

SENNACHERIB, KING OF ASSYRIA

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# SENNACHERIB, KING OF ASSYRIA

Josette Elayi

SBL Press



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft
AHw	Von Soden, Wolfram. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1965–1981.
A.J.	<i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
Anab.	Xenophon, <i>Anabasis</i>
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AnSt	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
AOTU	<i>Altorientalische Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
ARAB	Luckenbill, Daniel David. <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> . 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926–1927. Repr., New York: Greenwood, 1968.
ARMT	Archives Royales de Mari, transcrite et traduite
ArOr	<i>Archív Orientální</i>
ARRIM	<i>Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamian Project</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
BaghM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
Bib. hist.	Diodorus Siculus, <i>Bibliotheca historica</i>
BIN	Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>

BM	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
chr.	chronicle
COHP	Contributions to Oriental History and Philology of Columbia University
col.	column
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i>
Demetr.	Plutarch, <i>Demetrius</i>
Descr.	Avienus, <i>Descriptio orbis terrae</i>
DoArch	<i>Dossiers d'Archéologie</i>
Ébib	<i>Études bibliques</i>
ErIsr	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
Fam.	Cicero, <i>Epistulae ad familiares</i>
HIMA	<i>Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire Ancienne</i>
Hist.	Herodotus, <i>Historiae</i>
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HSOA	<i>Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
ISIMU	<i>ISIMU: Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la antigüedad</i>
IrAnt	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
JAIE	<i>Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JdI	<i>Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
JEGH	<i>Journal of Egyptian History</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Voorazitisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux</i>



JESHO	<i>Journal for the Study of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. <i>Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften</i> . 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
KASKAL	<i>KASKAL: Rivista di storia, ambiente e culture del vicino oriente antico</i>
l(l).	line(s)
LBAT	Sachs, A. J. <i>Late Babylonian Astronomical and Related Texts Copied by T. G. Pinches and J. N. Strassmeier</i> . Providence: Brown University Press, 1955.
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
Mes	<i>Mesopotamia</i>
NABU	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
ND	field numbers of tablets excavated at Nimrud (Kalḫu)
NEAEHL	Stern, Ephraim, ed. <i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> . 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.
NeHeT	<i>Revue numérique d'Égyptologie</i>
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NumC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
o.	obverse (front) of a tablet
OAC	Orientis Antiqui Collectio
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> (NS)
OrAnt	<i>Oriens Antiquus</i>
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTS	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
PALMA	Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities
PaP	<i>Past &amp; Present</i>

PIASH	Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities
PNA	Baker, Heather, and Karen Radner, eds. <i>The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> . Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998–.
r.	reverse (back) of a tablet
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RAI	Rencontres assyriologiques Internationales
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RGTC	Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes
RIMB	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Period
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RINAP 1	Tadmor, Hayim, and Shigeo Yamada, eds. <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
RINAP 3	Grayson, Albert Kirk, and Jamie Novotny. <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC)</i> . 2 vols. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012–2014.
RINAP 4	Leichty, Erle. <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011.
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–.
ROMOP	<i>Royal Ontario Museum Occasional Papers</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAA 1	Parpola, Simo. <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I</i> . SAA 1. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1987.
SAA 2	Parpola, Simo, and Kazuko Watanabe. <i>Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths</i> . SAA 2. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1998.
SAA 3	Livingstone, Alasdair. <i>Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea</i> . SAA 3. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989.
SAA 5	Lanfranchi, Giovanni Battista, and Simo Parpola. <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II</i> . SAA 5. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990.
SAA 6	Kwasman, Theodore, and Simo Parpola. <i>Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I, Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon</i> . SAA 6. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1991.

- SAA 7 Fales, Frederick Mario, and John Nicholas Postgate. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I*. SAA 7. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992.
- SAA 10 Parpola, Simo. *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. SAA 10. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993.
- SAA 11 Fales, Frederick Mario, and John Nicholas Postgate. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II*. SAA 11. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995.
- SAA 12 Kataja, Laura, and Robert Whiting. *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period*. SAA 12. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995.
- SAA 15 Fuchs, Andreas, and Simo Parpola. *The Neo-Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III: Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*. SAA 15. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2001.
- SAA 16 Luukko, Mikko, and Greta Van Buylaere. *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. SAA 16. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2002.
- SAA 17 Dietrich, Manfred. *The Neo-Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib*. SAA 17. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2003.
- SAA 18 Reynolds, Frances. *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. SAA 18. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2003.
- SAA 19 Luukko, Mikko. *The Correspondence of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud*. SAA 19. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2012.
- SAA 20 Parpola, Simo. *Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts*. SAA 20. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2017.
- SAAB *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
- SAAS *State Archives of Assyria Studies*
- SAAS 2 Millard, Alan. *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire: 910–612 BC*. SAAS 2. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1994.
- SAAS 3 De Odorico, Marco. *The Use of Numbers and Quantifications in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*. SAAS 3. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1995.
- SAAS 9 Melville, Sarah Chamberlain. *The Role of Naqia/Zakutu in Sargonid Politics*. SAAS 9. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999.

SAAS 11	Mattila, Raija. <i>The King's Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials in the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> . SAAS 11. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000.
SAAS 12	Waters, Matthew William. <i>A Survey of Neo-Elamite History</i> . SAAS 12. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000.
SAAS 20	Adali, Selim. <i>The Scourge of God</i> . SAAS 20. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011.
SAAS 23	Svärd, Saana. <i>Women and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Palaces</i> . SAAS 23. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2015.
SANE	Sources of the Ancient Near East
SBTh	Studia Biblica Theologica
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
TA	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
Tob	Tobit
<i>Transeu</i>	<i>Transeuphratène</i>
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
<i>VeEc</i>	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WBJb	<i>Jahrbuch: Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin</i>
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Oriental-Gesellschaft
YBC	Yale Babylonian Collection
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## Key to Transliterated Words

<i>kibrāt</i>	Akkadian words are indicated by italics.
DINGIR	Sumerian word signs are indicated by capital letters

## Explanation of Symbols

[ ]	single brackets enclose restorations.
⌈ ⌋	raised brackets indicate partially visible signs.

- ( ) parentheses enclose additions in the English translation.  
... a row of dots indicates gaps in the text or untranslatable words.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sennacherib, successor of his father, Sargon II, reigned over Assyria from 705 to 681 BCE. He was one of the main Neo-Assyrian kings, particularly famous for his expert knowledge. The history of his reign is well known from abundant Akkadian sources, most of them dominated by an apologetic view. However, the image of Sennacherib conveyed to us through the centuries is chiefly negative. This negative image has two origins: the first is its presentation in the Bible as that of the bad king who attacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem and Lachish. The second origin is his responsibility in the Babylonian tragedy through his contemptuous and destructive actions against this city. The literature from later periods gives narrative amplifications of the biblical and unfavorable classical material, as in Greek accounts of Sennacherib's reign. For example, in 1815 Lord Byron presented the Assyrian king as a merciless predator in a famous poem:

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.<sup>1</sup>

The reputation of Assyrian kings' ferocity was further amplified by the discovery of archaeological remains in Iraq during the nineteenth century that included representations and descriptions of their cruelty. For exam-

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1. Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. J. J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3:309–10; Eckart Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften*, AfOB 26 (Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik, 1997), 21–28. See also Lytton Strachey, “Sennacherib and Rupert Brooke,” in *The Really Interesting Question and Other Papers*, ed. Paul Levy (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), 42–44; Joseph Verheyden, “The Devil in Person, the Devil in Disguise: Looking for King Sennacherib in Early Christian Literature,” in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 389–431.

ple, Sennacherib boasted of having slit the throats of his Elamite enemies like sheep: “I filled the plain with the corpses of their warriors like [grass]. I cut off (their) lips and (thus) destroyed their pride. I cut off their hands like the *stems* of cucumbers in season.”<sup>2</sup>

On his ascent to the throne, Sennacherib inherited the Assyrian Empire, the true founder of which was his grandfather Tiglath-pileser III, who reigned from 744 to 727,<sup>3</sup> because he created a truly imperialist-dependent system, a strong and effective source of considerable wealth. This system was characterized by the ongoing mechanism of conquest to annex “the four regions (of the world)” (*kibrāt arba’i*) and the growing weight of the Assyrian administration, which oppressed the conquered states. Sennacherib’s father, Sargon, who ruled from 722 to 705, played an important and prestigious role in the history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, providing its driving force at the peak of its renown.<sup>4</sup> Sennacherib belonged to the so-called Sargonids group, a term that did not designate a new dynasty but rather the sequence of Sargon’s successors. Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal increased the power and wealth of the Assyrian Empire still further.

The Akkadian inscriptions related to the history of Sennacherib’s reign are numerous and even overabundant. Most of them are housed in museum collections, such as the British Museum in London and the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. Others are scattered around the world in private collections. Several large inscribed objects were reburied and left in the site, such as at Nineveh. These inscriptions can be divided into two categories: royal and nonroyal.<sup>5</sup>

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2. RINAP 3.1:183, 22.vi.10–12.

3. Paul Garelli, “The Achievement of Tiglath-pileser III: Novelty or Continuity?,” in *Ah Assyria ... Mélanges H. Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph‘al (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991), 46–51. However, John Nicholas Postgate considered that there was continuity between the Medio-Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods. See *The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur: Studies on Assyria: 1971–2005* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2007).

4. See Josette Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria*, ABS 22 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017). It is not necessary to be precise all the time in saying “Sargon II” because there cannot be any confusion in this book with Sargon of Agade.

5. Bruno Meissner and Paul Rost, *Die Bauinschriften Sanheribs* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1893); Daniel David Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, OIP 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924); G. L. Russell, “Sennacherib’s Annals: A Foundational Text Study” (PhD diss., Dropsie College, 1967); Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften*; RINAP 3.1–2; Eckart Frahm, “Sanherib,” *RIA* 12:12–22; *PNA* 3.1:1124–27

Some royal inscriptions can be very long (over five hundred lines). Several duplicated exemplars of the well-known Nineveh texts were preserved in Assur and Nimrud (Kalhu). Until Sennacherib's sixth year of reign (699), royal inscriptions were written on clay cylinders. From his seventh year (698), clay cylinders were abandoned in favor of clay prisms with more surface area (three- to ten-sided). All these texts generally give detailed accounts of his military campaigns presented in chronological order and of his building operations, and they are frequently called annals. They are complemented by clay tablets and cones, stone stelae, slabs and blocks, bull and lion colossi, rock reliefs, and smaller clay and metal objects. In the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib's successors, allusions can also be found to his reign.<sup>6</sup>

Two problems are associated with royal inscriptions: dating and propaganda. The so-called double dating by regnal year and eponymate sporadically occurred in some colophons, fixing Sennacherib's first regnal year to 705, 704, or 703. However, there are no grounds for accepting these inconsistencies: he ascended the Assyrian throne on the twelfth day of Abu (August) 705.<sup>7</sup> In the annals, his military campaigns are numbered with figures that differ from the regnal years. The number of campaigns and the precise years of some of them are difficult to establish because they are merely numbered as first, second, and so on, up to eight. Even if this official numbering is only supposed to include the campaigns led by the Assyrian king, the Assyrian army no longer undertook annual marches targeting new conquests. In total, between his accession year (705) and his sixteenth year (689), twelve campaigns are recorded in all the inscriptions, four of them probably led by his officials.<sup>8</sup> By combining the different sources, it will be possible to propose a plausible chronology. The second difficulty for the historian when using the royal inscriptions is to decipher

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(with bibliography); Jamie Novotny, "The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib: An At-a-Glance Akkadian Glossary of the RINAP 3 Corpus," *SAAB* 20 (2017): 79–129.

6. PNA 3.1:1126–27 (with bibliography).

7. PNA 3.1:1117; SAAS 2:48 and 70–71.

8. RINAP 3.1:10, table 1; Hayim Tadmor, "World Dominion: The Expanding Horizon of the Assyrian Empire," in *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Lucio Milano, Stefano De Martino, Frederick Mario Fales, and Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi, RAI 44.1 (Padova: Sargon, 1999), 61; Bradley J. Parker, *The Mechanics of Empire: The Northern Frontier of Assyria as a Case Study of Imperial Dynamics* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 97.



them through the filter of propaganda by consulting the different sources and identifying the distorted information.<sup>9</sup>

The nonroyal inscriptions are often undated, but they are much less distorted by propaganda. They belong to several categories, starting with the chronographic one: king lists, eponym lists, and chronicles such as the Babylonian Chronicles and the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle for the beginning of Sennacherib's reign,<sup>10</sup> useful for dating the events. The category of letters is disappointing because they are much less numerous than Sargon's and Esarhaddon's letters. Moreover, almost all of them belong to the period when Sennacherib was crown prince. The theory that the epistolary archive of his reign was destroyed after his murder does not seem to be valid because many letters in the archives may remain unidentified.<sup>11</sup> A few letters written after his death allude to events from his reign.<sup>12</sup> The number of economic documents on clay tablets positively identified as dating from Sennacherib's reign is relatively large, and they are probably still more numerous, but the attribution to his reign is uncertain for several documents. This is especially the case for the fragments not physically joined, which makes it difficult to confidently attribute them to the same tablet.<sup>13</sup> When they can be so identified, they make it possible to gain further insight into Assyria's economic situation under Sennacherib.

There are also external sources written in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, such as the story of Ahiqar, the Bible, the histories of Herodotus, and later texts such as those of Berossus and possibly Menander.<sup>14</sup> The

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9. Antti Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib," *VT* 45 (1995): 198–226; Katsufi Sano, "Die Repräsentation der Königsherrschaft in neuassyrischer Zeit: Ideologie, Propaganda und Adressaten der Königsinschriften," *Studia Mesopotamica* 3 (2016): 215–36.

10. Frahm, "Sanherib," *RIA* 12:12–22; *PNA* 3.1:1117; SAAS 2; Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, TCS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

11. SAA 1; SAA 5; SAA 17. See Simo Parpola, "A Letter to Sennacherib Referring to the Conquest of Bit-Ha'iri and Other Events of the Year 693," in *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux: Festschrift für Manfred Dietrich*, ed. Oswald Loretz, Kai A. Metzler, and Hanspeter Schaudig (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002), 576.

12. *PNA* 3.1:1126–27 (with bibliography).

13. SAA 6:38–159, nos. 34–200.

14. *PNA* 3.1:1117; Frederick Mario Fales, "Multilingualism on Multiple Media in the Neo-Assyrian Period: A Review of the Evidence," *SAAB* 16 (2007): 95–122; Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften*, 24–28; James Miller Lindenberger, *The Aramaic*

late literature is mainly based on the biblical and classical accounts of Sennacherib's reign. All the external sources must be used carefully for a reconstruction of Sennacherib's reign, with a precise assessment of their more or less important distortions.

Nonwritten documentation dating from Sennacherib's reign is also historically important. The main information is provided by the reliefs from his palace in Nineveh (Mosul), which he called "Palace without Rival" (*ekallu ša šānina la išû*).<sup>15</sup> They are partly representations of the Assyrian king's conquests, focusing on spectacular actions, sometimes accompanied by an epigraph, similar to our modern comics. These reliefs are complementary to the texts, but some of them provide information that is not mentioned in the written sources. In 1847 the so-called Southwest Palace was discovered and excavated between 1847 and 1851 by Austen Henry Layard.<sup>16</sup> The main interest focused on the discovery of a small inner chamber (Room XXXVI) with wall reliefs depicting Sennacherib's siege of the Judean walled city of Lachish that was identified by the epigraph and recorded in the Bible (2 Kgs 18:13–14).<sup>17</sup> It was the first archaeological confirmation of an event known from the Bible. The Southwest Palace was then excavated by Hormuzd Rassam and Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1852–1854), then incidentally by William Kennett Loftus (1854–1855). George Smith's discovery, in his campaigns of 1873 and 1874, of a fragmentary account of the deluge generated a wave of

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*Proverbs of Ahiqar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 3–4; Tawny L. Holm, "Memories of Sennacherib in Aramaic Tradition," in Kalimi and Richardson, *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem*, 295–323; Gerbern S. Oegema, "Sennacherib's Campaign and Its Reception in the Time of the Second Temple," in Kalimi and Richardson, *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem*, 325–45; Rivka Ulmer, "Sennacherib in Midrashic and Related Literature: Inscribing History in Midrash," in Kalimi and Richardson, *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem*, 347–87; Verheyden, "Devil in Person," 389–431; Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.141 (Σαυαχάριβος); Josephus, *A.J.* 10.1–23; 2 Kgs 18:13–37, 19; 2 Chr 32:1–23; Isa 29:5–9, 30:27–33, 31:5–8, 36:13–22, 37:1–38; Mic 1:8–16; Tob 1:18–22; Sir 48:18–22; 1 Macc 7:41–42; 2 Macc 8:19, 15:22–24.

15. RINAP 3.2:38, 39.74.

16. Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains I–II* (London: Murray, 1849); Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: Murray, 1853); Layard, *A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh* (London: Murray, 1853); Paul-Émile Botta, *Monuments de Ninive III–IV* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1849).

17. John Malcolm Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 40.

excitement among both scholars and educated public. Several excavation campaigns were episodically led in the palace: again by Hormuzd Rassam (1878–1882), E. A. Wallis Budge (1889–1891), L. W. King (1903–1904), and Reginald Campbell Thompson (1905, 1931–1932).<sup>18</sup> The most recent excavations were sponsored by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and directed by T. Madhloom (1965–1968). Some reliefs from Sennacherib's palace are now mainly housed in the Iraq Museum (Baghdad), British Museum (London), Musée du Louvre (Paris), Vorderasiatisches Museum (Berlin), and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).<sup>19</sup> They also survive in drawing formats made during the excavations.<sup>20</sup>

Numerous works, large and small, mention Sennacherib.<sup>21</sup> Every general history of Assyria or Mesopotamia includes short studies on this king; the most useful ones are those compiled by Albert Kirk Grayson and Eckart Frahm.<sup>22</sup> All these books, although titled *History of Sennacherib*, were devoted to his inscriptions, sometimes accompanied by some historical comments. The first one was George Smith's *History of Sennacherib* published in London in 1878; in fact, the book, focused on inscriptions, was unfinished and completed by Archibald Henry Sayce.<sup>23</sup> The main books were those written by Bruno Meissner and Paul Rost in 1893, Daniel David Luckenbill in 1924, G. L. Russell in 1967, Eckart Frahm in 1997, and finally

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18. George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries* (London: Bagster & Sons, 1875), 94–144; Hormuzd Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (New York: Eston & Mains, 1897), 3–7, 39; E. A. Wallis Budge, *By Nile and Tigris II* (London: Murray, 1920), 22, 67–83; Reginald Campbell Thompson and Richard Wyatt Hutchinson, *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh* (London: Luzac, 1929), 59–69; Cyril John Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), 83–85; T. Madhloom, “Nineveh, 1968–69 Campaign,” *Sumer* 25 (1969): 44–49; Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh*, 4, 40–44.

19. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh*, xi, 269–88.

20. Austen Henry Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh from Drawings Made on the Spot* (London: Murray, 1849); Botta, *Monuments de Ninive III–IV*.

21. RINAP 3.1:6–9 (bibliography); Eckart Frahm, ed., *A Companion to Assyria* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 183–86; Mario Liverani, *The Imperial Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017).

22. Albert Kirk Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.),” in *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.*, ed. John Boardman et al., 2nd ed., CAH 3.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 103–41; Frahm, “Sanherib,” *RIA* 12:12–22; PNA 3.1:1113–27.

23. See RINAP 3.1:7.

Albert Kirk Grayson and Jamie Novotny in 2012.<sup>24</sup> Some other books are devoted to a specific historical feature of Sennacherib's reign. For example, those of Leo L. Honor, David Ussishkin, William R. Gallagher, Lester L. Grabbe, Paul S. Evans, Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson, Nazek Khalid Matty, and Claudio Saporetti particularly focus on his third campaign.<sup>25</sup> Those of Archibald Paterson and Richard D. Barnett focus on his palace in Nineveh.<sup>26</sup> Works by Thorkild Jacobsen, Seton Lloyd, Frederick Mario Fales, and Roswitha Del Fabbro focus on the aqueducts of Jerwan.<sup>27</sup>

The purpose of this book is to study, for the first time, the history of Sennacherib's reign in all its aspects: political, military, economic, social, ideological, religious, technical, and artistic. Modern historians used to consider history as a process essentially governed by structural or systemic causes. Putting too much emphasis on the impact of the "great men" has become relatively unfashionable.<sup>28</sup> However, the biographical approach is not dead and continues to flourish in the popular branches of history, with

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24. Meissner and Rost, *Die Bauinschriften Sanheribs*; Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib*; Russell, "Sennacherib's Annals"; Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften*; RINAP 3.1:1–2.

25. Leo L. Honor, *Sennacherib's Invasion of Palestine: A Critical Source Study*, COHP 12 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926); David Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib*, PIASH 6 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1982); Francolino C. Gonçalves, *L'expédition de Sennachérib en Palestine dans la littérature hébraïque ancienne*, Ébib 7 (Paris: Gabalda, 1986); William R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: New Studies*, SHCANE 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Lester L. Grabbe, ed., "Like a Bird in a Cage": *The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE*, JSOTSup 363 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003); Paul S. Evans, *The Invasion of Sennacherib in the Book of Kings: A Source-Critical and Rhetorical Study of 2 Kings 18–19*, VTSup 125 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Kalimi and Richardson, *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem*; Nazek Khalid Matty, *Sennacherib's Campaign against Judah and Jerusalem in 701 B.C.: A Historical Reconstruction*, BZAW 487 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016); Claudio Saporetti, *Sennacherib e la Bibbia*, Teletè 3 (Acireale, Italy: Bonanno, 2017).

26. Archibald Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sennacherib* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1915); Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh*; Richard D. Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey Turner, *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh* (London: British Museum, 1998).

27. Thorkild Jacobsen and Seton Lloyd, *Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan*, OIP 24 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1935); Frederick Mario Fales and Roswitha Del Fabbro, "Back to Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan: Reassessment of the Textual Evidence," *Iraq* 76 (2014): 65–98.

28. Marc Van De Mieroop, *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 39–85; Eckart Frahm, "Family Matters: Psychohistorical Reflections

an endless production of new biographies of Alexander, Cleopatra, and Nero, for example. The present book downplays neither the structural factors nor the biographical approach. In contrast to the history of Sargon's reign,<sup>29</sup> that of Sennacherib's reign is well documented concerning his family background, his childhood and youth, and the long period when he was crown prince before he ascended the throne. The abundance and variety of sources enable the proposal of a comprehensive assessment of the psychological factors that shaped his character and how, in turn, it influenced his approach to politics. Eckart Frahm has attempted a psycho-historical investigation of Sennacherib and his time, and some of his interpretations can be accepted.<sup>30</sup>

Several issues are raised and, wherever possible, answered: What were Sennacherib's qualities and skills? What were his shortcomings? What was his relationship with his father? How did he react to Sargon's violent and inauspicious death on the battlefield? Why did he not officially commemorate his father's memory? Did he avenge him? Did he have a clear plan or program at the beginning of his reign, or did he simply respond to various challenges in different areas as and when they arose? What did he attempt to achieve, and how did he go about fulfilling his objectives? How did he manage to consolidate the Assyrian Empire and to drive it at the peak of its ascent? Were military campaigns as important to him as prestigious building projects, or did he think it was more important to expand or to embellish the empire? What can be said of his personal evolution during his reign? Was he more a reformer or a conservative? In what areas can it be said that he succeeded or, conversely, failed?

My methodology consists in adapting to the specific topic of the book and to the available sources.<sup>31</sup> My approach is always multidisciplinary: political, strategic, economic, geographic, ethnographic, along with text studies, onomastic analyses, and so on. For me, history is primarily down to earth, implying that I stay closely in line with the documents. Only then is it possible to move on to a historical synthesis, with a partial summary at the end of each chapter. The limited framework of a book has forced me

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on Sennacherib and His Times," in Kalimi and Richardson, *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem*, 163–222.

29. Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria*, 13–15.

30. Frahm, "Family Matters," 163–222.

31. On my conception of history, see Josette Elayi, "Être historienne de la Phénicie ici et maintenant," *Transeu* 31 (2006): 41–54.

to make choices in selecting from a mass of overabundant data, accompanied by a consistent series of comments, that appeared to me fundamental and relevant for the topic of this book. Some facts and minor features had to be omitted through necessity. The letters written by Sennacherib as crown prince are related to events of Sargon's reign, already analyzed in my previous book,<sup>32</sup> and are therefore less developed here. The format and progression of the present book are built around decisive events and determining facts. I have selected the interpretations that seemed to me the most plausible. Different interpretations that have been put forward are discussed or presented in notes. Sometimes I reached the conclusion that, given the current state of research, it is impossible to choose between various hypotheses.

It is usual to start a biography with a portrait, and chapter 1 ("A Portrait of Sennacherib") strives to encompass the king's personality through his inscriptions before seeing him in action: his name, his family, his childhood, his youth, and his character. Now, Sennacherib presented an attractive image of himself, but to what extent is this image true or distorted by propaganda? Chapter 2 ("Sennacherib, the Crown Prince") investigates the long period during which the king was crown prince in order to determine the date of his selection to succeed Sargon, his functions and his actions, and his relationship with his father. In chapters 3–6, the book follows a chronological order, mainly based on the various texts of the annals. Chapter 3 ("Accession and Priority Campaigns [705–701]") explains the basis on which Sennacherib managed to succeed Sargon to the throne and analyzes his priority campaigns. Chapter 4 ("Consolidating the Empire [700–695]") analyzes the subsequent campaigns that he conducted in order to solve militarily the problems encountered in other parts of the empire. Chapter 5 ("Focusing on Babylonia and Its Allies [694–689]") is related to all the military operations that were necessary to completely overcome Assyria's archenemy: Babylon. Chapter 6 ("End of Reign [688–681]") focuses on the last years of Sennacherib's reign, when external military campaigns were replaced by internal political struggles, ending in the king's murder. Chapter 7 ("Traditions and Reforms") explains how the Assyrian Empire was administered under Sennacherib's reign and what reforms he had inaugurated. Chapter 8 ("Building and Innovation") examines all the building projects initiated by Sennacherib and presents his innovations in different

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32. Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria*, 115–52.

domains. Finally, the book concludes with an assessment of his contributions to the evolution of the Assyrian Empire as compared with the state it was in at the beginning of his reign, as well as the positive and negative consequences of his decisions and actions (“Conclusion: Assessment of Sennacherib’s Reign”). At the end of the book, readers will find research aids, in line with the publisher’s requirements: a selected bibliography for each chapter; an index of ancient texts used; an index of the personal names cited, followed by brief comments and dates for situating them both in a diachronic and synchronic perspective; and an index of modern authors cited. Eight maps locating all the geographical terms mentioned in the book are also provided.

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