

Paper #9 – Hammurabi: In defense of his mid to late 14th century dates

In our previous paper (#8) we succeeded in providing absolute dates for both the 1st (Amorite) and 2nd (Sealand) dynasties listed in the *Babylonian King List A*. In particular we determined that Hammurabi, the 6th king of the Amorite dynasty, ruled during the years 1351-1309 BC, with the possibility that these dates might be lowered by as much as a decade. There remains the task of proving that Hammurabi belongs in that time frame, based on the known details of his reign.

Skeptics will no doubt assume that proving this will be impossible, considering two facts readily admitted by this author.

1) According to the generally reliable *Assyrian King List*, the (supposedly) powerful king Ashurballit I ruled Assyria in the time frame 1353-1318 BC, his reign overlapping that of his southern neighbor Hammurabi according to our revised chronology. Hammurabi's inscriptions say nothing about Ashurballit, and instead indicate that during his reign Assyria was ruled by an Amorite king named Shamshi-Adad I, and that when this king died, his son Ishme-Dagan I governed Assyria briefly.

2) This problematic detail is compounded by the fact that according to the *Assyrian King List* Shamshi-Adad I governed Assyria in the years 1807-1775 while his son's reign spanned the years 1774 -1734, dates which have prompted traditional historians, those who follow the "middle chronology" dating system, to date Hammurabi in the years 1792-1750.

How do we reconcile these disparate facts?

As it turns out there exist remarkably simple answers to both of these anticipated objections. And rather than keep the reader in suspense we state them at the outset in the few pages that follow. The balance of this paper is preoccupied with examining documentation proving that our answers are correct. This evidence will be published at a later date in the following paper.

Our answer to objection number one is two-fold. On the one hand, as the reader probably already knows, we have repeatedly argued in previous papers that the king named Ashurballit, who authored five Amarna letters and presented himself therein as the equal of the powerful 18th dynasty Egyptian pharaohs Amenhotep III and Akhenaton, and who was sufficiently powerful to have at one time invaded Babylonia to install his grandson Kurigalzu II on the Babylonian throne, was not the 14th century king Ashurballit I named in the [Assyrian King List](#), in spite of the fact that traditional scholars identify him as such. He was instead a late 10th century namesake king, assisting the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari II in his battles with neighboring Hanigalbat. In the sequel to this paper we spend at most a few pages documenting the fact that the 14th century Ashurballit I, the 73rd king on the *Assyrian King List*, was rather a nondescript ineffectual individual, well deserving of Hammurabi's inattention.

On the other hand Shamshi-Adad I was an ambitious and resourceful Amorite king inhabiting a small city state named Andarig, located east and slightly north of Nineveh, bordering Assyria, and almost certainly a former province of that nation. Early in his illustrious career, while ruling Eshnunna, another territory adjoining Assyria, this time on the south, he invaded and conquered Andarig, at the time governed by a dignitary named Erishum. Later still he attacked and overran the city of Mari on the Euphrates, absorbing its extensive domains into his growing kingdom. Finally, around the year 1368 BC, he attacked and conquered Assyria itself. Scholars tend to avoid discussing which Assyrian king was ruling at the time of the conquest. Nor do they specify for how long Assyria remained a vassal state, but it is quite likely, considering the suggested 1368 BC date for the conquest, that Eriba-Adad (1380-1354) was ruling at the time of the invasion and that his successor Ashurballit I (1353-1318) inherited a vassal state and remained a vassal king through the whole of his reign.

It follows from the previous paragraph that there is no conflict needing resolution in our first proposed objection. Throughout the Hammurabi era there existed two kings in Assyria, Shamshi-Adad I the suzerain and Ashurballit the weak vassal. Problem solved, though there remains a need to document and verify our claim.

To assist the reader in following the geographical details provided above, we include below in our Figure 1 a map of the Fertile Crescent showing the areas mentioned as they existed in the 14th century BC.

Figure 1: Map of the Fertile Crescent in the 14th century BC showing the locations of Eshnunna, Andarig (in purple), Mari, and Assyria. (Compliments of a Wikipedia article)



Our answer to objection number two hinges on our interpretation of the origin and structure of the upper (earlier) half of the *Assyrian King List*. The reader of our papers #3-10 will readily acknowledge that to date we have had no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of that collated document. Seldom have we had occasion to modify even slightly the absolute dates presented in that listing of kings. And we continue to believe in its substantial accuracy, at least as far back as king #41.

While we have thus far accepted the accuracy of the king names and regnal lengths recorded on the *Assyrian King List*, with due allowance for minor errors in transmission or in reading reign length numbers on damaged source documents, we need to point out that up to now we have been dealing exclusively with the latter half of the King List, focusing on kings who reigned in the late-Middle and Neo-Assyrian time frames. The earlier part of the document is a different matter entirely, since it is structured differently. For the most part it consists of what appear to be distinct dynasties of kings, listed sequentially, but linked together as if they followed one another temporally, though there remains the likelihood that this “link” is merely stylistic, and that these otherwise distinct “dynasties” may well have overlapped to some extent.

Thus it is stated concerning the first 17 kings that they “lived in tents”. The next nine kings, numbered #18-26 by modern scholars, consist of a genealogical sequence of “ancestors” of a king Aminu, recorded in reverse order as is usual for genealogical lists, and citing the name Apiashal as the last, thus linking this sequence of names to king Apiashal, the last of the tent dwellers. There follow a distinct list of 6 kings “named on bricks” beginning with king Sulili, son of Aminu, thus linking this listing of 6 kings with the 9 kings named previously, the last of whom bore the name Aminu. Finally there follow the names of 6 more kings, numbered 33 to 38, all identified using the phraseology which persists through the balance of the Assyrian King List:

“KN₁, son of KN₂, ruled for X years” (where KN = a king’s name)

The last of these kings, Erishum (II), is a namesake of the first, who is designated “Erishum (I), son of Ilushuma”, the latter name connecting this sequence of kings to the previously mentioned list of 6 kings “named on bricks”, whose last king was Ilushuma. The structure is now complete, though probably artificially contrived to present at least kings #18-38, if not all kings from #1 to #38, as if they are literal descendants of one another – an unlikely event in either instance.

Finally we encounter the names of our two controversial kings Shamshi-Adad I and Ishme-Dagan I. The genealogical link with the aforementioned lengthy “genealogy of Erishum II” is here broken, since Shamshi-Adad is identified as the son of an otherwise unknown Ila-kabkabi, and text is added to explain his succession to power, including his defeat of Erishum (II).

To save the reader frequent recourse to the online [Assyrian King List](#), we have duplicated in Table 1 on the following page the lines on that King List related to the first 40 kings.

**Table 1: The first 40 “Assyrian kings” on the [Assyrian King List](#)”
(copied from the online Livius translation)**

[1-17] Tudija, Adamu, Janqi, Sahlamu, Harharu, Mandaru, Imsu,Harsu, Didanu, Hanu, Zuabu, Nuabu, Abazu, Belu, Azarah,Ušpija, Apiašal.
Total: 17 kings who lived in tents.[1]

[18-26] Aminu was the son of Ilu-kabkabu, Ila-kabkabi of Yazkur-el, Jazkur-ilu of Yakmeni, Jakmeni of Yakmesi, Jakmesi of Ilu-Mer, Ilu-Mer of Hayani, Hajanu of Samani, Samanu of Hale, Hale of Apiašal, Apiašal of Ušpia.
Total: 10 kings who were ancestors.[2]

[27-32] Sulili son of Aminu, Kikkija, Akija, Puzur-Aššur [I],Šalim-ahum, Ilušuma.
Total: 6 kings named on bricks,[3] whose number of limmu-officials is unknown.

[33] Erišum [I] , son of Ilušuma, [...] ruled for 30/40 years.
[34] Ikunum , son of Erishu, ruled for [...] years.
[35] Sargon [I] , son of Ikunu, ruled for [...] years.[4]
[36] Puzur-Aššur [III] , son of Sargon, ruled for [...] years.
[37] Naram-Sin , son of Puzur-Aššur, ruled for N+4 years.
[38] Erišum [III] , son of Naram-Sin, ruled for [...] years.

[39] Šamši-Adad[II] , son[5] of Ila-kabkabi, went to Karduniaš in the time of Naram-Sin. In the eponymy of Ibni-Adad, Šamši-Adad went up from Karduniaš. He took Ekallatum, where he stayed three years. In the eponymy of Atamar-Ištar, Šamši-Adad went up from Ekallatum. He ousted Erišum, son of Naram-Sin, from the throne and took it. He ruled for 33 years. (1813-1781)
[40] Išme-Dagan [I] , son of Šamši-Adad, ruled for 40 years.

The point of this brief analysis of the structure of the listing of the initial 40 kings will become more transparent when we examine this matter further in the sequel to this paper. For now we simply point out the fact that there is more than a semblance of similarity between this portion of the Assyrian King List and the Babylonian king list A discussed in our first eight papers. The first two sections in particular follow the Babylonian pattern almost verbatim, i.e. a listing of the kings of a particular dynasty, followed by a brief entry which describes some unique feature of the named kings (usually their ethnicity and/or their domicile) and ends by providing a total for the number of kings in the dynasty. Scholars have been quick to note this similarity, but surprisingly slow to remark on the possibility that these hypothetical dynasties included as part

of the listing of 38 kings did not govern in succession, but rather overlapped to some extent, as did many of the early dynasties listed on the Babylonian king lists. The 17 and 9 kings respectively who begin the Assyrian listing of kings, at least give the appearance of being dynastic groups, and they either approximate or surpass the number of kings in the Amorite and Sealand dynasties of Babylon, which did in fact overlap considerably. Having said that, we are constrained by the fact that, apart from the first 17 kings, the document does provide a genealogical link between each king and his successor. Thus, in this paper, we represent the first 38 kings by a single timeline of indeterminate length. And assuming there is no overlap, then this segment of history may have lasted well over 500 years. The only question remaining is - did these "kings" actually rule Assyria? In particular we wonder what is their ethnicity? Here is our theory.

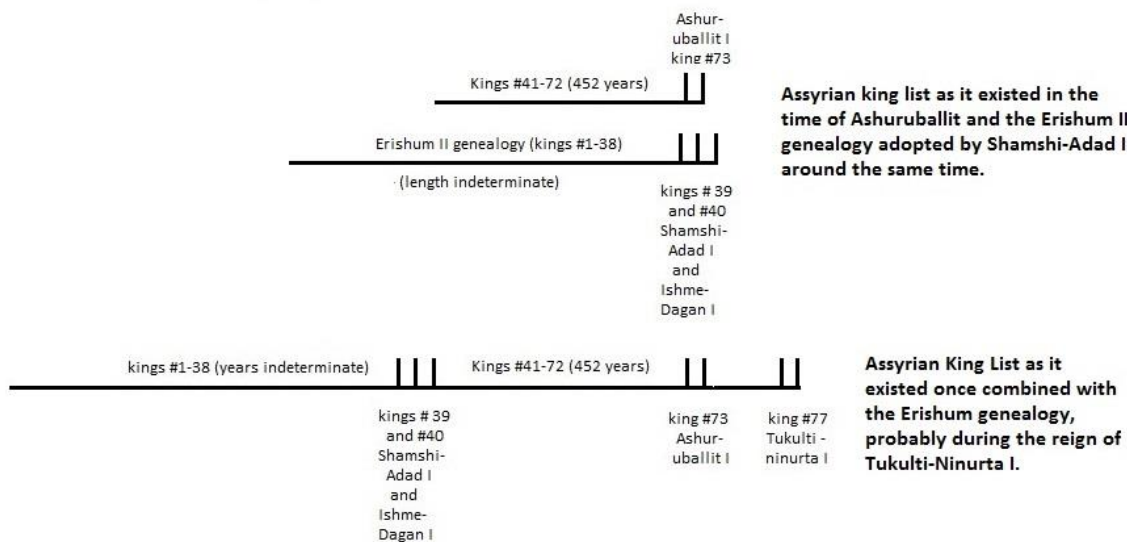
Accepting for the moment that our revised history is correct, and that Shamshi-Adad I was a contemporary with both Ashurballit (king #73 in the King List) and Hammurabi, then what sense can we make of the listing of kings #1-38 who supposedly governed Assyria prior to the rule of Shamshi-Adad I, an impossibility considering that the immediate ancestors of Ashurballit I on the existing King List are well known and reasonably well documented. The reader will surely agree that there would be no possibility of adding the names of Shamshi-Adad I and his son to the existing king list. The appropriate time slots were already occupied by Ashurballit I, who was the legitimate king of Assyria, regardless of his status as a vassal. It follows that the King List would proceed as per usual, ignoring the presence of another king, whether an auxiliary king (as in the case of our late 10th century Ashurballit) or a conqueror (in the case of Shamshi-Adad I). But a tradition of "king lists" was well established throughout the Ancient Near East by this time, and thus the need for Shamshi-Adad (or his son Ishme-Dagan) to create their own, if for no other reasons than to lend credibility to their reigns and preserve their names for posterity. And since the home of Shamshi-Adad I was the city state of Andarig, bordering Assyria on the northwest and arguably once a part of the Assyrian kingdom, it follows that he might trace back in time the kings of that city-state/province up to the time of his conquest, affixing his own name, to which his son later added his. Thus the existence of a listing of kings beginning with Shamshi-Adad and his son, and continuing through Erishum II, son of Naram-Sin, whom he had deposed, and followed by that kings' supposedly "unbroken" ancestry 37 generations long. How accurate this list is we have no idea, though we will touch on the subject in the pages that follow.

And how is it, the critic will ask, that a genealogy of a king Erishum II, a 14th century BC ruler of a city state adjacent to Assyria, with the names of Shamshi-Adad and Ishme-Dagan attached, came to be affixed to the *beginning* of the existing Assyrian King List, where it was later interpreted a list of the earliest kings of Assyria. While we know absolutely nothing about when and by whom the earliest king list was created, we do have an opinion on how the ancients constructed king lists consisting of overlapping dynasties governing the same general area. We refer again to the *Babylonian King List A*. When the initial author of that List was confronted with two separate overlapping dynasties, that of the Amorites ruling Babylon and one of the

Sealand kings ruling an adjacent land mass to the south of Babylon, he simply listed the kings of the dynasty that began first, followed immediately and without comment by the one that began later. That gave the appearance that the two dynasties did not overlap, when in fact they did. We cannot be faulted for believing that a similar situation prevailed in Assyria. It is very likely that the first scribe who chose to unite the then existing “Assyrian King List” and the “Erishum II” genealogy with the names of Shamshi-Adad and Ishme-Dagan attached, consciously followed the Babylonian methodology. He was likely well aware that the first forty kings in his list were not Assyrian kings per se, but that they did rule a land mass adjacent to Assyria, likely worshipped Assyrian gods, and with the exception of Shamshi-Adad I and his son, may well have been ethnic Assyrians. And since the Erishum genealogy apparently began before the reign of the earliest known Assyrian king(s) he merely listed them consecutively, first the Erishum genealogy (kings 1-40), then the earliest existing *Assyrian King List* which begins with the listing of seven kings (#41-48) who apparently ruled simultaneously over small “city states”. If we are wrong, let the critic prove otherwise.

In order to assist the reader in visualizing the situation we have just described we have created the timeline chart in Figure 2 below. The dual overlapping timelines of the shortened Assyrian King List and the Erishum II genealogy are diagrammed at the top of the chart while the merged single timeline of the Assyrian King List is depicted on the single timeline at the bottom of the diagram.

Figure #2: The *Assyrian King List* interpreted as a merging of native Assyrian and Amorite overlapping dynasties.



The traditional history supports the timeline at the bottom of the chart, but without our proviso that it be interpreted as a composite of the two timelines at the top. The revised history argues for the pre-existence of the pair of timelines at the top. Let the reader decide which is correct. Regardless, a scenario which solves the “second objection” has now been proposed, and awaits further argument. For now we leave the matter there.