

Comparative Analysis of the Babylonian and the Hittite Empires

Name:

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### **Introduction**

Studying ancient civilizations has significant cultural value for the contemporary world: people have an opportunity to discover the scope of their ancestors' intellectual abilities and the formation of our initial societies. Limitations to conduct comparative analysis are large in number due to a small amount of found artifacts; moreover, empirical knowledge is the most significant part of historical records. Nevertheless, studying the beginning of great empires can improve cultural perception and give an understanding of how ancient civilizations existed without contemporary technological advances.

### **Demographic Patterns**

Available literature and studies on demographic patterns in the Babylonian and the Hittite empires are limited to particular cities and social groups; in other cases, the existing information makes it possible to get acquainted with this aspect only superficially. According to Thomas Beckett (2016, p. 12), only small details allow us to assume that the first Hittite people "most likely came into the region from what is present day Ukraine." Their appearance in Anatolian territory entailed the conquest of the local population to become a part of the empire. As a result, it is possible to assume that all changes in the population were related to hostilities. Whereas the Hittite empire allows studying only a limited amount of details, the Babylonian empire provides historians with the opportunity to study separate cities in different time intervals. For instance, Jonathan Tenney (2011, p. 51) managed to study the sex ratio in Kassite Nippur: the male population prevailed with 103 men per 100 women; this can be explained by the absence of quality care during childbirth and, as a result, the high mortality rate among women. At the same

time, even such limited data makes it possible to make a parallel with the Hittite empire and assume the same situation with their demographic pattern and male population prevalence.

### **Cultural Assumptions and Religious Beliefs**

Polytheism was the distinctive and unifying feature of ancient religions. In his study on the Hittite empire, Trevor Bruce (2004) stated that the Hittite people practiced the most extreme form of polytheism; they had a pantheon of deities allocated to local cities. In addition to that, they were dependent on a particular conqueror, and as a result, there could be multiple deities that personified the Sun, for instance. Similar to the Hittite people, the Babylonian empire confessed polytheism with particular praise to deities related to nature, climate, and weather changes (Lecture II, 2018). The preserved literature also contains examples of prayers that are more like lamentations in their essence. Religious beliefs also had a significant influence on the cultural aspect of life. Since a Hittite conqueror influenced the local pantheon, he was considered almost divine and had the power of the chief priest (“Hittites...,” 2014). According to Sayce (2011, p. 412), the Babylonian empire “begins with the temple” hence, religion was a significant part of Babylonian culture. Craig (2010) also wrote that the most vivid example of cultural impact had been the period of Hammurabi. For the most part, his decisions were related to temple property, but he also was the first to understand the importance of law enforcement.

### **Technology**

Ancient civilizations either borrowed ideas from other nations or invented new approaches that made life easier for them and were the key to a successful, long existence. Regardless of the recent debates on Babylonian intellectual qualities (Ball, 2016), it is difficult to dispute the fact that they contributed to the development of mathematics and astrology, as their

religious beliefs were closely tied to outerspace. In comparison with the Babylonians, the Hittite empire consisted of more militant-minded people; an important role in this was played by the fact that this civilization “was the first [...] to discover iron” (Beckett, 2016, p. 40). Moreover, this discovery allowed them to support their economy and protect their territories for several centuries.

### **Organizational Structures**

Existing data suggests that ancient civilizations in their division into groups according to their function are close to contemporary organizational structures. Both the Babylonian (Harris, 1975) and the Hittite (Genz and Mielke, 2011) empires had kings who possessed royal and close-to-divine power to divide society into groups that were engaged in their duties. Each “department” could be engaged in religion, agriculture, military affairs or legislation, but all of them were inferior to royal power.

### **Social Stratifications**

Ancient civilizations with a monarchical government are almost identical in their hierarchical social stratification. The Hittite empire had a king and his family prevailing over the upper, middle, and lower classes; local authorities, priests, and warriors as the upper class, farmers and metal workers as middle class, and slaves as the lower class (Genz and Mielke, 2011). The Babylonian empire had almost the same social stratification: a king and his family above all people, authorities and wealthy families as an elite or upper class, all free Babylonians as the middle class, and slaves as the lowest layer of society (Lockard, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Regardless of the fact that it is difficult to distinguish where the truth ends and fallacy in the empirical assumptions begins, available data, literature, and artifacts allow studying the history of such ancient civilizations as the Babylonian and the Hittite empires. Existing limitations could be solved with a set of different approaches to the investigation of preserving records. The conducted comparative analysis gives us an understanding that ancient civilizations had been similar in many aspects (polytheism as a leitmotif of religious beliefs, organizational structures, and social stratifications); however, with regard to recent debates on Babylonian intellectual contribution, further research is imperative to support or refute outlined claims.

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