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Queens of Assyria

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Abstract

The period between ca. 934-609 BCE is called the Neo-Assyrian or the Assyrian Imperial Period. The kings of Assyria who lived during this period are very well known but the queens are not known as clearly. Because of that, this study focuses on the Assyrian queensøposition, their titles and activities during the Neo-Assyrian Period.

Our knowledge of the queens comes from textual as well as archaeological sources. During the 1988-1989 excavation season at Nimrud the queensø tombs were found at the North-West Palace. These tombs included jewellery and objects of three Assyrian queens, although ten Assyrian queens are known from this period. It is known that the Assyrian queens lived in the harem at the palace. They played an active role in the social, economic, religious and political life of Assyria. Some of them were very wealthy and had their own army under their command. They supported their husbands and sons as wife or mother.

According to the sources, most of the Assyrian queens were not native of Assyria. They came from a foreign country via marriage, to the Assyrian palace. They had the title øwoman of palaceø as Sumerian M .É.GAL (Akkadian s gallu). The figure of the scorpion which appears on the texts, seals and the other archaeological evidences was identified with the queenship.

Keywords: M .É.GAL, Queen of Assyria, Neo-Assyrian Period/Assyrian Empire, Scorpion, Nimrud Tombs.

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Introduction¹

Ancient Mesopotamian texts and images carved in to sculptures, rock faces and palace walls monumentalized the primacy of the male ruler. Despite this, it is an indisputable fact that women at all levels of society; mothers, sisters and daughters also had an important place. The elite of royal women nonetheless are reflected on the largely male-dominated art, economics, religion, and in administrative records². In the Neo-Assyrian Period (ca. 934-609 BC), queens had an important role in society, religion and administration. Our knowledge comes from written sources as well as archaeological evidence on the queens.

The Assyrian state became an empire in the Neo-Assyrian Period. This period is generally divided into two terms:

I.Term (934-745 BC): During this period, the power and the authority of the kings were strengthened in the Northern Mesopotamia.

II.Term (744-612 BC): During this period, the kings of Assyria had a systematically expansionist policy following successful military expeditions. This policy founded one of the largest empires of the Ancient Near East, the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Hundreds of cuneiform tablets unearthed in Iraq give us information about this period. The Neo-Assyrian period texts, which were recovered from the imperial capital, have largely stayed within the boundaries of the state of Iraq today. The city of Assur (modern Qal'at Ḫārgat), the first capital of Assyria maintained its importance throughout Assyrian history. Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II moved his capital city to Kalhu (modern Nimrud). Sargon II, established the city of Dur-Šarrukin (modern Korsabad) and made this city the capital. The successor of Sargon relocated to Nineveh (near modern-day Mosul) and Nineveh remained as capital of the empire until the collapse³. There have been found cuneiform texts about the empire in all the capital cities. Nimrud and Nineveh especially provide information about the royal women of the period. Nonetheless, our knowledge about Sargonid period is not as much as we might wish. But, it is a generally accepted opinion that royal women had an effective role in politics during this

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² A.R.Gansell, öWoman in Ancient Mesopotamiaö, *A Companion to Woman in the Ancient World*, First Edition, (Eds.) S.L.James-S.Dillon, Blackwell 2012, p.11.

³ S.Svärd, *Power and Women in the Neo-Assyrian Palace*, Helsinki University Print, Helsinki 2012, p.26-28.

period⁴. It means the queens were not passive women in the palace, although it may be that public women continued to live under their husbands domination at home⁵.

Tombs and cylinder seals belonging to the queens, provide the most important information on the Assyrian queens. The royal tombs particularly contain important archaeological evidence on the Mesopotamian women⁶.

Some Notes on the Queen's Title

Sumerian GA^TAN, MÍ/SAL.LUGAL and UN.GAL as well as Akkadian ῷ-arratumö⁷ are all titles with the meaning ῷqueenö. The Old Assyrian title ῷrub tumö also has this meaning when it refers to Anatolian queens. The titles ῷrub tumö and ῷ-arratumö have the same meaning, when occurring in some texts, although they can be used to indicate a difference in terms of status between types of queen, due to the political power of the kingdom they represented. In other words, when ῷrub ῷumö was used for a sovereign/independent king and ῷ-arrumö was used for vassal king, it is understood that also ῷrub tumö⁸ would refer to a queen of an independent country. Conversely ῷ-arratumö was probably used about the queen of a vassal country. A similar approach can be seen during the Neo-Assyrian period. In that period, ῷ-arratumö was used to refer to a tribal foreign female leader or goddess⁹. For example, the Arabian queen mentioned in the annals of Esarhaddon was called ῷ-arratumö¹⁰.

It has been determined through both cuneiform documents and archaeological evidence that Sumerian MÍ.É.GAL and the Akkadian equivalent ős galluö were terms used for the title ῷqueenö in the Neo-Assyrian period. In Sumerian, MÍ means ῷwomanö, and É.GAL means "palace". Hence MÍ.É.GAL means woman of the palace. In its translation into Akkadian this title becomes *issi* (from Old Babylonian: *i-u*¹¹, ῷwomanö), and ῷ*issi ekalliö*

⁴ S.C.Melville, The Role of Naqia/Zakutu in Sargonid Politics, *State Archives of Assyria Studies*, Vol. IX, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki 1999, p.1-2.

⁵ Svärd 2012: 28.

⁶ In tombs, there are many palm tree images that represented woman's fertility, birth-giving ability and wealth. See Paul Collins, ῷTrees and Gender in Assyrian Artö, *Iraq*, Vol.68, 2006, p.100.

⁷ I.J.Gelb, *Glossary of Old Akkadian*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1957, p. 289; CAD TMI: 72.

⁸ R. Kuzuo lu, ῷAsur Ticaret Kolonileri Ça ,ında Anadolu Kraliçeleriö, *Belleten*, LXXI/262, TTK, Ankara 2007, p. 796.

⁹ In addition, the use of the ῷ-arratumö form is common in the standard Babylonian and Neo-Babylonian dialect. However, it is seen in the royal inscriptions and religious texts of the same dialectic that ῷmalkatumö and ῷrub tumö were also used to express ῷqueenö. See Svärd 2012: 90 and footnote 279.

¹⁰ S.C.Melville, ῷNeo-Assyrian Royal Women and Male Identity: Status as a Social Toolö, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.24, No.1, 2004, p.43.

¹¹ CAD J I: 267.

(woman of the palace) when used with É.GAL. The term *ős galluö* originated from this combined form (issi ekalli s gallu=MÍ.É.GAL)¹².

Most spouses of Neo-Assyrian kings holding the title of queen were also called woman of the palace. The king may have had more than one spouse, whose primary responsibility was giving birth to heirs. The success of a woman was determined by her ability to produce heirs. This gave her a place in the hierarchy and in the eyes of other women and the king¹³.

Other Sumerian and Akkadian terms refer to the female relatives of a king as follows:

DUMU MÍ LUGAL marat -arri ödaughter of the kingö

MÍ.NIN LUGAL ahat -arri öking's sisterö

AMA LUGAL ummi -arri öqueen motherö

MÍ É.GAL issi ekalli/s gallu öwife of the king/queenö¹⁴.

To date, the names of ten Neo-Assyrian queens have been identified. Unfortunately, we only have detailed information regarding three of these: Naq ḫa/Zak tu, Libb li--arrat and Sammu-r mat. For the other queens, we often know nothing beyond their names¹⁵.

Women with the title MÍ É.GAL appear to have held an important position in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. There could only be one queen holding this title in the time prior to the Assyrian king Sennacherib. It was a title the queen continued to hold all her life until her death, even after the king, her husband, died. This changed after Sennacherib. Therefore, 705 BC is a turning point¹⁶.

The Queens in the Archaeological Evidence: Tombs of Nimrud

The most spectacular find of treasures in Iraq during recent times was the Neo-Assyrian queensö tombs discovered at Nimrud¹⁷. In 1989-90 the State Organization of Antiquities in Iraq, while reconstructing parts of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), came upon four vaulted burial chambers. In two of them, Tombs II and III, they discovered the extraordinarily rich burials of several Assyrian queens. The tombs held more

¹² S.Parpola, öThe Neo-Assyrian Word for öQueenöö, *SAAB II/2*, 1988, p.74; K.Radner, öThe Seal of Ta-m tum-arrat, Sennacheriböö Queen and Its Impressionsö, In G.B.Lanfranchi at al (ed.), *Leggo! Studies Presented to Frederick Mario Fales*, *Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 2*, Wiesbaden 2012, s.687; S.Teppo, Women and Their Agency in The Neo-Assyrian Empire, *Unpublished MA Thesis*, University of Helsinki, Helsinki 2005, p.35; S.Teppo, öAgency and The Neo-Assyrian Woman of the Palaceö, *Studia Orientalia 101*, 2007, p.389.

¹³ Çayl., öPrehistoryadan Günümüze Kad,n Sembolünün Sanata Yans,mas,ö, *Colloquium Anatolicum VII*, TEBE Yay., stanbul 2008, p.141.

¹⁴ Melville 2004: 38.

¹⁵ Teppo 2005: 35; Teppo 2007: 389.

¹⁶ Svärd 2012: 91.

¹⁷ Nimrud (Kalhu, Biblical Calah (Genesis 10.8-12)) served Assyria as a capital city for nearly 150 years. For Nimrud excavation until 1982, see Julian Reade, öNimrudö, *Fifty Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*, The Work of The British School of Archaeology in Iraq 1932-1982, (Ed.) J.Curtis, London 1982.

than sixty kilograms of gold, bronze, silver and electron objects, hundreds of precious, semiprecious and crystallized stones, textiles and other materials. These objects give an idea of the splendor of Mesopotamian civilization and, in particular, Assyrian culture. Historically speaking, the treasures range in date over a long period. As can be seen from the copies provided here, the inscriptions date from King Kurigalzu II (1332-1308 BC) of Babylonia to the time of King Sargon II (721-705) of Assyria¹⁸.

Inscriptions naming the deceased and physical remains that were well enough preserved to permit scientific study reveal that the Queens' Tombs, as they are known, contained high-ranking male or eunuch courtiers, children, and generations of elite palace women. The women may have included queen mothers, primary and/or secondary wives, and the sisters and daughters of the king. Luckily, ancient robbers left tombs undisturbed¹⁹. Indeed, around 119 large pieces of jewellery and gold were recovered²⁰ (Fig.1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8²¹ and Fig.9²²).

Fig.1.



Fig.2.



Fig.3.



Fig.4.



Fig.5.



Fig.6.



¹⁸ Farouk N.H. Al-Rawi, *○Inscriptions from the Tombs of the Queens of Assyria○, New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.119.

¹⁹ Gansell 2012: 19.

²⁰ Enrico Ascalone, *Mesopotamia, Assyrians, Sumerians, Babylonians*, Translated by Rosanna M. Giannonca Frongia, University of California Press, London 2007, p.265.

²¹ *New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, Plate I, II, IV, V, VII.

²² Dominique Collon, *○Nimrud Treasures: Panel Discussion○, New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.110.

Fig.7.

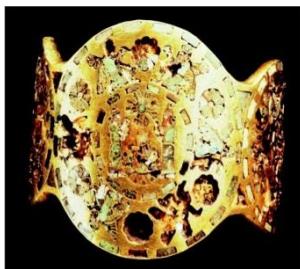


Fig.8.



Fig.9.



Nimrud tombs contain inscriptions, seals and different objects of the Assyrian queens Yab , Ban tu, Ataliya, Ham and Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua²³. Archaeological resources and cuneiform texts revealed the name of the ten Assyrian queens. But unfortunately, we are able to obtain accurate information of only very few of these queens. We know little beyond the names some of the queens²⁴. Now let's examine the individual records of Assyrian queens.

1. Queen Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua

She is the first queen that we know in Neo-Assyrian Period²⁵. Her full title queen of Ashurnasirpal, king of Assyria, (and) of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, daughter of A-ur-nirka-dārīn, great cupbearer of Ashurnasirpal, king of Assyria is best explained by assuming that she remained M .É.GAL after the death of Ashurnasirpal II²⁶. It means she was the queen of two Assyrian kings, Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III²⁷. Her grave was found at Tomb III at Nimrud²⁸.

She also had a treasurer in the capital city Nimrud (Kalhu), where she was buried as well²⁹. This shows that the queen had an active role also in the economic life from the early period of Neo-Assyria.

There is a funerary inscription belonging to Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua from Shalmaneser III's reign³⁰. Inscriptions included curse sentences as follows:

²³ Muayyad Said Damerji, *An Introduction to the Nimrud Tombs*, *New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.82; Teppo 2005: 35; Al-Rawi 2008: 136; Gansell 2012: 19.

²⁴ Teppo 2005: 35; Teppo 2007: 389.

²⁵ Svärd 2012: 102.

²⁶ Damerji 2008: 82; Svärd 2012: 91.

²⁷ Ascalone 2007: 265; Mattias Karlson, Early Neo-Assyrian State Ideology, Relations of Power in the Inscriptions and Iconography of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859) and Shalmaneser III (858-824), Upsala Universitet, *PhD Dissertation*, Upsala 2013, p.4.

²⁸ Teppo 2005: 3; Damerji 2008: 82.

²⁹ Svärd 2012: 102.

³⁰ Karlson 2013: 50.

ōí *No one later may place here, whether a palace lady or a queen, nor remove this sarcaphagus from its place. Whoever removes this sarcophagus from its place, his spirit will not receive the kispu-offering with the other spiritsí ö*³¹.

2. Queen Sammu-r mat

After Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua's death, the next queen was the legendary Sammu-r mat. During her son's reign, Sammu-r mat is referred to either with the title M.É.GAL(queen) or with the longer title AMA LUGAL (mother of the king)³². Her full title is öSammu-r mat, queen of Shamsi-Adad, mother of Adad-nerari, daughter-in-law of Shalmaneserö³³. There has been a great deal of speculation about the origin of Sammu-r mat. The Levant, Assyria, Babylon, Armenia, Bit-Adini, Bit-Gabbari, Carchemish, Gurgum, Namri, Patina, Que and TMBria have all been suggested as being her native land. In the absence of further evidence these proposals must remain speculative³⁴.

Sammu-r mat is known from her stele that was uncovered in Assyria³⁵. She is also known from her son's boundary stone where she is recorded as having gone on a campaign with her son, Adad-nerari III³⁶. This was found in Pazarcık/Kahramanmaraş in the south-east of Turkey (Fig.10)³⁷.

Fig.10.



³¹ Al-Rawi: 2008: 124; S.L. Macgregor, Beyond Hearth and Home, Women in the Public Sphere in the Neo-Assyrian Society, *State Archives of Assyria Studies*, Vol.XXI, Helsinki 2012, p.80.

³² Svärd 2012: 91.

³³ H.W.Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria*, St.Martin's Press, New York 1990, p. 78-79; Svärd 2012: 101.

³⁴ Teppo 2005: 35.

³⁵ K.Köroğlu, *Eski Mezopotamya Tarihi, Bağlantıdan Perslere Kadar*, İleti im Yay., İstanbul 2006, p.163.

³⁶ Teppo 2005: 35; Svärd 2012: 103. For details see C.Zaccagnini, öNotes on the Pazarcık Stelaö, *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*, VII/ 1, Helsinki 1993, pp.53-72.

³⁷ E.Konyar, öM.Ö.I.Biny, İda Kahramanmaraş Gurgum Krall., ö, *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 180, Tarih Vakfı, Yay., İstanbul 2008, p.60.

This inscription describes how Adad-nerari and Sammu-r mat crossed the Euphrates. After this, the perspective changes from the first person plural to first person singular, to describe the battle. Sammu-r mat disappears as a subject and the king alone fights the enemy. However, immediately after the battle is won, the plural forms return: ötheyö erected the boundary stone between the king of Kummuhites and the king of Gurgumites. Variation in Assyrian royal inscriptions is ideologically and historically significant and the wording of the stele should be taken as a serious indicator of her position³⁸.

It seems possible that she acted as *pater familias* after the death of her husband Shamsi-Adad while Adad-nerari III came of age³⁹. Much has been written about her and her story became steeped in the myths and legend which surrounded the classical heroine Semiramis. The Greek writers Herodotus and the Roman historian Diodorus added to the legend with their stories of Semiramis⁴⁰.

Bel-tar i-ilumma, governor of Kalhu dedicated two identical inscribed statues to the god Nabû and set them up in the Nabû Temple of Kalhu. Both statues state that Bel-tar i-ilumma had the statue made and dedicated it for the life of Adad-nerari and Sammu-r mat⁴¹.

Sammu-r mat was an authoritative figure who played an important role in the running of the empire. But she was not included in the later royal inscriptions and chronicles. Sammu-r mat's disappearance from later accounts öí was not because of insignificance of her position, and there is no evidence for a conflict between her and Adad-nerari IIIö but probably because öí Assyrian royal ideology could not accommodate the presence of an authoritative female figureö. As Siddall states, the reason is ideological. This seems a plausible explanation⁴².

3. Queens Ham , Yab /Ban tu ve Ataliya

The name of Ham , queen of Shalmaneser IV (782-773), is only known from her seal, which was found in the Tomb III of Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua⁴³. (Fig.11⁴⁴)

³⁸ Svärd 2012: 103.

³⁹ Teppo 2005: 35.

⁴⁰ Macgregor 2012: 82;Teppo 2005: 36.

⁴¹ Teppo 2005: 36; Svärd 2012:103.

⁴² Svärd 2012: 104-105.

⁴³ Svärd 2012: 105.

⁴⁴ Lamia al-Gailani Werr, öNimrud Sealsö, *New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th-13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.156.

Fig.11.



š-á ^{mi}ha-ma-a MÍ.É.GAL -á ^m-ul-man-MA^TMAN KUR A^Tkal!-lat ^mU-ÉRIN.DAH:

Belonging to Ham , queen of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, daughter-in-law of Adad-nerariö ⁴⁵. There is no further archeological or textual evidence about her.

In the Northwest Palace of Nimrud, there were recovered graves and objects of the queens Yab (Tiglath-Pileser III), Ban tu (Shalmaneser V) and Ataliya (Sargon II) in Tomb II⁴⁶. The skeletons of Yab (Fig.12) and Atalia (Fig.13) were found in the same sarcophagus⁴⁷.

Fig.12

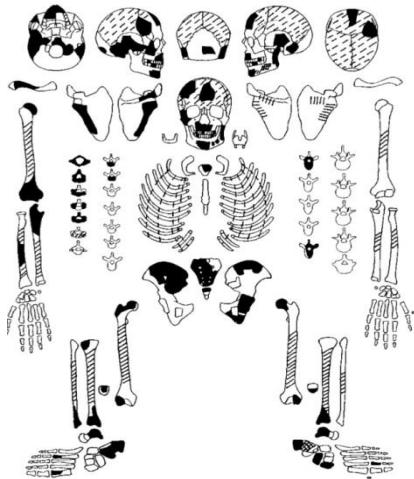
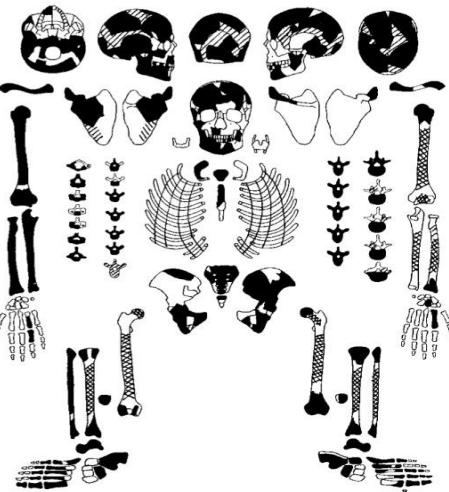


Fig.13



Paleopathological work on the skeletons indicates that both women died at approximately the same age, that of 30 to 35. But they were not buried at the same time, as

⁴⁵ Al-Rawi 2008: 136; Macgregor 2012: 76.

⁴⁶ Damerji 2008: 82; Gansell 2012: 19; Karlsson 2013: 57.

⁴⁷ Teppo 2005: 36; Damerji 2008: 82. For the figures see Michael Müller Karpe-Manfred Kunter-Michael Schultz, *Results of the Palaeopathological Investigations on the Royal Skeletons from Nimrudö, New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.143-144.

there were 20 to 50 years between the interments⁴⁸. It must have been opened again for a second funeral, perhaps in order to preserve the body of a queen who had died elsewhere and been brought back to Nimrud for burial⁴⁹. The sarcaphagus also contained two vessels of Yab and a gold bowl, electron mirror, a cyristal jar belonging to Atalia. These were probably heirlooms⁵⁰. Examples of jewellery from Tomb II match those represented on a rare large-scale relief portraying King Ashurbanipal (r.685-627 ? BCE) and his primary wife, Libbali--arrat, sharing a victory banquet in the royal garden⁵¹.

The names of Yab and Atalia are of West Semitic origin, suggesting that the women in Tomb II may have been Levantine princesses who entered the Assyrian palace through marriage, Neo-Assyrian rulers regularly gave and received ranking women in diplomatic unions⁵². It is generally accepted that Atalia was a Judah princess⁵³. She may have been brought to Assyria after the conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE⁵⁴. She also may have been the mother of the crown prince Sennacherib⁵⁵. As stated before, Yab had an Aramaic name⁵⁶. Interestingly, a third name, őBan tu, wife of King Shalmaneser Vö (r.726-722 BCE), is inscribed on objects in the sarcophagus, but it does not refer to a third individual. őBan tuö is an Assyrian translation of őYab ö. At some point, probably when Tiglath-Pileser died and Yab transitioned into the court of Tiglath-Pileser's son and successor Shalmaneser, Yab became őBan tuö⁵⁷. Dalley is of the same opinion⁵⁸. őBan tuö means őbeautifulö as Akkadian. Yap /Yab has the same meaning in Hebrew. It means she had two different names⁵⁹. Melville, however, disagrees with Dalley⁶⁰. Because of absence of evidence, these proposals also must remain speculative.

The name of Yab was inscribed on two gold bowls in the Tomb II. On inscriptions read as follows;

⁴⁸ Karpe-Kunter-Schultz 2008:142-143; Macgregor 2012: 79.

⁴⁹ Damerji 2008: 82.

⁵⁰ Teppo 2005: 36.

⁵¹ Gansell 2012: 20.

⁵² Gansell 2012: 20.

⁵³ K. Rander, őRoyal Marriage Alliances and Noble Hostagesö, Assyrian Empire Builders, University College London 2013, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/diplomats/royalmarriages>.

⁵⁴ S.Parpola, őNational and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Timesö, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol.18, No.2, 2004, p.12, footnote 31.

⁵⁵ Stephanie Dalley, őThe Idendity of the Princesses in Tomb II and A New Analysis of Events in 701 BCö, *New Light on Nimrud Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11 th- 13 th March 2002*, (Eds.) J.E.Curtis-H.McCall-D.Collon-L.al-Gailani Werr, British Museum, London 2008, p.171.

⁵⁶ Parpola 2004: 12, footnote 31.

⁵⁷ Gansell 2012: 20.

⁵⁸ Svärd 2012: 91.

⁵⁹ Dalley 2008: 171.

⁶⁰ Svärd 2012: 92.

ō-á ^{mi}Ia-ba-a MÍ.É.GAL al-ti ^{m.gi}TUKUL-A-É.TMÁR.RA MAN KUR ATM Belonging to Queen Yab , wife of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyriaö

ō-á ^{mi}Ia-ba-a MÍ.É.GAL -á ^mTUKUL-A-É.TMÁR.RA MAN KUR ATM Belonging to Yab , queen of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyriaö ⁶¹.

In Tomb II, a stone funerary tablet was found belongs to Queen Yab and reads as follows;

Obv. MU ^dUTU ^dere-ki-gal ^da-nun-a-ki
 DINGIR.METMGAL.METM -á KI-ti ^{mi}ia-ba-a
 M .É.GAL ina mu-te NAM ZI-ti
 ik- -ú-da- -e-ma ur- u AD.METM-ú ta-lik
 5. man-nu EGIR-ú lu M .É.GAL
 -á ina ^{gi}GU.ZA tu- -á-ba lu ^{mi}ÉRIN.METMÉ.GAL
 na-ra-an-te MAN -á ul-tú KI.MA -ia
 i-da-ka-in-ni lu mam-ma -á-nu-u-ma
 it-ti-ia i- -á-kan-nu ù a-na
 10. -u-ku-ti-ia qa-su ina UL-te LÁ- u
 -á ^{na4}KITMB -á KI.MA -u-a-tú BAD-ú
 e-le-nu ina -u-ru-ru ^dTMm- -i
 e- é-ma- -ú ina u-me-e ka-ma-te
 li-ir-pu-du

rev.

15. -ap-la-nu ina KI-tim ina na-qa me-e
 KATM.SAG ^{gi}-GETTMTIN ú-pu-un-tu
 it-ti ^da-nun-na-ki ta-kal-li-mu
 la i-ma- ar ^dnin-gi-zi-da
^dbi- u- i-du-gul DINGIR.METMGAL.METM
 -á KI-tim -á-lam-di zi-qi-qi
 la sa-la-lum li-me-du
 a-na du-ri da-ri-i-⁶².

ōBy the command of TMma-, Ere-ki gal and Anunnaki, the great gods of the netherworld, mortal destiny caught up with Queen Yab in death, and she traveled the path of her ancestors. Anyone, in time to come, whether a queen who sits on the throne or a palace

⁶¹ Al-Rawi 2008: 136, 138.

⁶² Al-Rawi 2008: 119.

lady of the palace who is a favorite of the king, that removes me from my tomb, or places anybody else with me, or lays his hand on my jewellery with evil intent or breaks open the seal of this tomb-on earth, under the rays of the sun, let his spirit roam outside in thirst. In the netherworld he must not receive with the Anunnakku any offering of libation of water, beer, wine or meal, but instead may Ningi-zida and (unintelligible), the great gods of the netherworld, inflict his corpse and ghosts with eternal restlessnessö⁶³.

In the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser, the title MUNUS.É.GAL is used for Queen Yab⁶⁴.

The sarcophagus also contained two vessels (a gold bowl and a cosmetic container) bearing queen Ban tu's inscription⁶⁵ which reads as follows:

ō-á ^{mi}DÙ-ti MÍ.É.GAL -á ^{md}SILIM-man-MATMMAN KUR ATM Belonging to Ban tu, queen of Shalmaneser, king of Assyriaö⁶⁶.

In the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser, the title MUNUS.É.GAL is used for the queen:

ō-á ^fDÙ-ti MUNUS.É.GAL -á ^mSILIM-man-MATMMAN KUR ATM or ó-á ^fba-ni-ti MUNUS.É.GAL -á ^{md}SILIM-ma-nu-MATMMAN KUR ATM Belonging to Ban tu, queen of Shalmaneser, king of Assyriaö⁶⁷.

Tomb II contained at least three objects (a gold bowl, jar and mirror) inscribed with the name of Atalia, wife of Sargon II:

ō-á ^{mi}a-ta-li-a MÍ.É.GAL -á ^mMAN-GIN MAN KUR ATM Belonging to Ataliya, queen of Sargon, king of Assyriaö. The inscription ends with the symbol of a scorpion⁶⁸.

Queen Ataliya's authority and high position are highlighted in a list of tribute and audience gifts sent to Sargon by his son Sennacherib (SAA 1 34). Numerous officials receive tribute and audience gifts in two separate lists. In both listings, contributions to the palace, are listed first, but immediately after that, the queen receives her share. Only after her, do the crown prince, sukkallu, turtanu, sartinnu and the second sukkallu receive their shares. The lists are clearly organized by rank⁶⁹. It shows Ataliya's high position in the palace.

⁶³ Macgregor 2012: 79. Also see Marc Van De Mieroop, *oRevenge, Assyrian Styleö, Past & Present*, No. 179 (May), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, p.13; S.Parpola, *oThe Neo-Assyrian Royal Haremö, Leggo!Studies Presented to Frederick Mario Fales on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, (Eds.) G.B.Lanfranchi-D.M.Bonacossi-C.Pappi-S.Ponchia, Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien, Band 2, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2012, p.614.

⁶⁴ RINAP I, Tiglath-Pileser III, 2003, 2004, 2005.

⁶⁵ Teppo 2005: 36.

⁶⁶ Al-Rawi 2008: 138.

⁶⁷ RINAP I, Shalmaneser V, 2001 and 2002.

⁶⁸ Al Rawi 2008: 138.

⁶⁹ Svärd 2012: 106.

Some letters to the king (all found at Nineveh) relate to the queen. A—ur-bani, the governor of Kalhu begins his three letters⁷⁰ by assuring the king that temples, the city and the queen are well, implying that the queen was living in Kalhu:

1. *a-na LUGAL EN-ia*
2. *ARAD-ka "a--ur-ba-ni*
3. *lu DI-mu ana LUGAL EN-ia*
4. *DI-mu a-na É.KUR-METM*
5. *DI-mu i-na URU.kal-ha*
6. *DI-mu a-na MÍ.É.GAL*
7. *DI-mu a-na LÚ.GÁL-METM*

ōTo the king, my lord, your servant A—ur-bani. Good health to the king, my lord! The temples are well, the city of Calah is well, the queen is well, the slaves are well.ö It is possible that Ataliya moved to Dur-TMarrukin, later on⁷¹.

As understood from the above expression, the chronological order of succession of the three names mentioned in the owner's inscriptions on the grave goods is Yab , Ban tu and Ataliya. Therefore, Ataliya was apparently placed in the sarcaphagus last. The other skeleton could be of Yab but also Ban tu. It was Yab ø for whom the tomb was built and it was her stone tablet with the curse, that still lay in the alcove of the antechamber. The microscopic investigation of samples taken from the bones of Ataliya have yielded an unexpected result. The bones were apparently heated at temperatures of about 150-250 °C over several hours. This may point to some kind of desiccation, i.e. dehydration or smoking of the corpse. Whether this was part of a special mortuary practice to preserve the corpse, possibly in preparation for a long journey back home to the final resting place, has still to be determined⁷².

In additional, some amulets⁷³ were also found in the Nimrud tombs. Amulets were usual for Assyrian kings, queens and men and women of rank to wear as jewellery. Cylinder seals were also used as amulets by them. Four amulets were found in Tomb II, the burial chamber of Yab which also contained grave goods of Ataliya and Ban tu. There is no personal label to show that the amulets were the property of a particular queen but it is

⁷⁰ SAA 01, no.111-115-116.

⁷¹ Svärd 2012: 106.

⁷² Karpe-Kunter-Schultz 2008: 143,144.

⁷³ The use of unscripted amulets in Ancient Mesopotamia can be traced back to prehistoric times. During the historical periods inscribed amulets were used for protection against demons, for deliverance in the event of attack, against appalling discomfort or danger such as the hot west wind, or to protect women in childbirth and nursing mothers. See Al-Rawi 2008: 131.

possible to speculate on other evidence. It is possible that Ataliya the queen of Sargon II must have been buried in a hurry, perhaps because she had a contagious disease. Such circumstances might explain why the body was boiled or, in modern terms, disinfected. It is suggested that if Atalia was ill, she was most likely the owner of amulets. The question arises as to what kind of disease of the head occasioned the use of these amulets. Bearing in mind the limited options and the fact that our modern typology of disease did not exist at that time, we can say, comparatively, it could be ömeningitisö or severe ömigraineö. At least two of these amulets in the tombs, and perhaps all of them, were written against the condition called *ö*sagkidibbûö, literally öforehead-seizingö. This condition is characterized by the authorities as an öunidentified illness of the headö (according to CAD S:25, sub *sagkidabbû*) or ömigraineö⁷⁴. Ataliya also suffered from dental caries⁷⁵.

4.Queen Naq ḫa (Zak tu)

As stated before in our study (title of chapter: öSome Notes on the Queenö Titleö), there was usually only one M .É.GAL at a time, who reigned until her death as the only M .É.GAL. This custom seems to have changed during the reign of Sennacherib, who is recorded as having had two queens, Ta-metu--arrat and Naq ḫa⁷⁶. They could be consecutive M .É.GAL of Sennacherib.

According to Julian Reade, they overlapped because the building inscription mentioning Ta-metu--arrat comes from ca. 700 but Esarhaddon was born before 700. However, this does not in fact prove the existence of two queens at the same time, but only that the king could have children with women other than the M .É.GAL. It is possible that Ta-metu--arrat was the M .É.GAL until her death, after which, at some point before Sennacheribö death, Naq ḫa became the M .É.GAL⁷⁷.

In many of the sources Naq ḫa is referred to as the öqueen motherö rather than by her name. Most occurrences of ömother of the kingö in Neo-Assyrian texts refer to Naq ḫa⁷⁸. It seems that she did not use title M .É.GAL when she expressed herself⁷⁹. The royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon, her son, used the title MUNUS.É.GAL (the same meaning as M .É.GAL):

*ö*na-qi-'a-a MUNUS.É.GAL -á 30-PAP-METM*su:Naq ḫa, the wife of Sennacheribö*⁸⁰.

⁷⁴ Al-Rawi 2008:132.

⁷⁵ Karpe-Kunter-Schultz 2008: 147.

⁷⁶ Svärd 2012: 91, 93.

⁷⁷ Teppo 2005: 36; Svärd 2012: 93.

⁷⁸ For texts see SAA 12, no.21-23 and SAA 06, no.143.

⁷⁹ Teppo 2005: 37; Svärd 2012: 93,94.

⁸⁰ RINAP 4, Esarhaddon, 2009.

King Esarhaddon's mother Naqqa is certainly the best documented queen and mother of a king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire⁸¹. She was the wife of Sennacherib, daughter-in-law of Sargon, mother of Esarhaddon, grandmother of Ashurbanipal. Although her name is West Semitic, there is no certain evidence about Naqqa's origin⁸². Various scholars have speculated about her origins. According to Nougayrol, she was probably born in Babylonia but her family may have originated in the Haran area⁸³.

The facts of the life of the queen Naqqa are few. About her family we only know that she had a sister, Abi-rami⁸⁴. Naqqa means ḥpure, clean in Aramaic⁸⁵.

Most of our information about Naqqa dates to the reign her son, Esarhaddon. To this period belong the letters addressed to her and those in which she is mentioned. We also have the building inscription from a palace that she had built for Esarhaddon, two dedicatory inscriptions, and administrative and economic documents indicating that she was very wealthy and supported a large household staff. When her son died she imposed a loyalty oath on behalf of her grandson, Ashurbanipal, and although she may have lived longer, that is the last positive evidence we have of her⁸⁶.

Among the Neo-Assyrian royal correspondence are a number of letters addressed to the queen mother, Naqqa. Five or six letters were addressed to her from Assyrian officials; four letters were written to her from Babylonian officials; one letter was written to her from the king⁸⁷. In the letter from king to his mother, it seems that the king agreed with his mother's opinion about the topic at hand:

*“The order of the king to the mother of the king: I am well. Good health to the mother of the king! Concerning the servant of Amos, about whom you wrote to me-just as the king's mother commanded, in the same way I have commanded. It is fine indeed, as you said. Why does Hamunaiu go?”*⁸⁸ This is excellent example of the influence of the king's mother⁸⁹.

⁸¹ Svärd 2012: 107.

⁸² By the end of the 8th century, West Semitic names were becoming more and more common in Assyria and Babylonia, thus the fact that a name is West Semitic cannot be used to determine the bearer's point of origin. Naqqa's name alone cannot tell us where she came from, nor does it indicate that she was born outside of Assyria proper. She also used the Akkadian name ḥZakutu. Johns and Waterman suggest that she was Hebrew and latter contends that she was one of the women that Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib in 701 BC. Other scholars connect Naqqa to the Aramaean tribes living in Babylonia. There are letters written to her from Babylonia during Esarhaddon's reign. Some scholars have taken these as indications that Naqqa came from the area and governed it. See Melville 1999: 13-15.

⁸³ A.Parrot-J.Nougayrol, ḥAsarhaddon et Naqqa sur un Bronzedu Louvre (AO 20.185), *Syria* 33, 1956, p.158.

⁸⁴ In SAA 06, no.252 was recorded that Abi-rami lent the silver in Baruri's town in 674 BCE. She must be Naqqa's sister.

⁸⁵ Parpola 2004: 12, footnote 31; Macgregor 2012: 72, 99; Melville 1999: 13.

⁸⁶ Melville 1999: 2.

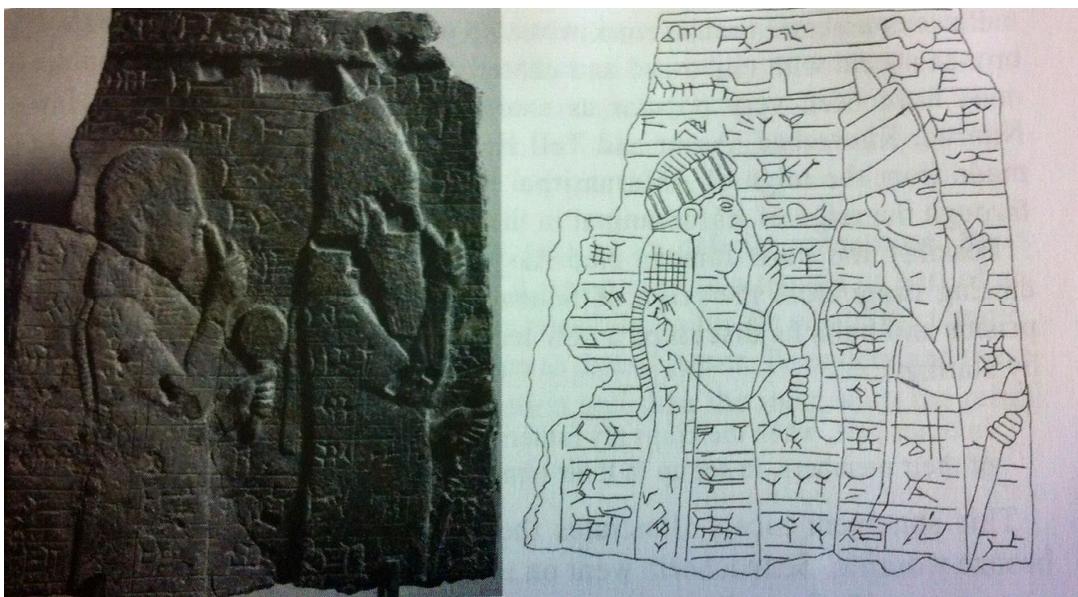
⁸⁷ Melville 1999: 6.

⁸⁸ For the letter see SAA 16, no.2.

During Sennacherib's reign, military units (*ōmuk l app te -a MÍ É.GAL*⁹⁰) appear in the queen's service⁹¹. There is a text that relates to direct military action by Naq⁹² regarding the Elamite invasion of the Sealand⁹³. This is the second and last example of royal women being associated with military action, after Sammu-r⁹⁴ mat.

Naq⁹⁵, also played an active role in religious life⁹⁶. She seems to have taken a more active interest in them than her predecessors. Her role seems to have expanded into the cultic realm, as attested in a description of a ritual where both the king and the queen play a role⁹⁷. (Fig.14⁹⁸) Furthermore, a washing of the mouth (*m s pī*) and opening of the mouth (*p t pī*) ritual for the great gods of Assyria were performed in the front of statue or image of Naq⁹⁹ (*a-lam f na-qi-'a-a*)¹⁰⁰. This too shows her important position in religious life.

Fig.14. Bronze Relief Fragment in the Louvre Museum



Naq¹⁰¹ undoubtedly had residences in the major Assyrian cities in addition to Nineveh and was extremely wealthy, possibly even wealthier than the queen. She had an extensive staff and she made numerous donations to temples and contributed horses to the palace¹⁰². Nonetheless, it is not clear why she provided for the temples. The contributions might have been tax payments, private donations or materials for her statues in the temples. Indeed, an

⁸⁹ Svärd 2012: 110.

⁹⁰ S.Dalley-J.N.Postgate, Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud III, The Tablets from Fourth Shalmaneserö, *British School of Archaeology in Iraq*, 1984, p.11.

⁹¹ Svärd 2012: 107.

⁹² Svärd 2012: 103. For text see SAA 18, no.85.

⁹³ SAA 09, no.1,2,5; SAA 10, no.109; For ritual texts see SAA 10, no.313; SAA 13, no.76, 77; For temple donations see SAA 10, no.313, 348; SAA 13, no.188.

⁹⁴ Svärd 2012: 107-108.

⁹⁵ Svärd 2012: 109.

⁹⁶ RINAP 4, Esarhaddon, 2010.

⁹⁷ Teppo 2005: 37.

image of her in gold was to be erected at Kalhu (SAA 13, no.61) and a statue of her possibly existed in Harran (SAA 13, no.188) ⁹⁸.

After Esarhaddon's accession to the throne Naqqa's authority definitely grew. She built a palace for her son in Nineveh and composed an inscription commemorating it. She also made a dedication to the goddess Belet-Ninua for her own life and that of her son Esarhaddon. The other side of this tablet bears an inscription recording a dedication made by Zakutu to the goddess Mulissu⁹⁹.

A number of letters from scholars also refer to the state of the queen mother's health¹⁰⁰. It is understood that her health was not good and Namburbi rituals were performed for her health¹⁰¹.

The last evidence for Naqqa is from the beginning of the reign of Ashurbanipal, her grandson (end of 669). That is when, using her Akkadian name Zak tu, she had the king's family, the aristocracy and the nation of Assyria swear an oath of loyalty to her grandson¹⁰²:

ōi ina IGI M .za-ku-te AMA-ū ù ina IGI "a--ur-DÙ-A MAN KUR-a- i .in the presence of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria and his mother¹⁰³, Zak tuō¹⁰⁴.

It is clear from the treaty itself that the queen mother was taking Esarhaddon's place (temporarily) as Ashurbanipal's patron and reaffirming the succession treaty of 672. She is carrying out the stipulation in the vassal-treaties that calls for Ashurbanipal to be helped to take the throne when his father dies¹⁰⁵.

Naqqa has also been connected with Nitokris of Babylon, a legendary figure in later Greek histories by Lewy¹⁰⁶. After Sammu-rim, Naqqa was the second queen to become a legendary figure. We do not know when Naqqa died, but it seems likely that she did not long outlive her son¹⁰⁷.

5. Queen Ta-m tu--arrat

Ta-m tu--arrat was probably Sennacherib's second wife. According to Reade, it is likely that she overlaps with Naqqa and is possibly the mother of A--ur-nadin--umi. She is

⁹⁸ Svärd 2012: 108, 109.

⁹⁹ Teppo 2005: 37; RINAP 4, Esarhaddon, 2004 and 2006.

¹⁰⁰ SAA 10, no.200,201-244; Teppo 2005: 38.

¹⁰¹ Macgregor 2012: 105.

¹⁰² Teppo 2005: 38.

¹⁰³ Normally it has to be this grandmother but she played the role of his mother. Because of this, she must have referred to herself as his mother. For details see S.Parpola, Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol.39, No.2, Autumn, 1987, p.165.

¹⁰⁴ For Zak tu treaty see SAA 02, no.08.

¹⁰⁵ Melville 1999: 89.

¹⁰⁶ H.Lewy, Nitokris-Naqqa, *JNES* 11, 1952, p. 264-286; Melville 1999: 3.

¹⁰⁷ Melville 1999: 90.

known from an inscription on a votive vase, which merely states her name and position as Sennacherib's queen (M .É.GAL). The existence of an inscription of her own is significant on its own-not anyone could do that. She is also known from Sennacherib's building inscription where she is called "the queen" (M .É.GAL) and a "beloved wife" ¹⁰⁸. Sennacherib built a palace in Nineveh for his "beloved wife" ¹⁰⁹. The inscription found on a lion colossus from the South-West Palace at Nineveh is unique in that it seems to reflect the genuine feeling of the king towards his wife. Sennacherib records here how he built a palace for "the queen, my beloved wife, whose features Belet-ili has made perfect above all women" ¹¹⁰.

Reade writes that visual evidence suggests that both Naq^{aa} and Ta-m tu--arrat contributed to the policies characteristic of Sennacherib's rule¹¹¹. Indeed, by the beginning of the 7th century BC, the queen was invested with more and wider-reaching authority than ever before. The textual and archaeological record suggests that, by the time of Sennacherib, the nature and responsibilities of the queen had undergone a deep change. Most significantly perhaps, the queen now commanded her own standing army¹¹², as did also the crown prince. This seems to have been a strategy inspired by the king's desire to shift power away from the magnates to members of his immediate family¹¹³.

In the 7th century, the queen started to use seals more than before. The texts SAA 07, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100 and 102 included the queen's seal and scorpion symbol. Ta-m tu--arrat's seal was acquired in 2002 by the British Museum (Fig.15)¹¹⁴.

Fig.15.



¹⁰⁸ Teppo 2005: 38.

¹⁰⁹ Macgregor 2012: 85.

¹¹⁰ Svärd 2012: 106.

¹¹¹ Teppo 2005: 39.

¹¹² SAA 06, no.164, r.4-5, 11-12: LÚ.GAL-ki- ir -a M .É.GAL; LÚ.GAL-ki- ir KI.MIN; LÚ.3--ú -a M .É.GAL (reign of Sennacherib, 686 BC). See Radner 2012: 692, footnote 5.

¹¹³ Radner 2012: 692, 693.

¹¹⁴ Radner 2012: 687, 690 ve 693.

6. Queen E-arrá-hammat

E-arrá-hammat was queen of Assyria, wife of Esarhaddon (680-669), mother of Ashurbanipal and Táma—umi-ukin (died in 672). There are no references to her as a living person but the sources make it very clear that her loss caused deep grief for Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal and that she was remembered with great reverence. Quite extraordinarily, the date of her death in Addaru 672 is recorded in some Babylonian chronicles. Esarhaddon also built a mausoleum for her. This mausoleum was presumably located in Assur¹¹⁵.

In the royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon reads about her as follows:

óí .É KI.MAH -á ^fé- -ár- <ra> -ha-mat MUNUS.É.GAL- -í ... *the grave of E-arrá-hammat, his (king) wife* í ö

ó-á ^fé- -ár- *ra-ha-mat* MUNUS.KUR -á ^mATMPAP-ATMMAN KUR ATM *Belonging to E-arrá-hammat, wife of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria* í ö¹¹⁶.

In addition, Naq ḫa also continued her position in the reign of Esarhaddon, her son. It seems possible that exceptional circumstances, such as Esarhaddon's need to bolster his mother's status for political reasons, might have necessitated a change in the institution of M .É.GAL¹¹⁷.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss thoroughly those Neo-Assyrian texts where the compound M .É.GAL appears in the plural. There are only two references to queens in the plural form among the Neo-Assyrian texts. The first one comes from a funerary ritual of queen. Indeed, it was performed as a funerary ritual for E-arrá-hammat in 672. None of female participants of the ritual are identified by name. Instead, they are referred to as óthe daughter-in-lawö (kallatu), and óthe daughterö (marat -arri)¹¹⁸. At the beginning of the ritual óthe daughter-in-lawö apparently washes the feet of E-arrá-hammat and kisses them. óThe daughterö sprinkles roasted grain in the second part of the ritual. It is recorded that the queens (M .É.GAL.METM) cry out¹¹⁹. The second reference is an astrological report¹²⁰ from 669, M .É.GAL appears in the plural ófor the king, the son of the king (and) his (w)ivesö¹²¹.

7. Queen Ana-ta-m tum-takl k

Ana-ta-m tum-takl k was probably the second wife of Esarhaddon (after the death of E-arrá-hammat). This is however far from certain and she might also have been the wife/

¹¹⁵ Macgregor 2012: 87; Teppo 2005: 39.

¹¹⁶ RINAP 4, Esarhaddon, 2001 and 2002.

¹¹⁷ Svärd 2012: 96.

¹¹⁸ Melville 2004: 38 ve 46.

¹¹⁹ Svärd 2012: 97.

¹²⁰ SAA 08, no.381.

¹²¹ Svärd 2012: 96.

widow of Sargon II, the second wife of Ashurbanipal or the wife of one of Ashurbanipal's sons¹²².

8. Queen Libb li--arrat

Libb li--arrat was wife of Ashurbanipal (668-631? or 627?) and is known from many texts. At the time when Libb li--arrat is only the wife of the crown prince Ashurbanipal (during the reign of Esarhaddon), a letter¹²³ from ^TMeru^{ea}-etirat¹²⁴, Ashurbanipal's oldest sister reveals a degree of tension between the female members of the royal family. The daughter of king Esarhaddon writes a letter and complains that she (Libb li--arrat) does not write to her. She reminds the recipient that she has a higher rank than Libb li--arrat¹²⁵. In addition, there is textual evidence that the queen had her own army¹²⁶.

As the queen of Ashurbanipal, Libb li--arrat is known from an inscription on a stele from Assur bearing a representation of the queen (Fig.16¹²⁷)

Fig.16. Drawing of Libb li--arrat on Assur Stele



Libb li--arrat is also presumably the woman depicted with Ashurbanipal on the relief from Nineveh bearing the famous banquet scene¹²⁸. It shows that Assyrian king and queen

¹²² Teppo 2005: 39.

¹²³ SAA 16, no.28.

¹²⁴ Svärd 2012: 116.

¹²⁵ Teppo 2005: 39.

¹²⁶ SAA 14, no.7, r.7-8: LU.GAL-ki- ir -a LU.A-SIG -a M .É.GAL (reign of Ashurbanipal, ca. 668-666 BC); SAA 06, no.329, r.13: LU.DIB-KU^TMPA.ME^Ta M .É.GAL (reign of Ashurbanipal, 660 BC). See Radner 2012: 692, footnote 5.

¹²⁷ Tallay Ornan, *The Queen in Public: Royal Women in Neo-Assyrian Art*, in *Sex and Gender*, 2002, p.462.

¹²⁸ Svärd 2012: 39, 40; Çayl, 2008: 141, 142.

celebrated the victory of Elam. In the scene the Elamite king's head hangs on a tree near to the king and queen. This relief is in the British Museum now¹²⁹. (Fig.16¹³⁰ and Fig.17¹³¹). It shows the queen's status in the realm.

Fig.16.



Fig.17. Libb li--arrat as portrayed on wall relief



The names of the queens that followed Libb li--arrat are not known, but one of them might have been Ana-ta-m tum-takl k. Nevertheless, the documents from this period indicate that the role of the queen was important, despite the upheavals that plagued the Empire after the death of Ashurbanipal. SAA 12, no.96 records a dedication to Nabû ḫor the life of Sin-

¹²⁹ Karlson 2013: 109; Körö lu 2006: 179.

¹³⁰ Macgregor 2012: 89.

¹³¹ Ornan 2002: 463.

–arru-i-kun, king of Assyria, his lord, and for the life of his queenö by a loyal subject, Nabû-sakip. This text is roughly comparable to the dedication made for Sammu-r mat and her son, although there the dedication was made öfor the life of Adad-nerari, king of Assyria, his lord, and (for) the life of Sammu-r mat, the queen, his ladyö. Although the honorific öladyö and the name of the queen are missing from the dedication to the queen of Sin–arru-i-kun, the text still attests to her high rank¹³².

On the Neo-Assyrian Royal Harem

S.Parpola's article summarizes the evidence available on the Neo-Assyrian royal harem, which has never been studied *in toto* in order to clarify the function, organization and ideological basis of the institution. Although it has been claimed that the term öharemö should be avoided in this connection as semantically loaded and hence anachronistic and misleading with reference to Assyria, the term will be kept here, as it is easy to demonstrate that the Neo-Assyrian royal harem in every essential respect resembled later oriental (Sasanian, Abbasid and Ottoman) royal harems.

The royal court housed not only queens but also a large numbers of other kinds of women; noble ladies of Assyrian and foreign origin lodged at the court as honoured guests or hostages, and entire harems of conquered foreign kings, which not only included the wives, daughters and concubines of the defeated kings but also their female servants and entertainers. All these women were lodged in private quarters of royal palaces referred to as *b t is te*, öthe house of womenö or öwomen's apartmentsö, a term implying that these quarters were primarily reserved for women¹³³.

The life of Assyrian palace women in all essential aspects closely resembled the life of women at Abbasid or Ottoman harems, and there is thus every reason to regard the Assyrian öhouse of womenö as a harem in the traditional sense of word. Many of the harem edicts refer to eunuchs (–a-r –i). Eunuchs were surely employed at the harem because of their inability to reproduce, but they were, of course, as able to dally with harem women as their later colleagues¹³⁴.

¹³² Svärd 2012: 117.

¹³³ Parpola 2012: 613, 614.

¹³⁴ Parpola 2012: 616.

The Assyrian Queen and The Scorpion

The scorpion¹³⁵ certainly figures in Mesopotamian art, especially engraving, from very early times (Sumerian) and is thought to have been quite clearly connected with fertility¹³⁶. Indeed, representations of scorpions are known from prehistoric times onwards, but not unequivocally as a religious symbol until late in the Kassite Period on kudurru, on which the creature is labelled as a symbol of goddess I-hara¹³⁷. The creature's scorpion tail suggests its fertility aspect; this aspect manifests elsewhere in the scorpion's association with I-hara, the goddess of sexual fertility and fecundity. It is also emphasised in the divine function of Sin; the responsibility of Adad to provide rain can also be related to the fertility of the land¹³⁸.

Ideologically, the Assyrian queen was the image of the Queen of Heaven, Mulissu/I-tar, and was accordingly depicted with the main attributes of the goddess, the mural crown, the mirror and the spindle. In Assyrian religion, Mulissu was the heavenly mother of the king, the holy spirit, who spoke through the prophets and pleaded for the king and all mankind in the divine council in heaven. As the physical mother of the future king, the queen effectively coalesced with her heavenly paragon. By the virtue of her access to the king's bed, she also personified the goddess of marital love, I-hara. All documents of the queen were sealed with the image of scorpion, the symbol of I-hara¹³⁹.

There are at least 65 known examples of seal impressions from Nineveh that have the image of a scorpion on them¹⁴⁰. Beside that, twelve stamp seals and two cylinder seals were found in the queens' tombs in Nimrud¹⁴¹. The grave goods from the discovered queens' tombs in the North-West Palace of Nimrud have yielded further evidence for the intimate association of the scorpion with the Assyrian queen. From Tomb II, a gold bowl with a scorpion embossed on its inner rim and an electron mirror with scorpion embossed on its handle are identified as the property of Ataliya, queen of Sargon II. A bracelet of gold with nine cornelian stone inlays, the central one of which is engraved with a scorpion, was also found in Tomb II. Finally, the finds from Tomb III include a golden stamp seal in the shape of a finger ring worn as a pendant. Around its convex base runs a cuneiform inscription identifying the

¹³⁵ Akkadian őzuqiq pu(m)/zuqaq pu(m). See Gelb 1957: 309; Sumerian őG R.TAB. See CDA: 450; Chikako E.Watanebe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia, A Contextual Approach*, WOO, Band 1, Institut für Orientalistik, Universität Wien, Wien 2002, p.39.

¹³⁶ Macgregor 2012: 77.

¹³⁷ Jeremy Black-Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia, An Illustrated Dictionary*, Illustrations by Tessa Rickards, British Museum Press, London 1992, p.160.

¹³⁸ Watanebe 2002: 160.

¹³⁹ Parpola 2012: 619.

¹⁴⁰ Macgregor 2012: 74.

¹⁴¹ Al-Gailani Werr 2008: 155.

seal as the property of Ham , queen of Shalmaneser IV. The seal motif shows, inside a guilloche and dot border, a bare-headed woman whom we, nevertheless, should confidently identify as the queen herself. She is standing in prayer in front of the goddess Gula, who is seated on a straight-backed throne supported by a dog; behind the deity is a scorpion¹⁴².

Another comparable seal is known from its impressions only; it shows the king and the queen approaching a god and a goddess, standing on a bull and a lion respectively, with the scorpion hovering above the scene. Its impressions survive on four inscribed box sealings from the North-West Palace at Nimrud, and the preserved dates prove that the seal was used during the reign of Sargon II in the years 719 and 716 BC. Due to its similiy to Ham 's seal, it would seem highly likely that this was the seal of Sargon's queen Ataliya¹⁴³.

In addition, royal weights also were founded at Nimrud tombs. On the Ataliya's weights included a scorpion symbol. Because of this, it could be possible that it was the astrological sign of Sargon II¹⁴⁴.

That the scorpion is the emblem of the Assyrian queen is now widely accepted. But why the scorpion? The female scorpion was called *t rit zuqaq pi*, 'she who picks up the scorpion', the first element *t tu* being a nominal form derived from the verb *tarû*, 'to arise, to pick up' (also used in the meaning 'child-nurse, nanny'). This certainly refers to the fact that the mother scorpion carries her young about on her back. Giving birth to the crown prince is arguably the queen's most important duty, and the very active role in promoting and supporting their sons is well known for those royal women whose memory has survived the fall of Assyria: Sammu-r mat and Naq . Is the scorpion the emblem of the Assyrian queen because the female scorpion, fiercely guarding and defending her young with her poisonous tail, was seen as the ideal mother? ¹⁴⁵.

Conclusions

It is understood that most of the textual evidence relates to the queens (Sum. M .É.GAL, Akk. *s gallu*), whose position were permanent fixtures of the Neo-Assyrian society. Once chosen as the queen, the position was for life. The evidence demonstrates that the queens exercised hierarchical power and could exert their wills in the kingdom. Furthermore, it seems that their sphere of action and the nature of their authority was comparable to that of the kings¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴² Radner 2012: 691.

¹⁴³ Radner 2012: 691.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Rawi 2008: 130.

¹⁴⁵ Radner 2012: 691, 692.

¹⁴⁶ Svärd 2012: 229.

Ten queens' names were determined from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II to the reign of Ashurbanipal in the Neo-Assyrian Period. It is understood that the Assyrian queen was not a passive woman who sits in the Palace. In contrast, she had an active role in social, economic, religious, legal and political life of Assyria with the kings. Because of the lack of evidence, we don't have details about most of the queens. But two of them, Sammu-rat and Naqia, are better known than others. Naqia who was wealthy and had power lived a long time and played an active role in policy of Assyria. She also donated silver, gold and jewellery to the temples of Assyria. It seems that she was also active in religious life. Both Sammu-rat and Naqia, probably had their own army and went to war with the king. In addition, Sammu-rat and Naqia were both connected with a legendary figure in later Graeco-Roman histories: Sammu-rat-Semiramis, Naqia-Nitokris.

The Nimrud Tombs also provide information about four other queens of Assyria: Mulissu-mukanni-at-ninua, Ham, Yab / Ban tu and Ataliya. According to the evidence from the tombs, Ataliya, the queen of Sargon II, suffered because of oömigraineö and dental problems and died when she was young. Maybe because of this she used the amulets which were found in the queens' tomb at Nimrud. The tombs also included the seals, the inscriptions, the jewellery and other objects of the queens. Most of these women were not native of Assyria. Their names were West-Semitic. They came to Assyria via marriage from the Mediterranean countries, like Judah. This shows that Assyrian kings practised political marriages, as did their contemporaries.

It is accepted that the Assyrian queens lived in a öharemö in the palace. Assyrian palaces included the royal harem like Abbasid and Ottoman Palaces. It is interesting that the symbol of the scorpion represented the queens in the seals, textual and the other archaeological sources.

As a result we can have a table of the Neo-Assyrian kings and their queens as follows:

Table 1:The Neo-Assyrian Kings & Queens¹⁴⁷.

Regnal Years	King	Queen
911-891	Adad-Nirari II	X
890-884	Tukulti-Ninurta II	X
883-859	Ashurnasirpal II	Mulissu-mukanni-at-Ninua
858-824	Shalmaneser III	
823-811	Shamsi-Adad	Sammu-r mat
782-773	Shalmaneser IV	Ham ¹⁴⁸
744-727	Tiglath-Pileser III	Yab or Ban tu
726-722	Shalmaneser V	
721-705	Sargon II	Ataliya
704-681	Sennacherib	Naq ḫa or Zak tu Ta-m tum--arrat
680-669	Esarhaddon	E-arra-hammat Ana-ta-m tum-takl k ?
668-631?/627?	Ashurbanipal	Libb li--arrat

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¹⁴⁷ Teppo 2005: 34.

¹⁴⁸ This line has been added by us.

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