

Executive Summary

State Party

Republic of Iraq

Province

Babil Governorate

Name of property

Babylon

Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

Latitude

N 32° 31' 7.68", E 44° 27' 18.00"

Longitude

N 32° 34' 9.12", E 44° 24' 18.00"

Center

N 32° 32' 31.09", E 44° 25' 15.00"

Textural description of the boundary

The size of the nominated property is 1054.3 hectare. The boundaries include all excavated archaeological remains, modern reconstructions of ancient buildings and artificial alterations to the landscape, together with all unexcavated archaeological areas of the ancient city contained in its outer walls that give the property its Outstanding Universal Value under World Heritage criteria (iii) and (vi). The buffer zone is proposed at a distance of 100 meters from the property boundaries from every direction in accordance with the instructions issued by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) on the protection of archaeological sites following the Iraq Antiquities Law No.55 of 2002. It covers an area of 154.5 hectares.

The site's boundaries have been based on the perimeter of the ancient Outer city walls and an agricultural map compiled by the Ministry of Irrigation in 1949. A

survey conducted by the SBAH and WMF in 2010 served to re-identify the site's boundaries, which has been approved by the Chairman of the SBAH and the Babil Province Governor.



Criteria under which the property is nominated

Criteria (iii) and (vi)

Draft statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Babylon is an archaeological and symbolic site that stands as a unique testimony of one of the most influential empires of the ancient world and that has exceptionally wide ranging and long-lasting cultural associations of value for humanity as a whole .

One of the largest, oldest settlements in Mesopotamia and the Middle East, and was the seat of successive powerful empires under such famous rulers as Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar. As the capital of the Neo-Babylonian empire (626-539 BC), it is the most exceptional testimony of this culture at its height and represents the expression of this civilization's creativity through its unusual urbanism, the architecture of its monuments (religious, palatial and military or defensive) and their decorative equipping as artistic expression of royal power. Babylon radiated not only political, technical and artistic influence over all regions on the ancient Near and Middle East, but it also left a considerable scientific legacy in the fields of mathematics and astronomy. As an archaeological site, Babylon possesses exceptional cultural and symbolic associations of universal value. The property represents the tangible remains of a multifaceted myth that has functioned as a model, parable, scapegoat and symbol for over two thousand years. Babylon figures in the religious texts and traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths and has consistently been a source of inspiration for literary, philosophical and artistic works originally in the Western world. Today, Babylon also inspires artistic, popular and religious culture on a global scale and remains an icon of Iraqi national identity .

The buildings and other urban features contained within the boundaries of the property (outer and inner-city walls, gates, palaces, temples including the ziggurat, the probable inspiration for the Tower of Babel, etc.), include all its attributes as a unique testimony to the Neo-Babylonian civilization, in particular its contribution to architecture and urban design. These attributes also form the material basis for the property's cultural and symbolic associations. Eighty-five percent of the property is still unexcavated and of primary importance to support the site's Outstanding Universal Value through further conservation and research. The location and identification of the ancient city of Babylon and its attributes are well established by historical documentation, in particular a wealth of cuneiform

tablets of various periods found at the site. The city's spatial organization is legible even if the morphology of the mud-brick buildings has long been impacted by natural factors and man-made interventions. Twentieth-century removals to museums together with the reconstruction of some major buildings have nevertheless allowed most buildings to retain the distinctive attributes they bore after being excavated .

The property is legally protected and under the oversight of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. It is managed by the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of the Babil Province. The management plan addresses in priority conservation issues and benefits from the highest levels of federal and provincial support.

The State Party proposes to inscribe the property under the following criteria:

Criterion (iii)

Babylon is one of the largest, oldest settlements in Mesopotamia and the Middle East with earliest references dating to the third millennium BC. It was the seat of successive powerful empires under such famous rulers as Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar, and a political and cultural center that radiated its influence over all regions on the ancient Near and Middle East.

As the capital of the Neo-Babylonian empire (626-539 BC), it is the most exceptional testimony of this culture at its height and represents specifically the expression of this civilization's creativity through its urbanism, the architecture of its monuments (religious, palatial and military or defensive) and their decorative equipping as artistic expression of royal power. The property is also of exceptional significance for the history of the ancient Middle East before, during and after the Neo-Babylonian period, an importance supported by an extremely rich record of documentation, particularly cuneiform archives.

Babylon's cultural legacy was enhanced by previous Akkadian and Sumerian cultural achievements, which included the cuneiform writing system, a significant tool for today's knowledge of the history and evolution of the region in general and Babylon in particular. In turn, Babylon exerted considerable political, scientific, technological, architectural and artistic influence upon other human settlements in the region, and on successive historic periods of the Antiquity. Astronomy was first elaborated as a science in the city, alongside advances in mathematics that would inform all subsequent studies of the stars.

Criterion (vi)

As an archeological site, Babylon possesses exceptional cultural and symbolic associations of universal value. The property represents the tangible remains of a multifaceted myth that has functioned as a model, parable, scapegoat and symbol for over two thousand years. Babylon figures in the religious texts and traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths and has consistently been a source of inspiration for literary, philosophical and artistic works originally in the Western world. Today, Babylon also inspires artistic, popular and religious culture on a global scale.

The Bible offered Babylon's greatness as a cautionary tale, a warning against hubris, idolatry, and the moral laxity linked to the city's wealth. The Holy Qur'an mentions it in reference to a tale of human weakness. In the works of Greek historians, Babylon was distant, exotic and incredible. Classical texts attribute two of the seven wonders of the world to Babylon: the walls of the city, whose remains are still visible today, and the Hanging Gardens. The innumerable artistic and literary representations of the Tower of Babel and the Hanging Garden are iconic or philosophical but they have their origin in real ancient structures of which archaeological traces are still preserved: the ziggurat Etemenanki and Nebuchadnezzar's palatial complex.

Babylon is also a powerful political metaphor. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is a degenerated archetype. In the twentieth century – the age of nationalism and post-colonial independence –, it became the symbol of power and historical pride and was heavily invested by Iraqi leaders who strived to leave their mark on the site by reconstructing the grandiose monuments of Nebuchadnezzar.

Statement of integrity

The boundaries of the archaeological site encompass the outer walls of the neo-Babylonian city on all sides. These limits are well marked by remnants of the fortifications in the form of mounds visible on the ground. They are confirmed by archaeological surveys. The buildings and other urban features contained within the property include all archaeological remains since the time of Hammurabi until the Hellenistic period, and specifically urbanistic and architectural features from the Neo-Babylonian period where the city was at the height of its power and glory. These represent the main attributes of the property as a unique testimony to the Neo-Babylonian civilization, and the material basis for its cultural and symbolic associations. Most of these attributes are located at the center of the property: remains of the inner wall, the city gates, the Processional Way, major temples, particularly the ziggurat, and palaces. The outer

city walls and the Summer Palace, located to the north of the property, also represent major attributes.

The morphology of Babylon's historic buildings is affected by natural factors and man-made interventions, and none of the ancient monument or urban feature has remained intact since Antiquity. As early as the Hellenistic period, the high-quality material that went into erecting Babylon's iconic monuments under Nebuchadnezzar II started being reused in new buildings. Medieval Baghdad was partly built with bricks from ancient Babylon shipped on the Euphrates. In the course of time, the unbacked bricks remaining on the site were eroded by the natural elements and reverted to mud. Ancient grandiose monuments became archaeological mounds with foundations and wall remains buried under the surface. In the early twentieth-century, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft excavated then removed the fourth and most elaborate stage of the Ishtar Gate to rebuild it in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin in 1930. Vast numbers of other artefacts, including architectural elements, were looted or made their way to Western museums.

On this vast site, several constructions have been built upon the unexcavated archaeological layers: the medieval Islamic shrine of Amran bin Ali, dating in its current shape from the Ottoman period; scattered rural settlements associated with date palm agriculture – an enduring feature of the site since the Antiquity; and, in the twentieth-century, facilities for archaeologists, management, visitors and tourists. Artificial topographical features (hills and lakes) were also created in the 1980s, one of them topped with a presidential palace. These are all traces of the continuous use – agricultural, religious, commercial, scientific, political and educational – of river banks since the time of ancient Mesopotamia. The impact of these interventions on the unexcavated archaeological layers is limited: the foundations of buildings are absent or shallow, and artificial topographical features were created in areas selected for their secondary archaeological importance. Three parallel pipelines installed since the 1970s cross the eastern sections of site buried in shallow trenches.

The Ishtar Gate before conservation work (SBAH Photographic archives)



Statement of authenticity

The location and identification of the ancient city of Babylon and of the various material attributes supporting its Outstanding Universal Value have been established by a large body of archaeological and historical research conducted scientifically and published since the late nineteenth century. Even if some debate exists as regards the actual location and even existence of the Hanging Gardens, it is nevertheless well established by historians of Antiquity that classical Greek authors placed them in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. Furthermore, vast amounts of original documentation on ancient Babylon is conserved in the world museums in the form of cuneiform tablets and other artefacts.

Some physical aspects of the property have often been viewed as problematic in terms of authenticity. Reconstructions were performed by the Iraqi archaeological authority starting in the 1960s after excavation campaigns. They were meant to address the scarcity of visible monumental remains to make the site attractive for visitors and convey a political message. These interventions used modern material and have been duly criticized for failing not only to adopt international conservation techniques but also, at times, for weakening original remains. Such interventions were grounded in the nationalist and post-colonial philosophy of their time and rooted in the values attributed to Babylon by previous political powers.

Yet they did not affect the legibility of the spatial organization of the urban core into religious, political and administrative districts, and of the inner and outer city's limits that are clearly discernible today. Furthermore, modern reconstruction systematically followed original plans revealed by excavations works conducted by the German and Iraqi archaeologists. Works were executed on top of original foundations or excavated remains of walls some several meters high. In most cases, although modern additions were not clearly marked, they are distinguishable from original remains. The main distinctive attributes of the excavated ancient buildings have thus been retained. Since 2011, the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage that has authority over the site has adopted a new conservation philosophy: incomplete monuments are to be conserved but not reconstructed, and modern additions will be removed whenever they affect conservation.

Some major identified buildings, excavated or not, have been unaffected by reconstructions. This is the case with the outer city walls, the Northern Palace, the

Esagila, several secondary temples, and the ziggurat. Additionally, excavations and reconstructions have focused on large public buildings leaving much to discover about residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial quarters. It is noteworthy that ninety percent of the site is neither unexcavated nor rebuilt, a situation that presents remarkable opportunities to support the site's Outstanding Universal Value through further conservation and research.

Requirements for protection and management

The property falls under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Antiquities and Heritage Law No. 55 of 2002 which aims to protect, conserve and manage all archaeological sites in Iraq. The law is further concerned with surveying, excavating and documenting all archaeological sites in Iraq and presenting them to the public. The law is enforced by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, a body under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities. At the provincial level, the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of Babil is directly responsible to ensure the conservation, management and monitoring of the property, and works in collaboration with the Antiquity and Heritage Police that maintains a station near the site. Several conservation issues affect the property and addressing them is an absolute priority of the management plan developed through an in-depth consultation process with local and national stakeholders since 2011. Both the federal and provincial governments have committed sufficient levels of funding to ensure that the property is conserved, studied and developed for visitors to international standards while protecting its Outstanding Universal Value.

Name and contact information of official local institution

Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities

State Board of Antiquities and Heritage

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