

* *
*

DIETRICH, M. The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib. (State Archives of Assyria, Volume XVII). Helsinki University Press, Helsinki, 2003. (25 cm, XLV, 214). ISBN 951-570-558-4.

SAA 17 contains all the hitherto unpublished correspondence of Sargon II and Sennacherib in the Neo-Babylonian dialect. The volume brings to completion the publication of the correspondence of Sargon II and his successor Sennacherib discovered at Nineveh; the Assyrian language parts of the corpus are to be found in SAA 1 (S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West*), SAA 5 (G.B. Lanfranchi and S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*), and SAA 15 (A. Fuchs and S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III: Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*). Dietrich prepared the entire manuscript in German and I. Parpola and R. Mayer-Opificus translated it into English.

The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib consists of an introduction, transliterations and translations of the texts, a glossary, indices, and collations of 47 letters. The two hundred and seven texts edited in the volume are divided into four main sections (Royal letters, Letters from Northern and Central Babylonia, Letters from Eastern and Southern Babylonia, and Unassigned and Fragmentary), which are grouped further into twelve chapters: 1. *Letters from the King* (nos. 1–6); 2. *Letters from Sippar and Birati/Harratu* (nos. 7–19); 3. *Letters from Babylon* (nos. 20–58); 4. *Letters from Šabhanu* (nos. 59–61); 5. *Letters from Borsippa and Bit-Dakuri* (nos. 62–85); 6. *Letters from Dilbat, Larak and Nippur* (nos. 86–91); 7. *Letters from Gambulu* (nos. 92–128); 8. *Letters from Uruk* (nos. 129–144); 9. *Letters from Nemed-Laguda* (nos. 145–148); 10. *Letters from Tubliaš* (nos. 149–155); 11. *Letters of Unknown Provenance* (nos. 156–168); and 12. *Letters of Unknown Authorship* (nos. 169–207). Ninety-one of the letters were first published by R.F. Harper in *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum* (ABL; London-Chicago, 1892–1914) and one hundred and fourteen of the texts by Dietrich in *Neo-Babylonian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection* (CT 54; London, 1979). Two of the letters (nos. 138 and 207) are published here for the first time. The author dates one hundred and twenty-seven letters to the reign of Sargon and sixty-five to the time of Sennacherib; fifteen of the texts may have been composed in either Sargon's or Sennacherib's reign.

Very few of the letters are complete or nearly complete; the majority are fragmentary.¹⁾ Despite this, Dietrich has made a tremendous effort in presenting up-to-date editions, as well as gathering the texts into fairly coherent groups. The accuracy of the transliterations of texts was ensured by repeated collation of the originals in the British Museum, most of which were done in the 1960s; F. Reynolds made a few recent spot collations (nos. 5, 84, and 85). It is unfortunate that Dietrich did not re-examine the letters for this important publication after the corpus was entered into the electronic database of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. Given the high number of new and improved readings noted by Reynolds for the Neo-Babylonian correspondence of Esarhaddon and letters to Assurbanipal and Šîn-šarru-iškun from northern and central Babylonia (just for CT 54 alone!), the reviewer questions the accuracy of the translit-

erations. For this review, I was unable to collate selected texts sign by sign to see whether or not the Neo-Babylonian correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib should have undergone a more thorough re-examination. With regard to the translations, they are generally readable despite having some minor and a few major omissions, numerous places where the English could be improved, and many instances where the square brackets are missing or in the wrong places.

Remarks on Selected Texts

No. 8: Although the sender is the same as nos. 7 and 9 as suggested by the remarkably large ductus of the script, inclined to the left and with considerable space between the lines — the reading of the name in line 2 as Nabû-ahhe-lumur is not entirely certain. Therefore, read “*Nabû-ahhe-lumur*” for “*Nabû-ahhe-lumur*” as it is in no. 7:2.

No. 31: Dietrich (p. XL add n. 31) suggests that the sender is Bel-iqiša on the basis of the introduction and diction, but notes that the letter differs from the other correspondence of this sender (nos. 21–30) in its ductus, specifically its size, the depth of the wedges, and the inclination of the writing. The attribution to this prelate of Esagila and Ezida seems unlikely since Bel-iqiša is mentioned in rev. 9'; this may also explain the difference in the scribal hand.

No. 83: The letter is wrongly placed in Table I (p. XXXVI, last cell). It should have been included in Table III (p. XXXVII) since the author dates Rm 64 to the reign of Sennacherib (pp. XXV and 74).

No. 85: In the introduction (pp. XXVI and XXXVI) K 9124+ is dated to the reign of Sargon and tentatively attributed to Ana-Nabû-taklak, but in the critical apparatus (p. 75) Dietrich suggests that the letter was addressed to Sennacherib since there is a reference to boats in line 5. If the letter was written by Ana-Nabû-taklak, then no. 85 was composed during Sargon's reign since this commander of Borsippa regularly sent letters to that king. If not, then it is possible that K 9124+ was addressed to Sennacherib.

No. 147: There is some confusion about the provenance of the letter. Dietrich groups K 882 with the correspondence sent from Kinâ in Nemed-Laguda, but states in the introduction (p. XXIX) that the letter originates from Nippur. If this is the case, then why was no. 147 not edited with texts from Dilbat, Larak, and Nippur (nos. 86–91)?

No. 160: The inclusion of šá!! (tablet: A) between [*di-na-an*] and LUGAL (lines 1–2) is unusual; *di-na-an šá* LUGAL is not otherwise attested in the Neo-Babylonian corpus of Sargon and Sennacherib. Dietrich suggests that the scribal hands of nos. 159 and 160 are identical. However, it should be noted here that there are several orthographic differences in the opening formulae: no. 159 has *a-na di-na-an* 'LUGAL' *be-lí-ia lu-lí[k]* (line 2), whereas no. 160 has [*a-na di-na-an*] / šá!! LUGAL *be-lí-šú lul-[lik]* (lines 1–2); and no. 159 has *be-lí-ia-a-[m]a* (line 3), whereas no. 160 has *be-lí-ia-[a-ma]* (line 3).

No. 189: The heading of the letter (“Fragment Referring to a Carrier Pigeon”) is misleading since there is no evidence in the text that the bird (*iš-šur-tú*) mentioned in line 4' is a carrier pigeon.

Sargon's Birth Name and Date of Birth

No. 46 (K 5444b + K 14617 + K 15388 + K 15688 = CT 54 no. 109), a letter sent to Sargon by a certain Nabû-...

¹⁾ Nos. 2, 3, 7, 17, 20, 22, 43, 46, 48–49, 53, 63–64, 73, 75, 86, 89, 92–93, 96, 102, 115, 117, 120–122, 133, 136, 139–140, 142, 148–149, 152–153, and 155 are the most complete letters in the volume.

(^md+AG-[...]),²⁾ is one of two texts stating that Tiglath-pileser III was the father of Sargon II.³⁾ The sender specifically refers to Tiglath-pileser as “the k[īn]g, your [fat]her”: rev. 10–11 TUKUL-ti-DUMU.UŠ-‘E’.[ŠAR.RA] / LU[GA]L [A]D-ka. If the royal name in line 1 ([LUGAL]-ū-kin) and the reading of [A]D-ka in rev. 11 are correct, then this letter conclusively proves that Sargon was a son of Tiglath-pileser, despite the fact that the former intentionally distanced himself from his father by failing to mention him in his royal inscriptions.⁴⁾ While some scholars have maintained that Šarru-ukīn was a throne name adopted by Sargon when he ascended the throne in 722, it is more likely to have been his birth name.

Assuming Šarru-ukīn was the birth name of this king, then the name may imply that Sargon was born shortly after 13 Aiiaru (II) 745 (eponymy of Nabû-bel-ušur), when his father firmly seized the throne of Assyria and re-established law and order in the Assyrian capital.⁵⁾ Given the turbulent circumstances (rebellion in Calah) by which Tiglath-pileser came to the throne, the name Šarru-ukīn could be interpreted as “the king (Tiglath-pileser) has established stability/justice.”⁶⁾ If this interpretation proves correct, then Sargon was born after 13 Aiiaru (II) 745; was eighteen years old when his older brother Shalmaneser V (also referred to as Ululaia) became king on 25 Tebetu (X) 727; twenty-three years of age when he seized the kingship of Assyria on 12 Tebetu (X) 722;⁷⁾ and only forty when he was killed in battle fighting Gurdī the Kulummean in early 705 (before 12 Ab [V]).⁸⁾

Furthermore, if it is assumed that Shalmaneser V (Ululaia) was the older brother of Sargon and that he was born prior to 13 Aiiaru (II) 745, then this Assyrian king was at least was eighteen years old when he became king on 25 Tebetu (X) 727 and no less than twenty-three years of age when he died in early Tebetu (X) 722.⁹⁾

Although this interpretation of Sargon’s name is conjectural, it makes sense given the circumstances by which his father Tiglath-pileser came to the throne, i.e. the king established order and stability in Calah, thus ending hostilities in the Assyrian capital. Of course, this proposal may be wrong and thus Šarru-ukīn is actually the name Sargon adopted when he ascended the throne in late 722; he likewise seized power during a period of unrest.

SAA 18 is a professional treatment of the Neo-Babylonian correspondence of Sargon II and his son Sennacherib.

Dietrich deserves our gratitude for his efforts in providing us with new editions of two hundred and seven letters, some of which have been translated into English for the first time. The only major complaint that the reviewer has is that the texts were not thoroughly re-examined prior to publication; fresh collation of the corpus may have proved useful. *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib* is not only an important contribution to the field of Neo-Assyrian studies, but a much needed companion to CT 54. The volume will undoubtedly serve as a valuable research tool, particularly for studies of Aramaic loanwords in Akkadian and Assyrianisms in the Neo-Babylonian correspondence from Nineveh.

Chicago, November 2004

Jamie R. NOVOTNY

* *
*

²⁾ Pp. 43–44. Dietrich restores the name in line 2 as ^md+AG [MU-GAR-un]; the glossary correctly lists the name as Nabû-[...] (p. 197).

³⁾ Sargon claims descentance from Tiglath-pileser in a short inscription written on an enameled tile from Assur, now in the Archaeological Museum (Istanbul). For copies and editions of K 5444b+ and EŠ 3282, see F. Thomas, “Sargon II., der Sohn Tiglath-pileser III.,” in AOAT 232 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993) pp. 467–470. The inscription reads: “Property of Sargon (^mMAN-ū-ki-in), great king, mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, son of Tiglath-pileser (^mtukul-ti-A-ē-šar-ra), (who was also king of Assyria.”

⁴⁾ Sargon’s father and son, Tiglath-pileser III and Sennacherib, did the same.

⁵⁾ Eponym Chronicle ex. B 1:75’–76’ (Millard, SAAS 2 [Helsinki, 1994] p. 43).

⁶⁾ Compare E. Frahm, *Sanherib* (Vienna, 1997) p. 2. Compare also A. Westenholz’s interpretation of Sargon of Agade’s name in Sallaberger and Westenholz (eds.), *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit* (Schweiz and Göttingen, 1999) p. 34: “the king is true (to his word).”

⁷⁾ Babylonian Chronicle 1 i 31 (Grayson, *Chronicles* [Locust Valley, 1975] p. 73).

⁸⁾ Eponym Chronicle ex. B6 rev. 9–11 (Millard, SAAS 2 p. 48).

⁹⁾ Babylonian Chronicle 1 i 27 and 29 (Grayson, *Chronicles* p. 73).