prebendaries – could contract out their obligations to another man.

Five prebendary ašipatu contracts have also been published, including four in which one Labaši of the Ekur-zakir family buys up shares from other members of his extended family over the decade 265–255 BC. As Paula Corò has shown, this is part of a much larger pattern of Labaši’s prebendary acquisitions over several decades covering a wide range of priesthoods, especially those of the temple enterer, attendant, brewer and butcher. About half a century later Labaši’s widow – or his eponymous grandson’s widow – made a similar purchase. From these records it appears that the ašipus’ prebend was originally divided into seven equal shares, which then became further subdivided into halves, quarters and eighths through inheritance. Perhaps these tiny fractions were simply too small to operate with any economic efficiency, and Labaši’s purchases represent a consolidation exercise, in return for which the sellers gained cash in silver coins. In any case, the ašipus’ prebends always remained within the family, and could even be bought by female relatives. This practice stands in sharp contrast to the kalûs’ prebend, which as we have just seen, could be bought even by men with Greek names and no attributed ancestry. In both cases, however – women and ancestor-less men – it is almost certain they paid deputies to perform the necessary cultic duties on their behalf as they were not themselves qualified to do so.

The secular lives of these scholars is harder to detect. However, three Seleucid birth horoscopes from Reš and (perhaps) elsewhere in Uruk show that consultation for private individuals was compatible with institutional affiliation. In addition, a single surviving bird-augury, commissioned by city governor Anu-uballiṭ Kephalon of the Ah’utu family in about 200 BC (see Chapter 5), is a useful reminder that powerful men still needed diviners to help them with decision-making in the post-barû
world. Unfortunately, the name of the augur is absent from the request but in it he asks the gods to decide whether ‘the goldsmiths and the carpenters who are doing work on the statue of Ištar should set in her left hand a … stone that is suitable for a sceptre’.

The latest surviving dated scholarly tablet from Uruk, a ritual for sacrificing a bull to make the membrane of a kalûs’ kettledrum, was written out by a young member of the Sin-leqi-unninni family in 161 bc, at about the same time that Reš was badly damaged in a fire. The temple itself somehow staggered on for another half-century, through the Parthian conquest of the 140s bc, and is last attested in a legal document dating to 108 bc.

**InterCity knowledge exchange: The shrinking scholarly networks of later Babylonia**

So far in this chapter I have documented the micro-geographical dispositions of Babylonian scholars and their tablets before and after the independence revolts of around 500 bc. It has proved possible to track the continuities, evolutions and ruptures in each community’s economic foundations over the course of time. But the approach I have taken, dependent as it is on the happenstance of archaeological (or illicit) discovery of artefacts, does not address my claim that the total population of scholars was devastated in the revolts’ aftermath. We need therefore to trace the human, divine and textual relationships between regional centres in Babylonia, in order to determine the extent to which scholarly knowledge networks were affected by the supposed purges.

Let us start in the long sixth century, when relationships between palace, temple and scholarship were still healthy and functional. Michael Jursa has examined the communication and exchange networks of both Eanna in Uruk and Ebabbar in Sippar (Fig. 6.5). Both cities, he notes, were situated on the major Euphrates trade route that ran south from Opis through Sippar, Babylon, Borsippa, Dilbat, Marad and Uruk to Ur and the Sealand. As might be expected, both institutions’ archives reveal the overwhelming dominance of Esangila and Babylon, with influential prebendary families spreading from the capital to also colonise the major provincial temples. The two temples were also in regular, substantive contact with each other but much less with other Euphratean cities. However, Jursa points out that whereas Eanna used the trade route ‘in its entirety’, officials from Ebabbar rarely ventured south of Dilbat.
Figure 6.5: The Euphratean temple trade network of the long sixth century, according to Jursa’s (2010a: 64–117) analysis. Source: Martin Brown.
This pattern fits with Eanna’s close connections to the ruling Chaldean dynasty in Babylon (Chapter 5), contrasted with the absence of southern interests for Ebabbar. Major settlements on other watercourses – Kish, Kutha, Nippur – were almost entirely outside either temple’s purview, despite their relative proximity and connectedness via other canals. Rather, the regional temple administrations focused their economic and cultic attention on nearby satellite cities, such as Larsa and Eridu for Uruk, and Akkad for Sippar, where cultic personnel often held secondary prebendary posts. Babylon was clearly the hub, so it is likely that cities such as Kish, Kutha and Nippur were not as completely cut off from the flow of people, goods and knowledge to and from the capital that this necessarily Uruk- and Sippar-focused picture presents.

We should envisage, then, two types of scholarly movement through Babylonia in the long sixth century: a vertical flow up and down the Euphrates, the whole length of the land, and much routine centripetal–centrifugal traffic in and out of major regional centres to their surrounding satellites. Sadly, there is not enough colophon information from this period to systematically map the geography of copying statements, nor yet a detailed enough understanding of hypotextual–hypertextual relationships (Chapter 2) to chart direct transmission of manuscripts and compositions from city to city. However, the scanty evidence from Uruk’s Eanna temple and Sippar’s E-ulmaš, a subsidiary of Ebabbar, is at least consistent with this model. Eanna’s scholarly tablets include copies made from originals from Borsippa and Babylon in the north, as well as perhaps the southern satellite town of Eridu (if that is the home of the ‘šangû-priest of Ea’ Labaši-Marduk, whose name appears in the fragmentary colophon of a chapter of Enûma Anu Ellil). And we have already seen above that Larsa’s Ebabbar temple relied on Eanna for instructions on timings of kalûtu rituals. Meanwhile, the depositors of scholarly tablets in Sippar’s E-ulmaš worked with originals from nearby Borsippa, Babylon and perhaps Nippur, but no further south than that. And the gods they invoked in their colophons – so far as we can tell – also reflected this northern Babylonian focus. As more such information becomes available in future years, it will be possible to test Jursa’s model further.

Now let us turn to the situation after the anti-Achaemenid revolts and their aftermath. In late fifth-century Uruk, half a century after the ‘end of archives’, the Šangu-Ninurta family of ašipus owned about two dozen scholarly tablets that had been copied from other tablets or writing-boards. The originals, where described, include three ‘Urukean copies’; two writing-boards that had belonged to the now defunct Eanna temple; a ‘Babylonian copy’ of a writing-board; and a tablet ‘from among
the old tablets of (E-)Meslam’, the god Ninurta’s temple in the northern Babylonian city of Kutha. In addition, a tablet found in the same archaeological context, and which therefore probably also belonged to the family, was owned, according to its colophon, by one Sin-banunu, an ašipu šehru of Marduk, and may therefore also come from Babylon. We do not know how those tablets arrived in the house: purchase, inheritance, exchange? But we can also see that the family was part of a wider network of scholars (Fig. 6.6). For instance, Rimut-Anu owned two tablets copied for him by Belu-kašir, son of Balātu, and by one Nadin, whose relationship to him is unclear. Were they his apprentices, learning to write tables as part of their training; or his colleagues, generously making copies of works for him that he needed? On present evidence we cannot tell.

But if the Šangu-Ninurta family’s human network still reached to northern Babylonia, its access to learned writings seems to have been significantly reduced, at least on one indicator. A catalogue of scholarly works now called The Ašipu’s Handbook circulated in cities across Assyria and Babylonia in the first millennium BC. Cynthia Jean has convincingly shown that in seventh-century Assur, Kišir-Assur of the Baba-šumu-ibni family (Chapter 4), who made a copy of this work, had access in his household collection to about half of the 200-odd compositions enumerated in it. However, in late fifth-century Uruk, Rimut-Anu, who also copied the Handbook, had access to about half that number again in his family’s tablets. Of course, on this is likely that both households possessed at least some of the ‘missing’ works in manuscripts on wooden writing-boards or other media. But it would be over-optimistic to assume that all of them could be accounted for in this way. There is a great deal of further work to be done, to map the changing geography of the scholarly corpus across the first millennium BC.

A century later, in the same house, the Ekur-zakir family must have been entirely unaware of the scholarly treasure trove abandoned by the Šangu-Ninurta men under their very feet. They owned twenty tablets copied from original sources, including two from elsewhere in Uruk. The only one with an explicit statement of provenance outside the city is Iqišaya’s copy of Tablet 43 of Šumma Ąlu, ‘from an old writing-board from Nippur’. Perhaps it came into the house by the same means as four commentaries written by or for men from the community of prebendary brewers in early fourth-century Nippur, discussed above, a generation or more before Iqišaya and Ištar-šuma-ereš were alive. Two further tablets were written by scholars from Der; two more, dating to the reign of Darius I (506 and 486 BC respectively), have protective formulae invoking
Figure 6.6: The scholarly networks of the Šangu-Ninurta family of late fifth-century Uruk and of the Ekur-zakir family of late fourth-century Uruk. Source: Martin Brown.
Marduk and Zarpanitu, suggesting that they originate from Babylon; and one even bears a colophon of Ashurbanipal from early seventh-century Nineveh (Fig. 6.7).169 There is not much evidence of direct human contact with other scholars, however, except for Iqišaya’s apprentice Anu-ab-uṣur of the Kuri family of Uruk, who made at least three tablets for him.170

By around 200 BC, the Ekur-zakir family’s descendants and their associates were mostly copying tablets and writing-boards from Uruk itself, including ‘the property of Anu and Antu’.171 Just three or four originals are said to be from Babylon or Borsippa (Fig. 6.7).172 The fragmentary scholarly tablets excavated from Reš itself do not include any that were obviously made outside the city and of course it is impossible to know if the illicitly discovered cache originally contained manuscripts that had arrived in Uruk from elsewhere. However, there is a striking consistency in the deities invoked in the scholarly colophons of Uruk, from the fifth to the second centuries BC. As I have suggested already in Chapter 5, it was only Anu and his entourage that mattered here; Nabu, Marduk and the other gods of northern Babylonia were never summoned to protect the southerners’ writings (Table 5c).

Although this evidence cannot be definitive it is suggestive in its consistency: over the course of nearly three centuries after the ‘end of archives’ the Uruk scholarly community was able to access tablets and colleagues from an ever-smaller range of Babylonian cities. And once they ceased to be active, some time in the mid-second century, the scholars of Parthian Babylon were more or less on their own. For instance, the scholar Nabu-balassu-iqbi, descendant of Egiba-tila, seems to have made copies of commentaries that were on tablets and leather scrolls (magallatu) only from Babylon, Borsippa and one ‘Belšunu’s house’. And he invoked only northern gods: Bel and Beltiya (Marduk and Zarpanitu) of Babylon, Nabu of Borsippa and Šamaš of Sippar (Fig. 6.8).173 Once more, however, it is impossible to tell if Nabu-balassu-iqbi or his colleagues owned tablets written elsewhere, or by others writing anonymously. Such are the limitations of working without archaeological context.

At the same time, as I have argued elsewhere, these men stopped worrying about the theft of their intellectual property. For many, many centuries both Assyrian and Babylonian scholars had habitually protected their writings by invoking divine protection in their colophons, with a particular focus on works most closely associated with their personal professional interests.174 As we saw in Chapter 4, only the scholarly advisors to the Assyrian king and Ashurbanipal himself did not bother with this practice, as they could rely on their own high status – and the very real security systems in place around them – to guard their writings.
Figure 6.7: The scholarly network of the Ekur-zakir and Sin-leqi-unninni families of Seleucid Uruk. Source: Martin Brown.
Figure 6.8: The scholarly network of the Egiba-tila, Mušezib and Nanna-utu families of Parthian Babylon. Source: Martin Brown.
against misadventure. Even in second-century Uruk, scholars regularly urged that ‘Whoever reveres Anu and Antu shall not take it (i.e. this tablet) away by theft!’\textsuperscript{175} However, by around 100 bc the risk of theft seemed so improbable to the scholars of Babylon that only the vestigial utterance ‘Whoever reveres Šamaš and Marduk!’ remained.\textsuperscript{176}

Conclusions

In Chapter 4, I compared the movements of five different types of scholar at – and far beyond – the Assyrian court in the seventh century, through their correspondence with the king. I also argued that the social world of the scholars was highly stratified, with those lower in the hierarchy having least access to the full range of written knowledge and thus expressing greatest anxiety about the potential loss of what they did have. The data collected in this chapter does not allow us to replicate that study exactly for Babylonia, but it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the mobility of scholarly practitioners, and the accessibility of scholarly writings, across professions and dynasties and cities in the course of the first millennium bc.

The impact of Darius’s and Xerxes’ reigns in the decades around 500 bc cannot be overstated. In the past two chapters I have detailed how the Achaemenids’ repression of northern Babylonian independence movements affected different scholarly communities, city by city. But those events also seem to have had a different significance for each the four primary scholarly professions. Coincidentally or not – it is impossible to say for now – the ‘end of archives’ coincides more or less with the disappearance from historical record of both asûs and bārûs. That is not to say that these professions no longer existed, nor that asûtu and bārûtu stopped being copied. Rather, cuneiform-literate scholars no longer chose to identify themselves as members of those professions. As witnessed in almost every Late Babylonian tablet collection discussed in this chapter, asûtu-healing was now the domain of the ašīpu – and indeed the boundaries between them had never been clear-cut, as I have argued elsewhere.\textsuperscript{177} Meanwhile, with the possible exception of Babylon, bārûtu in cuneiform remained only a heritage tradition, copied as an antiquarian curiosity.

More study is needed in order to identify the reasons for these huge changes but there must have been both socio-economic and intellectual factors at play. I argued in Chapter 4 that in seventh-century Assyria, the professions of asû and barû had the loosest connections to the temple. If
the same held true in Babylonia, the loss of royal patronage, as a source of both income and prestige, must have been devastating. Meanwhile, the ăšipu and kalûs were the great survivors, at least in some cities. Their long-standing ties to economically robust urban temples, often with prebendary privileges attached, gave them an extraordinary resilience to dramatic political upheavals. At the same time, the work of the šušar Enûma Ellil – that is, of a subset of ăšipu and kalûs – was undergoing major conceptual and methodological transformation. Through long-term programmes of observation and calculation in Babylon, begun under the Chaldean dynasty, short-term observational divination was replaced by horoscopic astrology and mathematical astronomy. Sacrificial divination, inherently resistant to repeatability, standardisation and mathematisation, may have been mothballed for the same reasons as Enûma Anu Ellil. Further research is needed to determine whether these dramatic shifts were coincidently an outcome of the post-Xerxes intellectual landscape, or fundamentally driven by the need to adapt to the new socio-political circumstances.

Yet even in Babylon and Uruk, the worlds of the ăšipu and kalûs were steadily shrinking. As scholarly communities elsewhere died out, the opportunities for intellectual exchange, in writing or in person, diminished all the time. What were once intra-Babylonian networks, spanning north and south, collapsed down to regional hubs, as reflected in the restricted circulation of compositions and practitioners, and a consequent reduction in the range of divine patrons. Somehow, the ăšipu and kalûs of Uruk survived until the late second century BC while their counterparts in Babylon hung on for another 100 years. It is clear, though, that in the long run they were fighting a losing battle with multicultural modernity. Although the vagaries of preservation mean that cuneiform tablets dominate the surviving textual record, archaeological and historical evidence points clearly to the increasing dominance of new ways of thinking, circulating in other media and other languages. Educated urbanites now had an unprecedented abundance of philosophical and theological choice about how to conceptualise the divine, about the natural world, about society’s and the individual’s relationships to them. And increasingly they chose not to patronise cuneiform scholarship or the temples that supported it.

However, it is clear that geographies of knowledge in first-millennium Babylonia were not bounded by the closed system of increasingly esoteric cuneiform culture. Networks of intellectual communication transcended the confines of script, medium and locality, despite the social and technological constraints imposed from within and without. The
abandonment of the clay tablet did not necessarily entail the rejection of the observations, methods and theories of Babylonian scholarship. As always, they could and did live on in translations and adaptations, memories and bodily gestures – and many were adapted and assimilated into newer philosophical movements. But it would take another book, and a very different set of expertise than I have, to trace the various inter-actions, many already well documented, between cuneiform high culture and the intellectual worlds of Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Persian speakers in the late first millennium and beyond.

Notes


2. Waerzeggers (2010; 2011a). I have by and large refrained from citing earlier literature on priests and prebends in the following paragraphs, for which see the footnotes and bibliographies in Waerzeggers’ work.


8. AO 6684 (Thureau-Dangin 1919; Paulus 2014: no. 67); on the provenance, Thureau-Dangin (1919: 120).


13. Da Riva’s (2002: 403) statement that ašipatu prebends are ‘überhaupt nicht bezeugt’ (completely unattested) in Sippar is thus incorrect.

14. ri-hi ma-la-a-ta | šá ʾBARA ʾGU₄ u ʾSIG₄ | a-di-i U₄ 22-KÁM šá i-si-nu É | šá ʾKU₄-Éš₄ u ḫZABAR ʾša-a a-na šu-qa-a-a A-šú šá ʾba-ku-ú-a | SUM (Strassmaier 1890b: no. 236, dated Darius 4.iii.25). Bongenaar (1997: 288) notes that the recipient, Suqaya son of Bakua, may not be an ašipu himself but acting as the ašipu’s intermediary; he is likely to be the overseer of the priestly brewers at Ebabbar (although there is no prima facie reason why prebendary brewers should not also have been ašipus, as we shall see).

15. BURU₄ is-qi ʾza-bar-ru-ʾtu-tu’ (BM 42408 obv. 1, Jursa 1999: 72–5, 177–8; cf. Waerzeggers 2011a: 67); see Jursa (1999: 73) on the unusual syllabic writing of the logogram ZABAR. Jursa (1999: 177) also discusses the phrase from obv. 2, bi-re-e-tu₄ šá UDU.NÍTA sat-tuk ‘biretu of the regular sheep-offerings’, provisionally translating the first word as Schafs(leber)beschauungen, ‘extispicies’, though noting that at that time there were no other known attestations of bi reš in the feminine plural. Now, however, see Sasmannshausen (2001: 168) for several instances of this form in Kassite administrative texts, where it always refers to oil divination. In any case, if Jursa’s interpretation is correct, the income is from acts of divination, not from a prebendary post. At most, then, it shows that divination was performed on sacrificial animals but does not demonstrate that the diviner was a prebend-holder. Indeed, given the clear contrast between isqu ašipu’s prebend’ in l. 1 and biretu šá immer sattuk(i) ‘divinations from the regular sheep-offerings’ in the following line, it could even be argued that divination was explicitly not a prebendary duty.

ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS


19. E.g. Hilgert (2013); Robson (2013b); Robson and Stevens (2019).


21. Earlier estimates (e.g. Pedersén 1998: 197) put the total number of tablets at 800 but Hilgert (2013: 145) counts 428, of which 325 contain clearly identifiable compositions or genres plus a further 103 as yet unidentified fragments.


30. Compare, for instance, the situation in Neo-Assyrian Nineveh, where George (2003: 381–5) identifies four sets of the eleven-chapter Epic of Gilgamesh, each written for or by a separate individual and clearly demarcated by layout and palaeography, none of which is anywhere near complete either.


32. pa-lih ‘NÁ hal-qa GUR on a copy of the so-called ‘Weidner chronicle’ made by one Marduk-eṭir, son of Eṭir-[…] of uncertain family ([…]x-ha-a-a) (IM 124470, rev. 40; Al-Rawi 1990: 8).


34. Falkenstein (1931).


39. Pedersén (2005: 283). Clancier (2009a: 142–3) discusses the possibility that Hormuzd Ras-sam, digging for tablets at Babylon on behalf of the British Museum, could have discovered a ‘library’ in Esangila in 1881, but concludes on balance that the large numbers he found are more likely to have come from several deposits south of the temple, i.e. in the ‘Amrán area. See further below, note 81.


That is, they had calculated the date of the eclipse correctly but had not predicted that it would be invisible in Babylonia: see Beaulieu and Britton (1994); Robson (2019).

Robson (2019); cf. Rochberg (2004: 224–80). As far as I know, there are no published Neo-Babylonian tablets of E̱ntama Anu Ellil or of observational astronomy, such as diaries or planetary records, that record the scholarly profession of the copyist.


Ist Ni 1364 (Kramer 1944: no. 71), a tablet of Sumerian liturgy from Nippur, was thought to be a Neo-Babylonian by Hunger (1968: no. 122). He read the last line as 'Sohn des Ištar-mubbaliṭ-aḫi, der Arzt' (A×A =šš-tār–DIN–ŠEŠ ma-ri A.ZU), noting that 'diese Berufsname könnte auch als Familienname aufgefasst werden'.

See e.g. Tallqvist (1905: 16); Wunsch (2003: II 277) for Asû as a northern Babylonian family name before the 'end of archives'; cf. Nielsen (2011: 1, 56–62) for ancestral homes in Babylon at this time; Bongenaar (1997: 135); Joannès (2006: 84) for the interpretation 'house of the physician'.


a-na KA SAR 1½/mina (Finkel 2000: 150–1 nos. 1A–C).

ki pi-ša-ga MAN.TIN.TIR.SAR =šš/tār (Finkel 2000: 204–5 nos. 48A–C).

IM =IŠKUR =šš-raššu =MAŠ [MAŠ =šš] AMAR.UTU (Finkel 2000: 178 no. 29). Although Jursa (1999: 27 n94) argues that this Bel-ēru was probably an earlier compiler, in fact there are several men with that name attested as scribes in the Šangu-Šamaš archive, any of whom might be identical with this individual (Jursa 1999: 277).


Finkel (2000: 138–9). But note that none of the extracts is marked with phrases such as hantša nasha ‘quickly excerpted’, as one finds, for instance, in the Baba-šumu-ibni family’s tablets in Neo-Assyrian Assur (Maul 2010: 212–13).

Finkel (2000: 146). Fincke (2009: 98) shows this formatting division between landscape-orientation tablets of asûtu and portrait-orientation clay tablets was not universal at this period: recipes for healing eye diseases could be written onto either one.


The list given by Joannès (1992: 97–100) can be updated with the following editions and translations: Maul (1994: no. VIII.12(b)); Rochberg (1998: no. 1); Hunger, Sachs and Steele (2001: no. 63); Foster (2005: 707–8); and see note 62.

Finkel (2000: 143), who also suggests the tablets UET 4: 148–53 (Figuila 1949: nos. 148–53) comprise a parallel group of medical tablets. However, they are not from a single findspot. Tablets UET 4: 146–8, identified by Jursa (2005: 137) as lists of spices, were found in a private house with the so-called Sin-uballi archive, concerning this man’s financial activities in northern Babylonia during the years c. 625–616 bc (Jursa 2005: 135–7). Tablets UET 4: 150–2 (lists of stones and gems, maybe for healing purposes), plus UET 4: 208 (a short commentary on the lexical list Nabnitu: see Frahm 2011a: 249, 312), are from the U.20089 excavation lot which comprises the small Sin-ili archive, spanning the years c. 510–480 bc (Jursa 2005: 135). Tablets UET 4: 149, 153 have lost their excavation numbers and therefore can no longer be associated with an archaeological findspot or archival context.


69. It may well be that the Šangu-Šamaš A men likewise had intellectual interests beyond healing, but the methodological limitations of museological reconstruction mean that it is almost impossible to identify such tablets when they lack colophons or other distinguishing features.

70. Waerzeggers (2003/4).


72. On observational astronomy from late Achaemenid Nippur see, very briefly, Ossendrijver (2012: 6 n33).


84. Hackl (2013: 297–9). I am enormously grateful to Johannes Hackl for sharing some of his unpublished PhD with me. It contains far more detail and data on the scholars of Esangila and Ezida than I have chosen to discuss here.


86. Hackl (2013: 319–25; 326–36; 342–3) collects extensive prosopographical data; see also Robson (2019). It is also possible that barûs are the subject of two further ration lists from the Esangila archive (Hackl 2013: 325–6). As Jursa (2002: 112) notes, the reading “HAL is not entirely certain, but alternatives such as “UŠ-MEŠ (mittatu ‘dead men’) and LÚ SUMUN (amelu labaratu ‘old men’) seem a priori less likely. Likewise, a reading “DIDLJ (edâtu ‘prominent, high-ranking men’) seems excluded because – as far as I know – this designation does not appear elsewhere in the archive.


93. An anonymous barû may also be mentioned in one of Rahim-Esu’s temple accounts dating to 103 bc (McEwan 1981: 15 n56; Hackl 2013: 325) but see the reservations expressed in note 86 above.


95. E.g. van der Spek (1985); Rochberg (2004: 234–5). It is often assumed that astronomical observations were made from the top of the ziggurat Etemenanki, but George (2005/6; 2010) shows that it had been made inaccessible by the removal of its staircase, probably by Xerxes in 484 bc and was gradually levelled to the ground during the years 327–281 bc.


101. E.g. ana DU₁₂ ZI -hi: VAT 270 rev. 10’ (Reisner 1896: no. 3); see also Reisner (1896: nos. 5, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20a, 25, 27, 28, 36, 44–46, 49, 51, 53 and 55); Spar and Lambert (2005: nos. 2, 8 and 15); and the Bilinguals in Late Mesopotamian Scholarship corpus, http://oracc.org/blms/ (last accessed November 2017).


103. Liturgy: Reisner (1896: no. 3); Mathematical astronomy: ACT 122 (Zo), 420+821b (Zld); van der Spek (1998: no. 27).

104. 1-en lú DUMU ki A me₄ -⸢gi₇-⸢ba-ti-⸢la | ku-um lú UN-MEŠ šá TA iri BAR.SIP ki ana DÙ-eš-par-ṣ i ana […] ‘A citizen of Babylon, a son of Egiba-tila […] instead of the people who are from Borsippa, to perform the rites at […]’ (Hunger and Sachs 1996: no. –155a rev. 8–9).

105. Dirven (2014); see Hauser (1999: 228) for the estimate of Parthian Babylon's population.

106. Brown (2008); see also Robson (2018; 2019) for other aspects of this community.


112. Namely BRM 4: 18; Figulla (1959: nos. 12 and 21); the ‘Converse Tablet’ (Lambert 1971); and SpTU 4: 125, 185. The colophons of the first three are edited by Hunger (1968: nos. 188–90); see also Oelsner (1986: 237).

113. ana ŠÌR-šú (Figulla 1959: no. 12 rev. 36); ana šu-uz-mu-ru üGALA-MEŠ (Figulla 1959: no. 21 rev. 16).

114. SpTU 4: 125, 185 are from Uruk; see further below. BRM 4: 18 is said to have been bought in Babylon (Pedersén 2005: 296, N 26 no. 89, with further bibliography). Figulla (1959: nos. 12 and 21) were acquired by the British Museum from a Dr H.C. Duncan in 1956, while the ‘Converse Tablet’ (named after its first modern owner) is also in private hands.

115. Reade (1968: 107–8) describes how in 1879 Hormuzd Rassam, excavating Nabu’s temple Ezida in Borsippa for the British Museum, discovered an unspecified quantity of tablets in Room C1, an antechamber to a cella in the southeast of the building. Reade suggests they may have included the tablets BM 93043–93064 (Leichty 1986: 370), which were ‘written with a distinctive fine script [on a] smooth slipped surface’. One of the tablets bears a colophon of Nabu-kusuršu, enabling a linkage with several other scholarly tablets of his (Hunger 1968: nos. 124–32). Jay Crisostomo is currently undertaking a study of this collection.


118. BRM 1: 88; McEwan (1981: 21–3).

119. On the archaeology of this house, see Kose (1998: 374–90); on the tablets SpTU 1–5, Pedersén (1998: 212–13); Clancier (2009a: 47–72, 387–405); and http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/uruk (last accessed August 2018). A few scholarly tablets from illicit excavations can also be linked to this house by their colophons: one owned by Šamaš-iddin // Šangu-Ninurta (Friberg et al. 1990) and six owned by Iqišaya // Ekur-zakir (Langdon 1915: BRM 4: 20; TCL 6: 9, 17, 34, 50).

120. The family’s only dated scholarly tablet is a copy of the Ašipu’s Handbook made by Rimut-Anu during the reign of Darius II (SpTU 5: 231; Clancier 2009b). The twenty-eight Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid legal and administrative documents from the house are discussed by

121. A member of the Šangu-Ninurta family witnessed the legal document SpTU 2: 55 in Uruk in 610 BC (= Nabopolassar 14). The name does not appear in the archives of Eanna, although the priestly position of Ninurta’s šangû is attested there (Beaulieu 2003b: 303). The lineage does not appear to have survived into the Seleucid period.


123. Kümmel (1979: 31, 80, 130); Gehlenke (1990: no. 131).


126. Scholarly and legal tablets of the very well-attested Iqišaya, of the second generation, date to the final two decades of the fourth century BC (SpTU 1: 90, 128; SpTU 2: 38; SpTU 3: 97; SpTU 4: 162, 170; SpTU 5: 308, 310–11). Only two tablets are from earlier in the fourth century: a fragmentary legal document of 359 BC and some astronomical calculations of the timings of summer solstices in the 360s BC (SpTU 1: 129; SpTU 4: 168). There are also two third-century scholarly tablets from the house: a calculation of the new moons of 271 BC (SpTU 1: 98) and a copy of an esoteric commentary on the duration of Bārûtu omens, with a colophon dating to se 83 = 229 BC (SpTU 4: 157). The owner of this tablet was an unknown member of the Ekur-zakir family known to have owned tablets written at this time (TCL 6: 19, dated se 84 = 228 BC); its scribe was one Ša-Anu-ḫššu son of Ištar-šum-ešer, family name unknown (but hitherto the only known Uruk scholars with this name are all members of the Ekur-zakir family). And, as argued below (note 129), it is possible that SpTU 2: 33 was written in the 220s or 210s BC.


128. SpTU 1: 94; see also SpTU 2: 28 (Ištar-šum-ešer).


130. This provisional dating is based on Weisberg (1991: no. 51), a hymn to Adad copied by a Mannu-igapu/Ekur-zakir for his (grand)father Nidintu-Anu/Anu-belšunu/Ekur-zakir, dating to se 111 (c. 200 BC). A Nidintu-Anu/Anu-belšunu/Ekur-zakir also copied two scholarly tablets in the period se 90–1 (221–220 BC) and owned eight more that were written over the period se 97–9 (214–212 BC). In each of their colophons he calls himself \textit{upaššu-Maš.Šupu} \textit{a-tu} u an-tu (cf. Robson 2008a: 256; Ossendrijver 2011b: 641). However, it is by no means certain that this was the same individual, as the names Nidintu-Anu and Anu-belšunu were both very common amongst the scholarly families of Seleucid Uruk. One Ištar-šum-ešer/Balu is a ‘kalû of Anu and Antu’ in his only colophon, undated (SpTU 2: 28). It is unlikely that this is Iqišaya’s father because all attested kalûs belong to the Sin-leqi-uninni family.


133. (In chronological order (the BagM Beih. 2 tablets were formally excavated from Reš): Nidintu-Anu [5] (338 BC; 322 BC); Nidintu-Anu [3] (se 66, 81, 84); Anu-belšunu [1] (se 81, 83, 84; se 108, 112, 120, 121); Anu-uballit [3] (se 85); Anu-ab-uter (se 118–21, 124, 130, 136); Anu-balassu-šiqā [3] (se 130, 136); Anu-belšunu [2] (se 147, 150) (see online Tables B12–B13).

134. E.g. tablets written by Anu-ab-uter [1] for Šamaš-ešir in se 118 (online Tables B11–B12); or tablets written by the brothers Anu-uballit [4] and Anu-ab-šiqāt [3] for Anu-ab-uter in se 124 (online Tables B11–B13). There are nine scholarly tablets written by or for descendants of Ahʿutu or Hunzu known to me (online Tables B11, B13): Weidner (1941/4: Tafl. 14); TCL 6: 1 and 32 owned by members of the Ahʿutu family, written in se 80–91 (online Table B13); TCL 6: 11, 31 and 39 owned by descendants of Hunzu (all undated); and BRM 4: 12; TCL 6: 5 and 16 written by members of the Hunzu family for Nidintu-Anu [1] of the Ekur-zakir family.
138. Pedersén (1998: 209). Nöldeke et al. (1937: 57) give the total number of epigraphic finds here as two scholarly tablets (W 16343, an ‘omen text’ and W 16383a, a ‘commentary’); seventeen economic documents, two of which are dated to the reign of Demetrius II Nicator (r. 145–141 bc); sixteen ‘insignificant’ fragments; plus fifteen impressed clay bullae (for parchment rolls). It is unclear to me where Pedersén’s (1998: 206) figure of ‘55 cuneiform tablets and several clay bullae’ comes from; it is followed by Clancier (2009a: 36).


140. See Boiy (2012) for a family tree of the Seleucid Ekur-zakir clan. Iddin-Ellil (sometimes read Iddin-Amurru) is the only one of the other four ancestors to appear in the cuneiform documentation at this period: e.g. Clay (1913: no. 3); Weisberg (1991: no. 36); Sarkisian (1955: no. 1); Doty (2012: no. 8). As discussed in Chapter 5, the supposed families Ile’i-Marduk, Nagaraya and Parakki-Marduk are not (yet) attested at all.

141. Anu-ah-ušabši/Kidin-Anu: e.g. BRM 4: 7, 8; SpTU 1: 2 (se 61); Anu-ah-ušabši/Ina-qibit-Anu: e.g. TCL 6: 2, 4, 7 and 35 (se 99); Anu-ah-iddin: e.g. TCL 6: 15 (se 117); and Šamaš-eṭṭir: e.g. ACT 163 (c. ss 118 or later). See Robson (2008c) for the career of Šamaš-eṭṭir.

142. Weisberg (1991: 47); Corò (2005b: 218–19); date missing.

143. Seller Anu-belšunu/Anu-ahhe-iddin//Ekur-zakir: BM 105200, dated ss 47: 1/4 of 1/7 share for 20 shekels of silver (Corò 2005b: 118–9); BM 105178, date missing: 1/4 of 1/7 share for 30 shekels of silver (McEwan 1981: 72; Corò 2005b: 146–8); BM 109946, dated ss 57, sixteen days later: 1/8 of 1/7 share for 10 shekels of silver (Corò 2005b: 149–51). These contracts fall in the chronological gap between the Ekur-zakir family’s scholarly tablets of the early Hellenistic and mature Seleucid periods, and so these men are otherwise unknown to me.


145. NCBT 1954 (se 95/6), in which Ina-qibit-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//Ekur-zakir (unknown from scholarly tablets) sells 1/18 of a 1/7 share to Maqartu/Anu-aba-usur//Hunzu, the wife of Labaši/Anu-zer-kiddin//Ekur-zakir (the same man or his grandson?) for 17 shekels of silver (McEwan 1981: 73).

146. Corò (2005a). McEwan (1981: 73) already draws attention the scholarly significance of the number seven for the ašipus; note too that there are seven ancestral ašipus named in Schroeder (1916: no. 1; see Chapter 5), although only in practice the ašipus were drawn from just two or three families in Seleucid Uruk.


148. Kessler (1984). I exclude from my definition of ‘scholarly’ SpTU 1: 99, an almanac that may date to the second half of the first century ad (Hunger and de Jong 2014). As its editors point out, the dating of that tablet is highly problematic, not just because of the tablet’s fragmentary state and its out-of-context findspot on the surface of the tell, but more fundamentally because the text itself is so badly executed. But if it was written in the period 42–79/80 ad it belongs to the final semi-scholarly phase of cuneiform practised by just a few horoscopic astrologers in Babylon (Brown 2008) and Uruk.

149. Nielsen (2009) argues that two men of the Iddin-Papsukkal family, who appear as witnesses on a contract written in Ur in 658 bc, are identical with two individuals of the same name appearing in very damaged scholarly colophons from Eanna in Uruk. Even if we accept the proposed restorations, with Nielsen (2009: 176), the scholarly tablets must be at least thirty years younger than the legal document, given their archival context. As scholarly tablets were typically produced by young apprentices for their fathers/masters in the final stages of their training, the men who witnessed the legal tablet are thus far too old to have produced the scholarly tablets too. On the other hand, the legal witnesses in Ur could theoretically be the Uruk scholars’ grandfathers (cf. H.D. Baker 2002).

157. Borsippa: cruciform monument of Maništušu (Al-Rawi and George 1994); Babylon: Bārûtu (Starr and Al-Rawi 1999) and Lugale (Al-Rawi 1995); dictation from an ašipu of Nippur: proverbs (George and Al-Rawi 1998); also a copy of the laws of Hammurabi, whose colophon claims it to be ‘a copy of the original stela that Hammurabi, king of Babylon, erected in Susa [sic]’ (Fadhil 1998) but was presumably not made directly from the monument itself.


162. Both types of relationship are attested amongst the ašipus of seventh-century Assur (Maul 2010: 212, 216).

163. SpTU 2: 34.


166. SpTU 2: 34.


172. SpTU 2: 34.

173. Babylon: CCPo 3.4.1.A.i (see note 102).

174. Stevens (2013); Robson (2018); Robson and Stevens (2019).

175. e.g. pa-lih 𒈗 u an-tu₄ ina šur-qa la TÜM-šú (TCL 6: 50 rev. 26); ACT 600(L), a planetary table written by the kalû Anu-aba-ṭ er//Sin-leqe-unninni for the ašipu Šamaš-eṭ ir//Ekur-zakir in 118 = 194 BC.

176. e.g. pa-lih 𒊏 u ṣAMAR.LI.TU (ACT 122(Zo), u.e. 2), a table of new moons written by a descendant of Egiba-tila in 209 = 103 BC.


178. See Dirven (2014).