

THE POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND CLERGYMEN IN THE ANCIENT HISTORY

Abstract: People, who shifted their lifestyles from hunter-gatherer societies to settled lives dominated by agricultural activities, first began to live in villages and then in cities. The concepts 'to govern' and 'to be governed' began to appear in time among the crowded population settled in cities. Clergy members became administrators in the Mesopotamian city-states where the urbanization first started. The clergy members having a hierarchy in their own merits, owing to the organized structure brought about by the religious belief in the first periods of humanity, formed a temple-centered administration system. When secular governors supported by the armies appeared in cities, the clergy members had been ruling, struggles began between these two social classes. In this paper, it will discuss the struggle between secular governors and clergy members who had taken over in the first Mesopotamian city-states, focusing on the Urukagina and Akhenaton samples.

Keywords: *Mesopotamia, city-states, urbanization, Ancient Egypt, Urukagina*

Ercüment Yıldırım

Kahramanmaraş Sutcu Imam University
neshali@gmail.com

DOI: 10.14795/j.v4i3.268

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

1. INTRODUCTION

According to recent research, the last glacial period ended 11.711 years ago¹. As the world's middle latitude climate zone had become appropriate for agricultural activities, the first agricultural societies of the world began to flourish around the world's major rivers. The Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the Indus River in Harappa and the Yellow River in China had all given life to civilization². As the climate turned out to be suitable, people who had survived on hunting and gathering and created a culture suited to this lifestyle during the millennia until the last glacial period began to change lifestyles to engage in agriculture and livestock³. In the transition to an agricultural society process, people broke with all their experience and habits they had on hunting, they began to invent new tools and shape their life considering the planting and harvest seasons for the crops they grow⁴.

Groups of people consisting of just a few families due to the facts that being in groups was an essentiality and the food provided was limited

¹ ZEBROWSKI 2011, 90 - 91.

² KEMP 2005, 7 - 34; SMITH 2007, 22 - 36; MCINTOSH 2007, 54 - 90; CHINNERY 2012, 6 - 13.

³ POSTGATE 1992, 7 - 21; GATES 2003, 31 - 33; WILDWOOD 2010, 36 - 37.

⁴ SIMMONS 2007, 10 - 17; KUIPER 2010, 11 - 12.

in hunting-gathering era started to establish dwellings, we might call 'agricultural villages or towns', in which a few hundred families can live together in crop farming and cultivation period called "Neolithic era", thanks to a sense of security depending on being in groups and abundance of food resources⁵.

Neolithic farmers strived to meet their own needs all by themselves at the beginning of the Neolithic period; however, they organized as the population got crowded and witnessed the emergence of professions organized in various fields such as in pottery, stone and wood tools production and textile⁶. In the fourth millennium, Mesopotamian and Egyptian cities were settlements classified according to occupations and financial strength, and surrounded by walls all created with the support of the people in the city. These cities were places which could exchange raw materials required with neighboring cities in return for excessive product they produced and develop their own city culture different from the common culture of humanity. People who did coexist with others developed a sense of belonging to their city⁷.

One of the most fundamental reasons for the formation of the city, namely the coexistence of people, to become mandatory is their need for irrigation canals. Despite the floods that occurred in the land of Egypt created a permanent irrigation system without human labor, irrigation canal construction work which required planning, collaboration and cooperation of all people in the city accelerated the formation of cities in Mesopotamia. Opening irrigation canals and keeping them open constantly was one of the most important things the city administrators had to do, and the necessity of joint efforts and collaboration brought about social communication and governance phenomenon⁸.

Phenomena 'to govern' and 'to be governed' emerged in cities which began to create an advanced social organization. In the first periods, the religious figures, that we will here use the definition "clergymen" to indicate their classification, who were more prestigious and organized when compared to the rest of the community since they came together to serve gods commenced to govern cities as temple-based by making use of worldly powers such as land in their hands, slaves, donations, prophecy and the people's trust⁹.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHENOMENA 'TO GOVERN' AND 'TO BE GOVERNED'

In the middle of the 4th millennium, both Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations were identified as a city state. It was centuries before the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt, and the establishment of an Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia. However, the cities, we may call "City States", independent from each other began to develop in parallel in

⁵ BREWER / TEETE 2007, 58 - 60; BODLEY 2011, 230 - 234; STARR 1991, 51 - 60.

⁶ EASTON 1970, 23 - 25; SCHWAB 1982, 93 - 102.

⁷ BERTMAN 2003, 274; LEECH 2007, 8.

⁸ POTTS 1997, 13 - 21; POLLOCK 1999, 31 - 34; MICHAEL 2008, 17 - 19; BERTMAN 2003, 204 - 205.

⁹ MIEROOP 1999, 118 - 121; MCINTOSH 2005, 129 - 130; BODLEY 2011, 236 - 238; LEICK 2002, 41 - 47.

terms of both administration and religious organization¹⁰. When the documents in the archives of the city states in Mesopotamia regarding this period are examined, we learn that the administration was temple-based and the clergymen were dominant over the community. In addition, we infer that clergymen did not regard their responsibilities as a distinct part of their everyday lives, they acquired their tasks a special profession no matter what duty they were on and they worked full-time¹¹. In order to ensure their livelihood and to meet the needs of the temple, clergy members used to cultivate the lands they owned either by means of temple or directly using the religious power of the temple by slaves and workers and store products they harvested. In addition, they used to undertake the responsibility to store products produced by the public and exchange among the inhabitants of the city. Except those, clergy members might have traded some goods they had such as pots, cereals, textile, and animal products, which all had a commercial value¹². It was necessary for clergymen who governed the cities according to Gods' or their own interests to do this by creating a perception as if people need the temple, not the temple needs people. Otherwise, the city dwellers could show disobedience towards the temple. An obligation for the clergymen to systematize activities regarding product storage, consignment and records of the decisions made, in order not to lose the people's trust, has resulted in record keeping and contributed to the invention of writing¹³.

The most fundamental and complex question to be answered at this point is why a temple-based administrative organization which was in the leadership of the clergymen emerged instead of a government organization around the palace and the king in the early stages of the establishment of city states. First of all, there must be a human-centered social organization to explain and understand divinity. Owing to the fact that they led the social organization since the very early stages of urbanization to make the people confess their religious beliefs, clergy members imposed the idea that Gods should be served and led the communities according to Gods' demands or their own necessities¹⁴.

Additionally, since the decisions made by clergy members were regarded as either the gods' demands or something very vital for the community, their decisions in administration had become 'unquestionable' and been accepted. Community members obeyed and followed these orders without any disobey. Apart from all these, gods cannot survive without being institutionalized. In other words, since the gods would be erased from people's minds without clergy members who praised them, offered victims and built temples, clergy members were constrained to Gods and the temple in order to sustain their lives. To be able to continue this mutual relationship, the temples had to be institutionalized in terms of political, social and economic aspects. Because the struggle between the cities had not turned into an entire military conflict during this period yet,

¹⁰ PARSONS 1966, 63 - 67; FAGAN 2004, 367 - 369; JOHNSTON 2004, 531 - 536.

¹¹ BERTMAN 2003, 127 - 128; SOMERVILL 2009, 22 - 23; SCHNEIDER 2011, 66 - 68.

¹² NEMET-NEJAT 1998, 263 - 268; BULLIET / CROSSLEY 2009, 32.

¹³ GOODY 1986, 49 - 57; MIEROOP 1999, 27 - 30.

¹⁴ BODLEY 2011, 238 - 239; SNELL 2005, 5 - 6.

city administration could be continued depending on an oral tradition developed by clergy members¹⁵.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE MONARCHY

In Mesopotamia, the concept of 'an administrator' or 'administration' independent from the temple cannot be mentioned until the Early Dynastic Period (2900 BC). In the Uruk Period (BC 3500 – 3100), Uruk, the biggest representative of the Mesopotamian civilization, had also a temple-centered administration. The number of people increased in parallel with the abundance of food production in the Early Dynastic Period, and new cities were erected in a territory which can be considered very small and the present ones were developed as a result of this fact. This situation increased the value of lands that could be cultivated and triggered struggles between cities to control larger territories¹⁶. Although the city administrative system developed by clergy members was specialized to carry out tasks, which we may call "internal affairs", such as sharing of the urban land, cultivation and harvest of those land, resolution of problems among people living in the city, trade with neighboring territories, storing the excessive products obtained, opening the water channels and keeping them open and collecting taxes required for the city and temple works, that system was not capable to make decisions instant enough to maintain military and political conflicts with another city and sustain itself by making use of imperia.

Under these circumstances, a monarchic system or rather a powerful king was needed. Thus, a new ruling class under the leadership of a single king, along with the temple administrators, began to be institutionalized in the Early Dynastic Period¹⁷. When compared to the clergy members who took strength from the temple of gods and had an obligation to base their decisions on the city's religious beliefs, the kings could make decisions often independently of religious beliefs by claiming that they defended the interests of the city. Common deities were also worshipped in city states which were in constant war with each other in the Early Dynastic Period. For that reason, in disputes between different city communities which believed in the same deities, it seemed unconvincing and sounded unbelievable when clergy members asked people to fight against those who lived in other cities, in which the gods they represented were worshipped; however, for kings, it was not very important which gods/deities were worshipped in cities they fought against. It was enough to convince the people they ruled that they will ensure their happiness and welfare¹⁸.

Although clergy members had a hierarchical order inter se, more than one person could be on duty in the same positions or the same posts. In the same way, there were also disputes among themselves since it could not be mundanely determined which of the clergy members on duty in the same positions was superior. In addition, even if they wanted to choose one as the highest, one of the problems

¹⁵ LEICK 2002, 54; HOLLAND 2009, 112 - 128; RISTVET 2014, 194 - 202; JOHNSTON 2004, 292 - 293.

¹⁶ LLOYD 2010, 53 - 55; SELTZER 1989, 5 - 10; BODLEY 2011, 200 - 201.

¹⁷ CABRERA 2010, 64 - 65; ADAMS 2005, 136 - 138; CRAWFORD 2013, 160 - 161; LIVERANI 2014, 97 - 106; GRIFFETH 1981, 7 - 28.

¹⁸ FARMER 1977, 20 - 37; SNELL 2005, 7 - 12; FAGAN 2004, 369 - 373.

to be solved was how to elect 'this person' and ensure obedience of others¹⁹. However, since kings took over reign either through inheritance regarded as their natural right or the use of military force to eliminate their opponents, there was no one to be considered their counterpart. Because they did not accede after an election, the kings had no sense of gratitude to anyone as long as they were in power. This provided them with total independence while making and performing decisions²⁰.

In addition to the advantages of clergy members' and king's reign together mentioned above, there emerged some administrative strategies which kings did, but clergy members could not. Among these was kings' ability to offer their followers and supporters various mundane promises. While clergy members were expected to behave equally to every individual in the society because of their position by the community, kings could reward people who availed their own power as they wished and they were not expected to treat everyone equally and fairly. Additionally, as the destiny of the king was the destiny of the people living in the city and the more powerful the king was the better welfare the community could live in, the people agreed king's hegemony unconditionally because they believed that could continue their lives more comfortably²¹. Although the kings of city-states in Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic Period began to take the governing rule of the clergy members, the power of the temples and religious belief on people never disappeared and remained as an alternative power. Kings did not underestimate the power of the temple and its employees during their reign, and they tried to make use of this power by either assigning themselves as the highest administrator of the temple or God's proxy on the earth²².

Despite the fact that it is possible to follow how the administrative mentality developed by referring to the documents in the state archives in Mesopotamia, it does not seem possible to understand how this development occurred in cities, called "Nom", founded around the Nile River in Egypt. Yet, the first rulers who unified Upper and Lower Egypt to create a central government did not even concede being the highest religious figure or the position of caliphate of deities so they declared themselves gods directly. As the reasons why Kings of Egypt –who used the title "Pharaoh" afterwards– declared themselves gods, it can be thought that they strived to ward off the clergy members in Egypt to come against a ruler, a person like themselves, and intended that the people should not have regarded their rulers as normal individuals as they were²³.

4. STRUGGLES FOR THE POWER DOMAIN

When the city states began to have more complex social and economic organizations in the Early Dynastic Period, the temple-centered administrative approach was

¹⁹ BERTMAN 2003, 127 - 128; MCINTOSH 2005, 129 - 130; HINNELLS 2007, 192 - 195.

²⁰ DIAKONOFF 1991, 84 - 95; BODLEY 2011, 239 - 240; MAISELS 2001, 163 - 172.

²¹ YOFFEE 2005, 100 - 103; SOMERVILL 2009, 24 - 28.

²² MARCHESI / MARCHETTI 2011, 129 - 149; ADAMS 2005, 139 - 143; LIVERANI 2014, 107; MIEROOP 1999, 118 - 121.

²³ GARCÍA 2013, 1 - 14; SILVERMAN 2003, 199 - 201; BRIER / HOBBS 2008, 72 - 77; SAUNERON 2000, 54 - 57.

not sufficient enough to rule the people and it could not meet relations to other cities. Thereupon, kingship regime which began to develop in the previous periods came to the forefront and appeared to be more decisive to make the decisions essential to maintain the lives of the people in the city. In the process of time, a struggle for power between the temple-centered religious administration comprised of many clergy administrators and benefited from the impressiveness gods had and the palace-centered kingship regime depending on the strength of a temporary or permanent military force constituted by soldiers under the command of the king²⁴.

In Mesopotamian cities, it is observed that kings procured acceptance for their dominance to the clergy members and the community, although it is not very obvious and clear how both the temple and the king ruled at the same time and how they maintained that system. Given the early Sumerian laws, it is inferred that kings had placed themselves a central position that resolved social inequalities, acted modestly towards the neediest classes of the community such as widows and orphans, helped people and limited taxes collected by the temple. Even if it seems unclear about whether such behavior was based on humanitarian reasons or intended to reduce the power of the temple, and whether the kings wanted to ensure the support of the people to justify themselves as their rulers; we can infer that this preference eventually prevented people to question 'What was the king for?'²⁵.

Kings always agreed they were under the right command of the gods, just like any individual in the society. While making their decisions and finding solutions to the problems between people, they attributed source of their sovereignty directly to gods, not the people, and they did not hesitate to mention this in laws they legislated. Owing to the powerful belief in god or gods in Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies had in common, it does not seem possible to talk about 'a secular king' approach almost no time²⁶.

Kings was never directly up against gods which were the largest source of power in the hands of clergy members. Instead, they regarded themselves as god' agent and servant; thus, they both used the power of the temple and made the community have much more respect for themselves. Because of the fact that they regarded and introduced themselves as 'the protector of the community' against internal and external problems as their first objective, kings were required to listen to the complaints of their people about the temple and find solutions. High taxes collected the temple for worldly and religious affairs might be one of the prominent complaints. The way or ways kings, the protectors of the community, followed to resolve tax and payment questions without reducing the temple's income or impoverishing people must have been regarded as an indicator about how a king they were. As looking after the community's rights guaranteed and strengthened their power, kings were also required to fulfill the wishes of clergy members. Against kings in such a dilemma, clergy members exerted pressure for more power and wealth from time to time and even threatened kings'

²⁴ KAGAN 1966, 19 - 21; MULLER 1961, 54 - 58; MAYER / BUCKLEY 1969, 22 - 26.

²⁵ MAISELS 1993, 162 - 168; MANN 2012, 73 - 79; MAISELS 2001, 79 - 82.

²⁶ MIEROOP 1999, 33 - 34; JOPPKE 2015, 8 - 10; POTTS 2012, 544 - 545; KASER 2011, 99 - 100.

administration²⁷. Although there exist many examples in this regard in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, we strive to explain the developments occurred in the periods of Urukagina and Akhenaton by this research's nature and limitations, and provide a live commentary on the subject.

A. URUKAGINA'S REFORMS

Urukagina, alternately referred as "Uruinimgina" or "Irikagina", was the king of the city-state Lagash ca. 2400 BC in Mesopotamia. He is known as 'the first lawmaker and social reforms' in recorded history by historians. Urukagina seized power after his predecessor Lugalanda, made decisions to restore the order in his city having social problems and made both clergy members and the community to obey these rules²⁸. The presence of free economic approach and absence of a social security system conducted by the state in Mesopotamian cities had resulted in that the rich got richer while the poor get poorer. As far as Urukagina's reformations indicate, the clergy members who were supposed to support social structure and help widows, orphans and poor which all constitute the 'weakest groups' in communities prioritized their own interests over those of the weakest and destitute. Clergy members who were already fulfilling religious obligations collected fees they set for funerals, feast celebrations, fortunetelling and consultancy on religious matters regardless of the person's financial situation²⁹.

If economic sharing in a community provides inequalities when it is compared with population distribution; namely, if the majority of the city's financial wealth is in the hands of a very small portion of society while the vast majority of the people in that society fight hunger to sustain their lives, although they make sacrifice for it, this will bring about a social explosion. However, clergy members in the Mesopotamian city states continued to live in a social order they established. Because they claimed to be using the economic power in their hands on behalf of the gods since they made people accept that any objection and obstruction against them meant objection to gods and deities, they used to accuse people of coming against the gods and ostracized them, if any individual resistance they faced. As compared with clergy members who believed they were accountable to gods, kings were also accountable to people they ruled; so they might have thought that they should not have remained indifferent to the current unjust situation. It is highly probable that these dynamics were on the basis of Urukagina's reforms³⁰.

Despite of the fact that Urukagina made his arrangements inscribed, the document was found to be broken. On the readable parts, Urukagina begins with a description of the community: "Since time immemorial, since the seed corn (first) sprouted forth, the head boatman had the boats in charge for his own benefit, the head

²⁷ MCINTOSH 2005, 173 - 174; SHORTLAND 2012, 37 - 39; LOCKARD 2010, 35 - 36; OLSEN 1994, 161 - 166.

²⁸ KRAMER 1971, 58 - 80; CRAWFORD 2013, 119 - 120; EHRlich 2011, 70; VISICATO 2000, 6 - 7.

²⁹ LIVERANI 2014, 112 - 114; THOMSON 2011, 71 - 73; KING 2012, 182 - 187; KRAMER 1988, 104 - 105; STARR 1991, 44.

³⁰ BURG 2003, 9 - 10; KRAMER 1971, 81 - 84; FALKENSTEIN 1974, 7 - 11; KAGAN 1966, 16 - 18; GOFF 1963, 230 - 236.

shepherd had the asses in charge for his own benefit, the head shepherd had the sheep in charge for his own benefit; the head fisherman had the fishing places in charge for his own benefit. The incantation-priest measured out the barley rent (to his own advantage)...”After telling that some people responsible for using facilities of the community used these resources for their own interests and they prospered, Urukagina describes the status of clergy members: “The [temple] oxen of the gods plowed the gardens of the ensi; the gardens and the cucumber fields of the ensi were in the best fields of the gods; the asses and oxen of the priests were taken away (by the ensi). The barley rations [income] of the priests were administered by the men of the ensi.... In the garden of a humble person a priest could cut a tree or carry away its fruit. When a dead man was placed in the tomb, it was necessary to deliver in his name seven jars of beer and 420 loaves of bread. The uh-mush priest received one-half gur [about fourteen gallons] of barley, one garment, one turban, and one bed. ne priest’s assistant received one-fourth gur of barley...” Later in the text, after he describes and tells about workers begging for bread and income injustice in the city, it is said the former days were like that³¹.

Afterwards, Urukagina talks about how he was granted the lugal-ship of his city, what he did for his people and how he eradicated social inequality before his reign: “When the god Ningirsu, the warrior of the god Enlil, granted the lugal-ship of Lagash to Urukagina, picking him out of the entire population, he [Ningirsu] enjoined upon him (the restoration of) the divinely decreed way of life of former days. He removed the head boatman in charge of the boats. He removed the head shepherd in charge of the asses and sheep. He removed the head fisherman from the fishing places. He removed the head of the storehouse from his responsibility of measuring out the barley ration to the incantation-priests...” Later on, he mentions what he did for the city of the en.si³².

Urukagina prevented people who were using the city resources for the sake of their own interests and cut the fees clergy members received from the public: “When a dead man was placed in the tomb, (only) three jars of beer and eighty loaves of bread were delivered in his name. The uh-mush priest received one bed and one turban. The priest’s assistant received one-eighth gur of barley...” In addition, he describes he relieved the people in the city of poverty and the oppression of the clergy members: “The youth was not required to work in the a-zar-la; the workingman was not forced to beg for his bread. The priest no longer invaded the garden of a humble person.” Except those, new laws he enacted to prevent clergy members to gain dominion over the people of the city are announced to all the public: “He (also) decreed: If a good ass is born to a client and his overseer says to him, “I will buy if from you,” then if he wishes to sell it he will say, “Pay me what pleases me”; but if he does not wish to sell, the overseer must not force him. If the house of a powerful man is next to the house of a client, and if the powerful man says to him, “I wish to buy it,” then if he wishes to sell he will say, “Pay me in silver as much as suits me,” or “Reimburse me with an

equivalent amount of barley”; but if he does not wish to sell, the powerful man must not force him.” This arrangement might have weakened clergy members’ and other powerful individuals’ dominance on other people. Nonetheless, it is inevitable that people who used to derive benefits from the temple and deities strived to establish dominance over the people and the king by depending on the power of gods, in case they had any opportunity³³.

Even if he attributes to Ningirsu, one of his gods, Urukagina glorified his ruler ship by attributing social welfare and development he realized to himself and vitiated the power of the clergy members; thus, it seems to have strengthened his administration: “He [Urukagina] freed the inhabitants of Lagash from usury, burdensome controls, hunger, theft, murder, and seizure (of their property and persons). He established freedom. The widow and orphan were no longer at the mercy of the powerful: it was for them that Urukagina made his covenant with Ningirsu.” Urukagina reforms or laws both saved the people of Lagash from the relentlessness of clergy members and other powerful people in the society and helped the kingdom, state administration, get stronger against the temple. This law indicates that gods were not only in the monopoly of the clergy members and the king could also make people obey his administration approach depending on the power of the gods³⁴.

B. AKHENATON AND HIS GOD

Although he was given the name ‘Amenhotep³⁵’ at birth and the title ‘Nefer-kheperu-re³⁶’ later, the tenth pharaoh of the XVIIIth dynasty changed his name to ‘Akhenaton³⁷’ after adopting the Aton religion. Despite the facts that Akhenaton takes place at an important turning point in humanity’s faith development and asserts the idea of only one eternal and everlasting god which was neither begetteth nor begotten, we remain within the boundaries of our study and discuss about the struggle between him and clergy members who had a wide sovereignty over Egyptian society believing in various gods for millenniums, instead of focusing on his announcement of a monotheistic belief system and his religious policies³⁸.

Although it is not clear and still remains a mystery why he gave up the religious understanding and creed system accepted by the Egyptian community for millenniums and started to believe in only one god in an unprecedented way, Akhenaton should have known that he would take clergy members which constituted the most active and best organized part of the social organization having a hierarchy in itself. As soon as Akhenaton began explaining his new god and religion to people he ruled, clergy members might have thought that the gods they represented and therefore they would be discredited and fall into disfavor³⁹.

³¹ BAILKEY 1976, 18 - 19; LIVERANI 2014, 113.

³² KRAMER 1971, 317 - 318; LANSING 1971, 117 - 119; MOSCATI 2001, 23 - 24.

³³ BAILKEY 1976, 19; SAMHABER 1964, 35 - 37.

³⁴ WALLBANK 1992, 11 - 12; BAUMANN 1969, 127 - 128.

³⁵ Amenhotep means “Amun is Satisfied” and sometimes given in its Greek form, Amenophis.

³⁶ Nefer-kheperu-re means “Beautiful are the Forms of Re”.

³⁷ Akhenaton means “Beneficial for Aton” or “Effective for Aten” and it is also spelled Khuenaten, Echnaton and Ikhnaton.

³⁸ HARI 1997, 7 - 11; ALDRED 1969, 94; LEPROHON 2013, 105; ARNOLD 1996, 4 - 5.

³⁹ FRANKFORT 2011, 17 - 26; HOFFMEIER 2015, 91 - 101; WHITE 1970, 171 - 173; RUIZ 2001, 182 - 183.

Polytheistic religions could be regarded as religions of rituals, rather than a religion of belief. Often, requests from individuals in the community used to be conveyed to gods by clergy members in the temple. Similarly, bureaucracy related to some issues such as marriage, divorce, funerals and inheritance in the Ancient Egypt were in the hands of clergy members. Individuals in the community used to do many important works in their daily life by obtaining approval of the temple and were determined to make a donation or pay a fee for it. In this case, the temple seemed as an indispensable part of daily life for the community⁴⁰.

Many continuous activities of not only people in the society but also the palace itself were managed by clergy members. Festivals, mummification procedures, funerals and wedding ceremonies were all held by the clergy members. This situation used to guarantee the maintenance of the mutual operation between the palace having military forces and the temple having social power. Kings had established a relationship based on a "mutual benefit" principle with the clergy members, who were always informed about what happened in the palace and directed the community. This relationship was committed on a regular basis until Akhenaton started his reign. However, the King who believed in only one god appeared to be the greatest threat and an enemy to be destroyed for the clergy members⁴¹.

One of the differences between the polytheistic religions and monotheistic religions is that it is absolutely required a religious functionary to be present to fulfill the faith rituals in polytheistic approaches. In monotheistic religions, people are regarded as individuals and so they can perform worship without clergy members. In polytheistic religions in the Ancient History, however, the practitioners of the faith are people who were loyal to the temple and asserted that they were appointed for that, rather than the individuals. Depending on the power of the gods they represented, these people were able to obtain wealth and prestige. This understanding lasted for thousands of years until Akhenaton. For the 'joe public', it was quite challenging to defy and disobey gods in the protection of clergy members since they would be ostracized from the community or insulted by people around. Even so, if someone, who himself is a God directly, begins to talk about only one God by abandoning his deity and the other gods, this is a situation that cannot be stayed indifferent⁴².

New understanding of religion declared by Akhenaton can be considered as a continuation of the "personal belief teachings" which found themselves support in the Egyptian society in earlier periods. While worshipping, people had begun to prefer calling directly to gods or deities who were the resource of the peace filled in their hearts, not the clergymen who presented themselves as "the chosen group". Owing to the fact that this belief system emphasizing that people should show their belief through behaviors in their own lives, not the extent of their loyalty and commitment to the temple, as gods asks them to be good believers, would lessen

⁴⁰ TEETER 2011, 19 - 35; DAVID 2003, 79 - 81; LORTON 2000, 29 - 36; CHRISTENSEN 2007, 74 - 87.

⁴¹ BAKER / BAKER 2001, 123 - 124; AFRICA 1969, 24 - 27; CASSON 2001, 83 - 94.

⁴² MONTERRAT 2003, 93 - 122; MCLAUGHLIN 2012, 34; RUIZ 2001, 153; ASSMANN 2014, 63- 69; MIEROOP 2010, 209 - 211.

the need for clergy members, it might have been faced with great opposition by clergy members. The clergy members who realized they would lose not only their prestige in the community but also the privileges and influence they had on government officials might have responded this belief system by increasing their threats and pressure on⁴³.

As soon as Akhenaton, together with his wife, Nefertiti, began to introduce and spread his new doctrine, the clergy members serving other gods believed in Egypt for centuries began to repaginate the king, their old god, directly or indirectly. Although Akhenaton held all military power as a pharaoh, social power was in the hands of clergy members. Since he could not realize a direct military intervention against his own people, Akhenaton left Thebes, the capital city, along with his devoted followers. He moved to "Akhetaten", a city specifically planned for God Aton, though it is of debates whether he left Thebes due to a possible uprising against him or he wanted to be free of the oppression and influence of the clergy members. Akhenaton moved in the city along with his army, servants and followers of his new religion; however, servants of the gods in magnificent temples of the city of Thebes did not go with him⁴⁴.

The life span of Akhenaton's new religion was limited to his own reign. The main reasons for this situation are believed to be that Aton religion was only accepted by the upper strata of the society and it could not reach the masses under the influence of clergy members. Furthermore, the successors ascended the throne after Akhenaton either did not believe in Aton religion or tried to prevent a social resistance and returned to the old gods, by not revealing determination as Akhenaton did. For any reasons whatsoever, clergy members in Ancient Egypt maintained the power they had, their dignity in the community and their impact on the state administration⁴⁵.

5. CONCLUSION

Since the early periods in the history, clergy members who claimed to be serving the god or god tried to provide themselves with a more comfortable life by using their power and requests as if they were gods' requests. While the clergy members were organized over the temple and had a full control over the inhabitants in cities during the formation periods of the city states, they contended for a power struggle with the kings emerged in time. The conflict between kings and clergy members, who were trying to protect what they had in hand, has taken place throughout the history. People's beliefs were at the center of their everyday life in Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, which both have an important place among the ancient civilizations. People used to learn 'how they should have lived' from their gods; in other words, clergy members. So, they had to accept the demands of the temple without questioning.

When any individual in the society, from a worker in the lowest segment of society to the king at the highest level of administration, put up resistance against the temple's

⁴³ BAKER / BAKER 2001, 125 - 129; BUNSON 2012, 18 - 19; MURRAY 2013, 40.

⁴⁴ THOMAS 2003, 67 - 77; HORNUNG 2001, 61 - 67; CHRISTENSEN 2007, 50; WILKINSON 2013, 285 - 296.

⁴⁵ RUIZ 2001, 183 - 185; SILVERMAN / WEGNER 2006, 161 - 177; HOFFMEIER 2015, 118 - 131.

requests, clergy members used to charge him/her with disobey against the gods and strengthen their indestructible social status as they guaranteed their incontestability regarding their decisions. The clergy members specialized in managing people by means of their beliefs had also succeeded in providing themselves with a comfortable life and a respectable status in the society, without any effort. However; the fact that clergy members used the religious beliefs of society for the sake of their own interests did not result in the lack of religious beliefs in community or a thought that religion is something unnecessary in no circumstances. It was thought that the fallaciousness was due to wrong persons.

The governors in Mesopotamia and the kings appeared after the unification of Lower and Upper countries in Egypt soon realized that the easiest way to rule a society was to make use of the power of the gods on account of their authorities. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, the easiest and effective management system, valid even today, was based on intimidating people to make them not to disobey authorities. This oppressive approach was realized on the most valid values in society, namely belief, and the administrators declared themselves 'gods' representatives' or 'gods in person'. Additionally, they claimed that when they were disobeyed, the gods would be disobeyed as well. Even though kings and the clergy members who succeeded in controlling gods and their most valuable capital, i. e. the temple, seemed to serve the same gods, they did not hesitate to struggle against each other for the sake of worldly interests.

Although this struggle in Ancient History, especially in the Middle East, has been active without any interruption up to now, we have tried to provide Urukagina and Akhenaton cases within the limitations of our study. When Urukagina came into power, clergy members had already created a great pressure on people and they used to wrench their goods from their followers and demand very high fees in religious affairs. Maintaining his authority depending on the support of the people he ruled, Urukagina made efforts to diminish the effectiveness of clergy members and to legitimize his power. Although not included in the resources we have today, it can be inferred that clergy members were not satisfied with his arrangements. Even though there was not an overt conflict, we can suppose that clergy members had no good intentions against Urukagina's power and authority. Although resources regarding Urukagina's reign do not provide direct information about the conflict between the clergy members and the government officials, the struggle between the members of the temple and Akhenaton is seen clearly.

As clergy members which could reach all segments of the Ancient Egyptian society by means of the hierarchical structure they were organized and had become an integral part of the society directed society according to their own needs, they were also active in important tasks such as ceremonies, celebrations and funerals in the palace where the highest representatives of the Egyptian religion met. Kings who held military power in their hands and clergy members who had social power were included in an order spontaneously occurred during millennia, and the kings avoided to do something which would undermine the

interests of the clergy members.

Akhenaton was an exceptional case regarding this situation. Two classes mutually benefiting from the current situation before Akhenaton began to conflict and struggle as soon as the concept of 'one god' emerged. Even if this conflict did not turn into an uprising against Akhenaton who had the military power in his hands, clergy members who could not benefit from the government's blessing hindered the society to confess his teachings. The winners of this power struggle limited to life of Akhenaton were the clergy members.

In conclusion, clergy members having social power and kings having military power in their hands had been in a struggle—*sometimes active/obvious and sometimes latent*—regarding the use of economic and political power in Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies in the ancient history. In this struggle, none of these two parties were able to win all the time. Although the winning parties changed depending on the conditions by the time, the public was the loser of this struggle because they had to share their economic wealth both with the king and clergy members.

REFERENCES

- ADAMS 2005
Adams, R. M., *The Evolution of Urban Society: Early Mesopotamia and Prehispanic Mexico* (New Jersey: Aldine Transaction).
- AFRICA 1969
Africa, T. W., *The Ancient World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).
- ALDRED 1969
Aldred, C., *Akhenaten, Pharaoh of Egypt: A New Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- ARNOLD 1996
Arnold, D., *The Royal Women of Amarna: Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).
- ASSMANN 2014
Assmann, J., *From Akhenaten to Moses: Ancient Egypt and Religious Change* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press).
- BAILKEY 1976
Bailkey, N. M., *Readings in Ancient History: From Gilgamesh to Diocletian* (Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company).
- BAKER / BAKER 2001
Baker, R. F. / C. F. Baker., *Ancient Egyptians: People of the Pyramids* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- BAUMANN 1969
Baumann, H., *In the Land of Ur: The Discovery of Ancient Mesopotamia*. (New York: Pantheon Books).
- BERTMAN 2003.
Bertman, S., *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York: Infobase Publishing).
- BODLEY 2011
Bodley, J. H., *Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States, and the Global System* (Maryland: Alta Mira Press).
- BREWER / TEETE 2007
Brewer, D. J. / TEETE, E., *Egypt and the Egyptians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- BRIER 2008
Brier, B. and Hoyt H. *Daily Life of the Ancient Egyptians* (Indiana: Greenwood).
- BULLIET / CROSSLEY 2009
Bulliet, R. / Crossley P., *The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History* (Boston: Cengage Learning).

- BUNSON 2012
Bunson, M., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File).
- BURG 2003
Burg, D. F., *A World History of Tax Rebellions: An Encyclopedia of Tax Rebels, Revolts, and Riots from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Routledge).
- CABRERA 2010
Cabrera, E., *Water Engineering and Management through Time: Learning from History* (Florida: CRC Press).
- CASSON 2001
Casson, L., *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- CHINNERY 2012
Chinnery, J., *The Civilization of Ancient China* (New York: Rosen Publishing).
- CHRISTENSEN 2007
Christensen, W., *Empire of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Chelsea House Publications).
- CRAWFORD 2013
Crawford, H. *The Sumerian World* (New York: Routledge).
- DAVID 2003
David, R., *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Penguin).
- DIAKONOFF 1991
Diakonoff, I. M., *Early Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- EASTON 1970
Easton, S. C., *The Heritage of the Ancient World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).
- EHRlich 2011
Ehrlich, C. S., *From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Maryland Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).
- FAGAN 2004
Fagan, B. M., *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall).
- FALKENSTEIN 1974
Falkenstein, A., *The Sumerian Temple City* (California: Undena Publications).
- FARMER 1977
Farmer, E. L., *Comparative History of Civilizations in Asia: 10,000 B.C. to 1850* (Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman, Incorporated).
- FRANKFORT 2011
Frankfort, H., *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* (New York: Dover Publications).
- GARCÍA 2013
García, J.C.M., *Ancient Egyptian Administration* (Leiden: Brill).
- GATES 2003
Gates, C., *Ancient Cities: The Archaeology of Urban Life in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, Greece and Rome* (New York: Taylor & Francis Publishing).
- GOFF 1963
Goff, B. L., *Symbols of Prehistoric Mesopotamia* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- GOODY 1986
Goody, J., *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- GRIFFETH 1981
Griffeth, R., *The City-State in Five Cultures* (California: Abc-Clío Publishing).
- HARI 1997
Hari, R., *New Kingdom Amarna Period: The Great Hymn to Aten* (Leiden: Brill).
- HINNELLS 2007
Hinnells, J. R., *A Handbook of Ancient Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- HOFFMEIER 2015
Hoffmeier, J. K., *Akhenaten and the Origins of Monotheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- HOLLAND 2009
Holland, G. S., *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Maryland Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).
- HORNUNG / DAVID 2001
Hornung, E. / David L., *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light* (New York: Cornell University Press).
- JOHNSTON 2004
Johnston, S. I., *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- JOPPKE 2015
Joppke, C., *The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics in Europe and America* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- KAGAN 1966
Kagan, D., *The Ancient Near East and Greece* (London: Macmillan).
- KASER 2011
Kaser, K. *The Balkans and The Near East: Introduction to A Shared History* (Munster: LIT Verlag).
- KEMP 2005
Kemp, B. J., *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (New York: Routledge).
- KING 2012
King, L. W., *A History of Sumer and Akkad* (London: Acheron Press).
- KRAMER 1971
Kramer, S. N., *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- KRAMER 1988
Kramer, S. N., *In the World of Sumer: An Autobiography* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press).
- KUIPER 2010
Kuiper, K., *Mesopotamia: The World's Earliest Civilization* (New York: Rosen Publishing).
- LANSING 1971
Lansing, E. H., *The Sumerians: Inventors and Builders* (New York: McGraw-Hill).
- LEECH 2007
Leech, B. C., *Mesopotamia: Creating and Solving Word Problems* (New York: Rosen Publishing).
- LEICK 2002
Leick, G., *Mesopotamia: The Invention of the City* (New York: Penguin).
- LEPROHON 2013
Leprohon, R. J., *The Great Name: Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).
- LIVERANI 2014
Liverani, M., *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy* (New York: Routledge).
- LLOYD 2010
Lloyd, A. B., *A Companion to Ancient Egypt, Volume - I*. (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Press).
- LOCKARD 2010
Lockard, C., *Societies, Networks, and Transitions: Volume I: A Global History* (Boston: Cengage Learning).
- MAISELS 1993
Maisels, C. K., *Emergence of Civilization: From Hunting and Gathering to Agriculture, Cities and the State in the Near East* (New York: Routledge).
- MAISELS 2001
Maisels, C. K., *Early Civilizations of the Old World: The*

- Formative Histories of Egypt, The Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China* (New York: Routledge).
- MANN 2012
Mann, M., *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- MARCHESE / MARCHETTI 2011
Marchesi, G. / Marchetti, N., *Royal Statuary of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns).
- MAYER / BUCKLEY 1969
Mayer, K. B. / Buckley, W. F., *Class and Society* (New York: Random House).
- MCINTOSH 2007
McIntosh, J., *The Ancient Indus Valley: New Perspectives* (California: Abc-Clio Publishing).
- MCINTOSH 2005
McIntosh, J., *Ancient Mesopotamia: New Perspectives* (California: Abc-Clio Publishing).
- MCLAUGHLIN 2012
McLaughlin, J. L., *The Ancient Near East* (Tennessee: Abingdon Press).
- MICHAEL 2008
Michael, A. M., *Irrigation: Theory and Practice* (Uttar Pradesh: Vikas Publishing).
- MIEROOP 1999
Mieroop, M. V., *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- MIEROOP 2010
Mieroop, M. V. A., *History of Ancient Egypt* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Press).
- MONTSERRAT 2003
Montserrat, D., *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt* (New York: Routledge).
- MOSCATI 2001
Moscati, S., *The Face of the Ancient Orient: Near Eastern Civilization in Pre-Classical Times* (New York: Dover Publications).
- MULLER 1961
Muller, H. J., *Freedom in the Ancient World* (New York: Harper).
- MURRAY 2013
Murray, M. A., *The Splendor That Was Egypt* (Montana: Literary Licensing Llc).
- NEMET-NEJAT 1998
Nemet-Nejat, K. R., *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Indiana: Greenwood).
- OLSEN 1994
Olsen, M. E., *Societal Dynamics: Exploring Macrosociology* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall).
- PARSONS 1966
Parsons, T., *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall).
- POLLOCK 1999
Pollock, S., *Ancient Mesopotamia: The Eden That Never Was* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- POSTGATE 1992
Postgate, N., *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (New York: Taylor & Francis Publishing).
- POTTS 1997
Potts, D. T., *Mesopotamian Civilization: The Material Foundations* (New York: Cornell University Press).
- POTTS 2012
Potts, D. T., *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Press).
- RISTVET 2014
Ristvet, L., *Ritual, Performance, and Politics in the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- RUIZ 2001
Ruiz, A., *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Algora).
- SAMHABER 1964
Samhaber, E., *Merchants Make History: How Trade Has Influenced the Course of History Throughout the World* (New York: John Day).
- SAUNERON 2000
Sauneron, S., *The Priests of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Cornell University Press).
- SCHNEIDER 2011
Schneider, T. J., *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing).
- SCHWAB 1982
Schwab, W.A., *Urban Sociology: A Human Ecological Perspective* (Boston: Addison-Wesley Longman, Incorporated).
- SELTZER 1989
Seltzer, R. M., *Religions of Antiquity* (London: Macmillan).
- SHORTLAND 2012
Shortland, A. J., *Lapis Lazuli from the Kiln: Glass and Glassmaking in the Late Bronze Age* (Leuven: Leuven University Press).
- SILVERMAN 2003
Silverman, D. P., *Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- SILVERMAN / WEGNER 2006
Silverman, D. P. / Wegner, J. W., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun: Revolution and Restoration* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology).
- SIMMONS 2007
Simmons, A. H., *The Neolithic Revolution in the Near East: Transforming the Human Landscape* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press).
- SMITH 2007
Smith, G. E., *The Ancient Egyptians and the Origin of Civilization* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press).
- SNELL 2005
Snell, D. C., *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Press).
- SOMERVILL 2009
Somervill, B. A., *Empires of Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York: Chelsea House Publications).
- STARR 1991
Starr, C. G. A., *History of the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- TEETER 2011
Teeter, E., *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- THOMAS 2003
Thomas, S., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamen: The Religious Revolution* (New York: Rosen Publishing).
- THOMSON 2011
Thomson, G. A., *First Writers-the Sumerians: They Wrote on Clay* (Indiana: iUniverse).
- VISICATO 2000
Visicato, G., *The Power and the Writing: The Early Scribes of Mesopotamia* (Maryland: CDL Press).
- WALLBANK 1992
Wallbank, T. W., *Civilization Past & Present: To 1714* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers).
- WHITE 1970
White, J. E. M., *Ancient Egypt: Its Culture and History* (New York: Dover Publications).
- WILDWOOD 2010
Wildwood, G., *Ancient Mesopotamia Civilization* (New York: Rosen Publishing).

WILKINSON 2013

Wilkinson, T., *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Random House).

YOFFEE 2005

Yoffee, N., *Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest*

Cities, States, and Civilizations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

ZEBROWSKI 2011

Zebrowski, E., *Curiosity Guides: Global Climate Change* (Massachusetts: Charlesbridge Publishing).