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UNUSUAL EPONYMY-DATINGS FROM MARI AND ASSYRIA

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The Old Assyrian texts from Anatolia contain a very substantial number of year-dates and these fall into two groups: there are simple datings of the type *limmum* PN, and there are a great many datings of the type *limmum ša qāli* PN; in a couple of texts we find the formula *limmum ša warki* PN. In a forthcoming study of the OA eponymic system of dating I shall attempt to show that the *ša qāli* datings were a very special kind of *mu-ussa* dates which were used during the first months of the year in the Assyrian colonies in Anatolia. The year eponym was appointed in the capital Assur, apparently in a ceremony which included the drawing of lots, and it was never known on beforehand who was going to give his name to the coming year. Consequently, the Assyrians in Anatolia had to receive this information by letter, and since it appears that the change of eponym took place in very late autumn it would often take several months before it was known in the colonies what name the current year had. The full form of the formula seems to have been as follows: *limmum ša ina qāli* PN *išbulu*, and we may perhaps render it loosely by: "eponymy: he who has taken over from PN"¹.

The few examples of the *ša warki* formula must be assumed to have the same meaning, *i.e.*: "eponymy: he who (came) after PN". The cases that I know about do fall in months which also typically occur in *ša qāli* datings. Whereas the latter formula is found only in the OA documents from Anatolia we do have a number of instances of (*ša*) *warki* datings from other sources. I shall begin with the references from Mari, found in texts which are in fact contemporary with the later OA documents; and after that I shall turn to a brief investigation of the references from the later Assyrian documents.

1. This interpretation of the *ša qāli* datings was first given by H. LEWY in chapter XXIV, § VII-X, Anatolia in the Old Assyrian Period, in *CAH*, Revised edition, vol. I, published as separate fascicle in 1965. Essentially the same translation of the formula was suggested by J. LEWY already in 1957 in *OrNS* 26, p. 20, n. 3. Balkan's criticism of this rendering in *AS* 16, p. 173, n. 33, is well-founded with regard to the problem of translating the phrase but the meaning established by J. and H. LEWY seems assured.

Assyria

The formulae *limmu ša EGIR PN* and *limmu arkat PN*, both obviously having the same meaning, appear in the eponym canon as well as in dated documents. It is generally agreed that these dates refer to years which had no eponym at all, or to months in the beginning of the year during which the appointment of the new eponym had not yet taken place.

The examples found in the eponym canon necessarily refer to years without an eponym, and they all stem from the period 1020-940 B.C.¹ This was a time of occasionally intense disruption in Assyria and our knowledge of the details of the historical evolution is often very scanty. Our first case is the last year of the reign of Shalmaneser II, and his successor, Aššurnirāri IV, must have had a troubled reign, for whereas he himself served as eponym during his first year the remaining four years of his rule were all without an eponym. These rulers have not left much of a mark on posterity but one may note that both were contemporary with the Babylonian king Simbar-Šipak who appears to have carried out successful wars against Assyria². The remaining examples from the eponym canon fall in the reign of Tiglath-pileser II, his third, sixteenth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh years. It may be relevant that Brinkman has shown that there are signs of military trouble even within the province of Assur itself during the reign of this king, but we have to admit that we do not know anything precise³.

It is fair to assume that quite a number of years in the history of Assyria must have witnessed delays in the appointment of the eponyms, and these cases are of course reflected in dated documents only. The earliest instance occurs in an unpublished text from the time of Arik-dēn-ili (1319-1308)*; I am unable to combine this with anything else for we know quite little about the events during the reign of this king.

From Tell Billa we have an example in a badly damaged document which is dated to the twenty-ninth day of an unknown month in the eponymy *ša arki*

1. See *RIA* 2, p. 436.

2. Cf. BRINKMAN, *AuOr* 43, pp. 153-154.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

4. Cf. WEIDNER, *Afo* 13, p. 314, where he offers a correction of *RIA* 2, pp. 446-447; Assur 13058ii has *li-mu ša arki* ^𒀭*Be-ri-ti*, and the eponym Berātu is otherwise known as a son of Erība-Adad who served as eponym during the reign of Arik-dēn-ili.

Shalmaneser III¹. It is known that this ruler held the eponymy twice and this text clearly stems from the year after his second tenure, *i.e.* 826; we know that this year was marked by a bitter civil war during which the king was confined to his capital city Kalah. Eventually the year was to be known as the eponymy of the *lurtānu* Dajjān-Aššur.

The next example comes from a document dated 5.II in the eponymy after Nabu-šarru-ušur, *i.e.* 681². This is of course the last year in the reign of Sennacherib and a year which was marked by violent events: the king was murdered and civil war broke out; however, this took place late in the year for the Babylonian Chronicle tells us that Sennacherib was murdered on 20.X and that the fighting continued until 18.XII, when Esarhaddon sat down on the throne³. The reconstruction of the events of this year constitutes a very complicated problem and in this context I cannot enter a broad discussion on this subject. Nevertheless, it may be relevant that Esarhaddon himself refers to troubles with his brothers after he had been chosen as heir to the throne; his somewhat obscure statement that the great gods let him dwell in a safe place protected from the schemes of his brothers must presumably refer to Esarhaddon's flight from the capital, and it could be that these events took place already in the very beginning of the year 681—which again could explain the fact that the eponym was not appointed at the right time. The new eponym must have been installed very shortly afterwards for we have a text which is dated to 12.II in the eponymy of Nabu-ahhē-ereš who came to give his name to this year⁴.

There is another *ša arki* dating which is connected with Esarhaddon and it is found in a text which is dated to the first month in the eponymy after that of Kanūnaja, *i.e.* 670⁵. There is a very clear relation to political history here, for we know from the Chronicle that "the king stayed in Assyria. He had many of his nobles killed". There seems to have been an abortive rebellion which again was directly connected with the appointment of an heir to the throne, and we have references to these events also from contemporary letters⁶. The new eponym, Šulmu-bēli-lašme, is attested in a date as early as 1.II⁷.

The next example is of a somewhat peculiar nature. In a document found in Gezer in Palestine we find the date 17.III in the eponymy after Aššur-dūru-ušur,

1. FINKELSTEIN, *JCS* 7, 1953, p. 137, no. 70.

2. *ADD* 213; the eponym has the title "governor of Marqasi" and must be kept apart from his namesake(s) who appear as eponym(s) under Aššur-bān-apli; one of these is also attested with *arki* datings, cf. below, p. 23.

3. See simply *ANET*, p. 302.

4. *ADD* 277.

5. *ADD* 499.

6. *ANET*, p. 303; for the letters see PARPOLA, *Iraq* 34, 1972, p. 34.

7. *ADD* 625.

i.e. 651¹. It is known, however, that the new eponym Sagabbu was appointed at the right time for we have from Assyria texts dated as early as 4.I in his eponymy². The year 651 was certainly marked by unrest and political turmoil since Aššur-bān-apli was engaged in a civil war against his brother Šamaš-šum-ukin in Babylon; the many anxious questions concerning the outcome of the fighting which are contained in the omen-reports of this year show that the situation in Assyria was critical. It is surely on this background that we must explain the late *ša arki* dating from Palestine, for under the circumstances it cannot have been considered particularly urgent to inform the people of Gezer of the correct name of the current year. The messenger service may even have been in disorder³. We have in this example a parallel to the OA *ša qāli* datings from the colonies in Anatolia, but such a delay can hardly have been usual in the provinces of the NA empire; one may note first that the change of eponym took place in spring where there was no difficulty in traveling from Assyria to the western provinces, and secondly that the messenger service of the imperial administration presumably functioned in a more regular manner than the OA commercial caravans.

Finally, we have some *ša arki* datings from the post-canonical period, and in this confused period it is certainly not surprising to find that also the annual appointment of the eponym had in some measure been affected by the political events. In fact, it is well known that some of the years of the late period must have had more than one eponym. The precise sequence of these eponymies has not yet been established and it is therefore uncertain which years had the *ša arki* datings. From one year, the eponymy after Nabu-šarru-ušur, the A. B. A. KUR, we have these datings as late as 10. XI and already Weidner⁴ suggested that this means that there was no eponym at all in the year in question. According to M. Falkner the year was 625, although she conceded the uncertainty of this dating⁵. Joan Oates has instead suggested that the year was 622 because her reconstruction of the complicated pattern of events in this period makes precisely that year one of great confusion⁶.

During the reign of Sin-šar-iškun we have one more *ša arki* date from 5. I in the eponym after Saiļu. According to Falkner the year was 617⁷.

1. PINCHES, *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1904, p. 231; in *RA* 2, p. 443, the month is erroneously given as *ajār*.

2. See e.g. *PRT*, no. 105.

3. Pinches suggested that the election of the eponym had been delayed, but JOHNS, *PEF*, 1904, p. 242, thought that it could be due to the scribe's distance from Nineveh and thus not an exact parallel to the date from 681 which Johns explained by "the unsettled state of affairs at Court".

4. WEIDNER, *Afo* 13, 1941, p. 316.

5. *Afo* 17, 1956, p. 114; references are listed on p. 104.

6. *Iraq* 27, 1965, p. 157.

7. *Loc. cit.*, pp. 105 and 115.

The interpretation of these data appears to be reasonably clear, but we have a few less unequivocal references which could belong in this group. In fact, in the *CAD* two more texts are referred to in a way which seems to indicate that the dictionary in them finds variants to the formula discussed in the preceding. Under *arkū* lc-l' we find first *ADD* 414 which is dated to 13. XI in the eponymy *Sin-šarru-ušur arkū*¹; in *RIA* 2, p. 454, this was explained as "the later *Sin-šarru-ušur*", and it is a fact that we have perhaps four eponyms of this name² so it would not be strange if one of them, who may have come to office shortly after a namesake, was further designated in this way. Another possibility is that it could be a reference to a man who took up the office of eponym late in the year, perhaps after the preceding man had been deposed. I am not certain which of these solutions was accepted by Falkner for she has one *Sin-šarru-ušur* as eponym in 639 and the one called *arkū* as eponym for part of the year 627, where she suggests that the political confusion at the end of *Aššur-ḫān-apli*'s reign could have led to the appointment of more than one eponym³. Joan Oates considers the possibility that our phrase could refer to another case of a *ša arki* eponymy but concludes that this is unlikely. Instead she offers the explanation that the "first" *Sin-šarru-ušur* may have died while in office so that the formula could refer to the remaining time of his tenure⁴. This does not strike me as a happy solution, both because of the formula itself which cannot mean anything like "after PN", and because of the chronological arguments based on prosopography which were offered by Falkner and which seemed to exclude the possibility that *Sin-šarru-ušur arkū* could be identical with *Sin-šarru-ušur A.BA.KUR*. At the moment it seems impossible to give a definitive explanation of this formula but it is not likely that it represents a variant of the *ša arki* phrase.

The second case is even more complicated: it is found in a text from the town *Kannu'* close to *Harran*⁵, and in addition to a normal dating to ? . II in the eponymy *Aššur-rimanni* we find the following strange passage: *PN₁ son of PN₂, the town Kannu', egru-u ša līm-mu [...]*. Falkner dates this eponymy to 621. No satisfactory explanation seems to offer itself.

1. I am not quite sure whether it is a mistake that these references are found in the section which has the heading: "second or lower in rank, said of officials." The reference given to the *ša arki* datings (found under *arkū*) rather points to a placing under the heading "later in time", perhaps together with such examples as *šarru-kiu arkū*.

2. See FALKNER, p. 105.

3. *Loc. cit.*, p. 119, n. 60.

4. *Loc. cit.*, p. 157, n. 56.

5. JOHNS, *PSBA* 30, 1908, pp. 137-141.