

Chapter 57

Women Officials of the Assyrian Imperial Palace: The Case of the “Šakintu”

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INTRODUCTION

One of communities having contributed to the Ancient Mesopotamian civilization is the Assyrians. Assyrian history is generally examined by dividing into three periods such as Old Assyrian (2000-1600 BC), the Middle Assyrian (1500-1000 BC) and the Neo-Assyrian (1000-609 BC) (Sever, 1987, 421). In the Neo-Assyrian period, Assyrian kings managed to keep up very expensive and luxurious system by shaking down the Near East and controlling all land and sea routes between the eastern and western worlds (Sevin, 2009, 61). Here the question is how the system managed to survive for such a long period of time, what kind of structure it had and what kind of strategy was followed.

The Assyrian state can be defined as a heterogeneous, multinational empire ruled by an autocratic king who believed in being the representative of god on earth. Although Assyrian kings did not claim being a deity, they took in charge at top levels in temples and palaces in their capacity as the representative of god on earth. In fact, the new management in the Neo-Assyrian period is a continuation of Ancient Mesopotamia traditions. Assyrian kings claiming to take orders directly from god emphasized the origin of their administration by frequently reminding that they glorified Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian gods and temples (Köroğlu, 2006, 182).

In the Assyrian palace, senior managers from the administrator family and eunuch officials also lived together with the king and his family. Since there was no concern regarding keeping the family name, eunuch officials were raised as army commanders and even as state administrators in addition to their duties in the harem especially upon reforms implemented after Tiglath-Pileser III (Köroğlu, 2006, 185). Nowadays, it is possible to have a knowledge about this period thanks to hundreds of cuneiform tablets uncovered in Iraq. Actually, texts from the Neo-Assyrian period have been uncovered from imperial capitals which are now within the borders of the state of Iraq. The city of Assyria (modern Qal'at Šergat) has preserved its importance throughout the history as the first capital city. The Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II move capital city to the city of Kalhu (modern Nimrud). On the other hand, Sargon II established the city of Dur-Šarrukin (modern Korsabad) and made this city the capital. Then, Sargon's successor move the capital to Nineveh city located near Mosul nowadays, and Nineveh remained as capital city until the breakdown of the empire (Svärd, 2012b, 26-28).

Palaces found in capitals appear not only as a place of residence for the ruling class but also as an important institution where many administrative, bureaucratic, business, industrial/productional and ceremonial activities took place (Winter, 1993,

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27). However, studies conducted on Assyrian palaces and ruling structure have not exactly shed light upon administrative and bureaucratic details of the Assyrian Empire. It is determined from the written sources that there was a hierarchical order in both the palace and state administration. This case, no doubt, should have been applied to women on duty in the palace (Svärd, 2012a, 511). This study will discuss the harem section, women in charge in this section and especially female official called as “šakintu” in the Assyrian palace.

1. The House of Women: *Bēt Isāte*

It was long discussed whether there was a “harem” in palaces of the Neo-Assyrian period, and experts refrained from using this term for a long time. S. Parpola put an end to this situation (Parpola, 2012, 613-626). Parpola, in his study, specified that Assyrians used to have a harem section in their palaces just like in Abbasid and Ottoman palaces, the section called “*bēt isāte*” of the Assyrian palace, namely “house of women” (Barjamovic, 2011, 49) constituted the part of harem. Again as can be seen in Abbasid and Ottoman palaces, it is known that eunuch officials called “*rēši ša*” performed their duty also in the Assyrian palace. Queens also lived with their servants in a special section that contained their personal belongings (Parpola, 2012, 615 etc.).

It is possible to obtain information on royal women of the period from cuneiform texts uncovered from Assyrian capitals that are largely published. Especially cities of Nimrud and Nineveh contain a wealth information in this sense. Despite not developed completely, it is a generally accepted opinion that, during this period, royal women were effective in politics (Melville, 1999, 1-2).

It is understood that women and girls sent by foreign administrators or local governors due to political or social reasons used to reside in Assyrian palaces except women from local population. Actually, it is understood that women were brought not only from enemy countries such as Aramean, Kassite, Hittites and Nubian but also from cities of Namri, Tyre, Arpad, Ashdod, Jerusalem, Memphis and Dor to the Assyrian palaces (Barjamovic, 2011, 53). Consequently, it can be indicated that people living and things lived in the harem were shaped and varied according to changing political conditions. Therefore, to understand the structure of the palace during the period in question, it is necessary to give a brief information about kings and queens ruling the country in that period, so kings and queens ascending to throne during the imperial period were shown in Table 1 (Duymuş Florioti, 2015, 38).

Women officials considered among palace personnel serving kings and queens in question can be determined thanks to administration records of the imperial period. Although it is difficult to identify the number of women who lived in the Assyrian palaces, it is understood that only a group of women resided in the palace permanently. Considering the fact that some of female officials were married and their husbands lived outside the city, it can be thought that they may have worked only during the day (Barjamovic, 2011, 51).

According to written sources, female officials who worked at the palace are determined as follows:

Šakintu: Harem manageress (Teppo, 2005, 70; CDA, 349);

Nargallutu: Chief musician (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 74; CDA, 241; For detail see, Duymuş Florioti, 2014, 99-119);

Lahhinutu: Stewardess (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 54; Teppo, 2005,

70), women offical (CDA, 175);

Tupšarrutu: Scribe (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 127);

Masennutu: Treasurer (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 61; For “masennu” see, Duymuş Florioti, 2012, 1-22);

Nuārtu: Musician (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 78);

Nappāhtu: Smith (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 73; CDA, 239);

Palissu: Stone-borer (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 79; CDA, 262);

Gallābtu: Barber (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 29; CDA, 88);

Kurgarrutu: Performer of some kind (Teppo, 2005, 70), some kind of the cult offical (CDA, 168);

Muraqqītu: Perfume maker (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 67), spice-bread baker (Teppo, 2005, 70);

Šāqītu: Cup bearer (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 112);

Āpītu: Baker (Teppo, 2005, 70; Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 8).

Table 1: The Neo-Assyrian Kings & Queens.

Regnal Years	King	Queen
911-891	Adad-Nirari II	X
890-884	Tukulti-Ninurta II	X
883-859	Ashurnasirpal II	Mulissu-mukannišat-Ninua
858-824	Shalmaneser III	
823-811	Shamsi-Adad	Sammu-rāmat
782-773	Shalmaneser IV	Hamā
744-727	Tiglath-Pileser III	Yabā or
726-722	Shalmaneser V	Banītu
721-705	Sargon II	Ataliya
704-681	Sennacherib	Naqī'a or Zakūtu Tašmētum-šarrat
680-669	Esarhaddon	Ešarra-hammat Ana-tašmētum-taklāk ?
668-631?/627?	Ashurbanipal	Libbāli-šarrat

Another female official among servants in the palace is “the palace maid” called “amat-ekalli”. However, in various written documents, any texts mentioning about these servants in particular could not be found. Presence of the title in question can be learned by means of texts mentioning their sons. The higher position of servants in question can be understood from the fact a distinction was made between “sons of purchased slaves” and “sons of palace servants” (Teppo, 2005, 67). Without a doubt, such a distinction would not be needed if they were in the same position. However, information on this issue is still limited.

Female officials listed so far with their titles show that there was a division of labor and it was applied in a way to meet daily needs of the section of palace called harem or house of women. Probably, control of all these working women was ensured by the harem manageress called šakintu.

Outside female personnel mentioned above, it is understood that a group of woman called “sekretu” resided in the palace (Barjamovic, 2011,51). Since the term sekretu is used in the sense of “handmaiden, mistress and bondmaid” (Kertai, 2014, 197, footnote

31), these women may have shared the king's bed, and according to Dr. Barjamovic, these women may be secondary wives of the king. Their names are listed more among wine sharing lists and among loots received by Assyrian kings. The term sekretu is derived from the verb sekēru and it means "closeting, keeping, imprisoning". From this point, it can be suggested that they had a life isolated from the outside world. However, it is the direct evidence of their imprisonment within palace walls that their names were mentioned in slave purchase documents or real estate purchase documents (Barjamovic, 2011, 51 and 53). On the other hand, although use of terms such as "handmaiden, mistress, odalisque, harem and eunuch" is considered as objectionable (Teppo, 2005:41), it is known that they existed in Neo-Assyrian palaces (Kertai, 2014, 197). Therefore, it has been understood from written sources that this section called the harem was managed with certain rules and regulations, and entries-exits in this section were supervised. In fact, it is detected from sources that it was prohibited for male officials to eavesdrop on conversation of female officials or listen to their discussions or singing, and female officials had to cover themselves near male officials. When captured in such a case, male officials were given flogging punishment. Only some of male officials were allowed to interact with royal women and this required a distance of at least seven steps. In fact, even an eunuch official sent by the king was allowed to enter the section called harem upon permission and supervision of palace overseer (rab ekalli) (Barjamovic, 2011, 52). The following passage is quite remarkable by mentioning the fact that the harem had strict rules even during the Middle Assyrian period (Stol, 1995 135):

"If shoulders of a house women is open and not covered with a cloth, and a male official demands anything from her and this male official idles around this women, he will be punished with 100 blows with rods" (Barjamovic, 2011, 51).

1.1. Royal Women

These terms expressing women closest to the king are as follows with their counterparts in Sumerian and Akkadian languages:

DUMU MÍ LUGAL marat šarri "daughter of the king"

MÍ.NIN LUGAL ahat šarri "king's sister"

AMA LUGAL ummi šarri "queen mother"

MÍ É.GAL issi ekalli/sēgallu "wife of the king/queen" (Melville, 2004, 38).

Assyrian queens used the title of "lady of the palace" during the imperial period, and names of these queens were reflected in written and archaeological data (Duymuş Florioti, 2015). Indeed, there are information available about kings ascending to the throne and their wives during the Imperial period, there is limited information about children of Assyrian Kings excluding the Crown Prince. Their names, general health status and activities were mentioned in personal letters, court lists and legal documents. For instance, five of Assyrian King Esarhaddon's children including 4 sons and 1 daughter named, Šeria-ēterat, were mentioned in a medical report written by the man of god (the exorcist) carrying out the treatment. Names of the same children were listed as a part of a ceremonial banquet in another text. From a letter written by a priest to the King, it is understood that the king and his five children were making offerings to Nabû and Tašmetum. While the name Šeria-ēterat was mentioned in many places as the son of Esarhaddon, it is a strange incident that sons were rarely mentioned in various texts. What could be the reason for Šeria-ēterat' coming to the fore? All of these questions remain unanswered for now regarding whether he was his father's favorite, whether he

had a dominant character or whether it was because he was the first born child. On the other hand, information about daughters of Assyrian kings show that these daughters could obtain goods on their own behalf and had a high status in the society (Macgregor, 2012, 68). Both administrative records and legal processes contain information about king's daughters obtaining property. For instance, an official with title of "sartinnu" recorded that "king's daughter" had purchased a property from his town. Again in the same document, it is recorded that 4 properties previously owned by military personnel were granted to "the princess of new palace". In another purchase document, it is written that Assyrian King Sennacherib's daughter and Esarhaddon's sister, Šadditu, purchased a garden, house, land and property with the servants for 8 silver mina. Despite the scarcity of such records, it can be understood that royal women were able to obtain property on their behalf in the Assyrian Empire (Macgregor, 2012, 69).

King's daughters also participated in religious rituals, again it has been determined from texts that Esarhaddon ordered to conduct a rituel for his sister, Šadditu. During the first millennium BC, Goddesses Mulissu and Šerua received much worship. It is estimated that there was a political and religious meaning lying behind the fact that royal women attended in rituals made on behalf of goddesses in question (Macgregor, 2012, 69).

King's daughters also played a role in politics by marrying foreign managers in Assyrian political alliances. The best example of this situation is Ahat-Abiša, the daughter of Sargon II. During the reign of Sargon, Assyria experienced problems in Anatolian borders in the West. When the King of Tabal died, Ambaris from Bit-Burutāš superseded with the approval from Assyria and was married to Ahat-Abiša, the daughter of Sargon II. However, Ambaris made an alliance with Phrygia and Urartian against Assyria, and Sargon II dethroned Ambaris after learning this betrayal and transformed the region into a state connected to Assyria. According to Postgate, administration of the region was granted to Ahat-Abiša (Macgregor, 2012, 69).

It is estimated that one or two daughters of Assyrian King Esarhaddon were married to foreign administrators by political purposes. Scythian King Bartatua is an example to this fact, the name of other groom is not found in the texts (Macgregor, 2012, 69).

1.2. The Term Šakintu and Duties of Šakintu

The term šakintu is an adjective verb in female form derived from the verb šakānu meaning "to sit, to place, to assign" (CAD Š, 116-117). Thus, šakintu means "assigned women, woman official" (related to term, see also Richter, 2002). This term can be defined as the women official responsible for the department where the queen resides (Teppo, 2007, 257), and in dictionaries, it is translated as follows; šakintu/ šakittu/ šagimtu (MUNUS.GAR): female official/manageress serving in the harem (CDA, 349), principal (Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, 109). Although this term is the equivalent of šaknu -a term for male servants- in female form, duties and responsibilities of šaknu are completely different (Teppo, 2007, 257). Šaknu is a title used in place for state manager or military rank (For details, see. Henshaw, 1967, 517-525; Henshaw, 1968, 461-183). Consequently, although the term šakintu seem like the female equivalent of the term šaknu, functionally their duties are different and they cannot be considered as equal (Macgregor, 2012, 61).

Although similar definitions are made for the term šakintu, none of these

definitions is enough to reflect duties of women with such titles, because their duties were also moved outside the palace (Teppo, 2005, 53). It is understood that these women used to have high status among palace officials as the Queen's principal deputy, and they employed male and female clerks, female servants, cooks and eunuch civil servants under their command. It has been concluded from written texts that šakintus used to conduct various economic affairs such as land and slave trade and they largely benefited from royal sources (Macgregor, 2012, 61). It can be considered that šakintus and officials under their command constituted a privileged group in Assyrian royal palaces. Even if we go even further, šakintus can be defined as the class of female officials acting independently (Teppo, 2005, 53). Indeed, it is still unclear whether šakintus were special servants of the queen or their duties were limited to only the queen, it can be understood that women officials in question were considered among palace personnel and lived a wealthy life, they were able to obtain properties and participate in legal business independently (Teppo, 2005, 54).

Records related to šakintu appear in Neo-Assyrian texts. While first records are dated back to the first periods of the 8th century BC, the latest records correspond to the latest periods of the 6th century BC. While the earliest records date back to the Adad-Nirari period of the early 778 BC, the latest record dates back to Sin-šarru-iškun, 617 BC or to year 611 after the fall of the Assyrian Empire (Macgregor, 2012, 61-62).

The title of šakintus had been written as LÚ.šá-kín-te; MÍ.GAR-te; MÍ.GAR-tú; MÍ.GAR.KUR-tu; MÍ.GAR.KUR-tú; MÍ.šá-GIM-tú; MÍ.šá-ki-in-te; MÍ.šá-ki-in-ti; MÍ.šá-ki-in-tú; MÍ.šá-kin-ti; MÍ.šá-kin-tú; MÍ.šá-kín-te; MÍ.šá-kín-ti; MÍ.šá-kín-tú; MÍ.šá-kín-te; MÍ.šá-kín-ti; MÍ.šá-kín-tu; MÍ.šá-kín-tú; šá-kín-tú in the Neo-Assyrian texts (For texts see, SAA 6, no.81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 152, 247, 250; SAA 13, no.18; SAA 14, no.8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 159, 175, 176, 177, 471; SAA 16, no. 183).

Women with the title of šakintu, were recorded with only their titles and sometimes only with their names and with the name of city where they worked. In these texts, 7 šakintus were detected as recorded with their titles and names. However, in Neo-Assyrian texts, 54 female servants with šakintus title were recorded from 17 different cities and 22 different houses. Officials in question served in capitals such as Niniveh, Assyria, Nimrud or regions closer to capitals such as Kasappa, Kilizi, Arbail, Adian and Shibaniba. However, in rare cases, officials serving in distant regions such as Tušhan, Nasibina, Kahat, Til-Barsip were also mentioned. Information about šakintus and officers in their attendance is obtained from 5 Assyrian cities: Niniveh, Nimrud, Assyria, Til-Barsip and Tušhan. A large part of these texts are among Kuyinjik tablets that were uncovered by Layard in the 19th century (Macgregor, 2012, 62).

According to Barjamovic, šakintu was a class of influential women working actively in economic business, and their essential task was to organize the production of textiles in the palace (Barjamovic, 2011, 56). In SAA 7, no. 23, 145 weavers and 13 šakintus were listed. In SAA 7, no.155, a variety of linen and laundry distributed in the palace was mentioned (Teppo, 2007, 266). However, they seem to have a leading role in many economic and legal processes such as the slave trade, silver circulation, control of supplies (Barjamovic, 2011, 56). Kertai and Teppo indicated that they were employed especially towards the female slave supply (Kertai, 2014, 198; Teppo, 2007, 264). Indeed, it has been detected from texts related to šakintu that they mainly purchased female slaves, males and children. The interesting aspect is the absence of

any information relating to their trade interactions. Here comes to mind two possibilities; either there were no need for trade or šakintus were not responsible for sales (Teppo, 2007, 264). It can be considered that šakintus organized economic works and they had influential powers on those under queen's command. If required, they may have also used the queen's staff: including cook, clerk, housekeeper and eunuch officials (Teppo, 2007, 264). Consequently, there could be many women living in the section of the Queen at the Palace and they may have exercised different professions under the supervision of šakintus (Macgregor, 2012, 64).

Another interesting information obtained from written sources is that the number of šakintus was relatively high. Why were so many šakintus employed in Assyrian Empire? Especially, why were there more than šakintu in charge in Nimrud? According to Dalley and Postgate's estimates, šakintus were found in places where the queen resided or they could be there as visitors or šakintus had to be there as military units of the queen. Melville, on the other hand, attributes the existence of more than one šakintu in the same city to the fact that the king might have more than one wife. If this theory is correct, the fact that king's wives lived in different places would prevent both unnecessary discussions and competition. The king must have been pleased with this situation (Teppo, 2007, 263). Theories are not limited with this situation. It is known that Assyrian queens used to conduct economic affairs in different places within the empire. Therefore, šakintus outside the capital might have carried out economic affairs of the queen who lived in the capital. In other words, even if the queen was absent personally, there might be sections where šakintus lived and monitored economic affairs of queen. Heltzer, on the other hand, suggests that šakintus might have only served for the queen (Teppo, 2007, 263). That is because in these texts they were not called as "queen's šakintu". Nevertheless, the lack of sufficient data makes it impossible to clearly detect this situation for the time being.

Another undetermined issue is what kind of officials there were in company with šakintus or whether šakintus had the same personnel. However, there are some clues to this thread. For example, it has been detected from written sources that šakintus had eunuch officials/harem officials (LÚ.SAG). In SAA 6, no. 152, the eunuch officer named Rudadidi was recorded as a witness in a document related to purchase of a woman in 687 BC. Still in SAA 14, no. 177, it was recorded that šakintu's eunuch, Remut-Nergal, had purchased a land (Teppo, 2005, 55). According to SAA 6, no.250, šakintu's sister, Abi-rahi, purchased three women (Teppo, 2007, 264). Although there were not many samples, it can be estimated that šakintus' relatives also lived a wealthy life. Information about their husbands is not available but it is known that they had children (Teppo, 2005, 54).

1.2.1. Šakintu-officials known by name

Šakintu Addatī

Addatī served as a Šakintu in Nineveh during the reign of Assyrian King Sennacherib. She had borrowed silver from a person called Bibia, and Bibia promised to provide her a land and 7 persons (SAA 6, no.81). According to SAA 6, no.82, she purchased a slave woman from Abi-salamu (Teppo, 2005, 56).

Šakintu Ahi-ṭallī

Texts relating to Šakintu Ahi-tallī (SAA 6, no. 88) were partially found in the library located southwest of Sennacherib's Palace in Nineveh (Macgregor, 2012, 62). It

is understood that she worked as a šakintu in Nineveh during the reign of Sennacherib. It is understood from SAA 6, no.88 that this official had the title of sekretu in 687 BC. However, she was called as šakintu after 686 (Teppo, 2005, 56). In other words, Ahi-talli was raised from sekretu position to šakintu position (SAA 6, no.88, 89). Although sekretu women were considered as concubine or the second wife of the king, it is quite difficult to detect this fact since women except the queen were all called with this title in the palace (Macgregor, 2012, 64). Ahi-talli is the only sekretu whose name was mentioned in the archives (Macgregor, 2012, 65).

It was recorded that the šakintu in question had purchased an orchard, slaves and land (SAA 6, no. 89 -90,92, 93) (Teppo, 2005, 57). For instance, Šarranu sold 3 slaves to Šakintu Ahi-talli in Nineveh in 686 BC and 80 šeqel silver was paid for each slave (Galil, 2007, 5; Dezsö, 2012, 130-131).

Šakintu Amat-Ba’al

Amat-Ba’al served as a šakintu in the Old Palace of Nimrud in the 7th century BC. Her name could only be learned by means of her female servant, Ahat-abû (Teppo, 2005, 57). It is also known that the šakintu in question who would serve in the Review Palace in Nimrud had a clerk named Attār-palṭī and a female servant named Kabalāia. After the reign of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal, Attār-palṭī was seen as “queen’s scribe” (LÚ.A.BA-tú ša É MÍ.KUR). The same woman probably should have worked for šakintu as well (Teppo, 2005, 54).

Šakintu Illia

Illia, serving as a šakintu in Nimrud in the 7th century BC, purchased a child from a man named Kaparia (Teppo, 2005, 57).

Šakintu Zarpî

Serving as šakintu in Nineveh, Zarpî purchased a woman in 668 BC according to SAA 14, no.08 (Teppo, 2005, 57).

Serving in Review Palace of Nimrud, Šiti-ilat was mentioned in sales documents of a house, a land and a couple of people. In another text, it is known that an unnamed šakintu purchased the daughter of Mannu-ki-Ninua. This šakintu is probably Šiti-ilat. Besides, a servant of Šiti-ilat was also recorded with the name Kabalaia (Teppo, 2005, 57).

While kabalaia was observed as a servant in the section where the queen resided (LÚ.2-i-tú ša É MÍ.KUR), later on she was mentioned as a servant of šakintu (LÚ.2-i-tú ša MÍ.šá-kin-te) (Teppo, 2005, 55). It is understood from texts that servant šakintu of Nimrud, Kabalia, was stuck in a difficult situation legally against the palace manager named Ísseme-ili. That was because the woman she had purchased ran away. Since the sale was under the guarantee of palace manager, the manager whose name was not given deemed appropriate to pay half of the price to Kabalia for the slave who had escaped (Svärd, 2012a, 512).

Šakintu Amat-Astārti

Šakintu Amat-Astārti served in the New Palace in Nimrud (Teppo, 2005, 57). In excavations conducted in the northwestern part of the palace in Nimrud, marriage contract belonging to a šakintu’s daughter was uncovered. The marriage contract unearthed during the excavations in 1952 dates back to the reign of Ashurbanipal in the mid-7th century BC. From the contract, it is understood that Šakintu Amat-Astārti’s

daughter Subeitu was married to Milki-ramu. In the text, girl's dowry consisting of a variety of pottery forms, gold and silver objects, woolen and linen garments, copper furniture and a bed was listed in detail. In the contract, divorce conditions were also decided in advance, in the event that Subeitu was infertile, Milki-ramu was allowed to marry another woman, but if Subeitu wanted, she could break up with her husband. In the event that Milki-ramu requested to break up, he would have to give back the dowry in twice amount (Macgregor, 2012, 63). Postgate narrated to the relevant chapter as follows:

"If Subetu does not give birth to a child, she will purchase a slave and put her in her place. (Born) boys will be her children. If she want to keep the slave girl, the girl will be kept, if not, she will be sold. If Subetu hates Milki-ramu, she will break up with him. If Milki-ramu wants a divorce, he will give back twice amount of dowry to Subetu."

In text of the contract, it is possible to observe a strong mother acting like a normal father. She must have obtained her power from her title (Svärd, 2012a, 513). As a witness, the high grade officials from Nimrud were recorded and seals of Amat-Astarti and Milki-ramu were impressed on the contract text. This case not only show šakintu's support in her daughter's marriage but also reveals her influence on other officials in Nimrud (Macgregor, 2012, 63).

1.2.2. Šakintus without Names

Female officials whose names were not explicitly specified but mentioned with the title of šakintu in Neo-Assyrian texts are learned from texts dating back to periods of Assyrian kings including Tiglath-Pileser II (744-727 BC), Sargon II (721-705 BC), Sennacherib (704-681 BC), Esarhaddon (668-669 BC), Ashurbanipal (668-631BC), Ashur-etel-ilani (630-623) or Sin-šarru-iškun (622-612). From these texts, it is understood šakintus played a role in grain distribution with other officials under their command in addition to various trading jobs and they served in various cult tasks according to SAA 3, no.34 and no.35 (Teppo, 2005, 58-62).

CONCLUSION

It has been understood that royal women lived in a separate section called harem, and various activities were carried out in this section of the palace. In cuneiform texts, there are many women apparently working on different affairs and serving for the queen. Consequently, organization, control and job divisions of these women must have been carried out by šakintu women who were directly connected to the queen. Perhaps for this reason, texts providing information about šakintu women contain economic affairs such as member supply to harem and palace, especially purchase of slave women, textile production and distribution processes, even grain distribution. Since there are not much data available, information about these women's tasks and positions or details of inner workings of the palace is limited. However, it can be easily said that Assyrian palaces were not places where only ruling class resided. Cuneiform texts show that many economic, religious, and even legal processes were performed in the palace and all of these processes were conducted by officials with a hierarchical order. It has been understood from cuneiform sources again that the section inhabited by women was isolated from male officers, and despite being castrated, male officers were prohibited from approaching this section closer than 7 steps.

Considering the fact that that šakintu were married and could have children, it can

be thought that they used to have a normal family life. Sources also show that these women were in a powerful position economically. In fact, one of these women appeared in the lead role in the marriage of her daughter, this normally is a behavior expected from the father in patriarchal societies (Teppo, 2005, 57).

With their clearly written names, these šakintu women were reflected on records uncovered from the Assyrian capitals. However, the fact that šakintus' names or only their titles were mentioned also in cities close to capital cities, that there were more than one šakintu has led to bringing up theories also discussed in this study. Šakintu women whose names are known and where they served in which king's period are listed in Table 2 (Teppo, 2005, 56).

Table 2. Šakintu-officials known by name

Name	Date	Location
Addati	Reign of Sennacherib	Nineveh
Ahi-tallī	Reign of Sennacherib	Central city of Nineveh
Amat-Ba'al	7 th century	Old Palace of Kalhu
İlia	7 th century	Kalhu
Zarpî	668 BC	Nineveh
Šiti-ilat	ca.642-615 BC	Kalhu Review Palace
Amat-Astārti	Ashurbanipal	New palace of Kalhu

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