

Chronology of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar III and Nebuchadnezzar IV –

In *NABU* 1993/11 M. A. Dandamayev paid attention to the documents VS 4, No. 9 (17.XI.Nbk 1), BRM 1, No. 43 (11.VI.Nbk 1) and CT 55, No. 79 (–.–.Nbk 1) which allowed him to discuss the chronology of Nebuchadnezzar III and Nebuchadnezzar IV's reigns.

The idea of assigning BRM I 43 to Nebuchadnezzar IV' reign is obviously right, however it was already recognized by F. Joannès, RA 76 (1982) 86 and Note 9 in his review of D. B. Weisberg, *Texts from The Time of Nebuchadnezzar*, YOS XVII, New Haven and London 1980 (and included in my catalogue of all texts known to me from the reign of that king). It remains for me to discuss only two other above-mentioned documents.

Dandamayev's idea that VS 4, No. 9 and CT 55, No. 79 cannot be dated to the time of Nebuchadnezzar II's reign is based on important prosopographic arguments. However the attribution of the text VS 4, No. 9 to Nebuchadnezzar III's reign (on February 1, 521 B.C. in the Julian calendar) is indisputably wrong. From the Bisitun inscription and Babylonian data we know that the rule of Nidintu-Bēl (Nebuchadnezzar III) started shortly after the death of Bardiya (i.e. after 10th of Tašritu = September 29, 522 B.C.). By taking the name of Nebuchadnezzar and by dating the texts to his « accession year » Nidintu-Bēl demonstrated his adherence to the great past and customs of his country. Darius defeated him twice, i.e. on the 26th day of Kislimu and on the 2nd day of Ṭebetu (December 13 and 18, 522 B.C. respectively). In addition the same Bisitun inscription suggests that Nidintu-Bēl was killed shortly after the second defeat (§§ 19 and 20). It is groundless to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar III changed the method of dating of his reign from *rēš šarrūti* to the first year within the same Babylonian calendar year! For that reason, if VS 4, No. 9 was copied by Ungnad correctly¹, it cannot be dated to the time of Nabuchdanezzar III.

Dandamayev's interpretation is probably based on Bardiya's documents. Although all of them must be assigned to the same Babylonian calendar year, five documents from the beginning of his rule are dated to his accession year while the all others to his first year. We know, however, that this situation was caused by unawareness of Bardiya having taken the throne in the last day of previous

Babylonian year (i.e. on 14th of Addaru according to § 19 of the Bisitun inscription). Precise information reached northern and middle part of Babylonia after the 6th day of Simanu (VS 4, No. 85) and before 23rd of the same month (Strassmaier, ZA 4, No. 4), and south of the country before the 15th of Du'uzu (GC II 132). By changing the dating of the documents from « the accession year » to the first year of Bardiya's reign Babylonian scribes corrected their error, made on the basis of an inaccurate information. There is no basis for changing the dating from the accession year to the first year in the last days of Nidintu-Bêl's reign.

There are, however, some difficulties preventing to recognize VS 4, 9 as the latest, presently known, document dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar IV. Assigning the text to the time of Nebuchadnezzar IV would have meant that the text was written on 19th of February 520 B.C. Such a dating is in conflict with the Bisitun inscription which states (§§ 49 and 50) that Nebuchadnezzar IV (Araha) was captured by the Persian army under the command of Intafernes on the 27th of November, 521 B.C. (i.e. on 22nd of Arahsamnu of his first year). It would be also in conflict with the later Babylonian tradition according to which the period of disturbances, lasted 20 months and had come to an end with the capture of Araha² and with all other Babylonian texts which, starting from the month of Tebet are dated to the first year of Darius. In such a situation we should take into account two other possibilities, i.e. that the scribe made a mistake in writing the name of the month or that two different peoples with the same name were active in Aqar-Nabû's family and assign VS 4, 9 to the first of them with the activity in the time of Nebuchadnezzar II and OECT 12, A 108 to the second person with the time of Nebuchadnezzar IV.

There is no problem with assigning CT 55, No. 79 to the first year of Nebuchadnezzar IV' reign.

Summing up : if the document is dated to Nebuchadnezzar's « accession year » we can choose only between the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II or Nebuchadnezzar III. On the other hands if the document is dated to the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, we can choose only between the first year of Nebuchadnezzar II or Nebuchadnezzar IV.

1. My personal collation of the tablet in autumn 1993 confirmed Ungnad's copy. Note, however, that in Ungnad's copy it lacks line 4 : [x x] x -^dAG A-šú [x x (x)]-šú-ja.
2. A detailed analysis of the political situation in Babylonia in years 527-521 B.C. is presented in my still unpublished article « Bardiya, Darius and Babylonian Usurpers in Light of the Bisitun Inscription and Babylonian Sources ».

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