

سرزمین مرکزی آشور در دوران هخامنشیان^۱امیلی کورت^۲مترجم منصورحمداللهزاده^۳

چکیده

مدت‌ها تصور می‌شد که قلمرو آشور پس از سقوط و ویرانی توسط بابل و مادها در سال‌های ۶۱۲-۶۱۴ به صورت پراکنده و کم جمعیت ساکن بوده است. به نظر می‌رسد تصویری که توسط گزنفون ترسیم شده باشد. این مقاله با تکیه بر آثار اخیر و اکتشافات جدید، شواهد مربوط به آشور در قرن ششم تا چهارم را دوباره بررسی کرده و نتیجه این بررسی‌ها، این تصویر را تایید نمی‌کند بنابراین دوره مذکور در منطقه آشور از این منظر، نیازمند تدقیق و بررسی مجدد دارد.

امپراتوری آشورنو (حدود ۹۰۰-۶۱۲ پ.م.) از باشکوه‌ترین آثار باستان‌شناسی و متنی را که از خاور نزدیک باستان شناخته شده است به ما به ارث گذاشته است. این شواهد، همراه با قطعات مهم و قوی در عهد عتیق، تصویری از یک امپراتوری بسیار قدرتمند و ثروتمند به ما می‌دهد، که کنترل یک دوره طولانی را در اختیار داشت، که تأثیر عمیقی بر اکثر مناطق خاور نزدیک داشته است.

کلید واژه‌ها: آشور، آشور نو، سرزمین آشور، قرن ششم پیش از میلاد، مادها

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دبگوی یتلخ، پژ یتوگر و

سرزمین مرکزی آشور در دوران هخامنشیان



Pallas

The Assyrian heartland in the Achaemenid period

آشور در دوره هخامنشیان

Résumé

On a jugé pendant longtemps que le territoire de l'Assyrie n'était que peu peuplé depuis les dévastations babyloniennes-médées de 614-612 ; l'image qu'en donne Xénophon dans l'Anabase paraît confirmer une telle impression. L'auteur réexamine la documentation sur l'Assyrie entre le VI^e et le IV^e siècles, se fondant sur des travaux récents et sur de nouvelles découvertes. Elle conclut que la documentation disponible ne corrobore pas cette impression négative, et qu'une réévaluation du pays assyrien durant les périodes néo-babyloniennes et achéménide est une sérieuse nécessité scientifique.

Abstract

The territory of Assyria has long thought to have been inhabited only sparsely after the Babylonian and Median devastation of 614-612. The picture Xenophon paints of it in the *Anabasis* appears to confirm this impression. This paper re-examines the evidence for Assyria in the sixth to fourth centuries, building on recent work and new discoveries. It concludes that the evidence does not bear out this negative impression, and that a serious reappraisal of the Assyrian region in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods is needed.

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The Assyrian Heartland in the Achaemenid Period

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1. Introduction

The Neo-Assyrian empire (c. 900-612) has bequeathed us some of the most magnificent archaeological and textual remains known from the Ancient Near East. That evidence, combined with potent passages in the Old Testament, gives us an impression of a very powerful and wealthy empire, wielding strong control over a prolonged period, which had a profound impact on most regions of the Near East. The apparently sudden and total extinction of the Assyrian state, by contrast, leaves us with an image of a burst balloon; everything seems to vanish into thin air virtually overnight – in the words of one scholar: '... (a) vacuum ... followed its collapse ...' (Postgate 1979: 217). The apparently total disappearance of Assyria's thriving urban culture seems, at first sight, to be confirmed by Xenophon's description of the Assyrian heartland in the Achaemenid period (specifically in 401; *Anab.*, II.4.27ff, esp. III.4.6-12). Xenophon's account has given rise to a widespread perception, summed up here by Oates:

Passing the former site of Kalhu he (sc. Xenophon) refers to the people of villages in the neighbourhood who took refuge on top of the ziggurat at the approach of the Greek army, although the city itself was deserted and he knew neither its name nor that of its former inhabitants, whom he describes as Medes. Nineveh was similarly identified as a ruined Median city ... From that point until the army entered the mountains he refers only to groups of villages. Clearly the great cities (sc. of Assyria) had disappeared ... (Oates 1968: 60-61)

The image is that of a virtually empty landscape, made yet more desolate by the presence of deserted cities with the odd village dotted here and there.

There is no denying that the heyday of the Assyrian royal centres at Nineveh, Kalhu, Dur-Šarrukīn and Aššur, with their magnificently decorated palaces and lavish court life ended in 614-612. The Babylonian chronicle (*ABC* no. 3), with its brief, but telling, mention of the looting and destruction of Aššur and Nineveh (*cf.* also the references to deportations from Nisibišand Rasappa), provides the terminus for dating the end of the Assyrian settlements. With their destruction the main source for the rich

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documentation of Assyrian life dried up, creating the traditional picture of emptiness and devastation. But it is a picture that depends on contrast: the bright light shed by the very full evidence on the decades preceding Assyria's fall, makes the subsequent centuries seem that much darker.

Dalley (1993) has recently challenged this oversimplified and unsatisfactory view of Assyria's end; her study concentrates on the evidence for post-Assyrian Nineveh, although she has collected material from more sites. Her conclusions are that Assyrian governmental institutions and bureaucratic practices disappeared along with the destruction of Assyria's palaces, but that Assyrian centres certainly survived under Babylonian, then Achaemenid, rule. Evidence for this are texts written in Harran (Dalley 1984) and others found at Neirab (Dhorme 1928) and Guzana (Ungnad in Friedrich *et al.* 1940: nos.117-120; *cf.* also the two unpublished Neo-Babylonian texts from Šēḫ Ḥamad discovered in the 1980s, Röllig 1993: 131-2 and n. 11).

In 1992 the excavators of the Assyrian provincial centre at Dur Katlimmu (modern Šēḫ Ḥamad on the Lower Khabur) found four texts dated to Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562). They are in Neo-Assyrian dialect, use Neo-Assyrian script and scribal conventions and invoke the god Aššur (Kühne 1993:75; Postgate 1993); they also mention two local officials with traditional Assyrian titles (Postgate 1993; Brinkman 1993). The find adds support to some of Dalley's earlier conclusions, but also shows that others need modifying – its overall effect is to strengthen her arguments and demonstrate for the first time a tangible institutional continuity from the Late Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian empire.

This in turn has implications for how we might begin to view Achaemenid Assyria: rather than seeing it as a depressed back-water deliberately ignored by the Babylonian rulers, in reaction to earlier Assyrian oppression (which has never made much sense), we must now think of the Babylonian régime harnessing Assyrian governmental forms to underpin its control and continuing to use existing administrative centres, partly rebuilt to receive Babylonian officials (Kühne 1993: 84-5). Into this picture must be fitted Nabonidus' restoration of the Sin temple, Ehulhul, in Harran, and all that implies (Beaulieu 1989, *cf.* now also Donbaz 1991). It also suggests that Babylonian control of the former Assyrian province of Arrapha (VAB 4: 146, 147), despite removal of the divine statue of Anunitum (VAB 4: 276, 277; *pace* Dalley 1993: 136), will have built directly on, and used, the local Assyrian bureaucracy.

But despite the new finds and a reappraisal of older material, there are still immense uncertainties and the evidence for Assyria after 612 can hardly be described as full, especially not for the Persian period. In what follows, I shall try to pull our present knowledge together and highlight some of the problems, in the hope that it will allow us to gain a clearer idea of how Assyria appeared under Achaemenid rule.

2. Preliminary considerations

Before looking at the evidence, it is important to realise that there is considerable uncertainty about two fairly crucial aspects: first, did the 'heartland' of Assyria (*i.e.* from around Aššur to north of Mosul) come under the control of the Neo-Babylonian kings after the combined Babylonian and Median victories? Secondly, when Assyria/Assyrians is/are mentioned by classical writers, in the Persepolis texts and in Old Persian inscriptions, what is meant?

2.1. The plain answer to the first question is that we do not know. There are hints which, to my mind, suggest that Babylonian control probably did embrace the central Assyrian territory. First, following the fall of Nineveh and the departure of the Medes in 612, Nabopolassar consolidated the conquest of Assyria's central territory by sending an army to take Našibina, the nodal point of strategic routes in Upper Mesopotamia (*cf.* Dillemann 1962). The campaign was obviously successful given the report of booty taken and people deported from there, as well as from the district of Rasappa, to the south, and directly west, of Nineveh and Aššur (*ABC* 3: 47-49). Also noteworthy is the fact that Nabopolassar received his victorious troops together with their human and material loot in Nineveh. Secondly, in 609 Nabopolassar ensured that his hold of this crucial area was firm, by trying to gain control of the Tur Abdin right up to the Urartian frontier (*ABC* 3: 70-72). Thirdly, in 608 and 607 Nebuchadnezzar (as crown-prince) fought two tough campaigns, almost certainly in the same area, following up his father's strategy. A possible implication is that the Babylonians controlled the territory right up to Nineveh, north-west from there the routes to Našibina, and the territory around and north of this strategic centre to the Urartian frontier (wherever that is thought to lie at this time, see Zimansky in this volume) and the territory adjacent to Assyria's core in the west. Since we also have evidence for Neo-Babylonian control of Arrapha, I am tempted to see the Babylonian kings taking over the whole of Assyria's heartland. I find it hard to visualise Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar expending such efforts to ensure control of Našibina and letting Arbela, the crucial link on the East Tigris route leading from Arrapha to Nineveh and on to Upper Mesopotamia and Našibina, slip through their fingers. If we add to this the nebulous nature of the Median polity, and any 'control' it might (or could) have wielded (*cf.* Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988), as well as the very clear indication in the chronicle, that the work of consolidating and following up the victories over the Assyrian cities was done by the Babylonians alone, then the case for Babylonian rule over the old Assyrian heartland begins to look fairly strong (*cf.* also some of the archaeological evidence below, *sub* 4).

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2.2. The question of what precisely is meant by 'Assyria' in post-empire contexts is a vexed one. Calmeyer has reexamined all the complexities of nomenclature recently (Calmeyer 1990) and shown how difficult it is to reach any precision, and how usage varies over time and with context; in this he diverges somewhat from Helm's views (Helm 1980; cf. Frye 1992). I find his arguments largely persuasive and sensible, although it still leaves unresolved specific questions that need thorough investigation.

2.2.1. When Darius I says that he impaled the rebel Ciçantakhma at Arbela, and then continues 'This is what was done by me in Media' (DB para 33), does it mean that Arbela was perceived as a city in Media (so Calmeyer 1990)? Or does the term merely reflect the fact that Darius is summarising his achievements vis-à-vis two Median rebels, Phraortes and Ciçantakhma, who both claimed to belong to the family of Cyaxares and whose area of operation seems to have been Media?

2.2.2. What exactly Xenophon means when he refers to Assyrian territory as 'Median' is also unclear: is he operating with the image of the succession of empires in Upper Asia (Assyria-Media-Persia) already found in Herodotus, but most strongly presented by Ctesias, whereby everything Assyrian became part of the Median empire, save for the fact that the Babylonian priest, Belesys, was granted the kingship of Babylonia (*FGrH* 688 F 1b)? If so, it does not seem to correspond with Xenophon's usage of 'Assyria' in the *Cyropaedia*.

2.2.3. Calmeyer (1990:111-112) points out that where Darius I says, in the Old Persian version of the Susa charter, that the Assyrians organised the transport of cedar from the Lebanon to Babylon, the Babylonian version of the text states that the work was done by the people of *Ebir nāri* (DSf 31-34). This implies that the term 'Assyria' could embrace a very wide range of meaning in the conventions of the royal inscriptions¹. Does that apply to Elamite administrative usage, too? PF 867, 1009, 1842-4 record rations given out to Assyrian workers, which does not give much help. PF 1799 notes an issue of flour to 'Addamuriš, the Assyrian, who handles cedar(?) (wood) at Persepolis': Adad-nūri is an attested personal name in Neo-Assyrian documents (cf., for example, SAA 1 no.216), and the association with some kind of wood (what kind is uncertain) is tantalising.

2.2.4. The only other mention of Assyria in the Persepolis collection I have come across is PF 1574, listing a small party travelling on royal business to Assyria. It is frustrating not to know what this means precisely.

¹ But note Quintus Curtius (X.1.19), who describes Alexander issuing instructions to the governors of Mesopotamia to cut timber in Mount Libanus, transport it to Thapsacus and start constructing ships which were then to be moved down to Babylon. This echoes the Susa charter in some respects and could imply (not surprisingly) that officials in North Mesopotamia were the obvious candidates to organise and manage the procuring, moving and initial processing of timber.

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2.2.5. It is a commonplace to use Xenophon's names 'Larissa' and 'Mespila' (on the assumption that they must be Kalhu and Nineveh) to show that Assyria had been extinguished so totally that not even the names of its most famous cities survived. Calmeyer, moreover, argues that Xenophon's description of the cities and all this region as 'Median' shows that the term 'Media' had expanded westwards to embrace the whole of Tigridian Assyria (Calmeyer 1990: 111-2; although this can co-exist with other perceptions, *cf. ibid.*: 119). This is not quite true of the situation: Xenophon's handling of geographical names in 'the east' is altogether odd (*cf.* Baslez this volume) and belongs to a discourse not helpful for understanding topographical realities; so his evidence here is not decisive. Strabo (XVI.1.1), writing much later in the Parthian period, preserves several of the traditional names in Assyria's heartland (which he calls 'Aturia'), including Nineveh and, most interestingly, Calachene, which must represent the district of Kalhu. This suggests strongly that the names of several Assyrian cities *had* survived and that the name Assyria to designate the north Tigris region had endured.

2.3. Conclusions

2.3.1. It seems likely that the whole of the Assyrian heartland was taken over by the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. The recent evidence from Dur Katlimmu implies that the Neo-Babylonian régime relied heavily on local Assyrian administrative practices and personnel. This organisational structure will largely have been in place when the Babylonian empire was conquered by Cyrus and incorporated in the fledgeling Persian empire (539).

2.3.2. What the term Assyria means in the Achaemenid period is and remains uncertain: contextual usage is probably the only way to make any headway here eventually. But it is not clear that it had definitively shifted westwards and so embraced all of the Levant and was always completely vague. The later evidence of Strabo suggests the opposite: a clear sense that the territory north of Babylonia is Assyria, with some regions and centres (in addition to Arbela) at least retaining their old Assyrian names (*cf.*, too, Ptolemy VI.1.2 for the region of Arrapachitis (*i.e.* Arrapha), as an area of Assyria between Armenia and Adiabene).

3. Textual Evidence

Written sources for the Assyrian heartland are at a premium after the fall of the empire, and particularly for the Achaemenid period. But they are not totally absent and, however unsatisfactory, they show the territory as a thriving, productive and well-integrated section of the Achaemenid empire.

3.1. Most frequently cited, because most important, is the Aramaic 'passport' of Nehtihor (AD VI), issued by Arsames, governor of Egypt, to his estate manager setting out from somewhere to the east of Babylonia and travelling to Egypt, late in

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the fifth century. Whitehead's interpretation of this document in the context of the Persepolis travel-texts (Whitehead 1974) has yielded the important insight that the stopping-places along Nehtihor's route were official stations along the Achaemenid royal road system. So they were centres where resources (food, fodder, animals) were collected to feed persons authorised to draw on their provisions. They were also equipped with administrative staff to check the written authorisations, register the identities of travellers, and keep accounts of the supplies dispensed and whose accounts were to be debited. Certainly some stations will also have had soldiers to guard (and defend) crucial strategic points (*cf.* Hdt. V.52). Although the document does not contain a complete itinerary from Babylonia's north-eastern border to Egypt, it does mention stopping-places in Assyria, which lay along Nehtihor's road. The first three places are well attested as earlier Assyrian provincial centres (*cf.* Graf 1994): Lahiru (on the Elamite border), Arzuhina (north of Arrapha), Arbela. From Arbela, the best known of the Achaemenid roads (Herodotus' 'royal road') ran across the Tigris up to Nisibis (Dilleman 1962: 147-162). Not all the details of this road are agreed, and there were probably several different routes in addition to that described by Herodotus. The route followed by Nehtihor from Arbela was (probably) to move toward Halzu, another former Assyrian district centre (perhaps to be identified with Strabo's Chazene (XVI.1.1; *cf.* Oates 1968: 59 n. 4; Graf 1994; *RLA* s.v. Halzu), south-east of Nineveh. The next place-name is normally read Matlabaš, argued by Driver to be identical with Assyrian Ubasê (Driver 1965: 58; Oates 1968: 59 and n. 5), whose suggested location is now Qaiyara, c.25 km north of Aššur, on the west bank of the Tigris. A possibly more plausible suggestion is that it is Assyrian Talbiš/Talmeš (modern Tilbis)², which lies east of 'Ana (ancient Anat) on the Euphrates, close to an important route linking the mid-Euphrates region with Aššur to the north and another running south through the Syrian desert and linking up with a route from Teima (see Northedge, Bamber, Roaf 1989: 4). This identification would make better sense, and allow us to see Nehtihor as continuing by the direct steppe route on to Damascus,

² I should like to thank Mario Fales, who drew my attention to this proposal in the discussion following the paper. Talbiš/Talmeš appears in the itinerary of Tukulti-Ninurta II (888-884), 'lying (on an island) in the Euphrates' en route to Anat (modern 'Ana), see Grayson 1991 A.O.100.5, 1.67 (*cf.* also Joannès' discussion of Tukulti-Ninurta II's route, this volume). ND 2768 (probably reign of Sargon II, 721-705) lists receipts of horses from officers in Rasappa, Talmeš, Bit Zamani and Nisibin; the *raksu*-officer of Talmeš, in charge of 477 horses, appears in 1.8 (Parker 1961: 49). For Iraq government excavations, which have revealed Neo-Assyrian, hellenistic, Parthian and Islamic remains on Tilbis island, see *Iraq* 45 (1983): 222 (*cf.* also Suru Telbis, *ibid.*: 221-2); *Iraq* 47 (1985): 225-6; for a discussion of the territory of Suhu, in which Talbiš lay, see Northedge, Bamber, Roaf 1989. Driver's tentative suggestion that Matlabaš could be in the region of Homs (Driver 1965: 58), should be rejected as it depends on reading Halzu as Halab = Aleppo.

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although the stopping point between there and Talbiš, Sa'lam, still resists identification (cf. Driver 1965: 58-9; Graf 1993: 152). Despite these uncertainties, the text provides an invaluable picture of several Assyrian centres continuing to fulfil some of their original functions in the late fifth century. It argues directly against a deserted landscape.

3.2. Other evidence comes from Xenophon (omitting his negative evidence on Larissa and Mespila, and that already treated by Joannès in this volume): a large and prosperous city, Caenac, lay north of the villages of Parysatis (*Anab.*, II.4.28) on the west bank of the Tigris. Since this was still at the point when the Greeks were being given an official Persian escort and access to supplies, the local people may have been ordered to cross the river with plentiful supplies in processed form (loaves of bread, cheeses and wine). They crossed on skin rafts. It is probable that this is an instance where the Greeks were expected to buy, although that is not certain. But to produce enough ready-to-eat food to contemplate satisfying several thousand soldiers suggests a thriving, local economic centre surrounded by good fields, pastures and vineyards. The impression is certainly one of considerable prosperity and, whether or not this is Aššur as its excavator Andrae assumed, his negative interpretation of Xenophon's account of Caenae is seriously misleading and at times plain wrong:

Außer Käse und Milch haben die Bewohner, die auf Schläuchen über den Tigris schwammen, den Griechen nichts anzubieten. Es sind Habenichtse. Es fehlt ihnen die königliche Fürsorge, die Kanäle gräbt und in Ordnung hält, die Landbestellung ermöglicht und ein weites Hinterland für den Handel offen hält. Das alles ist verlorengegangen. (Andrae 1938: 169)

Beyond this, Xenophon's narrative of the march through Assyria is marked by the presence of rich villages, especially the ones remarked on at *Anab.*, III.4.24 and III.4.31:

In the course of the fifth stage they (sc. the Greeks) caught sight of a palace of some kind, with many villages round about it, and they observed that the road to this place passed over high hills, which stretched down from the mountains at whose foot the villages were situated. ... In these villages they remained for three days ... because they had provisions in abundance – flour, wine, and great stores of barley that had been collected for horses, all these supplies having been gathered together by the satrap of the district (*chôra*).

The implication is that some days march north of Nineveh (if it is Mespila) there was a building substantial enough to be called a 'palace' (*basileion*). It was apparently in a prominent position, with rich villages clustered around it, which served as an official collecting point, with special responsibility for supplying horses; for what purpose, is not known – horses for specialised regiments of the army, for travel, for the

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king/administration, or to feed horses brought by cavalry soldiers to mustering points are all possibilities. But whatever its precise function, here was a visible arm of the Achaemenid administration.

3.3. Some scattered information is given by the Alexander historians. A general picture of the good supplies and routes available through Upper Mesopotamia is given by Arrian at various points. He describes the route from the Euphrates to the Tigris crossing (near Nineveh) thus:

On setting out from the Euphrates, he (sc. Alexander) did not take the direct route for Babylon, since by going the other road all supplies were easier to obtain for the army: green fodder for horses, and provisions from the country, and the heat was less intense. (Arrian, *Anab.*, III.7.3)

The importance of the fords on the Euphrates and Tigris are indicated by the royal arrangements made to guard them (cf. Arrian *Anab.*, III.7.1; III.7.5; D.S., XVII.55.1). The road from Gaugamela south to Babylon, east of the Tigris, is described as 'all of it inhabited and the road itself ... easy for the baggage trains' (Arrian *Anab.*, III.16.2), implying a good road, well maintained for easy travel including heavy wheeled transport. Where the road crossed the tributaries of the Tigris, there were permanent bridges (cf. Q.C., IV.16.8; IV.16.16 with reference to the Upper Zab).

3.4. The one major earlier Assyrian city, about which there is a little more written information (although there is virtually no archaeological material because the site has been continuously inhabited, see *RLA* s.v. Arbailu) is Arbela. Its survival after 612, probably under Babylonian control, is attested by the reference in the Nabonidus chronicle (547/6), where Cyrus is reported to have crossed the Tigris 'above Arbela' (*ABC* no. 7). What exactly is going on is obscure (cf. Kuhrt 1988: 120, 122, 123), although it is certainly not impossible that Herzfeld was right in assuming that Arbela was detached at this point and organised as Persian-ruled territory (cf. *EncIr* s.v. Arbela). Its importance as a regional centre is further attested by the final public execution of Ciçantakhma there in 522/1 (DB para 33; cf. 2.2.1 above). It appears in the Nehtihor letter (see 3.1), which shows its continued role as a strategic control point. The Alexander historians all bear out its importance as an urban centre of the region³: Alexander found great treasures deposited there including royal furniture, clothing of great value and either 3000 or 4000 talents of silver (Arrian, *Anab.*,

³ Cf. also Arrian's analysis of why so many writers place the Battle of Gaugamela at Arbela: 'Gaugamela was not a city, but a large village; it was not a famous place, and the name has an unpleasing sound; and so I suppose Arbela, being a city, carried off the glory of the great battle ...' (*Anab.*, VI.11.6).

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III.15.4; D.S. 17.64.3; Q.C.5.1.10). While it could be argued that some of this had been placed there temporarily just before Gaugamela (in particular the royal chariot, shield, bows and arrows), the other stores mentioned sound more like part of a regular royal treasury, which implies the existence of a building and staff to administer, guard and monitor its contents.

3.5. It is difficult to make much of Hdt., I.194 describing the round boats, built in Armenia, which were loaded with wine and sailed down to Babylonia. The cargoes could be very large, according to Herodotus, and he paints a picture of a regular supply-route running down the Tigris. If this is the case, then stopping-places for the crews to take on food and water, even rest, would have to be assumed. But there are such serious problems with Herodotus' picture of Babylonia that I would hesitate to deduce anything from this evidence alone (see Kuhrt in press).

3.6. A guard post is attested at Takritain (modern Tikrit, the 'frontier' between lowland Babylonia and more hilly Assyria, cf. Wiseman 1956: 80) in the reign of Cambyses (YOS 3, 106, cf. Durand and Joannès 1988). Joannès (1982: 182) had speculated that there was perhaps a Babylonian military station here in the Neo-Babylonian period. The evidence makes this feasible, so perhaps here, too, the Persians took over a pre-existing strongpoint.

4. Excavated sites

What remains frustrating is the absence of any significant archaeological material from the Assyrian core. Arbela, as indicated, is a special case, but why has nothing been found at any of the other sites? It might be helpful to summarise the situation briefly site by site.

4.1. North-east of Kirkuk, the construction of the Dokan dam encouraged archaeological investigation in the 1950s. An Iraqi team excavated the small site of Tell ed-Deim, where they found 'a small temple of the Neo-Assyrian period' built directly over prehistoric levels (al-Takriti 1960; cf. *AfO* 18 (1957-8): 77). The plates appended to the excavation report show an undecorated torus which Haerinck (1987: 143) took to be Achaemenid in date. The finds of horse-bronze equipment and fragments of a phiale are inconclusive for dating purposes. But the plan of the building is interpreted by Moorey (1980: 131) as a small, fortified manor, reminiscent of similar Achaemenid strongpoints in Palestine.

4.2. Aššur definitely continued to be inhabited after 614-612, still thriving in the Parthian period. Signs of violent destruction, save for the monumental gateways and the royal tombs, are said to be slight. In the *Vorhof* of the Aššur temple, two small

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temples, using the typical Babylonian broadroom plan, were constructed. The larger one (18x19m), built over a foundation of smashed documents from the temple, had towers at the front and a niched façade; its walls were 2.5m thick in some places; its paved floor was carefully laid; both outer room and cella were closed off with doors and the small altar facing the main entrance was solidly built (Andrae 1938: 164-6). The find of a statue of 'Heracles' here from the Parthian period (Andrae 1938: 174) indicates that the sanctuary probably continued in use right through the periods after Aššur's fall. Who was worshipped here before the Parthian period is unknown: Andrae assumed it could not be Aššur, but the Dur Katlimmu documents now make this a possibility worth considering (*cf.* Postgate 1993 nos. 2 & 3). The other temple is much smaller (4x7.5m), with a plain façade and only a single room; but its Babylonian plan is clear. Some important rooms in the Old Palace and the Anu-Adad temple show definite signs of repairs, almost certainly dating to the post-Assyrian period. Especially striking is the quite elaborate wall-decoration (*cf.* Andrae 1938: 166). Also significant is the evidence for dwellings west of the Anu-Adad temple. Here stood two substantial houses, surrounded by tiny huts lining the twisted alleyways, well-furnished, spaciouly laid out with outer and inner courtyards, good paved floors, handsome painted wall-plaster, solid stone thresholds and doorsockets; one house was equipped with a well (Andrae 1938: 166-7). Several of the graves under the floors of the houses must, according to Andrae, date to the time after 614 (Andrae 1938: 169).

Chronological precision for any of this material is lacking, although the temples suggest they were built in the time of Babylonian control. Continuity of cult down to the Parthian period is likely. We should also remember the reference in the Cyrus Cylinder (Berger 1975 1.30) to the restoration and repopulation of Aššur.

4.3. Kalhu (Nimrud), too, shows traces of occupation after Assyria's fall and pre-dating the hellenistic settlement. In the 'Acropolis Palace' (AB), on the south-eastern edge of the citadel, Mallowan assigned the mud-brick partition walls in the throne-room to the period 500-300, while he described some of the pottery from here as matching 'the Achaemenian ware from Susa' (Mallowan 1966: 296-299). A small hoard of antique seals (including a fine Agade cylinder, an eighth and a seventh century one) was found in one of the hellenistic graves in AB. Interestingly, the style of the hellenistic graves is standard Assyrian (Mallowan 1966: 295-7). Another observation by Mallowan is significant here:

Glazed vessels were made at this time (i.e. post-Assyrian period), and the fact that in the last phase of all much of the hellenistic pottery was typically a direct descendant of the Assyrian goes far to show that Calah was not altogether deserted between 600 and 220BC. (Mallowan 1966: 230)

In the Burnt Palace and Nabu Temple, a short-lived impoverished level was followed by a substantial effort at reconstruction: the old walls were repaired and

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plastered; in the temple the floor was raised over one metre above the old level. In Mallowan's view 'the stratigraphic evidence indicates this period of occupation has to be accommodated in some considerable lapse of time after c.600 and considerably earlier than 220'. A probable date, he suggested, might be the sixth to fifth centuries. Neo-Babylonian graves were also found in area PD5 (*cf. RLA s.v. Kalhu*), as were pyramidal stamp seals with Marduk and Nabu emblems, well-known from sixth century Babylonia. Most interesting is the find of kilns, a glassmaker's kit and an opaque red glass ingot from a crucible on the south side of Room 47 of the Burnt Palace. This was dated by Mallowan (1966: 209-210) to the hellenistic period. But Barag reconsidered the find when preparing his catalogue of Western Asiatic glass for the British Museum (Barag 1985:59): the British Museum laboratory assigned the ingot a radio-carbon date of 425 +/- 50 years BC. Barag then compared it to the finds of red opaque glass in Persepolis, and argued that there was a glass workshop in Nimrud in the Achaemenid period, producing coloured glass identical to that used at/produced for the Persian court.

The total evidence from Nimrud, then, indicates considerable continuities and occupation right through the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period. How substantial settlement was is hard to establish, but the evidence for a small glass workshop, producing material similar to that at Persepolis, suggests that the site was not totally impoverished and may have been more densely occupied than usually thought. Also in favour of some kind of continuity is the long survival of the name Calachene (see 2.2.5).

4.4. At Nineveh, the archaeological picture was becoming a little clearer with the University of Berkeley excavations and survey work. Dalley (1993), too, has helped considerably with clarifying the post-Assyrian situation. Some evidence for cult continuity is suggested by Neo-Babylonian references to the 'priest of the Lady of Nineveh' (*cf. Zadok 1985 s.v. Ninua*), as well as by the probable reference in the Cyrus Cylinder (Berger 1975, 1.30) to Nineveh as a place whose shrine was restored and cult personnel returned. Most striking is the statue of Hermes found *in situ* in the Assyrian shrine at Nineveh (Ali 1954), and the Greek inscription added to an altar dedicated to the Assyrian Sebitti gods (discussed, with plan, by Scott and MacGinnis 1990: 69-71). Whether the palaces continued to be inhabited in any way is not certain, although close study of the relief decoration in Sennacherib's palace as a model for the figures in Pasargadae has been argued for by Kawami (1972; for other examples, *cf. Calmeyer 1994*), which, she suggests, implies some inhabitants.

Lumsden's report on the Berkeley survey indicates that some of the most recently developed areas of the city were abandoned after 612 (Lumsden 1991:3); Stronach's description of the corpses of nine Assyrian defenders under the collapsed debris of the Halzu gate (Stronach 1989:1) would also suggest that this area was not rebuilt. It looks at present as though settlement in the city shrank, concentrating around Nebi

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Yunus, Kuyunjik, the area between the two and immediately to the east (*cf.* the hellenistic settlement east of Kuyunjik, Lumsden 1991, fig. 3).

Chronological uncertainties again loom large and it is not possible to say anything definite about how Nineveh may have looked at any one point. But again there is strong evidence for continuities at the cultic level right through from the Late Assyrian to the Parthian period, which must be weighed before dismissing Nineveh as a deserted ruinheap in the Achaemenid period.

4.5. At Khorsabad (Dur Šarrukin), the evidence for reoccupation is very slight, but there is some. In the Nabu temple, the doorways were blocked up and the floors reconstructed (Loud 1936: 62-64). In the latest occupation of the Nabu temple two silver bracelets with ram's head terminals were found. A Late Assyrian date for them is not at all certain, 'indeed the slight inswing opposite the terminals on the hoop of one of them suggests it is Achaemenian' (Moorey 1971: 220 referring to Loud and Altman 1938, pl.59: 127).

4.6. The projected Saddam dam in the Eski Mosul region was another gift to archaeologists in the 1980s. A British Museum team worked at the site of Khirbet Qasrij, which is definitely post-Assyrian and from one period only, perhaps lasting no longer than thirty years (Curtis 1989). The site had a pottery industry, and its pottery 'looked close to the post-Assyrian wares from Nimrud'. But there is, in fact, no chronological certainty as yet on the post-Assyrian pottery sequences (*cf.* Oates 1968: 63; Kühne 1993: 76-77), so Curtis' proposed date of an early sixth century date for Khirbet Qasrij is shaky. The solitary 'grander' object found at Khirbet Qasrij was a duck weight, which, Curtis says, finds 'its closest parallels in the sixth and even fifth century' (Curtis 1989: 52).

4.7. Finally, there is the site of Yarim Tepe in the Sinjar along the route leading to Guzana. It was excavated by a Soviet team in the 1960s, and has become famous for the early pottery kiln (Hassuna period) that it produced. But Yarim Tepe was occupied for a long time; the preliminary report mentions that the site contained 'numerous pits of different periods: from Halafian to Assyrian and Achaemenian' (Merpert and Munchajev 1969: 127). None of this later material has been discussed in print, as far as I am aware; excitement was generated at the time by the Neolithic levels alone.

Dandamayev told me in the early eighties that a cuneiform tablet dated to Cyrus was found at Yarim Tepe; nothing beyond the date is apparently legible. In the light of the new direction that studies of Achaemenid history have taken in recent years, and the serious re-evaluation of Assyrian history after 614-612 made necessary by the Dur Katlimmu finds, we should perhaps now give this tablet a little more weight.

5. Concluding Remarks

Xenophon's *Anabasis* has been used to lend emphasis to a historical vision of the Assyrian empire as a hollow, overly exploitative state which collapsed in on itself, leaving little trace. Such a complete caesura has never made much sense, given the evidence, long available from Herodotus, for the 'Royal Road', the passport of Nehtihor (however the route is reconstructed precisely) and the enduring existence of Arbela. The problem, however, has been the apparent total lack of evidence for anything aside from miserable villages, before the hellenistic and then Parthian periods. But to some extent we have been caught in a circular argument, *i.e. because* we know from the Babylonian chronicles that the Assyrian cities were destroyed between 614 and 612, anything found on Assyrian sites must either predate 612 or can perhaps be attributed to the hellenistic period on the basis of coins.

The new finds at Šēḫ Ḥamad now challenge this view in an incontrovertible way, and fit much better with the little pieces of information we do have. It allows us to see the Neo-Babylonian state taking over surviving Assyrian structures, physical and institutional, which in turn makes it likely that the Persians would have incorporated them into their realm. If we reexamine the excavation reports, it becomes clear that a great deal more was happening on the old Assyrian city-sites than has been thought. The remains at Nimrud are particularly rich, and Barag's little-noticed redating of the glass-workshop there (but see Kuhrt 1990: 186) has important implications that are worth pondering. It has also become evident how uncertain the dating of Late Assyrian archaeological sequences and pottery remains (see 4.6). This should make it imperative to pay more attention to the significant fact that Strabo and Ptolemy, in contrast to Xenophon, preserve the names of some old Assyrian cities. The time for a reassessment of the strategically and agriculturally important Assyrian territory in the Achaemenid period has come.

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Résumé. On a jugé pendant longtemps que le territoire de l'Assyrie n'était que peu peuplé depuis les dévastations babyloniennes et mèdes de 614-612 ; l'image qu'en donne Xénophon dans l'*Anabase* paraît confirmer une telle impression. L'auteur réexamine la documentation sur l'Assyrie entre le VI^e et le IV^e siècles, se fondant sur des travaux récents et sur de nouvelles découvertes. Elle conclut que la documentation disponible ne corrobore pas cette impression négative, et qu'une réévaluation du pays assyrien durant les périodes néo-babylonienne et achéménide est une sérieuse nécessité scientifique.

Summary. The territory of Assyria has long thought to have been inhabited only sparsely after the Babylonian and Median devastation of 614-612 ; the picture Xenophon paints of it in the *Anabasis* appears to confirm this impression. This paper re-examines the evidence for Assyria in the sixth to fourth centuries, building on recent work and new discoveries. It concludes that the evidence does not bear out this negative impression, and that a serious reappraisal of the Assyrian region in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods is needed.

Assyrian heartland in the Achaemenid period

Amélie Kuhrt

Abstract

The territory of Assyria has long thought to have been inhabited only sparsely after the Babylonian and Median devastation of 614-612 ; the picture Xenophon paints of it in the Anabasis appears to confirm this impression. This paper re-examines the evidence for Assyria in the sixth to fourth centuries, building on recent work and new discoveries. It concludes that the evidence does not bear out this negative impression, and that a serious reappraisal of the Assyrian region in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods is needed.

The Neo- Assyrian empire (c. 900-612) has bequeathed us some of the most magnificent archaeological and textual remains known from the Ancient Near East. That evidence, combined with potent passages in the Old Testament, gives us an impression of a very powerful and wealthy empire, wielding strong control over a prolonged period, which had a profound impact on most regions of the Near East

Keywords: Assyria, Neo-Assyria, Land of Assyria, 6th century BC, Medes