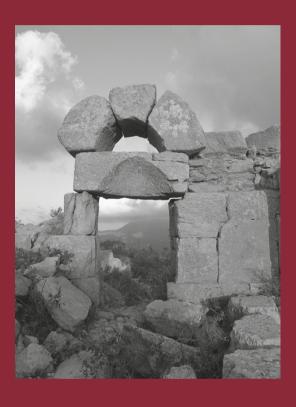Melammu
Workshops and
Monographs
8

Shaping
Boundaries

Ethnicity
and Geography
in the Eastern
Mediterranean Area
(First Millennium BC)

Proceedings of the 15th Melammu Workshop,
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Zaphon

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The Melammu Logo was drawn by Ria Berg from a Greco-Persian style seal found
on the north-eastern shore of the Black Sea (Dominique Collon, *First Impressions:
Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Publications
1987), no. 432).

Illustration on the cover: *An idea of border*. Monastery of Saint Simeon Stylites the
Younger (Samandağ – Turkey) (photo S. Ponchia).

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Boundary Definition in the Aramean Socio-political Context

Simonetta Ponchia

Pass ye unto Calneh, and see, and from thence go ye to Hamath the great;
then go down to Gath of the Philistines; are they better than these kingdoms?
Or is their border greater than your border?
(Amos 6:2)

Abstract
In the Aramean socio-political milieu identity is perceived and defined as shared
kinship rather than, or besides political affiliation. This has consequences on the
definition of boundaries, *i.e.* areas of competence and control of tribes and states.
The history of Aramean kingdoms and confederations shows varying develop-
ments in relation to the weight of pastoralist components in their organization, as
well as the outcome of interstate conflicts and alliances. The paper examines the
cases in which documents explicitly refer to boundary definitions, such as in par-
ticular the stelae of Antakya and Sefire. It attempts to highlight different patterns
and developments deriving from contacts and conflicts between the major powers
of the time and their hegemonic ambitions.

After the great Late Bronze Age kingdoms lost their hegemonic power, the Ara-
means emerged among the protagonists of a new system of relations and as the
engine of a new development, based on kinship organizations, more freely estab-
lished relationships between tribal groups and between them and urban societies,
non-palatial circuits of resource exploitation, together with powerful means of
communication: Aramaic and alphabetic writing that progressively became
widely established. Theirs was a complex and variously organized world, that on
historical, cultural and political grounds had various links with Hurrian, Assyrian,
Babylonian, Luwian and other contexts. In spite of the plurality of tribes and pol-
ities, a widespread network substituted the palace-based network of the LBA with
new relations, progressively occupying previously state controlled infrastruc-
tures.[1] It was probably a long process that had already begun before the end of
that period. This development in due time favored new state formation, with the
emergence of polities and kingdoms that occupied key positions. The process of
Aramaization can be viewed as a general restructuring of Near Eastern bounda-
ries, both culturally and geo-politically and seemingly also conceptually, due not

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[1] Schniedewind, 2002: 276; for a general economic perspective see Moreno García, 2016
with previous bibliography.

only to the mobility that characterized the pastoralist components of Aramean organizations, but also to changing alliances between polities and tribes. Over time, the designation Aram and Aramean acquired identitarian, contrastive and connoted values.[2] These terms however seemingly encompassed different cases, ranging from the "nomad" or "borderless" entities of the Suteans and Ahlamû, to the various territorial states whose boundaries formed the object of interstate relationships.

These various relations, therefore, represent an appropriate case for considering the questions recently posed, especially in archaeological research of "how territorial control interfaces with other modalities of social power, including networks",[3] and "the ways in which territorial practices and rhetoric might overlap with exchange networks, trade diasporas, and other forms of long-distance interaction."[4]

On the other hand, both the conceptualization and the actual and practical definition of boundaries went through a further dynamic of change, which in the 9th and 8th cent. BCE was affected by the imperial expansion, especially in the Syro-Levantine area.

The stela of Antakya and territorial borders

An exemplary document of this phase is the boundary definition imposed or guaranteed by the Assyrians, which was engraved on a stela found in the vicinity of Antakya and can be dated to the timespan between 796 BCE and the last years of Adad-nirari III's reign (810–783 BCE), more probably after 787/86 BCE.[5] It establishes the borders between the Aramean kingdoms of Hamath, with king Zakkur, and Arpad, with ʿAttarsumki, and more specifically decrees that the city of Nahlasi now belongs to Arpad.[6] It is not only written in the name of the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III, in cuneiform and Akkadian, but employs the technical jargon that is also used in other Assyrian documents and procedures, such as the definition of interstate boundaries in the historical account of the Synchronistic Chron-

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[2] On the difficulty of determining the origin and etymology of the term Aram see Younger, 2016: 35–40, with previous bibliography.

[3] VanValkenburgh / Osborne, 2013: 2.

[4] VanValkenburgh / Osborne, 2013: 8.

[5] The chronology of this document has long been debated and various hypotheses put forward. Recent contributions to the discussion, with reviews of previous bibliography, are Siddal, 2013 (esp. p. 69), who favours a date in the last years of the Assyrian king, and Younger, 2016 (esp. p. 484), who focuses on the period after 796 BCE and mostly that after Šamši-ilu's appointment as *turtānu*, seemingly dated to 787/786 BCE, since he is mentioned in the stela together with the king.

[6] Although warranting major benefits to Arpad, the stela established a boundary that allowed the two kingdoms shared control of the lower Orontes valley and thus perhaps limited the negative effects of Arpad's military superiority over Hamath.

icle, and the granting of land property in royal deeds.[7] Thus it witnesses Assyrian imperialistic policy and the implementation of its juridical perspective and instruments. The terms employed, *tahūmu*, "boundary / boundary stone / border zone", and the analogous *miṣru*, of Babylonian tradition, clearly convey the meaning of territorial border.[8]

Events concerning Hamath and Arpad are related in other documents. A stela, engraved with the Aramaic inscription of Zakkur king of Hamath and Luġath (KAI 202), commemorates the victory – announced by prophetic messages – of this king over an enemy coalition headed by the Damascene Bar-Hadad, thanks to the divine help of Baʿalšamayn, and the reconstruction of walls and buildings in ʾApis and Ḥaḏrak, that, located in the north-eastern part of the country, became the king's base instead of Hamath, located on the bank of the Orontes. The coalition included nine kings of the Levant, from Damascus in the south to Gurgum and Melid in the north, plus another, cumulatively indicated, 7 kings. All seemingly took part in the conflict for the control of the Orontes valley, and the Beqa' corridor especially, that saw as main contestants Damascus and Hamath.[9] In his inscription, Zakkur – who was probably a usurper and had brought to an end the Luwian dynasty that had long reigned in the country, or had taken the power after the former dynasty was submitted by the Damascene Hazael[10] – presents himself as "a man of ʿAnah", *i.e.* the capital of the kingdom of Suhu in the Middle Euphrates. Unfortunately, it is difficult to interpret the full consequences of the hostility with Damascus and the internal disorders that appear to have consistently changed the role and structure of the Hamath kingdom. The solution of the conflict, attributed in the stela to divine assistance, was instead largely due to the Assyrian intervention. However, the date of the inscription cannot be ascertained and it is debated whether the events could have been connected with the stela from Antakya and the fixation of the boundary with Arpad.[11] The hypothesis that for Hamath the price of peace and Assyrian support was considered worth the sacri-

[7] See Ponchia, 1991: 59–65.

[8] For these terms see Mattila in this volume. *Miṣru* is also used in the literary language of royal inscriptions (Standard Babylonian) and together with *kudurru*, "boundary stone" in Babylonian texts (see CAD s.v.).

[9] Damascus had expanded during the reign of Hazael (c. 844/843–803 BCE) and seemingly extended its hegemony over Hamath and its Luwian dynasty. Hamath already had links with the Middle Euphrates area in this phase, as attested by the letter written by Marduk-apla-uṣur of Anat to Uratami, king of Hamath (Parpola, 1990: 258–259).

[10] On this phase see recently Younger, 2016: 476–481.

[11] The dates of 805 and 796 BCE, *i.e.* those of two campaigns of Adad-nirari III attested by the eponyms chronicles, have been proposed and variously debated, as well as the possibility of a later intervention, as in the case of the Antakya stela, although not clearly documented by references to military campaigns in Adad-nirari III's inscriptions or chronicles. See Bagg, 2011: 208–210; and Younger, 2016: 425–499, with previous bibliography, for a detailed chapter on the history of Hamath and Luġath.

fice of some territorial control – according to the provisions of the Antakya stela – remains unproven, as well as the assumption that at a certain point Assyrian strategy consisted of breaking the enemy front by favouring Arpad and stipulating an alliance with its king.[12]

On the other hand, the arbitration of the Antakya stela and the role of the Assyrian king as an international authority is paralleled by another agreement stipulated some years earlier (805 BCE), and the erection of another stela with an Akkadian inscription, which was found in the site of Pazarcik, in the Gaziantep area.[13] In the latter case, the stela defines the borders between the northern Neo-Hittite kingdoms of Kummukh and Gurgum.[14]

Rivalries concerning the possession of border areas were probably enhanced by the institutional structure of the Syro-Levantine states, where the presence of internal subdivisions with local leaders is variously attested, for instance by the "river-lords" of the Luwian kingdoms, or the districts in the kingdom of Hamath mentioned in Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions. Assyria took advantage of this system, acting as guarantor of and supporting specific interests; she not only exercised her hegemony in tributary areas, but aimed to create conditions of order and security favourable to her interests of control and exploitation of local routes and resources. Through a strategy of alliance with the local leaders and fostering of conditions of peace, Assyria could profit from control, though indirect, of the north-south route that passed from the Taurus to the Orontes, via the ʿAmuq plain. This fundamental corridor had to be protected from disorders due to local rivalries and to the appetites both of local dynasties and of more powerful competitors such as Urarṭu in the north and Damascus in the south, that were active as well in pro-

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[12] The situation in Hamath remained complex also afterwards. Tiglath-pileser III records the subjugation of 19 districts of Hamath after the revolt of the tributary king Azri-Yau, and the following payment of tribute by a new king of Hamath, a certain Eni-il (e.g. RINAP 1 13–14). We might speculate that the latter was one of the previous district leaders who did not adhere to Azri-Yau's revolt and took the Assyrian side. Assyrian kings were able to intervene in this context not only militarily, but also to take advantage of local divisions and the mechanism of alliances.

[13] RIMA 3 A.0.104.3. As attested by the inscription itself, the stela was removed and returned to its position following bellicose events in the area. It remains doubtful whether it was found in its original place.

[14] This system and the policy towards friends and adversaries might be confirmed by a later text of the same type. The Incirli trilingual inscription – of which only the Phoenician version is, at least partially, readeable – marks the boundary (gbl) between Gurgum and the land of Warikas, king of the Danunians (i.e. Que, Cilicia), as was established by Tiglath-pileser III. The king of Que seems to have been rewarded for his loyalty during the hostility led by Matiʿ-ʾel of Arpad, perhaps in occasion of the vast anti-Assyrian front that Tiglath-pileser faced in 743 BCE when Urarṭu seriously imperilled Assyrian supremacy in Syria, in any case before 740 BCE when Arpad was annexed as a province (see Kaufmann, 2007 and Naʾaman, 2019 for textual edition and historical interpretation).

moting alliances favourable to their own interests. In this context Arpad occupied a key position between the regions of the Euphrates and the Orontes, crucial for Assyrian interests in Syria and the Levant, and had therefore also to be kept under control by negotiation.

The Sefire treaty, territorial control and Aramean social structures

That the situation and the application of juridical conventions were not as straight-forward as it might seem from the Antakya stela is revealed by another well-known and much debated document: the treaty attested by three stelae from the town of Sefire and dated to around the middle of the 8th cent. BCE. Arpad is again protagonist, but these inscriptions differ from the Antakya stela first of all in language and style – and in fact they constitute, together with the stela of Zakkur, one of the most significant preserved documents in ancient Aramaic. The Assyrian role is also different, at least formally: the Assyrians are not mentioned, although they certainly played an important or determinant role, since gods venerated in Assyria are invoked in prominent position as guarantors of the agreement. The agreement presents us with various unsolved problems, the principal one being the identification of one of those who underwrote it: Bar-Ga'yah of KTK.[15] The other signatory, Matiʿ-ʾel, king of Arpad, and son of ʿAttarsumki, is better known, and mentioned in other sources, also including a treaty stipulated with the Assyrian king Aššur-nirari V (754–745 BCE).[16] The Sefire agreement establishes an alliance between Arpad and KTK, but is stipulated to the advantage of the latter, and specifies the inclusion of the territory of Tal'ayim in the kingdom of KTK. Unfortunately the location of Tal'ayim remains also unknown. A possible association has been suggested with the toponym of Talḫaya/Talḫayum known from the Mari texts, and localized in the Euphrates area, not far from Emar.[17] It was presumably a boundary area between the territory controlled by Arpad and KTK, and in the treaty it is significantly defined in terms of territorial and institutional structures.[18]

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[15] This constitutes the main issue of the debate in which the most discussed hypothesis is the identification with the Assyrian *turtānu* Šamši-ilu (see Lemaire / Durand, 1984: 37–58). For a synthesis of the various hypotheses see Kahn, 2007, Bagg, 2011: 51–52, and Younger, 2016: 538–543, who concludes: "Having surveyed these proposals, one can sum up this way. The identity of the mysterious BR-G'YH and the location of his polity KTK must remain open", and favors the hypothesis of "a yet-unknown 'philo-Assyrian' Aramean monarch/governor".

[16] On the reconstruction of the Arpadite kings' genealogy see Younger, 2016: 536.

[17] Lemaire / Durand, 1984: 66–67. Bibliographical references to the toponym's debated localization in Younger, 2016: 516.

[18] Sefire III 23 (Lemaire / Durand, 1984: 119): [*wtl'y*]*m wkpryh wb'lyh wgblh*, "Tal'ayim, et ses villages, et ses citoyens, et son territoire". The toponym is usually interpreted as a town name and tentatively looked for in the area west of the Euphrates and is compared with the Talḫayum known from the Mari texts (Bagg, 2019: 18 for references). The ques-

In the present paper the question cannot be extensively reconsidered, and the review of the relevant debate is limited to the perspectives of analysis of two contributions that have recently addressed the topic of the definition of territorial control.[19]

In a recent miscellaneous volume devoted to Aramean borders J. Dušek (2019) discusses the evidence according to a well practiced method, *i.e.* the identification of the toponyms mentioned in the text as belonging to Arpad and their localization on a map, in order to define political boundaries, and updates the debate by means of comparison with recent archaeological evidence. Unfortunately, despite the author's thorough analysis, the majority of the localizations necessarily remains hypothetical or uncertain. Moreover, it must be considered that the list of cities belonging to Arpad is included in the section of curses invoked against the Arpadite king if he should not respect the oath (Stela I A 34–35). Although the list can be only indirectly used to define Arpad's external boundaries or internal divisions, Dušek's analysis is a valuable contribution to the study of historical geography. Among the variant solutions the scholar proposes, and which deserve further consideration, are in particular the hypotheses of identification of Sefire with Arpad,[20] thus moving farther south the kingdom's capital, and of Tell Rifʿat with Muru, a toponym already mentioned in Shalmaneser III's inscriptions.[21]

Most important is the identification of the various parties involved in the agreement which is subscribed to by the kings of Arpad and KTK. Dušek maintains that the inscriptions from Sefire occasionally refer to an anonymous group named the "kings of Arpad"[22] and that Arpad or "the kingdom of Bīt-Agūsi was not a clearly delimited land, with fixed and stable boundaries" (p. 194).

It should be noted however that in stela A a clearer hierarchy is seemingly implied by the use of *mlk*, for Matiʿ-'el and Bar-Ga'yah, the kings who signed the

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tion remains open however, and in any case it must be stressed that a settlement hierarchy is described (on this problem see also n. 20 below).

[19] For a detailed analysis of the sources, a wider review of previous literature, and history of Arpad/Bit-Guš, the reader is referred to Younger, 2016: chap. 8.

[20] Instead of with Tell Rifʿat, where the ruins of a large palace have been discovered, and as is usually accepted. The author also bases his assumption on the consideration that "What location would be more appropriate for the Sfīre treaties than the capital city and the seat of its king?" (p. 187). But this criterium could be reversed as well and Sefire considered the capital of KTK. Lemaire / Durand, 1984: 71 posed the question of a possible relation between the localization of the stelae and the role of Tlʿym in the treaty and suggested evaluating the conjectural identification of the latter with Tell Houdane, around 30 km north of Emar. For the site of Sefire see Del Fabbro, 2014.

[21] RIMA 3 A.0.102.14 (Black Obelisk): 130.

[22] "Apart from the family of the king, the preambles of the Sfīre treaties I A and B mention 'the lords of Arpad,' 'Miṣr and his sons,' 'those who enter the royal palace,' and the family of 'Bīt ṢLL.'. Apart from the 'king of Arpad,' the inscriptions from Sfīre occasionally refer to an anonymous group named the 'kings of Arpad'." (p. 177).

agreement, the reference to Arpad and KTK – without further specifications – and the use of *b'ly* presumably for "the lords" of Arpad and KTK (Stele IA, line 4), whereas "those who enter the royal palace" can be variously identified as members of the Arpad "confederation", or allies, emissaries of other kings and lords.[23]

This list bespeaks the complexity of the Arpad kingdom and its relations beyond its borders, as had already been pointed out in previous publications, also as far as the designation of Aram with the expressions: *'rm klh* = "Aram all of it" and *kl 'ly 'rm wtḥth* = "all of Upper and Lower Aram" is concerned (Stela IA, lines 5-6). N. Na'aman (2016) proposes that Aram designates the kingdom of Arpad, on the basis of comparison with the stela of Melqart from Breidj, in the vicinity of Aleppo.[24] He further proposes an important, though tentative restoration of the fragmentary lines which complete the list of those for whom the oath is valid: *w'dy ḥb*[*r bny st*]*w*[?] *'m 'rm klh*, "and oath of the confederat[ion of the Sutean]s[?] with all Aram" (l. 4). Moreover, he integrates the end of the following line as: *w*[*'m nsky*[?]] ("the sheykhs"), or *w*[*'m mr'y*[?]] ("the lords"), instead of *w*[*'m mlky*] ("the kings").

He therefore concludes that this section of the treaty concerns the tribal, pastoralist sectors of the kingdoms of Arpad and KTK respectively, *i.e.* Arameans and Suteans. The institutional importance of the clan is seemingly revealed by the statement of one of the inscriptions (stela B) where the oath is sworn between *byt ṣll* and *byt gš*, *i.e.* the most important families or clans of Arpad.

Combining the two interpretations we might hypothesize the organization of both polities, Arpad and KTK, into various districts including pastoralist groups whose appurtenance to either polity was probably contended and in need of definition.

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[23] Stela A lists: Bar-Ga'yah king (*mlk*) of KTK and Matiʿ-'el king (*mlk*) of Arpad, sons of Bar-Ga'yah and sons of Matiʿ-'el, descendants (*bny bny*), KTK and Arpad, people/lords (*b'ly*) of KTK and people/lords (*b'ly*) of Arpad and confederation(?) (*ḥb*[*r*[?]…]) […] and Aram as a whole, with Mṣr and descendants, with […] Aram High and Low (*kl 'ly 'rm wtḥth*) and descendants. The meaning of *b'ly* can be interpreted as "citizens" (see translation in Lemaire / Durand, 1984: 120)*,* on the basis of the value "owner, possessor" – as also attested in Bar-rakib 10–11: *b'lyh ksp wb'lyh zhb*, "possessors of silver and possessors of gold" – but it can as well be interpreted as "lords", *i.e.* those that had authority over the kins that composed Aramean society, and therefore constitute a reference to a gentilic social pattern or component.

[24] He proposes the following reading of lines 1–3 of the inscription: "The stele, which Bar-Hadad, son of ʿAttarsumki, son of Gūš, King of Aram, set up for his lord Melqart." and discusses previous interpretations with literature (p. 81). On textual problems and possible interpretations see also Younger, 2016: 534–536. The scholar also maintains that the formula "all of Upper and Lower Aram" in Sefire I A describes the entity of Arpad at the time the treaty was stipulated and is paralleled by the border description given in stela I B 9–10 (pp. 507–508).

In the unstable political situation of the 8th cent. BCE, new relationships were seemingly created by Assyrian interventions and the support given to polities or parties that became tools of imperialistic penetration. We may speculate that Bar-Ga'yah was either a new leader, or one of the lords of Arpad who, thanks to Assyrian support, ascended to a position equal to and even more powerful than Mati'-'el's, a position that allowed him to negotiate greater authority and more extended territorial control. His acknowledgment as *mlk*, which changed the relations in a crucial crossroads as Arpad was, needed to be also recognized in a much wider context.

The stela of Zakkur and the hypotheses concerning the localization of Tal'ayim mentioned in the Sefire inscriptions suggest the possibility that the Assyrians trusted in Aramean chiefs originating from or connected with the middle Euphrates region to take control of the line between the Euphrates and the Orontes and prepare their attack on the Levant.

Two points seem worth stressing. Compared with the Antakya stela of a few decades before, the Sefire treaties document the implementation of Aramaic language and conventions; on the other hand the mention of Aššur and other Assyrian gods as guarantors of the treaty suggests that the support given to Bar-Ga'yah, either a local leader or even an Assyrian emissary or official, attests to the Assyrian capacity to intrude into the socio-political structures of the area for expansionistic purposes.

The situation was however seemingly quite fluid. Mati'-'el of Arpad signed a treaty with the Assyrian king Aššur-nirari V. Although the absolute and relative chronology of this latter treaty and the Sefire treaties cannot be established, it appears that diplomatic means were variously implemented by the Assyrians to control the Arpad kingdom and its complex society.[25]

Aramean society and boundary definition: some further considerations

Is it possible to better clarify the meaning of this particular social and institutional structure in relation to boundary definition and the dynamics of political change?

We might briefly consider a group of roughly contemporary texts which often concern the institution of the *bītu*, the Akkadian equivalent of Aramaic *byt*.[26] The mid-8th cent. BCE letters from Nippur are written in Babylonian, but largely refer to the Aramaic world. In this period, also for climatic and environmental reasons, the town occupied a border position between the Babylonian ancient urban centers

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[25] For the pastoral component of Arpad when the region was included in the Assyrian provincial administration see e.g. SAA 16 48 concerning a *rab ṣibti ša māt Arpadda*, "sheep-tax master of Arpad". In this later phase they might have been part of the management of textile production, which also involved oher components such as artisans and workforce differently organized (see Gaspa, 2018: chap. 2).

[26] On the definition of the *bītu* and the "Arameans' socially constructed groups" see recently Younger, 2016: 43–63, with previous bibliography.

and the pastoralists' area and was part of "a patchwork of politically autonomous regions and peoples",[27] over which the central government of Babylonia had loose authority. Object of the correspondence are the relationships between the state organization, with its hubs in the urban centres, and the *bītu* institutions – *i.e.* households or clans, that at various levels formed the social fabric – or the relationships between individual *bītu*s themselves. The term *bītu* seemingly covers various levels of organization, from a basic cell such as a commercial household, to tribal groups and even larger confederations.[28] From these letters it appears that treaties and mutual acknowledgments of leaders and their *bītu*s warranted the development of regulated relationships and the implementation of legal procedures, fundamental in long distance trade. In these cases it is the *bītu* that appears the term of reference, rather than the territory. The *adê*, the sworn agreement, provides a protocol of behaviour for all the *bītu*s that are affiliated to the subscribers to the agreement, in hierarchical order of appurtenance from the smaller cells to the major *bītu* that incorporates them.[29]

Letter no. 12 of Cole's (1996a) edition provides an example of the oath stipulations and erection of stelae to regulate the use of territory, although the interpretation of the text is quite difficult. The letter informs that the stela on which the agreement concerning a territory, or a safe-conduct through it was inscribed, is now damaged.[30] Reference is made to a ceremony of the reading of the stela, which had taken place in the presence of various actors, presumably with the aim of making explicit and manifest the accorded rights. These likely included dwelling and circulation in the territory that were probably permitted, as suggested by Cole, in connection with transhumance or other particular activities. In this case, the procedure of reading in the presence of the parties (and probably of witnesses) points to the tutelage of rights at the local level in the context of a mobile society, and may be considered an interesting parallel, as far as procedure is concerned, of the documents analysed above.

Social organization and the specific role of the Arameans is exemplified by other, again quite difficult, letters, such as nos. 18 and 27 of Cole's edition. The

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[27] Cole, 1996b: 17. Babylonia was not yet subjected to the attacks of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE).

[28] See also Ponchia, 2002–2005.

[29] Cf. the Biblical entreaty: "Let there be an alliance between us, as well as an alliance between our fathers" (1 Kgs 15:18–20), commented by Lemaire, 2007 in the light of the Aramaic context as referring to the "maison paternelle" even with the ellipsis of the term בית.

[30] The sender (a certain Bēl-usātī) appears to go together with Iqīša to the *bītu* of Nabû-ušallim, who is a "man" of Iqīša, perhaps in the framework of, or to check the respect of the agreement that had been written on a stela. Iqīša, Šumā (the addressee of the letter, who is said to have read the stela, and is identified as a brother of the sender), the sender, and Nabû-ušallim, were present at the ceremony or reading (*atta ša eli asummitti ina pāniya tamnū*, "you, who recited in my presence what was on the stela").

former text reports raids conducted by people, or bands,[31] of Bit-Yakin against the Nippur region, seemingly in the context of commercial traffic. In this case the ethnonym LÚ.*A-ram* seems to be used to designate an element that is outside of the control of the state administration. In letter no. 27, the Aramean tribe of the Puqudu is expected to be in Nippur for celebrating a festivity and that is considered an occasion for regulating accounts with the Arameans, *i.e.* the LÚ.*A-ram gab-bi*, "all the Arameans", as they are designated in the letter.

Thus, these sources too suggest that the term Aram may have a general and contrastive meaning, and that the juridical instrument of the *adê*, the sworn agreement, was an acknowledged means to regulate relationships with the kinship-based and partly mobile society that lay beyond the urban institutional system. It could however be used at various levels and even have wide-ranging validity. This appears to have been the case in the Sefire treaty. The definition of a new equilibrium between Arpad and KTK and the new affiliations deriving from the inclusion of Tal'ayim in the latter, had to be acknowledged as valid throughout Aram (Stela I A) and "from Qarqar as far as Ya'udy and Baz, from Lebanon as far as Ybrd and […], from 'Umq as far as 'Arro and Manṣuate, from Bqʿt as far as KTK", *i.e.* in a clearly international context, as stated in Stela I B.

When considered as a whole these sources attest to the contemporaneous existence and integration of two orders of boundaries: the first defined in terms of territoriality, the second in terms of movements and affiliations, which guaranteed the development of economic activities, pastoral and commercial, and were the basis for inter-group relations and the construction of networks that extended well beyond individual borders.[32] The narratives of the Assyrian kings' strenuous fight against the Arameans reveal that they were able to progressively transform the diversified, often locally fragmented leadership or the loosely controlled tribes into the elements of an administrative system. This emanated from the monarchic institution and consisted of a hierarchy of officials which depended on and cooperated with the royal dynasty, even in the remote provinces. Thus, the problematic and largely unsolved points we have briefly considered so far lead us to a final general question: whether the turbulent, fragmented and often hostile Aramean milieu with its particular socio-economic and political system did anyway contribute to the construction of a new order – the imperial one with its programmatic borderless dimension and inner interconnections. It is difficult to determine to what extent the Assyrians took advantage of the transformation of Aramean social structures and conventions into institutionalized corps and procedures, as is evi-

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[31] Defined by the term LÚ *gudūdu*, a loanword from Aramaic, see Cole, 1996a: 73. It seems that the term has a meaning comparable with that of the Biblical word from the same root, *gdwd*, in the description of the troops of the Damascene Rezon in 1 Kgs 11:23–24 and 1 Sam 22:2, see Younger, 2016: 570. See also the inscription from Karatepe which mentions *bʿl ʾgddm*, "lords of gangs" (line 15 of the Phoenician text).

[32] For the general dynamics of these relations see Szuchman, 2009.

dent in the cases of the Itu'u and the *adê*, and as the spreading of Aramaic also shows. It seems however that they succeeded in combining the Aramean network and system of extended relationships with a centralized administration to provide the basis for the institutional innovation of imperial power.

Abbreviations

CAD: *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.* Chicago / Glückstadt, 1956–2010.

KAI: H. Donner / W. Röllig, 1962–1964: *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* 3 vols. Wiesbaden.

RIMA 3: Grayson, A. K., 1996: *Assyrian Rulers of Early First Millennium BC. II (858–745BC).* The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods, Volume 3. Toronto / Buffalo / London.

RINAP 1: Tadmor, H. / Yamada, Sh., 2011: *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria.* The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, Volume 1. Winona Lake, IN.

SAA 2: Parpola, S. / Watanabe, K., 1988: *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths.* State Archive of Assyria 2. Helsinki.

SAA 16: Luukko, M. / Van Buylaere, G., 2002: *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon.* State Archives of Assyria 16. Helsinki.

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