

Résumé – Le modèle centre/périphérie a souvent été utilisé pour expliquer les relations entre Assyriens et Araméens. Il est de plus en plus clair que ce modèle n'est pas apte à rendre compte de l'interaction entre ces deux groupes ethniques. Il convient de se défaire de l'idée de l'influence sur la périphérie et de chercher plutôt les signes des processus d'émulation qui ont lieu entre deux groupes équivalents culturellement et qui s'affrontent dans un territoire sans suprématie politique. Au cours du temps — environ 500 ans, entre 1100 et 600 av. J.-C. —, la situation politique change et avec elle les formes de l'interaction perceptibles au travers des différents traits culturels, illustrés par les objets découverts en fouille. De fait, on doit s'attendre à ce que ces objets reflètent différentes étapes d'émulation et deviennent potentiellement des hybrides, plus ou moins élaborés, ou des transferts plus ou moins profondément modifiés. Cet article est un essai sur l'interaction Assyriens/Araméens dans la région du Khabur, dont il ne peut guère être qu'une présentation initiale. Une interprétation exhaustive des dimensions sociopolitiques et culturelles nécessiterait plus de temps et d'espace.

Abstract – For the explanation of the relationship between the Aramaeans and the Assyrians the model of centre/periphery has been applied frequently. It becomes more and more apparent though that this model is not apt to make the process visible that characterizes the interaction between these two ethnic groups. It is rather necessary to keep one's mind clear of the influence of a centre on a periphery and instead look for indicators that will describe the emulation processes taking place between two equal cultural groups clashing together in a territory vacant of political supremacy. Through time — and the period debated comprises half a millennium or 500 years, roughly between about 1100 and 600 BC — the political situation changed and with it the ways of interaction resulting in different cultural products or material culture, in short in those objects which the archaeologist excavates in the context of cultural earth deposits. So it must be expected that these objects — in relation to time — reflect different stages of emulation and may have become hybrids, more or less well elaborated, or transfers, more or less intensively modified. This paper will be an essay on the interaction of the Aramaeans and Assyrians in the Khabur region — it cannot be more than just an initial compilation. A full appreciation of the socio-political and cultural dimensions would need more time and space.

خلاصة – إن النموذج الذي يعتمد على المركزية والضواحي غالباً ما كان مستعملاً لشرح العلاقات بين الآشوريين و الأراميين لكنه اتضح أنه غير صالح لفهم التفاعل بين هاتين المجموعتين الإثنيتين. ينبغي الإقلاع عن فكرة تأثير المركزية على الضواحي والتقسّي عن علامات التنافس والإحتكاك بين مجموعتين متساويتين ثقافياً تتصادم في منطقة ليست تحت أي سيادة سياسية. تبدل الوضع السياسي عبر الزمن، ما بين ١١٠٠ و ٦٠٠ ق.م. - حوالي ٥٠٠ عام - وتبدلت معه طرق التفاعل التي يمكن إبراكها من خلال سمات الحضارة الثقافية المنقولة والتي تم اكتشافها في أعمال التنقيب الأثري. يُتوقع أن تُبرز هذه اللقى مراحل مختلفة من التنافس فتصبح تدريجياً أشكالاً هجينة غير مدروسة نسبياً، أو تحولات معدلة جذرياً. هذه المقالة هي محاولة لدراسة التفاعل الآشوري-الآرامي في إقليم الحابور، والتي لا يمكن أن تكون أكثر من عرض أولي. إن تحليلها شاملاً ووافياً للأبعاد الإجتماعية - السياسية والثقافية يستلزم مدة أطول ومساحة أوسع للدراسة.

The role of the Aramaeans in the Lower Khabur valley in NE Syria during the Iron Age has not been investigated in a regional study before, mainly because of lack of evidence¹. This paper will use the known as well as new evidence, the latter provided by the excavations of Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dûr Katlimmu, Tell Bderi/Dûr-Aššur-ketti-lēšer, Tell Ajaja/Šadikanni, and Tell Taban/Tabete. It will consist of two parts:

I. Assyrian power and the Aramaeans before 935 (Aššur-dân II).

I will argue that the Middle Assyrian Empire between the 12th and the 10th century BC did not shrink to its mere heartland on the Tigris but rather kept control over the Lower Khabur (fig. 1). The quality of the political influence of the Assyrians on the local entities of the Lower Khabur may be debated but these entities stayed loyal to Assyria, resisted the pressure of the Aramaean tribes, and kept them off the eastern Jazira and the Assyrian heartland. Instead the tribes infiltrated neighbouring spaces, mainly in the north and in the west, in which a political vacuum of power prevailed. It is suggested that cultural interaction occurred in spite of heavy warfare.

II. The Aramaeans during the Neo-Assyrian Empire (935-612).

Once the political dominance of the Assyrians had been re-established during the late 10th and the 9th century the relationship changed from mere contact to interaction and from emulation to “cohabitation”. This will be demonstrated by analysing works of the visual arts from Tell Ajaja and Tell Sheikh Hamad in comparison to the Aramaean centres of Tell Halaf/Guzana and Tell Fekheriyeh in the north and Tell Ashara/Sirqu on the Middle Euphrates in the south.

I. ASSYRIAN POWER AND THE ARAMAEANS BEFORE 935 (AŠŠUR-DÂN II)

According to Zadok² and other scholars³ the history of the Aramaeans begins with the year 1111 BC when they were first recorded in the fourth year of the annals of Tiglath-pileser I as a compound gentile *Ahlamû Aramayya* which he translated with Kupper “the Aramaean semi-nomads”. However, it should be stressed that the contact of the Aramaeans with the Assyrians may have begun much earlier than 1111; this date only marks the moment when they enter Assyrian history under the designation of the “Aramaeans”⁴.

On the other end, the year 935 marks the end of the desiccation period in the Jazira⁵ which had paralysed Assyria for the preceding two centuries as King Aššur-dân II reports in his annals. His reign also signifies the beginning of the Assyrian “reconquista” of the Jazira which is then effectuated most successfully by his successors Adad-nîrârî II, Tukultî-ninurta II, and Aššurnaširpal II⁶, the last king’s reign ending shortly before the middle of the 9th century (883-859).

This period between 1200 and about 950 BC has been designated a “Dark Age” in historiography due to the lack of archaeological and written evidence. The beginning of the 12th century is marked by a severe crisis of the Middle Assyrian Empire after the murder of king Tukultî-ninurta I. At the same time the Hittite empire collapsed and gave way to most of the territory in North Syria including the Euphrates valley. With the resulting vacuum and the first Aramaean tribes moving in to North Syria and beyond, it became more and more difficult for the Assyrians to keep control over their western territories. Their retreat occurred gradually during the 12th century allowing the Aramaean tribes to enter the western Jazira (fig. 1).

1. DION 1997, p. 36-38; AKKERMANS & SCHWARTZ 2003, p. 377-382; KÜHNE 1995.

2. ZADOK 1991, p. 104.

3. More recently SADER 2000, p. 64-65.

4. *Ibid.*, with older literature.

5. NEUMANN & PARPOLA 1987.

6. KÜHNE 1980.

Local written evidence had almost been none existent for the region of the Lower Khabur before 1975, and any extension of the Middle Assyrian empire over the southern Jazira was doubted in historiography. This view changed slowly after the discovery and excavation of a Middle Assyrian archive of the 13th century at Tell Sheikh Hamad in 1978-1982. It allowed identifying the site with the Assyrian provincial centre of Dûr Katlimmu⁷ which was ruled by a district governor (*bêl pâhete*). Beyond this function it demonstrated that Dûr-Katlimmu served as the seat of a high official of the central government, a vizier (*sukkal.gal*)⁸, who was in charge of governing and stabilizing the newly conquered territory of Hanigalbat, which is comprising most of the western Jazira.

The significance of the city became even more emphasized when K. Radner⁹ discovered in Neo-Assyrian documents of Dûr-Katlimmu that the name of the city god of Dûr-Katlimmu was Salmanu. This name became the theophoric element of the throne name of five Assyrian kings who reigned between

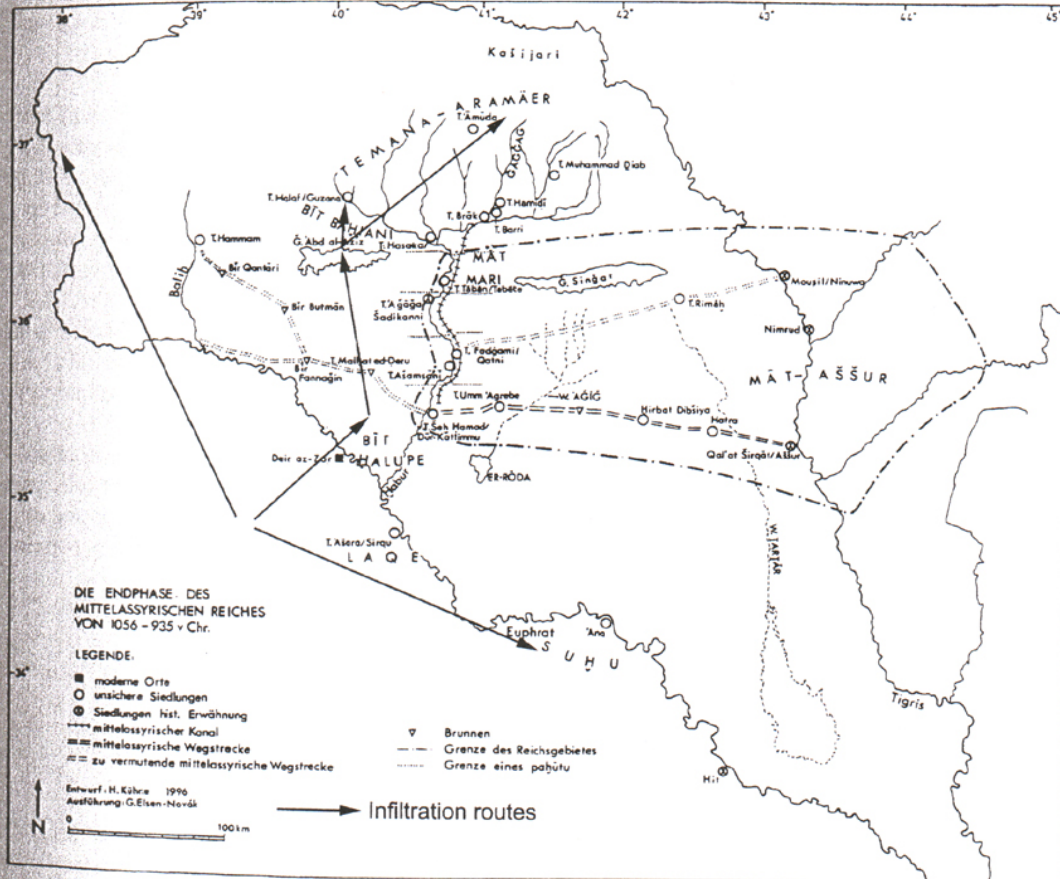


Figure 1: Migration routes of Aramean tribes during the final phase of the Middle Assyrian empire, the Lower Khabur being the buffer zone to prevent an infiltration to the Assyrian mainland.

7. RÖLLIG 1978.
 8. Two of them are recorded by name, Aššur-iddin, Šulmanu-mušabši; CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM 1996, p. 19-32; p. 142, p. 206.
 9. RADNER 1998, 2002.

the 13th and the end of the 8th century BC implying that the ties of Dûr Katlimmu to the capital of Aššur had been so close as to constitute “a community of fate”, as I have qualified this situation elsewhere¹⁰.

During the 12th century the Middle Assyrian palace of Dûr Katlimmu¹¹ continued to function after a fire had destroyed parts of it. Unfortunately archaeological evidence for the period down to the end of the 10th century is lacking in Dûr Katlimmu simply because it is unexcavated¹² (**table 1**). However, the discovery of Middle Assyrian documents of the 11th century BC at Tell Bderi¹³ and more recently at Tell Taban¹⁴ in conjunction with long known evidence from Ajaja, Ninive, and Aššur seems to fill in this lacuna and to enlighten the “Dark Age” of the Lower Khabur to the extent that local polities become apparent which remained in a status of semi-vassalage to Assyria according to their own witness¹⁵.

It is not surprising that no mention of the Aramaeans is found in the MA archive of the 13th century of Dûr-Katlimmu. The Assyrian kings prior to Aššur-bêl-kala, i.e. Aššur-reš-iši I and Tiglath-pileser I¹⁶, are reported to have fought the Aramaeans in the Euphrates valley between Tell Ashara and Karkemiš¹⁷, in the western Jazira, as well as in the Kašiyari (Tur Abdin) mountains. However, according to the new evidence from Tell Taban/Tabete they are documented for the first time in a local environment of the Lower Khabur¹⁸. These texts are a generation or two older than the Broken Obelisk of Aššur-bêl-kala (1074-1057) in which the Assyrian king is fighting the Aramaeans at the Lower Khabur¹⁹.

As opposed to most historians I have argued elsewhere²⁰ that the retreat of the Assyrians never reached their heartland, it stopped at the Lower Khabur. With the new evidence of the regional polities at the Lower Khabur it is rather suggested that they served as an Assyrian buffer zone against the Aramaeans. The aim of the Aramaeans must have been to infiltrate these polities and the most recent texts from Tell Taban seem to support this. The Khabur could be called the Assyrian “*limes*” against the penetration of the Aramaean tribes towards the nucleus of Assyria²¹. This “*limes*” turned the mainstream of the Aramaean migration off to the north following a north-south caravan route west of the Khabur valley from about Halebiye / Zalebiye on the Euphrates, leaving behind the Euphrates volcanoes in the east to about Malhat ed-Deru, then straight north via Umm Madfa through the gorge of the Jabal Abd al-Aziz and from there splitting in two directions, towards Tell Fekheriyeh/Tell Halaf/Bît Bahiani in the northwest, as well as to the Tur Abdin/Kašiyari mountains to the northeast (**fig. 1**).

Unfortunately, the excavation of Tell Halaf provides no indications for the presence of the Aramaeans at this early date (yet)²². The early local ruler Abisalamu, son of Bahiani, is only known from the annals of Adad-nîrârî II (912-891) and no settlement remains can be associated with this period. On the other hand, the establishment of the city state of Bît Bahiani must have required a prelude and was certainly

10. KÜHNE 1998, p. 284; forthcoming.

11. PFÄLZNER 1995, p. 236-238.

12. KÜHNE 2008a: <http://www.schechhamad.de/ausgrabung/topographie.php>; KÜHNE 2008b, p. 550.

13. PFÄLZNER 1989/1990, p. 220-221.

14. OHNUMA et al. 1999; 2000; OHNUMA & NUMOTO 2001; NUMOTO 2008; SHIBATA 2008.

15. KÜHNE 1998, p. 282-284, fig. 6; MAUL 1992; 1999; 2005.

16. ZADOK 1991 localises the battles of Aššur-reš-iši I (1133-1116), the father of Tiglath-pileser I, in the Jazira. At the turn of the 10th century Aššur-râbi II (1012-972) is reported to have fought the Aramaeans in the bend of the Euphrates.

17. *Idem*, p. 112-113.

18. Personal communication of Dr. Shigeo Yamada.

19. GRAYSON 1991, p. 102: “In the month Kislev, eponymy of Ili-iddina, on campaign against the Aramaeans, he fought (with them) at the city of Magrisu of the land of Iaru. In that year, in the same month, on campaign against the Aramaeans, he fought (with them) at the city of Dûr-katlimmu. In that year, ...[he plundered the Aramae]ans opposite the city Sangaritu [which is on] the Euphrates.”

20. KÜHNE 1995, p. 76; 1998, p. 284

21. PFÄLZNER in BERNBECK 1993: as demonstrated by the road station Tell Umm Aqrebe in the Wadi ‘Ajij.

22. ORTHMANN 2002, p. 17: “Auf welche Weise die seit dem Niedergang Assyriens im 12. Jahrhundert eindringenden aramäischen Stämme in diesem Gebiet sesshaft wurden ..., entzieht sich noch immer unserer Kenntnis.”

ZEIT	PERIODE	TELL (ZITADELLE)	UNTERSTADT II		
				EP (Erdphase)	
Gegenwart	Gegenwart	A ₁ , A ₂	Gegenwart	I	
18.–1. Hlft. 20. Jh.	Islamisch	A ₃ Gräber	unbesiedelt	2	
–1750 ca. 400	Islamisch	A ₄ unbesiedelt			
nach 250 n. Chr.	Römisch	B	Parthisch- römischer Friedhof	3	
250 n. Chr. – ca. 165 n. Chr.	Römisch	C Haus 1 & 2			
165 n. Chr. – ca. 70 n. Chr.	Spätparthisch	D Haus 3			
70 n. Chr. – ca. 1. Viertel 1. Jh. v. Chr.	Mittelparthisch	E Haus 4			
1. Viertel 1. Jh. v. Chr. – ca. 250 v. Chr.	Frühparthisch bis Seleukidisch	F Haus 5			unbesiedelt
333 v. Chr. – ab 539 v. Chr.	Achämenidisch		17 bis ,squatter' Besiedlung	5	
539 – 612	Spät-Neubabylonisch		24	3. Voll-Besiedlung	6
612 – ca. 721	Neuassyrisch III		25	2. Voll-Besiedlung	7
722 – ca. 823	Neuassyrisch II		26	1. Voll-Besiedlung	8
824 – ca. 936	Neuassyrisch I		27 a–b	Gründung	9
936 – ca. 1114	Mittlassyrisch II		? ?		
1115 – ca. 1295	Mittlassyrisch I	Gräber Gebäude P	27 c 28		

Table 1: Chrono-stratigraphical chart of Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dür Katlimmu.

not done over night. The works of art to be considered below have been excavated in the context of the later local ruler Kapara. It is certain that he has reused many works of art in his palace; however, the date of production of these works is uncertain.

Thus, in spite of the Assyrians fighting the Aramaeans vigorously in the Euphrates valley, the western Jazira, along the Lower Khabur as well as in the Tur Abdin the Aramaeans succeeded to gain a foothold almost everywhere at the outskirts of the Middle Assyrian Empire (fig. 1), and the Assyrians succeeded in keeping them off their mainland. On this evidence the interrelation between the Assyrians and the Aramaeans during the 12th to the 10th century BC may at best be described as unappreciative. And yet, with regard to the following paragraph there must have been some peaceful interaction preparing the ground for the transfer of cultural ideas.

II. ARAMAEANS DURING THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE (935-612)

Thirty years ago — on the observation of Aramaic epigraphs on Assyrian cuneiform tablets — Nicholas Postgate coined the sentence about the “symbiosis of Aramaic and Assyrian writing systems”²³. Seven years later, Allan Millard — departing from this sentence and after having discussed the historical implications of the bilingual inscription on the statue of Tell Fekheriyeh — concluded: “... then there is evidence for much more than a symbiosis of writing systems. In the earlier period of the Neo-Assyrian Empire there appears a symbiosis of peoples, of Assyrians and Aramaeans”²⁴. It seems that this notion may now be substantiated by archaeological material evidence.

The 1979 discovered statue of Adad-yisi'i of Tell Fekheriyeh (fig. 2) is one of the most prominent objects that launched a broad discussion on both, the bilingual inscription as well as its artistic features²⁵. Analysing the inscription Millard²⁶ argued that both, Šamaš-nuri and his son Adad-yisi'i were “local dynasts and Assyrian appointees”, that is Aramaeans. He dated the statue convincingly to the middle of the 9th century BC associating Šamaš-nuri with the eponym of the year 866 (Aššurnāširpal II).

The Aramaean ruler of Guzana is rendered in Assyrian styled headgear and garments. A comparison with a statue of Salmaneser III (858-824), who should have been a contemporary of Adad-yisi'i, demonstrates the overwhelming stylistic similarities but also some iconographical differences (fig. 3). One more notable difference is the size: the statue of Adad-yisi'i is life size as opposed to the Assyrian royal statues which are smaller than life size²⁷. This phenomenon may be related to Syro-Hittite influence²⁸. Yet, without going into further detail one may say that the overall appearance of the statue is Assyrianising. Vice versa, a view on a statue of the Kapara period of Tell Halaf / Guzana (fig. 4) shows the big differences in style and iconography to the Assyrian or Assyrianised statues. It displays a completely different mentality so that I am not hesitating to label it as Aramaean art as opposed to many other scholars²⁹.

On the southern end of the region focused here upon lies the modern site of Tell Ashara which is identified with Old Babylonian Terqa, during the late Old Babylonian early Kassite and Mittanian

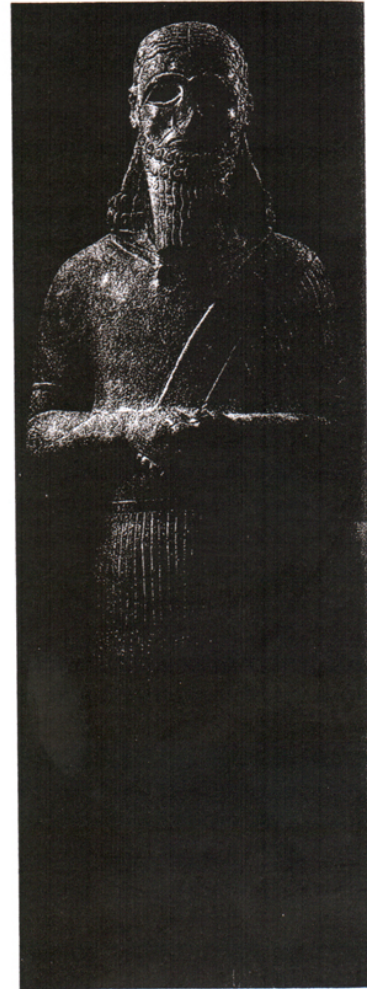


Figure 2: Statue of Adad-yisi'i.
From *Syrie. Mémoire et Civilisation*.
Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris,
Flammarion, 1993, p. 260, n° 225.

23. POSTGATE 1976, p. 6, p. 11.

24. MILLARD 1983, p. 106.

25. ABOU-ASSAF, BORDREUIL & MILLARD, 1982.

26. MILLARD 1983, p. 105.

27. The height of the statue of Adad-yisi'i without pedestal is 1.65 m, the height of the statue of Shalmaneser III is 1.03 m.

28. BONATZ 2000, p. 189 ; BUNNENS 2000b.

29. SCHWARTZ 1989, p. 281, p. 286 denies any differences between Late Hittite and Aramaean art.

periods being the centre of the kingdom of Hana, and in Neo-Assyrian times representing the centre of Sirqu in the province of Laqe³⁰. The well-known stele³¹ (fig. 5) is rather a three sided *kudurru* and was found prior to controlled excavation. It carries an inscription which allows assigning it to Tukulti-ninurta II (890-884) but is not understandable beyond that³². Thus, its historical significance remains unclear. It depicts the smiting weather god holding a snake in his left hand, a fish *apkallu* on the second side, and on the third side a person holding a club (?) in his right hand and in his left a bundle of ears. The iconography of the weather god is clearly of western origin especially with the horns standing off the helmet. The fish-*apkallu* occurs in the Assyrian art of the slightly later reign of king Aššurnāširpal II (883-859), son of Tukulti-ninurta II. The person on the third side has been associated with a provincially styled image of an Assyrian king, i.e. Tukulti-ninurta II or his father. Style and iconography of this rendering are contrasting the slightly later depictions of an Assyrian king sharply. However, the overall similarities to a relieved orthostate from Tell Halaf (fig. 6) are striking and connect it with the Aramaean world.



Figure 3: Statue of Shalmaneser III.
From ORTHMANN 1975, Abb. 172.



Figure 4: Statue from Tell Halaf.
From ORTHMANN 2002, Abb. 33.



Figure 5: Stele of Tell Ashara.
From FORTIN 1999, p. 229, n° 254.

30. RADNER 2002, p. 6-9; 2006, p. 55.

31. FORTIN 1999, p. 229 n°. 254 with photographs of all three sides; GERLACH 2000, p. 241, Taf. 2.

32. GRAYSON 1991, p. 188; GERLACH 2000 states that the Assyrian king Tukulti-ninurta II had this image made of his father Adad-nirāri II.



Figure 6: Orthostate A3,43 from Tell Halaf.
From MOORTGAT 1955, Taf. 32.

inscription on the rediscovered *lamassu* Mušezib-Ninurta claims to be the owner of a palace of which the Syrian-German mission succeeded to uncover parts of two halls, A and B, in which some new sculptures were found in addition³⁶. The inscribed *lamassu*, positioned on the northern flank of the eastern gate, had fallen over from its pedestal on a relieved orthostat which had been reused face down as a threshold³⁷. The *lamassu* and the inscription were still preserved and had suffered only some damage at the upper edge and at the head. As has been demonstrated elsewhere the style and iconography of this *lamassu* may be assigned to a "provincial" albeit smaller rendering of Assyrian *lamassu* sculptures of the 9th century palaces of Nimrud³⁸. The reused orthostate pictures a winged bull in front of a stylised tree³⁹. The bull is styled like an Assyrian *lamassu* but lacks the horn capped human head and holds the tail upright which is unknown in Assyrian sculpture⁴⁰.

In hall B two previously unknown steles were discovered. Both are remarkable but for the purpose of this article only stele no. 2 is treated here⁴¹. This piece (fig. 7) has recently been published by A. Mahmoud⁴². It renders a male figure of which the head is turned *en face*, an unusual stylistic element in Assyrian art. The headgear consists of a fluted cap adorned with a pair of horns and topped by a disc inscribed with a rosette. A long rectangular beard falls on the men's chest while his hair curls on his shoulder. He wears a short sleeved shirt. Below a broad belt the typical short skirt is visible but covered

Within these ends of this regional analysis two sites have furnished new evidence more recently, one of them being Tell Ajaja/Šadikanni in the north, and the other Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dûr Katlimmu in the south of the Lower Khabur. We shall have a look on the evidence from Tell Ajaja first.

Only about 100 km downstream from Tell Halaf/Tel Fekheriyeh is the modern site of Tell Ajaja situated which was reexcavated by a Syrian-German mission between 1982 through 1990³³. Its identification with the Assyrian town of Šadikanni was established by a seal found in Sharif Han / Tarbisu that mentioned in its inscription Mušezib-Ninurta, grandson of Samanuha-šar-ilani who in turn is filed in the annals of Aššurnasirpal II as local ruler of Šadikanni in the year 883³⁴. The name of Mušezib-Ninurta was engraved on a *lamassu* that was found by A. H. Layard in his previous excavations on the site³⁵. The depository place of this *lamassu* and other sculptures which Layard had excavated was unrecorded and it was speculated that the lot had got lost during transportation. All the sculptures were rediscovered by the Syrian-German mission in the tunnel that had been dug by Layard; they had not been removed ever. In his

33. MAHMOUD et al. 1988.

34. RÖLLIG in MAHMOUD et al. 1988, p. 148.

35. LAYARD 1853, p. 275-284.

36. A full publication of the evidence is under way.

37. MAHMOUD et al. 1988, Taf. 29 b.

38. MAHMOUD et al. 1988, Taf. 27-28, 30.

39. GERLACH 2000, p. 246-248, Taf. 6.

40. PALEY 1992, Plate 4.

41. For stele no. 1 cf. ROUAULT & MASETTI-ROUAULT 1993, p. 378 (Catalogue no. 373).

42. MAHMOUD 2008.

by a coat of *kaunakes* textile. In his left hand he holds a goat's kid in front of his chest and in his right downwards hand a branch whose leaves are stylized as rosettes.

In Assyrian iconography of the 9th century two or four winged genii with or without horned cap holding a quadruple and a branch are attested in the NW-Palace of Aššurnāširpal II⁴³. However, they are never pictured on the medium of a stele⁴⁴ and the face is never turned *en face*; further more, the cap is never fluted and domed by a rosette. These features, especially the *en face* rendering, prevails in the art of Tell Halaf (fig. 8) while the conception of the figure is totally different.

Summarizing, it seems to be quite obvious that below the level of Assyrian political hegemony there must have been some interaction of the Assyrian provincial centre of Šadikanni with the Aramaean centre of Guzana. This interaction resulted in a transfer of ideas which found its way rather cautiously into artistic expressions. As a consequence a new style was generated for which the term "provincial Assyrian art" is rather inappropriate because it is a derivation of the centre/periphery thinking; it should rather be accepted that the hybrid style of the Šadikanni sculptures represents an innovation!

The evidence of the 9th century at Tell Sheikh Hamad / Dûr Katlimmu is as yet limited because levels of this period on the citadel have not been excavated⁴⁵.



Figure 7: Stele of Tell Ajaja.
© Tell Sheikh Hamad Archive, Berlin.



Figure 8: Orthostate Ba,5 from Tell Halaf.
From MOORTGAT 1955, Taf. 107b.

43. MEUSZYNSKI 1981: Taf. 3:2; PALEY 1992: Taf. 4:1; I don't know of any unwinged genii with the mentioned attributes in Assyrian art of the 9th century.

44. Like the *apkallu* on stele no I (note 40) is never pictured on a stele in Assyrian art, because the medium of the stele was reserved for renderings of the king.

45. KÜHNE 2008a: <http://www.schekhhamad.de/ausgrabung/topographie.php>.

However, since during the season of 2003 a stratified inscribed seal impression of the seal of Išme-ilu, eunuch of Nergal-ereš, has been discovered, it has become established that the Lower Town II was already founded during the 9th century⁴⁶. Evidence of this early date is also a cuneiform tablet which holds an eponym of the year 828⁴⁷; this document bears an Aramaic epigraph and confirms thus that Aramaeans were living and acting in responsible positions in Dûr Katlimmu. The symbiosis of writing systems is thus confirmed at this early date in a major provincial centre. It may be noted that quite a number of the early epigraphs are inked. From then on, this symbiosis materializes in numerous epigraphs on cuneiform tablets⁴⁸ and in about 160 Aramaic docketts⁴⁹ and can be traced continuously at Dûr Katlimmu down to the end of the Assyrian empire and beyond⁵⁰.

For the 9th century a fragment of an orthostate⁵¹ (**fig. 9**), found on the surface of the southern slope of the citadel, documents the presence of imperial art in a rather unexpected fashion. It depicts a eunuch standing behind the king, carrying his weapons (**fig. 10**), as may be deduced from the famous scene in hall G of the north-west Palace of Nimrud⁵². The style of this fragment is genuine imperial, unbiased by any local emulation processes.

Contrasting this fragment is another one (**fig. 11**) which was found in hall B of the *hilani* wing of the palatial building in the northeast corner of Lower Town II (**fig. 12**). It depicts the smiting weather god who holds an axe in his upright right hand, a feature which — with one exception from Nineveh — never occurs in Assyrian art. Above the polos head gear the icon of Šamaš is positioned surrounded by other icons of the gods Enlil, Sin, Sibittu, Ištar and Hadad (?). While composition and style are Assyrianising the motive of the weather god clearly is of western origin.

A second major feature is the architecture of the palatial building in the north-east corner; it consists of three wings, of which the Assyrian type administrative wing with reception hall and adjoining staircase is neighboured by a representational wing, styled in a *Bit hilani*. The architectural idea is comparable to Arslan Tash⁵³.



Figure 9: Two fragments of an orthostate from Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dûr Katlimmu
© Tell Sheikh Hamad Archive, Berlin.



Figure 10: Reconstruction of the scene according to the image of hall G of the northwest Palace of Nimrud.
© Tell Sheikh Hamad Archive, Berlin.

46. KÜHNE & RADNER 2008.

47. RADNER 2002, text no. 116.

48. RÖLLIG in RADNER 2002.

49. Most of them as yet unpublished.

50. KÜHNE 2002.

51. KÜHNE 1998, p. 285, fig. 9; GERLACH 2000, p. 237-240 Taf. 1; KÜHNE 2005, p. 38 Abb. 26.

52. MEUSZYNSKI 1981, Tafel 8:1 (G 2 – G 3).

53. KÜHNE 1993/1994, p. 267 ff. Abb. 90. 96.



Figure 11: Fragment of an orthostate from hall B of the Hilani in the northeast corner of the Lower City II of Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dûr Katlimmu
 © Tell Sheikh Hamad Archive, Berlin.

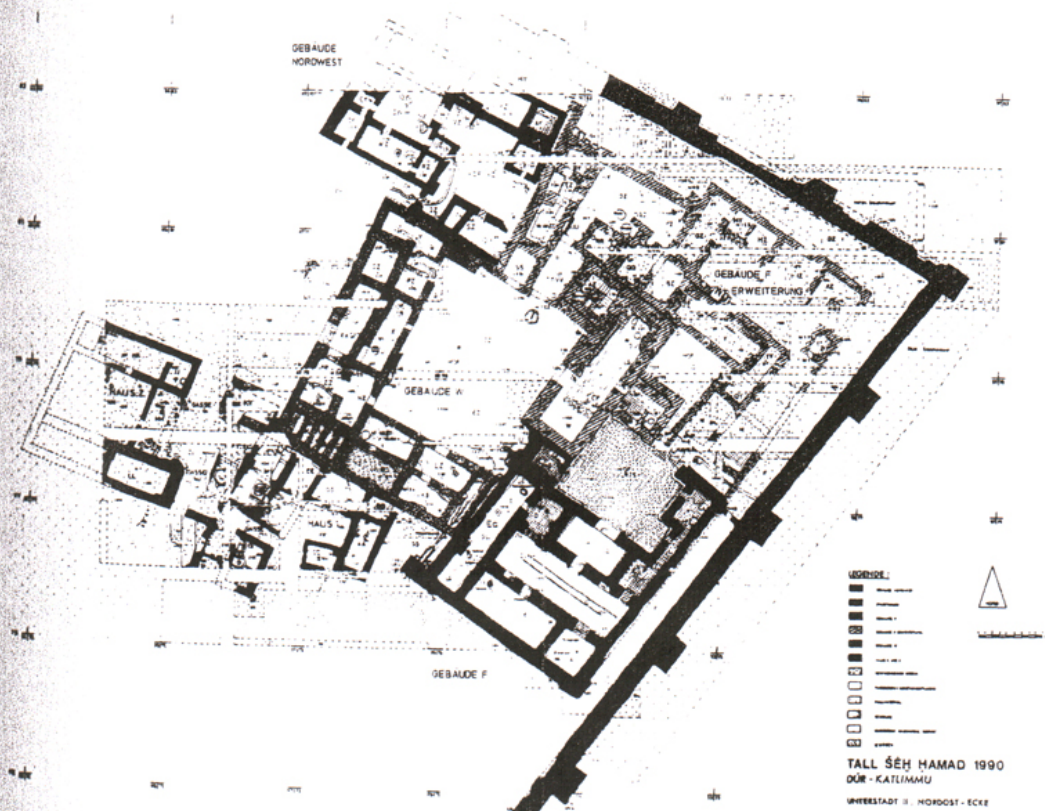


Figure 12: Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dûr Katlimmu, plan of the operations 3 and 4 (northeast corner of the Lower City II of Tell Sheikh Hamad)
 © Tell Sheikh Hamad Archive, Berlin.

III. CONCLUSIONS

It has been demonstrated that the earliest monuments (stele of Tell Ashara, reliefs from Tell Halaf) represent an independent albeit not unbiased expression of art which has been designated Aramean. If accepted it has to be concluded that independent cultural entities existed in northern Mesopotamia during the Early Iron Age, each based on its own long tradition. In our case, these would be Luwian (Late Hittite), Aramaean, and Assyrian (from west to east). During the migration period and in spite of the endless series of fightings, “interaction spheres”⁵⁴ grew up in which material goods and ideas were exchanged. This may have happened during the 11th and 10th century and took on traits of emulation and adaptation as visible on the stele of Tell Ashara. The 9th century which may be called the period of consolidation of power on the Aramaean side and the beginning expansion of power on the Assyrian side saw the first Aramaeans in high positions like the scribe of Dûr Katlimmu. The former experience stimulated innovative symbiotic renderings or hybrids like the sculpture from Tell Ajaja creating a genuine style and a new tradition which brought about eventually material “cohabitation”. In material culture this is expressed in architecture, writing systems, visual arts as well as every day utensils like pottery down to the final days of the Assyrian Empire. This approach leaves no room for the application of the centre/periphery theory and / or a “provincial Assyrian style or art” but rather opens our minds to search for the localisation of these interaction spheres and for the specific conditions that favoured these genuine hybrid styles.

54. STEIN forthcoming; I am applying his terminology which was developed for the prehistoric period of Ubaid because I think that it fits historical socio-cultural situations as well.