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THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN URUK DURING THE LAST YEARS OF ASSYRIAN RULE IN THE LIGHT OF THE SO-CALLED NABU-UŠALLIM ARCHIVES

The last years of existence of the Neo-Assyrian state has become the subject of numerous studies [1] since the quick decline of Assyria, which after Elam's defeat in the year 639 B.C. reached the height of its power, is suprising. Recently J. N. Postgate has came to the conclusion that Assyria's fall is closely connected with a defective economic structure of the state [2]. J. Zabłocka in turn has called attention to serious changes which occurred in Assyria in the domain of ownership relations after 652 [3]. Looking for reasons of Assyria's sudden political downfall, Wolfram von

[1] See the most important works: C. J. Gadd, *The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus*, Anatolian Studies 8 (1958), pp. 35—92; W. von Soden in the review of D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, London 1956, in: Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes (= WZKM), 53 (1957), pp. 316—322; R. Borger, *Mesopotamien in den Jahren 629—621*, WZKM 55 (1959), pp. 62—76; R. Borger, *Der Aufstieg des neubabylonischen Reiches*, Journal of Cuneiform Studies (= JCS) 19 (1965), s. 59—78; W. von Soden, *Aššuretellilāni, Sînšarriškun, Sinšum(u)līser und die Ereignisse im Assyrerreich nach 635 v. Chr.*, Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 58 (1967), pp. 241—255; J. Oates, *Assyrian Chronology 631—612 B.C.*, Iraq 27 (1965), pp. 135—159; R. Borger, *Zur Datierung des Königs Sinšumulišir*, Orientalia 38 (1969), pp. 237—239; J. Reade, *The Accesion of Sinsharishkun*, JCS 23 (1970), pp. 1—9.

[2] J. N. Postgate, *Taxation and Conscription in the Assyrian Empire*, Roma 1974, pp. 200—202.

[3] J. Zabłocka, *O własności w państwie nowoasyryjskim* (Ownership in the Neo-Assyrian State), (in:) *Własność: Gospodarka a Prawo*. Studia o marksistowskiej teorii własności, Warszawa 1977, pp. 298—299.

Soden was the first to come to the conclusion that in the latter part of Assurbanipal's rule fights broke out between his sons, Aššur-etelli-ilani and Sin-šar-iškun. These fights were also joined by the other usurpers, among them Sin-šum-lišir, who acquired the throne for some time [4].

The sources do not provide sufficient grounds for determining what extent the internal fights influenced the economic situation of the state. However, there are legal practice documents available which excellently illustrate the economic results of a fight for two Babylonian cities: Nuppur and Uruk. All these documents are characterised by the fact that they date back to the period when the cities were besieged and therefore are called "siege documents". In the case of documents from Nippur, the information that they come from the period of the siege is found in the texts, whereas in the case of Uruk documents this type of informations is included in the dating formula. Beside the wordings containing the day, month and year or ruler's reign there is a phrase (*ina*) *edel bābi* "while the gate (of the city) was closed", indicating a state of a siege. At the same time a different untypical dating was used: time-count in accordance with succeeding years of town siege with ruler's name omitted.

The Nippur documents come from private archives of Ninurta-uballit, the son of Bel-usati, whereas all the Uruk documents refer to isqu of the Eanna temple.

The documents from Nippur and other centres, known before 1955, have been analyzed by A. L. Oppenheim [5]. Nippur's siege of several months durations caused an enormous price increase (one shekel of silver could only buy one sutu of grain, while previously the prices were undoubtedly many times lower) [6] and a spectre of famine threatened the poorer population. The only solution for at least a certain part of inhabitants was to sell their own children, though the price — as estimated by A. L. Oppenheim —

[4] For the first time in *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, Bd 2, p. 118 ff.

[5] A. L. Oppenheim, *„Siege-documents" from Nippur*, Iraq 17 (1955), pp. 69—89.

[6] Cf. prices during the Neo-Babylonian period in the work of P. Garelli, V. Nikiprovetzky, *Le Proche-Orient Asiatique les Empires Mesopotamiens, Israel*, (Nouvelle Clio), Paris 1974, p. 286.

was low and oscillated from 6 to 22 shekels [7]. The basic condition of such a transaction was the purchaser's obligation to secure food for the child during the crisis.

The basis for studying the economic situation in Uruk is a group of documents found during excavation work in the area of the Eanna temple in 1960. A brief characteristic of this group from the point of view of their usefulness for establishing the chronology of over ten last years of Assyria's existence has been presented for the first time by J. van Dijk [8]. These texts were also studied for the same purpose by R. Borger, J. Oates, W. von Soden and J. Reade [9]. The studies of these authors were only based on date formulas published by J. van Dijk. A complete publication of these texts (copy, transliteration, translation) has been prepared by H. Hunger [10]. The analysis of the content of these sources makes it possible to investigate the difficult position — both political and economic — of the town; in conjunction with other sources an explanation can be attempted of why Uruk was persistently loyal to the obviously falling Assyria. Although the Babylonian throne was ascended by Nabopolassar in 626, Uruk remained faithful to Assyria till the seventh year of Sin-šar-iškun. These problems, however, are beyond the scope of the present work and will be a subject of a separate study.

[7] Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 82. A complete set of slave prices during the Neo-Babylonian period is contained in the work of M. A. Dandamajev, *Rabstvo v Vavilonii*, Moskva 1974, pp. 111—125, particularly p. 122. Cf. also P. Garelli, V. Nikiprovetzky, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

[8] *Vrlaufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft aus Mitteln der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka*, Bd 18, Berlin 1962, p. 41 ff.

[9] See works mentioned in note 1.

[10] H. Hunger, *Das Archiv des Nabu-ušallim*, Baghdader Mitteilungen V (1970), pp. 193—304; vide corrected dating of the text No 3 in J. A. Brinkman, *Documents relating to the reign of Aššur-nādin-šumi*, Orientalia 41 (1972), p. 245 and M. Dietrich, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte Babyloniens*, Die Welt des Orients VII (1972), p. 158. Dietrich also pointed out that not all documents belong in reality to Nabu-ušallim's archives, who in the light of these documents started his activities only in the year 631, see ibidem, p. 157 ff.

All the contracts concern *isqu* i.e. a determined income by virtue of performing temple functions. Isqu (Tempelpfründe, Einkommensrecht) was received by members of the narrow circle of worship personnel as well as persons not directly involved, such as brewers, cooks, fishermen, etc. A person who was given isqu by the temple was allowed to sell it, lease, pledge, divide it into parts, inherit it, etc. In any case isqu remained an income received in connection with some functions performed for the temple — together with the isqu the purchaser was taking over the duties towards the temple, resulting from the fact of possessing the isqu[11].

Twenty two texts from the Nabu-ušallim archives in Uruk refer to isqu although this term does not appear in all of them[12]. Eleven texts refer to sales of isqu; in three texts isqu appears as an object of dispute: in documents No. 14 and 15[13] the court was involved, the case mentioned in text No. 16 was terminated by an amicable agreement. In 21 document isqu ^{LU}MU-nu-u-tu[14] is involved, one deals with a brewer's isqu (^{LU}sirašūtu). Nine texts deal with the isqu of the goddess Nana[15], four with that

[11] Basic determinations relating to isqu are due to works of M. San Nicolo, *Parerga Babylonica XII*, Archiv Orientalni (= Ar Or) 6 (1934), pp. 179—202 and *Parerga Babylonica XVI*, Ar Or 7 (1935), s. 25—28. See also M. San Nicolo, A. Ungnad, *Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungurkunden*, Bd I, Leipzig 1935, pp. 87—98, 494—530, where documents relating to various forms of isqu trade are collected. See also H. Freydank, *Spätbabylonische Wirtschaftstexte aus Uruk*, Berlin 1971, pp. 29—49.

[12] In several texts the term isqu is omitted, but remaining elements are preserved, such as, above all, a mention of days when duties had to be performed towards the deity due to possession of isqu.

[13] Numbering of texts according to H. Hunger's work, see note 10.

[14] The publisher assumed proviosionally the meaning Bäckerdienst realizing, however, that lection nuhatimmūtu is for Mu-nu-u-tu not possible. It is possible that the correct lection is alahhinūtu, see H. Freydank, *op. cit.*, p. 55, note 2. With reference to alahhinu see determinations of J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud Wine Lists*, London 1972, p. 80 ff.

[15] With regard to the goddess Nana see H. Freydank, *op. cit.*, p. 58, note 2, where references are given to earlier publications.

of the goddess Kanisurra, two of the goddess Belti ša reš[16], one of the goddess Beltija and one of the goddess Ištar. In these documents the following sales of isqu are dealt with: fifteen days' isqu of the month of Nisannu (II—III), twice three days' isqu of the month of Simanu (V—VI) and three times two days' isqu of the month of Tebetu (XII—I).

As far as the chronology is concerned, the oldest text is dated 5th of Arahsamnu (X—XI) of the year 700 (No. 3) and the latest — 6th of Šabatu (I—II) of the sixth year of Sin-šar-iškun (No. 17 P), i.e. more than 70 years later. This chronological distribution of the documents is essential for the investigation of our problems because it enables us a comparison of earlier prices of isqu with those of the period of the fights. The study is facilitated by the fact that the analyzed documents contain (contrary to isqu sale or lease contracts published earlies)[17] accurate definition of price and number of days of isqu involved in the contract.

Thus, we shall evaluate the economic situation of the town during the last years of Assyrian rule on the basis of the increase in the price of isqu. As the basis of these considerations we assume the value of one day's isqu. In the case of a sale contract we can obtain this value by simply dividing the amount paid as an equivalent for the number of purchased days of isqu. In the case of silver loan we divide the amount by the number of days demanded as a security. We must assume that actual value of one day's isqu was slightly higher as some handling costa should be added because the creditor demanding a security considered also possible profit as a result of the contract. In order to protect himself against the debtor's failure to adhere to the contract the creditor tended to establish a maximum number of days of isqu as a security.

In the earliest document of the 5th of Arahsamnu (X—XI) of the year 700 (No. 3) the value of ten days' isqu of the month of Tebetu (XII—I) is estimated at 52 shekels of silver, i.e. 5,2 shek-

[16] See A. Falkenstein, *Topographie von Uruk*, Leipzig 1941, p. 4, 8, note 1.

[17] Cf. note 11.

els per day. Another document (No. 18) dated 10th Addaru (II—III) of the 7th year of Šamaš-šum-ukin (660) says that Kalumu, son of Nabu-etir lent Marduk-nasir, son of Bel-ah-iddin, 2 1/2 minas of silver and the debt was to increase by 10 shekels per each mina (i.e. 16,5 per cent). The loan was granted against a security in the form of the total of Marduk-nasir's isqu all his possessions "in the town and steppe" (i.e. outside the town). However, the number of days of isqu and the kind of remaining possessions are not specified.

To the same period refers also document No. 19 = 20 of 14th of Tešritu (IX—X) of the 15th year of Šamaš-šum-ukin (652). Erešu, son of Nabu-belani, lent 30 shekels of silver to three proprietors of isqu. The debt was to grow by 3/4 of shekel, and isqu of x days was treated as a security. In case of not adhering to the contract Erešu was to gain additionally sixteen days' isqu from the defaulters. Due to the damage of the place in the tablet stating the number of days to be treated as the security, the value of one day's isqu cannot be established. However, both necessary data are contained in another text of the same period (No. 4). Apla, son of Ubba, purchased five days' isqu[18] from the goddess Kanisurra's temple at the price of 25 shekels, which means that the value of one day's isqu amounted to 5 shekels. From the next year (651) comes a document dated 15th Ajaru (IV—V) of the 18th year of Assurbanipal: Rimut, son of Nabu-ahhe-iddin, sold his isqu to Lišir, son of Iddinna, for 6 shekels of silver. The duties to be performed for the goddess Beltija's temple by virtue of the purchased isqu should last from an unknown day of the month of Ajaru (IV—V) till the 21st day of the same month. Since the contract was negotiated on the 15th of Ajaru, the missing date must be fixed between the 16th and 19th of the month. So Rimut bought some days' isqu for a very low price.

The next document (No. 6) was issued 20 years later on the 13th of Abu (VII—VIII) of the 17th year of Kandalanu, i.e. 631.

[18] The document was made on the 23th day of an unknown month and referred to a sale of isqu of the remaining days of that month. We assume the 24th and 28th day of this month as the first and last day respectively. A possibility that it could be a month of 29 days cannot be excluded.

Nabu-ušallim, son of Bel-iddin, henceforth frequently appearing in the documents, paid to Nadinu, son of Nabu-ušallim 80 shekels of silver for 14 days' isqu of the month of Nisannu (III—IV). Thus the value of one days' isqu equals 5.3 shekels. It remains approximately on the same level in documents No. 3 (5.2 shekels) and No. 5 (5 sehekels). During a comparatively long period before the economic crisis the value of one day's isqu oscillated around 5 shekels.

In the subsequent documents the edel bābi dating appears. In the first of them (No. 7) of the 16th of Kislimu (XI—XII) "the year when the gate was closed" (MU ša edel bābi), we find the information that Nabu-ušallim purchased from Labaši, son of Gudadu half a day's isqu[19] of the month of Simanu (V—VI) for 6 2/3 shekels of silver. The value of one day's isqu amounts in this case to 13.2 shekels. The same wording MU.AN.NA ša edel bābi is also contained in document No. 8 of 2nd of Kislimu (XI—XII). Tubbušu, son of Bel-šunu, sells to Nabu-ušallim three days' isqu of the month of Simanu (V—VI) from 3rd to 5th of this month, for 51 shekels; the value of one day's isqu was now 17 shekels.

There are two documents dated to the 4th year of edel bābi. It is interesting that contract No. 9 of the 16th of Arahsamnu (X—XI) was negotiated between the same persons as in contract No. 8, and refers to a purchase of isqu of the 16th—18th day of the month of Simanu (V—VI). Such coincidences as identical contracting parties of a deal made in the same month, and the same value of one day's isqu suggest that both documents come actually from the 4th year of edel bābi. Thus document No. 9 would be issued earlier than No. 8, but both in the 4th year of edel bābi. It should be pointed out that the wording MU ša edel bābi means exactly "the year when the gate (of the city) was closed"; thus it may, but need not, indicate the first year of the siege. The identification by J. Reade of the wording MU ša edel bābi with 0 year (the year of ascending the throne) or with the first (full) year of Sin-šar-iškun's rule seems problematic.

Another document (No. 21 = 22) of the 8th of Šabatu (I—II)

[19] The text in the second line is not entirely clear.

of the 4th year of edel bābi contains the information that Ibna, son of Kuna gave Marduk-nasir, son of Bel-aha-iddin, a loan and received as a security the isqu of the first six days of the month of Tebetu (XII—I) and the borrower's property "in the town and steppe". The value of one day's isqu equals in this case 20 shekels, which — in accordance with the above suggested principle — should be slighty increased. A further price increase due to the siege is in this case unquestionable.

One text (No. 23), unfortunately badly damaged, dated 12th of Arahsamnu (X—XI) of the 5th year of Sin-šar-iškun's rule, does not mention any state of siege. Six shekels of silver was received by Labaši, son of Gudadu, from Ibni-Ištar, son of Bel-ušallim. The number of days of isqu demanded as a security is unfortunately not preserved.

During the 6th year of Sin-šar-iškun's rule prices continued to increase. In all the texts the same Nabu-ušallim is the purchaser. The first document (No. 12) of the 12th of Ululu (VIII—IX) says that he paid Marduk-nasir, son of Bel-ibni 92 shekels of silver for the isqu of 5 days of Tebetu (XII—I), i.e. 18.4 shekels for one day's isqu. Document No. 11 of 23rd of Tašritu (IX—X) says that Naid-Marduk, son of Raši-ilu received for five day's isqu of the month of Tebetu 102 shekels, i.e. 20.4 shekels for one day's isqu. In the last document (No. 10) dated to the 6th year of Sin-šar-iškun from the 6th day of Šabatu (I—II) the price of isqu of 2 days of the month of Abu (VII—VIII) amounted to 41 shekels, i.e. 20.5 shekels for one day's isqu.

There exists one more document dated to the 6th year of edel bābi, also of 6th of Šabatu. According to J. Reade, both contracts were negotiated in the same year and on the same day. However, the contents of these documents constitute a case against identifying the 6th year of Sin-šar-iškun's rule with the 6th year of edel bābi. Document No. 10 says that Nabu-ušallim purchased from Marduk-zer-ibni, son of Nabu-zer-ušabši two day's isqu — as we have seen — at a very high price. If J. Reade's idea is right, the economic situation would have to be reversed on the same day. According to document No. 17 P Nabu-ušallim gave two people a loan: Ibna, son of Bullutu and Marduk-zer-ibni, son of Nabu-zer-ušabši. The credit amounting to 58 shekels against a security

of 6 1/2 day's isqu is free of interest. It is hard to believe that Nabu-ušallim purchased isqu from Nabu-zer-ibni at a very high price and on the same day gave him a loan free of interest.

Two more texts come from Sin-šar-iškun's days, but the dating is not preserved. Document No. 24, about which we only know that it was made on the 6th of Addaru (II—III) of unknown year during Sin-šar-iškun's rule, refers to a loan of 1 1/3 minas of silver against a security in the form of isqu and all possessions of the debtor; the text is too damaged to allow any further conjectures. The second document (No. 4) of the month of Kislimu (XI—XII) mentions five days' isqu with a value of 75 shekels, which means that one day's isqu was estimated at 15 shekels. It seems therefore that this text should be dated to the 2nd or 3rd year of edel bābi.

The analyzed texts show that the siege recurring during several years caused severe economic crisis which can be judged on the example of a rapid increase in the isqu price, which was almost four times higher then the pre-crisis price.

In connection with this, three texts dealing with sale and loan against security in the form of isqu during Nabopolassar's rule are worth noting. Document No. 7 of the 7th year of his rule (619) says that Šum-ukin, son of Ahhe'a, lent three sons of Nabu-ušallim 16 shekels of silver; after one month the debt was to increase by 6 shekels per mina. Two day's isqu was established as a security, i.e. one day's isqu amounted to 8 shekels of silver.

According to another document (No. 13) of the 18th year of Nabopolassar's rule (607), Rimutu, son of Barbaru sold three sons of Nabu-ušallim five days' isqu for 68 shekels [20], i.e. 13.4 shekels per one day's isqu. In the last of these documents — 17 C — also from the 18th year of Nabopolassar, Marduk-nasir lent 12 shekels of silver to his brother Nabu-šum-usur, against the security of

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[20] The price in this text is not entirely certain, since in the forth line a figure of 1 mina and 6 shekels is mentioned, whereas in the ninth line — 1/2 and 6 shekels. The publisher assumes the first figure as the correct one, but this is not entirely certain. If the second version of the price was assumed, the value of one day's isqu should be estimated at 7.6 shekels, which is closer two remaining bits of information.

the isqu of 1 1/4 day. The value of one day's isqu is estimated at 9.6 shekels.

The data quoted indicate that after Nabopolassar's capture of the city prices were considerably reduced although they never returned to the level from before the critical circumstances. The increase in prices of isqu in the Neo-Babylonian period is in agreement with a general trend observed by H. Dubberstein [21] and P. Garelli.

Another aspect of the price increase during the crisis period should be noted. The document indicate the fact of frequent purchasing or leasing isqu in spite of considerable price increase. This phenomenon can only be explained by faultless inflow of isqu owed due to performing obligations with regard to a temple. It seems that both fighting parties preferred — apart from changing the satammu of the Eanna temple [22] — not disturb the flow of supplies to the temple, for that the temple should take the antagonist's side.

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[21] W. H. Dubberstein, *Comparative Prices in Later Babylonia*, American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures 56 (1939), pp. 20—43.

[22] Kudurru, šatammu designated by Nabopolassar and Gimillu, šatammu designated by Sin-šar-iškun, occupied the post in turn, depending on who ruled in town at a given time.

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VIGENTICIMAL SYSTEM OF COUNTING IN PASHTO

It was already in his article published in 1927 that the Soviet scholar Rosenberg [1] wrote about the preservation of vigenticimal system of counting in the region of Hindukush, the paper being entitled *Материалы по двадцатному счёту*. The system was preserved not only in the so-called Nuristani, Pamir or Dardic languages but also in Pashto. The use of the system is characteristic for most of the Pashto speakers though, as far as the frequency of applying the system is concerned, there are noticeable basic differences between the older and younger generation, the inhabitants of big towns and those living in the country as well as between the illiterate and the educated men. Nobody, however, from among the Pashto informants admitted that he did not know the system and that it was not used in his regional environment. It is difficult to arrive at the statement that would reveal the use of the system in literary norm of the language as the latter does not exist in Pashto [2]. In Kabul, however, which since a very remote time is the main scientific and literary centre of Afghanistan, there functions first of all the decimal system of counting. According to the informants, nowadays vigenticimal system of counting occurs less frequently on the provincial area than it

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[1] Розендер, Б. *Материалы по двадцатному счету* (in:) *Языковые проблемы по числительным* Ленинград 1927.

[2] Pashto dialects, a lecture delivered by M. A. Zyar during International Seminar of International Centre for Pashto Studies in Kabul, December, 1975.