



CONFLICT, TERRITORY AND CULTURE: THE CASE OF HARADU, A FORTRESS ON THE IRAQI MIDDLE EUPHRATES (11th-7th CENTURIES BC)

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Résumé – Haradu correspond à l'une des forteresses d'un vaste système défensif mis en place par les Assyriens dans la vallée du moyen Euphrate, dès le début du XI^e siècle, pour faire obstacle au déferlement des Araméens. Au cours du X^e siècle, la région échappe au contrôle assyrien pour devenir une principauté indépendante araméenne avant d'être reconquise durant le IX^e siècle. Le passage de l'autorité assyrienne à celle araméenne à Haradu ne se traduit pas par un changement radical de la culture matérielle, impliquant que les habitants de la forteresse demeurent substantiellement les mêmes. Malgré la continuité, on peut noter aussi une évolution lente avec un assemblage céramique comprenant des formes babyloniennes et locales, puis l'apparition de la céramique à engobe rouge d'origine levantine et plus tard quelques nouvelles catégories comme des pots à glaçure. La culture matérielle reflète également des échanges multiples à travers un vaste territoire s'étendant du Levant à l'Iran. Finalement, on présume que les Araméens ont joué un rôle majeur dans la circulation des objets et des techniques et on se demande s'il ne s'agirait pas de l'une des raisons principales du conflit entre les deux composantes.

Abstract – The fortress of Haradu is part of a large defensive system conceived in the 11th century by the Assyrians in the Middle Euphrates valley (Iraq), to oppose the overwhelming influx of the Aramaeans. During the 10th century it fell from Assyrian control into the hands of the independent Aramaean principality of Suhu, before being reconquered in the 9th century. The transition from Assyrian to Aramaean authority at Haradu is not marked by a major change in material culture, implying that the inhabitants of the fortress remained substantially the same. Despite this continuity, a slow evolution can be observed, from a ceramic assemblage with Babylonian and local shapes, through the appearance of red slipped pottery of Levantine origin to some new Assyrian wares, such as glazed pots. The material culture also reflects a wide ranging mix across a vast territory stretching from the Levant to Iran. Finally, it is assumed that the Aramaeans played an important role in the control and circulation of objects and crafts, which raises the question of whether this was one of the main reasons for the conflict between the two opponents.

خلاصة – إن قلعة Haradu هي إحدى قلاع المنظومة الدفاعية الواسعة التي أوجدها الآشوريون في وادي الفرات الأوسط (العراق) منذ بداية القرن الحادي عشر ق.م. بغية الحد من زحف الآراميين. تخلصت المنطقة، إبان القرن العاشر، من الهيمنة الآشورية لتصبح إمارة آرامية مستقلة قبل أن يتم احتلالها مجدداً خلال القرن التاسع ق.م. لم تُلاحظ تغيرات مهمة في الثقافة المادية عند انتقال Haradu من السيطرة الآشورية إلى الآرامية مما يدل على بقاء سكان القلعة أنفسهم فيها. رغم هذه الإستمرارية، يمكن ملاحظة تطور بطيء من خلال مجموعة خزفيات تحتوي على أشكال ذات طرازين بابلي ومحلي، ومن ثم ظهور خزفيات بلاء أحمر بطابع شرقي بعدها ظهور أصناف من الخزف المطلي بالطين. كما تعكس اللقى المادية تبادلات عدة في مقاطعة شاسعة الأرجاء تمتد من بلاد المشرق حتى إيران. نستخلص أخيراً أن الآراميين قد لعبوا دوراً مهماً في انتشار الأدوات والتقنيات فنتساءل ما إذا كانت هذه هي إحدى أسباب النزاع الرئيسة بين هذين الخصمين.

New data is now available on the confrontation between the Assyrian and Aramaean worlds during a period often referred to as a Dark Age. Like the Amorites, the Aramaeans were a group that had migrated in several stages from the Syro-arabian desert¹. Their first serious conflicts with the major powers occurred in the Euphrates valley. Movement between Jebel Bishri and the river, marked by the settling process, could well have preceded their appropriation of territories. The perception of their origin varies according to what element is seen as the most important. For a long time, the Aramaeans have been considered as strangers, but little by little they have come to be thought of as indigenous. In one view, the Assyrians were faced with new arrivals or, in another view the interaction would simply have produced a modification of the social structures of the local populations and the takeover of power by one part of them. Using the example of Haradu (Khirbet ed-Diniyeh), we will look at a number of new elements and changes which document this period and will attempt to interpret them.

GENERAL PRESENTATION

Haradu is located in the Middle Euphrates of Iraq and, together with other fortresses² represents the south western territorial limits of the Assyrian conquests, beginning at the time of Tiglath-pileser I³ when the first mention of the Aramaeans appears in written sources (**fig. p. 8**). It is a small site of only one hectare which was excavated between 1981 and 1988, as part of the rescue program for the Haditha valley⁴. Essentially it has two periods of occupation: the small town known as Harrâdum was the first, in the 18th to 17th centuries BC and the second, from the 11th to the 8th centuries, saw the construction of a fortress that forms the subject of this study⁵. The two settlements correspond to two periods of the settling of nomads in a valley that was otherwise largely given over to nomadism and pastoralism. Haradu was integrated into the kingdom of Suhu. The land of Suhu was essentially an open door towards Babylonia, but also a zone through which Aramaean and Arab nomadic populations passed on their way to the pastures of the Euphrates or the wadi Thartar. Suhu was at the crossroads of international trade routes between the Babylonian world, the Diyala, Iran and the Levant on the one hand, and on the other between Assyria and the world of the steppe.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The fortress of Haradu consists of a casemate wall with angles oriented to the cardinal points. It encloses a more or less square area with no structures at all inside (**fig. 1**). It was a purely military installation with a limited number of inhabitants basically occupying the curtain walls and, if required, there were temporary camps inside for soldiers⁶.

There are three main construction phases at the fortress of Haradu. The first enclosure with huge casemates surrounded by a buttressed wall was built on the ruins of the wall of the earlier town of Harrâdum. The interior casemate wall was, for example, completely anchored in the ruins of the 18th to 17th century defensive wall. One of the exterior walls was built on the top of a mound and the successive walls suggest both reconstructions as well as the use of several parallel walls together, like those seen on Assyrian bas-reliefs representing besieged fortresses⁷.

1. BRIQUEL-CHATONNET 2004, p. 7-10.

2. See TENU 2006.

3. The extent of the Assyrian empire in the time of Tiglath-pileser I included the Middle Euphrates valley contrary to the map shown par ROAF 2001, p. 358, fig. 2b.

4. For a synthesis of the Haditha excavations see KEPINSKI, LECOMTE & TENU 2006.

5. For Harrâdum see KEPINSKI-LECOMTE 1992 and JOANNES 2006. With regard to the fortress, it is now waiting to be published. A complete bibliography about Khirbet ed-Diniyeh can be found in KEPINSKI et al. 2006, p. 333-334.

6. For some representations of temporary camps surrounded by an enclosure wall, see the camp scenes from the Assyrian sculptures, for example in BARNETT, BLEIBTREU & TURNER 1998, pl. 342, 343, 346, 348, 402, 504.

7. See SMITH 1938, pl. LX, LXIII, or BARNETT 1975, p. 134.

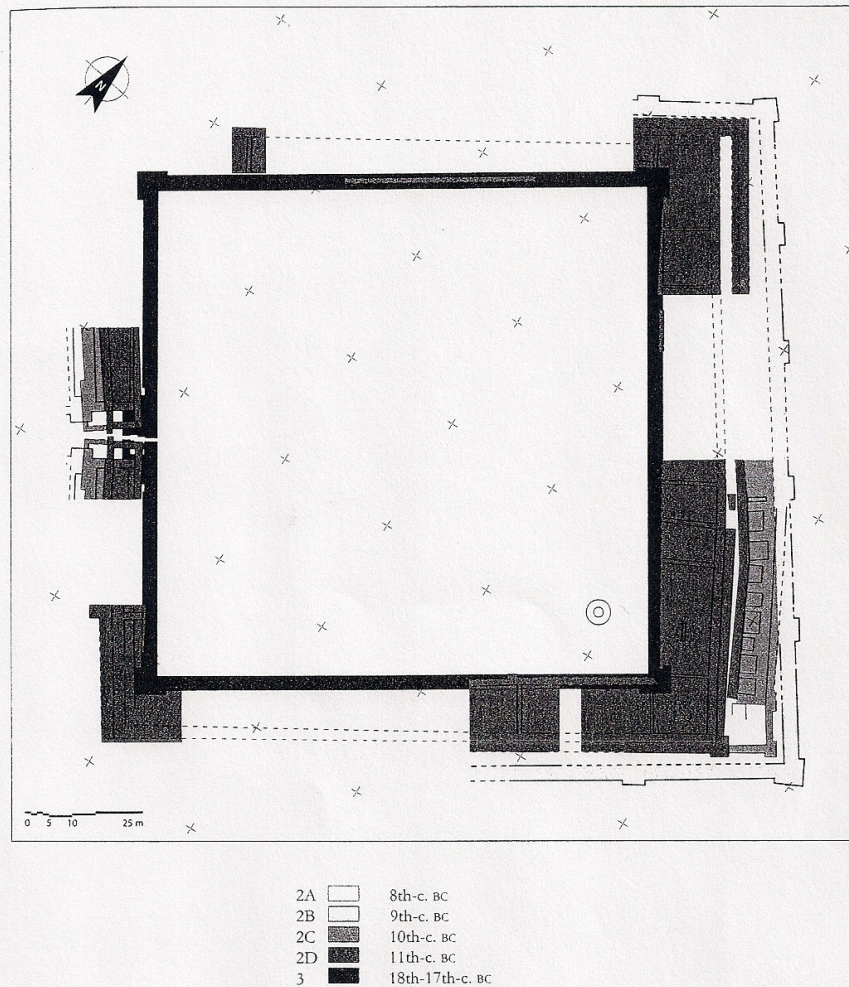


Figure 1: Haradu, plan of the fortress © Sylvie Eliès.

During the second phase, this structure was reinforced in the south-east by a second series of irregularly sized casemates, two of which contain a monumental tomb (fig. 2). A vaulted staircase was built in one casemate, leading to a burial chamber made in the next casemate. The tomb itself is cut into bedrock and covered with flat stone slabs. The wall of the casemate was built above the tomb, which clearly shows that the casemates and the monumental vault were all part of the same project. Inside the chamber, we found only a few bones, fragments of vertebrae and pelvic bones, which would suggest the practice of cremation. This hypothesis has unfortunately not been confirmed due to the absence of a physical anthropologist at the time of excavation. The grave goods included a number of bronze objects, a goblet, a sieve, a zoomorphic drinking vessel⁸, two knobs of a stick (fig. 6), also small plaques⁹ sown onto clothing or belt that no longer exists today, a bunch of iron arrows held together with a thread and a few pots. One gold earring was found in the vaulted staircase.

8. HUOT 2006, p. 325, fig. 1.

9. KEPINSKI 2006, p. 338, fig. 7.

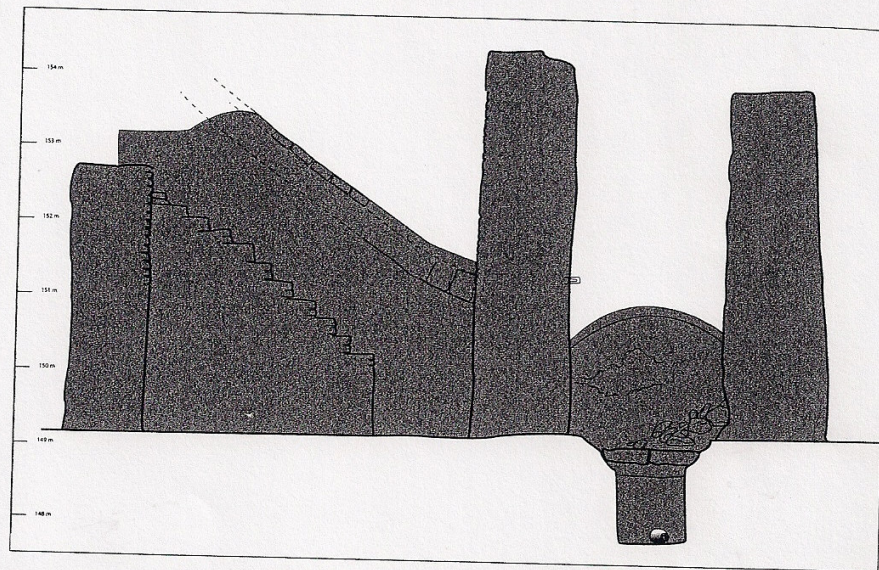


Figure 2: Monumental grave (section) © Sylvie Eliès.

The last phase is represented by a buttressed wall. The curtain wall has some extremely eroded remains of domestic structures, with a few walls, floors and ovens. Some burials in simple jars with lids or in two jars joined at the rim were found on the curtain wall and at the base of the different phases. A proper cemetery was partly excavated at the foot of the south west enclosure wall, in the southern corner and in the opening of the entrance door. A few other graves were dug into the abandoned fortress, one of which had an inscription in South Arabian, of a Semitic proper name, probably Aramaean¹⁰. Another tomb must be mentioned too, that had thirty-three whole pots, mostly jars, one of which contained the remains of cremated bones, and a few vases covered with a glaze.

CHRONOLOGY

The different phases and cultural remains were dated using written sources, relative chronology and cultural comparisons. Several Assyrian sovereigns speak of their conquest of Suhu, amongst them being Tiglath-pileser I, Tukulti-ninurta II and Aššurnāširpal II. We may conclude that the fortress was built in the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, a hypothesis which is confirmed by two tablets found at Haradu dating to his reign. Therefore we date our oldest level, level 2D, to the 11th century BC. The objects that have the most recent parallels were found in graves that were placed in the ruins of the abandoned fortress and notably in what could well be a cremation grave, to which we will return later. We date our latest level, 2A, to the 8th and 7th centuries. In so far as the function of Haradu was purely military, after the 9th century or at latest the 8th century, there was no longer really any reason to maintain this stronghold and it was probably abandoned during the course of the 8th century at the latest. We must therefore place level 2B, the one contemporary with the building of the third phase, in the 9th century, at the time of the recapture of the fortress by Aššurnāširpal II. Level 2C, with the second series of casemates and the monumental tomb, would thus belong to the 10th to 9th century and would correspond to the Aramaean takeover of the fort. This second series of casemates was built at the same time as the monumental tomb, possibly that of the chief of the fortified place, fallen under Aramaean control.

10. KEPINSKI 2006 p. 338, fig. 8.

ABOUT SOME ELEMENTS OF THE MATERIAL CULTURE

Haradu exactly documents both the infamous transition between the second and first millennia and the interaction between the Assyrians and the Aramaeans. In order to see how this meeting manifested itself in the material culture, we will first analyse the architectural data, followed by the burial practices and rituals, and finally the ceramics and objects.

Architecture

The original fortress was built by the Assyrians and it was completed in subsequent stages of reconstruction, but the installation remained purely military. There was never a major settlement at Haradu. The addition of the casemates in level 2C (10th century) most probably built during the period of Aramaean control of the fortress, in some ways disturbed the regularity of the original installation but it still reflected the original ground plan. They used the casemate method probably because it allows the reinforcement of a wall whilst being economical with the bricks. These second-phase casemates were of irregular sizes and, unlike those of the original stronghold, they denote a certain element of improvisation. Also, the vault above the staircase that leads to the monumental tomb was of a very rough construction¹¹; built of simple flat bricks, most probably made in a mould, and bonded by a mud mortar. As for the vault that covered the burial chamber, we found it collapsed. One would be tempted to say that, at least in the land of Suhu, the Aramaeans did not have a strong tradition of building.

Burial practices

The majority of inhumations were in jars, from the first to the last phase, and the grave goods always included a bowl near the head, then a variety of objects, jewellery or weapons. There are three notable exceptions: the monumental tomb and two cremations. These three exceptions belong to levels 2C and 2A. In both cases, the fortress was not under purely Assyrian control at the time. We therefore hypothesize that the practice of cremation could well have been brought in by the Aramaeans; nevertheless we should note that cremation was the exception rather than the rule, either used as a form of distinction from the others, as in the case of the monumental tomb, for example of a leader, most probably the chief of the fortress or else it was the practice of some of the nomadic population in the area. In order to confirm this hypothesis, an isolated cemetery, not directly related to any settlement, was excavated in the framework of the rescue excavations at Haditha, on the east bank of the Euphrates. Also it is not published, in the year 1980, I was able to visit Iraqi archaeologists excavating a hundred jars with narrow necks, through which a body could not have been placed—jars similar to the thirty-three found in the Khirbet ed-Diniyeh grave from level 2A; they contained a few fragments of bone, the remains of cremations. The simple observation of the unusual character of the cremations at Haradu leads us also to conclude that the Aramaeans seem largely to have adopted the burial practices of settled groups as they themselves settled, and the majority of them were buried in jars without being first cremated.

Ceramics

Turning to the pottery, which is studied by Aline Tenu for the final publication¹², it tends to confirm the dating suggested by the different phases of occupation of the fortress. The assemblage as a whole reflect wide ranging contacts, but the majority of forms find parallels either in Assyria or in Babylonia; a few are also attested in the Diyala and the Levant. Among the most ancient forms are some of Kassite

11. See fig. 3 and KEPINSKI 2006, p. 337, fig. 6.

12. In KEPINSKI, forthcoming.

origin, notably the goblets with thick ring bases (**fig. 3a**), and red slipped ceramics were most probably introduced later from the Levantine coast (**fig. 3b**). The more recent forms, such as the torpedo jars and the glazed pots (**fig. 3c-d**), have good parallels in the Neo-Assyrian repertoire, but we have no fine ceramics of the Assyrian palatial types which are well attested elsewhere.

The assemblage as a whole reflects multiple contacts. Of Kassite inspiration for some shapes of the most ancient levels, later it includes red slip ceramics coming from the west. The pottery in the land of Suhu subsequently has much more parallels with Assyrian culture and is composed also of a great number of local shapes.

Objects

There are many parallels for the objects both in Babylonia and Assyria. A number of them find equally good parallels in the Levant, and for the metal objects, in Iran and particularly in Luristan. However, clearly we cannot treat their function and their techniques used in the same way.

The metal plaques from the monumental grave are decorated with several motifs (**fig. 4a**). They are pierced with holes at their extremities, which implies that they were most probably sown onto the clothes worn by the corpse. From the end of the 2nd millennium and especially in the 1st millennium, the

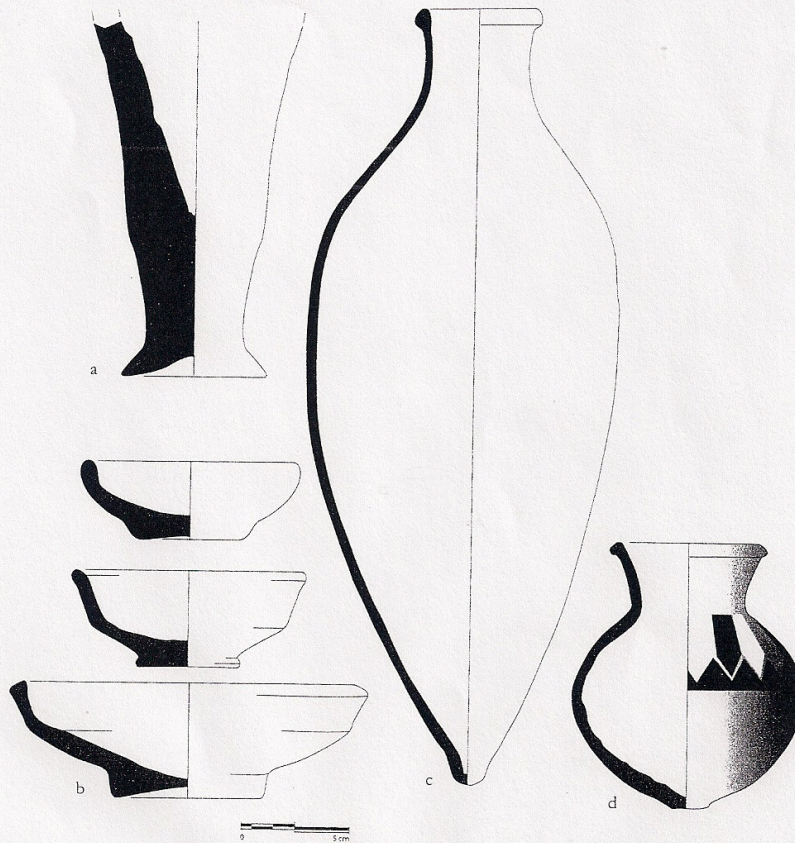


Figure 3: Haradu (11th-7th) a: goblet; b: red slip plates; c-d: storage and glazed jars © Sylvie Eliès.

Assyrian bas-reliefs, particularly those of Nimrud and Nineveh, show figures wearing clothes decorated with palmettos, floral or geometric decoration, and narrative or apotropaic scenes. However some Kassite *kudurrus* (boundary stones), which show kings wearing ceremonial dresses, display other examples¹³ (fig. 4b). Several old studies put forward tentative interpretations of how the textiles represented may have been produced and suggest that they are representations either of tapestry, embroidery, weaving or metal appliqué¹⁴. They distinguish clearly the simple motifs and the narrative scenes; the last ones are limited to the period between the 11th and 9th centuries that is between Tiglath-pileser I and Aššurnasirpal II¹⁵, while the first ones would have existed for longer. Written sources add much additional information and while M.-Th. Barrelet uses the example of an inventory of Kâr-Tukultî-ninurta to illustrate the development of needlework¹⁶, in 1949 A. L. Oppenheim put forward the thesis of metallic appliqué¹⁷, particularly for a large part of the simplest decorations¹⁷, whereas J. Vorys Canby suggests they were used more for clothing decorated with narrative scenes¹⁸. One must remember that although these clothes are abundantly illustrated in Assyria, they are generally recognised as being of foreign origin, either from Iran or northern Syria and Lebanon¹⁹. In fact the monumental statues from the Aramaean levels of Tell Halaf wear similar dresses²⁰ (fig. 4c). It is therefore, particularly important to be able to present here for the first time, an example of clothing probably dating to the 10th century, decorated with sown metal plaques carrying a simple palmetto decoration together with a scatter of points and more complex mythological scenes.

On the one hand, the attributes of power such as the use of sticks or the mythological scenes represented on the ceremonial dresses, the administrative practices and, more precisely, the iconography of cylinder seals, reflect an Assyrian origin, or in a few cases a Babylonian affinity. On the other hand, the ritual objects (*pyxis*²¹, sieves²²) and the finery (hair ornaments²³, bone combs²⁴) often have parallels to the west, from the Levant as far as Cyprus but they are known too in Mesopotamia. The best comparisons for the zoomorphic drinking vessel (*rhyton*) and for the knobs (fig. 5-6) which are in the form represented by mace heads, come from the Levant²⁵. An Egyptian-like amulet, well attested in the Levant, should also be noted.

13. STROMMINGER & HIRMER 1964, pl. 270-271, and ORTHMANN 1975, fig. 193b.

14. VORYS CANBY 1971, BARRELET 1977, p. 86-87.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 86-87.

16. BARRELET 1977, p. 56-58.

17. OPPENHEIM 1949, p. 188-189.

18. VORYS CANBY 1971, p. 47.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 35, 37, 47-49; BARRELET 1977, p. 73 and n. 3, p. 77, n. 4, p. 87; RIEFSTAHL 1944, p. 31.

20. See MOORTGAT, 1955.

21. Several glazes or alabaster *pyxis* have been exposed at Alalakh (WOOLLEY 1955, pl. LXXX: AT39/124), at Meskene (MATOIAN 1993, pl. 2-4), at Mari (JEAN-MARIE 1999, p. 59 pl. 35), at Babylone (REUTHER 1926, pl. 48: 24d), at Aššur (HALLER 1954, pl. 16i), at Tchoga Zanbil (GHIRSHMAN 1968, pl. LXXXIV: Z 822, XXXVI: 9).

22. A bronze strainer similar to the one of Haradu has been discovered at Alalakh (WOOLLEY 1955 pl. XXXIX : AT/46/41), at Mari (JEAN-MARIE 1999, p. 59, T 134 p. 120 P. 30, T 355 p. 137) and Uruk (NÖLDEKE et al. 1936, Taf. 26f).

23. A bronze tubular cover has been found in a tomb. This kind of object belongs always to a funerary context. It is often referred to as hair ornaments and similar objects come from Mari (JEAN-MARIE 1999, T 300 p. 133, pl. 45) or Cyprus (KARAGEORGHIS 1965, fig. 1, p. 143).

24. Several are in bone decorated with dotted circles as in Mari (JEAN-MARIE 1999, T 125 p. 119-120, pl. 29 ou T 308 p. 124, pl. 48), or in Hama (RHS 1948 p. 179, fig. 229); however similar combs are also attested in Mesopotamia and especially at Ur (WOOLLEY 1962, pl. XX: U 7913).

25. For the *rhyton* see HUOT 2006 and TUCHELT 1962, pl. 8, p. 59, with an example from Kefer Houneh in South Lebanon whose face is similar to the zoomorphic vessel from Haradu and for the mace-head, see CURTIS & GRAYSON 1982 and KOUROU 1994 (I thank Z. Niederreiter for these references).



Figure 4: a - Haradu; b - Kudurru of Marduknazir, British Museum, STROMMINGER & HIRMER 1964, pl. 270-271; c - Tell Halaf, Aleppo Museum, HUOT 2004, p. 123.

As for the decorations and techniques used for many bronze and gold objects, they are good parallels from Iran to the Levant²⁶. Several motifs are not unusual in the bronzes from Luristan²⁷ (fig. 7). Aside from Iran and the Levant, the world of Urartu offers some parallels for metal objects, such as the use of the granulation technique on gold earrings, which is also well attested in the Levant²⁸. These different,

26. See n. 23

27. CALMEYER 1973, p. 80f. N1, ORTHMANN 1975, fig. 306 et pl. XXXVII et fig. 307b; ENGEL 2008.

28. A gold earring with granular decoration discovered in the vaulted staircase of the monumental tomb has very good parallels at Hama, RIIS 1948, p. 129, fig. 159, on several other sites from Levant, Tell Ajjul, Tell Fara, Lachish, Megiddo, etc. or from Urartu, cf. MAXWELL-HYSLOP 1971, p. 115, fig. 79; p. 116, fig. 80; p. 122, fig. 85; p. 130, n° 96; p. 138, n° 101; p. 205, pl. F; p. 226, n° 200; p. 178, n° 131.

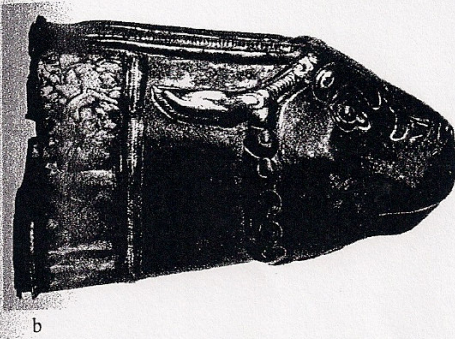
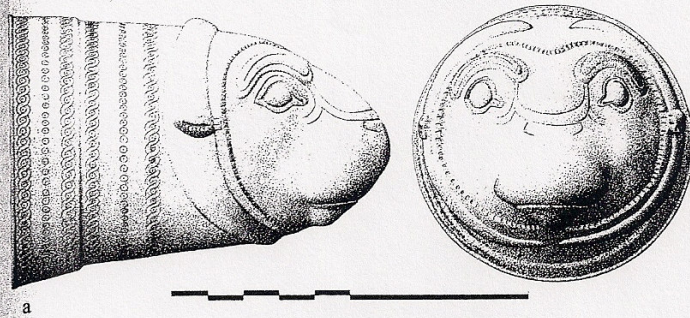


Figure 5: a - Haradu ; b - Kefer Houné, South Lebanon, TUCHELT 1962, pl. 8, p. 59.

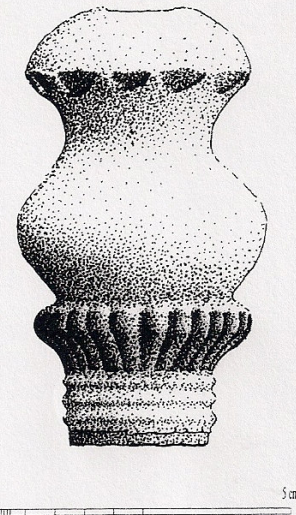


Figure 6: Haradu, knob.

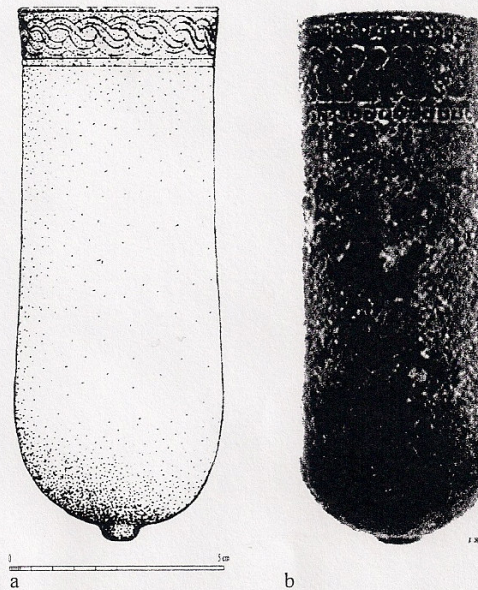


Figure 7: a - Haradu ; b - Luristan, ENGEL 2008, p. 225 n° 230.

but comparable, metal objects clearly lie on international trade routes for metals and their raw material, notably copper and tin, routes along which other objects were obviously also traded.

To complete our overview of the material culture of Haradu, one can mention the baked clay figurines that are only of horses, thus underlining the importance accorded to this animal.

SYNTHESIS

By way of synthesis, we can say that the meeting of the material cultures developed under Assyrian and Aramaean governances was not a homogeneous process. Our analysis of the different data shows a great variability of the different parallels according to the function and techniques of the different elements. The objects used in the Aramaean world in daily life are not fundamentally different from those of the neighbouring cultures and the change from Assyrian to Aramaean authority at Haradu did not translate into a major change in material culture, implying that the inhabitants of the fortress remained substantially the same. The Aramaeans did not arrive all of a sudden with their culture; in some way they had been there for some time. But in the process of settling, they can be distinguished first and foremost by their ability to adapt to the ways of the settled people. They can also be recognised by their imitations, at Haradu notably by the second series of casemates of irregular size and the poorly constructed vault. Equally we can recognise them by the objects made from materials that differ from

the usual ones, for example, a baked clay *pyxis* when the majority of parallels are in alabaster or faïence or a cylinder seal in faïence with an iconography that is more typically found on stone cylinder seals.

However these differences could equally be social and this would constitute another argument in favour of the Aramaean expansion illustrating a shift mostly in the social structures. Like all populations of nomadic origins, the Aramaeans are characterised by their ability to adapt, to imitate but also to transport foreign practices, such as cremation which is well attested in the Hittite world. We can thus recognise them by their elaborate burial rituals for their elites, which no doubt had numerous stages²⁹. Finally the Aramaean culture is also a reflection of extensive mixing across a vast territory stretching from the Levant to Iran.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the land of Suhu was a frontier zone. It became a highly contested territory between the great powers of Babylon and Assyria and the Aramaean nomads. From the 11th to the 8th centuries BC, the intense military activities which were played out are represented by the construction or reconstruction of strongholds. We have presented Haradu, but there were others such as Anat, Suru, Yemniyeh, Sur Jureh, Glaia and Telbis, all of which clearly illustrate these confrontations.

The Euphrates valley does not have any particular natural resources and it is only due to its strategic position as a cross-roads and transit area that there were periods of settling and of tension with the nomads. It must be emphasized that it was a cyclical process, which implies a permanent interconnection between the nomads and the sedentary populations. When the territories of the Assyrian empire were stabilised under Tiglath-pileser III, the fortresses were gradually abandoned.

The international trade routes continued to function during the Dark Age. This was even a period that saw the development of metal objects, illustrated in particular by the bronzes from Luristan. Objects, themes of iconography, decorations, techniques, all were transported across an enormous territory independent of the various powers that existed. Distribution occurred through commerce. One can justifiably ask exactly what role the nomads played in the circulation of objects, crafts, commerce and its control and if this was not one of the main reasons for the conflict between the Assyrians and the Aramaeans. At the very least, the nomads knew the territory and they were the only ones able to guide merchant caravans across the desert.

Nomads and settled people were two interlocking components of the same world that functioned in parallel but the tribal systems do not function well in large, unified territories. The period of the Dark Age followed the creation of the Middle Assyrian empire under Tukultî-ninurta I and reinforced by Tiglath-pileser I, in the same way as the transition between the Early and Middle Bronze Age and the Amorite kingdoms followed unification under the Akkadian empire and the kingdom of Ur III. In both cases, the periods thought of as obscure reflect territorial problems and the necessity to legitimate power. Whether the conflict between the two components is a cause or a consequence of the weakening of the centralised states still remains controversial.

29. PORTER 2002.