

Edward Lipinski (orientalist)

Aram And The Hebrew Forefathers



Edward (Edouard) Lipiński (born 18 June 1930 in Lodz, Poland)

is a Belgian Biblical scholar and Orientalist.

His first major work, published in 1965, was a monumental monograph entitled *La royauté de Yahwé dans la poésie et le culte de l'ancien Israël*. In 1969, he was appointed professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, where he taught i.a. the comparative grammar of Semitic languages and history of ancient Near Eastern religions and institutions. He was head of the Department of Oriental and Slavonic studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from 1978 to 1984. He directed the publication of the *Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique* (1992) and the *Studia Phoenicia* series (from 1983). He also published *Semitic Languages. Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (1997, 2001) and dealt extensively with Old Aramaic dialects and history, in particular in his *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics* (1975, 1994, 2010) and in *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (2000). Referring to the latter work a reviewer noted that it "embodies the accumulated insights of one of the greatest Semitic scholars of our time". Professor Edward Lipiński was awarded a doctorate honoris causa by the Lund University in 2003. Although he retired from KU Leuven in 1995, he continues teaching and doing research mainly in Aramaic and Phoenician studies.

The WorldCat database lists over a hundred publications by Edward Lipiński in his various fields of expertise.

A complete bibliography was published by The Enigma Press. Here is a short list of his major publications:

- *La Royauté de Yahwé dans la poésie et le culte de l'ancien Israël* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren, Jaarg. XXVII, Nr 55), Paleis der Academiën, Brussel 1965, 560 pp. ; second edition, Brussel 1968.
- *Le Poème royal du Psaume LXXXIX, 1-5.20-38* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 6), J. Gabalda et Cie, Paris 1967, 110 pp.
- *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics I–III* (Orient. Lov. An. 1, 57, 200), Leuven University Press, Peeters & Oriëntalistiek, Leuven 1975, 1994, 2010, 240 pp., 273 pp., XX + 308 pp.
- Author of volumes 1, 5 and 6 of *Studia Paulo Naster Oblata: Orientalia antiqua* published 1982 Peeters Publishers^[7]
- (Ed.), *Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique*, Brepols, Turnhout 1992, XXII + 502 p., 14 colour pls.
- *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique* (Orient. Lov. An. 64; Studia Phoenicia XIV), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 1995, 536 p.
- *Semitic languages: outline of a comparative grammar*, 2000. ISBN 978-90-429-0815-4
- *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Orient. Lov. An. 80), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 1997, 756 pp.; 2nd ed., Leuven 2001, 780 pp.
- *The Aramaeans: their ancient history, culture, religion*, 2001. ISBN 978-90-429-0859-8
- *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Orient. Lov. An. 100), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 2000, 697 pp.
- *Itineraria Phoenicia* (Orient. Lov. An. 127; Studia Phoenicia XVIII), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 2004, XXVI+ 622 pp.
- *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age. Historical and Topographical Researches* (Orient. Lov. An. 153), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 2006, 484 pp.
- *Prawo bliskowschodnie w starożytności. Wprowadzenie historyczne* (The Near Eastern Law in Antiquity. A Historical Introduction; Studia historico-biblica 2), Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2009, 492 pp.
- *Resheph. A Syro-Canaanite Deity* (Orient. Lov. An. 181; Studia Phoenicia XIX), Peeters & Departement Oosterse Studies, Leuven 2009, 297 pp.

CHAPTER II

ARAM AND THE HEBREW FOREFATHERS

A remarkable feature of the ancient Hebrew profession of faith in Deut. 26, 5 is the asserted Aramaean origin of the nation's forefather: 'Arammī 'ōbēd 'ābī, "my father was a roaming Aramaean"¹. The Greek translators of the Septuagint offer an adaptation of this clause that reveals its misinterpretation in Jewish Hellenistic circles: Συρίαν ἀπέβαλεν ὁ πατήρ μου, "my father left Syria". This clause was probably understood as reference to Abraham's migration from Harrān to Canaan (Gen. 12, 4-5) and to Egypt (Gen. 12, 10). Instead, Targum Onqelos relates this passage to Jacob's flight from Laban's mansion (Gen. 31): "Laban the Aramaean wanted to ruin my father and he went down to Egypt"². The meaning and the grammatical function of 'ōbēd in the clause under consideration suggest a quite different meaning. In fact, since the text is not written in Aramaic, one cannot assume that 'bd is the perfect 'ōbēd of the af'el, as supposed in Targum Onqelos and rightly challenged by Ibn Ezra³. The problem lays with the word 'ōbēd itself that modern authors translate by "wandering", "perishing", "starving", even "fugitive"⁴. While the latter connotation of 'bd does not occur in Hebrew texts⁵, the two other interpretations are based on the actual

¹ A survey of various interpretations was made by M.A. BEEK, *Das Problem des aramäischen Stammvaters (Deut. XXVI, 5)*, in *Oudtestamentische Studiën VIII*, Leiden 1950, p. 193-212. See now R.C. STEINER, *The "Aramean" of Deuteronomy 26: 5 - Peshat and Derash*, in *Tehillah le-Moshe*, Winona Lake 1997, p. 127-138. For a general assessment of the meaning and function of the "profession of faith" in Deut. 26, 5-9, see N. LOHFINK, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur I*, Stuttgart 1990, p. 263-290.

² A. SPERBER, *The Bible in Aramaic I*, Leiden 1959, p. 333; cf. F. DREYFUS, "L'Araméen voulait tuer mon père": *L'actualisation de Dt 26, 5 dans la tradition juive et la tradition chrétienne*, in M. CARREZ et al. (eds.), *De la Tôrah au Messie: Mélanges H. Cazelles*, Paris 1981, p. 147-161. This understanding of the text would reflect its original sense according to S. NORIN, *Ein Aramäer, dem Umkommen nahe — ein Kerntext der Forschung und Tradition*, in *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 8 (1994), p. 87-104.

³ IBN EZRA, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, first printed at Naples in 1488.

⁴ See the discussion by B. OTZEN, 'ābad, in *ThWAT I*, Stuttgart 1973, col. 20-24, especially col. 21. The translation "starving" was proposed by J.G. JANZEN, *The "Wandering Aramaean" Reconsidered*, in *VT* 44 (1994), p. 359-375.

⁵ The sense "fugitive" is nevertheless considered as correct and corresponding to the meaning of the verb by B.A. LEVINE, *The Semantics of Loss: Two Exercises in Biblical Hebrew Lexicography*, in Z. ZEVIT - S. GITIN - M. SOKOLOFF (eds.), *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots*, Winona Lake 1995, p. 137-158 (see p. 149-158).

use of the verb in ancient Hebrew. The solution of this semantic problem, resulting from polysemy, cannot be provided by speculative etymological considerations, but only by examining the semantic field of the Westsemitic verb *'bd* and the concrete use of *'ōbēd* as qualification of *'Arammī*⁶. The Arabic verb *'abida* or *'abuda* means "to roam" and, speaking of animals and game, also "to run away". Instead, the usual connotation of Aramaic *'ebad* is "to be lost", "to go astray", and this sense is attested also in the Old Canaanite dialect of Jerusalem where *a-ba-da-at* appears as an equivalent of Assyro-Babylonian *ḫal-qa-at*, "is lost": "If there are no archers this year, the entire land of the king, my lord, is lost"⁷. The notion of loss as something irreversible led in Aramaic and in Hebrew to the meaning "to perish", clearly expressed, for example, in a Bar-Kosba letter from A.D. 134/5: *'bdw bḫrb*, "they perished by the sword"⁸.

The sense of participial *'ōbēd* in Deut. 26, 5 is in contrast with the connotation "to be lost" or "to perish", since Abraham's or Jacob's clan was not gone astray and it did not cease to exist. Instead, as Deut. 26, 5 proceeds to inform us, "it went down to Egypt", a sentence recalling communications by Egyptian officials who were reporting the passage of Asiatic tribes into the better pasturage of the Nile delta⁹. The participle *'ōbēd* should be compared, in fact, with Arabic *'ābid*, "roaming in a state of wildness", "untamed", and also with the Assyro-Babylonian verbal adjective *ḫalqu*, since Canaanite *'abadat* was considered as an equivalent of *ḫalqat*. Now, *ḫalqu* appears in the phrase *eṭimmu ḫalqu*, "the vagrant spirit"¹⁰, which is the spirit of a body not buried and not provided with offering, and significantly enough in ^{lú}*A-ra-mì ḫal-qu*, "vagrant Aramaean". This qualification occurs in Sennacherib's annals, in a passage that refers to Shuzubu, the Chaldaean chief who had rebelled. Sennacherib characterizes his supporters as a band of outlaws: ^{lú}*A-ra-mì ḫal-qu mun-nab-tú a-mer da-mì ḫab-bi-lu ṣi-ru-uš-šu ip-ḫu-ru-ma*¹¹, "the

⁶ This correct approach can be found in the short article by A.R. MILLARD, *A Wandering Aramean*, in *JNES* 39 (1980), p. 153-155, where Mesopotamian parallels are used in order to clarify the meaning of Deut. 26, 5.

⁷ *EA* 288, 51-53; *a-ba-da-at* occurs in line 52.

⁸ J.T. MILIK, in *Les Grottes de Murabba'ât* (DJD II), Oxford 1961, *Texte*, p. 163, No. 45, 7.

⁹ See *ANET*, p. 259a.

¹⁰ W.G. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford 1960, p. 134, line 145, with the explanation on p. 322.

¹¹ *Sennacherib*, p. 42, col. V, 22. The comparison was first made by B. MAZAR, *The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel*, in *BA* 25 (1962), p. 97-102 (especially

vagrant Aramaean, the fugitive, the shedder of blood, the evildoer, around him they gathered". The distinction between *ḥalqu* and *munḥabtu*, "fugitive"¹², indicates that the basic meaning of *ḥlq*, "to go astray", is intended and that Sennacherib has "roaming Aramaeans" in mind. This is a rather stereotyped Neo-Assyrian description, paralleled by *zēr ḥalqatī*, "breed of vagrancy", an idiom which is used as a disparaging designation of nomads¹³. Disparaging qualifications of Aramaeans occur also in other Assyro-Babylonian texts, where they may be called *Aḥlamū*, an archaism used after 1000 B.C. for "Aramaean", most frequently in the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings and in the reports sent to them by their scholars¹⁴, but also in Babylonia, at Nippur in the mid-8th century B.C., as shown by a letter including the following sentence: "There is no *Aḥlamū* or one single dog-of-a-criminal around"¹⁵.

The Hebrew participle *'ōbēd* does not have such disparaging overtones, as shown by biblical texts that describe flocks and herds roaming in search of pasture. Thus Jer. 50, 6 compares the people of Israel with "small cattle roaming (*šō'n 'obədōt*)... from mountain to hill", while Ez. 34, 4 reproaches to Israel's shepherds not to have gone in search of the "roaming" ewe (*hā-'obedet*). The author of Ps. 119, 176 considers himself as a "roaming sheep" (*śeh 'obed*) and asks God to go in his search as a good shepherd. In Ez. 34, 16, God presents himself as the herdsman full of care that will go in search of the "roaming" ewe (*hā-'obedet*) until he finds her and brings back to the fold. Although also roaming she-asses are mentioned in I Sam. 9, 3.20, most texts are thus referring to sheep that shepherds let stray (*t'h*) on the mountains, far away from their fold (Jer. 50, 6). Modern translators and commentators usually speak of "lost sheep", even of sheep on the verge of perishing¹⁶, while Targum Jonathan makes it clear in Jer. 50, 6 that the metaphor refers to "sheep

p. 101, n. 8), reprinted in D.N. FREEDMAN - E.F. CAMPBELL (eds.), *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader II*, Garden City 1964, p. 127-151 (especially p. 130, n. 8).

¹² The *munḥabtu* was basically an uprooted fugitive and this notion was thus quite close to "vagrant"; cf. G. BUCCELLATI, 'Apirū and munḥabūtu: *The Stateless of the First Cosmopolitan Age*, in *JNES* 36 (1977), p. 145-147.

¹³ *AHW*, p. 313, s.v. *ḥalqu* 3; cf. *CAD*, H, p. 50. There is no reason why *SAA X*, p. 372, should transcribe it *zēr ḥalqatī*.

¹⁴ PARPOLA, *Toponyms*, p. 5-6; *RGTC* 8, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Nippur IV*, No. 109, 17b-19.

¹⁶ For example, F. HITZIG, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, Leipzig 1841, p. 394: "die dem Verderben entgegengingen". It is not convenient to collect the opinions expressed by more recent Bible commentators who generally repeat the views put forward in the 19th century, unless they use Oriental parallels or have recourse to ethnographic evidence or comparative Semitics.

scattered” on the mountains and grazing freely, *‘ān mabaddārā*¹⁷. This situation must be related to the seasonal drive of livestock from lowlands to mountains, when pastures on high grounds become better suited for grazing.

The existence of this practice in ancient Israel is attested in Gen. 37, 12-17: Joseph’s brothers are roaming with their flocks in the highland around Shechem and Dōtān, while their father is staying at Hebron. Similarly, if Judah goes up to Timna for the sheep-shearing (Gen. 38, 12-13) or if Absalom’s shearers are at Baal-Haṣor (II Sam. 13, 23), in the highland of Ephraim, it is because their flocks moved to the north for the summer. This practice is implied also by the term *nāweh* that refers in particular to transhumant herds that roam in mountain pastures¹⁸. It appears therefore that also the verb *’bd* can imply a reference to transhumance, which often occasions the loss of some animals. And this is precisely the reason why biblical writers have recourse to the metaphor of “roaming sheep” when they allude to the dangers menacing God’s flock.

This image is developed further in the relatively late oracle preserved in Is. 27, 13 where the stay of Israelite deportees in Assyria is viewed as a period of transhumance which will come to an end: “On that day a blast shall be blown on a great ram’s horn, and those who are roaming in Assyria (*hā’ōbādīm bə’ereṣ ’Aššūr*) and those straying in Egypt (*wə-hanniddāhīm bə’ereṣ Miṣrāyim*) shall come and bow down to Yahweh on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem”. The parallelism *’ōbādīm // niddāhīm* confirms this interpretation, since “straying” cattle is said *niddāhīm* as well¹⁹.

When replaced in this context, the qualification *’ōbēd* applied to *’Arammī* in Deut. 26, 5 cannot refer to primitive nomads, wandering aimlessly: it alludes rather to pastoralists who depend on domesticated livestock for a livelihood and migrate in order to find pasturage for their animals, but also establish rights over the territory within which they migrate. During the hot summer months they camp near a town or oasis, where the harvest had already taken place and crops were removed. They move out with livestock onto the steppe and to the mountains after

¹⁷ A. SPERBER, *The Bible in Aramaic* III, Leiden 1962, p. 250.

¹⁸ The similar use of the Amorite word *nawûm* in Old Babylonian texts has been examined by F.R. KRAUS, *Akkadische Wörter und Ausdrücke*, XI. — *nawûm*, in *RA* 70 (1976), p. 172-179. This important study has not been taken into account by H. RINGGREN, *nāwæh*, in *ThWAT* V, Stuttgart 1986, col. 293-297.

¹⁹ Deut. 22, 1; Ez. 34, 4.16.

the rain, in search of grazing. However, a different pattern is encountered in other regions, as western Syria, where winter villages are at the foot of the mountains, while the animals are taken into the uplands during the summer. The qualification *'Arammī 'ōbēd* must thus refer to those seminomadic Aramaeans that inscriptions of Adad-nirari II (911-891 B.C.) call ÉRIN.MEŠ EDIN, "people of the steppe"²⁰.

The biblical Patriarchal tradition of the Book Genesis alludes to settled Aramaeans of Upper Mesopotamia from where Abraham migrated to the south and from where Isaac's and Jacob's wives were brought according to Gen. 24 and 29-31. The mission of Abraham's servant in the city of Nahor (Gen. 24) and Jacob's stay in Laban's mansion at Ḥarrān (Gen. 29-31) reveal a certain knowledge of the Aramaean settlements in the Balīḥ and Ḥābūr valleys around the 10th century B.C. The Aramaean gradual transition to sedentary life was largely realized in this region towards the end of the 11th century B.C. and it was accomplished at the expense of the Assyrians who did not manage to set foot in this region before the reign of Adad-nirari II, about 900 B.C.²¹, and reconquered it only in the mid-9th century. The situation reflected by the biblical accounts of the Book Genesis — with no allusion to Assyria — corresponds therefore to a relatively short period, approximately the 10th century B.C. The historical circumstances of that time form thus, as it seems, the background of the biblical episodes referring to the relations between the biblical Patriarchs and the Aramaeans of the Balīḥ and Ḥābūr valleys²².

Side by side with the advance of historical and literary scholarship came the demand that the origin of this ancient belief in a parentage between the Aramaeans of Upper Mesopotamia and the Israelites of Palestine should be explained like any other historical problem. The similitude of languages and the souvenir of a seminomadic life led by sheep breeding pastoralists may have played a role, but only in the frame

²⁰ O. SCHROEDER, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts II* (WVDOG 37), Leipzig 1922, No. 84, line 33; *RIMA II*, text A.0.99.2, p. 149, line 33.

²¹ J.-R. KUPPER, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari*, Paris 1957, p. 120-121; A.K. GRAYSON, in *CAH III/1*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1982, p. 250-251.

²² Therefore, we do not think that it is useful to discuss here the arguments developed by J. VAN SETERS, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, New Haven 1975, who bases his statements mainly on contacts between the Abraham narratives and data from the Neo-Babylonian period that are not relevant from the chronological point of view. Instead, the conclusions reached by Th.L. THOMPSON, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives. The Quest for the Historical Abraham* (BZAW 133), Berlin 1974, agree fundamentally with the opinion presented in this chapter.

of continuous relations between these two regions, quite distant from each other. The probable North-Syrian origin of the scribe of the Jerusalem Amarna letters²³ may testify to ancient contacts between Upper Mesopotamia and Palestine, but more recent and specific relations must have existed in the period under consideration. Now, such contacts can safely be assumed in the 10th century B.C. which marks the apogee of the Aramaean power in Upper Mesopotamia²⁴ and the climax of David's and Solomon's monarchy in Palestine. Commercial and cultural relations between these two areas of the Fertile Crescent had to follow the caravan route that was coming down from Ḥarrān along the Balīḥ to the Middle Euphrates, then crossed the river in the direction of Reṣāfa, and continued towards Palmyra and Damascus, where it met the "King's Highway" (Numb. 20, 17; 21, 22) that led to Gilead, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Arabia. In order to deal with concrete evidence, it is convenient to describe this caravan route in some detail. Since the track lies across level, sandy, and arid districts, camels were employed for the transport of persons and goods. The ordinary caravan seasons are the months of the spring, early summer, and later autumn. According to a practice immemorial, the first day's march does no more than just clear the starting point, unless there is some urgency. Subsequently each day's route is divided into two stages — from 3 or 4 A.M. to about 10 in the forenoon, and from 2 or 3 P.M. till 6 or even 8 in the evening. A distance varying from 35 to 45 km is covered every marching day, but prolonged halts of two, three, four or even more days often occur, again if there is no urgency.

The itinerary from Upper Mesopotamia to Transjordan did not change in the course of centuries and corresponds largely to the main road system of Roman times that is obviously better known. This lengthy and important trade route follows the Balīḥ from Ḥarrān to the Euphrates like the "Parthian Highway" described by Isidorus of Charax in his *Σταθμοὶ Παρθικοί*, written *ca.* A.D. 25²⁵. The river Balīḥ, that

²³ W.L. MORAN, *The Syrian Scribe of the Jerusalem Amarna Letters*, in H. GOEDICKE - J.J.M. ROBERTS (eds.), *Unity and Diversity*, Baltimore 1975, p. 146-166.

²⁴ W.F. ALBRIGHT, in *CAH* II/2, 3rd ed., Cambridge 1975, p. 536: "The climax of Aramaean political domination in Mesopotamia may thus be dated between about 950 and 900 B.C."

²⁵ The text generally followed is that of *GGM* I, p. 244-256. It was taken over by W.H. SCHOFF, *Parthian Stations by Isidore of Charax*, Philadelphia 1914 (reprint: Chicago 1976). See also the too critical edition by F. JACOBY, *FGH* III C, p. 779-782. The best recent study is that by M.-L. CHAUMONT, *Études d'histoire parthe*, V. *La Route Royale des Parthes de Zeugma à Séleucie du Tigre d'après l'Itinéraire d'Isidore de*

rises just north of Urfa (Edessa) under the name of Güllab, flows almost due south to join the Euphrates to the east of Ar-Raqqa, a place name that designates the swampy land beside a river²⁶ and that seems to preserve Xenophon's name Ἐραξίης of the river²⁷. The city is called Nicephorium by Isidorus, it is named later Callinicum by the Romans, and at one time it was the capital of Harun al-Rašid. There are many places at which the Euphrates can be crossed and the existence of antique crossing points has been assumed west of Ar-Raqqa, between Heraqla, on the left bank, and Al-Funsa, on the right²⁸, as well as just above Mansūrā, in front of the tells of At-Tadayyēn. This site seems to offer particular advantages for building a pontoon bridge²⁹. Now, pontoon bridges, called *raksūtu*, were known in ancient Mesopotamia³⁰, and Herodotus left the earliest detailed description of such a bridge, built by Xerxes over the Hellespont³¹. However, they are mentioned and represented in Antiquity as aids in conquest, while commercial caravans were usually fording the rivers. Fordable crossings were available on the Euphrates at low water, i.e. from June to December, but the river did not begin to rise high till the end of March, attaining its maximum about the end of May, and its minimum at the end of November. The Greek mercenaries under Cyrus forded the Euphrates at Birecik on foot at the end of July 401 B.C. having water up to the breast³², and an Arab companion of G. Cousin is reported to have crossed the stream in seven minutes on October the 10th, 1898, having water up to the shoulders³³. The amazement of the local population,

Charax, in *Syria* 61 (1984), p. 63-107, with a new edition of the concerned section of the text (p. 70). The identification of several stations remains uncertain.

²⁶ G. LE STRANGE, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, Cambridge 1930, p. 101.

²⁷ XENOPHON, *Anabasis* I, 4, 19; cf. V. MANFREDI, *La strada dei Diecimila: Topografia dell'Oriente di Senofonte*, Milano 1986, p. 112-116.

²⁸ DUSSAUD, *Topographie*, p. 455. A. Musil, instead, disregards this crossing point (cf. n. 29). The name of Al-Funsa was changed in the meantime into Qal'at Nimrud.

²⁹ F. SARRE - E. HERZFELD, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet* I, Berlin 1911, p. 112-113; A. MUSIL, *The Middle Euphrates. A Topographical Itinerary*, New York 1927, p. 190-191; R. MOUTERDE - A. POIDEBARD, *Le limes de Chalcis* (BAH 38), Paris 1945, p. 137. This is the reason why F. SARRE - E. HERZFELD, *op. cit.*, p. 143-151, propose to localize Alexander's Thapsacus there, but their arguments are not convincing, as shown by A. MUSIL, *op. cit.*, p. 219-220.

³⁰ M.-C. DE GRAEVE, *The Ships of the Ancient Near East (c. 2000-500 B.C.)* (OLA 7), Leuven 1981, p. 144-148.

³¹ HERODOTUS, *History* VII, 36.

³² XENOPHON, *Anabasis* I, 4, 17-18. For the location, cf. V. MANFREDI, *op. cit.* (n. 27), p. 104-112; M. GAWLIKOWSKI, *Thapsacus and Zeugma: The Crossing of the Euphrates in Antiquity*, in *Iraq* 58 (1996), p. 123-133, in particular p. 126-127.

³³ G. COUSIN, *Kyros le Jeune en Asie Mineure*, Paris 1904, p. 311 ff.

mentioned by Xenophon³⁴, is either a literary adornment of the account or a genuine astonishment caused by the view of a whole army fording the river without the help of native guides. The site itself was then called Θάψακος, i.e. **tapsaḥ*, in Semitic “ford”³⁵, a name which precisely implies the presence of a fordable crossing.

From Manṣūrā to Damascus, the ancient track probably followed the same itinerary as the *Strata Diocletiana*. Following on 30 km the right bank of Wādī as-Sēlē, the caravans reached Reṣāfa, the *Raṣappa* of the Neo-Assyrian texts and the *Reṣep* of II Kings 19, 12 and of Is. 37, 12. The alternative location of Raṣappa in the southern or eastern slopes of the Ğebel Sinġar³⁶ does neither fit the biblical sequence Gōzān-Ḥarrān-Reṣep nor explain the close links of Raṣappa with the land of Laqē, related in Sargon II’s correspondence also to the city Nēmed-Iṣtar³⁷ which can hardly be located at Tell ‘Afar, west of Mosul.

One should keep therefore identifying Raṣappa/Reṣep with the Ῥησάφα of Ptolemy and the *Risapa* of the Peutinger Table, called Sergiopolis in the early 5th century A.D. Important halting-place for caravans on the route Manṣūrā-Palmyra, Reṣāfa was depending entirely on a system of cisterns and wells for its water supply. Since the city was the chief-residence of an Assyrian provincial governor, hydraulic installations must have existed at Reṣāfa at least from the beginning of the first millennium B.C., but no archaeological remains from the Iron Age have been discovered so far on the site. Although the preserved large cisterns go back only to Byzantine times³⁸, the latest evidence shows that the

³⁴ XENOPHON, *Anabasis* I, 4, 18.

³⁵ Cf. I Kings 5, 4; cf. II Kings 15, 16. The word derives from the root *psḥ*, “to go through”, “to walk through”, hence Arabic *fasaḥa*, “to dislocate”, “to disjoint”. The nominal derivative **tapsaḥ* may designate different places near fordable crossings.

³⁶ J. READE, *Studies in Assyrian Geography*, in *RA* 72 (1978), p. 47-72, 157-180 (see p. 175-177); M. LIVERANI, *Raṣappu and Hatallu*, in *SAAB* 6 (1992), p. 34-40. Still another location, north of Nusaybin, is proposed by A.K. GRAYSON, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5), Locust Valley 1975, p. 262, on basis of the mention of ^{kur}*Ru-ṣa-pu* in the Babylonian Chronicle (*ibid.*, p. 94, No. 3, 49). Supposing that the same place is meant, the context of the Chronicle does not allow a precise location of Ruṣapu.

³⁷ *SAA* I, 204, 13-15; 226, 8 and r. 7. A location at a crossing-point to Eber-Nāri (cf. *SAA* I, 204, r. 10-11), near the wood-land of Ğebel Biṣrī (cf. *SAA* I, 226, 4-9; 227, 5-9), rich in sources (cf. ^{uru}*Apqu*: *RIMA* III, text A.0.104.6, p. 209, line 23), and on the Royal Road following the Middle Euphrates, seems to fit the available evidence. Nēmed-Iṣtar was situated precisely on a Royal Road; cf. *SAA* VI, 328, 5'. For this subject in general, cf. K. KESSLER, “*Royal Roads*” and *Other Questions of the Neo-Assyrian Communication System*, in S. PARPOLA - R.M. WHITING (eds.), *Assyria 1995*, Helsinki 1997, p. 129-136.

³⁸ For the geographical situation of Reṣāfa and an outline of its history, one can always consult A. MUSIL, *Palmyrena. A Topographical Itinerary*, New York 1928,

Roman castle of Reṣāfa had already been erected in the first century A.D. There is no doubt, therefore, that there was a water supply, although it is unlikely that water was brought from a place 5 km distant, where wells could be dug without major difficulty.

From Reṣāfa, the caravans followed the route through the Ṭayibē passes between the slopes of the Ğebel Abū-Riğmen and of the Ğebel al-Biṣrī³⁹. This excellent track, provided with watering places and pasture grounds, could easily be controlled from the heights overlooking the passes. Ancient ramparts of seminomadic populations still overlook the passes on both sides of Ṭayibē, the ᾿Οριζα of Ptolemy, which is built on a hill in the centre of the passes. It lies 62 km south of Reṣāfa, and one or two halting-places were thus required between these two sites. The Peutinger Table mentions *Cholle*, present-day Al-Ḥullē, 17 km south of Reṣāfa, and the caravans had to stop also near Al-Kowm, some 50 km from Reṣāfa. This was an ideal halting-place provided with abundant watering-places on the northern slopes of the Ğebel al-Biṣrī and the caravans obviously used this station on their journey⁴⁰.

From Ṭayibē, the caravans were heading for Suḥne, 25 km to the south, then for Ḥlēhlē, the *Helela* of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and for Arak, the ^{uru}*Ia-ar-ki* of Ashurbanipal's annals, the ᾿Αραχα of Ptolemy and the *Harac* (corr. from *Harae*) of the Peutinger Table. At least two halting-places were required on the route from Ṭayibē to Palmyra, distant 93 km. There was also another route from Reṣāfa to Palmyra, through Turkmāniyē and Qdeym. It was used at least from the Roman times⁴¹, but it was somewhat longer — 165 km instead of 155 km —

p. 260-272, see also p. 299-326 by A. MENDEL. See besides on the site of Reṣāfa: A. POIDEBARD, *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie* (BAH 18), Paris 1934, p. 82; R. MOUTERDE - A. POIDEBARD, *op. cit.* (n. 29), p. 131-144 with Ch. CAMBIER's note on "L'alimentation de Reṣafa en eau potable"; R. DUSSAUD, *La pénétration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam* (BAH 59), Paris 1955, p. 87-90. Among more recent archaeological publications, cf. W. KARNAPP, *Die Stadtmauer von Rusafa in Syrien*, Berlin 1976; M. MACKENSEN, *Eine befestigte spätantike Anlage vor den Stadtmauern von Resafa* (Resafa 1), Mainz a/R 1984; Th. ULBERT, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Resafa 2), Mainz a/R 1988. The large water reservoirs of the city date only from the 6th-7th centuries A.D.: W. BRINKER - N. LOGAR, *Zur Wasserversorgung von Resafa-Sergiupolis*, in *DaM* 5 (1991), p. 119-146 and Pl. 40-53. Older literature can be found in the works just quoted.

³⁹ For this itinerary, see A. MUSIL, *op. cit.* (n. 38), passim; DUSSAUD, *Topographie*, p. 251-255; A. POIDEBARD, *op. cit.* (n. 38), p. 73-84.

⁴⁰ This site is studied intensively by a permanent French ethno-archaeological mission: D. STORDEUR, *El-Kowm et Qdeir*, in *Syrian-European Archaeology Exhibition/Exposition syro-européenne d'archéologie*, Damas 1996, p. 35-40.

⁴¹ R. MOUTERDE - A. POIDEBARD, *op. cit.* (n. 29), p. 113-114.

and did never have the importance of the route through the passes of Tayibē.

The great importance of Palmyra is sufficiently known⁴²: at this point, the great trade routes met in ancient times, the one crossing from the Mediterranean ports to the Persian Gulf, the other coming up from Damascus and South Arabia. Three natural tracks connect Palmyra with Damascus⁴³. They follow the valleys formed to the east of the Antilebanon by the three Qalamūn ridges which stretch northeast of Damascus as far as Palmyra. However, the main route, viable all the year long and called "the Highway of the Khans" by the Bedouin, borders on the southern slopes of the Ĝebel Rawāq, along the Syrian desert, the Ḥamād, that comes up in places almost to the foot of the range. A great part of the route, 225 km long, follows a large valley with grazings and watering-places. It corresponds to the Roman *Strata Diocletiana* that simply reused the old caravan track. There were at least four halting-places on this route, thus implying daily journeys of about 45 km, a distance travelled by present-day camel caravans.

The main route from Damascus to the Red Sea first followed a track that corresponds approximately to the Ḥiğāz railway from Damascus to Der'ā, along the western border of Al-Leğā. About 85 km south of Damascus, just to the southeast of Šayḥ Miskīn, the route reached 'Almā or 'Ilmā, the Ḥēlam of II Sam. 10, 16 and the Alema of I Macc. 5, 35⁴⁴. Edre'i, modern Der'ā, was reached 22 km further. This place, mentioned already in Ugaritic texts as *Hdr'y*⁴⁵, lies on a tributary of the Yarmouk. The track continued then to Tell ar-Rāmīt⁴⁶, 7 km south of the large modern village of Ar-Ramtā (Jordan), at the Syro-Jordanian border, 10 km south of Der'ā. This tell corresponds very likely to Ramoth Gilead. The caravan track reaches Ĝeraš and 'Ammān, the ancient Rabbat 'Ammān whose perennial source of the Yabboq must have attracted caravans from

⁴² See, for example, J. STARCKY - M. GAWLIKOWSKI, *Palmyre*, Paris 1985. For the roads in particular, one can refer to the chapter "Les routes de la Palmyrène" in R. DUSSAUD, *op. cit.* (n. 38), p. 76-90, and A. MUSIL, *op. cit.* (n. 38), *passim*.

⁴³ A. POIDEBARD, *op. cit.* (n. 38), p. 34-56.

⁴⁴ The place is known also for a martyr of saint Sergius, mentioned by Th. NÖLDEKE, *Zur Topographie und Geschichte des Damascenischen Gebietes und der Haurângegend*, in *ZDMG* 29 (1875), p. 419-444, especially p. 432. It is referred to by G. SCHUMACHER, *Das südliche Basan*, in *ZDPV* 20 (1897), p. 65-227 (see p. 75 and 171). See also here below, p. 374.

⁴⁵ *KTU* 1.108, 3. Cf. B. MARGULIS, *The Canaanite Origin of Psalm 29 Reconsidered*, in *Biblica* 51 (1970), p. 332-348, especially p. 344; ID., *A Ugaritic Psalm*, in *JBL* 89 (1970), p. 292-303, especially p. 293-294.

⁴⁶ See here below, p. 354 and 381.

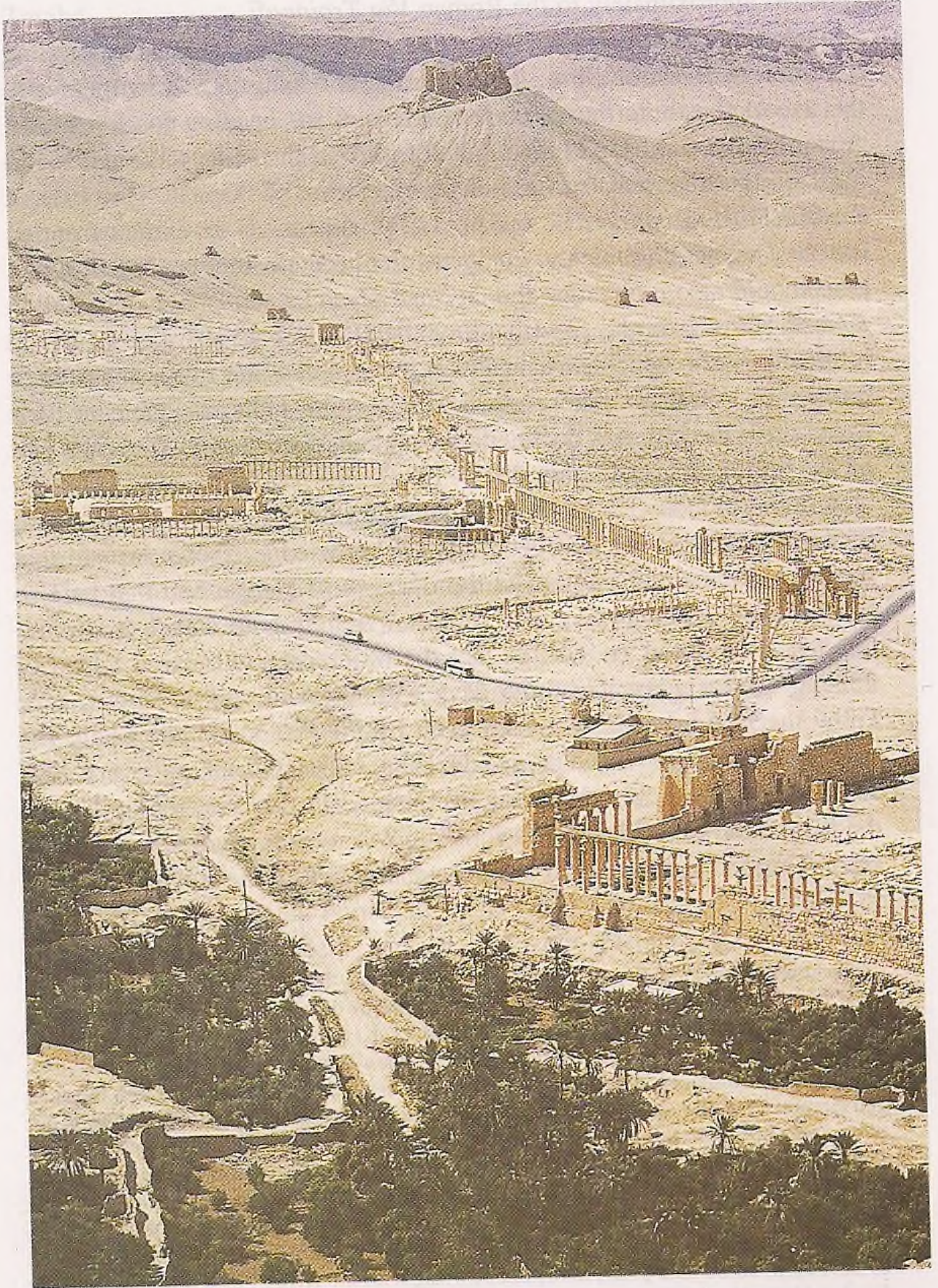
time immemorial. The route from 'Ammān to the Gulf of 'Aqaba corresponded approximately to the Roman *Via Traiana*⁴⁷.

The mention of a reconstruction of "Palmyra in the desert" by king Solomon in II Chron. 8, 4, that reinterprets I Kings 9, 18, witnesses to the use of the route thus described by caravans heading for Jerusalem. According to Gen. 31, 21, Jacob had followed the same route when flying from Ḥarrān, and the ordinate enumeration of "Gōzān, Ḥarrān, and Reṣāfa" in II Kings 19, 12 and Is. 37, 12 appears as an extract from an itinerary witnessing the knowledge of the northern section of that route. One should also notice that the city of Nahor, located somewhere in the area of Ḥarrān, on the right bank of the Ḥābūr, was also known to the biblical writers, which misconceived its name as that of an ancestor or brother of Abraham. The confusion was quite understandable at their time, since the city has declined and perhaps vanished towards the end of the Middle Assyrian period⁴⁸.

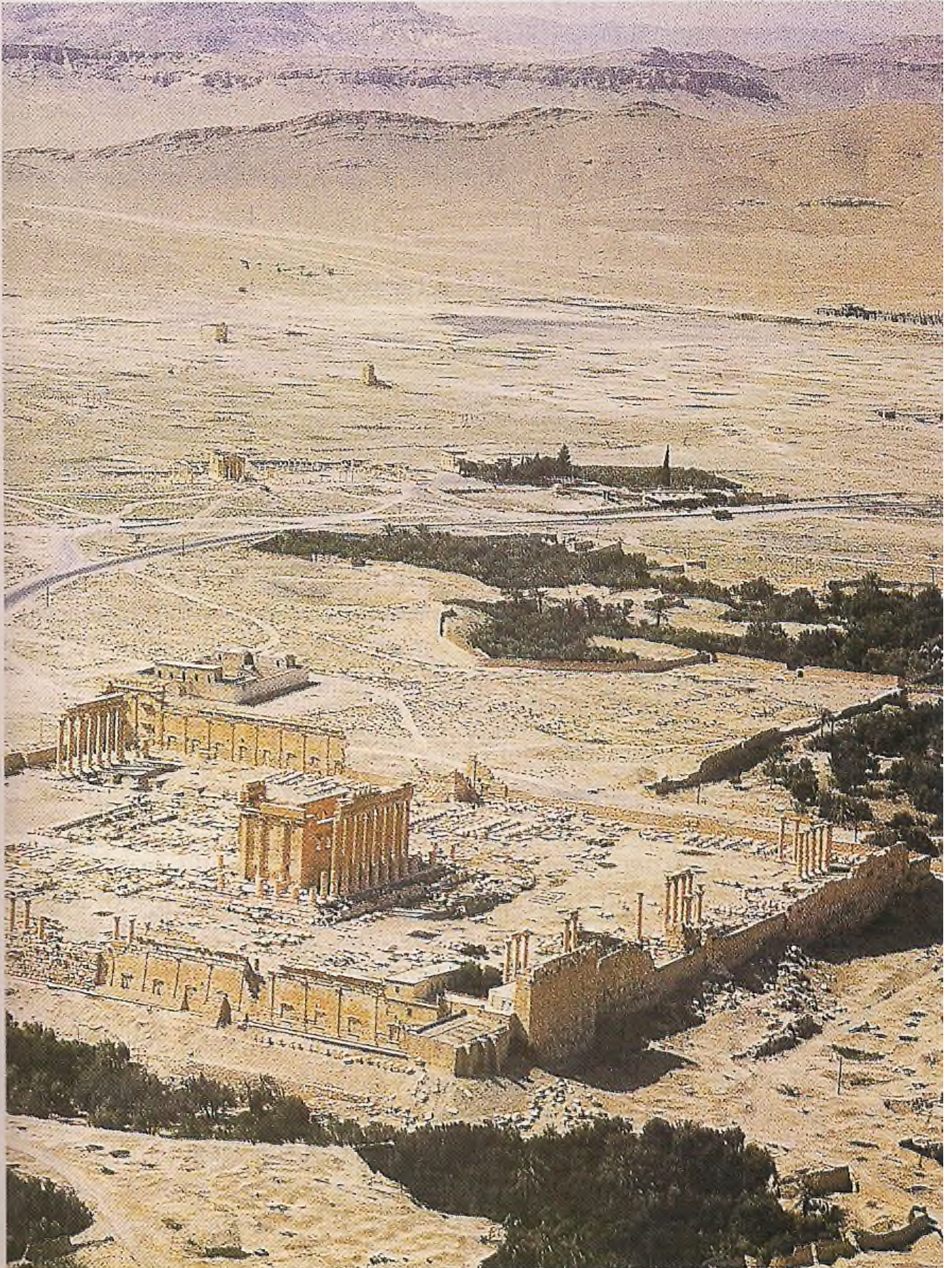
A detail in Gen. 31, 23, that is sometimes considered as an indication of the writer's insufficient geographical knowledge, shows instead that he had quite a correct notion of the distance of Ḥarrān and that he also knew which are the endurance limits of the Arabian camel or dromedary. It is common knowledge that the dromedary will carry a load of 250 kg 40 km a day for three days without drinking, but few people know that a riding camel, called *delūl* by the Bedouins, can easily run over a distance of 100 km a day, even without drinking every day. According to Gen. 31, 23, Laban has pursued Jacob for seven days up to the hill-country of Gilead, thus running over a distance of about 675 km from Ḥarrān to Ramoth Gilead and following the route we have

⁴⁷ ABEL, *Géographie* II, p. 228-230.

⁴⁸ The last mentions of the city of Nahor (Naḥūru) date from the 13th century B.C., when Nahor was still the chief-town of a district; cf. K. NASHEF, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der mittelbabylonischen und mittelassyrischen Zeit* (RGTC 5), Wiesbaden 1982, p. 201. The city was located on the western bank of the Upper Ḥābūr, between the river and Ḥarrān. Cf. E. BILGIČ, *Die Ortsnamen der 'kappadokischen' Urkunden im Rahmen der alten Sprachen Anatoliens*, in *AfO* 15 (1945-51), p. 1-37 (see p. 23); A. GOETZE, *An Old Babylonian Itinerary*, in *JCS* 7 (1953), p. 51-72 (see p. 67); J.-R. KUPPER, *Nahur*, in *RLA* IX/1-2, Berlin 1998, p. 86-87. The identification of Til-Naḥiri, mentioned in Neo-Assyrian documents from the 7th century B.C., with the earlier city of Nahor was proposed by W.F. ALBRIGHT, *Western Asia in the Twentieth Century B.C.: The Archives of Mari*, in *BASOR* 67 (1937), p. 26-30 (see p. 27, n. 6); ID., *New Light on the History of Western Asia in the Second Millennium B.C.*, in *BASOR* 78 (1940), p. 23-31 (see p. 29-30). See also R. T. O'CALLAGHAN, *Aram Naharaim*, Rome 1948, p. 140. The onomastics of SAA VI, 315 is in favour of the vicinity of Ḥarrān. In any case, the biblical name of Nahor is related to the place name of the second millennium B.C.



Palmyra, looking to the Northwest (Photo: M. Al-Rūmī).



Palmyra, looking to the Northeast (Photo: M. Al-Rūmī).

described above. This means that the daily journey did not exceed 100 km, while a detachment of Turkish soldiers riding upon *delūls* could easily journey from Jerusalem to Gaza in one day, covering a distance of 110 km. In two days, they were travelling from Beersheva to Jaffa, and back, thus covering a distance of 214 km. People even mention the case of a Bedouin riding upon a good *delūl* who run in one day over a distance of 175 km from 'Ammān to Ma'ān following the desert track that pilgrims to Mecca travel usually over in five days⁴⁹. The mention of a "journey of seven days" from Ḥarrān to Ramoth Gilead, in Gen. 31, 23, seems therefore to indicate that people in Palestine knew how much time one needed to reach Ḥarrān. Of course, the seven days correspond to journeys of couriers on fast riding camels, not to travels of heavily loaded caravans.

In any hypothesis, only camels should be used for transporting people and goods on such long journeys and biblical writers, when telling the mission of Abraham's servant to Aram-Naharaim (Gen. 24, 10 ff.) or Jacob's flight from Ḥarrān (Gen. 31, 17), knew it perfectly well. Thus, Abraham's servant choses ten camels from his master's herd, while Jacob sets his sons and wives on camels. There is no question that those stories refer to a period when domestic camels were widespread in Syria and Palestine, so that people knew their endurance and physical possibilities (Gen. 31, 23).

The so-called "Priestly" material of the Pentateuch designates Aram-Naharaim by the name Paddan-Aram. If the Hebrew term *paddān* must be explained in the light of Akkadian *paddānu*, "road", "track", then the name *Paddan-'Aram*, used in ancient Hebrew, should originally have designated this "Road to Aram"⁵⁰. However, the actual use of this phrase does not correspond to such a meaning, but refers clearly to a region of northern Syria. Another interpretation should therefore be proposed.

Now, a Neo-Assyrian tablet from Ashurbanipal's library, presented as a copy of an ancient inscription of the Kassite king Agum-kakrime, ascribes the following lofty title to this Babylonian monarch, who reigned either in the 15th century (Agum II) or in the later part of the 17th century (Agum I): "king of the Kassites and of the Akkadians, king of the vast land of Babylonia, ... king of Padan and of Alman, king of the

⁴⁹ A. JAUSSEN, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, Paris 1908, p. 271.

⁵⁰ This was the opinion of É. DHORME, *Recueil Édouard Dhorme*, Paris 1951, p. 217-218.



Caravan (Photo: A. Colette).

country of the Gutians, backward populations”⁵¹. The mention of the country called Padan seems to indicate that this geographical name was actually used at the time when this text was composed. Since Alman is a variant form of Ḫalman or Arman, mentioned in two other texts with Padni or Padin⁵², the three texts should be taken together into consideration. Now, one of them relates these places to Tirgan, king of the Gutians⁵³, which is a clear indication that Alman in the so-called “Agum-kakrime” inscription must be carefully distinguished from the western Ḫalman, used by Shalmaneser III as the name of Aleppo⁵⁴. Its location in Iran, at Sar-i Pul-i Zuhāb, is virtually cer-

⁵¹ G. RAWLINSON (ed.), *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia V*, 2nd ed., London 1909, Pl. 33, col. I, 31-39 = *II R*, Pl. 38, No. 2, rev., col. I, 34-42. The nature of this spurious text is briefly described by M.-J. SEUX, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes*, Paris 1967, p. 67, n. 14 (cf. p. 303), and R. BORGER, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur I*, Berlin 1967, p. 406; Id., in *BiOr* 28 (1971), p. 17b.

⁵² D.R. FRAYNE, *On the Location of Simurrum*, in G.D. YOUNG - M.W. CHAVALAS - R.E. AVERBECK (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons. Studies in Honor of M.C. Astour*, Bethesda 1997, p. 243-269, especially p. 259.

⁵³ B. LANDSBERGER - E. REINER - M. CIVIL, *The Series ḪAR-ra = ḫubullu: Tablets XX-XXIV (MSL XI)*, Rome 1974, p. 36, Recension B, Tablet V, col. III, 6.

⁵⁴ J.D. HAWKINS, *Ḫalab: The 1st millennium*, in *RLA IV*, Berlin 1972-75, p. 53.

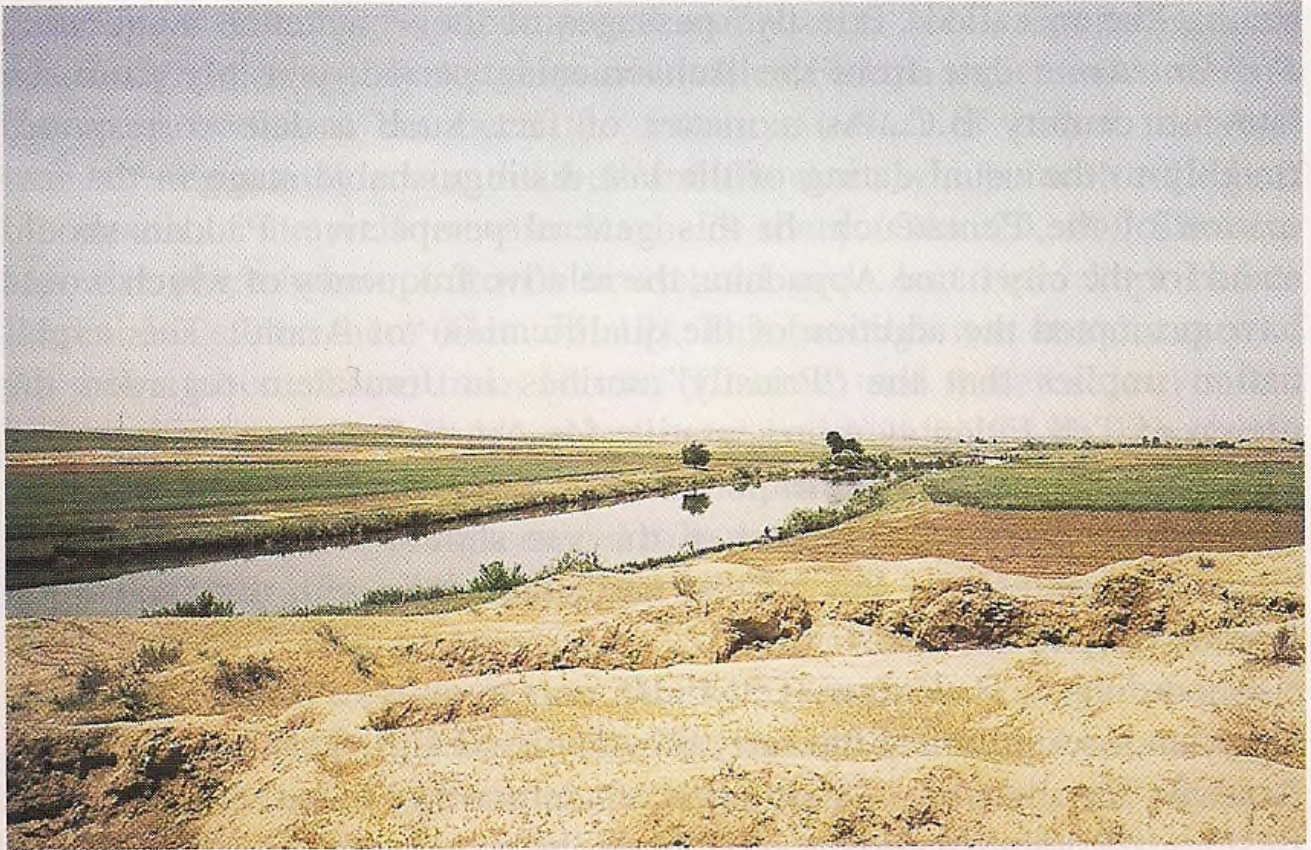
tain⁵⁵; therefore Padan must be another city of the same area. In other words, no connection is possible between this Padan and the biblical Paddan-Aram, a territory located to the east of the great bent of the Middle Euphrates, where Aramaeans have settled towards the end of the 11th century at the latest.

There must be a particular reason why the area under consideration or, at least, a part of this area is called *Paddan-'Aram* in the Bible. Now, there is a ruin mound called Tell Fidēn or Al-Fidayn that overlooks the right bank of the Ḥābūr, stretching for 800 m from north to south, some 35 km northeast of the Euphrates. The mound is about 200 m wide and 25 to 30 m high. Tell Fidēn is certainly the site of a city flourishing from the first millennium B.C. on⁵⁶. It was identified with the Ἀρφαδάνα of Ptolemy⁵⁷, who locates it on the Ḥābūr, and it should correspond to the

⁵⁵ R. BORGER, *Vier Grenzsteinurkunden Merodachbaladans I. von Babylonien*, in *AfO* 23 (1970), p. 1-26 (see p. 1).

⁵⁶ W. RÖLLIG - H. KÜHNE, *The Lower Habur. A Preliminary Report on a Survey Conducted by the Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients in 1975*, in *AAAS* 27-28 (1977-78), p. 115-140 (see p. 120-121 and map on p. 133). This is already stressed in general terms by J.-R. KUPPER, *op. cit.* (n. 21), p. 2, n. 1. A plan of the mound is given also by H. KÜHNE, *Zur historischen Geographie am Unteren Ḥābūr. Vorläufiger Bericht über eine archäologische Geländebegehung*, in *AfO* 25 (1974-77), p. 249-255 (see p. 251).

⁵⁷ PTOLEMY, *Geography* V, 17, 7. Cf. A. MUSIL, *op. cit.* (n. 29), p. 82, n. 46. This Ἀρφαδάνα is likely to be the Appadana of the Pap. Euphr. published by D. FEISSEL - J. GASCOU, *Documents d'archives romaines inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III^e s. après J.-C.), I. Les pétitions*, in *Journal des Savants* 1995, p. 65-119; D. FEISSEL - J. GASCOU - J. TEIXIDOR, *Documents d'archives romaines inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III^e s. après J.-C.), II. Les actes de vente-achat (P. Euphr. 6 à 10)*, in *Journal des Savants* 1997, p. 3-57. This Appadana was, in fact, the seat of the Roman governor of Sphorakene, as shown by Pap. Euphr. 5 of the group; cf. D. FEISSEL - J. GASCOU, *Documents d'archives romaines inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III^e s. après J.-C.)*, in *CRAI* 1989, p. 535-561, and below, p. 97-98, n. 130. This district is known also from the name of the Βίρθα Ἀσφωρακου in the inscription of Sapor I, identified quite convincingly with Ḥalabīya (cf. below, p. 97). It is unlikely therefore that this Appadana was located south of the Ḥābūr mouth, on the left bank of the Euphrates, as suggested by A. LUTHER, *Zwei Bemerkungen zu Isidor von Charax*, in *ZPE* 119 (1997), p. 237-242. In any case, Ἀρφαδάνα = Tell Fidēn should not be confounded with Ἀρφαδάνα mentioned by PTOLEMY, *Geography* V, 17, 5. The latter, located south of the Ḥābūr, cannot be identified with the Basileia of the Parthian Stations, probably the present-day Zalābīya, as still maintained by M.-L. CHAUMONT, *art. cit.* (n. 25), p. 83-84; J. LAUFFRAY, *Halabiya-Zenobia, place forte du Limes oriental et la Haute-Mésopotamie au VI^e siècle I* (BAH 119), Paris 1983, p. 79; T. GNOLI, *I papiri dell'Euftrate. Studio di geografia storica*, in *Mediterraneo Antico* 2 (1999), p. 321-358, in particular p. 325, 327, 350. Instead, it must be the Appadana which appears several times as *App*, *Appad*, *Appadan* in documents from Dura Europos and is mentioned in Pap. Dura 60B between Gazica (Ἀσῖχα of the Parthian Stations) and Dura, on the right bank of the Euphrates; see the references in C.B. WELLES - R.O. FINK - J.F. GILLIAM, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report V, Part I. The Parchments and Papyri*, New Haven 1959, p. 40 and 441. Besides, it is mentioned in Greek as Ἀρφαδάνα or Ἀπαδάνα in the accounts of Nabuchelus: P.V.C. BAUR - M.I. ROSTOVITZEFF - A.R. BELLINGER (eds.), *The Excavations*



The Middle Ḥābūr seen from Tell Raqa'i.

Apadna of the *Notitia Dignitatum*⁵⁸. It is mentioned also in Caliph 'Abd al-Mālik's time (A.D. 685-705) and the poet Mohammed an-Nawāǧī (A.D. 1386-1455) mentions this settlement with Aṣ-Ṣuwwar⁵⁹, located further north. One can assume that the city name is ancient and that it gave its name to *Paddan-'Aram*⁶⁰, but the forms with a prefixed *a-* obviously witness the influence of the Old Persian word *apadāna*, that designates a palatial residence, and they may indicate that the place name is not anterior to the 5th century B.C. The obvious conclusion would then

at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of Fourth Season of Work, October 1930 — March 1931, New Haven 1933, p. 96, No. 221; p. 119-120, No. 240. Finally, there are two *Appadana* in the area of the Ḥābūr and of the Middle Euphrates, not three or four.

⁵⁸ *Not. Dign. Or.* XXXVI, 8. It should be stressed that a second city *Apadna* is mentioned in *Not. Dign. Or.* XXXV, 13 (*Apatna* in 25), but it is situated more to the north, possibly near Mardin; cf. here below, p. 146, n. 80. DUSSAUD, *Topographie*, p. 483, recuses both identifications, but proposes no arguments.

⁵⁹ A. MUSIL, *op. cit.* (n. 29), p. 82-83, n. 46. For Mohammed an-Nawāǧī, author of various anthologies, see I. KRATSKOWSKY, *al-Nawāǧī*, in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, nouv. éd., VII, Leiden-Paris 1993, p. 1042.

⁶⁰ It is quite possible that a relation was seen between this geographical name and the Assyro-Babylonian word *paddānu*, "road". In Aramaic, instead, *paddān* is a "plough", or a "yoke of (plough-)oxen", or the name of a square measure corresponding to about 0,42 ha or an "acre" and related to the surface ploughed in a determinate time. The meanings "yoke of oxen" and square measure ("feddan") are attested also in Arabic for the noun *faddān*. See also below, p. 73

be that the so-called “Priestly” passages of the Pentateuch mentioning *Paddan-’Aram* date from the Achaemenian period, possibly from the late 5th century B.C. As a matter of fact, such a date corresponds roughly to the usual dating of the last distinguishable stage in the formation of the Pentateuch. In this general perspective, Paddan should stand for the city name Appadana, the relative frequency of which would have prompted the addition of the qualification “of Aram”. This explanation implies that the “Priestly” scribes in Jerusalem regarded the region of Tell Fidēn as representative for Aram. Such a view is understandable because of the importance of the Ḥābūr area for the Aramaeans, but the historical past of the site should eventually be better known to buttress the link of this particular place with the appellation *Paddan-’Aram*.

According to H. Kühne, Tell Fidēn corresponds to *Sūru* in the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions of the early 9th century B.C.⁶¹ This appellation — Aramaic *šūr*, “wall” — does not exclude another name, more precise. Besides, the identification is not certain, because not all the ancient sites along the Lower Ḥābūr have been taken into account, especially the site of Al-Buṣayra at the point where the Ḥābūr joins the left bank of the Euphrates, flowing from the foothills⁶². The possibility remains thus that Tell Fidēn preserves the name of ancient *Paddān*, shortened from *Apādana*. Its older Assyrian name may instead have been quite different, for instance “Dūr-Adad-nirari”, which was founded in the early 8th century by Nergal-ēreš with fifteen villages in the land of Laqē according to the stela from Tell ar-Rimāḥ⁶³. Concrete and firm information can be provided only by excavations on Tell Fidēn.

Paddan-’Aram may be linked tentatively not only with Tell Fidēn, on the right bank of the Ḥābūr, but also with a borough close to Ḥarrān.

⁶¹ H. KÜHNE, *Zur Rekonstruktion der Feldzüge Adad-nīrāri II., Tukulti-Ninurta II. und Aššurnasirpal II. im Ḥābūr-Gebiet*, in *BaM* 11 (1980), p. 44-70 and map, in particular p. 61-62. This identification is considered as “acceptable” by M. LIVERANI, *Studies on the Annals of Ashurnasirpal II, 2: Topographical Analysis*, Roma 1992, p. 33. For another identification, see here below, p. 87-89. One could add here that other ^{𐎢𐎣}*Pa-da-an* occur in the Murašū archives (V. DONBAZ - M.W. STOLPER, *Istanbul Murašū Texts*, İstanbul 1997, No. 59, 3) and in Middle Babylonian texts, perhaps to be located southeast of the Diyāla; cf. K. NASHEF, *op. cit.* (n. 48), p. 213.

⁶² See below, p. 86-89.

⁶³ S. DALLEY, *A Stela of Adad-nirari III and Nergal-ereš from Tell al Rimah*, in *Iraq* 30 (1968), p. 139-153 and Pl. XXXIX-XLI = *RIMA* III, text A.0.104.7, p. 211, line 19. Cf. also the improved decipherment by M. WEIPPERT, *Die Feldzüge Adadnararis III. nach Syrien. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen*, in *ZDPV* 108 (1992 [1993]), p. 42-67 (see p. 60-62).

The *Itinerarium Egeriae*, composed around 400 A.D., reports Egeria's pilgrimage to a large borough (*uicus*) called Fadana which, according to the local tradition, has been the mansion (*uilla*) of Laban the Aramaean⁶⁴. Egeria there saw the well and the stone which Jacob rolled off the mouth of the well to water Rachel's sheep (Gen. 29, 10). She also saw the place where Laban's household gods had been kept before Rachel has stolen them (Gen. 31, 19). This borough was at a distance of six miles (about 9 km) from Ḥarrān (Charrae) and therefore can safely be identified with Tell Feddān North and Tell Feddān South, seen by E. Sachau in 1879 and located by him at a distance of two hours walk west of Ḥarrān⁶⁵. One might be tempted to assume that the local tradition had originated from the biblical account of Gen. 29-31, 21, that ends with the mention of Paddan-Aram (Gen. 31, 18). Now, the Ḥarrān Census mentions a town ^{uru}*Ba-da-ni* near Ḥarrān⁶⁶. Since *b/p* was one phoneme in Neo-Assyrian, as shown e.g. by the variant spellings *Ar-pa-a-a* and *Ar-ba-a-a*, "Arab", while *p* changed later into *f*⁶⁷, the *uicus... Fadana* of the *Itinerarium Egeriae* and Tell Feddān may be identical with the ^{uru}*Ba-da-ni* near Ḥarrān. One can just wonder whether this could be the origin of the appellation Paddan-Aram. Today there is only one good well in the vicinity of Ḥarrān, that known as Bir Yaqub, Jacob's Well, about 1 km northwest of Altınbaşak, the site of ancient Ḥarrān. At this well occurred the fateful meeting of Jacob and Rachel according to the present-day tradition.

Finally, there is the possibility that *Ba-da-ni*, Fadana, Feddān, and Fidēn are place names related to the Aramaic and Arabic noun *faddān*, "acre", used in the broader sense of "arable land", just like "acre" derives from Latin *ager*. In this case, Paddan-Aram may just mean "the arable land of Aram", "the ground of Aram", like *śadēh 'Ārām* in Hos. 12, 13.

Contacts between Upper Mesopotamia and Palestine by the caravan tract described above would have a particular significance for the Patriarchal traditions of the Bible if David's scribe was called *Šay-Ši'*, "Gift of the Moon-god", and was native from the Ḥarrān area, as we have argued elsewhere in consideration of the divine name *Ši'* borne by the Aramaean Moon-god of Ḥarrān⁶⁸. Since two sons of *Šay-Ši'* exercised

⁶⁴ *Itinerarium Egeriae* XXI, in *Itineraria et alia geographica* (CCSL 175), Turnhout 1965, p. 65. Fadana appears in XXI, 26.

⁶⁵ E. SACHAU, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig 1883, p. 222.

⁶⁶ SAA XI, 213, III, 11'-12'.

⁶⁷ LIPÍŃSKI, *Semitic*, § 11.4 and § 11.1.

⁶⁸ SAIO II, p. 180-181.

the same function of king's scribes under the reign of Solomon (I Kings 4, 3), the influence of the Ḥarrānian traditions may have been quite strong in Jerusalem in the literary field.

Another source of influences exercised by Upper Mesopotamia and Aram-Naharaim were the so-called "Hittite" wives of Solomon (I Kings 11, 1), a qualification that could refer in that period to the Aramaean as well as to the Neo-Hittite states of northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. It is quite possible that the biblical story of Isaac's marriage with a spouse brought from the Ḥarrān area (Gen. 24, 10) was partly inspired by a princely marriage that the writer witnessed at the Court of Jerusalem. The fact is that Rebecca's name *Rbqh* is Old Aramaic and derives from the root *rbq* (*rbš*), "to lie down", written with *qōf* as in Early Aramaic inscriptions⁶⁹. It means therefore something like "bedmate". A feminine name, written *Rbdt*, is encountered also in Qatabanic, but it appears to be rather a place name. Instead, the masculine name *Rbd* is borne by men mentioned in a few Ṣafaitic inscriptions⁷⁰.

One should notice further that the name of Absalom, borne by David's third son, does never appear in the Bible and in Hebrew inscriptions as the proper name of another person, while the same name *A-bi-sa-la-mu* is borne towards the end of the 10th century B.C. by the Aramaean king of Bēt-Bağyān⁷¹, whose royal residence was at Gōzān, mentioned in the Bible⁷² and situated precisely in the region of Upper Ḥābūr. This name is attested also in a later period among the Aramaeans of Upper Mesopotamia⁷³.

The biblical tradition assuming the parentage of the Hebrew patriarchs with the Aramaeans of the Ḥarrān area is thus explainable in the historical context of the 10th century B.C., especially if one reckons with the possible influence of royal scribes of Aramaean descent, whose family was native from the Ḥarrān region. The other tradition, which

⁶⁹ M. NOTH, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, Stuttgart 1928, p. 28, could not propose any satisfactory explanation for this name, while J.J. STAMM, *Hebräische Frauennamen*, in *Hebräische Wortforschung* (VTS 16), Leiden 1967, p. 301-339 (see p. 335-336), reprinted in ID., *Beiträge zur hebräischen und altorientalischen Namenkunde* (OBO 30), Freiburg-Göttingen 1980, favours the opinion expressed by H. BAUER (*ZDMG* 67 [1913], p. 344), who linked Rebecca's name with the Arabic noun *baqara(tun)*, "cow". However, since nothing supports such a metathesis, this interpretation cannot be accepted.

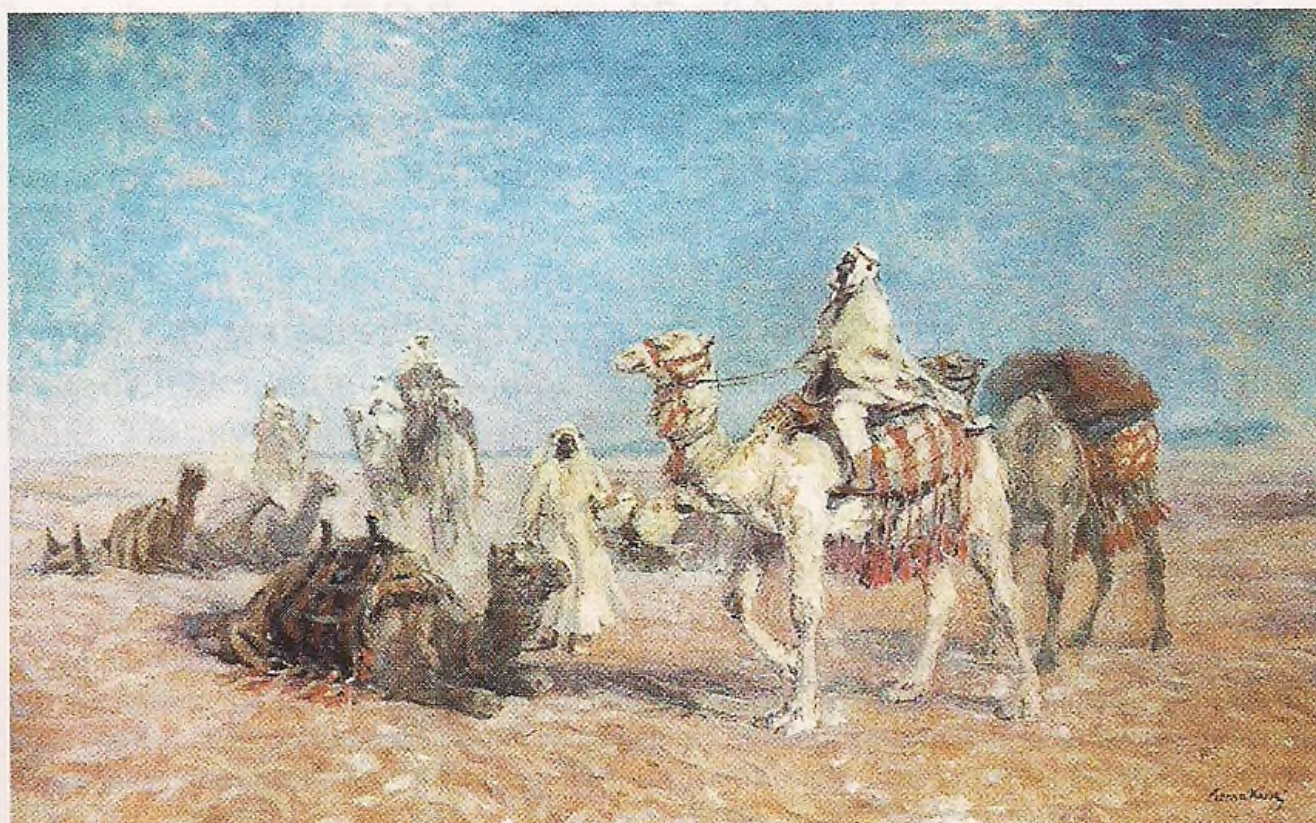
⁷⁰ HARDING, *Arabian Names*, p. 266.

⁷¹ RIMA II, text A.0.99.2, p. 153, line 101. Absalom's mother was Maaka, the daughter of Talmay, king of Geshur (II Sam. 3, 3).

⁷² II Kings 17, 6; 18, 11; 19, 12; Is. 37, 12; I Chron. 5, 26.

⁷³ PNA I/1, p. 14; cf. APN, p. 5b; SAA VI, 82, 6; SAA XII, 50, r. 3'.

links Abraham's clan with Ur of the Chaldees⁷⁴, is obviously more recent, since the city of Ur could not be called "Ur of the Chaldees" before the foundation of the Neo-Babylonian empire in the 7th century B.C. One should admit the long proposed view that this second tradition originated among the Judaeans exiled to Babylonia. This happened probably towards the end of the Neo-Babylonian period, when the relations between Ur and Ḥarrān were quite close because of the common cult of Sīn and of Ningal⁷⁵, and when the exiles realized how close was the parentage of the Chaldees of the Ur area and of the Aramaeans of the region of Ḥarrān. Abraham's migration from Ur to Ḥarrān looks in fact as a replica of the migration of the lunar deities of Ur to Ḥarrān, where their worship was aimed at restoring the ancient Ḥarrānian cult after a break of seventy years.



"Resting caravan" by Czerna Karsky (50 × 70 cm).

⁷⁴ Gen. 11, 28.31; 15, 7; Neh. 9, 7.

⁷⁵ SAIO II, p. 192.

Biblical genealogies establish a relationship between the Aramaeans and the ancestors of Israel as well. Thus, Aram appears as the grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor in Gen 22, 21 and belongs therefore to the same generation as Israel-Jacob. His grandfather Nahor is the personified city of *Nahūru* in Upper Mesopotamia, still mentioned in Middle Assyrian texts of the 13th century B.C.⁷⁶, while his father Qemu'el bears a real personal name⁷⁷. Although the list of the Nahorites in Gen. 22, 20-24 is a literary unit, composed probably in the early Persian period⁷⁸, the qualification of Qemu'el as "father of Aram" is unique in this enumeration of Nahor's sons and must echo a firm element of the tradition. It is quite possible that Qemu'el played an important role in Aramaean patriarchal narratives, but the genuine legendary material about the origins of the Aramaeans is so far unknown.

Another reference to Aram can be found in the genealogy of the Table of Nations, in Gen. 10, 22, where Aram appears as a son of Shem and as the father of four sons that represent populations the identification of which is not evident⁷⁹. Since the Table of Nations must date from the end or from the second half of the 7th century B.C.⁸⁰, this genealogy of Aram belongs to a period when no independent Aramaean states were left, but when the Aramaic language was already perceived as one of the most important of the Middle East.

⁷⁶ See here above p. 65 and n. 48.

⁷⁷ R. ZADOK, *Historical and Onomastic Notes*, in *WO* 9 (1977), p. 35-56 (see p. 54, n. 138); E. LIPÍŃSKI, "Mon père était un Araméen errant". *L'histoire, carrefour des sciences bibliques et orientales*, in *OLP* 20 (1989), p. 23-47 (see p. 43-47).

⁷⁸ D. JERICKE, *Die Liste der Nahoriden Genesis 22, 20-24. Eine redaktions-geschichtliche Studie*, in *ZAW* 111 (1999), p. 481-497.

⁷⁹ E. LIPÍŃSKI, *Les Sémites selon Gen 10, 21-30 et 1 Chr 1, 17-23*, in *ZAH* 6 (1993), p. 193-215 (see p. 198 and 200-203).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214-215; Yu.B. TSIRKIN, *Japheth's Progeny and the Phoenicians*, in E. LIPÍŃSKI (ed.), *Phoenicia and the Bible* (OLA 44), Leuven 1991, p. 117-134 (see p. 134); G.L. PRATO, *Dalla geografia neutrale alla mappa ideologica centralizzata: la "tavola dei popoli" (Gn 10) da testo delle origini a immagine normativa*, in L. CAGNI (ed.), *Biblica et Semitica. Studi in memoria di Fr. Vattioni*, Napoli 1999, p. 511-546, especially p. 524 and 529, where the author nevertheless prefers a date in the 6th-5th century, which seems too low.