

On kings, conventions, and dates

While this work's standards in citation and the transcription and normalisation of Akkadian follow those of the UAVA series (for example, bibliographical abbreviations follow those of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*),² a few additional conventions warrant discussion.

In reproducing modern toponyms, the present author has taken TAVO as a basis, albeit with some updates, standardisations, and modernisations. Firstly, toponyms within the modern Republic of Turkey receive their official modern names using the Turkish alphabet. Secondly, Arabic toponyms are given in forms privileging their written Modern Standard forms over pronunciation in local dialect, thus e.g. *Şayh Hamad* rather than *Šēḥ Hamad*, as this renders their etymologies clearer and permits their reverse transcription into Arabic characters. Thirdly, by the same token, names in adjacent Semitic languages (e.g. *Sūrī* and *Ṭūrōyō*) are given in an 'Arabicising' TAVO-esque transcription with some minor alterations such as spirantisations, thus e.g. *Ṭūrōyō Ṭūr 'Abdīn* over e.g. Radner's (2006b) *Ṭūr 'Abdīn*. Fourthly, Kurdish-language (i.e. *Gōrānī*, *Kurmāngī*, *Sōrānī*, and *Zazakī*) toponyms are presented in a TAVO-style transcription on account of the lack of any unifying alphabet for the various, often overlapping Kurdish languages or dialects—in light of the many variant spellings for Kurdish toponyms presently available, the present author has favoured those to be found on official or popular maps; much the same holds for (fifthly) Persian-language names—in doing so, redundant or 'Arabicising' features of spellings (e.g. initial *ʾ*) in Kurdish or Persian names are retained to aid in the consultation of maps in Perso-Arabic script. Upon the first appearance of a modern toponym in the text, its country is mentioned for context. Modern toponyms are presented in their official, cartographically-attested forms, with supplemental names in the other local languages (if any) of their inhabitants presented in parentheses, should they markedly differ from the official name. Sometimes ancillary elements of toponyms are translated for variety, thus both 'Dešt-e Ḥarīr' and 'Ḥarīr plain', or 'Harran Ovası' and 'Harran plain'. Rivers or mountain ranges running through too many countries to seem impartial are given their conventional Anglophone names, thus Taurus and Zagros mountains, or Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Turning to ancient names and words, it is worth noting that longer quotations from cuneiform sources are generally provided in transliteration and translation, although normalised Akkadian is used for short phrases, literary quotations, and terminological discussion. The occasional archaisms or colloquialisms in the present author's translations are intended to convey the flavours of the language of different textual genres, many of which would have sounded very stilted to the Assyrian on the street.³ The present author occasionally slips into English idiom simply for literary variety in a manuscript of such length.

The spelling of ancient toponyms also roughly follows the principles of the TAVO; for some examples, the present author has slightly altered or corrected these, in which cases, a brief explanation is given if at all warranted. The spelling of ancient individuals' names generally follows the principles of the *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (PNA) volumes, albeit with some divergences such as the use of Standard Babylonian divine names rather than Assyrian dialectical versions (thus *Ištar* over *Issār*, *Ninurta* over *Inurta*).

As has been recounted in the foreword, three new Neo-Assyrian kings are now identifiable: an Aššur-uballiṭ, son of Aššur-dān II (ca. 913*–912*), a Tukultī-apil-Ešarra, son of Šamši-Adad V (763–758?), and a Sal-mānu-ašarēd, son of Aššur-nārārī V (747–745). While the discovery of a single new monarch would hardly be cause enough to change the numbering of the Assyrian kings, the find of three such rulers inescapably warrants it.⁴ Indeed, it is not inconceivable that more such short-lived or parallel Assyrian monarchs are identified as the state of historical documentation continues to improve. While none of these newly found kings reigned for any significant period of time, their presence serves to explain previously enigmatic periods within Assyrian history, and their exclusion from the numbering system would lead to far more confusion

² To these must be added BNJ for *Brill's New Jacoby*. All dates are before the Christian era, unless otherwise stated.

³ To truly capture the difference between the Neo-Assyrian language and literary Standard Babylonian in English, the former would need to be rendered in Scots and the latter in the archaising late Victorian register of a Burton or Doughty.

⁴ In order to match the degree of chronological accuracy demanded by these reconstructions, kings' reigns are not rounded to the nearest year, as has often been the case hitherto, but instead placed as essentially coterminous with their predecessors and successors.

than benefit in the long run. Regardless, a renumbering has long been nigh: not only has Radner (2018) astutely observed that Assyria's last ruler Aššur-uballiṭ "III" was never crowned and regarded by his own people as merely a crown prince (which would strip him of his numerals), but it is also clear that Šarru-ukīn was not conventionally imagined as "Sargon II" but rather flatteringly on some occasions as a "second Šarru-kin" (May 2018b, 117; Fuchs 2020), much as a great general from Antiquity onwards might be dubbed a 'second Alexander'. Hence, the present author employs a new numbering system for the Neo-Assyrian kings reflecting the current state of research. So as to minimise confusion, those kings who have received a renumbering are signalled with an asterisk (*) following their name to signal their novelty to the reader.

In turn, so as to avoid misconceptions emerging from monikers such as 'Sargon II', and to foster compatibility with PNA, the Standard Babylonian versions of Assyrian kings' names are used. Beyond the scholarly integrity lent by such an approach, the inutility of the hackneyed, 'pseudo-Biblicising' Victorian names of Assyrian kings (the spelling and pronunciation of which significantly varies in practically every European language) must be recognised. These are actually an obstacle to the ever larger non-Judaeo-Christian or non-Western lay and academic communities engaging with Assyrian history. Why 'Ashurnasirpal' is retained when 'Tukulti-Ninib' was long since jettisoned is arbitrary, and a little 'conceptual autonomy' (*Eigenbegrifflichkeit*) can go a long way towards making Assyriology a more 'global' and less 'Eurocentric' subject. Regardless, the disquieted traditionalist can be comforted by the notion that Pūlu/Tukultī-apil-Ešarra has now been rightfully returned to his traditional numbering as 'Tiglath-pileser IV' (e.g. Olmstead 1918a, 71) after a century of flagrant misnumbering! So as to aid in the recognition of Assyrian kings considering this renumbering, any contemporarily attested Akkadian by-names are also listed. In this work, one will thus find, for example, the kings Pūlu/Tukultī-apil-Ešarra IV* (745–727), Ulūlāya/Salmānu-ašarēd VI* (727–722), and Šarru-ukīn (722–705).

Finally, the reader may note that the dating of events prior to 902 is shifted a year backwards in date from present convention (e.g. the eponymate of Šē'i-Aššur now equates to the year 910 rather than 909). This is because the date of the eponymate of Adad-nārārī II has been erroneously placed in 910 on the strength of an eponym list from Sultantepe (SAAS 2, A8) which presents demonstrable corruption, rather than 911 as might be reconstructed from counting the broken lines of a more reputable eponym list (SAAS 2, A1, see Edmonds 2024b). This problem is further compounded by Adad-nārārī II's status as a usurper, the brief reign of his predecessor Aššur-uballiṭ II*, and the lack of an intact eponym list for the period immediately preceding 911. Simply counting the years assigned to each king given by the Assyrian King List and compiling a chronology from this to span the 'Dark age' of the late 11th to late 10th centuries does not account for any number of kings or claimants who ruled for less than a year and were subsequently purged from Assyrian history (one might even think of the absence of Salmānu-ašarēd II from one redaction of the Assyrian King List). Hence, Assyrian absolute chronology prior to 911 has come profoundly 'unstuck'—although it was naïve from the start to count so far back from the famous 'eclipse of Bur-Sagalê' of 763 on the strength of Assyrian chronographic texts and assume a modern degree of precision. The discovery of many more chronographic sources will be required before the chronology prior to 911 can be confirmed. The tendency in the reconstruction of Neo-Assyrian chronology hitherto has understandably been towards harmonisation; the brief, mostly effaced reigns of new Assyrian kings presented in this volume demonstrate the mutability of official Assyrian chronology to suit political purposes. So as to signal the rediscovered uncertainty of the chronology, every historical date prior to 911 reliant upon Assyrian chronographic sources—i.e. every 'pre-canonical date'—is shifted a year back in time and adorned with an asterisk (*),⁵ which should also remind the reader of further changes which might occur in the reconstruction of the events of Assyria's dramatic past.

⁵ Much in the same way that post-canonical eponyms are garnished with this symbol to alert the reader to their mutability.

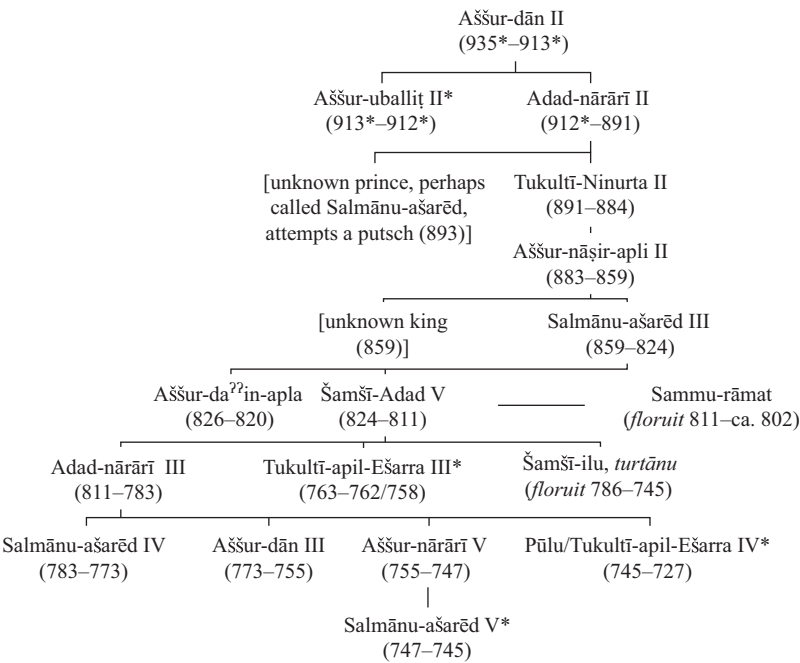


Figure 1: A family tree of the kings of early Neo-Assyria (diagram: author's own).

