

Tiglath-pileser, III Biography

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Biography

Tiglath-pileser III (reigned 745-727 BC), king of Assyria, was an able warrior and administrator who laid the foundations of the Late Assyrian Empire.

Tiglath-pileser or in Assyrian, Tukulti-apal-Eshara, was almost certainly an adopted name chosen in emulation of an earlier warrior-king. He came to the throne as the result of a palace revolution in which Ashur-nirari V was murdered. Assyria had suffered the loss of eastern and northern territories to its long-standing enemy, Urartu, the kingdom of Van, and as a result had lost access to the mines of Anatolia. Assyria needed an able leader who could restore the prestige and economic advantage won by the great kings of the 9th century. Tiglath-pileser was such a leader.

The King's first task was to restore order in Babylonia, where anarchy had reigned for nearly 50 years. Then, in 742 B.C., he marched west against a coalition of the Aramean kingdoms of Syria and southeast Anatolia organized by Urartu. In the ensuing battle he put Sarduris, the king of Urartu, to flight. In 738 Tiglath-pileser was again in the west; several Aramean cities were reduced, and Israel, Tyre, and Byblos were among those kingdoms which paid tribute.

In 734 King Ahaz of Judah appealed for Assyrian help against his enemies, Damascus and Israel. Samaria opened its gates, but Damascus took 2 years to reduce. The defeat of Urartu was the next objective; King Sarduris was attacked through his western territories, and then the Assyrian army struck at the heart of his kingdom. Though the citadel of Van proved impregnable, the power of Urartu in the west was broken for good.

Meanwhile, the pro-Assyrian king of Babylon had died, and a Chaldean from the south, Ukin-zer, had seized the throne. Tiglath-pileser chased the Chaldeans from Babylon, captured Ukin-zer, and put down the revolt with great severity. In 729 he himself was crowned king in Babylon. He died 2 years later.

Tiglath-pileser III was an outstanding administrator. He ably reorganized the provincial system and curbed the power of local officials. He probably created the network of roads and posting stations which linked the province with the capital at Calah. Shortly before his death he defined his realm in three dimensions: "I ruled the lands and exercised kingship from the salt waters of Bit Yakin [on the Persian Gulf] to Mt. Bikni [Demavend] in the east, from the horizon of heaven to its Zenith."