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Abstract

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“All Aram” and “Upper and Lower Aram”: what the Sefire Inscription suggests us about the Aramaean ethnicity

The Aramaeans are always presented as an “undifferentiated group present from the Lower Khabur to the Mount Lebanon” (Sader 1992), without any ethnic affiliation. The construction of their identity may be given by two opposite viewpoints: their own perspective (internal view) and that perceived by other populations (external view). We will show this through the notion of “all Aram” in the Sefire inscription, and by looking at some passages from Assyrian records and the Bible. The first document is the longest Aramaic inscription (about 200 lines) found 25 km from Aleppo in 1930 and dated to the 8th century. It is a treaty stipulated between the unknown king of KTK, Barga’ yah and the king of Arpad Mati’el. The other inscriptions concern, in particular, the records of Shalmaneser III and Tiglath-pileser III who occupied the Aramaean territories in the 9th-8th centuries, and some letters from Nippur.