The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel

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Indices

Jamie Novotny

Contextualizing the Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel: What Can Assyrian Official Inscriptions Tell Us?

1 Introduction

Considerable scholarly effort has been made trying to lift the heavy veil shrouding the details of the history of the final two decades of the kingdom of Israel, including the identity of the Assyrian ruler who conquered its capital Samaria and captured its last king Hoshea. Because there are significant discrepancies in extant primary sources, in particular between the Old Testament and Assyrian inscriptions, scholars have yet to satisfactorily answer the most important questions about this crucial period in the history of the Levant. Assyrian sources, especially royal inscriptions, may provide some key pieces to the puzzle, but what can they tell us about the last twenty to thirty years of the kingdom of Israel, the fall of Samaria, and the fate of Hoshea?[1] This paper will examine the available inscriptions of the eighth- and seventh-century Assyrian kings in order to eluci-

Support for my research on Assyrian (and Babylonian) inscriptions is provided by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (through the establishment of the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship for Ancient History of the Near and Middle East) and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Historisches Seminar – Abteilung Alte Geschichte). I would like to thank Karen Radner for reading through and commenting on a draft of this manuscript. Her time and care are greatly appreciated. Any errors or omissions are solely my responsibility. Because this conference volume contains numerous topic-specific studies on the last days of Israel and because this chapter is to serve as an introduction to Part I of the proceedings, footnotes and bibliography are kept to a minimum. For the Assyrian material, see the chapters by Eckart Frahm and Karen Radner. All dates are BC(E), except, of course, in bibliographical references.

1 For (general) studies on royal inscriptions, see in particular Albert Kirk Grayson, "Assyria and Babylonia," *Or* NS 49 (1980): 140–93; Johannes Renger "Königsinschriften. B. Akkadisch," in *RlA*, vol. 6/1–2, ed. Dietz Otto Edzard (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 65–77 (especially 71–77); Hayim Tadmor, "Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 325–38; and Frederick Mario Fales, "Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: Newer Horizons," *SAAB* 13 (1999–2001): 115–44.

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date what information that genre of Akkadian text can and cannot provide with regard to the history of Israel. Special attention will be given to potential lost sources to determine if new Assyrian texts could really help scholars solve some of the mysteries of the Bible.

This paper will serve as a general introduction to the more topic-specific papers given in Part I of this book. Nevertheless, I do hope to say a few things not covered in the other chapters. As a word of warning, at least one section of this paper will be purely speculative. However, these conjectures will be deeply rooted in the extant source material of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II.

2 Background Information: What Do We Know about Shalmaneser V?[2]

Before diving into the heart of matters, let me introduce Shalmaneser V, the chief protagonist of our story according to a Babylonian chronicle, the Bible, and the classical historian Josephus.

From Babylonian King List A, the Ptolemaic Canon, and several Neo-Assyrian letters, we know that the man who would be the fifth Assyrian king with the name Shalmaneser also went by the name Ulūlāyu, his nickname or birth name.[3]

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2 For details on Shalmaneser V/Ulūlāyu, see Albert Kirk Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B.C.)," in *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.*, The Cambridge Ancient History 3/2, second edition, ed. John Boardman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 85–86; Heather D. Baker, "Salmānu-ašarēd," in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/I, ed. Heather D. Baker (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 1077 no. 5; Heather D. Baker, "Salmaneser V.," in *RlA*, vol. 11/7–8, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 585–87; Karen Radner, "Ulūlāiu," in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/II, ed. Heather D. Baker (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 1375 no. 3; Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 14; Karen Radner, "Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria (726–722 BC)," in *Assyrian Empire Builders* (London: University College London, 2012), http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/kings/shalmaneserv/ (accessed 10/2017); and Keiko Yamada and Shigeo Yamada, "Shalmaneser V and His Era, Revisited," in *'Now It Happened in Those Days': Studies in Biblical, Assyrian, and Other Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Mordechai Cogan on His 75th Birthday*, eds. Amitai Baruchi-Unna, Tova Forti, Shmuel Aḥituv, Israel Ephʿal and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017): 387–442.

3 For the relevant sections of Babylonian King List A and the Ptolemaic Canon, see Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 15–16. For details on these texts, see Jamie Novotny, "Babylonian King List A (BM 033332; Rm 3, 005)," in *The Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online* (Munich:

A handful of royal letters attest to the crown prince Ulūlāyu playing an active role in his father's administration, particularly in the affairs of the western part of the empire. His responsibilities included securing sufficient supplies, coordinating security details for the queen (perhaps his mother), and receiving ambassadorial delegations visiting the capital Calah (Kalḫu; modern Nimrud). His on-the-job training gave him excellent knowledge of Assyria's western vassal kingdoms and prepared him well for his royal duties, once he became king. According to a Babylonian chronicle, Shalmaneser ascended the throne of Assyria without opposition shortly after Tiglath-pileser died; this was in the year 727.[4]

Hard facts about his short reign are rather scarce since textual and archaeological evidence for his stint as king are almost non-existent. This is in part due to that fact that no royal inscription of his has survived, apart from a set of lion-shaped weights.[5] The passage recording events of his reign in the Eponym Chronicle is heavily damaged and the relevant details are completely broken away.[6] Nevertheless, it is fairly certain he stayed at home during his first year as king and that military expeditions were conducted in his second, third, and fourth years on the throne. Unfortunately, the names of his military targets are missing. The kingdom of Bīt-Ḫumria, the Assyrian name for Israel, may have been named in this source since the Bible (2Kgs 17:3–6 and 2Kgs 18:9–12) records that Shalmaneser campaigned in that region.[7] As for what happened in his fifth year as king, nothing is preserved in the Eponym Chronicle. A Babylonian chronicle provides one important piece of information: Shalmaneser is report-

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Oracc, 2016), http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/kinglists/kinglista/ (accessed 10/2017); and Henry Heitmann-Gordon, "First Section of the Ptolemaic Canon," in *The Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online* (Munich: Oracc, 2016), http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/kinglists/ptolemaiccanon/ (accessed 10/2017). For the letters from Calah, see Karen Radner, "Salmanassar V. in den Nimrud Letters," *AfO* 50 (2003–4): 95–104 and Mikko Luukko, *The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), L–LII and 10–13 nos. 8–11.

4 Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley NY: Augustin, 1975), 73 no. 1 i 24–28; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 18.

5 Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 171–81 nos. 1–9 and Frederick Mario Fales, "The Assyrian Lion-Weights: A Further Attempt," in *Libiamo ne' lieti calici: Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Lucio Milano*, ed. Paola Corò et al. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016): 483–507.

6 Alan Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910–612 BC* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1994), 45–46, 59; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 17–18.

7 For textual references and bibliography, see Ariel M. Bagg, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der neuassyrischen Zeit Teil 1: Die Levante* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007), 50. For a recent study of the Assyrian Empire and the west, see Ariel M. Bagg, *Die Assyrer und das Westland: Studien zur historischen Geographie und Herrschaftspraxis in der Levante im 1. Jt. v.u.Z.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), especially 213–44.

ed to have ravaged Samaria.[8] 2Kgs 17 and 18 and Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* IX 15) also credit him with the conquest of Israel's capital; inscriptions of his successor, however, infer that Sargon II captured Samaria.[9] Exactly when Shalmaneser attacked Israel and when Samaria was captured is uncertain, but it is sometimes thought that Samaria fell towards the end of his reign, possibly in his fifth year. Shalmaneser appears to have added three new provinces to Assyria (Que, Samʾal, and Samaria)[10] and he may have besieged the Phoenician city Tyre, if the account of Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* IX 16) is to be believed.

No building activity by this Shalmaneser is known so far. However, a brick found at Apku, modern Tell Abu Marya, may belong to him, and, assuming the attribution proves correct, then this brick may attest to construction in that city.[11]

The end of Shalmaneser's reign is known only from a text composed under the auspices of his brother and successor.[12] The "Aššur Charter" portrays Shalmaneser as an oppressive ruler who had robbed the citizens of the city of Aššur of their god-given privileges and imposed hard labor upon them. Because Shalmaneser angered the gods, he was violently removed from the throne and replaced by someone more suitable: his brother, who took the name Šarru-ukīn (Šarru-kēnu/Šarru-kīn).[13] A Babylonian chronicle states that Shalmaneser died and was succeeded a few days later by Sargon;[14] no reference to the violent

8 Grayson, *Chronicles*, 73 no. 1 i 28; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 18.

9 The identity of the Assyrian king who captured Samaria (Shalmaneser V or Sargon II), whether the Assyrians conquered that city once or twice, and when that city fell are still matters of scholarly debate. Those issues fall outside the scope of the present paper, but are addressed elsewhere in this volume. In § 4.3, it is assumed, however, that Samaria may have succumbed to Assyria while Shalmaneser was still on the throne. For summaries and assessments of relevant scholarly discussion see, for example, Kyle Lawson Younger Jr., "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 461–82 and Kenneth Bergland, "Analysis and Assessment of Chronological Explanations of the Fall of Samaria," *Spes Christiana* 22–23 (2011–12): 63–84; for further bibliographical references, see n. 5 of Frahm's chapter in this volume.

10 Karen Radner, "Provinz. C. Assyrien," in *RlA*, vol. 11/1–2, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 62 nos. 57–59.

11 Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 183–84.

12 Henry W.F. Saggs, "Historical Texts and Fragments of Sargon II of Assyria: 1. The 'Aššur Charter'," *Iraq* 37 (1975): 11–20; and Galo W. Vera Chamaza, "Sargon II's Ascent to the Throne: The Political Situation," *SAAB* 6/1 (1992): 21–33. See also Text 1 in Frahm's chapter in this volume.

13 For a discussion about the meaning of Sargon's name ("The righteous king" or "He [= the god] made firm the king"), see, e.g., Andreas Fuchs, "Sargon II.," in *RlA*, vol. 12/1–2, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009): 51–53 § 2; and Andreas Fuchs, "Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn," in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/II, ed. Heather D. Baker and Robert D. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011): 1239–47 no. 2.

14 Grayson, *Chronicles*, 73 no. 1 i 29–31; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 18.

circumstances of his death is given in that source. We just have Sargon's word on the matter.

No positively identified inscriptions of Shalmaneser V have survived, apart from several bilingual Akkadian-Aramaic lion weights.[15] One expects that more official texts of his must have existed in antiquity; this is suggested by the fact that inscriptions of other Assyrian kings – for example, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon – were written well before their fifth regnal years, as well as in their fifth year as king.[16] Because he is known to have carried out at least three military expeditions (according to the Eponym Chronicle), it would be highly unusual had Shalmaneser not taken the opportunity to record his deeds. Although there is a near complete gap in the textual record for the five years that Shalmaneser was king, we can still speculate about what he may have recorded about himself and what form those royal compositions may have taken.

To put our conjectured now-lost sources into context, we must dive into the extant corpora of Shalmaneser's immediate predecessor and successor. Let us start with those of Tiglath-pileser III.

3 Brief Overview of the Official Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III[17]

Thirty-four or thirty-five inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, excluding those of his wife Yabâ and several of his subordinates, are known. The complete corpus of texts has been recently published by Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada for the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period Project, directed by Grant

15 See n. 5 above.

16 E.g., A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC), Part 1* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 29–69 nos. 1–4; and Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 119–34 nos. 57–59. For the inscriptions of Sargon II written near the beginning of his reign, see Texts 1–3 in Frahm's chapter.

17 For details on Tiglath-pileser III and his reign, see, e.g., Grayson, "Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II," 71–85; Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 12–14; Heather D. Baker, "Tukultī-apil-Ešarra," in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/II, ed. Heather D. Baker (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 1329–31 no. 3; Heather D. Baker, "Tiglatpileser III.," in *RlA*, vol. 14/1–2, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 21–4; and Karen Radner, "Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (744–727 BC)," in *Assyrian Empire Builders* (London: University College London, 2012), http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/kings/tiglatpileseriii/ (accessed 10/2017).

Frame of the University of Pennsylvania.[18] These self-aggrandizing compositions are found on a variety of stone, clay, and metal objects. The most important are written on wall slabs with reliefs, threshold slabs, mud bricks, clay tablets, and a stele. The majority were discovered in the citadel of Calah, in the ruins of the Central and South-West Palaces, while a few others were found at Aššur, Arslan Tash, and western Iran. Following Tadmor, scholars generally divide this king's texts into three categories: (1) chronologically-arranged annals; (2) geographically-organized summary inscriptions; and (3) miscellaneous texts, which include labels and building inscriptions.[19]

The most important inscription of Tiglath-pileser is the so-called "Calah Annals."[20] This modern conflation of several ancient texts is a long running annalistic account of the events of Tiglath-pileser's reign from his accession year to his fifteenth or seventeenth year as king.[21] Copies of it were originally inscribed on the walls of rooms and corridors of the Central Palace, usually in a horizontal band separating the sculpted upper and lower registers.[22] Due in part to the fact that the seventh-century Assyrian king Esarhaddon dismantled the Central Palace and reused some of the sculpted wall slabs in his own palace, most of Tiglath-pileser's annals have not survived.[23] One third, if not less, of the Calah Annals are known today, and the known pieces may represent parts of four or

18 For details on the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (with references to previous scholarly literature), see Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III* and its online version on *Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period online* http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap1/ (accessed 10/2017). Much of the contents of that volume is based on Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria: Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations, and Commentary* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994).

19 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 22–25. This classification of the corpus is maintained in Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*; see pp. 4–10 of that volume.

20 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 27–89, 216–21 and 238–59; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 4–8 and 19–79 nos. 1–34. See also John Malcolm Russell, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 88–96.

21 For details, see Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 4–7. Tadmor's designations for the inscriptions are followed here.

22 For drawings showing the position of the text of the Calah Annals on the extant wall slabs, see Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 241–56 (= Figures 11–2).

23 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 10–12 and Richard David Barnett and Margarete Falkner, *The Sculptures of Aššur-naṣir-apli II (883–859 B.C.), Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1962), 1–7 and 20–23 provide good information about the poor condition in which Tiglath-pileser's palace and its inscribed and sculpted wall slabs were discovered. See also § 4.1 (with n. 49) below.

five different texts. The surviving material is divided into three hypothetical series: Series A, the "Hall of the Seven-Line Series"; Series B, the "Hall of the Twelve-Line Series"; and Series C, the "Colossal Slabs (Series)". When all three series are combined, the extant text of the Annals preserves parts of the prologue, reports of Tiglath-pileser's 1st – 3rd (745 – 743), 7th – 9th (739 – 737), 11th (735), 13th (733), and 15th (731) regnal years, and an account of the construction of Tiglath-pileser's palace. This badly damaged set of inscriptions narrated the military achievements of every year of the king's reign, up to his fifteenth or seventeenth regnal year. The Calah Annals are one of the principal Assyrian sources that provide evidence about the last days of Israel. Of note, Menahem of Samaria is said to have paid tribute to Assyria and sixteen districts of Bīt-Ḫumria are reported to have been destroyed.[24]

Annals of the king were written on other media, including provincial steles and rock reliefs.[25] The two best surviving examples are a stele discovered in western Iran and a panel carved into a rock face near Mila Mergi in Kurdistan. Copies of Tiglath-pileser's annals would have been inscribed on clay foundation documents that would have been deposited into the structures of buildings constructed or repaired by him. No such object bearing his annals is known today.[26] Some of these now-lost documents are presumed to have been destroyed in antiquity by Esarhaddon when he built his own royal residence at Calah, or in modern times, by local inhabitants or nineteenth century excavators.[27] There is little doubt in my mind that such texts existed, despite their current lack in the archaeological record.

Several of Tiglath-pileser's so-called "Summary Inscriptions" are also known.[28] These compositions were written on stone pavement slabs and clay tablets near the end of his reign, probably late in 729 or in 728, and they give a summary of his military achievements by geographical region. The résumé of victories usually began with events in the south and then continued with those of the east and north, and concluded with events in the west. The narrative

24 Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 46 no. 14 line 10, 61 – 63 nos. 21 – 22, 70 no. 27 line 3, and 77 no. 32 line 2.

25 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 90 – 116; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 8 – 9 and 79 – 94 nos. 35 – 38.

26 This might not be entirely true as a small clay fragment found at Aššur (VAT 12938) might be inscribed with a version of Tiglath-pileser's annals. Too little of that inscription is preserved to properly classify it.

27 See n. 23 above and § 4.1 below.

28 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 117 – 204; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 9 – 10 and 94 – 138 nos. 39 – 52.

divides the accomplishments of the king as follows: (1) the Babylonia wars; (2) the Zagros campaigns; (3) the wars with Urarṭu and its allies; (4) the conquest of northern Syrian states; and (5) the military operations in southern Syria, Palestine, and Arabia. Two of the summary inscriptions report on Israel: Tiglath-pileser claims to have conquered parts of Bīt-Ḫumria, as well as states that Pekah was killed and Hoshea was installed as king in his stead.[29] Although this type of inscription is less descriptive than annalistic texts, summary inscriptions nevertheless provide important historical information and supplement and compliment details provided by the annals.

With regard to the miscellaneous category of inscriptions,[30] I will briefly mention just one type: epigraphs. Three epigraphs of Tiglath-pileser III survive and these one-word labels help us identify cities shown in reliefs being besieged, destroyed, and looted.[31] This text type is extremely important as such texts often name places not mentioned in other texts.[32] This is the case for all three epigraphs of Tiglath-pileser.

29 Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 106 no. 42 lines 15′b – 19′a and 112 no. 44 lines 17′ – 18′. On the death (murder/assassination) or overthrow of Pekah in these texts, see Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 141 (note to line 17′), 277 and 281; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 106 (note to no. 42 line 17′). According to 2Kgs 15:25, Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea, a man whom Tiglath-pileser claims to have installed as king.

30 Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 205 – 15; and Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 10 and 139 – 54 nos. 53 – 64.

31 Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 143 – 46 nos. 55 – 57. The city Gazru in text no. 57 is probably to be identified with biblical Gezer, an Israelite city located in the Vale of Ayalon. This city was probably captured in 733.

32 Although annalistic texts and summary inscriptions name many important opponents, it is certain that those inscriptions did not record the name of every person who was defeated and every place that was captured. Therefore, many epigraphs accompanying reliefs play an important role in reconstructing Assyrian history, since they provide information intentionally omitted in longer descriptions of military expeditions. This is well attested throughout the Neo-Assyrian period. The best-known example is the depiction of Sennacherib's siege of Lachish. This relief, which adorned the walls of Room XXXVI of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, shows many details of the hard-fought siege of a well-fortified Judean city (not mentioned elsewhere in Sennacherib's annals) and its aftermath. For the Lachish reliefs, see Richard David Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey Turner, *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, vol. 2 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1998), 322 – 52.

4 Brief Overview of the Official Inscriptions of Sargon II[33]

To date, approximately 125 inscriptions of Sargon II, excluding those of his wife Atalya and several of his officials, are known. Unfortunately, the complete corpus of texts has yet to be published in a single place; Grant Frame's manuscript of this king's inscriptions are in an advanced state of preparation and should appear in 2019 (or 2020).[34] The major texts from Khorsabad, Nineveh, and Aššur, however, have been carefully edited by Andreas Fuchs.[35] This rich source material is found on a plethora of stone, clay, and metal objects. The most important compositions were written on wall slabs with reliefs, threshold slabs, human-headed bull colossi, prisms, cylinders, and provincial steles. Given this king's efforts to build himself a new royal city, it is little surprise that about half (46 %) of the inscriptions were found at Dūr-Šarrukīn, with the highest percentage coming from his own palace. As one expects from a late-eighth-century Assyrian king, many inscriptions of his were discovered in the ruins of Aššur, Calah, and Nineveh. In addition, building inscriptions of his come from Babylon and Uruk, Babylonian cities where he sponsored building, and steles of his commemorating victories on the battlefields have been found in Cyprus, Iran, Israel, Syria, and Turkey. Sargon's scribes wrote out detailed chronologically-arranged annals, geographically-organized summary inscriptions, labels (including epigraphs), dedicatory texts, and building inscriptions. In addition, a few unique compositions have survived; for example, "Sargon's Letter to Aššur," which reports on a campaign conducted against Urarṭu and the city Muṣaṣir, and the "Aššur Char-

33 For details on Sargon II and his reign, see, e. g., Grayson, "Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II," 86 – 102; Fuchs, "Sargon II.," 51 – 61; Fuchs, "Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn," 1239 – 47 no. 2; Karen Radner, "Sargon II, king of Assyria (721 – 705 BC)," in *Assyrian Empire Builders* (London: University College London, 2012), http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/kings/sargonii/ (accessed 10/2017); and Sarah C. Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721 – 705 B.C.* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016). See also Radner's chapter in this volume.

34 I would like to thank Grant Frame for allowing me use of his unpublished manuscript *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721 – 705 BC)*, prior to its publication as volume 2 in the series *The Royal Inscription of the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Access to his Sargon material facilitated the writing of this section.

35 Andreas Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen: Cuvillier Verlag, 1994); and Andreas Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr. nach Prismenfragmenten aus Ninive und Assur* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998). This section overlaps to some extent Frahm's chapter in this volume; see that chapter for further details.

ter," which describes his succession to the throne.[36] Most of the dateable texts were written during the second half of his reign, between his eighth regnal year, 714, and his sixteenth regnal year, 706; at least one text was written at the very beginning of his reign, probably late in his second regnal year, 720.[37]

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, including the powerful ninth-century ruler Ashurnasirpal II, Sargon had his annals inscribed on the walls of his palace; the slabs of Rooms II, V, XIII, XIV, and Court VII bore this text.[38] Each of the aforementioned rooms contained a complete version of the inscription. These annalistic texts were always written in a broad horizontal band separating the elaborately sculpted upper and lower registers. The width of the inscribed band, and thereby the number of lines per column, depended on the size of the room; for example, the middle register in Room II accommodated thirteen lines of text, while the central band in Room V was wide enough for seventeen lines of text. Unfortunately, large passages are now missing from each version of Sargon's annals; none are fully preserved. This lengthy text recorded in chronological order the deeds of his first fourteen years and, thus, provides a comprehensive picture of Sargon's seventeen-year reign. Unfortunately, many of the details of his second regnal year, when Samaria and Bīt-Ḫumria participated in a rebellion organized by Hamath, are very fragmentarily preserved in this text; Eckart Frahm, in the following chapter, will provide details about the campaign of 720, as well as editions of the relevant passages. These versions of the annals concluded with a description of the creation of this king's new capital, along with the construction and decoration of Sargon's own palace. This group of texts was composed towards the end of his reign, around 707, his fifteenth regnal

36 For "Sargon's Letter to Aššur," see François Thureau-Dangin, *Une relation de la huitième campagne de Sargon* (Paris: Geuthner, 1912); and Walter Mayer, *Assyrien und Urarṭu I: Der Achte Feldzug Sargons II. im Jahr 714 v.Chr.* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013). For the "Aššur Charter," see Saggs, "Historical Texts and Fragments of Sargon II of Assyria," 11–20; Vera Chamaza, "Sargon II's Ascent to the Throne," 21–33; and Text 1 in Frahm's chapter.

37 For a helpful chart of the dates of the most important inscriptions of Sargon, see Fuchs, "Sargon II.," 52. The "Tell Asharneh Stele" and "Tell Tayinat Stele" (Texts 2–3 in Frahm's chapter) probably also date to around 720. For details on these two texts, see Grant Frame, "The Tell Acharneh Stela of Sargon II of Assyria," in *Tell Acharneh 1998–2004*, ed. Michel Fortin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006): 49–68, esp. 49–52; and Jacob Lauinger and Stephen Batiuk, "A Stele of Sargon II at Tell Tayinat," *ZA* 105 (2015): 54–68.

38 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 82–188. See also Grant Frame, "The Order of the Wall Slabs with Sargon's Annals in Room V of the Palace at Khorsabad," in *From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea: Studies on the History of Assyria and Babylonia in Honour of A.K. Grayson*, ed. Grant Frame (Istanbul and Leiden: Netherlands Institute for the Near East, 2004), 89–102; Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 111–15; and Texts 7 and 10 in Frahm's chapter.

year; compare the Calah Annals of Tiglath-pileser III, which were composed around his seventeenth year as king. Other annalistic texts of his are attested and these are preserved on prisms, prismatic cylinders, tablets, and steles; many are badly damaged, with much of their original contents missing.[39]

Another important text of Sargon inscribed on the walls of his palace is the so-called "Great Display Inscription."[40] Copies of it were found in Rooms I, IV, VII, VIII, and X and, unlike the annals, this composition described the military expeditions geographically, starting with the east and ending with the southeast. In this inscription, Sargon states that he plundered Samaria and the entire land of Bīt-Ḫumria. A shorter version of this text, the so-called "Small Display Inscription," is also known, and it likewise mentions the defeat of the inhabitants of Bīt-Ḫumria and Samaria in 720.[41] Both compositions were written in or after his fifteenth year (707).

Sargon had his scribes write out at least one inscription that is a perfect blend of a display and building inscription: this is the so-called "Bull Inscription."[42] Numerous human-headed bull colossi flanking the prominent gateways at Khorsabad, including several from Sargon's palace, are inscribed with a text that included a short geographical summary of this ruler's victories and a lengthy account of the creation of Dūr-Šarrukīn. With one known exception, the Bull Inscription was distributed between a pair of bulls. Each colossus had two rectangular panels, one below its belly and one between its hind legs, and was inscribed with approximately half of the text. Thus, the complete text required two bulls and four inscribed surfaces. The Door M, Room VIII colossi, however, were different: each of those bulls bore a complete inscription, written in two inscribed surfaces. The information included in this text, which

39 For example, see Cyril J. Gadd, "Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud," *Iraq* 16 (1954): 173–201 (= "Nimrud Prism"); Louis D. Levine, *Two Neo-Assyrian Stelae from Iran* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1972) (= "Najafehabad Stele"); Françoise Malbran-Labat, "Section 4: Inscription assyrienne (No. 4001)," in *Kition dans les textes*, Kition-Bamboula 5, ed. Marguerite Yon (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2004): 345–54 (= "Cyprus Stele"); Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 29–44 and 289–96 (= "Khorsabad Cylinder"); and Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr.* (= "Nineveh Prism," "Aššur Prism"). See Texts 4, 6, 8, and 13 in Frahm's chapter.

40 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 189–248 and 343–55; and Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 111–5. See also Texts 9 and 12 in Frahm's chapter.

41 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 75–81 and 307–12. See also Text 16 in Frahm's chapter.

42 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 60–74 and 303–307. See also Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 103–108, and Text 17 in Frahm's chapter.

was written in or after his fifteenth year (707), compliments what was recorded in the annals and display inscriptions.

Sargon's successes on the battlefield and his building activities at his new capital are also recorded on numerous pavement slabs; five, or possibly six, different inscriptions are known from twenty-one, or twenty-two, threshold slabs.[43] Military matters are mentioned, but only in a very cursory fashion. The longest of the threshold inscriptions refers to the conquest of Bīt-Ḫumria and Samaria.

As mentioned earlier, there are many other sub-genres of official inscriptions composed during the reign of Sargon. As for building inscriptions, texts recording only the construction of a palace or temple, these are attested on a wider variety of objects, in particular clay cylinders and stone and metal foundation tablets. We know from mid-nineteenth century French excavations at Khorsabad that such (stone and metal) tablets were sometimes placed inside alabaster coffers and deposited within the walls of buildings.[44] One unique royal composition from this time is a text often referred to as "Sargon's Eighth Campaign," "Sargon's Letter to God" or "Sargon's Letter to Aššur".[45] The inscription consists of an initial address to the god Aššur, the body of the text, which records in minute detail a campaign directed against Urarṭu and the city Muṣaṣir in the ruler's eighth regnal year (713), and a concluding statement/colophon. This royal report is generally classified as a letter to a god, a rarely attested genre of text, and it is sometimes thought "not to be deposited in silence in the sanctuary, but to be actually read to a public that was to react directly to their contents" and that "they replace in content and most probably in form the customary oral report of the king or his representative on the actual campaign to the city and the priesthood of the capital."[46]

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43 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 249 – 75 and 356 – 63. See also Text 18 in Frahm's chapter.

44 Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, 45 – 52 and 296 – 300. These tablets made of gold (AO 19933; formerly Nap. III 2897), silver (AO 21371; formerly Nap. III 2898), bronze (AO 21370; formerly Nap. III 2900), and magnesite (Nap. III 2899) were discovered in 1854 inside alabaster coffers embedded in the mud-brick wall between Rooms 17 and 19 of Sargon's palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn.

45 See n. 36 above.

46 A. Leo Oppenheim, "The City of Assur in 714 B. C.," *JNES* 19 (1960): 143. With regard to letters to gods, see, e. g., Rykle Borger, "Gottesbrief," in *RlA*, vol. 3/8, ed. Ernst Weidner and Wolfram von Soden (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971): 575 – 76; and Oppenheim, "The City of Assur in 714 B. C.," 133 – 47.

5 Conjectured now-lost Assyrian inscriptions and their contents

Now that I have given a brief overview of the most important extant Assyrian inscriptions from 744 to 705, let me address what now-lost sources may have told us about the end of the kingdom of Israel.

5.1 Lost inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III

Compared to kings like Sargon II and Sennacherib, or even Esarhaddon, relatively few inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, especially from his own palace, have survived. Now-lost texts of his or passages of known texts that are no longer preserved would have provided some information about Bīt-Ḫumria and its rulers Peqah and Hoshea. Annalistic texts, including now-lost portions of the Calah Annals, would have provided many details about Tiglath-pileser's western campaigns – which took place during his eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth regnal years – and, thus, would have provided the Assyrian point of view of events recorded in 2Kgs 15 and 16. These texts would have contained more information than what is already known from contemporary summary inscriptions. At present, no annalistic accounts for the years 734 and 732 are extant and what is preserved for the year 733 is too badly damaged for proper assessment.[47] Tiglath-pileser's annals, based on statements in two summary inscriptions, would very likely have described or mentioned Pekah's removal from the throne and/or his death/assassination. It would have been nice to have had contemporary confirmation of the information given in 2Kgs 15:25, which states that Hoshea murdered his successor. On the other hand, it is possible that Assyrian texts would have credited Pekah's death to Tiglath-pileser, as he is the central figure of his

47 The relevant section of one version of the Calah Annals reads: "... [...] *without* ... [... I *utterly demolished* ...] of sixteen dis[tricts of the land *Bīt-Ḫumria* (Israel). I carried off (to Assyria) ...] capti[ves from ...], 226 [captives from ..., ...] captives [from ...], 400 [(and ...) captives from ...], 656 cap[tives from the city Sa..., ...] (altogether) 13,520 [people, ...], with their belongings. [I ... *the cities Arumâ (and) Marum*, (...) *which are*] *sit*[*uated* in] rugged mountains" (Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 61 no. 21 lines 1′–11′). Another version of the annals has: "[...] ... [...] ... [...] I en[veloped] him [like] a (dense) fog [... *I*] *ut*[*terly demolished* ... of sixteen] districts of the land *Bīt-Ḫum*[*ria* (Israel). *I carried off (to Assyria) ... captives from* the city ...]barâ, 625 captives from the city ...a[..., ... *captives from* the city] Ḫinatuna, 650 captives from the city Ku[..., ... *captives from* the city Ya]ṭbite, 656 captives from the city Sa...[..., ..., *with their belongings*. I ...] the cities Arumâ (and) Marum [...]" (Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 62 no. 22 lines 1′–8′a).

self-aggrandizing compositions.[48] Based on what little is preserved in the Calah Annals for the year 733 and what is recorded in extant summary inscriptions, the annals would have provided some details about the Israelite cities and districts conquered, and the number of people deported; we do know that sixteen districts of Bīt-Ḫumria were ravaged by the Assyrian army. Now-lost annalistic texts written closer to the events than the Calah Annals may have given more details. Such inscriptions may have been written on steles and/or on (clay and/or stone) foundation documents. I assume that Tiglath-pileser had texts deposited in the walls of his palace and that many of these foundation documents were lost or destroyed when Esarhaddon had that royal residence dismantled to make use of its building materials.[49] Exposure to the elements and other lootings of that building, ancient and modern, likely played a part in the near absence of Tiglath-pileser's foundation documents today; the few foundation tablets of his

48 Regarding the relevant passage in one of Tiglath-pileser's summary inscriptions (Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 106 no. 42 line 17′), Tadmor (*Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 141) correctly points out: "[...]-*du*-˹x$_1$˺-˹x$_2$˺: The possible restoration of the verb describing Peqah's fate is still a riddle. DU is the only completely preserved sign, followed by KU (or UK) and a trace of another sign. One might restore [*i*]-*du*-[*ku-ma*] or even [*a*]-*du*-[*uk-ma*], but in Smith's draft there is space to restore a longer word. Rost's *is-ku-pu-ma* is entirely conjectural. According to 2Kgs 15:25, Peqah was assassinated by Hoshea."

49 For details, see Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 10–12 and Barnett and Falkner, *Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud*, 1–7 and 20–23. The best description of the state of affairs in the Central Palace is provided by Austen Henry Layard for a group of slabs discovered there: "Walls of unbaked bricks could still be traced; but the slabs, with which they had been paneled, were no longer in their places, being scattered about without order, and lying mostly with their faces on the flooring of baked bricks. Upon them were both sculptures and inscriptions. Slab succeeded to slab; and when I had removed nearly twenty tombs, and cleared away the earth from a space of about fifty feet square, the ruins, which had been thus uncovered, presented a very singular appearance. Above one hundred slabs were exposed to view, packed in rows, one against the other, as slabs in a stone-cutter's yard, or as leaves of a gigantic book. Every slab was sculptured; and as they were placed in a regular series, according to the subjects upon them, it was evident that they had been moved, in the order in which they stood, from their original positions against the walls of sundried brick; and had been left as found, preparatory to their removal elsewhere. ... These sculptures resembled, in many places, some of the bas-reliefs found in the south-west palace, in which the sculptured faces of the slabs were turned, it will be remembered, towards the walls of unbaked brick. It appeared, therefore, that the centre building had been destroyed, to supply materials for the construction of the more southern edifice." Excerpted from Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Narrative of an Expedition to Assyria during the years 1845, 1846, & 1847*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1849), 19–20. For images of a trench with a deposit of Tiglath-pileser's reliefs, see Richard Sobolewski, "The Polish Work at Nimrud: Ten Years of Excavation and Study, *ZA* 71 (181): fig. 7; and [anonymous], "Nimrud," in *W Cieniu Wojny* (http://heritage.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/; accessed 10/2017) s.v. Archaeological Sites, Nimrud.

that we now have are all summary inscriptions, and these were found elsewhere at Calah, in the South-East Palace and in the temple of the god Nabû (Ezida).

As for missing information in summary inscriptions, better preserved texts might have clarified who killed Pekah: Tiglath-pileser, Hoshea, or frightened members of the Israelite court and elite.

5.2 Lost Inscriptions of Sargon II

Jumping ahead to the reign of Sargon II, there is a gap in the textual record, at least up to his eighth year (713). Most extant inscriptions of his referring to Samaria date to Sargon's final years on the throne, when his annals and display inscriptions were engraved on the walls of his palace.[50] Several texts from his second and/or third year as king also record the defeat of the inhabitants of Samaria. All of the known references to Israel's capital in this corpus of texts are to that city's participation in an anti-Assyrian rebellion that took place in 720. Earlier versions of the annals, those written on steles and clay foundation records, might have provided us with only a few more details about what Sargon did in the Levant during his second regnal year (720), thus, giving us only a slightly better picture of the post-fall-of-Samaria landscape and the anti-Assyrian pockets of resistance in the Levant. Because the Great Display Inscription and a version of the king's annals written on clay prisms discovered at Calah, a text written in the year 706, contain rather descriptive accounts of the defeat of the inhabitants of Samaria, I have my doubts that yet-to-be-discovered inscriptions of Sargon would have revealed more than what the known texts already tell us. Perhaps those lost inscriptions would have recorded a different number of deportees and chariots carried off to Assyria. For example, some texts states that the Assyrians took 27,290 inhabitants and 50 chariots, while others appear to increase those numbers to 47,280 (reading not entirely certain) and 200 respectively.[51]

50 For editions of the relevant passages concerning Samaria and Bīt-Ḫumria, see Frahm's chapter in this volume.

51 The reading of the number in Nimrud Prism iv 31 is uncertain. Frahm (this volume) reads it as [2]7$^{?}$ LIM 2 ME 80 ("[*2*]7,280"), while Nadav Naʾaman reads it as [4]7$^{?}$ LIM 2 ME 80 ("[*4*]7,280"). See Nadav Na'aman, "The Number of Deportees from Samaria in the Nimrud Prisms of Sargon II," *NABU* 2000: 1 no. 1. Unfortunately, the original object (IM 67661; ND 2601 + ND 3401 + ND 3403 + ND 3417), which is now in the Iraq Museum (Baghdad), could not be checked to verify the reading of the now-damaged number. The number in Gadd's copy looks more like [2]7 than [4]7; see Gadd, "Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud," pl. XLVI.

5.3 Lost inscriptions of Shalmaneser V

Assuming Shalmaneser V followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, we expect that he recorded his military conquests and building activities on a variety of clay, stone, and metal objects. If we look at what is preserved for other eighth- and seventh-century Assyrian rulers, it is clear that kings started having their scribes writing compositions in their names the first chance they got. For example, Sargon recorded the defeats of Elam and Hamath in inscriptions written in or just after his second year (720);[52] Sennacherib described his successes in Babylonia in texts composed during his third year (702);[53] and Ashurbanipal commemorated the installation of his brother as the king of Babylon and the return of the god Marduk in an inscription written shortly after ascending the throne (early 668).[54] It has sometimes been suggested that because Shalmaneser reigned only five years, that he did not have time to have any inscriptions written in his name.[55] That proposal is not very plausible since texts of other kings are known from their first years on the throne and since Shalmaneser is known to have conducted no less than three campaigns (according to the Eponym Chronicle).[56] However, this would certainly be the case if one was referring to annalistic texts and summary inscriptions carved on wall and pavement slabs. It is clear from the extant texts of his father and brother that such monumental inscriptions were composed after sitting on the throne for more than a decade. Thus, given Shalmaneser's five-year tenure as king, we should only expect more modest texts: in particular annals written on foundation documents and steles; building texts written on foundation documents and bricks; as well as royal dedications and proprietary labels written on a wide variety of objects, including bronze lion weights. Apart from a set of weights,[57] none of these objects have survived. So, what happened to them?

Let me try to answer that question before diving into what the texts might have included. Many of Shalmaneser's foundations documents may have suffered at the hands of his successors (Sargon II and Esarhaddon, in particular)

52 See nn. 36–37 above.

53 See n. 16 above.

54 Jamie Novotny, *Selected Royal Inscriptions of Assurbanipal: L[3], L[4], LET, Prism I, Prism T, and Related Texts* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), xvi–xvii, 77–80 and 96–99 no. 18. This text is commonly referred to as the "L[ondon][4] Inscription" or "Ashurbanipal's School Days Inscription."

55 Compare Grayson, "Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II," 85.

56 See n. 6 above.

57 See n. 5 above.

and, thus, did not survive antiquity. At Calah, his inscriptions may have been removed from their original locations when Esarhaddon decided to build a palace for himself. This seventh-century ruler made extensive use of the limestone slabs decorating the walls and floors of Tiglath-pileser's palace.[58] Esarhaddon had the unfinished royal residence of his great grandfather dismantled, numerous wall slabs transported further south, and packed in rows, one against the other. The slabs that were installed in the South-West Palace before Esarhaddon's death had their sculptured surfaces face the mudbrick wall in order to leave their uninscribed surfaces exposed. In a few instances, the slabs were re-cut to make them fit their new spaces.[59] Any foundation document deposited in the Central Palace may not have been treated with respect. If Shalmaneser had continued the work of his father at Calah, then any inscribed object of his in the Central Palace may have been removed during the demolition or left to the elements.[60] Thus, it is possible that many of Shalmaneser's inscriptions disappeared or were placed elsewhere, in a location that has yet to be discovered, during Esarhaddon's reign. Moreover, given the tenor of the Aššur Charter, there is a possibility that Sargon had his brother's texts intentionally destroyed. The near complete absence of official inscriptions from Shalmaneser's reign may be due to Sargon's systematic attempt to erase any trace of his brother's accomplishments as king; this would have included destroying Shalmaneser's foundation records. Of course, there are many other possible scenarios leading to the near complete absence of inscriptions of Shalmaneser.[61]

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58 See above, §4.1 (especially n. 49). Further details about the reuse of earlier material in the South-West Palace can be found in Barnett and Falkner, *Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud*, 23–30, which excerpt Layard's descriptions in *Nineveh and Its Remains* 1–2.

59 According to Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* 2, 35, some of the edges of the orthostats "had been cut away, several letters of the inscriptions being destroyed, in order to make the stones fit into the wall."

60 In the ninth and eighth centuries, Assyrian kings appear not to have deposited many clay foundation records in their royal residences if those palaces had copies of annals and summary/display inscriptions prominently inscribed on sculpted orthostats. No clay foundation documents of Ashurnasirpal II have so far been found in the North-West Palace at Calah, however, some clay cylinders of Sargon II (the "Khorsabad Cylinder") have been discovered in that king's palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn. None of the summary inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser written on clay tablets (assumed here to be foundation documents rather than archival copies) were discovered in the Central Palace, which could have been the result of their removal by Esarhaddon.

61 One possibility is that Shalmaneser made only relatively minor repairs to buildings and walls worked on by his father and, therefore, did not have foundation records deposited in those structures. Compare, for example, Aššur-etel-ilāni who restored a few rooms of the Nabû temple (Ezida) at Calah and left his mark only in the form of inscribed bricks. It is also likely that some of the temples, palaces, and walls worked on by Shalmaneser were subsequent-

As for the contents and media of these hypothetical texts, I tentatively suggest that Shalmaneser's scribes wrote out annalistic texts, dedicatory inscriptions, building inscriptions, and proprietary labels. Annalistic texts may have been inscribed on stele or on clay foundation tablets. In my opinion, prisms and cylinders were probably not used because tablets were the primary choice of foundation document between 1076 and 721.[62]

We know that Shalmaneser led at least three campaigns, and certainly his scribes would have described one or more of these. Because the targets of the expeditions are not known, apart from Bīt-Ḫumria and Samaria, we cannot speculate too much about the contents of this king's now-lost compositions. Early versions of Shalmaneser's annals, those written in 725 or 724, may have described the destruction of Israel and may have included a statement about its last king's anti-Assyrian behavior; since the siege of Samaria is said to have lasted three years, this campaign likely took place during this king's second or third year. Assuming such accounts existed, contemporary texts would have presumably given us a more comprehensive view of the last days of Israel and may have confirmed or contradicted information provided in 2Kgs 17 and 18, including Hoshea's capture prior to the siege of Samaria. Given the fact that Assyrian kings generally avoided referring to unfinished business, for example, in-prog-

ly rebuilt/restored/repaired by Sargon II, who did not return inscriptions of his brother that his workmen had found to their original spots, as many inscriptions request of their successors, but rather had them destroyed. This might explain why no inscriptions of Shalmaneser have been discovered in the ruins of the Aššur temple (Eḫursaggalkurkurra) at Aššur or the Nabû temple (Ezida) at Calah, assuming, of course, that this Assyrian king undertook such projects. Moreover, it is likely that the bricks used for Shalmaneser's repairs were not inscribed (or stamped). Assyrian kings did not always have inscriptions placed on bricks, as is clear from eighth- and seventh-century repairs made to the aforementioned Ezida temple; no inscribed bricks of Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Ashurbanipal, or Sîn-šarru-iškun have been found in that temple. For the building history of Ezida, see Jamie Novotny and Greta Van Buylaere, "Sîn-šarru-iškun and Ezida in Calah," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller and Alan Millard (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 233–35.

62 No prisms or cylinders bearing Assyrian inscriptions are known between the reigns of Tiglath-pileser I and Sargon II. The latter's scribes appear to have reintroduced prisms as a medium for writing out long, descriptive annals and adopted the cylinder format for shorter texts from its southern neighbor Babylonia; a cylinder of Marduk-apla-iddina II (Merodach-baladan of the Bible) from Uruk was brought back to Calah, where it likely served as a model for Sargon's own inscriptions. K. 3751, a clay tablet discovered in the South-East Palace at Calah, is a good example of a clay foundation tablet used during the reign of Shalmaneser V's father; for photographs, see Tadmor and Yamada, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 117 figures 6–7. On prisms see Benjamin Studevent-Hickman, "Prisma," in *RlA*, vol. 11/1–2, ed. Michael P. Streck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 4–6.

ress sieges, Shalmaneser's scribes may have done their best to not mention Samaria in these first reports. If they did, they presumably found a way to spin the narrative in favor of their royal patron. A good example of this is Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, a city whose capture is absent in reports of this king's annals.[63]

Later annalistic texts, those written in the king's fourth and fifth regnal year, assuming such inscriptions existed, may have recorded the capture of Samaria and the deportation of its inhabitants, assuming, of course, that the city was taken while Shalmaneser was still king. Such compositions may have confirmed (or even contradicted) some of the information provided in 2Kgs 17 and 18. It is highly unlikely, however, that Assyrian inscriptions would have admitted that it took three years to capture the city. Statements about the conquest of Samaria and the removal of its population, livestock, and property, would likely have been incorporated into the earlier reports of the destruction of Bīt-Ḫumria. Whether Shalmaneser had time to commemorate the capture of Samaria would have depended on how long before his death the city was taken and how long and tumultuous the revolt that brought his reign and life to an end lasted. If it was captured too close to the tenth month of 722, then it is unlikely that Shalmaneser would have had time to record this event in texts written in his name. However, if Samaria was taken in 723 or early in 722, then it is possible that Shalmaneser proudly boasted about capturing Bīt-Ḫumria's capital.

6 Conclusions

So then, what can now-lost Assyrian inscriptions tell us about the last days of Israel? Potentially a great deal. This is certainly the case for Tiglath-pileser III and possibly the case for Shalmaneser V. Texts of these two kings may have provided important information about the years 734–732 and 725–722 and may have supplemented or contradicted the information provided in 2Kgs 15–18. However, missing inscriptions of Sargon II would probably not improve our knowledge about the anti-Assyrian activities of the inhabitants of Samaria in the year 720, as that information is already known from a number of important texts. Until new sources become available, we can only guess at what the eighth-century Assyrian kings might have said about Bīt-Ḫumria, its last two kings, and its capital.

63 E.g., Grayson and Novotny, *Inscriptions of Sennacherib* 1, 65–66 no. 4 lines 52–58, and 176–77 no. 22 iii 27b–49.