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From Karkemiš to Rapiqu: The Assyrians in the Euphrates Valley in the 13th century

Aline Tenu*

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Abstract

The Euphrates Valley was a scene of rivalries between the Hittites, Babylonians and Assyrians throughout the 13th century BCE. The Assyrians developed several strategies to control the valley through the establishment of governors or the creation of small settlements. Shalmaneser I was very active upstream of the confluence on the Habur, while the Middle Euphrates came into the Assyrian sphere during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I. Analysis of the available literature invites a multi-level approach to separate local events from matters affecting the geopolitical balance of the states.

Keywords: Middle Assyrian Empire, borders, Euphrates, Habur, regional organisation.

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* CNRS – UMR 7041. E-mail: aline.tenu@cnrs.fr.

From Karkemiš to Rapiqu: The Assyrians in the Euphrates Valley in the 13th century*

Aline Tenu**
CNRS – UMR

The middle valley of the Euphrates (in the broadest definition between the present-day Syria-Turkey border and the Haditha Dam in Iraq) is generally marked by its distance from Aššur, the Assyrian capital (Fig. 1). Although Adad-nirari I (1295-1264 BCE) claimed in his inscriptions to rule over a vast territory as far as the Euphrates from Karkemiš to Rapiqu,¹ the Assyrian presence on the river is still the subject of much discussion.² The scarcity of textual sources combined with the limited number of excavated sites makes it particularly difficult to understand this region, especially since the sources come from a wide variety of periods and locations. In addition, the entire vast area was at the intersection of the Hittite and Babylonian worlds, in a context of strong local traditions.

However, recent research gives a picture of the Assyrian presence on the river, highlighting the various forms it may have taken depending on the area, as well as the differences that may have existed in different periods of 13th century, but also from one sector to another. This article does not claim to give an exhaustive overview of this subject, which has already been the topic of much research, but rather to propose an updated summary.

I. The Euphrates Valley at the beginning of the 13th century BCE

It is impossible to separate a study of this region from the study of Assyro-Hittite relations, which have already been the subject of much research.³ As texts from Emar, Hattuša, Aššur, Tell Chuera and Tell Sabi Abyad are published and analysed, we also get an understanding of how complex those relations were, with probable interactions at a regional level, sometimes independent of the Royal Courts of Aššur and Hattuša.

* The publication of this article, written in 2013, has been greatly delayed. I thank F. Caramelo to have however managed to find a solution to allow its publication, in a very reworked version. I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to all colleagues who have generously shared their digital libraries, at a time when the pandemic was preventing access to academic libraries and the paper books they keep.

** CNRS – UMR 7041 ArScAn, Nanterre, aline.tenu@cnrs.fr

¹ Grayson 1987, 131. See Caramelo 2013, 135-137 for a reflection on the territorial aspect of the royal ideology.

² Brown 2013, 101, note 6; Fales 2011, Herlès 2007, Llop-Raduà 2012, Luciani 2001a, Tenu sous presse a and b.

³ See among others Cancik-Kirschbaum 2008a, Freu 2003, Yamada M. 2011 to quote a few.

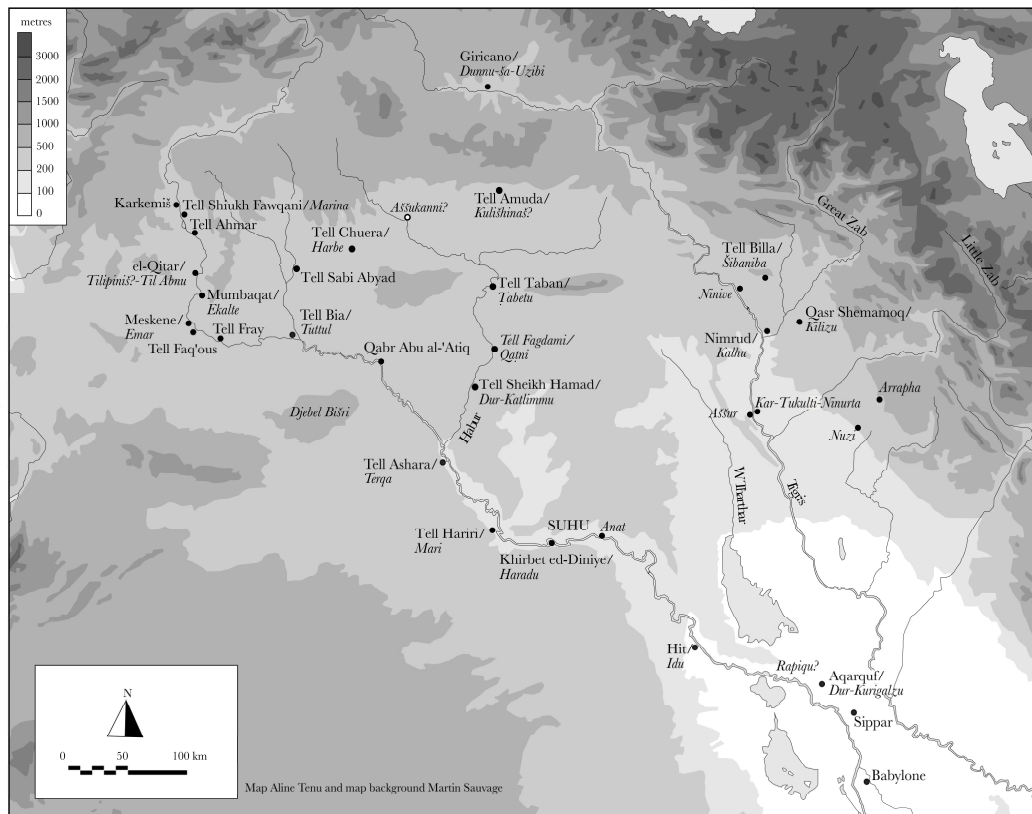


Fig. 1. North Mesopotamia during the Middle Assyrian period (map Aline Tenu, map background Martin Sauvage).

The paucity of both archaeological and epigraphic sources documenting the Euphrates Valley at the beginning of the 13th century BCE prevents a full picture from emerging. From the end of the 14th century BCE, the Assyrians and Hittites clashed, particularly around the city of Karkemiš.⁴ By the second year of the reign of Mursili II,⁵ the city was besieged and the situation was serious enough for the Hittite King himself to come to the aid of his brother, Sarri-kušuh, who had been installed as viceroy by their father Suppiluliuma I. Following a victorious campaign against Tušratta of Mittani, he seized the Euphrates Valley and entrusted it to his son.⁶ The treaty he signed with Šattiwaza, the new Mittani king, is today one of the only sources describing the geopolitical situation in the Euphrates Valley, divided between the lands of Karkemiš and Aštata.⁷

⁴ Adad-nirari I presented Aššur-uballit I as the "subduer of the land Mušru" (Grayson 1987, 132). This toponym and its variants have designated several regions that are very distant and different from each other and are not always easy to identify, see Bagg 2007, 306-307. One of them, however, most certainly concerns the region just downstream of Karkemiš.

⁵ Goetze 1933, 26-28. There is still some doubt as to the identity of the attackers, but the hypothesis of Egyptian intervention (see, for example, Freu 2002, 105) seems less likely to me. See also Miller 2010.

⁶ Traces of destruction at several sites downstream of Karkemiš could be evidence of military activities of Suppiluliuma I, Otto 2018, 229.

⁷ Beckman 1996, 41. See on the land of Aštata, Cohen 2019 with the main bibliographical references.

At that time, the Euphrates Valley was under Hittite rule, while the Mittani, whose territory had been severely reduced, still served as a buffer state with the Assyrians.

At the very beginning of the 13th century, Assyrian King Adad-nirari I (1295-1264) proclaimed in his inscriptions that he ruled the area up to the Euphrates, but few, if any other textual or archaeological documents support this assertion. There is no reason to doubt *a priori* the existence of the sovereign's military expeditions, but they were undoubtedly not followed by the settlement of Assyrians in these areas, but the lands were traversed by his armies.

The situation changed in mid-13th century under the reign of Shalmaneser I, who began to take over new territories. Before his campaigns, the Middle Euphrates was divided between two major areas of influence: the Hittite Empire and Babylonia, then called Karduniaš. The boundary between them was likely in the vicinity of Tuttul,⁸ modern-day Tell Bia, as evidenced by a long letter (KBo I 10) sent by the Hittite King Hattušili III (1267-1237)⁹ to the Babylonian King Kadašman-Enlil II (1269-1260). According to this letter, Tuttul was under Hattušili's authority, but close to the edge of his correspondent's area of influence.¹⁰ Another document also dating from the reign of Kadašman-Enlil II (discovered in Marwaniye, 10 km downstream from Terqa) confirms that the region was at that time under Babylonian rule.¹¹

The Babylonian presence in the region likely also dates back to the second half of the 14th century BCE. The *Chronicle of the Kassite Kings* reports that King Kadašman-Harbe, grandson of Aššur-uballiṭ I, had “strengthened the fortifications of the citadels in Šaršar (= Djebel Bišri), dug wells there, and settled people on fertile lands in order to help guard it.”¹² The Euphrates Valley likely escaped control by the Mittani as they were under attack by Hittites and Assyrians.

The previously cited letter (KBo I 10) reports an intermittent epistolary relationship between the Hittite and Babylonian courts. Kadašman-Enlil II justified his difficulties sending messengers due to the presence of hostile Ahlamu and the presence of the King of Assyria, who prevented the messengers from travelling. Whether the threats were real or used as a pretext by Kadašman-Enlil II and his entourage to distance themselves from the Hatti—which Hattušili III seems to believe—the letter nevertheless reveals the activities of the Assyrian king, whose name is never revealed, on the Euphrates.

⁸ For the toponyms attested in the Middle Assyrian documentation, see Nashef 1982 (RGTC 5). It has been very usefully and completely updated by E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and C. Hess. This work is available both in online edition <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/4439> and in printed version Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016.

⁹ The Hittite and the Babylonian absolute chronologies are not yet known with certainty. So the reign dates I give should be seen more as orders of magnitude.

¹⁰ Beckman 1996, 132-137. See Astour 1996, 38; Harrak 1998, 246.

¹¹ Rouault 2009, 139.

¹² Glassner 1993, 224 and Glassner 2004, 279.

II. The reign of Shalmaneser I and the fate of former Hittite possessions

One of the consequences of the "Hittite tradition of contempt for the Assyrians" outlined by A. Harrak¹³ is that many texts do not refer to the Assyrian king by name. In combination with the very poor state of certain documents, this means that the identity of the protagonists and the dates of the events mentioned, particularly in the letters, often remain unknown. There seems to be no doubt, however, that Shalmaneser I, who put a definitive end to the Mittani by defeating its king, Šattuara,¹⁴ undertook multiple operations on the Euphrates. Some of them took him very far north, to Malatya.¹⁵

The Karkemiš area

The personal presence of the Assyrian ruler in the Upper Euphrates is now confirmed in a text from Tell Taban (TO5A-609) dating from his 28th year of rule. The text records the king's trip to Karkemiš, probably in the company of Crown Prince Tukulti-Ninurta.¹⁶ A text from Assur (KAJ 249) mentions the king's visit to Araziqu¹⁷ in connection with Mušru.¹⁸ The poor state of the tablet makes it difficult to understand the events, as they could relate to either the conquest of Mušru or to its political and economic integration.¹⁹ The date of the text is also not a matter of consensus, as there is almost nothing left of the name of the eponym, but attribution to the reign of Shalmaneser I is quite possible.²⁰ This date would be supported by the mention of the king's victory in Mušri²¹ in one of his inscriptions. Letter KBO XVIII 24, presumably written by Tudhaliya IV to Shalmaneser I, also reported on Assyrian military activities in the territories formerly conquered by Suppiluliuma I.²² A collection of letters (KUB 23.92, KUB 23.103, KUB 40.77) likely written by Tudhaliya IV at the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I's accession to the throne reveals

¹³ Harrak 1998, 243.

¹⁴ Grayson 1987, 183-184.

¹⁵ Heinhold-Krahmer 1988, 87-98. For a summary of the events with the main bibliographical references, see Tenu 2006, 164-165; Tenu 2009, 197-198.

¹⁶ Shibata 2017. I would like to thank Daisuke Shibata for sharing this text with me long before its publication.

¹⁷ Araziqu is usually identified with Tell el-Hajj (Tenu 2009, 204) but recently E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and C. Hess proposed a location at Tell Beddaye, a site also situated on the eastern bank of the river a few kilometres from Tell Ahmar (Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 18). This proposition seems all the more convincing as numerous Middle Assyrian sherds were collected on its surface (Einwag, Kohlmeyer & Otto 1995, 105) and Tell Ahmar was itself occupied by Assyrians (see Paci and Tenu in press, Tenu in press b) but possibly after the 13th century BCE (see Bunnens 2013, 179-180 and 186). A text by Emar AuOr 5 T 13 (Arnaud 1987, 233-234), unfortunately undated, would attest that Araziqu was at one time controlled by the Hittites (Yamada M. 2011, 201-202).

¹⁸ Faist 2001, 90-92; Jakob 2003, 497. On the term Mušri, see Bagg 2007, 306-307. The term appears to have referred to an area downstream of Karkemiš. This hypothesis is supported by a letter (n. 17) of Dur-Katlimmu (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 177-178) which associates it (in the form Mišraju), with the Euphrates and the city of Tilipinis. Y. Cohen proposed to identify this latter with el-Qitar (Cohen 2019, 189).

¹⁹ Prechel & Freydank 2011, 6.

²⁰ Voir Jakob 2003, 497, Faist 2001, 90-91; Llop-Raduà & Shibata 2016, 69 (they attribute the text to the reign of Tiglath-pileser I).

²¹ Grayson 1987, 183.

²² Heinhold-Krahmer 1988, 88-90 and Mora & Giorgieri 2004, 87-98.

that the Hittite sovereign had taken note of the new borders established in the aftermath of the campaigns of Shalmaneser I and recalled that the latter and his own father, Hattušili III, had not written to each other.²³ It is perhaps in this context that some sites came under Assyrian domination and that a small Assyrian settlement was established on the site of Tell Shiukh Fawqâni.²⁴ The ancient name of this site, “Marina,” appears in a letter from Dur-Katlimmu, dating from the eponymy of Ina-Assur-šumī-ašbat i.e. around year 22 = 1212 BCE.²⁵ The occupation was modest, but erosion at the site is such that it is difficult to determine its nature and duration. The site may have afterwards returned to Hittite rule, as possibly suggested in a Hittite letter (KBo XVIII 25) sent by Suppiluliuma II (?) to Tukulti-Ninurta I (?).²⁶ The (very damaged) text reads: “he gave back Karkemiš.”²⁷ Although very limited, this small settlement from which Karkemiš can be seen reveals the desire of the Assyrians to “physically” settle in the Euphrates valley. The discovery of standard Middle Assyrian pottery to the exclusion of all others²⁸ reflects a very particular form of settlement, in an official and administrative framework.

Emar

The city of Emar²⁹ never appears in Assyrian sources as belonging to the Hittite Empire, but as an autonomous polity³⁰ that had extensive trade relations with Aššur. In the Late Bronze Age, there was a “palace,” temples and a residential zone.³¹ Little is known about the ceramic materials unearthed during excavations overseen by J.-C. Margueron between 1972 and 1976 because only complete shapes have been published by A. Caubet,³² but the vast majority relate to the local corpus. P. Pfälzner identifies only two shapes related to the domestic corpus of Middle Assyrian pottery,³³ but Hittite pottery does not appear to be represented either.³⁴ The excavations at Emar were taken over by a Syrian and then Syrian-German team from the 1990s, but the most recent levels were by

²³ Mora & Giorgieri 2004, 155-174.

²⁴ Tenu 2010, 247 and 250.

²⁵ Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 92-93 (lettre n. 2). Freydank 2016, 9. The level prior to the Middle Assyrian settlement yielded a house violently destroyed by fire that the excavator tentatively attributes to the campaigns led by Suppiliuma I (Bachelot 2005, 331). The pottery of this level presents shapes that belong to the Middle Assyrian horizon, such as a carinated cup (pl. 3:22) discovered on the floor of room 1 of the house.

²⁶ Mora & Giorgieri 2004, 29.

²⁷ Mora & Giorgieri 2004, 102. See Heinhold-Krahmer, 87, note 99; Harrak 1987, 260; Yamada M. 2011, 207.

²⁸ Capet 2005, 381. Non Middle Assyrian sherds come from the decayed mudbricks of the architectural structures and are therefore older.

²⁹ A web page written by Betina Faist, Uwe Finkbeiner and Siegfried Kreuzer presents Emar in a very clear way, <https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/17472/>.

³⁰ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2008b, 93; Faist 2001, 216 and 220-233.

³¹ Margueron 1993a, 85-91. The interpretation of the building discovered in *chantier A* as a *hilani* palace is nowadays much debated.

³² See Caubet 1982 and 2014.

³³ Pfälzner 1995, 201.

³⁴ Genz 2011, 312.

then considerably damaged by erosion and illegal excavation.³⁵ Most of the corpus brought to light thus dates back to the 14th century and the end of Mittani domination.³⁶

The site was violently destroyed around 1175 BCE.³⁷ The circumstances of this event are largely unknown, but a small Assyrian commercial and military post might have been located there.³⁸

The question remains as to whether the city may have at some point in its history been attacked by the Assyrians and whether the Assyrians may have played a role in its final destruction. Text MARV III 19,³⁹ dating from the eponymy of Ili-qarrad, records the delivery of copper blocks taken from the country of Hatti, and more precisely, from Hazariru, which is otherwise unknown, and from Imar. This administrative document from the reign of Shalmaneser I therefore suggests looting.⁴⁰ The possibility of an Assyrian offensive was, however, mainly mentioned due to the famous attack by the king of the Hurrians on Emar.⁴¹ The identity of this man remains a mystery, but the hypothesis of it being an action by the Grand Vizier, King of Hanigalbat, Qibi-Aššur, has been regularly suggested.⁴² M. Yamada links this event with the (re)construction of the town of Šumu by the Hurrians. The location of Šumu is unknown, but it was in the vicinity of Emar. If M. Yamada's hypothesis were confirmed, this would demonstrate that the Assyrian campaign was not just a military coup, but that it led to a policy of settlement and control, probably very localised, but aimed at being long-term. This hypothesis may be supported by the description in a Tukulti-Ninurta inscription (A.O. 78.23⁴³) of several cities, which M. Astour has located in the region.⁴⁴ This proposal is attractive, especially if considered as part of a multiscale approach, where local events may seem to contradict the geo-political balance between states. The Hittites and Assyrians would “officially” be at peace, but this would not prevent Emar and the Grand Vizier, King of Hanigalbat from being in conflict.

In 1978, J.-C. Margueron and his team conducted an excavation campaign lasting a few weeks at Tell Faq'ous, a site situated approx. 12 kilometres as the crow flies from Emar.⁴⁵ Located on a cliff, Tell Faq'ous was understood by J.-C. Margueron as a military position intended in particular for the protection of Emar. Nothing in the short exploration of the

³⁵ Sakal 2018, 63.

³⁶ Sakal 2018, 84. F. Sakal also points out that the Mittanian material itself is rare.

³⁷ Cohen & d'Alfonso 2008, 14-15.

³⁸ Dietrich 1990, 26; Adamthwaite 1996, 109.

³⁹ Faist 2001, 89-90.

⁴⁰ Yamada M. 2011, 200. According to him, “this text shows that the Assyrians, most probably those of Assyrian Hanigalbat, raided I/Emar (Meskene Qadime) in this period.”

⁴¹ See Astour 1996 and Cohen & d'Alfonso 2008, 21-22 who date this event to the period of the Mittanian domination, i.e. at the beginning of the 13th century BCE

⁴² See the point proposed by M. Yamada (2011, 211-212). E. Cancik-Kirschbaum considers this hypothesis as hardly conceivable (Cancik-Kirschbaum 2008b, 95).

⁴³ Grayson 1987, 271-274.

⁴⁴ Astour 1996, 39-43. See also Tenu 2009, 208-209.

⁴⁵ Margueron 1982a, 47.

site documented its destruction, but the excavator included it in the context of Assyrian military operations without explicitly holding them accountable.⁴⁶

A final collection of documents from Tell Sabi Abyad illustrates the complex relationship between the Assyrians and the Emariotes. Around 1190 BCE, a conflict broke out between Emar and Karkemiš. The King of Assyria, Aššur-nirari III (1193-1188 BCE) apparently sent troops to Emar to support the viceroy of Karkemiš. The conflict lasted several months and it is not clear what the outcome was.⁴⁷ Emar may have sought independence from Karkemiš when Hattuša had just fallen.⁴⁸ We do not know what prompted the Assyrians to side with one rather than the other, but this event may have been part of a broader context, of which we know almost nothing, of rivalry between the two cities, with perhaps more economic and commercial than political origins.

Tell Fray

At Tell Fray, there are two levels (V and IV) dating from the Late Bronze Age. The most recent has been attributed to the 13th century BCE, based on a sealing bearing the seals of the Hittite King Hattušili III (1267-1237) and his wife Padu-hepa. This level was violently destroyed by fire. Several buildings in this level were excavated, interpreted as characteristic of Hittite architecture by the excavators.⁴⁹ However, in light of more recent excavations carried out in particular in the area of the Tishrin Dam, the architecture appears to be rather representative of local culture, as does the pottery.⁵⁰ In the “northern house,” eleven tablets, three letters and eight administrative texts were discovered on the floors of two rooms. They were described as Middle Assyrian and dated to the beginning of the 13th century,⁵¹ but are still unpublished. The ancient name of Tell Fray is not yet known with certainty. Identification with the city of Yahariša, whose name appears on one of the tablets⁵² and is also known from Nuzi texts, is probable,⁵³ but A. Bounni also proposed that Tell Fray was called Šaparu. This toponym, which is also mentioned in the written documentation of Tell Fray, appears in the form of “Šiprin” in the treaty between Suppiluliuma and Šattiwaza⁵⁴ in the second half of the 14th century. This hypothesis is fragile as the tablets have not been published and in the text of the treaty Šiprin belongs to the kingdom of Karkemiš and not to Aštata.⁵⁵ The date and circumstances of the destruction of Tell Fray by fire remain mysterious, but the excavators did not exclude the possibility that the site was destroyed by Shalmaneser I.⁵⁶

⁴⁶ Margueron 1982a, 62.

⁴⁷ Akkermans & Wiggermann 2015, 120-121.

⁴⁸ Cohen & d’Alfonso 2008, 14-15.

⁴⁹ Bounni & Matthiae 1980.

⁵⁰ Pfälzner 1995, 203-204.

⁵¹ Matthiae 1980, 39 and Pedersén 1998, 103. G. Wilhelm considers these tablets are actually Mittanian (quoted by Faist 2001, 215, n. 73)

⁵² Bounni 1977, 7-8.

⁵³ Bounni 1988, 369.

⁵⁴ Bounni 1988, 369.

⁵⁵ Beckman 1996, 41.

⁵⁶ Bounni & Matthiae 1974, 36.

Tuttul

Several texts allow us to date Tuttul's change of sovereignty.⁵⁷ Letter KBo I 10 indicates that it was still Hittite around 1267-1260. The city is then mentioned in at least two texts from Tell Sheikh Hamad and in one from Tell Sabi Abyad, showing that it had by then become Assyrian.⁵⁸ In text DeZ 3280,⁵⁹ Tuttul was governed by a man named Katmuḫḫayu during the eponymy of Nabu-bela-ušur. Nabu-bela-ušur was eponym at the end of the reign of Shalmaneser I.⁶⁰ The text of Tell Sabi Abyad (T 97-3)⁶¹ explicitly mentions the presence of an Assyrian governor, Aššur-šuma-eriš,⁶² during the eponymy of Etel-pi-Aššur, dated to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.⁶³ Finally, in letter no. 2 from Tell Sheikh Hamad published by E. Cancik-Kirschbaum⁶⁴, dated to the eponymy Ina-Aššur-šumi-ašbat (21st or 22nd year of Tukulti-Ninurta I's reign),⁶⁵ it seems quite clear that the city was always dominated by the Assyrians. So, it seems that it passed into their hands during the reign of Shalmaneser I.

From an archaeological point of view, the situation is more difficult to analyse, as no 13th century levels have been discovered at Tell Bia (modern-day Tuttul), meaning that there are no traces of Assyrian occupation. J.D. Lyon also noted that archaeological material contemporary with Hittite domination was also mostly local.⁶⁶ For the Assyrians, integrating the region into the provincial system was undoubtedly the best solution to quickly establish their domination over a city that had already lost its independence, but had not been deeply affected by the presence and/or culture of the Hittites.

Generally speaking, Hittite dominion over the Euphrates Valley is almost invisible in the archaeological field, with the exception of Karkemiš, Emar, el-Qitar⁶⁷ and Tell Fray. At the latter two sites, it is only documented by seal impressions.⁶⁸ From an archaeological point of view, the analysis of events is all the more difficult because political control was not necessarily accompanied by the spread of an associated material culture.

⁵⁷ See Cancik-Kirschbaum 2014b, 113-114.

⁵⁸ See also Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 150.

⁵⁹ Röllig 2008, 72-73, text n. 39.

⁶⁰ See Freydank 1991, 56 and 191; Bloch 2012, 407 (26th regnal year of Shalmaneser I, i.e. 1246), Röllig 2004, 44 and 49.

⁶¹ Wiggermann 2000, 172. In a table made by E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, Tuttul appears as the capital of an administrative district in another text from Tell Sabi Abyad, T 96-7 (Cancik-Kirschbaum 2014a, 301, Abb. 1).

⁶² Jakob 2003, 117. I thank Stefan Jakob for confirming the name of this governor.

⁶³ On the place of this eponym, see Röllig 2004, 47 et 49, Reculeau 2011, 172 and Freydank 2016, 9 (year 13= 1221).

⁶⁴ Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, p. 95 (lettre n. 2, ligne 9).

⁶⁵ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 131, Freydank 2016, 9.

⁶⁶ Lyon 2000, 100.

⁶⁷ The site delivered a Middle Assyrian tablet. It is a private document that is not dated (Snell 1983). Y. Cohen considers that it belongs in style and format to the Syro-Hittite tradition of Emar (Cohen 2019, 289, n. 49). T. McClellan also noted that pottery shapes common to both el-Qitar and Emar find parallels to Tell Sabi Abyad and may indicate that Assyrian pilgrims came to these two sites located on the right bank of the Euphrates river (McClellan 2018, 141-142).

⁶⁸ Otto 2018, 14.

Qabr Abu al-'Atiq

The small site of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq occupies a mound of approx. 58 m by 45 m. It was first identified in the 1990s,⁶⁹ but excavations began in 2008.⁷⁰ Five rooms in a building violently destroyed by fire were partially excavated. The pottery as well as two, as yet unpublished, tablets discovered have been typically Middle Assyrian. The architecture also demonstrates clear similarities with rooms discovered in Building P at Tell Sheikh Hamad (formerly Dur-Katlimmu). J.L. Montero Fenollós suggests that Qabr Abu al-'Atiq was a *dunnu*, probably built and owned by a very high-ranking official in Dur-Katlimmu. The name of the site, destroyed after the 11th year of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I,⁷¹ is not yet known, but its role was most certainly to control communication routes and the surrounding steppe.

Apart from the site of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq, there is little evidence of Assyrian control,⁷² but Tuttul was at a minimum integrated into Assyrian provincial organisation. The data is less clear for Emar and Tell Fray, but considering their place—and especially Emar's—in Assyrian trade, we propose (F. Caramelo, J.L. Montero Fenollós and I) that both sites, together with Tuttul and Qabr Abu al-'Atiq, were important points on the steppe route in the western section.⁷³ The existence of this steppe road was proposed as early as 1983 by H. Kühne and its location was specified by P. Pfälzner following the Wadi Agig survey. Our proposal is that this route continues westwards and, by joining the Euphrates at Emar, allows the distance between the Levantine coast and Aššur to be covered as quickly as possible.

According to J.L. Montero Fenollós and colleagues, the date of the foundation of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq corresponds to the 13th century and the reigns of Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I or Tukulti-Ninurta I.⁷⁴ Attribution to the reign of Shalmaneser I is a viable option because, in addition to his military expeditions, he played an important role in the regional structuring of the Djezirah after the definitive end of the Mittani.⁷⁵ The foundation of Dunnu-ša-Uzibi, in the upper Tigris Valley, also dates back to his reign.⁷⁶

The abandonment of Tell Shiukh Fawqâni and the burning of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq may have been isolated events, but both sites may also have suffered from being too far from Aššur and too remote. These positions, intended to act as bridgeheads on hostile margins, were probably too precarious. This failure may explain, upstream, the retreat to the Balih in favour of a denser line of occupation with, in particular, Tell Sabi Abyad, which Tukulti-

⁶⁹ Einwag, Kohlmeyer & Otto 1995, 102.

⁷⁰ Montero Fenollós *et al.* 2010 and 2011; Montero Fenollós & Caramelo 2012.

⁷¹ On the dating of the Middle Assyrian occupation, see Montero Fenollós, Sanjurjo Sánchez & Márquez Rowe 2018.

⁷² Sherds dated to the Late Bronze Age were collected at Tell Tadayin (see Herlès 2007, 434), but data are too scarce to draw any conclusions about its occupation at this period.

⁷³ Tenu, Montero Fenollós & Caramelo in press with previous bibliography.

⁷⁴ Montero Fenollós, Sanjurjo Sánchez & Márquez Rowe 2018, 154.

⁷⁵ On the creation of the Middle Assyrian provinces under his reign, see Llop-Raduà 2012.

⁷⁶ Schachner 2004, 5; Radner 2004, 113.

Ninurta I founded around 1225⁷⁷ and in the 12th-11th centuries, the establishment of fortification lines on the Euphrates.⁷⁸

III. The Lower Middle Euphrates Valley and the conquests of Tukulti-Ninurta I

Terqa and the land of Hana

An analysis of the situation in Terqa and in the land of Hana raises many difficulties as the documentation can be poor or ambiguous. It is ambiguous in that different regions in the Middle Assyrian Empire are referred to as Hana/Hanu⁷⁹ and it is not always easy to determine which is being discussed. Two cities are named Terqa, one on the Middle Euphrates and the other on the Balih.⁸⁰ Added to this uncertainty are doubts about whether Terqa/Tell Ashara continued to be the capital of the kingdom of Hana.⁸¹ Finally, it should be noted that the archaeological data at Tell Ashara and the surrounding sites are sparse for the Middle Assyrian period.⁸² The situation is particularly complex and questions remain as to whether and when the Assyrians conquered or at least took control of the region around Tell Ashara. Two texts have long been regarded as evidence of Assyrian domination during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I. For A. Podany,⁸³ contract LH17⁸⁴ (unfortunately without any archaeological context) showed that Terqa was Assyrian under the eponymy of Libur-zanim-Aššur, the 6th or 7th year of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.⁸⁵ Assyrian domination appears to be confirmed by a letter discovered at Tell Sheikh Hamad/Dur-Katlimmu dated to the eponymy of Ina-Aššur-šumi-ašbat,⁸⁶ which reports the arrival of Sin-mudammiq in Terqa to organise the harvest.⁸⁷ Recently, E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and C. Hess considered that this letter was more likely to refer to Terqa on Balih and not Tell Ashara.⁸⁸

The toponym “Hana” raises just as many difficulties. Around the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE, the Kingdom of Hana extended towards the Lower Habur Valley⁸⁹ and then became one of the vassal states of the Mittani.⁹⁰ Hanaean activities then moved to Qaṭṭuna/Qaṭni in the Habur Valley at the end of the period of independent reign by Hana

⁷⁷ Akkermans & Wiggermann 2015, 91.

⁷⁸ Tenu in press a, and in press b.

⁷⁹ For a short presentation, see Tenu 2009, 193-195 et Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 55.

⁸⁰ Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 147.

⁸¹ Podany 2014, 68.

⁸² Rouault 2009; Tenu 2009, 191-192.

⁸³ Podany 2002, 73 and 151-153.

⁸⁴ The text was first published by H.M. Kümmel in 1979. Neither the names Terqa or Hana appear in the text, but the name of the Habur river does (l. 7-8).

⁸⁵ Reculeau 2011, 172; Bloch 2012, 407; Freydank 2016, 9.

⁸⁶ Reculeau 2011, 172; Bloch 2012, 407; Freydank 2016, 9.

⁸⁷ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 127.

⁸⁸ Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 147.

⁸⁹ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 126-127.

⁹⁰ Rouault 2004; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 126-127.

kings at the very end of the 14th century or the very beginning of the 13th century BCE.⁹¹ The last king of Hana, Pagiru, eventually became a vassal of the Assyrian ruler, probably Adad-nirari I.⁹² For H. Kühne,⁹³ the fact that Sin-mudammiq went to Terqa to organise the harvest shows that the city had lost its status as a capital, but as we have seen, this could refer to Terqa on the Balih and not Tell Ashara. There is now a growing consensus that Terqa (Tell Ashara) was abandoned as the capital and that Hana is located in the Habur Valley.

However, two pieces of information seem to indicate that the toponym “Hana” could still designate the Middle Euphrates region in the Assyrian sources. The first is in the famous passage from the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I (A.o. 78.23), where he lists the regions that came under his command. It is an understatement to say that this list has given rise to questions and comments. Only one example of this text is known, on a stone tablet discovered in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.⁹⁴ After stating the capture of 28,800 Hittites in the year of his accession to the throne, the extent of his conquests and the victorious battle with forty kings from the Nairi lands, to the north of the Van Lake, the sovereign reported having captured Kaštiliaš IV, King of the Kassites, and becoming “Lord of Sumer and Akkad in its entirety.”

He then specified having brought under his command the lands of Mari, Hana and Rapiqu and the mountains of the Ahlamu (probably the Jebel Bishri) and about thirty other lands. The rest of the inscription is devoted to the construction work carried out at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. The discovery of a “land of Mari” on the Habur led several researchers to think that this region is the subject of the inscription (see below). A. Podany subsequently considered that the land of Hana could also be located on the Habur. While this alternative location should not be dismissed, it does not seem to me to correspond to the “logic” of the royal inscriptions. It is difficult to understand why, in the same text, the Assyrian ruler would put his victories over distant and powerful enemies (the Hittites, the Nairi kings and the Babylonian king) on the same level as victories over regions like Hana and Mari, which had been dominated by the Assyrians since at least the reign of his father, Shalmaneser I, and probably since that of his grandfather, Adad-nirari I.

The second piece of information that I believe is likely to demonstrate that two Hanas could coexist is an administrative text discovered at Tell Sheikh Hamad, published by W. Röllig. Text DeZ 3281 is dated to the eponymy of Enlil-nadin-apli, whose place in the succession of eponyms is unfortunately uncertain.⁹⁵ The text records deliveries of barley to different towns in Assyria, usually recorded under their names, but in four cases under the name of a person, whose title is not specified, but presumably was the ruler. The first two are well known in the texts of Dur-Katlimmu: Eṭir-Marduk was a governor of the town⁹⁶ and Sin-mudammiq was a *sukkallu* who resided in Aššukanni.⁹⁷ The identity of the

⁹¹ Kühne H. 2018, 142.

⁹² Kühne H. 2018, 142.

⁹³ Kühne H. 2018, 143.

⁹⁴ Grayson 1987, 271.

⁹⁵ Shibata 2011, 100, note 45; Freydank 2016, 9 (12th year = 1213 BCE)

⁹⁶ Röllig 1997, 284, note 14; Jakob 2003, 113.

last two, at the end of the list, raised many discussions at the time of publication because men with these names were not known in relation to the 13th century, but the 11th century.⁹⁸ At that time, Tukulti-Mer and Aššur-ketti-lešer were respectively King of the land of Hana and King of the land of Mari. The existence of a ruler named Aššur-ketti-lešer in the 13th century has since been confirmed by texts from Tell Taban/Ṭabetu. In text DeZ 3281, line 12, “a land of Upper Hana” is referred to. Thus, if we retain the hypothesis that Tukulti-Mer was King of the land of Hana, this would mean that two of the contributors paid for the land of Hana. This toponym would have thus designated at the end of the 13th century two different regions, one between the Balih and Habur, the Upper Hana, whose capital was perhaps Qatni,⁹⁹ and the other on the Middle Euphrates, under the responsibility of Tukulti-Mer.

These two texts offer limited clues and to date nothing allows for certainty, but they seem to show that excluding *a priori* a location on the Middle Euphrates could distort our understanding of events.

The Assyrians could have subdued the land of Hana around Terqa during the activities of Tukulti-Ninurta I in northern Babylonia,¹⁰⁰ but they did not transform it into a province. This was probably not appropriate in this case: the territory, located far from Aššur, had enjoyed a certain power only a short time before and had established strong political and cultural links with Babylonia.¹⁰¹ The tablet (still unpublished) discovered in Marwaniye shows that only a short time before, during the reign of Kadašman-Enlil II (1263-1255 BCE), the region was still under the rule of the Babylonians.¹⁰²

One can probably assume that the Assyrians chose to integrate the land of Hana on the Euphrates as a vassal kingdom, which would explain both why it appears in DeZ 3281 under the name of its ruler and why in Tell Ashara itself and in the surrounding sites, the Middle Assyrian material culture is so poorly documented. For example, Djebel Mashtale, about 4 km south of Terqa, has yielded levels from the Late Bronze Age, where pottery from the southern tradition appears to be in the majority, but which nevertheless includes shapes from the Middle Assyrian horizon, dating back to the 13th-11th centuries.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Röllig 1997, 284, note 15; Jakob 2003, 60-62.

⁹⁸ See for instance Luciani 2001b.

⁹⁹ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 128.

¹⁰⁰ See also Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 129. On the chronology of Tukulti-Ninurta's activities against Babylonia, see Yamada S. 2003 (especially the synthesis p. 166-168) and the PhD thesis of Ygal Bloch (Bloch 2012, 273-275), Jakob 2003, Jakob 2011, 194-205; Llop-Raduà 2011.

¹⁰¹ H. Kühne (2018, 143) pointed out that Ammurapi, a client king of the Assyrian king, likely Shalmanaser I, worshiped Kassite gods.

¹⁰² Rouault 2009, 139.

¹⁰³ Tenu 2009, 192.

The Lands of Mari and Suhu

In the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I A.O.78.23 mentioning the “land of Mari and Rapiqu and the mountains of the Ahlamû,”¹⁰⁴ one may be surprised at the absence of “the land of Suhu”, situated between Rapiqu and Mari, as this toponym also appears in sources from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I. This absence is probably explained by the fact that, although the two regions often shared a common history, this was not always the case in the 13th century.

One of the first mentions of these two lands in the Middle Assyrian period comes from a letter discovered in Dur-Kurigalzu. A man named Zikir-ilišu, who may have been a Babylonian envoy to the Assyrian court, wrote it.¹⁰⁵ The text reports that one band of armed Hirana had settled partly in towns in Subartu captured by the Assyrian King and partly in the lands of Suhu and Mari. The text is poorly preserved, but it shows that the lands of Suhu and Mari were not integrated into Assyria.¹⁰⁶ Its date is uncertain: O. Gurney proposed the reign of Adad-nirari I (1295-1264 BCE),¹⁰⁷ B. Faist that of Shalmaneser I (1263-1234)¹⁰⁸ and Y. Bloch that of Tukulti-Ninurta I.¹⁰⁹ The context, in any case, leaves no doubt that the land of Mari mentioned here is indeed the one located on the Middle Euphrates.¹¹⁰

Since the discovery of tablets attesting to the existence of a “land of Mari” on the Middle Habur, research on the land(s) of Mari has multiplied¹¹¹ and there are still many uncertainties as to their location around Tell Taban/Tabetu or at Tell Hariri/Mari, including the passage from the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I A.O. 78.23. My hypothesis is that it is the Mari of the Middle Euphrates for two reasons. First of all (and this is the same as for the country of Hana), it is difficult to see why the Assyrian sovereign would have included a region that was already firmly part of Assyria in an inscription valuing his conquests and victories. Excavations at Tell Taban also show the complete integration of the city within the Assyrian material culture, especially concerning pottery.¹¹² In addition, unlike Tell Ashara, which delivered few, if any, vestiges of the 13th century, Tell Hariri was probably occupied at that time.

In 1979, J.-C. Margueron and his team opened an excavation at Tell Hariri es-Srir to the south of the site. It was an imposing mass of clay, still at least 8 m high, which was located

¹⁰⁴ Grayson, 1987, p. 273. The land of Mari around Tell Taban was indeed subject to the Assyrians from the reign of Shalmaneser I (Shibata 2007). For detailed argumentation, see Tenu 2009, 129-132.

¹⁰⁵ Gurney 1949, 139-141; Faist 2001, 234-236.

¹⁰⁶ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2008a, 215. See also Bloch 2013, 265-266, note 173; Clancier 2020, 281-282.

¹⁰⁷ Gurney 1949, 141.

¹⁰⁸ Faist 2001, 236.

¹⁰⁹ Bloch 2013, 266, note 174.

¹¹⁰ Clancier 2020, 281.

¹¹¹ See the paper of D. Shibata (2011), which provides an update on this issue. with previous bibliography

¹¹² H. Numoto, D. Shibata & S. Yamada (2013) pointed out the long lasting local traditions in many aspects in Tell Taban/Tabetu but the pottery sequence they conveniently present (p. 175) do show the complete integration of this corpus to the Middle Assyrian pottery assemblage.

against the rampart. The almost sterile accumulation had no stratified deposits, but delivered about 50 slingshots made from hardened earth. Dating perhaps to the Middle Assyrian period, this small tell would have served as a platform for a Middle Assyrian fortress measuring ca. 50 m by 50 m.¹¹³ Extending this hypothesis, J.L. Montero Fenollós proposed that a *dunnu* of comparable dimensions to those of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq and Tell Sabi Abyad was built there.¹¹⁴ A second area, *chantier* E, excavated in 1984, 1987 and 1990,¹¹⁵ yielded findings attributable to the Middle Assyrian period. It was a small domestic building, unfortunately very poorly preserved, but with at least two levels of occupation.¹¹⁶ It delivered two graves, one of which had a skeleton resting on a layer of plaster with purple castings (tomb 863),¹¹⁷ similar to other tombs of this type found in cemeteries and tombs at Tell Chuera (see below).¹¹⁸ Pottery from the Middle Assyrian and Middle Babylonian traditions was also discovered there.¹¹⁹

The main data documenting the Middle Assyrian period in Mari consists of the cemeteries discovered in the ruins of the *Grand Palais Royal*. To date, they may be the largest corpus of Middle Assyrian tombs known, with 304 burials, according to Marylou Jean-Marie.¹²⁰ Plastered tombs, sometimes purple in colour, identified as a new funerary custom by J. Mallet,¹²¹ have been recognised in these cemeteries. The tradition has also been identified in two graves (C. 32 and C. 33) on level 2 of Tell Chuera.¹²²

Several tombs have delivered refined and luxurious objects: gold jewellery, mirrors and glazed wares. A. Parrot¹²³ had assumed that these graves were those of members of an Assyrian garrison stationed in Mari. This hypothesis is widely discussed in particular because the pottery does not correspond to the standard assemblage, as defined by P. Pfälzner;¹²⁴ many shapes are related to other horizons, notably Babylonian,¹²⁵ and very few graves delivered weapons—only eleven, according to J.L. Montero Fenollós¹²⁶, who studied two of them in particular. Twenty-three bronze arrowheads and an iron ring were found in tomb 176. In tomb 134, five iron arrowheads in a quiver and a sieve were

¹¹³ Margueron 1982b, 29-30; Margueron 2004, 536.

¹¹⁴ Tenu, Montero Fenollós & Caramelo 2013, 148.

¹¹⁵ Margueron 2004, 530-532.

¹¹⁶ Margueron 1993b, 19.

¹¹⁷ Jean-Marie 1999, 53.

¹¹⁸ Klein 1995, 188.

¹¹⁹ Pons & Gasche 1996.

¹²⁰ Jean-Marie 1999; Tenu 2009, 188. According to H. Kühne (2017, 326), 63 tombs are roughly dated to 1350-1200 BCE

¹²¹ See for instance, tombs 656, 658, 659, 665, 670 and maybe 668, but no bone was found, Mallet 1975, 26-30.

¹²² Klein 1995, 187-188. The precise dating of level 2 has not been established, but level 3b has delivered tablets dated to the second half of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (Kühne C. 1995, 206; Jakob 2009, 1-3). These burials would thus date back to the beginning of the 12th century. For a synthetic presentation of Tell Chuera in the Middle Assyrian period, see Tenu 2009, 94-97.

¹²³ Parrot 1974, 150-151.

¹²⁴ Pfälzner 1995.

¹²⁵ Tenu 2009, 189-190 and 195. The same situation occurs at Khirbet ed-Diniye, see Tenu 2012, 104-105.

¹²⁶ Montero Fenollós 2004, 14.

discovered.¹²⁷ In the 13th-11th centuries BCE, the use of iron for weapons was still rare.¹²⁸ The Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser I himself claimed that he had killed four bulls with iron arrowheads.¹²⁹

For J. L. Montero Fenollós, the two men in graves 134 and 176 were probably archers, perhaps even officers.¹³⁰ The low proportion of graves containing weapons gives the general impression of low militarisation at the site and seems to strongly contradict the hypothesis of an Assyrian garrison put forward by A. Parrot. However, it cannot be ruled out that the scarcity of weapons in the graves does not reveal the small number of soldiers but rather a deliberate choice not to "waste" indispensable military equipment.

The occupation of Tell Hariri during the Middle Assyrian period is certain, and moreover, contemporary sherds have been collected at Tell Abu Hassan, a site on the left bank of the river, close to Tell Hariri.¹³¹ To consider *a priori* that the land of Mari could never therefore refer to the "metropolis of the Euphrates" seems to me to be a significant bias. The number of tombs, the discovery of two levels of occupation on *chantier* E, and the possible presence of a military installation of the *dunnu* type indicate that the occupation of the site was neither ephemeral nor negligible, although its nature remains difficult to establish.

The place of Suhu in Middle Assyrian military operations in the 13th century is a thorny issue to address because the sources, which are few in number, are often allusive or poorly dated. First of all, from an archaeological point of view, it must be acknowledged that there are virtually no sources available. Most of the archaeological activity in the region took place during the rescue excavations linked to the construction of the Haditha Dam between 1978 and 1986.¹³² 82 sites were inventoried at that time, several of which were further researched by Iraqi and foreign teams. The results of this work have not been widely published and the unpublished thesis of Sabah Jassem Abdul Amir al-Shukri, defended in 1988, remains the main source to this day.¹³³ The Assyrian presence in ancient Suhu in the second part of the 2nd millennium BCE seems to me beyond doubt, but the archaeological evidence available to us indicates a date more likely in the 12th century than the 13th century.¹³⁴ This absence can certainly be explained by the luck of the draw in the excavations, but written documentation provides another, more satisfactory and likely more relevant explanation.

¹²⁷ See the complete lists in Montero Fenollós 2004, 13 and 14. The closest parallel for this discovery is the material from tomb T 47 of Khirbet ed-Diniye, dated to the 11th-10th century. Christine Kepinski and her team discovered a sieve (V 149) and 28 iron arrowheads in a quiver (m 156) made of organic material in a vaulted tomb, within the walls of the fortress (Kepinski 2012, 66 and 188)

¹²⁸ On the spread of iron use, see H. Kühne 2017. J. Llop-Radua's article on Middle Assyrian armament as documented in written sources also shows the still rare character of iron (Llop-Radua 2016).

¹²⁹ Grayson 1991, 25.

¹³⁰ Montero Fenollós 2004, 17.

¹³¹ Geyer & Monchambert 2003/1, 260; Tenu 2009, 190.

¹³² Kepinski, Lecomte & Tenu 2006.

¹³³ Abdul-Amir 1988.

¹³⁴ I have published papers of this data on several occasions Tenu 2006, 2008, 2009, in press a and in press b.

The first mention of a campaign against Suhu in Assyrian sources likely dates back to the reign of Adad-nirari I.¹³⁵ A very damaged text seems to indicate that the Assyrian King led a military operation to Suhu via the Wadi Tharthar. This reference is isolated and difficult to satisfactorily interpret, but it could explain why Adad-nirari I mentioned Rapiqu in his epithets.¹³⁶

The other texts all date from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I and several are closely associated with the sovereign's campaigns in Babylonia. The chronology of events has given rise to numerous studies which show that two major events, the capture of the Kassite ruler Kaštiliaš IV and the direct takeover of Babylon and the deportation of the statue of Marduk, constitute the culmination of a conflict that consisted of many episodes. Suhu does not appear in any royal inscriptions or chronicles, but it does in letters and administrative texts.¹³⁷ MARV IV 27 and MARV IV 30 are not dated, but J. Llop-Raduà, who published a very useful translation, suggested attributing them to the eponymy of Etel-pi-Aššur, i.e. the 13th year of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.¹³⁸ Both explicitly mention a campaign led by the King against Suhu, which may have been linked to an operation against Babylonia, which also appears in text MARV IV 30.¹³⁹ It may have been during this campaign that Suhean prisoners were deported to villages around Tell Chuera.¹⁴⁰

Another document, Emar VI/3, 263¹⁴¹, is of great interest in understanding the Middle Euphrates under the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I because it mentions Suhu and the land of Mari. The author of letter Emar VI/3, 263 wrote to his correspondent in Emar that two Ahlamu from Suhu had informed him that “the governor of the land of Suhu severely raided the land of Mari with his chariots and his troops.”¹⁴² This letter does not have a date, but it most certainly dates from the end of the 13th century BCE or the very

¹³⁵ Bloch 2013.

¹³⁶ Grayson 1987, 131.

¹³⁷ The mention of Suhu in MARV II 17 is subject to discussion. For Y. Bloch, the reading Suhu does not raise any difficulties and would show cooperation between Assyrians and Suheans (Bloch 2012, 229). K. Deller and J. N. Postgate (1985, 74) have suggested Suḫuritišu. This reading was also taken up by E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and C. Hess (Cancik-Kirschbaum & Hess 2016, 122-123). In addition to differing opinions on whether or not to mention Suhu, the dating of the text is also uncertain. For Y. Bloch (2012, 275), the eponymy of Abi-ili, son of Katiri takes place in the 21st year of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, between the capture of Kaštiliaš IV and the king's takeover of Babylon; for W. Röllig before the eponymy of Ina-Aššur-šumi-ašbat (Röllig 2004, 48). H. Reculeau also considers that Abi-ili was eponymous in the first half of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, after Etel-pi-Aššur (year 13) and before Ina-Aššur-šumi-ašbat, the 17th year of reign (Reculeau 2011, 172). E. Cancik-Kirschbaum (2018, 10) estimates that there were between 4 and 9 eponyms between Ina-assur-šumi-ašbat and Abi-ili, son of Katiri. H. Freydank (2016, 9) places the eponymy of Abi-ili in the 19th year of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, 1215 BCE, between that of Etel-pi-Aššur (year 13=1221) and Ina-Aššur-šuma-ašbat (year 22=1212).

¹³⁸ Llop-Raduà 2010, 108-113. On these two texts, see also Cancik-Kirschbaum 2009, 129; Freydank 2016, 9 (year 13 = 1221).

¹³⁹ Another text MARV I 1 records a campaign against Karduniaš and ca. 14.400 Kassite deportees during the eponymy of Etel-pi-Aššur (Bloch 2012, 273; Llop-Raduà 2011, 213-214).

¹⁴⁰ Jakob 2009, 94; Jakob 2005, 184.

¹⁴¹ Arnaud 1986, Durand & Marti 2005, Shibata 2011, 97-98.

¹⁴² Shibata 2011, 97.

beginning of the 11th century.¹⁴³

Once again, the location of the land of Mari is the subject of much discussion. Its identification with the region of Ṭabetu/Tell Taban on the Middle Habur seems to me possible, but no more probable than with the region of Tell Hariri. In particular, D. Shibata stresses how unlikely it seems to him that an event of this importance would not be reflected in Tell Taban documentation.¹⁴⁴ Y. Bloch favours the location on the Habur and finds it doubtful that Emar's authorities would be kept informed of a purely local event far downstream on the Euphrates between Mari and Suhu.¹⁴⁵ This argument is weakened by the fact that Emar had relations with Suhu, as evidenced, for example, by the letter sent by Talmi-Šarruma, Governor of Emar, to Nabunnu, Governor of Suhu,¹⁴⁶ and also by Emar VI/3, 26, which relates to a transaction carried out in a house in Anat, a city located in Suhu, also involving a man named Nabunnu, son of Ulambu[rriyaš]. These two texts date to the end of Emar's archives and are most likely more recent than Emar VI, 263. However, they do attest to links between Emar and Suhu that justify that Suhean actions would be of general interest to the Emarites, as well as providing information on the situation in the region ruled by a governor¹⁴⁷ put in place by the Kassite rulers.¹⁴⁸ One may wonder to what extent the Suhean attack on the land of Mari was directed against the Assyrians, who then dominated the region around Tell Hariri, and whether the news of this raid was not in the end rather good news for the Emarites. The author of the letter also stated that he would inform his correspondent of the booty taken by the Suheans.

The conflict that led Tukulti-Ninurta I to oppose the Hittites went through several phases, some of which were very acute crises, at the time of the battle of Nihriya,¹⁴⁹ for example, or the mobilisation of the Hittite vassal states in the Levant against the Assyrians.¹⁵⁰ Apart from these episodes, a low intensity conflict may still have existed, with misfortunes of the Assyrians not necessarily displeasing Emar, which was under Hittite domination.

The significant place of Suhu in the geopolitical chessboard of the end of the 13th and beginning of the 12th century BCE is confirmed by letter KBo 28. 61-64¹⁵¹ sent by Tukulti-Ninurta I to a Hittite king, probably Suppiluliuma II, at the very end of his reign.¹⁵² The text is very damaged and understanding the events it reports is difficult.¹⁵³ It refers to the role of a "servant of Suhu" in a *coup d'état* on the throne of Karduniaš. The context, reasons and identity of this "servant of Suhu" remain unclear, but this text, dated to the

¹⁴³ Shibata 2011, 98, note 19; Clancier 2020, 306.

¹⁴⁴ Shibata 2011, 98.

¹⁴⁵ Bloch 2012, 266 (note 174).

¹⁴⁶ Cohen 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Clancier 2020, 309.

¹⁴⁸ Clancier 2020, 315-316.

¹⁴⁹ See *inter alia* Yamada M. 2011, 202-203, with previous bibliography. See also Bryce 2005, 337-339 (the equation between Nihriya and Nairi is however to be excluded).

¹⁵⁰ This is the meaning of the treaty that the great Hittite king Tudhaliya IV concluded with Šaušgamuwa of Amurru (Beckman 1996, 98-101, esp. 101). Tudhaliya IV also released his vassal Ammistamru II of Ugarit from participating in war against Assyria (Beckman 1996, 167-168). Ugarit paid in exchange fifty mina of gold.

¹⁵¹ Mora & Giorgeri 2004, 113-127.

¹⁵² Mora & Giorgeri 2004, 113.

¹⁵³ Durand & Marti 2005, 127-129; Singer 2008; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2008a, 216-217.

eponymy of Ili-pada (around 1197 BCE) shows that the Assyrian military campaigns had not succeeded in controlling Suhu, which was still led by a governor, qualified as a “servant”. Suhu was then important enough for its governor to play a key role in the Babylonian political scene.¹⁵⁴

Unpublished texts from Tell Sabi Abyad confirm that at the end of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, the Suheans were considered the enemies of Assyria, including the Kassites, and that the Assyrians received information about suspicious movements of the Suheans.¹⁵⁵

The literature on Suhu in the 13th century is disparate but consistent. At no time did Suhu actually become part of Assyria. In the current state of the documentation, we know with certainty only one campaign of Tukulti-Ninurta I against Suhu, launched at the beginning of its operations in Babylonia. It apparently ended in failure, which either showed the Assyrian ruler that it would never be possible for him to hold Suhu, or that his strategic interest in his Babylonian policy did not justify military investment.¹⁵⁶ There is nothing to definitively rule between these two hypotheses, which are not mutually exclusive.

In any case, texts subsequent to the campaign of year 13 (eponymy of Etel-pi-Aššur) show that governors ruled the region. They were probably put in place at the end of the 14th century by the Kassite King Kadašman-Harbe II when he “strengthened the fortifications of the citadels in Šaršar (= Djebel Bišri).”¹⁵⁷ The absence of Suhu in inscription A.O. 78.23 is likely not an error and Rapiqu certainly should not be interpreted to mean Suhu by metonymy. Suhu avoided Assyrian takeover in the 13th century.

Conclusion

The Middle Euphrates Valley passed partly into the Assyrian fold in the 13th century, but the control of the Aššur remained uneven. The offensives of Shalmaneser I essentially ensured his control over the area upstream of the confluence with the Habur, while the lands of Hana and Mari on the Middle Euphrates were more likely to be subjected later, in the context of the activities of Tukulti-Ninurta I in northern Babylonia.

An analysis of the situation in the Euphrates Valley is very complex because it was at the forefront of politics in the major states and more particularly the conflicts between the Assyrians and the Hittites, who were generally allied with the Babylonians. This regional geopolitical balance underwent multiple profound upheavals as a result of major events such as the coup d'état by Hattušili III against his nephew and the capture of Kaštiliaš IV by Tukulti-Ninurta I; however, most are undoubtedly unknown to us. The story is probably fraught with local clashes and frictions that are difficult to explain. For example, was the destruction of Qabr Abu al-'Atiq and Emar an isolated event, a successful *coup de force*, or part of a more general conflict? There is no way to know for sure. One can also imagine the important role played on this chessboard by the vassal states, who likely

¹⁵⁴ See Clancier 2020, 300-308.

¹⁵⁵ Akkermans & Wiggermann 2015, 119.

¹⁵⁶ See Tenu in press b.

¹⁵⁷ Glassner 1993, 224 and Glassner 2004, 279.

often had more latitude and could afford to influence politics without threatening the general balance. A multiscale perspective on the data is therefore essential.

Finally, it remains particularly difficult to make the connection between the textual data and the archaeological documentation, due to the lack of chronological precision, especially in the absence of discoveries of texts dated by known eponyms.

The form of political domination or control greatly affects the quantity and quality of archaeological data. Hittite control established by Suppiluliuma I over the Euphrates Valley is little or not reflected at all in the archaeological material. The Assyrians were clearly pragmatic in adopting the “formula” they felt was most appropriate,¹⁵⁸ which explains the wide variations in the administrative statuses of the sites (e.g. Tuttul was fully integrated into the Assyrian administrative system) and in the quantity and even nature of the Assyrian material uncovered. The land of Hana on the Euphrates was certainly a subject of the Assyrians by oaths of vassalage, without any real Assyrian presence or culture.

The temporal and geographical imbalance of the sources at our disposal does not allow us to obtain a truly satisfactory picture of the place of the Middle Euphrates in the Assyrian Empire in the 13th century, but we can nevertheless measure its importance both in the surveillance and protection of the borders and the protection of the main traffic routes which supplied the capital. The challenge for the Assyrians was therefore to hold on to the vast territory they had conquered, even if their presence on the ground was in places very limited and was in fact very dependent on the relations maintained with the local populations and elites.

At the beginning of the 12th century, the destruction of Emar and the end of the great Hittite Empire profoundly changed the balance of power in northern Syria, while Babylonia, shaken by *coups d'état* and a victim of Assyrian and Elamite military campaigns, was going through a troubled period in the 12th century.

¹⁵⁸ Tenu, Montero Fenollós & Caramelo 2012.

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