

## ARAMEANS AND LUWIANS – PROCESSES OF AN ACCULTURATION

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### 1

After the collapse of the Hittite Empire a number of minor kingdoms were established in Southern Anatolia and Northern Syria. Their material culture was strongly influenced by Hittite art, Luwian hieroglyphs were frequently used in the inscriptions. Therefore these states are commonly labelled as “Late Hittite” or “Syo-Hittite” by modern scholars, following the Assyrian designation of this region as the “Lands of Ḫatti”. The cultural and, for some time, also political centre was the city of Karkamiš, in which the dynasty of the Hittite Great King Šuppiliuma I is attested at least until the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>1</sup> The Neo-Hittite states were incorporated into the Assyrian Empire at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

In contrast to the designation of these states as “Late Hittite”, Arameans rather than Luwians became the dominating ethnic and linguistic element in most of them from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>2</sup> Thus, many attempts have been undertaken by modern scholars to point out the differences of “Aramean” and “Luwian” elements in the “Late Hittite” culture.<sup>3</sup> Most of them failed. It seems that acculturation processes of different “ethnic” groups are much more complex than to allow simple solutions about the origin of single elements. Instead, it is more promising to extract some characteristics and, with that, some regularities of acculturation processes.<sup>4</sup>

### 2

But first we should take a short look at the general development of Late Hittite material culture:

The architecture is characterised by some specific features.<sup>5</sup> The general outline of the cities differs from region to region. There are towns with circular (Fig. 1), rectangular (Fig. 2) and irregular outer shape. Most of the cities possessed a fortified citadel in which the palaces were situated. Thus a separation of the elite and the urban citizens was constructed. The element of the citadel was a product of Anatolian city planning in the Late Bronze Age as it is visible e.g. in Ḫattuša.

Nevertheless, the construction techniques of ramparts and gates differed from Anatolian patterns and showed Syrian influence. Same with the layout of palaces and temples: Both, the so-

<sup>1</sup> On the history of the Late Hittite states see Starke 1999b, on the role of Karkamiš as political and cultural centre Starke 1999a and Winter 1983. For several aspects see Hawkins 1974, 1976-80, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1993-97, 1995a and 1995b.

<sup>2</sup> On the history of the Arameans see Sader 1987; Zadok 1991; Lipinski 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Akurgal 1949; Ussishkin 1971; Ikeda 1984; Mazzoni 1994.

<sup>4</sup> On “acculturartion” and “acculturation processes” see Blum 2002 and Attoura 2002.

<sup>5</sup> The architecture is generally studied by Naumann 1971; several aspects are discussed by Mazzoni 1994, 1995 and 1997, Bunnens 1996 and Novák 1999.



called “Ḫilāni” as well as the “temple *in antis*” were Syrian creations, dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or even 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. The outer façades of gates, palaces and, sometimes, also of temples were plastered with stone blocks or orthostats, which were decorated with reliefs. These represent the main corpus of Late Hittite art.

The chronological development of this art shows three steps in its style and iconography from the end of Hittite Empire in the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the incorporation of North Syria into the Assyrian Empire in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> In the first phase until the 11<sup>th</sup> century elements of imperial Hittite art have spread all over the former vassal territories. Responsible for that was the domination of the former Hittite provincial capital of Karkamiš. Examples can be seen in Ain Dara (Fig. 3),<sup>7</sup> Melid (Fig. 4) and, recently found, in Aleppo<sup>8</sup>. In the second step between 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century an emancipation of Late Hittite art took place with the creation of new iconographical elements. Examples can be seen at the funerary monuments showing the deceased members of the elite (Fig. 5).<sup>9</sup> From the late 9<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards Late Hittite art was characterised by a strong influence of Assyrian art. Especially the iconography of the king copied Assyrian patterns (Fig. 6).

These three steps correspond more or less with the stylistic groups “Late Hittite I – III” defined by Winfried Orthmann.<sup>10</sup> From the late 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards Assyrian monuments were produced in the new established provinces.

### 3

In this development there is no clear break visible, which may serve as an indication for the appearance of a new ethnic group, the Arameans. So let us go more into detail now.

The two Aramean principalities of Sam<sup>3</sup>al in Northern Syria and Guzāna in Northern Mesopotamia can serve as case studies:

The city of Sam<sup>3</sup>al has been the capital of the northernmost Aramean kingdom called Bit Gabbār, founded at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. In spite of the undoubtful Aramean origin of the dynasties at least three of its rulers bore Luwian names like Kulamuwa and Panamuwa.<sup>11</sup> The last known king, Bar-Rākib son of Panamuwa II, again has got an Aramean name. This shows that an ethnical determination on the base of the onomasticon is quite difficult; from grandfather to father to son we can find the change of Aramean name to Luwian and again to Aramean. The name does not indicate the ethnic origin of a person.

The inscriptions of Sam<sup>3</sup>al were written in different languages and scripts; the dominating one was a local dialect of Aramean written in Aramaic alphabet. This shows that, from a linguistic and historical point of view, Sam<sup>3</sup>al belonged clearly to the Aramaic world.

The city of Sam<sup>3</sup>al has got a circular outline with three gates in regular distances from each other (Fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> The public buildings, namely the palaces, were concentrated on the strongly forti-

<sup>6</sup> Orthmann 1971 and 1975: 107; Novák 2002a.

<sup>7</sup> Abu Assaf 1983 and 1990; Orthmann 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Khayyata / Kohlmeier 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Bonatz 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Orthmann 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Tropper 1993.

<sup>12</sup> Novák 1999: 196ff.



fied citadel, which was situated in the centre of the city. As other examples like Til-Barsip or Tall Sheikh Hassan indicate, the concept of the circular city with a central citadel was spread in Northern Syria at that period and probably stood in an earlier tradition of this region.

The excavations in Sam<sup>3</sup>al have brought to light a rich corpus of statues and reliefs (Fig. 7). This enables us to define the art of Sam<sup>3</sup>al. From the very beginning style and iconography had been strongly influenced by the art of Karkamiš; so much that it often seems to be just a provincial copy of it.<sup>13</sup> Because of that it gained its typical Hittite character and is therefore generally assigned to belong to the “Late Hittite” art. The result was that, according to Winfried Orthmann, Hama is labelled as the only Aramean capital, which had been excavated so far.<sup>14</sup> Sam<sup>3</sup>al has been excluded because of the close relation of its material culture to the Late Hittite art.

Summing up, from the archaeological point of view Sam<sup>3</sup>al belongs to the Late Hittite culture, but from the historical and philological point of view to the Aramean.

This situation is comparable to that of Guzāna at the Ḥābūr, the capital of the principality of Bīt-Baḥiāni.<sup>15</sup> It was also founded by Aramaic tribes belonging to the confederation of the Tema-nides. The origin of the Arameans in general is still an open question, but because of their name it seems as if at least these groups came from the oasis of Tēmā'. This has been a prominent caravan knot point in the Northern part of the Arabic Desert, and later, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the temporary Babylonian residential city of Nabonid.<sup>16</sup>

The outline of the city of Guzāna is rectangular (Fig. 2). The citadel with the palaces was, like in Sam<sup>3</sup>al, strongly fortified. But in contrast to Sam<sup>3</sup>al, it was situated at the northernmost periphery of the town, close to the river. This concept of city planning is known in Assyria from the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium onwards. Since Northern Mesopotamia had belonged to the Middle Assyrian Empire for at least two centuries it is possible that comparable cities had existed in this region before the foundation of Guzāna.

The iconography of the art of Guzāna differs strongly from that of the other Luwian and Aramaic states (Fig. 8).<sup>17</sup> It shows an influence of the Mittani glyptics of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, which may have still been vivid until the time of Aramaic infiltration.<sup>18</sup>

So, very similar to the situation of Sam<sup>3</sup>al, no new architecture or iconography was created by the Arameans. They seem to have adapted principles and concepts of the occupied regions. This is, in contrast to the formal differences between the material culture of Sam<sup>3</sup>al and Guzāna, the main structural similarity.

But it goes further: Neither in Sam<sup>3</sup>al nor in Guzāna a temple was excavated. In addition, no inscription in one of the two states does mention such a building. Is this pure coincidence?

A statue found at Tall Faḥariya, the ancient Sikāni and probably also the Mittani capital of Waššukanni, shows Hadad-yiš'i, the ruler of Guzāna.<sup>19</sup> In the bilingual inscription it is mentioned that the statue stood in front of the main deity of the country, Hadad the “Lord of the Ḥābūr” in

<sup>13</sup> Orthmann 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Orthmann 1975: 122.

<sup>15</sup> Novák 1999: 188ff.

<sup>16</sup> Novák 2002b: 448ff.

<sup>17</sup> Orthmann 1971; Bonatz 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Orthmann 1971: 470.

<sup>19</sup> Abu Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard 1982; Spycket 1985; Sauer 1996



his temple in Sikāni. This temple is attested in textual sources from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium onwards.<sup>20</sup> It seems as if the Aramean masters not only respected but also adopted the existing and traditional cult of the regional deities. This is also affirmed by the iconography of the gods of Guzāna: We can hardly find new iconographical elements in these images.

In Sam'al it seems to be the same: As attested by the inscriptions, the pantheon of the state consisted of gods known to the inhabitants of Northern Syria centuries or millennia before.<sup>21</sup> Even the idea of dynastic gods and of divine ancestors<sup>22</sup> was not really new, as we know from Ugarit and Emar in the Late Bronze Age.<sup>23</sup> We do not know where the religious centre of the state of Bīt Gabbār had been but it does not seem to have been inside the city of Sam'al. Perhaps we must look for it in one of the former capitals of the region like Tilmen-Höyük.

Therefore it seems that both Sam'al and Guzāna were founded as political residential cities by the Arameans in the close surrounding of existing towns which remained the religious centres.

Once attentive to this phenomenon, we can find it in many Aramean states: Nusaybīna was founded beside Nabala, Ḥuzirīna beside Ḥarrān, Arpad beside Ḥalab. Of course there are also opposite examples like Hama and Damascus, but I think that we can find a characteristic feature of the politics of the Arameans here.

#### 4

But what about their own traditional religion? It is very difficult to find an answer.<sup>24</sup> All inscriptions date to a time long after their infiltration. They indicate that the regional religious concepts were already adopted.

According to the inscriptions and the images in visual art the most prominent gods of the Aramean states from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards were the Storm God of Ḥalab and the Moon God of Ḥarrān, the latter assigned to be the “master of king Bar-Rākib of Sam'al” in the inscription on a relief (Fig. 7).<sup>25</sup>

This is expressed by a newly developed iconography, as it can be seen on a group of steles like the one recently found in Til-Barsip,<sup>26</sup> dating to the time of king Hamiyatas von Masuwara (Fig. 9).<sup>27</sup> It shows a male god standing on the back of a bull and holding an axe and a bundle of flashes. According to textual evidence it seems clear that we can identify this god as the Storm God, in most cases the one of Ḥalab.

Nevertheless, in the Hittite iconography from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century axe and flashes were

<sup>20</sup> Kessler and Müller-Kessler 1995

<sup>21</sup> Tropper 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Niehr 1994; Bonatz 2000.

<sup>23</sup> van der Toorn 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Hutter 1996a; Kreuzer 1996; Novák 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Orthmann 1971, Tf. 63 (Zincirli F/1a); Orthmann 1975, Abb. 358; Tropper 1993: 164 (Inscription B3); Novák 2002b, Abb. 10.

<sup>26</sup> See G. Bunnens in *Orient-Express* 2001, 67-68 and Green and Hausleiter 2001: 152ff., Abb. 3 (Stele No. 4).

<sup>27</sup> J.D. Hawkins *apud* Green and Hausleiter 2001: 152.



attributes of the moon god as it can be seen in Yazilikaya<sup>28</sup>, Melid (Fig. 4)<sup>29</sup> and Karkamiš<sup>30</sup>.

Strangely enough, there is a winged disc situated above his crown. This disc is commonly identified as sun symbol but recent studies made clear that instead it is a moon symbol: It shows the lying crescent of the new moon and the disc of the full moon. Examples from three millennia prove that this combination was quite common in Near Eastern art.<sup>31</sup>

As discussed elsewhere, the bull originally has been the symbol of the Moon god.<sup>32</sup> The reason lies in the similarity of the horns of the bull with the lying moon crescent on the one hand and the connection of the fertility of cattle with the moon cycle on the other hand. In Mesopotamia the Storm God was primarily connected with the lion dragon and not with the bull. It originates in Northern Syria where the Storm God was accompanied by the bull, an image that spread during the Old Babylonian period all over Mesopotamia.

There are indications that the nomads of the steppes and deserts of Northern Arabia worshiped the moon god since the moon cycle had a strong influence on their life. Two steles found in the already mentioned oasis of Tēmā' show several astral symbols and, most prominent, *bucrania* (Fig. 10).<sup>33</sup> The symbols probably can be identified with the gods mentioned in the inscription,<sup>34</sup> several aspects of the moon god with Šalmu, perhaps the new moon, at the top.<sup>35</sup>

If we take this into account it seems as if the moon god, associated with the bull, was the main deity of the Arameans when they infiltrated Northern Syria and Mesopotamia. Here he was equated with the Moon God of Ḥarrān and was worshipped there. At the same time the Storm God of Ḥalab, as the most prominent regional deity, was adopted. In times of mobility the cult of these two gods spread all over the Aramean world and was established in times of sedentary. This may explain the over-regional panthea with these two gods at the top.

The bull as a symbol animal of both gods connected the two deities. This corresponds with the newly established iconography of the Storm God with the former attributes of the Hittite Moon God in his hands. The winged moon symbol accompanies the image of the male god. Therefore, his identity is not as clear as thought before. Anyhow, the slowly developing symbioses of Moon God and Storm God, in inscriptions as well as in iconography, seems to be one of the results of the acculturation of Arameans and Luwians.

## 5

So let us now sum up these observations concerning structural similarities in the acculturation processes:

A number of the Aramean states in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria preferred to build new political capitals close beside those existing towns that were and remained religious centres. As far

<sup>28</sup> Seeher 2002: 114, Abb. 2, No. 35, following Bittel 1975.

<sup>29</sup> Orthmann 1971, Tf. 40 Malatya A/6

<sup>30</sup> Orthmann 1971, Tf. 23 (Karkemis Bb/1) and 1975, Abb. 356. On the identification see Orthmann 1971: 253ff.

<sup>31</sup> Novák 2002b.

<sup>32</sup> Keel 1994; Burnett and Keel 1998; Theuer 2000; Ornan 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Boerker-Klähn 1982: 230, Abb. 265; Dalley 1986.

<sup>34</sup> Donner and Röllig 1962: 278ff. (No. 228).

<sup>35</sup> Novák 2002b: 448ff.



as we know from Sam<sup>2</sup>al and Guzāna the residential cities had geometric outlines. Although the patterns were different – one is circular with the citadel in its centre, the other rectangular with the citadel at its periphery – the act of foundation *ex nihilo* and the geometric layout are common features. Furthermore, in both cities the same architectonic types like the Ḫilāni were known and, in both cases, the outer facades of the public buildings were decorated with reliefs. Both in architecture and in visual art an adoption of regional cultural norms and iconographical concepts occurs. In Sam<sup>2</sup>al they depend on the Hittite patterns, in Guzāna on Mittani and Assyrian patterns. Formal differences show structural similarities.

Comparable are the political attitudes of the new rulers towards religion. In general, the existing cults were adopted and continued, even in their spatial context. Nevertheless, the slowly developing mixture of regional and nomadic ideas led to some new concepts like the symbiosis of Moon God and Storm God and the diffusion of over-regional cults all over the Aramaic world.

The case study of the “Late Hittite” kingdoms indicates that pure ethnical determination of culture is not a reasonable and sufficient way of archaeological or philological research. Nevertheless, the investigation of specific elements of material and immaterial culture may help to gain a better understanding of the acculturation processes and their regularities.

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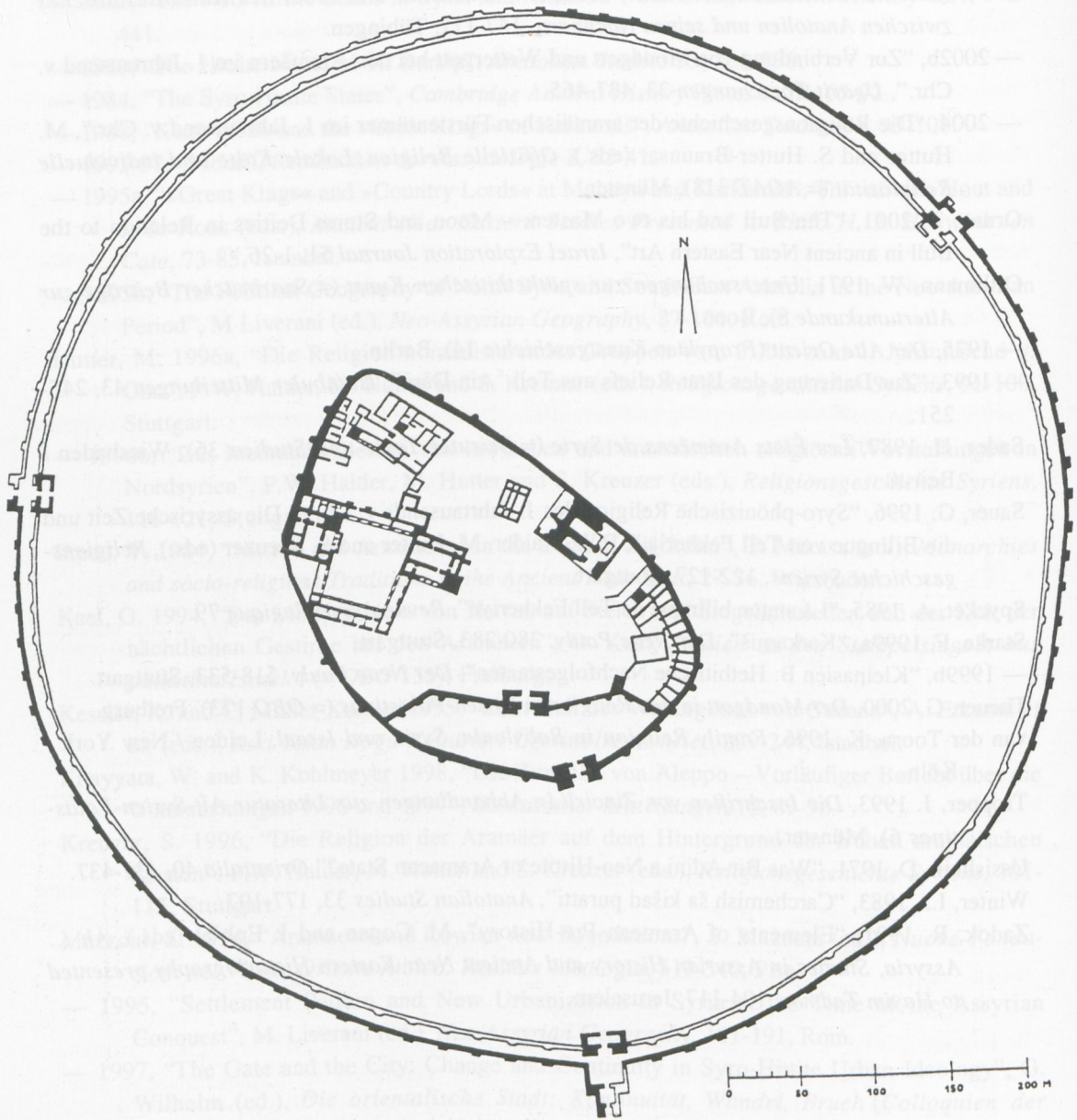


Fig. 1. Sam<sup>3</sup>al (from Orthmann 1975, Fig. 133).



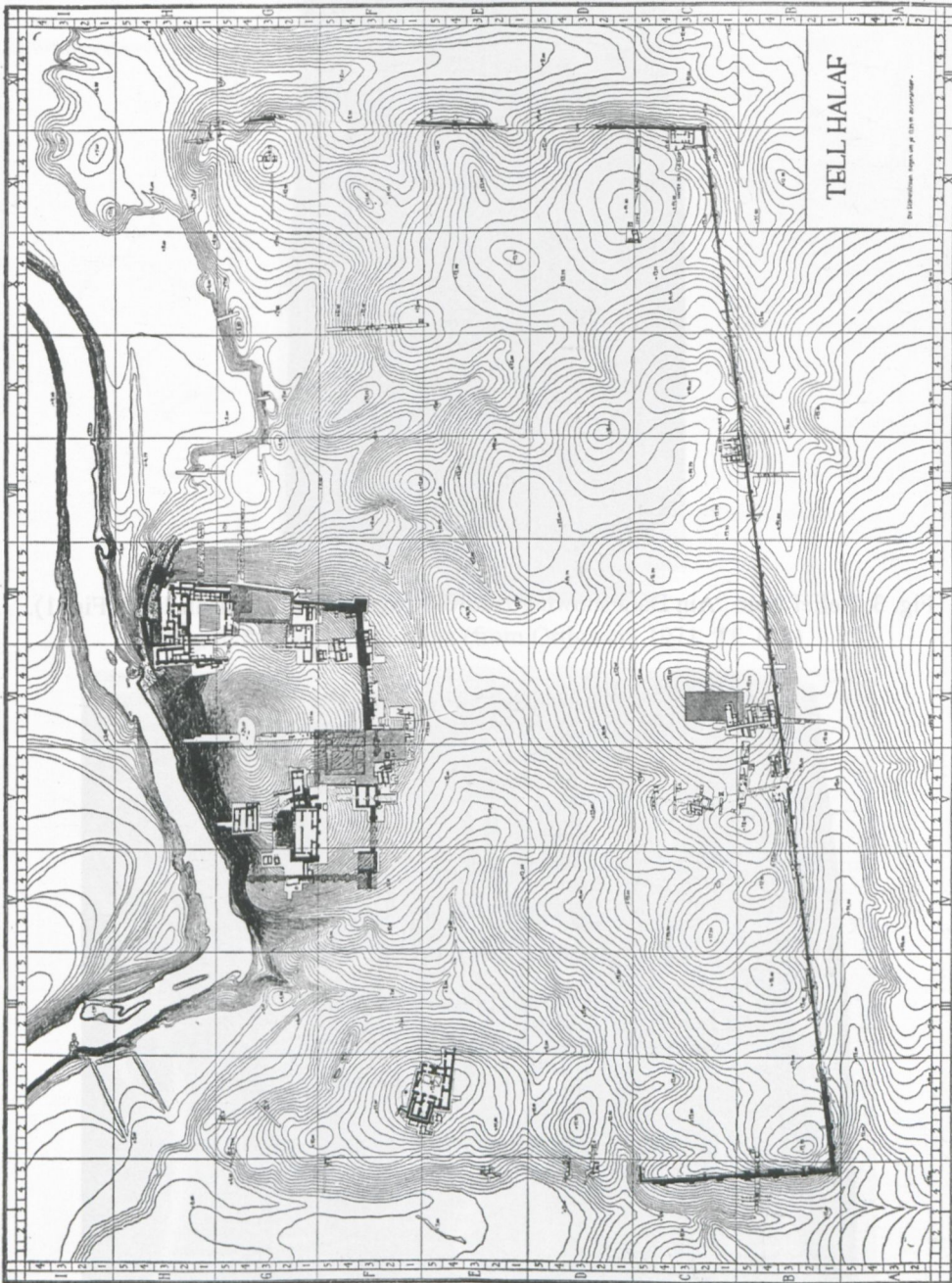


Fig. 2. Guzāna (from M. von Oppenheim *et al.*, Tell Halaf II, Plan 1).

Fig. 4. Relief from Meid, showing a seated figure in a chariot, from Oppenheim 1927.  
Fig. 6. Statue of a bull, from Meid, from Oppenheim 1927.





Fig. 3. Relief from ʿAin Dārā showing Ištar-Šawuška (from Orthmann 1993, Fig. 1).



Fig. 4. Relief from Melid, showing libation in front of the Moon God (from Orthmann 1975, Abb. 353).



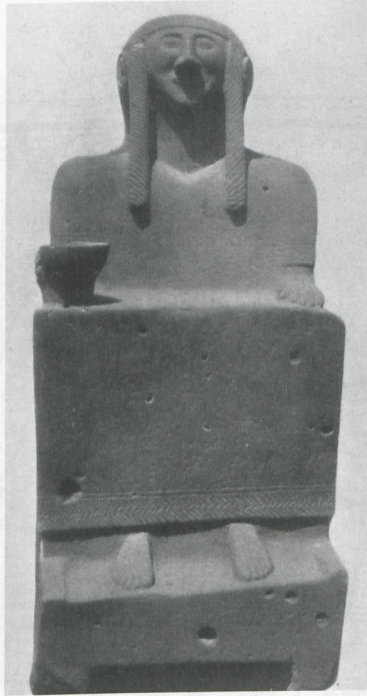


Fig. 5. Statue from Guzāna (from Orthmann 1971, Tf. 13f.).



Fig. 6. Statue of a king of Melid (from K. Bittel, Die Hethiter, S. 248, Abb. 281).



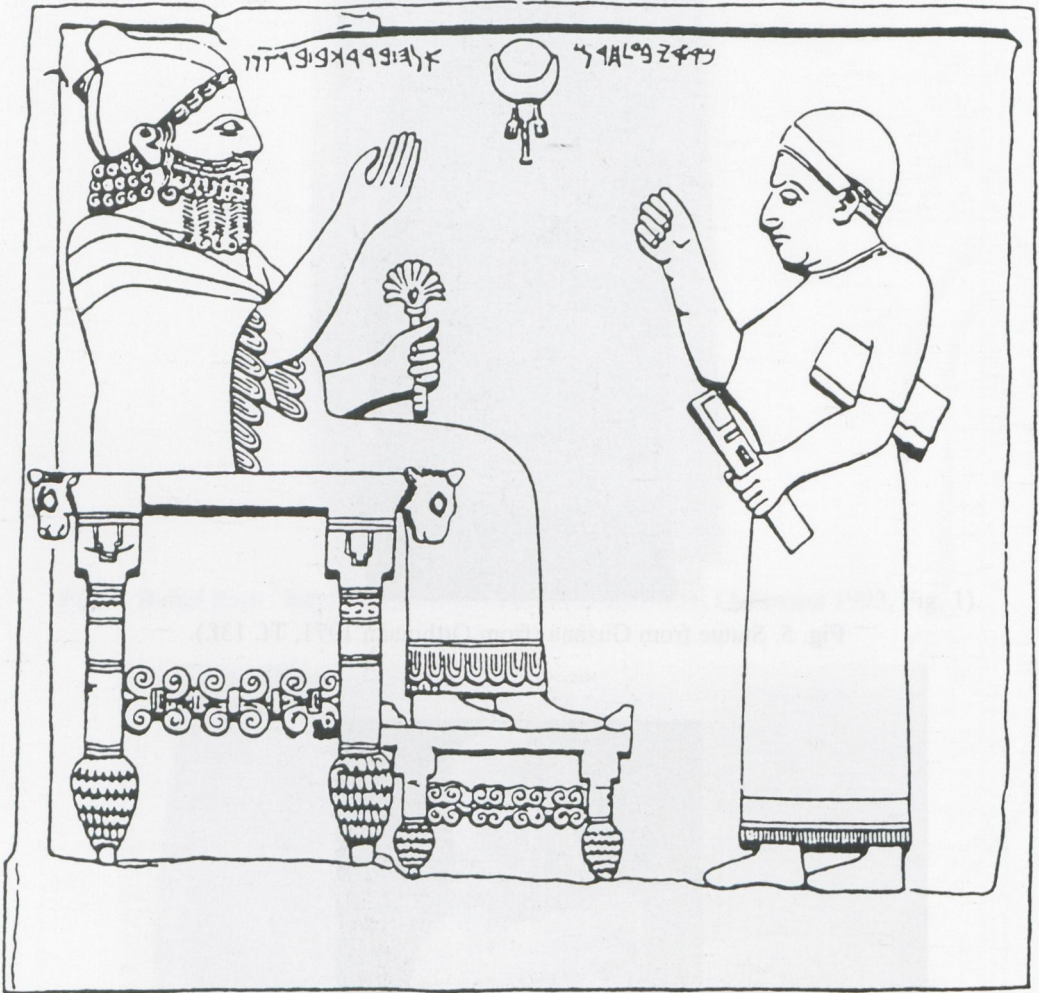


Fig. 7. Relief of Bar-Rākib of Sam'al with the emblem of the Moon God of Harran (from Bennett and Keel 1998, 155, Abb. 105).





Fig. 9. Stele from Til-Barsip / Masuwari (Tall Ahmar), showing Storm God with the emblem of the Moon God (from Green and Hausleiter 2001, 166, Abb. 3 after G. Bunnens, *Orient-Express* 2001, 67, Fig. 3).





Fig. 8. Relief from Guzāna (from Orthmann 1975, Abb. 363).

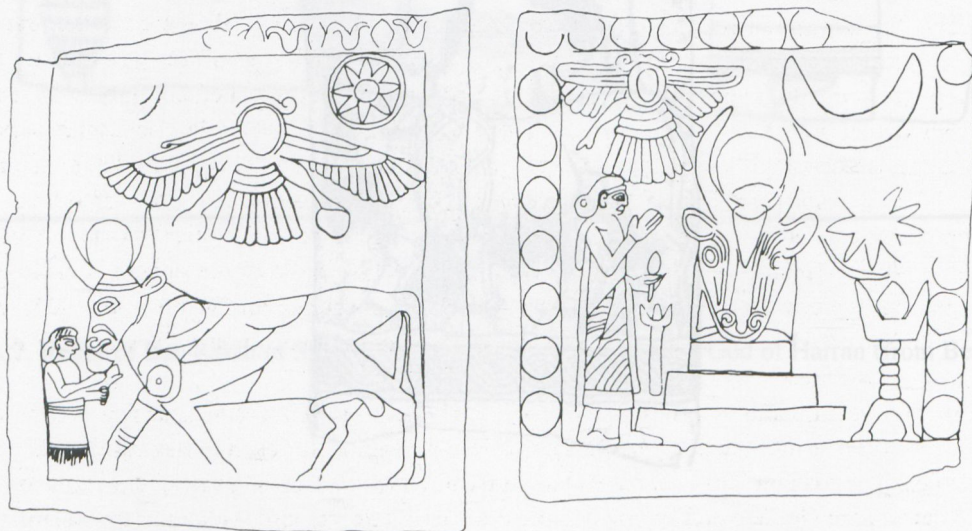


Fig. 10. Stele from Tēmā' (from Dalley 1986, 87, Fig. 2).