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THE DATE FORMULAE OF THE TABLETS EXCAVATED AT TELL AS-SADOUM (SEASON 2005) AND THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD BABYLONIAN KINGS OF MARAD

Abbas al-Hussainy

A number of cuneiform tablets were found in the second season of excavations at Tell as-Sadoum, the ancient Mesopotamian city of Marad. They are legal and economic documents dating to a limited period of time, extending from the reign of Sumu-(w)atar (ca. 1877 BC), the third-last independent king of Marad, to the time of the Babylonian king Sin-muballit (ca. 1812-1793 BC). Some of these texts also contain date formulae, which provide some information on the political history of Marad in the early Old Babylonian period and allow us to refine the chronology of the kings who ruled over Marad at that time.

Introduction¹

In southern Mesopotamia, from the Akkadian to Old Babylonian periods, years were usually referred to by year names. Every year was named after one or more major events. So year names, which were used both for propagandistic purposes and to date documents, record significant events of various kind, and provide us with important pieces of information concerning political history and cultic activities (Horsnell 1999a: 123-147; 2003; 2004).

Some of the cuneiform tablets that were excavated at Tell as-Sadoum, the ancient Mesopotamian city of Marad (al-Hussainy 2010: 65-66; de Boer 2013: 73-74), by the Iraqi expedition directed by the author in 2005 (second season of excavations) bear dates of this type. A number of legal and economic texts were found in Square 2, Room 12, near the temple of the god Lugal-

Marada (the principal shrine of the city)², but only few of them are dated. These date formulae from excavated tablets from Marad are presented and discussed below. In addition, the chronology of the kings of Marad will be reviewed in the light of these new data.

The Date Formulae

DF 1

mu ús-sa *ia-am-si-èl* lugal, “Year following (the year named) ‘Yamsi-El is king’” (M2,51).

This is the second regnal year of Yamsi-El³. The same date formula is attested in Simmons 1978: no. 117. Yamsi-El is known to have succeeded Sumu-numkhim on the throne of Marad and to have ruled for at least two years (de Boer 2013: 78, 85).

¹ I would like to thank Gianni Marchesi, who offered his expertise in reading cuneiform tablets and graciously revised my original manuscript, *The Civic Denotations of Unpublished Date Formulas from Tell as-Sadoum (Ancient Marad) (Season 2005)*. The published photos were taken by Khalil al-Tamimi. Absolute dates in this article are according to the so-called Middle Chronology.

² For Lugal-Marada, the patron god of Marad, see Stol 1987.

³ For this type of year name, characterized by the mu ús-sa formula, see Horsnell 1999a: 139-145. The mu ús-sa year names were usually provisional, being used before regular year names were promulgated. However, sometimes a mu ús-sa name was used even after the promulgation of the new year name as an alternative to the latter. Finally, it also happened that no new year name was promulgated; in that case the provisional mu ús-sa name remained in use throughout the year.

DF 2

mu ús-sa bàd éreš^{ki}, “Year following (the year named) ‘The city wall of Eresh’” (M2,20; Figs. 1-2).

The construction of the city wall of Eresh, an important ceremonial center consecrated to the cult of the grain goddess Nisaba (or Nissaba)⁴, was commemorated in the fifteenth year name of Sin-muballit, king of Babylon. Three different variants of this date formula are attested: 1) mu bàd éreš^{ki} sîn(30)-mu-ba-lí-îṭ ba-dù, “Year ‘Sin-muballit built the city wall of Eresh’”; 2) mu bàd éreš^{ki} ba-dù, “Year ‘The city wall of Eresh was built’”; 3) mu bàd gal éreš^{ki}, “Year ‘The great wall of Eresh’” (Horsnell 1999b: 98-99). The date formula in our text refers to the sixteenth year of Sin-muballit⁵, before it was officially renamed mu <^dsîn(EN:ZU)-mu-ba-lí-îṭ lugal-e> ^{gis}gu-za kù-sig₁₇ bára maḥ ⁴lugal-gú-du₈-a mu-na-dím, “Year ‘<Sin-muballit, the king,> fashioned the golden throne of the august dais for (the god) Lugal-Gudua’”⁶. The latter name was probably



Fig. 1. M2,20 obverse

promulgated during *Simānu* (May-June)⁷, the third month of the southern Mesopotamian calendar.

The use of a Babylonian year name in the text M2,20 implies that Marad was controlled by Babylon in the time of Sin-muballit. This fact is also confirmed by another year name of Sin-muballit, Sin-muballit 12, which celebrates the construction of the city wall of Marad by the Babylonian king (Horsnell 1999b: 97). When exactly Marad passed in the hands of the Babylonians, however, remains unclear. In point of fact, no Babylonian king claims to have conquered Marad. The only other reference to Marad in year names of Babylon is found in Sumu-la-El 3 and 4: mu ḥa-lam-bu-ú ^{gis}tukul ba-sàg, “Year ‘Khalambû was defeated’”, mu ús-sa ḥa-lam-bu-ú [^{gis}tukul b]a-sàg, “Year following (the year named) ‘Khalambû was [defe]ated’” (King 1900: no. 101 i 18-19). The Khalambû of these date formulae is almost certainly the self-same king of Marad named Alum-pi-umu (*a-lum-pí-ú-mu*) (Leemans 1966; Yuhong 1998: 224; Charpin 2004: 87). However, Sumu-la-El does not seem to have annexed Marad to his kingdom,



Fig. 2. M2,20 reverse

⁴ For Eresh and the problem of its location, see Civil 1983: 43-45; Steinkeller 2003: 624-631.

⁵ See nr. 3 above.

⁶ The reconstruction of the full form of this year name is based on Dalley, Yoffee 1991: no. 208 rev. 2: mu ^{gis}gu-za ⁴lugal-gú-du₈-a mu-na-dím; Simmons 1978: no. 161

ll. 32-33: mu gu-za kù-sig₁₇ ⁴lugal-gú-du₈-a; and King 1900: no. 101 ii 44: mu ^{gis}gu-za bára maḥ [...]. Cfr. also Horsnell 1999b: 99-100.

⁷ Note that our text is dated: iti ⁱⁱⁱsig₄.a u₂ 2-kam, “month *Simānu*, second day”, while Simmons 1978: no. 161 (cfr. previous note) has: iti sig₄.a, “month *Simānu*”.



Fig. 3. M2,138 obverse



Fig. 4. M2,138 reverse

when he defeated Khalambû aka Alum-pi-umu⁸. In fact, three kings ruled at Marad after Alum-pi-umu and before the city passed under the control of Babylon (see below).

DF 3

mu ús-sa íd-*su-mu-la-èl*, “Year following (the year named) ‘The Canal of Sumu-la-El’” (M2,138; Figs. 3-4).

This date formula recalls the twelfth year name of Sumu-la-El – mu <*su-mu-la-èl* lugal-e> íd-*su-mu-la-èl* m[u-un-ba-al], “Year ‘<Sumu-la-El, the king,> [dug] the Sumu-la-El Canal’” (reconstructed after King 1900: no. 101 i 27) – and designates Sumu-la-El year 13. The latter year was then renamed mu *su-mu-la-èl* kiš^{ki} ba-ḥulu, “Year ‘Sumu-la-El smote Kish’” (Horsnell 1999b: 52), to celebrate Sumu-la-El’s victory over Kish (Charpin 2004: 95).

The date formula on M2,138 shows that Sumu-la-El controlled Marad already in his thir-

teenth regnal year. This fact also has important implications for determining the chronology of the kings of Marad before Sumu-la-El.

Chronological Implications

The matter of the sequence and chronology of the kings of Marad in the early Old Babylonian period has most recently been discussed by Rients de Boer (2013). He proposed the following sequence and dates:

Alum-pi-umu	ca. 1890/1885-1879
Sumu-ditana	ca. 1878-1871
Sumu-(w)atar	around 1871
Sumu-numkhim	ca. 1870-1864
Yamsi-El	ca. 1864-1862
Babylon ruled Marad	ca. 1861 until at least the reign of Sabium

However, DF 3 above tells us that Sumu-la-El was in control of Marad already in his year 13, that is, 1868 BC. This fact implies that it is not possible to insert four kings of Marad between

⁸ Presumably, Sumu-la-El’s campaign aimed at re-obtaining the control of Dilbat, which had been captured by Alum-pi-umu (Charpin 2004: 87, 94-95).

Alum-pi-umu and Sumu-la-El. Accordingly, de Boer's reconstruction should be modified as follows:

Sumu-ditana	
Alum-pi-umu	?-1878 (= Sumu-la-El 3; see above)
Sumu-(w)atar	1877 ⁹
Sumu-numkhim	1876-1871
Yamsi-El	1871-1869
Babylon ruled Marad	since 1868 (= DF 3 = Sumu-la-El 13; see above) ¹⁰

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⁹ Sumu-(w)atar is also attested in one of our texts: the legal document M2,139, which contains an oath by Lugal-Marada and Sumu-watar (*su-mu-wa-ta-ar*).

¹⁰ Probably without interruptions (*pace* Charpin 2004: 87). Note that Babylon was in control of Marad also at the time of Sabium (BM 112347: oath by Lugal-Marada and Sabium [de Boer 2013: 88]) and Apil-Sin (M2,140: oath by Numušda and Apil-Sin).