BABYLONIAN CHRONOLOGY
OF THE 2ND HALF OF THE 2ND MILLENNIUM B.C.

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CONNECTING KASSITE CHRONOLOGY WITH THE 1ST MILLENNIUM

The most important source for the chronology of the Kassite and Post-Kassite periods is Babylonian King List A which gives the lengths of the reigns of all kings of Babylon from the first dynasty of Babylon to the Neo-Assyrian period. Unfortunately we know so far only one copy of this text which has three gaps and lacks the beginning and the end. Because of the gaps there is no direct connection from the 2nd millennium rulers to the 1st millennium. However, the gap can be bridged, because there are 14 synchronisms of Assyrian rulers with Kassite rulers which allow to parallel the Babylonian King List with the Assyrian King List, and since we have for Assyria the uninterrupted sequence of regnal dates we can thereby connect Kassite chronology with 1st millennium chronology (Table 1).

A possibility to check the accuracy of Babylonian King List A is provided by the administrative archives found at Nippur, from the time of Burna-Buriyās II to Kadašman-Ḫarbe III (usually called K.-H. II’), 1359 to 1223, according to BRINKMAN’s chronology. Much less dense is the documentation for the last 67 years of the late Kassite period, from which we have dates in texts found in Ur, Dūr-Kurigalzu, Tell Zubēl and in the unpublished documents found in Babylon.

THE LATE AND MIDDLE KASSITE PERIOD

Babylonian King List A provides dates for the reigns back to the time of Kurigalzu II. The administrative texts give a minimum of 27 years for his predecessor Burna-Buriyās II and at least 15 years for Kadašman-Enlil I. Thus the accession of Kadašman-Enlil I has to be dated at 1374 B. C. at the latest.

For the middle Kassite period we have a good sample of dated documents from Nippur for the 125 years from the first year of Burna-Buriyās II to Kaššišu-šu-sarru-ehu IV. These dates confirm the general reliability of the Babylonian King List A at least for the middle Kassite period. We only have minor problems, the most serious of which is the 25th year of king Nazi-Maruttaš, King List A gives 26 years for this king. We have documents from his 24th year and the year of his death (MU.ŠU-SA) which should be the 26th year, if the king list is correct, but texts from the 25th year are still wanting. Another problem is posed by a tablet in which a king with the name of Kadašman-Enlil is placed before Kadašman-Turgu. Kadašman-Turgu is known to have been the predecessor of Kadašman-Enlil I; his predecessor was Nazi-Maruttaš.

A particular problem are the years following the deposition of Kaššišu-šu-sarru-ehu especially the statement of Chronicle P that Tukulti-Ninurta I of Assyria administered Babylonia for seven years. King List A does not mention this administration and gives one and a half year for Enlil-nadin-šumi, the same duration for Kadašman-Ḫarbe III, and six years for Adad-šuma-iddina. From documents we have the accession year of Tukulti-Ninurta as king of Babylonia, the first year of Enlil-nadin-šumi, the accession year and the first year of Kadašman-Ḫarbe III and the accession year of Adad-šuma-iddina. Since we know that Adad-šuma-uršu came to the throne through a revolt of the Babylonian magnates, that he was said to have been a member of the old Kassite royal family.

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3 KARAHARDAS of the Synchronistic History is apparently a garbled form of Kadašman-Ḫarbe; the latter form is given for the predecessor of Kurigalzu II in Chronicle P.
4 I do not think, as does BRINKMAN 1976, 146, that the chronicle “mistakenly inserts the name of Kadašman-Ḫarbe as a predecessor of the later Kurigalzu”, but rather that we should refer to the predecessor of Kurigalzu II as Kadašman-Ḫarbe II.
5 BRINKMAN 1976, 31.
7 In his chronological scheme Brinkman assigned only one year to Enlil-nadin-šumi and Kadašman-Ḫarbe each. Cf. BRINKMAN 1976, 296, footnote 76.
and attacked Assyria, in all likelihood his three predecessors were more or less Assyrian puppets. So their three reigns combined, nine years according to the king list, come close to the seven years of Chronicle P for Tukulti-Ninurta’s administration of Assyria.

In the late Kassite period we have the problem of double datings for the kings Adad-šuma-šur, Mele-Šihu, and Marduk-apla-iddina. For whatever reasons, these three kings seem to have had a second and partly third accession after which a new numbering of years began. For Mele-Šihu we have his 12th in an unpublished text from Babylon and his second 4th in a text from Ur. Therefore there seem to have been at least 16 years of this king while the king list attributes 15 years to him.

Vexing as these problems are, they are only minor and just show us that King List A, while generally reliable for the middle and late Kassite period, may need some adjustment.

**The Early Kassite Period**

The direct predecessor of Kadašman-Enlī I was Kurigalzu I. He was one of the most active builders among the Ancient Near Eastern kings. He had not only built the residential city Dūr-Kurigalzu, which must have been still one of the important centers of Babylonia during the 2nd quarter of the 12th century, although no traces of construction activity of any of the successors of Kurigalzu I have been found in Dūr-Kurigalzu. He initiated an ambitious program aiming at the renovation of the main temples of the important Babylonian cities (Table 2). He is known to have cultivated the relations with Egypt and married a sister of his to the Elamite king Pahīr-issān, and a daughter to the next Elamite king, Humban-numana.

We have no concrete dates for his reign, but since Kurigalzu I was one of the most important Kassite rulers, even one of the most significant kings in the entire history of Mesopotamia, and since Kassite rulers with much less profile such as Nazi-Maruttāš and Kadašman-Turgu had reigns of 26 and 18 years, it is realistic to reckon for Kurigalzu I with a reign of at least three decades. Thus we reach the last decades of the 15th century (Table 3).

The predecessor of Kurigalzu I was Kadašman-Ḫarba I. On a tablet which was found at Nippur a date “year in which King Kadašman-Ḫarba dug the canal of Diniktum” is attested. Chronicle P ascribes to him a campaign against the Suteans. These pieces of information show that he was a king who, unlike several other Kassite rulers, left some historical traces. Although the few data do not allow us to assess the length of his reign, he – in all likelihood – ruled at least a few years. Thus the end of his predecessor Karaindaš may have been around the last but one or last but two decade of the 15th century.

Karaindaš did not only rebuild a part of the Eanna in Uruk. He also took up relations with Egypt and concluded a border treaty with Aššur-bēl-nīṣēnu, a ruler of Assur. Thus he was one of the more prominent rulers of the Kassite dynasty. Most probably his reign was not short. For a ruler, who undertook such significant activities in the early Kassite period, I would assume that he reigned for more than a decade, possibly much more, and that his reign therefore started somewhere in the second third of the 15th century. It is very likely that Karaindaš was the Babylonian king who sent precious gifts, particularly lapis lazuli, to pharaoh Thutmose III during the 8th campaign of this pharaoh, according to the annals of Thutmose III. If Karaindaš is not the king in question, it must be one of his rather obscure predecessors, which does not seem very likely. According to the Egyptian chronology of von Beckerath which is not the only possible one, the

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7 BREINER 1976, 410.
8 The 2nd and 3rd accession years of Marduk-apla-iddina are attested in unpublished documents from Babylon.
9 I owe the correct interpretation of these dates to O. Pedersen.
10 Amarna letter EA 11, 47f.
11 VAN Dijk 1986, 163.
13 EA 10, 8–10.
14 Synchronistic History, GLAYSON 1975, Chronicle 22.
16 One of the greatest problems is the controversy concerning the several co-regencies that have been assumed by some scholars. Because of the problems of Egyptian chronology of the New Kingdom the attempt of BOSE 1982, 15–26 to arrive at a more precise Middle Babylonian chronology through links with Egypt is based on conditions which are not given. This is also the case for Boese’s linking of the supposedly simultaneous destruction of Emar, Ugarit and Ḥattuša. For Ḥattuša see now SEEKER 2001, 621–634. For Emar the excavator U. Finkbeiner informs me that there is no evidence for a large destruction layer that seals the Late Bronze Age remains.
8th campaign of Thutmosis III took place in 1447. This date fits well with my assumption on the probable beginning of the reign of Karaindaš. Unfortunately, both Babylonian King List A and the Synchronistic King List has gaps where the reign of Karaindaš should be listed. The only clues for the chronological placement of Karaindaš can be found in the Synchronistic History and Chronicle P. Thus we do not know who was the immediate predecessor of Karaindaš. The reign of king Aššur-bēl-nisēšu of Assur, with whom Karaindaš concluded a treaty, has to be dated according to Brinkman’s chronology to the years 1417–1409. Presumably the reign of Karaindaš ended in the first years of Aššur-bēl-nisēšu. As a rough estimate for the reign of Karaindaš I suggest 1450–1415, on the basis of the data mentioned above.

One of the predecessors of Karaindaš was one Burna-Buriyāš who concluded a treaty with Puzur-Āššur III of Assur, according to the Synchronistic History, Puzur-Āššur III must have ruled around the first quarter of the 15th century. Unfortunately the reigns of the two predecessors of the Assyrian ruler Enlil-nāšir II, Aššur-rabi I and Aššur-nādin-ahhe I, are lost in the Assyrian King List. The reign of the quite obscure Aššur-nādin-ahhe I was probably short. Not too short was the reign of Aššur-rabi I, since four generations later this king was still included in the royal genealogy and an inscribed clay nail documents his construction activity. So two decades for both rulers combined seems a good guess. This Burna-Buriyāš of the Synchronistic History was perhaps (but not necessarily) the same person as Burna-Buriyāš, the father of Ulam-Buriyāš. The Synchronistic King List names one Burna-Buriyāš as tenth Kassite ruler who was contemporary of Išme-Dagan II, who is separated from Puzur-Āššur III by 42 regnal years. This looks as if there were at least two early Burna-Buriyāš, one contemporary with Puzur-Āššur III and one roughly contemporary with Išme-Dagan II. It has to be stressed, however, that the Synchronistic King List is very far from being a chronologically precise source and can be shown to be inexact at several places. Unfortunately our sources for this stretch of history are too few and too fragmentary. So far there is no contemporary material to confirm or disprove the chronological sources for most of the early Kassite period. But since Išme-Dagan II lived around 1557–1542, and since the discussion below will show that this was during the final years of Samsu-Ditānum, the first Burna-Buriyāš should have lived after Išme-Dagan II of Assyria.

A successor of Burna-Buriyāš I seems to have been Agum, son of Kaštiliȳaš (usually called Agum III), because Agum is mentioned in the Chronicle of Early Kings after Ulam-Buriyāš, who was a son of a Burna-Buriyāš. This Agum led a campaign into the Sealand, according to the Chronicle of Early Kings. He conquered the city Dur-Enlil which is otherwise unknown and destroyed its temple Egalga’uruna. Annoyingly the text ends right here. Whether this king Agum is the same person as the king Agum whose 4th year and perhaps also his 3rd year are attested in the dates of texts found in the area of the Qal’at al-Bahrain, is not yet clear. If yes, then Agum conquered the Sealand in his first year, crossed over to Bahrain, had a new palace built, set up a functioning administration there in his second year, so that already in his third and fourth year administrative documents could be dated after his reign. Not impossible, but not too likely. I would prefer to see these two kings named Agum as two different persons.

Several earlier Kassite kings are mentioned both in the Babylonian King List and in the Synchronistic King List, partly not in the same sequence. The Synchronistic King List states that eight of these Kassite rulers were contemporary with Šamši-Adad II who died 58 years before Puzur-Āššur III, thus around the middle

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17 Cf. Ahlbrecht 1942. 30. Not only his grandson Aššur-um-nisēšu (RIMA I A.0.70) and the son of his great-grandson, Aššur-uballit (A.0.73.1,3), but also Erība-Adad I, mention Aššur-rabi I.
18 RIMA I A.0.65.
20 Note, however, that while the inscriptions of Ulam-Buriyāš state that his father was king, they do not specifically call him king of Babylon.
21 He is not explicitly called a king, but the text is one that deals with the exploits of kings.
23 1 16–22.
24 1 18–20.
of the 16th century, and ruled for eight years. Whether this is really true is doubtful. If yes, it would mean that these early Kassite rulers either had short reigns or/and were partly contemporary rivals for power. The chronological data given by the Assyrian King List (see below) also do not necessitate too long reigns for the early Kassite rulers.

A crucial question is, how the dates on the texts from Tell Muhammad can be fitted into our chronological mosaic. A number of these texts bear dates of the type MU.x.KAM.MA ša KÁ.DINGIR.RAki uš-bu, with the "x" standing for numbers between 36 and 41. S. Cole translated this phrase as "year x that Babylon was resettled", a translation that seems reasonable. It seems not very likely to me that Babylon, at least nominally the capital of the country, was resettled only in the final phase of the consolidation of Babylonia, after a treaty with Assyria was concluded and texts were dated after Kassite kings all the way down to Bahrain. It is more likely that Babylon was rebuilt provisionally soon after the Hittite sack. Also the war events, which are mentioned in several year names on Tell Muhammad texts, indicate a somewhat chaotic time of transition. The Old Babylonian kingdom consisted in its final years only of the city of Babylon and its close surrounding. It seems reasonable to assume that the reestablishment of the Babylonian Kingdom required some time. Therefore Cole’s chronological placement of the Tell Muhammad texts after Agum seems forced. But in view of the paltry data for the 15th century it is not yet possible to disprove Cole’s arrangement definitively.

Since the somewhat chaotic era of the Tell Muhammad texts has to be placed in all likelihood at the beginning of the Kassite period, the titles of Gandaš and Agumakrime “king of the four world quarters” and “king who causes the four world quarters to exist permanently” in their inscriptions of disputed authenticity do not fit into the early Kassite period and this speaks against the authenticity of these inscriptions.

**The end of the First Dynasty of Babylon**

The lengths of the reigns given in the Assyrian King List permit to compute approximately the end of the first dynasty of Babylon, despite some dispute over some of the lengths of reigns and the fact, that there are attested rulers who do not appear in the King List. If we depart from the reign of Enlil-nâṣir II and follow Brinkman in dating it to 1430–1425 and assume as a very rough estimate for the reigns of Aššur-rabi I and Aššur-nâdin-apli I, which are not preserved in the Assyrian King List, roughly 20 years, as I suggested above, we arrive at a date around 1725 or 1715 for the final year of Šamš-Adad I. If we follow Charpin and Durand who assumed the death of Šamš-Adad I in the 17th year of Ḥammurapi, we arrive at an estimated date around 1544 or 1534 for the end of Samsu-Ditana.

An old question that is at the heart of the Assyriological chronology debate is the fact that the Assyrian King List cannot be reconciled with the Babylonian King List A, which gives a length of 576 years and 9 months for the entire Kassite period – this would bring us to the year 1733 for the beginning of the Kassite period, which is totally impossible, because this date is early in the reign of Ḥammurapi or even before the accession of Ḥammurapi and therefore half a century before the first safe references for Kassites.

The Old Assyrian eponym lists indicate, as far as they are published, that the length of the reigns of the Old Assyrian rulers in the Assyrian King List are generally correct. The “new” Kültêpe eponym list gives exactly the forty years for Irišum I that we find in the king list, as well. Furthermore there are headings in the Kültêpe eponym list at the beginning of each reign. This

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25 For these year names see my paper “Kassite Nomads: Fact or Fiction?”, Amurru 3, Paris, in press.
26 In 1999, 444 and in my book of 2001, 456 I suggested to translate the phrase “38th year, after x sat down in Babylon”. Now, while elliptic versions of Old Babylonian year names are common, it is never the subject that is omitted in such phrases. Therefore Cole’s solution is definitely preferable.
makes it likely that the figures given in the Assyrian king list are based on eponym lists from which the length of reigns could be most easily taken. It is also interesting to see that the eponym list begins with Irīṣum I who is also the first Assyrian ruler who is listed with the length of his reign in the Assyrian King List — certainly not a coincidence. Therefore the Assyrian King List should be seen as generally reliable, and the figure of 576 years and 9 months of the Babylonian King List A, of which we do not yet know how it came about, should not be seen as something that would render the figures of the Assyrian King List questionable.

Thus the written documents which are available at present speak in favour of an end of the first dynasty of Babylon shortly after the middle of the 16th century.

The “Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa”

It is not possible to discuss the chronology of Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium without considering the so-called “Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa,” which is a traditional designation for the 63rd tablet of the astrological omen series Enûma Anu Enlil,32 a composition of the first millennium without 2nd millennium forerunners in which king Ammi-šaduqa is not mentioned at all. The tenth omen on this tablet reads: “If Venus sets in the east on the 25th of Addaru, it is the year of the golden throne.” The apodosis of that omen was seen since more than 90 years33 as referring to the date formula for the 8th year of Ammi-šaduqa which reads in its complete form: “Year in which king Ammi-šaduqa brought a throne of red gold which is fit for the distant place, and his forward rushing(!?) statue into the Enamtül.” One could, however, as well see the apodosis as referring to the 21st year of Samsu-Ditāna which reads: “year in which king Samsu-Ditāna brought his princely statue and a throne of red gold for the distant place into the Enamtül.”34

A golden throne is also mentioned in several other Old Babylonian date formulas. There it is however not called dûr-gar, but ši-gu-za, mostly in connection with bāra “temple.”35

Since the tradition of the days on this tablet is notoriously bad and this specific omen is preserved only on two of the five known copies of this tablet, this text can at the most function as a possible additional confirmation for a chronology which has to rely on other sources. Therefore the question of “high, middle or low chronology” should not be asked any more, at least not in the way it has been done since the early 1940’s, when these chronologies were first established.

Prospects for Mesopotamian Chronology

The open chronological questions can only be clarified through new text finds. This requires new excavations. Excavations in the cultural sphere of Assyria like the ones at Assur seem particularly promising, because this is where the most important chronological sources like the Assyrian King List and the Synchronistic King List come from. A complete edition of the Assyrian King List would bridge the chronological gap in the 15th and 16th centuries. Finds of additional copies of Assyrian eponym lists of the 2nd millennium have been made and more can be expected, which is important as possible confirmation of the King List. Dated documents from Babylonia are still wanting for large parts of the 2nd millennium, like the years of stability under Karaindaš and Kurigalzu I. In recent years sources appeared for periods where they were previously lacking, as was the case with the Tell Muhammad texts and the new finds from Bahrain. This shows that it is realistic to reckon with the possibility that in the future dark decades may become illuminated by new finds of texts, if the sites are not destroyed.

Also material for dendrochronology would be very important, especially for the sites in Babylonia and Assyria where dendrochronological evidence might be correlated with building inscriptions.

The continued edition of the tens of thou-

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32 REINER 1975
33 KUGLER 1912
35 Sumu-la-er years 22, 23. April-Sin 3, 9, 10, 15, 17, 18, Sin-maballit 16, Ḥammu-rapi, 3, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, Samsu-iluna 5, 19, 21, Ammi-Ditāna 6, 19, 31.
sands of unpublished legal and administrative texts in the museums and the collation of the published material is also important since these texts allow sometimes to check the accuracy of the King Lists.

Thirty years ago John Brinkman expressed this wish: “In conclusion, if one may look forward to the future, it would be a great service to students of Mesopotamian history if all the various Assyrian and Babylonian kinglists were available in more accessible and reliable form. It is essential that these documents be carefully re-edited from the original tablets, since some of the present disagreements concern even the basic reading of the text. ... At this stage in the history of the discipline, we would all derive much more benefit from an adequate and reliable text edition than from further elaborate theorizing on an unevenly edited jumble.”

Brinkman’s wish was so far only partly fulfilled through the article “Königslisten und Chroniken” in the Reallexikon der Assyriologie. That article gives the desired overview, but does not make up for an edition that shows how the tablets look precisely and what is exactly on the tablets. Since all historical chronologies for the entire Near East in the 2nd and 3rd millennia B.C. are entirely or to a larger or smaller degree dependent on the Assyrian King List, this new edition is most urgently needed.

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### Table 1  Kassite - Middle Assyrian synchronisms (BRINKMAN 1976, 30)

The highest possibility for the reigns of the Kassite rulers is represented by the unbroken lines on the left side, the lowest possibility (9 years lower) by the dotted lines. 1 year $\cong 1$ mm.

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<td>Nippur</td>
<td>Ekur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burna-Buriyāš</td>
<td>Larsa</td>
<td>Elabbar of Samaš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nippur</td>
<td>Ekur of Ninlil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazi-Maruttaš</td>
<td>Uruk</td>
<td>Eḫiliana of Nanā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadašman-Turgu</td>
<td>Ṣimarāš</td>
<td>Ešigikašama of Lugaimarada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kudur-Enlil</td>
<td>Nippur</td>
<td>Enlil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šagarakti-Šuriyāš</td>
<td>Sippar-Anunnītu</td>
<td>Eulmaḫ of Istar-Anunnītu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adad-šuma-šurur</td>
<td>Nippur</td>
<td>Ekur of Enlil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mele-Šilītu</td>
<td>Isin</td>
<td>Egalmaḫ of Gula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nippur</td>
<td>unpublished inscriptions from the Ekur area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marduk-apla-iddina</td>
<td>Borsippa</td>
<td>Ezida of Marduk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Known temple constructions of Kassite Babylonian Kings in chronological order
(Data taken from inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Nabonidus are given in italics)

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Cf. Sassmannshausen 2001, 157f. It is unclear whether the inscriptions of Kadašman-Enlil were commissioned by the first or the second king of that name. I consider it more likely that they have to be attributed to Kadašman-Enlil I who may have tried to bring the ambitious program of his predecessor to an end, and not to Kadašman-Enlil II who ruled only for nine years at a time that is characterized by little construction activity still visible.
Ka dašman-Enlil I
1374 (+x)–1360
Kurigalzu I
ca. 1410–1380
Ka dašman-Barbe I
ca. 1415–1410
Kara indaš
ca. 1450–1415
Predecessor of Kara indaš
?
Agum “III” son of Kaštihyāš = (?) Agum of Bahri-texts
Burna-Buriyāš, contemporary with Puzur-Aššur
ca. 1480
Burna-Buriyāš father of Ulam-Buriyāš and Burna-Buriyāš I
of the Synchronistic King List the same person?
Tell Muḥammad texts
ca. 1540–1490

Table 3: Suggested chronology for Kassite Babylonia in the 15th–16th centuries

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