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BABYLONIAN INFLUENCE IN THE ŠĒḤ ḤAMAD TEXTS DATED UNDER NEBUCHADNEZZAR II¹

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The Babylonian impact seen in the four Šēḥ Ḥamad documents dated under Nebuchadnezzar II seems to be strictly political. The texts are written in Assyrian language and script (two of them also have brief Aramaic notations) and give no evidence for a change in the population of the area in the short time since the lapse of Assyrian governance². The two local officials attested in the witness list of one of the documents³ bear traditional Assyrian titles: *bēl āli* and *šangû*⁴. Only the date formulae, which mention the Babylonian king, mark these texts as written under Babylonian rule; and it is these formulae that I will discuss here. Professor Röllig has sketched elsewhere

¹) Text citations in this article conform to Chicago Assyrian Dictionary style in the rendering of determinatives (in capital letters on the line).

²) As expected, Assyrian and Aramaic personal names are borne by a substantial number of individuals mentioned in the texts.

³) No. 1, 28-29 (Šin-na'id and Šulmānu-šangû-ušur). This is the earliest of the texts and apparently also transfers the most valuable real estate in the four documents (which could explain the presence of titled officials acting as witnesses, the longer witness list, and the more extensive use of patronyms for persons without titles or occupation designations). The same two persons, without titles, probably occur in inverse order as the first two witnesses in text no. 4, 20-21; and Šulmānu-šangû-ušur occurs also as the first witness in no. 3, 23.

⁴) *bēl āli* is a common designation for a local ruler in Assyria (CAD A/1, p. 388), but is relatively uncommon in Babylonia and then apparently only in the south (ABL 1072, r.7, and possibly r.4^r; WdO 5/1 [1969], p. 40, 8, in a generic list of titles in an eighth-century private building text). *šangû* is amply attested in early first-millennium Assyria and Babylonia (CAD Š/1, pp. 377-382), but in Neo-Babylonian witness lists the title is usually *šangû* GN or *šangû* DN (see WdO 5/1 [1969], pp. 47-48, but note that "MB" is a printer's error for "NB" in the second-last line there on p. 47). The only other person in these texts with a title is the LÚ*.A-SIG⁵ in no. 1, 36.

in this journal the historical background for the advent of Babylonian imperial power in the region.

I will divide discussion of the date formulae into four sections: (a) the date, (b) the royal name, (c) the royal titulary, and (d) the placement of the formula within the inscriptions.

The Date

ITI.APIN 2 MU.MEŠ (no. 1, 44)
 ITI.ZÍZ UD.5.KÁM MU.2 (no. 2, 35-36)
 ITI.ŠE 2 MU.ME(Š) (no. 3, 21)
 ITI.BÁR UD.10.KÁM* MU.5 (no. 4, 18)

The date itself may consist of three parts: month, day, and year. The month citations (ITI.APIN, ITI.ZÍZ, ITI.ŠE, ITI.BÁR) follow normal Assyrian—and Babylonian—usage. The indication of day is not uniform: texts nos. 2 and 4 are in accord with regular Assyrian and Babylonian custom, writing UD-*n*-KÁM⁵, but texts nos. 1 and 3 omit the day. Such omission is attested rarely elsewhere in Neo-Assyrian legal texts⁶, but only very rarely in Babylonian legal documents of the time⁷. The writing of the regnal year formula is unusual in all the texts: it appears as MU *n* (without KÁM) in nos. 2 and 4 and as *n* MU.MEŠ in nos. 1 and 3. It is not surprising that the changeover from Assyrian dating by eponym to Babylonian dating by ordinal regnal year should occasion scribal confusion; and “year 2” (no. 2), “year 5” (no. 4), and “2 years” (nos. 1 and 3), while improvisations, are nonetheless comprehensible. Dating by ordinal regnal year was not unknown in Assyria in the seventh century⁸, but may not have penetrated to the world of the provincial scribe. Roughly contemporary Babylonian usage of MU *n* (without KÁM) is known, but quite uncommon⁹. It is worth noting that the same two texts (nos. 1 and 3) both omit the day portion of the formula and write “2 years”¹⁰. All four texts were written by the same scribe, and the variations seem to reflect a choice among alternatives rather than the scribe’s gradually learning a more appropriate designation for regnal years¹¹.

The Julian equivalents of the dates are as follows:

⁵ “*n*” in this paragraph, as cited in date formulae, stands simply for “(any) number”.

⁶ E.g., SAA 6, 39, r.10; 203, r.2'; O. Muscarella (Ed.), *Ladders to Heaven*, no. 84, 11.

⁷ E.g., YBC 7399 (JCS 36 [1984], p. 63, no. 25, 15), dated under Sin-šar-iškun.

⁸ E.g., SAA 6, 90, 16; 177, 19; 180, r.1.

⁹ E.g., TuM 2-3, 66, 4; YOS 17, 266, 5. Cf. Assyrian SAA 6, 90, 16.

¹⁰ These texts are both land sales to Adad-aplu-iddina; and these are also the only two texts in the group which have Aramaic notations (containing the names of the persons selling the property).

¹¹ The more atypical formula 2 MU.MEŠ (“2 years”) is used as late as text no. 3, which is dated in the month after text no. 2 (containing the more nearly conventional MU 2, “year 2”, with KÁM alone omitted).

No. 1	ITL.APIN 2 MU.MEŠ	Nov. 13-Dec. 12, 603
No. 2	ITL.ZÍZ UD.5.KÁM MU.2	Feb. 14, 602
No. 3	ITL.ŠE 2 MU.ME(Š)	Mar.12-Apr. 9, 602
No. 4	ITL.BÁR UD.10.KÁM* MU.5	Mar. 28, 600 ¹²

The Writing of the Royal Name

^{1d}PA-NÍG.DU-PAB (NOS. 1, 45; 2, 36; 3, 22; 4, 19)

The writing of the elements of the royal name is done according to standard Mesopotamian conventions in use in both Babylonia and Assyria. Royal names are sometimes preceded by the masculine personal determinative in both countries. Writing of the divine name *Nabû* as PA, the element *kudurri* as NÍG.DU, and *-uṣur* as PAB are also conventions commonly used in both lands. Babylonian scribes writing the name of Nebuchadnezzar II, however, by a wide margin prefer AG to PA and by a somewhat smaller margin prefer ŠEŠ to PAB. When Babylonian scribes use the shorter sign PA to write the royal name of Nebuchadnezzar II, they very frequently omit the masculine personal determinative as well. Thus the writing of the royal name in the ŠĒḫ Ḥamad texts uses a combination of conventions that, taken together, are considerably more common in Assyria than Babylonia; and, in a search of more than 1,500 Babylonian documents written in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, I have been able to find only three instances of the writing attested in the ŠĒḫ Ḥamad texts: ^{1d}PA-NÍG.DU-PAB in BE 8, 10, 18; TuM 2-3, 73, 16, and YOS 17, 320, 16¹³. These three texts, dating between years 6 and 10 of Nebuchadnezzar II, are almost contemporary with the ŠĒḫ Ḥamad documents; and they were all either written in or excavated at Nippur. Thus present evidence indicates that the writing of the royal name Nebuchadnezzar in the ŠĒḫ Ḥamad texts is done in a fashion more typical of Assyrian than Babylonian style¹⁴.

¹²⁾ These are the equivalents of Babylonian dates according to Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75*, which would presume that by this time Babylonian and Assyrian intercalary months were being inserted according to the same timetable (which has yet to be demonstrated).

¹³⁾ The search was relatively comprehensive, since it covered more than 90% of the published documents dated under Nebuchadnezzar listed by M. Dandamaev, *Slavery in Babylonia*, pp. 8-9. Almost the same writing, but lacking the masculine personal determinative, occurs in a few more texts, e.g.: CT 56, 591, 14; CT 57, 653, 2; Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Nabuchodonosor*, 65, 15; 181, 8; 441, 15; UET 4, 130, 7; YOS 17, 334, 6.

¹⁴⁾ The name Nabû-kudurri-uṣur occurs infrequently in Assyrian texts, except when referring to Babylonians. The personal name of a Nabû-kudurri-uṣur written ^{1d}PA-NÍG.DU-PAB occurs in the legal text ADD 50, 10 (=T. Kwasman, NALK, no. 388).

The Titulary

MAN URU.KÁ.[DINGIR(.KI)] (no. 1, 45)

MAN URU.KÁ.DINGIR.KI (no. 2, 37)

MAN URU.KÁ.DINGIR (no. 3, 22)

MAN URU.KÁ.DINGIR.KI (no. 4, 19)

The designation “king of Babylon” for Nebuchadnezzar is standard titulary used in the date formulae of legal and administrative texts in Babylonia during the time of the Nabopolassar dynasty. But the style of writing here too reflects Assyrian rather than common Babylonian usage. The writing of *šar* as MAN is much more frequent in Neo-Assyrian legal and administrative texts than in comparable Babylonian documents, where LUGAL is overwhelmingly preferred. MAN does occur in such Babylonian texts, but is comparatively rare¹⁵. The writing of the geographical name as URU.KÁ.DINGIR(.KI), according to present evidence, seems also to be Assyrian. The writings with and without KI are paralleled, though not common, in Neo-Assyrian¹⁶. URU.KÁ.DINGIR also occurs infrequently in Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions¹⁷, and the URU determinative occurs regularly before the geographical name, however written, in that period¹⁸. It is worth noting that the URU determinative before the name of Babylon occurs also in texts from northern Mesopotamia in the OA/OB period, in texts from Rimah¹⁹, though the syllabic writing *a-lam* KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI in a text from Aleppo²⁰ raises the possibility that not all such occurrences of URU need be interpreted as determinatives. The core of the Middle Assyrian-Neo-Assyrian writings with KÁ.DINGIR.KI (prescinding from the initial determinative) rather than KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI reflects the earliest clear²¹ orthographic traditions in third-millennium southern Mesopotamia where KÁ.DINGIR.KI is used

¹⁵ E.g., ZA 62 (1972), 98, 3' (*kudurru*, Nabû-mukîn-apli, tenth century B.C.: the choice of sign perhaps occasioned by the narrow space available); IM 58184, 6' (= W. 18027, economic text, Kandaianu year 19, 629 B.C.); Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Nabuchodonosor*, 314, 19 (legal text, Nebuchadnezzar II year 36, 569 B.C.).

¹⁶ E.g.: (a) with KI: WdO 4/1 (1967), 32, VI, 1 (Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III); ABL 241, r.5' (Postgate, TCAE, p. 266); ABL 474, 14; (b) without KI: ABL 242, 20 (Postgate, TCAE, p. 268); ADD 625, 14 (= SAA 6, 287).

¹⁷ KAH 2, 61, 14 (= Weidner, *Tukulti-Ninurta*, 30, no. 17 = RIMA 1, 275, A.0.78.24); AKA 144, IV, 38 (= RIMA 2, 104, A.0.89.7, Broken Obelisk, attributed to Aššur-bêl-kala).

¹⁸ RGTC 5, 47.

¹⁹ Dalley *et al.*, *Old Babylonian Texts from Tell al Rimah*, nos. 42, 19; 135, 6.

²⁰ Dossin, *Syria* 33 (1956), 65, 12. Cf. *a-lam de-er. ki ibid.*, line 16. These could, of course, be regarded as local aberrations.

²¹ For a possible older Early Dynastic occurrence in YOS 9, 2, 2', see George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, p. 253.

during the Akkad dynasty²² and occurs more commonly during the Ur III period than the longer alternative²³. The shorter KÁ.DINGIR.KI is rare in the south during the Old Babylonian period²⁴ and, in so far as I am aware, is totally lacking in Middle Babylonian. It is attested once again, but rarely and without the URU determinative in Neo-Babylonian times²⁵. The determinative URU is occasionally used before writings of Babylon in Middle Babylonian²⁶, but then is uncommon in Neo-Babylonian before 539 B.C., confined for the most part to royal inscriptions of the Nabopolassar dynasty²⁷ and not thus far attested in legal or administrative texts before the reign of Nabonidus²⁸; and in both periods it does not occur in combination with KÁ.DINGIR.KI. Thus the writing of both elements in the title MAN URU.KÁ.DINGIR(.KI) reflects Assyrian style, though the title itself is obviously Babylonian and designates Babylonian rule.

The Placement of the Date Formula

The date formula occurs after the witness list in the two earlier texts (nos. 1-2)²⁹ and before the witness list in the two later texts (nos. 3-4). This positional variety was admissible in the range of earlier Neo-Assyrian legal documents³⁰, but I have not yet found a Neo-Babylonian legal text where the principal date precedes the witness list.

Conclusion

It has been seen that the date formulae in the four Šēḫ Ḥamad documents, while indicating subordination to Babylonian rule, reflect an Assyrian or local idiosyncratic

²² RA 4/3 (1897), pl. V following p. 84, no. 13, r.6' = Thureau-Dangin, *Recueil de tablettes chaldéennes*, no. 118 = Thureau-Dangin, SAKI, 225. II c = RIME 2, p. 183 (k).

²³ RGTC 2, 21-22.

²⁴ CT 2, 1, 2; 6, 2.

²⁵ E.g., VAS 4, 3, 18 (legal text, 659 B.C.); ABL 852, r.5; UET 4, 179, 5; TuM 2-3, 108, 3; Durand, *Documents cunéiformes de la IV^e Section de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, vol. 1, no. 469, '4'; IR, 55, IV, 47 (= VAB 4, 130).

²⁶ RGTC 5, 49.

²⁷ E.g., PBS 15, 80, I, 13.

²⁸ The alleged exception in AfO 16 (1952-53), pl. V following p. 196, no. 6, 6, cited in RGTC 8, 53, actually reads URU.DÙG (not URU.TIN.TIR). URU does, however, occur in a few Neo-Babylonian Harper letters before TIN.TIR.KI (ABL 468, 10; 780, 14; 1091, 2, some with restorations).

²⁹ Although the name of a single witness has been added in no. 1, 46 as a postscript after the date.

³⁰ See Postgate, FNALD, p. 10, § 1.6, where he noted a tendency of the date to follow the witness list in conveyance texts and to precede the witness list in contracts. The four documents published here, all conveyance texts, split evenly between observing and deviating from that pattern.

style in their cuneiform writing, not unexpected in an area recently subjected to Babylonia³¹. It would be helpful to find earlier or later texts in the region that would further elucidate the loss of Assyrian political power and the survival of Assyrian practice on the local level³². In any case, these four Šēḫ Ḥamad texts clearly demonstrate that Assyrian language and writing did not die with the fall of Nineveh in 612 and the eclipse of the rump kingdom in Ḥarran a few years later. Babylonian political power prevailed at Šēḫ Ḥamad, but was expressed at this time in a local idiom³³.

³¹ In addition, the use of Aramaic notations, which had become relatively common in Assyria during the course of the seventh century, was still uncommon in Babylonia at the same time (see the brief summary in Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, p. 14 fn. 53).

³² Röellig indicates the existence of two other Neo-Babylonian texts (SH 87/91⁷⁷ IV 165 and SH 86/8975 I 134) and notes that the first of these, a legal text, has a date formula featuring a royal title written in a style more customary in Babylonia itself ([LUG]AL E.KI).

³³ One hesitates to draw extensive conclusions from these texts, since they are a small collection, all written by the same scribe, and probably reflecting activity in a relatively small neighborhood. Note the occurrence of the GN Maḡdalu and the field of the Elamites in texts nos. 3-4, the river mentioned in connection with field boundaries in texts nos. 1 and 3, an individual named Adad-idrī holding neighboring land in nos. 1, 8 and 4, 9, Adad-aplu-iddina as buyer in nos. 1 and 3, Ubru-Ḥarran as a seller in nos. 3 and 4 (and possibly as first witness in 2, 25), and witnesses in common between two or more texts: Gabbi (nos. 2, 30; 3, 26; 4, 24), Idi (nos. 2, 29; 3, 27; 4, 25), Manni (nos. 1, 41; 2, 32; 3, 29; 4, 23), Mannu-kī/kā-aḥḥē (nos. 1, 42, and 3, 30, and as a seller in no. 2, 1), as well as the officials listed in fn. 3 above. Because of infrequent use of patronyms, it is not possible to demonstrate that every name mentioned in the preceding sentence represents one and only one individual; but the combination of recurring names and their near juxtaposition in several of the witness lists makes this likely. One must, however, recognize that there are probably two individuals named Adad-milki-ēreš (no. 1, 14; 1, 31) and Sin-na'id (no. 4, 2; 4, 21); but each of these doublets is within a single document and, in each case, at least one of the persons is further distinguished by a patronym. It would be premature to speculate whether these lands sales were influenced by the political climate.