

BM 59748, 28.XIIIa.43 S.E. : an exception to the Babylonian intercalary cycle ? – During the Hellenistic period the Babylonian calendar had a fixed intercalary scheme in a cycle of 19 years : a second Addaru in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th and 19th year and a second Ululu in the 17th year of each cycle. All dated texts from Hellenistic Babylonia fit into this scheme and can be dated without any problem by means of the lists compiled by Parker and Dubberstein¹.

The first part of the Sippar catalogue from the British Museum² mentions the tablet BM 59748³ and dates it 28th Addaru II of the 43rd year of the Seleucid Era. According to Parker-Dubberstein’s list 43 S.E. (=269/8 B.C.) is the 4th year of a cycle and has no intercalary Addaru II according to the above mentioned scheme.

A stay at the British Museum in London⁴ last October enabled me to have a look at the tablet. BM 59748 (82-7-14, 4158) is an interest-bearing promissory note and the main body of the text mentions 43 S.E. in connection with the payment of interests. The dating formula on the reverse gives Addaru II (ⁱⁱⁱDIRI.ŠE.KIN.TAR) of the year 42 S.E. : although three vertical wedges are visible, the interspace between the second and the third wedge is much smaller and must be interpreted as one stroke of a broken stylus. If one compares the reverse with the three vertical wedges of 43 of the obverse this interpretation becomes even more obvious.

BM 59748 is dated 28th Addaru II of the 42rd year of the Seleucid Era which is the 3rd year of the 19-year cycle and has an intercalary Addaru II in accordance with the scheme in use during the Hellenistic period. Composed on one of the last days of 42 S.E. the texts mentions the interest rates due from 43 S.E. onwards.

1. Parker R.A. & Dubberstein W.H., *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75*, Providence, 1956.

2. Leichty E., *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum. Volume VI : Tablets from Sippar I*, London, 1986, p. 292.

3. This tablet will be published shortly by M. Jursa as text n° 16 in his book on tithes in Babylonia in the first millennium B.C.

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