[ANE] Assyrian chronology

Robert Whiting
Sun, 9 Mar 2003 16:01:10

On Wed, 5 Mar 2003 Graham Hagens wrote:
>>>
>I suggested, and do suggest, that there is reasonable primary and
>secondary evidence (including Ashur 14616C for all its faults), to
>support the hypothesis that Ashur-rabi II was a contemporary of
>Shalmaneser II,

Well of course Assur-rabi II and Shalmaneser II were contemporaries. Since they were both sons of Assurnasirpal I, and since Shalmaneser presumably only became king at the death of Assurnasirpal and since Assur-rabi could not have been born much later than 9 months after the death of Assurnasirpal, they must have been contemporaries. The question is were they king of Assyria at the same time. I can't see that there is evidence of this. It is not sufficient to say that there is evidence that supports it because it is not what theories individual pieces of evidence taken in isolation may support (which is the Von Däniken/Sitchin method) that is important at the end of the day, but rather what all the evidence, weighted according to its reliability and relevance, will support.

As far as Assur 14616c (SynKL) is concerned, the synchronisms that it presents are notoriously unreliable. However the succession of rulers that it gives agrees precisely with AKL and the eponym lists. My conclusion is that the synchronisms are wrong but that the order of rulers is correct whereas your conclusions seems to be that the synchronisms are correct but the sequence is wrong. But since AKL (with the exception of NaKL) and the eponym list agree with the sequence, I still prefer to believe that the sequence is correct.

>*(with his own local limmu officials).*

Once again, you have lost sight of the purpose of the limmu lists. Limmu lists are not meant to record the eponyms of each king. Limmu lists are not meant to record the length of kings' reigns. Limmu lists are not meant to record the filiation of kings (they don't even give it because it is not their concern). Limmu lists are meant to record the names of the years in their proper sequence. This is the entire purpose of the limmu lists. Eponym lists only contain the kings' names because the kings served as eponym. If the kings hadn't served as eponyms, their names wouldn't be in the eponym lists.

In the Old Assyrian period, the kings did not serve as eponym. Therefore the names of the Old Assyrian kings do not appear in the Old Assyrian eponym lists. This means that these lists make it possible to arrange dated texts in chronological order but make it very difficult to date a particular eponym to a particular king's reign. On the other hand, it does have the beneficial side effect that no one mistakes Old Assyrian eponym lists for king lists.

The purpose of the eponym lists means that they have no ideological function. Their sole purpose is to record the proper sequence of years so that one knows whether a particular year came before or after another and so that one can determine spans of elapsed time between one year and another. This is simply a basic requirement for doing business. Because of the system we use for keeping track of years (dating by eras), we don't think much about this problem. It is obvious to us that 1914 came before 1953 and that one is 39 years later than the other. But perhaps everyone has forgotten about the recent Y2K panic when it was widely feared that the turn of the century might mean the end of civilization as we know it because computers might not be able to tell that the year 00 actually comes after, not before, the year 99 and that there was one year difference between them, not 99.

So your claim that the Assyrians introduced parallel sets of eponyms in sequence in the eponym lists has an immediate logical inference: The Assyrians were really dumb when it came to calculating elapsed time. I find this really hard to buy and I'd hate to have to sell it myself. One of the principal uses of the eponym lists was to calculate spans of elapsed time. Assyrian kings were fond of telling how many years had elapsed since some predecessor had built or repaired some piece of architecture. Such timespans could only be calculated using the eponym lists because that is the way that

the Assyrians kept track of elapsed time. That is what makes the eponym list KAV 21-24 our most accurate source for the chronology of the 10th century and it is what allowed Postgate to say that AKL corroborated by the eponym lists forms an "insurmountable barrier" to the diddling of Assyrian chronology, at least as far back as the eponym lists go. This is true because each eponym in the list represents one year of elapsed time. If it doesn't there is no system for measuring elapsed time. And since this a logical inference of your claim that the eponym lists had two eponyms in the list in sequence for some years, your claim fails.

Now KAV 21-24 is especially set up for calculating spans of elapsed time. A line is drawn before the name of each king and above the line is written the number of years since the last line. Note that the scribe is counting 'years' (MU.ME$) not eponyms. This arrangement means that one does not have to count every eponym individually from the starting date to the ending date (a procedure that is extremely susceptible to miscounting), but only has to count to the next drawn line and then add the numbers before all the following drawn lines up to the section where the ending date is and then count the number of years from there (of course one could also go in the other direction with equal ease).

Again we can note that the sections divided off by lines and "pre-counted" begin with the name of a king and end just before the next king. If the king always took the eponymate in the same year of his reign, then the ruled sections would correspond to the reign length (but would not include the eponyms that actually belonged to the reign since there is general agreement that the king normally took the eponymate in the second year of his reign [see Poebel, JNES 2, 71ff]).

But the number of years counted does not have to correspond to the length of the reign because there may have been circumstances which caused a king to take up the eponymate earlier or later than normal. And the important thing is that the eponym list doesn't care because it is not recording reign lengths. It is simply recording the year names in sequence and the division into pre-counted sections is just for ease of use and making the divisions at the eponyms of kings is just a convenient way of dividing it. Thus the totals in the eponym blocks in KAV 21-24 may be different from the reign lengths in AKL and it may be that neither of them is wrong (although in the fully preserved part of the eponym canon the eponym blocks and the reign lengths in AKL agree in every single case). But you can pretty much count on the number of eponyms matching the number of elapsed years or else the Assyrians had no way to measure elapsed time.

In line with this, I will take the opportunity to respond to some points that you raised earlier in a discussion with Ian Hutchesson and that I had intended to reply to earlier.

On Sun, 2 Mar 2003 Graham Hagens wrote:

>The AKL and Eponym lists are held in extraodinary reverence by
>students of ancient history for very good reason. For many
>periods they are the only near contemporary source of
>chronological information. In some cases we rely on a single
>entry from a single exemplar to support chronology (e.g.
>Ashurnasirpal I's 19 years found in only one exemplar which - to
>quote Brinkman - 'may be in error').

This is not a good e.g. Assurnasirpal I's reign is attested as 19 years in KhKL and in KAV 21-24 the eponym block before Shalmaneser II shows a total of 19 years. KAV 21-24 continues with the 12 years of Shalmaneser II, followed by 6 years for Assur-nerari, and then starts in on the reign of Assur-rabi II before it breaks off. Considering the function of eponym lists, it is simply not possible that these are parallel years.

And then:

>My purpose is to demonstrate that "Reasonable Doubt" about the
>Assyrian data during the 10th century exists. Thus my quip
>about "50% probability being enough". I don't have to prove
>that there was dynastic overlap - I only have to demonstrate
>that Assyriologists cannot prove there wasn't. That is enough
>to give historians permission to explore other options.
>Permission.

You must realize that this is precisely the same as saying that you don't have to prove that Santa Claus exists - you only have to demonstrate that no one can prove that he doesn't for there to be reasonable doubt. I don't see how this gives a 50% probability that Santa Claus exists. You may believe it, but I don't. Plausibility again.

Besides, Assyriologists can prove that there is no overlapping. The eponym list KAV 21-24 proves it. Assyriologists have already said this. The fact that you don't believe them because you don't understand the purpose of eponym lists and think that they are just another form of king list doesn't change anything. Saying that because the eponym lists and AKL agree they are both wrong is simply not a plausible statement. But, to be fair, if you can come up with

any other example where a society that used year names to keep track of time (Old Akkadian, Sumerian, Old Babylonian, Athenian, Roman) counted the same years twice in their canonical time reckoning device, I would be willing to consider that the Assyrians might have.

Then:

>Second: there is an anomaly in KAV 21 - Ashur-nirari is given 6 >reign years, but no eponyms. Now why do you think that may be? >My theory: T-P II bumped him.

There are two reasons why the _limmu $a arki ..._ "eponym which is after ..." is used. One is when the scribe does not know the name of the eponym. The other is when there was no eponym appointed that year. In general, see M. T. Larsen, RA 68 (1974), 21-24. But the problem with your analysis of the "anomaly" is that you are once again only looking at part of the evidence and evaluating in isolation from its context.

The eponym block for Assur-nerari IV in KAV 21-24 reads as follows:

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1.a$-$ur-ERIM2.GABA [MAN]       Assur-nerari, [king]
$a EGIR 1.a$-$ur-[ERIM2.GABA]   after Assur-[nerari]
2   "       3 [  "  ]          second ditto -- third [ditto]
4   "       5 [  "  ]          fourth ditto -- fifth [ditto]
6 MU.M[E$]                      6 years
---------------------------   ---------------------------
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As you point out, this is anomalous. First, it it possible that no eponym was appointed for 5 consecutive years? Well, considering the disruptions of the period, it is not impossible, and taking this information in isolation we might consider it. Is it possible that Tiglath-pileser II has removed the names of Assur-nerari's eponyms while leaving Assur-nerari's name itself and the six years of his reign in the eponym canon? Well, sure, anything's possible. But it is only the kind of possibility that would be believed by a New Chronologist.

But if we go back and look at KAV 21-24 again, we will see (at least we will if we can read cuneiform) that the last year of Shalmaneser II is also a _$a arki_ eponym. Is it possible that no eponym was appointed in this year either? Since (under normal circumstances) this year would actually have been the first year of Assur-nerari, it would mean that no eponyms were appointed during his reign except

for taking the eponymate himself in his second year. Since the eponym for his first year would already have been selected when he became king (which is why new kings only took the eponymate in their second year in the first place) the lack of this eponym cannot be related to Assur-nerari but must have some other explanation. Is it possible that T-P II stripped out this eponym as well because it belonged to the reign of Assur-nerari? Well, sure, anything's possible. But I think even a New Chronologist would have trouble with this one.

But wait -- let's go back and look at KAV 21-24 yet again. This time we see that in Tiglath-pileser II's reign the second eponym after T-P II's is an _arki_ date. Furthermore, we see that beginning 8 lines before the last eponym of the reign (immediately after a break) we find the formula already familiar from the reign of Assur-nerari:

$[a EGIR 1.x-x-x-x]	af[ter PN]
2 " [3 " x x]?	second ditto [-- third ditto more?]?

The naming of eponyms then continues normally until the end of the section. Interestingly, the fourth eponym from the end of the section is T-P II again. This second eponymate would have occurred 30 years after his first (see Millard, SAAS 2, p. 14). Since there are 3 remaining eponyms after this, this verifies the block count of 33 years.

But what are we to make of this new section of _$a arki_ dates? Is it possible that no eponyms were appointed for the _arki_ dates in the reign of T-P II either? Well, yes, but it is getting less and less likely. Is it possible that T-P II bumped himself in the same manner that you claim he bumped Assur-nerari? Well, sure, anything's possible. But even a New Chronologist would have to walk away from this one.

What then is a plausible explanation for all of the _arki_ eponyms, especially the ones that come in sequence? As I see it, the only plausible explanation is that the scribe did not know the names of the eponyms and so had to use the standard formula that scribes used in that case. Since the scribe was copying from an earlier tablet, the only way to account for all the missing eponym names is that the original tablet was damaged. Tablets often get damaged; they get chipped, cracked, gouged, and broken. For tablets where there is no other source to restore the damaged section from, the scribe usually wrote he-pi "break" and continued again after the break. This is a normal practice attested in numerous examples.

But in an eponym list, simply writing "break" and going on defeats the purpose of the list, which is to be able to calculate spans of elapsed time. If all the years are not accounted for, then the calculations cannot cross this gap. But unlike other types of tablets eponym lists also have the means to be self-restoring. While the copyist will not be able to restore the names of the eponyms, he can, by simply counting the missing lines, determine the number of eponyms missing and simply list them as _$a arki_ eponyms. This restores the list to usefulness. For calculating elapsed time, the names of the eponyms are not nearly so important as having every year accounted for. The list can still be used as long as the starting or ending date doesn't fall into one of the holes.

In the case of the present tablet, the first section of missing eponyms begins with the last year in the Shalmaneser block and continues to the end of the Assur-nerari block. The scribe knew where he was in the list and so he was able to restore the year count for Shalmaneser and the eponym of the next king, Assur-nerari. everything else became an _arki_ eponym. In the second section of missing eponyms in the reign of T-P II, which contained at least two and possibly as many as four eponyms, the scribe simply counted the number of missing lines and listed these as _$a arki_ dates. Considering the similar sizes of these breaks, I would hazard a guess that these two sections were on adjacent columns in the original tablet and the same damage to the tablet affected both columns. This damage does not necessarily have to have been on the tablet that KAV 21-24 was copied from. The reconstruction of the damaged sections might have been done long in the past and the tablet from which KAV 21-24 was copied may have already had this reconstruction which the copyist simply copied exactly as it was.

Personally, I consider this a much more plausible explanation for *all* the evidence than a conspiracy where T-P II removes the names of Assur-nerari's eponyms from the eponym list (and then rather stupidly leaves Assur-nerari's name and the number of eponyms in the list) and then does the same thing to himself so nobody will get suspicious. Of course you and the rest of the world can believe whatever you want.

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avigdor horovitz
Sat, 15 Mar 2003 21:50:38

Dear Robert,
I enter this discussion with very great trepidation, and fully admitting that I am far from being any bit of an expert in chronological matters, and haven't been reading the lengthy exchanges as carefully as perhaps I should. I hope I will not be making too much of a fool of myself by asking. This being said, I would like your comment on one particular passage, not from an Assyrian inscription but from a Neo-babylonian one, but involving Distanzangabe in any case and certainly related in principle to what you mention in this dispatch about Esarhaddon and his sources of chronological information.

In a Nabonidus inscription (NBKI 238 Nabonid 2 II 20-25 we find:
An inscription of Hammurabi, the ancient king who 700 years before Burnaburia$, had built for Shamash Ebabbara and the temple tower on the ancient foundation platform, I saw in it.

If I take Hammurabi's dates as 1792-1750 and Burnaburiash II as 1359-1333 (following Oppenheim), I have only @450 years, tops, not 700. This would indicate a typological number indicating, perhaps, some conception of Hammurabi as a legendary figure, rather than adherence to material derived from eponym lists or, year name list.
So if the Distanzangabe are literary creations in an NB inscription can they not, hypothetically, be such in NA texts as well?

In the same vein, I must ask a theoretical question which occured to me early in the discussion. Cannot the date lists or the limmu lists become literary creations at a certain point in their transmission, apart from their original purpose? This is a possibility which your interlocutors in the "new chronology" camp should certainly have thought of themselves, although I have not noticed it raised (BTW, I am not in their camp, just asking the natural question hoping you will have a good answer).

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Robert Whiting
Sun, 16 Mar 2003 21:14:49

On Sat, 15 Mar 2003 avigdor horovitz wrote:
>>>
>So if the Distanzangabe are literary creations in an NB inscription
>can they not, hypothetically, be such in NA texts as well?

Sure, hypothetically, anything is possible. But the number 700 is, as you note, is a typically typological number (how's that for a tautology?), that has been much discussed. As such, it differs from the 580 years of Esarhaddon or the many other "Distanzangabe" to be found in Assyrian royal inscriptions.

There are manifold reasons why the Babylonians were not capable of the degree of precision in calculating spans of elapsed time that the Assyrian were.

First, the kingship of Babylonia was not a continuous tradition as the Assyrian was, nor was the Babylonian state a continuous entity as the Assyrian was. The First Dynasty of Babylon was brought to an end by the sack of Babylon by the Hittites; and the first things the sackers head for are the palace and the temples because that's where the goodies are. In general, they carry off anything that can be carried off, smash up the rest, and then set fire to it. Assur never suffered such treatment until 614 BC. So the documents that would have permitted chronographic continuity in Babylonia may have been destroyed, whereas in Assyria they were not.

Second, the method of keeping track of elapsed time in Babylonia changed during the period involved. Up to the end of the Old Babylonian period, year names were used to date texts. This necessitated keeping lists of year names in their proper sequence for normal administrative work (see RlA, s.v. "Datenlisten") just as the Assyrians kept lists of eponyms for the same purpose. But after the OB period, Babylonian texts were dated by regnal years. This does not require a list of individual years for time reckoning. What it needs instead is a list of the kings in their proper order and the number of years that each reigned. And this is of course the form that Babylonian king lists take (see RlA, s.v. "Königslisten und Chroniken"). Again, Babylonia does not have a single continuous and uninterrupted system of timekeeping whereas Assyria does.

So the fact that a Neo-Babylonian inscription uses a "Distanzangabe" that is clearly a literary device should not -- in my opinion -- be taken as an indication that "Distanzangaben" in Assyrian texts should be considered the same way. We know that the Assyrians had everything that they needed to calculate the precise spans of time that they used in their inscriptions so they had no need to make them up. Besides, Assyrians weren't Babylonians in the same way that Romans weren't Greeks or that Germans aren't Italians.

Besides, there are "Distanzangaben" that have nothing to do with building temples. In his "Bavian inscription" (OIP 2, p. 83:48ff) Sennacherib says:

> 48 ... d=IM d=@a-la DINGIR-ME`
> 49 @a URU=E2.GAL-ME` @a 1=d=AMAR.UTU--SUM--PAB-ME` LUGAL
> 49 KUR--URI=KI a-na tar-$i 1=tukul-ti--A--E2.`AR2.RA LUGAL
> 49 KUR--a@-@ur=KI il-qu-ma a-na KA2.DINGIR.RA=KI u2-bil-lu
> 50 i-na 04-me 18 MU.AN.NA-ME` ul-tu KA2.DINGIR.RA=KI
> 50 u2-@e-$a-am-ma a-na URU=E2.[GAL-ME`] a-na a@2-ri-@u2-nu
> 50 u2-tir-@u2-nu-ti ...
>
> Adad and Shala, the gods of Ekallate, which Marduk-nadin-ahhe, king of Babylonia in the time of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, took and carried to Babylon -- after 418 years I rescued them from Babylon and returned them to Ekallate, to their places.

Sennacherib's conquest of Babylon took place in 689 so this event could not have taken place before that. 689+418 = 1107. Since this date is "in the time of Tiglath-pileser" (1114-1076), there is no problem here. Marduk-nadin-ahhe's reign, however, is taken as 1099-1082 which means that either the event described by Sennacherib must be moved down 8 years from his conquest of Babylon or some other adjustment must be made. It must be noted, however, that Marduk-nadin-ahhe is given as a contemporary of Tiglath-pileser I in both the Synchronistic History and the Synchronistic King List. See in general PNA 2/II s.v. Marduk-nadin-ahhe with further discussion and bibliography.

>In the same vein, I must ask a theoretical question which occured
>to me early in the discussion. Cannot the date lists or the limmu
>lists become literary creations at a certain point in their
>transmission, apart from their original purpose? This is a
>possibility which your interlocutors in the "new chronology" camp
>should certainly have thought of themselves, although I have not
>noticed it raised (BTW, I am not in their camp, just asking the

>natural question hoping you will have a good answer).

<snip>

Again, hypothetically, anything is possible, but I think it would be unlikely for the eponym list to be considered as a literary text so long as it was still being used for keeping track of elapsed time. Essentially because there was presumably a "master" eponym list, probably kept in the Assur temple, where the latest eponym was recorded and other copies, kept in administrative centers, were probably just updated locally when the new eponym was announced. But once you start mucking with the eponym list, you can't keep track of elapsed time anymore. I'm sure Assyrian scribes (and possibly even Assyrian kings) were smart enough to realize this. Now it is quite possible to tack on some fictitious eponyms at the beginning of the list as a literary device (cf. the antediluvian section of the Sumerian King List), but altering the sequence of eponyms or interpolating fictitious eponyms anywhere else in the list would have rendered it useless for accurately calculating spans of elapsed time.

I think the best indication that the eponym lists were not considered literary texts comes from KAV 21-24. As I have already pointed out, there are several places where the names of the eponyms could not be read. On some "Vorlage" of the text, in one place there was a block of 7 (or 8) consecutive illegible names and in another there was a block of probably 4 such names. If this were a literary text, the scribe would have simply written "break" at these points and then continued with the preserved text after the break. The fact that the scribe actually accounted for all the illegible eponyms by using the _$a arki_ formula (or by restoring the name[s] of the king[s], which he doubtless knew) indicates that the number of eponyms was important to the purpose of the text and that therefore the texts were being used to calculate spans of elapsed time rather than simply being considered a piece of literature.

So, while AKL might have been considered a literary work and may have had an ideological agenda (note the addition of Shamshi-Adad's genealogy at the beginning), I think it extremely unlikely that the eponym lists were anything other than the way that the Assyrians kept track of elapsed time.

I will close with what Alan Millard had to say in his article "Observations on the Eponym Lists" in _Assyria 1995_ (Helsinki 1997), 207:

The Function of the Eponym Lists

The Eponym Lists clearly had a different purpose from the Eponym Chronicles. The Lists surely served as ready reckoners for discovering the lapse of time between one eponymate and another, whether recent or long past. While the duration of a debt or the length of ownership of property may have been the sort of calculation for which the Lists served in daily life, the so-called _Distanzangaben_ in royal inscriptions could also be calculated from them.* The unearthing of an old building text during restoration work could lead to the question, How long ago was it deposited? The King List would indicate how many generations had passed, The Eponym List would give the precise number of years. Variation in the coverage of years and in the quality of copying between the manuscripts suggests some were carefully made for "official" or "standard" use (e.g. A1, A2, A7), others were private copies, perhaps for a single series of calculations (e.g. A3, A5).

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*See the discussion by J. A. Brinkman in _A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia_ (Rome, 1968), 83-84.

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Robert Whiting
Wed, 19 Mar 2003 01:38:05

On Fri, 14 Mar 2003 Bernard wrote:

<snip>

>Finally, on the matter of KAV 21-24 and the scribe's use of "one
>after" and "two after" to denote entries for which no names were
>available, Bob Whiting notes that these occur at the very end of the
>reign of Shalmaneser II, the entire reign of Ashur- nirari IV and
>sporadically in that of Tiglath-pileser II. He suggests:
>
><< Considering the similar sizes of these breaks, I would hazard a
>guess that these two sections were on adjacent columns in the
>original tablet and the same damage to the tablet affected both
>columns. >>
>
>I guess not. For my articles in JACF 8 I made a reconstruction of
>KAV 21-24 and I can confirm that this would not have happened in the
>copying of an identical tablet. Working from O. Schroeder's
>photograph (Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts, WVDOG
>26, 1920, pp.28-29), these rulers appear in columns IV and V. Column
>4 starts with 3+1 lines of Ashur-nasirpal I, then there are the 12+1
>lines of Shalmaneser II, then 4+1 (for format see Bob Whiting's post
>of 9th March) for Ashur-nirari IV, etc. Column V starts with about
>3 lines of Ashur-resh-ishi II (obliterated) and then goes into
>Tiglath-pileser II. The "one after" limmu occur in Tiglath-pileser's
>Years 3, 16, 26 & 27. So only the Year 16 "one after" would coincide
>with those of Ashur-nirari IV.

I'm sorry that you couldn't understand what I said or that you can't seem to visualize what the _Vorlage_ to KAV 21-24 might have looked like. Perhaps more experience of cuneiform tablets or of philological and text critical methodology might have helped. Perhaps a picture will help. If KAV 21-24 was copied from a tablet with the the same format, then the damage wouldn't have been on that tablet. If it had the same format, the reconstructed eponyms would already have been present. That much should be obvious. But sometime in the past, some copyist was probably faced with a tablet that looked, at least in two of its columns, something like this:

```
            i'       ii'
          _____________________
Abk   17  |         |         |       31
      18  |         |         |       32
E-A II 1  |         |         |       33
      2   |         |         |       34
S-A IV 1  |         |         |       35
      2   |         |         |       36
      3   |         |         |       37
      4   |         |         |       38
Anp I  1  |         |         |       39
      2   |         |         |       40
      3   |         |         | A-R II  41
      4   |         |         | Ari II   1
      5   |         |         |         2
      6   |         |         |         3
      7   |         |         |         4
      8   |         |         |         5
      9   |         |         | T-P II   1
     10   |         |         |         2
     11   |         |\\\\\\\\\\|         3
     12   |         |         |         4
     13   |         |         |         5
     14   |         |         |         6
     15   |         |         |         7
     16   |         |         |         8
     17   |         |         |         9
     18   |         |         |        11
Anp I 19  |         |         |        12
Sh II  1  |         |         |        13
      2   |         |         |        14
      3   |         |\\\\\\\\\\|        15
      4   |         |         |        16
      5   |         |         |        17
      6   |         |         |        18
      7   |         |         |        19
      8   |         |         |        20
      9   |         |         |        21
     10   |         |         |        22
     11   |38th line |38th line |        23   46+23=69
Sh II 12  |\\\\\\\\\\|\\\\\\\\\\|         24
A-N V  1  |\\\\\\\\\\|\\\\\\\\\\|         25
      2   |\\\\\\\\\\|\\\\\\\\\\|         26
      3   |\\\\\\\\\\|\\\\\\\\\\|         27
      4   |\\\\\\\\\\|          |         28
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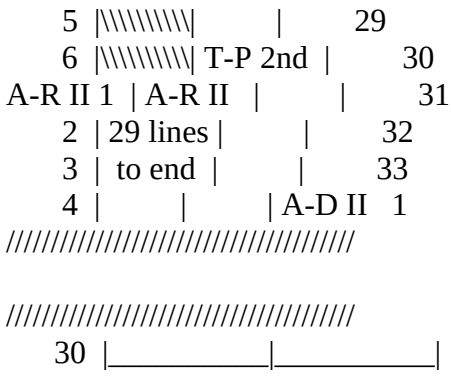
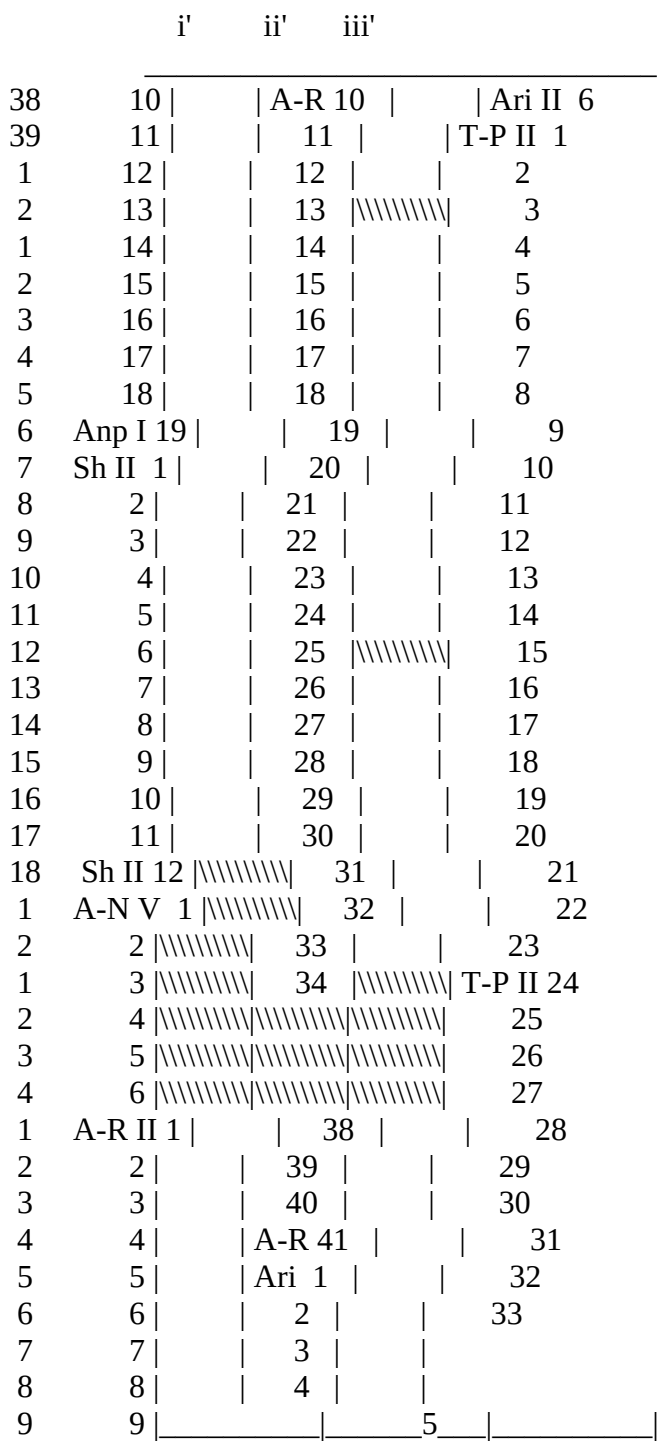


Some assumptions: This tablet would have lacked the totals at the end of each eponym block. Since of the 9 manuscripts of the eponym lists preserved only A7 (KAV 21-24) has these totals, this is likely. Eponym blocks would have been marked by a ruling before the eponym of a new king. This is a common feature of eponym lists.

This first layout has about 75 lines per column which is somewhat more than KAV 21-24. If column i' was actually column ii of the tablet, then the tablet would have begun with the reign of Assur-re$-i$$i I and col. i would have had 75 lines (18+39+2+16; Ari I 1 to Assur-bel-kala 16). Col. ii would also have had 75 lines (2+2+4+19+12+6+30; Abk 17 to Assur-rabi 30). The approximate number of lines per column is determined by the distance between the two damaged areas. Since the first damaged area ends just before the eponymate of Assur-rabi II and the second damaged area begins after the 23rd eponym after T-P II (by my count), there are 69 lines between the two damaged areas. The precise relationship of the two areas would depend on the exact number of lines in the columns. I have reconstructed it so that the number of lines in the first two columns would be the same if the tablet began with the eponym of Assur-re$-i$$i I. Other arrangements would be possible if there were more columns before the one containing the damaged areas. There probably would have been damage to the preceding column as well, probably around the 10th eponym after T-P I, but we have no evidence of this because KAV 21-24 is not preserved in this area.

Alternatively, the tablet might have had fewer lines per column and the damage may have covered at least three columns. In this case there would probably have been damage in the eponyms of Assur-rabi II as well, somewhere between the 30th and 38th eponym of the block. This could account for the fact that Weidner estimated 45 years for the combined reigns of Assur-rabi and Assur-re$-i$$i on the basis of KAV 21-24 whereas the total is actually 46. If there had been 3 damaged eponyms, the scribe would have used only 2 lines for them if he continued with the same formula already observed. The three

columns would have looked something like:



In this layout, the tablet probably would have had 5 columns and have begun with the eponym of T-P I. Col. i would have had 37 lines (T-P I 1-37), col. ii 37 lines (T-P I 38 - Anp I 9), col iii

(= i') 37 lines (Anp I 10 - A-R II 9), col. iv (= ii') 37 lines (A-R II 10 - Ari II 5), and col v (= iii') whatever. Again, there may have been similar damaged areas in the first two columns, but there is no evidence to confirm or deny this.

These are basically the only two layouts possible since multi-column tablets with fewer lines than this just don't occur.

>Indeed, the "missing" officials of Tiglath-pileser II are widely
>separated whereas those at the end of Shalmaneser II's reign and
>for the duration of Ashur-nirari IV are all in one bunch.

Again, more experience with cuneiform tablets would have helped you here. The spacing of the tablet and the reconstruction of the reverse (see S. Zawadzki, SAAB 8 [1994]), suggest that there is only one full line missing in the gap between the traces of the 8th eponym after T-P II in col. v of KAV 21 and the first trace of an eponym in col. v of KAV 22. Therefore to get the count of 33 eponyms for the block it must be assumed that there have to be three eponyms accounted for in the numbered _$a arki_ line following the _$a arki_ line found 8 lines before the last eponym of the block. In any case, there cannot be less than two eponyms represented by this line because there cannot be more than two lines missing in the gap between the two pieces. Furthermore, the spacing of the line indicates that there was at least one more eponym on the line. In my posting of 9 March I gave the following reconstruction:

> *$[a EGIR 1.x-x-x-x] af[ter PN]*
> *2 " [3 " x x]? second ditto [-- third ditto more?]?*

This was based on a quick look at the copy (not a photograph, by the way), and indicated that there were doubtless two eponyms on the line and possibly three. After a more detailed investigation, as outlined above, I am quite confident that the reconstruction should be:

$[a EGIR 1.x-x-x-x] af[ter PN]
2 " [3 " 4 "] second ditto [-- third ditto -- fourth ditto]

>I would find the "damaged original" theory much more credible if the
>beginning of the next reign, that of Ashur-rabi II, was also in poor
>condition.

Well, you can have your wish. I'm sure you must have picked up enough about eponym lists by now to know that the king normally took the eponymate in the second full year of his reign. This means that

the last eponym in the Assur-nerari block actually belonged to the first year of Assur-rabi's reign. Furthermore, it is possible that the name of Assur-rabi had been damaged as well since the scribe would have been able to restore it and we wouldn't know the difference.

>But it was not: in early reign this king's eponyms are clearly
>preserved. It seems too much of a coincidence that, as a king
>completely unattested outside of the chronicle traditions,
>Ashur-nirari IV is the one ruler for whom no eponyms are known.

I'm sorry, but damage to tablets just doesn't take cognizance of such things. It seems clear to me that there were seven consecutive eponyms (and possibly eight) on the _Vorlage_ that were illegible and 69 or so lines later there was another block of four eponyms that were illegible. The scribe who made the restoration was able to determine the number of damaged eponyms but not the names (except for the kings, whose names he could restore from his own knowledge).

>Since the scribe had no information concerning the names of
>officials for Ashur-nirari IV, there must be a possibility that the
>line giving the total was also unreadable or missing. In which case,
>the scribe will have determined the duration of the limmu period for
>Ashur-nirari IV from some other source... perhaps a king list?

In all probability the line giving the total was not on the _Vorlage_ of KAV 21-24. KAV 21-24 is the only exemplar of the eponym list that has this feature. KAV 21-24 is especially designed for doing long-range calculations by having the eponym blocks "pre-counted" so that it was not necessary to do a line-by-line count of several hundred lines.

Again in all probability, the missing lines were only damaged, not completely destroyed. The drawn lines before the names of the kings were probably still partially visible. The scribe, who probably was not particularly stupid, would know the names of the kings that came after these lines, and could count the number of eponym lines that were damaged. That is all he would have needed to produce the text found in KAV 21-24 from a _Vorlage_ that looked like either of the possible reconstructions that I have given above.

****

Robert Whiting
Wed, 19 Mar 2003 22:36:

On Sun, 9 Mar 2003 Graham Hagens wrote:

<snip>

>Yes. Ungnad (RdA): "wurden in Assyrien die Jahre nach einem
>staatlichen Wurdentrager, einem Eponymen, benannt". ... However: do
>we know for a fact that two competing monarchs would agree on a
>common dating nomenclature?

Doubtless they would not.

>Could they not have asserted their independance by naming their own
>officials

Of course they could, and, more importantly, undoubtedly would.

> - this would be another reason to align the kings sequentially in
>the king and eponym lists.the warring popes of the

No it would not. There is clear evidence in both the eponym list and the king list that this was not the case. I don't know what the warring popes have to do with it, but when it can be attested that there are competing rulers (e.g., the revolt of Assur-da"in-aplu against Shalmaneser III and Shamshi-Adad V from 826 to 820), or joint rulers (Assur-nerari III and Nabû-dan) as in Poebel's "[smal]l kings" episode, they are simply ignored by the king list and the Eponym Canon. Despite the fact that the revolt of Assur-da"in-aplu lasted 6 years according to the eponym chronicles, and despite the fact that 27 cities, including Assur and Nineveh, sided with him according to an inscription of Shamshi-Adad V (RIMA 2 A.0.103.1 i 39), there is no trace of Assur-da"in-aplu in either the king list or the eponym lists. Since Assur-da"in-aplu controlled Assur, and hence the Assur Temple, he doubtless both declared himself king and appointed his own _limmu_-officials. But as you have quoted Grayson as saying: "In periods of political confusion the list tends to adhere to the theory of a single line of descent and frequently ignore rival claimants to the throne." This is precisely what has happened here. The rival claimant to the throne, even though a son of Shalmaneser, and even though he outlived him, and even though he held Assur and Nineveh, was simply ignored by the list.

I have earlier pointed out that in the alleged "[smal]l kings" episode there is no trace of Assur-nerari's co-[smal]l king, Nabû-dan, in the king list.

So the evidence clearly shows that both before and after the place

where you want the king list (and the Eponym Canon) to have listed contemporary claimants to the throne sequentially, the king list has done no such thing (and in the after case, nor has the Eponym Canon). Clearly, and as Grayson has pointed out, had Shalmaneser II and Assur-rabi II been contemporary claimants to the throne, only the winner would have gone into the king list and only the winner's eponyms would have gone into the Eponym Canon. Since they are both present, both in AKL (except for NaKL) and the Eponym Canon, I have to reject the claim that they were contemporary rivals for the throne because it is not consistent with the context of the king list or the Eponym Canon and because it destroys the value of the Eponym Canon as a chronographic device.

>*Robert Whiting wrote Sunday, March 09:*
>
>>*The purpose of the eponym lists means that they have no ideological*
>>*function. Their sole purpose is to record the proper sequence of*
>>*years so that one knows whether a particular year came before or*
>>*after another and so that one can determine spans of elapsed time*
>>*between one year and another. This is simply a basic requirement*
>>*for doing business.*
>
>*In my hypothesis we had two provinces separated by an entrenched*
>*Aramaean confederacy. These provinces conducted their own business.*

And it is a beautiful hypothesis. All it lacks is evidence.

>*Also: only the first seven eponym's of Ashur-rabi II's reign are*
>*extant. Following that we only have lines (estimated by*
>*interpolation).*

The number of missing lines is fairly exactly determined by the size and layout of the tablet and by the precise reconstruction of the reverse. So what do you suppose was in the missing lines? Were they blank? Did they contain recipes or Assyrian drinking songs? Or did they contain one eponym per line plus a line giving the total of each eponym block as in the rest of the tablet? Work this one out using probabilities.

And then on Fri, 14 Mar 2003 **Bernard** wrote:

>*On 9th March Bob Whiting replied to Graham Hagens, concentrating on*
>*the latter's ideas for parallel eponyms during the 10th century*
>*reigns of Shalmaneser II and Ashur-nirari IV. Bob Whiting wrote:*
>
>>< *Limmu lists are meant to record the names of the years in their*

>proper sequence. >>
>
>and later continued:
>
>>< Their sole purpose is to record the proper sequence of years so
>that one knows whether a particular year came before or after
>another and so that one can determine spans of elapsed time between
>one year and another. This is simply a basic requirement for doing
>business. >>
>
>This is my understanding also but I have a question to ask. Where an
>instance of multiple eponymy occurred, how was this recorded in the
>eponym listings?

The answer to that is that I don't know because there are no examples to show. What the eponym listings show is that there was one eponym listed per year of elapsed time. When there were multiple eponyms in one year, I don't know how the decision was made as to which one went into the Eponym Canon. But only one went in. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to find eponym dates on texts that aren't in the Canon. See my (very brief) comments on extra-canonical eponyms in SAAS 2, p. 78. The example of Paqaha might suggest that if the _limmu_-official was unable to continue in office for some reason (like being dead) then it was the one who replaced him and ended the year who went into the Canon. Or it might be that the one who held the office for the greater part of the year became the canonical eponym. When there were rivals for the throne appointing their own _limmu_-officials, the answer would seem simple and based on a fairly constant principle: The winner's eponyms go into the Canon.

<snip>

>I have to ask if there was more than the one tradition. For
>example, consider the canon Ca2. This gives Tukulti-Ninurta II a
>6-year limmu period whereas the Assyrian King List (AKL) and the
>canon STT 1, no. 47 give a 7-year reign and 7-year limmu period
>respectively. Before STT 1, no. 47 was discovered (O. R. Gurney & J.
>J. Finkelstein, The Sultantepe Tablets 1, 1957) it used to be
>thought that the eponyms Yari and Naid- ili were office-holders in
>one and the same year (see R. Ungnad in RlA, 1935, p. 418): nowadays
>they are thought to have been consecutive - as shown in STT 1, no.
>47.
>
>Of course, the alternative is that one or other of these canons is
>in error and that a scribe has copied a tablet incorrectly, giving

>rise to the impression of variant traditions. For the sake of
>argument, let us suppose that the 7-year limmu listing was the
>original (and ultimately correct). If the scribe copied this
>listing, omitting in the process the name of one eponym, the
>resulting record would show the names of 6 limmu and a span of "7
>years". The scribe should not have amended the line giving the
>duration of the limmu period because this would be contrary to his
>normal practice. Indeed, the presence of the line giving the total
>would be a great help in proof-reading, showing up at once
>discrepancies caused by errors of omission. If the scribe could not
>find the name of a "missing" eponym he would have added a line with
>a "one after" entry, this also being his normal working practice.

If you look at the tablet (A2), you will see that there are no totals for the eponym blocks given, so the scribe had no quick means of telling that he had dropped an eponym. Source A7 (KAV 21-24) is the only exemplar that has totals for the eponym blocks.

>I no longer think an error in the other direction (i.e. the creation
>of a 7-year limmu period out of an original 6-year one) is likely
>since - as per Bob Whiting's description of the working process -
>the scribe would have had to wilfully alter the figure for the
>duration of the limmu period. My only proviso is this: if it was
>reasoned that multiple eponymy never occurred and the scribe
>possessed the names of 7 limmu for this reign, he may have decided
>that the 6-year limmu period was incorrect and that the tablet he
>was copying contained a simple mathematical error. This is a big if
>- but the only alternative I can think of is the postulate of
>variant traditions in eponym listings.

There are no totals for the eponym blocks given in A2, so mathematics doesn't come into it. The problem was that A2 was originally the only preserved source for this period and that the eponym Na'id-ilu was used (twice) as a date in the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II but did not appear in its proper place in A2. Poebel wasted almost two pages trying to rationalize this in JNES 2, 73-74. When source A8 was discovered at Sultantepe, it became obvious that the omission of Na'id-ilu in A2 was a simple copyist's mistake, of the same type as the omission of Shalmaneser II in NaKL. Of course this meant that anyone using this list would come up one year short if his calculation spanned this error.

>I came back to this idea recently because Bob Whiting had written
>in an earlier post that the reign-lengths given in the AKL have been
>derived from information in the eponym listings. However, as I
>noted, the Nassouhi and Khorsabad king list traditions are mutually

>exclusive in respect of certain reign-lengths. If indeed the AKL
>reign-lengths were obtained from eponym listings, would this not be
>evidence for variant traditions of the same?

What Bob Whiting actually wrote is: "The Assyrian King list was based, at least in part, on eponym lists." I wrote this because eponym lists were the way that the Assyrians calculated spans of elapsed time. They did this for over a thousand years. At the time I wrote that I believed that this was common knowledge and an accepted fact among those with "an informed knowledge of the Ancient Near East." Subsequent events indicate that my belief was misplaced. But in any case, it is much easier and much more plausible to account for the differences between the exemplars of the king list as errors in addition or copying than to ascribe them to variant Eponym Canons.

What my comment meant, in my mistaken belief that everyone knew that eponym lists were used to calculate spans of time, was that if you were an Assyrian and wanted to calculate a span of time, such as the length of a reign, you used an eponym list. The eponym lists are not necessarily a direct source for the king list. The eponym lists are just a tool, although because kings took the eponymate and usually took it at a fixed time in their reigns (viz. the second year), the eponym blocks created by placing a ruling before each new king's eponym could be used as a shortcut to reign lengths. But scribes had to be wary of kings who did not take up the eponymate at the customary time. There must have been other sources for the king list as well because some of the information in the king list (such as filiation) is not found in the eponym lists.

>Regarding Graham Hagens's parallel eponyms, Bob Whiting concluded:
>
>>< And since this is a logical inference of your claim that the
>eponym lists had two eponyms in the list in sequence for some years,
>your claim fails. >>
>
>But I have to ask if we can really be so sure that multiple eponymy
>did not occur!

I think that we can be pretty sure that multiple eponymy did occur. But I think we can be equally sure that no matter how many eponyms a year may have had, only one eponym went into the Eponym Canon.

>For the post-canonical period, 648-612 BC, the names of more than
>50 limmu are known (Whiting apud A. R. Millard, The Eponyms of the
>Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC, 1994, pp. 72ff).

Quite so, except that I said ~50 rather than "more than 50." And if you keep reading there you will find quite a catalog of reasons that might account for additional eponyms, including the possibility of more than one eponym in a year, either sequentially or simultaneously.

>*For the 30-year reign of Shalmaneser I, Helmut Freydank (Beitrage*
>*zur Mittelassyrischen Chronologie und Geschichte, 1991) lists the*
>*names of more than 34 limmu. For the 99-year span comprising the*
>*reigns of Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I,*
>*Freydank gives the names of 104 limmu. Nor are these to be*
>*considered complete listings because I am aware of additional names*
>*of limmu from the archive at Dur-Katlimmu (Shalmaneser I /*
>*Tukulti-Ninurta I).*

<snip>

Again, it is the same thing: When one collects eponyms that belong to an era, one often comes up with more eponyms than the era calls for. The additional eponyms might be accounted for in any number of ways. But as in the case of the post-canonical eponyms, we are dealing with eponym dates on tablets, not with an Eponym Canon. No matter how many eponyms may be in use for dating purposes, only one per year goes into the Canon. Otherwise, it can't be used as a chronographic device. How intervals between extra-canonical eponyms were figured, I really don't know, but if the problem arose often enough there probably was a method for dealing with it. We just don't have the evidence to be able to tell what it was.

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Ian Hutchesson
Sun, 16 Feb 2003 20:45:00

The Assyrian king lists I would reconstruct firstly on the basis of the epigraphy. Where there is epigraphy, there are continuous generations from Ashur-uballit I to Ashur-nadin-apli (son of Tukulti-Ninurta I) which marked a time of turmoil, out of which came Ninurta-epil-akur, son of Ili-hadda (I-h's claim to fame, besides being 1) grand vizier to a previous Assyrian king and 2) king of Hanigalbat in lieu of the Mitannian dynasty, was a decendant of Eriba-Adad I). From Ninurta-epil-akur there is another chain of epigraphy down to Shalmaneser II. There is a break in the epigraphy after that for the reigns of Ashur-nirari II and Ashur-rabi II, then from

Ashur-rabi II onward continuous epigraphy returns.

We then compare the three epigraphic chains (and their implied two possibilities of an interruption) with the king lists (there are three principal lists, of which Nassouhi is the earliest -- less than 100 years after the time of Ashur-rabi II) and find a good fit of data. (See Brinkman, Or 43, p312 for discrepancies between Nassouhi and the others.) We then turn to the Synchronistic History which is an independent, if late, witness to the events and find a good fit of the data. Next, we look at the limmu lists, which, though in places very fragmentary, also provide a good fit of the data. All of these secondary sources have to be wrong in both of the only two places possible in order to entertain the possibility that chronological revision be considered seriously.

One could naturally also bring archaeological evidence to bear in the matter -- things like how Mitanni and its destruction fit into any revision, considering that Tushratta is another Amarna synchronism --, but I don't think that that is necessary to consider thus far in the chronological debate.

If a chronological revision can stand, it must do so on all fronts.