Chronology at the Crossroads: The Late Bronze Age in Western Asia, 2007, by Bernard Newgrosh.


The following is an extended review of Bernard Newgrosh’s book on chronological revision. I’ll try to do a chapter at a time, or at least a selection at a time. To the extent that I can, I’ll also do more than exposition, but will provide some commentary, and perhaps argumentative interaction. The whole review will probably take a few months, Lord willing, and as times allows. If anyone knows of any previous online discussions of the book, please let us know on the List.

Before beginning the content of the review, I’d first like to give the table of contents, and then in the next installment examine the Introduction to the book. In the meantime, I’ll also post my Mesolithic stuff in bits and pieces, rather than waiting until I’m finished with the whole.

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Before proceeding with the review, we should give our own (tentative) chart of the relation of Assyrian kings, starting with Eriba Adad 1 down to Shalmaneser 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eriba Adad 1</td>
<td>911 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalmaneser 2</td>
<td>890 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalmaneser 3</td>
<td>858 BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some abbreviations are given after the table of contents, but I’ll only list a few

AKL = Assyrian King List  
CAH = The Cambridge Ancient History  
KBo = Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi  
MA = Middle Assyrian; also mA.  
RIMA = Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, A  
VAT = siglum [abbreviation] for tablets etc in the collections of the Staatliche Museum, Berlin

I haven’t finished Newgrovsh’s book, so I don’t know how much my correlations differ from his at this point. I believe they are fairly close, however. Mitcham offered a very similar view sometime around 1990, which was reviewed favorably by the historian Herbert A. Storck.¹

Introduction:

Newgrosh starts with the question of why study chronology. He says some have advised him to stay away from absolute chronology and work only with relative chronology. In their view, pursuing an absolute chronology is like chasing rainbows. Newgrosh, however, believes that an absolute chronology is possible, and that it is a worthy goal, even if we cannot always be certain of our chronology. Part of the task of establishing an absolute chronology is correctly interpreting the Assyrian King List (AKL), understanding who wrote it, what motives were involved, and what alterations were made to get it in its present form. Newgrosh says that every assumption made by previous authorities on the AKL have to be questioned. Accordingly his approach will give us, among other things, an evolution of the AKL from its beginnings.

Unfortunately, Newgrosh says, “Minimal consideration has been given to matters archaeological: again, this has been a practical decision based on time and ability.” It is too bad that Newgrosh neglected this area, for stratigraphy has been either the salvation or the death knell for some chronologies. For instance, both Courville and Rohl, not to mention Velikovsky, have run afoul of stratigraphic problems. Fortunately, Newgrosh recognizes the importance of stratigraphy, and has included an appendix on the subject. This was written by archaeologist Robert M. Porter, who discusses pottery sequences, Nuzi Ware, the archaeology of Tell Brak, Tell al Rimah, and of many other sites. I only wish that more archaeological discussion could have been brought to bear on the whole topic of Assyrian and Mesopotamian chronology, and not regulated to a mere appendix in the book.

Chapter 1, The Imperial Hittites and their Neighbours.

In this chapter Newgrosh describes the conventional chronology for Late Bronze Age “Hittite” history. Accepted synchronisms are as follows:²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hitites</th>
<th>Egyptians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suppiluliuma 1</td>
<td>Akhenaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muwatalli 2</td>
<td>Seti 1, Ramses 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hattusili 3</td>
<td>Ramses 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Egyptian chronology is then correlated with the chronology of Assyria by way of the Hittites. In conventional views, the middle Assyrian king Adad-nirari 1 is placed during the time of Muwatalli 2, and hence in the days of Ramses 2. The most recent discussion of conventional chronology for this period is by Amir Harrak in his *Assyria and Hanigalbat*, 1987 (which unfortunately is hard to obtain). Newgrosh extends Harrak’s discussion of the chronological difficulties of this era, and provides arguments showing the untenability of conventional chronology. If the latter is accepted as true, then the

² Note that all spellings and numeral forms are mine, not necessarily Newgrosh’s.
inscriptions for this period appear to show that the Assyrians and Hittites were living in different worlds.

A real problem here is that the alleged synchronisms between the Assyrians and Hittites of the Late Bronze Age are based on material that is in fragmentary condition. The identity of the sender and receiver of letters is usually difficult to determine. Referring to Peter James’s earlier discussion in *Centuries of Darkness*, 1991, Newgrosh says, “[T]he only clear-cut synchronism in these letters is that between a Tudhaliya of Hatti and a Tukulti-Ninurta of Assyria, in KUB III 74” (22). Another possible synchronism is between Tukulti-Ninurta 1 and Hattushili 3 by way of an Urhi-Teshub in KUB XXVI 70. “In nine out of the thirteen letters,” says Newgrosh, “because the Hittite king is unnamed it is necessary to aduce his identity. Similarly, the ruler of Assyrian is not specified in eight out of thirteen. In the remaining five, he is cited as either a Shalmaneser or as a Tukulti-Ninurta. And here a critical assumption is revealed because, on grounds of [conventional] chronology, only Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I are deemed suitable candidates. Again, where a Tudhaliya is named, historians only consider Tudhaliya IV, Tudhaliya II (and III) being presumed inadmissible for the same reason” (22).

In spite of the fragmentary nature of the source material, conventional historians have presented the histories of these two countries as being in harmony with one another, but the result is strained and leaves many anomalies. First, no middle Assyrian (mA) royal inscriptions ever mention any of the Great Kings of the Hittites, despite the existence of many royal inscriptions during this time (23). Second, the land of Hanigalbat (i.e., Mittani) lies between Hatti and Assyria, but the Assyrian view of Mittani is very different from that of the Hittites. After the Amarna period, the Hittites took control of Carchemish from the Hurrians and installed viceroy who appear to have ruled without any challenges. This, however, is in contradiction to the claims made by Assyrian kings Adad-nirari I and Shalmaneser I, whose rule extended as far as ‘the bank of the Euphrates’ and, in particular, ‘the fortress of Harranu to Carchemish…which is on the bank of the Euphrates’ (25, citing Grayson).

How are these situations to be reconciled? Conventional chronologists merely dismiss the Assyrian claims as untrue or exaggerated, but an Assyrian king in KUB III 73 mentions that his predecessors, the middle Assyrian kings Adad-nirari and Shalmaneser, plundered the land of the Hittites. Thus, the Assyrian domination of Mittani during the reigns of Adad-nirari I through Tukulti-Ninurta I is not mentioned once by the Hittites (27).

A reasonable answer to this conundrum is that the Middle Assyrian kings have been incorrectly placed on the BC time scale in relation to the history of other ancient nations. Newgrosh believes that there are too many contradictions to ignore and that the middle Assyrian kings “describe a different world from that inhabited by the viceroy of
Carchemish for the supposedly corresponding period, from Shuppiluliuma I to Tudhaliya IV” (29).

Another problem is that Mittani was eliminated for a time as a major power after the days of Tushratta. It then became a vassal to the viceroy of Carchemish and the Hittite great kings. Nevertheless, the treaty between Muwatalli 2 and Alakshandu of Wilusha (Alexander of Ilios or Troy), refers to the Mittani king as a great king. So Mittani eventually regained its great king status by the time of Muwatalli 2 (during the days of Ramses 2). On the other hand, under Shattuara 1, Mittani was a vassal of the Middle Assyrian king Adad-nirari 1 (who supposedly lived during the days of Ramses 2 on conventional views).

How then could Mittani have great king status and at the same time be a vassal of Assyria? (30, 31). Ramses 2 famously fought against Muwatalli 2 at Qadesh but lists Mittani as an independent kingdom in alliance with the Hittites, again during the time when Mittani was supposed to be a vassal to Assyria on conventional views. Ramses 2 says the “vile enemy from Hatti” allied itself with several lands, among them Nahrin, which is Mittani (31). Yet at the same time, Adad-nirari 1 said that a king of Mittani, Shattuara 1, was his vassal. So who was right, Ramses 2 or Adad-nirari 1? Was Mittani an independent state during the time of Ramses 2, or was it a vassal of the Middle Assyrians during the time of Adad-nirari 1?

It is clear that if there is a mismatch between the Middle Assyrians and the Hittites, then there will also be a mismatch between the Hittites and Mittani, as well as with the Egyptians of the New Kingdom period. This is because on conventional views the Assyrians are the connecting link between Mittani and the Hittites and Egyptians. A mismatch will therefore lead to seemingly contradictory claims made by the Assyrians and Egyptians, and will make it hard to understand the history of the Hittites in relation to Mittani. “[T]he weight of evidence…,” says Newgrosch, “dictates that Mittani was independent, strong and a Hittite ally in this era – with any Assyrian threat remote at the time of the Battle of Qadesh [time of Ramses 2]. Yet the next momentous event…was Adad-nirari’s subjugation of neighbouring Hanigalbat [Mittani] – without any interference from her powerful ally, Hatti” (32).

Newgrosch goes on to discuss CTH 76 (the treaty between Muwatalli 2 and Alakshandu) and compares it with other Hittite texts, especially KUB XXIII 102. The latter contains a record of the conquest of the Mittani great king Wasashatta (or Uasashatta) by an Assyrian king. This is probably Adad-nirari 1, and it made Adad-nirari 1 a great king himself. In the Hittite text, the unidentified Hittite king took a dim view of the Assyrian’s newly minted great king status: “[Y]ou shall not keep writing to me [about brotherhood] and Great Kingship,. [It is not my] wish” (34).
Conventional scholars want to identify the sender of KUB XXIII 102 as Hittite king Urhi-Teshub or Hattusili 3 (who lived after Muwatalli 2). According to CTH 76, however, the Assyrians had already achieved great king status in the days of Muwatalli 2, whereas KUB XXIII 102 indicates that the Assyrian king had just achieved great king status after the conquest of Mittani. So either these Hittite texts contradict one another, or more likely Adad-nirari 1 has been incorrectly placed upon the BC time scale. The notion that an Assyrian king was a contemporary of any particular Hittite king is merely a conventional assumption that could very well be wrong (36).

Other problems crop up under conventional assumptions. The document KBo XXVIII 66 was a letter sent by a Hurrian king to a Hittite king, though the names of the kings haven’t been preserved. On good grounds, however, the letter is dated to the time Hattusili 3 or Tudhaliya 4. In the letter, the Hurrian king refers to the Hittite king as his brother, presupposing a status of equality between the two kings. Nevertheless, this was during a time when, on conventional views, the Hurrian kingdom had been reduced to vassalage by Adad-nirari 1 (36).

In addition, the document IBoT I 34 was similarly written by a Hurrian king and sent to a Hittite king, though neither name is preserved. Internal evidence has led scholars to date it to the time of Tudhaliya 4. In this letter, the Hurrian king writes from the town of Sinamu and considers himself a vassal to the Hittite king. On conventional views, however, Tudhaliya 4 and his predecessor Hattusili 3 were living during the days of Assyrian king Shalmaneser 1, a time in which the Middle Assyrians had put an end to the Mittani kingdom (37).

Another problem is with the Hittite document RPAE 263, dated to the time of Hattusili 3 or Tudhaliya 4. This text makes reference to the armies of the Ahlamu (Aramaean) that is similar to how the Aramaean “field troops” were described at the time of Adad-nirari 2. However, the situations of Tudhaliya 4 and Adad-nirari 2 cannot be brought closer together in time since on conventional assumptions, the Hittite king lived two hundred or so years before the Assyrian king” (39).

A similar problem arises with RS 34.165, a document found in the Ugarit archive and written by an Assyrian king, usually identified as either Tukulti-Ninurta 1 or Shalmaneser 1. It mentions a Hittite king named Tudahliya but not which one. The king who received the letter is treated as an equal to the great king of the Hittites. This would rule out the king of Ugarit as the addressee since he was subordinate to both the Hittite king and the viceroy of Carchemish, and therefore could not be a great king. A possible contemporary letter is the Hittite document KBo IV 14 which dates during the time of Tudhaliya 4. This king mentions a battle with Assyria, but Middle Assyrian sources say that Assyria and Hatti were generally at peace (41-45). This would assume that the Tudhaliya x of RS
34.165 is Tudhaliya 4, though in our view it could be Tudhaliya 2.

Newgrosh then discusses the concept of the Sea Peoples and proffers the idea that Tudhaliya 4 invaded the trading center Cyprus and in effect instituted trade sanctions that precipitated the end of the Late Bronze Age kingdoms (49). On conventional assumptions, Tudhaliya 4 is correlated to the middle Assyrian period, which saw flourishing trade rather than economic collapse. Thus conventional chronology fails to recognize the true cause of the collapse of the Hittite empire and consequently the end of the Late Bronze Age civilizations.

Note: In the past grain shortages, climate change, economic decline, or “systems collapse” (the kitchen sink theory) have been blamed for the collapse of the Late Bronze Age and consequent inauguration of the Dark Age of Greece and elsewhere. This is the first time, however, that I have heard anyone blame Tudhaliya 4 for it! And for good reason, too, in that trade blockades are easy enough for enterprising merchants to bypass, and thus could hardly serve as an efficient cause of the collapse of all the civilizations of the Late Bronze Age.

The last section of Chapter 1 deals with the city of Emar (Tell Meskene), which was taken over by the Hittites at the time of Suppiluliuma 1. During the days of Emar’s king Pilsu-Dagan, a Hurrian king attacked the city. Pilsu-Dagan was a contemporary of Ini-Teshub, viceroy of Carchemish who is correlated to Hittite king Tudhaliya 4. This again brings up the problem of a Hurrian power existing in a time when the whole region was, on conventional assumptions, in vassalage to the middle Assyrian kings (50-51).

Some other difficulties involve the finding in Emar of Babylonian texts mentioning “year 2 of Meli-shipak” (a Babylonian king). On conventional views, however, Meli-shipak came to the throne a generation after the final destruction of Emar. The same problem crops up with RE 19, another document found in Emar and dated to the time of Ninurta-apil-Ekur. But again, this was a generation after Emar had already been destroyed. On the basis of these problems and others Newgrosh concludes, “Since the orthodox scheme is untenable – because the Middle Assyrian kings Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I are not to be accommodated in the era of Muwatalli II, Hattushili III and Tudhaliya IV – a different chronological assumption will be made [in a later chapter]” (53).

Chapter 2

The second chapter in Newgrosh’s *magnum opus* is a long and difficult chapter to sum up. Thankfully, Newgrosh himself provides a convenient summary of his work at the end of the chapter. The main point of discussion is whether the Ashur-uballit of the Amarna letters—hereafter Ashur-uballit(A)—is the same as the Ashur-uballit I of the king lists and inscriptions. The reason this is important is
that if the two are one and the same, this would provide a link between the kings of the middle Assyrian period and the kings of the Egyptian Amarna period. The result would be supportive of the conventional chronology of the ancient world vis-à-vis a revised chronology.

It has long been known that the two Assur-uballits record different ancestries. Velikovsky may have been the first to call attention to it as a chronological problem requiring a revised chronology. He cited Luckenbill, who pointed out that the Amarna Assur-uballit referred to his ancestor as Assur-nadin-ahe, but Assur-uballit I of the king list gives at least two genealogy records, neither one of which mentions Assur-nadin-ahe as part of his ancestry:

59 “Assur-uballit . . . son of Eriba-Adad; Eriba-Adad . . . son of Assur-bel-nishesu; Assur-bel-nishesu . . son of Assur-nirari; Assur-nirari . . son of Assur-rabi; Assur-rabi . . son of Enlil-nasir; Enlil-nasir . . son of Puzur-Assur. . . .”

60 “Assur-uballit . . . son of Iriba-Adad; Iriba-Adad . . . son of Assur-bel-nishesu; Assur-bel-nishesu . . son of Assur-nirari . . . .”

Luckenbill says, “In the texts given [above] Assur-uballit does not include Assur-nadin-ahe among his ancestors, although he carries his line back six generations.” In Luckenbill’s opinion, the explanation of the omission was because the Assur-uballit line had a hard time holding the throne. However, this is not much of an explanation but

the important point to be noted here is that Luckenbill felt an explanation was needed in the first place.

Newgrosh goes further than the above anomaly by presenting several more problems that result from accepting the equation of these two Assur-uballits.

ASHUR-UBALLIT AS CONQUEROR:

At the start of the Middle Assyrian period, Assyria was in a state of vassalage to Hanigalbat (Mittani). After the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma I defeated Mittani, the Assyrians threw off the yoke of vassalage to Mittani and began to dominate the Hurrian kingdom. Supposedly, the king who led the Assyrians against Mittani was Ashur-uballit I. Unfortunately for this view, there are no records that Ashur-uballit I ever went beyond Rimah, a city located to the west of Nineveh. Additionally, none of Ashur-uballit’s surviving inscriptions indicate he was a great military leader capable of reducing Mittani to a state of vassalage (54).

Newgrosh proceeds to question whether either Ashur-uballit(A) or Ashur-uballit I was a conqueror as assumed by conventional chronology. He discusses the following instances of Ashur-uballit(A)’s relationship to Mittani (or Hanigalbat):

1) With respect to the letter to Egypt (EA16), this was sent by Ashur-uballit(A) to Egyptian king Akhenaten. In this letter, Ashur-uballit(A) complains about the paltry gift

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4 Luckenbill, p. 21.
provided by Akhenaten. Newgrosh surmises that if Ashur-uballit(A) had really conquered Mittani, as held by conventional historians, he would not have had to convince Pharaoh Akhenaten to treat him in the same way the Pharaoh treated other “Great Kings” such as the former “Great King” of Mittani, Tushratta. (The term “Great King” was a title referring to a king who had sovereignty over other kings. Very few kings could claim this title and such a self-ascription could generate opposition if it was used improperly.) In fact, it was the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma who had defeated Tushratta, and there is no evidence in this letter that Ashur-uballit(A) participated in any serious Assyrian campaigns against Mittani. Newgrosh believes the letter does not provide evidence of Ashur-uballit’s military conquest of Mittani but is really an attempt to establish a better trading posture with Egypt (58).

2) The Shattiwaza-Shuppiluliuma treaty mentions that Tushratta exhausted the treasury of his country in making payments to the lands of Alshe and Assyria. These are not payments of a vassal to foreign powers but are payments to hired mercenaries from the lands of Alshe and Assyria. The Hittites would not have interfered with mercenaries from other countries but would have stopped any Assyrian incursions into Hittite-controlled geography. Thus, conventional historians believe instead that Assur-uballit(A) must have invaded Mittani after the death of Shuppiluliuma, but this is a gratuitous theory. One problem with Newgrosh’s discussion is that in the treaty Hittite king Shuppiluliuma says the following:

“The entire land of Mittanni went to ruin, and the land of Assyria and the land of Alshe divided it between them.”

Does this not suggest that the Assyrians, under the leadership of Ashur-uballit(A), conquered the lands of Mittani? Wouldn’t this treaty prove that Ashur-uballit was a great conqueror after all? On the face of it, it does not seem so. The Assyrians managed to dominate only a portion of Mittani while the Hittite ally Alshe took the rest. In addition, Newgrosh argues that it contradicts the Shattiwaza version of the treaty (which suggests Assyria was only providing mercenaries in the region) and also neglects the implications of having Alshe in control of part of the country. It is surmised that Shuppiluliuma was attempting to justify his own foreign policy of military intervention by talking up the dangers of foreign invasion. Newgrosh concludes that there is no evidence for an Assyrian “conquest” of Mittani before the death of Shuppiluliuma (60).

My own opinion is that we should take Shuppiluliuma at his word, that Assyria did conquer a portion of Mittani. It was enough to encourage Ashur-uballit(A) to think he had

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achieved Great King status. However, it was not enough of a conquest to motivate Akhenaten to take the claim very seriously. Akhenaten sent such a small amount of gold as a response to Ashur-uballit(A)’s shulmanu gift that the latter complained about in a famous letter to the Egyptian king. In addition, Ashur-uballit(A)’s conquest was not sufficient to impress the king of Babylon, who warned Akhenaten that he still regarded the Assyrians as his subjects. There is then no really good reason to doubt that Ashur-uballit(A) was something of a conqueror but not in the sense of a Napoleon. He was more of an opportunistic conqueror, taking what he could get after the Hittites had already done the heavy lifting.

With respect to Ashur-uballit I, Newgrosh makes the following observations:

1) An inscription was found that contains the retrospective of Adad-nirari, in which he gives the history of conquests of his ancestor Ashur-uballit I. These included conquests of the land of Musru (near Nineveh) and of the land of Shubaru. This latter was not Mittani (or Hanigalbat) since an official from Hanigalbat makes reference to the aggression of the king of Shubaru (61; referencing KBo I 20). Newgrosh points to the “modesty” of Ashur-uballit’s achievement list. If Ashur-uballit I had been conqueror of Hanigalbat proper, his kingly descendant Adad-nirari I would undoubtedly have mentioned it and played it up—but he doesn’t. Perhaps he didn’t because Ashur-uballit I did not conquer Mittani and was not the same king as Ashur-uballit(A).

2) Inscriptions of Adad-nirari I mention the rebellion of Shattuara, king of Hanigalbat. If they were in a state of rebellion, this presupposes the Hurrians were previously in a state of vassalage to Assyria and chose to withhold tribute. Adad-nirari I was thus required to quell Shattuara’s rebellion. The question is which Assyrian king placed the Hurrians under vassalage to the Assyrians in the first place? It wasn’t Adad-nirari I himself since he would have bragged about it if he had. It is true that Ashur-uballit(A) had at least local control over the land of Mittani, so conventional chronologists could claim that Ashur-uballit I is the king who subdued Mittani. However, even if Ashur-uballit I had been suzerain over Mittani, this would not in itself prove he was the same as Ashur-uballit(A). Furthermore, the idea that Ashur-uballit I conquered Mittani as a Great King is based on the equation of Ashur-uballit I with Ashur-uballit(A), which Newgrosh is questioning. The other choices are Enlil-nirari or Arik-deni-ili, father of Adad-nirari I.

There is very little evidence that Enlil-nirari was a strong king. While Chronicle 21 records his victory over a Babylonian king, and Adad-nirari I describes him as an “extender of borders and boundaries” the first is equivocal and the second underwhelming. In the case of the war with Babylon, the fighting took place at Sugagu with is close to

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7 H. W. F. Saggs, The Might that was Assyria, 1984, p. 43.
8 Saggs, p. 41.
Ashur. Newgrosh believes this can only mean the Assyrian king was defending the home territory against a Babylonian invasion, not that the Assyrian king was bringing the battle to Babylon (62). With regard to the second, the phrase “extender of borders and boundaries” is simply ancient boilerplate. If Enlil-nirari had really conquered other lands, Adad-nirari would have mentioned them in detail, not in generalities.

In addition, in letter KUB XXIII 102, a Hittite king acknowledges that Adad-nirari I earned the title “Great King” but indicates the Assyrian’s immediate ancestors did not write to the Hittite king about brotherhood and Great-kingship. This indicates that the Assyrians prior to Adad-nirari I, including Ashur-uballit I, were not greatly respected as conquerors and were not considered Great Kings (63).

The other choice is Arik-den-ili. Adad-nirari I mentions his father’s conquests, including Kutmulu, which is north-eastern Hanigalbat. If anyone put Hanigalbat under (partial subjugation) it was probably Arik-den-ili, and it was this subjugation that Adad-nirari I used as a pretext for claiming that Shattuara had rebelled (64).

3) The Assyrians raided the Euphrates frontier in an attempt to subjugate Carchemish during the days of Sharre-kushukh, an official representing the Hittite king Murshili 2. It is conventionally assumed that the Assyrians were led by Ashur-uballit I. Unfortunately for this theory, the first Assyrian raid happened in year 2 of Murshili, but in terms of conventional dating Ashur-uballit I had already died before the reign of Murshili. Historians have therefore adopted a shortened chronology in order to place Ashur-uballit I during the days of Murshili (65). Other than chronological preference, there is no independent evidence that Ashur-uballit I led any raids against Carchemish. The more likely candidate would be Arik-den-ili.

Year 9 of Murshili also saw an Assyrian attack with respect to Carchemish, and again the more likely candidate is Arik-den-ili. Adad-nirari I lists the conquests of Arik-den-ili, including some part of Hanigalbat as noted above. While this does not prove that Arik-den-ili was the Assyrian king who attacked Carchemish, it is just as likely, or even more so, that he was the agent of aggression rather than Ashur-uballit I (66).

4) According to Chronicle 21, Ashur-uballit I gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Babylon, presumably Burna-buriash. After Burna-buriash’s death, a Kassite usurper killed the son of Ashur-uballit’s daughter. This caused Ashur-uballit I to conquer Babylon and kill the usurper, then place a mainstream Kassite ruler on the throne. There is some skepticism about the rendition of events as told by Chronicle 21, which is a late source. The chronicle is regarded as having a pro-Assyrian bias and there are no contemporary records to indicate the Ashur-uballit I was a powerful king (67), nor does Adad-nirari I record a conquest of Babylon by Ashur-uballit I, something
that would not have been missed. Newgrosh says, “[Adad-nirari I] seems unaware that Ashur-uballit had conquered Hanigalbat and achieved a position of dominance over Babylon: this situation would only occur in a later reign, that of Tukulti-Ninurta I” (68).

In summary, there is no real evidence to prove that Ashur-uballit I was a great conqueror, or that he conquered Hanigalbat in a Great King sort of way, not without already assuming that he is the same as Ashur-uballit(A). The evidence appears to point to Arik-den-ili as the king who conquered at least a portion of Hanigalbat. Additionally, both Ashur-uballit I and Adad-nirari I were silent with regard to any conquests of Hanigalbat or Babylon. Newgrosh summarizes: “There is thus a huge discrepancy between the modern perception of Ashur-uballit I as a great general, the conqueror of Hanigalbat, and the evidence on which this is based” (69).

**PROBLEMS FROM THE AMARNA LETTERS:**

First Problem: Ashur-uballit(A) sent Amarna letters EA 15 and 16 to Akhenaten. The first letter is written in Assyrian and the second in Hurro-Akkadian. Newgrosh parallels this to Labayu, who wrote a letter (EA 252) in which many of the words were in pure Canaanite and many in a mixed language. He quotes W. F. Albright to the effect that this change was because the scribes of Labayu were untutored in the target language of international diplomacy. Newgrosh then appeals to his theory that Labayu was none other than King Saul of Israel, a view we cannot accept. Nevertheless, on Newgrosh’s view Saul started out as a common man and was raised to kingship, and therefore his scribal correspondence would reflect the transition from rustic source language to sophisticated diplomatic language (71).

Based on this analogy, Newgrosh argues that Ashur-uballit(A) did not start out as a king, but after he became king, eventually acquired scribes who were competent in the international language (Akkadian). This would explain the use of unsophisticated Assyrian in the earlier letter EA 15 and sophisticated Akkadian in letter EA 16. Since conventional chronology has Ashur-uballit I as inheriting kingship from his fathers, this explanation will not work. If Ashur-uballit(A) was the same person as Ashur-uballit I, it does not explain why a king who was “to the manner born” would write to Akhenaten in the obscure Assyrian language rather than in the well-known Akkadian language.

Second Problem: This is not really a chronological problem, but in EA 15, Ashur-uballit(A) says, “Until now, my predecessors have not written; today I write to you.” The term “predecessors” is *ab-ba-ua-ia* meaning “fathers.” It is similar to the Greek *abba* (father) and Hebrew *abahati* (fathers). The problem is that in EA 16 Ashur-uballit(A) mentions that his ancestor did write to Egypt, so Newgrosh believes one can infer that the immediate family of Ashur-uballit(A) did not write to Pharaoh but that more distant ancestor wrote to him (72).
Third Problem: Based on inscriptions we have of Ashur-uballit I (including tablets, cones, bowl, and stone), we learn that Ashur-uballit I was modest in his epithets. His usual one was “vice-regent of the god Ashur” while Ashur-uballit(A) does not hesitate to call himself the “king of Assyria” and implies Great King status for himself. The standard response is that Ashur-uballit I was a weak king at first and later became a strong king. The problem with this is that it creates a problem in terms of the distribution of inscriptions: five from his first 10 years of rule, and four for the remaining 25 or so years (73-74).

Fourth Problem: The successor of Ashur-uballit I was Enlil-nirari, but the latter did not call himself “king of Assyria” but only “vice-regent of Ashur.” If Ashur-uballit I had been a Great King, then Enlil-nirari should also have been a Great King. However, it was Arik-den-ili, a renowned fighter, who presumably “reintroduced” the epithet “king of Assyria” and “strong king.” If Ashur-uballit I was a Great King, why the lapse of these titles with the accession of his son? Perhaps, it is because Ashur-uballit I was content to be “vice-regent of Ashur” as his inscriptions indicate, and it was a different Ashur-uballit who claimed Great King status (74-75).

Fifth Problem: In EA-9 Burna-buriash wrote to Pharaoh Tutankhamun of Assyria’s subordinate position: “For the sake of your father my father did not listen to them [Canaanites]. Now, as for my Assyrian vassals, I was not the one who sent them to you” (75; my emphasis.)

According to Newgrosh, this shows that Burna-buriash regarded Babylon as the dominant power in the region, even over Assyria. Modern scholars merely dismiss this as propaganda, but they do so only because it as the time of Ashur-ubbalit(A), the one who wanted to be treated as the equal of the Mittani king. Nevertheless, given that the Assyrians threw off the sovereignty of Mittani, how could they be seen vassals of Babylonia? (76-77). Newgrosh does not believe there was any real dominance of Mittani over Assyria except during the time of Shaushtatar, so there is no reason to reject Babylonian suzerainty over Assyria during the days of the New Kingdom pharaohs (78-79).

Sixth Problem: In EA-16 Assur-uballit(A) refers to an ancestor, Ashur-nadin-ahhe, as receiving 20 talents of gold. Scholars regard this as a bride-price from the Egyptian king to the Assyrian ancestor. Newgrosh argues that rulers of strong nations, such as Egypt, married the daughters of peer nations, that is, those who were great powers in themselves. In other words, a pharaoh would not marry the daughter of a weak nation. However, if Ashur-uballit I was the one who was the first Great King, then Ashur-nadin-ahhe would have been a weak power, and pharaoh’s marriage to him would make no sense. Modern scholars as usual dismiss the claim as a clever fairy tale to impress the Egyptian king, but in order to do so they are dismissing primary documentation (81-82). My own view is that we don’t really know enough about the ancient world to understand all the nuances of foreign inter-marriages, so
Newgrosh’s claim that marriages were only between peer nations is speculative at this point, and therefore it is entirely possible that the Egyptian king would have paid a bridal price to a relatively weak Assyrian king. This would be especially true if the Egyptian king was attempting to align itself with smaller nations.

Seventh Problems: Ashur-ubballit(A) names Ashur-nadin-ahhe as the ancestor who married an earlier Egyptian king. There are two kings who go by that name in the Assyrian King List, both reigning in the Old Assyrian Period. Newgrosh believes Assyria would have been a Hurrian vassal during the time of Ashur-nadin-ahhe 2, but on his theory of marriage alliances, there would have been no marriage alliance between the Assyrian and the king of Egypt. Newgrosh believes the claim by Ashur-uballit(A) that an ancestor named Ashur-nadin-ahhe gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Egypt is inconsistent with what we know about Egyptian alliances (82-83).

Problem 8: This is Newgrosh’s discussion of the ancestry problem that we discussed earlier. “[W]e have to ask,” says Newgrosh, “how or why it was that the Assyrian king named Assur-uballit who wrote to Akhenaten could be misinformed as to his ancestry” (86).

Newgrosh concludes chapter 2 with two helpful tables that contrast what we know about Ashur-uballit 1 and what we know about Ashur-uballit(A). Newgrosh says, “There appears to be a disparity between source materials—the Amarna letters and the royal inscriptions. In particular, the Amarna Ashur-uballit seems to have lived in a different historical setting to his alter-ego, Ashur-uballit I. Moreover, there are specific differences in the stated genealogies of these rulers such that we might instead regard them as two different kings” (86).

Of course, the source of all the difficulties was the late 19th century assumption that Ashur-uballit(A) was to be identified with Ashur-uballit 1 of the king lists.

TO BE CONTINUED