CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

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HISTORY

Hélène Sader

This chapter presents a survey of the history of the Aramaeans of ancient Syria from their origin and state formation until the end of their existence as independent polities; it takes into account the latest written and archaeological evidence. Emphasis will be laid on the formative period of Aramaean history, the understanding of which has drastically changed in the light of recent discoveries.
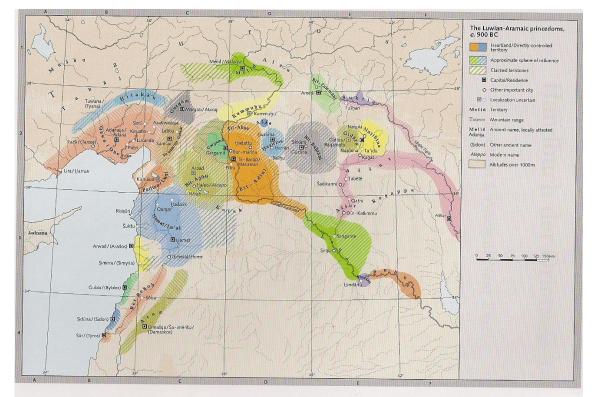
1. Geographical and Chronological Scope

The geographical scope of this chapter coincides roughly with the borders of the modern state of the Syrian Arab Republic, infringing in the north on the Amuq Valley and the slopes of the Amanus Mountains, which are situated in Modern Turkey. It is within this geographical space that we can trace the origin and development of the Aramaean states of ancient Syria.[1]

Chronologically, this chapter deals with the Iron Age I and the larger part of the Iron Age II (ca. 1200–622 B.C.), a period that witnessed the rise and decline of the Aramaean polities. After this period, and in spite of the fact that Aramaean culture continued to thrive, these polities ceased to exist. Their political history thus starts after the collapse of the Late Bronze Age city-states and ends with the Assyrian conquest of Syria and their incorporation into the territory and administrative system of the imperial Assyrian state.

It is important to stress in this context the fact that Syria toward the end of the Late Bronze Age had a geopolitical landscape that was totally different from the one provided by the Neo-Assyrian annals, the Iron Age Hittite-Luwian, and the Aramaic royal inscriptions.[2] All the kingdoms that

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[1] Cf. the map in the frontispiece.
[2] For the Late Bronze Age kingdoms of Syria, see Klengel 1992.

Map 1. The Luwian-Aramaic princedoms ca. 900 B.C., after Wittke – Olshausen – Szydlak 2010: 43.

existed in the 2nd millennium B.C. disappeared and were replaced by
new polities, some ruled by Luwian-speaking dynasts and some ruled by
Semitic-speaking Aramaean rulers. It is the history of the latter kingdoms
that is the focus of this chapter.

However, the history of the Aramaeans of ancient Syria is closely con-
nected with that of the Neo-Hittite or Luwian states. The latter are "rump"
states that were created from and on the ruins of the Late Bronze Age
Hittite Empire.[3] Newly discovered Luwian inscriptions[4] have led to the
conclusion that the vacuum created by the collapse of the Hittite Empire
around 1200 B.C. was filled immediately—but only partly—by surviving
polities whose rulers were of Hittite royal descent. Not only did these
local dynasties continue to rule but they expanded their territories at the
expense of the former Late Bronze Age Syrian kingdoms. New epigraphic
material reveals that next to the kingdom of Carchemish, which had sur-
vived the collapse of the Hittite Empire,[5] another state called Walastin or
Palistin was immediately formed and claimed dominion over a large part
of central and western Syria during the early Iron Age, in the years imme-
diately following the collapse.[6] This new kingdom, which was ruled by a
local dynasty of Hittite descent, was founded on the ruins of the former
kingdom of Mukish in the Amuq Plain, with Tell Tayinat as its capital.
This is suggested by the inscriptions of one of its rulers, Taitas, which
were found in Aleppo and Hamath.[7] This epigraphic evidence raises the
possibility that a local dynasty (next to that of Carchemish and Malatya)
survived the Hittite Empire's collapse[8] and continued to rule in the tradi-
tion of the former Hittite state over a territory stretching from the Amuq
Plain to the Orontes Valley, including Aleppo and Hamath. These Neo-
Hittite or Luwian states were the direct neighbors of Aramaic-speaking
communities and included probably among their population large groups
of the latter. So both the territory and the history of Aramaeans and Luwi-
ans are imbricated and often difficult to disentangle for lack of sufficient
documentation. This is mainly true for the period of formation of the Ara-
maean states during which the political landscape of Syria appears to be

[3] Harrison 2009b: 187.
[4] Hawkins 2009.
[5] Hawkins 1988; see also Klengel 1992: 183f.
[6] Harrison 2009a: fig. 1
[7] Hawkins 2011.
[8] Harrison 2009a: 174.

"fragmented", or "balkanized."[9] As a result, any history of the Aramaeans of ancient Syria will have to take into account this close interconnection.

2. The Sources for a History of the Aramaeans of Ancient Syria

2.1   *The Written Record*

The first problem that the historian of the Aramaeans of ancient Syria faces is the scarcity and disparity of the written record. The main contemporary sources are the annals of the Middle- and Neo-Assyrian kings,[10] the Luwian[11] royal inscriptions, and the inscriptions left by the Aramaeans themselves.[12] The biblical account (mainly 1 Kgs 11: 23–25; 15: 18; 20: 1–34; 22: 1–4; 2 Kgs 6: 8–33; 7: 1–8; 8: 7–15; 12: 18–19; 13: 3–7, 24–25; 15: 37; 16: 5–9), which often deals with the tense relations between the Israelite and Aramaean kingdoms has to be used with great caution. It is mainly relevant for the history of the Aramaean kingdom of Aram-Damascus.[13]

2.2   *The Archaeological Record*

In the absence of a comprehensive corpus of written sources covering the entire period of Aramaean history, one has to turn to the archaeological record to try and fill in the gaps left by the texts. This task is not easy for here, too, one is faced with the problematic and lacunal nature of the evidence. Until the end of the 20th century, little was known about the Iron Age I, which is the period that saw the formation of the Aramaean states. Little was also known about the layout and organization of the Aramaean cities and territories in the Iron Age II because of the very limited number of excavated sites with substantial Iron Age remains. Apart from the evidence from early 20th-century excavations (Tell Halaf,[14]

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[9] Harrison 2009b: 187.

[10] Grayson 1991; id. 1996; Tadmor 1994; Leichty 2011.

[11] Hawkins 2000.

[12] KAI 201–227; Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982; Biran – Naveh 1993; iid; 1995; Schwiderski (ed.) 2004; Pardee 2009 a; id. 2009b.

[13] Kraeling 1918; Unger 1957; Pitard 1987; Reinhold 1989; Axskjöld 1998; Hafþórrson 2006.

[14] Von Oppenheim 1931; id. 1943; id. 1950; id. 1955; id. 1962.

Tell Fekheriye,[15] Zincirli,[16] Tell Tayinat,[17] and Hamath),[18] no published information was available. In spite of its importance the evidence from the above-mentioned sites gave only a truncated view of the Aramaean settlement. It first focused exclusively on large urban sites and within these settlements on the upper cities and their Iron Age II monumental architecture. It entirely neglected the lower cities where the domestic and industrial quarters were located as well as the small rural settlements.

With a few exceptions, little attention was also given in these excavations to stratigraphy and to the establishment of reliable pottery sequences.[19] This failure has led to a major difficulty in interpreting the results of surveys that covered large areas of the Syrian territory in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Little can be gathered about the Iron Age occupation from most of them because scholars were unable to identify and to determine clearly the nature and date of the Iron Age pottery. So in spite of the large number of surveys only the results of the most recent ones, such as those at Tell Tayinat[20] and the Euphrates,[21] revealed substantial information about the settlement pattern and distribution during the Iron Age. Real progress has nevertheless been made in the last two decades regarding the Iron Age archaeology of Syria. Next to surveys, new excavations such as those of Tell Afis[22] and Tell Qarqur[23] have yielded refined pottery sequences ranging from the Iron Age I until the end of Iron Age II, allowing a better understanding of the characteristics of the Early Syrian Iron Age. This new evidence has changed our understanding of the situation that prevailed in the period immediately following the collapse and shed new light on the origin and formation of the Iron Age polities of ancient Syria.

In addition to these new excavations, work recently resumed on several major sites that had been excavated at the beginning of the 20th century yielding extremely important new archaeological and epigraphic evidence, allowed for new insights into the history of some Aramaean kingdoms.

[15] McEwan et al. 1958.
[16] Von Luschan 1893; id. 1898; id. 1902; id. 1911; id. 1943.
[17] Haines 1971.
[18] Fugmann 1958 and Riis 1948.
[19] Jamieson 2000: 261–263 and n. 7.
[20] Harrison 2009a.
[21] Wilkinson 1995.
[22] Mazzoni 1995; ead. 2000a; ead. 2000b; ead. 2000c; ead. 2005; Cecchini – Mazzoni (eds.) 1998; Venturi 1998; id. 2000.
[23] Dornemann 2002 and id. 2003.

These sites are Tell Fekheriye[24] and Tell Halaf[25] on the Khabur, Tell Aḥmar[26] on the Euphrates, Zincirli[27] on the eastern slopes of the Amanus Mountains, Tell Tayinat[28] in the plain of Antioch, and Aleppo[29] in central-northern Syria.

2.3   Origin of the Name "Aramaean"

Before dealing with the history of the Aramaeans of ancient Syria it is important to define the origin of the appellation "Aramaeans." This designation derives from the geographical name Aram, which appears for the first time in connection with groups called *aḥlamû*[30] in the Middle-Assyrian texts of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 B.C.) and Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056 B.C.).[31] The inscriptions of these 11th-century B.C. kings mention *aḥlamû* of the land Aram or *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans,[32] the land Aram indicating the area between Khabur and the Euphrates[33] as well as the west bank of the Euphrates,[34] since these *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans moved freely as far as Jabal Bishri, Palmyra, and Mount Lebanon.[35] It is interesting to note in this context that later Aramaean dynasts never refer to themselves as Aramaeans or to their country as Aram, with the exception of the king of Aram-Damascus since his kingdom was also called Aram. In the 8th century B.C. Aramaic inscriptions of Sefire (KAI 222–224) expressions "All Aram" and "Upper and Lower Aram" were variously interpreted[36] but it can be safely argued that "All Aram" refers to a geographical area[37] that included the territories of the Aramaean and non-Aramaean kingdoms united in the coalition against Mati'el of Arpad, and that roughly covers

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[24] Bonatz – Bartl – Gilibert – Jauss 2008: 89–135.
[25] Cholidis – Martin 2002; iid. (eds.) 2010; iid. (eds.) 2011; Baghdo – Martin – Novák – Orthmann (eds.) 2009; iid. (eds.) 2012; Novák 2010.
[26] Bunnens 1995a and Roobaert – Bunnens 1999: 167–172.
[27] Schloen – Fink 2009a; iid. 2009b; iid. 2009c.
[28] Harrison 2009a and id. 2009b.
[29] Kohlmeyer 2000; id. 2009; id. 2012; Gonnella – Khayata – Kohlmeyer 2005.
[30] Postgate 1981: 48–50 and Lipiński 2000a: 37f.
[31] Nashef 1982: 34f. For earlier occurrences of the term Aram, see Reinhold 1989: 23–38 and, more recently, Lipiński 2000a: 26–40.
[32] Nashef 1982: 35.
[33] Ibid.
[34] For the later use and meaning of the term Aram, see the review in Sader 2010: 276f.
[35] Grayson 1991: 23, 37f.
[36] Sader 1987: 279–281.
[37] Pitard 1987: 178–179; Fitzmeyer ²1995: 65–68; Grosby 1995; Sader 2000: 70; Kahn 2007.

the boundaries of modern Syria, while "Upper and Lower Aram" may refer to North and South Syria, respectively.[38] So Aram is a geographical term that refers at times to part and at others to all of the Syrian territory in the Iron Age, hence the appellation "Aramaeans" given to the 1st-millennium B.C. inhabitants of Syria.

3. THE ARAMAEANS IN THE IRON AGE I (1200–900 B.C.): FROM KIN-BASED GROUPS TO POLITIES[39]

3.1   The Texts

The foundations of the Aramaean polities were laid during the three centuries that followed the collapse of the great Hittite Empire (ca. 1200–900 B.C.). The only texts that deal with the Aramaean population of Syria in the Iron Age I are the above-mentioned Middle Assyrian royal annals of Tiglath-Pileser I and Aššur-bēl-kala.

Tiglath-Pileser I says in one of his annals: "I marched against the *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans...I plundered from the edge of the land of Suhu to the city of Carchemish of the land Hatti in a single day. I massacred them (and) carried back their booty, possessions, and goods without number. The rest of their troops...crossed the Euphrates. I crossed the Euphrates after them.... I conquered six of their cities at the foot of Mount Bishri, burnt, razed, (and) destroyed (them)...."[40]

In another passage the same king says that he crossed the Euphrates 28 times, twice in one year, in pursuit of the *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans. Again, he claims to have defeated them "from the city of Tadmar of the land Amurru, Anat of the land Suhu, as far as Rapiqu of Karduniash."[41] Elsewhere he says: "I brought about their defeat from the foot of Mount Lebanon, the city Tadmar of the land Amurru, Anat of the land Suhu, as far as Rapiqu of Karduniash."[42]

Aššur-bēl-kala[43] also led several campaigns against various contingents or caravans of Aramaeans (KASKAL *šá* KUR *a-ri-me*) in northeast Syria.

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[38] Lipiński 2000a: 214 identifies "Upper Aram" as the sphere of influence of the kingdom of Bit Agusi and "Lower Aram" with that of Aram-Damascus.

[39] For this formative phase of Aramaean history, see also Sader 2000; ead. 2010; ead. forthcoming.

[40] Grayson 1991: 23.

[41] Grayson 1991: 36–38, 43.

[42] Grayson 1991: 23, 37f.

[43] Grayson 1991: 101–103.

The Akkadian term *aḫlamû*, which is used to refer to the inhabitants of Aram, referred from the 2nd millennium B.C. to tribal groups, leading scholars to infer that the groups referred to as Aramaeans had a tribal social structure. The fact that the Assyrians called the inhabitants of Aram *aḫlamû*, a term "with the general range of 'nomad' or 'barbarian',"[44] has led to the assumption that the Aramaeans were semi-nomadic agropastoral groups.

3.2   *The Archaeological Evidence*

The archaeological evidence seems to match the general picture provided by the 11th-century B.C. Assyrian texts, not only in the valley of the Euphrates but throughout North Syria. This evidence comes from both surveys and large-scale excavations. Surveys were conducted east of the Euphrates, in the Jabbul area, in the Orontes Valley, and in the coastal area.[45] The available survey data indicates an increase in the number of Early Iron Age settlements as compared to the previous Late Bronze Age both east and west of the Euphrates.[46] A large majority of them were new foundations of a small size, indicating "a 'dispersal' of the population into small, rural settlements...."[47] The so-called "cities" of the Aramaeans mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser I in the 11th century B.C. and by Assur-dān in the 10th century B.C.[48] are certainly to be understood as part of this early Iron Age settlement process.

The survey results were confirmed by those of large-scale excavations, which have demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of excavated early Iron Age I sites had an economy based predominantly on agriculture and small cattle breeding with strong evidence of production, storage,

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[44] Grayson 1976: 13 n. 70.

[45] For these surveys, see Braidwood 1937; Maxwell Hyslop et al. 1942–1943; Braidwood – Braidwood 1961; van Loon 1967; Courtois 1973; Matthers et al. (eds.) 1981; Akkermans 1984; Braemer 1984; Shaath 1985; Meijer 1986; Geyer – Monchambert 1987; Sapin 1989; Ciafardoni 1992; Schwartz et al. 2000: 447–462; Melis 2005; Janeway 2008: 126f; Harrison 2009a: 175f; Tsuneki 2009: 50.

[46] Wilkinson 1995: 152; see also McClellan 1992: 168f; Bartl – al-Maqdissi 2007: 243–251; Fortin 2007: 254–265; Harrison 2009a: 175f.

[47] Morandi Bonacossi 2007a: 86 observed that "the diffusion throughout the countryside around Mishrifeh of dispersed rural settlements dependent on a larger central site located at the geographical centre of the system, following a 'scattered' model also found in the Syrian and Iraqi Jazirah—which seems to constitute a developmental pattern shared by northern Mesopotamia and inner Syria in the IA II and III."

[48] Grayson 1991: 133.

and processing of food represented by silos, pithoi, and bread ovens.[49] The rural and egalitarian character of the sites is clearly indicated by the architecture: each house had its own storage and work areas as indicated, for example, in the well-preserved remains of Tell Afis[50] and Tell Deinit.[51] Most 12th–11th century B.C. sites had no monumental public buildings and contained only dwellings characterized by domestic installations such as *tannurs*, silos, and pithoi, indicating food processing and storage. Tell Afis, for example, displays in levels 7abc–6 (Iron Age IB) "a regular plan with rectilinear streets separating units of houses with inner courtyards furnished with domestic and industrial installations for weaving, storage and probably dyeing."[52] As suggested for the southern Levant, the fact that Iron Age I sites in Syria were also composed of agglomerations of domestic structures would seem to confirm the complex patriarchal family as the fundamental social unit.[53]

This archaeological evidence may lead to the conclusion that the new communities that appeared after the collapse of the Late Bronze Age settlements in Syria were founded on new principles, and "stressed domestic autonomy and an ideology of categorical equality between domestic groups," as suggested by B. Routledge[54] for the Jordanian Iron Age. What happened toward the end of the Late Bronze Age is that people from within and from outside the cities "began to gravitate to new communities focused on mutual defense and subsistence security."[55]

3.3   *A Population Continuum*

The Middle Assyrian texts mentioned above confront the student of Aramaean history with two main difficulties. First, they describe the situation prevailing only in a specific area of Syria, stretching from the Khabur to Mount Lebanon. On the other hand, the only population groups they refer to in this area are the *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans. Did this group form the entire population of northeastern Syria or were they only its agro-pastoral component? Was "Aramaean" presence restricted to the area mentioned

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[49] Mazzoni 2000c: 121–124.
[50] See Chitti 2005 and Venturi 2005.
[51] Shaath 1985. The Iron Age II houses uncovered in Tell Mastuma (Iwasaki et al. [eds.] 2009) seem to be in the tradition of these early Iron Age I dwellings.
[52] Mazzoni 2000c: 123.
[53] Routledge 2004: 128.
[54] Routledge 2004: 113.
[55] Ibid.

in the Middle-Assyrian annals or were these groups also present else-where in Syria? Finally, were these *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans newcomers or the descendants of the Late Bronze Age population?

While the term *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans may be understood in the specific context of Tiglath-Pileser I's annals as referring to agro-pastoral groups this does not imply that they included only semi-nomadic elements or that they were the only inhabitants or social group of Iron Age I Syria. As G. Bunnens rightly stated, "there were no great shifts of population after the collapse of Late Bronze Age society. Local rural communities together with unstable, possibly but not necessarily nomadic groups such as the Ahlamu…became the primary components of the political and social fabric, and the tribe replaced the former territorial states as the basic unit of collective organization."[56]

In spite of clear regional differences, the recent archaeological evi-dence clearly supports a population *continuum*, which is attested by the evidence of both the language and the material culture. Regarding the linguistic evidence, it supports continuity between the Late Bronze Age West Semitic–speaking population, of which the *aḫlamû*–Aramaeans were part, and the later Aramaeans. The Emar texts show continuity between 2nd-millennium West Semitic and 1st-millennium Aramaic dialects and suggest that the Aramaeans had been part of the local population of Syria since the Late Bronze Age: "Most of the roots occurring in the huge Amor-ite documentation of upper Mesopotamia and northeastern Syria recur later in Aramaic. Furthermore, several Amorite names…are the forerun-ners of exclusively Aramaic anthroponyms…."[57]

As for the archaeological evidence, when available it attests the survival of Late Bronze Age architectural traditions, industries, and other aspects of the material culture, more specifically the local ceramic assemblage[58] found at all excavated sites. According to S. Mazzoni, "the analysis of the local pottery and elements of architecture, such as the plans of domes-tic buildings in Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Sukas and Tell Afis, has successfully demonstrated the native character of the local Iron Age II population."[59] This continuity is also indicated by the fact that some early Iron Age sites re-occupied Late Bronze Age settlements and a larger number of them

56 Bunnens 2000b: 16.
57 Zadok 1991: 114.
58 Fugmann 1958: 135, 266; Bounni – Lagarce – Lagarce – Saliby – Badre 1979: 243, 245;
Lund 1986: 40–42; Venturi 1998: 128.
59 Mazzoni 2000a: 34.

continued to be settled in the Iron Age II.[60] So it can be safely assumed that the settlers of the Iron Age I sites were part of the local population of Syria and that the groups called *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans were also part of this population. The theory that was widely spread 30 years ago and according to which the Aramaeans are foreign invaders coming from the Syro-Arabian desert[61] no longer holds in view of the recent archaeological and epigraphic evidence. As B. Sass[62] correctly puts it: "Rather than as invaders, new on the scene, the Aramaeans are rightly understood as a local element in changing social conditions."

3.4 *Northeast Syria between Assyrian Pressure and Neo-Hittite Expansion*

What was the prevailing political situation in northeast Syria in the Iron Age I according to the above evidence? The Middle Assyrian texts do not refer to individual Aramaean polities but only to an undifferentiated group called *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans who were present in the area extending from the Khabur to Mount Lebanon. With the exception of the kingdom of Carchemish, which was in the hands of a Neo-Hittite dynasty, northeast Syria in the Iron Age I appears to have been occupied by rural settlements controlled by a confederation of large kin-based groups referred to as *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans. These groups were not yet organized in individual political entities and their settlement was peaceful and resulted from the collapse of the large Late Bronze Age urban settlements. No leading house or leader is mentioned individually by name but these groups appear nevertheless to have been well organized and armed, for they were able to resist the mighty Assyrian army. They also apparently enjoyed great wealth, as suggested by the expression "their goods without number."[63]

While the *aḥlamû*–Aramaeans were resisting Assyrian advances east and west of the Euphrates, the settlers of central and northern Syria had to face the growing power of the land of Palistin. This area, from the plain of Antioch in the west to Aleppo and Hamath in the east, was being rapidly transformed into a polity by the rise of a Luwian dynasty. Indeed, Taitas appears to have conquered central and northern Syria as early as the 11th century B.C. According to the archaeological evidence, the situation

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60 Venturi 2000: 533–536 and table 1.
61 E.g., Dupont-Sommer 1949 and Malamat 1973.
62 Sass 2005: 63.
63 See note 40, above.

in the conquered area was probably quite similar to that prevailing in the northeast before this Neo-Hittite expansion.

Northeast Syria, the heartland of the Aramaeans, was therefore pressured by the Assyrians in the east, and by the Luwian kingdoms of Carchemish and Palistin in the north and west, respectively. This constant threat was instrumental in creating a defense mechanism that led to the regeneration of complex societies.

3.5 *The Regeneration of Complex Societies*

It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that in the early stages of the Aramaean state formation kinship or belonging to what B. Routledge calls a "founding house" or "domestic group"[64] was instrumental in creating the necessary cohesion among the population and in formulating new sociopolitical relationships that became the basis of the emerging state. As already argued, the textual and archaeological evidence supports this assumption. This social organization may be inferred also from the name later given to the new polity as "House" of an eponymous ancestor.

Two main factors may have prompted the regeneration of complex societies toward the end of the Iron Age I in northeast Syria. The first is the proximity of already established Neo-Hittite kingdoms. It is important not to underestimate the Aramaean states' desire to emulate the successful Luwian models, which had survived the great collapse and the territories of which were interwoven with those held by Aramaean groups. T. S. Harrison is right in stating that the diverse cultural and ethnic milieu may have "provided the stimulus that forged the small vibrant nation-states that would come to define Iron Age civilization in this region."[65] So, "the survival of institutions or ideas from before the collapse,"[66] embodied in the Luwian polities may have played a role in the formation of Aramaean centralized states.

The second factor that may have accelerated the regeneration of complex societies and the creation of centralized states in Aramaean-held territories is trade. G. M. Schwartz notes that "trade with external societies has been identified as a crucial variable in the revival of complex societies";[67] indeed, it may have played an important role in the

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64 Routledge 2004: 113.
65 Harrison 2009b: 187.
66 Schwartz 2006: 10.
67 Schwartz 2006: 11.

regeneration of such societies in Iron Age I Syria. There is a clear indica-
tion in the archaeological and written record that these Iron Age I com-
munities witnessed a growing economic power represented by the storage
of production surpluses, local industry, and trade activity. The Euphra-
tes was one of the most important trade routes in ancient Syria and, as
already noted, it was under the control of the Aramaeans, who may have
quickly resumed trade and exchange. This trade activity is clearly attested
in the rich booty from the Aramaean groups on the middle Euphrates
collected by Tiglath-Pileser I in the 11th century B.C. and by Assurnasir-
pal II at the dawn of the 9th century B.C.: precious metals, ivory, sheep,
and dyed textiles.[68] This revival of trade activity is attested as early as the
11th century at several sites by the presence of imported pottery.[69] The
settled communities could have intensified their own level of production
to participate in this active commerce, as evidenced, for example, by the
flourishing textile industry attested in Tell Afis[70] and in the sheep and
dyed textiles that are constantly mentioned as part of the booty collected
from Aramaean groups.

It was this growing prosperity and increased contact with the wider
world that may partly explain the growth of the settlements and the rise
of new complex centers in Syria in the Iron Age II. It is highly likely that
the need to protect the settled territory and the privileges and wealth
acquired by controlling the main trade routes was instrumental in lead-
ing Syria toward rapid urbanization, which in turn paved the way to the
emergence of centralized states.

So the creation of the Aramaean polities started with large kin-based
groups—around which smaller domestic groups may have clustered—
establishing control over a territory they had settled and which they
secured with strongholds. Once a group had firmly established its control
over a territory it was able to expand in order to conquer more land for
defensive, strategic, or economic purposes. There is evidence in the Assyr-
ian records that the Aramaeans had to use military force to conquer or
maintain control over settlements that were of economic and/or strategic
importance for their survival. This was the case in the conquest of Pitru,
Mutqinnu,[71] and Gidara[72] on the western bank of the Euphrates as well

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68 Sader 2000: 69.
69 Riis 1948: 114; Bonatz 1998; Mazzoni 2000a: 36; Venturi 2000: 522–528.
70 Cecchini 2000.
71 Grayson 1996: 19, 51, 64f, 74.
72 Grayson 1991: 150.

as of many other cities that were previously held by the Assyrians or by Luwian kingdoms. The Neo-Hittite kingdom of Palistin lost large parts of its territory to the Aramaean kingdom of Bit Agusi and to Hamath: the first controlled Aleppo—a key city on the way to Anatolia—and its area and the second Hamath and its area. Under the pressure of the newly established Aramaean polities, this great Luwian kingdom, known in the Neo-Assyrian annals as Pattina-Unqi, shrank to its original core around Tell Tayinat in the plain of Antioch. The Aramaean kingdom of Bit Adini, on the other hand, conquered territories that were in Luwian hands, such as Masuwari,[73] Aramaean Til Barsib, and modern Tell Aḥmar, a key site controlling the crossing of the Euphrates from east to west that was conquered by Aḫuni of Bit Adini, who turned it into his main stronghold.

3.6   *Territorial Organization and Consolidation of the State*

Independent polities ruled by Aramaic-speaking dynasts appear for the first time in the late-10th-century B.C. annals of the Neo-Assyrian king Adad-nirari II (911–891 B.C.). Most of them are characterized by a new naming: "house of PN" (Bit Baḫiani, Bit Adini, Bit Asalli, Bit Agusi) and their rulers are called in the Assyrian annals and in some Aramaic inscriptions "sons of PN," the personal name in both appellations being that of the historical or legendary founder of the state.[74] There were, however, some exceptions to this rule: The kingdom of Hamath was always called by the name of its territory and never "house of PN." This may be explained by the fact that after having been part of the land of Palistin, Hamath may have been ruled by an offshoot of this Luwian dynasty, since its 9th-century rulers, Parata, Urḫilina, and his son Uratami, bear Luwian names.

The other exception is the kingdom of Aram-Damascus. This kingdom was referred to as Aram or Aram-Damascus in the Aramaic inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible and as *ša imērišu* in the Neo-Assyrian annals. Only rarely do these annals refer to it as *bīt-haza'ili*.[75] Finally, the successors of Gabbar never call their kingdom Bit Gabbari but refer to it by the name of the territory, "Yādiya," or by that of its capital "Sam'al." Only the earliest ruler mentioned in the Assyrian annals, Hayyan, is called "Son of Gabbar." Here, again, the mixed Aramaean-Luwian character of the ruling dynasty

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[73] Hawkins 1983.
[74] Routledge 2004: 124–128 recently discussed this issue.
[75] Summ 4, 7'; Summ 9, rev. 3; cf. Tadmor 1994: 138, 186.

may have been the reason behind choosing the name of the territory instead of the traditional tribal designation.

The Aramaean kingdoms that developed in the territory of modern Syria[76] are those of Bit Baḫiani on the upper Khabur, Bit Adini on the east and west bank of the Euphrates, Bit Agusi in central north Syria from Aleppo to the Syro-Turkish borders, Hamath and Luʿaš from the Orontes Valley to the coast, and Aram-Damascus from Palmyra to the Golan Heights, including the Lebanese Beqaʿ.[77] Aramaean polities, like Laqe and Bit Ḫalupe on the Middle Euphrates and lower Khabur, and Nisibis and Bit Zamanni in the Tur ʿAbdin area, were short-lived and do not appear to have initiated large-scale urbanization, since there is no mention of their royal or fortified cities.[78] They were incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system towards the middle of the 9th century B.C.

When the Assyrian annals first mention these Aramaean kingdoms all appear to have undergone large-scale urbanization. The Assyrian texts always associate these urban settlements with the person of the polity ruler by referring to them as his royal (*alānu šarrūti-šu*) or his fortified cities (*alānu dannūti-šu*).[79] Political authority may have preceded urbanization and the building of fortified cities may be explained by the need "to enhance the managerial and coordinating capabilities of the emerging leadership."[80] As S. Mazzoni correctly observed, urbanization was linked to the emergence of "political entities based on territorial control and exploitation," which later achieved "central administration and a palace-oriented organization."[81]

Urban centers with fortifications and monumental buildings are widely attested in the archaeological record of Syria from the 10th century onward in Hamath,[82] Zincirli,[83] Tell Halaf,[84] Tell Fekheriye,[85] Tell

[76] Sader 1987, Dion 1997, and Lipiński 2000a recently discussed the political history of these kingdoms. Cf. also the map in the frontispiece.

[77] Lipiński 2000a: 298 claims that the Beqaʿ Valley was in the hands of the kingdom of Hamath in spite of the fact that the provinces created by the Assyrians on the territory of Aram-Damascus clearly include cities located in the Beqaʿ Valley.

[78] For their boundaries and their political role, see Lipiński 2000a: 77–117.

[79] For these cities, see Ikeda 1979.

[80] Cohen 1984: 347.

[81] Mazzoni 1994: 329.

[82] Fugmann 1958.

[83] Von Luschan 1893; id. 1898; id. 1902; id. 1911; id. 1943; see more recently Wartke 2005 and also Schloen – Fink 2009a; iid. 2009b.

[84] Von Oppenheim 1950; id. 1955; id. 1962 and more recently Cholidis – Martin 2002; iid. (eds.) 2010; iid. (eds.) 2011; Baghdo – Martin – Novák – Orthmann (eds.) 2009; iid. (eds.) 2012.

[85] McEwan et al. 1958.

Afis,[86] 'Ain Dara,[87] Tell Rifa'at,[88] Tell Mishrife,[89] and Tell Qarqur.[90] New urban foundations such as that of Hazrak-Hatarikka continued all through the 8th century B.C. and they are attested in both the written and the archaeological record.[91] Almost all these urban centers were new foundations and this fact may account for the drastic change in the toponymy of the area.

Urbanization was accompanied by an increase in the number of small rural settlements mentioned simply as "cities" or "towns" (alāni), for lack of a specific name for this type of settlement. Shalmaneser III says in the account of his campaign against Bit Agusi, for example, that he "captured the city Arne, his royal city. I razed, destroyed, and burned together with (it) 100 cities in its environs";[92] in the annals relating to the battle of Qarqar, the same king says that "he conquered the city of Aštamakku together with 89 (other) cities,"[93] which belonged to the kingdom of Hamath; finally, in Tiglath-Pileser III's campaign against Damascus, the Assyrian king says that he conquered "591 towns" of Damascus.[94] This settlement pattern, consisting of an urban administrative center surrounded by a large number of small rural settlements, is supported by the archaeological evidence.[95]

The territory of the Aramaean polities was divided into administrative districts the number of which varied from one state to another. This may again be inferred from the Assyrian inscriptions, which indicate, for example, that the kingdom of Aram-Damascus, on the eve of its transformation into an Assyrian province, was divided into at least 16 districts[96] while 19 districts of the land of Hamath were conquered by Tiglath-Pileser III and annexed to the Assyrian Empire.[97] These districts may have been organized around major urban centers.

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86 Cecchini 2005; Affani 2005; for a recently discovered monumental Iron Age I temple, cf. Soldi 2009: 106–116.
87 Abou Assaf 1990 and Kohlmeyer 2008.
88 Seton-Williams 1961 and id. 1967.
89 Morandi Bonacossi 2006 and id. 2007a.
90 Dornemann 2002 and id. 2003.
91 Mazzoni 2000a: 48–55.
92 Grayson 1996: 46.
93 Grayson 1996: 38.
94 Ann 23, 16'–17'; cf. Tadmor 1994: 80f.
95 Morandi Bonacossi 2007a: 86; cf. note 47, above.
96 Pitard 1987: 187.
97 Ann 19, 9–10 and 88–89; Ann 26, 5; cf. Tadmor 1994: 62f and Radner 2006–2008a: 58–61 nos. 50, 54.

The borders of these Aramaean territorial states were never clearly defined and they were often the cause of armed conflicts, echoes of which are occasionally found in the written record such as the conflict opposing Bar-Gayah of Kittika to Mati'el of Arpad recorded in the Sefire inscriptions,[98] or the one opposing Sam'al to the kings of the Danuna[99] and to Gurgum[100] in the royal inscriptions of Kulamuwa and Panamuwa II respectively, or, finally, the conflict opposing the kings of Damascus to the kings of Israel recorded in the Bible[101] and in the recently discovered Aramaic inscription of Tell Dan.[102]

In the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., state authority as well as administrative and economic duties were concentrated in one urban center and in the hands of a hereditary monarch. This centralization process is evidenced in the building of new capitals. Some Aramaean capitals were clearly new foundations especially built to be the seat and the symbol of power of the ruling dynasties. The most obvious examples are Hazrak, the capital of the kingdom of Hamath and Lu'aš (KAI 202), and Arpad, which became the new capital of Bit Agusi after the destruction of Arne. Other cities, which had existed before, like Sam'al, Qarqar, and Damascus, became with time the vital centers of their respective kingdoms. This trend toward centralization is clearly seen in the fact that Aramaean rulers of the 8th century B.C. were no longer called "sons" of their eponymous ancestor, of whom they were the hereditary descendants, but by the name of their capital: while in the 9th century B.C. Hayyan is called son of Gabbar, the 8th-century king Panamuwa is called the Sam'alite.[103] The traditional designation of the ruler as "son of PN" seems to have been abandoned in the 8th century B.C., since the Aramaeans had adopted for themselves the title of king: Attarsumki and Mati'el are kings of Arpad,[104] Panamuwa is king of Yādiya,[105] and Bar-Rakkab the king of Sam'al.[106]

Centralization created an organic link between the fate of the capital and that of the kingdom. The royal residence became the life-giving organ

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98 KAI 222–224.
99 KAI 24.
100 KAI 215.
101 1 Kgs 15: 20–22; 2 Kgs 6: 12–15.
102 Athas 2003.
103 Ann. 3,4; 13,12; 27,4; cf. Tadmor 1994: 68, 87f.
104 KAI 222.
105 KAI 214.
106 KAI 216 and 217.

of the state and its destruction automatically led to the collapse of the entire polity.

4. The Iron Age II: Aramaean Polities and the Assyrian Conquest

The incorporation of the newly established Aramaean kingdoms into the Assyrian provincial system started as early as the mid-9th century B.C. with the conquest of Bit Baḫiani and Bit Adini, two Aramaean kingdoms located east of the Euphrates on the route from Assyria to the Mediterranean. It was also in the first half of the 9th century B.C. that the Aramaean territories of Laqe and Bit Ḫalupe were subdued by Assurnasirpal II. They seem to have fallen later into the hands of the Hamathite rulers.[107]

4.1   Bit Baḫiani

Regarding Bit Baḫiani, recent archaeological and epigraphic discoveries in Tell Halaf have led the excavators to reconsider the chronology of events and the succession of the rulers of this Aramaean polity.[108]

Bit Baḫiani is mentioned as early as the reign of Adad-nirari II, who received the tribute of Abisalamu, son of Baḫianu,[109] in the year 893 B.C. Two royal cities of Bit Baḫiani—Guzana, modern Tell Halaf; and Sikani, modern Tell Fekheriye, on the upper Khabur near Ras el 'Ain—are also mentioned, indicating that the kingdom was founded as early as the 10th century B.C.

M. Novák[110] places the foundation of the kingdom at the beginning of the 10th century B.C. and the rule of Hadyanu and his son Kapara, whose inscription was written in cuneiform on the female statue of the *hilani* toward the middle of the 10th century B.C. before the first Assyrian campaign. M. Novák considers Kapara to be the builder of the *hilani* and of its impressive scorpion gate.[111] He justifies a date in the 10th century for his rule by

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[107] Lipínski 2000a: 105; Radner 2006–2008a: 55 n. 34.
[108] Novák 2009: 97.
[109] Grayson 1991: 153.
[110] Novák 2009: 97.
[111] Novák 2010: 12. The date proposed by Novák for the rule of Kapara and the building of the *hilani* diverges from the 9th-century date previously established by Moortgat in Oppenheim 1955 and Hrouda in Oppenheim 1962 for the orthostats and small finds, respectively, and the 8th-century date proposed by Akurgal 1979 for the building of the *hilani*. Lipínski 2000a: 123,132 suggests that Kapara is a king of the Baliḫ area who conquered Guzana in the second half of the 9th century B.C.

the absence of Assyrian influence on the iconography of the *hilani* and on the palaeography and wording of the inscription.[112] If this assumption is correct the *hilani* of Tell Halaf would be the oldest building of this type in Syria known to date.

The date M. Novák suggested for Kapara's rule raises various questions and clearly contradicts the generally accepted 9th-century date for that building.[113] First, although both Kapara and his father bear clearly Aramaic names, Kapara does not refer to his kingdom as "house of PN" as do other early Aramaean rulers. Kapara refers to himself as "King of Pale," an otherwise unknown kingdom. Lipiński suggests for Pale a reading of *bá-liₓ-e*, and identifies it with an Aramaean kingdom that developed in the Baliḫ area. According to him, Kapara was the ruler of the Baliḫ kingdom around 830 B.C.[114] and extended his dominion over Guzana during that period.

In M. Novák's sequence, Kapara's rule is followed by that of the Aramaean house of Baḫianu. Only Abisalamu is known by name while another ruler, a contemporary of Assurnasirpal II, is simply referred to as "son of Baḫiani."[115] Bit Baḫiani was conquered by the Assyrians in the first half of the 9th century B.C. and Guzana became the seat of an Assyrian governor before 866 B.C., the eponym year of the earliest-mentioned governor of Guzana, Šamaš-nūrī.

The recently discovered bilingual inscription of Tell Fekheriye[116] has confused scholars because the author of the inscription, Haddayisʿi, gives himself and his father Šamaš-nūrī the title "Governor of Guzana" in the Assyrian text and that of "King of Guzana" in the Aramaic version. The problem that confronted scholars was, first, to reconcile the dual status of these rulers—how could they be kings and Assyrian governors at the same time?—and second, to determine the date of their rule knowing that Guzana became an Assyrian province before 866 B.C. A. R. Millard[117] identified Haddayisʿi's father, Šamaš-nūrī, with the above-mentioned governor of Guzana. M. Novák,[118] following E. Lipiński's suggestion, identifies

112 Novák 2009: 94.
113 Sader 1987: 37.
114 Lipiński 2000a: 123, 132. This date contradicts Novák's dating of Kapara's rule.
115 Grayson 1991: 216.
116 Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982.
117 Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982: 112.
118 Novák 2009: 95.

Haddayis'i with Addu-rēmanni, the eponym of the year 841 B.C.[119] Based on this identification he suggests that when Bit Baḥiani was incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system the Assyrians appointed members of its Aramaean dynasty to be governors of Guzana. Haddayis'i and his father would therefore be members of an Aramaean royal house and not Assyrian aristocrats.[120]

M. Novák's interpretation, which attempts to solve the duality of the titles of Haddayis'i and his father and to reconcile the provincial status of Guzana with the existence of "kings" of Guzana, is based on the unproven assumption that members of local dynasties could be appointed governors of an Assyrian province simply on the occurrence of Aramaic names of some eponyms. This interpretation still needs to be substantiated by more decisive evidence.

The last episode in Guzana's history is a rebellion against the Assyrians, which Adad-nirari III subdued in 808 B.C. This episode may perhaps indicate that Guzana had attempted to secede after the Assyrian conquest by Assurnasirpal II and that the two rulers mentioned in the Tell Fekheriye inscription may have been the authors or initiators of this "coup d'état" against Assyria.

The recent archaeological evidence may have shed light on the occupation sequence in Tell Halaf and on the nature and date of some of its monuments but it has not yet solved the many problems regarding the history of this Aramaean kingdom. It is to be hoped that future results from Tell Halaf and from the recent excavations of Tell Fekheriye, ancient Sikani, will yield better insights into the history of this kingdom.

4.2   *Bit Adini*

The relationship between the Assyrians and the Aramaean polity of Bit Adini seems very clear, on the other hand: the texts betray an unprecedented determination on the part of the Assyrians to destroy and erase from the map all the cities of Aḫuni, son of Adini, the only ruler of Bit Adini attested in the texts. The reason is obvious: the Assyrians needed to control the key passage on the Euphrates, which was held by Bit Adini. According to the Assyrian annals, Aḫuni held the city of Til Barsib, modern

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[119]   One wonders why Haddayis'i, unlike his father, should have had two names and why his Aramaic name should appear in the Assyrian eponym list and not in the Aramaic version of the Tell Fekheriye, inscription where he calls himself "King of Guzana."

[120]   Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982: 109f have cautiously made this suggestion.

Tell Aḥmar. Recent evidence[121] has shown that this city, called in Hittite Masuwari, was ruled by a Luwian dynasty. So Aḥuni must have conquered it from the Luwian dynasty, which ruled it.[122] It is this event perhaps that led the Assyrians to end the expansion of Bit Adini.

Aḥuni—and probably also his predecessors—who appears for the first time in the annals of Assurnasirpal II, were also able to protect the large territory they controlled east and west of the Euphrates, with no fewer than nine fortified cities that Shalmaneser III would systematically attack and destroy over four consecutive years (856–853 B.C.). Til Barsib was renamed Kār-Šulmānu-ašarēd, "Shalmaneser's harbor," and became the seat of the Assyrian governor.

Recent excavations at sites located in the territory of Bit Adini have not yielded any new evidence for the Aramaean occupation of Aḥuni's cities. The main city of Aḥuni, Til Barsib/Tell Aḥmar, for example, which was excavated in the early 20th century by the French,[123] was re-investigated recently by the University of Melbourne.[124] According to the excavator, "no remains dating from the pre-Assyrian Iron Age were found in place in the middle and lower city...and no stratified remains surely datable to the Iron Age were found on the tell below the level of the Assyrian palace...."[125] On the other hand, the site of Tell Shuyukh Fawqani, which has been identified with Burmar'ina,[126] one of Aḥuni's fortified cities, has not yielded remains from the early Iron Age[127] and thus does not provide additional information on the history of the Aramaean kingdom. Until more textual evidence becomes available the history of Bit Adini will remain restricted to the last years of its existence.

The Aramaean polities that developed west of the Euphrates had a longer life span than those located east of the river. They were able to establish centralized kingdoms, build new capitals, and rule over a large territory for about two centuries. Next to the information provided by the Assyrian annals, details of their political history are available from their own local inscriptions.

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[121] Hawkins 1983 and id. 1996–1997.

[122] According to Lipiński 2000a: 184, Aḥuni was the son of a Luwian ruler of Til Barsib, Hamiyata, who was a usurper.

[123] Thureau-Dangin – Dunand 1936a and iid. 1936b.

[124] Roobaert – Bunnens 1999 with relevant bibliography in n. 5.

[125] Roobaert – Bunnens 1999: 167.

[126] Bagg 2007: 55 with relevant bibliography.

[127] Bachelot 1999: 143–153.

4.3   *Bit Agusi*

This polity developed in central north Syria at the expense of Bit Adini in the east and the kingdom of Palistin in the northwest. Its political history is one of the best documented by both Assyrian and local Aramaic inscriptions.

Its original territory, known as the land of Yaḫanu, is first mentioned in the annals of Assurnasirpal II.[128] Its ruler, Gusi, is considered to be the founder of the polity known later as Bit Agusi. He is also the founder of its ruling dynasty, which can be reconstructed without gaps until the last ruler Mati'el.[129] From this core territory, Bit Agusi expanded; at the peak of its power its territory extended from the Euphrates in the east to the Afrin River in the west, and from the Jabbul Lake area in the south to the Turkish borders in the north.

The history of Bit Agusi is one of constant wars. Since the first Assyrian incursions west of the Euphrates, this polity seems to have held a leading position in the coalitions against Assyria. Moreover, Bit Agusi had a border conflict with Zakkur, King of Hamath and Lu'aš, that was settled by Adad-nirari III and the Turtan Šamši-ilu.[130] It also participated in a coalition of Syrian kingdoms against Zakkur.[131] The last king of Bit Agusi, Mati'el, had a particularly aggressive policy: he fought a war against the King of Kittika[132] and he allied himself with the King of Urartu against Assyria.[133] This alliance led his dynasty and his kingdom to their downfall: in 740 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III marched against the capital, Arpad, destroyed it, and annexed it to the Assyrian Empire.

Little archaeological evidence is available to complement the history of this kingdom. The main capital Arpad-Tell Rifa'at was excavated[134] but only preliminary reports have been published and these do not provide insights into the city's organization and monuments. Aleppo[135] and 'Ain Dara[136] have yielded monumental temples of the 11th century B.C., built

[128] Grayson 1991: 218.
[129] Lipiński 2000a: 219. Lipiński has adopted the reading *hdrm* proposed by Puech (1992) for the inscription of the Breğ stele instead of '*brm* (Zadok 1997b: 805), and identifies the Bar-Hadad of the Breğ stele as king of Bit Agusi and son of Attarsumki I.
[130] Grayson 1996: 203.
[131] KAI 202.
[132] KAI 222–224.
[133] Tadmor 1994.
[134] Seton Williams 1961 and id. 1967.
[135] Kohlmeyer 2000; id. 2009; id. 2012; Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005.
[136] Abou-Assaf 1990 and Novák 2012.

probably under the rule of the Luwian dynasty of Palistin but which continued to be in use in the Iron Age II under the rule of Bit Agusi. Apart from the temple nothing is known about the Iron Age city of Aleppo and investigations in the lower city of ʿAin Dara have been limited.[137] No other substantial information relevant to the history of Bit Agusi is available from the excavated sites.

4.4   *Bit Gabbari-Yādiya*

The Aramaean kingdom of Yādiya, which was founded by Gabbar, is mentioned for the first time in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III for the year 858 B.C. It is located on the eastern slope of the Amanus Mountain and was founded as early as the late 10th century B.C. The northern location of this Aramaean kingdom seems to indicate that the settlement area of Semitic-speaking Aramaeans was not confined to northeast Syria but that these groups were also present at the northern edge of Syrian territory. The history of the kingdom of Yādiya is well documented by the Assyrian annals and by local Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions of its rulers[138] and officials.[139] These inscriptions allow the reconstruction of its ruling dynasty from the founder Gabbar to the last ruler Bar-Rakkab, after whose rule Samʾal became an Assyrian province.[140]

Severe crises threatened both the ruling dynasty and the polity during its two-century-long existence. This complex and insecure situation was created on the one hand by the mixed Aramaean and Luwian population, which co-existed with difficulty, and on the other by the fact that the Aramaean kingdom of Yādiya was perceived as an alien body by its threatening Neo-Hittite neighbors. The troubled internal situation and the external threats are clearly reflected in the 9th-century B.C. royal inscription of Kulamuwa (KAI 24) and in the 8th-century B.C. inscriptions of Panamuwa I (KAI 214) and Bar-Rakkab (KAI 216–221). This situation led the rulers of this Aramaean kingdom to seek Assyrian protection very early, enabling them to develop and to prosper in spite of their precarious situation. The wealth of Samʾal is clearly reflected in the archaeological evidence, which has unveiled strongly fortified lower and upper cities and a series of

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137 Zimansky 2002.
138 KAI 24 and 214–221.
139 Schloen – Fink 2009a; iid. 2009b; iid. 2009c.
140 Lipiński 2000a: 247.

beautifully decorated *hilani*.[141] Sam'al must have been incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system before 681 B.C., since a governor of Sam'al appears in the eponym list for that year.[142]

The University of Chicago's new excavations[143] investigating both the upper and the lower cities will certainly enhance our understanding of this kingdom's history by providing new archaeological and textual evidence such as the recently found inscription of Kuttamuwa, an official of the 8th-century B.C. king Panamuwa II.[144] The new archaeological investigation of the site of Zincirli, ancient Sam'al, also promises to yield substantial evidence for the study of Aramaean and Luwian relations and the impact these two cultures had on each other. It will also allow for a better understanding of the process that led to the formation of an Aramaean polity in such a hostile environment.

4.5   *Hamath—Lu'aš*

The Aramaean kingdom of Hamath and Lu'aš in the 9th century B.C. was ruled by a Luwian dynasty that controlled only the land of Hamath. Three of its kings, Parata, Urḥilina, and his son Uratami, are known from both the Assyrian annals of Shalmaneser III[145] and the local Luwian inscriptions that were found scattered on Hamath's territory.[146] In these inscriptions the kings are called "Hamathite."

At the beginning of the 8th century and under hazy circumstances, an Aramaean leader called Zakkur[147] founded a new dynasty, added a northern territory called Lu'aš to the conquered kingdom of Hamath, and built a new capital called Hazrak. It was perhaps this usurpation that led other Aramaean and Luwian kingdoms to form a coalition against him as echoed in the stele he erected to commemorate his victory over them.[148] In 738 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III[149] incorporated 19 districts of his kingdom into the Assyrian Empire and formed the provinces of Ṣumur and Hattarika.[150]

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141 Von Luschan 1893; id. 1898; id. 1902; id. 1911; id. 1943.
142 Millard 1994: 102f.
143 Schloen – Fink 2009a; iid. 2009b; iid. 2009c.
144 On the inscription, cf. Pardee 2009a; id. 2009b; Masson 2010; Nebe 2010; Lemaire 2012; id. 2013.
145 Grayson 1996: 23.
146 Hawkins 2000: 398–423.
147 Lipiński 2000a: 301 suggests that he was from 'Ana on the Euphrates.
148 KAI 202.
149 Ann 19, 9–10 and 88–89, Ann 26, 5; cf. Tadmor 1994: 62f.
150 Lipiński 2000a: 315 and Radner 2006–2008a: 58 n. 50; 62 n. 60.

The rest of the kingdom was annexed by Sargon II, who conquered the capital Qarqar in 720 B.C.[151]

Old and recent excavations on the site of Hamath,[152] Tell Qarqur,[153] Tell ʿAfis,[154] Tell Mastuma,[155] and Tell Mishrife[156] have yielded new and interesting evidence on the cities and villages of this kingdom. As we have seen, Tell Afis, commonly identified with the newly founded capital Hazrak,[157] and Tell Qarqur, also commonly identified with the old capital Qarqar,[158] have greatly contributed to the understanding of the transition period between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. It is to be hoped that future excavations at both sites will reveal more insights into their history and the daily life of their inhabitants.

Recent excavations at Tell Mishrifeh, Bronze Age Qaṭna, have revealed a huge and complex city of the Iron Age II.[159] The archaeological evidence, which includes a palace, industrial zones, and warehouses, suggests that the site was a major city of the territory of Hamath in the Iron Age II. The existence of rural settlements scattered around the tell strengthens the assumption that Mishrifeh was a main regional and political center of the kingdom of Hamath, the capital of one of the "districts" of the kingdom. It represents a very good example of the administrative system in use in the kingdom during the Iron Age.

Tell Mastuma is in turn a very good example of a well-planned Aramaean rural settlement, displaying an arrangement composed of repetitious blocks of domestic buildings, which betrays a social structure based on large family groups and has yielded invaluable information about the town planning, architecture, and economy of a typical Aramaean rural site.

4.6 *Aram-Damascus-*[kur]*Ša-imērišu*

The kingdom of Damascus is mentioned for the first time in the annals of Shalmaneser III as a major participant in the Aramaean coalition against the Assyrian king at the battle of Qarqar. The biblical account, which ascribes the foundation of this kingdom to Reṣon,[160] an officer of Hadad-Ezer

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[151] For a list of the kings of Hamath, see Lipiński 2000a: 318.
[152] Riis 1948 and Fugman 1958.
[153] Dorneman 2000.
[154] Mazzoni 1995 and ead. 2005.
[155] Iwasaki et al. (eds.) 2009.
[156] Morandi Bonacossi 2006 and id. 2007a.
[157] Lipiński 2000a: 305 and n. 374.
[158] For a recent discussion see Lipiński 2000a: 264f.
[159] Morandi Bonacossi 2006 and id. 2007a.
[160] Lipiński 2000a: 368f argues for a reading of Ezron.

of Ṣobah, is not corroborated by extra-biblical sources. So, little is known about the origin of this kingdom and its later history is mainly known from the Assyrian records and the Bible. The lacunal state of the Tell Dan inscription does not allow for decisive historical conclusions. The fact that Tiglath-Pileser III calls the kingdom *bit haza'ili*[161] may lead to the assumption that the key figure in the history of this Aramaean polity was Hazael,[162] a usurper and the 9th-century founder of the dynasty that ruled until the Assyrian conquest. A long list of rulers[163] can be reconstructed on the basis of the above-mentioned sources but only the rule of the 9th- and 8th-century kings is historically verified. The kingdom was repeatedly attacked by the Assyrians until it was finally annexed by Tiglath-Pileser III in 732 B.C.

The Bible insists on the armed conflicts that opposed the Israelites and the Aramaeans of Damascus and it conceals almost any positive aspects in these relations.[164] Territorial claims and the control of the trade routes that linked the Arabian Peninsula (King's Highway) and the Mediterranean to north Syria appear to be behind the lasting Israelo-Aramaean conflicts.[165]

After the creation of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, a long-lasting coalition seems to have been established between the Aramaeans of Damascus and the southern kingdom of Judah against the northern kingdom of Israel.

It is quite surprising that the territory of the kingdom of Aram-Damascus has been hardly touched by archaeological investigation to date. The only survey, undertaken by F. Braemer,[166] yields no information about the Iron Age settlement and no large-scale excavations have revealed extensive Iron Age remains. As for the capital, Damascus, the ancient settlement is most probably hidden under the modern old town.[167] The discovery of an orthostat representing a sphinx[168] that was found re-used in a Hellenistic wall under the Omayyad mosque may hint at the location of the Iron Age Hadad temple in that same area. There is a pressing need for new archaeological investigation of this kingdom's territory in

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[161] Tadmor 1994: 138, 186.
[162] For Hazael, cf. Niehr 2011.
[163] Lipiński 2000a: 407.
[164] For these relations, see Kraeling 1918; Reinhold 1989; Axskjöld 1998; HafÞórrson 2006.
[165] Pitard 1987: 94f, 109.
[166] Braemer 1984.
[167] Cf. Sack 1989: 7–4 and ead. 1997: 386–391.
[168] Abd-el-Kader 1949: 191 and pls. 7 and 8; Trokay 1986; Caubet 1993.

order to gain more insights into its history and into its relations with its
neighbors.

5. Concluding Remarks

The Aramaeans of ancient Syria were the descendants of the Late Bronze
Age population of Syria in all its diversity and the heirs of its culture. The
main lines of their formation process can be traced with a fair degree of
probability in light of recent archaeological evidence. The new communi-
ties—among which predominated West Semitic–speaking groups—that
emerged as a result of the collapse of the Late Bronze Age urban system
were composed of people from within and without the cities. These com-
munities were founded according to new principles of domestic autonomy
and equality between kin-based groups.[169] The allegiance of the people in
this kin-related society, relying mainly on agriculture and cattle breeding,
belonged to the group. However, with the regeneration of complex societ-
ies this allegiance was transferred to the polity and to the representative
of its identity and power: the ruling dynast who was the descendant of the
leader of the founding house.

The Aramaean polities of the Iron Age like those of the Late Bronze Age
were never united in one kingdom and never shared a feeling of "national"
belonging. Their external relations were dictated by the strategic inter-
ests of their kingdoms and not by any other consideration. The Assyrian
threat prompted alliances with polities of different linguistic and cultural
backgrounds: Luwians, Phoenicians, Israelites, and even Urartaeans. We
find no instance of Aramaeans uniting together to fight against non-
Aramaeans. The solidarity against a common enemy, mainly Assyria, did
not prevent the Aramaean kingdoms from turning against each other for
economic reasons and/or territorial claims.

Syria in the Iron Age was a mosaic of kingdoms and different ethno-
linguistic groups but it is the language of the Semitic-speaking popula-
tion that became the marker of this new era. The Assyrians might have
inflicted a military and political defeat on the Aramaeans of Syria but the
victory of the latter was a long-lasting cultural one: their language became
the *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East for several centuries and sur-
vives today.

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[169] Routledge 2004.