The Assyrian Itineraries in the Zagros during the reign of Sargon II (6th and 8th campaigns) and the question about the correlation between Toponymy and Geography

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Among the many Assyrian written sources and inscriptions some texts report the military expeditions of the kings of Assyria. These accounts, the so-called Itineraries texts, describe in details the different stops of the armies through territories outside the Assyrian heartland.

With regard to the Zagros area, the reports mention different long and ruthless campaigns undertaken by some Assyrian Kings before the reign of Sargon II (720-705).

However the texts of the campaigns of Sargon II differ considerably from the other written sources like the Annals because the expeditions undertaken by him are related through a chronological succession of events. It means that the different place names (towns, villages, mountains, plains and watercourses) are mentioned according to their order of appearance during the marches of the Assyrian armies. That's the reason we call them Itineraries.

To reconstruct the different routes taken by the armies and to fix the different stops of these military expeditions on the geographical maps, we have used a methodology based mainly on the possibilities offered by the local geography.. The logic is that the establishment of diagrammatic charts must correspond to the most passable tracks and ways at least to explain the choices of all the army movements through mountainous areas of the Zagros

However despite some deficiencies, we have to recognize that the Itineraries of Sargon are exceptionally interesting. Indeed the reports of the 6th and 8th campaigns undertaken in 716 BC and 714 BC contain a great number of precious topographical and geographical information about the Iranian populations of the Zagros. In this study we tried to reconstruct the most complete and precise map showing the real political geography of the Zagros as the Assyrians knew it during the 8th century B.C.

Keywords: *Assyrian Itineraries; Sargon; Iran; Military Expedition*

Introduction

Before trying to locate place names mentioned in the reports of the two campaigns of Sargon II on a geographical map, the two itineraries must be analysed methodologically so that it's possible to determine the direction of the movements of the armies according the possibilities given by the geography. Indeed we have to take account that the marches of the armies are submitted to the logic given by the use of paths and ways that make all the movements the troops possible. The first logic we can find in the Itineraries is that the most practicable tracks in regards to the difficulties of crossing over mountainous areas and terrains for wheeled chariots and also for loaded horses and mules. In matter of fact, the routes used by the armies during their march must be topographically feasible. The strategic coherence of a campaign is that an army with its usual cartage for the military logistics and the dressing of the army base camps has to use the most easy and best tracks as possible to move across the landscape whatever the nature of the environment. According to this, the routes through the valleys, passes and fords used by the military convoys must not have been very different from those existing nowadays and thus identifiable in the topographical and geographical maps (Fig. 1). It's not unreasonable to think that valleys, plains and passes used as connexion have existed and could have been used during these remote times as well. We must always to analyze the geographical reality

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before to propose to reconstruct the communication and the connexion routes between the different places, sites and geographical spots. Moreover we have to bear in mind that the movements of the troops and the itineraries must be linked to the possibilities for water supplies in all the areas crossed over.



Fig. 1: *Map of the northwest area of the Zagros*

Exceptionally, it could be made with certainty a phonetic link between an ancient place name and modern ones. In contrast to the documents explaining the Assyrian campaigns against cities of the West and even in Babylonia, the phonetic connexions between ancient toponyms and the modern names of places, sites, regions, rivers and mountains are exceptional for the Zagros area. However we can find only very few examples like the name of the city of Arbela (most probably the modern Arbil), the river Zaban (the Lower or the Greater Zab) and the mount Zimur (most probably the mount Zeimur near Tabriz).

We have used a methodology based on the drawing of diagrammatic charts (Fig. 2) in which all the toponyms are introduced in a network of geographical connexions according to their position (appearance) in the itineraries . This method adopted by J.Reade was to introduce in a sketch map of the Zagros the different connecting routes to be able to locate the place occupied by some important place name mentioned in the Itineraries (Reade 1995). However the construction of these "diagrammatic" charts must take account of three points, which seems particularly important.

First of all it's necessary to set-up the chronological sequences in which the different toponyms take place according their order of appearance in each itinerary. Indeed each place name is linked to different neighbouring places and sites according its position in the itinerary taken by the army. The next stage is to establish cross–checking geographical connexions between these different sequences of the itineraries through the appearance in the texts of the same name. Indeed we have absolutely to take account that a position or a place for any place name must be coherent that is to say its network of geographical connexions must not vary or be different whatever the itinerary and whatever the reign during which the campaign is undertaken. For each place name, it's necessary to establish a permanent system of relations that must be let unvaried and stable. By no means, the same place name could belong to two different networks of interconnected toponym. To the contrary each place name must "hold" constantly its position whatever the campaign and the reign concerned.

The aims of the drawings of theses networks of connections are to make appear coherent and stable assemblages of different interconnected place names, as parts (or subdivisions) of a wider network even whether afterwards some other place names are added to. Indeed in some passages the text brings precious information about the neighbourhood of some place names for example, where the Assyrian king receives tributes offered by some cities. The place must be easily and quickly reachable by representatives of the cities that is to say their cities must be situated at least in the vicinity of the spot where the tribute is paid. Other helpful information could help to locate with more accuracy some places according their geographical setting in the mid of well-watered plains. It's not unlikely that some of these places were administrative centres and according their importance they have been inhabited on the same spot (or in a close vicinity) until now.

Despite all these precious information coming

from the Itineraries texts the mentions of the geographical features are very few. Only when they are exceptional for the Assyrians like a very high mountain with snowed cap summit, or a dangerous narrow valley, a large watered plain, a difficult pass or a stormy river, they seem to have been of enough interest to be reported. Exceptionally some of these landmarks could be identified with precision to significant or major geographical features bearing modern names for example, the mount Arusaka seems to be the mountain of Bisutun – the land of Bai't Ilu, known by the Assyrians as the land of White Mountain or later as the mount Bikni - the pass of Upurya could be the long pass situated on the modern road connecting the valley of Sahneh to the one of Kangavar in the actual province of Kermanshah. For the most part these geographical features seem to have served as landmarks helping the troops to find their way and to take the right direction. Unfortunately also many names seems to have been directly given to geographical features (plain, mountains, passes) according the fact that a never named city or a village is situated in their vicinity. As a result, some toponyms may bear different names through the time according to the political fate of the city or the village nearby.

If the Assyrians seem to have more or less correctly reported the local names the Itineraries show obviously however that they were more acquainted and familiar in the use of place names of lands or cities that are in good (economical) terms with Assyria or in a state of submission. Indeed some lands have noticeably interested the Assyrians like for example: Mannea, Allabria, Zamua known by its ancient name Lullubi/mi and Parsua/Parsuash.

The passage from a Diagrammatic chart (names of places in a network of itineraries) to a

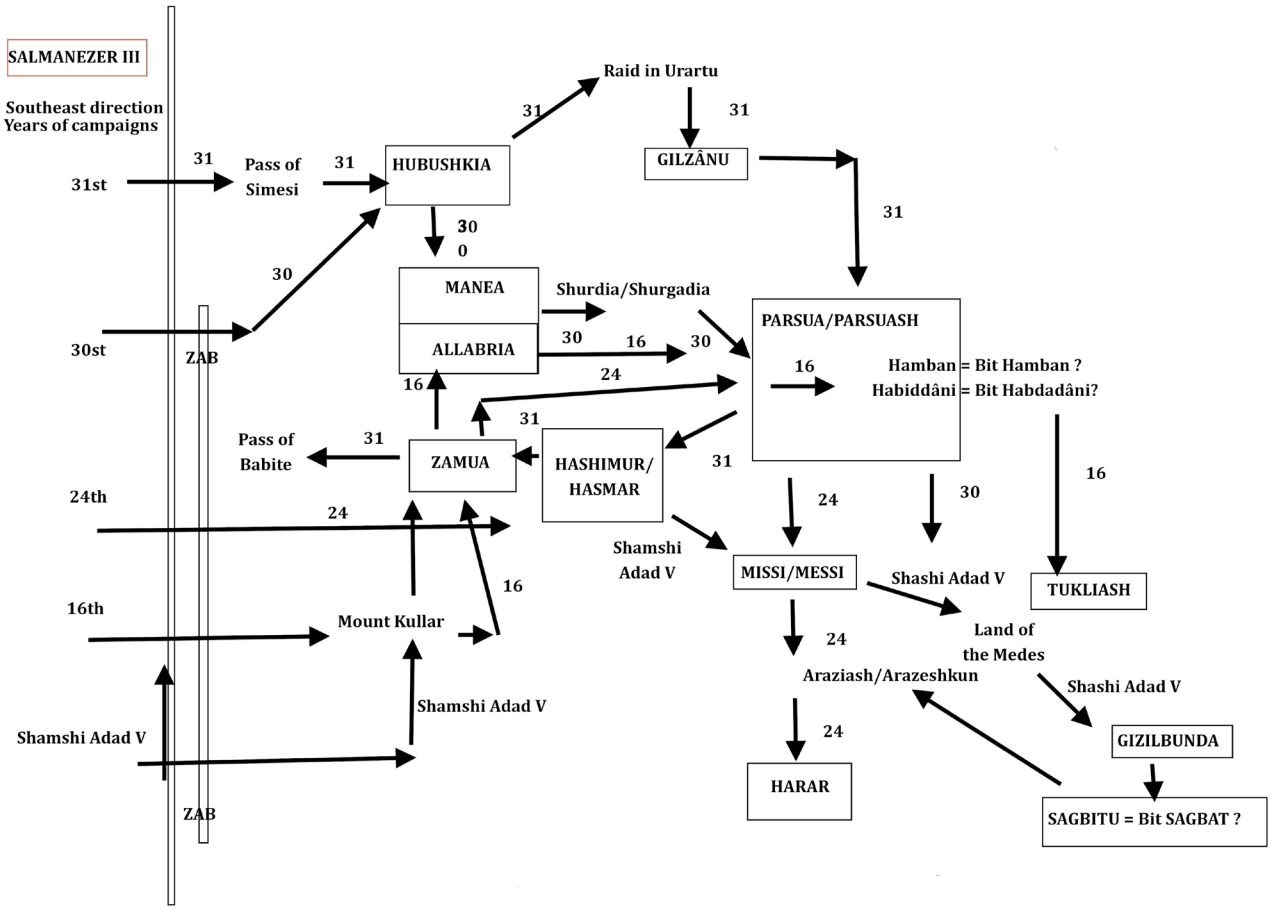


Fig. 2: *Example of a Diagrammatic Map of the 16th/24th/30th and 31st years (reign of Shalmanezer III).*

real geographic map is not straightforward. All the connexions identified in the Diagrammatic map must be clearly pointed up but this time according to a geographical reality. Moreover all the connexions between different place names must be related to the possibilities of communications given by the existing tracks, valleys, passes, paths and even by the modern communication roads through the mountainous areas.

Of course, itineraries texts may be different in relation to the number and the precision of the details giving more or less possibilities to follow the different stops of the marches of the Assyrian armies in the Zagros Area. Here it will be proposed to illustrate our new approach of the historical geography the accounts of the 6th and of the 8th military expedition of Sargon II in which the identification of the different geographical data's of these Itineraries can be discussed so as to reconstruct the geography of the Zagros.

The Assyrian expedition of the year 716 BC or the 6th campaign of Sargon II (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

The text of the Itinerary comes from the inscriptions on the stele discovered by Levine in Nadjaf-e Abad a place near Assadabad on the road connecting Kermanshah and Hamedan (Levine 1972). It has been proved that the inscription on this monument corresponds to the text of the Annals relating the 6th campaign of Sargon II. The goals of this campaign are to bring Izirtu, the Karalla, the Allabria and the Mannea/Manna back in the Assyrian sphere of Influence.

Coming from Assyria by a pass through the Chaîne Magistrale of the Zagros Sargon II attacks the lands of Karalla and Allabria before to take control of the city of Izirtu in the land of Mannea/Manna. Whether the Assyrian troops follow the usual and long standing route of penetration that is to say the road leading by Marivan – Sanandaj - Kermanshah, the land of Karalla must correspond to the area around the lake of Marivan and Allabria must be identified with the area of Sanandaj. The Diagrammatic charts corresponding to the former Assyrian expeditions have proved these identifications. According to this, Izirtu is to be located to the north east of the Karalla-Allabria Area and to the east of the pass crossed by the Assyrian Army. The site of Qalaitchi near the modern town of Bukan, believed to be the ancient site of Izirtu seems for us to be located to far away to the north as regard with the geographical setting of the lands of Karalla and Allabria and also according to the logic of the direction of the expedition (to the south east). There are no another mention about an intermediary place name in the text but it's said that consequently to this campaign, the Karalla is annexed to the long-standing Assyrian province of Zamua. (the Iraqi district of the Shahrizur-Halabja plain). It means first that a geographical proximity links the two areas forming now one province and secondly that a route connects directly the two lands through a pass. Indeed, Karalla must be located to the south east of the Zamua, along the road connecting Halabja in Iraq to Paveh in Iran.

In matter of fact, the most logical route to enter the Zagros area is the modern communication road going from Nowsud to Sarband (identified with the Surikash of the next 8th campaign). This southeast road seems to have been considered as of first interest for the Assyrians who have carved in a rocky cliff overhanging the valley a relief known as the relief of Tang-I Var (Frame 1999). For Frame, Shurgadia must be situated in the vicinity of the relief, which has been carved at the end of an expedition when Sargon went back to Assyria through the Zamua province. The text reports that the Assyrians have annexed the Karalla during the time of the expedition. If Karalla is logically annexed to Zamua, Allabria is left free maybe as regard with its more distant geographical situation. According to this, Allabria could be located in the area of Sanandaj, at the rear (on the east side) of the sharply mountainous area of the Kuh-e Sahu, which separate this land to the Karalla much closer to the Zamua. By no means, this last assumption dismisses the geographical possibilities to connect the two lands by a bypassing track from Marivan to Sanandaj.

On their way the Assyrians take control of the fortress of Shurgadia. This mighty fortress, mentioned as a stronghold of the Quti people, lies most probably on the western edge of the mountain Kuh-e Sahu and its control may be justified by the interest to secure this important communication route. Shurgadia as some other cities is annexed to the Assyrian province of Parsua/Barsua (this last name appears in some Urartian Inscriptions), which

seems to be a long-standing ally of Assyria. Parsua must be located to the south of the Karalla-Allabria area, otherwise how to explain that this province (or a vassal entity) has not been annexed by the Urartean power like these two entities. According to Levine, Parsua must be located in the north part of the long Mahi Dasht plain (Levine 1972: 31). His suggestion is far from convincingly. Whether the route taken by the Assyrian army leads naturally to the southeast direction before to run into the large valley of the upper course of the river Qara Su that's to say the north part of the Mahidasht plain, this area must encompass the (future) province of Kishesim. Indeed the text of the stele relates that shortly after the sacking of Shurgadia, the Assyrians takes control of the city of Hundir where Sargon II receives the tribute of the defeated king of Kisheshim. This centre seems to be enough remote from Parsua otherwise it would have been integrated to this Assyrian province. In fact we ignore the real nature of the relations that linked Assyria to Parsua. Does Parsua exist as a sort of protectorate or as a province controlled by an Assyrian governor? Assyrian annexation policy seems to have managed a form of autonomy for the local elites who must only agree the supervision of a governor. Parsua seems to have played more the role of a protected land than the one of a real province for the reason that its low level of administration needed reduced procedures of control (Lanfranchi 2003: 96-99). The Assyrians didn't remove the former local political institutions or deprived the elite of their prevailing position. They mainly tried to adjoin to the local elites a man who was in charge to secure the commercial relations with Assyria.

On the contrary Kishesim is designated by Sargon II as the centre of a new province created by the assemblage of different lands (Bit-Sagabi/Sagbi = Bit Sagbat, Bit-Hirmami) and cities, all impossible to locate on a map due to the lack of more precise geographical information. The extension of this province is not known but most probably its southern part is limited by the border of the neighbouring province of Harar, centred on the lower course of the river Qara Su.

After the forced reintroduction of the city of Harar in the Assyrian sphere of influence and the change of its name in Kar Sharrukin, the campaign of Sargon seems to enter in a new phase. Harar seems to have been an ally of Assyria but changed for a rebellious or seditious party. The text reports that the city was in search of an alliance with Ellipi. This situation indicates that the land of Ellipi must be located in a geographical proximity (Luristan ?). Otherwise the search of such an alliance between the small state of Harar and the kingdom of Ellipi would have been illogical.

The text of the Nadjaf-e Abad stele reports that Harar is situated between the upper and the lower courses of a river whose name is not mentioned. The upper course of this unknown river is said runing into an area named Arazishu/Araziash and its counterpart, the lower course, in an area named Bit Ramateia. This clear but unusual differentiation between two areas may signify that the city of Harar/Kar Sharrukin was situated at the confluence of two important rivers. It's possible that the junction of the two streams was a wide marshy and regularly swampy area and the Assyrians were not able to distinguish the two watercourses from each other. According the geographical maps and the satellite images of the area around Kermanshah, two major rivers may be observed running in this very well irrigated region, the above mentioned Qara Su, which runs North West to South East and the Gamas-I Ab, which comes from the east. During the time the confluence point have moved gradually some kilometres to the south of the modern town of Kermanshah. If it's possible to identify this city with Harar/Kar Sharrukin mentioned in the text of the stele, the area to the northwest could be identified with Arazishu/Araziash and the area to the southeast with Bit Ramateia. Whether Harar is said to have become the camp base for expeditions toward the east mainly to raid in the Medan Heartland, the situation of Kermanshah represent an outstanding and serious advantage for the Assyrian army (Tourovets 2011).

After Harar has been secured and pacified Sargon II takes the direction of Zakruti and Kurabli. Most probably these two lands are located to the west of the city of Harar taking into account that the second half of the campaign takes obviously the direction of the territories situated to the east of Harar as we will see below.

The text of the stele relates that the Assyrian troops cross over a river. If unfortunately its name

is not mentioned we may be sure that it is not the same river as the watercourse that runs in the Bit Ramateia. Precluding the solution represented by the river Gamas-Ab, the river Rudkhaneh-ye Marek (or Marek) seems the most logical option. Situated to the west of the Qara Su it runs parallel to it. The area irrigated by the Marek may be the land Zakruti, that is the first stop reached by Sargon II after the fall of Harar. According to this, it's not surprisingly to locate the Zakruti (which is told to belonging to the "Mighty Medes" in the text of the 9th campaign of Tiglath-pileser III) at a relatively short distance from Harar. The city of Zakruti, (most probably the centre of the land) is mentioned in the same text (Stele of Iran) just before the Mount Bikni supposedly the Alvand (Tadmor 1994) . The city of Kurabli seems to be also a very important centre that controls an extended area. The importance of this area for Sargon II is proved by the fact that the king receives in this city the tributes of many local "kings" of lands (and cities) located all around, like those of Urikatu Sikris and others impossible to locate. Sargon II decided to integrate all these lands and cities in the new province of Kar Sharrukin. This may indicate a regional proximity linking these lands to the Assyrian provincial centre. According to this, Kurabli seems to be situated in the vicinity of the modern city of Eslamabad-e Gharb (if not with the city it-self) in a well-irrigated plain clearly separated from the one centred on the city of Zakruti by a range of low mountains. The two areas are directly connected to the not–too-distant city of Kermanshah/Harar by a road that may naturally have taken the place of the ancient track.

The text is not clear after the passage about Kurabli (lines 49-50 of the text on the Nedjaf-e Abad stele). but it seems that Sargon II pursue the march to the east from Kurabli itself or from the city and the land named Sikris (the possible cities of Sarab-e Harasam or Cheshmeh Mâhi). The mention of a high mountain named Abrau at the beginning of the march leads us to identify Sikris with the first of these two towns where the local geography corresponds better to what is described on the stela. Coming from Sikiris or from Kurabli, the Assyrian army goes across a river named Pattus. In regards with the direction taken by the march, the river seems to have been identified logically with the lower course of the Qara Su (already mentioned above). Here the Assyrians seem not to have seen that this watercourse is the same as the river, which runs right across the land of Arazishu, identified to the north west part of the same wide and long fertile basin. It's not unlikely that the Assyrians believed that this watercourse come directly from the east, so, they have made confusion with the course of the Gamas-Ab river, the real Pattus, a tributary of the Qara Su according to the fact that the army pursues its march to the east along the same river for which it was no need to mention again by its name. As it is usual in the texts, it's not necessary to relate the name of the Bit-Ramateia (lower course of the Qara Su) an area, which has been very recently (during the same expedition) pacified and secured. It seems to be the reason why its name doesn't appear once again in the report.

The first area met by the Assyrians to the east of the Qara Su is a land named Ukuta, which appears in the itinerary to be connected to the neighbouring mountain named Arusaka. This mountain seems to have caught the imagination of the Assyrians who called it the "mighty mountain" most probably in connection with its massive form and height. This mountain seems to be identified with the rocky mountain of Bisutun, which appears in the landscape as a tremendous huge massive peak with an abrupt cliff facing the valley of the river Gamas-Ab. Having passed this outstanding geographical feature, the route open onto a long and narrow valley, which ends by a pass named Upurya. Before this passage, one city named Anzaknie is mentioned in the text as the centre of this land. It's is probably the modern Sahneh, which is well irrigated by many little streams coming from the mountain.

The pass of Khariz (to the east of the village of Sarab), recently enlarged, connects the valley of Bisutun with the one of Kangavar-Assadabad. In the text of the stele, the pass of Upurya is situated between two high mountains named Patashshun and Darue. From the highest point on the pass of Khariz-e Bid Sorkh two high mountainous chains appear in the landscape on each side of the road. According the following steps of the itinerary (as we will see below) we identify the mountain Patashshun with the mount Kuh-eDalakhâni situated to the north of the pass, and the mountain Darue with the Kuh-e Gozaru to the south. After the passage of the Assyrian army by the pass of Upurya,

Sargon II reaches an important city named Bustus. Logically, the site of this city seems to correspond to the city of Kangavar, which is located down the road coming from the pass.

After to have received the tribute of some rulers of the vicinity the Assyrians pursue their march towards cities named Datumbu, Karzinu, Barikanu and Saka. To reach them, Sargon change his progress towards the northeast to turn in the southeast direction. The geographical map (and satellite maps) shows clearly that another large and well-irrigated basin runs into the main plain of Kangavar-Assadabad through a large passage situated just in front of the city of Kangavar. The Assyrians enter this rich plain of Nehavand-Firuzabad to subdue its cities and populations. The city of Datumbu seems to be situated at the junction of the two great valleys in the proximity or not-too-distant of Kangavar. In matter of fact the cities of Datumbu, Karzinu and Barikanu, are stops along the route. At last, Sargon II reaches the city of Saka, which seems to be the most important of the plain because here he receives the tributes brought by many rulers of the other cities. Saka, as the main centre of the area, may be identified logically with the modern town of Nehavand commanding the plain around it. We consider the identification of Saka with Malayer highly unlikely. This city is situated too far away to the north-east beyond a barrier formed by a group of low mountains crossed by the modern road joining Nehavand to Malayer.

It was not in the interest of Sargon to pursue further and deviate from his planed route in an enemy territory. Maybe being aware of the danger, Sargon goes back in the direction of the Darue river, which bears the same name of the mountain located to the south of the Upurya pass as we mentioned before. It is highly likely that the river is to be located at the foot of the mountain. According the geography, the river supplied by a great number of streams coming from the mountain, must be identified to the lower course of the Rudkhane-ye Malayer, which runs into the Gamas-Ab river as its affluent. The junction is situated at some distance of the passage leading to the Assadabad valley also mentioned before. This point is logically situated to the south of the pass of Upurya and that is the reason for which we previously proposed to place the mountain Darue to the south of the pass.

Sargon II and his army are now on the right (east) bank of the Rudkhane-ye Malayer/Darue river. From this point the route taken by the Assyrians seems to be now oriented to the northeast through the long and wide Assadabad valley where is situated the city of Ramanda, the next objective of the expedition. This city appears very important but it is not as the final point of the march. It's possible to identify Ramanda with the imposing site of Godin Tepe situated 25 km to the south of Assadabad, a distance covered easily in one day of march. Then Sargon II goes to Irnisa and stops his march at the city of Urratus. For Levine it's very likely that this last stop must be situated in the vicinity of Nadjaf-e Abad where the stele was discovered (Levine 1972: 29). The place situated very close to Assadabad lies at the foot of a huge mountainous barrier, the mountain Alvand, which is till now particularly difficult to get over for modern vehicles going to Hamedan. Urratus may be identified with Assadabad most probably a city of importance because Sargon II chosen this place to receive there the tribute of many mighty Medan rulers. As the name of its king is named Burbasu, it could be identified with Burbazu the ruler of Bit-Ishtar, during the 8th campaign. The place same name appears in the report of the campaign of the 9th campaign of Tiglatpilezer III on the Stele of Iran, lines 25-44 (2nd campaign –pâlu - in the Zagros) in relation to his situation at the foot of the highest mountain of the region, which certainly impressed the Assyrians to believe that this fantastic snowy peak was the domain of a deity (Tadmor 1994).

The text of the stele stops here and most probably the king and his army went back to Harar through a pacified land. However, we have no definite information if this area was later transformed in a new province or most probably annexed to the long-standing province of Harar.

The Assyrian campaign of the year 714 BC or the 8th campaign of Sargon II (Fig. 5)

Once again, the objectives of this new expedition are to bring back into the Assyrian sphere of influence different lands from Urartu even the invasion of the southern Urartian territories appears as a highlight. Indeed, at the beginning of the march Sargon didn't plan to enter this area (Levine 1977: 149). The king changed his military plans when he understood the

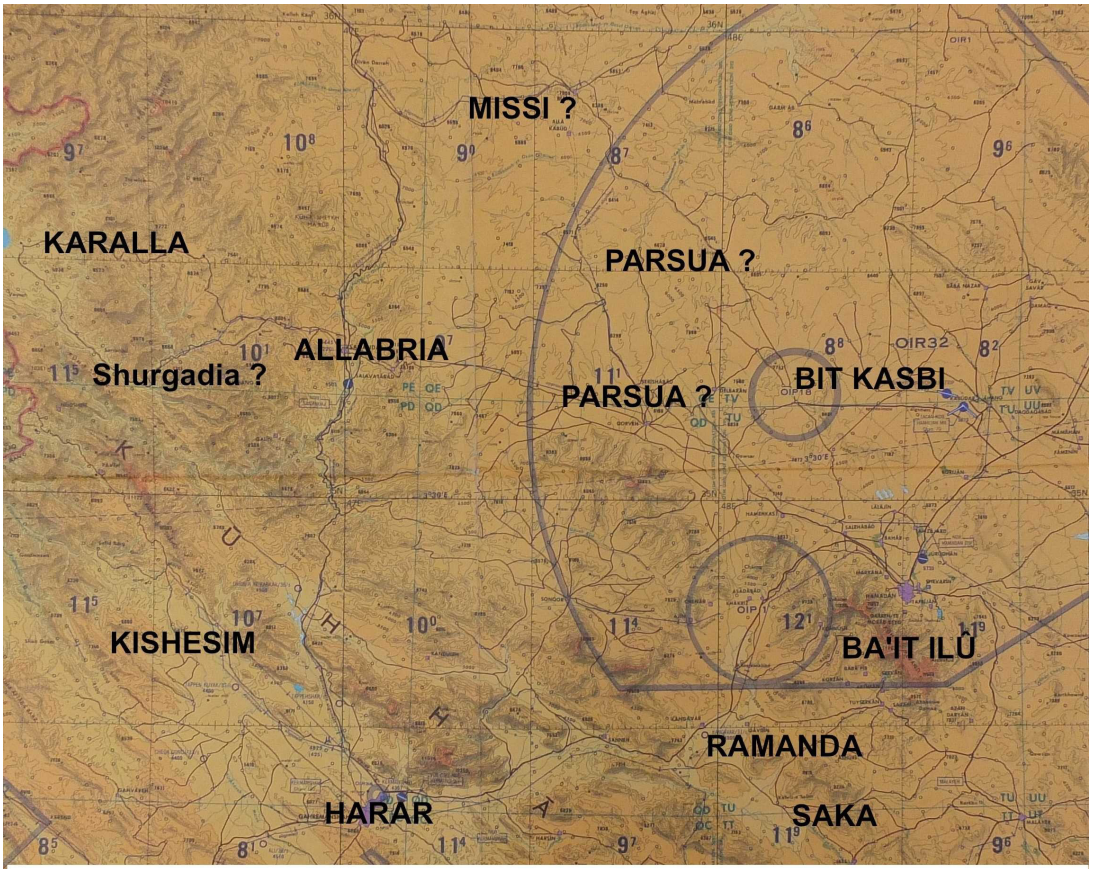


Fig. 3: *The first part of the 6th campaign of Sargon II*

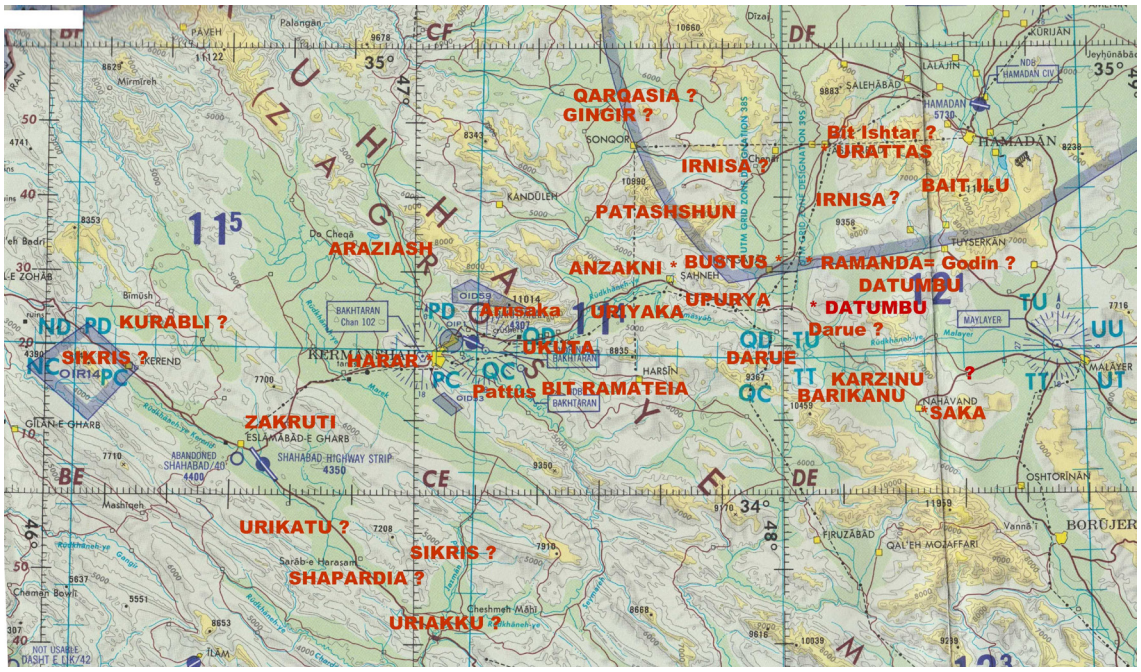


Fig. 4: *The second part of the 6th campaign of Sargon II*

danger to be confronted to a large alliance.

Contrary to the Annals text, the letter relating the 8th campaign is more reliable because it is a personal letter addressed exclusively to the god Assur in which the king speaks at the first person (Mayer 1980: 14-16). The text reports that the Assyrian army after having crossed the Greater Zab river, goes through the pass of the mountain Kullar in Zamua (the Iraqi area around the modern town Suleymaniyeh). We have seen such a geographical feature appears in the Assyrian sources as an important geographical landmark for the armies on the move. The Kullar mountain is identified with the Barzian chain, between the cities Kirkuk and Suleymaniyeh (Levine 1973). Indeed, Sargon II enters into the area of a district named Sumbi belonging to the land of Zamua. According the logic of the geography (the army takes the direction to the south east) Sumbi must be located to the east of Suleimaniyeh but it is difficult to locate (Levine 1973:19 ; Levine 1974: 114; Levine 1977:137). Sargon pursues his march in the direction of the east along one of the traditional routes to enter the mountains of the Zagros by a pass crossing the Chaîne Magistrale and most probably leading down to the area of the Iranian city of Baneh. Of course this "central" route must be differentiated to the southern one taken previously by Sargon II during the 6th campaign (from the plain of Halabja - Nowsud – to Paveh in Iran). The army take a pass situated between the "densely forested" mounts Nikippa and Upa where runs the "stormy" Buia river. Sargon II bypasses a high mountain named Simirra mentioned as a "mighty and dangerous" peak where the goddess Belet-Îli is believed to live. Then he has to get over two other mountains named Sinahulzi and Biruatti and then a group of high and abrupt mountains and at least the mount Suia/Suya. Most probably these mountains are situated to the east of the Chaîne Magistrale. The area around Baneh is crowded by a lot of such geographical features. The name of Suia/Suya appears in the text of the campaign undertaken by the king Assurnazirpal against Zamua but most probably it's not the same peak that the one situated in the area of Baneh contrary what supposes Levine (Levine 1977:137-138). On their way to the land of Surikash the Assyrians cross the Rappa and Aratta rivers also impossible to localise with certainty taking account of the high number of streams running from the mountains. Surikash is said to have a border with the Karalla. We have proposed before (Sargon II 6th campaign) to place this land in the area to the south of the lake of Marivan. This location seems to suit very well as regard of the identification of Surikash with the mountainous area south of Baneh. Surikash seems to open directly to its east side to a very wide area formed by low and relatively flat mountains but extensively watered. Nowadays many tracks connecting north and south along the Chaîne Magistrale are running right across this area. Among them is the very important north-south road linking Saqqez to Sanandaj and Kermanshah and then to Hamedan. Most probably the Assyrians were acquainted of this strategic route, which could facilitate the march of the army toward to the north. Surikash is the place where the king of Mannea brings to Sargon II the tribute from his town named Izirtu unconvincingly identified with the modern Qalaitchi to the north of the city of Bukan and thus to far from the place of the tribute received by Sargon II (Kargar 2004). This mention may confirm the location of the Land of the Manneans in the Iranian province of Azarbaïdjan-e Gharbi (West Azerbaïdjan) most probably between the cities Miyandoab and Sakkiz. Then Sargon and his army go to a city named Latashe said as situated on the river of the land of Laruete a district of Allabria. Most probably the Assyrians joined first the area of Sakkiz to take the route going south. On the move they cross an important river of this district which could be the upper course of the Zarineh Rud river or the Jurjureh Rud river its affluent. Here the passage that crosses the river near the village of Sonateh is narrow and the road sinuous according the nature of the cliff overlooking the valley. It's not unlikely that such a site could have been easily transformed into a mighty lock to control the movements on the track.

As the area of Latashe belongs to the Allabria (the northern district of this land), it's clear that Surikash and Allabria have a long common border, which is parallel to the direction of the Chaîne Magistrale. Allabria seems peaceful as a long-standing ally of Assyria and probably Sargon II pursues peacefully his march to the land of Parsua/Parsuash, which seems more an Assyrian protectorate than a province. According to the localisation of the next

steps of the itinerary, this land seems for us to have been situated to the east of Allabria near or around, the area of the town Cheshme Bijar. Levine situated Parsuash (!) around Sanandaj first then he changed his opinion for the north part of the Mahi Dasht plain to the north of Kermanshah (Levine 1974: 180 ; Levine 1977: 138). However we have seen that the north part of the Mahi Dasht must be the province of Kishesim according the geography and the direction taken during the march of the VIth campaign. In the report of the Zagros campaign led by Shamshi Adad V, the text mentions the geographical links between three main political entities like Mannea, Parsua and Missi. The location proposed by Levine seems now unsounded. Moreover in Parsua Sargon II receive the tributes from Sangibuti and from Bit Abdadani, and also from some rulers ("kings") of the Medes, all of them could not be situated more to the south near Kermanshah.

Sargon II leaves the Parsua for the land of Missi. For Levine Missi must be situated near the lake of Marivan (Levine 1977:141). Once again it seems really illogical for the troops to go westwards after to have taken the eastern direction to reach Parsua. We prefer to place Missi near the city Takab, because is clearly said in the Annals that the district of Messi/Missi belongs to the Mannea and its situation is close to the great mountain of the same name (district and mountain known by the Assyrian during the previous reigns). According to the geography, the mountain could be identified with the huge Kuh-e Balghis (the mountainious area around Takht-e Sulayman). The text says that here in the fortress of Zirdiuaka/Sirdiaka, Sargon II receive the tribute of the people of the "far remote" land of Gizilbunda situated in the "mountain near the land of the Medes". Reade identifies Gizilbunda with Amlash (Reade 1995:41). Sargon is said to have send some reliable men from the Parsua to these people of the Gizilbunda to know about their richness's. It's clear that the Assyrians consider Parsua as a gate to the eastern remote regions according its geographical setting and Messi as a stronghold guarding the border.

Then Sargon II goes through the land of the mighty Medes, the Bit Kaspi for which no more details are given by the texts. It seems that this name is a sort of general appellation for the vast area inhabited by the Medan populations. The sources say that the Assyrian reached finally the fortress of Panzish after an exhausting march. The route taken by the troops is impossible to trace on a geographical map but it is noteworthy to note that Panzish is qualified as a mighty fortress of the border of the Mannean territory (Levine 1977:144). Çilingiroglu counts 30 beru or 30 x 6 km that's to say some 180 km between Missi and Panzish, which could be identified with the place of Takht-I Sulayman (Çilingiroglu 1976/1977: 262). However, contrary to the opinion of Çilingiroglu, Panzish is not situated on a mountain but the fortress lies on the border of a river named Ishtar-Aura, which sounds as a typical Iranian name.

From Missi, we can recognize two possible roads to reach Panzish. The first one leads to the east and according to this direction, Sargon II could have reach the Qizil Uzun an affluent of the stormy Zanjan Çay river. However this long route leads to the east direction (or north-east) and greatly steps back Sargon from his planned goal to stop the advance of the Urarteans from the threatened northern territories. In front of this Urartian threat the strategic setting of Panzish requires the Assyrians to strengthen the walls surrounding the fortress and to mange a garrison. It proves that the fortress plays an important role as a stronghold guarding the front line. For all these reasons the northwest route seems more logical because it leads directly to the area threatened by the increasing Urartean pressure. Panzish could be situated somewhere at the north-west limit of the mountainous area of the Kuh-e Qarehdash, on the edge of the Zarineh Rud river and maybe in the surrounds of the city of Miandoab.

From Panzish, Sargon II goes to a city named Aukane. The city is difficult to locate with precision but most probably this district must be situated in the neighbouring area south of Bonab. Indeed the text says that the city belonged to the land of Mannea before the district has been subtracted from the Assyrian sphere of influence by the king of Urartu. In Aukane, Sargon is said to have given up he project to pursue his march against the Medan lands Zikirtu and Andia but to enter directly in the Urartean territories. This city seems not-too-distant of another place named Uishdish, (Uishdish was inhabited by a Mannean population before it has been conquered by the Urarteans), which is situated at some short distance of a mountain

named Uaush and identified with the Kuh-e Sahand. Most probably, this outstanding landmark obliged Sargon to make a crucial choice between the two different directions before to come at the foot of this mountain.

Whether the route taken by the Assyrians led them to go to the north (Indeed, we agree with Levine when he presumes that the south-north route taken by Sargon II runs along the eastern side of the lake of Urumiyeh (Levine 1974:115 ; Levine 1977: 142). If so, the location of Zikirtu and Andia must be logically situated in a different or opposite direction, for instance the northeast direction. The area between Miyaneh-Hashtrud could be identified with Zikirtu and Andia as this region of farming and breeding (horse) may have been economically speaking very attractive for Assyria. After Uishdish the Assyrians pursue their advance and enter the territory of Urartu. Sargon subdues the fortified Urartian fortress of Ushkaia, which locks the pass situated on the mountain Mallau leading to the land of Zaranda. This landmark overlooks the plain of Subi where it's told that horses are extensively breed. The plain could be identified with the very large plain situated to the northwest of the pass (and not to the north and the east of Tabriz as Thureau-Dangin stated formerly (Thureau-Dangin 1912) - an opinion accepted by Levine (Levine 1977: 142). Whether we accept that Sargon entered the Urartean territories, Zaranda could be identified with the modern city of Marand (the phonetic proximity of the two toponyms must be noted) contrary to the not convincingly opinion of some scholars who prefer the city of Maragheh (Çilingiroglu 1976/1977: 262). Ushkaia the centre of the plain of Subi is depicted as a huge stone masonry fortress built on a high rocky mountain. This description seems clearly to correspond to the architecture of an Urartian fortified city. From here Sargon II directly enters the Urartian kingdom leaving the Iranian territories. Contrary to what has been taken for granted without enough considerations, the Assyrian penetration in Urartu seems limited to the southeast border of the land. No one of the great Urartean cities has been captured and the movement of the Assyrian army seems only to bypassing the lake of Urumiyeh, named in the texts as the "See of Naïri", along its northern shore.

Some years ago Zimansky has written a very interesting article about the Urartean geography (Zimansky 1990). Here we have to put forward that some toponyms mentioned in the letter of the 8th campaign could be identified with some others appearing with some phonetic distortions in the previous reports dating back to the reign of Shalmanazer III as Dalaia (Daeni), Irtia (mount Eritia), Arsane (Arsania river) and many others. The armies of Shalmanazer reached the lake of Urumiyeh from the south-west or from the west according the geographical logic of the marches contrary to Sargon II who reaches these areas by the east.

According to the difficulties we have matched in the reconstruction of the routes taken by the

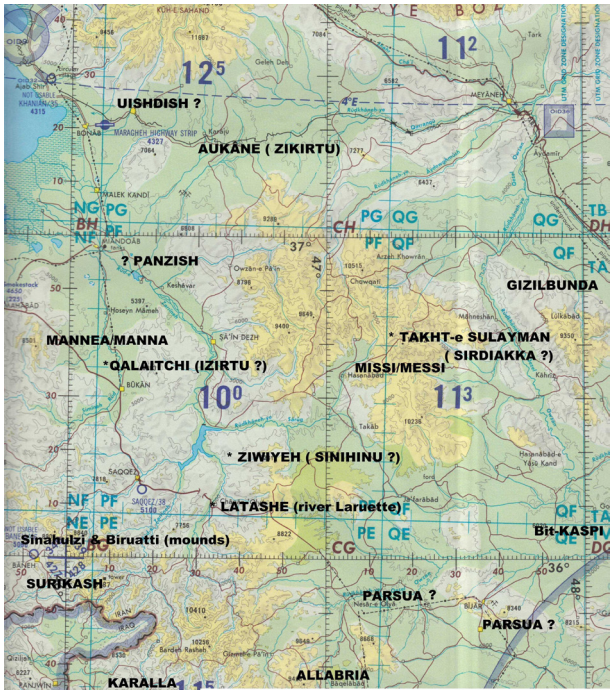


Fig. 5: *The second part of the 8th campaign of Sargon II.*

Assyrian armies and the geography of the landscapes encountered by them, we could say that the itineraries are linked before all to the commercial interests of Assyria and only for these. By no means, the Assyrians reached the Urartean Heartland but they only entered their allied territories on the northern shore of the lake of Urumiyeh, which appear as the remotest point in the North. In the same order of Idea, it's clear that the Assyrians reached the foot of the Mount Alavand/Bikni but we see that during the time (and the succession of reigns) that the goals

of the Assyrians were to control the western margin of a territory where the Medes become more and more powerful. Unfortunately for Assyria, the fall of Urartu didn't give to the successors of Sargon II the possibility to reduce directly this threat in their heartland territory. Also, the great question may be raised if the Assyrians were acquainted with the existence of the city of Hamedan or on the other hand why they didn't mention it as some sources report they made raids until the remote land of the Salt Lake of the Bit Tabite and until the mounds Ariarma and Silhazu? The question is left open.

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