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Alessandra Gilibert

SYRO-HITTITE MONUMENTAL ART AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PERFORMANCE



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Alessandra Gilibert
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and the Archaeology of Performance

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The Stone Reliefs at Carchemish and Zincirli
in the Earlier First Millennium BCE

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Bibliographical abbreviations

AiS I-V

Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli, voll. I–V

AiS I

Felix v. Luschan, *Einleitung, Monolith des Asarhaddon, Fünf Bildwerke aus Gardschin*. E. Schrader, *Inchrift Asarhaddon's*. E. Sachau, *Die Inschrift des Königs Panammu von Sam'al*. Berlin, 1893

AiS II

F. v. Luschan, *Vorbemerkung*. C. Humann, *Bericht über die erste Ausgrabung von Sendschirli* 1888. R. Koldewey, *Die Architektur von Sendschirli*. Berlin, 1898.

AiS III

F. v. Luschan, *Thorskulpturen von Sendschirli*. Berlin, 1902.

AiS IV

F. v. Luschan, *Bericht über die fünfte Grabung*, 1902. G. Jacoby, *Die Architektur der Grabung*. F. v. Luschan, *Bildwerke und Inschriften*. Berlin, 1911

AiS V

W. Andrae (ed.), *Die Kleinfunde von Sendschirli*. Berlin, 1943.

Carchemish I

D.G. Hogarth, *Carchemish: Report on the Excavations at Djerabis, Part I, Introductory*. London, 1914

Carchemish II

C.L. Woolley, *Carchemish: Report on the Excavations at Djerabis, Part II, The Town Defenses*. London, 1921

Carchemish III

C.L. Woolley, *Carchemish: Report on the Excavations at Djerabis, Part III, The Excavations in the Inner Town; The Hittite Inscriptions*. London, 1952

CHLI

J.D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*. Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft (=UISK), 8,1. Berlin / New York, 2000.

KAI

H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Wiesbaden, 1962–64.

USK

W. Orthmann, *Untersuchungen zur spätethitischen Kunst*. Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 8. Bonn, 1971

RIMA

The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods. Toronto, 1987ff.

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1 Introduction

The present work deals with monumental figurative reliefs on stone from two important Iron Age centres of the Syro-Anatolian region, Carchemish and Zincirli. Scholarly interest in the stone reliefs from Carchemish and Zincirli begins with their archaeological record and museal exhibition between the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. These excavations were among the first archaeological enterprises in the Syro-Anatolian region, whose ancient history was at the time largely unknown.¹ First notices did not hide their bewilderment toward the “strange sculptures” (Ward and Frothingham 1887:62). More often than not, the informed public was disappointed by their aesthetics: “from an artistic point of view,” so an anonymous reviewer of the colossal statue of Panamuwa, “nothing could be more repulsive” (*The Classical Review* 1889:479). Preliminary studies focused primarily on the question of dating, a problem destined to dominate the scholarly debate into the 1970s and beyond.² In the following decades, new questions started being of concern to the scholarly community and Syro-Hittite monumental art has been increasingly analyzed as expression of a specific urban ideology.³

This book approaches monumental art through investigation of its archaeological context and addresses the question of the embedment of monumental art in public spectacles, such as ceremonies,

1 For a table summarizing chronological data of the most significant excavations of Iron Age sites in Syro-Anatolia up to year 1990, see Pucci 2008:4, Table 1. For a more detailed report on the history of excavations, see Aro 2003. On the archaeological policy of the late Ottoman Empire and its ties to the foreign strategy of the Great Powers, see McMurray 2001 and Shaw 2003.

2 The matter has been approached almost exclusively from the point of view of stylistic analysis. The first comprehensive studies of this kind have been those of Akurgal (1949; 1961; 1966). In 1971, Orthmann published his *Untersuchungen zur späthethitischen Kunst*. Here, Orthmann elaborated on Akurgal and individuated three stylistic phases, based *in primis* on the series of reliefs at Carchemish and Zincirli (Orthmann 1971:133–136, 148): “Späthethitisch I” (c. 1200–1000 BCE), “Späthethitisch II” (c. 1000–850 BCE), and “Späthethitisch III” (c. 850–700 BCE). In 1979, Genge published a study in which he proposed a general dating considerably lower than Orthmann’s (Genge 1979). Since then, however, the consensus has been to keep the dates of the earliest Syro-Hittite reliefs on the high side, in order to fill the gap between them and the last monumental reliefs of the Hittite empire (Bunnens 2006; Orthmann 1993). Particularly concerning Carchemish and Zincirli, the dating system proposed by Orthmann has proved reliable and independent perspectives – first and foremost the epigraphic studies by Hawkins (1972; 1979; 1981; 1995a; 2000) – consistently confirmed it. The datings proposed by Orthmann dovetail harmoniously into the results of the present work, and the reader will often be referred to them.

3 Ussishkin published a series of articles on the ritual embedment of Syro-Hittite monumental art at Carchemish and elsewhere (Ussishkin 1970, 1976, 1989); Winter investigated the role of Carchemish as a centre of art pro-

duction (Winter 1982, 1983); Mazzoni published a series of articles on the correlation between Syro-Hittite monumental art and urban ideology (Mazzoni 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2000a); she also wrote on Syro-Hittite iconography (Mazzoni 1986, 2002, 2005). Voos, Niehr, and Bonatz have dealt with Syro-Hittite funerary contexts (Bonatz 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b; Niehr 1994, 2001, 2004b, 2006; Voos 1983, 1989). Özyar defended a dissertation on technical and iconographical aspects of the “architectural reliefs” at Carchemish, Tell Halaf, and Malatya (Özyar 1991); some of her ideas re-appear in an article on the re-use of reliefs at Carchemish (Özyar 1998). Özyar also published a concise overview on “Architectural Reliefs in Anatolia through Time,” (Özyar 2003). Most recent publications start with a book resuming the history of the excavations at Zincirli, complete with a number of interesting unpublished pictures (Wartke 2005). In 2006, *A New Luwian Stele* from Tell Ahmar was published (Bunnens 2006); the book comprises the most up-to-date iconographic and stylistic study of the Storm-God motif and elaborates also on its possible religious contexts. Harmanşah has recently written on the figurative cycles at Carchemish as “building narratives” embedded in commemorative practices (Harmanşah 2005, 2007), while Denel has published on “ceremony and kingship” at Carchemish (Denel 2007). Boese has written an article on the first reproduction of a Syro-Hittite relief ever to reach Europe, which was a carved slab from Carchemish (Boese 2006). Pucci has written on space in Syro-Hittite Architecture (Pucci 2008a; 2008b), Brown has written on monuments and urbanism in North Syria, 1200–800 BCE (Brown 2008), and a new stele from Zincirli discovered in 2008 has been published (Schloen and Fink 2009; Struble and Rimmer Herrmann 2009).

parades, public presentations, and festivals. The overarching goal of this volume is to explore how change in art may relate to change in ceremonial behaviour, and the latter to change in power structures. Before going deeper into the matter, however, it is necessary to define some of the frequently used technical terms and to refer to the works which most contributed to shape the theoretical background of the present study.

The Syro-Anatolian artistic monumental production of the Iron Age has been variously called “Late Hittite,”⁴ “Neo-Hittite,”⁵ or “Syro-Hittite.”⁶ The terms are largely interchangeable; each has advantages and drawbacks, related largely to unspoken free associations and inconsistency in general usage. Thus, for example, the generally established term “Late Hittite” may suggest a unilinear evolution from the artistic tradition of the Hittite Empire; furthermore, the same term has also been used to signify the period immediately preceding the disintegration of the Hittite empire, as in the case of Emar in the thirteenth century BCE (Adamthwaite 2001). As for the present, there is no consensus among scholars about which term should be favoured. “Syro-Hittite” emphasizes – perhaps better than the others do – the indisputable hybrid nature of the artworks in question, which owe to the traditions of the Syrian Bronze Age at least as much as to the art and culture of the Hittite empire.⁷

The reader will not fail to notice the repeated use of terms such as *art* and *artwork*. The definition of *work of art* and its classificatory power is a philosophical issue that, in modern times, has been debated to the point of exhaustion.⁸ Here, the term is used to address *a specific class of artefacts singled out by conventional means for public appreciation*, whatever forms such appreciation might have taken (Dickie 1997).

The artworks in question are consistently monumental, and therefore, the term *monumental art* is employed as standard. What makes artefacts “monumental” in the first place is their permanence (large scale, durable materials, sheer weight)⁹ and their visibility: “a monument can be defined as a cluster of intentional results, made concrete in the form of an artificial product which is visible through space and which maintains this visibility through time” (Criado 1995:199). Monuments are *per definitionem* a lasting feature, created as “inalienable possessions,” to bring “a vision of permanence into a social world that is always in the process of change” (Weiner 1992:8). Monuments are long-term modifiers of the urban landscape, which they mark even if they are not “in use”. The meaning of monuments changes through time and according to the viewer, sometimes shifting radically from sympathetic to subversive. Monuments, that is, have a multi-layered, long-term life-history, which by far outlives that of their builders as well as that of their intended public. The influential work of Richard Bradley analyzes precisely this notion (Bradley 1984, 1991, 1993, 1997).¹⁰ In *Altering the Earth*, Bradley writes:

4 Cf. Akurgal 1949; Guterbock 1957; Orthmann 1971; Winter 1983; Novák 2002; Novák et al. 2004a.
5 Cf. Ussishkin 1966; Mazzoni 1977; Hawkins 1982; Thuesen 2002.
6 Cf. Woolley 1946; Kantor 1957; Ussishkin 1970; Mazzoni 1997b; Bonatz 2000; Pucci 2001; Mazzoni 2002, 2005.
7 A divergent meaning for the term *Syro-Hittite* is in use among French scholars, who, following loosely the tradition initiated by *La glyptique syro-hittite* (Contenau 1922), apply it in reference to a specific Syro-Anatolian glyptic style of the Late Bronze Age (cf. e.g., Laroche 1981 and the works of Beyer, most recently Beyer 2001).

8 For a selection of influential essays and theories, see Dayton 1998; Carroll 2000; Lamarque and Olsen 2004; Kieran 2006.

9 For an attempt to establish practical criteria to assess monumentality in the Greek *polis* in terms of function, scale, material, and cost, see Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994.

10 For a discussion of Bradley’s thesis and monumentality in archaeology, see Holtorf 2000–2007. On permanence, oblivion, and monuments as “materialization of memory” in Pharaonic Egypt, see Love 2007.

Monuments feed off the associations, not only of places, but also of other monuments. Monuments are enhanced, and rebuilt; they are reinterpreted and changed; and new constructions are created around old ones. We tend to lose that dimension of the archaeological record as we become immersed in chronological analysis. ... What we think of as the evolution of monuments, their ordering according to a linear perception of time, was really a process of finding out about the world: a way in which successive generations established a sense of place and time in relation to the living and the dead. On occasion this involved the wholesale rejection of monuments, their abandonment or destruction. At others, it required a greater act of the imagination: a process of recreating a past that was really beyond recall and of making it play an unrehearsed part in the present” (Bradley 1993:129).

This work focuses from the start on the archaeological contexts of monumental artworks. The premise is that visual artefacts can be explained in terms of factors external to them (Clayson et al. 1995:367). A “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the archaeological context, accounting for its complexities and formulating hypothesis about the processes of its formation, are seen here as the crucial, and perhaps only possible, analytical step to reconstruct how Syro-Hittite monumental artworks correlate to past human behavior or – following Baxandall – to patterns of intention (Baxandall 1985). Insights into past behavioural patterns and into the complex web of relationships between images and the modes of their consumption will hopefully contribute to the final aim of this research, a greater understanding of the social and historical framework(s) in which Syro-Hittite monumental art “made sense.”

The present work does not apply any master theory; however, comparative readings provide a toolbox of paradigms and vocabularies that prove useful in organizing and interpreting the evidence at hand. In *Ideology, Materialization, and Power Strategies*, DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle (1996) design a general conceptual framework for monumental art as materialization of ideology, where ideology is seen as a source of social power, and social power as “the capacity to control and manage the labor and activities of a group to gain access to the benefits of social action” (1996:16). In this interpretive model, ideas and beliefs need to be given a tangible, material form in order to become an effective form of social power and extend the control of a central authority to a broader population. DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle posit that in any given society heterogeneous sets of ideas and beliefs coexist, and that the ruling class must therefore efficiently control those beliefs that legitimate its position: “Giving an ideology concrete, physical form in events, symbolic objects, monuments, and writing systems is instrumental to its institutionalization [...]. The costs of materializing ideology restrict access to this form of power” (1996:31).¹¹ Significantly, “materialization includes the production of *events* as well as *things*” (Schoenfelder 2004:405). Drawing upon the example of the Inka empire, DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle emphasize how ceremony, monumental art, and monumental architecture can be deployed as an integrated strategy to legitimate a central authority. Similarly, the edited volumes *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Bergmann and Kondoleon 1999) and *Archaeology of Performance* (Inomata and Coben 2006) are important sources of inspiration and main gateways to further readings. Both collections of essays discuss the importance of performances and theatrical events in the generation and negotiation of political cohesion in premodern societies.¹² Both books confront spectacle and performance from an archaeological point of view and place emphasis on the role played by monumental art in shaping “theatrical spaces.” Bergmann takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ancient imagery, integrating the analysis of

11 On social power and artifacts, see Walker and Schiffer 2006. On social power and architecture, see Nielsen 1995.

12 On the “Archaeology of Performance” see also Laneri 2008, which came to my attention regrettably late.

monumental art with festival studies and the anthropology of public events. She recognizes spectacular events as “a generative force in the creation of monuments” and suggests that, in order to understand context and function of ancient monumental art, we turn to the performative culture behind it (Bergmann 1999:9–10). Considering monumental contexts as regularly “animated” by multimedia events, Bergmann introduces three general levels of function for monuments: “as settings or props for the event, as documentary records of the event, and as mimetic agents that recreated the event in the mind of the beholder” (Bergmann 1999:14). The essays collected in *Archaeology of Performance* by Inomata and Coben (2006) focus on the nexus of public performances and power relations at the polity level. Arguing that in premodern societies mass-spectacles constituted a key-mechanism for the negotiation of power, Inomata and Coben analyze the configuration of ancient ceremonial spaces with the tools of performance theory and theatre studies. Ancient ceremonial spaces and monumental art embedded in ceremonial architecture are seen from the point of view of performers and spectators. The human body as point of action and sensory perception takes in a central role in decoding the material remains; ancient settings are scanned for configurations critical for gathering potential, such as size and visibility axes, as well as stages, backdrops, lighting and acoustic installations (Inomata and Coben 2006:30). Inomata and Coben highlight a number of parallels between the study of spectacle and that of monuments and monumental art, which they summarize in four points. First, monuments and spectacles alike derive their social importance at least in part from the great labor investment required by their set up; second, the erection of monuments is very much a spectacle in itself, quite often deliberately set up as such; third, monuments can function as stages for spectacles or parts thereof, ordering and defining space and movements; and finally, monuments bring a mark of extraordinariness to space in a way much like that of spectacles, so that both can be seen as loci of negotiation of spatial meaning (Inomata and Coben 2006:17).

The present study is limited to the sites of Carchemish and Zincirli. The reason behind this limit is the primacy given to the archaeological contexts and the need to re-trace complex artefactual life-histories within these contexts: Carchemish and Zincirli alone, among all excavated Iron-Age sites of the Syro-Anatolian region, provide a wider spectrum of monumental contexts evolving over many centuries of the earlier Iron Age, from the twelfth (Carchemish) / tenth (Zincirli) to the early seventh century BCE. This work, however, does not entail an exhaustive treatment of all figurative reliefs on stone found at the two sites. The reports of both excavations describe occasionally stray finds, mention more fragments than those illustrated, and indicate that many more were found that have not been recorded in any way. Here, the reader will find discussed and catalogued only those monumental items that were found in situ or that can reasonably be said to belong to a recorded context.¹³

13 Each catalogue entry comprises, when extant, a picture of the item and basic information concerning absolute dating, material, measurements, iconography, and present location (when known, inventory number is added in parentheses). The measurements are given following Orthmann (1971) and Özyar (1991); when incongruent,

the precedence has been given to the most recently collected data. The items are identified by the name of the site and a number. The numeration is consecutive and follows the order in which the items are discussed in the text.

2 The Syro-Anatolian region in the Iron Age

The Syro-Anatolian region is the cross-boundary region encompassing today's Southeastern Turkey and Northern Syria (Fig. 1). The backbone of this region is the folded range of the Amanus and Eastern Taurus mountains. Their foothills, their river valleys and the gently undulating, semi-arid lowlands of Northern Syria are a transitional zone, where Mediterranean and desert "bioclimates" meet.¹⁴

The settlement history of the region dates back to the Early Neolithic (Akkermans and Schwartz 2002:47). Over the millennia, Syro-Anatolia developed its own identities and traditions, borrowing, passing on and merging in non-linear patterns elements from the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, and Northern Mesopotamia. During the Middle and Late Bronze Age (2100–1200 BCE), the region constantly played a pivotal role as an area of intense cultural contact, an articulation point of a system of inter-regional routes (Sapin 1981:27–28; Semple 1919), enabling and embedding the exchange of goods and information between regions as distant as Greece, Egypt, Babylonia, and Hittite Anatolia (Cancik-Kirschbaum 2002; Klengel 2000).

In this respect, Syro-Anatolia was not just a passive stage for foreign interactions. On the contrary, the region played a pioneer role in the management of trading activities and in technological innovation (Sherrat and Sherrat 1998:336–339). During the mid-late Early Bronze Age (2600–2100 BCE) and in the Middle Bronze Age (2100–1600 BCE), the Syro-Anatolian region was fragmented into a network of small independent polities, competing and cooperating with one another in terms of the flow of traded goods (Marfoe 1987; Matney and Algaze 1995). By the mid-second millennium BCE, the wealth and strategical position of Syro-Anatolia catalyzed the hegemonic aspirations of the multi-regional "great powers" Mittani, Hatti, Egypt, and Assyria. Thus, the region was drawn into the equilibrium of powers created by a network of equally structured regional empires, becoming an important arena for their confrontation and coexistence. The small Syro-Anatolian polities were first integrated into the Mittanian sphere of influence. During the fourteenth century BCE, the Mittanian authority was replaced by Hittite and Assyrian rule. In the thirteenth century, Hittite territory extended west of the Euphrates while east of it was Assyrian territory; the river formed a frontier acknowledged by both powers (Postgate 1992).¹⁵ Under the Hittite overlordship, the Syro-Anatolian statelets maintained a certain degree of flexible organization (Altman 2003; Faist 2002) and became "a loosely affiliated confederation of semi-independent vassals" (Yener 1998:275). These subjugated states were controlled by Hittite viceroys, sons of the Hittite king, whom the Hittite king installed at Aleppo and Carchemish. Carchemish grew to be the most influential of the two "secundogenitures" and played the role of a hinge-joint between the local polities and the Hittite royal house. Conversely, the Assyrian rule exerted a stronger and more direct control over the conquered lands, replacing the existing dynasties with Assyrian governors and with the Assyrian system of administration (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996:25–29; Faist 2002:129–130).

At the end of the thirteenth century BCE, the "world system" of the Late Bronze Age was affected by a deep systemic crisis and collapsed, marking the transition to the Iron Age (Frank, et al. 1993:397–398;

14 For a detailed geographical analysis, see Sapin 1981:8–32

15 An alternative view identifies the river Balikh as the border between Hittite and Assyrian territory, with the

area between Balikh and Euphrates as a kind of no-man's land or buffer zone (Brown, n.d.).

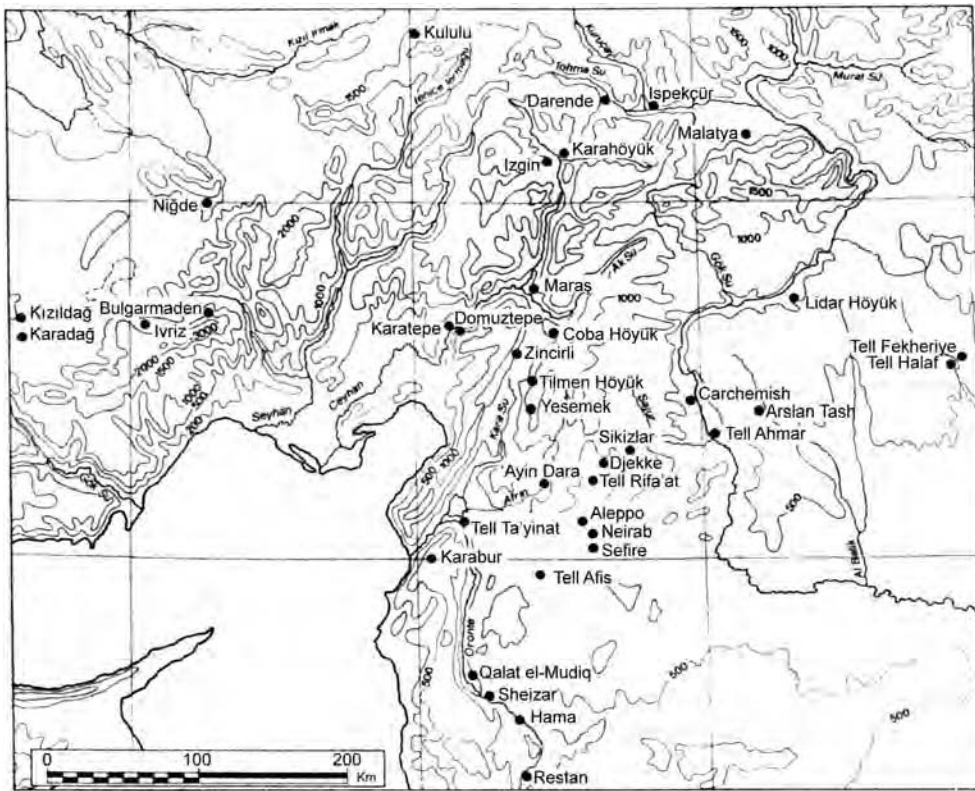


Fig. 1 | The Syro-Anatolian region with Iron Age sites
(after a drawing by S. Martelli, published in Mazzoni 1997, Fig. 1)

Liverani 1987; Ward, Joukowsky and Åström et al. 1992). The reasons for the collapse are still poorly understood. The Assyrian rule over Northern Syria experienced an “intense loss of power” (Postgate 1992:249), its territorial control withered, and the modes of its administrative control were redefined. The Assyrian sphere of influence was much reduced, and direct control was maintained only in the Assyrian core-land, while Northeastern Syria re-organized itself in loosely dependent polities (as in the case of Tell Bderi, Maul 1992: 41–45). The Hittite imperial system, on the other hand, broke down on a definitive basis. Its administrative system in Syro-Anatolia dissolved, important trade centres such as Ugarit and Emar did not survive beyond the end of the thirteenth century, and the imperial archival practices were abandoned. In particular, the abrupt interruption of the epigraphic evidence on clay tablets from Egypt, Boğazköy, Ugarit, and Emar signifies, for the modern historian, the loss of the written sources upon which a consistent part of the historical reconstruction of Late Bronze Age Syro-Anatolia is based. In the earliest Iron Age (approximately 1200–1000 BCE), there is a paucity of written sources pertinent to the Syro-Anatolian region and a virtually complete absence of local cuneiform archives. These facts led some scholars to label the period a “Dark Age” (cf. Muscarella 1995:91), a time of “almost impenetrable gloom” (Boardman 1999:40). A reappraisal led by discoveries of the last twenty years, though, has revealed a lively political and cultural scenario (Bonatz 2000a:168–169; Mazzoni 2000a:1043). It is now generally accepted that the early Iron Age in Syro-Anatolia was not a period of deurbanization and stagnation but rather one of transition, marked by continuities as well as by changes in the sociopolitical structures (Bunnens 2000:12–19).

2.1 The urban landscape

The royal palace continued to be the main seat of political power, governing a territory through a centralized administrative system (Bunnens 2000:13; Mazzoni 1994:329).¹⁶ Moreover, the important urban activities are a testimony to stability and economic growth (Ciafardini 1992:55–56; Mazzoni 1995:181, 189). Yet, the Syro-Anatolian palaces of the Iron Age were not any longer integrated into a larger cosmopolitan network of “great powers” (Sherrat and Sherrat 1998:338) but operated on a strictly regional level (Mazzoni 1997b:289–290). The economic basis of the local kingdoms was no longer built on the “generalized enslavement” of the rural villages characteristic of the Late Bronze Age palaces (Liverani 1975), but on a more liberal cooperation with the smaller agricultural communities (Akkermans and Schwartz 2002:368; Mazzoni 1994:327), following “a major re-structuring of power-relationships and economic roles” (Sherrat and Sherrat 1998:340). To quote J. D. Muhly: “The situation is complex, but it is becoming increasingly obvious that we are not looking at a ‘Dark Age,’ only a shift in settlement patterns and the development of new life-styles” (Muhly 2003:31).

At the turn of the thirteenth century, some major and many minor urban sites did continue to be settled. At Hama, Malatya, and Carchemish, continuity in settlement was accompanied by innovative building phases, which radically re-shaped the ceremonial centres of the cities (Mazzoni 1997b; Venturi 2000:1720–1721). The transformation and renewal of pre-existing cities went together with the foundation of new urban centres and with “the multiplication, the functional articulation and the splitting up of settlements” (Mazzoni 1994:326).¹⁷ The large administrative centres of the Bronze Age (50–100 ha) were abandoned in favour of a smaller, polyvalent urban model (30–50 ha) with a more limited territory (Mazzoni 1991–1992:56).

The autonomous polities of Syro-Anatolia were typically built around a capital city ruling over a belt of fortified towns and a rural hinterland of villages (Ciafardini 1992:56–57). They had the three-tier hierarchical settlement pattern typical of small states: “the central settlement hosts the political élite and the treasuring process; the intermediate settlements ensure the transmission of directions, the collection of contributions, also the protection in case of need; lastly the villages are widespread in the countryside, mostly devoted to food production” (Liverani 1992:125–126).¹⁸ Polities of this kind can be described operationally as “city-states,” a label equally stressing the urban character, a state-like institutional framework, and a modest territorial size (Grosby 1997; Hawkins 1995b; Thuesen 2002).¹⁹ The Syro-Anatolian city-states shared common cultural features and interacted with one another as equal partners. Essentially, they constituted what Renfrew has termed a “peer-polity network,” in which change is not brought about necessarily by shifts in the balance of dominance and subordination but by a wide range of constant interactions, most notably emulative competition (Renfrew 1986). Besides these peer-polity interactions, the Syro-Anatolian city-states were enmeshed into a decentralized web of wider interregional economic connections (Mazzoni 2001a). From Etruria and Greece to Assyria and possibly even to mod-

16 The absence of tablet archives, which had been the signature of the Late Bronze Age palaces, is not to be interpreted as an absence of written administrative records *tout court*. Rather, it is to be seen in the light of an increased use of writing technologies using more perishable materials, such as waxed wood, parchment, or papyrus (Hawkins 1986:368; Klengel 1992:181).

17 For a detailed analysis of Iron Age settlement patterns, see Mazzoni 1991–1992; 1994; 1995.

18 Further settlement types are to be imagined in the interstices between these three main site categories, the typologies of which we as yet know nothing about: forts, smaller villages, isolated farms, camps, and so on (for the Lower Hābūr Valley, cf. Morandi Bonacossi 1996:115–116).

19 Grosby 1997:6–17 prefers “city-kingdoms.” On the concept of “city-state” in general, and in particular on its application to the Syro-Anatolian region, see Hansen 2000; Hansen 2002. See also the essays collected in Charlton and Nichols 1997.

ern Iran, material tracks and cultural intrusions are found that can be traced back to the Syro-Anatolian city-states (Novák et al. 2004a).

The Syro-Anatolian polities constructed and developed their identities as autonomous sociopolitical units between the late twelfth century and the early ninth centuries BCE.²⁰ This “archaic period” (Mazzoni 1997b:299) corresponds roughly to the archaeological phases of Iron Age IA-C (as defined in Mazzoni 2000b, table 1). It is a poorly known period but, at the same time, a most important one for the genesis of the Syro-Anatolian social environment. The general impression is of a period of economic stability and re-definition, in which, as sketched above, important urban centres were re-planned, new cities founded, and towns expanded into larger settlements (see further here, § 6.1 and 6.2). The situation changed as the Syro-Anatolian city-states faced the expanding interests of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

At the end of the tenth century BCE, the Assyrian kings Aššur-dan II (934–911 BCE) and Adad-Nērāri II (911–891 BCE) carried out a series of military enterprises in the Upper Ḥabūr and west of it, in an attempt to re-establish a longer lost hegemony over the region (Postgate 1992:249–250). This was the beginning of a persistent and escalating policy of westward expansion and conquest, which shaped the Syro-Anatolian political landscape until the complete submission of the region by the end of the eighth century BCE.²¹

The Assyrian aggression of Syro-Anatolia occurred in two waves. A first stage of interactions between the Syro-Anatolian city-states and Assyria took place approximately 900–750 BCE, coinciding roughly with the Iron Age II A phase. In this phase, Assyria established a firm control and imposed annual tributes over the territories east of the Euphrates, with the river’s bank working as a frontier. The peak of this process was reached with the campaigns of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), and in particular with the conquest of Til Barsip in 856 BCE. The city-state was renamed Kār Salmanassar and transformed into an Assyrian province. Across the river, the Assyrian army led numerous military campaigns, repeatedly receiving rich “audience gifts,” “gifts of surrender,” and “spot tributes” from the Syro-Anatolian kings (Yamada 2000:237–239). These tributes may have, as in the case of Carchemish, been of enormous proportions (Fuchs 2002:595). Although Shalmaneser’s economic exploitation of the lands west of the Euphrates was important and, furthermore, “a new phenomenon in the history of the ancient Near East” (Yamada 2000:271), it is worth noting that a continuous direct administration of the region was not yet on the Assyrian political agenda (Fuchs 2002:595–597). In this phase, the Syro-Anatolian city-states west of the Euphrates negotiated their political and military position with alliances of varying kind with or against one another, Assyria, and their neighbours (Aram-Damascus to the south and Tabal and Urartu to the north). The Syro-Anatolian polities struggled for territorial dominance and “spot tributes” were paid not only to Assyria, but also among peer polities (as reported in an inscribed horse frontlet found in the Heraion of Samos: Bron and Lemaire 1989:35–44).

A second stage of interactions between the Syro-Anatolian city-states and Assyria took place approximately 750–700 BCE (Iron Age II B), during the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE), Shalmaneser V (726–722 BCE), and Sargon II (721–705 BCE). In 743 BCE, Tiglath-Pileser III defeated an

20 For detailed political maps, see Hawkins 1982, map 14, and Novák 2007.

21 For a “structural analysis” of the Assyrian imperialism in the West, see Lamprichs 1995; for a list of the single military events as reported by the Assyrian sources, see Orthmann 1971: 169–175; for a map of the Assyrian campaigns, see Kessler 1987; on the political geography of

Syro-Anatolia at the time of Aššurnasirpal II (883–859), see Liverani 1992; for the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824), see Yamada 2000; for the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727), see Garelli 1991; for the epigraphic legacy of Sargon II (721–705), cf. Tadmor 1958 and Fuchs 1994.

anti-Assyrian coalition led by the Urartean king Sarduri II and involving the city-states of Malatya, Maraş, Samsat and, probably, most north-western Syro-Anatolian centres (Lipiński 2000:218–219). This decisive victory paved the way for a policy of radical subjugation (Hawkins 1972–1975:158–159), with ample use of siege warfare (Fuchs 2002:597) and mass deportations (Garelli 1995). The termination of the last shreds of independence was then completed under Sargon II. By 708 BCE, all Syro-Anatolian city-states were finally seized and annexed to Assyria as provinces. At this point, five hundred years after its beginnings, the history of the independent Syro-Anatolian city-states ends. The accession to the throne of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) marked a new phase in the Assyrian impact on Western Asia: a “pax assyriaca” (Halla 1960:57) was established, Syro-Anatolia became a matter of normal administration, the indigenous records were replaced by Assyrian sources, and the Syro-Anatolian culture “dissolves into the dark of History” (Hawkins 2002:59).

2.2 Questions of ethnicity

In the study of Iron Age societies of the Eastern Mediterranean, “all too often the interest of modern scholars has been directed not toward ‘what was being done’ but rather toward ‘who was doing it’” (Muhly 2003:30).

To put it with Bunnens,

The problem is less to find out who of the Hittites and the Aramaeans was dominating what, but to understand how competing groups were interacting and what use they were making of the various cultural traditions available to them. (Bunnens 1999:615, also quoted in Brown 2008:196)

However, an “obsession with ethnicity” (Muhly 2003, *ibid.*) led to numerous attempts to connect the body of archaeological evidence from the Syro-Anatolian city-states with identifiable ethnic groups. The local epigraphic evidence shows that in the Syro-Anatolian region two linguistic families co-existed: the Luwian, an Indo-European language written in a hieroglyphic script, and a number of Early Aramaic dialects, written in Northwest Semitic alphabet. Luwian-speaking groups are known to have settled Southeastern Anatolia at least since the middle of the second millennium BCE (Bryce 2003:88–89). Aramaic-speaking groups, on the other hand, become clearly detectable in the written record starting from the beginning of the first millennium BCE. The Aramaic language is probably a development of earlier Semitic languages spoken in second-millennium Northern Syria by smaller rural communities and by nomadic groups (Bunnens 2000:16–17). After the collapse of the Late Bronze Age society, these components of the social fabric progressively gained political influence. Aramaic-speaking groups interpenetrated the urban landscape of Western Syria, grafted onto the already existing settlement structures and slowly emerged as new urban elite. Simultaneously, Aramaic dialects and scripts spread, ceasing to be tied to a tribal identity and becoming a matter of cultural choice (Bunnens 2000:16–17; von Dassow 1999:249).

In the literature, however, language and ethnic group membership are often correlated in a straightforward, and perhaps simplistic, way.²² Thus, a number of attempts have been made to study the Semitic “Arameans,” distinguishing them clearly from the Indo-European “Luwians” (Daviau et al. 2001; Dion 1997; Lipiński 2000; Melchert 2003). Accordingly, scholars focusing on the Syro-Anatolian

22 On the bias of this approach, see Keyes 1976.

region tried to differentiate between “Aramaean” and “Luwian” (or “neo-Hittite”) city-states and to analyze them separately (Jasink 1995; Sader 1987). This approach may prove effective for Damascus, seat of the “centralized monarchy” of Aram (Sader 2000), or for the regions north of the Taurus, such as Malatya or the ancient Tabal (Aro 1998), still heavily and coherently tied to their “Hittite” heritage. Applied to Syro-Anatolia proper, however, the same approach has its shortcomings, since the Syro-Anatolian city-states had multi-linguistic backgrounds and shared a single material culture (Mazzoni 1997b:301; Novák, et al. 2004b:2). In fact, it is difficult to find *any* cultural feature that may function as ethnic marker in the Syro-Anatolian region (von Dassow 1999:249). This lack of distinctive ethnic markers is the result of a prolonged process of intense and peaceful acculturation among Luwian-speaking and Aramaic-speaking groups, a process involving all aspects of society, as it has well been shown for religion and iconography (Hutter 1996; Niehr 2002, 2004a; Novák 2002, 2004a). Although scholars increasingly choose to use the inclusive label of “Luwian-Aramaean” when referring to Iron Age polities of the Syro-Anatolian region, applied to the material culture this label bears a misleading ethnolinguistic connotation (Novák, et al. 2004b:4). The material culture of the Luwian-Aramaean city-states is a blend of second-millennium Syrian traditions (cf. Pinnock 2004) and Anatolian traditions. Since the second-millennium Anatolian tradition is virtually coterminous with that of the Hittite empire, and because parts of Iron Age Syro-Anatolia are still seen as “Hittite” by foreign contemporaries (Güterbock 1957; Hawkins 1972–1975:152), the material culture of this region in this period is perhaps best labelled “Syro-Hittite” (see above, Introduction; and further Bonatz 2000a:4).

2.3 Carchemish

Between 1200 and 700 BCE, Carchemish and Zincirli were each the urban centre of a city-state, both located at the most strategically significant points along the east-west piedmont “highway” connecting Northern Mesopotamia with South-Eastern Anatolia (Fig. 2).²³

Combining indigenous textual evidence with dated references in Assyrian texts, it is possible to reconstruct in fragments the succession of rulers at both sites and selected aspects of their geo-political history (Plate 1 illustrates the dynasties of rulers, their relation to one another, and their provisional absolute date).²⁴

Among the two sites, Carchemish is without doubt the most important. The written record proves that the city has been continuously inhabited from about 2500 BCE onwards: the name is attested in the archives of Ebla, Mari, Alalakh, Boğazköy, and Ugarit.²⁵ Around 1340 BCE, when Carchemish was probably controlled by a Mittani gouverneur, the Hittite king Suppiluliumas conquered the city and installed his son Piyassilis on its throne, under the name of Šarri-Kušuh. After the death of Suppiluliumas, around 1320 BCE, the successor Muršili II confirmed his brother Piyassilis in his office and made the

23 For more on the piedmont “saddle route,” see Comfort et al. 2000; Comfort and Ergec 2001; and Fales 2002, fig. 10.

24 The inscriptions from Carchemish are now published in Hawkins 2000:80–223; for a discussion of the criteria used to date the inscriptions, see Hawkins 1976–1980:439–441; for the inscriptions from Zincirli, see Tropper 1993.

25 As for the name of the city in antiquity, in Ebla it appears as *qar-ga-miš*; in the second millennium BCE, Cunei

form texts spell *kar-ka(/ga)-miš(/maš)*, Hieroglyphic texts spell *kar-ka-mis-sà*, and Alphabetic texts *krkmš*. In the Iron Age, the Hieroglyphic Luwian texts spell *kar-ka-mi-sà*, while the Hebrew Bible reads *krkmš* (Hawkins 1976–1980:426). Thus, philologically speaking, it would be best to adopt “Karkamiš.” The spelling “Carchemish,” largely gone into the literature and adopted here for the sake of tradition, is the Anglicization of the Hebrew name (Hawkins 1997:423). The site itself was originally known to the locals as “el Qala’at,” i.e., “the Castle.”