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THE FALL OF ASSYRIA
AND
MEDIAN-BABYLONIAN RELATIONS
IN LIGHT OF
THE NABOPOLASSAR CHRONICLE

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CHAPTER II

THE QUESTION OF CHRONOLOGY: ASSYRIA DURING HER LAST QUARTER CENTURY (7th Cent. B.C.)

Due to the limited number of documents that have survived Assyria's last quarter century, the task of a historical reconstruction has proven to be formidable. Especially sacking is an almost complete absence of sources from the central part of Assyria. The Annals of Ashurbanipal discontinued in 639, [1] and the last编年史 document dated during his reign comes from 631. [2] The Annals of his successors, Ashur-nasir-pal II and Sin-shar-Ishkun, are also missing, and the limmu list, an important document in the reconstruction of chronology and political history, breaks off at 648. [3] As a result, we have at our disposal only a few letters [4] and documents of donations performed by Assur-ētil-īlīmitti for the benefit of Sin-sum-īššu. [5] Also worth mentioning are two pieces of evidence: a document testifying that Assur-ētil-īlīmitti ceded to the Dakhkareans the šešir of their leader Šama-il, executed by the Assyrians in 478, so that they could be deported to a mausoleum. [6] and a fragment of an agreement between Sin-sum-īššu and another civilian, who also was Ashurbanipal's son.


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[7] Of great importance to us in the Synchronistic King List from Asšur, [8] written during the reign of Asšur-etel-ilani or soon after his death, where his name immediately follows that of Ashurbanipal. Date formulae of business documents [9] can also be very useful in establishing the chronology.

None of the above mentioned sources provides us with conclusive information concerning the duration of Ashurbanipal's rule nor those of his successors. All scholars who dealt with this problem before the publication of new texts by Wiseman and Cadd, [10] drew special attention to the data from ancient sources. And so in Eusebius they found a fragment of work by Alexander Polyhistor, who records after Berossus that after a reign of 21 years by Sammugus, alias Šamaš-sum-ukin, Sardanapullos, alias Asšurbanipal, ruled over the Chaldeans for another 21 years. [11] According to the Prolemaic Canon, Saosdouchinios' reign of 20 years in Babylonia was succeeded by Kimedanaros' reign of 22 years. [12] Correspondingly, the Babylonian King List A corroborates a Šamaš-sum-ukin - Kandalanu succession. [13] This discrepancy between Eusebius on one hand and the Prolemaic Canon on the other has given rise to a hypothesis according to which Ashurbanipal, after the example of Tiglath-Pileser III and Shalmaneser V, who appear on the aforementioned Babylonian King List A as Pulu and Ululai, respectively, [14] started to use the name of Kandalanu in Babylonia (Nippur excluded) after he had defeated Šamaš-sum-ukin. Another argument in favour of the identification of Kandalanu as Ashurbanipal is that they both died in the same year.


The absence of any documents dated from the last years of Ashurbanipal’s reign (assuming that it lasted 42 years) and the fact that, in light of the Proemial Canon and Eusebius, his reign could be with equal facility counted at 43 years [15] have made many reputable scholars reject both the identification and the count of Ashurbanipal’s years as king. [16] And thus, P. Schnabel [17] believes that Ashurbanipal ruled until 638 B.C. (for 31 years), W. H. Dobberstein [18] - until 633, F. H. Wessbach [19] - until 631 at the latest, and A. Poebel [20] and S. Smith [21] - no longer than up to 628. By the same token, these scholars have dismissed the view of Ashurbanipal as being identical with Kandalaniu, Šamál-šum-ukin’s Babylonian successor. According to their calculations, Kandalaniu, who died in 627, had outlived Ashurbanipal by several years. More light was shed on the issue by the Herran Inscription H 1 B published in 1958. From it we learn that Adad-guppu, the mother of Nabonidus, was born in the twenty-first year of Ashurbanipal and lived till the 42th year of this king till the 3rd year of Astur-etel-ilani till the 21st year of Nahopolassar till the 43rd year of Nebuchadnezzar till the 2nd year of Amil-Marduk till the 4th year of Nergilzasar, that is in total for 95 years (till her son Nabonidus came to the throne). [22]

[15] Since Ashurbanipal began his reign a year before Šamál-šum-ukin, the 21st year of Šamál-šum-ukin corresponds to the 22nd year of Ashurbanipal. Totaling 22 years of Ashurbanipal and 21 years of Sarranatapalus after Šamál-šum-ukin’s death results in the count of 43 years. Similarly, since the 20th year of Saosouchinos coincided with the 21st year of Ashurbanipal, to add 22 years of Knefaselos (assuming that Ashurbanipal and Kandalaniu were the same person) results in 43 years of Ashurbanipal’s reign. An explanation of the errors committed - see below pp. 57.

[16] The summing up of the first round of discussion of this issue is contained in the work by A. T. Clay, Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Sex:A: Cuneiform Texts Vol.VIII, Part I, Philadelphia 1908, pp. 6-11; M. Streck, Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Unerschafflichen, VAB 7, 1 Teil, Leipzig 1919, pp. CLVIII-CLX. See also works from notes 17-21, and for the recent discussion of the issue see the latter part of the chapter.


Further on, Adda-guppi is said to have lived all the ninth year of her son, which comes to 104 years. [23] As Gold promptly observed, there is a 93, not 95, year difference between the twentieth year of Ashurbanipal and the sixteenth year of Nergal-esser si; similarly the difference between the twentieth year of Ashurbanipal and the ninth year of Nabonidus is 102, not 104 years. [24]

If the Harran evidence alone accepts Ashurbanipal's reign as covering 42 years, then, considering that his first year started in 668, one has to date the 42nd year, his last, in c.627. But the inscription places before the first year of Nabopolassar (625), a three year reign of Ashur-etel-ilili. What is more, according to the documents found in Nippur, the reign of this king was 10 years only not 3 but 4 years. [25]

Our knowledge of the final stages of Assyrian history has been complicated even more by the Urk King List, which states that Nabopolassar's reign was preceded by a year-long rule of Sin-lim-ilili and Sin-sar-iskun. [26] Lastly, the Chronicle of the early years of Nabopolassar states at the beginning that right up to his accession "there was no king in the land for one year". [27] The inscription from Harran does not mention Sin-sar-iskun, who appears at the very beginning of the Chronicle of Nabopolassar's early years. [28] Attested dates for Sin-sar-iskun can also be found on documents from a few other Babylonian cities, which allows us to claim that he must have been a power in at least part of Babylonia until his 7th year. [29] Still, apart from the Urk King List, other texts from Babylonia also confirm Sin-lim-ilili's short reign. [30]

These sources which are now available on the issue of late Assyrian chronology are complimentary and conflicting at the same time. While bringing up some new chronicles, D. J. Wiseman tried to explain some of those inconsistencies, [31] but the first fully-negotiated attempt to reconcile the conflicting

[30] Ibid., pp. 55-54.
[31] CCK, pp. 89-94.
sources was undertaken by W. von Soden. [32] He believes that the last years of Ashurbanipal witnessed a struggle between him and two sons, Assur-etel-danni and Sin-sar-isikun, who ruled together fighting each other at the same time. Von Soden adopts Wiseman's proposition that the fragment of the Chronicle BM 25127:1-17 in its entirety records events of 626. From the Chronicle he also derives the information of a siege of Nippur and links it to several documents written in Nippur during the siege and dated to the 3rd year of Sin-sar-isikun, [33] thus concluding that the year 626 was the third year of his reign. His assumption to the throne would then have fallen in 629 and his seventh year from which a few texts from Babylonia are dated - in 622. Since the Synchronistic King List from Assur names Assur-etel-danni as the first successors after Ashurbanipal, von Soden deduces that his reign must have started before that of Sin-sar-isikun. Extrapolating from the fact that the last document dated by Ashurbanipal's name comes from U.N.631 (the 38th year of his reign), von Soden dated Assur-etel-danni's accession in the same year, 631. Since, in accordance with the documents from Nippur, Assur-etel-danni ruled for four years, then there must have been a two year overlap with either Ashurbanipal or Sin-sar-isikun. Von Soden accepts the latter possibility, as Sin-sar-isikun's earliest attested date in the Nippur evidence comes from 14 XII.2nd year of his reign. [34] As a result the following chronology arises:

Ashurbanipal 669-631 (till at least July)
Assur-etel-danni 631 (from July at the earliest till at least October 627)
Sin-sar-isikun 629 (from September at the latest till August 612)

(Sin-sum-ililti, presumably ruled for a very short time, the year unknown).

After C. J. Gadd published the text from Harran, von Soden revised [35] and later modified and expanded [36] his hypothesis in the course of a debate with R. Borger. This new data required von Soden to retain only the years ofSin-sar-isikun from the original version of his hypothesis. He accepts now that TMH 2/3, No 35 [37] comes from Nippur, but drawing on a collation by J. Oelsner, he claims that the name of a king from line 7, whose third year of reign coincided with the accession year (ref. farkut) of Sin-sar-isikun does not read

[34] In fact the earliest known date for Sin-sar-isikun comes from 17.V.2 or maybe even from his ref farkut - cf. J. A. Brinkman, D. A. Kennedy, o.c., pp. 54-55 under O.13 and O.7.
Assur-etel-ilani, but Sin-tum-illu. The year 639 was then the third year of Sin-
tum-illu and the accession year of Sin-lar-sin. But according to ARU 20/11, 
Assur-etel-ilani had become king before Sin-kam-illu and, since the latter’s 
accession is believed to have occurred in 632, Assur-etel-ilani would have had to 
come to the throne earlier the same year or the preceding year. Vor, Soden 
eventually accepted 633 as a beginning of Assur-etel-ilani’s reign, that is, the 
36th year of Ashurbanipal and the 15th year of Kandalami. Consequently, he 
proposes the following chronology of kings, starting from 633: [38]

633: Ash 36 = Kand.15 = Aei 0
632: Ash 37 = Kand.16 = Aei 1 = Sti 0
631: Ash 38 = Kand.17 = Aei 2 = Sti 1
630: Ash 39 = Kand.18 = Aei 3 = Sti 2
629: Ash 40 = Kand.19 = Aei 4 = Sti 3 = Sti 0
628: Ash 41 = Kand.20 = Sti 4 = Sti 1
627: Ash 42 = Kand.21 = Sti 5 = Sti 2
626: Kand.22 = Sti 6 = Sti 3 = Nhp 0
625: Sti 4 = Nhp 1

[37] O. Krawczan, Neuhbabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungs texte. Texte und 
Materialien der Frau Prof. Hülrots Sammlung in Eigentum der Friedrich-
Scharer, Universität Jena, Bd 2/3, Leipzig 1933 (= T grades 2/3). Cf. the 
transliteration and translation by H. San Nicolas, Babyloni sche Rechts-
ursprünge des ausgehenden 8. und 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr., AWA N.F. Heft 
74, München 1951, Nr. 63.

[38] Abbreviations used: Ash = Ashurbanipal; Kand. = Kandalami; Aei = 
Assur-etel-ilani; Sti = Sin-tum-illu; Sti = Sin-lar-sin; Nhp = Nabopolas-
lasser.

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Harranûn tradition and state of knowledge, but what the higher echelon of Babylonian society in Nabonidus' time understood of the events of earlier decades. On the whole, Babylonian writers knew of the past events; but what they related to us are not bare facts, but their interpretation.

As to other controversial issues, the identification of Ashurbanipal as Kandalana, the subject of many heated discussions, should be no longer questioned. The identity is borne out by comparing the Babylonian King List A and the Protean Canaan, which mention Kandalana/Kindalane as the successor of Šamaš-tum-ukin/Saadodchino, with the fragment from Barroutas, which specifies Sardanapalus/Asurbanipal as the successor of Šamaš-tum-ukin/Sammugus. It is commonly known that Ashurbanipal had ascended to the Throne of Assyria a year before Šamaš-tum-ukin became the king of Babylonia, and that the 20th year of Šamaš-tum-ukin was the 21st year of Ashurbanipal. Barroutas, ascribing a reign of 21 years to Sammugus mistakenly assumed that Šamaš-tum-ukin's rule started the same year as Ashurbanipal's. Conscious of this error, one could tally up 21 years for Sammugus (actually Ashurbanipal's) reign and 21 years for his successor Sardanapalus to end up with the sum total of 42 years for Ashurbanipal's rule. The Protean Canaan, in turn, correctly determines Saadodchino's reign at 20 years, as we indicated earlier, his 20th year is concurrent with Ashurbanipal's 21st year in Assyria. The Protean Canaan credits Ashurbanipal's successor Kinelaçonos with 22 years of rule, which means that it includes "his" 22nd year - the year of anti Kandalana, "after the death of Kandalana". Since these two sources name Kandalana 'the successor of Šamaš-tum-ukin, while the third one mentions Sardanapalus/Asurbanipal in this capacity, and since Sardanapalus/Asurbanipal and Kinelaçonos/Kandalana must have begun their reign over Babylonia in the same year and died in the same year, the identity of the two seems to be indisputable. All three sources, if interpreted correctly ascribe 42 years of reign to Ashurbanipal. And so does the Harran Inscription. Hence, Babylonian texts and ancient accounts are in complete agreement in this respect.

Currently the main argument against this identification is based on dates of some business documents. Let us give a list of these dates to make clearer our further discussion of this issue: [121]

[121] The list is compiled on the basis the frequently cited J. A. Brinkman, D. A. Kennedy, Documentale Evidence. The left column specifies the signature of a given document in this catalogue, where a complete bibliography can be found.
Except for the last document, from the beginning of the month of Tbebet, texts were dated by the name of Kandalatu in all cities and settlements save Nippur, where Ashurbanipal's name was used for this purpose, with his reign reckoned to have begun in 668.

According to Brinkman, who proposes the interpretation accepted by other Assyriologists as well, Kandalatu was a dependent monarch appointed by Ashurbanipal a year after crushing Samal-jum-ukin's revolt. [123] The above list of dates testifies, in Brinkman's opinion that the transfer of rule was gradual since in Borsippa during Kislev 647 and in Dhibat during Nisan 646 documents were still dated by Ashurbanipal's name. Brinkman's argument against the identification of Kandalatu with Ashurbanipal can be summed up in the claim that it is impossible to justify "why texts would be dated at Nippur under one name (and reckoning the beginning of the reign at 668) and in the other cities under another name (with the beginning of the reign in 447)?" [124]

In our opinion, Brinkman's argument at least in its part concerning Ashurbanipal dates from Nippur, can be easily checked. One will note that from the first decade after the accession of Ashurbanipal (669) and of Samal-jum-ukin (668), there are only two documents dated 29. V. Asb 5 (664) and 19. I. StU 8 (660), respectively. [125] It appears from the two documents that Ashurbanipal transferred Nippur to Samal-jum-ukin sometime between the

[122] The text does not specify the name of the king but, in view of reference to Kudurru, governor of Uruk (see below note 131), and the title of jar masari, cf. W. H. S. Shear, Jr, Unrecognized Vassals of Babylon in the Early Ashurbanipal Period, Journal of Cuneiform Studies, 19 (1957), p. 311 (with some minor inaccuracies), the identification is certain.


[124] RLA V, p. 368 and similarly in Prelude to Empire, p. 106.

second part of 664 and the beginning of 660. After the outbreak of Šamalkumân's revolt, at the end of 661, the city again came under Ashurbanipal's control [126] and from then until 651, the year of the last Ashurbanipal date, documents were again dated by his name. Consequently, regardless of whether we accept the extant of Ashurbanipal and Kandalanu or not, the dates clearly indicate that Nippur was not under Babylonian control but directly under Assyrian administration. This situation prevailed later also: Ashur-etel-ilani dates on business documents come exclusively from Nippur. Lastly, Nippur remained for the longest (along with Ur, Isin and Kar-Assur) in the hands of the last Assyrian king, Sîu-sar-takînu. This has led scholars to conjecture that Nippur could have been the site of a powerful Assyrian garrison established there with the aim of wielding control over central Babylonia. Thus, during the period from Ashurbanipal's assumption (with the intervention of 660-651) until the end of Assyrian presence in Babylonia, Nippur was considered to be almost integral part of Assyria. Therefore, the fact that documents there were dated under Ashurbanipal's name cannot stand in the way of identifying him as Kandalanu.

From the year 648 (Asb 21 and in theory Kand 0) there are only two documents from Nippur both dated to Asb 21. [127] The absence of documents from other cities, one has to positively reject the notion of the year 648 as being identical with Kand 0, however. Several documents known to date from Borsippa, Uruk and probably Sippar from 647 (see, table above) contain the dating formula of Asb 22. What follows then is that the preceding year of 648 must have been described as Asb 21 (and not Kand 0) in those cities. Only the absence of documents from Babylon alone from the years 648-647 could substantiate the hypothesis of Kandalanu assuming control over the city after Ashurbanipal as early as 648 (Kand 0) or at the very beginning of 647, and this could possibly account for the lack of Kand 0 dates. [128] There is no reason whatsoever, though, why documents in the capital should have been dated with the reference to Kandalanu's reign while the rest of the country was still using Ashurbanipal dates.

[126] The last document from Nippur dated under the name of Šamalkumân comes from 3×IX, year 17 (651) and the first one dated again by Ashurbanipal's name from 18.XI, year 18 (551) - cf. J. A. Brinkman, D. A. Kennedy, o.c., p. 34; under K,116 and p. 21, under I,6. [127] Ibid., p. 23 under 1. 16 and 2. 1° (duplicate of 3,16). [128] Possibly, such a situation is reflected later in the documents dated to the "1st year of Cambyses, king of Babylon (and) Cyrus, King of Lands" or to the "1st year of Cambyses, King of Babylon" - see M. San Nicolò, Beiträge zu einer Prosopographie, p. 52 and S. Zawadzki, Gubaru: a Governor or a Vassal King of Babylonia, Eos, vol. 75/1987, p. 71, Note 14 and 15.
Let us again refer to the table. It is assumed that in 647 Ashurbanipal began to transfer power to Kandalanu. From the table it appears that the process started towards the end of that year, though no earlier than at the end of the month of Ktelev. [129] If the 22nd year of Ashurbanipal was the year of the transfer, [130] and the change over had started only at the end of the year, then, according to the time-honored tradition, the documents from that year should have been dated reš šarrûti, "the accession year," and not "year 1" of Kandalanu. The actual "year 1" of Kandalanu would have then fallen in 646, or considering the document from Dilbat, even in 645! However, the table makes certain that it was in 647 that the name of Ashurbanipal was substantiated with that of Kandalanu. If the 22nd year of Ashurbanipal was then replaced by the 1st year of Kandalanu, it is not possible to find any documents dated to Kandalanu's reš šarrûti because he had no accession year! The absence of reš šarrûti dates for Kandalanu would be unaccountable, however, had Kandalanu and Ashurbanipal been two different persons; it becomes justifiable only on the condition of their identity, that is, if one assumes that in 647 Ashurbanipal decided to use the name of Kandalanu in Babylonian business documents. This notion explains both the replacement of Ashurbanipal 22 by Kandalanu 1, and the absence of his reš šarrûti dates. After all reš šarrûti encompassed the period of time from ascending to the throne until the beginning of the new year, when the new king for the first time presided over the ceremony of akšu festival. This type, the king, who had had his "accession year" in the past, was alive, and only his name had changed. These could have been the reasons why there are no "year 0" dates for Kandalanu, and his existing dates start with year 1.

An argument against identifying Ashurbanipal as Kandalanu can be found in the Synchronistic King List from Ashur, where the name of Ashurbanipal appears twice vâ-a-vê the names of Šamaš-šuma-ukin and Kandalanu. This form of the text, however, does not prove that Ashurbanipal was not identified as Kandalanu. The two of them being identical (with the name of Kandalanu in Babylonian or not, the fat would have still looked the same. Thus, the Synchronistic King List from Ashur does not provide arguments either for or against such an identification.

[129] J. A. Brinkman in RLA V, p. 368 mentioned a document from Ešn 647 and this reference cited also W. H. S. Shea, op. cit., p. 61. There is no such document in the "Documentary Evidence": The author explained that anomaly in his Prelude to Empire, p. 106, note 534, where he explicitly stated that the information in RLA about the text from "VI-648 (RLA: 647) is incorrect".

[130] This view was already expressed earlier by W. H. Dobriner, Assyrian Babylonian Chronology, JNES Vol. 3/1944, p. 40.
The fact that Kandalanu same appears only in chronological texts (King lists, chronicles) and in date formula is also an argument in favour of the identification hypothesis, not against it. There is not one official Kandalanu document concerning the construction or restoration of a temple, which in Babylonia was considered a particular duty, indeed a privilege, of the sovereign. All such undertakings were ascribed to Ashurbanipal it is easy, however, to imagine that even though Ashurbanipal wanted business documents to be dated by the name of Kandalanu, he still those that his activities as a benefactor be associated with his supremacy over the whole Empire, not only Babylonia.

The identification of Kandalanu as Ashurbanipal is also sustained by the fact that there is a date formula which would be similar to that used in Babylonia in 538: "the 1st year of Cyrus, King of Lands and of Cambyses, King of Babylon". A weighty, however much overlooked, argument for the identification is provided by references to Šamaš-dannimanni, a limmu from Ashurbanipal's times. Three copies [131] of Cylinder A of the Annals of Ashurbanipal bear Šamaš-dannimanni dates and the following title for him:

(a) ḫa-kin Akkad[^1]
(b) ḫa-pāšu (NAM) Babil[^2]

The same limmu, with the title of ḫa-kin Akkad[^2] also appears in text BII 132-10, [132] which concerns an extended dispute over a few dozen Paquedean, who were presented as turbines to the goddess Istar and Nano of Uruk by Sargon II and Sennacherib. That the said group of people were to stay in the temple had been decided through a ḫa-kina-organ already under Esarhaddon, but the dispute had not been settled then. It was revised in 20 years after Esarhaddon's death, and the governor of Uruk, Huduru [132] was to arbitrate in it; Šamaš-dannimanni was also involved in the proceedings. The last information is of foremost importance to es as it helps to explain the ambiguous term Akkad, which could designate all of Babylonia, or only its northern part. The texts makes a clear that Šamaš-dannimanni administered over all of Babylonia from

the border with Assyria to the Persian Gulf. In both texts the titles used to describe his office are of equal weight; they differ only in that one employs an archaic term of Akkad to denote Babylonia, while the other uses a more modern term in this capacity.

The office held by Šamaš-daninannī in Babylonia is comparable to that of Gubaru/Lú aphar, who was appointed governor of all Babylonia after Cyrus' conquest. [134] The fact that Šamaš-daninannī fulfilled the duties of his position over all of Babylonia could not possibly be fitted with the opinion of Kandašu and Ashurbanipal being two different people. If Kandašu - a person distinct from Ashurbanipal - had been nominated by Ashurbanipal Šamú of Babylon and obediently executed his orders, then, Šamaš-daninannī would have nothing more but duplicated Kandašu's powers of jurisdiction. But when we assume the identity of Ashurbanipal as Kandašu, the high office and broad range of authority of Šamaš-daninannī become fully understandable.

Lastly, the identification is also borne out by the fragment of the Annals of Ashurbanipal in which he states that, having crushed Šamaš-šum-ukin's rebellion, he appointed governors and officials for the inhabitants of Babylonia, but does not make any reference to the nomination of Kandašu as the king of Babylonia. [135]

So, there are no convincing arguments to improve the validity of Ashurbanipal's reign of 42 years, and his identification as Kandašu. It is very probable that a struggle for sovereignty over Babylonia between the several contestants to the succession after Ashurbanipal = Kandašu assured full proportions only after the death of the old king in 627. On the evidence of the Harran Inscription, the contest had actually begun a few years earlier, still in Ashurbanipal's lifetime. The fact that the last Ashurbanipal document from Nippur is dated to 631 could be read as indicating that it was about that time when the struggle for succession began. Characteristically, the last Kandašu documents from Uruk are dated to the same year. These documents show...

[133] Cf line 8. For this governor, see M. Dietrich, o.c., p. 98 and J. A. Brinkman, Notes on Aramaic...., p. 311. Both authors disregarded this text. Kudurru was in office probably until 631, from which year his successor is known - cf H. Hunger, o.c., No. 6 (15.V. Kand. 13) and No. 2 (7.VI. Kand. 13). Even though a precise date of EIN II 132 cannot be established, there is no doubt, that it was composed during Ashurbanipal's reign, after Šamaš-šum-ukin's revolt had been quelled (contra R. Borger, HSL I, p. 216).

[134] ABC, p. 110-20, but with the transliteration and translation proposed by Grayson in a commentary to this line.

that Ashurbanipal entrusted high posts in the state and temple administration to those people who had already proved their loyalty to him. It stands to reason that his motive in choosing only these people was a form of preparation for the impending conflict. Later Sin-ibar-ilum also appealed to that same circle of faithful followers, which leads one to conjecture that Sin-ibar-ilum must have been considered by them the legal successor. It was indeed this son who had originally been intended as the heir; his title-tale name, containing a theophoric element Sin referring to the protective deity of the dynasty, testifies to this: "The god Sin made (give) King." Normally, it was the intended heir apparent who was in a special way entrusted to the dynastic god's care. Among all contemporaries, Sin-ibar-ilum was the most popular in Babylonia, and for some time he was recognized by all important cities, Babylon, Sippar, Nippur and Uruk included. In contrast, Ashtur-etel-ilum enjoyed little popularity in Babylonia, which was made evident by his efforts to gain allies among the other enemies of Assyria. Such a state of relations between Sin-ibar-ilum's garrison in Babylon and his presence in Uruk and Sippar could have been tacitly approved of by the worn-out and very old king.

The discussion thus presented shows that none of the current reconstructions of this elusive period in Assyrian history can be deemed to be fully correct. Even though, in light of thorough research, much is now known about the intentions of Babylonian writers of the texts under investigation, some of their motives still remain hidden. Consequently, many of the anomalies occurring across the texts cannot be adequately clarified as present. One also has to allow for a certain degree of incoherence in dating of business documents. It could have easily happened, for example, that a follower of Assyria (or Nabopolassar) in any given city anticipated the course of events and, as the news of an army approaching, started to date documents under the name of his candidate, even though his wishful thinking would never materialize. The most valuable sources at our disposal come from Babylonia, which results in that the view of Assyrian history presented in them is only fragmentary and biased. It therefore appears that the present difficulties should hold for as long as no comparable Assyrian documents are available. Any sound chronology must be based on a number of concrete facts, whose interpretation is unequivocal. Unfortunately, there are still too few such facts documented especially in texts from the territory of Assyria.