

Rafał Koliński

OLD ASSYRIAN OR OLD BABYLONIAN?
THE CULTURAL SETTING
OF NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA
AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE 2nd MILLENIUM B.C.



PALAMÉDES

A Journal of Ancient History

Nº1 (2006)

C O N T E N T S

EDITORIAL STATEMENT	5
LESŁAW MORAWIECKI (1949-2004)	7
PIERRE VIDAL-NAQUET (1930-2006)	11
<i>Mario Liverani</i> , NEW DISCOVERIES IN THE LAND OF THE GAR- MANTES: ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LIBYAN SAHARA	15
<i>Rafał Koliński</i> , OLD ASSYRIAN OR OLD BABYLONIAN? THE CULTURAL SETTING OF NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2 nd MILLENIUM B.C.	33
<i>Edward Lipiński</i> , SOZOMÈNE II 4 ET LE SITE DE RAMAT AL-HALIL ..	55
<i>Włodzimierz Lengauer</i> , EROS AMONG CITIZENS	67
<i>Krystyna Bartol</i> , THE LOST WORLD OF INVENTORS: ATHENAEUS' SENTIMENTAL HEUREMATOGRAPHY	85
<i>Adam Pałuchowski</i> , LE NOMBRE DES BOULEUTES ET LE PRÉSIDENT DE LA BOULÉ DANS LES CITÉS CRÉTOISES AUX DEUX PREMIERS SIÈCLES DE L'EMPIRE	97
<i>Andrzej Wypustek, Izabella Donkow</i> , CHRISTIANS AND THE PLAGUE IN THE 2 nd CENTURY ASIA MINOR	123
<i>Michał Stachura</i> , STADT UND PERIPHERIE IN DER HÄRETIKERPOLITIK DER FRÜHBYZANTINISCHEN KAISER (CA. 325 BIS 455)	133
VARIA, REVIEWS	
<i>Jan K. Winnicki</i> , EINE DEMOTISCHE VOTIVINSCHRIFT AUS SAQQARA ..	153



OLD ASSYRIAN OR OLD BABYLONIAN? THE
CULTURAL SETTING OF NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2nd MILLENIUM B.C.¹

To the memory of David Oates

Cultural differences between the north and the south of Mesopotamia are a characteristic of the region. Those differences start with different environmental conditions. Northern Mesopotamia is a slightly undulating plain, very arid in the south, but in the north, where there is more rain, it is fertile and friendly to men. Southern Mesopotamia is a very dry, flat, alluvial plain traversed by rivers, the number of which in antiquity was increased by canals providing irrigation and communication. The considerable distances between the fringes of Mesopotamia, exceeding 1000 km, are also important for the creation of cultural differences.

As the result, it is possible to notice cultural distinctions between the south and the north already in the prehistoric period (e.g. the so-called Northern Ubaid culture, the local variety of Uruk culture). The written sources which appeared in the north sometime in the 24th century B.C. also strengthen that impression. In the south, texts were written in Sumerian, whereas in the north they were written in early dialects of Semitic languages related to Akkadian,² which implies population differences. In the 2nd millennium Akkadian was commonly used in all of Mesopotamia, but the language evolved into two distinct dialects (Assyrian, showing archaic features, and Babylonian), which continued to exist also during the 1st millennium B.C. Since their existence reflected the political dualism characteristic Mesopotamian history, namely, the existence of two important

¹ The text was translated into English by Ma. Maja Hrebetowicz, to whom the author owes sincere thanks.

² For the relation of the Semitic languages of the 3rd millennium to Akkadian, cf. G. Pettinato, 'Le lingue semitiche di Ebla, Mari e Tell Beydar', in F. Marasini (ed.), *Semitic and Assyriological Studies Presented to Felio Franzoni by Pupils and Colleagues*, Heidelberg 2003, 520-551.

centers: Assur in the north and Babylon in the south, northern dialect was called Assyrian and the southern was called Babylonian. That distinction, confirmed by the orthography and paleography of cuneiform texts, constituted the basis for the division into historical periods. The most significant periods providing numerous written sources were called in the north Old-, Middle- and Neo-Assyrian, whereas with reference to southern Mesopotamia the terms Old-, Middle-, Neo- and additionally Late-Babylonian are used.³

The historical terminology presented above was accepted by archaeologists without reservation first of all because of the fact that the small number of sites excavated in northern Mesopotamia before the year 1960 impeded the recognition of the cultural situation in that region.⁴

One of the first archaeologists who took up research in northern Mesopotamia at the sites with settlement from the early 2nd millennium B.C., after World War II, was David Oates. His attention was drawn by Tell Rimah (ancient Katana or, less likely, Qattara), a hill situated about 140 km to the north-west of Assur and 180 km north-east of Mari (Fig. 1). A temple and palace from the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. were excavated during six field seasons from 1964–68.⁵ More than 300 cuneiform texts excavated from the ruins of palace were written with Babylonian signs and represented the Old Babylonian dialect of Akkadian.⁶ In the introduction to the publication of the texts Oates used the term "Old Babylonian" in order to define both the cultural context and archaeological

³ C.B.F. Walker, *Cuneiform*, London 1987, 17–18.

⁴ The culture of the layers from the early 2nd millennium B.C. in *Akkad*, for obvious reasons, was defined as "Old Assyrian". When the archives from Mari were discovered, it became clear that that city by the Euphrates belonged to the Babylonian culture zone. The situation at Tell Chagar Bazar, where Mallowan discovered a new kind of pottery typical for that period, which he called "Khabur Ware", is doubtful. The appearance of that pottery he linked with the arrival of Hurrites, which is why the period during which Khabur Ware occurred he called "Hurrian period", cf. M.E.L. Mallowan, 'The Excavations at Tell Chagar Bazar and an archaeological survey of the Khabur region. Second Campaign, 1936', *Iraq* 7 (1937), 102–104, pl. LXIV. Cuneiform texts discovered at the site were closely related to those of Mari, i.e. "Old Babylonian", cf. C.J. Gadd, 'Tablets from Chagar Bazar and Tell Brak', *Iraq* 4 (1937), 178–185; the most recent publication Ph. Talon, *Old Babylonian Texts from Chagar Bazar* (Akkadica Supplementum X) Brussels 1997. The term Khabur Ware is still in use, although the idea of relating this kind of pottery to Hurrites has been abandoned.

⁵ Interim reports by D. Oates, cf. *Iraq* vols. 27–30, 32, 34; summary report: D. Oates, 'Tell Rimah', in J. Curtis (ed.), *Fifty Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*, London 1982, 86–98. The only volume of the final publication concerns pottery, but includes also substantial chapters on stratigraphy, architecture and graves, cf. C. Postgate, D. Oates, J. Oates, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah. The Pottery* (Iraq Archaeological Reports 4), Warminster 1997.

⁶ S. Dalley, personal communication, cf. S. Page (Dalley), 'The Tablets from Tell Rimah, 1967', *Iraq* 30 (1968) 96–97 and S. Dalley, C.B.F. Walker, John D. Hawkins, *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell ar-Rimah*, London 1976 (the final publication of the texts).



Fig. 1. Northern Mesopotamia in the period of the rule of Samsi-Addia (H. Ogucchi, 'Trade routes in the Old Assyrian period', *Rafidain* 20 [1999], Fig. 2).

layers from which the tablets came.⁷ It was a distinct departure from the terminology used in the preliminary reports in which, although pointing to Babylonian borrowings in cuneiform texts and southern elements in the architecture of some excavated buildings, he commonly used the term "Old Assyrian" to describe the cultural context.⁸ Such terminology was used again in the summary report published in 1982,⁹ but since the mid-1980s Oates (and his collaborators) consistently use the term "Old Babylonian", both in reference to the context from which the texts came and to other layers from the beginning of 2nd millennium B.C.¹⁰ Moreover, he uses the same term to refer to Tell Brak, a site situated in Syria he explored after he had finished his excavations at Tell Rimah.¹¹ English archaeologists followed his precedent, using the term "Old Babylonian" when referring to the whole subsequent part of the Old Assyrian period, which began when Samsi-Addu I took over power in Aššur (around 1808 B.C., middle chronology), reserving the term "Old Assyrian" for the period when Assyrian trade colonies known from layer II of *karum* Kanesh flourished in Anatolia.¹²

Before we analyze the validity of that change in terminology, arguments in favor of its use should be considered. The first and the most important group of arguments is based on written sources. The Assyriologists who published the texts (Dalley, Walker, Hawkins and Wiseman) agreed that the oldest group of texts was written with cuneiform signs typical of the Old Babylonian scribal tradition and with the syllabic values of signs typical of the Old Babylonian period. The spelling in those texts indicates that the scribes used Babylonian dialect.¹³ Furthermore, a significant number of cylinder seals, impressions of which were found on the tablets, belong to the Old Babylonian group in respect of style.¹⁴

⁷ D. Oates, 'Introduction', in Dalley *et al.*, *The Old Babylonian Tablets*, ix.

⁸ D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1964' *Iraq* 27 (1965), 78; *id.*, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1965' *Iraq* 28 (1966), 136-137.

⁹ D. Oates, 'Tell Rimah', in J. Curtis (ed.), *Fifty Years of Mesopotamian Discovery*, London 1982, 86-98.

¹⁰ For instance: D. Oates, 'Innovations in mud-brick: decorative and structural techniques in ancient Mesopotamia', *World Archaeology* 21 (1990), 388-406; S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana. Two Old Babylonian Cities*, London-New York 1984.

¹¹ D. Oates, J. Oates, H. McDonald, *Excavations at Tell Brak. Vol. 1: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian periods*, Cambridge 1997, and a number of interim reports published in *Iraq* since 1982.

¹² This situation reflects the fact that the number of written sources from Aššur itself is surprisingly small, cf. O. Pedersen, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur*, Uppsala 1985, 26-27; D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Aššur avant l'Assyrie', *M.A.R.I.* 8 (1997), 367-368.

¹³ Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*, 17; for the identification of the language and script of the Rimah texts, S. Dalley, personal communication. Furthermore, a single dedicatory inscription partly preserved on one of relief plates was written in Old Babylonian, cf. D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1966', *Iraq* 29 (1969), 76, 96, Pl. XXXI, a.

¹⁴ J.D. Hawkins, 'The Inscribed Seals Impressions', in Dalley *et al.*, *The Old Babylonian Tablets*, 247-255.

The next group of arguments concerns the architectonic features of the two most important buildings excavated at the site: a great temple and palace. As far as the temple is concerned, these features are the symmetrical plan of the building, the situation of the cella on the axis of the structure and certain elements of architectonic decoration (semi-attached columns in facades and stone bas-reliefs placed in the main entrances) (Fig. 2).¹⁵ According to Oates, buildings with such abundant Babylonian features could appear in the north only when contacts with the south were extremely intense and even then only if architects coming from the south were responsible for the building.¹⁶ A typical Babylonian element of the palace discovered at Tell Rimah is the throne room in which the throne was placed in a niche, in the middle of the longer wall of the Throne Room, opposite to the door leading to the Throne Room (Fig. 10). Also the general plan of the excavated part of the palace resembles,

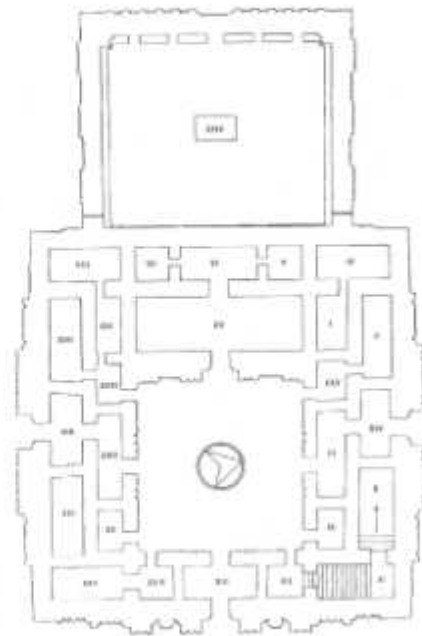


Fig. 2. Plan of temple at Tell Rimah (C. Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah: The Pottery*, Warminster 1997, Fig. 4).

according to Oates, the so called e.hur.sag. palace of Ur-Namma in Ur, dated to the Ur III period (Fig. 12).¹⁷ The presence of numerous features characteristic of Babylonian culture Oates explained by the fact that Samsi-Addu I,¹⁸ before he became king of Aššur, spent a considerable period of time in exile in Babylonian.¹⁹

¹⁵ Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*, 21–29, Figs. 3–4, Pl. 6a.

¹⁶ D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1965', *Iraq* 28 (1966), 137; *id.*, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1966' *Iraq* 29 (1967), 94–95.

¹⁷ D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1968', *Iraq* 32 (1970), 7–8; Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*, 30–36, Figs. 8–10. For the plan of e.hur.sag. palace of Ur-Namma and Šulgi, cf. L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations VI. The Buildings of the Third Dynasty*, London 1974, 36–38, Pl. 56.

¹⁸ D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1967', *Iraq* 30 (1970), 138; Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*, 23.

¹⁹ Assyrian King List, §12, cf. A. Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Bd. VI, Berlin–New York 1980–1983, 105–106; cf. M. Birot, 'Les chroniques „assyriennes" de Mari', *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 219–24. For the most recent outline of Samsi-Addu's life, cf. D. Charpin, 'Histoire politique du Proche-Orient Amorite (2002–1595)', in D. Charpin,

According to Oates and other authors that period of time allowed the future ruler to get to know the culture of Babylonia and later, after he returned to his home country, emulate its patterns in the north.

Forty years have passed since the excavations at Tell Rimah. Numerous sites located in northern Mesopotamia have been excavated during the last few decades, providing a considerable number of new texts, architectonic remains, as well as small finds. These sources compel a review of the validity of the terminology used by Oates and his students.

Written sources

The discovery of cuneiform tablets with paleographic features typical of Babylonia so far north of that region may seem surprising, but it should be remembered that the same kind of writing was used in a city much closer to Tell Rimah, namely Mari situated on the Middle Euphrates.²⁰ Strong relations between Mari and South Mesopotamia existed already in the first half of the 3rd millennium B.C. (Early Dynastic period) and the tradition of keeping close political and economic relations was maintained until the final destruction of the city around 1762 B.C.²¹ It is very likely that Mari was responsible for propagating Babylonian writing in the Khabur Valley and in the steppe region situated on the east bank of the river. Tablets from Mari confirm that that terrain was suitable for sustaining a city. According to the tablets, before northern Mesopotamia was conquered by Samsi-Addu in the early 18th century B.C., a significant part of that territory was controlled by Mari and the lands down the river Khabur were used as pastures for sheep in summer and autumn.²² A year date formula of Yahdun-Lim, king of Mari, preserved in a series of 22 texts, describes a victory over Samsi-Addu achieved in a battle at the gates of the city of Nagar (probably Tell Brak) – plainly a defensive battle.²³ By contrast the so-called eponymous chronicle from Mari mentions that the battle against Samsi-Addu was lost by Yahdun-Lim and his 12 allies, after which the Khabur Valley was taken over by the king of Aššur.²⁴

D.O. Edzard, M. Stol, *Mesopotamien. Die altbabylonische Zeit* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 160/4), Fribourg 2004, 147–191.

²⁰ The Old Babylonian dialect and script was in use also in Niniveh; cf. S. Dalley, 'Old Babylonian tablets from Niniveh; and possible pieces of early Gilgamesh Epic', *Iraq* 63 (2001), 155–168. The propagation of Babylonian writing was, most likely, a result of influence of the Ešnunna; cf. Charpin, 'Aššur avant l'Assyrie', 374–375, n. 59.

²¹ For a recent summary of the history of Mari, cf. J.-R. Kupper, 'Mari. A. Philologisch', *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Bd. VII, Berlin–New York 1987, 382–390, and D. Charpin, N. Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite. Essai d'histoire politique* (Florilegium marianum V), Paris 2003 (the Old Babylonian period).

²² Charpin, Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient*, 38–39.

²³ Charpin, Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient*, 60–61.

²⁴ Fragment D of the text, cf. Birot, 'Les chroniques assyriennes', 225.

Babylonian writing and dialect was used also in the city called Šehna, situated even farther north, which became the capital of Samsi-Addu known as Šubat-Enlil for a short time. Scribes of that city used the dialect of Mari also after the fall of Samsi-Addu's kingdom,²⁵ and one of the few texts written in the Old Assyrian dialect, which were found at that site, was a draft of an international treaty undoubtedly written in Aššur and sent to Šehna for approval.²⁶ There is also evidence for the Old Babylonian dialect in Niniveh, even further to the north and east.

An interesting contradiction is the fact that scribes from Tell Rimah, although they wrote in "Old Babylonian", used a purely Assyrian system of dating. The names of *limu* officials, who were elected by lot in Aššur at the beginning of each calendar year (which in Aššur began in autumn), were used for denoting years.²⁷ The names of months used belong to the so-called "Samsi-Addu Calendar", i.e., a set of names different from those typical for Mari and Babylon as well as the pre-Samsi-Addu period in Aššur (the most closely comparable set of names was used in Ešnunna, a city located in the borderlands between northern and southern Mesopotamia).²⁸

Public buildings: the temple

The temple and the *ziggurat* next to it are the best known buildings discovered at Tell Rimah. Both of them were built on a platform 6 m high to which leads a ramp supported by at least three arcades (Fig. 2). The analysis of the temple's plan reveals several features of the architecture characteristic of southern Mesopotamia from the period Ur III forward, i.e.: the square, symmetrical plan of the building with its internal courtyard; the situation of the sanctuary at the axis of the main entrance to the temple, the importance of which is additionally emphasized by a monumental ramp; and the cella in the room located on the main

²⁵ F. Ismail, *Altbabylonische Wirtschaftsurkunden aus Tall Leilan (Syrien)*, (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis), Tübingen 1991, 12.

²⁶ J. Eidem, 'An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan', in D. Charpin, F. Joannès (eds), *Marchands, diplomates et entrepreneurs. Études sur la civilisation mésopotamienne offertes à Paul Garelli, Paris 1991*, 187.

²⁷ R.M. Whiting, 'Tell Leilan/Šubat-Enlil, Chronological Problems and Perspectives', in S. Eichler, M. Wäfler, D. Warburton (eds), *Tall al-Hamīdīya 2. Vorbericht 1985–87/Symposium Recent Excavations in the Upper Khabur Region, Berne, Dec. 9–11, 1986, Freiburg 1990*, 189–202. For a broad description of the *limu*-institution, cf. A. Ungnad, 'Eponymen', *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Bd. II, Berlin 1933–38, 412–457. The most recent study concerning the Old Assyrian period can be found in K. Veenhof, *The Old Assyrian List of Year Eponyms from Karum Kanish*, Ankara 2003.

²⁸ Whiting, 'Chronological Problems', 197. Some authors have suggested that the names of the months used by Samsi-Addu came from Ekallatum, his city of origin, cf. Charpin, Durand, 'Aššur avant l'Assyrie', 376.

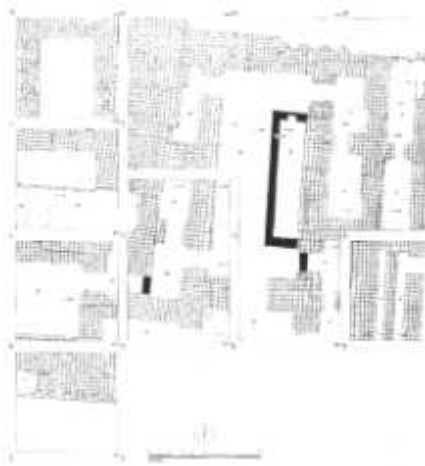


Fig. 3. Tell Leilan, the temple (H. Weiss, 'Tell Leilan and Shubat Enlil', *M.A.R.I.* 4 [1985], Fig. 7).

excavated in Aššur: that of the god Aššur (Fig. 4),²² the double temple of Sin and Šamaš (Fig. 5)²³ and the very badly preserved remains of Ištar's temple (phase D),²⁴ the temple from Tell Leilan (Fig. 3)²⁵ and the building from Tell Bakrawa.²⁶ Another problem is that the construction of at least 3 of those structures is attributed to Samsi-Addu. In the case of the temple of Aššur this is confirmed by

axis of the building with a niche for divine representation placed in the wall opposite the entrance.²⁷ In the Old Babylonian variant of that plan, the sanctuary was preceded with one or more transverse rooms corresponding to the cella in size and serving as a vestibule (cf. Figs. 11, and 13).²⁸ Furthermore, linking the ziggurat with the temple in such a way that the back wall of cella is joined to the wall of ziggurat is typical rather for the south and not the north.²⁹

The small number of temples discovered in northern Mesopotamia make it difficult to make comparisons. Apart from the temple from Tell Rimah, we also know the plans of the temples

²² A typical example of such a temple is the so-called Šu-Sin temple in Ešnunna, cf. H. Frankfort, S. Lloyd, Th. Jacobsen, *The Gınılsin Temple and the Palace of the Rulers at Tell Asmar* (Oriental Institute Publications 43), Chicago 1940, 9–32, Pl. 2.

²³ For instance, the temple of Ištar *in situ* in Nerebtum (Ishchali), cf. H. Frankfort, *Progress of the Work of the Oriental Institute in Iraq 1934/35. Fifth Preliminary Report of the Iraq Expedition* (Oriental Institute Communications 20), Chicago 1936, 78–83, Figs. 60, 65; temples discovered in Shaduppum (Tell Harmal), cf. T. Baqr, *Tell Harmal*, Baghdad 1959, 5, Figs. 1, 3; the temple of Enki in Ur, cf. L. Woolley, M.E.L. Mallowan, *Ur Excavations VII. The Old Babylonian Period*, London 1976, 64–71, Pl. 120a–b; and Giparu in Ur, cf. L. Woolley, M.E.L. Mallowan, *Ur Excavations VII. The Old Babylonian Period*, London 1976, 40–44, Pl. 118.

²⁴ For instance in the Šamaš temple complex in Larsa, cf. J.-L. Huot, 'Larsa: preliminary report of the seventh campaign at Larsa', *Sumer* 36 (1980), 99–132.

²⁵ A. Haller, W. Andrae, *Die Heiligtümer des Gottes Assur und der Sin-Šamaš-Tempel in Assur* (WVDOG 67), Berlin 1955, 6–15, Abb. 2, Taf. 4; P. Miglus, 'Der Aššur-Tempel des Königs Samsi-Adad und die mesopotamische Samelarchitektur seiner Zeit', in J.-W. Mayer, M. Novák, A. Pruss (Hrsg.), *Beiträge zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie. Festschrift Wulfried Orthmann*, Frankfurt a. M. 2001, 322–331.

²⁶ Haller, Andrae, *Die Heiligtümer des Gottes*, 82, Abb. 24, 25, Taf. 16, 17.

²⁷ W. Andrae, *Die archaischen Ištar-Tempel in Assur* (WVDOG 39), Berlin 1922, 25–6, 111–16, Taf. 7b.

²⁸ H. Weiss, 'Tell Leilan and Shubat-Enlil', *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 278–81, Fig. 7, Pl. 1–4.

²⁹ M.B. al-Hussaini, 'The Excavations at Tell Bakr Awa', *Sumer* 18 (1962), 155–56, Figs. 1, 4 (Arabic part). The interpretation of the building as a temple is questionable.

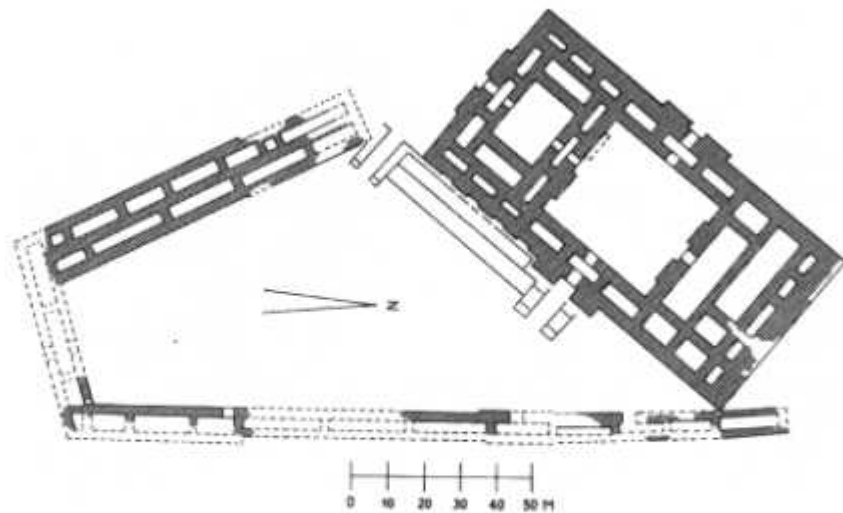


Fig. 4. The temple of the god Aššur in Aššur (W. Orthmann [ed.], *Der Alte Orient*, [Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 14], Berlin 1975, Fig. 55).

the foundation inscription as well as inscribed bricks, while the date of temples in Tell Rimah and in Tell Leilan bases can be determined from the lowest floor levels, where tablets mentioning Samsi-Addu's officials were discovered.³⁷ The numerous common features of those buildings may also suggest that they were erected by the same ruler. If this interpretation is true, then these three structures would represent a foreign, Babylonian type; as the result, the list of "typical Assyrian" temples would be limited to the temple of Sin and Šamaš in Aššur and the building in Bakrawa (though it seems unlikely that that building was a temple). The first one is dated to the late Old Assyrian period (around 1500 B.C.) and could be derivative of any of the earlier temples already mentioned.³⁸ It is clear that the temple in Tell Rimah and the temple of god Aššur in Aššur were used until the end of Middle Assyrian period – the first one could be the prototype of the temple of god Aššur in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta built in the late 13th century B.C.³⁹ The temple of Sin and Šamaš recalls the temple from Tell Rimah with its symmetrical plan; however, it has two sanctuaries consisting of a transverse vestibule and prolonged cella with a podium in the rear. Thus, it is a different kind of temple plan, described

³⁷ Hawkins, 'The Inscribed Seals', 195–97; Weiss, 'Tell Leilan', 281.

³⁸ Mylius, 'Der Aššur-Tempel', 328, suggests that the original temple of Sin-Šamaš, as well as another double temple, that of Anu-Adad had been erected by Samsi-Addu as well.

³⁹ W. Andrae, W. Bachmann, 'Aus den Berichten über die Grabungen in Tullul Aqir (Kar-Tukulti-Ninib), Oktober 1913 bis März 1914', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 53 (1914), 41–57.

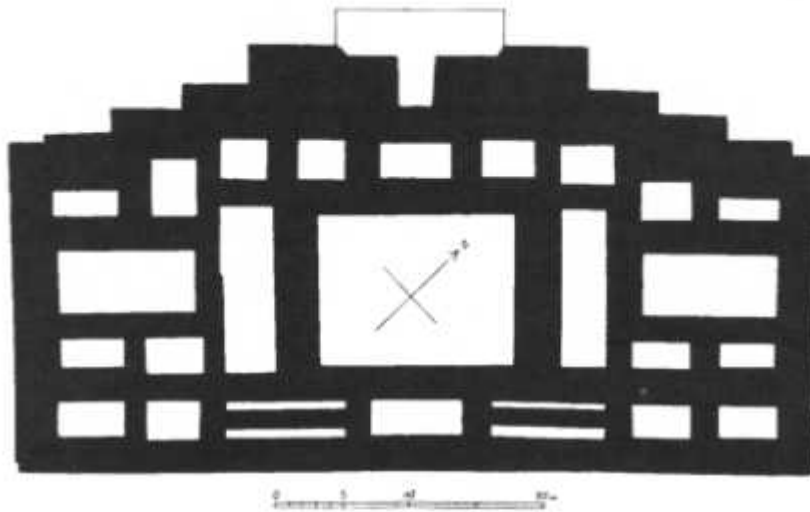


Fig. 5. The double temple of Sin and Šamaš in Abur (W. Andrae, *Das widererstandene Assur*, Leipzig 1938, Fig. 44).

in the literature as *Langraumtempel* and considered characteristic of Assyria. An interesting element of the plan of that temple is a significant number of side rooms which can be entered directly from the cella. That is a unique element in Mesopotamia, however, recalling the plan of the temple in Tell Rimah.

Heinrich in his book about Mesopotamian temples⁴⁰ has noticed a number of minor features distinguishing the temple in Tell Rimah from the so-called Babylonian type of temple. Firstly, in the back wall of the cella there is no niche characteristic of temples from the south. Secondly, the cella is smaller than the vestibule – in southern Mesopotamia both of them were equal in size. Theoretically the cella could be treated as an unusually complex niche; however, there are no parallel cases. Interestingly, the temple in Tell Leilan, the construction of which was also attributed to Samsi-Addu, seems to represent a different type of plan with a relatively small transverse vestibule and a large, elongated cella recalling cellas in the temple of Sin and Šamaš.⁴¹ If the discovered room is indeed the cella of the temple, then one of the three temples founded by Samsi-Addu would belong to a different, Assyrian type. Consequently, the thesis that Samsi-Addu introduced Babylonian temple plans is difficult to maintain.

⁴⁰ E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien. Typologie, Morphologie und Geschichte* (Denkmäler Antiker Architektur 14), Berlin 1983, 180-181.

⁴¹ Room 12/13 on Fig. 7 in Weiss, 'Tell Leilan'.

Peter Miglus has recently analyzed temples erected in Aššur by Samsi-Addu.⁴² He concluded that all these temples are in fact double temples, dedicated to two gods, one of local, and one of southern origin. Thus, in the temple of Aššur there was a sanctuary for Enlil (moreover, this sanctuary had a typical southern plan, while the cella of Aššur represented the so-called northern type of plan). Two other temples, probably built by Samsi-Addu, were dedicated to Sin and Šamaš and to Anu and Adad (of which Anu and Šamaš represented southern gods). Nevertheless all the sanctuaries in those temples represented the northern type. One may conclude that a characteristic feature of the temple-building of Samsi-Addu is a dedication to two gods of corresponding rank. However, the Rimah temple is dedicated to one deity only and thus differs clearly from the temples built in Aššur. The Leilan temple, only partly excavated, may belong to either of these two types.



Fig. 6. The temple facade from Tell Rimah (C. Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah: The Pottery*, Warminster 1997, Pl. 6a).

The second important issue is the architectonic decoration of the temple. I will not discuss the stone bas-reliefs discovered in the temple in Tell Rimah, because they have no comparanda during that period in all of Mesopotamia.⁴³ Instead, I would like to discuss the decoration of the facades of the temple. In Tell Rimah they take the form of attached semi-columns made of mud brick covered with plaster and placed in niches adorning the external facades of the building and the walls of the courtyard (Fig. 6). The surface of the attached columns was either smooth or covered with spiral wire marks, or took the shape of a date palm trunk.⁴⁴ The same decorative patterns were found at the external and internal facades of

⁴² Miglus, 'Der Aššur-Tempel'.

⁴³ E. Holzinger-Braun, 'Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples in the Third and Second Millennia', in T. Abusch, K. van der Toorn (eds), *Mesopotamian Magic. Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (Ancient Magic and Divination 1), Groningen 1997, 158–159.

⁴⁴ Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*, Pl. 6a. The technique of construction was described in particular by Oates, 'Innovations in mud-brick', also *id.*, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah 1966', *Iraq* 29 (1969), 76–78, 88–90, Pl. XXXII a-b, XXXIII a-b, XXXVI, XL.



Fig. 7. The façade of the temple at Tell Leilan (H. Weiss, 'Tell Leilan and Shubat Enlil', *M.A.R.I.* 7 [1985], Pl. 3).

the temple in Tell Leilan (Fig. 7). By contrast, in the temple of the god Aššur in Aššur only the internal facades of the courtyard in front of the temple were decorated with attached columns.⁴⁵ Thus, it seems that this is another common feature of the three buildings, attributed to Samsi-Addu. That feature recalls the decoration of certain Mesopotamian buildings: the facade of the so-called Warad-Sin Bastion in Ur⁴⁶ or the courtyard facades of the Šamaš temple in Larsa (Fig. 8).⁴⁷ Recent discoveries, however, challenge that hypothesis. First of all, similar facades were found in the temples at other sites located outside of Babylonia. The first is Tell Haddad (ancient Me-Turan), situated in the Hamrin basin near Diyala,⁴⁸ a region which used to have closer relations with the south than with Assyria. The second site is Tell Bazmusian in the valley of Lesser Zab, where on the walls

⁴⁵ The columns are preserved at the ground level only, consequently it is impossible to determine if and how their surface was decorated, cf. Haller, Andrae, *Die Heiligtümer des Gottes*, 54, Abb. 8, Taf. 39b.

⁴⁶ L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations V. The Ziggurat and its Surroundings*, London 1939, 40–47, Pl. 29–30, for a general plan cf. Pl. 71.

⁴⁷ Huot, 'Larsa', 100–103, Figs. 2–4; J.-L. Huot et al., 'Larsa. Rapport préliminaire sur la septième campagne à Larsa et la première campagne à Tell el 'Oueh (1976)', *Syria* 55 (1978), 186, Figs. 13a, 17; J.-L. Huot, *Une archéologie des peuples du Proche-Orient*, II, *Des hommes de Palais aux sujets des premiers empires*, Paris 2004, 21, lower right photograph.

⁴⁸ R. Killick, J. Black, 'Excavations in Iraq, 1983–84', *Iraq* 47 (1985), 220–221.

of a small temple from the first half of the 2nd millennium were found traces of a similar architectonic decoration.⁴⁹ Thus it is quite obvious that temples decorated in this manner can not be the result of the building activities of one ruler, but rather a popular way of adorning temple which appears in the temple architecture of all of Mesopotamia.



Fig. 8. The court facade of the temple Samsi in Larsa (J.-L. Huot, *Une archéologie des peuples du Proche-Orient, II, Des hommes de Palais aux sujets des premiers empires*, [Paris 2004], 21, bottom right).

Public buildings: the palace

The oldest archaeological layer of the palace, which dates from the period of Samsi-Addu's reign, was excavated to a very limited extent; in fact only three rooms, interpreted as a reception suite have been cleared (Fig. 9). An entrance decorated with recesses led from the courtyard to a transverse room, on whose longer wall of which there was a podium on which there could have been a throne. In the second of the longer walls there were two doors leading to two smaller rooms of unknown use.⁵⁰ Neither such a location for the podium in the Throne Room nor the presence of two auxiliary chambers has comparanda in any palace construction of that period.⁵¹



Fig. 9. Plan of the remains of the oldest palace at Tell Rimah (C. Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah: The Pottery*, Warminster 1997, Fig. 8).

⁴⁹ B. Abu al-Souf, 'Mounds in the Rania Plain and excavations at Tell Bazmusian', *Sumer* 26 (1970), 69-70, Pl. III, X, 1-2, 4, XI, 2.

⁵⁰ D. Oates, 'The Excavations at Tell Rimah, 1971', *Iraq* 34 (1972), 83, Pl. XXVIII.

⁵¹ In the Tell Leilan Lower Town Palace, discovered in 1985-1987 and dated to exactly the same period as the Tell Rimah palace, the throne room has not been excavated, cf. P. Akkermans, H. Weiss, 'Tell Leilan 1987: Operation 3: A preliminary Report on The Lower Town Palace', *Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 38/39 (1989), 91-103, Figs. 3-4.



Fig. 10. Plan of the palace of Aqba-hammu at Tell Rimah (C. Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah: The Pottery*, Warminster 1997, Fig. 9).

A slightly later palace building, built by Aqba-hammu and later rulers over the earlier one (Fig. 10), has been much more extensively cleared. This was exactly the building in which Oates observed southern influences. In his opinion, the similarity of the palace of Aqba-hammu to Babylonian constructions was visible in the way the two biggest rooms, XIII and XIV, were arranged. The first of those rooms served as a Throne Room with a dais located in a niche in front of the passage leading from a larger transverse vestibule. That arrangement follows the plan of the so-called Babylonian temple (described above in connection with the Rimah temple) and not a palace of that period.

A typical arrangement for palaces is an Official Suite composed of a Throne Room (akk. *paḫūm*) accessible directly from the courtyard and a second room, in the back, serving as a reception hall for official meals of the king (*kumum*). This arrangement is entirely different from the one reconstructed at Rimah. Therefore, such a distribution of rooms as the one proposed by Oates for the Rimah palace seems to be something exceptional for Babylonia too.

The reconstruction proposed by Oates was recently criticized by Battini, who convincingly demonstrated, that the main entrance to the two rooms in question led from the main courtyard (VIII) and that, consequently the entire suite functioned exactly as reception suites composed of Throne Room and Reception Hall present in other Mesopotamian palaces of this period: in Aššur (Fig. 15), Mari (Fig. 16), Ešnunna (Fig. 13), Ur (Fig. 12) and Uruk (Fig. 14).⁵² An exception to this plan seems to be the royal palace at Tuttul, a city located in Syria at the confluence of the Euphrates and the Balikh (Fig. 17).⁵³

⁵² L. Battini, 'La dernière phase du palais de Tell al-Rimah: nouvelle approche', *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 95 (2001), 124–129.

⁵³ For the plan, cf. M. Kreebner, *Tall B'at/Tuttul – II. Die altorientalischen Schriftfunde (WVDOG 100)*, Saarbrücken 2001, Taf. 65–66.

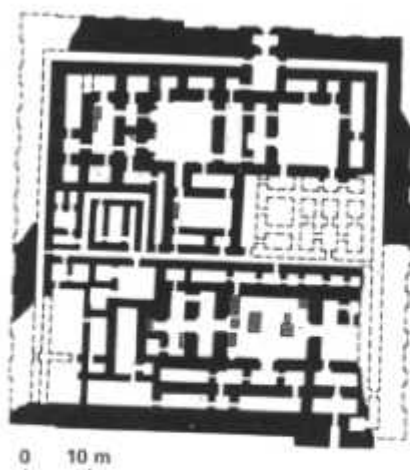


Fig. 11. The giparu at Ur (after J.-L. Huot, *Une archéologie des peuples du Proche-Orient*, II, *Des hommes de Palais aux sujets des premiers empires* Paris 2004, 20, top right).

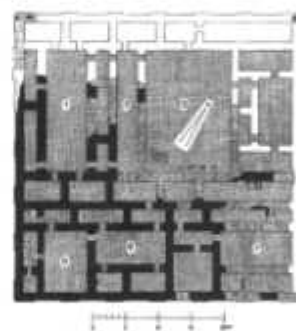


Fig. 12. The *chur.sag* palace of Ur-Namma at Ur. (W. Orthmann [ed.], *Der Alte Orient*, [Propyläen Kunstgeschichte Bd. 14], Berlin 1975, Fig. 27).

Pottery

According to a book published a few years ago and devoted to the pottery found in Tell Rimah,⁵⁴ the most typical pottery of the whole “Old Babylonian” period at the site is the so-called Khabur Ware decorated with dark linear motifs painted on the upper part of the vessel. Pottery of that kind appears in a vast territory spreading from the upper part of the Khabur Valley, through the Tigris Valley up to the mountainous valleys of northern Zagros, where it constitutes around 25%–35% of all of the ceramics of that period.⁵⁵ Popular also in the plain steppe around Tell Rimah, such pottery does not occur in Babylonia, is very rare in the Euphrates Valley and relatively rare even in Aššur.⁵⁶ Another characteristic group among the remaining vessels from Rimah constitute bowls formed on a mould, with a polished surface. Such bowls, popular in Tell Rimah, are almost unknown in areas north of Jebel Sindjar or in the Tigris Valley. However, such vessels occur in the Euphrates Valley, for instance in Terqa. The only set of pottery from Rimah, which beyond doubt can be connected with Babylonia, are white

⁵⁴ Postgate *et al.*, *The Excavations at Tell Rimah*.

⁵⁵ R. Koliński, *Tell Rimah, Iraq. The Middle Bronze Age Layers* (British Archaeological Reports, Int. Series 837), Oxford 2000, 66–68, Tab. 10.

⁵⁶ Koliński, *Tell Rimah*, 68–72, Pl. 1.

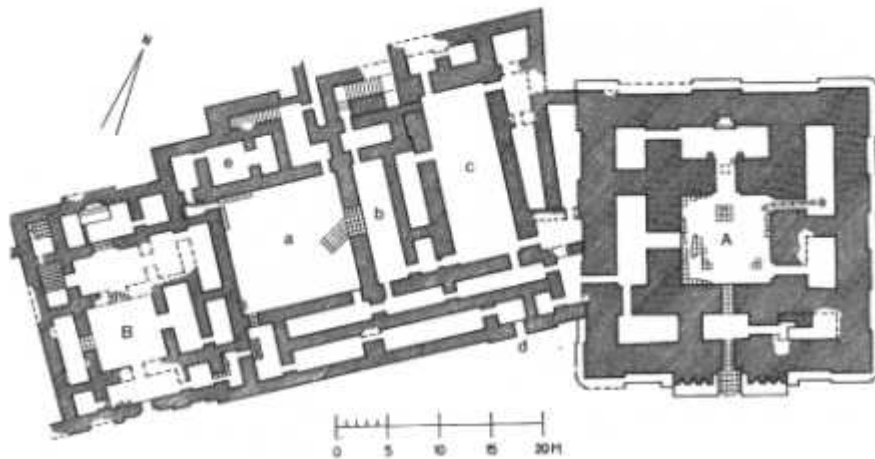


Fig. 13. The palace of the governors of the Ešnuna (W. Orthmann [ed.], *Der Alte Orient*, [Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 14], Berlin 1975, Fig. 28).

incrusted and black painted vessels of the so-called Isin type. Vessels of that kind are generally rare, even in Babylonia, and in the northern Mesopotamia they occur sporadically even at the biggest sites of that region, such as Aššur or Mari.²⁷

Undoubtedly, pottery found in the lowest layers of both the temple and the palace belongs to a local tradition, strongly related to the plains directly to the north, between the Tigris and the Khabur and, to a smaller degree, to the middle Euphrates Valley. Evidence of the Babylonian ceramic tradition is virtually absent in the material from Tell Rimah.

Conclusion

The analysis of the cultural situation in northern Mesopotamia in the early 2nd millennium B.C. reveals a clear distinction between the sphere of linguistics and material culture.

Cuneiform texts provide evidence for the simultaneous existence and use of two dialects of Akkadian language. The Old Assyrian dialect was used in Aššur and in its close vicinity, but not further north (in Niniveh for instance). Contemporary use of the same dialect is proved by the texts from Assyrian colonies in Anatolia, mainly from Kültepe (*karum* layer Ib). In the central part of northern Mesopotamia

²⁷ S. Ayoub, *Die Keramik in Mesopotamien und in den Nachbargebieten von der Ur-III bis zum Ende der kassitischen Periode*, München 1982, 15–17, 23, 25.

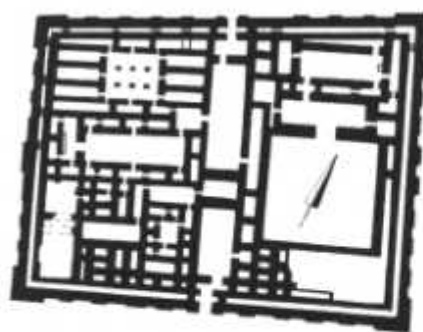


Fig. 14. The Sin-Kašid palace in Uruk (after J.-L. Huot, *Une archéologie des peuples du Proche-Orient, II. Des hommes de Palais aux sujets des premiers empires*, Paris 2004, 19).

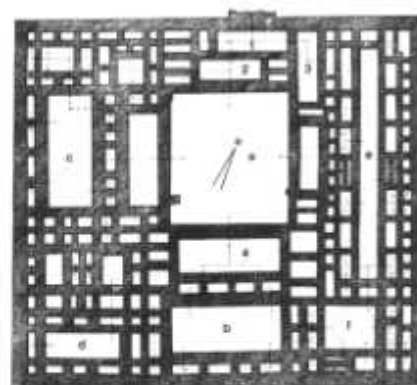


Fig. 15. The "Alter Palast" in Assur (W. Orthmann [ed.], *Der Alte Orient*, [Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 14], Berlin 1975, Fig. 22).

and in the Euphrates Valley the Old Babylonian dialect showing the influence of Amorite was used for written texts. Thus, in respect of linguistic evidence, the division into Old Assyrian and the Old Babylonian is fully justified and reflects the situation during the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C.,⁵⁰ when Old Babylonian dialect was in use over a wide territory of northern Mesopotamia, including a large part of what was later known as Assyria.

Determining appropriate terminology for cultural artefacts is a different matter. Because of the small number of monuments of art, only architecture and pottery can be subjected to analysis. It is difficult to justify the term "Old Babylonian" in reference to architecture. Even the temple in Tell Rimah does not fully match the plans of temples from southern Mesopotamia, and the temple discovered at Tell Leilan is by no means typical. In general temples are considerably diversified, thus it is difficult to distinguish well defined types of Babylonian or Assyrian plan, as it is possible in the 1st millennium B.C., for instance. Similarities in the plan and in architectonic decoration of temple buildings can be explained in several possible ways, for instance by the unifying influence of the preceding historical period, namely Ur III.⁵¹ Historical sources show the strong political influence of southern

⁵⁰ It should be taken into consideration that the language of texts reflects first of all the language (or dialect) used by scribes and does not have to correspond the dialect of local population.

⁵¹ F. Strinkeller, 'Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State', in M. Gibson, R.D. Biggs (eds), *The Organization of Power: aspects of bureaucracy in the ancient Near East* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations 46), Chicago 1987, Fig. 6.

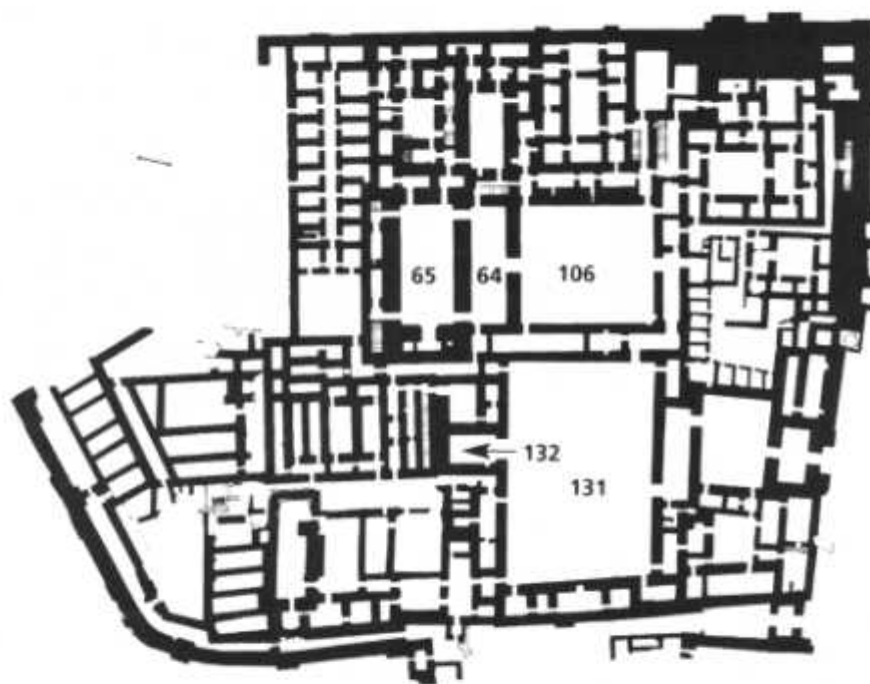


Fig. 16. The royal palace of Zimri-lim in Mari (after J.-L. Hout, *Une archéologie des peuples du Proche-Orient, II. Des homes de Palais aux sujets des premiers empires*, Paris 2004, 31, bottom).

Mesopotamia on the Tigris, Diyala and Little Zab Vallies in that period, an influence which could also inspire cultural changes. On this view the development of temple architecture which can be observed in the beginnings of the 2nd millennium B.C. would be rather a transformation of a common pattern characteristic for a preceding period than the building programme of one, babylonised sovereign.

Cultural background of palaces in Tell Rimah is even harder to define. The older throne room is definitely different from the buildings from the south, the newer (which post-dates Samsi-Addu) belongs to a widely distributed "standard" Mesopotamian palace type, known from southern Mesopotamia but employed also in Mari. An inspiration for that change could be some unknown royal palaces existing in Ekallatum, Ešnunna or even Babylon.⁶⁰ The Aššur palace, which belong

⁶⁰ Old Babylonian texts sometimes report visits to the rulers' palaces, for instance in Tell Rimah (Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, 26) and in Mari (A. Farrot, 'Les fouilles de Mari. Troisième campagne [hiver 1935-1936]', *Syria* 18 [1937], 74).

to the same type, cannot be exactly dated⁶¹ and therefore does not provide conclusive evidence for the existence of structures of the same type prior to the Samsi-Addu's rule. Small finds, mainly pottery, form the only kind of evidence distinctively northern Mesopotamian, particularly in comparison to Babylonia.

Finally, one must turn attention to Samsi-Addu himself and his supposed babylonisation. His position among the rulers of Aššur can be ascertained by attempting to incorporate him and his lineage into the sequence of the Assyrian Kings recorded in the Assyrian Kings List, a late composition based on earlier Assyrian sources.⁶² It seems, however, that Samsi-Addu never considered himself the king of Aššur: his official titles were "the king of Ekallatum" and, with some exaggeration, "the king of Agade".⁶³ He did not use Aššur as his capitol – this function was fulfilled by Ekallatum and later Šehna. The name of Šehna was changed by Samsi-Addu to Šubat-Enlil in an attempt to express his esteem to Enlil, whom he considered a god who personally chose him for kingship and to whom he built a sanctuary in the temple of Aššur.⁶⁴ It is thus justified to say that he never was a "typical" king of Assyria. For this reason French scholars insist on using the term "Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia" to designate his state, instead of the more traditional (and more widely used)

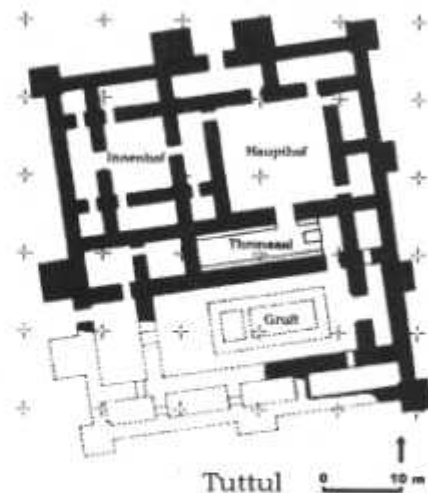


Fig. 17. The royal palace in Tuttul (after: P.A. Miglus, 'Palast B', *Archäologisch-Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Bd. 10, Berlin-New York 2004, 233–276, Abb. 2d).

⁶¹ P.A. Miglus, 'Untersuchungen zum Alten Palast in Assur', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 121 (1989), 119–121.

⁶² Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', 101.

⁶³ Samsi-Addu never assumed a traditional title of the ruler of Aššur, *išṣaku sa Aššur*, "steward of god Aššur" as the first-rank title (cf. M.T. Larsen, *The Old Assyrian City State and its Colonies*, Copenhagen 1976, 109–160; H. Galter, 'Textanalyse assyrischer Königsinschriften: Die Puzur-Aššur Dynastie', *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* XII, 1 [1998], 10–14), but used instead a southern title, *šarru*, "king", which in Aššur was traditionally reserved for the god Aššur himself prior Samsi-Addu's rule, but claimed by him and by later rulers; cf. P. Garelli, 'L'influence de Samsi-Addu sur les titulatures royales assyriennes', in Ö. Tunca (ed.), *De la Babylonie à la Syrie, en passant par Mari. Mélanges offerts à Monsieur J.-R. Kupper à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire*, Liège 1990, 97–102.

⁶⁴ P. Miglus, 'Auf der Suche nach dem „Ekur“ in Assur', *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 21 (1990), 303–320; *id.*, 'Der Aššur-Tempel'.

terms: Assyria or Aššur.⁶⁵ Aššur continued to be a religious center of this state, and appreciation of its role and of the role of its main god was reflected in the rebuilding of the temple of Aššur by Samsi-Addu, but there was no reason for him to build a substantial residence (as "Alter Palast" certainly was) in the city.

If such was the case, neither the term "Old Babylonian" nor "Old Assyrian" is fully justified when referring to the culture of northern Mesopotamia of the early 2nd millennium B.C. The written sources demonstrate that the use of the Old Assyrian dialect was limited to the city of Aššur, and in other cities of northern Mesopotamia the Old Babylonian dialect and script was used (at least by scribes). Yet, in most of the area a typically Assyrian way of naming years by *limu* officials nominated in Aššur was used. In this field Babylonian influences are undeniable, and that is why applying the term "Old Assyrian" to the culture of northern Mesopotamia is problematic, especially for philologists and historians. Architecture reveals a number of features which are common in the north and in the south and have been described by numerous scholars as "Babylonian". Yet, it is doubtful if substantial differences between "Assyrian" and "Babylonian" architecture existed at that early date. The more likely explanation is that common features of numerous palaces and temples of the 2nd millennium B.C. result from independent development from a common tradition formed in the period of the IIIrd Dynasty of Ur.⁶⁶ The differences are obvious when the pottery is considered. Decorated pottery appears nearly exclusively in the north; there are also some technical and formal differences. In this light separating Babylonia from the area of later Assyria, as well as from the Euphrates Area (where Mari is located), is justified. For that situation a new, more appropriate term should be coined.

During a congress devoted to the chronology of Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium B.C. an international group of scholars have suggested a change of cultural labels for the whole early historical period of North Mesopotamia. Instead of the traditional terms employed to describe cultures of the 3rd millennium as "Early Dynastic", "Akkadian", and "Ur III", which reflect cultural and political development of southern Mesopotamia, they suggest using the name "Early Jezirah" with a division into five sub-periods.⁶⁷ For the period under discussion, the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C., the term "Old Jezirah"

⁶⁵ Charpin, Durand, 'Aššur avant l'Assyrie', 371-376, 382.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. Roaf, 'Palaces and Temples in Ancient Mesopotamia', in J.M. Saxon (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, New York 1995, 426, 433.

⁶⁷ M. Lebeau, A. Pruss, M. Roaf, E. Rova, 'Stratified Archaeological Evidence and Compared Periodizations in the Syrian Jezirah during the Third Millennium B.C.', in C. Marro, H. Hauptmann (eds), *Chronologies des pays du Caucase et de l'Euphrate aux IV^e-III^e millénaires. Actes du Colloque d'Istanbul, 16-19 décembre 1998*, Paris 2000, 169-192.

is suggested.⁶⁸ It seems that this term, which uses the Arabic name of northern Mesopotamia, has a chance to replace the traditional, yet inappropriate, terms. Another possibility, probably more likely to be accepted by Assyriologists and historians, is "Amorite". Though relatively little is known about the Amorite tribes, which settled in a large part of Mesopotamia at the turn of the 3rd millennium B.C., and very little has survived of their culture (traces of their language, social organization and some names of their gods), their influence on the society and history of Mesopotamia in the early 2nd millennium is not to be overestimated.⁶⁹

Rafał Koliński

kolinski@amu.edu.pl

Institute of Prehistory
Adam Mickiewicz University
Św. Marcin 78
61-809 Poznań, Poland

⁶⁸ P. Pfläzner, 'Eine Modifikation der Periodisierung Nordmesopotamiens im 3. Jtsd. v. Chr.', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 130 (1998), 68, Tab. 1.

⁶⁹ Most of the rulers of the discussed period are of Amorite ancestry. Samsi-Addu included, cf. M. Streck, *Das amoritische Onomastikon der althabylonischen Zeit* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 271/1), Münster 2000, 29–75.