



STATE ARCHIVES OF ASSYRIA STUDIES

Published by the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project
of the Academy of Finland
in co-operation with
the Finnish Oriental Society

Project Director
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VOLUME II
Alan Millard
THE EPONYMS OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE
910-612 BC

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT

- 1994 -

THE POST-CANONICAL AND EXTRA-CANONICAL EPONYMS

by Robert Whiting

Post-canonical Eponyms

In the long lists of the eponym-officials covering the entire Neo-Assyrian period, known as the eponym canon, the last eponym preserved is that for the year 649 BC. Thus the eponyms for the years from 648 to 612, when Nineveh was destroyed and the Assyrian Empire came to an end, are referred to as post-canonical (or PC) eponyms. It has long been known, from an inscription of Aššurbanipal, that the eponym for the year 648 was Bēlšunu,¹ but otherwise, there is no direct evidence to tie any of the PC eponyms to a particular date, and their order is mostly unknown with clues to their order being scarce. The result is a puzzle of monumental proportions. This puzzle has not been addressed in its entirety since 1956 when a tentative order for the known PC eponyms was published by Margarete Falkner.² This was a valuable study and the list has been extensively used since, even though it is beset with problems and in a number of places obviously wrong. The present chapter is a brief summary of the advances made since Falkner's study and an interim report on my recent research on the post-canonical eponyms which is not yet completed and will be published elsewhere.

The Number of Post-canonical Eponyms

The first problem appears when one collects the PC eponyms. Obviously, since all Neo-Assyrian eponyms down to 649 are known from the canon, any eponym from a Neo-Assyrian text that is not in the canon is post-canonical.³ However, 648 to 612 requires 37 eponyms while the number of attested PC eponyms is ≈50.⁴ A number of these attestations are single occurrences,

¹ C. H. W. Johns, PSBA 24 (1902) 237, 241; PSBA 27 (1905) 98; cf. Streck, *Asb II*, p. 137 n. 6.

² M. Falkner, AfO 17 (1954-56) 100-120. Falkner did not include Bēlšunu in her study and her final list used 40 eponyms to fill out 36 years. Years assigned to eponyms by Falkner are preceded by an asterisk in the present discussion.

³ An exception is the text ND679.r.12-14 (BaM 24 7), dated 22:i: *mpa-qa-ha amēlišā-kīn alībbi-āli*, which from archival context belongs to the eighth century BC (cf. K. Deller and A. Fadhil, BaM 24 [1993] 266).

⁴ The exact number of PC eponyms depends on who is counting them. Specifically, opinions vary on which eponyms should be accepted unconditionally, which variant spellings represent the same eponym and which a different one, which writings are mistakes for other eponyms, which eponyms with the same name but different titles are the same, etc.

however, which might be discarded as mistakes, either ancient or modern; but many of them are quite clearly written or cannot be confused with anything else or occur in a strong archival context and so cannot simply be discarded.

Falkner attempted to solve this problem by positing a number of years with more than one eponym diachronically. That is, the year began normally but for some reason a new eponym was appointed at some point in the year. Falkner proposed this solution for no fewer than four years in her list, based on complementary distribution of occurrences through the year so that an eponym who was attested only at the beginning of the year was paired with one who was attested only in the latter part of the year. Unfortunately, with the increased documentation that is now available, most of these pairings can no longer be maintained.⁵

There are a number of other solutions that might be employed to pare down the number of attested PC eponyms to fit the 37 year span from 648 to 612. One is to simply throw away some of them, assuming them to be hopelessly garbled versions of canonical or already known post-canonical eponyms.⁶ Another is to assume that there may be a few eponyms that are both post-canonical and post-empire.⁷ These solutions may eliminate a few of the excess eponyms, but the most likely solution to account for the main body of them is to assume that there were a number of eponyms in use at different cities simultaneously. Unfortunately, direct evidence to support this assumption is not yet available,⁸ nor is there an obvious spatial distribution pattern among the attested PC eponyms that bears it out.

Of the 40 eponyms used by Falkner in her final list, three can be removed:

*614 Sîn-kêna-îdi (= Sîn-kêna-na'id?)⁹

*629 Bêl-šarru-na'id¹⁰

*633 Aššurbanipal¹¹

This is a small gain, because since Falkner's study another seven or eight post-canonical eponyms have appeared. Most of these are single attestations

⁵ In fact, only one of the pairings suggested by Falkner, Mannu-ki-aḥḥē and Sîn-šarru-ušur, *arkû*, for *627, could be maintained at the present time; this may actually be a valid pairing since otherwise the title *arkû*, 'second', is unexplained. Falkner was able to use 209 Neo-Assyrian texts of all types (royal inscriptions, letters, administrative and legal texts) for her study, whereas, through the SAA database, we have been able to collect over 400 published and unpublished eponym-dated legal texts alone.

⁶ This is an especially attractive option for names that are completely unfamiliar and do not otherwise occur in the Neo-Assyrian onomasticon such as Nūr-šalam-kaspi and Šanta-dameqi.

⁷ That is, eponyms belonging to the years after 612 and used by the small remnant of Assyrians who escaped to the west after the fall of Nineveh. These eponyms would be attested only at western sites; a prime candidate is Nabû-mâr-šarri-ušur, attested only at Guzana (Tell Ḥalaf). This solution was already suggested by Falkner (*loc. cit.* 106), but not utilized in her final scheme.

⁸ The most probable scenario to account for this would be a widespread civil war that lasted for several years, with two (or more) contenders to the throne holding different cities and each appointing his own eponym. The most likely time for this to have happened would have been after the death of Aššurbanipal, but this is a period that is presently shrouded in obscurity and, although there is general agreement that the end of Aššurbanipal's reign was accompanied by some sort of power struggle, there is no hard evidence or clear-cut indication of the extent and duration of this struggle. Indeed, even the date of the death of Aššurbanipal and the accession dates of his successors are currently matters of contention.

⁹ Now identified with Sîn-ālik-pāni.

¹⁰ Also read variously as Adad-bêlu-na'id, Adad-milki-na'id and Šarru-na'id. The reading of the name as Daddî and the identification with the eponym for *620 was established by O. Pedersén in OrSu 33-35 (1984-86) 313-15.

¹¹ See above, p. 14, n. 36. Falkner was skeptical about this eponym and included it only with reservations (*loc. cit.* 118 n. 56).

and might not, therefore, have to be given much weight in a reconstruction, but several are multiply-attested or have good archival context, particularly Kanûnâyu, governor of Dûr-Šarrukên,¹² and Pašî¹³. Further, a strong case can be made for there being a post-canonical eponym Bêl-šadûa.¹⁴

In her list, Falkner combined Adad-nâdin-aḫi with Nabû-nâdin-aḫi as a single entry under the former.¹⁵ However, Nabû-nâdin-aḫi is now multiply-attested (including a date on an Aššurbanipal prism) while Adad-nâdin-aḫi, although clearly written on the tablet,¹⁶ remains a hapax legomenon. Therefore, if the two are to be combined, Adad- must be considered an error for Nabû- rather than the other way around.

Chronological Order

After the problem of eliminating the excess number of PC eponyms comes the problem of placing them in chronological order. The period from 648 to 612 covered the reigns of three Assyrian kings and eponyms were frequently used to date events in their royal inscriptions. Unfortunately, the inscriptions from this period are so poorly preserved that it is often impossible to associate the eponyms with any historical event that can be dated by other means, and it is only possible to assign an eponym from a royal inscription to the reign of the king whose inscription it is. The following eponyms occur in inscriptions of Aššurbanipal:

Bêlšunu (648)
 Nabû-nâdin-aḫi
 Nabû-šar-aḫḫêšu
 Šîn-šarru-ušur
 Šamaš-da'inanni

¹² The existence of a PC eponym Kanûnâyu was conclusively shown by S. M. Dalley and J. N. Postgate, TFS [1984] 5, 55 *ad* no. 6.2, and 63 *ad* no. 11. Some examples had hidden behind the canonical eponyms for 671 and 666, but it is attested at Assur (*cf.* K. Deller, BaM 15 [1984] 232 n. 31), Kalah and Nineveh. The text from Nineveh (K441 = ADD 400) was dated to 688 (Iddin-aḫḫê) by G. Smith, Canon 90, but Johns when he copied the text could not justify the reading (*cf.* C. H. W. Johns, ADD IV [1923] 53 § 825). A fine convergence of evidence shows that this text must be dated to the eponymate of Kanûnâyu: (a) since the text belongs to the archive of Kakkullânu (see below, n. 19), it must be post-canonical and the original dating of the tablet by Smith can be ruled out; (b) the only likely reading for the first sign of the eponym's name is *baḫr/ḫr, or SUM, I suppose' (collation, J. N. Postgate); (c) the title, governor of Dûr-Šarrukên, is attested for Kanûnâyu in TFS 11; (d) the eponym Kanûnâyu is associated with the eponym Aššur-mātu-taqqin, possibly being the year immediately preceding it, in TFS 6; (e) the archive of Kakkullânu contains three texts dated to the eponymate of Aššur-mātu-taqqin. Thus, the possible readings of the sign, the title, and the archival context all point to the PC eponym Kanûnâyu for this text.

¹³ First reported by Deller, BaM 15 (1984) 246; *cf.* O. Pedersén, ALA I 22 n. 9. It is thus far attested only at Assur, but a strong archival context from administrative texts (ALA N4:462-70) indicates that it should immediately follow the eponymate of Sin-âlik-pâni.

¹⁴ This name is usually taken as an abbreviation for Bêl-Ḥarrân-šadûa (see RIA 2, 446) and in some cases it can be shown to be so, but there is growing evidence that Bêl-šadûa may have also been a PC eponym (*cf.* Dalley and Postgate, TFS [1984] 5 and Deller, BaM 15 [1984] 232 n. 32). The difficulties lie in the fact that the eponymate of Bêl-Ḥarrân-šadûa is so close to the post-canonical period (650 BC), making it difficult to distinguish on prosopographical grounds, and that no title is ever associated either with Bêl-Ḥarrân-šadûa or Bêl-šadûa in the legal texts.

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.* 104 n. 17 and 118 (*634).

¹⁶ Collated by J. N. Postgate.

The Sîn-šarru-ušur belonging to the reign of Aššurbanipal is identified as the governor of Hindānu.¹⁷ Further, a text from Sultantepe (STT 48) provides five eponyms which are generally agreed to be in chronological order:

Mušallim-Aššur
Aššur-gimillī-tirri
Zababa-erība
Sîn-šarru-ušur
Bēl-lū-dāri

although it is possible that other eponyms might be inserted in this sequence. This sequence is shown to fall in the reign of Aššurbanipal by the appearance of both Sîn-šarru-ušur, known from the historical inscriptions, and Aššur-gimillī-tirri, whose name appears at the end of Eponym List A7. Other eponyms that unquestionably belong to the reign of Aššurbanipal are Bulluṭu, which appears in the date of a votive dedication made for the life of Aššurbanipal (ADD 641), and Aššur-šarru-ušur, which, because of texts recording the purchase and subsequent resale of a slave, must be earlier than Bēl-lū-dāri.¹⁸ Another eponym that is almost certain to belong to the reign of Aššurbanipal is Nabû-šarru-ušur, Chief Eunuch, as this position was held by a man of this name under Aššurbanipal.

The following eponyms can be dated to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun through royal inscriptions:

Aššur-mātu-taqqin
Bēl-aḥu-ušur
Daddī
Nabû-tappūtu-alik
Sailu

In addition, Falkner's studies showed that Šalmu-šarru-iqbi and Sîn-šarru-ušur, palace scribe, were later than Aššur-mātu-taqqin and therefore must also belong to the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun.¹⁹

There are no eponyms that can be attributed with certainty to the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni.

Only one text provides a clear link between a canonical eponym and a post-canonical one. The summary of ADD 927 (= SAA 7 59) states that it was 6 years from the eponymate of Sagabbu (651) to that of Nabû-šar-aḥḥēšu. Unfortunately, such statements are so rare that we are not able to take full advantage of this windfall, because neither the statement itself nor current usage tells us whether this timespan is measured to the beginning of the eponymate of Nabû-šar-aḥḥēšu or to its end and therefore this eponym could be placed at 646 or 645 depending on which alternative is chosen. Still, it makes this the only PC eponym (other than Bēlšunu) that can unequivocally be placed within a year of its correct position.

What may become the cornerstone of any new solution to the post-canonical eponyms is a recent reconstruction of the Eponym List A7 by S. Zawadzki

¹⁷ Aššurbanipal cylinder, BM122613, Iraq 30 pl. XXVII. This datum was not known to Falkner.

¹⁸ D. J. Wiseman, Iraq 15 (1953) 140; cf. Falkner, *loc. cit.* 110.

¹⁹ This was based primarily on deductions from the ranks of military personnel appearing as witnesses in the archive of a certain Kakkullānu, cohort commander of the crown prince, during the time of Sîn-šarru-iškun. See Falkner, *loc. cit.* 107-108.

which places the eponymate of Aššur-gimilli-tirri at 636 (or possibly 635) BC.²⁰ This is extremely important because Aššur-gimilli-tirri appears in the sequence of five eponyms given by STT 48 and fixing this eponym also more or less fixes the others associated with it. Falkner had placed Aššur-gimilli-tirri at *641, but the lower date advocated by Zawadzki, although speculative, is much more in accord with the preliminary results of the prosopographic investigations carried out so far in my research on the PC eponyms.

Other than the sequence of five eponyms provided by STT 48, there are very few clues to the order in which the post-canonical eponyms held the office and these can be quickly summarized:

a) The eponymate of Kanūnāyu is earlier than that of Aššur-mātu-taqqin, and possibly immediately precedes it (TFS 6; see above, n. 12).

b) Aššur-šarru-ušur is earlier than Bēl-lū-dāri (ND3420, ND3421; see above, n. 18).

c) Pašī probably immediately follows Sîn-ālik-pāni (at Assur) based on a sequence of ration texts (ALA N4:462-70; transliterations provided to the SAA project by O. Pedersén).

d) A text from Dūr-Šarrukēn suggests that the eponym that immediately precedes Šamaš-šarru-ibni begins with Nabû-[]; Nabû-tappātu-alik seems indicated, but Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur is also a possibility (CTDS 1; courtesy S. Parpola).

e) Šalmu-šarri-iqbi is earlier than Sîn-šarru-ušur, palace scribe, based on the promotion of Aššur-killanni during the eponymate of Šalmu-šarri-iqbi (ADD 309, 318, 349, 623; cf. Falkner, *loc. cit.* 107).

f) Similarly, Kanūnāyu, Aššur-mātu-taqqin and Sîn-šarru-ušur, *arkû*, are earlier than Šalmu-šarri-iqbi because Aššur-killanni appears in texts dated to these eponymates with his earlier rank; a corollary to this is that Sîn-šarru-ušur, *arkû*, cannot be equated with Sîn-šarru-ušur, palace scribe (ADD 325, 361, 400, 414; cf. Falkner, *ibid.*).

These sparse clues, mostly already known to Falkner, are clearly not sufficient to establish the sequence of the later eponyms with any degree of scholarly rigour. There is no help to be obtained from the titles of the eponyms, since the more or less fixed sequence of the offices of the eponym holders that can be observed for most of the eighth century (see above, pp. 8-11) had fallen out of use already in the time of Sennacherib, and Sennacherib, who was the last king known to have served as eponym, did not take the office at the beginning of his reign. Although *turtānu*, *rab šāqê*, and *masennu* occur as PC eponyms, *nāgir ekalli* and *šakin māti* are not found. There are also a number of titles of eponyms that occur only in the post-canonical period:

chief cook (Sailu)

chief musician (Bulluṭu)

major domo (Sîn-ālik-pāni)

palace scribe (Sîn-šarru-ušur and Nabû-šarru-ušur)

showing a total departure from the earlier system, and, of course, for many of the PC eponyms no title is recorded at all.

²⁰ SAAB 7 (1993).

Apart from the royal inscriptions mentioned above, the only class of Neo-Assyrian texts that was systematically dated was legal texts, usually sale, loan and other contracts. Although letters and administrative texts were sometimes dated, the vast majority of eponym attestations, particularly PC ones, come from the legal archives and it is possible by studying these archives to get some idea of which eponyms must precede or follow others. However, the time period involved (37 years) is so short that it is possible for the archive of an individual to span the entire period.²¹

Among the legal texts from Nineveh, there are a number of personal archives of military personnel, notably royal charioteers or members of the king's or crown prince's personal guard, which show that these men became immensely wealthy, practically overnight, after their patron came to power.²² Thus the careers of these individuals, as reflected in their legal dossiers, trace the broad outlines of the known changes in leadership of the Assyrian state and it might be hoped that similar dossiers could do the same in the post-canonical period. This would seem to be a forlorn hope, however, as only three such dossiers appear among the post-canonical texts from Nineveh, and their information has already been analysed.²³

Another significant source of archival information is to be found in the numerous legal archives excavated in the city of Assur.²⁴ Unlike the Nineveh archives, many Assur archives are family records, sometimes covering more than one generation, and many of the archives are interlinked, either by their findspots, their principals and witnesses, or both. Family archives can provide general clues to sequences as new members begin to take an active part in the family affairs and older ones drop out. A specific datum can be obtained from the division of the estate of Mudammiq-Aššur (SAAB 5 52 and Appendix 2) which takes place in the eponymate of Bēl-aḥu-ušur, thus informing us that the date of any text in which Mudammiq-Aššur is an active participant must be earlier than this.

Finally, detailed analyses of the witnesses occurring in archival legal texts allow the identification of clusters of eponyms that must be close to each other in time. If sufficient such clusters can be found, the eponyms will be forced into their proper positions.²⁵ My own research is presently at this stage, and the SAA database of texts in electronic format is being systematically searched for such clusters.

A complete and convincing solution to the puzzle of the post-canonical eponyms must have a historical context that it either explains or uncovers. Thus there should be a historical basis for any scheme put forward to account for the excessive number of PC eponyms as well as the assignment of

²¹ Such as the archive of Šamaš-šarru-ušur from Kalaḥ which begins in the canonical period and continues well into the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun. The earliest dated text seems to date to the eponymate of Giršapūnu (660 BC) as the texts dated to 666 or 671 presumably belong to the post-canonical Kanūnāyu. See Wiseman, *Iraq* 15 (1953) 135-36 and Falkner, *loc. cit.* 108.

²² See T. Kwasman and S. Parpola, *SAA* 6 (1991) XX-XXI.

²³ These are the archives of Kakkullānu (see above, n. 19), Kišir-Aššur and Ninuāyu. Ninuāyu's archive, containing only three texts, falls in the reign of Aššurbanipal, Kakkullānu's in that of Sîn-šarru-iškun, and Kišir-Aššur has texts that date to both reigns (3 texts with Aššurbanipal eponyms, 1 with an eponym from the reign of Sîn-šarru-iškun, and 1 undetermined). Cf. Falkner, *loc. cit.* 107-108.

²⁴ For an overall view, see O. Pedersén, *ALA*.

²⁵ This approach was utilised by Falkner, but with only limited success. Two factors give the present use of this method much more potential. First, the greater amount of documentation now available means that there is more raw material, and second, the advent of the computer makes the collection, analysis and comparison of the material much quicker and more certain.

eponyms to specific years. At present, this historical context does not exist. Whether the eponyms themselves will provide the context or whether it will come from the rapid advances being made in Assyrian studies is a question that remains to be answered.

Extra-canonical Eponyms

There is at least one Neo-Assyrian eponym from the eighth century that is not found in the canon for reasons that are unknown. A text from Kalah is dated to the eponymate of Paqaḥa, who has the title governor of Libbi-āli ('Inner City', another name for Assur).²⁶ As the text is dated in the first month of the year, it is possible that Paqaḥa died early in his term and was replaced by someone else whose name now appears in the canon.

For the sake of completeness, two eponyms from Babylonian texts, Aqarâ²⁷ and Ubāru, have been included in the catalogue although not part of the Assyrian Eponym Canon, nor post-canonical in date. Both of these eponyms had the title governor of Babylon, although Ubāru is designated *šākin tēmi* while Aqarâ is called *bēl pāḥiti*. The date of Ubāru has been placed early in the reign of Esarhaddon,²⁸ while Aqarâ is apparently to be dated to the time of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, shortly before the latter's revolt against his brother, Aššurbanipal, in 652.²⁹ Although no compelling reason can be given for the use of eponyms to date Babylonian texts, there is little doubt that it was a result of Assyrian influence after the conquest and resettlement of Babylon.

²⁶ See above, n. 3.

²⁷ Or Aqarāya, but not Aqar-aplu; for spellings of the name see SAA 4 (1990), Index of Names, s.v. Aqarāia (all the same person).

²⁸ See B. Landsberger, *Brief des Bischofs von Esagila an König Asarhaddon* (Amsterdam 1965) 28-29. G. Frame, RA 76 (1982) 157-58, n. 5, suggests a date around 679-678 BC.

²⁹ Frame, *loc. cit.* 164-66.