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**THE LAND OF CARCHEMISH PROJECT, 2006–2010**

*Edited by*

TONY J. WILKINSON, EDGAR PELTENBURG  
AND ELEANOR BARBANES WILKINSON

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*Front cover:* Carchemish from the south-east. Photo: P. Newson

*Back cover:* Ceramic lion head found during 2006 survey at site LCP 6. Photo: E. Wilkinson

The Land of Carchemish Project was the last regional survey conducted by T.J. Wilkinson, and this volume was one of the last that he brought to completion. Tony's vision, hard work, and expertise shaped the entire project, and every field season benefitted from his steady guidance, boundless enthusiasm and inclusive humour.

This book is dedicated to Tony, who left us much too soon.

# CONTENTS

<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	x
<b>1</b> Introduction <i>T.J. Wilkinson and Edgar Peltenburg</i>	1
<b>2</b> Sketch history of Karkamish in the earlier Iron Age (Iron I–IIB) <i>J.D. Hawkins and M. Weeden</i>	9
<b>3</b> The Land of Carchemish and its neighbours during the Neo-Hittite period (c. 1190–717 BC) <i>Michael Brown and Stefan Smith</i>	22
<b>4</b> Long-term settlement trends in the Birecik-Carchemish Sectors <i>Dan Lawrence and Andrea Ricci</i>	38
<b>5</b> The landscapes of Carchemish <i>T.J. Wilkinson</i>	68
<b>6</b> The scent of empire on the Sajur <i>Jesper Eidem</i>	106
<b>7</b> Carchemish in the 3rd millennium: a view from neighbouring Tell Jerablus Tahtani <i>Edgar Peltenburg</i>	117
<b>8</b> Investigations of Iron Age Carchemish: the Outer Town survey of 2009 and 2010 <i>Eleanor Wilkinson and Andrea Ricci</i>	132
<b>9</b> The Carchemish region between the Hellenistic and Early Islamic Periods <i>Paul Newson</i>	184
<b>10</b> Sixty years of site damage in the Carchemish region <i>Emma Cunliffe</i>	203
<b>11</b> Discussion <i>T.J. Wilkinson and Edgar Peltenburg</i>	215
<b>Appendix A</b> The Land of Carchemish Survey (Syria), 2006–2010: Site Gazetteer <i>T.J. Wilkinson, Dan Lawrence and Andrea Ricci</i>	226

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Algaze's survey along the banks of the Euphrates in Turkey (Algaze <i>et al.</i> 1994) see Chap. 1 bibliography	KOS	survey conducted by Mehmet Özdoğan and Necmi Karul in the Birecik district to the east of the Euphrates (Özdoğan and Karul 2002) see Chap. 1 bibliography
BRB	Bevelled-rim bowl	LBA	Late Bronze Age
DEM	Digital Elevation Model	LC	Late Chalcolithic
DGAM	Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria	LCP	Land of Carchemish Project
EBA/EB	Early Bronze Age	LLC	Local Late Chalcolithic
EBSE	other Euphrates surveys in Syria by Moore and Sanlaville and McClellan and Porter	MBA/MB	Middle Bronze Age
EME	Early Middle Euphrates period	MP	McClellan and Porter survey
ESA	Eastern Sigillata A	RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia (Grayson 1991, 1996 in Chap. 3 bibliography)
FCP	Fragile Crescent Project	SAA	State Archives of Assyria.
GIS	Geographical Information System	SCM	Sanlaville, Copeland and Moore survey
GPS	Global Positioning System	SRTM	Shuttle Radar Topographic Mission
GPCC	Global Precipitation Climatology Centre	WP	GPS waypoint on geographical location in the field
IA	Iron Age		
KCG	Karkemish Cist Grave		

## The scent of empires on the Sajur

*Jesper Eidem*

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### Introduction

Archaeological sites in the Sajur Valley attracted some attention from early travellers who passed through the valley en route from Aleppo to reach Jerablus/Carchemish or destinations further removed on the Euphrates and in Anatolia (Sachau 1883; Hogarth 1909; Sayce 1911). The early interest did not, however, inspire further investigations for many decades. The apparent lack of large, historically documented sites left the valley more or less to itself until the 1960s and 1970s when survey teams made an effort to chart ancient settlement, both on the Turkish (Archi *et al.* 1971) and the Syrian Sajur (Sanlaville 1985), the latter work with specific emphasis on prehistoric settlement. Publication of the results obtained on the Syrian Sajur occurred just as the Upper Syrian Euphrates became an acute focus for archaeological research with the inception of the Tishrin Dam Salvage Project (Del Olmo Lete and Montero Fenollós 1999). This project perhaps postponed any follow-up to the new information on the Sajur, but on the other hand logically inspired fresh interest in the area as the hinterland for sites excavated on the Euphrates, as witnessed by the work discussed below, and not least “The Land of Carchemish Project” (Peltenburg *et al.* 2012).

Our Danish expedition to the Tishrin Dam area uncovered a rare sequence of local Iron Age material at the site of Jurn Kabir. Since the Iron Age was poorly documented both in the Tishrin and Sajur areas we decided to conduct two consecutive reconnaissance-type surveys (Fig. 6.1). The first, in April 1998, explored sites on the west bank of the Euphrates within the Tishrin Dam zone, and this led to the discovery of Tell Aushariye, a hitherto poorly known<sup>1</sup> hill-top site at the confluence of the Sajur and Euphrates. This site may, rather confidently, be identified with a fortress mentioned in Assyrian sources. In July 1999

a second brief survey covered part of the Sajur region, not as a comprehensive effort, but to test the apparent lack of Iron Age occupation evident from the earlier surveys.<sup>2</sup> Checking only sites recorded previously this exercise did not identify Qala’at Halwanji, another unrecognised hill-top site, some 15 km upstream from the confluence, and which was only discovered accidentally in June 2007. Both Tell Aushariye and Qala’at Halwanji have subsequently been the focus of excavations, and the present contribution will highlight some selected results which pertain to the theme of the paper: traces of imperial imposition on the Valley, focusing on three scenarios: the Assyrian “West Expansion”, the Middle Bronze Age forts in the valley, and a peculiar topographical feature of perhaps Early Bronze Age IV date.<sup>3</sup>

### Assyrian “west expansion”

In the year 856 BC the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III campaigned in Syria and conquered Til Barsip on the east bank of the Euphrates. Til Barsip was renamed Kar-Shalmaneser. The king then crossed the river and, according to the text of the Kurkh stela, seized a place, locally known as Pitru, which his ancestor Tiglath-pileser I had once occupied, and which was located on the river Sajur.

“At that time the city of Ana-Assur-uter-asbat, which the people of Hatti call Pitru (and) which is on the Sajur river [on the other side] of the Euphrates, and the city of Mutkinu, which is on this side of the Euphrates, which Tiglath-pileser (I), a forefather, a prince, my predecessor, had occupied, but (which) at the time of Assur-rabi (II), king of Assyria, the Arameans had seized by force - these cities I restored (and) settled Assyrians therein.” (Grayson 1996, p. 19, A.0.102.2)

This marked the first time for several centuries that the





Fig. 6.1 Map of Sajur region with sites mentioned in text



Fig. 6.2 The Early Iron Age (Level III) enclosure at Tell Jurn Kabir, cut by stone foundations of Level II

Assyrians were able to cross the Euphrates and establish a base on the west bank.<sup>4</sup> Shalmaneser was evidently proud that he could restore ancient Ana-Assur-uter-asbat, and thus match an achievement by his famous predecessor in the 11th century BC.

In the spring of 1998 our team surveyed part of the west bank of the Euphrates and here discovered the site of Tell

Aushariye (Eidem and Pütt 2001). The topography of the site immediately suggested a role as fortress or stronghold. Aushariye is really a tell placed upon a high limestone cliff, in clear view from Til Barsip/Tell Ahmar. The high part is only about one hectare in area and basically follows the triangular shape of the cliff. In a house near the site we discovered two large fragments of a basalt stele with remains of cuneiform inscription, authored by none other than Shalmaneser III. The owner of the fragments told us that he had found them in the Sajur close to the site, and they almost certainly came from there. So it seemed highly probable that Aushariye was ancient Pitru/Ana-Assur-uter-asbat.<sup>5</sup>

This identification promised some very clear and precise historical connections to the archaeological levels in Aushariye, and this was particularly interesting to us. When we found Aushariye we were close to finishing our first excavation within the Tishrin Dam area, at Jurn Kabir, also on the west bank of the Euphrates, some 20 km south-south-east of Aushariye. Jurn Kabir, which has since been completely flooded by the Tishrin Lake, was a small, low site with mainly Iron Age occupation (Eidem and Pütt 1999). This fact allowed us to examine not just the usual late Neo-Assyrian and post-Assyrian levels, which are quite common at other Iron Age sites in the region, but also to



Fig. 6.3 Tell Aushariye. SW corner (Area G). Stone foundations of Level VIII visible

reach and expose large parts of the older levels. The earliest level was very badly eroded, but the next, Level III, still preserved enough to reconstruct some interesting building plans (Fig. 6.2). The buildings were unfortunately almost empty of objects, but the characteristic ceramic material of Level III provided a date in the 11th century BC, with the best parallels found at sites on the Upper Syrian and Lower Turkish Euphrates. Level III is therefore a local horizon, broadly contemporary with the time of Tiglath-pileser I (Kehlet 2004). Since the site was not far from his Ana-Assur-uter-asbat what might the possible connections have been?

Moving our work in the Tishrin Dam area to Aushariye was therefore not least to investigate what material impacts Assyrian presence had in a place where this seemed historically assured, in contrast to Jurn Kabir, which produced no inscriptions or other types of finds providing a precise historical context. Excavations at Aushariye began in 2000, and continued through 2007, with a final season in 2010 (Fig. 6.3). The first seasons made it clear that the upper levels on the high plateau dated to the late Neo-Assyrian and early Post-Assyrian periods. These levels were deeper and more destructive of earlier remains than was the case in Jurn Kabir. In several places, however, we managed to reach the earlier Iron Age. On the south slope of the site a 100 m step trench revealed a section through the fortifications of Level III, which corresponds to Jurn Kabir Level III. At this time the steep slope of the site was supplied with a massive brick terrace (Fig. 6.4). Was this then the work of Tiglath-pileser I? Perhaps, but the associated ceramics were fairly exactly like those we had excavated at Jurn Kabir. In fact nothing appeared anywhere on the site that could be securely connected to a late Middle Assyrian presence. Also the level directly above, which structurally is very similar to Level III, and which should correspond to the reoccupation by Shalmaneser III, had local Iron Age materials, which was



Fig. 6.4 The MB II (Level VIII) stone terracing/glacis in Area O step-trench at Aushariye, covering/cutting earlier brick enclosure of Level IX (upper center), and overlaid by Early Iron Age brick terrace (upper right)



Fig. 6.5 Site 9 (=6501; Eidem and Pütt 2001, 90) from SW (May 2005)

puzzling. An obvious solution of course would be that the site after all was not ancient Pitru or Ana-Assur-uter-asbat, and this we can not entirely exclude. But where would the true Pitru then be? The landscape can be deceptive, and hill-top sites easily missed by more extensive surveys, as our own experience with Aushariye and Qala'at Halwanji



Fig. 6.6 Middle Assyrian sealing fragment from Aushariye (AU.7502-4)

shows, but the fact is that we know of no other convincing candidate for Pitru in the area close to the mouth of the Sajur. Upstream from Aushariye there are few sites with Iron Age material for quite a distance, and virtually the only alternative possibility would be a site *c.* 7 km south-east of Aushariye, near Hammam Saghir (Fig. 6.5; Eidem and Pütt 2001, 90, site 9 (= 6501) and 94, fig. 5-6), but this site has at least on the surface only the local Iron Age, and is not nearly as impressive as Aushariye.

Since the identification after all remained convincing we were obliged to think of how a realistic scenario could be imagined more concretely. As pointed out by Postgate (1985) the Middle Assyrian presence at Pitru, which lasted for some 100 years, until removed by Aramaeans in the time of Assur-rabi, would have remained pretty isolated from its base to the east, which later in the reign of Tiglath-pileser I suffered serious Aramaean incursions to the extent that even the core of Assyria was affected. It would appear more realistic therefore to think that Assyrian strongholds on the middle Euphrates were founded and maintained in some kind of cooperation with the local Hittite-Luwian principalities, foremost that of Karkemish (Carchemish). Tiglath-pileser's efforts to curtail Aramaean incursion, including his famous multiple crossings of the Euphrates, would of course have served his own purposes, but in the end also those of the local non-Aramaeans, who were no doubt equally disturbed. As such, supported by centres like Carchemish, strongholds like Pitru could have functioned

for some time. Such an establishment would have provided symbolic and real political importance as part of an Assyrian "network". Viewed in this perspective one may concretely imagine that Tiglath-pileser I was supported logistically in the establishment of Ana-Assur-uter-asbat, and that perhaps only a small core of actual Assyrians were settled there. This could help explain why materially the early Assyrian presence at Aushariye is virtually invisible, and would only be detected in the shape of inscriptions, tablets, seals or sealings, and decidedly elite items, which Assyrians had brought with them, and quite likely removed again when leaving.

Without any secure solution to this problem we turned our attention to the earlier Bronze Age levels at Aushariye, and worked to establish a sequence and understanding of the overall history of the site. In 2008 we moved some 15 km up the Sajur river, to Qala'at Halwanji, a fortress of the Middle Bronze Age, and devoted two seasons to preliminary investigations there. In 2010, however, we went back to Aushariye for a final season to round off work there before moving the team definitively to large-scale exposures at Halwanji. Among the last operations we did at Aushariye was to enlarge exposure at the southwest corner of the site, where we had earlier excavated a massive wall of Level III, potentially belonging to a gate-structure. The new operation exposed stone foundations of the wall turning north and cutting structures from the Late Bronze Age. Close to the surface, in old wash, we found a group of tablet fragments with writing which can be dated to the Middle Assyrian period. The date is supported by a fragment of a Middle Assyrian sealing found in the same deposit (Fig. 6.6). The fragments cannot be joined and must come from several different tablets, and as such they yield little concrete information, but important implications. The find does not prove that Aushariye is ancient Pitru, nor our theory of how that site may have functioned as an establishment of Tiglath-pileser I, but it does provide encouraging support for these assumptions. Control of the west bank of the Euphrates was a tentative and ephemeral undertaking, which left only a few isolated material remains. Indeed the establishment of Jurn Kabir and other contemporary Iron Age sites nearby, like Tell Qadahiye, with a sequence similar to Jurn Kabir, might, but need not, be related to the same scenario.

## Middle Bronze Age Forts on the Sajur

### *Aushariye*

There is another aspect of this however. The Assyrian name of Pitru, Ana-Assur-uter-asbat, means "He reconquered for Assur", but since the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III indicate that he himself did not give it this name, it should be Tiglath-pileser I who did it, which again means that it



Fig. 6.7 Tell Aushariye, Area G: Burnt Late MB room (Level VII) built up against unfinished fortification structure (upper right)

must have been considered Assyrian once before his reign. Does this refer to an earlier and otherwise unknown Middle Assyrian possession or to an even older one? Regarding the archaeological sequence at Aushariye it is tempting to suggest that the relevant period was the Middle Bronze Age, and that the first “Assyrian” possession was during the reign of Shamshi-Adad I in the early 18th century. Indeed we know that this king famously established two fortresses in the kingdom of Jamhad (Yamkhad), thus formally west of the Euphrates in 1786 BC (Middle Chronology), but lost them again six years later (Ziegler 2009). While the precise location of these forts is unknown, it is generally assumed that they should be sought somewhere close to the Euphrates, and between Carchemish and Emar. Let us take a brief look at the evidence from Aushariye.

A prominent feature of the slopes of Aushariye is the eroded lines of stone-settings irregularly preserved on the surface virtually on its entire circumference. From the excavations in Areas G and O we know that this feature represents a massive stone terracing constructed in the mature MB period (Fig. 6.4). At the edge of the slope parallel lines of foundations for the system cut deeply into earlier levels, but at a higher level merged to form a sloping surface. Far down the slope, in Areas O and S, we have exposed the inner edge of a stone feature resting immediately on the rock, and it seems likely that this represents the lowest part of the terracing, and that this formed a glacis. The stone foundations at the edge of the plateau cover or cut three earlier levels with mud-brick *encientes*, and the numerous sherds in the foundation fills range from late EB to MB II. No super-structures for this construction (Level VIII) are preserved on the edge of the slope. Instead the inner edge of the upper stone setting was reused for a series of small rooms in Level VII. Parts of five of these rooms have been excavated in Area G (Fig. 6.7), and the corresponding Level



Fig. 6.8 Selection of 17th cent. (MB IIB) ceramic vessels from burnt Level VII rooms (Tell Aushariye)

(VII) reached in Areas O and C. While the rooms in Area G were burnt, with numerous ceramic vessels and other items left *in situ*, this destruction is not in evidence in the other areas. Although clearly domestic in character the rooms must be viewed as part of a larger system, since details of construction, wall sizes, brickwork and plaster, are the same across the different excavation areas. The burning only found in Area G may relate to its location at the corner of the site, where the plateau is most easily accessed, and where an attack may have been focused. However that may be, the numerous reconstructable vessels from the Level VII rooms in Area G (Fig. 6.8) have close parallels at other Euphrates sites, like Saraça Höyük north of Carchemish (Sertok and Kulakoğlu 2002), and apparently Tell Ahmar (Bunnens 2010), and can be securely dated to the 17th century BC (Jacobsen 2011). The general picture then is of a really substantial project to create new massive fortifications at Aushariye at some point probably in the 18th century BC, but the project was apparently quickly abandoned and never brought to conclusion.

### *Qala’at Halwanji*

This scenario might of course fit the brief episode of the two forts established by Shamshi-Adad. Moreover, some 15 km up the Sajur river is the EB IV and MB II site of Qala’at Halwanji (Figs 6.9 and 6.10), which we accidentally discovered in 2007, and where we were able to make some preliminary test excavations in 2008 and 2009 (Eidem 2013; Maqdissi 2013; Ishaq 2013). Immediately under the modern surface the site has remains of a Middle Bronze Age II fortress which existed only briefly before it was burnt down in a cross-site event and never occupied again. Ceramics and sealings found provide a fairly precise date in the 18th century BC. A fairly close parallel to one seal image from

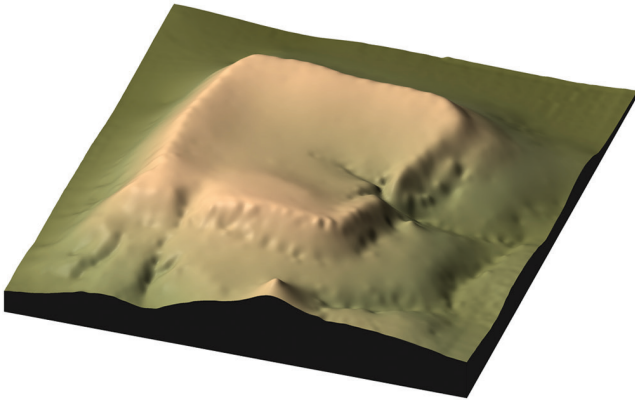


Fig. 6.9 Qala'at Halwanji: model



Fig. 6.11 Seal impression from Level I (MB II) at Qala'at Halwanji (see Eidem 2013)



Fig. 6.10 Qala'at Halwanji: Google image



Fig. 6.12 Tell Arab Hassan (LCP-68)

Halwanji, for instance, is found on an envelope from Level Ib at Kultepe/Kanish dated to 1776 BC (Fig. 6.11; cf. Eidem 2013, 12). What role did such a site play in this region? Who founded it and why? Much of the Sajur region in Syria was recently surveyed by the “Land of Carchemish” project (Peltenburg *et al.* 2012; Chapter 4), and the new evidence suggests that settlement on the Sajur itself in the Middle Bronze Age either remained stable or registered a slight decline (Chapter 4). Nevertheless, there continued a significant presence of MBA sites along the Sajur. A possible background for this development could be the formation of a small local polity which offered relative security. A few kilometres upstream from Qala'at Halwanji is the probably most imposing site in the Sajur region, namely Arab Hassan (LCP 68, Fig. 6.12) (Sanlaville 1985, 74). This site has mainly Bronze Age levels and given its size and central position in the region it seems reasonable to suppose that it could have been the capital of local polities for periods in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.<sup>6</sup>

Given the proximity to Arab Hassan, however, it does not seem likely that the Middle Bronze Age fortress at Halwanji was a new military capital for a local ruler – rather it was placed there to control the valley and its central site. From Old Babylonian Mari we have an interesting model for rampart construction on an exercise tablet (Charpin 1993). The text contains calculations of the volumes of earth needed for each side of a rectangular rampart and the number of man-days necessary for the work. Unfortunately the text does not provide dimensions of the walled area or indeed a name of the place, and is clearly an abstract exercise. The calculations, however, are probably fairly realistic and given the quantities of earth calculated, the model must have had dimensions fairly similar to Halwanji. Obviously the Mari text does not represent a model specifically for Halwanji, but a sort of standard model for a medium-sized, fast-to-build fortification of this period, which we must anyway assume existed. A rampart of this type, according to the Mari text, demanded some 27,000 workdays, and so could

be completed by, for instance, a workforce of 1000 men in just one month.

Even so, such a project would, in total, represent a considerable investment and this, plus the maintenance of a garrison force, would no doubt have been beyond the resources available to a small local ruler. Regarding the regional context it is clear that Qala'at Halwanji could be related to an episode in the history of Carchemish, located as it is, more or less where the south-western border of the kingdom may have been. In this perspective the fortress could have been intended to mark control in relation to another regional power, like Jamhad (Yamkhad) to the west, or a kingdom to the north-west, perhaps with its centre in modern Tilbeshar, located near Gaziantep in Turkey (Kepinski 2010). This site, which was almost 60 ha in the Middle Bronze Age, may be identical with ancient Haššum, mentioned, although infrequently, in the sources from Mari (Ziegler 2009, 201f.). These sources do not mention any direct confrontations between Carchemish and Haššum, but it seems logical that both kingdoms may have wanted to control as much of the fertile Sajur Valley as possible.

Moving some 17 km west of Halwanji we find Tell Algane (al-Qana), with a very similar size and shape, and MB II occupation. Are the two sites somehow connected, perhaps marking control points of Carchemish and Haššum respectively? Without more evidence this must of course remain speculation, and we may finally turn to the possible international context for Halwanji.

Neither Aushariye nor Halwanji have produced any inscriptions or other evidence which can serve to establish a firm connection to Shamshi-Adad or his Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia. The investigations at Halwanji were in an early stage when halted by the tragic unrest in Syria, but had produced only ceramics and other materials of local styles. In this situation nothing is really sure. A few years ago A. Otto (2009) and N. Ziegler (2009) suggested that the two fortresses established by Shamshi-Adad could be identified with the sites of Tell Bazi and al-Qitar, located on opposite banks of the Euphrates some 20 km south of Aushariye. Their arguments are good, but not compelling, and also the sites they favour have not yet produced any specific evidence to support the connection. This is not the occasion to discuss all the arguments in favour of either of these two or other possibilities, since only new evidence can provide a firm solution. For the time being however, the situation at Aushariye and the site of Halwanji shows that something important, but fairly ephemeral, was at work on the Sajur more or less at the relevant time. The apparent fact that Pitru was an Assyrian establishment at some time before the reign of Tiglath-pileser I seems to me a good argument that the Aushariye and Halwanji sites had some connection with the forts of Shamshi-Adad. In his known inscriptions Tiglath-pileser I makes no explicit reference to Shamshi-Adad, but in practice he certainly seems to have



Fig. 6.13 “Monument” at Qala’at Halwanji

attempted to emulate or even extend the geo-political reach of this illustrious predecessor, and among other things, like Shamshi-Adad, paid a symbolic visit to the Mediterranean coast. Surely oral traditions and sources now lost or as yet unrecovered kept the memory of Shamshi-Adad and his exploits alive also in Middle Assyrian times. The idea of such a legacy is not new, but worth stressing. At the roots of Assyrian power was the Old Assyrian system of elite families organising international trade, overlaid by a brief imperial episode organised by Shamshi-Adad. His foreign dynasty was expelled, but it retained sufficient prestige to provide throne names for a series of subsequent Assyrian kings.

### Monument Valley(?)

Just outside the south-east corner of Qala'at Halwanji is a conspicuous feature: a small, but fairly regular, conical hill, its shape now somewhat blurred by erosion (Fig. 6.13). It is almost certainly not natural, but man-made. No sherds are visible on the surface and a few, shallow robber pits reveal only limestone gravel under the surface. The investigations in 2008–9 did not allow occasion to work on this hill, which we have provisionally referred to as the “Monument”, superficially inspired by the remarkable “White Monument” near Tell Banat (McClellan 1998). This is located some 200 m north of the large 3rd millennium BC site of Banat/Bazi, no doubt a major regional center,<sup>7</sup> and is c. 20 m high and with a diameter of c. 100 m in its latest phase. The excavators estimate that it had no built structure on its small summit, and thus in fact was a “monument”, or more precisely a “monumental tumulus”:

“while no true burials or tomb chambers have been found inside or on top of the White Monument, several discrete deposits of human skeletal parts, some animal bones, and pottery were cut into or placed onto the sloping sides of the monument, and then encased within layers of earth and marl (Porter 2002b, 160–1). It has been conjectured that such bone deposits represent the final stage of a multi-stage burial practice, in which the skeletal remains were taken away from their original burial place and



Fig. 6.14 Tell al Qana from SE

returned with others in a collective, anonymous mass of bones.” (Cooper 2006, 237–8)

The Banat “Monument” seems unlikely to have been unique, and its exposure has inspired the search for similar mounds in Syria. One example, Tell Menkout, is located just 1 km west of the site of Mari, and variously suggested as a parallel to the White Monument, or as part of religious ceremonies performed at equinox (Butterlin 2007). The quest for parallels is hampered by the obvious fact that many smaller sites in Northern Syria are small, fairly steep, conical hills, in many cases no doubt a result of an initial (often 3rd millennium BC) function as a rural, heavily fortified, stronghold, but not comparable to the Banat example. Potential candidates must be examined on the ground and carefully considered as per topography, surface remains *etc.* With this caveat in mind, however, it seems appropriate to mention two potential parallels to the Halwanji “Monument” in the Syrian Sajur valley, both sites which I have personally visited, and which exhibit suggestive features.

The clearest of the two examples is Tell al Qana (Figs. 4.11, 6.14, 6.15), located *c.* 17 km upstream from Halwanji.<sup>8</sup> It has a shape and size closely similar to that of Halwanji, although founded on the plain and not on a cliff. On a visit to the site in spring of 2009 we found much of the surface completely covered by modern cultivation, but strewn with large fragments of basalt blocks, evidently the remains of substantial ancient structures. Sherds observed, mostly around the edges of the sites, were predominantly of Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date, but included a few clear examples of MBA material. The ‘touristic’ nature of the visit did not allow any comprehensive assessment, and so it remains uncertain whether the site was occupied also in the EBA period. Nevertheless the anomalous, circular attachment to the northeast corner of the otherwise very regular site is suggestive of a possible “monument”, later merged with the site by erosion. Figure 4.11, Chapter 4 shows the character of this feature.

The other example is the site of Molla Assad (Figs 6.16 and 6.17), located on a small tributary of the Sajur some 6 km south-west of Aushariye and some 12 km south-east of Halwanji (Sanlaville 1985, 76f.). This site is rather complex



Fig. 6.15 Tell al Qana: Google image (*c.* 1 km altitude) (see site plan, Chapter 4)



Fig. 6.16 Tell Molla Assad from N

and in spite of several visits to it we have failed to reach any clear understanding of its occupational history. The northern end of the site, however, is clearly a tall, separate, conical hill. At its base are cut burnt layers of Neolithic date from which flint and obsidian tools and numerous animal bones have eroded. Higher up the hill has steeper slopes, and the only surface sherd retrieved on our visits was a rim fragment from a Hama-type beaker. Clearly added to this hill is a fairly large, roughly rectangular mound extending south and with a size of *c.* 250 × 150 m. We have found very few diagnostic sherds on this mound, and cannot say what may be the main period(s) of occupation. A few clear examples of MB and late Iron Age sherds, however, have been observed.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, these two sites, although with a longer and more complex settlement history, may exhibit a feature similar to the Halwanji “Monument”. This observation of course in no way provides an answer to the central question about the function of the “Monument”, but only serves to suggest



Fig. 6.17 Tell Molla Assad: Google image (c. 1 km altitude)

that it was a fairly common feature of Bronze Age Syria. It is unfortunate that none of the three examples can be securely dated. The Halwanji “Monument” should be EB IV or MB II, while the other two examples only potentially are contemporary with it. If, however, we tentatively accept a late EB to MB date of these “monuments”, how can they be explained? The Banat “White Monument”, as well as other contemporary burial complexes, are clearly part of a “mortuary landscape” of EB Syria, designed to mark, venerate, and appropriate ancestors (e.g. Schwartz 2007). In the case of Halwanji, however, which appears to have been a fortress, although this function cannot yet be ascertained for the earlier EB IV phase, I think other possibilities should be considered. One such possibility is offered by the textually documented, but as yet not archaeologically identified “Victory Monument”, known from Old Akkadian sources. Old Akkadian kings claim to have raised tumuli over the corpses of defeated enemies, a feature described with the term *birūtum*, recently studied by Marti (2005). In early 2nd millennium Syria the generic term for “commemorative monument”, *humūsum*, is apparently used to describe a similar feature (Durand 2005, 93–141). Unfortunately the textual evidence is not very specific as to the material manifestation of these “monuments”, but

especially the Mari evidence provides some tantalising information. It would seem that such “monuments”, once erected, were intended to stay, and in some measure respected even by the defeated. As such they would have represented a particularly macabre aspect of the “mortuary” and “ancestral” landscape, representing simultaneously a triumphal and a heroic history.<sup>10</sup> If such speculation regarding the Sajur valley monuments has any merit it might further be conjectured that they could potentially mark the battles of a single imperial campaign in the Valley, by some unidentified external power.<sup>11</sup>

### Epilogue

The three “scents” of imperial imposition discussed in this paper are based on concrete archaeological evidence, which, however, does not easily translate into the kind of firm historical information we would prefer. While the more precise identifications elude us, we are at least presented with glimpses of substantial activities which must have shaken the otherwise humdrum ancient life in the Sajur Valley: the “Assyrianisation” in the 1st millennium BC, the substantial military activity of the MB II period, and



the admittedly more speculative “invasion” of the late 3rd millennium, or whatever spurred the considerable energy needed to construct the alleged “monuments” described above, and others as yet unidentified. Qala’at Halwanji was never occupied again after its destruction in the 18th century BC, and a high-intensive surface sampling conducted in 2008 retrieved only a few traces of transient activity, like a couple of Roman coins and Late Ottoman objects (Weideman 2011).<sup>12</sup> Tell al-Qana, which may owe its very regular outline to an MB project, accommodated important occupation in the late 2nd–early 1st millennium, while Tell Aushariye at the Euphrates junction saw intermittent occupation in the LB and Iron Age periods. Like the travellers of a century or so ago, many ancients followed routes through the valley, and left impacts of varying degrees, some now archaeologically retrievable, and enabling us to grasp the outlines of imperial episodes, easily described as “transient”, since only briefly did these endeavours persist, before collapsing or moving decisively beyond the Valley, as was the case of the Neo-Assyrian expansion. Intermediate phases between material remains and the ephemeral, often ideologically charged, historical record, remain difficult to reconstruct in this marginal context.

### Notes

- 1 An earlier visitor must have been the famous T.E. Lawrence, who acquired several objects said to have come from “Oshariye” (but probably came from robbed EB IV tombs at the nearby site of Nizel Hussain), and indeed marked the site as “Osherye” on a map of “Crusader Castles” (Lawrence 1986, 2nd map after preface), although unfortunately without any further mention or description.
- 2 An initially more ambitious plan for the survey eventually had to be abandoned, and the fieldwork reduced to a single week with only on-site study of surface ceramics. Many sherds, however, were recorded/drawn on-site, and a considerable amount of evidence documented. Although adding important specifics to previous results, the survey confirmed the relative paucity of Iron Age settlement in the region.
- 3 I am grateful to the conveners of the BANE A meeting in Manchester for their kind invitation to the conference and their subsequent acceptance of this modest contribution to the proceedings, although the subject deviates somewhat from that presented in Manchester. The archaeological work in Syria reported here proceeded with the gracious permission of – and in cooperation with the DGAM of The Syrian Arab Republic. It was funded by a number of Danish Foundations, and supported by the host institutions of the author (University of Copenhagen 1993–2007, The Excellence Cluster TOPOI (Berlin) 2008–9, and NINO (Leiden) 2010). Needless to say numerous collaborators, European and Syrian, contributed to the results, and for this deserve my warm thanks.
- 4 The Assyrian expansion towards the west has been the subject of numerous recent studies: see for instance Bagg 2012 for the historical evidence; for a very complete survey of the Middle Assyrian expansion from an archaeological and historical perspective see Tenu 2009.
- 5 For more information on the stela fragments, and the site in general I refer to the website: [www.aushariye.hum.ku.dk](http://www.aushariye.hum.ku.dk)
- 6 See Chapter 5 for more complete periodisation.
- 7 A. Otto (2006) has argued for an identification with ancient Armi/Armanum, but cf. Archi 2011, who prefers to seek this city further north (Samsat?).
- 8 Sanlaville 1985, 82. The material collected was MB, Roman, and Neolithic. A clear example of the MB material is fig. 14 (p. 151), 3.
- 9 Cf. photos of the site in Sanlaville 1985, 47 and fig. 7 (p. 89). A group of animal bones from the cut Neolithic layers is presented in the same volume, 163–5. Sherds collected are said to be of Pottery Neolithic, EBA, Roman, and Islamic date. We have not observed any clear examples of the later material, but quite likely the lower part of the site had some post-Iron Age occupation.
- 10 Yet other types of “monument”, intra-site, and from the Early MB period, have been exposed at Umm el-Marra and Ebla (Schwartz *et al.* 2012). These rather enigmatic structures seem related to ritual and cultic activities.
- 11 Given the very tentative nature of this idea it seems pointless to suggest a specific aggressor. For a summary of political and military dynamics in late 3rd millennium Upper Mesopotamia I refer to Sallaberger 2012.
- 12 The 2008 survey at Qala’at Halwanji is presently being prepared for publication and scheduled to appear in a future volume of PIHANS (Leiden).

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