

# The Semi-Circular Theatre in Seleucid and Arsacid Babylon<sup>1</sup>

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In 53 BC, General Surena of the Arsacid dynasty of Parthia defeated the Roman army near Carrhae (ancient Harran) in Upper Mesopotamia, killing its commander Crassus, one of the First Triumvirate. Crassus's head was sent to King Urōd (Hyrodes or Orodes) II of the Arsacids, who was hosting King Artavasdes II of Armenia. Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae* (Plut. *Vit. Crass.* 33) describes the event in which Crassus's head was brought to Armenia (Perrin 1916: 421–423). The scene shows that Greek tragedies were often performed in Armenian and Arsacid courts. When the head was brought to the king's banquet, a tragic actor called Jason was singing a part of the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Then Sillaces arrived at the banquet hall and cast the head into the hall. Jason seized the head, acting the role of Agave, sang as follows (Perrin 1916: 421):

'We bring from the mountain  
A tendril fresh-cut to the palace,  
A wonderful prey.'

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1 The research for this chapter is funded by JSPS KAKENHI Grants JP17Ho4527, JP18Ho5445, and JP18K00987. I thank the Trustees of the British Museum for allowing me to study the original cuneiform tablets cited in this chapter. I also thank Misa Hiyama (University of Tokyo) and Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.

The abbreviations in this chapter follow the lists in OCD<sup>4</sup> and in Streck (2016–2018) except those listed in the abbreviation list at the end of the chapter. Lines on cuneiform tablets of Babylonian Astronomical Diaries and Babylonian Chronicles are cited according to the method used in ADART 1: 38. The format 'n/n-1 BC' shows the Julian equivalent to a year in the Babylonian calendar, if unspecified. Since a Babylonian year begins in spring, the beginning and the end of the year should be dated to different years in the Julian calendar. Roman numerals are used to refer to Babylonian months.

The chorus made a dialogue with Agave, as follows (Perrin 1916: 423):

(*Chorus*) ‘Who slew him?’

(*Agave*) ‘Mine is the honour,’

This delighted everyone. In the context of the tragedy, there was a display of unusual enthusiasm regarding a strange object—Crassus’s head—as if it were a prop in the play.

In this occurrence, a feast venue was used as the stage for such a tragedy, but semi-circular theatres, such as those built in the Hellenistic and Roman world, were used for full-scale performances. Such semi-circular theatres also existed in Babylon, the old central city of Babylonia (modern southern Iraq). The theatre existed when the Seleucid (Macedonian) and the Arsacid dynasties ruled Babylon (305/304–141/140 BC and 141/140 BC–AD 224) and functioned as a meeting place for the Greco-Macedonian resident group called the ‘citizens of Babylon’ (*puliṭānu/puliṭēša ina Bābili* in Akkadian, the traditional language of ancient Babylonia). This group is differentiated from the traditional resident group of Babylon called ‘Babylonians’ (people who call themselves *Bābilāya* in Akkadian). The Akkadian term for ‘citizens’ was derived from the Greek word πολῖται (‘citizens’). The official who represented the ‘citizens of Babylon’ was called the ‘governor of Babylon’ (*pāḫāt Bābili*). Furthermore, it is highly probable that the ‘citizens’ had an institution called the ‘(council of) elders’ (πελιγᾶνες in Greek; *peliganānu* in Akkadian), which also existed in cities such as Seleucia on the Tigris and Laodicea by the Sea (Mitsuma 2019: 298–299, 303–304).

The ‘citizens’ were introduced to Babylon during the reign of Antiochus III (222/221–187/186 BC),<sup>2</sup> or that of Antiochus IV (175/174–164/163 BC)<sup>3</sup> of the Seleucids. Since the reign of Antiochus IV, or more precisely from 172/171 BC, they were often mentioned in Akkadian cuneiform records such as the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries and Babylonian Chronicles.<sup>4</sup> The scholars that compiled those records were employed by Esagil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon, which was the centre of ‘Babylonians’ (Mitsuma 2017: 42–43). The

2 Boiy 2004: 207–208.

3 Van der Spek 2005: 396; van der Spek 2009: 107–108.

4 For the attestations, see Mitsuma 2019: 295–296; Datable diaries are published in ADART 1–3, and Babylonian Chronicles after Alexander the Great are to be published in BCHP.

introduction of the ‘citizens’ into Babylon by Antiochus (III/IV) is recorded in the chronicle BCHP 14 (dated to 163/162 BC).<sup>5</sup>

#### BCHP 14 Obv.’

##### Transliteration

- 2 <sup>lú</sup>la-’-man-na-a-a-ni MU-šú-nu <sup>lú</sup>p[u-li-ṭa-nu]  
 3 šá ina lG1-ma ina qí-bi šá <sup>m</sup>An LUGAL ina E[<sup>ki</sup> KU<sub>4</sub> meš]  
 4 u Ì.GIŠ ŠÉŠ<sup>meš</sup> l[i]b-bu-ú <sup>lú</sup>pu-l[i-ṭa-nu]  
 5 šá ina <sup>uru</sup>Si-lu-ki-’-’ a-a URU LUGAL-ú-t[u]  
 6 šá ina muḫ-ḫi <sup>íd</sup>IDIGNA u ÍD LUGAL

##### Translation

- 2 the Greeks (or Ionians), who are called ‘citi[zens]’,  
 3 who formerly [entered] Babylon by the order of King An(tiocus),  
 4 and smear themselves with oil like the citi[zens]  
 5 of Seleucia, the city of kingship,  
 6 which is on the Tigris and the King’s Canal

The chronicle BCHP 14 clearly states that the ‘citizens’ were ‘Greeks’, or more precisely, ‘Ionians’ (people from the Aegean area, including Greece and western Anatolia; see Rollinger 2009: 32, 38; Yamada 2019: 221–222). Although the group of ‘citizens’ may have included people from Greece and western Anatolia, the group also included those from other regions who adopted Greek lifestyle and customs. Greek citizens’ habits included ‘smearing themselves with oil’; they smeared olive oil over their bodies while exercising naked in gymnasiums or training schools (van der Spek 2005: 396; van der Spek 2009: 108). Being accepted by a gymnasium was a sign of citizenship (van der Spek 2005: 396; van der Spek 2009: 108), and the existence of a gymnasium in Babylon is evident from the Greek inscription SEG 7 39<sup>6</sup> that records the winners of games in 111/110 BC of the Babylonian calendar<sup>7</sup>, or in the first half of 111/110

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- 5 The text of BCHP 14 with the restored signs is published in van der Spek 2005: 403–404. Mitsuma 2019: 296–297 cites the text of Obv.’ 1–7 with some changes in the way of transliteration and shows a new translation of the part. The following transliteration bases on the text citation of Mitsuma 2019: 296, but the translation changes in some points.
- 6 Van der Spek 2005: 398; van der Spek 2009: 110. For the text of SEG 7 39, see van der Spek 2005: 406–407.
- 7 Van der Spek 2005: 398; van der Spek 2009: 110.

BC<sup>8</sup>, and attests the existence of the office of the training manager of a gymnasium, or the gymnasiarch (unfortunately, his personal name is damaged and unclear).

The semi-circular theatre in Babylon served as a meeting place for the ‘citizens (of Babylon)’, and letters were often read aloud in this theatre in the early Arsacid period addressing the ‘citizens’ and their representative, the ‘governor of Babylon’ (van der Spek 2001: 455; Sciandra 2012: 236). The ruins of the theatre were uncovered in 1904 by the excavators of Babylon under the command of Robert Koldewey (Mallwitz 1994: 3; Potts 2011: 240).

According to Potts (2011: 240–243), the theatre was built and rebuilt in two phases, the first of which can be divided into three sub-phases. The theatre of Phase I was built in the period following the entrance of Alexander the Great into Babylon (331/330 BC) (van der Spek 2001: 446). A horizontal stage building (skene) was constructed that had three doorways that opened to the orchestra in front (the place where the chorus and actors performed, 21.8m in diameter). In addition, passages (parodoi) to the orchestra were constructed between the skene and the surrounding seating area (koilon). The parodoi were limited by the arc of the koilon; that is, when viewed from the skene, the opposite side of the passages became farther as one moved inside (see Mallwitz 1994: plate 8; Potts 2011: 241: figure 1). The theatre was thought to be renovated after the ‘citizens’ were introduced in Babylon (Phase I<sub>2</sub>, for the date of the renovation, see Mallwitz 1994: 20; van der Spek 2001: 445–446). In this phase, a proscenium was expanded in front of the skene; actors also performed there (see Mallwitz 1994: plate 8; Potts 2011: 242: figure 2). In Phase I<sub>3</sub>, the orchestra was expanded to 22.16m in diameter (see Mallwitz 1994: plate 9; Potts 2011: 242: figure 3). The theatre of Phase I<sub>3</sub> seems to have functioned until the beginning of the first century BC because it is mentioned in the Astronomical Diaries (as É IGI.DU<sub>8</sub>.A, *bīt tāmarti*<sup>9</sup>) several times during 162/161–83/82 BC (van der Spek 2001: 448–455). The Phase I<sub>3</sub> theatre was destroyed or fell out of use since then (the destruction’s *terminus post quem* seems to be 83/82 BC, see Potts 2011: 248), and the Phase II theatre was rebuilt in the first or second century AD (Mallwitz 1994: 20–21; van der Spek 2001: 446; Potts 2011: 248).

8 The two year numbers show the Julian equivalent to the Macedonian year, which begins in the autumn of 111 BC and ends in the autumn of 110 BC. For the dating of the inscription, see Assar 2003: 177.

9 This Akkadian expression seems to be an equivalent to the Greek word θέατρον, ‘theatre’ (see van der Spek 2001: 447).

This theatre seems to have been reconstructed in a Roman rather than a Greek style, and a palaestra (wrestling school) was added to the theatre (see Mallwitz 1994: plate 11a; Potts 2011: 242–243; 243: figure 4).

One can see how this theatre was used in several passages in the Astronomical Diaries. It likely hosted plays, but all the accounts concerning the theatre from the diaries of the Arsacid period describe letters read aloud there (ADART 3 -140A 'Rev. 5'–6'; -132D<sub>2</sub> 'Rev.' 14'–22'; -124B 'Rev.' 17'–19'; -118A 'Rev. 18'–21'; -87C 'Rev. 30'; and also -82B 'Obv.' 21' seems to show that something was read aloud in the theatre). According to ADART 3 -140A 'Rev. 5'–6', -132D<sub>2</sub> 'Rev.' 14'–22'; -124B 'Rev.' 17'–19', and -118A 'Rev. 18'–21', the letters were addressed to the 'governor of Babylon' and the 'citizens of Babylon'. According to ADART 3 -124B 'Rev.' 17'–19', a letter of the king Artabān I of the Arsacids was carried by the king's messenger and read aloud in the theatre in X.125/124 BC. In ADART 3 -118A 'Rev. 18'–21', it is clearly stated that the letter read aloud in VII.119/118 BC was the 'parchment document of King Aršak' and was certainly sent by Mihrdāt II, the Arsacid king who ruled Babylon at the time. The following are the accounts of the two letters read aloud in the theatre, transliterated and translated. Copies of the cuneiform texts are shown in Figures 1–2 at the end of this chapter.

#### ADART 3 -124B (BM 45693 + 45853) 'Rev.'

##### Transliteration

17' [x x x] lú.KIN.GI<sub>4</sub>.A LUGAL šá kuš<sup>r</sup> SAR<sup>meš</sup> na-šu-ú ana E<sup>ki</sup> KU<sub>4</sub>-ub U<sub>4</sub> BI  
kuš SAR<sup>m</sup>[eš LUGA]L šá ana muḥ-ḥi lú pa-ḥat E<sup>ki</sup> u lú pu-li-te-e šá ina E<sup>ki</sup> SAR<sup>meš</sup>  
ina É IGI.DU<sub>8</sub>.A šá-su-ú um-ma šal-tu<sub>4</sub>

18' [KI<sup>m</sup>] 'Pi-it-ti-it' lú.KÚR NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> DÙ-ma 15-lim ERÍN-ni MÈ ina ŠĀ  
ERÍN-ni-šú ina <sup>giš</sup>TU[KUL ú-šám-]qit-ma<sup>10</sup> ḥa-as-ru-ú<sup>11</sup> ina lib-bi ERÍN-ni-iá NU  
GAR-an<sup>kur</sup> NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> pa-aṭ gim-ri-šú ina <sup>giš</sup>TUKUL SĪG-aš<sup>m</sup> Pi-it-ti-it

19' [x] x x x KI<sup>7,12</sup> aš-bat U<sub>4</sub> BI (omitted)

10 The restoration <sup>giš</sup>TU[KUL ú-šám-] is shown in van der Spek 2001: 452.

11 The sign *as* was not transliterated in preceding editions (ADART 3: 278; Del Monte 1997: 142; van der Spek 2001: 452; Haubold 2019: 287; Visscher 2019: 259). The word *ḥasrū* is the stative 3m. plural of *ḥasāru*. The verb is used to show a break of cuneiform text in the scribal remark at BBR 43 8'–9' (CAD, s.v. "ḥesēru"). Here, the word *ḥasrū* seems to be used to show the part had been 'broken' in the source text of -124B. Judging from the context, one or two words are lost.

12 The restoration [lú]KÚR NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> is expected here, but the remaining sign traces do not necessarily support this restoration.

**Translation**

**17'** [...] A messenger of the king who carried parchment document entered Babylon. On the same day, the parchment document of the [king], which was written to the governor of Babylon and the citizens of Babylon, was read aloud in the theatre as follows: A battle

**18'** I made [with] Pittit, the Elamite enemy, and [I put] 15,000 battle troops among his army to the [weapon], and—broken—did not occur in my army. Striking all over Elam with the weapon, Pittit,

**19'** [...] .., I seized. On the same day, (omitted)

**ADART 3 -118A (BM 41693) 'Rev.****Transliteration**

**18'** (omitted) [ITI] BI U<sub>4</sub> 15.KAM <sup>kuš</sup>SAR<sup>meš</sup> šá <sup>m</sup>Ar-šá-ka-a LU[GAL šá ana UGU]

**19'** <sup>lú</sup>pa-ḥat<sup>E<sup>ki</sup></sup> u <sup>lú</sup>pu-li-ṭa-an šá ina <sup>E<sup>ki</sup></sup>SAR<sup>meš</sup> ina É IGI.DU<sub>8</sub>.A šá-su-ú ak-ka-i šá<sup>13</sup> <sup>lú</sup>ERÍN<sup>meš</sup> MAḪ<sup>meš</sup> NIGIN-ma ù ana LÚ.NE GIN<sup>meš</sup> ana UGU DUMU LUGAL u <sup>lú</sup>ERÍN<sup>meš</sup>-šú šá URU<sup>meš</sup> S[UD<sup>meš</sup>]<sup>14</sup>

**20'** [šá <sup>kur</sup>G]u<sup>?</sup>-ti-i<sup>15</sup> šá a-na <sup>m</sup>Ár-ta-ba-na-a ŠEŠ-iá GAZ-ku ù as-di-ir ana tar-ši-šú-nu u LÚ.NE e-pu-šú<sup>16</sup> it-ti-šú-nu GAZ-tu<sub>4</sub> GAL-tu<sub>4</sub> ina lîb-bi-šú-nu áš-kun e-lat 2 LÚ 'x' [...]

**21'** [x x x] ul GAZ<sup>meš</sup> u DUMU LUGAL u ERÍN<sup>meš</sup>-šú TA LÚ.NE BAL-ma a-na ár-ki-šú a-na KUR<sup>meš</sup> dan-nu-tú iḫ-ḫi-is ITI BI (omitted)

**Translation**

**18'** (omitted) On the 15th of the same [month], parchment document of King

Aršak[, which]

**19'** was written [to] the governor of Babylon and the citizens of Babylon, was read

aloud in the theatre as follows: A large army gathered and went to the battle against the prince and his army of the re[mote] cities

**20'** [of Gu]ti, who killed Artabān, my brother. And I arranged a battle line against

13 For *akkā'i ša* as a direct speech marker, see Sciandra 2012: 235n37.

14 The restoration is shown in van der Spek 2001: 453.

15 The restoration is shown in van der Spek 2001: 453.

16 The last sign *šú* only represents the vowel /š/ (See Hyatt 1941: 23, 56).

them, fought with them, and committed a great massacre among them.  
 Except  
 for two [....]  
**21'** [...] they were not killed<sup>17</sup> and the prince and his army withdrew from  
 the  
 battle and retreated to the rear, to the difficult mountains. In the same  
 month,  
 (omitted)

These two documents describe the victory of the Arsacid kings (Artabān I and his son Mihrdāt II, both of whom are called the Arsacid coronation name 'Aršak' in contemporary sources) against two different enemies, one is 'Pittit (Pitthides), the Elamite enemy', while the other is called 'the prince and his army of the re[mote] cities [of Gu]ti'. As Haruta (1998, 183–184) points out, the Elymaean leader Pittit can be identified as Pitthides, whose eyes were gouged out and whom the envoys sent to King Arsaces (Aršak) from Seleucia (on the Tigris) were forced to face as a warning (Diod. Sic. 34/35:19). The Akkadian name 'Guti' is an archaic appellation for the regions in the northeast direction from Babylonia (Zadok 1985: 143–144), and in this case, it is used to refer to the territory of the steppe nomads in Central Asia (Haruta 1998: 186). The nomads (Scythians) revenged by Mihrdāt II are also mentioned in Justin's epitome of Pompey Trogue's *Historiae Philippicae* (Just. *Epit.* 42:2:1–5). Justin describes Mihrdāt II's wars against Scythians as a whole in Justin (*Epit.* 42:2:5), but the diary ADART 3 -118A 'Rev. 18'–21' seems to describe a part of the wars. Justin describes the death of Mihrdāt II's father, King Artabān I, caused by a wound in the battle with Tocharii, a group of Scythians,<sup>18</sup> in Justin (*Epit.* 42:2:2); on the other hand, Mihrdāt II's letter quoted in the diary ADART 3 -118A considers the murder of prince Artabān (<sup>m</sup>*Ár-ta-ba-na-a*), brother of King Aršak (Mihrdāt II), as the direct cause of the battle against nomad troops led by a prince (could be identified as Tocharii). In short, Justin (*Epit.* 42:2:2) may have mistaken prince Artabān for King Artabān I (Mitsuma 2012: 341) because he makes a similar mistake in an adjacent chapter (Just. *Epit.* 42:4:1), in which he confuses Mihrdāt III with Mihrdāt II.

17 The sentence 'Except for two [...] they were not killed' probably describes the exceptionally minimal damage to the 'large army' of the King Aršak (Mihrdāt II) mentioned in Line 19'.

18 Strabo (11:8:2) mentions Τόχαροι as a part of nomadic Scythians.

Comparing these two victory reports passed on to Babylon, we find the following common features. They may represent the character of the royal propaganda of the Arsacids.<sup>19</sup>

1. Both argue victory over a large number of enemies ('[put] 15,000 battle troops among his army to the [weapon]' and 'committed a great massacre among them').
2. Both deny the occurrence of something negative in the Arsacid army ('—broken—did not occur in my army' and 'Except for two [...] they were not killed'; The subject of the former is lost, but the context suggests that it is a negative thing for the Arsacids).
3. Both claim that they widely overwhelmed their opponent's land ('striking all over Elam with the weapon' and 'the prince and his army withdrew from the battle and retreated to the rear, to the difficult mountains').

Regarding the victory over Elymais (Elam), the diary ADART 3 -124B quotes another letter just before the quotation of the letter sent by King Artabān I. This letter was written by Aspasinē—the king of Mesene, a small kingdom located in the Persian Gulf—to the 'general of Babylonia', the commander of the Arsacid troops stationed in the province Babylonia,<sup>20</sup> and read aloud to the 'citizens of Babylon' on 2.X.125/124 BC. Regarding the arrival of the Artabān's letter, its date is unclear because the tablet is damaged, but it should be dated later in X.125/124 BC, because the event is recorded in some lines after the arrival and reading out of the Aspasinē's letter in the historical part of X.125/124 BC of the diary ADART 3 -124B. The following is the transliteration and translation of the Akkadian text concerning the letter or the parchment document of Aspasinē. A copy of the cuneiform text is shown in Figure 1.

### ADART 3 -124B 'Rev.'

#### Transliteration

12' (omitted) ITI BI U4 2.KAM x' x' [x<sup>ku</sup>]ŠAR<sup>meš</sup> šā<sup>m</sup> As-pa-a-si-né-e LUGAL  
A<sup>meš</sup>-šā-nu-ú<sup>21</sup> šā ana muḫ-ḫi<sup>lú</sup> GAL ERÍN-ni KUR URI<sup>ki</sup> iṣ-ṭur iṭ-ṭaḫ-ḫi

19 Sciandra (2012: 234–236) discusses the outline of propagandistic letters of the Arsacids cited in the Astronomical Diaries.

20 For the function of the office, see Mitsuma 2002: 39, 43, 46; Mitsuma 2009: 155.

21 A<sup>meš</sup>-šā-nu-ú could be read *mê-šanû* and seems to be a corrupt form of *mû-šanûtu* 'other warters' (Del Monte 1997: 117). It could reflect the regional name of Mesene (Mêšān in



13' [ina DA <sup>lú</sup>pu-li-]te-e<sup>22</sup> šá ina E<sup>ki</sup> šá-su-ú um-ma ina ITI BI U<sub>4</sub> 15.KAM <sup>m</sup>Ar-šá-kam LUGAL u <sup>m</sup>Pi-i-[t-ti-i]t <sup>lú</sup>KÚR NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> šal-tu<sub>4</sub> KI a-ḥa-meš DÙ-u' LUGAL BAD<sub>5</sub>.BAD<sub>5</sub> <sup>lú</sup>ERÍN-ni<sup>kur</sup> NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> ina <sup>giš</sup>TUKUL GAR-<sup>an</sup> <sup>m</sup>Pi-it-ti-it  
 14' [<sup>lú</sup>KÚR NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup>]<sup>23</sup> iṣ-bat ITI BI (omitted)

### Translation

12' (omitted) On the 2nd of the same month, .... parchment document of Aspasinē,  
 the king of Mesene, which he had written to the general of Babylonia, arrived  
 (and)

13' was read aloud [next to the citi]zens of Babylon, as follows: On the 15th  
 of this  
 month (of the previous month?), King Aršak and Pittit, the Elamite  
 enemy, fought with each other. The king used the weapon to defeat the  
 Elamite  
 army. Pittit,

14' [the Elamite enemy,] he seized. In the same month, (omitted)

This letter conveys the Arsacid victory over Elymais in a subdued tone. It reports only the facts that King Aršak (Artabān I) and Pittit battled and the former defeated and seized the latter. The simplicity of this report suggests that Artabān I's letter, which is quoted after this statement, contains considerable exaggerations. News of the victory, which was brilliantly conveyed in the semi-circular theatre, should have been received sceptically, at least by the scholar who wrote the diary ADART 3 -124B and quoted Aspasinē's and Artabān's letters side by side (who was not a member of the 'citizens of Babylon' but one of the 'Babylonians'). However, the 'citizens of Babylon', who heard the victory report of Artabān I in the theatre, might have, at least officially, showed great enthusiasm for the propagandistic news, although they had already known of Artabān's victory from the letter of Aspasinē. Aspasinē's letter may itself point to a connection between the 'citizens of Babylon' and a potential adversary of the Arsacids. King Aspasinē's Mesene was a power

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Middle Persian, see Hansman 1992) and refer to the region situated on the waters of the Persian Gulf.

22 This restoration is shown in van der Spek 2001: 451.

23 This restoration is shown in van der Spek 2001: 452.

that temporarily occupied Babylon in 127/126 BC (Del Monte 1997: 249),<sup>24</sup> and while it lost control of Babylon at the time, it maintained contact with neighbouring Babylonia and thus conveyed the information of Artabān's victory to the military commander of the Arsacid troops in the province, the 'general of Babylonia'. Mesene's concern regarding Babylonia is also attested in the diary ADART 3 -124B 'Obv.' 5'–6'. According to the historical account of VIII.125/124 BC, Aspasinē's son, Timotheus, went out from Babylon to visit the 'general of Babylonia' in Seleucia on the Tigris, the Arsacid political centre of Babylonia. A son of Aspasinē was arrested (probably in Seleucia) and sent back to his father in the following month IX (ADART 3 -124B 'Obv.' 19'–20', unfortunately, the name of the arrestee is severely damaged in Line 19'). The letter from Aspasinē about the victory of Artabān I against Pittit arrived at Babylon on 2.X.125/124 BC. Presumably, if Artabān had failed at Elymais, King Aspasinē, the 'general of Babylonia', and even the 'citizens of Babylon', might have launched a resistance movement against Artabān I. King Aspasinē's letter may have been a message to the general and the 'citizens' that the situation no longer allowed such resistance. The event recorded on ADART 3 -124B 'Rev.' 14'–16' may show the reaction of the 'citizens' to this message (see the text of van der Spek 2001: 452). On 15.X.125/124BC, they took away the *θρόνος* ('throne' in Greek), which King Aspasinē had dedicated to the god Marduk during his occupation of Babylon, from the treasury attached to the 'Day-One Temple'.<sup>25</sup> This event shows the diminished authority of Aspasinē in Babylon. The 'citizens' might have further shown (even if they were merely pretending) pro-Arsacid sentiments toward the propagandistic victory report of Artabān, which was read aloud later in the theatre (which is recorded just after the sacrilege on ADART 3 -124B 'Rev.' 17'–19'), being afraid of a purge of Artabān's potential adversaries. We may understand the warning introduction of Pittit by King Arsaces to the envoys of Seleucia on the Tigris, who were sent to beg his pardon for Seleuceans' torture of his general, Enius (Diod. Sic. 34/35:19), as a threat against a hostile group, made after the Arsacid victory over Elymais (see also Haruta 1998: 183–184).

The reading of a letter in the semi-circular theatre reflects a deep political situation in which the ulterior motives of each power collided and became intertwined.

24 Aspasinē might have occupied Babylon from 128/127 to 127/126 BC (Mitsuma 2009: 168).

25 For the 'Day-One Temple' and its treasury, see Mitsuma 2008: 98.

Abbreviations

ADART	Sachs, Abraham J./Hunger, Hermann (1988–2014): <i>Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia</i> , vols. 1–3, 5–7, Vienna: VÖAW.
BCHP	van der Spek, Robartus J./Finkel, Irving L./Pirngruber, Reinhard/Stevens, Kathryn (eds.) (forthcoming): <i>Babylonian Chronographic Texts from the Hellenistic Period</i> , Atlanta: SBL (Finkel, Irving L./van der Spek, Robartus J. [n.d.]: <i>Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period</i> , scholarly edition, accessed 19 August 2016 at Livius.org. <a href="http://www.livius.org/sources/abot/mesopotamian-chronicles/">http://www.livius.org/sources/abot/mesopotamian-chronicles/</a> ).
OCD <sup>4</sup>	Hornblower, Simon/Spawforth, Antony/Eidinow, Esther (eds.) (2012): <i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , fourth edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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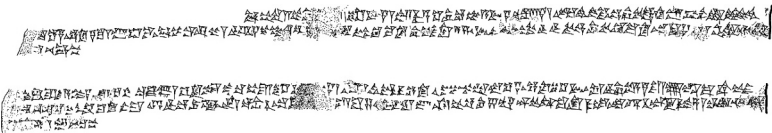
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Figures

*Fig. 1: Copy of ADART 3 -124B (BM 45693 + 45853) 'Rev.' 12'-14', 17'-19' (part, tracing of the photograph by the author, taken with courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)*



*Fig. 2: Copy of ADART 3 -118A (BM 41693) 'Rev.' 18'-21' (part, tracing of the photograph by the author, taken with courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)*

