



TEXTS

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A great amount of written sources of very different origin offer us insights into the Iron Age settlement of Tell Halaf:

Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Before the appearance of Tell Halaf in the chronicles of the Assyrian eponyms our scanty knowledge of its Iron Age chronology rests mainly on the datable mentions in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. For the year 894 B.C. they record the tribute of Abi-salamu and for the years 879 and 870 B.C. the tribute of one or two anonymous Aramaean rulers of Guzana and Sikani. They are termed as descendants of Bakhiani (*mar bahiani*), the historical or mythological founder of a dynasty.

Limestone Altar from Tell Halaf

In the written remains from Tell Halaf itself this dynasty appears in a short Old Aramaean inscription on a small limestone altar. The text immortalizes the Aramaean ruler Zdnt of the (house) Bakhiani (*zdnt.b'l.zy. bhy[n]*).

Kapara's Inscriptions at Tell Halaf

However, there is absolutely no reference to Bakhiani in the cuneiform inscriptions of Kapara, who calls himself son of Hadianu and king of the otherwise unknown land of Palê. The short inscriptions («Palace of Kapara, son of Hadianu») on the orthostats of the *Hilani* are incised partly next to, partly over the older inscription «Temple of the weather-god» (**Fig. 1**). Therefore, it may not be ruled out that the orthostats had originally been placed in a temple of a weather-god. The somewhat longer inscriptions on statues and figures at door jambs commemorate the name of the ruler, that of his father and unspecified deeds: He, Kapara, king of Palê, had achieved what his father and grandfather had not. The inscription ends in a curse menacing whoever would erase Kapara's name from the inscription (**Fig. 2**).

The question of the dating of the inscriptions is not yet solved: by orthography, morphology and shape of the signs the inscriptions may go back to the 9th century B.C. However, there are antiquarian arguments for giving the orthostats themselves an earlier date. As Kapara does not refer to a founder of a dynasty Bakhiani in his inscriptions, he might be dated before the first mention of a ruler from the house Bakhiani. In that case, the *terminus ante quem* would be the year 895 B.C. (see above). Or Kapara, king of Palê, was the usurper or conqueror who put an end to the Bakhiani dynasty. Then, the *terminus ante quem non* would be the year 870 B.C. (see above).

Votive Statue from Tell Fecheriye

Another ruler of Guzana is mentioned on the bilingual inscription in Aramaean and Assyrian on a votive statue from Tell Fecheriye, the Iron Age Sikani, not far from Tell Halaf. In the Aramaean part of the inscription, Adda-it'i, the donor, describes himself and his father Shamash-nuri as kings (*mlk*); in the Assyrian part, however, as governors (*sakin mati*) of

Sikani, Guzana and Zarani. This ruler does not refer to a Bakhiani, founder of the dynasty, either, nor do we know the dates of his reign (**Fig. 3**). Nevertheless, a date after 870 B.C. and before 808 B.C., when an Assyrian campaign to Guzana is mentioned in the chronicle of the eponyms is not improbable. As a direct or indirect consequence of this campaign Guzana seems to have been definitely incorporated into the Neo-Assyrian empire as a province. The first unambiguous written evidence is the occurrence of the Assyrian governor of Guzana, Mannu-ki-mat-Assur, in the list of eponyms of 793 B.C.

Archive of Mannu-ki-mat-Assur from Tell Halaf

The so-called archive of Mannu-ki-mat-Assur tells us about the tasks of the administration of an Assyrian province in the early 8th century B.C. The texts were found south of the Assyrian governor's palace on the citadel and date to, approximately, the first quarter of the 8th century B.C. They are records removed from the governor's archive proper: letters from the administrative correspondence and, mostly, short lists and memoranda concerning accounting. The texts are concerned with the enlistment of soldiers, horses and equipment for the Assyrian army (**Fig. 4**), the dispatching of men for civilian services outside the province, the integration of the semi-nomadic population, the accommodation of messengers, the transfer of the tribute of vassal states to the capital of the Assyrian empire, the collecting of the data needed to calculate the tax load, as well as the judiciary and the execution of the state cult.

The numerous mentions of the Turtanu, a high Assyrian official (maybe comparable to an European field-marshal) reflect his outstanding position within the hierarchy of the early 8th century B.C. Perhaps we are dealing with the well-known Turtanu Shamshi-ilu, a kind of 8th century B.C. Richelieu.

Seated Statue of Kammaki from Tell Halaf

On the torso of a seated statue made of basalt, a three-line inscription has been preserved. It mentions a certain Kammaki, son of the scribe Ilu-le'i and states that a destruction of the statue by a later ruler is to be declared a sin. According to the form of the signs, the inscription seems to date back to the middle of the 8th century B.C. It is possible, that the sculpture was intended for worshipping the ancestors, just as the stone seated figures from the «Kultraum» and the grave-chapels.

Assyrian State Correspondence

Numerous mentions in the Assyrian state correspondence are evidence of Guzana's status as a province down to the collapse of the Assyrian empire.

Archive of Il-manani from Tell Halaf

Further texts from Tell Halaf itself date to the second half of the 7th century B.C., the later ones thereof to the times of the Assyrian rump-state, which, after the fall of the Assyrian metropolises, existed for a short time with Harran as its centre.

Among them the archive of Il-manani should be pointed out: the cuneiform obligations for silver and barley and a record concerning the purchase of a slave go back to the years 615-611 B.C. With the exception of an envelope, the cuneiform texts were found in a clay vessel together with five Aramaean clay bullae inscribed with obligations for grain (**Fig. 3**). The triangular clay bullae probably secured the knot of a string tied around the scroll with the record itself. Thus, they fulfilled the same function as the cuneiform envelope protecting the tablet with the record. Interestingly, some of the judiciary clauses on the clay bullae point to their west Semitic origin.

Other Texts

Other Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts are stray finds and purchases from the antiquities market: A letter, two trial records and several unsealed copies of civil law records tell us, along with the archive of Il-manani, of 7th century B.C. judiciary and business life. The earliest text goes back to 648 B.C., the latest possibly to 610 B.C.

The dates of two religious cult texts and of four Neo-Babylonian letters remain unclear, however. The purely Babylonian onomasticon of the letters might mean that they date to the time after the collapse of the Assyrian rump-state in 609 B.C. Under that assumption, these texts, along with some almost contemporaneous texts from Dur-Katlimmu (mod. Tell Schech Hamad on the lower Khabur), show that life in upper Mesopotamia went on as usual even after the collapse of the Assyrian empire.

(Translation: B. Finkbeiner / A. Sollee / B. Sollee)