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2

Old Akkadian Period Texts

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I. Texts from the Old Akkadian Period
(Studevent-Hickman)

The events of the Old Akkadian period fundamentally transformed the social, religious, and economic structure of southern Babylonia forever. Under King Sargon the city-states of Sumer were forced into a single polity. This violated the very idea of the divinely owned city-state and forced a reckoning of radically different ideologies. Rebellions were a constant problem for the Sargonic kings in Sumer and elsewhere; given that fact, one must marvel at their ability to maintain what has been called the first empire. The ancients themselves certainly did: The Sargonic kings were paradigmatic rulers for future regimes, and many elaborate traditions evolved around their persons.

Old Akkadian royal inscriptions have a simple structure and are generally not very long. They consist of three parts: the royal titulary, a narration of the event commemorated, and a curse against anyone who should alter the inscription (especially by erasing the name of the king and inserting his own). Many were copied in Old Babylonian scribal schools at Nippur on *Sammetafeln*, large tablets containing several separate inscriptions. These copies also bear colophons indicating where the various sections of an inscription were written on the original object.

Many features of Sargonic religious and political ideology are immediately clear from the Old Akkadian inscriptions. First, the phrase "king of the world" (literally "king of Kish"), which had already taken on greater ideological significance in the Early Dynastic period, was used extensively for the titulary (see *History* 64).¹ Second, the kings made every effort to assure their audience that Enlil, the head of the Sumerian pantheon, had authorized both their kingship and their accomplishments. Finally, the inscriptions reflect an obvious attempt to exalt Semitic deities of war, above all the

goddess Ishtar, who was synchronized with the Sumerian goddess Inanna, and the god Ilaab (or Aba),² the personal god of the dynasty.

A. Sargon: ca. 2334–2279 BCE

14. The creation of the Akkadian Empire

Battles for hegemony were common among the city-states of Early Dynastic Sumer, and some of them were quite successful. When Sargon came to power, the seat of hegemony was in Uruk. There, Lugalzagesi (a former governor of Umma) had consolidated power and united much of Sumer for the first time. To be sure, his efforts paved the way for Sargon campaigns there.

Several of Sargon's inscriptions record the campaign against Lugalzagesi in southern Babylonia. The example below is attested exclusively by Old Babylonian copies.

Sargon, the king of Akkad, the bailiff of Ishtar, the king of the universe, the anointed one of An, the king of the land, the governor of Enlil. He vanquished Uruk in battle and smote fifty governors and the city by the mace of the god Ilaab.³ And he destroyed its fortress and captured Lugalzagesi, the king of Uruk in battle. He led him to the gate of Enlil in a neckstock.

Sargon, the king of Akkad, vanquished Ur in battle and smote the city and destroyed its fortress.

He smote Enimmar and destroyed its fortress. He smote its territory and Lagash as far as the sea.

He washed his weapons in the sea.

He vanquished Umma in battle and smote the city and destroyed its fortress.

Sargon, king of the land, to whom Enlil has given no rival, to him he (i.e., Enlil) gave the upper and lower sea. Indeed, from the lower sea to the upper sea the inhabitants of the land Akkad hold governorships. Mari and Elam stand before Sargon, king of the land. Sargon, king of the land, restored the territory of Kish and made them occupy it.⁴

Whoever should remove this inscription, may Enlil and Shamash uproot his foundation and obliterate his progeny (lit. "his seed"). . . . Anyone who should neglect this statue, may Enlil neglect him (lit. "his name"). Let him (Enlil) destroy his weapon. May he not stand before Enlil.

(This) inscription was written on the socle in front of Lugalzagesi.

B. Manishtusu: ca. 2278–2264 BCE

15. The standard inscription of Manishtusu

Following the Sumerian King List, scholars have long thought that Rimush succeeded Sargon to the Akkadian throne. However, a recently published copy of that document places Manishtusu in this position, and there is other

evidence to support this (Steinkeller 2003, esp. 278–9). The question of Sargon's successor is far from resolved, of course; suffice it to say that this latest development provides a humbling reminder of just how little we know about this period. Manishtusu is presented first here.

Only a handful of inscriptions have survived from the reign of Manishtusu, the son of Sargon. The lengthiest and best-attested is known as the "Standard Inscription." It records a campaign against Anshan, one of the two major powers in the land of Elam, and Sherihum, which lie south of there. As it stands, the inscription suggests that troops from these polities still or once again needed to be removed from the south. If nothing else, this blocked vital access to trade routes to the east. The curse that follows the text is not unusual.

Manishtusu, king of the universe. When he smote Anshan and Sherihum, he made warships⁵ cross the lower sea. The (troops of the) thirty-two cities on the other side of the sea assembled for war, and he vanquished (them) and smote their cities. He felled their rulers and captured their fugitives as far as the silver mines.⁶ He quarried the black stone of the mountains on the other side of the lower sea and loaded (it) into the boats and moored (them) at the wharf of Akkad. He made a statue of himself (lit. "his statue") and gave it as a votive to Enlil. By Shamash and Ilaab I swear: "Verily these are indeed not lies!"

C. Rimush: ca. 2263–2255 BCE

16. Rimush's campaign to Elam

After quelling a rebellion of Sumerian cities, Rimush, the brother of Manishtusu, turned his attention to Elam. Several of his inscriptions record campaigns there. The longest of these is presented below.

The inscription includes several toponyms known to be major centers of power in Elam, specifically the region northeast of Babylonia. It also includes the name of several kings of these cities. Given our limited knowledge of Elamite history, these attestations are extremely valuable.⁷ According to the colophon, this section of the inscription is written on the left side of a statue of the king.

The curse formula near the end of the text is a bit more explicit and emphatic than usual. According to the colophon, it was written on the socle of a statue.

Rimush, king of the universe. He vanquished Abalgumash, the king of Parashum, in battle. (The troops of) Zahara and Elam gathered in Parashum, and he vanquished (them) and fell 16,212 men. He took 4,216 prisoners captive and took Emahisini, the king of Elam, captive. He took all . . . of Elam captive and took Sidgu, the general of Parashum, captive. He took Shargapi,⁸ the general of Zahara, captive. Between

Awam and Susa, in the "middle river", He heaped destruction upon them around the city.⁹ He slew the cities of Elam and destroyed their walls and uprooted the foundation of Parashum in the land of Elam. Rimush, king of the universe ruled over Elam. Entil made it possible: In the third year that Entil gave him the kingship, (there were) in total 9,624 men, including the fallen, including the prisoners. By Shamash and Ilaba I swear: "Verily these are indeed not lies!"

At the time of this battle he made a statue of himself (lit. "his statue") and devoted it to Entil, his helper.¹⁰

Whoever should remove this inscription, may Entil and Shamash uproot his foundation and obliterate his progeny . . . As for anyone who removes the name of Rimush, king of the universe, and places his name on the statue of Rimush and declares "(It is) my statue!", may Entil, the owner of this statue, and Shamash uproot his foundation and obliterate his progeny. May the two of them not grant him a male (their). May he not stand before his god.

When he snote Elam and Parashum, he brought back thirty minas of gold, 3,600 minas of copper, and 360¹¹ male slaves and female slaves and presented them as a votive to Entil.

D. *Naram-Sin*: ca. 2254–2218 BCE

17. The inscription from the Basetki Statue: the dedication of Naram-Sin

The greatest transformation in the notion of kingship in Mesopotamia took place during the reign of Naram-Sin: He deified himself. The event is commemorated by several inscriptions, where it is connected to his "nine battles in one year," a phrase generally assumed to refer to the Great Rebellion. It is also reflected by the presence of the divine determinative, which was subsequently written before Naram-Sin's name.

By far the best-known version of the inscription is found on the base of a huge copper statue discovered in the village of Basetki, some 40 miles (64 kilometers) northwest of Mosul. The statue is now famous. In 2003 it disappeared from the Baghdad Museum during the invasion of Iraq by the United States and other forces. In the same year it was miraculously recovered intact. The statue was already broken when it was first discovered. It appears to be a *lahmu*, a benevolent protective deity and attendant of the god Enki/Ea.¹² The inscription itself is very short; it is amazing that such a momentous event could be conveyed so concisely.¹³

Naram-Sin, the mighty one, the king of Akkad. When the four regions (of the world) revolted against him as one, by the love which Ishtar showed him, he was victorious in nine battles in one year and captured those kings who had risen up (against him). Because he fortified the foundations of his city, which was in the line of danger,¹⁴ (the residents of) his city asked of Ishtar in the Eanna, of Entil in Nippur, of Dagan in Tuttul, of Ninlursag in Kish, of Enki in Eridu, of Sin in Uruk, of Shamash in Sippar,

of Nergal in Kutha, that he be the god of their city, Akkad, and they built his temple within Akkad.

Whoever removes this inscription, may Shamash and Ishtar and Nergal, the bailiff of the gods – all of these gods – uproot his foundations and obliterate his progeny.

E. *Shar-kali-sharri*: ca. 2217–2193 BCE

18. A letter concerning the Gutians

The reign of Shar-kali-sharri, the son of Naram-Sin, marks the demise of the Akkadian empire despite the fact that other ruler succeeded him. Next to nothing is known about his military campaigns outside year names, which suggest an increasing threat of foreign invasion.

The most palpable threat was posed by the Guitians, an ethnolinguistic group from the Zagras region (see Hallo 1957–71). A letter from Babylonia, probably from Girsu or Adab, provides an intimate look at their actions in the countryside and the effects these had on the operation of the state and the relationships between officials. Two basic translations are possible, one of them requiring a slight emendation. Each of these is offered below, together they reveal just how much our understanding of Mesopotamian history can hinge on the smallest detail of a translation.

Version one (following Michalowski 1993):

Thus says Ishkun-Dagan to Lugah:

"Work the field and protect the flock! This time, do not say 'Because of the Guitians, I could not work the field!' Install maqqatu¹⁵ every half-mile and work the field! If the troops attack, you should raise help and bring the flock to the city. If you say 'The Guitians took away the flock!' I will not say anything. I will (still) give you the silver. Now, I swear by the life of Shar-kali-sharri: If the Guitians take away the flock and you have to pay (for it) yourself, I will give you the silver when I arrive in the city. But (even if) you do not guard the flock, I will (still) ask you for the regular yield (of the aforementioned field) . . . You (should) know this.

Version two (following Kienast and Volk 1995):

Thus says Ishkun-Dagan to Lugah:

"Work the field and protect the flock! And this time, do not say 'Because of the Guitians, I could not work the field!' Install maqqatu every half-mile and work the field! If someone notices the troops, let them resist (the Guitians) for you so you may bring the flock to the city. You have said, 'The Guitians took away the flock!' and I have not said anything. (In fact) I have given you silver! But now, I swear by the life of Shar-kali-sharri: If the Guitians take away the flock, you shall indeed pay (for them) yourself! When I come to the city, I will <not> give you the silver. But (even if) you do not guard the flock, I will (still) ask you for the regular yield (of the aforementioned field) . . . You (should) know this.

II. Late Traditions Concerning Sargon and Naram-Sin (Morgan)

A. *Sargon of Akkad*

The exploits of Sargon of Akkad became legendary, and later generations passed down accounts of his life and reign in the scribal tradition. Few texts contemporary with his reign have been discovered: our knowledge of this figure arises nearly exclusively from the study of later texts. Centuries after the time of Sargon, scribes of the Old Babylonian period copied a number of Sargonic inscriptions and deposited them in Nippur, an important Mesopotamian religious center. It is assumed that these Old Babylonian copies faithfully reproduce original texts; thus, these inscriptions are considered useful for historical reconstruction.

These inscriptions – or more accurately these copies – represent but a fraction of the texts relating to Sargon. While these ancient copies are presumably reproductions of authentic Sargonic texts, other Sargonic traditions have no such direct link with the ruler. These late traditions are found in omens, chronicles, and legends and must be critically evaluated in an effort to glean whatever kernel of historical memory they may preserve.

The translations below represent two late, legendary traditions concerning Sargon. The “Sargon Birth Legend” is known from three Neo-Assyrian fragments from Nineveh and one Neo-Babylonian fragment from Dīlbat. The English below represents a composite translation – a detail missing in one source may be supplied by another.

The legend “Sargon, King of Battle” is known from Amarna, Assur, and Nineveh.¹⁶ The English below derives from the Amarna recension. It is a testament to Sargon’s greatness that, even a millennium and a half after the era bearing his name, he remains the principal character of legends with widespread currency.

19. The Sargon Birth Legend

The Sargon Birth Legend has been described as an example of *narrā*-literature.¹⁷ The genre takes its name from the *narrā*, a memorial stèle set up by a king in commemoration of his achievements. This type of composition opens with a first-person introduction, continues with a first-person account of significant events or achievements, and concludes with a blessing/curse formula (blessings on those who honor the ruler’s stèle and heed its message, curses on those who would deface the stèle). The brief text of the Sargon Birth Legend exhibits a similar structure: introduction (lines 1–12), events/achievements (lines 13–21), and blessing/curse (lines 22–33).

It is unlikely, however, that the Sargon Birth Legend was ever inscribed on a *narrā*. To distinguish such literature from authentic inscriptions, the more appropriate designation “pseudo-autobiography” has been proposed.¹⁸ As the

term suggests, scholars view these late traditions with some skepticism, and they come to differing conclusions regarding the usefulness of such traditions for modern historical reconstruction.

Yet it is possible that later writers drew upon ancient traditions when composing these legends, and the careful reader must remain alert to the possibility that an underlying kernel of historical truth may await discovery even in legendary materials.¹⁹ In other words, pseudo-autobiographical texts may preserve authentic historical memories of persons whose stories they purport to tell. Nonetheless, scholars and students must approach these texts critically, and modern historical reconstructions based on data of this sort will remain somewhat tentative.

The Birth Legend describes the infant Sargon imperiled as his mother sets him adrift on a river in a reed basket (lines 5–8), one example of the infant-exposure motif that pervades ancient literature. The motif appears in the literature of the Hittites, the Israelites,²⁰ and the Greeks, among numerous other peoples.²¹ In several instances the parallels are striking – the child is placed in a small vessel, set upon waters, then rescued.²² These details are clearly not to be taken at face value. The Sargon Birth Legend represents one expression of a stock literary motif often used in world literature to introduce a figure of some importance.

While the lateness of the tradition and its legendary character limit the usefulness of this text for modern historical purposes, it does not necessarily follow that the tradition is completely devoid of value for knowledge concerning the figure of Sargon. Though the traditions surrounding Sargon’s birth offer contradictory details – in the Birth Legend Sargon’s father is unknown, in the Sumerian Sargon Legend his father is named Laibum, and in the King List his father is an anonymous gardener – they each offer a portrait of a man with humble origins.²³ This understanding of Sargon’s origins may find support in his very name: in the Akkadian language, “Sargon” means, “the king is legitimate.” Such a name, assumed upon rise to kingship, would counter assertions that a man of lowly birth held no legitimate claim to the throne. Thus, while the details of the Birth Legend cannot be taken literally, they correspond with a tradition of humble beginnings, a tradition perhaps indirectly evidenced in Sargon’s name itself.

The text presents the water-drawer Aqqi rescuing the helpless infant Sargon from the river, then adopting the child (lines 8–11). Adoption was fairly common in the ancient world and took place for a variety of reasons. In some cases specific legal contracts formalized adoption agreements between natural and adoptive parents, while in other cases legal documents do not appear to have been involved. The adoption of Sargon by Aqqi represents a class of adoption in which an abandoned or orphaned child is discovered and subsequently taken in.²⁴

According to the Birth Legend, Sargon becomes a gardener for Aqqi (line 11), but eventually the amorous goddess Ishtar grows fond of him (lines 12–14). He rises to kingship, a result of Ishtar’s favor. The tradition linking

Sargon with Ishtar may reflect a close relationship between the king and the cult of Ishtar, though the nature of the relationship remains unclear.²⁵ Ishtar was, however, revered by the kings of the Sargonic dynasty.

Lines 14–21 relate Sargon's accomplishments in rather vague terms, presenting him as a king who repeatedly crosses mountains and navigates seas. Dilmun (line 19) has been identified as Bahrain.²⁶ With its strategic location on the Persian Gulf, Dilmun served as a port of entry for goods destined for Mesopotamia. Dilmun is often mentioned alongside Magan and Melukha, and ancient literary texts had a tendency to romanticize these areas.²⁷ The city of Der (line 20) was situated east of the Tigris, and Sargon may have encountered this city in route to his invasion of Elam. The Sargon Geography, a late tradition describing Sargon's empire, also associates the king with these sites.²⁸

The final lines of the text (lines 22–33) address a future king in terms of blessing. These lines emphasize Sargon's greatness by challenging future kings to achieve greatness by walking in his footsteps. The implications are clear: only a truly great king can do as Sargon has done, and any king who does what Sargon has done will be remembered as truly great.

I am Sargon, the mighty king - king of Akkad.

My mother was a high priestess; I did not know my father.

My father's brother occupies the mountains.

Azupirani is my city, situated on the bank of the Euphrates.

(5) *My mother, the high priestess, conceived me; in secrecy she bore me.*

She placed me in a reed basket; she sealed my opening with bitumen.

She gave me to the river, from which I could not come forth.

The river carried me; to Agqi the water-drawer it brought me.

Aggi the water-drawer brought me forth when he dipped his bucket.

(10) *Aqgi the water-drawer raised me as his adopted son.*

Agqi the water-drawer made me his gardener.

While I was a gardener, Ishtar lo

I reigned as king for [...] years.

Humankind I ruled and [governed (?)].

(15) With copper pickaxes I cut through mighty mountains.

I ascended high mountains.

I traversed the hills.

I sailed around the sea[lands] three times.

Dinnun [submitted to me].

(20) 10 Greater Der I...

I removed 1 stone.

Any king who arises after me

[Let him reign as king for . . . years.]

Let him live humankind:

(23) Let him ascend the high mountains with [copper/ pickaxes,

Let him ascend the high mountains.
 Let him traverse the foothills!

[Let him reverse the poem.]

Let him sail around the sea lands three times.

[...] Let him go up to greater Der.
(30) [...] from my city, Akkad
[...] like arrows [...]

Column ii of this composition contains text of uncertain relation to the Sargon Birth Legend. Numerous animals, seemingly restless, appear in a context replete with rhetorical queries. Due to the fragmentary state of the text, its connection (if any) to the Birth Legend cannot be determined.

20. Sargon, King of Battle

The King of battle Legend may serve as an example of the need to view late traditions with a critical eye. The text itself is fourteenth century, found in the Egyptian city of Amarna. The general setting of the story seems most at home in Old Assyrian times (nineteenth century), an era characterized by Assyrian merchant activity in Anatolia. The narrative claims as its protagonist Sargon of Akkad, a figure of the twenty-third century. We have reason to question the credibility of this late tradition.

The tablet containing our text has major breaks in the upper corners and damage along the left side and bottom of the obverse. On the reverse, the top and left side are damaged. Consequently, many readings remain incomplete, and scholars have offered various interpretations of these partial lines. A comparison of several English translations will reveal the degree to which the meaning of various portions of the text remains ambiguous.

Nevertheless, the substance of the document seems clear enough. Sargon yearns for battle (lines 1–6), but his soldiers advise against it, complaining of the difficulties they will face (lines 7–12). A messenger speaks on behalf of some merchants stationed in Anatolia, relating their oppression and urging the king to come to their aid (lines 13–20). The merchants themselves then enter the palace, and Sargon agrees to engage in a campaign to help them. He is again reminded of the grave difficulties that lie ahead (lines 21–7). Sargon and his soldiers march through difficult terrain (lines 28ff.).

On the reverse of the tablet, the scene shifts to the court of Nur-Daggal, ruler of Purushanda. Nur-Daggal takes comfort in the fact that Sargon has not yet attacked, and he expresses the hope that flooding and difficult terrain will hold Sargon back. His warriors ask rhetorically what king has ever come against their lands (lines 3'-7'). Before Nur-Daggal has a chance to respond, in an instant Sargon sweeps down upon the city (7'-12'). Sargon is crowned, and Nur-Daggal is brought before him. Nur-Daggal, astonished by the onslaught, speculates that Sargon's god must have given him aid. Nur-Daggal grovels before the great Sargon, perhaps even swearing allegiance as a vassal (13'-23'). When Sargon and his soldiers depart after three years, they carry the fruits of the land with them as the spoils of war (24'-8').

In the King of Battle Legend, Mesopotamian traders complain of unfavorable conditions in Anatolia and plead for relief from Sargon. The setting reflects the nineteenth century (some four centuries following Sargon of Akkad), a time when Assyrian merchants participated in a well-organized system of trade in Anatolia. The Cappadocian Texts from this period provide extensive documentation of certain Assyrian merchants' activities in an area outside the ancient city of Kanesh. These merchants established a permanent settlement known as a *kārum* – an Assyrian word originally meaning “port” or “quay,” which eventually came to signify a commercial district.

The goods the Assyrian merchants sold in Anatolia did not originate in Assur. The merchants purchased imported tin and textiles in Assur and transported them to Anatolia by means of donkey caravans, thus participating in a trade network of wide geographical scope. The tin originated east of the Tigris, likely in the central parts of present-day Afghanistan, while Babylonia to the south served as the source of the textiles. Once in Anatolia, the Assyrian merchants would exchange their goods for silver, gold, and other precious metals which would be used upon return to Assur to pay expenses and purchase more imported goods for sale in Anatolia.

The Cappadocian Texts, unearthed at Kanesh, offer a wealth of information with respect to the region and period in general. They reveal, for example, that three cities – Purushanda, Kanesh, and Wahshushana – seem to have been major political centers in the nineteenth century. It is Purushanda and its ruler Nur-Daggal that serve as the objects of Sargon's campaign in the King of Battle Legend. Though the precise location of Purushanda is not yet known, it appears in the texts as a major seat of power in Anatolia. Its ruler is known as “great prince” while other rulers are simply called “prince,” a nomenclature reflecting the city's political preeminence.

The King of Battle Legend does not represent history in any modern sense of the word. This legend places Sargon of Akkad in a setting most appropriate centuries later, the Old Assyrian period in which organized Assyrian merchant activity in Anatolia thrived. Furthermore, at this time Purushanda seems to have been a most influential city. This is not to imply that Purushanda was not influential in an earlier era, or that there were not precursors to the type of merchant activity so thoroughly documented in the Cappadocian Texts. To the contrary, both were certainly the case. Nevertheless, the student of history must view the claims of the King of Battle Legend with skepticism.

The situation becomes even more complex when one takes into account that the setting of King of Battle more accurately reflects the period of Sargon I of Assyria. Though the legend clearly understands its protagonist as Sargon of Akkad (e.g., lines 17, 20'), it is possible that a campaign of Sargon I of Assyria (or some other king) has been attributed to the earlier and more famous ruler. It is also possible that the legend has no basis at all in any historical campaign: King of Battle may be a literary creation crafted to prod

an irresponsible monarch to action, an anachronistic tale serving as a reminder that a great king responds decisively in times of crisis.

In fact, a number of important literary themes appear in the legend. The king's decisiveness in the face of his soldiers' misgivings serves to underscore Sargon's bravery, and in defending the defenseless merchants, he performs one of the duties of the ideal Mesopotamian monarch. Sargon faces and overcomes seemingly insurmountable obstacles, a testament to the king's determination. The legend's antagonist, Nur-Daggal, is humbled at a moment when he and members of his court are speaking arrogantly.²⁹

We may conclude that though the King of Battle Legend has as its central character the historical figure of Sargon of Akkad, it is best understood as a work of literature. Despite this, the document likely finds inspiration in Sargonic traditions that, quite broadly speaking, have a factual basis – traditions regarding Sargon's greatness, bravery, and influence in distant lands.

[.....] of Ishtar, [he who ??] the foundations (?) of Akkad.....]
 [.....] battles, the king in the midst of Akkad (?)......]
 [.....Sargon] speaks of battle, Sargon [.....]
 [....., with] his furious weapon. The palace of Sargon [.....]
 (5) [He speaks to his warriors], he declares –
 “My warriors, (against) Kalnesh]
 [.....: I seek battle. They have subjugated [.....]
 [.....] he has brought. Sargon is despised [.....]
 [.....] the thrones. The road, my lord, [that you wish] to travel
 [is a difficult path], a treacherous [way]. The road to Purushanda
 (10) [that you wish to travel], the road of which I complain,
 is a task of (seven double-miles).³⁰ When will we
 [.....] we sit down on a chair. Will we soon rest
 [.....] when! our arms have become exhausted,
 (when) our knees have grown weary from walking the paths?
 [Then] he opens [his mouth]³¹ and speaks,
 the messenger of the merchants declares,
 [By your god, Zababla, who travels the ways, who takes to the road,
 who watches over the world
 (15) [.....] of the thrones, that from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun
 [.....] that the merchants' hearts reech, coated with bile, vomiting
 [on the ground]³² What can Kish snatch from the midst of Akkad?
 We invoked [Sargon, king of the world:
 “Come down to us! We face opposition, (and) we are not warriors.
 (The cost of) provisions for the road, O king, impose (on us),
 that which we shall pay, O king.
 As for the one who will stand at his battle, let the king pay.
 (20) [Let] the warriors of Sargon [.....] gold; let them give him shafts of silver.
 Our lord, we shall go. Treachery is committed
 in the very place where your god Zababa rests!
 The merchants gathered; they entered the palace. After they entered,
 the merchants did not confront the warriors. Sargon opens his mouth, he speaks.

The King of Battle [declares]: "Purnishanda, which is acclaimed – let me see its valor!
 (25) What is its direction? Which is its mountain?
 Where is its Anzu?⁵⁵ Which (is its) Kililitu?⁵⁶?"
 "The road that you wish to travel is a difficult path, a treacherous way,
 Purnishanda, where you wish to travel, the road of which I complain,
 is a task of seven double-miles."
 [...] the enormous mountain, whose stones are lapis lazuli,
 with gold in its confines.
 [...] the apple tree, the fig tree, the boxwood, the urzimu tree,
 a depth of seven abzu.
 (30) [...] the place where the servants had fought one another.
 The haft⁵⁵ of its peak is seven double-miles. The brambles
 [...] all of it is seven double miles. The trees, the thorn bush, the area of
 [...] the thorns⁵⁶ of the trees are sixty cubits, is seven double-miles.
 The thorny bushes . . .

(Bottom of tablet obverse broken. Top of tablet reverse broken.)

[.....] Nur-D[aggal] opens his mouth and speaks [to his warriors]
 He declares, "Sargon has not yet come against us.
 May the riverbank and the flooding detain him,
 (5) (together with) the mighty mountain. May the reeds become a forest,
 a thicket, a wood, binding themselves together into knots."
 His warriors answer him – they declare to Nur-Daggal, "Which kings,
 more recent or long ago, what king came and saw our lands?" Nur-Daggal
 had not even finished responding when Sargon surrounded his city,
 making the Gate of the Princes 2 iku wide.
 [He knocked it down. He made a breach in the highest point of its wall.
 He struck down all his drunken men.
 (10') [Sargon, before the gate, approached his throne. Sargon opens his mouth
 and speaks. He declares to his warriors, "Now, as for Nur-Daggal,
 favorite of Enlil!
 Let him rejoice himself! Let him bow himself down. Let me see!
 He was crowned with a crown of precious stones on his head;
 a footstool of lapis lazuli below. Fifty-five officials
 [...] sat before him, who like him sat on a throne of gold;
 the king sits like a god.
 (15) Who is excited like the king? They made Nur-Daggal sit before Sargon.
 Sargon opens his mouth
 and speaks to Nur-Daggal. He [declares], "Come Nur-Daggal, favorite of Enlil.
 How could you say,
 'Sargon has not yet come against us. May the riverbank, the flooding,
 and the mighty mountain detain him.
 May the reeds become a forest. May it produce a thicket, a wood, knots.'
 Nur-Daggal opens his mouth
 and speaks to Sargon. "Perhaps, my lord, your god
 (20') Zababa, the warrior of the trans-Euphrates, informed you
 and brought the troops across for you. What land of all the lands rivals Akkad?

[What] king rivals you? Your adversary does not exist.
 The military campaign is their enemy.
 The kiln [fire] burns the hearts of your enemies.
 They have feared, and I am petrified. Restore to them
 [...] the field and the pasture land – lords, who are allies, over it.
 [...] we will return to his place. Let him carry its fruit –
 apples, figs, plums, vines,
 (25') [...] pistachios, olives, sweet pomegranates (?).
 Never shall we return to his place.
 [...] let him carry. Let the city be treated harshly.
 Let him take good things as he goes.
 [...] remaining. Who accompanied Sargon?
 They departed the city,
 having remained three years and [...] .
 Tablet One of "King of Battle" is complete.

B. Naram-Sin of Akkad

As with Sargon of Akkad, the figure of Naram-Sin continued to capture the imaginations of many generations of Mesopotamians. While traditions far removed from his time present Sargon's reign quite positively and portray the dynasty's founder as a mythic hero, the same cannot be said of all late traditions concerning Sargon's grandson and eventual successor, Naram-Sin. There is considerable irony in the fact that Naram-Sin's inscriptions extol him extravagantly, eventually going so far as to proclaim him a god, yet in later periods he is sometimes remembered for his ineptitude. The translations below represent divergent views of Naram-Sin's reign. The Great Revolt describes in some detail the rebellion against Naram-Sin as a means of emphasizing the king's might and military prowess. The Cutha Legend offers a very different portrait of Naram-Sin, presenting him as a somewhat tragic figure whose hubris nearly brings about the downfall of his kingdom.

In fact, the reign of Naram-Sin did not end so disastrously as some late traditions suggest, and the historical Naram-Sin would become the most important monarch of the Sargonic dynasty. Two sons of Sargon, first Rimush and then Manishtusu but please see the discussion on pp. 18–19, had consolidated and governed Sargon's empire for nearly a quarter-century following their father's death. Upon the death of Manishtusu, his son Naram-Sin – grandson of Sargon of Akkad – began a lengthy reign.

Naram-Sin enlarged the sphere of Akkadian influence by campaigning to the north, south, east, and west. He erected stelae in far-off lands, boasting of the uniqueness of his accomplishments. After successfully checking a challenge to Akkadian power, likely the rebellion inspiring traditions preserved in The Great Revolt, Naram-Sin's subjects hailed him as divine. The king passed the empire on to his son and successor, Sharkalishari, who maintained the Sargonic dynasty for another 25 years.