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Source: Persica Antiqua, July 2025, VOL. 5, NO. 9, 105-108.

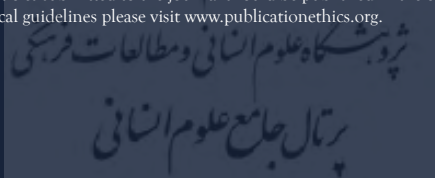
Published by: Tissaphernes Archaeological Research Group

Stable URL: <https://doi.org/10.22034/pa.2025.527274.1140>



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Review of Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāṭer

Dariush Kavousi¹ 

Abstract

The book *Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāṭer, The Archive of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, Part 1*, written by Basima Abed and Johannes Hackl, is one of the new books about Achaemenid texts. It includes transliterations, autographed copies, and photographs of texts confiscated from illicit excavators by the Iraqi Antiquities Authority, along with a brief introduction and indices; these texts form part of a larger collection housed in the Iraq Museum.

Keywords: Achaemenid Empire; Šāṭer; Babylonia.



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Article info: Received: 18 March 2025 | Accepted: 28 April 2025 | Published: 1 July 2025

Citation: Kavousi, Dariush. (2025). Review of Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāṭer. *Persica Antiqua*, Vol. 5 (9), 105-108.
<https://doi.org/10.22034/pa.2025.527274.1140>

Introduction

The Achaemenid Empire was a dominant power spanning three continents, from the Mediterranean to the Indus River. The empire was celebrated as a model of innovative governance for its cultural inclusivity and monumental architectural and infrastructural achievements. Researchers have extensively studied the Achaemenid Empire's cultural and civilizational characteristics (see Yaghmaei, 2023; Rahbar, 2023; Atayi, 2024; Khanipour, 2025; Veisi, 2025; Salahshour, 2025; Dara, 2025; Ahmadee, 2025a; Ahmadee, 2025b; Amanollahi and Alikahi, 2025; Raiyгани *et al.*, 2025).

After the Persian conquest, Cyrus II permitted the Babylonian kingdom to continue as a nominal entity, with its traditional methods of administration and social institutions. Law and economy continued to function normally, and Babylon became a winter residence and royal capital for Achaemenid kings, alongside Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana (Dandamayev, 1992: 3).

Most highly placed Babylonian officials kept their administrative posts. Cyrus aimed to restore the country's economic development and traditional culture. Priests were encouraged to revive ancient cults that had been neglected during the rule of the last Chaldean king, Nabonidus (Dandamayev, 1992: 3).

Babylonia held a significant role in the Persian Empire. Babylonia was a key and prosperous province, and Babylon was one of the select capitals where the Achaemenid court resided periodically. Babylonia's central location and agricultural resources made it an economically vital region for the Achaemenids, which resulted in the development of rural centres while the large towns declined in importance. Contrary to expectations, this development wasn't marked by a significant increase in farm produce prices. While the central Persian government taxed some output, intermediaries serving the authorities, as exemplified by the Muras'û family of Nippur's archives, still amassed personal wealth (Joannès, 2004: 203-204).

The book *Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāter, The Archive of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, Part 1*, is one of the new books about Achaemenid texts. It includes transliterations, autographed copies, and photographs of texts confiscated from illicit excavators by the Iraqi Antiquities Authority, along with a brief introduction and indices; these texts form part of a larger collection housed in the Iraq Museum.

The book opens with an introduction providing background on extant Late Achaemenid texts from Šāter. Šāter was a city probably northwest of Uruk and near Nippur. This book is divided into two parts: Part I catalogues and presents editions of 67 legal documents from Šamaš-zēru-ibni's archive in Šāter. At the same time, Part II offers a prosopography based on person files compiled from the Šāter texts in this volume. The 67 texts in this book comprise part of a larger collection of Late Achaemenid Babylonian legal documents from Šāter. Geographical range, Business activities, and Extended social network are important

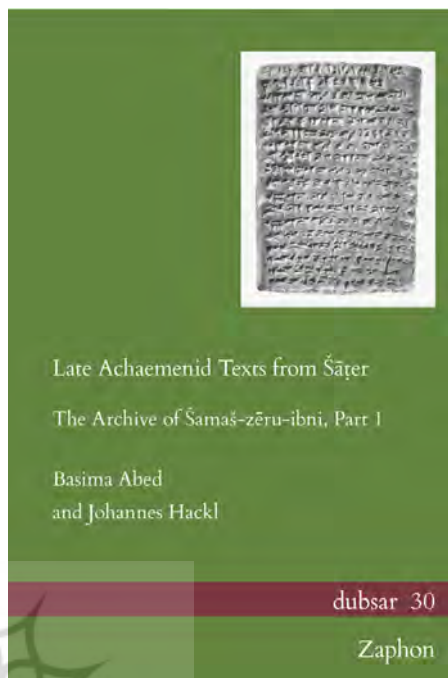
parts of this book. Diplomatic features of content and form are an essential part of this book.

These texts share the same archival and commercial origin, identifiable as components of the archive of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, son of Ayyanaʿad, an agricultural entrepreneur active in and around the Southern Babylonian city of Šāṭer during the latter half of the fifth century BCE.

Similar to the Murašû archive, it illuminates the socioeconomic conditions in the Babylonian hinterlands, focusing on the activities of a small, mobile group of businessmen unconnected primarily to the established urban elite (Abed and Hackl, 2024: 13). The Murašû Archive, assembled during the reigns of Artaxerxes I, Darius II, and Artaxerxes II, offers the most comprehensive insight into business practices and socioeconomic conditions in Persian-ruled Babylonia during the Achaemenid dynasty's final 150 years. The Murašû firm exemplifies the economic strength Persia derived from its provinces. Marc Van De Mieroop suggests that such firms enabled the Persians to leverage resources across their empire and vassal states, facilitating the creation of formidable armies for intimidation and conquest (Van De Mierroop, 2007: 28).

Conclusion

The Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāṭer, The Archive of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, Part 1, by Basima Abed and Johannes Hackl, offers a well-written and clear book on the Achaemenid Empire. This volume is a comprehensive book, offering fascinating insights into Late Achaemenid texts. This book offers a detailed examination of the 67 legal documents from Šamaš-zēru-ibni's archive in Šāṭer, providing a prosopography based on person files compiled from the Šāṭer texts.



Late Achaemenid Texts from Šāṭer, The Archive of Šamaš-zēru-ibni, Part 1, Basima Abed and Johannes Hackl, Zaphon, Münster, 2024, 56 272, ISBN: 978-3-96327-252-3 (book); ISBN: 978-3-96327-253-0 (e-book).

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