

# Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal

Part II: Commentary and Appendices

by  
Simo Parpola

1983

Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer

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Neukirchener Verlag Neukirchen-Vluyn

## EXCURSUS: THE SUBSTITUTE KING RITUAL

By the *substitute king ritual* is understood an arrangement in which, briefly put, the ruling king temporarily abdicates his throne for a surrogate who, having ruled his predetermined period, is put to death, after which the king reascends his throne and continues ruling as if nothing had happened. This rite forms the subject of one of the most familiar tales in the Arabian Nights, and from incidental and garbled statements made by ancient historiographers (see below, p. XXIX ff) it has long been known (or suspected) that the ritual was from time to time actually practiced in ancient oriental courts. The historicity of these more or less anecdotal reminiscences was put beyond all doubt by the discovery of the Nineveh letter archives, which contain numerous references to a substitute king (*šar pūhi*) ruling in the king's place, and above all by the publication in 1957 and 1967 of two sets of ritual texts (Akkadian and Hittite) showing that the rite was known and practiced all over the ancient Near East, not just in Sargonid Assyria. These texts revealed many previously unknown facts about the ritual and its function, but they also presented many problems, some of which have proved very difficult to solve. Despite much discussion (see Bibliography under Bottéro 1978, Böhl 1953, Dhorme 1941, Kümmel 1967, Labat 1946, Lambert 1957/8 and 1959/60, Landsberger 1965, Parpola 1971, Schott 1941/2, von Soden 1936 and 1956), there still exists much unclarity about the exact circumstances calling for the performance of the ritual, about the frequency at which it was performed, and — since the ritual instructions are badly broken — even about the general course of the ritual. This underlines the importance of a thorough and systematic analysis of the information provided by the *LAS* corpus — for the 30 letters of the corpus pertaining to the ritual (*LAS* 25-28, 30-32, 77, 134-139, 166-67, 179, 185, 205, 232, 235-6, 249, 257, 278-80, 292, 298-99, 317 and 334) not only are (along with *ABL* 735 and a few administrative documents from Calah, see below, p. XXVII) the only as yet available *direct* documentation of the performance of the ritual; they also contain a wealth of information furnishing, when properly organized, an answer to all the puzzles it initially presents.

The individual *šar pūhi* letters are thoroughly analyzed and discussed in the commentary. The present chapter provides, by way of a synthesis, a discussion of the ritual as a whole, and a catalogue of all attested instances of its performance — including ones recorded in non-cuneiform sources. The numbers in square brackets in the following discussion refer to entries in this catalogue. No systematic stand is taken on the research hitherto done (cf. above), which is taken as the point of departure to the present study.

*The ritual: description and discussion*

The need for a substitute king was created by evil omens, specifically *eclipses*, portending the death of the king. This is made quite clear by the ritual tablet [3], which defines the cause of the ritual as “the evil portent of evil and unlucky signs, eclipses of the moon, the sun, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury and Saturn, [and Mars]” (A 9-13). In fact, every single performance of the ritual featured in the *LAS* correspondence can be traced back to an eclipse, either a lunar or [11, 13] a solar one. And while no “planetary eclipses” (i.e., occultations of planets behind the moon) can as yet be shown to have triggered the ritual, there is no reason to doubt that they may occasionally have done so (cf. discussion sub *LAS* 14).

Not every eclipse, however, called for the performance of the ritual. One important restriction derived from an omen included in Tablet XX of *Enūma Anu Enlil*:

“If an eclipse (of the moon) takes place and the planet Jupiter is present in that eclipse, the king is safe; a noble dignitary will die in his stead.”

(*ACh* 2 Spl. 29:14)

This omen implied, as pointed out in three messages to the king where it is quoted (*LAS* 298, *ABL* 1006 and *RMA* 272), that there was no need to enthrone a substitute if Jupiter had been visible during the eclipse since the god's presence indicated that the sign did not, as usual, concern the king but one of his magnates. A similar restriction also applied to solar eclipses:

"If an eclipse (of the sun) takes place and Venus and Jupiter are visible, the king is safe, but the country will be attacked by an enemy."

(*ACh Šamaš* 8:6, see App. F 4.5)

A further restriction resulted from the analysis of the eclipses themselves. While every eclipse (excepting the cases just mentioned) in principle signified that a powerful king was to die (cf., e.g., *ACh Spl.* 22 ii 4', "If the moon is eclipsed on the 14th of Simānu, a famous king will die", and *ibid.* iii 12', "If an eclipse occurs from the 1st to the 30th of Du'ūzu, . . . a great king will die"), the identity of the king and the land in question had in each case to be established separately by taking into consideration the month, day, and hour of the eclipse, the area of the moon's or the sun's disc affected by the eclipse, and the direction in which the eclipse shifted (see App. F 4). Of overriding importance was the message sent by the eclipsed disc, which was divided into four quadrants, each corresponding to a specific quarter of the world (Amurru, Elam, Subartu, Akkad); the other factors were of subordinate interest. The darkening of a quadrant implied a threat to the relevant country. Thus, a total eclipse spelled danger to all kings of the world, while e.g. an eclipse touching only the upper part of the moon or the sun signified that a king of the West (Amurru) was going to die. The kings of Assyria were in danger whenever the lowermost quadrant (Subartu/Assyria) was eclipsed. For Esarhaddon, who was the king of both Assyria and Babylonia, even eclipses with darkened right-hand quadrant (Akkad/Babylonia) posed a mortal danger.

Accordingly, the need for a substitute king theoretically arose in Assyria whenever the portion of the lunar or solar disc representing Subartu (in the case of Esarhaddon: Subartu and Akkad) was eclipsed and the planet Jupiter was not simultaneously visible. How this theory was converted into practice can be seen from the following analysis of 16 consecutive eclipses in the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal:

Eclipse	Quadrants eclipsed	Visibility of Jupiter	Substitute king required (and attested)
680 Jul 11 / Duz 14	Amurru	—	no
679 Jun 1 / Sim 14	Subartu	—	yes
679 Jun 17 (Sun)	ALL	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 30f.?)
678 May 22 / Sim 14	ALL	+	NO ( <i>ABL</i> 1006, <i>RMA</i> 270)
677 Nov 3 / Ara 14	Subartu + Elam	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 136:12)
674 Sep 3 / Ulu 15	ALL	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 30f.?)
673 Feb 27 / Add 14	Elam + Amurru	—	NO ( <i>RMA</i> 272B)
671 Jul 2 / Duz 14	ALL	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 26f., 249, 278, 292)
671 Dec 27 / Kan 15	ALL	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 185, 232, 279f., 317)
670 Dec 17 / Kis 15	Amurru	—	NO ( <i>LAS</i> 41, 62, 164, 173ff.)
669 May 27 (Sun)	Subartu + Amurru	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 28, 104)
669 June 10 / Sim 14	Subartu	—	yes ( <i>LAS</i> 25, 77, 234f., 257)
667 Apr 21 / Nis 16	ALL	+	NO ( <i>LAS</i> 40, 61)
667 Oct 15 / Taš 14	ALL	+	NO ( <i>RMA</i> 272A, 273)
666 Apr 10 / Nis 15	Subartu + Akkad	+	no (but enthroned by error! See
666 Oct 4 / Taš 14	Amurru + Akkad	—	no <span style="float: right;"><i>LAS</i> 298)</span>

As can be seen, of these 16 eclipses, eight (exactly one half) called for the enthronement of a substitute king in Assyria. In all these cases (insofar as our evidence goes), a substitute was actually enthroned. Conversely, excepting one case explicitly labelled a mistake (*LAS* 298), eclipses interpreted as harmless according to the above principles

never triggered the ritual. This veritably perfect fit between theory and praxis proves that the factors considered really played the central role in deciding whether the king needed a substitute or not.

As soon as the need for a substitute had been established, the king was notified. In *LAS* 185 [10] and 134 [9], this was done by the chief exorcist alone; in *LAS* 28 [11] and 31 [7], by a group of several high-ranking scholars, including the chief exorcist, the chief scribe and the chief chanter. The latter probably was the normal practice (cf. [15]). Note that *LAS* 185 represents a special case, in which the suggestion to enthrone a substitute was exceptionally presented to the king already *before* the eclipse had actually taken place. Normally the need for the substitute could only be determined *post eventum*. In any case, the idea of enthroning a substitute never came from the king himself but from his counselors, even in the abnormal case of [12] (see discussion sub *LAS* 298). And while the king was formally given the option to decide whether the ritual be performed or not (cf. *LAS* 185 r.17), it was surely taken for granted that the answer was always in the affirmative (cf. [15]!).

Having got the go-ahead signal, the chief exorcist picked up a suitable substitute – a prisoner of war [4], a prisoner [15], a criminal condemned to death [16], a political enemy of the king [10], a gardener [1] or a simpleton (*LAS* 280 r.13ff) – in a word, a person whose life did not matter much or who would have deserved death anyway. The man was taken to the palace (*LAS* 279:7, [6]), treated with wine, washed and anointed, clad in the king's robes, furnished with the diadem and other royal insignia, and eventually seated on the royal throne ([1, 15-16, 19]; cf. *LAS* 134 and Ritual Tablet, [3], B 5-6, and see note on *LAS* 185 r.18). A “girl” (*LAS* 139) or “virgin” (Ritual Tablet, Col. A 20) was at the same time seated at his side as his “queen” (cf. [4] and *LAS* 30 and 280), and a statuette was presented as a substitute to the Netherworld gods [4].

At this moment, the substitute and the real king formally reversed their roles. The changed status of the latter is reflected in the fact that after the enthronement of the substitute, he was no more to be addressed as “king” [4] but as “Peasant” or “Farmer” (LÚ.ENGAR, cf. App. L 1 and 6) or simply as “my lord” (*LAS* 26-28). And while relevant evidence is lacking, it seems reasonable to assume that he did not wear any external marks of kingship or go near the throne as long as the substitute was occupying it, and otherwise, too, kept a low profile. It goes without saying, of course, that this reversal of the roles was only symbolic. In the eyes of his aides, the king was still very much the real king, as indicated by several letters (*LAS* 134-136, 249, 278-79 and 292) written while a substitute king was on the throne but nevertheless (inadvertently) addressed to the *king*, not the “farmer”.

That the “reversal of roles” was only partial is also indicated by the fact that merely putting a substitute king on the throne was just not enough. One had also to make sure that the fate portended by the eclipse really was to befall him and not the real king, under whose rule the portent had occurred. To this end, the eclipse omens, along with other recently observed evil portents, were written down and (immediately after the entronement) recited to the substitute king and his queen, who had to repeat them “in front” of Šamaš, the celestial judge (*LAS* 26, 30 and 279). The importance of this recitation ceremony (supervised by the chief scribe and complemented with exorcistic rites) is borne out by the fact that it had to be performed even in the (rare) case when the substitute had been enthroned *before* the eclipse had actually taken place (*LAS* 279). It made the substitute to “accept” from the officiating scholar the signs that had been originally sent to the king (*LAS* 30). To make sure that the omens would irrevocably remain affecting the substitute, the document where they were written was physically *attached* to his garments (*LAS* 26).

The ceremony just described reveals an important thing about the rationale behind the whole ritual. The danger looming before the king, as portended by the eclipse, was not just something that would befall *any* king [of Assyria]; it was the fate decreed by the gods to the ruling king *personally* as a punishment for his conduct as king. This fate could not be evaded by just suddenly abdicating the throne; it could only be evaded by having somebody to take upon himself the signs sent to the king, to accept responsibility for the king's sins, to be atoned only by death [4]. Thus the function of the substitute king was basically that of a *scapegoat*, the innocent sufferer, not that of a

puppet king. He had to be a king, because otherwise the scriptures would not come true, but otherwise the aspect of kingship was secondary. The whole ritual was functionally equivalent to the *pūḫi amēli* ("man's substitute") ritual described in commentary to *LAS* 140, in which a virgin kid was sacrificed to save a deadly sick patient. For the aspect of "sin" associated with the ritual cf. discussion sub *LAS* 35 (and 321).

The fate portended by the eclipse was to befall the king within 100 days from the occurrence of the eclipse (see note on *LAS* 135 r.6). Accordingly, the "reign" of the substitute king theoretically could, and in certain cases [9] certainly did last for as long as a hundred days. It could, however, and probably often did end considerably earlier. [10] certainly lasted less than a hundred days, [11] for 47 days, [12] for 20 days, the case planned in *LAS* 205 for only 7 days, and [19] (if the tradition is correct) for only 3 days. This variation in the duration of the ritual shows that the length of the substitute's reign was of no great importance in itself, and depended in each case on external circumstances. For instance, if other eclipses were liable to occur after the initial eclipse, as in the case of [11], the reign was certain to last for at least a month, so that the "evil" of all potential eclipses would befall the same substitute. If, on the other hand, no eclipses or other unlucky celestial portents were to be expected within a hundred days from the initial eclipse, there was no pressing need to extend the substitute's reign to its theoretical maximum; it was left to the king to decide whether he should "go to his fate" early or "complete his 100 days" (cf. *LAS* 135).

A special case was constituted by eclipses calling for repetition of the enthronement rites. According to *LAS* 298:11f. and 19ff., the substitute had to be enthroned in the residence of the ruler. For Esarhaddon (and other Assyrian kings who also held the kingship of Babylon), this meant that each time the lunar quadrant corresponding to Babylonia was eclipsed, a substitute had to be placed on the throne in Babylon as well. And if the quadrants of both Assyria and Babylonia were eclipsed, as actually happened three times in Esarhaddon's reign, the *same* substitute had to be enthroned *both* in Nineveh *and* in Babylon. Since the latter city was in ruins and thus not yet suited for a royal residence city in Esarhaddon's reign, the scene of the enthronement rites in Babylonia was in this reign the ancient capital of the Sargonic empire, Akkad (cf. *LAS* 134, 249, 279, 280, 298 and *CT* 53 206; it is uncertain whether Akkad was already the scene of the ritual in *LAS* 30). It seems that in the case of such double enthronements, the reign of the substitute was preferred to extend to its full length. *LAS* 26 indicates that the re-enthronement of the substitute in Akkad took place 50 days after the first enthronement in Nineveh, and *LAS* 292 shows that it ended after the full 100 days, so that the substitute came to spend exactly the same number of days both in Assyria and Babylonia. This appears to have been the case in *LAS* 30, too. On the other hand, in *LAS* 279 [10] the substitute was transferred to Akkad immediately after his enthronement in Nineveh. This may well have been due to the inflamed political situation in Assyria at the moment (cf. commentary on *LAS* 247, and also *LAS* 185r.25 and 280 r7ff.).

Until quite recently, nothing certain was known about the status of the substitute king during his "reign". The allegations of the Greek and Persian historians [16, 19] and the tradition of the Arabian Nights that he enjoyed full royal powers is now to some extent confirmed by the Nimrud wine lists published by Kinnier Wilson [5a, 6a]. These show that the substitute king had a sizeable entourage, about 1/10 of the size of the royal court, which included musicians, cooks, confectioners and other personnel designed to entertain the body and soul of the mock king. The lists also show that a sumptuous banquet (*naptunu*) was a regular feature of the substitute king's day, and that he was (at least in a certain measure) able to travel around. But they also reveal something that could not be a priori expected, viz. that as much as 1/3 of the substitute's "entourage" (about 100 men) consisted of bodyguards. Since the real king was certainly not in the least concerned about keeping his surrogate alive, this large number of armed attendants can only have served the function of keeping the surrogate under close surveillance, to prevent any attempt to perpetuate the example set by Illil-bāni [1]. It is hence clear that whatever "royal power" the substitute king possessed was only illusory; he seems to have been permitted to display a considerable amount of royal pomp in the public, and to enjoy a comfortable life, but the real power stayed with the king.

The king himself was certainly, to some extent, inconvenienced by the substitute's reign. Not only was he forced to maintain a costly mock court for the substitute king and to withdraw from public life, but he was also strong-

ly advised to stay within the confines of the palace and not to leave for the open country until the 100-day term of the eclipse was over (*LAS* 280 r.13, 299 r.7). The same injunction also concerned the other members of the royal family (cf. *LAS* 249). Otherwise, however, at least the private life of the monarch seems to have continued as usual. He kept receiving letters and even conducting administrative business with his officials (cf., e.g., *LAS* 278 and 292).

When the time came to terminate the ritual, both the substitute king and his queen were put to death. The ritual tablet [3] prescribes this explicitly (“The man given as substitute for the king will die, and the king and his country will be well”, Col. A 6’f.), and all sources attesting to the performance of the ritual (with the understandable exception of [1]) imply the same. Exactly how the substitute met his death is unclear in most instances, and may have varied depending on the case. It is suggested in the commentary to *LAS* 280 that the method preferred in Sargonid Assyria was an overdose of “soporific”; but [16] suggests that harsher methods were normally resorted to, and this may well have been the case. The expression “to go to one’s fate” used when referring to the substitute king’s death (*LAS* 135, 166, 249, 280 and 292) does not imply that the event itself was a matter which one preferred not to talk about directly, but rather that it was regarded as something decreed by fate and thus not to be avoided. The manner of death did not matter greatly.

The only extant description of the burial of a substitute king is provided by Mār-Ištar in *LAS* 280. This letter tells that the substitute was buried with royal honours. He and his queen were balsamized, bewailed and publicly displayed just like any other royal dead (cf. commentary on *LAS* 4 and 195), and their corpses were deposited in a mausoleum (KI.MAḤ) specifically built for the occasion. A tomb (lit. a “resting place”, *mašallu*) of the substitute king is also mentioned in *LAS* 32. It may be, of course, that the publicity given to the burial of the substitute in *LAS* 280 was exceptional and dictated by the political necessities of the day (cf. *ibid.*, r.8); but the possibility that the burial of the substitute king was a public event comparable to that of the king cannot be excluded for the present (however unlikely it may appear).

At the time of and following the burial many magical rites were performed. The ritual tablet (Col. A 18f.) prescribes the preparation of a figurine of “everything that is evil” (*šalam mimma lemnu*) which the substitute was supposed to take with himself to the Netherworld. *LAS* 280 states that “all kinds of exorcistic rites, including the elaborate rituals of *bīt rimki* and *bīt salā mē*” (actually prophylactic rites performed on the occasion of an eclipse) were performed at the burial. This may be exaggeration, but both the ritual tablet (Col. B 9ff.) and *LAS* 179 make it clear that the royal exorcists had a lot to do after the substitute’s death. The palace of the king had to be surrounded with all kinds of prophylactic figurines designed to drive off evil forces threatening the king’s peace of mind, and the king himself was to be cleansed immediately after the substitute king had “gone to his fate” (ritual tablet, col. B 8’; *LAS* 166:11; cf. also [15b]). We do not know how this purification was effected (it may have involved a shaving ritual, a bath in the Tigris, the donning of new garments, and a lot of incense burning, or a combination of all these cleansing methods), but it may be assumed that it was at least as much intended to clean the king’s conscience as his (probably very little stained) body. One may speculate that the performance of the ritual, which indeed, as often emphasized (cf., e.g., von Soden, 1954, p. 125), came close to a human sacrifice, was bound to leave an undeletable impression on the king’s psyche – cf. the testimony of the Alexander biographers, below [15].

291 (81-2-4, 131 = ABL 1214)

*(Beginning lost)*

. . . ] has written to me [concerning the bridge at the city of Barsip]: “[ . . . .  
have been arranged (? )] over the Barsip river. In the days of Sargon (and) the father  
as the Barsip river was high, a ra[mp] was trod upon them, (but) it did not keep safe  
the king, my lord, the river has swollen much; [the filling] has been bettered, (but) it (again) does not keep  
safe. Let the bridge of ships be kept as it is; wh[en] the king, my lord, comes, they will fill (and) better the  
filling, (so that) the king, my lord, can cross over it in his chariot.

This year the waters have increased (and) risen up to the wall of Ezida. There are oblates of the god Išum  
available; if it suits the king, my lord, let them . . . *the embankment* (and) build a dock for Ezida. I would  
put the signature of the king, my lord, therein. They should cut the waters off.

As regards the wall of the Nergal temple of Cutha about which [I wr]ote to the kin[g, my lord]: *(Break)*  
[If] it suits [the king, my lord], we will build the temple of [DN, . . . . . ]; the signat[ure of the king,  
my lord], would be put therein. Let them (however) do according to the wish of the king, my lord.

The bodyguard Nergal-šarru-ušur came with the deputy of the Laḫirite (majordomo) (and), announcing a royal  
order, dismissed the delegates of the temples of Sippar, Cutha, Ḫursagkalama (and) Dilbat (and) appointed  
others. The king, my lord, should know (this).

In the month Duʾūzu, on the evening of the 10th day, the constellation Scorpio approached the Moon; the

pertinent interpretation runs as follows:

“If, at the appearance of the Moon, Scorpio stands by its right horn, in th[at year] locust will rise and consume the harvest. According to another tradition: [The king of] the Eastland will be killed in that year, his reign will be brought to an end, (and) an en[emy] will attack and plunder the interior of his country. For the king of Akkad: f[or]tune. His reign will become long, (and) the enemy who attacks him will be defeated.”

In the month Duūzu, on the 10th day, Venus was visi[ble] in the constellation Scorpio. “The king of Akkad . . .” (*Remainder lost*).



Obv. About 5 lines lost

- 1' [ . . ]<sup>x</sup>[ . . . . . ]  
 2' [is]-sap!-ra ma-'a' [ . . . . . ]  
 3' [in]a UGU ÍD BÁR.SIPA<sup>r</sup>KI GIŠ!<sup>r</sup>M[Á!MEŠ *sadrā?* ]  
 4' ina ŠÀ UD<sup>r</sup>MEŠ<sup>r</sup> ša IMAN-GI.NA AD-šú ša M[AN EN-já]  
 5' ki-i ÍD BÁR.SIPA<sup>KI</sup> sa-qu-u-ni! ti-[tur-ru]  
 6' ina muḥ-ḥi ik-tab-su la iš-li-im 'ú<sup>r</sup>![ma-a]  
 7' tar!-[š]i! MAN EN-já ÍD a-dan-niš er-ti-pi[š tam-li-tú]  
 8' 'ú<sup>r</sup>![t]ib!-bu la i-šal-lim gi-iš-r[u]  
 9' ša [GIŠ]MÁ!MEŠ<sup>r</sup> ki-i ša ša-bit-u-ni lu-u ša-bit  
 10' ki-[ma] MAN be-lí it-tal-ka tam-li-ti ú-mal-lu-u  
 11' ú-[t]a!-ab!-bu MAN be-lí ina ŠÀ GIŠGIGIR-šú ina muḥ-ḥi e-ti-iq  
 12' šat-'tu<sup>r</sup>! an-ni-tú A<sup>r</sup>MEŠ<sup>r</sup> id-dan-nu ina UGU É.GAR<sub>8</sub>  
 13' É-zi-da e-te-li-i-u LÚ\*<sup>r</sup>še-er-ki ša dALÀD  
 14' i-'ba<sup>r</sup>!-áš-ši šúm-ma pa-an MAN EN-já ma-ḥer e-ber-tú  
 15' liš-<sup>r</sup>ḥu<sup>r</sup>!-tu ka-a-ri É-zi-da le-er-ši-pu  
 16' mu-šar-ru-u ša MAN EN-já ina liḥ-bi la-áš-kun

- 17' AMEŠ<sup>×</sup> *li-pu-gu ina UGU É.GAR<sub>8</sub> ša É dU+GUR*  
 18' *ša GÚ.DU<sub>8</sub>.AKI ša a-na 'MAN' [EN-já áš-pu]r!-an-ni*  
 19' *nu-uk a-'na'!* ×[ . . . . . ]  
 20' *i-'da'!*[ . . . . . ]

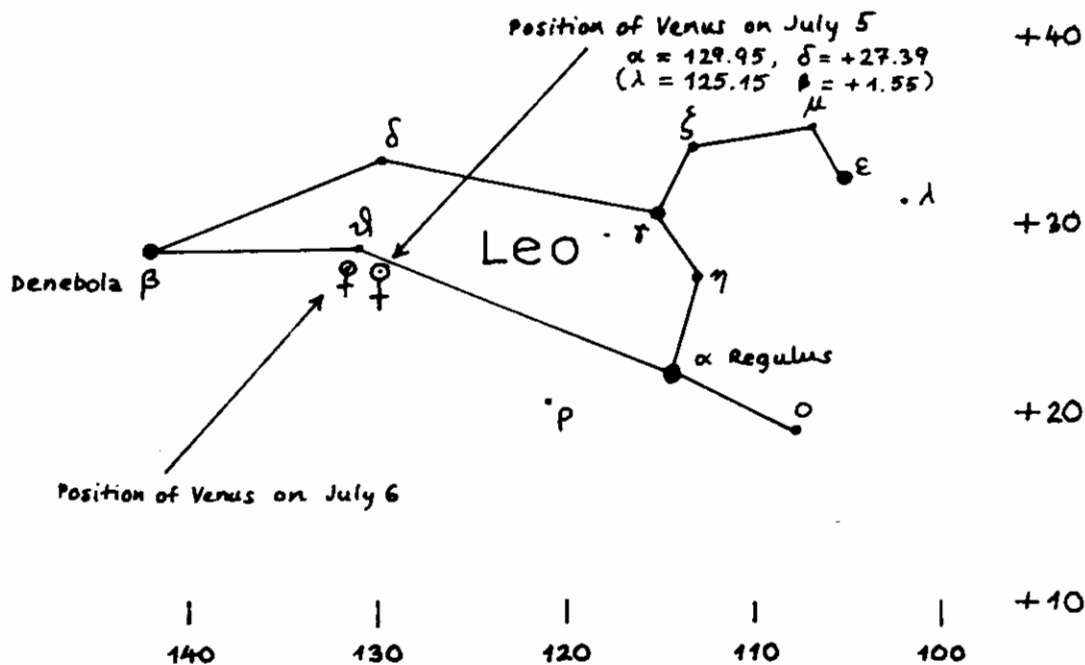
two lines + edge (about 2 lines) broken away

- Rev. 1 *ma-her É 'd'!*[DN . . . . . ]  
 2 *ne-er-šip mu-šar!-r[u!-u ša MAN EN-já ina lîb-bi]*  
 3 *liš-ši-ki-in ki-i ša ina 'pa!-an! MAN! EN!-[já]*  
 4 *ma-her-u-ni le-e-pu-šu ; IdU+GUR-MAN-PAP!*  
 5 *[LÚ\*]qur-bu-tú TA\* LÚ\* 2-i ša LÚ\*.URU La-ši-ra-aje*  
 6 *it-tal-ka a-bat LUGAL iz-zak-ru LÚ\* qe-e-pa-a-ni*  
 7 *ša É.DINGIRMEŠ ša Sip-parKI GÚ.DU<sub>8</sub>.AKI HUR.SAG.KALAM.MAKI*  
 8 *Dil-batKI up-ta-at-ti-i-u šá-ni-i-u-te*  
 9 *ip-taq-du MAN be-lí lu-u ú-di ina ITUŠU MI*  
 10 *ša UD 10.KÁM\* MULGÍR.TAB a-na d30 TE-ši*  
 11 *a-ki an-ni-i pi-šar-šú I 30 ina IGI.LAL-šú MULGÍR.TAB*  
 12 *ina SI ZAG-šú GUB-iz [ina MU BI] BUR<sub>5</sub> HÁ ZI-ma*  
 13 *ŠE<sub>E</sub>BUR KÚ šá-niš [LUGAL] NIM.MAKI ina MU BI GAZ-šú*  
 14 *BAL-šú ig-gam-mar K[ÚR] ZI-ma lîb-bi KUR-šú i-maš-šá-a'*  
 15 *a-na LUGAL KUR URIKI d[u-u]n!-qu BAL-šú i-ri-ik*  
 16 *LÚ\*KÚR ša i-te-[eb-b]p!-áš-šú mi-qit-ti LÚ\*KÚR-šú*  
 17 *iš-šak-kan ina I[TU]ŠU UD 10.KÁM\* MULDil-bat ina ŠÀ MULUR.'GU.LA'!*  
 18 *it-ta-[mar] LUGAL URIKI a-šar tē-X[ . . . . . ]*  
 19 *[ . . . k ]n ina KUR URIKI ta-X[ . . . . . ]*  
 20 *[ . . . i ]na KUR URIKI te-[ . . . . . ]*  
 21 *[ . . . ]× tu [ . . . . . ]*

Rest of reverse broken away

Crit. app.: 5' for restoration see commentary 7' cf obv. 10 8' *tib!* Waterman 320 r17 MULUR.'GU!.  
 LA! fairly certain, though squeezed on the edge

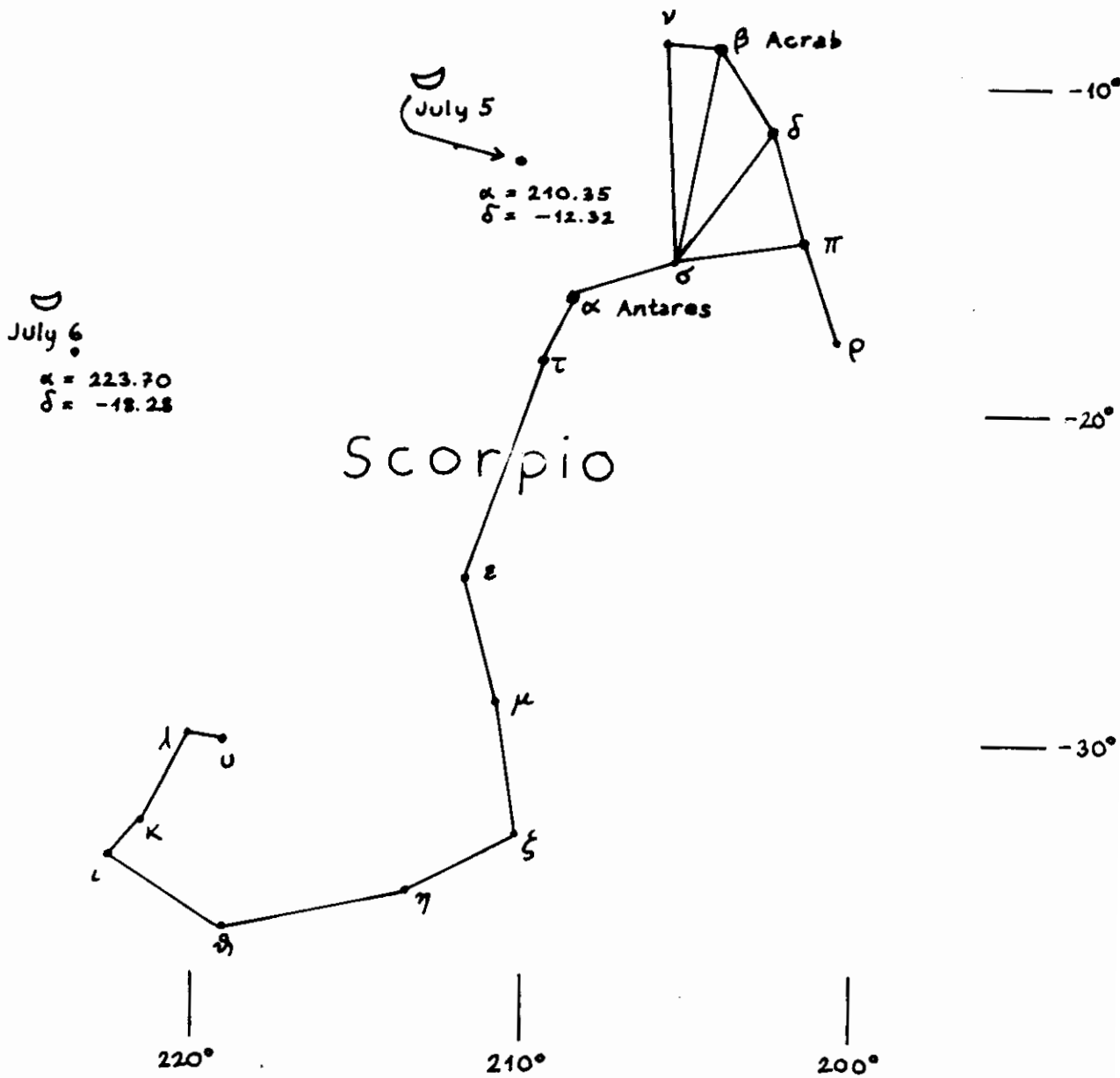
FIGURE 3



Position of *Venus* -668 July 5 8<sup>h</sup> p.m. Babylon

Computed with P.V. Neugebauer, *Tafeln für Sonne, Planeten und Mond* (1914). Positions of fixed stars according to idem, *Sterntafeln* (1912).

FIGURE 4



Lunar position -668 July 5 8<sup>h</sup> p.m. Babylon (LAS 291 r9f)

Computed with P.V. Neugebauer, Tafeln für Sonne, Planeten und Mond (1914). Positions of fixed stars according to idem, Sterntafeln (1912).

*Bibliography:*

(I) Waterman, *RCAE* 1214 (cf. IV 203); Pfeiffer, *SLA* 122.

(II) Oppenheim, *JAOS* 64 (1944) 196.

*Writer:*

Though the address formula of this letter has not been preserved, its attribution to Mār-lštar is absolutely certain. Note the following distinctive features (and cf. Appendix M 6): (1) *Orthography*: MAN EN-šá (Obv.7', 14' etc.)/MAN be-lí (10'f, etc.), šum-ma (14', cf. on *LAS* 289), LU\**qe-e-pa-a-ni* (r6), *up-ta-at-ti-i-u*, šá-ni-i-u-te (r8); (2) *phraseology*: šumma pān šarri bēlīja maḥir (14', cf. 277 r23, 280 r13), šarru bēlī lū ūdi (r9); (3) *measurements of the tablet*: see Pt.I, p. 339. Note, furthermore, the geographical setting, subject matter, and date of the letter, and cf. Obv. 14'f with 282:7 and 283 r6'f, and Rev. 5 with 275:8f.

*Addressee:*

Esarhaddon (cf. note on Obv. 4').

*Date:*

Du'ūzu 10, eponymy of Šamaš-kāšid-ajābi = July 6, 669 BC. This date can be established with absolute certainty from the astronomical observations communicated in the letter, viz. the "appearance" of the moon in the vicinity (to the left) of Scorpio on the night of Du'ūzu 10 (r9ff) and the simultaneous sighting of Venus in the middle of Leo (r17f). Both are, of course, rather frequently recurrent events, but their identification is helped by the fact that the letter certainly dates from the reign of Esarhaddon (see on Obv.4'). As appears from App.D, in this reign Venus was seen in four different years in Leo around Du'ūzu 10: in 680, 677, 675 and 669. Since no other letter of Mār-lštar predates 672 BC, the only a priori likely alternative is the year 669. App.A1 gives Du'ūzu 10, 669 = July 6. A computation carried out by means of P.V. Neugebauer's *Tafeln für Sonne, Planeten und Mond* (1914) gives as the coordinates of Venus at the date concerned  $\alpha = 131^{\circ}05$ ;  $\delta = +27^{\circ}04$ , which indeed locates the planet in the centre of Leo (see Fig. 3). The lunar position on the same day, 45 minutes after sunset (cf. Rev.11!), i.e. at 8<sup>h</sup> p.m., was according to the same tables  $\alpha = 223^{\circ}07$ ;  $\delta = -18^{\circ}28$ , which again pretty well agrees with the data of our text, the moon being situated to the

<sup>530</sup> This intransitive usage may indeed derive from phrases where *karāmu* appears in the stative (*karim*, *šarru karim*, *ḥūlu karim*, *ḥūlu karmaššu adanniš*); cf. *mariš* "it is difficult", *šarru mariš* "the king is ill", *kaqquru mariš* "the terrain is difficult", *urdu ša maršaššuni* "the servant who is doing badly", and similar usages of *ṭāb*. Note also the existence of intransitive and transitive *kašādu*.

<sup>531</sup> Cf. Weidner, *StOr* 1 (1925) 350: "*mul* <sup>u</sup>*narkabtu* . . . [= ] $\kappa$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\varphi$ ,  $\chi$ ,  $\psi$ , A Tauri"; in *HBA* (1915) 48, however, correctly " $\beta + \xi$  Tauri".

left of Scorpio, at a distance of about  $15^{\circ}$  from Antares and about  $12^{\circ}$  from  $\lambda$  Scorpii (the "sting" of the constellation, see Fig. 4). However, on the preceding day (July 5), the agreement with the text was still better. The moon was then at a distance of only about  $5^{\circ}$  from the two brightest stars of Scorpio, Acrab and Antares, which were both visible near the right "horn" of the moon, just as the text states (Rev. 12; cf. Fig. 4). Venus, too, was on July 5 nearer the centre of Leo than on July 6, her position being  $\alpha = 129^{\circ}95$ ,  $\delta = +27^{\circ}39$ ; cf. Fig. 3. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Julian date of the observations communicated in the letter was July 5, 669, and as a matter of fact, this date indeed agrees with the Assyrian date Du'uzu 10 given in the letter, since the Mesopotamian day already began at sunset. However, the actual date of the letter must be given as July 6, since the letter was certainly written down only in the following morning at the earliest.

#### Discussion:

The possibility to date the present letter exactly considerably adds to its historical significance. Firstly, it appears that hardly 4 months before his death, in the middle of 669 BC, Esarhaddon was preparing for a journey to Borsippa (and Babylon?) — a fact not known previously. Secondly, it seems extremely likely that the king had never before personally visited Borsippa (or Babylon): otherwise it would not have been necessary to explain in detail on what kind of bridge the kind was supposed to cross the River of Borsippa, as the bridge had been there from the times of the king's father and even grandfather (Obv. 3'ff).<sup>532</sup> Obviously, then, the king had exceptionally good reasons for the trip this time, but what reasons exactly? My guess is that he intended to be present at the ceremonial reintroduction of Marduk's statue in Babylon, which had already been unsuccessfully attempted earlier in the same year (LAS 29), and for which the next suitable occasion presented itself at the time of the New Year's festival of the month Tašritu (cf. on LAS 190). The existence of *three* different haruspical queries concerning Marduk's journey from Assur to Babylon from the time of Esarhaddon (AGS 104-106) indicates that the king considered sending the statue off more than once, and AGS 149 implies that the king's presence on the journey was (at least theoretically) obligatory. Of course, it is also possible that the king simply wanted to inspect the restored temples of Borsippa and Babylon on the spot, with an eye to another visit next year.

#### Notes:

3'. "The River of Borsippa": a canal connecting Borsippa with the Euphrates, ending at Babylon. See in more detail Unger, *RIA* 1 p. 408.

4'. "Under Sargon (and) the king's father": This remark shows unequivocally that the present letter was addressed to Esarhaddon. In Neo-Assyrian letters, the father of the ruling king was *never* referred to by name (cf. LAS 60:11.r3, 114:6, 125:18, 224 r16', 283 r10', ABL 474+659:18.20, 493:11.16f, 633+K.11448:12, 951:19, 1160:9', also CT 53 44 r3 and 139:5, all referring to AD-šú ſa LUGAL EN-ja, and LAS 198:11.15, 309 r15, ABL 166:5, 493 r24, 533 r2, 885:10, 948 r7, 1078 r7, 1103 r1, 1250 r8 and 1377:5 referring to AD-ka "your father"); hence the passage cannot be translated "Sargon, the father of the king" (thus SLA and RCAE), and the addressee cannot be identified as Sennacherib. On the other hand, the addressee cannot be Assurbanipal either, since if the ref. to the king's father is taken to pertain to Esarhaddon [who, as far as it is known, actually *never* visited Babylonia], one would be in trouble trying to explain why the writer had omitted Sennacherib who repeatedly campaigned in Babylonia. See also note on the date of the letter.

5'. *sa-qu-u-ni*: cancel the translation "was high" given in Pt. I and translate instead (with RCAE, SLA and AHw 1039a) "was narrow"; the context (Obv.7' and 12') shows unequivocally that the former rendering (based on the assumption that *SA-qu-u-ni* stands for /saqûni/; cf. note on 278 r4') is unacceptable. The stat. of *siāqu* is otherwise *siq*, but one may reckon with Neo-Assyrian *sāq* on the analogy of *rāqu* "be empty", Stat. Bab. *rīq*, Ass. *rāq* (AHw 979a).

*ti-[tur-ru]* "bridge, ramp" (= Aram. *t(y)twr* "bridge", see Kaufman, *AS* 19 p. 108): cf. Luckenbill, *OIP* 2 p. 802:90, *ina meḥ-rat KÁ.GAL MÚRUB URU ina a-gur-ri* NA<sub>4</sub> *pi-i-li pe-še-e a-na me-ti-iq be-lu-ti-ja ú-šak-bi-is ti-tur-ru* "at the access to the gate of the citadel, I had a ramp made with kiln-fired bricks and white limestone for

<sup>532</sup> LAS 277:9 shows that Esarhaddon had once visited Samarra (between Assur and Baghdad). But there is no corresponding evidence suggesting that he had ever visited Babylonia proper.

my lordly processions", and note *OIP* 24 pl. 18:8 *ša pi-i-li pe-ši-i ú-šak-bi-is ti-tur-ru* "I had a ramp of white limestone made" referring to the Jerwan aqueduct of Sennacherib. In the Kuyunjik letters, *titurru* also occurs in *ABL* 198 r6 (KASKAL<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ni *ša muḥ-ḥi* [ . . . ] <sup>6</sup>*ú-ṭa-a-bu ti-tur-ra-a-te ú-k[ab-bu-su]*), 503 r9 (*ti-tur-ru-šú e-piš* <sup>10</sup>*ga-mir*) and 1463 r2 (fragmentary context); note also *ADD* 364:4, (garden) *ina IGI ti-tu-ri SUMUN* "by the old causeway"; it seems that the word could denote any paved or raised road leading across wet ground (river, fosse, marsh etc.). For the present context specifically cf. note on Obv. 8'ff.

8'ff. *gi-iš-r[u] ša* [GIŠ]MÁ<sup>MEŠ</sup>: As far as I am aware, the present passage is the only Akkadian text giving a fairly detailed account of the structure and construction of a bridge of ships; in fact, there is hardly any other cuneiform evidence that such bridges were ever used in ancient Mesopotamia, if one may judge from the data presented in *CAD* G 107f (s.v. *gišru*) and *RIA* 2 p. 72. A bridge in Borsippa is also mentioned in a document dating from the reign of Darius (Strassmeier, *Dar.* 64:1 É Š SAG.DU *gi-iš-ri*; cf. Unger, *RIA* 1 p. 424, according to whom "es ist möglich, daß die Brücke das 'Jenseitige Viertel' mit der Altstadt verband"); but the nature of the bridge is not further specified in the text. The bronze gates of Balawat (bands 17 and 18) include two scenes in which a bridge is depicted (see e.g. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* [London 1963], p. 403, or E. Strommenger — M. Hirmer, *The Art of Mesopotamia* [London 1964], pl. 213); they seem to represent "a pontoon-bridge, made by running a plank over round-bottomed boats tied together" (Yadin, *loc.cit.*), and similar to those used even today in Iraq (cf. A. Salonen, *Wasserfahrzeuge*, Tf. 39,1). However, this cannot be the type of bridge described in the present letter, since it is unthinkable that the word GIŠMÁ "boat, ship" could refer to the round-bottomed *guffas* (= Akk. *quppu*, see Salonen, *op.cit.* p. 71 ff) of the gates.<sup>533</sup> A better point of comparison is provided by the bridge built by Xerxes across the Hellespont, whose construction Herodotus describes in the seventh book of his *Historiae* (cap. 34 ff). Cf. especially VII 36:7, "Having done this, they brought planks upon the beams, and having put these too in order, they brought earth upon the planks; having then trodden the earth hard (cf. *titurru iktabsū* in the present letter), they sheltered the edges on both sides so that the draught animals and horses would not get frightened at seeing the sea underneath." On the whole, it seems to me that the Persian bridge must have been essentially identical with the Babylonian one described here, and it is hardly necessary to point out that the former may well have been an adaptation of the latter.

That bridges of ships were later used in Iraq is of course well known. Nevertheless, our passage is so strikingly similar to the description of the bridge of Mosul given by Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains* II p. 76, that I think it is worth while quoting the pertinent passage in full: "The bridge of Mosul consists of a number of rude boats bound together by iron chains. Planks are laid from boat to boat, and the whole is covered with earth. During the time of the floods this frail bridge would be unable to resist the force of the stream; the chains holding it on one side of the river are then loosened, and it swings round . . ." <sup>534</sup> It would seem that a corresponding situation prevailed while our letter was written (cf. Obv.12'), probably owing to an excessive flood in the beginning of the year (cf. Borger, *Ash* p. 7 III 8, referring to the flood of the Tigris in Ajāru = May, 669, and note also *LAS* 294 r14f).

10'. *tam-li-ti*: for *tamlītu* (cf. note to 126 r13). Probably referring to the earthen filling trod upon the planks (= *titurru*?). Cf. above.

11'. *ú-ṭa-ab-bu*: cf. *ú-ṭi-ib-bu ger-ru* "they improved the (mountain) path" *Sg* 8 24 and KASKAL<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ni . . . *ú-ṭa-a-bu* "they'll improve the roads", *ABL* 198 r5 f. For the rest of the line cf. *ABL* 100 r14 ff, *i-su-ri gi-iš-ru* <sup>15</sup>*nu-ga-mar LUGAL ina UGU* <sup>16</sup>*gi-iš-ru e-bir* "perhaps we shall (be able to) complete the bridge so that the king may pass over it" (most likely pertaining to a pontoon bridge).

13'. <sup>d</sup>ALĀD = <sup>d</sup>I-šum, 2 R 50, 11c. Išum ("fire") was a manifestation ("counselor") of Nergal, cf. <sup>d</sup>I-šum *ma-lik-šú* "Išum, his (sc. Nergal's) counselor", *ZA* 43 (1936) 17:56; note also *ta-nit-ti EN GAL-i* <sup>d</sup>U+GUR *u qu-ra-du* <sup>d</sup>I-šum "praise to the great lord Nergal and the valiant Išum", Cagni *Erra* V 39 (ibid. 41 <sup>d</sup>I-šum *ma-lik-šú*, scil. of Erra, another "aspect" of Nergal). Since there apparently was no temple of Išum or Nergal in Borsippa (see Unger, *RIA* 1 p. 414 ff), it seems likely that the oblates mentioned here were procured from the Nergal temple of Cutha (= mod. Tell Ibrāhīm, 50 km N of Borsippa), which is mentioned (as object of building activities?) in the immediate sequel (Obv. 17').

<sup>533</sup> Incidentally, the identification of the supporters of the bridge as *guffas* is not at all certain; one could equally well think of pontoons or inflated skins (*maškuru*), cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* III 5:8 ff.

<sup>534</sup> Cf. also *Nineveh and its Remains* (abridged edition), pp. 266, 268 and 270.

15'ff. *ka-a-ri É-xi-da*: This structure does not seem to be referred to elsewhere; however, it can hardly be doubted that the place was situated near the "lapis lazuli gate" (KÁ.GAL NA<sub>4</sub>.ZA.GÏN) located by Unger (*RIA* 1 p. 409f; cf. Tf. 59) in the middle of the NE side of the circuit wall of Ezida, at the point where the procession street of Nabû and the Borsippa river meet the fosse surrounding the temple. The suggestion of Mār-Īstar that glazed (kiln-fired) bricks should be used for the structure (cf. note on *epertu šaḥāṭu* sub *LAS* 283 r6f) specifically speaks for this interpretation. The remark "they should cut the waters off" probably means quite simply that the former quay-wall had been completely inundated by the spring flood and that its level was now to be raised above the water line. — For the final vowel in *ka-a-ri* cf. note to 280:23.

17'ff. No building operations in Cutha — if, as it is likely, the present passage refers to such — are recorded in the extant building inscriptions of Esarhaddon. This must be simply due to the fact that the king died only four months after the present letter was despatched.

r4. *Nergal-šarru-ušur*: A bodyguard of this name is otherwise not known, but it does not seem excluded that the man meant is in fact identical with the "third man" (*tašlīšu*) N. frequently met as witness in contemporary contracts from Nineveh (particularly those of Rēmanni-Adad, the royal charioteer). Cf. *ABL* 580 r1-3, where mentioned together with Īstar-šumu-ēreš and the *bodyguard* Marduk-šarru-ušur (see on 190 r12).

r5. LÚ\*<sub>2-i</sub> ša LÚ\*.URULa-ḫi-ra-aje: See note on 275:9.

r6ff. Was the dismissal of these magistrates occasioned by the evil portents (delayed heliacal rising of Jupiter, solar and lunar eclipses, earthquake) received during the preceding month? Cf. *RMA* 272 r13 ff: "The noblemen which your royal father had installed in Akkad destroyed Babylon and carried away the valuables of Babylon; that is why these evil signs have appeared. Let the king's troops come and seize them, and place others in their stead . . ."

r11'-14'. Quoted from *Enūma Anu Enlil*, Tablet VI; cf. *ACh* Sin 18:10, [I ina SI ZAG-šú GUB ina] MU BI BUR<sub>5</sub> TE-ma EBUR KÚ ð LUGAL NIM.[MAKI . . . . .].

r15f. Free rendering of the following omen, quoted in *RMA* 213 and 214: I MULGÍR.TAB ana IGI 30 TE-ma GUB-iz BAL LUGAL GÍD.DA-ik LÚKÚR TE-am-ma ŠUB-ta-šú GAR-an "If Scorpio approaches and stands before the Moon, the king's reign will become long; an enemy will rise, but he will defeat him."



## APPENDIX B

## LUNAR CONSTELLATIONS

The Zodiac in our sense did not exist in Sargonid times, though its individual constellations had already been "known" for a long time.<sup>675</sup> Hence the positions of the sun, moon and the planets were not indicated by degrees with reference to 12 schematic signs of 30° each, as from the Neo-Babylonian period on,<sup>676</sup> but with reference to 17 zoomorphic constellations (and parts of their bodies) through which the planets and the moon passed in their orbits. These constellations are listed in the first tablet of the series *Mul Apin*:

[MUL]JUL MULGUD.AN.NA MULSIPA.ZI.AN.NA MULŠU.GI<sup>34</sup> [MULZ]UBI MULMAŠ.TAB.BA.  
 GAL.GAL MULAL.LUL MULUR.GU.LA<sup>35</sup> [MULA]B.S[IN MULZ]i-ba-ni-tum MULGÍR.TAB MULPA.BIL.SAG<sup>36</sup>  
<sup>36</sup> [MULSUHUR.MÁŠKU<sub>6</sub> MU]LGU.LA MULKUNMEŠ MULSIM.MAH<sup>37</sup> [MULA-nu-ni-t]um MUL.LÚHUN.GÁ<sup>38</sup>  
<sup>38</sup> [PAP an-nu-tum DINGIRMEŠ š]a ina KASKAL d30 GUBMEŠ-ma d30 e-ma ITU<sup>39</sup> [pi-rik-šú-nu DIB]MEŠ-ma  
 TAGMEŠ.šú-nu-ti<sup>677</sup>

"The Pleiades, Taurus, Orion, Perseus, Auriga, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, the "Tails" (i.e. the two Fishes), SW Pisces, NE Pisces, Aries. These are the gods standing on the path of the moon, (the gods) through whose sectors the moon passes every month and whom he touches."<sup>678</sup>

The boundaries of these constellations certainly differed in *minor details* from their modern counterparts,<sup>679</sup> but taking into consideration the continuity of the astrological tradition (Ptolemy) it can be taken for granted that *on the whole* the shapes and extensions of the zodiacal constellations at least have remained unaltered through the millennia. With the help of the *Stern tafeln* of P.V. Neugebauer (1912),<sup>680</sup> the boundaries of these constellations valid in the Sargonid period can then be approximately defined as follows:

Aries ( $\beta$ - 41 Arietis)	354° - 7°
Taurus ( $\sigma$ - $\zeta$ Tauri)	16° - 46°
Pleiades	19° - 20°
Hyades	28° - 32°
Orion ( $\alpha$ - $\gamma$ Orionis)	47° - 53°
Perseus ( $\alpha$ Persei - $\iota$ Aurigae)	11° - 33°
Auriga ( $\alpha$ - $\vartheta$ Aurigae)	33° - 45°
Gemini ( $\eta$ - $\beta$ Geminorum)	54° - 75°
Castor, Pollux	71°, 75°
Cancer ( $\beta$ + $\delta$ Cancri)	87° - 92°
Leo ( $\lambda$ - $\beta$ Leonis)	102° - 141°
Regulus	115°
Virgo ( $\beta$ - $\mu$ Virginis)	142° - 187°
Spica	167°

<sup>675</sup> Cf. B.L. van der Waerden, *AfO* 16 (1953) 216 ff.

<sup>676</sup> Cf. van der Waerden, *Anfänge der Astronomie* (1968) 97ff.

<sup>677</sup> BM 86378 iv 33-39 (*CT* 33 pl.8); restorations from AO 7540 iii 7-14 (Weidner, *AJSL* 40 189f).

<sup>678</sup> For the identifications of the individual constellations see F. Gössmann, *Planetarium* (1950).

<sup>679</sup> Cf. e.g. van der Waerden, *op. cit.* fig.7 (p. 66).

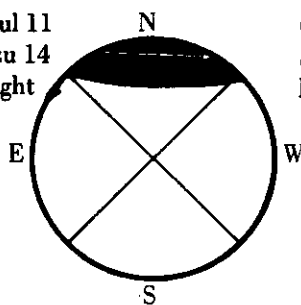
<sup>680</sup> Necessary to eliminate the effects of the precession of equinoxes.

Libra ( $\alpha^2$ - $\tau$ Librae)	188° - 197°
Scorpio ( $\rho$ - $\sigma$ Scorpii)	201° - 224°
Antares	209°
Sagittarius ( $\gamma$ - $\rho^1$ Sagittarii)	230° - 251°
Capricorn ( $\xi^2$ - $\delta$ Capricorni)	264° - 288°
Aquarius ( $\beta$ - $\epsilon^2$ Aquarii)	287° - 309°
Pisces ( $\alpha$ - $\beta$ Piscium)	313° - 353°
SW Fishes ( $\epsilon$ - $\beta$ Piscium)	313° - 343°
NE Fishes ( $\beta$ Andromedae - $\alpha$ Piscium)	343° - 353°

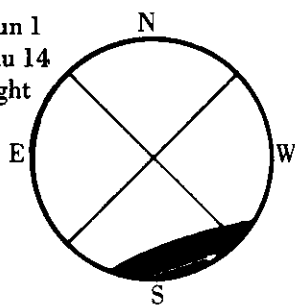
These values (corresponding to the situation in 670 BC) have been used in the preparation of the following tables (mainly covering the years 680-660 BC).

2. Graphic presentation of the lunar eclipses visible  
in Mesopotamia in years 680-664 BC<sup>685</sup>

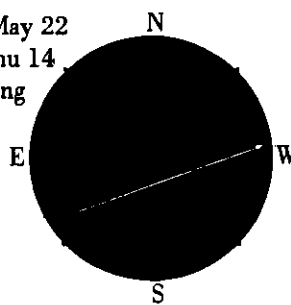
680 Jul 11  
Du'uzu 14  
Midnight



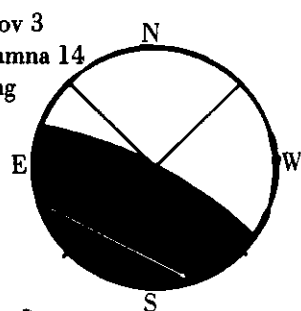
679 Jun 1  
Simanu 14  
Midnight



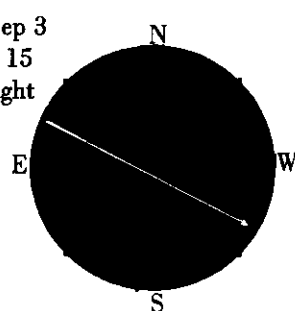
678 May 22  
Simanu 14  
Evening



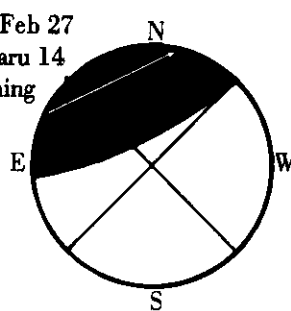
677 Nov 3  
Arahsamna 14  
Evening



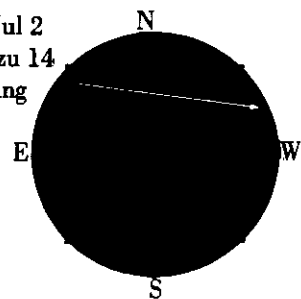
674 Sep 3  
Ululu 15  
Midnight



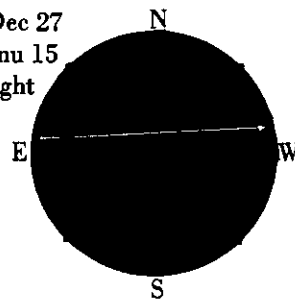
673 Feb 27  
Addaru 14  
Evening



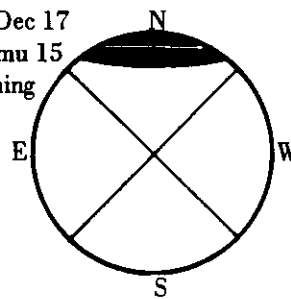
671 Jul 2  
Du'uzu 14  
Evening



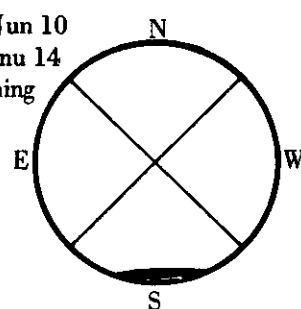
671 Dec 27  
Kanunu 15  
Midnight



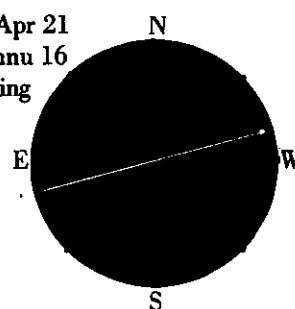
670 Dec 17  
Kislimu 15  
Morning



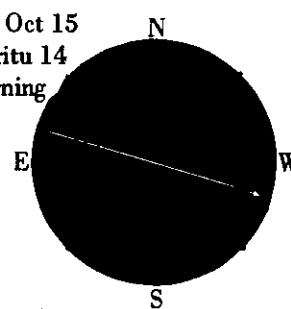
669 Jun 10  
Simanu 14  
Morning



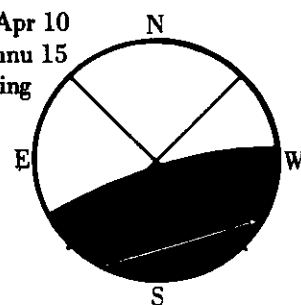
667 Apr 21  
Nisannu 16  
Evening



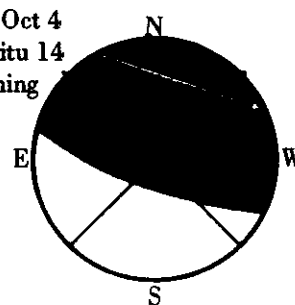
667 Oct 15  
Tašritu 14  
Morning



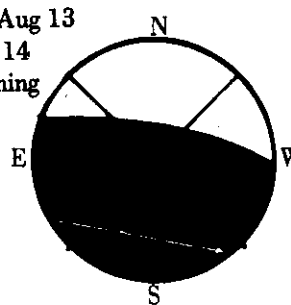
666 Apr 10  
Nisannu 15  
Evening



666 Oct 4  
Tašritu 14  
Evening

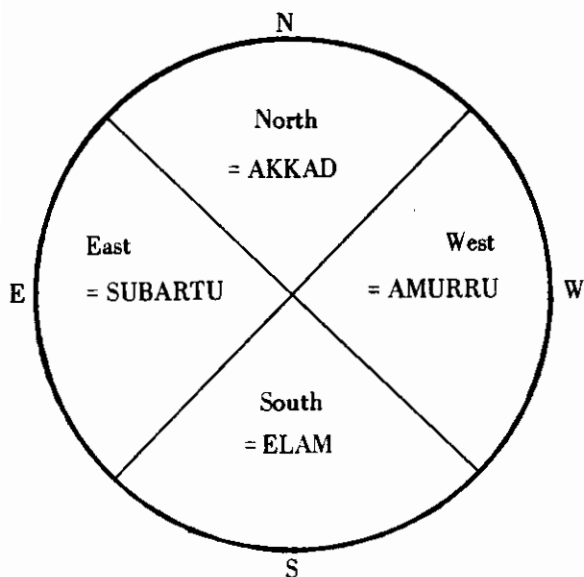


664 Aug 13  
Abu 14  
Morning



<sup>685</sup> Based on the data of P.V. Neugebauer + O. Hiller, *Spezieller Kanon der Mondfinsternisse* (Kiel 1934). The drawings show the disc of the moon (divided into four quadrants after App. F4) in the middle of each eclipse; the dark areas represent the shadow of the earth and the vectors the direction in which the shadow moved in each case. The ends of the vectors indicate the entrance and exit angles of the eclipses, respectively.

## 4.3 The direction of the shadow



*ACh* 2 Suppl. 19:17':

[I IMGĀL.LU KUR NIM.MAKI I]MSI.SÁ KUR URIKI  
IMKUR.RA SU.BIR<sub>4</sub> KI u *Gu-ti-i* IMMAR.TU KUR  
MAR.TUKI

"The South is Elam, the North is Akkad, the East is Subartu, the West is Amurru."

Cf. also *ABL* 1006:8 ff, quoted above, and the passages quoted by Schott, *ZA* 47 (1941/2) 107.

## 4.4. The month, day, and watch

*CT* 26 41 vi 12 ff:

12	[ITUBÁR ITUNE ITU]KAN KUR URIKI	"Nisannu, Ābu and Kislīmu	= Akkad;
13	[ITUGUD ITUKI]N ITUAB KUR NIM.MAKI	Ajāru, Ulūlu and Ṭebētu	= Elam;
14	[ITUSIG <sub>4</sub> ] ITUDU <sub>6</sub> ITUZÍZ KUR MAR.TUKI	Simānu, Tašrītu and Šabātu	= Amurru;
15	[ITUŠ]U ITUAPIN ITUŠE KUR SU.BIR <sub>4</sub> KI	Du'ūzu, Araḥsamna, Addāru	= Subartu."

*ACh* 2 Suppl. 19:12' ff:

12'	[I AN.MI EN.NU]N AN.USÁN <i>a-na</i> KUR URIKI : I AN.MI EN.NUN MÚRU.BA <i>a-na</i> KUR SU.BIR <sub>4</sub> KI
13'	[I AN.MI EN.NUN U]D.ZAL.LI <i>a-na</i> KUR NIM.MAKI : I ITUBÁR ITUNE ITUKAN KUR URIKI
14'	[I ITUGUD ITUKIN ITUAB KU]R NIM.MAKI : I ITUSIG <sub>4</sub> ITUDU <sub>6</sub> ITUZÍZ KUR MAR.TUKI
15'	[I ITUŠU ITUAPIN ITUŠE KUR] SU.BIR <sub>4</sub> KI ITUMEŠ <sub>3</sub> šá AN.TA.LÛ d30
16'	[I UD 13.KAM KUR URIKI UD 14.K]AM KUR NIM.MAKI UD 15.KAM KUR MAR.TUKI UD 16.KAM KUR SU.BIR <sub>4</sub> KI UDMEŠ <sub>3</sub> šá AN.TA.LÛ d30

"An eclipse in the evening watch pertains to Akkad; an eclipse in the midnight watch pertains to Subartu; an eclipse in the morning watch pertains to Elam. Nisannu, Ābu, Kislīmu = Akkad; Ajāru, Ulūlu, Ṭebētu = Elam; Simānu, Tašrītu, Šabātu = Amurru; Du'ūzu, Araḥsamna, Addāru = Subartu: the months of the lunar eclipses.

The 13th day is Akkad; the 14th day is Elam; the 15th day is Amurru; the 16th day is Subartu: the days of the lunar eclipses."

Cf. also passages such as *RMA* 156 r2, 270 r10, 271:10, etc.

## 4.5 The role of the planets

*ACh* 2 Suppl. 29:14 (quoted in *LAS* 298 r10', *ABL* 1006 = *RMA* 168 r3f, and *RMA* 272 r11):

[I A]N.MI GAR-*ma* ina AN.MI BI MULSAG.ME.GAR GUB *ana* LUGAL DI-*mu* *ki-mu-šú* IDIM SIG ŪŠ

"If an eclipse (of the moon) takes place and Jupiter is present (lit. stands) in that eclipse, the king will be well; a well-known important person will die in his stead."

## 4. Interpretation of lunar eclipses

### 4.1 General principles

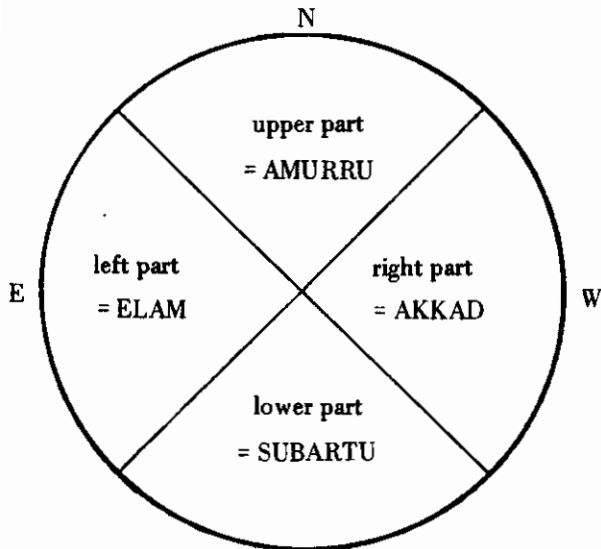
ABL 1006 = RMA 168:3 ff (Munnabitu explaining the eclipse of May 22, 678 BC):

- 3 šá AN.MI HUL-šú a-na EN ITU EN UD-mu EN ma-aš-šar-tu<sub>4</sub> EN taš-ri-tu<sub>4</sub>  
 4 a-šar ú-šar-ru-ú ù a-šar d30 AN.MI i-šah-ḫa-tu-ma i-na-as-sa-ku  
 5 HUL-šú an-nu-tu<sub>4</sub> i-mah-ḫa-ru ITUSIG<sub>4</sub> KUR MAR.TUKI ù  
 6 pu-ru-us-su a-na ŠEŠ.UNUKI na-din HUL šá UD 14.KAM šá qa-bu-ú  
 7 UD 14.KAM KUR NIM.MAKI taš-ri-tu<sub>4</sub> a-šar ú-še-er-ru-ú ul ni-i-du  
 8 mi-ni-tu AN.MI-šú a-na UGU IMGÀL.LU u IMMAR.TU il-ta-ḫa-aṭ  
 9 HUL šá KUR NIM.MAKI u KUR MAR.TUKI ul-tu IMKUR.RA u IMSI.SÁ  
 10 KI-šú im-mir SIG<sub>5</sub> šá Su-bar-tu<sub>4</sub> KI u URIKI<sub>i</sub> gab-bi-šú šá i-ri-mu  
 11 it-tu<sub>4</sub> šá ma-ta-a-ti gab-bi

“The evil of an eclipse pertains to the lord of the MONTH, the lord of the DAY, the lord of the WATCH, and the lord of the QUADRANT where the Moon begins the eclipse and where he shifts and sheds it to: these take over the predicted evil.

The month of Simānu is Elam, and its ‘decision’ is given to Ur. The evil of the 14th day, as it is said: The 14th day is Elam. We do not know the quadrant where it began. The measurable eclipse drifted toward the South and the West, bad luck to Elam and Amurru; its disc started to clear from the East and the North, good luck to Subartu and Akkad. That it was covered completely means that the portent pertains to all the countries.”

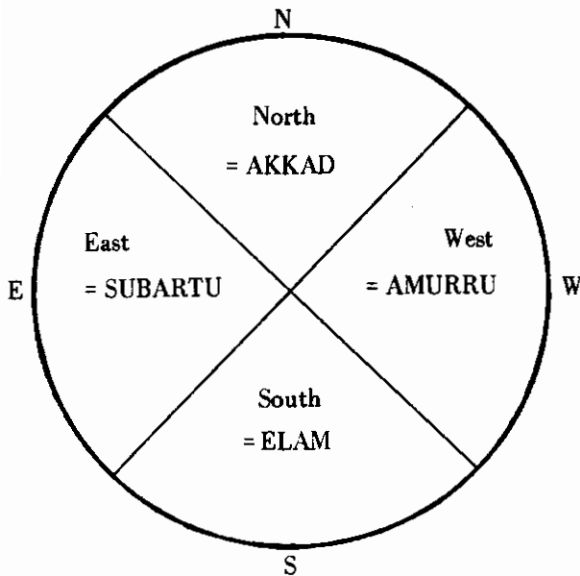
### 4.2. Significance of the lunar quadrants



Cf. ABL 1006 = RMA 268:11 f (quoting the Great Star List CT 26 40 iv 23-26):  
 15 d30 KUR URIKI<sub>i</sub> 2,30 d30 / KUR NIM.MAKI  
 e-la-a-ti d[30 KUR MA]RKI<sub>i</sub> šap-la-a-ti d30 KUR SU.  
 BIR<sub>4</sub> KI

“The right part of the Moon is Akkad, the left part of the Moon is Elam; the upper part of the Moon is Amurru, the lower part of the Moon is Subartu.”

## 4.3 The direction of the shadow



*ACh* 2 Suppl. 19:17':

[I IMGÀL.LU KUR NIM.MAKI I]MSI.SÁ KUR URIKI  
IMKUR.RA SU.BIR<sub>4</sub> KI u *Gu-ti-i* IMMAR.TU KUR  
MAR.TUKI

“The South is Elam, the North is Akkad, the East is Subartu, the West is Amurru.”

Cf. also *ABL* 1006:8 ff, quoted above, and the passages quoted by Schott, *ZA* 47 (1941/2) 107.

## 4.4. The month, day, and watch

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16'	[I UD 13.KAM KUR URIKI UD 14.K]AM KUR NIM.MAKI UD 15.KAM KUR MAR.TUKI UD 16.KAM KUR SU.BIR <sub>4</sub> KI UD MEŠŠÁ AN.TA.LÛ d30

“An eclipse in the evening watch pertains to Akkad; an eclipse in the midnight watch pertains to Subartu; an eclipse in the morning watch pertains to Elam. Nisannu, Ābu, Kislīmu = Akkad; Ajāru, Ulūlu, Ṭebētu = Elam; Simānu, Tašrītu, Šabātu = Amurru; Du'ūzu, Araḥsamna, Addāru = Subartu: the months of the lunar eclipses.

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