

Neo-Assyrian and Syro-Palestinian Texts II

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I. Neo-Assyrian Texts II

A. *Tiglath-pileser III (Strawn)*

Tiglath-pileser III (Akkadian: *Tukulti-apil-Ešarra*: "My help is the son of Ešarra"¹) ruled Assyria from 745 to 727 BCE. The Assyrian King List states that he was the son of Ashur-nirari V, but most scholars think he was an usurper who took the throne during a rebellion in Nimrud ca. 746 (Leick 1999: 165; Tadmor 1994: 212–13). The only official monument to mention Tiglath-pileser's parentage is an enameled brick, which states that he is "the son of Adad-nirari" III (810–783),² though this presents chronological problems.³ Whatever the case, after a series of three somewhat weak rulers (Kuhrt 1995: 2: 490–3, 496), Tiglath-pileser returned Assyria to its full vitality by means of vigorous expansion and a number of new conquests that reestablished Assyrian domination in the western regions of the empire. It is no exaggeration to say that, in many ways, it was under his rule that Assyria attained the pinnacle of its power and influence as preeminent ancient Near Eastern superpower.

It is not surprising, then, to hear from Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions that he invested heavily in Assyrian military endeavors. Indeed, unlike some kings, Tiglath-pileser marched out with his army every year of his reign, save one (year 16). Nor is it surprising to learn that his military exploits were brutal. As foremost example of these, mention should be made of Tiglath-pileser's significant innovations in repopulation strategies. Assyrian kings such as Ashurnasirpal II before him engaged in the practice of forced deportation and importation of subjugated peoples, but Tiglath-pileser made it a systematic and regular habit as did those who followed him on the throne. This practice resulted in large-scale population shifts, the most famous of which is probably the fall of the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, Samaria, and its correlate deportation(s) ca. 722 BCE (see Becking 1992).

Upon taking the throne, Tiglath-pileser moved first against Babylon to the south before turning his attention northward toward Urartu. There he faced the king of Urartu, Sarduri II, who was in league with the king of Arpad, Mati'-ilu (cf. the Sefire Inscriptions). After an extended siege, Tiglath-pileser took Arpad in 740. He came west again in 738, this time against a Syrian coalition headed by Azriyau.⁴ At this time he received tribute from Damascus and Samaria. By 735, he had effectively eliminated any future threats from Urartu. So, having secured his borders to the south, north, and west, Tiglath-pileser set his eyes toward Egypt. He marched through the Levant, taking Gaza in 734. During this campaign, he again received tribute from nearby locales, including Hamath, Damascus, and Tyre. The next year he conquered Damascus and its king, Rezin, and turned the region into a province in 732.⁵ Thereafter, the Assyrian turned his attention to the eastern frontier of his empire and, following an uprising in Babylon, marched south where he put down the rebellion and took the throne, being called in Babylonian (and Hebrew) king "Pul(u)."⁶

127. Calah Annals

In the latter years of Tiglath-pileser's reign, a final edition of his annals was composed, comprising 17 regnal years (*palûs*). These annals were inscribed on stone slabs in the palace at Calah (Nimrud), but the palace was never completed, and Esarhaddon later dismantled and reused some of the slabs in his southwest palace. This, along with the fact that many of the slabs were lost, damaged, or destroyed in antiquity or in the early excavations of Nimrud, means that the reconstruction of the texts and their chronological arrangement is notoriously complicated.⁷ As might be expected, most of the annals concern the king's military campaigns, but the summary (non-annalistic) inscriptions also include treatments of the building projects he undertook, notably his palace at Nimrud (see Tadmor 1994: 25, 117–204).⁸

Introduction

(...)⁹

(Royal epithets [Ann. 1a+b: 1–7]) (...)¹⁰ *precious descendant of Baltil*,¹¹ *beloved of the god* [...] *a creation of divine Ninmenna*,¹² *who for the dominion of the lands* [...] *he grew up for kingship* [...] *governor* [...] *mighty male, light (for) all his people* [...] *(the one who) knocks his enemies away, heroic (young) man, (who) overwhelms [his foes?]*¹³ [...] *I cut straight through jagged mountains*¹⁴ and [...]]¹⁵

Year eight

(Ann. 19*: 1–12)¹⁶ (...) [...] *Azriyau*¹⁷ [...] *seized and* [...] (...) [...] *tribute like that of* [...] *the city (of)* [...] *his reinforcement(s) the city of El* [...] *the city of Usn[u], the city of Siammu, the city of Ma* [...]], *the city of Kaspuna, [which (are) on the coast] of the sea, including the cities* [...] *as far as Mt. Saue, which*

adjoins the Lebanon, (Mt.) Baal-Sapon, as far as (Mt.) Ammanana, boxwood mountain, all of Mt. Saue, the province of Kar-Adad,¹⁸ *the city of Hatarikka, the province of Nukudina, [Mt. Hasu? incl]uding, the cities of its surroundings, the city of Ara* [...]], *both of them, the cities of their surroundings, all of Mt. Sarbua, the city of Ashani, the city of Yatabi, all of Mt. Yaraqū* (...) *the citi of Ellitarbi, the city of Zitanu, as far as the city of Atinni* (...), *the city of Bumame: 19 regions of Hamath, including the cities of their surroundings which (are) on the coast of the western sea, which in rebellion and sin were taken*¹⁹ *for Azriyau, I annexed to Assyrian territory. Two of my eunuchs I placed over them as provincial governors.* [...]] *I settled 83,000 [people ...] from those cities (in) the province of Tuš[han]. I settled 1,223 people in the province of Ulluba* (...)]²⁰

(Ann. 13*: 10b-Ann. 14*: 5a)²¹ *I received the tribute of Kushtashpi of Kummuh*,²² *Rezin (Ra-ḫi-a-nu) of Damascus*,²³ *Menahem (Me-ni-ḫi-im-me) of Samaria, Hiram of Tyre, Sibitti-bi'il of Byblos, Urikki of Que, Pisisis of Carchemish, Eni-il of Hamath, Panammu of Sam'al*,²⁴ *Tarḫulara of Gurgum, Sulumal of Melid, Dadi-ilu of Kaska, Uassurme of Tabal, Ushitti of Tuna, Urballa of Tuḫana, Tuḫamme of Ishtunda, Urimme of Hubishna, (and) Zabibe, the queen of the land of Arabia: gold, silver, tin, iron, elephant hides, elephant tusks (i.e., ivory), multi-colored garments, linen garments, blue-purple (dyed) wool, red-purple (dyed) wool, ebony, boxwood – whatever (was) valuable (enough for a) royal treasure – (also) live sheep whose wool is dyed red-purple, flying birds of the sky whose wings are dyed blue-purple*,²⁵ *horses, mules, cattle and sheep, camels, (and) female camels*²⁶ *along with their young*.²⁷

Year thirteen

(Ann. 23*: 1'-17') (...) [of] *Rezin (Ra-ḫi-a-ni) [of Damascus ... he]avy [spoil' ...] his advisor* [...] *the blood of his] war[rriors], the river* [...]] *furious, [I d]yed (like) a [re]d f[lo]wer ...] his courtiers*, *charioteers and* [...]] *their weapons, I destroyed, and* (...) *their horses* (...) [...]] *I capt[ur]ed his [fig]hters, archers, (and) shield and lance [be]arers and [I disp]ersed their battle. In order to save his life, he (i.e., Rezin) fled alone and entered the gate of his city [like] a mongoose. I impaled his foremost men (i.e., officials) alive [on] stakes and made his land watch. For 45 days I set up my camp [aro]und his city*²⁸ *and enclosed him like a caged bird*.²⁹ *I cut down his gardens* [...]] *countless orchards. I did not leave one (standing)*.³⁰ *I besieged and captured* [...]] *ḫadara*,³¹ *the ancestral home*³² *of Rezin (Ra-ḫi-a-ni) of Damascus (and) [the p]lace of (his) birth. I took 800 people together with their property, their cattle, (and) their sheep as spoil. I took 750 captives of the cities of Kuruṣṣa (and) Sama (as well as) 550 captives from the city of Metuna as spoil. I destroyed 591 cities from the 16 districts of Damascus like ruins*³³ *from the Flood*.³⁴

B. Sargon II (Melville)

Sargon II took the Assyrian throne upon the death of Shalmaneser V in 722 bc. Whether Sargon murdered Shalmaneser or simply took advantage of his (half) brother's death is not known, but his accession appears to have been violent and it took him well over a year to quell opposition in Assyria and solidify his position as king. As a usurper, it was vital for the new king to

address the issue of his legitimacy. Although he was a son of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon did not make use of that connection and did not include his patrimony in his inscriptions as was customary. Instead, he established a new order by boldly adopting the illustrious name Sargon (Akkadian *Sharru-kenu* meaning “true king” – obviously not a name bestowed on a child at birth). This name not only forcefully declared the king’s legitimacy, but perhaps invited comparison to the early Assyrian king of that name or even the ancient legendary hero/king, Sargon of Akkad. In political terms, however, Sargon seems to have continued his father’s expansionist policies. A capable administrator and exceptional military leader, Sargon II campaigned throughout his seventeen year reign. In spite of almost ceaseless warring, Sargon undertook various building activities, the most ambitious of which was a new capital called Dur-Sharruken (Fort Sargon), completed just a year before his death in battle in 705 BC.

The most elaborate and literary of Sargon’s surviving inscriptions is his “Letter to Ashur,” which narrates the events of his eighth military campaign. In 714 BC, Sargon personally led his army north and northeast of Assyria into the mountainous lands in and around Urartu. Addressed to the god Ashur, the gods and people of Ashur, and the city itself, the “Letter to Ashur” was probably read aloud as part of a ceremony celebrating the successful conclusion of the campaign (Oppenheim 1960: 143). Other examples of Assyrian letters to gods have survived (Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal wrote such letters) but they are too fragmentary to tell us much either about the literary conventions of the genre or its purpose (Ibid.: 133). Hence, any discussion of the eighth campaign narrative is of necessity limited to the text itself; we can only speculate about why Sargon chose this genre, what he hoped to accomplish by doing so, how common or uncommon his use of it was, or why he apparently singled out the city of Assur for his attentions. The text itself does not elucidate any of these questions. Nevertheless, Sargon’s “Letter to Ashur” has received a great deal of scholarly attention for it is not only a rich source of literary language, references and wordplay, but it also offers an unusually detailed account of a single campaign (albeit one still shrouded in royal rhetoric) and is informative about the historical geography of the area as well (Foster 2005: 790; Levine 1977).

The “Letter to Ashur” assumes the narrative stance typical of Assyrian royal inscriptions; the invincible and valorous king successfully leads his army against a host of evil and cowardly enemies. Nonetheless, Sargon is careful to state his objectives clearly. He has launched the campaign in order to avenge the wrongs done to his vassals by neighboring municipalities. Thus, the eighth campaign was not undertaken at a whim or for personal glory but as the fulfillment of royal duty. In this way, Sargon shows himself to be a serious, dutiful and legitimate king. In some respects, however, the “Letter to Ashur” is atypical for a royal inscription. It not only includes interesting information about foreign cultures and details of geographical features unknown in Assyria, but it emphasizes the ability of the Assyrian

troops (not just the king) to overcome serious obstacles such as impossibly steep ascents, impenetrable forests, deep gorges, and raging mountain torrents. Although soldiers are described as leaping rivers effortlessly, they also put in back-breaking work with picks as they literally cut a road through the mountains. Sargon celebrates the agility, perseverance and fearlessness of his men as he boasts of his own; what they accomplish they accomplish together. In the eighth campaign narrative we get a rare glimpse of an Assyrian king as a genuine military commander, someone who leads his troops personally. At one point, just before a pitched battle with Rusa, king of Urartu (passage not included here), Sargon laments the fact that he cannot provide food, water, or any adequate encampment for his men who are exhausted. While this scene may have been included to enhance the dramatic appeal, it nonetheless reveals the very real logistical difficulties of supplying the Assyrian army during campaigns in inhospitable territory. By mentioning the crisis, Sargon acknowledges both the quality of his troops and his bond with them. This passage would not be out of place in any commander’s memoir, and reminds us to look beyond the monolithic image of the king that is normally portrayed in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions.

The true focus of Sargon’s “Letter to Ashur” is, however, his sack of the Urartian cult center, Musasir. For reasons not stated (possibly lack of supplies), Sargon sends the bulk of his army home and, with only 1,000 of his best troops, turns aside to besiege and sack Musasir. At this point in the text, Sargon lists numerous omens, including an eclipse of the moon, as testament to the gods’ support for his actions. It is possible, as many scholars believe, that by sacking an important cult center Sargon risked public disapproval, and anticipating this, sought to justify his actions. However, it is equally likely that the omens themselves, particularly the widely visible celestial events, motivated Sargon to take action, and he simply included them in the text in order to explain what happened. In any case, Sargon and his men successfully captured Musasir and took home a great deal of booty, including statues of the gods, Haldi and his wife. The Letter closes with an acknowledgement of the campaign’s casualties; only six men from the army’s different units. The same list of dead (“one charioteer, two riders and three infantry”) is given at the end of Esarhaddon’s letter to a god and is obviously meant to be taken symbolically, rather than literally. Lastly, we are introduced to Tab-shar-Ashur, Sargon’s chief treasurer and governor of the northern provinces, who was apparently given the honor of reading the tablet out and then depositing it in the temple. The many personal features of the text, such as the tacit recognition of the soldiers and even war dead, coupled with the mention of individual Assyrians by name, gives strong support to the supposition that the “Letter to Ashur” was composed in commemoration of what Sargon considered to be his most exceptional military venture.

In addition to the remarkable “Letter to Ashur” Sargon’s scribes produced more conventional royal inscriptions that fall naturally into two groups:

those found at Dur-Sharruken (modern Khorsabad) and those from other cities (namely Ashur, Nimrud, and Nineveh). The so-called Display Inscriptions from Khorsabad, selections of which are translated here, were written on the walls, pavements, and foundation tablets of the palace and offer an official, somewhat abbreviated account of the first 15 years of Sargon's reign (Fuchs 1994). The excerpt included here deals with Sargon's activities in Babylonia where he confronted Marduk-apla-iddina II (known as Merodach-baladan in the Bible), who confounded the Assyrians off and on for nearly 20 years. Although the situation in Babylonia had been fairly stable under Sargon's predecessors, the strife in Assyria occasioned by Sargon's accession provided Marduk-apla-iddina with the opportunity to seize the Babylonian throne. In 720 BC, the Assyrians battled the Babylonians and their allies at Der; both sides claimed victory but Sargon probably suffered a defeat since he was unable to do anything to oust Marduk-apla-iddina for another 10 years, a fact that attests both to the strength of the Babylonian opposition and to the many pressing problems that Sargon faced elsewhere. In the Display Inscriptions, Sargon's scribes deal with the embarrassment of Marduk-apla-iddina's lengthy, uninterrupted rule in a couple of ways. First, the text is structured to enhance our appreciation of Marduk-apla-iddina's final defeat and Sargon's glory rather than to explicate events chronologically. Thus the text begins by emphasizing Sargon's restoration of the privileged status of many Babylonian cities, something he obviously couldn't have done while Marduk-apla-iddina ruled. This preface also includes a long summary enumeration of Sargon's many military accomplishments. All of these deeds then appear in stark contrast to the blasphemous and underhanded activities of Marduk-apla-iddina, who broke his oath to the great gods and seized the throne under false pretences. In this way, the length of Marduk-apla-iddina's reign simply becomes symbolic of the depths of his depravity, and, by defeating him, Sargon not only rids Assyria of an enemy, but reestablishes the order of the gods in Babylonia. Animal imagery that appears in the account of the Assyrian siege of Dur-lakin serves to underscore the sharp contrast between the opposing forces: Marduk-apla-iddina is variously compared to a fleeing bat and a skulking cat, his men to roosting birds and helpless sheep; while Sargon's troops are compared to soaring eagles. Sargon's victory is so complete that he can "grasp the hands of Marduk" and take his rightful place as king of Babylon. He neatly finishes this portion of the text by briefly describing his pious good works for the first three years of his reign, a reference not to his rule of Assyria, but to his new reign in Babylonia as a truly Babylonian king.

Having begun his reign in violence and under a cloud of illegitimacy, Sargon II went to great lengths to establish himself, his dynasty and his empire. His royal inscriptions and his military achievements reveal that Sargon was a clever tactician who took advantage of every means to promote his policies, although, like other Assyrian monarchs, he doubtlessly subscribed wholeheartedly to conventional Assyrian royal ideology.

128. Sargon's Letter to Ashur

May it be exceedingly well with Ashur, father of the gods, great lord, who dwells in Ehursaggalkurkurra, his temple! May it be exceedingly well with the gods of destinies and the goddesses, who dwell in Ehursaggalkurkurra, their great temple! May it be exceedingly well with our gods of destinies and the goddesses who dwell in the city of Ashur, their great temple! May it be well with the city and its people, may it be well with the palace and the ones who dwell inside. It is exceedingly well with Sargon, the high priest, the servant who fears your great divinity, and his camp.

In the month of Dumuzi (July), the one that makes firm the regulations of mankind, the month of the powerful, foremost son of Enlil, the overpowering one of the gods, Ninurta, wherefore the lord of wisdom, Ninshiku wrote on a venerable tablet for the gathering of the army and setting the camp in order, I set out from the city of Kalhu, the city of my kingship and I impetuously crossed the upper Zab in full flood. On the third day, in order to muzzle the mouth of the arrogant, to shackle the legs of the adversary, I prostrated myself devoutly to Enlil and Ninlil. I caused the armies of Shamash and Marduk to jump over like a ditch the lower Zab whose crossing is difficult. I entered into the passes of the Kullar mountains, steep mountains of the Lullubeans which they call the land of Zamua. In the district of the land Sumbi I inspected my army and checked the number of horses and chariots. With the great encouragement of Ashur, Shamash, Nabu and Marduk, for the third time I arranged the march into the mountains. Against the lands of Zikirtu and Andini I guided the (chariot) yoke of Nergal and Adad, whose standards precede me. I passed between the land of Nikappa and the land of Upa, high mountains covered with impenetrable trees, whose interiors are labyrinthine and whose passes are frightful; a shade is cast over their region as if it were a cedar grove and the one who goes on their paths cannot see the shining sun. The River Puia, (in) the gully between them, I crossed as many as 26 times and my army in its might did not fear the flood water. The mountain, Simiriu, the highest peak of the mountains which lunges up like the point of a spear, raising its head above the mountains, the dwelling of the mistress of the gods, whose summit leans up to heaven, whose root reaches down in the midst of the underworld, and (where) like the backbone of a fish, there is no going side by side, its ascent on all sides is difficult, on whose sides gullies and mountain ravines are deeply cut and the act of looking at it is shrouded in terror, unfit for the ascent of chariots or for horses to show their mettle, its access was too difficult for foot soldiers, through the understanding and wide knowledge which Ea and the mistress of the gods decreed for me, they enabled me (lit. opened my knees) to destroy the land of my enemy. I had my soldiers carry strong copper picks and they cut off the jagged parts of the steep mountain like limestone and they raised a path. I took (my place) at the front of my army and I caused my chariots, cavalry, battle troops, the ones who accompany me, to fly over its loftiness like valiant eagles. I made the corvée troops and scouts follow them. Camels and pack donkeys like mountain-bred goats leaped its height. I caused the huge army of Ashur to rise up the laborious ascent safely and I organized my camp on that mountain. Sinahulzi, Biruatti, barren mountains whose vegetation was leeks and the fragrant Sumlalu plant, Turtan, Sinabir, Ahshuru, Shuia, seven mountains I crossed with difficulty, (likewise) the river Rapaa, the river Aratta, rivers whose cascades I crossed in their floods as if they were irrigation ditches. I descended against Surikash the border district of the regions of Karalli and Allabria. Ullusunu, the Manmaean, because, year in and year out, I did not stop planning to avenge him, he heard of my

expedition's coming, and that one, together with his princes, elders, advisors, the seed of his father's house, the governors and followers, who govern his land, with a joyous heart and a happy face, from the midst of his land he came to me quickly without hostages. From Izirti, the city of his kingship, to Sinihini, a border fortress of his land, he came before me. He brought before me his tribute: horses, broken to the yoke together with their harnesses, cattle and sheep, and he kissed my feet.

(Sargon proceeds and receives more tribute.)

From Parsuash I descended, I drew close to Missi, a region of Mannea. Ullusunu, having set his heart to do service, together with the people of his land, waited for my force in Sirdaku, his fortress. Like my officials or the governors of Assyria, he piled up grain and wine for the provisions of my army. He delivered his eldest son with peace presents to me and he set up his stele (before me) in order to make his kingship firm. Large draft horses, cattle, sheep and goats I received from him as his tribute, and so that I might wreak vengeance (on his enemies), he prostrated himself. To bar the feet of the land of Kakmui, the evil enemy, from inside his land, to repulse Ursa in open battle, to turn the scattered Mannaean to their place, to stand in might over his enemy, to do what he wants, that man, together with his nobles, the governors of his land, entreated me, crawling before me on their four limbs like dogs. I took pity on them, I paid attention to their prayers, I heard their words of entreaty and spoke to them truly! Because of the surpassing greatness that Ashur and Marduk gave to me, causing my weapons to be great over all princes of the world, I ordered for them the defeat of Urartu, to return their boundaries, to restore the distressed people of Mannea; and their heart was quieted.

Of Ullusunu, their lord, I spread an honored banquet table before him and exalted his throne above that of Iranzi, the father who engendered him. Those people with the people of Assyria, I caused to sit down at a joyous table; before Ashur and the gods of their land, they blessed my majesty. Zizi of Appatar, Zalaia of Kitpata, the city rulers of the region of Gizilbundi, who live in faraway mountains, a distant place in the area of the Mannaean and the Medes, blocking the way like a barricade – the people who dwell in these cities trusted in their own strength, they knew no lord – none of the kings who preceded me saw their dwellings, heard their name or received their tribute. At the great command of Ashur, my lord, who gave me as a gift the subjugation of the princes of the mountains and the receipt of their presents, they heard the approach of my force and fear of my radiance covered them. In the midst of their land terror afflicted them. They sent their tribute: draft horses without number, cattle, sheep, and goats from the cities Appatar and Kitpat. In Ziridiakka of the land of Mannea they brought it before me. They prayed to me to spare their lives and kissed my feet so that their fortresses would not be destroyed, and for the safety of their land, I appointed the officials over them. I place them in the hand of my officers and the governor of Parsuash. From Ziridiakka, the fort of the land of Mannea, I departed.

(Sargon defeats Rusa in battle and decides to invade Urartu.)

On my return journey, Urzana of Musasir, doer of wrong and crimes, breaker of the oath of the gods, who did not submit to my lordship, the dangerous mountain man who sinned against the loyalty oath of Ashur, Shamash, Nabu, and Marduk and

revolted against me, he interrupted the advance of my return journey and my expedition by (withholding) his ample gifts; he did not kiss my feet. He withheld tribute, gifts and his presents and not once did he send his messenger in order to ask about my health. In the anger of my heart, I caused all of my chariots, my abundant cavalry and my whole camp to take the road to Assyria. In his great trust in Ashur, father of the gods, lord of the land, king of all of heaven and the underworld, begetter, lord of lords, to whom from distant days Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, gave the gods of the land and the mountains of the four quarters, so that not one should avoid making him great, with their treasuries heaped up in order to make delivery to Ehursaggalkurkurra; at the exalted command of Nabu and Marduk who set in motion the position of the stars signifying a good omen for the taking up of my weapons, and favorable signs which mean the gaining of power, Sin, lord of the crown, remained eclipsed for more than one watch, (a portent) for the Gutu to be wiped out. At the valuable consent of the hero, Shamash, who caused the entrails to be inscribed with favorable omens, which means going at my side, with one chariot alone at my feet, and one thousand of my furious horsemen, soldiers, bowmen, shield-bearers and spearmen, my fierce heroes, trained for the heroism of battle, I took the road to Musasir, a difficult road. I caused my army to go up the mountain, Arsiu, a strong mountain whose gradient like the rungs of a ladder has no ascent.

(Description of the arduous journey and further action.)

Because Urzana, the king, their prince, did not fear the command of Ashur, threw off the yoke of my lordship and forgot to serve me, I planned to carry off the people of that city and I ordered that the god, Haldi, the protector of Urartu, be brought out. Triumphantly, I caused him to take his seat by his city gate; his sons, his daughters, his people, seeds of his father's house, I plundered. With 6,110 people, 12 mules, 380 donkeys, 525 cattle, 1,235 sheep I counted (them) and I made them enter inside the wall of my camp. I entered triumphantly into Musasir, the dwelling of Haldi, as a lord I dwelled in the palace, the abode of Urzana. The storerooms, piled up with abundant riches, I opened the sealings of their treasure.

(Here follows a long inventory of booty.)

The property of the palace of Rusa and Haldi, together with their bountiful possessions which I took up from inside Musasir, I laid alongside the mass of my wide army and caused them to drag to Ashur. I counted the people of the region of Musasir together with the people of Assyria, I imposed iku-service and compulsory labor on them as upon the Assyrians. Rusa heard and fell to the ground. He ripped his garments and bared his limbs. His headgear was thrown to the ground, he tore out his hair and beat his breast with his fists. He threw himself on his stomach. His heart stood still, his insides burned, in his mouth were painful lamentations. In the whole region of Urartu, I caused mourning to be spread, I caused wailing to be established in the Nairi lands forever. In the sublime strength of Ashur, my lord, in the might and strength of Bel, Nabu, the gods of my aid, at the favorable oracle of Shamash, the great judge of the gods who opened my way and established the protection of my army. In the greatness of Nergal, strongest of the gods, the one who goes at my side, the one who protects my camp, from the region of Sumbi between the lands of Nikippa and Upa, the

inaccessible mountains, I entered the land of Urartu. In Urartu, Zikirtu, the lands of the Mannaeans, Nairi and Musasir like a wild lion who is lordly with frightfulness, I went and I did not see an adversary to overwhelm me. I defeated the many armies of Rusa, the Urartian, Metatti, the Zikirtian, on the battlefield. 430 cities of the 7 regions of Rusa the Urartian, all of it I subjugated and lay waste to his land. From Urzana, the Musasiran, Haldi, his god, Bakbartu, his goddess, together with the abundant property of his temples, with 6,210 people, 12 mules, 380 asses, 525 cattle, 1,285 sheep, his wife, his sons, and his daughters, I carried off. Through the pass of Andarutta, an inaccessible mountain opposite Hipparna, I went out and returned in health to my land. 1 charioteer, 2 riders and 3 infantry were killed. I had the best orator, Tab-shar-Ashur, the chief treasurer, bring (the tablet) into the presence of Ashur, my lord.

129. The display inscription from the palace of Sargon at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad)

Palace of Sargon, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, governor of Babylon, the king of Sumer and Akkad, beloved of the great gods, to whom Ashur, Nabu, and Marduk entrusted an incomparable rule and have brought my good name to preeminence.

I continually made provisions for Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, and Borsippa, whose exempt people, as many as there were, I recompensed for damage (suffered). I eliminated their forced labor. I calmed the people of Der, Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Larsa, Kullaba, Kisik, and Nemed-Laguda. Ashur and Haran, whose freedom was for many days forgotten, I restored their interrupted privileges. The great gods looked on me with their loyal hearts; among all the princes they gave me the strength of manhood and made my form massive. In the days of my rule, there was no rival prince. I saw no adversary who could subdue me in making war and battle. I smashed all the enemy lands like pots and I cast the nose-rope on the rebels of the four (regions). Distant mountains, whose passes were difficult and without number, I opened. Again and again I passed over steep, inaccessible paths whose locations were extremely frightening. I continually crossed all watercourses. With the power and strength of the great gods, my lords, who set my weapons in motion and smote all my enemies, from Iadnana in the midst of the sea of the setting sun, to the border of the lands of Egypt and Mushki, the wide land of Amurru, Hatti in its entirety, all of Gutium, Mada on the border of the Bikni mountains, to the lands of Ellipi, Rashi, which is on the border of Elam on the banks of the Tigris; the people of Itu'u, Rubu'u, Hatallum, Labdudu, Hamranu, Ubulum, Ru'ua, Li'taya on the banks of the Surappi and Uqni rivers, the Gambulu, Hindaru, Puqudu, Sute, the desert people of Iadhuri, as many as there are, up to the cities of Sam'una, Bab-duri, Dur-Teliti, Hilimmu, Pillatum, Dunni-Shamash, Bube, Til-Humba on the border of Elam, Karduniash (Babylonia) north and south, Bit-Amukkani, Bit-Dakkuri, Bit-Shilani, Bit-Sa'allu, all of Chaldea, as much as there was, Bit-Iakin on the shores of the Sea up to the border of Dilmun, altogether I ruled. I set my eunuchs, my governors over them and imposed on them the yoke of my lordship.

Marduk-apla-iddina, member of the Iakin tribe, King of Chaldea, seed of a murderer, scion of an evil demon, who did not fear the name of the lord of lords, who trusted in the Sea's surging swell and who overthrew the oath of the great gods and withheld his tribute, he turned to Humbanigash, the Elamite, for help and the whole of the Suti, the desert people, he caused to rebel against me. He prepared for battle and

made straight for Sumer and Akkad. Twelve years, against the will of the gods, he ruled over and administered Babylon, the city of Enlil and the gods. At the command of Ashur, father of the gods, and the great lord Marduk, I got my (chariot) team ready, organized my camp and ordered the advance against Chaldea, the brazen enemy. That Marduk-apla-iddina heard of the coming of my campaign and panic for himself befell him. From Babylon to Iqbi-Bel, he fled like a bat in the night. His cities, inhabitants and the gods who dwell in them, he gathered as one and made them enter Dur-Iakin, and he strengthened its enclosure wall. The people of the tribes Gambulu, Puqudu, Damunu, Ru'ua, and Hindaru he made his auxiliary forces and made them enter and (so) he made battle preparations. He took a measuring rope from its great wall 200 cubits distance and caused a moat to be dug one and a half nindan deep and reached ground water. He cut a channel from the Euphrates and flooded its meadows; the flood plain of the city, the battle zone, he filled with water and broke the bridges. That one, together with his auxiliary troops and battle troops, set his lordly tent and prepared his camp in the midst of the canals like pelicans. I sent my warriors over his ditches like eagles and they accomplished his defeat. With the blood of his soldiers they dyed the water of his canals red like red wool. The Suteans, his reinforcements, who turned to his side and came to his aid, together with the Marsane, I slaughtered like sheep and I sprinkled the remaining surviving people with the poison of death. That one left his royal tent, golden throne, golden couch, golden scepter, silver chariot, golden sun-shade and the ornament on his neck inside his camp and fled alone. Like a cat, sneaking along its wall, he entered his city. I besieged and I sacked Dur-Iakin. That one, together with his wives, his sons, his daughters, gold and silver goods, property, the treasure of his palace, as much as there was, with the heavy plunder of his city and the survivors, the remainder of his people who fled before my weapons, I took as if they were a single thing, and counted them as booty. Dur-Iakin, his strong city, I burned with fire, I demolished, I destroyed its enclosure wall. I tore out its foundation and I made it become like a mound (left after) a flood. The citizens of Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, and Borsippa who were imprisoned inside it without their being guilty, I destroyed their prison and showed to them the light (of day). The fields which from distant days, the Suti had taken away during the confusion in the land, I restored to them. The Suti, desert people, I felled with the sword. Their neglected border territory which was abandoned during the disturbances in the land, I transferred to them.

For Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Larsa, Kullaba, Kissik, and Nemed-Laguda, I established their freedom and returned their plundered gods to their shrines. I restored their regular offerings. I renewed their disused places. The land of Bit-Iakin, north and south, together with the cities of Samuna, Bab-duri, Dur-Telitim, Bube, and Til-Humba which were in the region of Elam, I ruled completely. The people of Kummuhu which is near the land of Hatti, who, with the help of the great gods, my lords, my hand captured, I made them take up residence there, and so made its wasteland inhabited. Along the border of Elam, at the city Sagbat, I had Nabu-damiq-ilani build a fort in order to block the way of the enemy Elamites. That land I divided equally; I entrusted it to my official, the governor of Babylon and to my official, the governor of Gambulu. To Babylon, the cult center of Enlil of the gods, I entered joyfully with a rejoicing heart and shining face. I grasped the hands of the great lord, Marduk, and I completed the procession to the Bit Akiti. 154 talents, 26 minas, 10 shekels of shining gold, 1,604 talents, 20 minas of pure silver, bronze and iron without number, obsidian, lapis-lazuli, agate, (four unidentified) precious stones in quantity, purple and azure cloth, multicolored clothing and linen, boxwood, cedar and cypress, everything aromatic,

products of the Amanus mountains, whose scent is sweet, from my accession year to my third year I gave as presents to Bel, Sarpanitum, Nabu, Tashmetum, and the gods who dwell in the cult centers of Sumer and Akkad.

C. Sennacherib (Melville)

After Sargon II was killed in battle while on campaign in the northwest in 705 BC, Sennacherib, his long-standing Crown Prince, acceded to the Assyrian throne without any challenge from within the regime. Whenever the Assyrian throne changed hands, rebellions frequently broke out among Assyria's vassals and Sargon's death proved no exception. Within a year of his accession, Sennacherib was faced with a serious rebellion in Babylonia. In fact, finding a way to rule Babylonia successfully proved to be the greatest difficulty Sennacherib faced during his 24-year reign. In terms of imperial policy it seems that Sennacherib aimed to consolidate his father's empire rather than expand it, but Sennacherib's plans to implement imperial peace were repeatedly thwarted by his enemies, who spurred each other on to open rebellion whenever possible.

Sennacherib followed the Assyrian tradition of writing annalistic accounts of his military exploits and these have survived in many recensions and multiple copies. Although only certain selections are included here, it is important to remember that numerous versions of the Annals were composed throughout Sennacherib's reign and their contents vary according to the political circumstances and ideological concerns that were relevant at the time of writing. Like all Assyrian kings, Sennacherib had to act expediently in the political and military sphere, while also making sure that his actions could be explained according to accepted notions of Assyrian kingship and divine interaction with the mundane world. As a result, the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib must be seen both as factual reports of specific events, and as the official ideological interpretations of those events. In addition to his annals, Sennacherib produced a number of building inscriptions of a strongly ideological nature, such as the text commemorating the construction of the new Akitu House (temple of the New Year's feast) at Ashur. The selections under discussion here were chosen because they are particularly interesting examples of the methods Assyrian scribes used to put the right ideological "spin" on historical events.

It is fairly rare for us to be able to compare the historical narrative of Assyrian inscriptions with information from other types of sources. However, Sennacherib's third campaign of 701 BC against Judah offers just such an opportunity. The Assyrian account of this campaign is written in the standard prose style of most royal inscriptions; there is nothing very original or unusual about it. At the behest of his national deities, especially Ashur, the king marches against vassals who have dared to rebel. In typical Assyrian fashion, Sennacherib treats his foes, depending on the situation, with a combination of ruthlessness and mercy. He is unerringly victorious. Negative

or unsuccessful events are rarely included in Assyrian inscriptions and the king gets credit for all military and political accomplishments. What is particularly interesting about the third campaign is the exceptional amount of corroborating evidence that has survived concerning it. Archaeological excavations at Lachish (one of the cities in Judah taken by Sennacherib, albeit with nary a mention in his annals) uncovered the siege ramp constructed by the Assyrians as well as artifacts such as armor and weaponry (Ussishkin 1982). In an exciting and unusual correlation between art and artifact, sculptured reliefs from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh depict the Lachish siege right down to the siege ramp (BMWAA 124904–124915). We also have an account of the siege of Jerusalem from the opposing side in Bible verses 2 Kings 18.3–19.36, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36–37 of the Old Testament. According to the biblical version, which includes a wonderfully vivid speech of the Assyrian Rab Shaqe (chief cupbearer/commander of the northern army) to the citizens of Jerusalem, the Assyrian army eventually falls prey to a plague sent by the Angel of the Lord: 185,000 soldiers are killed in a single night, and Sennacherib retreats to Nineveh where he is murdered by his sons. The discrepancies between the two accounts (was there a plague? why does the biblical story seem to indicate that Sennacherib's murder took place immediately upon his return to Nineveh instead of 20 years later?) have given rise to much speculation, but the fact remains that both versions agree on at least three points: the Egyptians ultimately failed their allies; Hezekiah paid Sennacherib a great deal; and the Assyrians retained control of the area. Not surprisingly, both the Assyrian and biblical sources interpret events according to their own particular ideologies.

While the Mediterranean vassals caused Sennacherib only minimal difficulty, Babylonia and her ally, the Elamites, proved to be a constant, nagging problem. Because the Assyrians shared their language, religion and basic culture with the Babylonians, they seem to have given Babylonia special status in the empire. In general, the Assyrians held Babylonian cities in high regard and made every effort to maintain their institutions, especially religious ones. Sargon II ruled Babylonia as a traditional king of Babylon, taking care to respect and participate in many of the country's royal customs including the Akitu festival, and it appears that initially Sennacherib planned to do the same. However, soon after his accession, Assyria's long-time foe, Marduk-apla-iddina, having secured Elamite aid once again, put himself on the throne in Babylon. Sennacherib defeated the combined Elamite Babylonian forces in battle and Marduk-apla-iddina was forced to flee into exile again. After the rebellion of 704 BC, Sennacherib diverged from his father's Babylonian policy and chose to install a puppet-king, Bel-ibni, who had been raised as a hostage at the Assyrian court. This was only the first attempt at finding a satisfactory way to rule Babylonia, but Bel-ibni proved to be a poor choice and after only three years, it was necessary for Sennacherib to take the field against Mushezib-Marduk and Marduk-apla-iddina. Although he was again victorious on the battlefield, Sennacherib did not capture the

rebels who were able to elude him. In a second attempt to solve the problem of Babylonian rule, Sennacherib removed Bel-ibni from office and placed his eldest son, Ashur-nadin-shumi on the throne of Babylon. Things were relatively peaceful in Babylonia for the next six years, but eventually Sennacherib launched a campaign against Elam, ostensibly to go after fugitives from Assyrian justice and punish the Elamites for harboring them. The sixth campaign of 694 was an ambitious undertaking in which Sennacherib attacked Elam by sea. Unfortunately, some Babylonians at Ashur-nadin-shumi's court availed themselves of the absence of the Assyrian army to take their king captive and turn him over to the Elamites. Ashur-nadin-shumi was never heard of again and probably died a horrible death in Elam. The loss of his son was the last straw for Sennacherib, who from 693 until Babylon fell in 689, focused all his attention on eradicating Babylonian resistance once and for all.

Assyria's religious and cultural ties to Babylonia, coupled with prevailing notions of the parallelism between mundane and divine events and the king's role in connecting them, made it essential that Sennacherib carefully prepare his subjects for the violent destruction of his enemy and express all his actions in the correct ideological terms. It is therefore no surprise that the narration of the eighth campaign and the battle of Halule in particular, displays certain literary characteristics and takes on an almost mythical quality (Weissert 1997: 190ff). The battle of Halule itself took place in 691 between Sennacherib's army and a huge coalition of enemy forces consisting of the Babylonian and Elamite armies and their allies. Sennacherib claims to have enjoyed an overwhelming victory but the *Babylonian Chronicle*, a document that tersely lists important events in Babylonia year by year, reports that the Assyrians suffered a defeat (Grayson 1965: 342). Although the Assyrians gained no ground as a result of the battle, they lost none, and because they were subsequently able to follow through with their plans in Babylonia, it would probably be wrong either to accept the *Babylonian Chronicle's* not unbiased assessment or to suggest that the hyperbole of the Assyrian account is merely a poor attempt at a public cover-up. On the contrary, the high literary language and innovative phraseology of the narrative of the battle of Halule seem rather to be preparatory propaganda designed to pave the way for the destruction of Babylon. By using obscure language and rare words alluding to such important works as *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation epic, the author elevates the narrative to a heroic level (see Weissert 1997: 200–2). In this way, Sennacherib's talented scribe not only created an atmosphere of overwhelming heroism but also demonized the Babylonians and encouraged his audience to pursue a complete and devastating victory. Once Babylon was destroyed, the need for such manipulation ceased to exist and the extended account of the battle was dropped from the Annals.

Just how complete Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon was remains uncertain, but his descriptions both stress the finality of the devastation, and carefully place the blame on the blasphemous Babylonians, who used funds

from the temple of Marduk to fund their rebellions. Even though Sennacherib emphasized that he was always carrying out the will of the gods, the destruction of Babylon was not accomplished without the need for further ideological justification. According to Assyrian understanding of the cosmic order, what kings accomplished on earth was the reflection of events in the divine sphere. As the sacker of Babylon and conqueror of the whole of Babylonia, Sennacherib was clearly the most powerful king, therefore his god, Ashur, must be the most powerful god, more powerful even than Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. In order to establish Ashur's promotion over Marduk in the pantheon, Sennacherib made a number of religious reforms including the construction of a new Akitu (New Year's) temple in Assur. Although practiced in other cities for other deities (some even in Assyria), the Akitu festival was a quintessentially Babylonian rite whose enactment both renewed Marduk's supremacy in the pantheon and legitimized his earthly representative, the Babylonian king (Frahm 1997: 282–8). When Sennacherib commandeered the festival for Ashur he thus made some radical alterations in the theology of the day. Since his purpose was to replace Marduk with Ashur at the head of the divine pantheon, Sennacherib depicted Ashur, rather than Marduk, in the heroic fight with the primeval monster Tiamat in narrative scenes from the Creation epic decorating the bronze doors of his new temple. Sennacherib's Akitu inscription also describes in detail how he took the very soil of Babylon and put it in the new temple as a symbol of his and Ashur's invincibility. It has often been suggested that Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon was regarded as sinful heresy by at least some of his subjects and possibly contributed to his later murder, but since there is no hard evidence to substantiate this, it is better to see his actions as being right in line with other Assyrian kings, who always took pains to justify their policies in religious/ideological terms, not only in answer to opposition, but simply because they their understanding of cosmic reality required it.

130. Oriental Institute Prism: campaigns in Babylonia and Judah

On my first campaign, in the environs of Kish, I brought about the defeat of Marduk-apla-idinna, king of Karduniash (Babylonia), together with the army of Elam, his ally. In the midst of that battle he abandoned his camp, fled alone and saved his life. Chariots, horses, wagons, donkeys which he left behind at the beginning of battle, my hands conquered. I joyously entered his palace, which is inside Babylon, and I opened his treasury. Gold, silver, equipment of gold and silver, precious stones, anything at all, property and possessions without number, heavy tribute, his palace women, his courtiers, his nobles, his male and female musicians, all of the workforce, as many as there were, the servants of his palace, I made go out and I counted as booty. By the strength of Ashur, my lord, 75 of his heavily fortified cities of Chaldea and 420 small towns of their environs, I besieged, I destroyed, I carried off their plunder. Arabs, Aramaeans and Chaldeans who were inside Uruk, Nippur, Kish, Hursagkalamma, Kutha, Sippar, together with the citizens, criminals, I made go out and I counted them as booty.

Bel-ibni, son of a building inspector, descendant of Shuanna (Babylon), who grew up in my palace like a young puppy, I set over them as king of Sumer and Akkad. (This passage added from the Bellino cylinder, not the Oriental Institute prism.)

On my third campaign I duly went against Hatti. Luli, king of Sidon, fear of the radiance of my majesty overwhelmed him and he escaped far away in the middle of the sea and he disappeared. Great Sidon, small Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Zasribtu, Mahalliba, Ushu, Akziba, Akku, his strong cities, fortresses where there were pastures and watering places for his garrisons, the terrifying weapon of Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed them and they bowed down at my feet. I sat Tuba'lu on the royal throne over them and I imposed tribute, payment for my majesty yearly without interruption. From, Tuba'lu of Sidon, Abdili'ti of Arvad, Uru-milki of Byblos, Mitinti of Ashdod, Pudu-ilu of Beth-Ammon, Kammusu-nadbi of Moab, Ayarammu of Edom, kings of Amurru, all of them, for the fourth time they brought before me extensive gifts, their heavy tribute, and they kissed my feet. But Sidqu, king of Ashkelon, who did not submit to my yoke, the gods of his father's house, himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, the seed of his father's house, I uprooted and brought to Assyria. Sharruludari, son of Rukibtu, their former king, I placed over the people of Ashkelon. I imposed on him the payment of tribute, gifts to my majesty. He pulled my harness.

In the course of my campaign, Beth-Dagan, Joppa, Bainabarka, Asuru, cities of Sidka, who did not bow to my feet quickly, I surrounded, I conquered, I carried off their spoil. The governors, officials, and people of Ekron, who threw Padi, their king, (then) under oath and allegiance to Assyria, in iron shackles and turned him over to Hezekiah, the Judaeen; they confined him like an enemy. On account of their villainous act, their heart feared. They got help from the kings of Egypt, troops, archers, chariots and cavalry of the king of Nubia, a force without number, and they came to their assistance. In the vicinity of Elteka, battle lines were drawn in front of me. They sharpened their weapons. With the help of Ashur, my lord, I fought with them and brought about their defeat. The charioteers and princes of Egypt together with the charioteers of the king of Nubia, my hands took alive in the midst of battle. Elteka and Timnah I besieged, I defeated and I carried off their plunder. I approached Ekron. I killed the governors and officials who caused the crimes. Their bodies I hung on the enclosure walls of the city. Citizens of the city who committed sin and sacrilege, I counted as plunder. The remainder, who did not bear sin and contempt, who were not guilty, I ordered their release. Padi, their king, I brought out from the midst of Jerusalem and I made him sit on the royal throne over them and I imposed on him my royal tribute.

As for Hezekiah, the Judaeen, who did not submit to my yoke, 46 heavily fortified cities and small cities of their environs, which were countless, with siege ramps, and siege engines drawn close, combat infantry, mines, breaches and scaling ladders, I surrounded (and) conquered 200,150 people, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle and sheep without number, I took out from their center and counted as booty. Him, like a caged bird I confined inside Jerusalem, his royal city. I constructed siege walls against him and the one coming out of his city gate I turned back to his misfortune. His cities that I plundered I took from his country and gave to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Silli-Bel, king of Gaza and I reduced his land. I assigned more than the former tribute and I increased payment of gifts to my lordship. I set the nose-rope on him. That Hezekiah, fear of the radiance of my majesty overwhelmed him and the Arabs and auxiliary soldiers whom he had brought into Jerusalem in order to make it strong, they withheld (their service). With

30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, daggassu stone, ivory couches, high-backed ivory chairs, elephant hide, elephant tusks, ebony, box-wood, all that heavy treasure (along with) his daughters, his concubines, male and female musicians, he caused them to bring back to me to Nineveh, the city of my sovereignty, and in order to pay tribute and make obeisance, he sent his messenger.

In my fourth campaign, Ashur, my lord, encouraged me and I levied my troops in their great numbers and I ordered (them) to march against Bit Iakin. During the course of my campaign I brought about the defeat of Mushezib-Marduk, the Chaldean who dwelled in the midst of the marshes at Bitutu. That one, terror of my battle fell upon him and his heart became dark. He fled alone like a lynx and his location was not found. The front of my yoke I turned and I took the road to Bit Iakin. That Marduk-apla-iddina, whose defeat I brought about in the course of my first campaign, I broke up his gang. He feared the cacophony of my weapons and the onslaught of my furious battle. He gathered the gods of his entire land in their dwellings and loaded (them) into ships, and he fled like a bird to Nagiterakki, which is in the midst of the sea. His brothers, the seed of his father's house, whom he abandoned on the sea-shore, together with the remaining people of his land, I caused to go out from Bit Iakin, the midst of swamp and marsh, and I listed (them) as booty. I turned and carried off and demolished his cities. I caused them to change into ruin mounds. I poured out awe-inspiring radiance on his ally, the king of Elam. On my return, I set Ashur-nadin-shumi, my first born son, the offspring of my loins, on the throne of his lordship and I handed over to him the wide lands of Sumer and Akkad.

In my sixth campaign, the remaining people of Bit Iakin who groveled before my great weapons like calves and gathered the gods of their entire country in their dwellings, crossed the great sea of the East and they positioned their dwellings in Nagitu of Elam. In Hittite ships I duly crossed the sea. Nagitu, Naitu-dib'bina together with Himu, Billatu and Hupapanu, districts of Elam, I destroyed. The people of Bit Iakin, together with their gods and the people of the king of Elam, I plundered; not an evildoer escaped. I loaded (them) inside ships and I caused them to cross over to this side and I made them take the road to Ashur. The cities that were in those districts I demolished, I destroyed, I burned with fire. I turned them into ruin mounds and heaps. On my return, Nergal-ushezib, a Babylonian who took over the rule of Sumer and Akkad during a period of confusion in the land, I brought about his defeat in a pitched battle. I seized his life in my hands. I threw tethers and iron fetters on him and brought him to Assyria. The king of Elam who turned to his side and went to his aid, I accomplished his defeat, I scattered his band and broke up his gathering.

In my eighth campaign, after Mushezib-Marduk revolted and the citizens of Babylon, evil demons, closed the gates of the city, their hearts schemed to do battle. Mushezib-Marduk, the Chaldean, the low-life, impotent man, the servant who obeys the governor of Lahiru, gathered to him the fugitive Arameans, the runaway, the killer, the criminal, and they went down into the midst of the marshes and made rebellion. I surrounded him and I constricted his life. From misdeed and hunger he fled to Elam. When conspiracies and schemes were created against him there, he hurried from Elam and entered into Babylon. Inappropriately for him, the people of Babylon made him sit on the throne and they handed over to him the rule of Sumer and Akkad. They opened the treasury of Esagil and the gold and silver of Marduk and Sarpanitum, the property of the temples of their gods, they brought out and delivered to Umanmanu, king of Elam, who did not have either judgment or intelligence, (and they said) "Collect your army, raise your camp, hasten to Babylon and stand by our side. Be our encouragement."

That Elamite whose cities I conquered and turned into ruin mounds on my previous campaign against Elam, his heart did not ponder (and) he accepted bribes from them. He collected troops and his camp and he prepared his chariots and wagons. He checked the horses and mules (for) his chariot teams.

The lands of Parsua, Anzan, Pasheru, Ellipi, the men of Yazan, Lakabra, Harzunu, Dummuku, Sulai, Samuna, the lands of Bit-Adini, Bit-Amukkani, Bit-Sillana, Bit-Salatutu-akki, the city of Lahiru, the men of Bukudu, Gambulu, Halatu, Ru'ua, Ubulum, Malahu, Rapiku, Hindaru, Damunu, great reinforcements he called up to his side. Their hosts took the road to Akkad. They went off to Babylon, (and) together with Mushezib-Marduk, the Chaldean, king of Babylon, they brought about their assembly. Like the onslaught of swarms of locusts of the springtime, they were rising up against me in order to do battle. The dust of their feet like a heavy fog in the depths of winter covered the face of the wide heavens. The battle line was drawn up before me in the city of Halule, on the banks of the Tigris, and they sharpened their weapons. But I, I appealed to them, to Ashur, Bel, Nabu, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, Ishtar of Arbela, the gods who are my support, in order to conquer my strong enemies. They quickly heard my prayer and came to my assistance. Like a lion I rampaged. I put on my mail coat, I put on my helmet, symbol of combat. In the rage of my heart, I speedily mounted my splendid war chariot that crushes the enemy. I seized in my hands the strong bow that Ashur bestowed on me. The arrow that slices through throats, I grasped in my hands. Against the entire armies of the evil enemy I roared loudly like a storm. Like Adad, I bellowed. At the command of Ashur, the great lord, my lord, on the flank and front I assaulted the enemy like the onslaught of a furious storm. With the weapons of Ashur, my lord, and the onset of my furious attack, I put them to flight and I effected their retreat. I pierced the enemy soldiers with the points of arrows and I perforated all their bodies like a storm (?). Humbanindasha, the herald of the king of Elam, a prudent man, the commander of his armies, his trusted official, together with his nobles, who wear the golden sword-belt, whose wrists were accoutered with red gold bracelets, like fat bulls who are tethered, I quickly slaughtered them and brought about their defeat. I slit their throats like sheep. I cut their precious lives like threads. Like the swollen flood waters of seasonal rains, I caused their blood to flow over the broad earth. My fleet war horses, my chariot team, were immersed in the flood of their blood like the river-god. The wheels of my war chariot that crushes the villainous and wicked were drenched with blood and muck. With the corpses of their warriors I filled the plain like grass. I hacked off their lips and I destroyed their pride (?). Like the sprout of a cucumber at just the right time, I cut off their hands. I took the bracelets of bright gold which hung on their wrists. With sharp swords I cut through their belts and deprived them of the gold and silver dagger belts that were round their middles. Those remaining of his officials, together with Nabu-shuun-ishkun, son of Marduk-apla-idinna, who took fright before my battle and had shifted to their side, my hands grasped them alive in the midst of the battle. The chariots, together with their horses, whose riders were killed at the start of the mighty battle, and who were left to themselves, ran amuck until the last double-hour of the night passed, I put a stop to their fight. That Umanmenanu, king of Elam, with the king of Babylon and the leaders of Chaldea, the ones who had gone to his side, the terror of my battle overwhelmed their bodies like a bull. In order to save their lives they trampled the corpses of (their) soldiers. They fled, their hearts fluttering like a pursued hatchling dove. They painfully discharged their long-held urine (and) released their excrement in their chariots. In order to catch them, I sent my horse-drawn chariots

after them. Those fugitives who did escape with their lives, they will smite with weapons whenever they locate (them).

131. The Bavian inscription: the destruction of Babylon

In my next campaign, I moved swiftly against Babylon whose destruction I strove for, and like the onset of a storm I attacked. Like a mist I enveloped it. I filled the city square with their corpses. Mushezib-Marduk, king of Babylon, together with his family I carried off alive to my country. The property of that city – silver, gold, precious stones, goods, possessions – I delivered into the hands of my people and they made it their own. The gods that dwell inside, the hands of my people acquired them and they broke them up and they took their goods and property . . . The city and its houses, from its foundations to its parapets, I swept away, I demolished, I burned with fire. The wall and the outer wall, the temples and the gods, the ziggurat of mudbrick and earth, as many as there were, I tore down and deposited them in the Arahtu canal. In the midst of that city I dug ditches and flooded its ground with water. The form of its foundations I destroyed and I caused its devastation to exceed that of (any) flood so that in later days the ground of that city, (its) temples, and (its) gods would be forgotten. I caused it to be covered with water and I finished it off like river flats.

132. The Akitu inscription from Ashur

Sennacherib, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, the one who makes widespread people obey, maker of the image of Ashur and the great gods, the one who completes the forgotten rituals of Esharra, who, by oracle and by order of Shamash and Adad, makes great their purification rites, the one who returns the abandoned Lamassu of Esharra to its place, who fears the gods of heaven and who greatly knows the gods of Assyria, who enriches the great gods in their dwellings, who makes great their symbols, the maker of Assyria, the one who makes its shrines perfect, the one who subjugates the enemy lands, the destroyer of their villages, who causes canals to be dug, who, releasing the waters, causes canal water to flow, who establishes abundance and plenty in the broad meadows of Assyria, who firmly establishes irrigation water for the meadowland of Assyria – ditches and installations that no one had seen in Assyria from earlier days, that no one knew, and that those before did not make – the one who lays the foundation of the work of Libittu, from the work of the living to the tombs, proper symbols of the dead, with limestone of the mountains which none of the kings of Assyria who came before me did; prudent prince whose rule is attentive above (all) kings who sit on daïses, protector of his land, trustworthy in battle and war, I am the protection of its armies. At that time after I made the image of Ashur, the great lord, my lord, and the images of the great gods and I had them occupy their peaceful dwellings, in the month Nisan, the primary month of the father, Enlil, the month of the visibility of the plough star, (the month) of the feast of the banquet of the king of the gods, Ashur, which, from distant days, on account of political disorder and rebellion, the rites of the king of the gods, Ashur, were (then) being practiced in the Bit Akiti inside the city, (but) were forgotten in open country; my heart moved me for the making of the Bit Akiti with that design and I came to know the decision of Shamash and Adad and they gave to me their true consent; they ordered me to build. In a good month on a favorable day,

with the craft of purification priests (and) the skill of incantation priests, I laid its foundations of mountain limestone. I raised its top from its foundation to its parapet, I completed it in limestone and I built it up like a mountain. Two canals I had dug at its sides and a garden of plenty, a fruit orchard, I made surround it; I encircled its sides with appealing gardens. After I destroyed Babylon, the gods of which I shattered, I overwhelmed its people with weapons. So that the ground of that city not be identified, I took its earth away and I had it carried to the Euphrates, to the sea. Its soil arrived at Dilmun and the people of Dilmun saw. Terror of the fearsomeness of Ashur fell upon them and they brought their audience gifts to me. With their presents, craftsmen – a levy of their land, *corvée* labor – copper spades, copper nails, tools of the work of their country, they sent to me on account of the destruction of Babylon. To quiet the heart of Ashur, my lord, that people sing the praises of his might (and) for the inspection of posterity, I took away the dirt of Babylon and stored it in heaped up mounds in that Bit Akitu.

D. Esarhaddon (Melville)

Esarhaddon ruled only 11 years (680–669 BC), but in his short reign he accomplished a great deal: he successfully imposed the *pax Assyriaca* on most of the empire, brought lasting peace and prosperity to Babylonia and extended Assyrian territory to include, albeit briefly, Egypt. In spite of the generally positive circumstances of his reign, Esarhaddon had to deal with a number of problems that threatened not only the stability of the empire, but the life of the king himself. Esarhaddon's brothers, who had murdered their father, Sennacherib, remained at large and thus posed a continuing threat to the throne, while the fact that Esarhaddon himself had a number of sons undoubtedly made the king mindful of the potential for future upheaval. Ill health plagued Esarhaddon from the beginning of his reign and apparently drove him to pay particular attention to omens and divination. Circumstances also required that the king take action in Babylonia, which languished in the aftermath of Sennacherib's destruction. Using every means at his disposal from military action to prognostication and written propaganda, Esarhaddon not only managed to rule effectively, but he implemented a succession policy that would avoid the internecine strife that had erupted at the end of his father's reign. The excerpts from the royal inscriptions and succession treaty translated here reflect Esarhaddon's many concerns and show us how he and his scribes made the king's policies palatable to his subjects.

One of the first things Esarhaddon did as king was to order the reconstruction of the city of Babylon and the economic rebuilding of Babylonia. His reasons for so abruptly and completely reversing Sennacherib's policies are not well known, but economic and political concerns coupled with what the omens said, probably played a greater role in his decision than any personal desire to oppose his father. Esarhaddon spent his entire reign working to establish an Assyrian rule over Babylonia that would be acceptable to the inhabitants of both countries. Such was the history of antagonism between

the two countries by the time Esarhaddon became king that he had to act with great political insight and diplomatic agility in order to implement his plans successfully. To this end, the inscriptions concerning the reconstruction of Babylon are masterpieces of ideological manipulation presented in a number of recensions which were carefully modified for different audiences (some Assyrian, some Babylonian), in different places, at different times (Cogan 1983: 84; and Porter 1983: 6–8). The excerpts included here are mostly restricted to the text Babylon A (written in 680 BC), but occasionally include some composite elements from other versions.

In these inscriptions Esarhaddon's Babylonian policies are always revealed as divinely sanctioned and ordained. In no text does he mention his father by name or identify him as the source of destruction. Rather, the blame is put (with greater or lesser severity depending on the text's intended audience) squarely on the shoulders of the Babylonians for their iniquity against the gods, especially Marduk, who abandons and punishes his people. Esarhaddon's scribes explain the time period of the abandonment by cleverly manipulating the cuneiform writing system; 70 turns into a passable 11 when turned upside down. Once Marduk is mollified, he chooses Esarhaddon as the instrument whereby Babylon and Babylonia may be restored to their former greatness. Esarhaddon takes special care in these texts to justify his reconstruction of Babylon by repeatedly referring to celestial omens and other types of divination. For example, the unusually detailed observation of Jupiter included in several recensions of the text (and translated here) quotes the canonical omen literature, probably the series *Enuma Anu Enlil* ("When Anu and Enlil"). The fact that the ominous meaning of Jupiter's observed position could be verified in the canonical omen series thus validated Esarhaddon's actions and gave credence to his other claims. It also took the responsibility for the decision out of his hands; he was only doing the gods' will. In order to demonstrate his respect for the culture and traditions of Babylonia, Esarhaddon also makes a point of describing how he takes part in the ritual carrying of the head basket (Porter 1993: 44ff). At the start of any large (temple) construction project, Babylonian kings would ceremoniously do labor in much the same way we have groundbreaking ceremonies. By doing this, Esarhaddon reveals his intention to be a proper Babylonian monarch. Evidence shows that Esarhaddon's careful attention to public relations paid off and his Babylonian policies were largely, if not always enthusiastically, accepted in both countries.

Esarhaddon told the story of his own accession in a text (designated Nin A by Borger 1956) which survives in at least 20 copies and dates to 673/672 BC (Porter 1993: 18 n 29). Interestingly, the text does not name either Esarhaddon's father or his brothers, nor does it actually state that murder occurred. Esarhaddon waited nearly eight years to give an account of the events leading to his unorthodox accession and there are several likely reasons for his delay. Aside from a reluctance to describe regicide in an official document, he probably did not want to bring up the subject of his legitimacy until his