

THE LEGEND  
OF THE  
INFANCY OF SARGINA THE FIRST,  
KING OF AGANI.

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TRANSLATED BY  
H. F. TALBOT, F.R.S.

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THE text of this story is lithographed in plate 4 of the third volume of Rawlinson's British Museum inscriptions. I gave a translation of it in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. I., p. 271.

One portion of it much resembles the history of the infancy of Moses as related in the second chapter of Exodus. We there read that the mother of Moses "took for him an ark of bulrushes *and daubed it with slime and with pitch* and put the child therein, and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink? All this was done likewise by the mother of Sargina. The pitch was to prevent the entrance of the water. Exod. ii. v. 5, 6. "And Pharaoh's daughter saw the ark among the flags, and she sent her maid to fetch it. And *when she had opened it* she saw the child." This circumstance also agrees exactly. Sargina's mother had made a door to the ark, and closed it with pitch, of course only round the edges. The child would breathe freely through the interstices of the rushes and could not fall out of the ark.

Similar traditions attend the birth of other great lawgivers or founders of nations. The story of Romulus offers in some respects a striking resemblance. The mother of Romulus was a king's daughter: *but his father was unknown*. The new-born infant was placed in a boat (*alveus*, Livy) and launched on the waters of the Tiber. The boat coming ashore, was found by the king's herdsman, who with his wife Acca brought him up as his own child. When of sufficient age he became the head of a band of rustic and warlike youths and gradually reached sovereign power.

Similarly Sargina was saved from the river by Akki the water-carrier (a name much resembling Acca) and brought up as his own son. When old enough he joined a rustic people and became their king, and afterwards a powerful monarch (*sar dannu*).

The god Dionysus when an infant was placed in an ark and thrown into the sea. The waves cast him ashore on the coast of Brasixæ in Laconia (Pausanias). Cyrus, son of a princess, but brought up by a herdsman as his own son; elected king (though in sport) by his rustic companions; afterwards the founder of a great monarchy, has some points of similarity with the tale of Sargina: but the circumstance of the ark on the river is wanting.

These examples show that similar tales were current in antiquity concerning the infancy of many great sovereigns or legislators.

The date of Sargina's reign is very uncertain, but he lived probably about 15 or 16 centuries before the Christian era. I conjecture that this inscription was written upon the pedestal of his statue.

## INFANCY OF SARGINA I.

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- 1 I AM SARGINA the great King ; the King of Agani.
- 2 My mother knew not my father :<sup>1</sup> my family were the rulers of the land.
- 3 My city was the city of Atzu-pirani<sup>2</sup> which is on the banks of the river Euphrates.
- 4 My mother conceived me : in a secret place she brought me forth :
- 5 she placed me in an ark of bulrushes : with bitumen my door she closed up :
- 6 she threw me into the river, which did not enter into the ark to me.
- 7 The river carried me : to the dwelling of AKKI the water-carrier<sup>3</sup> it brought me.
- 8 AKKI the water-carrier in his goodness of heart lifted me up from the river.

<sup>1</sup> Considering that his mother belonged to the royal family, that she was delivered in secret, and that the child was abandoned, this passage affords a strong confirmation of certain statements made by Herodotus concerning the customs of the Babylonians: and it is also alluded to in the book of Baruch. Compare also the story of Rhea Sylvia the mother of Romulus, who was a king's daughter: the unknown father, and the abandonment of the child.

<sup>2</sup> Atzu-pirani. The latter part of the name is the Chaldee *Birani* meaning Citadel, Tower, or Palace.

<sup>3</sup> A water-carrier was a labourer of the lowest and meanest class, as we see from Joshua ix. 21: "And the princes said unto them, Let them live: but let them be bearers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation." And again, verses 23 and 27, "There shall none of you be freed from being bondmen and hewers of wood and drawers of water."

- 9 AKKI the water-carrier brought me up as his own son.  
 10 AKKI the water-carrier placed me with a tribe of  
 Foresters.<sup>1</sup>  
 11 Of this tribe of Foresters ISHTAR<sup>2</sup> made me King :  
 12 and for . . . . .<sup>3</sup> years I reigned over them.

[The rest of the inscription, consisting of several lines which are much broken, says that during his reign Sargina introduced civilization, or great improvements. But this part has not a mythic character, and is of less interest.]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These Woodmen or Foresters were probably a rude race of men. Sargina became the captain of the band.

<sup>2</sup> Ishtar was the Babylonian Venus.

<sup>3</sup> Lacuna.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 56, 57, of this volume.



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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