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THE EPONYMS OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE 910–612 BC

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Selecting the eponym long in advance of the start of his year avoided the problem the year name system created in Babylonia where the new year might have begun before its name was announced. In such a situation the scribes were forced to write 'year after' the name of the previous year. If an Assyrian scribe did not know the name of the current eponym, he would use a similar formula, 'in the eponymate following (*ša arki*)' the previous one. That formula appears already in the Old Assyrian period, on tablets from the merchant settlement at Kanesh and on tablets from the Assyrian rule at Mari. The formula occurs in Middle Assyrian times, on one tablet,[4] and in the eleventh century BC section of Eponym List A7. The last year of Shalmaneser II (*c.* 1030-1019 BC) is labelled *ša arki* the previous eponym, and then there are no eponym names for the reign of Assur-nērārī IV (*c.* 1018-1013 BC), but each of the five years after the king's office is marked *ša arki* ^{m}*aššur-nērārī*. Something similar is listed for Tiglath-pileser II (*c.* 966-935 BC), where one eponym followed him, then a *ša arki*, and others occur later in his reign.[5] In the Neo-Assyrian tablets, six years have *ša arki* dates. M. T. Larsen, in studying the whole phenomenon, has argued that they arose in circumstances of civil disturbance when the installation of the eponym or information about it was delayed.[6] His arguments can largely be maintained. The *ša arki* dates are:

a) 'after Šulmānu-ašarēd,' presumably after his second turn, 827 BC, therefore 826, for which the Eponym Chronicle reports 'revolt'. The tablet comes from Šibaniba (Tell Billa) some 20 km east of Nineveh, so conditions may have hindered confirmation of the new eponym reaching there, although the

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[4] See C. Saporetti, *Gli eponimi medio-assiri* (Malibu 1979) 56.
[5] KAV 21-24 iv. 18-22, v. 6f, 20, 30, 31; see RIA 2, 436.
[6] M. T. Larsen, RA 68 (1974) 15-24.

automatic sequence of king — commander-in-chief might have been expected. The month of writing is broken.

b) 'after Nabû-šarru-uṣur,' 682 BC, therefore 681, from Nineveh. The tablet is dated 5:ii. Larsen suggested there were troubles surrounding the appointment of Esarhaddon to succeed Sennacherib, months before the king was assassinated (20:x). However, the existence of a tablet from Assur dated 10:i of the next eponym, Nabû-aḫḫē-ēreš, and of one from Nineveh dated 12:ii, may imply the scribe who wrote the *ša arki* document had a lapse of memory.

c) 'after Kanūnāyu,' perhaps 671 BC, therefore 670, from Nineveh, dated o:i. As Larsen noted, the Babylonian Chronicle reports a revolt in Assyria (iv.29), a situation which could have resulted in confusion over the eponymate, although other tablets from Nineveh are dated 28:i, 1 and 10:ii of the next eponym, Šulmu-bēli-lašme.

d) 'after Aššur-dūru-uṣur,' 652 BC, therefore 651, from Gezer, dated 17:iii. The distance and perhaps a breakdown in communications caused by the war between Aššurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, which involved many of Assyria's vassal states, may account for this dating. One tablet from Nineveh is dated 4:i of the next eponym, Sagabbu.

e) 'after Sagabbu,' 651 BC, therefore 650, from Assur, dated 5:i[7] and 20:i. Although there are tablets dated 23:i and 28:i in the next eponymate, Bēl-Ḫarrān-šadûa, from Kalah and Nineveh, the war could have impeded news reaching Assur early in the new year, and by this time, the sequence of governors no longer held.

f) 'after Nabû-šarru-uṣur,' a post-canonical eponym for whom *ša arki* dates are recorded as late as the eleventh month, all from Assur or Kannu'. Since the date of this eponym cannot be fixed, the circumstances of the date remain unknown.