



*The Sumerian renaissance during the reign
of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2111-2003) BC*

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Abstract :

This topic deals with the Sumerian renaissance during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2111-2003) BC. Starting from its foundation during the reign of King Ur-nammu to its fall, where we referred to the political and military Renaissance and the lack of distinction between Sumerians and Akkadians in the army and management positions, and touched upon the development of administrative systems, regional governors and the most important functions and how to grant and control them. We also pointed out the economic and social developments and the importance of the temple's role in this by controlling agriculture, industry and trade, and its reflection on social life and the relationship between the strata of society. We concluded with the artistic, intellectual and literary renaissance, and the extent of the influence of this dynasty on the life of ancient Iraqis, through the arts of sculpture, engraving, architecture, stories, legends, religious and worldly epics.

Article info

Received

27 June 2023

Accepted

03 September 2023

Keyword:

- ✓ *Sumerian Renaissance*
- ✓ *Ur dynasty*
- ✓ *Ur-nammu*
- ✓ *Arts and literature*

1. Introduction

The weakness of the Akkadian state and the political chaos that swept it after the control of the Gutians returned Mesopotamia to the pre-central rule stage, so city-states appeared in the south, some of which came under the control of the city of Lagash, while many of them became independent. These cities managed to coordinate with the Gutians in order to avoid their direct control, while the north of the country was almost completely subjected to this invasion.

After the political chaos and problems that pervaded Mesopotamia, after the Jutes invaded it, and overthrew the Akkadian state, some cities, especially those located in southern Mesopotamia, which were not under the direct control of the Gutians, these cities began to gradually rise and recover their political and civilized role.

The Gutians met with a complete failure and were expelled from the country, after some Sumerian cities resisted the occupiers, headed by the cities of UR and Uruk, Mesopotamia was again conquered by the leadership of the third Ur dynasty, which ruled until the end of the third millennium BC. From this point of view, the following problem arises: How did the Sumerian Renaissance take place during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur? What are the most important political and military manifestations? How

administrative systems have evolved? What are its implications for economic and social developments Then, what are the manifestations of the cultural and intellectual renaissance that the Sumerian revival phase defined in the period between (2111-2033) BC.?

2. Foundation of the Third Dynasty of Ur

After the collapse of Akkad and the control of the Gutians over the Mesopotamian land, especially in the North, successive rulers with the title "ANSI" came to power in the city of Ur, they recognized the submission to the authority of "lagash", which in its renaissance exploited the main trade routes around it extensively, and the best of its Reigns was the reign of its kings "urbaba, Judea and orningerso" . Who came to some kind of arrangement with the Gutians guaranteed some stability, albeit for a while. (Dellow, 1989, p. 220)

The burden of the armed struggle against the Gutian invaders fell on the shoulders of the Uruk state, and it is possible that in some of its days its renaissance had coincided with the renaissance of both Lech and UR, and it may have taken advantage of its ancient reputation and after its southern location, and tried to unite the word of the Sumerian cities nearby under its banner against the invaders, and one of its most prominent

rulers appeared utukhigal, who declared a war of salvation.

There is no doubt that " utukhigal "had great political ambitions after his victory over the Goths, and the proof of this is that he followed the example of the Akkad Kings by taking the title of" King of the four sides of the universe", but his fame did not last long and his mention was overshadowed by the reign of the Kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur.

And this change and the victory achieved by the Sumerians, was associated with two people and two cities, the first is "utukhigal" the ruler of Uruk, and the second " Ur-nammu " who later became the king of Ur. A few texts have come down from the reign of "utukhigal", some of which stated that he (the happiest of the inhabitants of Uruk) when he decided to fight the war against the Gutians, and won against them, and after that he bore the title of "King of the four sides of the world", which later became a more traditional title than expressing the real authority enjoyed by the one who held this title.

It seems that "utukhigal", thanks to his efforts to get rid of the rule of the Gutians, became sovereign over the group of cities located in the south of Mesopotamia, he intervened in the resolution of many conflicts, such as between Uruk and Lagash, and also made many

achievements in other political and economic fields.

After those achievements and victories achieved by the king of Uruk over the Gutians and their deportation, one of his aides named " Ur-nammu " became the governor or military governor by him over the city of Ur, but the latter, after settling the matter, turned against his master and named himself king in Ur between 2111 and 2094 and declared it an independent kingdom. (Al-Hilu, 2004, p.285).

During the first years of his reign, Ur-nammu was able to impose his influence on most of the cities of Southern Mesopotamia, and later extended this influence to the North, whereupon he was nicknamed The "King of Sumer and Akkad".(Schmokel,1964 ,p78).

Ur rose to its renaissance with the beginning of a new ruling dynasty founded by " Ur-nammu " and known as the "Third Dynasty of UR", and Five Kings succeeded to the throne of this family who sought to restore unified rule, and most famous of them, along with its founder, Ur-nammu, and his son, "Shulgi", and by the effort of these two kings, many Sumerian and Akkadian cities submitted to Ur, which allowed their kings to receive the title of "Sargon of Akkad ", Meaning " King of Sumer and Akkad ". And the "king of the four sides", although this last title, especially, remains an honorary title

more than an actual title. (Abdul Aziz Saleh, 1990, p. 496).

Ur-nammu has done a lot of work and achievements, where he built many temples, such as the temple of the sun god in Larsa, and the temple of Enlil in Nippur, he also built canals, reformed laws, and made justice prevail, and it shows that this king during his first period was interested only in peaceful affairs, as every year there was a religious incident, or public utility works, from the erection of temples and sacred institutions, placing idols in the restored structures, and appointing high priests...However, he would not neglect any opportunity to extend his authority and expand it in the neighboring territories . (Delaport, 1997, pp. 39-40).

The reign of " Ur-nammu " was relatively short (2111-2094) BC. In comparison with the reign of his son "Shulgi", who succeeded him between (2093-2046) BC. It seems that after the departure of the Gutians from the land of Mesopotamia, there was a noticeable stability, as no mention of Foreign Wars was found in the writings belonging to this period, on the other hand, at this stage it became the center of political gravity in the south of Mesopotamia, and all the northern regions became subordinate to it.

3. Political and military Renaissance:

In politics, Ur tried to avoid to some extent the disastrous factors that gnawed at the Akkadian state entity by her as a result of the distinction between the Sumerians and the Semites, and divided the people of the same country into two parts, so she used the two elements in her army and in management positions, and combined the Sumerian and Akkadian languages in some official and literary documents. The centuries-old Semitic population of these cities became influential in the new organization, and we see among the names of local rulers many whose names indicate their Semitic origin, and the new nation became called "Sumer and Akkad". (Breasted, 1955, P.170).

But this policy did not prevent its kings from being affiliated with Sumer and its gods the most, nor from centralizing government in their capital as the Akkadians had done before, and the predominance of palace politics over temple politics. This capital continued to supervise all large and small matters of irrigation and the economies of cities and regions, and it seems that it used the ministry's system and the runners ' system to communicate its orders to the governors of its regions, and considered those governors to be just senior officials subject to transfer from region to region, working on behalf of the state in the use of

Labor and monopolize foreign trade. (Klinkel, 1990, p. 39).

Based on the writings known so far, all the phenomena indicate that the Kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur did not have the main concern of the highest authorities to fight for the survival and stability of their state, as was the case with the Kings of Akkad after Sargon the great. Through these writings, it is clear that the military policy of the Kings of Ur was primarily and primarily focused on the countries bordering the kingdom. And from the reign of " Ur-nammu " until the reign of "IPI-sin" there is no indication of internal unrest or cases of entity rebellions. (Al-Hilu, 2004, p.292).

But this is not considered conclusive evidence of complete stability, since the documents that exist so far are few and do not cover all the years of that period, hence it remains a matter of question whether "Shulgi" inherited from his father " Ur-nammu " a stable kingdom that was already firm, and he did not have during his reign, which lasted 48 years (2093-2046) B.C except for its management, expansion and improvement.

"Shulgi" continued the work of his father during a reign that lasted about 48 years, and according to the new Sumerian history, this King did not have to fight many wars after ascending the throne, and unlike what happened with the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad, " Ur-nammu " left

Shulgi a steady King, and although the written sources are few and poor before the 23rd year of the reign of "Shulgi", it is possible to follow the events through the general development, and he reorganized the army according to the academic style and created a squad of archers, and in the same previous style he inspired himself He regained the title of" King of the four sides". (Beshur, 2008, p.71).

After the matter settled at home, he began his war efforts, the aim of which was to extend his influence to the edges of the Zagros Mountains, and since the twenty-third year of his reign, the texts of his era begin to mention his military campaigns that he carried out in the east of his country, and the years of his reign after his twenty-third year were not war, but he had to conduct several campaigns to subdue this rebellion. One of the states that revolted against him was "Anshan", which he conquered in the thirty-fourth year of his reign . (Salim, 1998, p.227).

His campaigns also included all the mountainous provinces that currently make up the "Kurdistan" region and most likely aimed at ensuring the safety of trade routes, as the danger of the Hurrians also emerged at that time . (Beshur, 2008, p.72).

The extend of the expansion of the third Kingdom of Ur was, in facets, almost equivalent to that of the kingdom of Akkad, and exceeded this level when it

incorporated the edges of the Zagros Mountains. (Margaron, 2009, P.68).

Although the city of Ur was the royal seat and the actual capital of the kingdom, there were two major centers distinguished by their importance in the Kingdom, namely: Uruk with an ancient past, and then Nippur, the main religious center, so much so that the coronation of "Ibi-sin" as King was solemnized in the three cities sequentially Ur, Uruk and then Nippur.

4. The evolution of administrative systems:

The ruling "ANSI" or Viceroy was the highest figure in the administrative province, he was accountable to the king who appoints him to office, he enjoyed the powers of the Supreme magistrate of his city. The provinces, each of which was governed by an "ANSI", exceeded forty in number, and it seems that the cases of replacement of rulers in distant provinces were very frequent, and the administrative link in them was not as severe as in the inland regions, where the density of these rulers was greater, depending on the density of cities and population. He chose them from among the Sumerians and Akkadians without discrimination. (Wadie Beshur, 1981, p. 56).

It is also noted that power was exercised in these territories by the Civil governor "ANSI" and the military governor

"Shogin" who sometimes took control of some aspects of the Civil Administration, and this distinction between the civil and military authorities should not be taken absolutely, there are some figures who exercised both powers.

If there is a kind of oligarchy in the history of this kingdom, it should be mentioned that the Kings of Ur were the first to support the centralization of administration in Mesopotamia by using special teams that exercised control over business in the regions and the delivery of messages to the center, that is, they were entrusted with the functions of information and security, and thus centralization under such a distribution of powers relatively reduced the autonomy of cities. (Sollberger. 1956, p120-122).

The administration was generally divided between two large authorities: the palace and the temple, and the palace is understood not only as the seat of the Royal government, but all that is subordinate to the residence of the king and the headquarters of the "ANSI" of economic and administrative institutions, craftsmen workshops, warehouses and money houses.

One of the most important developments in Ur is the work of "Ur-nammu", who issued a law through which he tried to regulate the administrative, economic and social life in the areas under his control, and this law exists only in the form of

fragments, which are school writings discovered in Nippur, Sippar and UR, and are currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul and in the British Museum in London.

In the introduction to his law, Ur-nammu mentions that the gods commissioned him to rule the country of Sumer and Akkad on her behalf, and then talks about his actions and his attempt to achieve justice in the country, protecting the poor, orphans and widows, and also mentions his standardization of Weights, Measures and scales.

5. Economic and social developments:

The temple occupies a special place in Mesopotamia in general and among the Sumerians in particular, it is a place for performing rituals and a social, commercial and political center, and the temples also control most of the agricultural land. Facilities for commercial activity occupy an important section of the city.

A large part of the documents found during the reign of the Ur dynasty concerns the economy and administration of the temple and the lists of offerings that were given to the temples of the gods on certain days and seasons. As well as records of his expenses to other affairs of the temple administration. There are the records of the rulers and officials, that is, the ruling class, at the head of which is the

king and his court, and then the records of the middle class, the peasant class and the common people.

From these documents, important things are deduced about individual ownership and the possibility of disposing of it freely from the sale, purchase and exchange of real estate and slaves, and we also study from them the transactions of debits and loans in grain, dates and silver. The surplus rate is twenty percent for grain loans, especially from the people of the palace and temples, while the silver loans had a high surplus. (Baquer, 2012, pp. 435-436).

These documents include the provisions of rents for houses and agricultural land, and the common people preferred to work for wages on the lands belonging to the king or the temple in exchange for their maintenance and payment of their living costs to get rid of the accumulation of debts on them with an obscene surplus, which often led to their slavery, as the historical reality is that the era of the Third Dynasty of Ur represented a high degree of capitalism, that is, state capitalism through the monopoly of the apparatus of government for most means of agricultural production and commercial and industrial activity.

It was natural that cattle breeding was associated with an active wool and leather industry, and all this was organized. As for the agricultural economy, it was also

subject to organized and careful management, this is evidenced by the information found in some tablets indicating the places of storage of grain and its guards, about the proportions of crops, about the storage of yields and warehouse management, deliveries from warehouses and so on. The grain was delivered from the warehouses to various destinations such as mills, livestock breeders and others who had the right to receive the production materials . (Al-Hilu, 2004, p.301).

The main criterion in the calculations was silver, but the payment of wages, quotas, etc. was carried out in practice with natural productive materials most often such as: (wheat, barley, sesame, dates, etc....).

But the unlimited expansion of the Royal economy, the ruin of a huge mass of the Commons, the transformation of free working women into people deprived of all rights, the development of usury and debt bondage, eventually led to a social situation in which contradictions worsened, relations between the strata of society strained, which weakened the state and paved the way for its subsequent downfall.

6. Artistic, intellectual and literary renaissance:

The Sumerians merged with the Semites, and their cultural influence remained continuous, represented by their arts,

language and literature, which continued to influence the lives of ancient Iraqis. the political progress in Ur was accompanied by architectural activity and artistic development, unfortunately, few of their models remain, the remains of the temples of Ur are the remains of a luxurious "ziggurat" erected in the name of the moon idol "nenar" during the era of " Ur-nammu " on the ruins of an older ziggurat attributed to the days of the first dynasty of Ur.

It was noticed from the doctrinal renovations in the temples of Ur that the statues of their idols were placed inside high niches led by a staircase, after they were placed above their bases in front of the niches and not inside them. (Saleh, 1990, p. 501).

Among them are several smooth-line views engraved on a large limestone monument erected by the name of " Ur-nammu" on the occasion of the establishment of one of the temples, and the king is repeatedly depicted on his face with a long beard and a long wide cloak, offering his praises and pouring offerings in front of "nenar" the God of the moon and the protector of Ur.

The art of sculpture also followed the art of Engraving in its development, and several of its models remained, some of them were carved from diorite and some were carved from Alabaster, and some of their eyes were grafted with white

shellfish and blue lapis lazuli, which means that the stones suitable for carving were imported especially for him. In them, the artists made a remarkable effort to show the facial expressions, the planes of their bones and lip bodies, the hairstyles of men and women.

As for the field of thought and beliefs, the researcher finds in the Sumerian Cuneiform texts a number of ideas and beliefs through which the ancients tried to give a perception of cosmic and natural realities, and the presentation of many values and concepts that prevailed in their society. We read, for example, about a terrible struggle that took place initially between the forces of good represented by the young gods, and the forces of evil represented by the ancient gods, which eventually resulted in the victory of the young gods, the creation of the universe including Heaven, Earth, stars, planets and rivers. (Fadel Abdul Wahid, 1996, p. 86).

The texts of the second millennium BC and later also retained Sumerian literature in character and style, copied by their owners from Ancient origins, and it is difficult to determine the eras of these origins convincingly, but they can be traced back to the era of the revival of Sumerian civilization during the reign of the Third Dynasty of UR as the era of reaching the peak of its maturity.

These literatures included stories, epics and legends, religious and worldly

dialogues, the most famous of which were the story of the flood, the epics of "Enmer Kar" and The Adventures of Gilgamesh, and these and those shared with other ancient literatures in general features, such as the predominance of a religious character on them, and their frequent use of symbols to express the idea and incident.

7. CONCLUSION

Through Our study of the subject of the Sumerian renaissance during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur in the period between (2111-2003) BC.M. We were able to come up with a set of conclusions that we can include in the following points:

- The establishment of the Third Dynasty of Ur occurred after the political chaos and problems that the Akkadian state experienced following the invasion of the Gutians.
- The renaissance of Ur came with the beginning of a new ruling family founded by Ur-nammu, and he did a lot of works and achievements in the political, economic, social, cultural and intellectual fields.
- One of the most important political and military actions that contributed to the Renaissance during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur was the use of the Sumerian and Semitic elements together in the army and administrative positions.

- We can also conclude the development of administrative systems, the smooth appointment of regional governors and communication with them, with control over high posts and positions and granting them to those who serve this Kingdom, we also point out the importance of the temple's role in the developments in economic and social life, through the control of agricultural, industrial and commercial activity.
- Finally, the political progress and economic development during the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur was accompanied by an artistic, intellectual and literary renaissance, represented by the development of architecture such as "ziggurats", as well as the development of sculpture and engraving, in addition to many texts that included literature, epics and legends that touch the religious and worldly lives of people.

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