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Vignette de couverture : Stèle de Tell Ajaja (archive de Tell Sheikh Hamad, Berlin), dessin tiré de l’article d’H. Kühne, fig. 7.
THE ASSYRIAN–ARAMAEOAN INTERACTION IN THE UPPER KHABUR:
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM TELL BARI IRON AGE LAYERS

Anacleto D’Agostino
Università degli Studi di Firenze

Résumé – À la fin du IIe millénaire et au début du Ier, les processus d’interaction entre Assyriens et Araméens, dont l’importance est essentielle dans le développement de l’empire néo-assyrien, ne sont pas homogènes car ils dépendent du substrat géographique et socio-politique. La présence d’Araméens dans le haut Khabur n’est toujours pas clairement établie en raison de l’insuffisance des données issues de la culture matérielle. Le manque de sources textuelles et iconographiques limite notre perception d’éventuels changements politiques ou de la présence de nouvelles entités culturelles et nous conduit à considérer ces questions sur la base d’un nombre réduit de données archéologiques. Les fouilles stratifiées de Tell Barri offrent ainsi l’opportunité d’évaluer les changements culturels et politiques ou le niveau d’interaction entre ces deux entités distinctes en examinant les assemblages matériels. Cet article présente la séquence archéologique correspondant à la transition entre l’âge du Bronze récent et le début de l’âge du Fer avec un intérêt particulier pour les niveaux du premier âge du Fer de Tell Barri. Les données semblent indiquer que le site était habité par une même communauté assyrianisée et que si de nouveaux arrivants ou de nouveaux groupes sont arrivés et se sont installés, ils ont été absorbés et presque complètement intégrés dans la société locale.

Abstract – At the end of the 2nd millennium and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, the process of the interaction between Assyrians and Aramaeans, of crucial importance for the political and cultural development of the Neo-Assyrian empire appears diversified and not homogenous, depending on regional factors of a socio-political nature and diversity in the landscape of Near East. The presence of Aramaeans in the Upper Khabur is still unclear since the material culture does not provide sufficient information. The lack of textual records and iconographic sources, limits our perception of possible political changes or the presence of new cultural entities at Tell Barri, directing us to investigate this problem based solely on evidence acquired from a limited set of archaeological data. However, the stratified excavations provide an opportunity to examine this process on a site where cultural and political changes, or the level of interaction between these two distinct identities, can be evaluated through the material assemblages. This paper intends to present the archaeological sequence corresponding to the transitional phase (Late Bronze Age–IA) with a particular focus on the Early Iron Age levels of Tell Barri. Evidence seems to suggest that the site was inhabited by a single Assyrianised community and if newcomers arrived or new groups settled, they would have been absorbed and integrated almost completely into the local society.

خلاصة – لم يكن التفاعل بين الأشوريين والأراميين متجانساً – في نهاية الآلف الثاني وبداية الآلف الأول – رغم أهميته في تطور الدولة الآشورية الحديثة، وذلك لامتداد الموطن الجغرافي والاجتماعي. لا يزال وجود الأراميين في الحوض الغربي غير مسبوق عالمياً، لعدم تواجد مصوصة لهذه المضمار، كما أن التنص في المراجع الكتابية واللغوية، لا يوجد إجابة، سواء فيما يتعلق بالتفاعل السياسي، أو نظرية الحضارة، تعددت النظريات، إن تأثير الساسة، أو ثقافي، يمكن إدراكه من خلال عدد محدود من المعلومات الآثارية، إن التفاعل بين ثقافات الأثري، يتضمن نسجًا ثقافيًا، ثقافيًا وسياحيًا، أو مستوى التفاعل بين هذين الكيانين المختارين من خلال دراسة العلاقات الفردية للمفردات من الحضارات.

عرضنا هذه المقالة المرحلة الإنتقالية ما بين العصر البرونزي الحديث وبداية العصر الحديدي مع إهتمام خاص بالأبواب الأولى للعصر الحديدي القديم، تشير النتائج إلى أن الموقع كان مأهلاً من حيث ما يتعلق بالحضارة الآشورية، وإن أي جماعات جديدة وصلت واستقرت فيه، فهي قد اندمجت واندمجت بالكامل مع المجتمع المحلي.
INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is the analysis of archaeological evidence coming from the late 2nd to early 1st millennium levels of Tell Barri, in order to examine the modality of the Assyrian–Aramaean interaction at the site and, generally, in the east-central part of the Upper Khabur region. The lack of textual records and iconographic evidence concerning the period and the issues under analysis here limit our ability to track potential political changes or the presence of new cultural entities at this site. I would like to point out here that the development of the material culture of Tell Barri as a consequence of local dynamics more than a result of direct external interferences. From this point of view, interactions between Assyrians and Aramaeans assume a different and secondary role in the evolution of the local culture.

The structure of the paper is based on two main points: firstly, I will provide the stratigraphic sequence and associated materials exposed in Tell Barri; secondly, I will attempt to interpret these archaeological data in relation to the historical events, trying to outline some implications with regard to a possible Aramaean and Assyrian encounter taking place at the site. Some general remarks concerning the status of the Upper Khabur valley, during the Dark Age, will be made.

As regards the cultural interaction concerning the Aramaean and Assyrian components in the eastern Khabur triangle, what can we infer by basing our reasoning only on every-day objects and remains from domestic contexts remains which do not come from palace or administrative contexts? Not very much, because there is no material culture that can be associated with Aramaean settlements and the presence of Aramaeans in this region has been very difficult to demonstrate in the archaeological record, especially for the first centuries of the Iron Age. However, analysing the Tell Barri sequence leads to some interesting observations and can provide a starting point for future following studies and issues to discuss.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The sudden appearance of the Aramaeans in the history of the Jazireh plains represented a new element after the crisis at the end of 2nd millennium. This the result of a change at the beginning of the Iron Age, when non-urbanized groups and nomads assumed importance as the Late Bronze Age system collapsed. There is no doubt that between the 11th and the 9th century a considerable change took place and the consequence was that Aramaean groups became important actors on the Near Eastern scene and assumed a leading role in Upper Mesopotamian history. When sources reappear, new states have replaced those of the Late Bronze Age period.

In the middle of the 12th century, the Assyrian state was in manifest difficulty and the territory controlled by the Assyrians suffered a drastic reduction. Aramaean activity, or more precisely, the activity of the Ahlamû/Aramaeans, as the historical cuneiform inscriptions defined the groups that had been wandering over the territories belonging to Aššur for a long time, eroded Assyrian supremacy over Upper Mesopotamia1. Beginning with the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BC), the annals give prominence to the Aramaean incursions, which probably were one of the main causes for the loss of administrative control over the Jazireh. It is in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I that the name “Ahlamû/Aramaeans”, described as belligerent, probably nomadic populations threatening sedentary communities and caravans, made its first historical appearance as enemies of Aššur. The first confrontations between Assyrians and Aramaeans date back to the Middle Assyrian period at the time of king Tiglath-pileser I, and Aššur-bêl-kala (1073–1056 BC) when Assyrians were fighting the Aramaeans in the Euphrates valley and tried to restore the power of their predecessors on the Middle Euphrates.

A significant component of Ahlamû/Aramaean groups seems to have included pastoralist nomads and semi-nomads, inhabiting the border of the administrated area, and who settled over less intensively cultivated zones. Tribal structure was the base of the social organisation of these groups: during periods of crisis, responding to different social and ecological conditions, and based upon the needs and availability of resources, people belonging to the tribe could convert to a settled or mobile life to adapt more easily to different environmental stimuli, supplementing traditional animal husbandry with agriculture. This dualism of the tribe constituted an important economic and social advantage during periods of change and crisis: the resilience of this social structure and the diversified and flexible economy connected to it supplied the population with the adaptive ability to shift from one type of productive strategy to another as circumstances demanded. Particular ecological conditions, such as the drying up of pastureland or a decrease in agricultural production, internal development in the society, demographic factors, and the consequent space created by the crisis of centralised states, may have compelled Aramaean shepherds to move into sedentary zones, increasing the pressure and influence on sedentary and urbanised communities and leading to a confrontation with Assyrian authority. The tribe offered an alternative model to palace organization during a period of strong inner change and structural crisis of the Late Bronze Age political system. These groups must have been part of the local cultural landscape during the Late Bronze Age, located at the fringes of cultivated zones and involved in some way in the economic system, in a balanced relation with the needs of sedentary communities controlled by central authorities. The crisis in sedentary society and a political vacuum may have allowed pastoralist leaders to assume control in the sedentary sphere, while keeping close links with the mobile segment of tribe which continued its traditional way of life. The shaping of the Aramaean state of Bit Bakhiani, with Guzana/Tell Halaf as its capital, established since the 10th century and which had fallen under the control of Aššur in the middle of the 9th century, was the product of the growing importance and power of Aramaeans over the economic hinterland of the native Assyrians.

After a period of weakness, at the end of the 10th century, the Assyrians began a series of successful campaigns in the west. The kings followed an explicit policy of expansion, with annual military expeditions to subjugate their neighbours. The reign of Aššur-dān II (934–912 BC) marks a renaissance of Assyrian power. From that time, some cuneiform texts indicate that Assyrian kings resettled the area of the Jazirê, previously partially abandoned, incorporated Aramaean states into the empire and used deportations of people as an instrument of political control and economic improvement. Assyrian people were resettled in territories that had probably been abandoned. From the campaigns accounts of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) it is generally assumed that the Balikh and the Khabur regions were regained and organised on the basis of a new system of agricultural colonisation and with a new settlement pattern. From this date onwards the progressive expansion, the conquest of new

2. Concerning social evolution during periods of radical change see Schwartz & Nichols 2006.
3. Masset-Rouault 2001a, p. 74–75; 82–85. It has been suggested that the underlying causes of the collapse of the Middle Assyrian empire may have been a change to a warmer drier climate in about 1200 BC, not only making agriculture less productive, but also affecting the grazing lands of the nomadic population and forcing them to invade previously farmed areas (Neumann & Parpola 1987, p. 161–162). The osteological research carried out by Arkadius Soltysiak on human remains from Tell Ashara, Tell Masaikh, Tell Barri and Aššur, presented during the 6th ICAANE held in Rome in May 2008, support the hypothesis of an agricultural crisis: “in the Early Iron Age populations the frequency of enamel hypoplasia was higher, the frequency of dental caries much lower, and the mortality of children greater than during the Bronze Age and after the recovery in later Neo-Assyrian period. Such a pattern strongly suggests undernutrition and decrease of food quality” (p. 99 of the list of papers presented at the 6th ICAANE).
6. For the origin and formation process of Aramaean kingdoms see Sader 2000, p. 68–76.
territories and their management became the intention of Assyrian policy. A direct consequence of the enlargement of the empire was the absorption of different cultural influences and the elaboration of a new language whose original components can sometimes be clearly observed in the archaeological record, but more often we can only just make them out.

**The archaeological data**

During the early part of the 1st millennium, a change in the pattern and structure of settlement, that differentiated it from Bronze Age pattern, has been suggested: the picture comprised a limited number of large urban centres and a dense network of villages spreads over the plains, often on the lower town of ancient tells. Archaeological remains that date to between the mid 11th and mid 9th century are almost completely absent in the region. From the 9th century onwards and especially after the colonisation of the 8th century the picture improves because of an increase in the documentation: a dispersed framework of little rural sites attests to the growth of settlements during the Neo-Assyrian imperial period with an increase in land occupation. However, stratified material from 8th to 7th century is very rare. Between the Middle Assyrian and the Neo-Assyrian period some sites were probably abandoned, like Tell Brak, while others, like Tell Barri and Tell Hamidiye, continued to be inhabited: architectural remains indicate the presence of palace architecture at both sites. In particular, the sequence of Iron Age layers exposed at Tell Barri helps us to evaluate the consistence and type of the occupation in the eastern part of the Upper Khabur triangle.

Evidence at Tell Barri from the end of the 2nd and the beginning of 1st millennium has been found and investigated by the team of P. E. Pecorella, in two different areas (fig. 1a): on the south-eastern slope, in Area G, where a continuous stratigraphic sequence spanning the Mitannian to the post-Assyrian period was exposed between 1998 and 2003; and on the western slope, in Area J, where a Neo-Assyrian palace has been cleared, starting in 1997. Its original construction can probably be attributed to Tukulti-ninurta II (890–884 BC).

**The evidence of Area G**

The excavation carried out in Area G revealed a sequence of strata important for defining the events characterising the site during this period. The stratigraphic segment that interests us here includes eight main phases; it begins with the abandonment level of a Middle Assyrian building (Phase 1d = stratum 33A; fig. 1d) and ends with another in which a new plan of the built-up area can be observed (Phase 8 = stratum 25; fig. 3d). Between these two levels, there are strata characterised by remains of modest dwellings and open spaces devoted to domestic activities (Phase 2–6, 7B = strata 32–27, 26A) except one stratum containing a group of tombs (Phase 7A = stratum 26B).

Pottery typology and some associated objects provide us good elements to date this sequence at the end of the Late Bronze Age/early phases of the Iron Age. In particular, we can date Phase 1 (strata 33a–c) of the large Middle Assyrian building back to the 12th century and the buildings of Phase 8 (stratum 25)

13. Preliminary reports have been regularly published over the years: for more detailed information concerning the layers of Areas G, sectors A–D, 7–10 and J, it is useful refer to Pecorella 1996, 1997, 1999a & b, 2003; Pecorella & Pierobon Benoit 2003, 2004, 2005a & b, 2008. I would like to thank the director of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Tell Barri, R. Pierobon Benoit, who gave me the opportunity to continue my field research started under the direction of P. E. Pecorella.
14. The whole Middle Neo-Assyrian sequence is composed of eighteen strata belonging to eleven archaeological phases. Phases 1–8 will be discussed in this paper.
Figure 1a: Tell Barri topographic plan (from Marchand 2004); b: Area G, stratum 33C, late phase (Pecorella & Pernobon Benoit 2005a, p. 60); c: Area G, stratum 33B (ibid., p. 66); d: Area G, stratum 33A (ibid., p. 68).
to approximately the 8th century. Starting from the stratum 25, the typology of ceramic material results different and more similar to the late Neo-Assyrian repertoire well known from the other provincial and capital cities. The date of these strata, based mainly on pottery parallels and stratigraphic observations, is confirmed by the presence, in a tomb from stratum 18, at the end of the sequence analysed here, of a typical Neo-Babylonian stamp seal, the production of which begins during the last quarter of the 7th century.\(^{15}\)

The stratigraphy shows a progressive evolution in the occupation at the site with some changes in quality of building especially in two strata dated, one, back to the end of 2nd millennium and the other to a period before the 8th century, probably around the middle of the 9th century. The recognition of any architectural style or plan is difficult, because of the limited dimensions of the excavated areas, about 16 x 16 m within Area G.

Phase 1b (stratum 33C; fig. 1b) marks a significant moment in the history of the settlement, at the end of the 2nd millennium when a large building was erected. The pottery repertoire and a cuneiform tablet, from the debris filling the rooms of the Middle Assyrian residential building are datable to the reign of AŠšur-bēl-kala (1076–1057 BC)\(^{16}\) and provide an important reference point in the Late Bronze Age sequence. The stratigraphic evidence reveals that the building, constructed in the first phase of Middle Assyrian period and renovated a different times during the 12th century and then in the first half of the 11th (stratum 33B; fig. 1c), was abandoned in the second half of 11th century (Phase 1d, stratum 33A). A few rooms were reused at that time for shelter and for domestic purposes (fig. 1e); most of the building was in ruins, partially filled with the material resulting from the collapse of the mudbricks walls.

On top of the flattened debris of the building, during the Phase 2 (strata 32 A–C), the area was resettled and remains are of small-scale domestic structures (fig. 2a): simple dwellings are built with annexes, various domestic devices and places devoted to open-air activities. Several pits were cut in the open-air area. The organisation of the site seems to have been affected by a change given that, instead of a large residential complex, only simple houses were constructed. The local apparatus generated during the Middle Assyrian expansion, somehow passed through a crisis after the weakening of central control.

The area maintains the same features and its domestic use in the next Phase 3 (stratum 31) as attested by the presence of two simple houses nearby (fig. 2b). Two pit tombs with adult corpses are located not far from the buildings. On the floor inside the room 1013, a fragment of an unusual cuneiform tablet was found\(^{17}\): both sides show stylised drawings of animal intestines with captions.

In Phase 4 (stratum 30) the area was partially levelled and devoted to open-air activities (fig. 2c). There are numerous small floors, mud-bricks benches and bread ovens: this suggests that it was mainly used for household activities.

During the period identified as Phase 5 (strata 28 and 29), the area was occupied by two major groups of buildings and small rooms for domestic use with facilities including different kinds of ovens (fig. 2d).

During the next Phase 6 (stratum 27), there was a sort of refurbishing of the structures. More substantial houses, on the same axis, where built all over the area, leaving the north-west area as open space, as the numerous bread ovens and small pavements attest (fig. 3a).

The necropolis of Phase 7 (stratum 26B)\(^{18}\) cut the ruins of the abandoned buildings and seems to indicate a reduction of the settled area on top of the tell (fig. 3b); however, the pottery production points to a significant continuity between the previous and subsequent strata. Pit and cist-type tombs and burials in jars are more or less regularly spaced. The pit-tombs were rather simple: the body was laid on its back with a few grave goods, some personal ornament and one or two pots to preserve food for the last voyage.

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15. PECORELLA 2002, p. 622. The material culture complex found in the level on top of strata 21–20 (strata 19–15) appears to be a continuation of the tradition of the previous period and no break is visible in the pottery production.
Figure 2: Area G. a: stratum 32B (Pecorella & Pierobon Benoit 2004, p. 55); b: stratum 31 (Ibid., p. 60); c: stratum 30 (Ibid., p. 62); d: stratum 29 (Ibid., p. 65).
Figure 3: Area G. a: stratum 27 (Pecorella 2003, p. 47); b: stratum 26b (Ibid., p. 49); c: stratum 26a (Pecorella 1999b, p. 64); d: stratum 25 (Pecorella 2003, p. 47).
In two tombs, the bodies were deposited in two or three very large vessels (pithoi and jars sometimes cut longitudinally), with personal ornaments, especially necklaces with a variety of beads of several materials, particularly cornelian. There were three cylinder seals amongst the necklace beads of these tombs. Two of them were in faience and one in lapis lazuli. The burial typology has parallels with the Middle Assyrian tombs of strata 33C, 31 and 29. Tomb 774 is the most important in the area, located in a large pit, well lined with mudbrick walls and a cover made of the same material. The tomb was still visible during the re-occupation of the area as a dwelling site, during Phase 7 (fig. 3c) and slightly later, in Phase 8 (fig. 3d) when the building VI (stratum 26A) was built alongside the monument which, later, was encircled by a courtyard.

In the subsequent strata of the Iron Age sequence, a series of buildings were erected and, later, additions and improvements were introduced to the main body of the edifices. Evidence of urban planning and specialisation of architecture appears from this point onwards. Starting from Phase 8, a different layout of the built-up area can be observed (fig. 3d). Most of the area was occupied by a unique building, organised around a big central courtyard which incorporates and probably develops around the mudbricks tomb 774 (fig. 3d). Respect for earlier graves highlights the cultural continuity with the previous period, attested also in other cultural aspects19.

In Phase 9 (fig. 4a), the layout of the sector assumed a form that it would be maintained till the end of the Neo-Assyrian period (fig. 4b-c).

The material culture associated with these layers consists principally of pottery sherds. As for the excavated pottery20, we will take into account a selection of diagnostic types that have parallels with other regional traditions in order to underline the appearance of new morphological and technological traits and shed new light on regional links. The pottery coming from the abandonment level of the building (Phase 1d, stratum 33A) maintains obvious characteristics of the repertoire from the previous period and, typologically speaking, does not differ typologically very much: next to pottery of clear Middle Assyrian tradition some new shapes appear, even if their presence is very low in percentage. Ceramic indicators including distinctive shapes, as for example conical (fig. 7, line 33A, type 210B) and carinated bowls (fig. 8; types 212 and 214) and ovoid jars with a ribbon rim (fig. 9, line 33A), were very widespread in Syria, Iraq and south-eastern Turkey during the Middle Assyrian period21. The first bowl on line 33A in figure 7, is very similar to some shapes widespread over south-eastern Anatolia and also has parallels in Tell Bderi22.

During Phase 2 (strata 32a-c) the typology and macroscopic features of bowls remain the same. Besides more common and easily recognisable shapes with strong parallels with the Tell Bderi repertoire23, there are particular types (fig. 8, line 32, types 212-4) similar to some coming from Tille Höyük and Üçtepe24, located respectively on the upper course of the Euphrates and of the Tigris rivers. Furthermore, the bowl type with grooves and rib below rim (fig. 7, lines 33A, 32, 29-28 type 210AW) is considered a local type of the territories north of Tur-Abdin mountains during the Early Iron Age and belong in some ways to the so-called “groovy” or “grooved Ware” horizon25.

Also the pottery from the Phases 2 and 3 (strata 32 and 31) preserves a strong Middle Assyrian character in vessels morphology (fig. 7, type 210B; fig. 8, types 212, 214, 217), but the amount of variants increases and the degree of standardisation of the shapes weakens. Carinated bowls with in-turned thickened rims (fig. 8, line 31, type 221) find parallels in the Tell Bderi repertoire26. The presence of a base with three

20. The final publication of Tell Barri pottery sequence is forthcoming.
21. Regarding the ceramic repertoire of the Middle Assyrian period see the preliminary studies in D’AGOSTINO 2008a, 2006 and 2005.
22. PFALZNER 1995, fig. 140c–d.
23. Ibid., fig. 136–157.
24. BLAYLOCK 1999, fig. 4: 7, 11; KOROĞLU 1998, fig. 6, 12.
Figure 4: Area G. a: stratum 24 (Pecorella 1999b, p. 67); b: stratum 23 (Ibid., p. 69); c: stratum 22 (Pecorella 1999a, p. 65); d: stratum 17 (Pecorella 1996, p. 65).
looped feet (fig. 9, lower line 31) found in the debris fill of a room is interesting: it is an exogenous element in the Tell Barri repertoire, and direct parallels can be found at Yunus Tepe near Kirkemiş27, at Tell Shiukh Fawqâni28, at Tille Höyük29 and in the Upper Khabur area at Tell Halaf30, Tell Fekheriyeh31 and in the Assyrian heartland at Nimrud32 where, however, it dates from the 10th to the 8th century BC.

The carinated bowl with everted rim of Phase 4 (fig. 8, line 30, type 216) is a shape that has parallels in the Elâzığ region33, at Zitayar Tepe in local products of the Early Iron Age34, and at Tell Jurn Kabîr35 on the Euphrates, in levels dated approximately from the 10th century onwards. The pottery assemblage, in terms of forms and fabrics, can be considered a derivation of Middle Assyrian prototypes but starts to be characterised by morphological elements which were typical of the subsequent Neo-Assyrian period.

During Phase 5 (strata 29-28), while the Middle Assyrian roots of the repertoire are sometime still visible, a process of differentiation and an articulation of the pottery manufacture take place. Most of the types follow the main morphological main traits of the widespread shapes of the Middle Assyrian tradition36 but a few hole-mouthed pots (fig. 7, line 29-28, type 210AW; fig. 9, line 29-28), widespread over zones to the north of Tur-Abdin, in the Keban area, Upper Euphrates37 and Upper Tigris valleys38, but also present at Tell Halaf39, attest to the fact that different influences are at work.

In Phase 6 (stratum 27) and then in Phase 7 (strata 26 A & B) the Middle Assyrian morphologic tradition tends to weaken and the pottery repertoire begins to assume typical characteristics of late Neo-Assyrian tradition (fig. 7 and 8, lines 27).

The pottery of Phases 8–7 (strata 26a & 25), typically Neo-Assyrian in morphology and in manufacturing technique, has to be dated probably back to the Middle Iron Age. Apart from some types, we observe that the most of the repertoire consists of carinated bowls, which are attested at Qasrij Cliff40, Nimrud41 and Aššur42 for instance, and the bowl with projecting rim and carination. The thin walled bowls (fig. 10, line 4 from the bottom) have parallels at Tell Sheikh Hassan43 and Lidar Höyük44, dated between the 9th and 8th century as well as beakers and jar rims that are typical of the Neo-Assyrian period.

Various types considered as a reference type for the latest Neo-Assyrian period (fig. 10, line 3 from the top and fragment on the right, in line 3 from the bottom), appear in the next phases (Phases 9–11 = strata 24–22) and are typical of the late 8th–7th centuries. The diffusion of certain ceramic types originally at home in Assyria and then widespread over the conquered territories seems to accompany the establishment of imperial control. Gradual introduction and use of mass-produced ceramics, characterised by different quality and less variation in shapes and sizes, suggest the existence of a few centralised production facilities and could be considered as evidence of the reorganisation of the local economy as a possible consequences of imperial integration45.

29. Baylock 1999, 277 fig. 4: 14 and 16.
33. Sevin 1991, fig. 6: 6; 3.
34. Matney 1998, fig. 7; McDonald 2005, 23–26.
35. Eiden & Ackermann 1999, fig. 4: 7; 6: 3.
36. See the occurrence of types 212, 214 and 607 in table 1.
40. Curtis 1989, fig. 7–8.
41. Oates 1959, fig. XXXV-XXXVI.
42. Haller 1954, fig. 6: ax1, bc.
43. Schneider 1999a, fig. 7: 1–8; 1999b, fig. 3: 3–8.
44. Müller 1999, fig. 15, 17.
Figure 5: Area G, stratum 26B, graves 991 and 895. a: seal E.2936; b: seal E.2935; c: grave 991; d: seals E.2838 and E.2839; e: grave 895. a, b, d (Pecorella 2003, p. 71; 73); c, d (Ibid., p. 53).
In general, the assemblage of Area G seems mostly homogeneous and uniform. Proceeding upwards through the levels, the picture becomes more articulate in time; it improves and is differentiated in morphology and manufacturing from Middle Assyrian standard types, which decrease in number from one stratum to the other.

Forms typical of the Late Bronze Age occur side by side with forms that become common during the 1st millennium, and in some shapes the progression from one to another can be seen quite clearly. Some features gradually lead to the introduction of the proper, standard imperial shapes. The identification of this transitional material is difficult, when it is not stratified, given the considerable affinities it has with both, the earlier and more recent assemblages.

We can read the evolution of the ceramic repertoire as a product of an inner development at the site; it is due to social and economic dynamics, within an Assyrian cultural milieu, more than as a direct product of external influences. The evidence of foreign products and characteristic morphological traits, in a way important for a number of reasons, is poor, consisting of very few examples, which are not relevant in terms of percentage and statistic evaluation. In any case, we obviously cannot consider the contribution of an Aramaean presence at the site.

Among the grave goods accompanying the buried bodies, in addition to the pottery and small objects, the necropolis of stratum 268 produced three cylinder seals in faience and one in lapis lazuli, adding more evidence of the persistence of Assyrian cultural traits during the period when the site was becoming less important.

The seals E.2935 and E.2936, fitted with a bronze hub ending in an eyelet, were found in the tomb 991 (fig. 5c); E.2839 and E.2838 into the tomb 895 (fig. 5e). Concerning the materials used in the production, faience seals appear predominately in Assyria and northern Mesopotamia whereas as lapis lazuli is rare in the Assyrian seal repertoire. All the seals have lines bordering the top and bottom of the scene.

E.2839 (faience; fig. 5d, at the bottom): a wingless griffin demon stands with empty hands on one side of the stylised palm-tree flanked by a rampant wild goat with its head turning backwards over its shoulder. Astral symbols, winged disc and crescent, are concentrated along the upper edge of the seal. Ten wedges are arranged to fill the empty space. It is possible to note a rather casual composition with the juxtaposition of elements belonging to different contexts, ritual, naturalistic or of hunting scenes. The engraving is very clear, the figures appear stiff. It is probably a provincial product.

E.2838 (faience; fig. 5d, at the top): consists of a small fragment (1/4); a palm-tree, probably the hind legs of a goat and the base of a third unidentified element are distinguishable.

E.2935 (faience; fig. 5b): partly destroyed by excoriations and fractures, some particulars are not clear. A horse with raised forelegs is depicted in the act of the mounting the other, galloping, horse; on the back of the rising horse a large bird (?) is visible, of which only faint traces remain. On top of the scene astral symbols are represented. The natural scene is reminiscent of Middle Assyrian style and sensibility.

E.2936 (lapis lazuli; fig. 5a): a ritual scene where a standing figure with a table or altar between him and a stylised tree as a terminal is shown. The human figure in ritual attitude wearing a long fringed robe, holds a fly-whisk or a frond in one hand and another object in the other, maybe a staff or a bucket. At the back of the attendant, some wedges are being used as filling; between the human figure and the table/altar is an element, maybe a pot, on the ground. A crescent on top of tree and a star above the table/altar are represented. The scene is engraved in a shallow linear and schematic style.

46. The seals have been first published in 2003 preliminary report (PECORELLA 2003, p. 50; p. 71–73).
47. One of them is broken.
48. COLLON 2001, p. 3.
49. Ibid., p. 19.
50. PECORELLA 2002, p. 623. Also the E.2839 appears to be linked to the late Middle Assyrian cultural environment.
Figure 6: Area J. a: Stratum 14B (Pecorella & Pierobon Benoit 2005b, p. 11); b: fragments of painted stucco (Pecorella 2008, tav. 5); c: decorated door slabs (Pecorella 2005, fig. 24); d: basalt fragmentary object © Archives of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Tell Barri.
Apart from the lapis lazuli seal, which might be well a late Middle Assyrian product, the others could be dated to the 9th century or possibly earlier50. The scenes are similar to some examples dated around 9th–8th century51.

The evidence of AREA J

On the western slope of the tell, the Area J offers a different archaeological picture: here, in the debris filling the rooms, we have finds datable to the late Neo-Assyrian period and no strata covering the passage between 2nd and 1st millennia, as observed in Area G.

The remains exposed indicate the presence of a palace (fig. 6a), probably a building originally constructed by Tukulti-ninurta II; the inscribed stone found in 1960 and now in the Aleppo Museum52 mentioning the existence of a Neo-Assyrian palace in the city, most likely comes from this structure. A few rooms and a series of large and small paved courtyards have been cleared. The building was of some importance as denoted by the decoration of the walls consisting of a frieze of painted stucco with bands of rosettes and stripes (fig. 6b)53; and by the presence of a brick-paved bathroom with a stone ablution slab54. A large quantity of stucco fragments was recovered in the fill of the rooms. The stone “carpet” in room 71 and the alabaster slabs (fig. 6c) decorated with standard excised rosettes in registers and grids have similarities with Neo-Assyrian palace facilities55 while the general structure of the threshold has similarities with the architectural devices of some doors at Tell Halaf56. The palace of Area J was in use for a long time and documents a secondary occupation in the Neo-Babylonian period 57.

The pottery assemblage found in the fill debris can be dated from the end of the 7th century to the end of the 6th century BC58 and is similar to the assemblages coming from other late Neo-Assyrian cities. Regarding the morphology of the ceramics repertoire we can clearly consider it as typical late Neo-Assyrian, with a few examples datable to the 8th century which have not been published yet. Similarities in morphology run with the post-Phase 8 repertoire of the Area G. The continuous use of the rooms is probably the cause of the lack of pottery datable to the first half of the 9th century.

The general palace layout, characterised by long rooms and large paved courtyards, the decoration of the slabs and the painted stucco define the building as a typical Assyrian product.

As for the finds repertoire inside the building, the presence of a small stone object is worth noting. It can shed some light on the issue of interaction in which we are interested. It is a fragmentary object with a rectangular base (fig. 6d) showing a single head of a bull at the centre of the short front side. The interpretation of the head of the bull is rather unsure, being based on the presence of two symmetrical spirals that could be seen as stylised horns59. Found into the debris of the palace, and interpreted

51. MOORTGAT 1988, p. 72; Taf. 83: 705–708; Taf. 78-79, 662–672, in particular 672 for the fillings elements behind the attendant; HRUDA 1962, Taf. 24–25, in particular 11–14, 19, 38, 42.
54. The stone finds parallels in examples from Nimrud (MALLOWAN 1966, fig. 306 and 351); and Tell Halaf (NAUMANN 1950, p. 282, tav. 49: 1–2).
55. MALLOWAN 1966, p. 205 and fig. 141. Concerning the decoration pattern of the stone threshold found in the Burnt Palace of Nimrud, Mallowan wrote that “… covered with rosettes in the style of decorative masonry at Khorsabad”. Besides, P. E. Pecorella reported (PICORELLA & PIEROBON BENIT 2004, p. 88, 168) a personal observation of D. and J. Oates about the tight similarity between the Tell Barri “carpet” and a similar installation found in the women’s rooms of the Asurnasirpal palace at Nimrud, not yet published.
56. NAUMANN 1950, p. 131 and tav. 26, 43.
57. PICORELLA 2005, p. 269; PICORELLA & PIEROBON BENIT 2004, p. 79 and p. 94.
58. FIORINA et al. 2005, p. 89.
59. BOMBARDIERI 2008.
originally as an incense burner, mortar or stand, it provides an interesting element and testifies that some
iconographic motifs were by then diffused over a wide geographical area. Vessels of this type, made of
basalt and characterised by the presence of single or double heads of bulls or heads of lions at the front of
the vessel, or with heads of lions in a similar position, come mainly from Upper Mesopotamia, from the
Khabur in the east up to the upper part of the Euphrates in the west. Similar objects have been unearthed in
Karkemish60, Sultantepe61, Zincirli62, Hama,63 Tell Halaf,64 Tell Ahmar,65 Tell Umm el-Marra66 and, in
a circular variant, as grave goods inside the incineration/cremation graves of Deve Höyük67 and at Tell
Shiukh Fawqān68, in both circular and rectangular shapes. The period in which the production can be
placed is most probably from the end of the 8th century to at least the end of the 6th century BC. This kind
of objects is documented from the Early Iron Age when it probably had a ritual function or significance:
the symbolism of the bull is connected with the cult of the Storm God Teshup and, according to a more
recent hypothesis, of the Moon God, the main deity of the Aramaeans when they infiltrated northern
Syria and Mesopotamia. It is a cultural expression of the north-western Syrian, the Aramaean and the
Luwian world69, assimilated by Assyrians in the period of imperial expansion. However, the vessel with
a bull’s head allows us to observe the presence at Tell Barri of iconographic motifs attested in different
sites, belonging to both Aramaean and Assyrian areas of influence or direct control. And this presence
talks about possible external influences or at least a degree of interest towards themes and concepts that
would have taken place after the expansion of Neo-Assyrian empire.

**Discussion**

The investigations of specific elements of material culture may furnish some hints to help interpret
the Assyrian–Aramaean interaction at the site. The archaeological data we have presented above show
that this part of the settlement kept an Assyrian character, even if it changed function, dimension and
organisation after the abandonment of the large Middle Assyrian building. This is visible in the material
culture, as we can deduce primarily from the evolution of the pottery repertoire of Area G and later from
some of the architectural arrangements and facilities of the palace found in Area J. Other proof of the
Assyrian character of the local artistic taste can be found in the carved scenes of the seals found in the
tombs, who clearly belong to the Assyrian cultural sphere. As regards burial practices, parallels with the
typology of Middle Assyrian tombs are noteworthy: the fact that graves were found in the open-air and
not near the houses or below the house floors, represents a novelty of Phase 7 (= stratum 26B) compared
to the graves of Phases 3, 5 and 1 (respectively strata 31, 29 and back 33C)70. This practice of Phase 7
is also documented in other Assyrian cities, such as Ashur.71

Considering the limited documentation available from the Tell Barri excavations due to the small
size of the exposed areas in relation to the extent of the Iron Age settlement, and basing the reasoning on

60. WOOLLEY 1952, pl. 69: d.
61. LLOYD 1954, pl. VIII: 1, 2.
64. HROUDA 1962, Taf. 53: 131–134.
65. TROKAY 2000, 1674, fig. 1, 10.
66. SCHWARTZ et al. 2003, fig. 37.
67. MOOREY 1980, 45 and fig. 8, n. 133-135. Other parallels are in cremation cemeteries of Karkemish region.
68. MARRINSON 2005, 547 and 564, n. 282.
69. For this interpretation and bibliography see NOVÁK 2005, p. 255–256. According to the scholar “the slowly developing
symbioses of Moon God and Storm God, in inscriptions as well as in iconography, seems to be one of the results of the
acculturation of Aramaeans and Luwians* and in a second step, we can add, an element absorbed by the Assyrians testifying
to a form of acculturation. The relation between the Storm God and the bull is well known also in northern Syria during the
2nd millennium but this class of object is a clear product of western artisans, considering their main area of diffusion.
70. PECORELLI & PEBBONI BOISSOT 2008; D’AGOSTINO 2008b.
71. HALLER 1954; NASRABADI 1999, p. 83.
the present set of available archaeological data, only some general remarks can be made. In the Khabur area the ongoing Assyrian influence produced a stronger continuity in material culture making it hard to distinguish signs of external contributions in the development of the society during the Early Iron Age: pottery shapes, expressions of visual art, iconography, all were embedded in a strongly Assyrianised local environment and evidence of continuity with the preceding Late Bronze levels is evident in the subsequent Iron Age strata, with regard to architecture, elements of material culture and every-day objects.

In the Tell Barri sequence we note that during the whole period there is no sign of any external interference on material culture that can be labelled as “Aramaean”, excluding a very few, secondary elements. The production of lower status and every-day objects, such as pottery, continued to be locally oriented and the presence of new morphological traits is explicable within the local pottery tradition. Cultural continuity is readily observable in the pottery assemblages from the end of the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Rather than revealing a sharp and abrupt break in stylistic tradition and technology between these two periods, the Tell Barri ceramic sequence indicates a smooth, unbroken development of vessel types from one phase to the next. There is evidence that the frequency of many pot shapes diminished in the passage to the Iron Age. Despite the change, it is apparent that several vessel forms continued throughout the last years and persisted or evolved gradually during the subsequent Iron Age occupation phase. This considerable continuity is also demonstrated by technological developments.

On the other hand, the influence of the Assyrian world is continuous, also during the Early Iron Age, when the local components seems more active, as demonstrated by the loss of standardisation within the pottery repertoire and by the presence, however scarce, of Grooved Ware vessels and ceramic types not representative of the local tradition. They are linked to the northern and western territories and are to be considered intrusive artefacts, an influx of population dispersed over the northern Mesopotamian and the eastern Anatolian regions and an outcome of significant mobility across a wide area. The eastern Upper Khabur probably experienced a period of autonomy characterised by contacts with neighbouring regions but that did not affect the Assyrian character of the site.

The settlement of Tell Barri continued to be occupied on a smaller scale. Changes in site arrangement are explicable by a normal phase of reduction of the settled area on the tell, caused by instability and movement of people from one site to another or from a centre into its hinterland. The settlement was reduced in size and probably diminished in complexity at the end of the Late Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age: there was a reversion to a local and rural pattern of settlement. Intra-settlement density was much lower in the strata between the remains of the large Middle Assyrian building and the new planning of strata 25–24. This part of the Khabur triangle remained within the Assyrian cultural sphere and maybe under some form of political relation.

The extensive building activities at the time of Tukulti-ninurta II, in Area J and the contemporary re-planning of Area G, renewed the importance of Tell Barri as a provincial town, equally during the Middle Assyrian period when Adad-nirari I probably constructed his palace which documents the continuation of a similar settlement pattern between the 2nd and 1st millennium. We see a process witnessing the growth of the settlement and a change of function of the neighbourhoods of the site at the same time. This activity could be connected to the new rise of direct Assyrian control over the city. Could these elements be signs of the re-appropriation by Assyrian kings of the city, left culturally Assyrian during the crisis period, but perhaps controlled for a certain period by local or even Aramaeans leaders? This issue is open for debate in the absence of archaeological or textual evidence which might indicate the existence of either a local kingdom loyal to Aššur or an independent Aramaean entity. No new architecture or iconography was created by the Aramaeans because, for the most part, they adopted the edifices and ideas of the occupied settlement as well as their every-day objects. In this case the traces left by these groups that were integrated and absorbed by local populations are not visible archeologically.

72. Cf. Table 1 and the morphologic development of the vessel shapes in figures 7–10.
We have two possibilities: either the Aramaean presence is still to be discovered in another part of the tell, or this kind of presence is not visible archeologically at Tell Barri.

It is likely that the Assyrians never lost the control over the Upper Khabur region. The administration mechanism changed, becoming less centralised, as did the status of the site and the settlement arrangement in Tell Barri. This is illustrated by the abandonment of the large Middle Assyrian building which was substituted by a simple domestic structure constructed on top of it and by the de-standardisation of pottery production. The penetration into the Upper Khabur region by the Aramaeans culminated in the emergence of the Bit Bakhiani state, but there is no clear information at the moment concerning its real extent and territorial border. According to Lipiński, Nisibis, modern Nusaybin, was the centre of an Aramaean state which was conquered by Adad-nirari II in 896 BC and annexed to Assyria: the sources seem to indicate that the Aramaeans of this region did not manage to create a federation of clans or a kingdom. Apart from the epigraphic data coming from Tell Halaf and Tell Fekheriye, an absence of Aramaic documents characterises the region in the second half of the 9th and the 8th century.

As Kühne observed in his detailed study on historical geography of the Lower Khabur, the establishment of the Aramaean state during the late 10th and the 9th century “marked the line which separated politically and in the way of material culture the Assyrian “provinces” on the Lower Khabur from the west”. A similar interpretation could also be valid concerning the eastern part of the Upper Khabur, east of the Jaghanjarg river: based on the valid archaeological evidence currently available, the boundary line of direct influence could have followed one of the *wadis* running through the whole Khabur valley, the Wadi Ganzir or the Wadi Zarqan for instance; and could have been limited to some sites of the foothills of Tur-Abdin range, according to the Assyrian sources. As yet there is little archaeological information by which one can distinguish between an Assyrian and, for example, an Aramaean settlement: topographic and morphologic elements, quality of buildings or ceramic assemblages taken alone provide little indication of the cultural identity of any particular settlement. However, it seems that the Assyrians did not entirely lose control over the eastern Upper Khabur region, which became a sort of buffer zone, with some centres controlled or directly influenced by the Assyrians and the rest of the territory not subject to their control. In this phase, it was logistically difficult for the Assyrians to maintain a permanent presence in this region, which resembled a kind of appendage linked to the centre by the corridor of the Lower Khabur valley, with its network of centres more or less loyal to Assur, or directly through the steppe of the Sinjar area. In fact, we note differences of mentality in the conception of the palace decoration of Tell Halaf compared to that of Tell Barri, both sites located respectively in the western and eastern parts of the Khabur triangle. In addition, both the red burnished ware and the local painted ware with horizontal red stripes found in Tell Halaf and Tell Fekheriye are absent in

73. It has been noted that the Assyrian withdrawal from their territories was a result of the Aramaean diffusion, even if the Assyrian homeland was probably never fully taken away from Assyrian control; the spread of Aramaean settlement is seen as complementing Assyrian colonisation (Postgate 1974, p. 234, 236).
74. Lipiński 2000a, p. 109–110.
75. Amadaï Guizzo 1998, p. 303–304. W. Röllig underlined that the Aramaic texts are concentrated in the 7th century contexts at different sites (2000, p. 183–184); See also Fales 2005b.
78. As observed by R. Zadok (Zadok 1997, p. 216), speaking of the ethnolinguistic composition of Assyria, “it seems that Assyrians were capable of Assyrianization of foreigners only in their core country, namely Assyria proper and certain adjacent regions, which always had an adequate Assyrian demographic base […]”: the settlement of Tell Barri could be part of the above mentioned adjacent regions.
79. The architectural and artistic expressions of the Aramaean cities of the Upper Khabur show traces of Assyrian influence having deep roots and a long history in the region: so we can note this aspect in the rectangular plan of Tell Halaf compared to the circular layout of Zincirli, for example, or in text and inscription styles coming from Tell Fekheriye (Novák 2005, p. 254–255 with reference to Ortmann 1971).
the strata exposed in Tell Barri, equally, the Grooved pottery, found in considerable quantity at Tell Halaf represents a negligible amount in Tell Barri. We cannot exclude the possibility that also for the eastern part of the Upper Khabur the system of control and management was loosened, leaving room for local lords who in some case were loyal to the centre and in others antagonist, but here we are on speculative grounds.

Within this framework, the exogenous presence or an external interference might be seen in a shift of settlement layout and in a change of pottery repertoire. In fact, the loss of the degree of standardisation of vessels shows a change in the production and, in general, in the economy of the site. Moreover, even if this can be a sign of the decay in central control, we cannot establish if the Aramaeans were the cause of this change or other tribes/people that took advantage of the Assyrian weakness or if it was simply due to the changing status of the settlement. The intrusive artefacts, such as the grooved pots, show parallels with the south-eastern Anatolian assemblages, and if we have to refer them to a cultural environment, we have to think of the tribes or mixed communities living around the Taurus mountains, even if the historical sources talk about Aramaean tribes threatening the integrity of the Assyrian interests. It is possible that artefacts belonging to a different cultural context testify to new contacts with the products of surrounding regions in the period of Assyrian weakness during which we can suggest a major mobility of nomads and semi-nomads along ancient routes.

However, the archaeological data suggest that the Aramaean influence on local material culture during the whole period examined is not recognisable in Tell Barri.

During the late period, the possible influence or traces of an interaction are visible only in the presence of craft products from the palace of Area J, and consequently concern only the higher segment of the local society involved in administrative and management activities. In this case, during the period of maximum expansion of the Assyrian empire, we can also see the diffusion also in the Assyrian mainland of some iconographic motifs and cultural traits, probably accompanying new ideas and beliefs, as a consequence of the integration of other cultural entities. The significance assumed by this iconographic symbolism was probably different in the two contexts but attests to an attitude amongst the Assyrian elite that allowed the absorption of external elements; indeed, the intrinsic value of the objects and the associated message could remain close to Assyrian sensibilities. The mere diffusion of single iconographic motifs in visual art and in the glyptic does not attest a form of direct interaction between two components at the site, but simply explains the existence of relations between cultural groups that have been in touch for a long time against a background of mobility within the territorial borders of the empire. It just provides a clue that Assyria adopted styles and luxury goods coming from its periphery, as it is frequent in the behaviour and history of imperial systems. The subject matters of various Neo-Assyrian iconography seem to derive from the west, and also the inspiration for the protective portal figures and models for the palace reliefs should probably be sought in Syria.

The last period of the Assyrian rule, from the second half of the 8th century onwards, was a time of intense internal relations developed between the territories under submission to the Assyrian centre, which produced a cultural and social amalgam. So the Neo-Assyrian world shared a common basis of mythological and iconographic traditions with the Aramaean world: admitting this shared tradition and culture might explain why some motifs were so successful in the heartland of the empire.

The Assyrian character of almost the entire range of material culture in both Area G and J is persistent during the Early and Middle Iron Age. The pottery and the iconographic motifs decorating the palace are largely comparable to those of Assyrian capitals and the cylinder seals display styles characteristic

81. Except a fragment of painted bowl.
82. Bartl 1989; the context and origin of the Tell Halaf grooved assemblage are not clear.
84. Schwartz 1989, p. 280, noted that “the evidence which we possess on the early Aramaeans is predominantly concerned with the royal, urban sector of Aramaean society”: outside the large centers and in absence of monumental architecture it is almost impossible to recognize “Aramaean evidence”.
85. TUNCA 1996.
of the Assyrian heartland. In the case of Tell Barri, the evidence of a possible Aramaean influence or clues of an interaction between local and external non-Assyrian elements are almost completely absent or, if they existed, they are superficial, linked to a specific segment of the local, urbanised society but almost impossible to recognise in the absence of written texts, inscriptions, sculptures or public/official architecture and by basing the analysis only on the pottery and the sequence of domestic structures.

Due to this lack of evidence, nothing definitive can be said regarding Assyrian–Aramaean interaction. In this case the change from Assyrian to Aramaean authority, if it happened, did not produce a modification of the main elements of material culture. The site was inhabited by the same Assyrianised community and if newcomers arrived or new groups settled, they were absorbed and integrated almost completely into the local society. This process of assimilation of different cultural entities and consequent acculturation, as regards language and other habits, produced a city that modified its composition in comparison to the 13th century Middle Assyrian settlement. However, during the first part of the Iron Age the Aramaean impact on local culture cannot have been very deep, if there was any at all. This confirms the capability of Aramaeans to adapt to the ways of the settled people without producing changes in material culture.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interaction between two components did not leave traces during the period of possible direct control, but appears as a product of the imperial system and as an outcome of the Assyrian–Aramaean amalgam. The tight cultural closeness to the Assyrian mainland after the 13th century Middle Assyrian conquest, which we can observe in the archaeological record, makes it particularly hard to recognise any Aramaean influence, for both early and late phases of the sequence in the absence of a better composite set of documentation. Basing the reasoning on the excavated data currently available, the Aramaean presence or traces of coexistence of different cultural components is not clearly detectable. During the period of imperial expansion only superficial indicators and a few hints suggest the diffusion of iconographic elements belonging to a western cultural sphere, but limited to a context related to the upper segment of local society.

Whether historical events, political change and migrations had direct consequences on material culture is questionable; however the Aramaean diffusion, in the part of the eastern Khabur triangle where Tell Barri is located, was a process that did not affect the main cultural characters. The cultural interchange was limited to superficial and marginal elements, during the early period of contact. Whether the Aramaeans took control of the settlement is a question open to debate and of course the interpretation of archaeological observations can be discussed. The Aramaean population, whether they took political control of the site or constituted a newly settled component at the site under lords loyal to Aššur, was in any case completely integrated into the local population and the Neo-Assyrian kings and their armies found here cultural traditions of Assyrian origin. In this case the Aramisation, which started in a wider sense at the end of 2nd millennium as a phenomenon of diffusion of people and cultural elements from the west, has to be considered a late product of the uniform environment, a consequence of the imperial conquest of the west and set within the normal dynamics of reciprocal cultural interchange between conquerors and subject peoples. However, more research and new excavations need to be done to understand better the complex phenomenon of interaction between Assyrians and Aramaeans.
Figure 7: Area G, pottery selection from strata 33A-27. Curved bowls. © Archives of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Tell Barri.
Figure 8: Area G, pottery selection from strata 33A-27. Carinated bowls.
© Archives of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Tell Barri.
Figure 9: Area G, pottery selection from strata 33A-27. Jars, a looped base and grooved pots. © Archives of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Tell Barri.
Figure 10: Area G, pottery selection from strata 26A-22.

© Archives of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Tell Barri.
Table 1: Distribution of some diagnostic types present in figures 7-10
The numeric value are in percentage terms. The percentage is referred to the total amount of diagnostic sherds (i.e. entire vessels, complete profiles with rim and rim sherds of open and closed pots).

1.1 Occurrence of bowl types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>33 B</th>
<th>33 A</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>29-28</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>24</th>
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<td>type 212</td>
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<td>11.17</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.77</td>
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<td>0.69</td>
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<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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<td>0.69</td>
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<td>10.32</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.47</td>
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<td>1.10</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.27</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.15</td>
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<td>type 221</td>
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<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.38</td>
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1.2 Average of values occurrence, in relation to Late Bronze Age (strata 33D-31) and Early Iron Age (strata 30-27) levels. The second column gives the percentage as regard the total amount of diagnostic sherds, the third one as regard the amount of bowls total.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>LBA</th>
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<tr>
<td>type 210</td>
<td>17.56</td>
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<td>type 212</td>
<td>8.45</td>
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<td>type 216</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>type 217</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.31</td>
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1.3 Occurrence of jar with ribbon rim (type 607) and grooved bowls (type 210W).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>33 B</th>
<th>33 A</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>29-28</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>24</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>607</td>
<td>16.07</td>
<td>14.89</td>
<td>16.83</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
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<td>210W</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>31.57</td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>16.98</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td></td>
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ABRÉVIATIONS

AAAS  Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes, Damas.
ANES  Ancient Near Eastern Studies.
AOAT  Alter Orient und Altes Testament.
AVO  Altertumskunde des Vorderen Orients.
BAH  Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique.
BBVO  Berliner Beiträge zum vorderen Orient.
CAD  The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago.
CRAI  Comptes-Rendus de l´Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.
EVO  Egitto e Vicino Oriente, Pisa.
JESHO  Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient.
MARI  MARI. Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires, Paris.
MVS  Münchener vorderasiatische Studien.
OIC  Oriental Institute Communications.
OLA  Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta.
RAVA  Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie, Berlin.
RIMA 3  Grayson 1996.
TAVO  Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients.
WDOG  Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft.

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