


Die assyrischen Königstitel und -epitheta vom Anfang bis Tukulti-Ninurta I. und seinen Nachfolgern.


This short volume treats the royal titles and epithets from the first rulers of Assur to the end of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, with particular emphasis on the historical development of titles which imply claims of universal rule. The work continues Cifola’s Analysis of Variants (1995), which had already covered much of the same ground.

Following an introduction (pp. 1–5) and brief sketch of Old and Middle Assyrian history and royal ideology (pp. 7–18), the individual chapters provide an overview of the titles used in succeeding periods: from the Old Akkadian to the end of the Old Assyrian period (chapter 2, pp. 19–36), from Aššur-uballiṭ I to Shalmaneser I (chapter 3, pp. 37–62) and Tukulti-Ninurta I (chapter 4, pp. 63–100). The last section offers the longest excursion into other periods and regions in sketching the history of the titles šar šarrānī “king of kings” and šar kiššati “king of the universe” up to the Achaemenids. The study ends with the immediate successors of Tukulti-Ninurta I up to Aššur-rēša-iši I (chapter 5, pp. 101–4).

The main argument re-affirms the presumption that the titulary reflects political status and royal ideology. The modest titles of the earliest rulers, largely borrowed from southern Mesopotamia, are interrupted only by the grander pretensions of Samsi-Addu I’s short-lived Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia. Middle Assyrian changes are already perceptible under Aššur-uballiṭ I, gain pace with Adad-nērari I’s campaigns, and culminate in the adoption of traditional Babylonian titles following Tukulti-Ninurta I’s Babylonian conquest. The subsequent abandonment of most of these reflects the presumed collapse of the Middle Assyrian state.

The author’s work redirects focus onto the importance of the earlier periods of Assyrian history in shaping Neo-Assyrian ideology. Unfortunately, the work seldom goes beyond the superficial observations noted above. While Cifola herself (1995: 5) had pointed to the need for a more detailed analysis of the relationship between Assyrian and Babylonian royal titulary, Sazonov’s comparison is mostly relegated to general assertions of Hurrian, Hittite, and Babylonian influence (e.g., pp. 17, 19). Most attempts at further analysis are problematic. The astonishing claim that Tukulti-Ninurta I was deified (p. 86), based solely on the epithet šamaš kiššat nišē “sun(god) of all peoples” (“Sonnen(gott)” on p. 85) and a reference to the god Enlil as father, fails to draw the basic distinction between the inherent sacralization of kingship and deification.
The sources used are mostly confined to the royal inscriptions already cited by Cifola. Transcriptions and translations are sometimes unreliable: the shepherd king (rēʾû), for example, also variously rēʾu (p. 60), rēʾūm (p. 61); niṣīt Aššūr (likely derived from ina našī “to look upon with desire”) is the “anointed of Aššūr” (“Gesalbte von Aššūr,” p. 67), niṣīt Aššūr u Šamaš “the favorite of Aššūr and Šamaš” (“der Günstling von Aššūr und Šamaš,” ibid.), migir Anīm u Enlīl (“granted consent (by the gods)”) again the “anointed of Anu and Enlīl” (“der Gesalbte,” ibid.).

Despite Babylonian influence in usage, the title šarru “king” is certainly not a “Babylonian loanword” (“babylonisches Lehnwort,” p. 18), just as the logographic writing LUGAL KĀL.A.GA for šarrum dannum “mighty king” is hardly a “Sumerian variant” (“sumerische Variante,” p. 29). Remarks on the distribution of Adad-nērārī I’s epithets (pp. 55f.) fail to acknowledge that the RIMA 1.0.76.1 (= Grayson 1987) is an artificial composite of introductory sections. Similarly, the statement that style and composition of the inscriptions of Adad-nērārī I and Shalmaneser I are “almost completely identical” (“fast völlig identisch,” p. 57) misses the important shift from lengthy military epithets incorporated into the introduction under Adad-nērārī I to independent campaign narratives following the introductory section under Shalmaneser I. Evidence cited for titles of Shalmaneser I includes numerous inscriptions of his son and successor Tukultī-Ninurta I (e.g., p. 61 nn. 482–92).

In general, Sazonov’s analysis would have benefited from a critical examination of the contexts of individual titles and epithets. As Larsen (2015: 106) notes, “although there are clear traces of very ancient ideas in the Old Assyrian political and religious system, we cannot simply assume that they retained the original meaning and significance.” For example, the functions of royal titles in the Old Assyrian period are summarized on p. 22: iššīʾak Aššūr “steward of the god Assur” is the “basic” title (“Grundtitel”), (w)aklu “overseer” is used in letters, while rubāʾum “prince” and bēlum “lord” are used for other persons and not the king himself. Comparison with Larsen’s discussions of kingship in Assur (Larsen 2015: 105–11), not cited by Sazonov, clearly shows the limits to Sazonov’s approach. The title of iššīʾak “steward” is only “basic” in the sense that it sets the king’s building activities in direct relation to the god of the city. Rubāʾu “prince” highlights the king’s role as head of the royal lineage and is used, as is bēlu, in judicial contexts. Wāklu “overseer” connotes the king’s role as head of the city’s administration and of the assembly in particular.

Sazonov, again citing Cifola (1995: 20), concludes that Aššūr-uballiṭ I restored the use of Old Assyrian (w)aklu (p. 40; “diesen alten Titel wiederhergestellt”) and thus shifts focus for the rest of the discussion to more overtly universalistic epithets. A more careful review of Middle Assyrian sources again yields a more nuanced picture. As Sazonov concedes, the king continues to bear the title (w)aklu in his administrative and legal functions, as does already Aššūr-bēl-nisēšu in the pledge contract KAJ 162, and in letters. The same title is also used for the king in his status as eponym, beginning at least with Enlīl-nērārī (MARV 9, 83 rev. 10’; Freydank and Feller 2010). However, in contrast to the Old Assyrian period, both as the assembly itself and the role of the city as a political institution diminish, the title aklu can no longer be primarily defined by the relationship to either.

Sazonov’s claim of a “restoration” misrepresents the evidence. Earlier waklu was never used as a standard title in the royal inscriptions, but mostly confined to the Old Akkadian ruler Ititi (RIMA 1.0.1001, 2) and to two copies of an inscription of Erišum from Kanesh (RIMA 1.0.33,1, 1). In the latter, the exact interpretation of PA in PA A-šūr is disputed; the addition of the divine name rather suggests an abbreviated form of ENSI(PA.TE.SI). Similarly, aklu is never incorporated as a standard title in the Middle Assyrian inscriptions. It is attested on bricks from the embankment wall of Adad-nērārī I’s palace (RIMA 1.0.76.40), bricks from the palace of Adad-nērārī (RIMA 1.0.76.43), and in an inscription on both a brick and a copper axehead belonging to the palace of Adad-nērārī (RIMA 1.0.76.45), all of which suit the king’s secular roles. Three final attestations are provided by short epigraphs on jar fragments, recently discussed by Pongratz-Leisten (2015: 393–94). Two of these, RIMA 1.0.76.27 and RIMA 1.0.77.27, derive from the area of the Assur-temple and are explicitly associated with the tākulṭu-ritual. It is tempting to connect the Aššūr-uballiṭ I label RIMA 1.0.73.7 with the ritual as well, though it is not mentioned in the inscription and the archeological evidence is more ambiguous.

The tākulṭu, first associated with Assyria under Samsi-Addu I, later developed into a major state ritual during which all the gods of Assur and its provinces were invoked and offered sacrifices, with
a strong spatial component affirming the ties between center and imperial periphery. The texts which
detail the ritual are all dated to the later Neo-Assyrian period, and, as already noted by Postgate (1988:
145), several attestations for tākultu should be read in a secular sense (e.g., BATSH 9, 69 = Röllig 2008,
dated 29/Ša-kēnāte). Evidence does, however, suggest that the Middle Assyrian tākultu had already
acquired many of its later connotations. The celebration was duplicated in some form in provincial and
local centers (Wiggermann in Duistermaat 2008: 560) and these same centers participated by supplying
provisions for the celebration (BATSH 9, 101; 20/Ḫîbur/Assur-daʾʾān). The title of “overseer” is
thereby directly associated with the king’s role in a ritual which bears exactly the sort of universalistic
implications Sazonov means to examine.

While Sazonov’s work thus provides a convenient overview of royal epithets and titles from early
Assyrian history, it also misses the opportunity for a more reliable and critical contribution to the topic.

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The Splintered Divine: A Study of Ištar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the

Spencer Allen’s The Splintered Divine analyzes the phenomenon in which ancient Near Eastern
deities are identified by two-component names: what he calls the “first name,” representing a common
divine name like Ištar, Baal, or Yaḥweh, and the “last name,” providing a specifying, often geographi-
cally based, marker or epithet, such as Nineveh, Šapun, or Teman. Whereas previous scholarship has
often understood gods and goddesses with geographic “last names” to be local manifestations of an
overarching deity, this book argues that Ištar and Baal figures with different “last names” were, in
their respective Neo-Assyrian and Levantine worlds, treated as distinct deities. Additionally, Allen
demonstrates that the biblical and inscriptional evidence provides less clear answers to the question
of the individuality of Yahwehs in Israel. The nature of the divine has been the subject of numerous
recent studies. Allen adds to this discussion a wide range of data that will be of interest to students and
scholars alike.

The Splintered Divine is comprised of six chapters, an introduction and conclusion, and over eighty
pages of annotated tables that reflect the author’s 2011 dissertation research on god lists. An inadver-