

## TIGLATH-PILESER III



Fig. 8. *The Iran Stela of Tiglath-pileser III* (Israel Museum).

The reign of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE) ushered in what was surely the most aggressive period of Assyrian expansion. Tiglath-pileser III came to the throne after decades during which the position of the king as head of state had diminished, due in part to the usurpation of power by high officials. He began the imperial renewal by circumscribing the territories of the provincial governors and their responsibilities, and followed this with a series of military campaigns that brought Assyria back to its former predominant position “from the Upper Sea (=Mediterranean) to the Lower Sea (=Persian Gulf).”

The history of Tiglath-pileser III has suffered in modern historical writings because of the sorry state of preservation in which his inscriptions were found. A large part of them had been discovered in the early days of Mesopotamian archaeology during the excavations conducted by Austin Henry Layard at Tell Nimrud (ancient Calah) in 1845. In the southwest palace of Shalmaneser III, Layard discovered a burnt building on the verge of collapse, on whose walls were large reliefs with their inscriptions facing inward. Parts of other reliefs were found stacked on the floor. Layard surmised that the reliefs had been brought from another part of the mound and had been meant for secondary use in the building in which they were discovered. When he reached the central palace and discovered a pile of about 100 additional reliefs, he correctly concluded that Esarhaddon had appropriated the reliefs for his new palace. Layard copied some of the reliefs, made paper squeezes of their inscriptions, and then sawed off the inscriptions from the reliefs so that he could ship “the pictures” to the British Museum in London. Thus was the “official history” of Tiglath-pileser III almost entirely lost.

The early editors of the texts did not note that the original texts belonged to different recensions. Some of the texts were inscribed between two bands of reliefs and differed in the number of lines—somewhere between 7 and 12

lines each—depending on the room in which they were set up; others were inscribed directly on the engraved images—here the number of lines was 16, 20 or more. In addition, the editors did not know that the reliefs came from different rooms in the palace. Hayim Tadmor, who studied Layard’s notebooks, unravelled these complexities and published all the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III in a new edition that reconstructs their original settings (Tadmor 1994).

---

**No. 8—THE AZRIYAU AFFAIR—ANNAL FRAGMENT FROM  
738 BCE**

---

The events of the year 738 BCE survive in a fragmentary annal text; they concern a rebellion against Assyria led by a certain Azriyau that took place in the vicinity of Hamath. In the first publication of this text (in 1869), George Smith, one of the fathers of Assyriology, joined a broken clay tablet (K 6205) to the annal text on the basis of the name of a person “*xxx-yau* of *Iaudi*” who was taken to be Azriyau mentioned in the annals. Now *Iaudi* is the usual Assyrian transcription of the name of the kingdom of Judah and according to Smith, Azriyau was none other than Azariah-Uzziah, king of Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 15:1–7; 2 Chr 26). In the course of the following century, scholars debated the correctness of this identification, pointing out that *Iaudi* was also the name of the kingdom of Samʿal in northern Syria (Tadmor 1961). The matter was partially settled by the discovery made in 1974: the fragment K 6205 was joined to another tablet fragment and it became clear that the new combined text does not belong to the corpus of Tiglath-pileser III (see Naʿaman 1974, and Text no. 27). Thus, Azriyau of the annals of Tiglath-pileser III remains without a sure identification, neither as to his origin or his kingdom. What is clear is that Hamath was the center of the disturbances in 738 and the engagement there ended with deportation of its residents and the annexation of the territory to Assyria. The text is badly broken and the partial restorations are suggested on the basis of parallel formulations in the annal fragments of the same year (Annals 22 and 26).

1–12 [...]...[...] Azriyau [...] I seized and [...] tribute like that [of the Assyrians ...] the city *x* [...] his help. The city El[ ] ... [the city Usn]u, the city Siannu, the city Ma[ ], the city Kashpuna, [which are on the sea]coast, together with the cities [...] up to Mount Saue,] which touches [Mount Lebanon,] Mount Baʿali-]sapuna, up to Mount Ama[na]na, the boxwood mountain, Mount Sa[ue] in

its entirety, the district of Kar-Adad, the city of Ḥatarikka, the district] of Nuqudina, [Mount Ḥasu], together with the cities [in its environs, the city Ara ... on both their sides, the cities of] their environs, Mount Sarbua in its entirety, [the city Ashḥani, the city Yaṭabi, Mount Yaraq in its entirety...] the city Elitar[bi, the city Zitanu, up to the city Atin[ni ... the city Bumame, 19 districts of Hamath,] together with the cities in its environs, [which are on the sea]coast of the West, [which in rebellion were seized by Azriyau,] I annexed [to the territory of Assyria]. I placed two of my eu[nuchs] over them as governors. [...] 83,000 [...] from those cities, I organized in the province of Tush[ḥan]. 1,223 I settled in the province of Ulluba.

1–12 [...] **Azriyau**—This name is Israelite; this can be determined by the theophoric element *-yahu*, the name of the God of Israel, regularly transcribed in Assyrian cuneiform as *-yau*. As already noted in the introduction to this text, in the first publication of the annals of Tiglath-pileser III, a tablet fragment was joined to the annals; it is now known that the tablet belongs either to Sargon II or Sennacherib (see Text no. 27) and what remains of the name of the king in rebellion against Assyria on the tablet: “*-yahu*, king of Judah,” refers most likely to Hezekiah, king of Judah. Therefore, Azriyau of the days of Tiglath-pileser III lacks a sure identification, as there is no information concerning him other than his name. It has been suggested that he was king of Ḥatarikka, biblical Hadrach (Naʿaman 1978), but the transcription of the name points to its being an Israelite name. Had Azriyau been an Aramean from north Syria, the transcription would have been *\*Idriyau*. Still the presence of an Israelite of seeming stature in Hamath remains puzzling; see Cogan and Tadmor 1988:165–166.

1–3 The very fragmentary opening lines apparently tell of the capture of Azriyau and putting down the rebellion he led. The area was reorganized as an Assyrian province.

5–12 **[the city Usn]u, the city Siannu**—For the identifications of these cities, see Text no. 1.

**The city Kashpuna, [which are on the sea]coast**—Perhaps to be identified with Kusbā near Wadi Qadisha, 15 km south of Tripoli.

**Mount Baʿali-]sapuna**—Jebel el-Aqraʿ in northern Syria; known as Mount Ḥazi in Hittite and Akkadian texts and Mons Casius in classical sources; in