

Sargon ii the assyrian king history essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

One of the most important Assyrian Kings who ruled during the Neo-Assyrian period was Sargon II. He ruled over Assyria from 722-705 B. C. Sargon seems to have ascended to the throne after an internal revolution in Assyria had broke out against the king that had ruled before him. Sargon II was a powerful king who expanded the Assyrian empire farther than any Assyrian Kings before his time[1]. During Sargon's First year of reign he did not put any effort into military campaigns in order to further expand the empire and conquer over other territories[2]. When he ascended to the throne, Assyria was going through a major domestic crisis. Because of this, Sargon found himself busy with the internal conflicts at Assyria where he was trying to secure the stability of the country before he can turn to his military campaigns. He did this by giving back the citizens rights that had been taken away from them by previous kings and he also gave them new privileges in addition to their rights[3].

Sargon II is well known for expanding the Assyrian empire farther than his predecessors ever had. Therefore this essay will mainly focus on the campaigns that Sargon participated in. It was not until the second year of his reign in 721 B. C that he began his military campaigns and the expansion of the Assyrian empire[4]. There seems to be an inconsistent use of the word palu in the historical inscriptions that describe and date his military campaigns. The scribes of Sargon do not correct the information even after his death in 705 B. C[5]. There are two major sources that contain the historical chronology of Sargon's reign. Those two sources include the Annals from the city that Sargon founded and renamed Dur-Sarrukin and the incomplete prisms from the city of Nimrud. Both of those sources do not

chronologically match because the campaigns in the prisms are dated a year earlier than the ones in the Annals from Dur-Sarrukin. The inconsistency of the campaigns makes it difficult to correctly date the years that Sargon II went out to fight against different cities and how long he had ruled for.

Scholars such as Tadmor argue that the word *palu* has two different meanings in the two different major sources. In the prisms that were found at Nimrud, *palu* refers to the years of reign that Sargon militarily campaigned in. Meanwhile in the Annals from Dur-Sarrukin, the word *palu* refers to the general years of reign that Sargon ruled over Assyria. Tadmor concludes that this confusion was done purposely to hide the fact that Sargon II did not militarily campaign during his first year of reign in 722 B. C because he was busy with the internal conflict in Assyria[6].

With the successful campaigns of Sargon II along came the changes of the political and economic structure of the empire. Part of this change was Sargon's foundation of new capitals where he would resettle the city and rename it[7]. He established royal roads for the benefit of the empire where the trade system became more effective and profitable. These royal roads were built at Dur-Sarrukin, one of Sargon's most famous new founded cities during his reign[8]. He also placed in all three major capitals of Assyria prisms that had historical inscriptions about his successful campaigns[9].

As mentioned earlier in the essay, the year 722 B. C was the first year of Sargon's reign; however his first year of military campaign did not begin until the following year in 721 B. C. After he secured his empire, he began his military activity against the Elamites in Babylon who were allies of Merodach

-Baladan king of Babylon[10]. There are also inscriptions that describe the fall of Samaria under Sargon's rule in the same year that Sargon began his military campaigns in 721 B. C[11]. However, the earliest sources of Sargon's campaigns do not mention the defeat of Samaria or the province itself. It was actually his predecessor Shalmaneser V who attempted to lay siege against Samaria before Sargon II ascended to the throne in 722 B. C[12]. It was only after Sargon's second year of military campaign against the western provinces in Syria that he returned to Samaria in 720 B. C to complete his predecessor's campaign. He does this by deporting more than 27, 000 Israelites out of the province and puts an end to the northern kingdom of Israel[13]. He rebuilt the province renamed it Samerina, and four years later he re-settled Arabs in Samaria[14]. Sargon II did this to bring fear against the Musri people and the Arabs. However the mention of the Musri people does not refer to the kingdom of Egypt in this case, it is unsure to which country it is referring to[15]. There seems to be mention of Egyptian contact with Sargon II in the prisms that were found at Nimrud, but they did not refer to military campaigns. They were activities to strengthen the ties between the Assyrian and the Egyptian trade contact[16].

719 B. C is the third year of Sargon's military campaign but his fourth year reigning as the king of Assyria. During this year he campaigns against a few cities on the border of Urartu in the land of the Mannaeans[17]. In the following year in 718 there is mention of Mita conspiring against Assyria for the first time[18], but Sargon is more concerned with the conquest of Sinuhtu during that time, which is referred to as Kiaki of Tabal in the prisms that were found at Nimrud[19]. During Sargon's fifth year in 717, he founded

the city of Dur-Sarrukin. This form of turning conquered territories into provinces reflected the way the new Assyrian government was now working[20]. In the same year Sargon defeated the Israelites and deported the well known “ ten lost tribes” that are mentioned in the bible. Sargon II continues to campaign in 716 during his sixth year against the city of the Mannaeans. He conquers the city of Kisesim and renames it Kar-Mas-Mas[21]. As it was mentioned earlier in the essay, Sargon deports the Arabs to Samaria but this does not occur until 715 four years after he founded Samerina[22].

Year eight in 714 B. C is perhaps one of the most discussed military campaigns in modern literary sources about Sargon II. It is in this year that Sargon writes a letter to the chief god Assur, it was his way of showing the god how he had fulfilled his duty as a king. This letter to the Assyrian god discussed in detail the defeat against their enemy Urartu and Musasir[23]. Urartu had been successful when Assyria’s power had declined during the 8th century before Sargon II was the king of Assyria. When Sargon II became king power shifted because he quickly rejuvenated the Assyrian empire and defeated Urartu. In his letter to Assur, he writes that he got rid of Urartu’s temple of their chief god Haldi and made Rusa I perish, where there were no more wars between Assyria and Urartu[24]. The defeat of Urartu brought booty and goods to the kingdom of Assyria. The win brought back ivory couches, tables, box wood tables, chairs and many other jewellery that were made of gold and silver. Records of the tribute from Assyrian vassal states show that furniture was among the most valuable objects that were collected by the Assyrians after a victory[25].

Sargon II had given his daughter to Amris of Tabal who was the king of Bit-Buruti. The kingdom that Amris ruled over had been given to him by Sargon as well. Amris of Tabal failed to be faithful to Sargon's daughter and the kingdom as well. This angered Sargon II and led to the punishment of Amris in 713 B. C during Sargon's ninth year of military campaign[26]. Despite Sargon's continuous campaigns during his tenth year in 712 B. C, Sargon remains in Assyria while the military was out fighting against the city of Ashdod in Philistia. The expedition against Ashdod was led by Sargon's generals where they fought in Ellipi and Tabal[27]. Sargon continues to campaign through his 11th year against Marqasa and in his 12th year in 710 he defeats and gets rid of Merodach-Baladan king of Babylon. For the first time ever Sargon makes himself the official king of Babylon in 710 B. C[28]. After the defeat of Merodach-Baladan he devotes most of 710 B. C campaigning against the Aramean tribes. The Arameans are known as the bandits to the Assyrian people and had always been their enemies. Sargon subdues the Arameans and regains the territories that his predecessors had lost to the Aramean tribes during the 13th century when they had been ruling over the Assyrian empire[29].

Sargon II continues to fight against the Arameans through the year 709 during his 13th year of military campaigning. Mita of Muski fears Assyria and suddenly becomes allied with Assyria. Mita does this by handing over Urartu to the Assyrian government. This had pleased Sargon because to him it meant less inferior kingdoms to conquer on the southern plateau[30]. In 708 there is victory over the king Mattalu of Kummuh because of his disloyalty to

Sargon II. He was one of Sargon's former favourite and had been installed as the ruler of the city of Meliddu in 712 B. C by Sargon himself[31].

Sargon II leaves Babylon and returns to Assyria in 707 B. C during his 15th year of military campaigning. During this time he also goes to war against the city of Dur-lakin and conquers it. Under Sargon II the Assyrian empire was now aiming to expand and extend westwards. Many goods were taken from the Phoenicians through trade that which benefited the Assyrian empire and mostly the Assyrian Royal family[32]. Dur-Sarrukin the city that Sargon had founded in 717 B. C is inaugurated in the year 706 B. C. Many tributes from Assyrian vassals were accepted and during that year and Sargon II decided to remain in Assyria[33].

The last year of Sargon's reign in 705 B. C, he finds himself campaigning against the city of Tabal in Anatolia again. The Cimmerians in Anatolia had sent proposals to Sargon asking for peace. Sargon accepted those proposals gladly[34]. When Sargon II went in person to the city of Tabal he found out that the Cimmerians had tricked him and did not want peace with the Assyrian empire. King Sargon II and the Assyrian army was forced to battle against the Cimmerians and it was during this battle that Sargon II was killed and defeated in 705 B. C.

The death of Sargon II in 705 marked the end of his 18 years of reign over Assyrian empire. Even though he was defeated and killed in battle, he had brought great prosperity to the Assyrian kingdom during his rule over Assyria. No king before his time had ever expanded and extended the Assyrian empire as far as Sargon II did during his reign. His cruel treatment

against Assyria's vassal city states created an atmosphere of fear over other kingdoms around Assyria. This tension and fear was so strong that it continued even under other kings that had ascended to the throne after Sargon II.