

# ANNOTATIONS (C) TO TABLE XXVI

## SARGON AND SENNACHERIB FIX THE DATES OF HEZEKIAH'S REIGN

An important detail relating to the reign of Sargon of Assyria is the double dating of his records. The Assyrian Eponym Lists give his 1st year as beginning in 721 B.C., and alternatively in 719 B.C. (Table XX). Similarly in the Annals of Sargon, his Ashdod Expedition is dated in his *n*th year, and on his Ashdod Inscription (Kouy unjik Cylinder) it is dated in his 11th year. Comparison of the two inscriptions shows that it is the same expedition that is described and dated. The regnal year referred to extended from 1st Nisan 711 B.C. to 1st Nisan 710 B.C. = 3288.5 - 3289.5 A.K. Reference to Table XXV shows this coincided with the 13th year Hezekiah. Now Sargon narrates concerning this year that Azuri of Ashdod revolted after refusing to pay tribute to Assyria. Sargon states that he "wreaked vengeance" and deposed Azuri and appointed Azuri's brother, Achimite, as governor of Ashdod. This obviously occupied the first part of the year. Then he states that the Hittites set an Ionian in Ashdod, as king there. Sargon hearing of this, rapidly mobilised his army in Assyria, and without taking time to collect his baggage again advanced against Ashdod. The Ionian fled, before his approach, into Egypt to the frontier of Ethiopia. Meanwhile Sargon besieged Ashdod and eventually captured it. Sargon's next move seems to have been a threat to Egypt and Ethiopia, since he states that the king of Ethiopia delivered up to him the fugitive Ionian of Ashdod. Sennacherib's records show that Mitinti was made king over Ashdod, and Sennacherib, late in his own reign refers only to Mitinti. Sennacherib in the account of his campaign against Hezekiah states that he defeated the Ethiopian army of Sabaka. The importance of this will be seen in what follows.

The whole series of events clearly occupied the extent of the one regnal year of Sargon to the beginning of the "14th year of Hezekiah" when—the Ashdod affair having been satisfactorily settled for the Assyrians—Sargon's son, Sennacherib, as Tartan (or commander-in-chief) "came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them. (Isaiah, xxxvi, 1; II Kings, xviii, 13.) Isaiah, xx, 1, therefore, in referring to the Ashdod siege states "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him) and fought against it and took it." Had this been the year in which the Tartan came against Judah, Isaiah would have said so. The Ashdod expedition and siege belong to the second half of Hezekiah's 13th year and the invasion of Judah to the early part of Hezekiah's 14th year. Now it is in this year that 185,000 of the host of Sennacherib, (as Tartan of Sargon) died in one night as stated in II Kings, xix, 35, and Isaiah, xxxvii, 36. Accounts from other sources attribute the disaster to pestilence (Josephus, *Antiq.*, x, i, 4) and this seems to have been the explanation adopted by the Assyrians since they left Syria and Judaea alone after this date. The account given by the Egyptians to Herodotus (ii, 141) states that in the night mice gnawed the bowstrings of Sennacherib's army, and that in consequence, the Assyrians took flight in the morning.

In the same year, however, Sargon became active against Merodach-baladan of Babylon and overthrew him in the Autumn. Sargon, then, entered Babylon in the winter of 710 B.C., still in the 14th year of Hezekiah. Now it is important to observe that Merodach-baladan ceased to reign in the autumn of 710 B.C., and that he sent presents to Hezekiah before this (I Kings, xx, 12) during the year of Hezekiah's sickness. The latter is fixed as the 14th year of Hezekiah by II Kings, xx, 1-12, since it is given in verse 6 as 15 years before the death of Hezekiah, who reigned 29 years. It is also dated as succeeding the invasion of Sennacherib, and after the disaster to his host. The latter event is therefore dated by the and Book of Kings and by Isaiah as prior to the actual reign of Sennacherib. The Annals of Sargon have shown that Sennacherib's invasion belongs to 711 B.C. for the siege of Ashdod, and to 710 B.C. for the invasion of Judah and the disaster to the Assyrians. Sennacherib correctly claimed this and other expeditions of Sargon's reign as his, without, however, stating they belonged to the period of his co-regency with Sargon. For this reason, obviously, Sennacherib's records do not date his various expeditions. It is clear, therefore, that the dated Assyrian records fix the 14th year of Hezekiah as beginning 1st Nisan, 710 B.C.= 3289.5 A.K., and his 1st year as beginning 1st Nisan, 723 B.C.=3276.5 A.K. as independently obtained from the Books of Kings and Chronicles (Table XXV). This is an important matter as is shown in the next column.

captured Samaria in the accession year of his co-regency (not stated as such). This was in Spring, 721 B.C., and prior to 1st Nisan, 721 B.C., when his 1st year co-regency began. He was therefore acting for Shalmaneser in connection with the events of II Kings, xvii, 4. Sargon claims that he took 27,280 persons into captivity at this time from Samaria. He also claims that he immediately transplanted other conquered peoples into Samaria. In his 2nd year from co-regency (1st Nisan, 720, to 1st Nisan, 719 B.C.) he, however, still mentions Samaria as in revolt in relation to the advance of Sebeck (Sabaka). This still fits the facts of II Kings, xvii, 4. Sargon claims that at this time he defeated Sabaka at the battle of Raphia. What he said further concerning Samaria is unfortunately broken off. That Samaria, however, was still being besieged and had not yet received its transplanted peoples, is confirmed by Sargon's record of his 7th year from co-regency (1st Nisan, 715 to 1st Nisan, 714 B.C.) stating that Samaria did not receive the transplanted people until that year. It is clear, therefore, that Sargon's Annals gloss over the fact that Samaria troubled him from 721 to 717 B.C.

## SHALMANESER AND SARGON AND THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA.

As derived from the data of the preceding column, three facts have to be emphasized. These are (1) that the record of the Kouy unjik Cylinder, drafted between 710 B.C. and 706 B.C., gives the 1st year of Sargon as beginning 1st Nisan, 719 B.C.; (2) that later the Annals of Sargon, drafted not earlier than 705 B.C., give the 1st year of Sargon as beginning 1st Nisan, 721 B.C.; and (3) that the Assyrian Eponym Lists, as we now have them, were compiled at a date considerably later and give, in different lists, the two alternative datings of Sargon for the beginning of his 1st year. Having regard to the sequence of evolution and compilation we may conclude that the late complete Eponym Lists derived their data for the earlier beginning of Sargon's reign from Sargon's own inscriptions.

Again, when we find the sole authority for the death of Shalmaneser in Tebet (January), 721 B.C., to be the Babylonian Chronicle,—certainly compiled not earlier than the last year of Esarhaddon, 680 B.C., and known only from a copy of the 22nd year of Darius, 500 B.C.—we may conclude that the data relating to Shalmaneser and Sargon in the Babylonian Chronicle are from the same sources as those from which the complete Assyrian Eponym Lists derived their data.

We are therefore introduced to the probability that Shalmaneser did not die in Tebet, 721 B.C., but that his death in this month, on an unknown day of the month, prior to the 12th Tebet, was inferred from the fact that Sargon was appointed coregent on 12th Tebet (15th January), 721 B.C., and began to reckon his 1st year as coregent from 1st Nisan, 721 B.C. This would account for Sargon, when he began his 1st year sole reign at 1st Nisan 719 B.C., proudly adopting the dating of his sole reign until lack of novelty robbed it of its precedence; that, in consequence, to record to posterity his victorious career back to include his years of co-regency, he resumed, late in his reign, his original reckoning from the beginning of his 1st year of co-regency at 1st Nisan, 721 B.C. The sequence outlined seems to be confirmed by the fact that no monuments or inscriptions of Shalmaneser are extant. Sargon would certainly have destroyed his predecessor's monuments had his intention been to claim his conquests.

The probability inferred from the Assyrian records is reduced to a matter of certainty by the Old Testament records. By the data of the preceding column, the 9th sole year Sargon = 13th year Hezekiah beginning 1st Nisan, 711 B.C. Now II Kings, xviii, 9, 10, dates the Siege of Samaria as beginning at the commencement of Hezekiah's 4th year, in Spring, 720 B.C., which is the year preceding the 1st sole year of Sargon. II Kings, xviii, 9, therefore states that it was "Shalmaneser" who "came up against Samaria and besieged it." Verse 10 then states that Samaria was taken "at the end of three years," at the end of "the 6th year of Hezekiah," = 3282.5 A.K.= 717 B.C. It does not say that Shalmaneser took the city, for Shalmaneser had been dead 2 years, as we now see. It merely states that, "they took it," thus implying that it was taken by the generals of the Assyrian king.

Now it is essential to read carefully II Kings, xvii and xviii and the Annals of Sargon. II Kings, xvii, 3, states that some time prior to the siege of Samaria, Shalmaneser came up against Hoshea and Hoshea became his servant and gave him presents. Verse 4 then states that Hoshea ceased to send tribute as he had done "year by year" and that Shalmaneser found Hoshea conspiring with So (Sabaka), king of Egypt. This was before Sabaka's sole reign, when he was coregent and commander-in-chief of Kashta, the Ethiopian king (refer Annotations A to Table XXVI. Verse 4, continuing, states that Shalmaneser shut Hoshea up in prison. Verse 5 then states that after this Shalmaneser came up "throughout all the land" and that Samaria was besieged for three years, i.e., from Spring, 720, to Spring, 717 B.C.

In his Annals, Sargon claims that he besieged and