Sippar

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Being close to Babylon, Sippar was an early addition to its empire under [Hammurabi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammurabi).

**Sippar** ([Sumerian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_language): **Zimbir**) was an [ancient Near Eastern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Near_Eastern) city on the east bank of the [Euphrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrates) river, located at the site of modern **Tell Abu Habbah** in [Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq)'s [Babil Governorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babil_Governorate%22%20%5Co%20%22Babil%20Governorate), some 60 km north of [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon) and 30 km southeast of [Baghdad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad).

History

Despite the fact that thousands of cuneiform tablets have been recovered at the site, relatively little is known about the history of Sippar. As was often the case in Mesopotamia, it was [part](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar) of a pair of cities, separated by a river. Sippar was on the east side of the Euphrates, while its sister city, [Sippar-Amnanum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar-Amnanum), was on the west.

While pottery finds indicate that the site of Sippar was in use as early as the [Uruk period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk_period%22%20%5Co%20%22Uruk%20period), substantial occupation occurred only in the Early Dynastic period of the 3rd millennium BC, the [Old Babylonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Babylonian) period of the 2nd millennium BC, and the [Neo-Babylonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylonian) time of the 1st millennium BC. Lesser levels of use continued into the time of the [Achaemenid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire%22%20%5Co%20%22Achaemenid%20Empire), [Seleucid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) and [Parthian Empires](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthian_Empire).

Sippar was the cult site of the sun god (Sumerian [Utu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utu), Akkadian [Shamash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamash)) and the home of his temple E-babbara.

Sippar has been suggested as the location of the Biblical [Sepharvaim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sepharvaim%22%20%5Co%20%22Sepharvaim) in the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament), which alludes to the two parts of the city in its [dual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_%28grammatical_number%29) form.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-1)

**Rulers of Sippar**

In the [Sumerian king list](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_king_list) a king of Sippar, [En-men-dur-ana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En-men-dur-ana), is listed as one of the early pre-dynastic rulers of the region, but has not yet turned up in the epigraphic records.

In his 29th year of reign [Sumu-la-El](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumu-la-El%22%20%5Co%20%22Sumu-la-El) of [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon) reported building the city wall of Sippar. Some years later [Hammurabi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammurabi) of Babylon reported laying the foundations of the city wall of Sippar in his 23rd year and worked on the wall again in his 43rd year. His successor in Babylon, [Samsu-iluna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samsu-iluna%22%20%5Co%20%22Samsu-iluna) worked on Sippar's wall in his 1st year. The city walls, being typically made of mud bricks, required much attention. Records of [Nebuchadnezzar II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_II) and[Nabonidos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nabonidos) [record](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar) that they repaired the Shamash temple E-babbara.

**Classical Speculation on Sippar**

[Xisuthros](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziusudra), the "Chaldean Noah" in Sumerian mythology, is said by [Berossus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berossus%22%20%5Co%20%22Berossus) to have buried the records of the [antediluvian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antediluvian) world here—possibly because the name of Sippar was supposed to be connected with *sipru*, "a writing". And according to [Abydenus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abydenus%22%20%5Co%20%22Abydenus), [Nebuchadnezzar II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_II) excavated a great reservoir in the neighbourhood.

[Pliny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) ([*Natural History*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History_%28Pliny%29) 6.30.123) mentions a sect, or school of Chaldeans called the *Hippareni*. It is often assumed that this name refers to Sippar (especially because the other two schools mentioned seem to be named after cities as well: the *Orcheni* after [Uruk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk%22%20%5Co%20%22Uruk), and the *Borsippeni* after [Borsippa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borsippa%22%20%5Co%20%22Borsippa)), but this is not universally accepted.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-2)

Archaeology





Hammurabi clay cone from Sippar at Louvre

Tell Abu Habba, measuring over 1 square kilometer was first excavated by [Hormuzd Rassam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hormuzd_Rassam%22%20%5Co%20%22Hormuzd%20Rassam) between 1880 and 1881 for the British Museum in a dig that lasted 18 months. [[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-3) Tens of thousands of tablets were recovered including the Tablet of Shamash in the Temple of [Shamash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamash)/[Utu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utu). Most of the tablets were[Neo-Babylonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylonian). [[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-4) [[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-5) [[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-6) The temple had been mentioned as early as the 18th year of [Samsu-iluna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samsu-iluna%22%20%5Co%20%22Samsu-iluna) of Babylon, who reported restoring "Ebabbar, the temple of Szamasz in Sippar", along with the city's [ziggurat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat).

The tablets, which ended up in the [British Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), are being studied to this day.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-7) As was often the case in the early days of archaeology, excavation records were not made, particularly [find](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar) spots. This makes it difficult to tell which tablets came from Sippar-Amnanum as opposed to Sippar.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-8) Other tablets from Sippar were bought on the open market during that time and ended up at places like the British Museum and the [University of Pennsylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Pennsylvania).[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-9) [[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-10) Since the site is relatively close to [Baghdad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad), it was a popular target for illegal excavations.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-11)

In 1894, Sippar was worked [briefly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar) by [Jean-Vincent Scheil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Vincent_Scheil).[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-12) The tablets recovered, mainly Old Babylonian, went to the Istanbul Museum. In modern times, the site was worked by a Belgian team from 1972 to 1973. Iraqi archaeologists from the College of Arts at the [University of Baghdad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Baghdad), led by Walid al-Jadir with Farouk al-Rawi, have excavated at Tell Abu Habbah from 1977 through the present in 24 seasons.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-13)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-14) [[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-15) After 2000, they were joined by the [German Archaeological Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Archaeological_Institute). [[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-16) [[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sippar#cite_note-17)