

The Former ‘Periphery’; The Latter ‘Province’: Interest of Neo-Assyrian Kings in South-Eastern and Eastern Turkey

Önceki ‘Çevre’; Sonraki ‘Eyalet’: Yeni Asur Krallarının Türkiye’nin Güneydoğu ve Doğusuna İlgisi

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Özet

Ön Asya’da Demir Çağ’ının ilk yarısında Yeni Asur İmparatorluğu’nun sınırları zamanla, Türkiye’nin güneydoğu ve doğusuna doğru genişlemiştir. Asur Krallarının Türkiye’nin bu bölgelerini egemenliğine alma isteği, başlangıçta Orta Asur dönemindeki seleflerinin hâkimiyetinde bulunan ve zamanla kaybedilen toprakları tekrar kazanmak olan politik bir amaca yönelik olmuştur. Zamanla, Türkiye’nin doğu ve güneydoğu bölgeleri, ekonomik potansiyelinin temel öğeleriyle ilişkili olan stratejik konumu, zengin maden ve doğal kaynakları ile bereketli tarım toprakları bakımından Asur Krallarının odaklandığı bir alan haline geldi. Yeni Asur kralları, bu bölgenin ekonomik kaynaklarına sahip olabilmek için, başka güçlere (Yeni-Hitit devletleri, Aramiler ve Urartu Krallığı) karşı üstünlük sağlamaları gerektiğinden, bunlara karşı askeri ve siyasi saldırılar düzenlemiştir. Yeni Asur İmparatorluğu’nun kuzeye yayılımının arkeolojik izlerine Yukarı Dicle, Fırat, Kilikya ve doğudaki dağlık bölgelerde rastlanmıştır. Özetle, başlangıçta Orta Asur krallığına ait olan ve kaybedilen toprakları geri kazanım düşüncesi, zamanla emperyalist ve yayılmacı bir eyleme dönüşmüş, başlarda Asur ülkesini çevreleyen bu bölgeler, zamanla Yeni Asur eyaletlerine dönüşmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yeni Asur ilgisi, Türkiye’nin Güneydoğu ve Doğusu, sömürme, yayılma, hammadde kaynakları.

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Abstract

During the first half of the Iron Age (*ca.*1000-620 BC), south-east and east Turkey witnessed the expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in a number of regions. The initial interest of the Assyrians in some regions of Turkey was political. It was to regain the lost territories once under the rule of their Middle Assyrian predecessors. Through time, Turkey's strategic position, economic potential, rich mineral and natural sources, and its fertile lands drew the attention of the Neo-Assyrian kings. In order to obtain these resources and the strategic advantage, these regions of Turkey must have been brought under control. The Neo-Assyrian kings carried out military campaigns and political offensives against contemporary local political powers primarily against the Neo-Hittite and the Aramaean states in the west, and the Kingdom of Urartu. Indeed, the expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire is evident in the Upper Tigris, Euphrates regions, Cilicia, and the eastern highlands. The Neo-Assyrian kings' perspective on these regions seems to have evolved from notions associated with the heritage of the Middle Assyrian kingdom; however, this became an imperialistic and expansionistic outlook. Thus, in time, these preliminary peripheral regions became the provinces of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Keywords: Neo-Assyrian interests, South-eastern and Eastern Turkey, exploitation, expansion, raw material.

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

In the modern Assyriological philology, the period from the 10th to the 7th century is named as the Neo-Assyrian period in the ancient Near East.¹ During the Neo-Assyrian period, Assyrian rulers gradually achieved domination over a vast area stretching primarily from Zagros Mountains to the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt (for a brief period), and also established military control over strategic areas around the Taurus Mountains in south-eastern and eastern Turkey.² The initial realm of Assyria in the 10th century BC encompassed predominantly a small triangular area, the so-called “Core Area” including Ashur, Nineveh and Arbela³ in modern northern Iraq (Map 2). The capital Ashur is 100 km south of modern Mosul, in Iraq. Besides the fertile agricultural land surrounding the land and its strategic position controlling the circulation of river trade between south and north Mesopotamia was an incentive for the Assyrians to control and use the Tigris River for transportation.⁴

Mesopotamia is devoid of raw material sources such as mineral and metal and the demand for those sources provoked a motivation for the Assyrians to pursue these resources by means of invasion and the acquired booty, regional and long distance trade, and the receiving tribute from subjugated countries.⁵ There is no doubt that the areas including the mountainous eastern regions of Turkey are one of the richest areas conceived as targets by the Assyrians. In order to understand the reasons behind the activities of Neo-Assyrian kings in these regions, a variety of studies and textual sources have been inspired. It is assumed that the Assyrian state had concrete economic interests in these regions, and these interests inspired upon their political and military activities.

¹Healy, 1991:3; Kuhrt, 1995b: 473; Wilkinson et al.2005: 23; Van De Mierop, 2015: 246;

² Kuhrt, 1995b: 473; Oates, 2001: 13; Van De Mierop, 2015: 246.

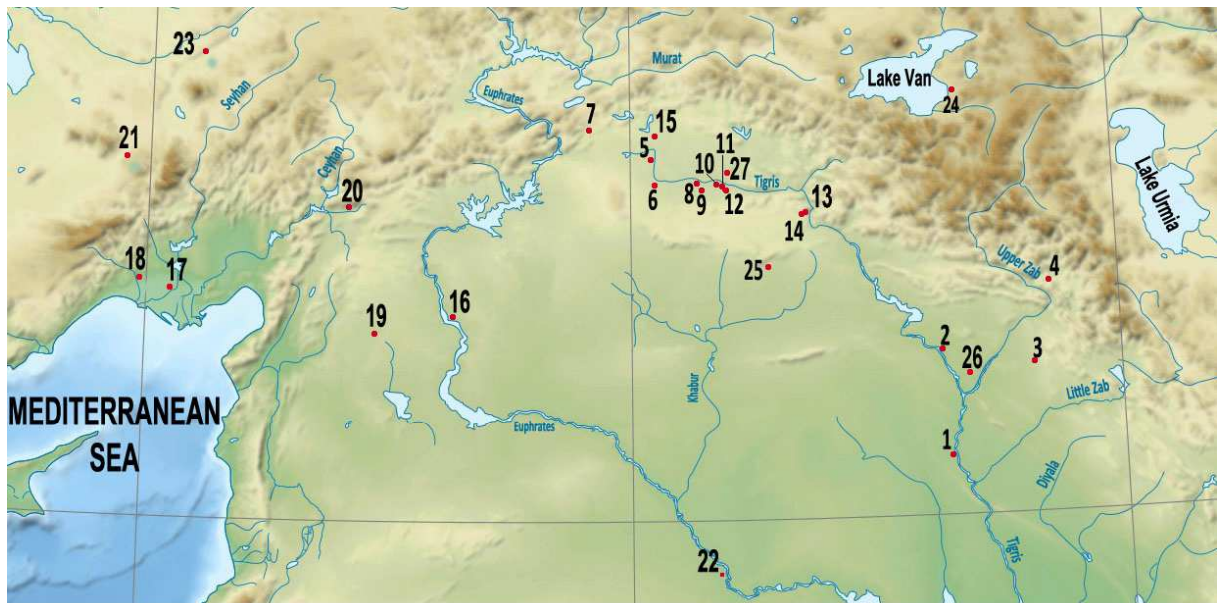
³ Radner, 2015: 4

⁴Kuhrt, 1995a: 81 and 88; Liverani, 2014: 208

⁵Baştürk, 2010: 140



Map 1: Contemporary Rivals of the Neo-Assyria Empire mentioned in the text



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|------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Ashur | 6. Sinabu (Pornak?) | 11. Nirdun | 16. Til Barsip | 21. Niğde | 26. Nimrud |
| 2. Nineveh | 7. Ergani (Maden) | 12. Nirbu (Urumu) | 17. Adanawa | 22. Mari | 27. Salat Tepe |
| 3. Arbela | 8. Tidu (Üçtepe) | 13. Tivilki Tarlası | 18. Tarsus | 23. Kültepe | |
| 4. Musasir | 9. Damdammusa (Aktepe?) | 14. Kilokki Tarlası | 19. Arpad | 24. Tushpa | |
| 5. Amid | 10. Tushan (Ziyarettepe) | 15. Birkleyn | 20. Marqasu | 25. Tell Leilan | |

Map 2: Sites mentioned in the text

Before discussing the main topics, information dealing with the historical background of the Assyrian state in the 2nd millennium BC is given. The geographical definition covers the Upper Tigris and Upper Euphrates regions, along with the Middle Euphrates, Eastern highlands, and Cilicia (Map 1). The main theme is that there were a number of incentives and reasons behind the interests of the Neo-Assyrian kings in these regions. The subject regions were located north and northwest of Assyria, situated on the important trade routes using natural routes and passages through the mountains constituting an important strategic location. Turkey is rich in mineral sources, such as iron, copper, silver, and other raw materials like timber and stone; these drew the attention of Neo-Assyrian kings. These regions of Turkey enjoy fertile and sufficiently watered lands for agriculture, along with grasslands for animal breeding.

The Neo-Assyrian kings paid close attention to these lands for obtaining rich agricultural products and herds. They established a new settlement system on agricultural communities in the Upper Tigris Valley. Several small settlements bearing Neo-Assyrian standard pottery have been explored during surveys carried out in the Upper Tigris region, and these sites reflect a systematic settlement plan with ca. 4-5 km distances from each other.⁶ Some of these sites have been excavated within the Salvage Project of the Ilisu Dam.⁷

In order to meet their interests, the Assyrians had to encounter a number of small states and polities in Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia. After the fall of the Hittites, a number of independent states have been established. The “Neo-Hittite” states ruled in Cappadocia, Cilicia, and north Syria.⁸ The Aramaeans were already penetrated in several areas in northern Mesopotamia since the 2nd millennium BC.⁹ They were mentioned for the first time by Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BC) at the end of the 12th century BC, even though speculations regarding the origin of the Aramaeans are still ongoing.¹⁰

In the eastern highlands of Turkey and in the Northern Zagros zone, the Urartian Kingdom was established as a confederation of several nomadic tribes in the middle of 9th century BC opposing the military campaigns of the Assyrians against the land of “*Nairi*”;¹¹ later named “*Uruatri*” (Map 1). The Urartian Kingdom eventually controlled the region extending from

⁶Ökse et al. 2009; Ökse and Görmüş: 2013; 2016

⁷Parker and Cheekmore, 2002b; Parker 2003: 539-540; Kozbe 2006: 498; Ökse et al. 2010; Tekin Forthcoming.

⁸Hawkins, 2009: 164

⁹Younger, 2016: 221

¹⁰For further details about the origin of the Aramaeans see also Younger, 2007 and 2016; Liverani, 2014: 434-35.

¹¹Zimansky, 1995: 1138

the Van basin to Urmia and Sevan basins.¹² Regarding the archaeological nomenclatures Urartu or *Nairi*, Zimansky states that “there were Urartians before there was an Urartu, and there was a land called Urartu before a unified state emerged there in the ninth century.”¹³ Indeed, the terms “*Nairi*” or “*Uruatri*” were frequently used by the Middle Assyrian kings to describe local political entities north of Assyria.¹⁴ Phrygian Kingdom ruled the in Central Anatolia¹⁵ (Map 1), extending roughly from Daskyleion in northwestern Anatolia, to Kerkenes Dağ, in the eastern part of the Kızılırmak River.¹⁶

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Old Assyrian Period

It was around the early 2nd millennium BC, as a number of kingdoms rivaling each other appeared in northern Mesopotamia and Syria.¹⁷ Among these, the Assyrians with their capital Ashur have existed for two centuries in Mesopotamian history. The Old Assyrian kingdom organized long-distance trade, basing on exchange of precious metals and tin between Assyria and Anatolia from c. 1900 to c. 1830 BC.¹⁸ According to the texts, the trade was carried out by family-based merchants from Assyria; Kanesh (Kültepe-Kayseri) (Map 2, 23) is suggested to be the center of this trade in Anatolia since Erishum I (1974-1935 BC) of Assyria.¹⁹

Shamshi-Adad I (1813-1781 BC), originally Amorite, was undoubtedly one of the prominent figures in Assyrian history. He seized the throne of his father Ila-Kabkabu, the king of Ekallatum²⁰, probably located on the west bank of the Tigris River. Towards the end of the 19th century BC, he conquered Ashur and became the King of Ashur. Afterwards, he conquered the kingdom of Mari on the west bank of the Euphrates River (Map 2, 22); his campaigns to the west indicate his desire to reach the Eastern Mediterranean shores. His palace in Tell Leilan (Shubat Enlil) on Wadi Jarrah in the Upper Habur region had been the

¹²Kuhrt, 1995a: 55; Liverani, 2014: 521-522; Bryce, 2012: 189

¹³Zimansky, 1995: 1135

¹⁴Zimansky, 1995: 1138

¹⁵Sams, 2011: 607; Roller, 2011: 561; Bernt-Ersöz 2012.

¹⁶Roller, 2011: 560 and 563; Tüfekçi, 2007: 10

¹⁷Bryce, 2003: 49

¹⁸Michel, 2011: 313

¹⁹Kuhrt, 1995a: 88; Özgüç 2004: 4.

²⁰retrieved from <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsMiddEast/MesopotamiaEkallatum.htm>

administrative center for commercial relations to the north (Map 2, 25)²¹. After he nominated his son Yasmah Adad to the throne of Mari in 1796 BC, he passed away during a campaign, and his kingdom suffered disintegration; though the royal dynasty seems to have survived. Consequently, the land controlled by Assyria broke into small states and the Mitanni Kingdom dominated Assyria until the 14th century BC.²²

The Middle Assyrian Period

The history of Assyria between the Old Assyrian king Ishme-Dagan (1781-1741 BC) and the Middle Assyrian king Ashur-uballit (1353-1318 BC) is poorly recorded.²³ The Assyrian kingdom shrank to its core area and had been conquered by the Mitannian King Sausatar around 1420 BC. The Assyrian kings became his vassals during the last two decades of the 15th and the first decade of the 14th century BC, until Eriba Adad I gained independence on account of the alliance with the Hittite King Suppiluliuma I. The continuity of the former cultural components enabled the Assyrian to once again re-establish a small state in Ashur and its environs under the leadership of Ashur-uballit I (1353-1318 BC) who, like Shamshi-Adad I, desired to expand his territory to the Euphrates valley. However, the Hittites were apparently dissatisfied with the advancement of the Assyrians. Therefore, they gave support to Shattiwaza (the son of Tushratta of Mitanni), a Hittite vassal.²⁴ Ashur-uballit I, managed to regain control over the Assyrian core area, the Tigris Valley and the plains in the east.²⁵

Adad-Nirari I (1295-1264 BC) conducted some military campaigns against Shattuara I and Wasashatta of “Hanigalbat” in Upper Mesopotamia; the Mitannian vassal of the Hittite Kingdom (Map 1). Consequently, Adad-Nirari I took control of areas from the Khabur and Balikh basins to the border of Carchemish on the Euphrates River.²⁶ Adad-nirari I²⁷ and his son Shalmaneser I (1260-1190 BC) gained also control on the Upper Tigris region.²⁸ During the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233-1197 BC), Assyrian kingdom expanded to an unforeseen

²¹ Kupper 1973: 6-7; Weiss 1985a; 1985b: 18.

²² Bryce, 2003: 12

²³ Liverani, 2014: 347

²⁴ Kuhrt, 1995a: 350; Bryce, 2003: 13; Liverani, 2014: 347; Van De Mieroop, 2015: 190-193

²⁵ Van De Mieroop, 2015: 190

²⁶ Liverani, 2014: 350

²⁷ The name *Amidi* or *Amedi* is first written on the hilt inscription of Adad-nirari I. It commemorates his attack on Diyarbakır during the final period of his reign (Ökse, 2015a: 75)

²⁸ Lipiński 2000: 135; Köroğlu, 2002:450; Szuchman, 2009: 56; Ökse et al. 2009: 33; Matney, 2011: 448; Ökse, 2015a: 75

scale.²⁹The king focused on the eastern highlands of the Zagros zone, in order to acquire raw materials, such as copper, lapis lazuli, tin, and horses. In the south, he extended the south border of the Middle Assyrian kingdom up to Babylon.³⁰ His assassination caused a gradual decline for Assyria.

Meanwhile, the Aramaeans were becoming gradually more powerful in north Syria. Towards *ca.* 1200 BC, the Aramaean migrations weakened the Assyrian state, and fights for the throne broke out. The disintegration of the Middle Assyrian kingdom continued until the reign of Ashur-resha-ishi I. The king achieved inner stability of the state that enabled his successor Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BC) to expand the Assyrian territory. According to the Prism inscription and his inscribed relief in Cave 1 in Birkleyn (Map 2, 15)³¹, Tiglath-Pileser I fought with several lands located in the Eastern Anatolian highlands; these include the *Kashiari* Mountains (Tur Abdin- Mazıdağı), the lands of *Nairi*, *Mushki*, Aramaeans, *Milidia* (*Malatya*), *Alzi* (*Elazığ*) and *Prulumzias* well as *Daiaeni* in the Araxes region (Map 1). These campaigns probably sought raw materials and their transfer (iron, copper, horse) to Assyria.³² Furthermore, he expanded the Assyrian sphere of influence towards the eastern Mediterranean.³³

Following the collapse of the Late Bronze Age states throughout the Aegean and the Near East, small Neo-Hittite and Aramaean states rise in northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia.³⁴ The Assyrians lost control over the Upper Tigris region towards the middle of the 11th century BC³⁵, and drew back from the region under Ashur-bel-kala (1073-1056 BC). The gradual decline of the Middle Assyrian Kingdom between *ca.* 1056-934 BC is historically not well known;³⁶ however, Assyrian notables might have asserted themselves as the rulers of parts of the territory.³⁷

²⁹ Liverani, 2014: 351; Van De Mieroop, 2015: 193

³⁰ Kuhrt, 1995a: 355-356

³¹ Schachner 2009: 173, 203

³² Kuhrt, 1995a: 360

³³ Van De Mieroop, 2015: 194

³⁴ Kuhrt, 1995a: 361-62; Younger, 2016: 162

³⁵ Radner, 2004: 52-53

³⁶ Kuhrt, 1995a: 362; Younger, 2016: 221

³⁷ Liverani, 2014: 475; Van De Mieroop, 2015: 256-257

NEO-ASSYRIAN OCCUPATION OF SOUTH-EASTERN AND EASTERN TURKEY

The Revival and Consolidation Period (934-859 BC)

The Assyrian kingdom recovered itself after the middle of the 10th century BC. During the “revival”³⁸ period, the main goal was to regain claimed territories lost after the fall of the Middle Assyrian kingdom,³⁹ and to ensure safety in the core area and immediate vicinities.⁴⁰ The next goal appears to be to regain the lost territory and expand the sphere of influence to a wider area by annexing new territories.⁴¹ The revival period begins with Ashur-dan II (934-912 BC) who regained the regions surrounding the core area. Afterwards, he conquered the lands of the Aramaean *Yausu* tribe living in the southern and the eastern parts of Ashur⁴², and pushed them out of the core area. Moreover, he fortified the frontiers, and repopulated these lands. Ashur-dan II paved the way to a proper state power and organizational capacity for his son Adad-nirari II (911-891 BC); his effort encouraged his successor to go beyond his own endeavors.⁴³ Adad-Nirari II organized an offensive military strategy against Hanigalbat, covering the lands to the south of the Kashiari Mountains; the aim was to take access to the rich resources of the northern highlands.⁴⁴

During the first half of the 9th Century BC, the Assyrian kings preferred primarily to conquer the Upper Tigris region, in order to take access to the mountainous regions to the north. Tukulti-ninurta II (890-884) followed the steps of his father. His primary target was the Nairi land; thus, he attacked the *Bit-Zamani* Aramaeans⁴⁵ in the Upper Tigris basin, in order to clear his way to Nairi (Map 1).⁴⁶ Consequently, he took control of *Bit-Zamani* and its capital

³⁸The revival period of the Neo-Assyrian state begins with the reign of Ashur-dan II (934-912), followed by Adad-nirari II (911-891) and then Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884). In this period, the king focused on consolidating power and state organization from the mid-10th to the mid-9th centuries BC (Liverani, 2014: 475).

³⁹ Especially the northern territories located above the capital Ashur and the area of the Khabur River in the west, where Middle Assyrian kings could make conquest and ultimately the Aramaeans took the control of those areas (Younger, 2016: 221, 224)

⁴⁰ Bedford, 2009: 41; Liverani, 2014: 475

⁴¹Therefore, the development of the empire is divided into two main phases. The first period (934-745 BC) was when the Neo-Assyrians reestablished their claims to lands in Upper Mesopotamia and put pressure on the adjacent regions. In the second period (745-610 BC) that gave to the Neo Assyrians their great reputation, the Neo-Assyrian empire became one of the most powerful empire in the Near East (Kuhrt 1995b; 473).

⁴² Younger, 2016: 222

⁴³ Bryce, 2012: 209

⁴⁴ Parker, 2001b: 166

⁴⁵Bit-Zamani is located in the region north and north-east of Diyarbakır in Turkey (Moorey, 1994)

⁴⁶ Parker, 2001b: 162

Amid, modern Diyarbakır, and plundered the city in 886 BC (Map 2, 5).⁴⁷ During his reign, *Bit-Zamani* was ruled by a non-Assyrian leader named *Amme-ba'li* (man of *Bit-Zamani*) who was forced to swear loyalty to Assyria,⁴⁸ and to pay tribute.⁴⁹

Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) had more systematic and well planned expansion policies than his predecessors. He annexed the Upper Tigris region, and his considerable effort reinforced the Assyrian domination in the region by conquering several cities.⁵⁰ Ashurnasirpal II conducted his second and fifth campaigns in the Upper Tigris region, and also passed through the region in his tenth campaign. In the meantime, *Amme-ba'li* of *Bit-Zamani* rebelled; the Assyrian king attacked the city subsequently in his second (882 BC) and fifth (879 BC) years and ultimately subjugated *Bit-Zamani*.⁵¹ In addition to the standard produce of the land, such as sheep, goat, and oxen, Ashurnasirpal II obtained precious materials such as gold, silver, bronze, and tin as tribute. Since these materials are mostly not locally produced, *Bit-Zamani* seems to have been part of the trade network⁵²; the Assyrian king received tribute also from *Shubria* (Map 1), *Nirdun* and *Urumu/Nirbu* (Map 2, 11 and 12),⁵³ determining a total conquest of the whole region.

After passing through the Shubnat River (Sufan Dere) during his second campaign, Ashurnasirpal II reached *Tushan* (Ziyaret Tepe), a city at a suitable location with great importance.⁵⁴ He performed intensive building activities, pointing his aims to be permanent in the region (Map 2, 10).⁵⁵ *Tushan* was probably under the domination of the Aramaeans until the conquest of Ashurnasirpal II. Soon after, the city's economic potential was exploited and it became a "royal city".⁵⁶ It provided economic advantages for storing grain and collecting tribute from the immediate vicinities, and being placed far away from Ashur, *Tushan* became an important provincial center. Ashurnasirpal II also conquered *Tidu* (Üç Tepe) and *Sinabu* (Pornak?) – probably located in the Upper Tigris region (Map 2, 6 and 8) – by his fifth campaign; these became fortified outposts of the Assyrian Province *Tushan*.⁵⁷ In

⁴⁷Kuhrt, 1995b: 482; Parker, 2001b: 166; Szuchman, 2009: 56-57; Yıldırım, 2012: 3;

⁴⁸ Younger, 2016: 300

⁴⁹Szuchman, 2009: 56-57. According to the inscriptions of Tukulti Ninurta II, Assyrians received a number of goods as tribute through the campaign (for further details see also Younger, 2016: 297).

⁵⁰Parker, 2001a: 1; Baştürk, 2010: 143

⁵¹ Parker, 2002a: 384; MacGinnis and Matney, 2009: 4; Ökse, 2015a: 76

⁵² Parker, 2002a: 384;

⁵³ Parker, 2001b: 162; Guarducci, 2011: 17-19

⁵⁴ Parker, 1996: 299; Parker, 2001a: 3; Harmanşah, 2007: 189; Köroğlu, 2016: 311

⁵⁵ Parker, 2001a: 3

⁵⁶Szuchman, 2009: 58

⁵⁷ Parker, 2001a:3; Parker, 2001b: 162

his inscription on the Kurkh stele, Ashurnasirpal II declares that *Sinabu* and *Tidu* were already under the control of Assyrians under Shalmaneser I;⁵⁸ however the Aramaeans had captured both cities. In 866 BC, Ashurnasirpal II attacked also *Damdammussa* (Aktepe?), a fortified city of *Ilanu* (Map 2, 9),⁵⁹ and plundered the city. His next target had been *Amedi*, the royal city of *Ilanu*; however, he could not conquer the city, probably by virtue of its defense walls.⁶⁰ He merely ravaged and looted the orchards, probably the Hevsel gardens.⁶¹

Ashurnasirpal II reorganized the conquered region regarding administrative, economic, and demographic structure, in order to integrate the region to his empire. Assyrians established small agricultural villages in the Upper Tigris region⁶²; thus, the region became objective for *agricultural colonization* rather than *periphery*.⁶³ On the other hand, *Bit-Zamani* did not become an Assyrian province until the reign of Shalmaneser III. Ashurnasirpal II (883-859) was also the first king who contacted the Urartians in the Tigris headwaters.⁶⁴

The First Expansion Period (858-745 BC)

Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC), the son and successor of Ashurnasirpal II, consolidated Assyrian domination over the Upper Zab and Upper Tigris by forcing *Habruri* on the Upper Zab and *Bit-Zamani* on the Upper Tigris rivers to be his vassals (Map 1).⁶⁵ He primarily conducted three campaigns against the northern highlands and the realm of Urartu,⁶⁶ and *Bit-Zamani* became a Neo-Assyrian province.⁶⁷ The Assyrian king besieged *Uppum* – a traditional capital of *Shubria* – as a stronghold.⁶⁸ Afterwards, he took control over *Til Barsip* (Tell Ahmar) (Map 2, 16), ruled by the kingdom of *Bit-Adini*, in order to reach the lands beyond the Euphrates. His third target was the Neo-Hittite kingdoms in the Middle Euphrates region, on the way to a variety of resources.⁶⁹ During his early regnal years, he encountered a

⁵⁸ Harmanşah, 2007: 189

⁵⁹ Szuchman, 2009: 57

⁶⁰ Ökse, 2015b: 23

⁶¹ Ökse, 2015a: 76.

⁶² Radner, 2004: 118

⁶³ Parker, 2003: 546-547

⁶⁴ Radner, 2011: 738

⁶⁵ Liverani, 2014: 481

⁶⁶ Bryce, 2012: 242. The Balawat bronze reliefs depict the battle scenes concerning his Urartu campaign, including the sacrifice scene in Birkleyn. See. Schachner 2007: 166. Three inscribed reliefs of Shalmaneser III are to be seen in Cave 1 and 2 at Birkleyn. See: Schachner 2009: 179, 183, 189-194.

⁶⁷ Parker, 2001b: 214; Liverani, 2014: 48; Ökse, 2015a: 77;

⁶⁸ Kessler 1995: 56

⁶⁹ Liverani, 2014: 481

coalition of Carchemish, *Pattina (Unqi)*, *Sam'al*, *Que*, and *Hilakku* under the leadership of *Bit-Adini*; however, *Gurgum*, *Kummuh* and *Bit-Agusi* stood out of this coalition (Map 1). Shalmaneser III subsequently broke up the coalition and conquered *Bit-Adini*.⁷⁰

The land of *Tabal*, located to the west of the Taurus range in south-central Anatolia (Map 1).⁷¹ *Tabal* possessed on abundant resources; thus, the land drew the attention of both Urartian, Phrygian and Assyrian states, politically cooperating to pursue their own interests.⁷² In the Neo-Assyrian records, *Tabal* is mentioned for the first time by Shalmaneser III who fought with twenty-four kings of *Tabal*;⁷³ these subjugated Assyrians in 837 BC. Afterwards, he marched towards the “*Tunni Mountain*” on the Taurus—probably the Bolkardağ massif – and obtained immense silver. He also passed through Mount *Mulu* with rich sources of alabaster in the same region.⁷⁴ In 835 BC, he proceeded to Milid and occupied the fortified city of *Uetash*. Afterwards, he turned to the west, towards *Adanawa*; Kate, the king of *Adanawa* subjugated without resistance in 833 BC (Map 2, 17). Moreover, *Tulli* (a leader under Kate) paid gold, silver, iron, oxen and sheep to Shalmaneser III. Similarly, Tarsus subjugated without resistance and paid gold and silver as tribute (Map 2, 18).⁷⁵ According to these data, Shalmaneser III was the first Assyrian king receiving tribute from states outside the traditional borders⁷⁶.

The first open conflict with the Kingdom of Urartu took place under Shalmaneser III (858-824). The Assyrian king attacked *Aramu* of Urartu in 859 BC,⁷⁷ defeated *Aramu* in 830 BC, and afterwards, his successor Sarduri I in 825 BC.⁷⁸ Sarduri I established Tushpa as his royal capital, in order to protect the state against Assyrians (Map 2, 24).⁷⁹ The mountainous area separating Tushpa and the Assyrian capital Nineveh bear no direct passages between both

⁷⁰Healy, 1991: 11; Kuhrt, 1995b: 487

⁷¹ Bryce, 2012: 79

⁷²Grayson, 1987: 133; Duymuş, 2011: 41

⁷³ Bryce, 2012: 141

⁷⁴ Yiğit, 2000: 178; Bryce, 2012: 240

⁷⁵ Bryce, 2012: 241

⁷⁶ Liverani, 2014: 481

⁷⁷Zimansky, 1995: 1135; Kuhrt, 1995b: 551; Liverani, 2014: 481 and 521; Radner, 2014: 739. At the time of *Aramu*, the capital was *Arzaškun*. *Arzaškun* has not been identified yet (Radner, 2011: 734). In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that *Aramu* is not the founder of Urartu.

⁷⁸ Shalmaneser III states in one of the royal inscriptions that “*In my twenty-seventh year of reign I mustered my chariots and troops: Daian-Assur, the Turtan, the chief of (my) large host (wide spreading armies) I dispatched at the head of my armies, against Urartu (Armenia) I sent (him). He descended against Bit-Zamani; he entered by the pass of Ammash (and) crossed the Arzania (Murat Su River) river. Seduri, the Armenian, heard of it and trusted in the strength (mass) of his many troops. He advanced against me, to offer a battle. I fought with him, I accomplished his defeat. I filled the wide plain with the corpses of his warriors.*” (Luckenbill, 1968: 208)

⁷⁹ Pehlivan, 2013: 194

capitals, hindering a direct contact, particularly considering the snow in winter.⁸⁰ On the basis of textual evidence, there is no report of a conflict for 40 years following the battle between Shalmaneser III and Sarduri I.

His son and successor Shamsi-Adad V (823-811 BC) conducted campaigns against Urartu, and his son, Adad-Nirari III (810-783 BC) received tribute from Neo-Hittite and Aramaean states as well as attacks Urartu and Medes. In 781 and 774 BC, his son Shalmaneser IV (782-773 BC) fought with Argishti of Urartu, regarding the constraint by *Gutium* in northwest Iran⁸¹ and the Neo-Hittite kingdoms of Hatti in northern Syria. Although both sides did not gain new territory, they enforced economic sanctions on local powers, such as *Carchemish*, *Marqasu* (Map 2, 20) and *Kummuh*. Meanwhile, as epidemics and rebellions broke out in Assyria, Urartu's influence over Hatti gradually increased, and reached its peak during the reign of Sarduri II. Sarduri II defeated the Assyrians in a battle in the territory of *Arpad* in northern Syria (Map 2, 19),⁸² conquered *Melid* and *Kummuh*, and built an anti-Assyrian coalition with Arpad and *Gurgum*.⁸³

The Second Expansion Period and the Peak of the Empire (744-612 BC)

Assyria became a “real” empire from Tiglath-Pileser III's (744-727 BC) accede to the Assyrian throne in 745/744 BC) as usurper, until the collapse in 612 BC.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Urartu was being consolidating its influence over the local rulers in northern Syria. Tiglath-Pileser III waged a war against Sarduri II and the kingdom of *Arpad* in 743 BC; the Assyrian king defeated Urartians at Samsat (744 BC) and Arpad along with its allies (*Melid*, *Kummuh*, and *Gurgum*) in the battle of *Kishtan* at *Kummuh* (*Commagene*) in 743 BC (Map 1).⁸⁵ Thus, Tiglath-Pileser III broke up the coalition and a number of autonomous Neo-Hittite states; *Milid*, *Kummuh*, *Gurgum*, *Tabal*, *Sam'al* (738 BC) and *Que*. Following the Assyrian victory, these states were sentenced to pay tribute;⁸⁶ Tiglath-Pileser III drew the Urartian King back to Tushpa (735 BC), and the Assyrian army besieged Tushpa for the first time, though

⁸⁰Kuhrt, 1995b: 552

⁸¹Radner 2011: 739

⁸²Radner, 2011: 739

⁸³Bryce, 2012: 108; Liverani, 2014: 523

⁸⁴ Van De Mieroop, 2015: 21 6

⁸⁵Luckenbill, 1968: 272-273; Grayson, 1987: 132; Zimansky, 1995: 1139; Kuhrt, 1995b: 557; Radner, 2011: 740; Bryce, 2012: 110, 114; Liverani, 2014: 485

⁸⁶Grayson, 1987: 132

unsuccessful.⁸⁷ Urartu lead frequently coalitions of Neo-Hittite states against Assyrians that affected Tiglath-Pileser III's Urartu policy.⁸⁸ After a successful campaign against the kingdoms of *Tabal*, Tiglath-Pileser III received tribute from the kingdoms of *Tabal*, *Atuna*, *Tuhana*, *Ishtuanda*, and *Hupishna*⁸⁹ as well as *Sulumal of Milid*;⁹⁰ an Assyrian governor ruled in *Milid* during the reign of Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC).

Sargon II (721-705 BC) seized the Assyrian throne and ruled the empire 16 years long. His policy on Southeastern Turkey differed from his predecessors.⁹¹ Most of the Neo-Hittite kingdoms were left autonomous against tribute during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III; however, in order to prevent rebellions and coalitions against Assyria, Sargon II gradually integrated these into provinces; *Carchemish* in 717 BC, *Gurgum* and *Marqasu* in 711 BC, *Kummuh* in 708 BC, and *Que* and perhaps also *Sam'al*.⁹² From the Assyrian point of view, it was a consolidation and fortification against Urartu and Phrygia.⁹³ This policy paved also the way for proceeding to Central Anatolia; to the lands of *Tabal* and *Hilakku*.⁹⁴

It is likely that since the local leaders of *Tabal* perceived the Assyrians as a potential threat, or presumably were fed up with paying tribute after several Assyrian campaigns, they joined various anti-Assyrian coalitions with few states in the region during the reign of Sargon II.⁹⁵ Moreover, *Tabal* was a buffer zone between Phrygia and Assyria; *Mita* of *Mushki*⁹⁶ provoked *Tabal* against Assyria in 718 instead of causing an open conflict between Phrygia and Assyria. This was part of *Mita's* efforts against Assyria that led Sargon II to an immediate intervention – for example, the dethroning of the king of *Tabal* – against the cooperation of Phrygia with other kingdoms.⁹⁷ Likewise, *Pisiris* of *Carchemish* was accused of cooperating and plotting with *Mita* in 717 BC. Sargon II invaded Carchemish and

⁸⁷Zimansky, 1995: 1139; Kuhrt, 1995b: 557; Radner, 2011: 740; Liverani, 2014: 523

⁸⁸Grayson, 1987: 132

⁸⁹ Bryce, 2012: 141. The exact location of these small Tabalian kingdoms is not known but there are suggested locations for these states, see also Yiğit, 2000)

⁹⁰Hawkins 1974: 76

⁹¹Bryce, 2012: 190; Mutlu, 2015: 104

⁹²Grayson, 1987: 133; Radner, 2011: 740; Bryce, 2012: 275, 280, 286, and 287

⁹³Grayson, 1987: 133

⁹⁴ Liverani, 2014: 490

⁹⁵Duymuş, 2011: 41

⁹⁶ Mita of Mushki is particularly mentioned as the organizer of the anti-Assyrian coalition with *Tabal*, *Tyana*, *Que*, as well as *Carchemish* against the Assyrians (Vassileva, 2004:165). The name *Mushki* is possibly a reference to a group of people, who were under the political control of the Phrygians, located in eastern Anatolia; thus, *Mita* (*Midas*) of *Mushki* was both the king of Phrygians and *Mushki* (Roller, 2011: 563).

⁹⁷Grayson, 1987: 132; Kuhrt, 1995b: 498; Vassileva, 2008: 165; Duymuş, 2011: 41; Bryce, 2012: 42; Liverani, 2014: 490

integrated its territory to an Assyrian province.⁹⁸ These deliberate provocations of *Mita* appear to have continued until the *Cimmerian* invasion that hindered the rise of Urartu, and threatened the Phrygians, according to ancient Greek sources. Accordingly, it has been argued that the Phrygians sought an alliance with the Assyrians.⁹⁹

Rusa I of Urartu (734-714) challenged Sargon II and took the control over the land of *Mannea* (Map 1),¹⁰⁰ so that horses would then be given to Urartu as tribute, instead of Assyria. Urartu's long term anti-Assyrian politics, as well as their military and political alliances with various powers lead the Assyrians to attack Urartu. Urartu had the advantage of the Zagros zone as a buffer zone to Assyria,¹⁰¹ so, Sargon II directed his famous 8th campaign to northern Zagros region in 714 BC.¹⁰² Sargon II was interested in this region since his third regnal year in 718, so that the rulers of the region sought Urartu's support.¹⁰³ During his 8th campaign, Sargon II took the control of the land of the Mannians and¹⁰⁴ plundered the temple of Haldi in *Musasir* (Map 2, 4) in 714 BC.¹⁰⁵ After this victory, Sargon II controlled the whole *Mannea* land and its vicinities – an important region for trade routes.¹⁰⁶

Uartians and Phrygians, along with *Melid* and *Gurgum*, became allies against Assyria during the early reign of Sargon II. Although Sargon II did not intervene against the coalition in his early years, he later used the disloyalty of *Tarhunanzi* of *Milid* as a pretext for military intervention, enthroned *Tarhunanzi* in 712 BC, and appointed *Mutallum* of *Kummuh* as governor; it was partially incorporated into Kummuh's realm.¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, *Gurgum* was re-conquered in 711 BC and was included into *Tabal*.¹⁰⁸ However, even though *Kummuh* was mostly loyal to Assyrians,¹⁰⁹ Argishti II of Urartu was able to form a coalition with *Kummuh* and the latter was encouraged to revolt and refused to pay tribute to Assyria. In

⁹⁸ Vassileva, 2008: 166; Bryce, 2012: 84 and 98.

⁹⁹ Grayson, 1987: 133; Duymuş, 2011: 41

¹⁰⁰ Mannians were located near Lake Urmia. The region provided horses which in case of need could be required by Assyrian kings as the "royal right" (Liverani, 2014: 525)

¹⁰¹ The buffer zone between Assyria and Urartu "is the mountainous regions between the headwaters of the Tigris and of the Lower Zab." These regions mainly remained independent, such as Shubria, Kumme, Ukku and Musasir (Radner, 2012: 243).

¹⁰² Çilingiroğlu, 1977; Zimansky, 1990; Zimansky, 1995: 1139; Bryce, 2012: 281-82; Liverani, 2014: 491 and 523

¹⁰³ Çilingiroğlu, 1977

¹⁰⁴ Zimansky, 1990: 2; Liverani, 2014: 491

¹⁰⁵ Zimansky, 1995: 1140; Radner, 2012: 252; Liverani, 2014: 491

¹⁰⁶ Kuhrt, 1995b: 498

¹⁰⁷ Hawkins 1974: 76 ff

¹⁰⁸ Grayson, 1987: 132-133; Duymuş, 2011: 41

¹⁰⁹ Bryce, 2012: 110-111

consequence, Sargon II attacked *Kummuh* in 709 BC. After the conquest, *Kummuh* became an Assyrian province in 708 BC.¹¹⁰

After Sargon II, expansion policy is no longer observed so intensive.¹¹¹ His successor Sennacherib's (705-681 BC) military campaigns are rarely directed to the north and west.¹¹² According to Kuhrt¹¹³ his campaigns "can be regarded as frontier wars",¹¹⁴ and some regions were intended to be lost; such as the Upper Euphrates region that came under Urartian control. Sennacherib's absence in campaigns against Anatolia is frequently attributed to his father's death in Anatolia.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, Sennacherib and his successors were mostly interested in the Levant and Egypt, according to the economic benefits regarding the harbors.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the incursions of *Cimmerians* and *Scythians*, along with the rebellions of the lands in the Taurus region, and *Cimmerian* tribes invaded Anatolia.¹¹⁷ Consequently, Sennacherib's generals conducted several campaigns against Cilicia and Cappadocia in 696 BC,¹¹⁸ and Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) defeated *Cimmerian* tribes in *Que* (Cilicia) in 679 BC. Esarhaddon also attacked the land of *Shubria* in the pretext of their refusing to give back the assassin of his father; the king annexed *Shubria* and deported its people to Nimrud (Map 2, 26).¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, *Tabal* gained independency and Urartu took *Musasir* back.¹²⁰ On the other hand, *Milid* came once more under Assyrian control; *Mugallu* of *Tabal* ruled in *Milid* and paid tribute to Ashurbanipal.

DISCUSSION

The Assyrian events discussed above demonstrate the close attention of Neo-Assyrian kings to the areas in the north, in particular the southern, southeastern and eastern Anatolia as well

¹¹⁰Grayson, 1987: 133; Radner, 2011: 740; Mutlu, 2015: 104

¹¹¹ Liverani, 2014: 491

¹¹² Although in the chronological sequence Sennacherib's reign is started in 704 by scholar (e.g., Kuhrt, 1995b; Liverani, 2014, and Van De Mierop, 2015), according to the Eponym Chronicle, Sennacherib came to the throne on the 12th day of the month of *Abu* (late July) in 705 BCE; therefore, 705 was the 'succession year' of Sennacherib (Siddall, 2013: 18).

¹¹³Kuhrt, 1995b: 499

¹¹⁴ Liverani, 2014: 491; Adalı, 2017: 310

¹¹⁵ Liverani, 2014: 491

¹¹⁶ Adalı, 2017: 310

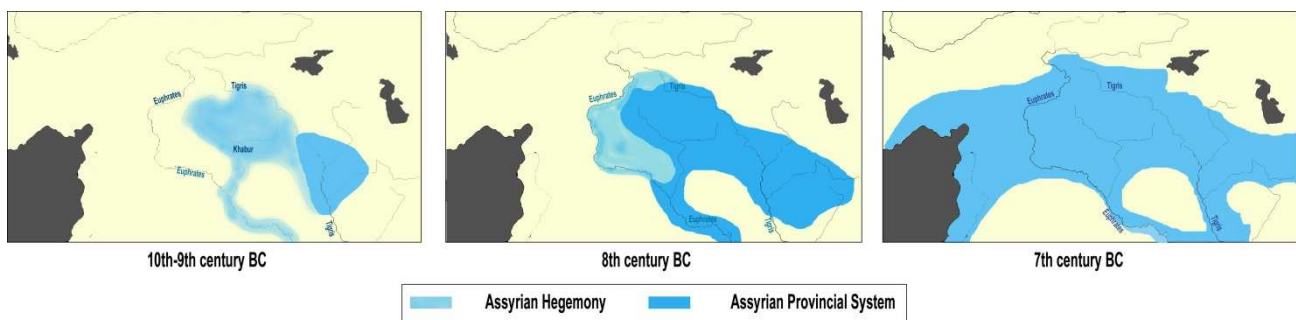
¹¹⁷ Liverani, 2014: 493

¹¹⁸Dalley, 1999: 73

¹¹⁹Kessler 1995: 56; Zimansky, 2010: 109

¹²⁰ Liverani, 2014: 491

as the mountainous areas of the Zagros over a long time. The initial expansion during the earliest Neo-Assyrian phase aimed to regain the previously controlled territories, as a considerable part of Assyria's political tradition since the Middle Assyrian period. In the Neo-Assyrian period, Assyrians developed their own set of interests in relation to economic and political needs. It can be argued that throughout the Neo-Assyrian Empire, the ideological statements connected with those of the Middle Assyrian past became less significant, especially, as the Assyrian Empire started to invade lands beyond the traditional boundaries of the Middle Assyrian period. The reign of Tiglath-Pileser III was critical because of the 743 BC battle which paved the way for a greater dominance over the larger areas. Policies of tribute imposition, collaboration with vassals eventually gave way to policies of more intense annexation and exploitation, as seen during the reign of Sargon II. The multiple Assyrian campaigns and their later attempts to establish a provincial system in above mentioned regions of modern Turkey point to a great interest of Assyrians in these lands (Map 3). From the Assyrian point of view, the provinces enabled a direct control far away from the core area. These regions had rich exploitable natural and mineral sources as well as fertile agricultural lands that always drew the attention of the Assyrian kings. They fell out of the reach of the Assyrians following different political choices of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon focusing in other areas of the ancient Near East.



Map 3: The gradual expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the 9th, 8th and 7th centuries BC.

This study aims to point out to the importance of economic incentives. The area covering the Upper Tigris region was the first target of gaining control. There were multiple reasons lying behind this interest. First, the Assyrians stated to regain their territories got lost in the Middle Assyrian period as vital duty. The Neo-Assyrian kings adopted the Middle Assyrian kings' names and their other statements in inscriptions and elsewhere in order to establish the empire, but also to re-create an ideological history based on the Middle Assyrian state

heritage.¹²¹ *Bit-Zamani* was placed within the ideological boundaries of Assyria, seeking to connect with its Middle Assyrian past, since *Bit-Zamani* was targeted within some campaigns during the Middle Assyrian period. Thus, an ideological basis for Neo-Assyrian expansion could be established. Located close to the Taurus region, *Bit-Zamani* controlled a variety of materials that were easily accessible, such as wood, stone, and mineral sources.¹²² Consequently, *Bit-Zamani* was crucially important.

Second, aside from ideological reasons, there must have been motivations of economic profit regarding *Bit-Zamani*, e.g. getting more products and raw materials. *Bit-Zamani* had sent various materials, such as gold and iron to Assyria as tribute.¹²³ Especially Birkleyn and the Upper Tigris region had rich sources of iron, copper, and silver ores.¹²⁴ As Moorey¹²⁵ asserts that Neo-Assyrian texts mention *Bit-Zamani* had the richest tin reserves in the region. Moreover, Ergani- Maden supplied the Assyrians' need for copper (Map 2, 7).¹²⁶

Third, the Upper Tigris region is the borderland to the *Nairi*, and provides direct connection to the Assyrian heartland.¹²⁷ Moreover, the Upper Tigris basin connects the Van basin through *Nairi* in the further northeast, whereas the southern passages through the Tur Abdin (Mardin Mountains) were easily accessed, and by following the Habur Valley, the Middle Euphrates basin can easily be reached.¹²⁸ Birmingham¹²⁹ reconstructs an overland trade route towards the east and the west in the 8th and 7th centuries BC. On this route, especially the eastern commodities, such as Urartian and Iranian metalwork and goods had been transported to Eastern Mediterranean world.

Finally, it is well understood that the Neo-Assyrian kings paid close attention to the Upper Tigris basin. From Adad-nirari II onwards, Assyrian kings spent great efforts to increase the agricultural production in rural areas.¹³⁰ Thus, the increasing interests of Assyrians in the region indicate their desire to reach the fertile and arable agricultural lands of the Tigris River and its tributaries.¹³¹ Indeed, recent excavations carried out within the scope of the Ilisu Dam

¹²¹ Grayson, 1982: 280

¹²² Ökse, 2015b: 17

¹²³ Moorey, 1994: 220, 280, and 299

¹²⁴ Harmanşah, 2007: 189

¹²⁵ Moorey, 1994: 299

¹²⁶ Maxwell-Hyslop, 1974: 147; Köroğlu, 2002: 449

¹²⁷ Parker, 2001a: 1

¹²⁸ Ökse, 2015b: 16-17

¹²⁹ Birmingham, 1961: 185 and 186

¹³⁰ Parker, 2001b: 166

¹³¹ Parker, 2001a:3; Parker, 2003: 528; Köroğlu, 2016: 309

Project (Tivilki Tarlası and Kilokki Tarlası) (Map 2, 13 and 14),¹³²brought out several sites with Neo-Assyrian pottery. On the western bank of the Tigris River one large and two small villages as well as three hamlets, on the eastern side, two large villages and six hamlets have been detected. The distances between these vary from 2-4 km. Likewise, the settlement sequences on the arable lands to the east of Salat Çay valley¹³³ brought out a similar pattern of six small hamlets with distances of 2.5-4km to each other; three to the north of Salat Tepe (Map 2, 27) and two to the south. Tiglat-pileser III claims that he deported 83,000 Aramaens from *Hama* to *Shubria* in order to employ these people in the newly established hamlets as laborers¹³⁴ in the agricultural fields within the manorial system.¹³⁵

It is reasonable that long standing conflicts between Urartu and Assyria broke out due to the Neo-Assyrian interest in resources and products in the rich areas located to the north-east and north-west of Assyria. Iron and copper were crucial. The texts indicate that they were available in many areas controlled by Urartians. Iron was a particularly important metal for Assyrian economy to manufacture agricultural tools and weapons. Also tin was obtained probably from Afghanistan via Iranian highlands; therefore the area under the control of Urartu was geopolitically important.¹³⁶ Several texts record also timber as tribute from the Zagros woodlands and oak, cypress, pine, and juniper were available in the northern Zagros and the Eastern Taurus zones.¹³⁷ Horses bred by pastoral groups in the low lands around Lake Urmia – the *Manneans* – as well as the Armenian highlands; thus, horses were another reason for conflicts between Urartu and Assyria.¹³⁸ By the 8th century BC, the gradual supremacy of Urartu reached *Alzi* and *Melid* in the west¹³⁹ that undermined Assyrian authority in the Upper Euphrates region. The Urartian king Menua (c. 785 BC) captured the Elazığ-Palu (*Alzi*) region around 800 BC, Afterwards; the Urartian kingdom exploited the rich iron and copper sources of the Upper Euphrates region that also became another reason for conflict between Urartu and Assyria throughout the 8th and 7th centuries BC.¹⁴⁰

¹³²Ökse et al. 2009: 34; Ökse et al. 2014

¹³³ Okse 2016: 25. Salat Çay is roughly 20 km west of modern city Batman and 19 km east of Bismil, in Turkey.

¹³⁴ The labor is *ilku*-obligations. *Ilku* is interpreted as “work done on the land held from a higher authority.” (Gelb et al, 1960: 73).

¹³⁵MacGinnis and Matney, 2011: 11

¹³⁶Moorey, 1994: 246; Liverani, 2014: 525

¹³⁷Moorey, 1994: 351

¹³⁸ Liverani, 2014: 493 and 525

¹³⁹ Kuhrt, 1995a: 55; Liverani, 2014: 521-522; Bryce, 2012: 189

¹⁴⁰ Maxwell-Hyslop, 1974: 150

A unique case of conflict between Assyria and Urartu happened in *Kummuh*. Kummuh takes place on the Euphrates basin immediately to the south of the Southeastern Taurus range, covering the region of the modern province of Adıyaman. Thus, a critical question arises from this act; what can be assumed from the reason behind their strategy? From the Assyrian point of view, the target was probably not the Urartian heartland. The direct route between Urartu's capital Van and the Assyrian core area was mountainous and very difficult to pass. The Assyrian-Urartian conflict therefore seems to have taken place in the plains where the Neo-Hittite states were mostly located. These two powers presumably sought to reach the Mediterranean shore, in order to control the resources and harbors of the Levant; so, war was inevitable.¹⁴¹

In comparison with the east, the Neo-Assyrian kings were actively involved in the west and north-west whereas they conducted a number of campaigns against the Neo-Hittite and Aramaean states in the Middle and Upper Euphrates regions as well as Cilicia. Although the Central Anatolian kingdom of *Tabal* was too far from their core area, the Assyrian kings tried also to penetrate to it. In the north-west, *Carchemish* enjoyed easy access to iron deposits recorded in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III. Moreover, its strategic location enabled the Assyrians access to the Iskenderun Gulf via the Belen pass through the Amanus Mountains and Gaziantep; the natural destination reaches Cilicia through the Sakçegözü plain.¹⁴² Cilicia seems to have stood in the target of Shalmaneser III, because of its iron sources.¹⁴³ In this regard, being in the smooth Cilicia (Çukurova), Tarsus controlled the natural gates to iron deposits located in Faraş and Niğde (Map 2, 21). Subsequently, according to Liverani, the particular interest in these more distant lands allowed the Assyrians to find out new sources of income from 'undiscovered' lands.¹⁴⁴ This is clearly discernible by the reign of Shalmaneser III, who introduced a new economic policy on receiving tribute from foreign states located outside of the traditional borders of Assyria.¹⁴⁵ Such interests ultimately gave the Assyrians the necessary outlook and favorable opportunity to take direct control on iron deposits in south-eastern and eastern Turkey, in northern Syria, and significant trade routes from the reign of Sargon II onwards.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Radner, 2011: 738

¹⁴² Maxwell-Hyslop, 1974: 148

¹⁴³ Healy, 1991: 11-12

¹⁴⁴ Liverani, 2014: 481

¹⁴⁵ Liverani, 2014: 481

¹⁴⁶ Maxwell-Hyslop, 1974: 152

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