Social Aspects of Babylonian Names

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Introduction

How did names acquire social meaning in Babylonia? To begin, we may recall a short presentation by Sophie Démare-Lafont about the name as an element of identification in ancient Mesopotamia (Démare-Lafont 2014). She underlined the following points concerning the definition of the name. First, a standard name consists of two or three elements, linked together in a sentence. Most names are theophoric and follow two models: either the deity is called upon for protection (e.g., Nabû-šumu-uṣur 'O Nabû, protect my name/fame') or the name-bearer is identified as a servant of the god (e.g., Arad-Bēl 'Servant of Bēl'). Second, sometimes we find 'Banana names', constructed from the reduplication of the same syllable (e.g., Dada, Zuzu). This happens mostly in Sumerian (Foster 1981) but also sometimes in Akkadian. Such names lack a lexical meaning. Third, foundlings are named after the specific circumstances of their discovery (e.g., Ša-pî-kalbi 'Out of the mouth of a dog'). And fourth, double names are attested in Neo-Babylonian times for some individuals (e.g., a man named Marduk-nāṣir-apli 'Marduk is the protector of the heir' was also known as Širku 'Gift').

In the words of Karen Radner, 'Akkadian and Sumerian personal names generally have a precise meaning' (Radner 2005, 26). The referent included in a name contributes to the social identity of the bearer. For example, some names put the person under the explicit protection of a deity, a temple, or a city (e.g., Nabû-aplu-uṣur 'O Nabû, protect the heir!'). Other names set him or her in relation with family members (e.g., Aḫūšunu 'Their brother') or with an animal (e.g., Kalbāya 'My dog'). There is also what J. J. Stamm called '*Begrüßungsnamen*': positive reminders of the circumstances at birth and the family's reaction to the newborn child (Stamm 1939). Thus, it is plausible that names formed with the verb *balāṭu* in the D stem and having the meaning 'to heal, to bring to life' – an action attributed to a deity – recalled a difficult birth. By contrast,

a name like Mīnu-ēpuš-ilī 'What fault did I commit, O my god?' conveyed a negative reaction of the family – a reaction that remained attached to the person for their entire life (Stamm 1939, 164–5). In all these examples, the name and its referent revealed something about the social identity of the bearer. Only a minority of Babylonian names were 'Banana names' – that is, names constructed from the reduplication of the same syllable. Such names had no connection to the linguistic context in which they developed and operated outside the lexicon.

The Name as a Means of Identification

In Babylonia, at least since the second millennium BCE, whenever it was necessary to produce a legal identity – for instance, in legal contracts or administrative texts – people mentioned their name and the name of their father, or, alternatively, their name and their function or occupation. The mother's name was rarely used for such purposes. If she was mentioned at all, this was because she was physically present at the transaction. However, there exists one exception to this rule. In the Neo-Babylonian period, oblates (*širku*) of the Ištar temple in Uruk, born to unmarried mothers, were identified as 'PN$_1$, the son of ^{f}PN$_2$, the released woman (*zakītu*)'.[1]

An innovation of the first centuries of the first millennium BCE was to identify persons with three, instead of two, onomastic elements: the person's name, their father's name, and a family name. This phenomenon did not affect the whole population but remained limited to the urban notability or 'bourgeoisie'. However, as this group is responsible for most archives surviving from Babylonia, the phenomenon is particularly well documented. It is often put forward as a special characteristic of Neo-Babylonian onomastic practice (see Chapter 4 in this volume).

Hence, a person can be identified with up to three onomastic elements in cuneiform texts from the first millennium BCE. The first element is a personal name. This name can be quoted in full or in an abbreviated form, often a hypocorism. For instance, the name Nabû-šumu-iddin 'Nabû gave a name' can be shortened to Iddināya (based on the component *-iddin* 'he gave') or to Šumāya (based on the component *-šumu* 'name'). The rules for deriving a hypocorism from the full name are not yet fully understood

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[1] At that time, the *zakītu* women were dependent persons, attached to the temple with the legal status of oblate (*širkatu*), and being widowed or unmarried. This did not prevent them from having children. The designation *zakītu* 'released' defines their particular position in relation to the marital norm and has no pejorative value.

(see Chapter 2). The second element is the father's name. This name refers to the nuclear family and lends legitimacy to a person through direct filiation or adoption. A person who was adopted in adulthood usually retained the name of his first (biological) father, especially when being adopted for financial reasons. Thus, Iddin-Nabû, son of Nabû-bān-zēri, descendant of Nappāḫu, kept the name of his father Nabû-bān-zēri even after he was adopted by his paternal uncle Gimillu (Baker 2004). The third element is the family name. The system is fairly similar to the one in use in modern Western Europe. Chapter 4 is devoted to the topic of family names.

Papponymy and Mammonymy

The practice of naming children after members of previous generations of the family is well attested in Babylonia. Mammonymy was rare and mostly confined to Late Babylonian documentation (Wunsch 2006; Langin-Hooper and Pearce 2014). More common was papponymy, as underlined by Michael Jursa (2007, 133): 'Another tradition of some of these upper class families is papponymy: names are often reused by the grandchild generation onwards . . . The Murašû archive (Stolper 1985, 18–19) and the Tattannu archive (Jursa and Stolper 2007, 249) offer very clear evidence.' The best-known case at present is that of King Nebuchadnezzar II, whom Michael Jursa links through papponymy to a governor of Uruk during the reign of Assurbanipal, (Nabû)-kudurru-(uṣur), who would have been his grandfather (Jursa 2007). Papponymy thus seems to have developed especially during the fifth and fourth centuries, but was practised in certain social circles already in the seventh century. It is especially well documented among scholars (e.g., Ossendrijver 2011).

If papponymy was mainly practised among families of the elite, in families of a lower social stratum names referencing the father, the grandfather, or an uncle were popular, such as Abi-abi 'Grandfather', Aḫi-abia 'Brother of my father', and Abunu 'our father' (Stamm 1939, 302–3).

Orthography

In many writing systems personal names are accompanied by identifying marks to distinguish them from the rest of the words in a text. In the cuneiform script used during the Neo-Babylonian period, we find two such ideographic markers: a vertical wedge for men and the sign MUNUS

for women.[2] In Assyriological parlance, the vertical wedge is known as the 'Personenkeil'. Transliterations usually render the masculine marker as ^{I} or ^{m} and the feminine marker as ^{f} or ^{mí}, placed in superscript before the personal name. In this volume, we also mark normalised versions of female names with a superscript f; in this way, they can be easily distinguished from normalised male names, which we leave unmarked.

The name itself was often written in a non-phonetic way by using a specific set of logograms.[3] This system served three functions. First, it allowed readers to quickly differentiate a personal name from other parts of the text, which were usually written by means of phonetic signs. Second, the system allowed scribes to avoid wasting space and to optimise the layout of the text by using long or short spellings depending on available space. For instance, the name of the chief deity Marduk could be written using the short spelling ^{d}ŠÚ or the long spelling ^{d}AMAR.UTU. Such long and short options were available for many of the common elements of personal names. For instance, the element Mušēzib- could be rendered KAR and mu-še-zib and -erība could be written SU and eri_4-ba. Hence, acquiring knowledge of logograms specific to the repertoire of names and their variants was part of scribal training. The student practised this skill by copying out lists of names on school tablets. In certain contract types, the notion of 'page layout' was important. For instance, in property deeds the scribe was supposed to fit the chain consisting of the personal name, the father's name, and the family name on a single line. The availability of long and short spelling options was helpful to attain a neat line division. Third, the practice of writing personal names logographically offered the possibility to give the name a particular value in view of the polysemic nature of logograms. A good illustration of this practice is found in the myth of creation, Enūma eliš, which ends with a commentary on the fifty names of the god Marduk. The name 'is' the person: it must present itself in a particular way.

Another orthographic practice relating to Neo-Babylonian onomastics is the use of rare values of common signs in order to lend a name antiquity. This is found in royal names (see section on 'Royal Names'), but also in ancestor names. For example, the family name Sîn-taqīša-libluṭ ('O Sîn, the one you gave, may he live!') was written ^{d}A.KU-BA-TI.LA and read ^{d}E$_4$.GI$_7$-BA-TI.LA, which then was reduced by acrophony to ^{d}E. GI.BA and Egibi.

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[2] The masculine marker was frequently left out in front of royal names.
[3] These logograms are discussed in Chapter 6.

A distinction must be made between the use of archaising spellings and the use of real ancient names. A Sumerian name – an ancient language of culture by the Neo-Babylonian period – allowed the bearer to inscribe himself in a prestigious tradition and to reinforce his social status (see Chapter 17). It is not always clear whether an archaising spelling represents a Sumerian name. For instance, the name spelled [I]BÀD.MAH-[d]AMAR. UTU could be understood as a real Sumerian name, even though it has an Akkadian equivalent: Tukulti-Marduk.[4] Another example is the name spelled [Id]ÙRU.DÙ-MA.AN.SUM,[5] of which the Akkadian equivalent would be Nusku-iddin. Here, the scribe added a note drawing attention to the fact that the name-bearer wrote his own name (ll. 19–20): [Id]URU. DÙ-MA.AN.SUM A *šá* [I]*ta-qiš*-[d]ME.ME *ina* ŠU[II]-*šú* MU-*šú* IN.SAR 'Nusku-iddin son of Taqīš-Gula wrote his own name himself'. As a name, [Id]URU.DÙ-MA.AN.SUM is found in other archival contexts (e.g., *Cyr.* 173; VR 67 1 r. 16) but in those instances it is clearly used as an ancestor's name.[6]

Such archaising spellings were also used by scribes who wanted to show that they were scholars, even when writing practical texts. A case in point is Nabû-zēru-līšir, a scribe who travelled to Agade in order to copy ancient royal inscriptions for King Nabonidus. He had been a scholar at the court of Neriglissar and went on to work for Nabonidus. Nabû-zēru-līšir used archaic signs and spellings not only when copying ancient inscriptions of, among others, Kings Kurigalzu and Šar-kali-šarrī, but also when writing administrative documents. Curiously, in a sale contract of agricultural land (*Nbn.* 116), he gives both his paternal (Nabûnnāya) and maternal (Šamaš-abāri) ancestry.

Family and Social Status

Claiming a (prestigious) ancestor generally put an individual in the social group of the so-called *mār banê*. The most accurate French equivalent of this term would be '*notable*'; CAD M₁ 256 s.v. *mār banî* 1.a translates it as 'free person, noble man'. As CAD also notes, during the first millennium BCE the adjective *banû* (and its superlative *babbanû* or its intensive form *bunnu*) replaced the older adjective *damqum*, which was used in the Old Babylonian period in the term *mār damqi*. In fact, during the second

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[4] CAD T 461 s.v. *tukultu* 1.a.2´.b´ with references.
[5] TEBR 6 no. 23:2 (Nippur, reign of Artaxerxes II).
[6] See the discussion by Cornelia Wunsch about the archive of [f]Šikkūtu, a woman from this very family (Wunsch 2003b, 89–105).

millennium BCE, the term *awīlum damqum* or *mār awīlim damqim* had the meaning 'of good family, well-to-do' in texts from Mari, Bogazköy, Alalah, and El Amarna, but not in Babylonia. On the other hand, in the Neo-Assyrian documentation *mār damqi* refers to a category of soldiers and no longer has anything to do with social hierarchy. The Neo-Babylonian expression *mār banê* has also recently been studied by Kristin Kleber (2018, 448–50), who insists that this term primarily refers to a person who does not have servile status, regardless of his or her actual social ranking.

Neo-Babylonian society was very diverse, however. As some private archives of Neo-Babylonian urban notables show, the use of family names was restricted to wealthy (but not necessarily the wealthiest) individuals. Men such as Iddin-Nabû from the Nappāḫu family in Babylon, the descendants of the Gallābu family in Ur, and those of the Ea-ilūtu-bāni family in Borsippa did own real estate, but on a modest scale. Their financial assets cannot be considered extensive either. In other words, the use of a family name was not in itself a sufficient mark of belonging to the highest political and economic elites of the country. We have to look towards the socio-economic group of the entrepreneurs in order to find the wealthiest individuals. The two best-known examples from the Neo-Babylonian period are the Egibi family of Babylon in the sixth and early fifth centuries (Wunsch 2000) and the Murašû family of fifth-century Nippur, who made their fortune in the management of military tenures in the service of the Persian crown (Stolper 1985). In the latter case, it is difficult to determine whether the name Murašû had the status of 'family name' as the name had been borne as a personal name by the first-attested head of the family, under Darius I (Cardascia 1951; Stolper 1985).

Some families took over chief political and religious functions and thus created veritable dynasties of ruling elites. For instance, the Ša-nāšišu family held positions as governors and temple administrators (*šangû*, *šatammu*, and *šākin ṭēmi*) in the cities of Babylon, Sippar, and Borsippa (Jursa 2007, 76–7; Waerzeggers 2014). During the Hellenistic period, the scholars of Uruk functioned as a true socio-professional group who claimed membership of a prestigious clan, like the family of the descendants of Sîn-leqe-unninnī.

As shown by the case of the Ša-nāšišus, some family groups in first millennium BCE Babylonia gained a situation of control over the great institutions (especially the temples) and formed a kind of oligarchy or local ruling class, a phenomenon that has many parallels in history. However, these networks did not form a permanent or undisputed elite over a long period of time: after the Babylonian revolts against Xerxes in 484 BCE, many families of central Babylonia were excluded from high office (Kessler 2004;

Waerzeggers 2003–4). Moreover, as producers of wealth, entrepreneurs did not require a firmly established family group: in Uruk, the rent farmer Šumu-ukīn of the Basia family was an outsider to the local urban elite when he rose to prominence in the beginning of the reign of Nabonidus.

Gods in Personal Names

Inhabitants of the great religious cities (*māḫāzu*) often bore names referring to their city's deity (almost always masculine, except in Uruk and Isin), his female consort, and, to varying degrees, his divine vizier. A theophoric name can thus serve as an indication of a person's geographical origin (see Table 1.1).

Another system of reference derived from the 'national', rather than the local, pantheon. This system was centred around two gods whose power extended over the whole of Babylonia: Marduk (also named Bēl) and his son Nabû. In the Neo-Babylonian period, Nabû had the same status of 'intercessor god' near the supreme deity (i.e., Marduk) that Sîn had enjoyed during the Old Babylonian period vis-à-vis Enlil. There was also a '*Beiform*' of Marduk, the god Madānu (^dDI.KU₅), who was Marduk's official 'throne bearer' (GU.ZA-LÁ). Madānu accounted for Marduk's power as a god of justice, a sphere that he shared with the sun god, Šamaš. A similar 'national' appeal was enjoyed by Ištar – venerated in, among other places, Uruk, Babylon, Sippar, and Agade – and by Nanāya, who was worshipped in Uruk and Borsippa.

Table 1.1 *Deities of major Babylonian cities favoured in personal names*

City	Deity favoured in personal names
Babylon	Marduk (or Bēl), Bēltia, Ištar-of-Babylon
Borsippa	Nabû, Tašmētu, Nanāya, Mār-bīti
Isin	Gula (or Bābu)
Kish	Zababa
Kutha	Nergal
Larsa	Šamaš, Aya, Bunene
Nippur	Enlil, Ninlil, Ninurta, Kusu
Sippar	Šamaš, Aya, Bunene
Ur	Sîn, Ningal, Nusku, and the 'chtonic group' (Ninazu, Ningišzidda, Niraḫ, Umunazu)
Udannu	Nergal (IGI.DU)
Uruk	Anu, Ištar (or Innin), Nanāya, Urdimmu

In view of the national pantheon, a personal name composed of, for instance, the element Nabû is less informative about a person's origins than a name referring to the god Zababa, who was strongly connected to the local pantheon of the city of Kish. We see that names consisting of a city's deity could be used as a means to reaffirm local identities against the royal centralism exercised by Babylon and its Marduk-based theology. As Karlheinz Kessler has shown, the resurgence of the god Anu in personal names at Uruk during the second part of the Achaemenid period was a way to reject the influence of Babylon (Kessler 2004). The people of Uruk foregrounded their city's male divinity Anu instead of Marduk, perhaps because Ištar had become a 'national' goddess, no longer exclusively connected with Uruk.

In the same theophoric perspective, we have to pay attention to personal names referring to the great temples, especially those of Borsippa (Ezida) and Babylon (Esagil), but also of Sippar (Ebabbar) and Uruk (Eanna).[7] The ideological reference is the same as for the god names, as the affiliation to a temple was indicative of a person's local identity (see Table 1.2).

The same is true for some personal names using city names, such as Zēr-Bābili and Ṭāb-Uruk, and maybe also, when the relation is not to a temple or a city but to sacred paraphernalia, for the rare family name Ina-ṣilli-sammi 'In the shade of the lyre' ([I]ina-GISSU-[giš]ZÀ.MÍ).

Table 1.2 *Personal names referring to temples*

Temple name	Examples of personal names
Esagil (Babylon)	Ina-Esagil-šumu-ibni, Ina-Esagil-zēri, [f]Banât-ina-Esagil, Esagil-amassu, Esagil-šadûnu
Eturkalamma (Babylon)	[f]Ina-Eturkalamma-alsišu
Ezida (Borsippa)	Ezida-šumu-ibni, Ṭāb-šār-Ezida
Eimbianu (Dilbat)	[f]Ina-Eimbianu-alsišu
Eigikalamma (Marad)	[f]Ina-Eigikalamma-lūmuršu
Egalmaḫ (Nippur)	Arad-Egalmaḫ
Eanna (Uruk)	Eanna-iddin, Eanna-līpī-uṣur, Eanna-nādin-šumi, Ina-ṣilli-Eanna, Itti-Eanna-būdia
Ebabbar (Sippar)	Ebabbar-šadûnu

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[7] The name of the great temple in Uruk might have to be read Ayakku instead of Eanna; see Beaulieu (2002).

Royal Names

During the Neo-Assyrian period, some kind of taboo rested on the royal name (Livingstone 2009, 154). Giving a child a name already borne by the sovereign or a member of his family was considered an offence against the king because it could signal a conspiracy. In 521 BCE, when unrest broke out in the Persian Empire after Cambyses' sudden death, two individuals tried to ascend the throne in Babylon and lead a rebellion against Darius I. Both rebels took a royal name charged with symbolism: Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian form of the name is Nabû-kudurru-uṣur).[8] The first of these rebels also claimed to be the son of Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. This shows that at this time it was still considered a mark of legitimacy to bear the name Nebuchadnezzar. However, a generation later, in 484 BCE, two new Babylonian usurpers rebelled against the Persian Empire, but neither of these men chose a name relating to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty; rather, they operated under their own personal names, Bēl-šimânni and Šamaš-erība.

Of the kings of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE) bore a particularly 'royal' name, as it clearly referred to Nebuchadnezzar I who had ruled between 1125 and 1104 BCE. However, in view of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar II already bore this name when he still was chief administrator (*šatammu*) of the temple of Ištar in Uruk (Jursa 2007), it is uncertain how we should interpret the ideological significance of this name. When we consider the other Neo-Babylonian kings[9] – his father Nabû-aplu-uṣur (626–605), his son Amīl-Marduk (562–560), his son-in-law Nergal-šarru-uṣur (560–556), Lâbâši-Marduk (556), Nabû-naʾid (556–539), and, finally, Bēl-šarru-uṣur (co-regent with Nabonidus) – they all seem to have borne common names.[10]

Also in Babylonia, the names of kings were avoided by the general population. Available lists of Neo-Babylonian personal names show that kings had few homonyms in society despite the common nature of their names. In the words of Heather Baker:

> In Babylonia also this restriction on the use of royal names can be observed. . . . [A] number of individuals named Nabû-naʾid are attested in

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[8] In scholarship they are referred to as Nebuchadnezzar III and IV.

[9] Such an analysis applies well to the kings of the Neo-Babylonia dynasty founded by Nabopolassar in 626 BCE, as their names can be compared with the numerous personal names found in the texts from daily life. In the absence of such ample documentation, the situation during the preceding centuries in Babylonia (ninth to seventh centuries BCE) is less easy to determine.

[10] Note that Amīl-Marduk was probably the name adopted by Nabû-šumu-ukīn, son of Nebuchadnezzar II, upon his release from imprisonment (Baker 2002). Nabû-šumu-ukīn is known as the author of a hymn to Marduk, where he claims to have been held captive because of false accusations (Finkel 1999).

Babylonian documents of the late seventh and earlier sixth centuries BC, but there is a notable lack of such individuals born after the accession of the king of that name. Even the latest attested person, the father of a man known in a tablet dated 522 BC was most likely born and named before Nabonidus' accession in 555 BC. (Baker 2002, 7)

Scribes often chose rare logogrammatic values to spell the names of Babylonian kings. For instance, in the case of Nabonidus the usual spelling [(I)d]AG-*na-a°-id* is often replaced with the more scholarly version [(I)d]AG-NÍ. TUK or [(I)d]AG-I. This system may have begun already in the seventh century BCE, as the name of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (668–648 BCE) was written using a rare spelling for Šamaš ([(I)d]GIS-NU$_{11}$-MU-GI.NA).

'Historical' Names

The kings of the Ur III period and even of the Empire of Akkad (later third millennium BCE) were part of Babylonian collective memory, as can be seen, for example, in the divinatory practice of linking certain configurations of the liver to 'historical' events taking place in those distant times (Glassner 2019). We also find evidence of persons being named after these ancient kings, presumably as a mark of prestige. One notes, for instance, the popularity of names such as Šarru-kīn 'Sargon' (*Nbk.* 106:2; *Nbk.* 365:1; *Cyr.* 297:1); Kurigalzu, a Kassite king (YOS 21 169:19') and Narām-Sîn (TMH 2/3 9:41–2). It is unclear why these kings were remembered and not others. In order to answer this question, we need a better understanding of the transmission of cultural memory in Babylonia. Finally, we can note a name more mythological than historical: Aṣûšu-namir ([I]*a-ṣu-šú-na-mir*), known from the myth of Ištar's descent, is mentioned as the name of a person in the legal text YOS 7 118, from the Eanna archive of Uruk.

Slave Names

Introduction

The names of slaves follow the same general rules of formation as the proper names of free persons (Watai 2012; Hackl 2013; and Chapter 3), but some names were typical for slaves. For instance, names such as 'I grasped the feet of (a deity)' are only attested for slaves (e.g., Šēpē(t)-Bēl-aṣbat, [f]Šēpē(t)-Ninlil -aṣbat, [f]Šēpētāya; see Tallqvist 1905, 202). The main categories of slave names are discussed in the next section.

Slaves were probably given a new name when they entered a new household (Radner 2005, 31). This phenomenon is visible especially when slaves are of foreign origin: by receiving an Akkadian name, they were given a new identity. This identity put them, before all, at the service of their owner. The relationship to the master could be made explicit in the name itself, as seen in the following examples (Stamm 1939):

ᶠBānītu-bēlu-uṣrī	'Bānītu, protect my master!'
Gabbi-(ilāni)-bēlu-uṣur	'All gods, protect my master!'
Ina-qātē-bēli-lumḫur	'May I receive (life) from the hands of my master'
Madānu-bēlu-uṣur	'Madānu protect my master!'
ᶠNanāya-bēlu-uṣrī	'Nanāya protect my master!'
ᶠNanāya-kilīlu-uṣrī	'Nanāya protect the tiara (the mistress)'

As observed by Heather Baker, the element Marduk is so rare in slave names that a 'deliberate avoidance' seems to be at play (Baker 2002, 8). However, while slave names with Marduk are very rare (Atkal-ana-Marduk in *Cyr.* 64 and 315 being an exception), the elements Bēl and Bēltia are regularly included in slave names. Perhaps such names did not refer to the gods Marduk and Zarpanītu, but rather to the slave's legal owners (*bēlu* 'master'; *bēltu* 'mistress'). Even when the scribe put the cuneiform sign DINGIR before the logogram EN, we cannot be sure whether this orthography reflects the actual meaning of the name. Ša-Bēl-bāni 'All what pertains to Bēl is beautiful' is an example of such an ambiguous slave name (*Dar.* 275).

Slave names rarely include references to family members (e.g., 'son', 'heir', 'brother', and 'sister'). A name such as Nabû-dūr-ēdi 'Nabû is the defence of the individual', typical for slaves, seems to highlight the plight of single people. In the absence of family solidarity, to which a slave could not aspire given his status, prayer-names seem to deliver the slave's fate into the hands of the gods and, as we have seen, perhaps also his master or mistress.

Main Categories of Slave Names

Slave names often express a prayer or a request for assistance, directed to a deity. The implicit effect of such names is that of a perpetual prayer uttered by the slave for himself or herself and maybe also for the benefit of his or her master or mistress. Some examples are:

ᶠBānītu-supê-muḫur	'Bānītu, accept my prayers!'
Bēl-ēdu-uṣur	'Bēl, protect the single!'
Enlil-māku-pitin	'Enlil, strengthen the weak!'

Enlil-supê-muḫur	'Enlil, accept my prayers!'
ᶠIna-Esagil-šimînni	'Listen to me in Esagil!'
ᶠIna-Eturkalamma-alsišu	'In Eturkalamma, I cried out to him (the god)'
Nabû-alsika-abluṭ	'I cried out to you, Nabû, and I came back to life'
Nabû-alsi-ul-āmur	'I cried out to Nabû but I could not see him'
Nabû-ayyālu	'Nabû, (come to) my help!'
Nabû-killanni	'Nabû, direct me!'
Rēmu-šukun	'Have mercy on me!'

Another category of slave names consists of expressions of trust in the deity and in his or her benevolence, for example:

ᶠAna-muḫḫi-Nanāya-taklāku	'I trust in Nanāya'
ᶠAna-muḫḫīšu-taklāku	'I trust in him (the god)'
Bēl-išdīa-ukīn	'Bēl granted the continuation (of the family)'
Gūzu-ina-Bēl-aṣbat	'I took my joy with Bēl'
Ina-qātē-Nabû-bulṭu	'Health is in the hands of Nabû'
Ina-ṣilli-Bīt-Akītu	'Under the protection of Bīt-Akītu'
ᶠItti-Eturkalamma-būnūʾa	'My face is turned towards Eturkalamma'
ᶠMannu-akî-ištaria	'Who is like my goddess?'
Nabû-gabbi-ileʾʾi	'Nabû knows everything'
Nabû-lū-salim	'May Nabû be well disposed (toward me)'
Nabû-rēmuʾa	'Nabû (has) mercy on me'
Nergal-rēṣûa	'Nergal is my helper'
Ultu-pāni-Bēl-lū-šulum	'Greetings from Bēl'

Slaves also often bore names referring to flora and fauna, as can be seen in these examples:

ᶠBaltammu	'Balsam'
ᶠBazītu	'Monkey'
Gadû, ᶠGadāya	'Kid'
ᶠḪilbunītu	'Galbanum'
ᶠInbāya	'Fruit'
ᶠIsḫunnatu	'Bunch of grapes'
ᶠKallabuttu	'Locust'
ᶠMurašītu	'Wild cat'
ᶠSinūnu	'Swallow'
ᶠSuluppāya	'Date'
Šaḫû	'Pig' ([11])
ᶠŠeleppūtu	'Turtle'

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[11] An anonymous reviewer of this manuscript notes that Thesiger (1964, 34) observed that Iraq's Marsh Arabs use similar names for boys whose brothers had died in infancy, to avert the evil eye.

fŠikkû	'Mongoose'
fŠilangītu	'Fish'

Finally, there are some programmatic names, directly related to the slave's activities:

fAna-pî-maḫrat	'She is ready for the command'
Ina-nemēli-kitti-ibašši	'True profit is there'

In some cases, the foreign origin of slaves, even of those bearing Babylonian names, was indicated. For instance, in the large inheritance document of the Egibi family, one of the slaves was listed as fNanāya-silim ᵘʳᵘ*ga-an-da-ru-i-tu₄* 'from Gandar' (*Dar.* 379:44). Another example is fNanāya-ittia *miṣrītu* 'from Egypt' (*Camb.* 334 and duplicates). In the case of Tabalāya the slave's name refers to Cilicia (Streck 2001, 114). Some slaves, finally, were simply called Ubāru 'foreigner'. For instance, in *Dar.* 492 we encounter a slave described as follows: 'Ubāru, the tattooed(?) slave whose right hand is inscribed with the name of Mušēzib-Marduk'.

Names of Foundlings and Orphans

Not everyone in Babylonia had a peaceful destiny and birth was not always considered a happy event. Perhaps a name like fLā-magirtu ('Not welcome') illustrates this experience.[12] The names of orphans and foundlings also reflect the dramatic conditions of their birth. The name Abī-ul-īde 'I do not know my father' is interpreted as typical for fatherless children (Stamm 1939, 321). Abī-lūmur 'I want to see my father' expresses a similar situation (Streck 2001, 114). And we may consider as abandoned children those persons who had been found in the streets (*sūqu*, *sulû*) or who had been rescued from stray animals (Wunsch 2003a),[13] as reflected in such names as:

Ḫāriṣānu	'The one from the ditch (of the city)' (Streck 2001, 114)
Sūqāya / fSūqaʾītu	'The one from the street'
Sulāya	'The one from the street'
Ša-pî-kalbi	'Out of the mouth of a dog'[14]

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[12] Note that Johannes Hackl (2013, 138) translates this name as 'Stubborn' and Laura Cousin and Yoko Watai translate it as 'Disobedient' (see Chapter 3, this volume).

[13] This hypothesis is based on the meaning of the name borne by these individuals. In some contracts, however, those persons appear with a full father's name, from which it could be concluded that they had been fully integrated into their adoptive family.

[14] Note that Streck (2001, 114) translates this name as 'Mit einer Hundeschnauze'.

Non-Babylonian Names

What did it mean to bear a foreign name in a society which attributed such value and significance to the personal name? Babylon's status as the capital city of a multi-ethnic empire attracted many individuals of allo-ethnic origin. Some of these persons migrated voluntarily to Babylonia, for instance, in order to perform a function in the service of power. Ḫanūnu 'Hannon', the chief royal merchant at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II, is a case in point. Others were brought to Babylonia as prisoners of war, deportees, or booty. This is the case with the Egyptian prisoners taken during the great battles between Nebuchadnezzar II and the Egyptians in Carchemish and Hamath. The king presented many of these prisoners as gifts to the temples of Babylonia. Several lists of personnel have been preserved where we can find phonetic renderings of their Egyptian names in cuneiform (Bongenaar and Haring 1994). These persons were not meant to increase the temple's workforce, probably did not speak Akkadian, and disappeared a few years later, presumably due to natural death.

Another community of forced immigrants is that of the deportees from the kingdom of Judah who were taken captive by the Babylonian army in 597 and especially in 587 BCE. Some recently published archives relate to this community (Pearce and Wunsch 2014). Without anticipating the chapter on Yahwistic names (see Chapter 9), we note that many instances are known of children born to the deportees who, even though sometimes bearing an Akkadian name, still retained their Judean identity within the familial group. In fact, in the majority of cases, name-giving practices preserved a strong ethnic, cultural, and social identity within the Judean community.

Most foreigners were registered with their original name, transcribed more or less approximately into cuneiform script, without any depreciative mark. This practice continued when Babylonia was no longer the centre of political power. For instance, after the conquest by Alexander the Great, one notices a significant increase of Greek names recorded in cuneiform tablets (Monerie 2014 and Chapter 14). Nevertheless, Babylonian scribes did sometimes emphasise the social status of foreigners in two different ways. Occasionally, they added an ethnic label to the personal name – for instance, Partammu 'the Persian' (*Dar.* 379:3) or Aḫšeti 'the Imbukean' (Abraham 2004 no. 46:16). Such labels allowed the scribe to characterise an individual whose name had no clear meaning for him. Another way of marking a foreign person's status was by adding a title situating the

individual, like Gubāru 'Governor of Babylon and Across-the-River'. It should be noted that West Semitic names were not marked as such. Babylonian society was virtually bilingual (Aramaic–Akkadian) and West Semitic names were very common in the onomastic repertoire (see Chapter 8). The difficulties encountered by scribes when dealing with foreign names are illustrated by the multiple spellings for the name of the king Xerxes which had no understandable referent for Babylonian scribes (Tavernier 2007, 66–7).

Conclusions

In Babylonia, a person's name could express different aspects of his or her social identity. A common name type conveyed a relationship between the person and a deity, who was thanked or implored. Nabû-iddin 'Nabû gave', Bēl-rēmanni 'Bēl have mercy on me', Šamaš-iqīša 'Šamaš awarded', and Nabû-alsi-ul-abāš 'I cried out to Nabû and will not come to shame' are examples of such names. Other names expressed a special relationship between the person and a family member; for instance, Aḫūšunu 'Their brother' and ꜥUmmī-ṭābat 'Mother is good'. A physical characteristic of the name-bearer, often of women, could be referred to, or a particular circumstance at birth. Kubburu 'Fat' is an example of the former name type, and Nabû-mītu-uballiṭ 'Nabû resurrected the stillborn (child)' and Ēdu-ēṭir 'Save the only (son)' are examples of the latter type.

This personal identity was coupled with a second identity, conveyed by the father's name. That name inserted the person into a nuclear family that provided him or her with a means of existence, assistance, and, possibly, renown. He or she was thus legitimised as a civilian with the status of a free person. Slaves and oblates were given a personal name but not a father's name. Instead, they were referred to by their master's name.

Finally, urban notables added a third name: an ancestor's name (or family name) which lent the individual a social position and allowed them to look for functions, activities, and matrimonial as well as professional alliances.

Further Reading

The study of Neo-Babylonian socio-onomastics is in its infancy and various future research avenues are still open. One aspect that requires more research is the practice of naming and renaming enslaved people. Female slave names have received more attention (Watai 2012; Hackl 2013) than male slave names.

Sibling naming patterns are studied by Heather D. Baker (2002), and intergenerational developments within families and larger communities by Tero Alstola (2020) and Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper and Laurie E. Pearce (2014). Ancestor names and family names have been the topic of several studies, notably by Wilfred G. Lambert (1957) and John P. Nielsen (2011). The rare phenomenon of female ancestor names is studied by Cornelia Wunsch (2006). For Neo-Babylonian onomastics, the name book by Knut L. Tallqvist (1905) remains indispensable.

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