



## ASSARHADDON

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**ASSARHADDON** (Aššur-aḥa-iddin, English usually Esarhaddon), king of Assyria 680-69 B.C., son of Sennacherib and the Arameo-Babylonian princess Zakūtu (or Naqī'a) and the father of Aššurbanipal. He became king after two of his brothers had killed Sennacherib at Nineveh, which plunged the empire into civil war and anarchy. . (See [Assyria, i.](#))

The Cimmerians (Gimiru) with an admixture of Scythians (Aškuzai) came down from the Caucasus about 700 B.C. and began to press on the eastern borders of Assyria. They arrived along the western coast of the Caspian, turned towards Lake Urmia (land of Sangibuti and Bari), and from there proceeded towards Uišdiš (Tabrīz-Marāḡa), Zikirtu, and Gizilbundi. The threat to Assyria posed by the invaders may have been the reason why the land of Šupria (situated between Assyria and Urartu) dared—in the event unsuccessfully—oppose Assarhaddon at the beginning of his reign. The Barbarians reached Manna, situated directly south of Lake Urmia, whose local population, being rather anti-Assyrian, helped them take the fortress of Dūr-Enlil and, almost, the fortress of Šarruiqbi. Assarhaddon blamed the lack of military success on King Aḥšeri of Manna; records of demands for oracles from Šamaš show the gravity of the situation. Eventually, the Cimmerians of King Teuspa were beaten near Ḥubušna (Eregli, Mounts Bolkar) and moved along towards Ḥilakku (Cilicia) and Du'a (Tabal, beyond Kaḫlemiš), which proves that they were already infiltrating the northern possessions of Assyria. About 675 the Scythian chief Išpakaia (cf. Greek Aspakos) was defeated and killed and his followers confined to the land south of Lake Van.



The Median invasion no doubt was a corollary of the movements of the Cimmerians and the Scythians, who, on reaching Sangibuti (north of Lake Urmia, region of *Ḳoy-Marand*) and *Uišdiš* probably came upon groups of Medes whom they chased, thereby setting in motion all the Median tribes, whether under Assyrian rule or not. We are told that the land of *Kišesim* (also *Kišesi*, *Kišasa*, *Kišusimai*, probably the region northwest of *Hamadān*) was surrounded by the Medians and that its capital, *Kišasa* (probably *Ecbatana/Hamadān*) was on the point of being, or was actually, taken. The land of *Ḥarḥa* (west of *Hamadān*, region of *Sonqor-‘Alīābād*) was also occupied. The town of *Šiṣṣirtu*, which *Sennacherib* had attached to *Bīt-Barrua* (i.e., the region of *Kermānšāh-Kangāvar*) in *Ḥarḥa*, was taken by the Median chief *Kaštariti* with the help of the Cimmerians. Also *Ellipi* (approximately the region of *Kermānšāh-Borūjerd-Ḳorramābād*) was attacked, which meant that the Assyrian province of *Bīt-Ḥumban* (east of *Dīāla*, *Mandalī*, *Qaṣr-e Širīn*, *Sar-e Pol-e Zohāb*, *Šāhābād*) was in a critical position. *Kaštariti*, ruler of the *Cassites* (*Bīt-Kašši*, a mountainous region in the *Kabīr-Kūh*, towards *Īlām-Dezfūl-Kūhdašt*) attacked the cities of *Karibti* and *Ušiši*. He laid plans with *Mamitiaršu*, another Median chief, and *Dušanni* of *Šaparda* (farther north, *Bijār-Šarīfābād-Zanĵān* area) to plunder the towns of *Kilman* and *Sandu*. Finally, some Scythians were laying siege to *Bīt-Kāri*, southeast of *Hamadān*. All these events probably took place in 675.

We observe how the rebellion spread from the northeast to the southwest and it is quite possible that *Kaštariti*, who was an important “master of the city” (*bēl āli*, calque on OIr. *visapati* ?) coordinated the various enemy forces in this anti-Assyrian uprising.

In the light of these events the goal of *Assarhaddon*’s big expedition to *Patušarra* is quite clear: Although it is of course possible that Assyria was seeking to keep an area for animal breeding in order to compensate the loss of animals due to the recent secession of *Manna*, the main reason for the expedition was strategical, forcing a wedge from west to east between the rebels of *Manna*, *Gizilbundi*, and others, in the north and *Šaparda*, *Ḥarḥa*, *Elippi*, and others, in the south. The plan seems to have succeeded since *Assarhaddon* boasts that the chiefs *Uppiš* of *Partakka*, *Zanasana* of *Partukka*, and *Ramataia* of *Uraka-Zabarana*, who had been dethroned by their subjects who sided with the Medes and Cimmerians against Assyria, came to him offering gifts and begging him to reinstate them.

In 673, *Patušarra*, “district on the border of the salt desert, in the land of the



far Medes, limited by Bikni, mountain of lapis-lazuli, on whose soil none of my ancestors have trodden,” saw the deportation to Assyria of population groups led by “the mighty *ḥazanu* (chiefs)” Sidirparna (OIr. Ciθrafarnah) and Eparna (OIr. Vahufarnah?) with their horses, camels, and small cattle. The names quoted in this account show the new—though provisional—diplomatic and strategic formation of the area: Bikni is Damāvand; the salt desert the Dašt-e Kavīr; Patušarra is Old Persian Pātišuvāri (Elamite Pattišmarriš, Mid. Pers. Padišxwārgar, Greek Choarene), east of Māzandarān; Partakka (Greek Paraitakene, Latin Paraetacene in Pliny) is the modern Isfahan; Uraka-Zabarna may be connected with OIr. Vṛkāna (Hyrkania, modern Gorgān), and Partukka ought to be in this region, too. The kingdom of Bartatua, a Scythian who asked for a royal daughter in marriage and alliance with Assyria, has not been localized, but may have lain towards Cassi or Elam.

Assarhaddon, then, advanced at least as far as Salmanasar III before him, and probably even farther than Tiglathpileser III, but not as far as Damāvand, which his troops saw only from a distance. We can hardly speak of an Assyrian occupation of these territories; it was more a question of an overlordship expressed by levies of tribute and raids of reprisal against disobedient groups. In 672, a treaty was concluded with six Median chiefs, of which the one with Ramataia is extant. It is a long document of 675 lines, accompanied by solemn oaths and the performance of sympathetic magical rites. It contains some strange clauses implying that the Median, an obscure chief of an equally obscure canton, hundreds of miles away from Nineveh and Babylonia, was to act as guarantor of the Assyro-Babylonian legitimacy. However, this, as well as other stipulations, should be viewed only as the expression of the Assyrian legalistic, bureaucratic style, pushed to its extreme and absurd limits. Nevertheless, the fact that an official document could contain stipulations for strangers and barbarians to act as tutors and protectors of Assyrian princes threatened by their own family, their courtesans, or their high officials, reveals an atmosphere of uncertainty and a profound lack of trust in the head of state.

See also [Aššurbanipal](#).



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