

# MUTUAL CULTURAL INFLUENCES OF KASSITES AND BABYLONIANS DURING KASSITES REIGN

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## Abstract

Kassites are one of the tribes of Iranian plateau who, after migration from southern parts of Caspian Sea, settled in the present Lorestan region and lived a pastor life in the mountains and plains there. The country of Babylonia which was a neighbor of the Kassites gradually attracted the attention of Kassites. So they attacked this region several times but they could not win because there was a powerful king named Hammurabi in Babylonia. During the reign of the son and successor of Hammurabi also they could prevent their progress, but eventually in 1749 BC Kassites overcame Babylonia and their long reign lasted for 500 years. The long-lasting coexistence of Babylonians and Kassites caused some mutual influences between them which created important changes in their life that remained in them for a long time. The basic question of research is that what have been these changes and what has been their fate after separation? Kassites and Babylonians could influence each other very much and the impact of these two groups on each other was such that it remained and institutionalized in them even after their separation. The research method in this paper is descriptive-analytical.

**Keywords:** Kassites, Babylonia, Influences, Culture.

## INTRODUCTION

During the ancient times, many tribes lived with different cultures; and cultural diversity and existence of various diverse cultures and tribes in Iranian plateau is like a double-edged sword, which, if it is used appropriately, it can strengthen cultural identity and cultural cohesion, and if it is used inappropriately, it acts as a factor leading to social and national split and break up and leads to cultural division of the country (Moradi, 2015, 129). Considering the history of groups' dominating and being dominated by each other, it is seen that from the old times, people were fighting neighbors and other tribes in order to achieve better facilities and more comfort.

One of the Iranian tribes who had a significant role in this issue was Kassites who lived in the

central part of Zagros and noticed their wealthy neighbor. Babylonia was one of the wealthy cities of Mesopotamia which had a lot of gold mines and also a good regional position. These led to the attack by Kassites and their ruling in Babylonia. In this study, the cultural influences of these two tribes are examined based on library sources.

### Dominance of Kassites on Babylonia

Most historians have a common point of view about the Kassites. Mashkoor writes about them: "Kassites were an Asian tribe living in the first half of the second millennium BC in Zagros hillsides and apparently their main residence had been in the southwestern areas of Caspian Sea" (Mashkoor, 1968, 142). What does Kassites mean? Kassites comes from Kas which literally means having livid eyes, unripe

hair, and livid color as black and blue (Sartip Pour, 1973, 8). The oldest sources mentioning the name of this tribe are the texts related to 24th century BC which belong to Puzur-Inshushinak era (Bayat, 1976, 13), that in an inscription found from a king, he has claimed to have dominated more than thirty cities, one of which had been called Koshan, which is probably the land of Kassites (Cameron, 2002, 32). Their habitat had been in Zagros hillsides and especially Lorestan, and thus they were the eastern neighbors of Babylonian state. Based on the sense of conquest and warfare among tribes of that time, it seems that they had an eye to the situation of their neighbor. Eight years after the death of Hammurabi, Kassites attacked Babylonia and after repression they returned, and following that they had consecutive attacks to this country and finally they took the control of government as conquerors, and they ruled there for nearly six centuries (Izadpanah, 1971, 29-30). Regarding the long period of Kassites domination, Ghirshman believes that the memory of Kassites attack created a deep influence in Babylonians' minds. They attached this memory with an extraordinary power. Probably this has had some reason that has led to the long period of Kassites domination (Ghirshman, 2005, 56). Kassites domination in Babylonia ended with Elamites' invasion in 1157 -1168 AD, and they returned to their main location, namely Lorestan. Most likely, Today's Lur tribes must be from Kassites race (Razani, 2003, 8).

Between two southern rivers, on the Euphrates River beach, there was the city of Babylonia. Initially, Babylonia was a small settlement made of some cob cottages. The local situation of Babylonia was very good. Fertile lands were all around it. Babylonia was located in the place where Tigris approached Euphrates so much. In addition, two important roads between the two rivers also passed Babylonia. Due to its excellent local position, this city became the largest and richest commercial city between the two rivers (Korovkin, 1999, 135-136). In other languages, Babylonia has been mentioned with other titles such as Babylon, Bab-il, Bab-Ilani, etc. all of which mean the

gate of Gods (Karduniash) (Ru, 1990, 168). In the first half of the 18th century, during Hammurabi era, Babylonia achieved its greatest power. Hammurabi reigned for 43 years. He was a young man full of warmth, zeal and ingenuity (Durant, 1999, 187). When he came to reign, Babylonia was a small land surrounded by large and powerful governments (Durant, 1999, 67). The Babylonian Empire was built by a man, and its survival and durability was also entirely dependent on his strong character. This empire was created during some years as a result of integration of five independent states, each of which had a long history. Hammurabi sought to centralize power and this caused dissatisfaction of people. For this reason, after his death, riots increased and the country was decomposed (Ru, 2011, 245-246).

Mesopotamia map presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Mesopotamia map (aratta.wordpress.com).

Kassites attack to Babylonia took place during the rule of Hammurabi's successors. The son and successor of Hammurabi defeated their army one time, but his successors could not resist the Kassites. Abi-Eshuh (1684-1711 BC) repelled the next attack of Kassites but he could not prevent their settling in Hanna region (today's Anah). In this way, Kassites gradually progressed in Babylonia until in 1749 AD, they exterminated Babylonian state completely, by their king titled "Gandash" (Rashidyasemi, 1984, 42). The Kassites reign totally lasted for

about 576 years. The number of their kings has been mentioned as 36 by some and 32 by some others (Safi Zadeh, 2003, 213). During their time, the country was divided into 20 regions or states governed by local governments, and the governors of cities were selected by the king (Majidzadeh, 1997, 49-52).

Babylonia during Kassites reign provided in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Babylonia during Kassites reign (<http://gahshomar.blogfa.com>).

#### The Impact of Kassites on Babylonia

In ancient times, Iran, with its special geographic situation, had been as an intersection, not only politically and economically, but also in terms of culture and civilization, where eastern and western thoughts came together, and this confluence had caused dramatic scientific, literary and artistic evolutions (Bayani, 1971, 1). Obviously, due to long coexistence of Kassites and Babylonians, interactions have taken place between them which have had long-term effects on both groups.

#### Calendar

In all books written about the Kassites and their rule in Babylonia, it has been mentioned that one of the great reforms made by the Kassites in Babylonia was revising Babylonians' calendar. In the book, *History of Babylonia*, King states that "the important benefit of the Kassites for Babylonians was reforming calculation of calendar, in which, instead of using the difficult system of rules for dating that was inherited from Sumerians to the Semites, according to which, each year was founded based on a complex name obtained

from a great event or a religious custom, the Kassites used a simpler system including dating the years based on the reign of kings" (King, 1999, 205-206). Now the question is whether this reform remained or it was disappeared after their going out of Babylonia? In order to answer this question, it should be noted that determination of events was very important to Babylonians, for example the year when Dungi the king destroyed a city, or the year when this king's daughter married the prince of Elamite. On the other hand, lists and calendars have also been found which have certain dates in terms of day, month, and year; for example, the list related to the last days of Babylonians' government till conquest by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC is from this type (For example, the fifth year of a specific king's reign) (Pirnia, 2010, 54). According to these points, it can be understood that, until before the Kassites, the Babylonians' tradition for dating had been the same primitive method, and this tradition has changed by the Kassites and has remained until the end of Babylonian dynasties. So it can be said that Babylonians owe this great change to the Kassites.

#### Horse

In Babylonians' inscriptions before domination of the Kassites and even in the Code of Hammurabi, there is no mention of horse, but since the Kassites' reign, the name of this animal has been mentioned in the inscriptions. So, it can be said that horse was taken to Mesopotamia by the Kassites (Izadpanah, 1971, 28). Before presence of the Kassites, Babylonians used chariots pulled by donkeys for domestic transportation (Durant, 1999, 193). Using horse made significant changes in Babylonians' life and it became the best pack animal in their view (King, 1999, 206). Babylonians bought horses from the Kassites and even, it has been mentioned somewhere that, they asked help from them and hired them for caring the horses (Adelfar and Aminpour, 1998, 73). The entry of this animal into Babylonia was a great help to them, and even later they used horse in wars for riding and carrying military chariots (Meyer, 1909, 23-24). And even this animal reached a position among the people of that time that they

worshiped it (Ravasani, 1991, 208). Many statues of this animal have been found in excavations, and it had been worshiped under the title "Mirizi". A horse sitting on the altar is an image of this goddess (Hall, 2001, 25).

### Architecture

Natural condition has affected Babylonian architecture, and their architecture had been defensive, not only because of human enemies; in fact, the enemy they were mostly afraid of was flood. Security against flood influenced the architects and thus their goal was to create "heights and masses". When a king built a palace for himself or for his god, his only goal was not to make it beautiful, but he sought to set it up like a mountain (Adelfar and Salehpour, 1998, 7). So it can be said that Babylonians were almost advanced in architecture, and they had great architects, but "architecture in Babylonia found a new form from the time of Kassites kings with all their traditional associations; and this was just the result of the Kassites presence" (Prada, 2011, 179).

In their territories, the Kassites kings started to repair and decorate well-known and ancient temples in Nippur, Larsa, Ur and Uruk. One of their kings, called Kara-Indaash has created an interesting work in E. Ana in Uruk (Behzadi, 2004, 155). This temple is an achievement which is a real Kassites building in all its details, map, height, and in the form of interior spaces and exterior decorations; and nowhere and at no other time in Mesopotamia can we find such a building. Unlike all Mesopotamian temples, this temple does not have a central yard, and the temple building is completely separate from the adjacent buildings. However, the new architectural innovation created by the Kassites and later followed not only by the Babylonians but also by other neighbors including the Achaemenids is decorating the building's facade which was well described in the above mentioned table. The decoration in the front of the building covers a height of three meters. This decoration is consisted of embossments created through blocky bricks in the building's façade; these bricks are like painted tiles, each one containing a small part

of a role or scene, and it is only after putting a specific number of them beside each other that the decorative scene is complete (Majid Zadeh, 1997, 132). This is the first time that this work is done by brick. This skillful and artful technique, which became a substitute for carvings on the rocks, was not known in Mesopotamia at that time, and it was later used by the Chaldeans in Babylonia and by the Achaemenids in Shush and Persepolis where Iranian kings used the help of Babylonian architects to do this (Behzadi, 2004, 155). One of the other examples of the Kassites architecture is the city of Dur-Kurigalzu which was built by Kurigalzu II, one of the Kassites kings, and it is an outstanding example of Kassites art. Today, its ruins named Aqra-Quf are a few kilometers west of Baghdad city and it also has a famous ziggurat (Majidzadeh, 1997, 135).

The ziggurat of Kurigalzu city presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The ziggurat of Kurigalzu city (<http://wikimapia.org>).

### Kudurru

Kudurru in Akkadian language means boundary and border, and it had been a small stone also called border stone. Kudurrus were made up of two parts; above the stone, there were the images of gods and the symbols related to the science of astronomy or sometimes, instead of the image of gods, their symbols were carved on the stone, for example the sun instead of Shamash, or a hoe instead of Marduk; and sometimes some lengthy contents were written on the back or under the stone which included the name of a person receiving a grant from the king (Behzadi, 2012, 153).



Kudurru was considered some kind of ownership document sometimes issued by kings and senior officials, in which they officially announced granting of a specific land along with exemption from paying some taxes and re-establishment of receiving certain services to a particular person (Mobini and Hakimi, 2014, 61). "It seems that Kudurru remained as an adjunct section at the end of the text of the charter of land donation, especially the religious oath that was added to the end of the charter in order to maintain it. Although the gods mentioned in the affidavit cannot be considered as special protective force, but there is no doubt that the purpose of using these signs had been turning the Kudurru to a sacred historical monument which damaging the whole or part of it had been considered as insult to sacred things" (Motgart, 1998, 190). With the entry of Kassites to Babylonia, the age of Kudurrus begins. This is the view mentioned by Majidzadeh in his book, and others also agree with him (Majidzadeh, 1997, 45). It must be stated that bordering was common before presence of the Kassites too, but what is new is the exterior form of these memorials, and this belongs to the Kassites. The most prominent features of these stones include existence of symbols of a religious statute meaning that gods are present and are supervising the granted property, as well as a curse which incriminates those who ignore these grants (Majidzadeh, 1997, 46).

The figure of Kudurru showed in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Kudurru (<https://iranatlas.info>).

### The Impact of Babylonians on Kassites

The long-standing presence of the Kassites in Babylonia caused the people entering Babylonian community to learn some things from the customs and traditions as well as sciences of the Babylonians and to be influenced by them. In some cases, signs of Babylonians' arts have been found in the art of these people. For example, in the area of wall paintings, this has been proved. Wall painting has a long history in Mesopotamia, and the Kassites kings decorated their palaces using the same old method. There are many technical similarities between wall painting methods in this period (Kassites period) and the previous periods. Here also the walls have been covered by a thick layer of clay and then the paintings have been drawn with the same white, black, and ochre red colors. In older periods, these paintings were consisted of geometric images, and it is only in the last period of construction, namely the period of Marduk-apla-iddina reign, that we observe human images (Majidzadeh, 1997, 138).

If we want to name the greatest impact of Babylonians on the Kassites, we must look for it in the area of religion, because by entering Babylonia, the Kassites accepted many Babylonian gods as their own gods. However, it should be noted that the Kassites people themselves had been religious people, and have had gods before entering Babylonia, too. Regarding the Kassites religion we see in the literature: "the Kassites were a very religious tribe and they thought to the afterworld such that they planned their daily works as to secure their afterworld" (Qadyani, 1995, 60, 61). Among the Babylonian gods, Marduk and Gilgamesh had the greatest impact on the Kassites to the extent that after their returning to Lorestan region, still they had a great position in their view.

In Mesopotamia, always domination of a city over another city had also meant domination of the god or gods of that city too; and among Babylonian gods, Marduk had been the most prominent one (Valavi, 1989, 5). Marduk was initially the god of sun and then obtained the title of head and major god of Babylonian gods,

and became known as Ba'le-Marduk meaning Marduk the God. The Babylonians did their most intense and warm prayers for this god (Durant, 1999, 200). There are statues of this god. There are several reasons why this god has become important among the Kassites. "One of the Kassites kings of Babylonia named Agum returned the statues of Marduk and Sarpanitum, which were taken to Hanna in 1590 by the Hittites after incursion of Babylonia, to their first place (Behzadi, 2004, 150). Another thing showing the importance of Marduk is that they painted the image of this god in their Kudurrus; for example, the Kudurru of Meli Shipak II in which Marduk can be seen in the form of a human (Majid Zadeh, 1997, 140). One point showing the importance of Marduk among the Kassites is the names of their kings. One of the Kassites kings is named Marduk Apak Aydin which confirms the above mentioned points. One of the other religious elements valuable for the Kassites is Gilgamesh. In Mesopotamian customs, Gilgamesh firstly appears as a hero; he is naked with a tight belt on his waist, his hairs beautifully ringed in three rings falling on his face, and he fights the predatory animals and looks after the herds and people. Similarly, in Lorestan also it has appeared during its popularity time on the decorations of horses' harness, pins and decorative plates, often having a horned crown on his head (Godard, 1998, p. 42). These all show the importance of Gilgamesh among Kassites people who took this idea with themselves to Lorestan, and many statues found in Lorestan are related to Gilgamesh.

### Conclusion

According to the investigations, it can be concluded that there have been cultural influences between the Kassites and the Babylonians. Each of them has had a high cultural level; both the Babylonian government which at that time was one of the most important and most advanced governments of the time, and the Kassites who owned a culture, and after returning from Babylonia, created the Treasury of Lorestan. The remarkable point is that the relationship between the Kassites and

the Babylonians has not been a dominant and dominated relation, and they lived peacefully together, and it seems that the same feature has caused mutual cultural interactions and influences which lasted even after their separation; because if these influences were due to force and coercion, they would have been forgotten soon after their separation.

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