

# King Hammurabi of Babylon

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ACCORDING TO HIS OWN testimony, Hammurabi (Hammurapi) was destined for kingship since time immemorial, when two powerful gods, Anu and Enlil, entrusted to a third god, Marduk, control over destiny, on Earth as in heaven. At that time, too, the gods set Babylon above all other lands, and its rule was made everlasting. Here is how Hammurabi describes himself on an inscribed black basalt stele we have come to call the *Code of Hammurabi*:

At that time, to give happiness to the people, Anum and Enlil pronounced my name "Hammurabi," me, the pious and god-fearing ruler, to decree equity in the land, to eradicate the wicked and the evil so that the powerful might not oppress the powerless, to rise like Shamash and illumine the land for the black-headed (people).

Primordial selection, self-praise, and dedication to justice combine readily in Mesopotamian tradition: before Hammurabi at least two kings, Ur-Nammu of Ur (III) and Lipit-Ishtar of Isin, cover the same ground, albeit more succinctly, in the prologues to legal prescriptions they issued for their own people. If we treat the three components of such sentiments separately, we may note that the first two items—divine preference and boast—are quasi-formulaic in Mesopotamian monumental royal inscriptions; indeed they are featured in inscriptions of rulers who, we now know, had every reason to be modest about themselves. That these two elements seem to us more ap-

propriate to Hammurabi is doubtless because in books on world history, on the art of antiquity, on the evolution of consciousness, or on the spirit or ethics of law, we have long since conceded to this Babylonian king the third attribute: champion of justice. Indeed, "Hammurabi" and "Lawgiver" have come to be practically synonymous in most modern publications.

## BABYLON

Hammurabi, who ruled from 1792 to 1750 BCE, came to the throne almost a hundred years after his ancestor Sumu-abum established his dynasty at Babylon in 1894. At that time Babylon was no major power, but its political history went back at least to the time of the Agade (Akkadian) Dynasty. One of its kings, Shar-kalisharri, built a temple to the deities Annunitum and Il-aba in Babylon. During the Ur III period diverse persons were appointed ENSÍ, "governor," of Babylon. The name of the city was written KÁ.DINGIR. (RA) in Sumerian, equivalent to *bāb ilim* in Akkadian, meaning "God's Gate," a name it held throughout its history. Whether or not "God's Gate" is itself folk etymology on a very ancient and no-longer-understood name is still under discussion. During Hammurabi's time, Babylon was also known in written form as TIN.TIR, and there is a

## “Hammurabi” or “Hammurapi”?

There is still a debate on how to read the king's name, and for this reason you will often find two spellings: “Hammurapi” and “Hammurabi.” It is generally accepted that the name contains two elements: *hammu* and *rap/bi*. The issue has gotten complicated because some would treat the name as Babylonian (East Semitic) and others as Amorite (West Semitic). As the first element is undoubtedly West Semitic, the second should also be treated as such. But, at this point the problems mushroom.

The cuneiform script itself was invented for Sumerian and adapted for Akkadian, so it is not well suited to represent a number of consonants that occur in Semitic languages. Scribes use five to six different cuneiform signs to write the name, most often spelling it *ha+am+mu+ra+bi*. The sign that we transcribe *ha* represents a number of Semitic phonemes among which were *het* (a voiceless pharyngeal) and *ayin* (a voiced pharyngeal). The difference between them, however, is significant because the “*hammu-*” element would mean “heat” (hence “Sun”) if the first consonant was heard as a *het* (but possibly also “father-in-law”), but “people, nation” or “paternal uncle, kinsman” if heard as an *ayin*. For the second element of the name, “mighty, vast” would be its meaning if read *-rabi*, but something to do with healing if read *-rapi*.

In older literature, the tendency was to differ on the meaning of the first element (hence “Sun” or “[Divine] Kinsman”) but to understand the second element as *-rabi*. But because some scholars con-

nected the Babylonian Hammurabi with a king of Shinar named Amraphel (Genesis 14), they opted for *-rapi* as the second element. When documents in alphabetic cuneiform were recovered from Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in the 1930s, a number of its kings of the second half of the second millennium were seen to be named *mrp*, and this spelling was retrojected on the name of the famous king of Babylon, thus leading many to read his name *ammu + rabi*, meaning “The (Divine) Kinsman/Uncle heals.”

This interpretation is possible; but in this chapter (as in the *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* reference set), the traditional “Hammurabi” is kept because there is no reason to assume that in different cultures names with homonymic components must have the same meaning. Moreover, Mesopotamian scribes exclusively used the sign for the syllable *-bi* in “Hammurabi” (as almost always in other names with *-rabi*) even when they had another sign for *-pi*. In the West, in Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana), scribes would sometime use *GAL*, the Sumerian word meaning “vast, large,” instead of the *-rabi* element in “Hammurabi.” Finally, in Babylonian traditions, presumably closer to a truer understanding of the meaning of the name, “Hammurabi” was understood as *kimta rapaštu*, “Vast Nation,” again favoring *-rabi* as the second element.

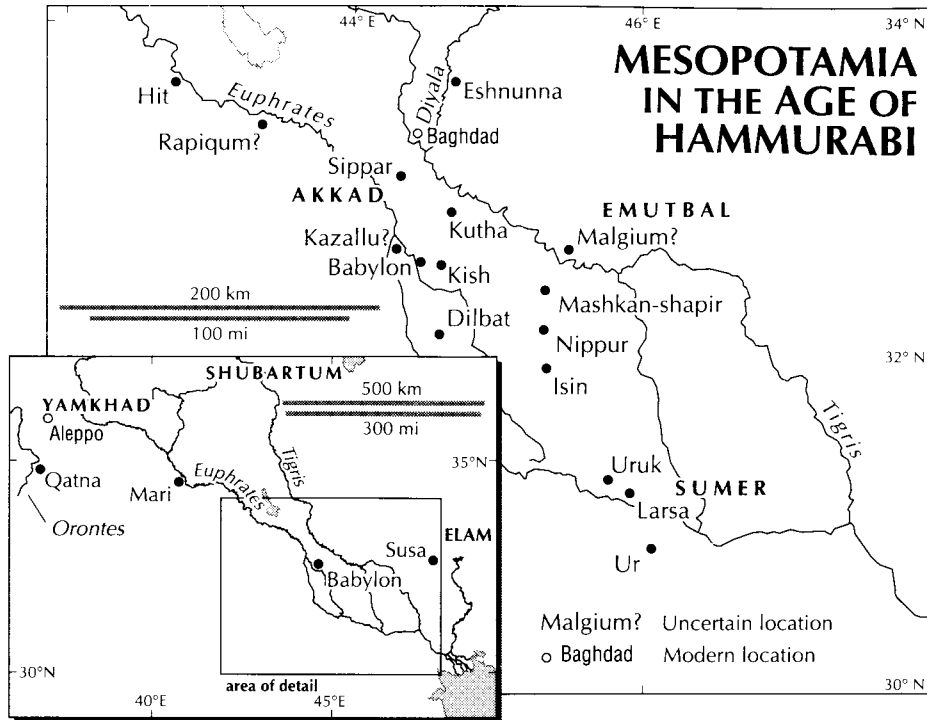
*Moral:* It is all right for people to use either spelling, provided that they not become dogmatic about their choice.

likelihood that before the Agade period, it had a name that was pronounced \*Babal/r but written BAR.KI.BAR. In Hebrew the city was called *bābel*, allegedly because God “confounded (*bālal*), the speech of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:9); but we get our own name for the city from the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, where it was written *babylōn*.

Babylon sat astride the Arakhtum—either a branch of the Euphrates or the great river itself before it shifted its route—and its soil could be among the most fertile in the ancient world if constantly worked and watered. Its ruins are divided among a number of tells that are now partially walled-off for display to tourists visiting Iraq; but the immense remains that are still

to be seen there are those of first millennium Babylon. (See “Nabonidus” below.) Hammurabi's own capital, lying beneath the present remains, must have been much more modest in size; but because of the rise of subsoil water levels in the region, it is now largely beyond archaeological inspection. For this reason almost all of our information on Old Babylonian Babylon, that is the Babylon of Hammurabi's dynasty, comes from material excavated in other sites under Hammurabi's control, correspondence recovered at capitals of powers friendly or hostile to Babylon, copies done in antiquity of inscriptions no longer extant, and monuments taken elsewhere as spoils of war. The most famous example in the last category

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is the *Code of Hammurabi*, itself likely promulgated in two versions over a ten-year period, the second of which was produced in at least two copies. When in the twelfth century, the Elamites raided Babylon, they took to their capital Susa (biblical Shushan, modern Shush) one or perhaps two copies of the second version. From there, in 1902 French archaeologists retrieved the *Code of Hammurabi*, now one of the treasured objects of the Louvre.

### BABYLON BEFORE HAMMURABI

We do not know how Sumu-abum (1894–1881), the dynasty's founder, came to Babylon. We suspect that he was one of many Amorite tribal leaders who chose to move his dwelling from a tent beyond the city walls to a palace within it. Well after Hammurabi's own day, the new state was recognized as a joining of two groups: the urbanized Akkadians of previous generations and the Amorites who became sedentary when in the region. (See the chapter on the Amorites in Part 5, Vol. II.)

As the new dynasty was settling in Babylon, the major powers in the region were Isin (at modern Ishan Bahriyat) and Larsa (at modern Senkereh). After the Elamites sacked Ur toward the end of the third millennium, these two cities successively—for a while even alternatingly—took control of southern Mesopotamia. Most of our information on what happened during his reign and that of his immediate successors comes from what we call "year-dates," "year-names," or "year-formulas." It was a common practice in southern Mesopotamia for scribes to label each year of their king's reign after a major royal activity occurring the previous year and to use such a "year-date" when dating a legal or administrative document. For example, they would write: "Month Abum; day 12; year: Sumu-abum captured Kazallu." In some cases an event was deemed so spectacular that scribes would initiate a rising count from that moment. Thus, in the formulation of the year-dates Rim-Sin used after he conquered Isin, a rising count was kept for the thirty-one years remaining in his reign: from "year: He conquered Isin" to "year 31 after: He conquered Isin."

## History and Culture

Sumu-abum's first act was to begin rebuilding Babylon's fortifications, a task that occupied almost every one of his successors. He built temples to Sin (the Ekishnugal and Enitenna), carried out raids against neighboring towns, such as Dilbat (modern Tell Dulaim), Kazallu, Elip, and the venerable city Kish. How much effective control he had over these towns

cannot be easily stated. Of his successors, Sumula-El (1880–1845), Sabium (1844–1831), and Apil-Sin (1830–1813), we can draw more or less similar profiles: they (re)built fortifications, walls, and temples in Babylon and at neighboring towns; founded military outposts bearing their names ("Fort-Sumu-la-El"); built levees; and (re)dug canals, some of which also were

### Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian Periods

<i>Isin</i>	<i>Larsa</i>	<i>Babylon</i>	<i>Eshnunna</i>	<i>Ekallatum</i>
Ur-Ninurta (1923–1896)	Abi-sare (1905–1895)		Ipiq-Adad I	
Bur-Sin (1895–1874)	Sumu-El (1894–1866)	Sumu-abum (1894–1881)	Sharriya	
Lipit-Enlil (1873–1869)		Sumu-la-El (1880–1845)	Warassa	
Irra-imitti (1868–1861)	Nur-Adad (1865–1850)		Belakum	Ila-kabkabu
Enlil-bani (1860–1837)	Sin-iddinam (1849–1843)	Sabium (1844–1831)	Ibal-pi-El I	Aminum
	Sin-eribam (1842–1841)		Ipiq-Adad II	
	Sin-iqisham (1840–1836)			
Zambiya (1836–1834)	Silli-Adad (1835)		Naram-Sin	
Iter-pisha (1833–1831)	Warad-Sin (1834–1823)	Apil-Sin (1830–1813)		Shamshi-Adad (1830–1776)
Urdukuqa (1830–1828)			Dannum-takhaz	
Sin-magir (1827–1817)	Rim-Sin (1822–1763)		Dadusha (?–1780)	
Damiq-ilishu (1816–1794)		Sin-muballit (1812–1793)		
1793 <i>Larsa annexes Isin</i>		Hammurabi (1792–1750)	<i>Yasmakh-Adad at Mari (c. 1796–1776)</i>	
			Ibal-pi-El II (1779–1765)	
			Ishme-Dagan (1775–?)	
			<i>1766 Babylon, Mari, and Elam capture Eshnunna</i>	
	<i>1763 Babylon annexes Larsa</i>	<i>1761 Hammurabi defeats Zimri-Lim of Mari</i>		
		Samsu-iluna (1749–1712)	<i>1738 Babylon loses southern Sumerian city-states</i>	
<i>1720 Babylon loses Nippur and Isin</i>		Abi-eshukh (1711–1684)	Akhushina	
		Ammi-ditana (1683–1647)		
		Ammi-saduqa (1646–1626)		
		Samsu-ditana (1625–1595)		
		<i>1595 Hittites raid Babylon</i>		

(Adapted from "The History of Ancient Mesopotamia" in Part 5, Vol. II)

named after activities of kings. They defeated enemies of nearby towns, the same as those listed above, plus Barzi (=Borsippa; Sumu-la-El), Kar-Shamash (Sabium), and Durmuti (Apil-Sin). Occasionally we find Babylonian rulers attacking a major power such as Larsa (Sabium) or meeting allies (Sabium, from Uruk). We cannot say too much more about these kings for they left us very few monumental inscriptions, and the documents stemming from their reigns tend to be singularly circumspect about any information beyond trade agreements and juridical decisions.

With Sin-muballit, Hammurabi's father, Babylon really strove for panregional status. We have a very long letter that Anam (An-anam), ruler of Uruk (modern Warka, biblical Erech), wrote to Sin-muballit. A generation or so before, a daughter of Sumu-la-El had married a king of Uruk and the two powers felt strongly enough about their bonds that they spoke of being "one House." Although there are reasons to take this particular letter to be fictive, quoting from it can illustrate the ethos of power politics of the time. Anam writes,

God knows that since we have come to know each other I have trusted in you as one would trust in Ishtar, and my head has rested on your very own lap. For these reasons, for us to be in harmony, my opinion and yours should be the same. You must certainly know that before there could be peace and goodwill, a sacred oath must be taken, that until there is a "touching of the throat" ritual, there can be no mutual trust, and that any sacred oath must be renewed yearly. (You also know) that while for the past three to four years, soldiers from Amnan-Yakhrurum (tribes) have been constantly in this very House (dynasty), a sacred oath was never urged upon you by word of mouth or in writing. Under these circumstances, because this House is speaking frankly with you and respects your reputation, you must try to make things turn out well.

We soon find Sin-muballit joining a coalition that included Isin and Uruk to check the rising power of Rim-Sin's Larsa at Babylon's southern flank; but everyone except Babylon paid dearly for it. To his north a powerful kingdom was being forged by Shamshi-Adad who, although he once took refuge in Babylon, could not be trusted to respect its frontiers. (See "Shamshi-

Adad and Sons" above.) To the east, there was Eshnunna (Eshnunnak, modern Tell Asmar), a power that rarely held back its armies. Farther away in the same direction loomed Elam, a major force that repeatedly struck into Mesopotamia. Sin-muballit himself spent the last of his twenty years on the throne strengthening the walls of cities within his territory, no doubt awaiting a Larsa onslaught. One hundred by forty miles (160 by 60 kilometers) would be a plausible estimate of the size of his kingdom.

Hammurabi took power under these circumstances.

## THE REIGN OF HAMMURABI

Hammurabi by no means inherited a "bad" situation. Although archaeology cannot reconstruct what Babylon looked like then, we do know that it contained a palace and many temples, each with its own name: Apil-Sin had rebuilt *Eturkalamma* ("Temple: Cattle-Pen of the Land"), dedicated to the triad Ishtar, Anu, and Nanay; for Marduk, Sumu-la-El outfitted and Sabium rebuilt *Esagila* ("Temple: Lifted Head") and its ziggurat *Etemenanki*, ("Temple: Base for the Universe"); at least since Sumu-la-El's time, *Enamkhe* ("Temple of Plenty") had been consecrated to Adad. And if we add to this list of temples in Babylon itself those patronized in controlled territory—the temple of Shamash in Sippar (Sabium), of Ishtar at Elip (Apil-Sin), and of Zababa at Kish (Sumu-la-El)—we would recognize that only a state with significant resources could build and maintain them, feed and clothe their resident gods, and support the priesthood they required.

Hammurabi eventually reigned for forty-three years (1792–1750), and by critically reviewing the formulas that were used from one year to the next, we acquire a fairly comprehensive picture of his career. He consolidated his hold on the throne by issuing a *mīšarum* (see below) in his first full year and, during the next four, by refurbishing, endowing, or building diverse temples in and out of Babylon, including the *Ekishnugal* (folk etymology: "Temple: Universal Protection") for Sin, the moon-god, featured in the names of his



Hammurabi's law code. The eight-foot stela, originally kept in Babylon, was taken to Susa as a war trophy, from where it was later recovered. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

father and grandfather. Then, from his sixth though his tenth year (formulas 7–11), Hammurabi launched important raids beyond his borders: from Rim-Sin of Larsa, his main rival to his south, he took Isin and Uruk in the sixth year. During the next year he raided Emutbal (Yamutbal), the country with Larsa as its capital. Two years later he made his first attacks, probably not permanent conquests, against Malgium, at the edge of Eshnunna. Hammurabi's eleventh year-date says that he conquered Rapiqum, another town then under Eshnunna's control but at the frontier of Mari (Tell Hariri). Striking so close to land controlled by the redoubtable Shamshi-Adad may seem to us a particularly venturesome act; but thanks to an interview Hammurabi gave much later to a Mari diplomat, we now know that Hammurabi was, to adapt Emily Dickinson's verse, "telling all the truth, but telling it slant," for it was Shamshi-Adad who had captured Rapiqum and who invited Hammurabi to share dominion over it.

We are now around 1780, and after these great exertions, Hammurabi spent actual regnal years eleven to twenty-eight (year-dates 12 to 29) in programmatic consolidation: cultic construction (11–17), irrigation works and fortifications (18–24), and more religious activities (25–28). Later rather than earlier in this period must have come the assessment of a Mari official that tells of Hammurabi's standing among the other great powers of the time: "No king is truly powerful just on his own. Ten to fifteen kings follow Hammurabi of Babylon, Rim-Sin of Larsa, Ibal-pi-El of Eshnunna or Amut-pi-El of Qatna; but twenty kings follow Yarim-Lim of Yamkhad."

A decade of Babylonian activities follow that radically alter the political shape of Mesopotamia. In his twenty-ninth year (1764–1763), Hammurabi joins a coalition that defeats Eshnunna, Shubartu (generally equivalent to Shamshi-Adad's kingdom), and Elam; in his thirtieth year, responding to a divine oracle, he conquers and annexes Larsa. We have a large document that shows how within two years after his conquest, six Babylonian functionaries were taking census of the weavers living there, very likely to use the able-bodied among them for his next battle.

Hammurabi can now deservedly assume the ancient title “King of Sumer and Akkad.” But there is more: during his thirty-first year, Eshnunna and its allies are once more defeated. During his thirty-second year, Mari falls to Babylon. When, two years later, in 1756, Babylonian armies reach from one edge of Assyrian territory to another (Turukku and Shubartu), Hammurabi can be said to have become the dominant power between Elam and the Euphrates. Only to the west of that river, in the kingdom of Yamkhad with its capital at Halab (Aleppo), could we find a force that compared to Hammurabi’s Babylon. In the remaining years of his reign, Hammurabi undertakes major rebuilding projects in areas that were probably devastated by floods or by constant war making. He also resettles people deported from conquered territory. In Babylon and in towns under his control, such as Kish and Ur, priestly refugees from diverse defeated cities, including Isin, Uruk, and Larsa, are allowed to build temples in which they could continue the worship of the gods of their ancestors.

## ASPECTS OF HAMMURABI’S RULE

### *Internal Rule*

We learn how Hammurabi ruled from consulting a variety of material: monumental inscriptions, legal and administrative documents, and letters exchanged with contemporaries. Each of these categories of information allows us a different angle by which to focus on the ideology and style of Hammurabi’s rule.

There are a number of monumental inscriptions that replay the themes mentioned earlier in this essay. Thus, after excavating or dredging canals, solidifying fortification walls, and dedicating shrines or temples, Hammurabi would commission inscriptions in which he lyrically harked back to primordial moments when gods such as Shamash of Sippar, Marduk of Babylon and Borsippa, Zababa of Kish, Nergal of Kutha, and Inanna of Zabalani (modern Izbaykh) decide to favor him over all others. Echoes of his devotion to justice again occur in such inscriptions and, less so, in the rhetorically related

hymns and prayers that are extant. However, when such conventional themes are replayed in the prologue and epilogue of the *Code of Hammurabi*, they emerge more concrete and persuasive because they are set within an imaginative retelling of Hammurabi’s historical triumphs.

Was Hammurabi traditional, sincere, or merely ingenious in using the *Code* as a vehicle by which to proclaim his attachment to justice? Ancient rulers would obviously never espouse injustice or inequity as a guidepost for their reign. In fact, earlier kings of the Old Babylonian period occasionally proclaimed an *andurārum* or a *mīšarum*, an edict meant to stem economic and social disintegration by reverting to earlier (presumably less unstable) conditions. Immediately following such a decree, the arrears of state agents would be excused and personal debts between private parties would be erased. Hammurabi’s own absorption with justice, however, is on another plane, for he chose to *publicize* this attachment a number of times during his reign. Just months after coming to the throne, Hammurabi claims to have “established justice in his land” (first full year of reign = second year-date). Similarly, the formula for his twenty-second year recalls the dedication of a “statue of Hammurabi (as) king of justice.” Characteristically, Hammurabi proclaims a *mīšarum* upon ascending Larsa’s throne. In comparison, neither Yakhdun-Lim nor Zimri-Lim of Mari, who were equally devoted to righting wrongs, chose to mention justice among their many year-dates. After Hammurabi and because of the prestige of his precedence, the issuing of such decrees became more common during unstable periods. As to the *Code*, internal evidence makes it unlikely that the copy we have now was consecrated before his thirty-ninth year of reign.

The *Code* itself is Hammurabi’s most impressive monumental inscription. Inspired by the gods, Hammurabi gives us principles by which the just society he is fashioning will continue to find its equilibrium. These principles are intended not just for the ruling classes, but for all those thirsting for justice: “Any person feeling wronged in a legal matter should go in front of the statue of me as ‘King of Justice’ and also

have my inscribed stela read out to him so that he can hear my precious words and my stela can explain the case to him. By understanding his legal situation, he can be comforted.”

As well, the *Code* was to be a measure by which future kings could gauge their own commitment to equity. Once the *Code* was read to them, naturally they would want to equal the political success Hammurabi had; but they would fail to do so unless they embraced his drive for justice and kept true to the divinely set standards he enunciated in the *Code*: “If (such a leader) has intelligence and wishes to guide his land aright, he should heed the words which I wrote on my stela, and it shall surely show him the road and the way.”

The *Code* covers legal matters partially or selectively. Its provisions are framed hypothetically (“if this condition occurs then this is the consequence”), and the circumstances they describe are stated so precisely that they could provide guidance only by example or analogy. Additionally its form (an eight-foot tall black basalt stone), its location (probably in a temple, next to a statue of Hammurabi as “King of Justice”), and its script (highly archaic) must have made it accessible only to the very learned, not at all the persons who normally sat in judgment at the city or temple gate. These qualifications have caused a major debate about how precisely to deal with the *Code*: Does it collect laws or merely precedents? Was it ever consulted or did it delight only the gods, who prompted it, and the master scribes, who drew from its pristine rhetoric fine exercises for advanced students? There is no simple answer, and the same debate can be raised about most legal formulations from antiquity, including what is found in the Hebrew Bible, for there is no easy match between our vocabulary and our principles of law and those of the Mesopotamians. It cannot be doubted, however, that Hammurabi’s *Code* contains immensely useful information about Old Babylonian society and provides cultural anthropologists with precious details on its behavior. (See also “Legal and Social Institutions of Ancient Mesopotamia” in Part 4, Vol. I.)

The largest number of extant documents on internal administration from Hammurabi’s reign was exchanged between the king and

two of his officers, Sin-iddinam and Shamash-khazir, the first apparently entrusted with higher authority than the second. They themselves were probably Babylonians who were given posts in Larsa after the city was annexed by Hammurabi, and their correspondence therefore reflects conditions in that area during the last decade of Hammurabi’s reign. The problems these two officers handled reflected a postwar reconstruction period when an administration that was not familiar with the local situation nevertheless had to arbitrate among claims for landownership, taxation, completion of *ilkum*-duty (work or money owed the state for diverse privileges), mercantile prerogatives, price control, and the like. Relevant to the theme we are pursuing here is the pivotal role of Hammurabi in resolving legal situations: he can remit a case to local authorities, he can decide on a case pending more specific information, or he can simply issue a judgment. These communications also reveal him to be immersed in even the most trifling of decisions; conversely they indicate how little room to maneuver Hammurabi gave his administrators. Here are four brief notes of Hammurabi (treated by M. Stol, *Altbabylonische Briefe*, vol. 9 [1981]):

*To Lushtammar-Zababa and Belanum:*

Re: Sin-ana-Damru-lippalis, son of Maninum, captured by the enemy. Pay 10 shekels from the (treasury) of the Sin temple to the merchant and (thus) ransom him. (no. 32)

*To Shamash-khazir:*

Let Ea-kima-iliya, the musician, keep control of his field as he did of old. Don’t take a single square foot from him! (no. 188)

*To Shamash-khazir:*

Qishtum and Awil-ili wrote to me, “30 *bur* of land assigned to us was taken from us and given to Shamash-shatakakim. He did not farm what they gave him, but handed it over to farmers who did.” This is what they wrote me.

You and Shamash-mushallim must stand by. Qishtum, Awil-ili, and Shamash-shatakakim should be summoned before you. Look into their grievance and come up with a final judgment for them. Then send me a report on that final judgment. (no. 190)



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### *To Shamash-khazir:*

The provincial leaders of Emutbal have not yet brought into Babylon their barley tax. Put pressure and check on them so that they bring their barley tax into Babylon promptly. You will be punished for their failure. (no. 192)

### *Politics: Babylon and Mari*

We have relied on Hammurabi's year-dates and inscriptions to follow his fortunes in conquests and annexation of territories. Such documents are not likely to be revealing about the king's personality. We are, therefore, very fortunate that letters from the archives of Mari have come to fill that gap.

Hammurabi was in communication with Mari kings from his earliest years on the throne. We do not know whether it was during his reign that a Mari princess (possibly Yakhdun-Lim's daughter) was sent as a *naditum*, a woman not allowed to have her own children, to a Sippar cloister dedicated to the worship of Shamash. A brief note from Yasmakh-Adad, his "brother" (that is, an ally of equal status), discusses the movement of a caravan passing through Babylon when returning from Tilmun (Dilmun). But we are best informed through the numerous and often loquacious dispatches the next king, Zimri-Lim, received from his ambassadors at the court of Hammurabi, and they paint a vivid portrait of the "Lawgiver," showing him to be a man of many moods, who could turn mercurial and affable within the same interview. They also give us information on his inner circle of advisers and ministers. We have learned that Hammurabi's eldest son, Sumu-ditana, frequented Mari officials, that he lived in one of Mari's provincial palaces (at nearby Terqa) where his household included a group of Babylonian artisans. Another son, Mutu-numakha, was also sent to Zimri-Lim, but with a plea to send him to Yamkhad or Qatna (modern Tell Mishrifeh in Syria) if Zimri-Lim did not wish to keep him. From other sources, we know that Hammurabi had a sister who lived in a cloister at Sippar and at least one daughter whom he married off to Silli-Sin, a king of Eshnunna, whose rise was as quick as his fall, for he soon became a victim to his own father-in-law's machinations—an arrangement that was not unusual in a period when many kings used

daughters to solve short-term political problems.

The relationship between Zimri-Lim and Hammurabi was friendly, as they often shared common goals and common enemies. But in the brutal political games that characterized the Old Babylonian period, the two kings had reason to be suspicious of each other. A traveling merchant sent Zimri-Lim a report that cannot be given a specific date: "As Hammurabi issued orders, he could not shed enough tears, and he kept on begging God to despise my lord. This is what he also said, '2 months is long enough for me to return the favor and force him squat to the ground.'" A letter from Mari diplomats reads almost comically as Hammurabi and a delegation from Mari try to maneuver each other into a more advantageous formulation of the sacred oath that preceded the ratification of a treaty. A dispute over control of a town on the Euphrates named Hit, important as a trading as well as a religious center, simmered for a long time. A letter from one of Zimri-Lim's most trusted omen interpreters, Asqudum, pulled no punches: "My lord sent me the gist of the letter that Hammurabi, king of Babylon, wrote to him. My lord will surely come to realize how exaggerated is his information and how full of lies are his words! Does my lord not know how badly Hammurabi king of Babylon wants to make an alliance with my lord?"

Zimri-Lim indeed knew it and in the Mari archives was found a rough draft for an oath to seal a treaty that read,

Swear by Shamash of Heaven! Swear by Adad of Heaven! These are the gods that Hammurabi, son of Sin-muballit, king of Babylon, invoked (when taking the following oath),

"From now on, as long as I live, I shall indeed be enemy of Siwa-palar-khukhpak (king of Elam). I shall not let my servants or my messengers mingle with his servants, and I shall not dispatch them to him. I shall not make peace with Siwa-palar-khukhpak without the approval of Zimri-Lim, king of Mari and the Khana-land. If I plan to make peace with Siwa-palar-Khukhpak, I shall certainly consult with Zimri-Lim, son of Yakhdun-Lim, king of Mari and the Khana-land. If it is not a peaceful condition, we shall make peace (only) jointly. What I have sworn by my gods,

Shamash and Adad, to Zimri-Lim, son of Yakhdun-Lim, king of Mari and the Khana-Land, I will faithfully fulfill, joyfully and in complete sincerity.”

At one point during the dispute, Hammurabi met two of Zimri-Lim’s ambassadors in Sippar, where the god Shamash resided, and the report they sent back to Mari, although accented to display their own cleverness, is worth sampling because it captures the flavor of Hammurabi’s speech making,

We reached Greater Sippar, and Yansib-Adad, my lord’s servant, delivered my lord’s message to Hammurabi. As he was doing it, Hammurabi kept on listening, without objecting, during the entire message. Until Yansib-Adad completed his report, Hammurabi was very attentive; but then he addressed us,

“Has this House, then or now, ever transgressed against Mari? Furthermore, has there ever been a single conflict between Mari and this House? Mari and Babylon, then as now are one House—and one finger—that cannot be led astray(?). Even as now Zimri-Lim keeps me abreast of every event and is forthright with me. Previously did not his father and grandfather (Yakhdun-Lim and Yaggid-Lim) keep this House abreast of every event? Ever since Zimri-Lim moved to support me and began to communicate with me, no transgression or attack on him has been attributed to me. I have been entirely beneficial to him and he is deeply aware of how beneficial I have been to him.”

Once he said these and many such agreeable words, I replied,

“Indeed you have in no way transgressed against my lord, and my lord has in no way transgressed against you; you have been well-disposed to my lord and he has been well-disposed toward you. He has honored you and has promoted your excellent reputation. Of the kings allied to you . . . there is not one who has been more beneficial to you and has honored you more than my lord. Upon your request, he once arrested and conveyed to you ambassadors from Eshnunna! . . . Now then, matching the favors my lord has showered on you and the way he has honored you, give him satisfaction: put yourself under oath regarding the towns that the viceroy of Elam, your ‘father,’ has given my lord, and may utter sincerity prevail.”

This is what I told him and he answered me,

“Among my allies there is no one who could compare to how much Zimri-Lim has done me favors and honored me. I want to satisfy him by matching his favors. An eternal bond must keep us together. Please, review the previous stipulations before I answer you.”

I replied, “It is for you to review them”; and when he said, “Very well, I will do so, but mention the cities for which I must take an oath,” I said, “Hit, Kharbe, and Yabliya.” “You must not mention Hit!” he said. “The situation is similar to what had happened when Shamshi-Adad forced Rapiqum out of the king of Eshnunna’s control and gave it to me. Since then my garrison stayed there and must remain there even now. As Shamshi-Adad’s garrison stayed there ever since then, Zimri-Lim’s garrison can stay also. Just as my garrison and his have stayed jointly there, these garrisons (of ours) should be merged as one.” (Published by D. Charpin, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, pp. 364–367, no. 449)

The dispute about Hit seemed beyond solution, and the two allies remained suspicious of each other even as they cooperated on many of the fronts Hammurabi opened, year after year, against Eshnunna, Elam, and Ekallatum (“Assyria”). For the conquest of Larsa—a defining moment for Hammurabi and his dynasty—Zimri-Lim dispatched troops to Babylon. From his diplomats and generals, we gather details about Hammurabi’s strategy: how he lulled Rim-Sin into imagining him an ally against Elam; how he sent a loyal minister to advise Rim-Sin’s brother, Sin-muballit, who ruled from Larsa’s other major fortification, Mashkan-shapir (Tell Abu Dhuwari); how skirmishes at Babylon’s frontier were deemed a reason for war; and how, after consulting the gods Shamash and Marduk, Hammurabi felt justified to open major hostilities. “Go,” he was quoted by one Mari official as telling his troops setting forth on their journey, “may God guide you. If as you reach (Mashkan-shapir), it opens its gates for you, accept its truce. Even if he had broken the oath of Shamash and Marduk, in no way should you violate this city. But if the city does not open its gates, send me a message.”

The letters also tell us that Hammurabi accepted the surrender of Mashkan-shapir and, after subjecting Larsa to a six-month assault with ramps, battering rams, and towers, he cap-

tered the city. From yet another Mari diplomat, we learn that Rim-Sin, undoubtedly a very old man after sixty years as king, was taken alive; but we can only guess about his fate.

As the siege stretched out, Zimri-Lim began to worry about a timely release of his men, for he faced difficulties with a number of vassal states. From this period, a remarkable series of letters was exchanged between Zimri-Lim and trusted palace officials, including his wife Shiptu, trying to pin down Hammurabi's intent. Here are brief excerpts (published in J.-M. Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari I/1*):

*Zimri-Lim to Shiptu:*

Make an oracular inquiry about Hammurabi of Babylon: "Will this man die? Will he come to terms with us? Will he start a war against us? When I go north, will he besiege us? What?" Ask about his man, and when a first time you have inquired, then do so once more, and write me whatever you gather about him. (no. 185b, pp. 368–369)

*Shiptu to Zimri-Lim:*

Regarding news of Babylon, I gave potions to the men and posed my (oracular) questions. (Their answer:) Though this man is plotting much against this land, he will not prevail. My lord will see what God will do to this man. You will capture him and stand over him. His days are numbered; he will not live long. My lord should know this. (no. 212, pp. 440–441)

*Erib-Sin, a diviner, to Zimri-Lim* (The report is sent from Babylonian territory!):

Yet another time, I repeated the (oracular inquiry): "The army which my lord dispatched to Hammurabi: This army, will Hammurabi not stir it to revolt, not crush it, not have it crushed? Will he not detain it in captivity—whether harmful or peaceful? Having left Mari's gate intact, will it enter Mari in full force? (no. 100b, pp. 264–266)

Yet, the extensive administrative documentation we have from Zimri-Lim's final year on the throne does not indicate that the palace was preparing for warfare. How Mari fell to Babylon, then, is not at all clear: had Zimri-Lim died while campaigning elsewhere, and the city opened its gate to the Babylonians? We know that tradition did not deem Zimri-Lim a "loser," for his name was assumed by a regional king of Khana less than a century later.

The archaeology of Mari itself has produced no evidence of a siege or a brutal attack. Furthermore, we do not know why Hammurabi decided not to annex it, as he did many other cities. In the *Code*, Hammurabi prides himself on having spared the people of Mari, but we do not know what he did with its population: did he move it to another corner of his realm? What we know, rather, is that he dispatched a number of administrators and scribes (two brothers among them) who, during the next two years (1760–1758), methodically catalogued and carted away Mari's treasures and useful archives. They then dismantled its walls and put it to the torch.

## HAMMURABI'S SUCCESSORS

Hammurabi became gravely ill late in his reign and was forced to hand over power before he died. A number of inscriptions, originally attached to gifts to the gods, have survived that are dedicated "for the well-being of Hammurabi." They may have come from this period. Our documentation on the kings that followed him includes several royal inscriptions and is rich in private letters and contracts. The political story they reveal is that of a dynasty that experienced numerous ebbs and restorations. Samsu-iluna (1749–1712), Hammurabi's son, began to experience problems within a decade of his father's death. (Why Hammurabi was not succeeded by his oldest son Sumu-ditana is a minor puzzle: did the latter not survive his father?) At that time a major insurrection took place throughout the empire, and it was led by a Rim-Sin who obviously took up the name of Larsa's final king. The rebellion, one of many more to come, lasted at least four years.

Martial activities did not stifle the creativity of Babylonian scribes as they prepared a series of inscriptions to commemorate diverse building activities. Among the more striking is one dubbed today "Samsu-iluna C" that was composed in two languages (Sumerian and Akkadian) to celebrate his fortification of Kish. In that text, times immemorial and historical cannot be parted from each other, barriers be-

tween gods and people are dropped, and actual events are telescoped into a perfect realization of one hero's unmatched deed.

The god Enlil wished to strengthen and beautify Kish, and ordered Zababa and Ishtar (its patrons) to inspire his favorite king, Samsu-iluna, and to vanquish his enemies so that he could rebuild a temple worthy of them. Happy to comply, the gods told Samsu-iluna ("of divine seed eternal, of royal stock") to fear nothing for they would fight on his right and humble his foes. Thus fortified, Samsu-iluna overwhelmed his enemies quickly. ("The year was not half over when he slew Rim-Sin . . . and heaped dirt upon his cadaver; likewise, he slew 26 rebel kings who opposed him.") Within the same year, Samsu-iluna rebuilt Kish and dug a moat around it. As a result, Zababa and Ishtar, the inscription anticipated, would certainly want to grant Samsu-iluna, "their twin brother," a healthy and long life that matched that of the gods Sin and Shamash.

Of the reigns of the remaining kings in the dynasty, Abi-eshukh (1711–1684), Ammi-ditana (1683–1647), Ammi-saduqa (1646–1626), and Samsu-ditana (1625–1595), we can give many political and economic details, but few that make any ruler stand out: they fought rebellions and incursions, redug canals, and rebuilt fortresses. Abi-eshukh is remembered in the chronicles and in an as yet unplaced year-date as a king who tried but failed to capture an enemy by deflecting the waters of the Tigris. From his reign, we have a hymn and fragments of love lyrics addressing the erotic divine pair, Nanay and Muati. His successor, Ammi-ditana, has left us one of the best-crafted Akkadian prayers, and it deserves our momentary attention.

Babylonians symbolically matched numbers to their gods. Thus, for obvious reasons, the moon-god Sin was often called "30," and Ishtar, less obviously, was equated with "15." This poem consists of 15 stanzas and begins as a hymn to Ishtar, celebrating frankly her instinct for vigor and pleasure. It then describes her place among the gods before settling on the business at hand: a plea for Ammi-ditana, her faithful lover. The following selections are taken from the beginning and end of the poem.

Glorify the Goddess, most exalted of goddesses,  
May she be praised, mistress of mankind,  
greatest of divinities;

Glorify Ishtar, most exalted of goddesses, may  
she be praised,  
Mistress of womankind, greatest among  
divinities.

She of delight—wrapped in love,  
Adorned by allure, desire, charm;  
Ishtar of delight—wrapped in love,  
Adorned by allure, desire, charm.

Honeyed of lips, life at her mouth,  
Laughter sweeps over her body;  
Dazzling, with beads set on her head,  
Glowing with blush, eyes speckled in many  
hues.

The king, favorite of the gods and love of their  
hearts,  
Munificently immolates undefiled animals;  
Ammi-ditana, as the pure sacrifice of his hands,  
Gorges them with fattened bulls and sheep.

From her consort Anum, she asks for him  
Life, healthy and long;  
On Ammi-ditana, numerous years of life,  
Ishtar bestows and awards.

At her beck, she makes submit  
The Earth's Four Corners, to his feet;  
The world's inhabited regions  
She hitches to his yoke.

Her heart's desire, a song to charm her  
Being perfect at his mouth, he fulfilled the  
command of Ea (who),  
On hearing praise for her, lauded Ammi-ditana,  
"May he live long, his king (Anum) should  
always love him."

O Ishtar, for Ammi-ditana, your loving king,  
Grant life, healthy and long,  
May he live it full!

Ammi-saduqa succeeded Ammi-ditana, and from his period come two documents that are of capital importance, although neither he nor his contemporaries might have granted them the merits that we do. The first is the best preserved text of the three extant *mīšarum* edicts (the others come from Samsu-iluna and a third king whose name is lost), picking up on tradi-

tional themes. (See above.) The second document probably reflects a memorial ritual (*kis-pum*) for which Ammi-saduqa's ancestors, harking back beyond Sumu-abum to personalities legendary or eponymous, are conjured:

The turn of Amorite tribesmen; the turn of Khana-tribesmen; the turn of Gutu; the turn of all those not mentioned on this tablet; also any soldier who has fallen on a difficult mission for his master; princes; princesses; all people, from East to West, who have no one to provide for them (in the after-life) or invoke their names: Come close, eat this (food), drink this (beverage), and bless Ammi-saduqa, son of Ammi-ditana.

A third document is not contemporaneous to Ammi-saduqa, but was recovered from the palace of Assurbanipal of Assyria. It belongs to the astrological series *Enūma Anu Enlil* and records the appearance and disappearance of the planet Venus, thus giving us a choice of several precise dates for his reign. (See also "Astronomy and Calendars in Ancient Mesopotamia" in Part 8, Vol. III, and "Chronology: Issues and Problems" in Part 5, Vol. II.)

Nothing suits better the reign of the dynasty's final king, Samsu-ditana, than that he left us no major inscription and that we are still sorting out the sequence of his thirty or so year-dates and evaluating the worth of the information that they carry. In truth, Babylon, its territory shrunken to a fraction of the size Hammurabi left at his death, seems to have reached political and economic exhaustion. Perhaps it is during this period of hard times that a certain Apil-Adad wrote a touching appeal to the "God of my father":

Why are you so unconcerned about me? Who could give you anyone like me? Please write (the god) Marduk, who loves you, to *absolve my sin*, so that I can face you and kiss your feet. Think also of my family, of those old and young, then for their sake have mercy on me. May your help reach me.

## EPILOGUE

Before he died, Hammurabi had attained a level of personal prestige not seen since the

days of Agade, Ur, and Isin: sweethearts took oaths about their love by "Nanay and Hammurabi the king"; poets credited him with inspiring divine poems ("Agushaya," a poem about the warrior Ishtar); chroniclers of much later times kept his memory alive. Especially after his conquest of Larsa, his reputation was such that in his own lifetime he was occasionally treated as a god (that is, his name was preceded by the sign of divinity DINGIR/*ilum*, just as were those of gods). People began to fashion names in which "Hammurabi" replaced the names of other gods. Thus, Hammurabi-bāni ("Hammurabi is a creator") was a name adopted by a cultic functionary commissioned to transport Larsa goddesses back to Babylon. Several administrators had the name Hammurabi-ilī, meaning "Hammurabi is my god." Whether obsequiousness (if not sycophancy) or sincerity inspired such naming practices cannot be decided, but we could note that such names were much rarer later on.

Two hundred years after Hammurabi came to power, around 1595, an army from the distant land of Khatti attacked and captured Babylon, carrying away its treasures. This spectacular raid ended the dynasty that had ruled from Babylon for three centuries. In the vacuum that ensued, the Kassites, an alliance of tribes that came from the east, took over the shrunken remnants of Hammurabi's empire. Their story is told in another chapter of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*.

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