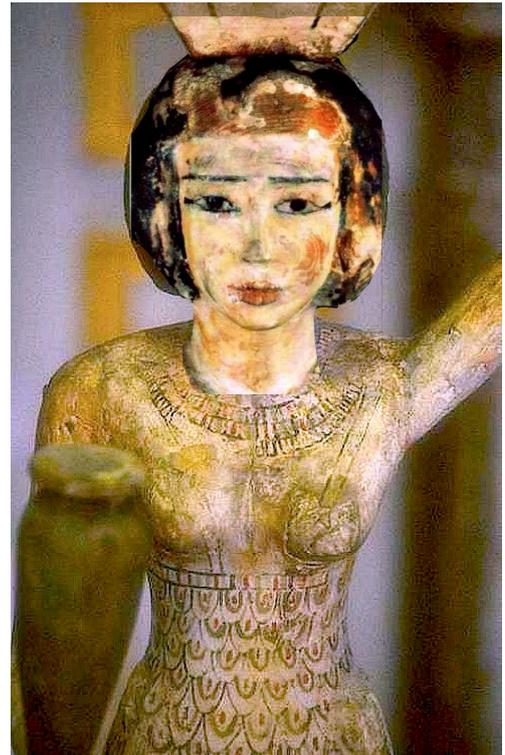
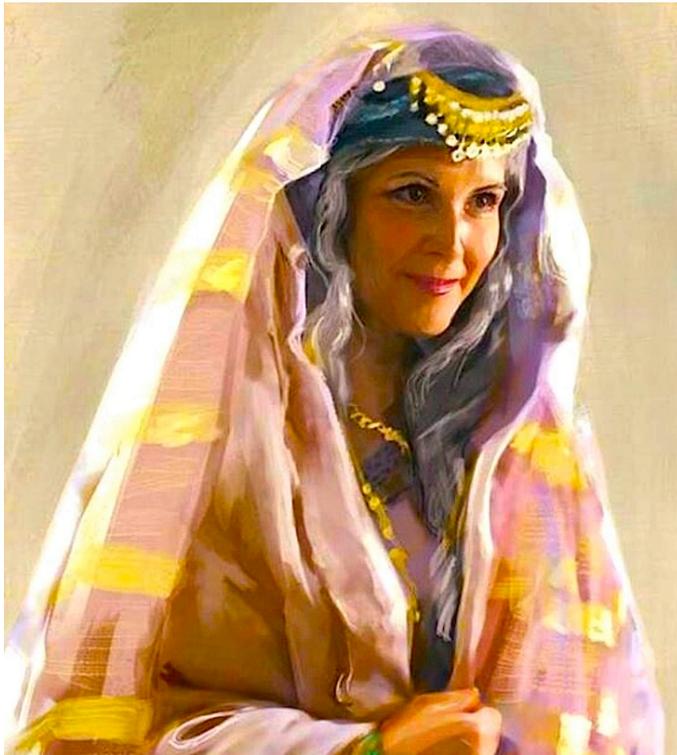


# Sarah wife of Abraham

## Fairy tale or real history?



## Outcome of the investigation

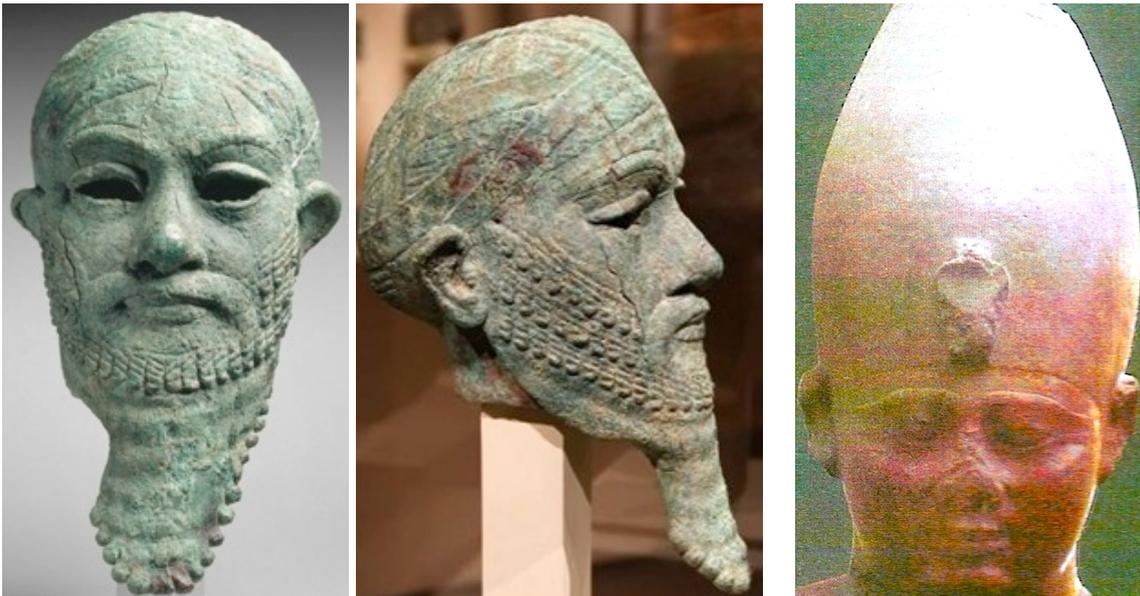
**Gérard GERTOUX**

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Member of the International Association for Assyriology*

Front page: Sarai's face with its original colours from the statue of Sarai (bottom right) Louvre E 10781:



Above left: Two statues of Sarai (Gn 12:10-20) as an Offering Bearer dated around year 15 of Amenemhat I (1962 BCE). The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York): Accession Number: 20.3.7.



Above left: *Head of Chedorlaomer* (H 34.3 cm) in *Arsenical Copper* from Iran (c. 2000 B.C.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1947 (47.100.80). *Ku-du<sub>7</sub>[ur-La-ga-mar]* (1990-1954), king of Awan I (Elam), mentioned in Genesis 14:1-17, appears in lines 13 and 14 of the King List WB 444 (Weld-Blundell Prism) dated c. 1800 B.C. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (number: AN1923.44).

Above right: head of the colossal statue in read granite from Tanis of Amenemhat I (Cairo JE 37470).

# Digging to find out, or to bury, the truth!

Very few Bible scholars believe now in the historicity of the book of Genesis, especially the narrative of Abraham and Sarah's life. In the early and middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, leading archaeologists such as William F. Albright, and biblical scholars such as Albrecht Alt, believed that the patriarchs were either real individuals or believable composites of people who lived in the "patriarchal age", the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. But, in the 1970s, new arguments concerning Israel's past as well as the biblical texts challenged these views. These arguments can be found in Thomas L. Thompson's *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (1974), and John Van Seters' *Abraham in History and Tradition* (1975).

Thompson, a literary scholar, based his argument on archaeology and ancient texts. His PhD dissertation centred on the lack of compelling evidence that the patriarchs lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, and noted how certain biblical texts reflected 1<sup>st</sup> millennium conditions and concerns. Van Seters examined the patriarchal stories and argued that their names, social milieu, and messages strongly suggested that they were Iron Age creations. In his book, he argues that there is no unambiguous evidence pointing to an origin for the stories in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC: *Arguments based on reconstructing the patriarch's nomadic way of life, the personal names in Genesis, the social customs reflected in the stories, and correlation of the traditions of Genesis with the archaeological data of the Middle Bronze Age have all been found, in Part One above, to be quite defective in demonstrating an origin for the Abraham tradition in the second millennium B.C. (...) Consequently, without any such effective historical controls on the tradition one cannot use any part of it in an attempt to reconstruct the primitive period of Israelite history. Furthermore, a vague presupposition about the antiquity of the tradition based upon a consensus approval of such arguments should no longer be used as a warrant for proposing a history of the tradition related to early premonarchic times* (Van Seters: 1975, 309). Consequently William G. Dever<sup>1</sup> has stated that by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, archaeologists *had given up hope of recovering any context that would make Abraham, Isaac or Jacob credible 'historical figures'* (Dever: 2002, 98 n.2). *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* is a book by biblical scholar Thomas L. Thompson, Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of Copenhagen. Together with John Van Seters's *Abraham in History and Tradition*. This book marked the culmination of a growing current of dissatisfaction in scholarly circles with the then-current consensus (or near-consensus) on the Patriarchal narratives.

The consensus can be summarized as the proposal that, even if archaeology could not directly confirm the existence of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), these Patriarchal narratives had originated in a 2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William G. Dever is an American archaeologist, specialising in the history of Israel and the Near East in Biblical times. He was Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona in Tucson from 1975 to 2002. He is a Distinguished Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania.

millennium BC setting because many personal names, place names, and customs referenced in the Genesis narratives were unique to that era. This view was expressed by John Bright in his influential *History of Israel* (1959, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1960) in these words; *one is forced to the conclusion that the patriarchal narratives authentically reflect social customs at home in the second millennium rather than those of later Israel.* Thompson and Van Seters pointed out that, in fact, none of the archaeological evidence cited by the dominant scholars of the time (notably William F. Albright, E. A. Speiser, Cyrus Gordon, and Bright himself) actually provided irrefutable proof for the historicity of the Patriarchal narratives: *Not only has archaeology not proven a single event of the patriarchal traditions to be historical, it has not shown any of the traditions to be likely.* Albright's reputation never quite recovered from the publication of Thompson's book.

Indeed all the recent research tends to go in one direction: debunking the biblical narrative. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, a book published in 2001, discusses the archaeology of Israel and its relationship to the origins and content of the Hebrew Bible. The authors are Israel Finkelstein, Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University, and Neil Asher Silberman, an archaeologist, historian and contributing editor to *Archaeology Magazine*. The methodology applied by the authors is historical criticism with an emphasis on archaeology. Writing in the website of "The Bible and Interpretation", the authors describe their approach as one: *in which the Bible is one of the most important artefacts and cultural achievements [but] not the unquestioned narrative framework into which every archaeological find must be fit.* Their main contention is that: *An archaeological analysis of the patriarchal, conquest, judges, and United Monarchy narratives [shows] that while there is no compelling archaeological evidence for any of them, there is clear archaeological evidence that places the stories themselves in a late 7th-century BCE context.*

As noted by a reviewer on Salon.com the approach and conclusions of *The Bible Unearthed* are not particularly new. Ze'ev Herzog, professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv University, wrote a cover story for Haaretz in 1999 in which he reached similar conclusions following the same methodology; Herzog noted also that some of these findings have been accepted by the majority of biblical scholars and archaeologists for years and even decades, even though they have only recently begun to make a dent in the awareness of the general public.

How to establish historical truth regarding the narrative of Abraham and Sarah? Considering all the suspicions around the Pentateuch, I strived to look for ways to discriminate the truth. One way I used is chronology, because chronology is indeed the basis of history. It is the key to finding historical truth. But before the truth is found, we must answer an important question: Does truth come from history or archaeology? You must know that "historical truth" is based on an accurate chronology and reliable documents, but "archaeological truth" is mainly based on archaeological surveys dated by means of C14.

## DOES TRUTH COME FROM HISTORY OR ARCHAEOLOGY?

For example, Dennis Pardee<sup>2</sup> sums up the archaeological evidence “proving” the absence of historicity of the patriarchal narratives in his review of the book of Thompson: *the lack of explicit evidence for patriarchal historicity, coupled with the form-criticism of the patriarchal narratives, do not allow the dispassionate historian to make any claim for the patriarchs as actual persons (...)* Some of the results are: 1) *patriarchal proper names are worthless for dating purposes since they occur at all periods from Ur III to Neo-Assyrian; 2) the term “Amorite” itself should be dropped because of confusion amongst the MARTU of Ur III/OB, the Levantine state Amurru, and the Amorites of the Bible; rather we should use the term “Early West Semitic” to describe the peoples behind the so-called Amorite proper names; the Egyptian Amu do not provide evidence for Amorites in Palestine; they were probably indigenous inhabitants of the eastern borders of Egypt; 4) the Execration Texts do not testify to progressive sedentarization, nor to a previous “Amorite” invasion; 5) the archaeological evidence from Syria-Palestine does not show a major break between EB IV and MB I, nor is there evidence for anything resembling a nomadic invasion; therefore no new people entered Palestine during MB I, Amorite or other; 6) Abraham was therefore not an Amorite donkey caravaneer; 7) Genesis 14 is clearly unhistorical and probably the latest of the major patriarchal narratives (exilic). The conclusion of Pardee seems impressive (Pardee: 1977, 222-224), but it is only based on a lack of explicit archaeological evidence, it is not based neither on a lack of explicit historical evidence nor on accurate chronologies. There is no chronological investigation despite the fact that chronology is the backbone of history, worse still, there are as many chronologies as there are experts, and there has been no historical research among archaeological witnesses despite the fact that apart from ancient texts there is no witness (stones are dumb). Worse, in order to establish historical truth, they regularly quote other leading experts (with whom they agree, obviously) rather than chronological investigations.*

Finkelstein's method is exposed in his book: *The Bible Unearthed: The main problem (sic) was that the scholars who accepted the biblical accounts as reliable mistakenly believed that the patriarchal age must be seen, one way or the other, as the earliest phase in a sequential history of Israel. Some Tell-tale Anachronisms: (...)* The mention of Gerar as a Philistine city in the narratives of Isaac and the mention of the city (without the Philistine attribution) in the stories of Abraham (Genesis 20:1) suggest that it had a special importance or at least was widely known at the time of the composition of the patriarchal narratives. Gerar is today identified with Tel Haror northwest of Beersheba, and excavations there have shown that in the Iron Age I —the early phase of Philistine history— it was no more than a small, quite insignificant village. But by the late eighth and seventh century BCE,

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Pardee is Professor of Northwest Semitics in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures and the Oriental Institute. His research focuses on Northwest Semitic Languages, Ugaritic and Hebrew poetics, Ugaritic and Hebrew epistolography, and Ugaritic and Hebrew ritual. He is one of the leading authorities on the ancient city of Ugarit and the hundreds texts discovered there that are written in the city's distinctive language and script. His regular teaching includes intermediate and advanced courses in biblical Hebrew and grammar.

*it had become a strong, heavily fortified Assyrian administrative stronghold in the south, an obvious landmark. Were these incongruous details merely late insertions into early traditions or were they indications that both the details and the narrative were late? Many scholars — particularly those who supported the idea of the "historical" patriarchs — considered them to be incidental details. But as Thomas Thompson put it as early as the 1970s, the specific references in the text to cities, neighboring peoples, and familiar places are precisely those aspects that distinguish the patriarchal stories from completely mythical folk-tales. They are crucially important for identifying the date and message of the text. In other words, the "anachronisms" are far more important for dating and understanding the meaning and historical context of the stories of the patriarchs than the search for ancient Bedouin or mathematical calculations of the patriarchs' ages and genealogies. So the combination of camels, Arabian goods, Philistines, and Gerar — as well as other places and nations mentioned in the patriarchal stories in Genesis — are highly significant. All the clues point to a time of composition many centuries after the time in which the Bible reports the lives of the patriarchs took place. These and other anachronisms suggest an intensive period of writing the patriarchal narratives in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (Finkelstein, Silberman: 2001, 36-38). All these statements, which are regularly cited by major media, can be rebutted! First, Finkelstein fails to mention that, without any inscriptions (usual situation in archaeology), identification of cities of the past is often controversial. For example, the Philistine city of Gerar (between Gaza and Beer-sheba) is believed to have been either Tell Jemmeh, Tell Abu-Hureyra (Tel Haror), Tell esh-Shariah or Tell et-Tuwail. What makes the situation even more complex is uncertainty regarding the site of Tel Haror, which is supposed to be Gerar, because it is also identified by some archaeologists either as Bat-Markaboth, Gath or Sharuhem (Negev, Gibson: 2006, 220,254). What a mess! And to make matters worse, dating the city of Haror is also disputed, but the city flourished during the Middle Bronze (2000-1550) and this urban settlement was one of the largest in southern Canaan, occupying an area of about 38 acres<sup>3</sup>. Therefore the only serious method of investigation to authenticate an ancient narrative cannot be based on archaeology but only from an accurate chronology (based on absolute dates) combined with historical evidence. Finkelstein says that the geographical place-names in Biblical accounts are reliable for the 7<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, but not for earlier times, showing that the biblical text cannot be regarded as a "history" of those earlier times, as a result of which the*

<sup>3</sup> The city was enclosed by an elaborate system of earthen ramparts fronted by a deep ditch (Klenck 2002: 30; Oren et al. 1996: 91). Within the city a sacred precinct was excavated, including a "migdol temple," remains of animal sacrifice, and cultic and imported pottery (Klenck 2002; Oren et al. 1996: 91–92). Also found within the fortified enclosure was a 10 foot diameter well, excavated to a depth of 38 feet (Klenck 2002: 34; Oren 1993: 581). Of particular interest is a Minoan graffito found in the sacred precinct dating to ca. 1600 BCE. Analyses of the sherd determined that it originated in Crete, most likely the south coast (Day et al. 1999; Oren et al. 1996). There are four Minoan signs on the graffito, inscribed prior to firing, which represent a bull's head, cloth, branch and figs (Oren et al. 1996: 99–109). In addition to the graffito, an unusual chalice of Canaanite shape and fabric was found in a room on the east side of the sacred area. What makes the chalice unusual is its high arching handles, a well-known feature of Minoan chalices, but not of Canaanite (Oren et al. 1996: 95, 96; Oren 1993: 581).

narratives of Abraham would be myths. However, if we use a chronology based on absolute dates (it was the purpose of my PhD dissertation), combined with ancient witnesses as well as historical writings, we can reach historical truth.

#### ATTACK N° 1: ABSENCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Criticism of Finkelstein against the Pentateuch is all based on an absence of archaeological evidence that would be historical evidence of the absence and his statement that, according to the documentary hypothesis, there had not been any biblical writing in the time of Moses is simply false. The Amarna letters (on clay tablets in cuneiform), which are mostly diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan and Amurru (dated 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE) have shown that the scribes of Canaan knew writing because these letters were written primarily in Akkadian (in fact Babylonian Standard), the regional language of diplomacy for this period, with marginal notes in Ancient Canaanite, their mother tongue. For archaeologists, Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because Paleo-Hebrew only appeared after circa 1050 BCE, at Byblos, and scribal schools in Palestine only began to exist circa 800 BCE. According to Finkelstein: *Modern archaeology has shown that the concept of archives kept in Jerusalem with writings of the tenth century, is an absurdity based on a biblical witness and not on factual evidence. Bible stories would rank therefore among national mythologies, and would have no more historical foundation than the Homeric saga of Ulysses, or that of Aeneas, founder of Rome, sung by Virgil* (Finkelstein: 2005, 73).

These statements and these dates are historically dishonest since these authors are well aware that the Semites who came from Egypt and lived in Palestine knew the old writing called proto-Canaanite, the ancestor of Old Hebrew. For example, several inscriptions in proto-Canaanite have been discovered in Egypt (Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai and Wadi el-Hôl north of Thebes) and in Palestine (Lachish, Gezer and Shechem). These inscriptions are difficult to date, between 1850 and 1500 BCE for those in Serabit el-Khadim or Wadi el-Hôl and around 1600-1500 for those in Palestine. The spelling of the name of Canaanite cities in execration texts (dated c. -1950)<sup>4</sup>, founded on shards and figurines, is variable<sup>5</sup> but their meaning is clearly Hebrew. In fact the oldest epigraph in paleo-Hebrew is dated 1550-1480 (Dalley: 2009, 1-16, 112, pl LIII, CLIV), exactly the time of Moses and the Exodus! One has to notice that this latter example comes from a professional scribe who inscribed his name in cuneiform: *Ali-dîn-ili of Kup[patu?]* (*a-lî-di-in-î-lî ša ku-up-[pa-tu? "high building"]*) and engraved it in paleo-Hebrew on the edge of the tablet as: 'LDN'L GB' (*Aldinel of Gaba "hill?"*). This paleo-Hebrew script is close to that much later one (c. 950 BCE) found at Tel Zayit (Colonna d'Istria: 2012, 61-63).

<sup>4</sup> They are transcribed with early Old Babylonian features, especially the mimation as the final *m* that appears on all singular, feminine plural nouns and on dative pronouns, which was lost quite early in the Old Babylonian period, after the collapse of Ur in 1912 BCE.

<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian letter "3" was frequently used, at that time, for rendering the Canaanite letter "l/r".

Denigration of biblical texts by archaeologists is based primarily on the following fallacy: *the current lack of archaeological evidence is evidence of the lack of historical evidence*. It is important to understand why this reasoning (mainly from 1970) is false because it is the cornerstone of archaeologists whereas for historians today the cornerstone is the testimony of early historians. First, one must know that the complete disappearance of past things, including some impressive buildings of stone, is the rule and not the exception, even the main capital of the first empire of Akkad (Aggad) has still not been found. Major periods of history, like the one that followed the attack of the Peoples of the Sea and lasted 400 years (1150-750) are called “Dark Ages” because they are completely empty of inscriptions. Similarly the kings of the Elamite empire “disappear” completely out of history for more than 3 centuries (1100-770) and although the Etruscan civilization is newer and prospered from 750 to 300 BCE we do not have any literature. Indeed, there is currently no document datable from the period of the Judges (1500-1000) but it should be noted, by way of comparison, that the Kassite dynasty, which also lasted 5 centuries (1650-1150), left no text and yet it was far more powerful than the Jewish jurisdiction. How can one explain that a known writing could disappear for several centuries without leaving any archaeological track? Thus the Elamite cuneiform was used from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE but disappeared<sup>6</sup> during the period 1100-770. It is obvious that Elamite writing did not disappear but as chancelleries ceased to produce documents in large quantities, due to disturbances in the empire, the number of documents of this period that have survived today has decreased drastically to reach virtually zero<sup>7</sup>. For the same reasons when the Babylonian empire was destroyed by the Hittites (in 1499 BCE) it was replaced by a small provincial Kassite kingdom without Chancery, and therefore without written documents<sup>8</sup> The appearance of writing is in fact closely linked to the activities of a Chancery. Furthermore a second factor has likely played a significant role (poorly known): the perishable nature (or not) of support.

## ATTACK N° 2: THE “DOCUMENTARY THEORY”

The ‘documentary theory’, which suggests that the five books of Moses were created around 450 BCE by combining four originally independent sources, known as the Jehovist, or J (c. -900), the Elohist, or E (c. -800), the Deuteronomist, or D, (c. -600), and the Priestly source, or P (c. -500), as set forth by J. Wellhausen in 1895, was accepted by the majority of academic scholars for many years without notable controversy. However, the

<sup>6</sup> It was probably caused by a massive arrival of Indo-Aryan tribes which upset the Elamite empire leading to a relocation of its capital at Susa (instead of Anshan).

<sup>7</sup> The proportion of contemporaneous documents that are found is probably less than one in a thousand. Thus most ancient writers are not known anymore, except sometimes their names, because their works are now lost. Josephus, for example, cites many ancient authors who then fell into anonymity.

<sup>8</sup> There are no Kassite documents between King Gandaš (1660-1635) and King Kurigalzu I (1390-1375). We know Kassite kings only through later Babylonian scribes.

‘documentary theory’ sequence is only based on an evolutionary theory popularized by German archaeologists during World War II to combat Jewish and Christian fundamentalism. In fact, no manuscript evidence of the J,E,P,D-documents or any of the other supposed fragments have ever been discovered and there are no ancient Jewish commentaries that mention any of these imaginary documents or their alleged unnamed authors. In addition, if these multiple sources had actually existed before being amalgamated, they would have been assembled into an undefined order (if authors were independent) as was the case, for example, for the scrolls of the minor prophets (and even the four Gospels), however all the manuscripts of the Pentateuch have the same arrangement of chapters and its five books are always in the same order. It is not randomly assembled episode recitations but an editorial choice made by a single author who wrote that long text as a whole. In addition, contrary to what most archaeologists say there are four chronological markers (datable elements but insignificant at the time of writing) which allow dating the five books of Moses (see page 135): 1) the rate of inflation in the slave price, 2) the proportion of Amorite names with a conjugated form in the imperfect, 3) the structure in patriarchal treaties and 4) the type of calendars used.

#### WHY THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS IS NOT SCIENTIFIC

The word “Pentateuch” refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Tanakh, also known as the Torah, or Old Testament, as it is known to Christians. These books are as follows: 1) Genesis, 2) Exodus, 3) Leviticus, 4) Numbers and 5) Deuteronomy. According to Richard Elliot Friedman, biblical scholar and professor of Jewish studies at the University of Georgia: *Moses is the major figure through most of these books, and early Jewish and Christian tradition held that Moses himself wrote them, though nowhere in the Five Books of Moses themselves does the text say that he was the author. But the tradition that one person, Moses, alone wrote these books presented problems. People observed contradictions in the text. It would report events in a particular order, and later it would say that those same events happened in a different order. It would say that there were two of something, and elsewhere it would say that there were fourteen of that same thing. It would say that the Moabites did something, and later it would say that it was the Midianites who did it. It would describe Moses as going to a Tabernacle in a chapter before Moses builds the Tabernacle* (Richard Elliot: 1997, 17-18).

Because of these alleged contradictions the majority of modern scholars, whether biblical, textual, or historical, no longer regard these books as having been written by Moses, they consider that early and credulous traditions attributed the authorship of these five books to the possibly mythological lawgiver of the Israelites, Moses.

Today the majority of academic scholars accept the theory that the Torah does not have a single author, and that its composition took place over centuries (McDermott: 2002, 21). From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a general

consensus around the documentary hypothesis, but this general agreement began to break down in the late 1970s (Wenham: 1996, 3-13), and today there are many theories but no consensus, or even a majority viewpoint. Variations of the documentary hypothesis remain popular especially in America and Israel, and the identification of distinctive Deuteronomistic and Priestly theologies and vocabularies remains widespread, but they are used to form new approaches suggesting that the books were combined gradually over time by the slow accumulation of “fragments” of text, or that a basic text was “supplemented” by later authors/editors (Van Seters: 2004, 74-79). At the same time there has been a tendency to bring the origins of the Pentateuch further forward in time, and the most recent proposals place it in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Judah under the Persian empire (Knoppers, Levinson: 2007).

Several variant views of the documentary hypothesis exist, but perhaps the most popular is that of Julius Wellhausen proposed in 1895. Wellhausen put dates to the alleged four sources and none were earlier than around 900 BCE. As highlighted Gleason Archer, an Old Testament scholar: *Although Wellhausen contributed no innovations to speak of, he restated the documentary theory with great skill and persuasiveness, supporting the JEDP sequence upon an evolutionary basis* (Archer: 1994, 95). Even though a great many scholars and much of the public have now accepted this view, is it really true?

The documentary hypothesis is above all a sceptical attack on the Bible and there are many scientific and logical reasons to reject it. First, consider what the Bible itself says about the authorship of the Pentateuch. Biblical witness to Mosaic authorship: The chart below shows that the Pentateuch states that Moses wrote these books<sup>9</sup>. In his rejection of Mosaic authorship, Wellhausen nowhere discussed this biblical evidence. It is easy to deny Mosaic authorship, if one ignores the evidence for it. But that is not honest scholarship. We also have the witness of the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament is also clear in its testimony<sup>10</sup>. The divisions of the Old Testament were clearly in place in the Jewish mind long before the time of Christ, namely, the Law of Moses (first 5 books of the OT), the Prophets (the historical and prophetic books) and the Writings (the poetic books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, etc.). So when Jesus referred to the Law of Moses, his Jewish listeners knew exactly to what he was referring. Even Hecataeus of Abdera (c. 310 BCE), a Greek historian and sceptic philosopher, knew (before the Septuagint) that there were the “words of Moses”. These are some of the arguments sceptics use:

- ✓ They assumed that the Bible is not a supernatural revelation from God, which implicitly reveals that they are Deistic or atheistic in their thinking. This view is faulty because not only the inexistence of God can not be proven but in this case all historical records of the past would be dismissed because they all

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:1-2; Deuteronomy 31:9-11

<sup>10</sup> OT: Joshua 1:8; 8:31-32; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11-13; Malachi 4:4. NT: Matthew 19:8; John 5:45-47; 7:19; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:5; Mark 12:26.

involve god(s)' intervention. For example, all pharaohs were believed to be "sons of the Sun" (Ra-mes) generated by Horus, but it is obvious that this (erroneous) belief does not affect the existence of Pharaohs.

- ✓ They assumed that the art of writing was virtually unknown in Israel prior to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy; therefore there could have been no written records going back to Moses' time. This claim not only attacks the intelligence of the ancient Israelites, but also the Egyptians who trained Moses. Were the Egyptians incapable of teaching Moses how to read and write? Since the time the *documentary hypothesis* was first proposed, archaeologists have discovered scores of written records pre-dating the time of Moses. It is hard to believe that Israel's ancient neighbours knew how to write, but the Jews could not. Their subjective bias led them to illegitimately assume that any biblical statement was unreliable until proven reliable (though they would not do this with any other ancient or modern text) and when they found any disagreement between the Bible and ancient pagan literature, the latter was automatically given preference and trusted as a historical witness. The former violates the well-accepted concept known as Aristotle's dictum, which advises that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the document itself, rather than the critic. In other words, the Bible (or any other book) should be considered innocent until proven guilty, or reliable until its unreliability is compellingly demonstrated.
- ✓ Liberal Bible scholars allegedly based their theories on evidence from the Biblical text and yet they evaded the Biblical evidence that refutes their theories. Theirs was a "pick and choose" approach to studying the Bible, which is hardly honest scholarship in pursuit of truth. They arbitrarily assumed that the Hebrew authors were different from all other writers in history — that the Hebrews were incapable of using more than one name for God, or more than one writing style regardless of the subject matter, or more than one of several possible synonyms for a single idea. Although many examples have been found of an ancient Semitic author using repetition and duplication in his narrative technique, sceptical scholars assume that when Hebrew authors did this, it is compelling evidence of multiple authorship of the biblical text. The sceptics erroneously assumed, without any other ancient Hebrew literature to compare with the biblical text, that they could, with scientific reliability, establish the date of the composition of each book of the Bible. To date, no manuscript evidence of the J-document, E-document, P-document, D-document, or any of the other supposed fragments have ever been discovered. And there are no ancient Jewish commentaries that mention any of these imaginary documents or their alleged unnamed authors. All the manuscript evidence we have is for the first five books of the Bible just as we have them today. This is confirmed by the singular Jewish testimony (until the last few centuries) that these books are the writings of Moses. The

documentary hypothesis developed by Julius Wellhausen is a literary criticism in disguise (Guillemette, Brisebois: 1987, 232-238) called sources criticism, which is in fact contradicted by linguistic analysis (Radday, Shore: 1985). This fanciful hypothesis was proposed first by physician Jean Astruc who postulated in 1753 that the Pentateuch came from 2 (not 4) sources: a Jehovist document (J) and an Elohist document (E) because God had two names: Jehovah and Elohim. It was his evidence that two authors (anonymous) had produced these two texts (at an unspecified date), which were then cleverly merged by a third author (also anonymous and date unknown). Wellhausen improved this hypothesis and taught his students that everything about the Temple had been written either by the priests, the priestly document (P), or at Jerusalem, the Deuteronomist document (D). This hypothesis is untenable (it resembles children's stories that begin with "*once upon a time in a faraway land*") since ancient authors never mention one of these missing links (those opposed to Judaism and Christianity, using challenged Apocrypha, never mentioned this "Do it yourself Pentateuch"). In addition, even if the fragmentation of the text in four sources is consistent with Darwinian evolutionism, it is contrary to common sense. Indeed, why would an author use only one name for God? If this hypothesis was correct, we should have a variety of sources: a Mercifulist document (M) when God is called Merciful, Olamist (O) when God is called Olam "Eternal", Elyonist (El) when God is called Elyon "Most High", Shaddayist (Sh) when God is called Shadday "Almighty", etc. In addition, it is easy to check the fallacy of this hypothesis. Indeed, if these multiple sources (J, E, P and D) had actually existed before being amalgamated, they would have been assembled into an undefined order (if the authors were independent) as was the case, for example, for the scrolls of the minor prophets (and even the four Gospels), however all the manuscripts of the Pentateuch have the same arrangement of chapters and its 5 books are always in the same order. This logical argument also applies to the work of Homer because in the same way it is not randomly assembled episodes recitations, but an editorial choice made by a single author who thought out that long poem as a whole, why not call it Homer since tradition is unanimous (Schnapp-Gourbeillon: 2002, 285-287)? The Pentateuch had to be written by someone, why refuse to call him Moses?

In fact, are alleged anachronisms invoked to discredit the Pentateuch real? For me, an honest archaeologist must dig, not to bury the truth but to unearth the truth.

# Finding out the truth

As we have seen, for archaeologists, the “archaeological truth” is based on two main pillars: 1) given that all historical witnesses contain errors or mistakes, they therefore are not reliable and must be corrected by archaeological surveys; 2) there are no original documents because they result from a process governed according to the theory of evolution. On the contrary for historians, “historical truth” is based on: 1) an accurate chronology (Herodotus’ principle) anchored on absolute dates and 2) reliable documents (Thucydides’ principle) coming from critical editions. Depending on the method chosen, the result will be different: according to archaeology, Abraham never existed because there is no definite archaeological evidence, but according to chronology, Abraham existed.

## BIBLE HISTORICITY REHABILITATED THROUGH CHRONOLOGY

Regarding biblical chronology, the Vatican's biblical scholars made Abraham enter into Canaan in 2138 BCE (Vigouroux: 1899, 737), but more recently they dated it back to 1850 (De Vaux: 1986, 1805). How can one explain such discrepancies in dates? The present chronology of the Bible is an elaborate system of life-spans, “generations”, and other means which delineate the events over the 4,000 years of narrative time between the Creation of the world and the re-dedication of the Temple in 164 BCE. Establishing such a chronology was theological in intent<sup>1</sup>, not historical in the modern sense, and functions as an implied prophecy whose key lies in the identification of the final event. Furthermore the chronology of the monarchy, unlike that of earlier periods, can be checked against non-Biblical sources and numerous disagreements appeared with historical synchronisms. Possibly the most widely followed attempt to reconcile the contradictions has been that proposed by Edwin R. Thiele in his *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, but his work has been widely criticised for, among other things, introducing “innumerable” co-regencies, constructing a “complex system of calendars”, and using “unique” patterns of calculation; as a result his following is largely among scholars “committed ... to a doctrine of scripture's absolute harmony”. The weaknesses in Thiele's PhD dissertation have led subsequent scholars to continue to propose chronologies, but<sup>2</sup>, there is “*little consensus on acceptable methods of dealing with conflicting data*”.

<sup>1</sup> The early Church Father Eusebius, attempting to place Christ in the chronology, put his birth in AM 5199, and this became the accepted date for the Western Church. As the year AM 6000 (800 CE) approached there was increasing fear that the end of the world was nigh, until the Venerable Bede then made his own calculations and found that Christ's birth took place in AM 3592. Martin Luther placed the Apostolic Council of Acts 15 in the year AM 4000, believing this marked the moment when the Mosaic Law was abolished and the new age of grace began. This was widely accepted among European Protestants, but in the English-speaking world, Archbishop James Ussher switched the focus back to the birth of Christ (c. 1650), which he found had occurred in AM 4000, equivalent, he believed, to 4 BCE, and thus arrived at 4004 BCE as the date of Creation.

<sup>2</sup> The criticism is to be found in Brevard Childs' *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*.

First, one must get an accurate biblical chronology. In order to check the accuracy of the Bible chronology one must use only the durations of reign given by the biblical text (marked by #). As Thiele had understood in his PhD work, the reigns of Judean kings (like Rehoboam) have begun on 1<sup>st</sup> Nisan with an accession year (year 0), which was a system of Babylonian origin, and the reigns of Israelite kings have begun on 1<sup>st</sup> Tishri (year 1) without an accession year, which was a system of Egyptian origin adopted by King Jeroboam I (dates in bold are absolute dates calculated by astronomical events<sup>3</sup>). Several reigns (highlighted) have been confirmed by archaeology (Kitchen: 2003, 604):

n°	JUDAH	reign	#	reference	ISRAEL	reign	#	reference
23	Solomon	1017- <b>977</b>	40	1Ki 11:42				
24	Rehoboam	<b>977</b> -960	17	1Ki 14:21	Jeroboam I	10/ <b>977</b> -	22	1Ki 14:20,21
25	Abiyam	960-957	3	1Ki 15:2		-05/955		
26	Asa	957 -	41	1Ki 15:10	Nadab	06/955-05/954	2	1Ki 15:10,25
					Baasha	06/954-04/931	24	1Ki 15:28,33
					Elah	05/931-04/930	2	1Ki 16:8
					Zimri	05/930	7 d	1Ki 16:10-16
					Omri/	06/930-05/919/	12	1Ki 16:21-23
		-916			[Tibni]	[06/930-01/925]	6	
27	Jehoshaphat	916 -	25	1Ki 22:42	Ahab	06/919-01/898	22	1Ki 16:29
		-891			Ahaziah	02/898-01/897	2	1Ki 22:51
28	Jehoram J.	893-885	8	2Ki 8:17	Jehoram A.	02/897 -	12	2Ki 3:1
	[Ahaziah]	886- <b>885</b>	[1]	2Ki 9:27,29		-08/885		
29	Athaliah	<b>885</b> -879	6	2Ki 11:1-4	Jehu	10/ <b>885</b> -03/856	28	2Ki 10:36
30	Joash	879 -	40	2Ki 12:1-2	Jehoahaz	04/856-09/839	17	2K 10:35;13:1
		-839			Jehoash	[01/841-09/839]	2	2Ki 13:10
31	Amasiah	839 -	29	2Ki 14:2		09/839-01/823	16	2Ki 13:10
		-810			Jeroboam II	01/823-05/782	41	2Ki 14:23
32	Uzziah	810 -	52	2Ki 15:2	[Zechariah]	[06/782-02/771]	[11]	2Ki 14:29
	[Azariah]	[796 -			Zechariah	03/771-08/771	6 m	2Ki 15:8
		-758			Shallum	09/771	1 m	2Ki 15:13
					Menahem	10/771-03/760	10	2Ki 15:17
					Peqayah	04/760-03/758	2	2Ki 15:23
33	Jotham	758-742	16	2Ki 15:33	Peqah	04/758-05/ <b>738</b>	20	2Ki 15:27
34	Ahaz	742-726	16	2Ki 16:2	[Hoshea]	[06/738-01/729]	9	2Ki 15:27-30
35	Hezekiah	726-697	29	2Ki 18:2	<b>Hoshea</b>	02/729-09/ <b>720</b>	9	2Ki 17:1,3
36	Manasseh	697-642	55	2Ki 21:1				
37	Amon	642-640	2	2Ki 21:19				
38	<b>Josias</b>	640- <b>609</b>	31	2Ki 22:1				
39	Jehoiachim	609-598	11	2Ch 36:5				
40	Zedekiah	598- <b>587</b>	11	2Ch 36:11				
	Jehoiachin	587- <b>561</b>	26	2K 25:27,28				
	<i>total n°24-40</i>	<i>977-587</i>	<i>390</i>	<i>Ezk 4:5-6</i>				
	<i>Babylonian empire</i>	<b>609-539</b>	70	Jr 25:11-12				2Ch 36:20-21
	<i>Temple desolation</i>	<b>587-517</b>	70	Dn 9:2				Zk 7:1-7

<sup>3</sup> For example, *all the nations had to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years* (Jr 25:11-12), from October 609 BCE (death of Ashur-uballit II, last Assyrian king) to October 539 BCE (death of Belshazzar).

The previous chronological reconstruction of all the Judean and Israelite kingdoms (from 977 to 561 BCE) can be verified in three different ways:

- ✓ There is absolutely no contradiction between the reigns of the kings of Judah (left) and those of the kings of Israel (right), there is a perfect fitting.
- ✓ There is absolutely no contradiction between the sum of Judean reigns going from n°24 to n°40, from the split of the Judean kingdom in October 977 BCE to the destruction of Jerusalem in October 587 BCE, and their total given in Ezekiel 4:4-6 of 390 years<sup>4</sup>, from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Rehoboam to the 11<sup>th</sup> of Zedekiah, is indeed 390 years. This period began when the 40-year reign of Solomon (1Ki 11:42) broke apart in two rival entities: Israel and Judah. This revolt (in October 977 BCE), considered as a major fault (1Ki 12:19), ended after the destruction of the Temple when the Jews of the exile (Jr 25:8-12) arrived in Babylon around October 587 BCE. Similarly the Babylonian world domination of that era lasted exactly 70 years (Jr 25:11-12; 29:10; Is 23:13-17), it starting in the beginning of the kingdom of Jehoiakim (Jr 27:1-7), in October 609 BCE, and ending in October 539 BCE when Cyrus subdued all nations, including Babylon, and freed the Jews (Is 45:1-7). A 70-year period of desolation (Dn 9:6), without worship at the Temple (Mt 24:15), began in October 587 BCE and ended in October 517 BCE when the worship at the Temple restarted after the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Darius I (Zk 7:1-7).
- ✓ There are at least 7 precisely dated events which occurred during these reigns (highlighted in grey) which can also be dated by some synchronisms with other chronologies (Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian), as follows:

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]		
977	1	X	4	35	2	39		[A] <b>Sheshonq I</b> , King of Egypt (1Ki 11:40) [B] <b>Aššur-reš-iši II</b> , King of Assyria [C] <b>Nabû-mukîn-apli</b> , King of Babylonia [D] <b>Solomon</b> , King of Judah (1Ki 11:42)	
	2	XI							
	3	XII							
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII	5	36	3	40			0
	11	VIII					[1] [E] <b>Jeroboam</b> , King of Israel (1Ki 14:20)		
	12	IX					[E] 390-year period (Ezk 4:5-6) (390 = October 977 – October 587)		
976	1	X	5	37	4	1			
	2	XI							
	3	XII							
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII	2	37	4	1			2
	11	VIII							
	12	IX							

<sup>4</sup> 390 = 17 + 3 + 41 + (25 – 2) + 8 + (7 – 1) + 40 + 29 + 52 + 16 + 16 + 29 + 55 + 2 + 31 + 11 + 11.

The double counting system of the years of rule was used until the destruction of the temple, thus the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar II (2Ki 24:12), according to the Egyptian reckoning, was also his 7<sup>th</sup> year of reign (Jr 52:28) according to the Babylonian reckoning (in 598 BCE). There was no ambiguity because the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah (in 588 BCE) was also the 18<sup>th</sup> year (Egyptian reckoning) of Nebuchadnezzar II (Jr 32:1).

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]		
587	1	X	2	17	18	10	[390]	[A] <b>Hophra (Apries)</b> , King of Egypt (Jr 44:30)	
	2	XI						[B] <b>Nebuchadnezzar II</b> , King of Babylonia	
	3	XII						[C] Nebuchadnezzar II ( <i>Egyptian reckoning</i> )	
	4	I						[D] <b>Zedekiah</b> , King of Judah (Jr 39:2-7)	
	5	II						[E] <i>The Temple is burnt</i> . 40-year period (Ezk 4:6) <sup>5</sup>	
	6	III						(40 = October 627 – October 587)	
	7	IV						{40}	
	8	V						[1]	[E] 70-year period of desolation (Dn 9:2; Zk 7:1-7)
	9	VI						(70 = October 587 – October 517)	
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
	12	IX							
586	1	X	3						
	2	XI							
	3	XII							

In fact over the period 977-587 the only disagreement between biblical and Assyrian data is the presence of King Hadad-ezer preceding Hazael the king of Syria. According to the annals of Shalmaneser III, Hadad-ezer was the Syrian leader of the coalition that led the military operations against Assyria during the period from 853 to 845. Campaigns were generally led by kings, but in practice these military operations were conducted by the chief of the army: *So Hadadezer sent for the Syrians in the region of the River, and then they came to Helam, with Shobach the chief of the army of Hadadezer leading them. When the report was made to David, he immediately gathered all Israel and crossed the Jordan and came to Helam. The Syrians then drew up in battle formation to meet David and fought against him. But the Syrians fled from Israel; and David killed 700 charioteers and 40,000 horsemen of the Syrians, and he struck down Shobach the chief of their army, who died there. When all the kings, the servants of Hadadezer, saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they promptly made peace with Israel and became their subjects; and the Syrians were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore* (2S 10:16-19). Naaman was a former army chief of Ben-Hadad II (2Ki 5:1). Hazael himself had been head of Bar-Hadad II's army (900-885) before becoming king. Chiefs of the army were as powerful as the king, some of them, like Omri (1Ki 16:16) or Hazael (2Ki 8:15), even murdered their king to reign in his place. If Hazael was appointed as army chief of Bar-Hadad II towards 900 BCE, as he was likely at least 20 years old at that time, therefore in 853 BCE he was 67 years old. That may have led him to choose his own army chief: Hadad-ezer “*Hadad is my help*”. Hadad-ezer was sometimes considered as king by the Assyrians for the

<sup>5</sup> The second period of 40 years is from the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah (Jr 25:3,11) in 627 BCE to the destruction of the Temple in 587 BCE.

following reasons: he led military campaigns with other Aramean kings and in Assyrian annals Hazael (who was king) was called “*son of nobody*” at that time by the Assyrians because he was considered as an usurper. Given that during this period (853-845) Hadad-ezer did not play any significant role in Israelite history he was not mentioned. Although the coming to power of Hazael occurred in a very complex context (a king is murdered another dies and two are killed) all the chronological data coming from the Bible is absolutely consistent:

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]		
886	1	X	6	0	11	(34)		[A] <b>Joram (J)</b> , King of Judah (2Ki 8:16-17)	
	2	XI						[C] <b>Joram (A)</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 3:1)	
	3	XII						[D] <b>Ben-Hadad II</b> , King of Syria (1Ki 20:1-2)	
	4	I	7		[E] <b>Hazael</b> , Army chief of Syria (1Ki 19:15-17)				
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
	12	IX							
885	1	X	8	1				[B] <b>Ahaziah</b> , King of Judah (2Ki 9:29)	
	2	XI							
	3	XII							
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
	12	IX							
884	1	X	1					[D] <b>Hazael</b> , King of Syria (2Ki 8:15)	
	2	XI						[B] <b>Ahaziah</b> , King of Judah (2Ki 8:25-26)	
	3	XII						[A] <b>Ahaziah</b> , [C] <b>Joram (J)</b> (2Ki 8:28-9:3)	
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
12	IX								
884	1	X	[1]					[A] <b>Athaliah</b> , reigning over the land (2Ki 11:1-3)	
	2	XI						[C] <b>Jehu</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 10:36)	
	3	XII							
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
12	IX								
884	1	X	1					[A] <b>[Jehoiadah]</b> king of Judah (2Ch 23:1; 24:15,16)	
	2	XI							
	3	XII							
	4	I							
	5	II							
	6	III							
	7	IV							
	7	IV							
	8	V							
	9	VI							
	10	VII							
	11	VIII							
12	IX								

The previous analysis of Hazael's reign shows that one must always fix an accurate and reliable chronology of reigns before interpreting historical events. In addition kings of Syria are mainly known through the Bible, even the last king Rezin, whose reign from c. 750 to 732 BCE is better documented.

The study of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns enables us to understand the aim of his conquests and his strategy. Actually, under Shalmaneser IV and Aššur-dan III, military expeditions were directed at Damascus, but without great consequences, and twice against Hazrak (Hatarikka), a strategic position on the

way to the river Orontes. But the kingdoms continued to exist. Assyria was then threatened by Urartu, whose power was then on the ascent, and her own interest dictated a comparatively moderate attitude towards the Aramaean kingdoms. The solution was to maintain Assyrian control of Arpad, the close neighbour who dominated the whole area between the land of Euphrates and the river Orontes. The best thing for this purpose was to induce this neighbour to conclude agreements with the king of Til-Barsip, Bar Ga'yah. Assyrian domination depended on the respect of such treaties by independent sovereigns. The 746 "coup" changed the whole affair. Mati'el was no longer bound by his oath of allegiance to Aššur-nîrârî V, since the king had been eliminated and if the commander-in-chief Shamshi-ilu fell victim to the same purge, the attitude of the king of Arpad can be even better explained. He joined the coalition formed by Sarduri of Urartu which included Sulumal of Melitene, Tarhulara of Gurgum and Kushtashpi of Kummuh. Practically all Northern Syria, from Arpad to Melitene, adhered to the coalition. It was utterly defeated, but Sarduri was able to escape. The steps then taken by Tiglath-pileser are instructive. He annexed the territories between Arpad and the coast near Antioch and Hamath. All the others, including Sama'al, Carchemish, Damascus, Samaria and the Phoenician cities were left independent, though forced to pay tribute. In short, he annexed the nearest conquered territories, thus enabling him to cut off possible future enemies, and he imposed his authority on more remote sovereigns without deposing them. That is what he had done in Babylonia after seizing power: he had annexed the areas along the Tigris down to the Uknu and the Persian gulf, while leaving Nippur under the control of Babylon, where apparently he did not even go. In short, until 738 BCE, Tiglath-pileser had adopted a flexible policy, which after all was not so new. When Shalmaneser III had started his Syrian campaigns in 858 BCE, he had annexed the territory of his closest neighbour, Bit-Adini, changing Til-Barsip into Kar-Shalmaneser, but he could not carry this annexation policy further because his opponents were too powerful, as the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE clearly showed. Tiglath-pileser III followed the same plans, but the balance of forces in his favour enabled him immediately to annex the territories adjoining Bit-Adini, where he posted permanent garrisons in order to launch faster counter strokes in case of need. This did not always prove possible because of the Medes and Urartu, that's why he unfolded his annexation plan of the Syro-Palestinian war: Rezin of Damascus, Pekah of Israel (2Ki 16:5-9) and the Philistine cities formed a coalition which Ahaz refused to join, calling Tiglath-pileser to his aid (2Ch 28:16-20). Hoshea of Israel formed a conspiracy against Pekah, he put him to death and began to reign in place of him (2Ki 15:27-30). In 734 BCE, Tiglath-pileser III invaded and immediately conquered the Philistine territories. The reconstruction of this troubled period highlights (in grey below) several synchronisms among the Assyrian, Israelite (Samaria) and Judean reigns.

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	
742	1	X	2	(1)	5	15	16	[A] <b>Tiglath-pileser III</b> , King of Assyria [B] <b>Shalmaneser (V)</b> , Crown prince [C] <b>Nabû-nasir</b> , King of Babylonia [D] <b>Jotham</b> , King of Judah (2Ki 15:32-33) [E] <b>Pekah</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 15:27)
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I	3	(2)	6	16		
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
741	1	X	4	(3)	7	1	17	[E] <b>Pekah</b> against <b>Jotham</b> (2Ki 15:37-38)
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
740	1	X	5	(4)	8	2	18	[D] <b>Ahaz</b> sent to the (two) kings of Assyria for them to help him (2Ch 28:16-20) and asked to be a vassal of <b>Tiglath-pileser III</b> (2Ki 16:7).
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
739	1	X	6	(5)	9	(3)	19	
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
738	1	X	7	(6)	10	(4)	20	[E] <b>Pekah</b> , King of Israel died (2Ki 15:27)
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
737	1	X	7	(6)	10	(4)	0	[E] <b>Hoshea</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 15:30)
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
736	1	X	7	(6)	10	(4)	[1]	[E] Beginning of the 65-year period (Is 7:8-9)
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						

Assyrian and biblical narratives during this period of great upheavals overlap perfectly and illuminate mutually. In 742 BCE, Rezin (750-732), the powerful king of Damascus, formed a coalition to resist Tiglath-pileser III's attack, Pekah (758-738). The king of Israel, joined the coalition but not Jotham (758-742), the king of Judah, entailing a retaliation against Jotham who died at the end of this year (2Ki 15:37-38). In 740 BCE, the kingdom of Bit-Agusi (Arpad) was defeated by Tiglath-pileser III during his 6<sup>th</sup> campaign in Syria and was definitively annexed to the Assyrian empire. In order to defeat Pekah, Ahaz (742-726), the new king of Judah: *asked the (two) kings of Assyria for help* (2Ch 28:16-20); *It was then that King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to wage war against Jerusalem. They laid siege against Ahaz but were not able to capture the city. At that time King Rezin of Syria restored Elath to Edom, after which he drove the Jews out of Elath. And the Edomites entered Elath, and they have occupied it down to this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying: I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me. Ahaz then took the silver and the gold that was to be found at the house of Jehovah and in the treasuries of the king's house and sent the king of Assyria a bribe* (2Ki 16:5-8). According to the biblical text, the main aim of the two campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III against Damascus to annex it, in 733 and 732 BCE, was primarily greed rather than strategy.

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	
730	1	X	14	(13)	1	11	[8]	[A] <b>Tiglath-pileser III</b> , King of Assyria
	2	XI						[B] <b>Shalmaneser (V)</b> , Crown prince
	3	XII						[C] <b>Nabû-mukîn-zêri</b> , King of Babylonia
	4	I						[D] <b>Ahaz</b> , King of Judah
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
729	1	X	16	(15)	3	13	[9]	
	2	XI						[E] <b>Hoshea</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 17:1)
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						[C] <b>Pulu</b> , King of Babylonia
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						

The paralleling of all the reigns helps to understand a few chronological oddities in some biblical reigns. For example Hoshea became king in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahaz the king of Judah in 729 BCE, however he was already king from the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jotham (2Ki 15:30) who only reigned 16 years (2Ki 15:32-33)! In

fact the explanation is simple, given that Hoshea was appointed by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BCE he was his servant, but not of God, consequently his reign became valid (and was registered) only after his anointing as king of Israel in 729. Similarly, because Ahaz became the servant of Tiglath-pileser III in 740 his reign became invalid from this date until the departure of Tiglath-pileser III in 732. Consequently when Hoshea was appointed king in 740, which was the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Ahaz, the scribe chose to reckon his reign from the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jotham because the latter was registered despite his being dead at that time.

After the reign of Tiglath-pileser III synchronisms between the Assyrian and biblical chronologies are easier to crosscheck. For example, the fall of Samaria began in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of King Hezekiah, which was the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Hoshea, when Shalmaneser V the king of Assyria came against Samaria and began to lay siege to it, which lasted 3 years (2Ki 18:9-11).

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]			
722	1	X	4	1	4	3	7	[A] <b>Shalmaneser V</b> , King of Assyria		
	2	XI						[16] [C] <b>Ulûlaiu</b> , King of Babylonia		
	3	XII						[B] <i>Siege of Samaria</i>		
	4	I	5		2	5	4	***	[D] <b>Hezekiah</b> , King of Judah (2Ki 18:9)	
	5	II							[E] <b>Hoshea</b> , King of Israel (2Ki 17:3-4)	
	6	III								
	7	IV								
	8	V								
	9	VI								
	10	VII								
	11	VIII								
	12	IX								
721	1	X	0	***		0	5	8	[A] <b>Sargon II</b> , King of Assyria	
	2	XI							[C] <b>Merodachbaladan II</b> , King of Babylonia	
	3	XII								
	4	I		1	3	1		5	9	
	5	II								
	6	III								
	7	IV								
	8	V								
	9	VI								
	10	VII								
	11	VIII								
	12	IX								
720	1	X	2	3		2	6	[19]		
	2	XI								
	3	XII								
	4	I								
	5	II								
	6	III								
	7	IV								
	8	V								
	9	VI								
	10	VII								
	11	VIII								
	12	IX								
719	1	X	3	***	3	7	[19]	[D] <b>Hezekiah</b> , King of Judah (2KI 18:10)		
	2	XI								
	3	XII								
	4	I			[B] <i>Fall of Samaria</i>					
	5	II								

According to a Babylonian chronicle the fall of Samaria began on the 5<sup>th</sup> and last year of Shalmaneser V and was finished 3 years later in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Sargon II according to the annals of Sargon<sup>6</sup>. A crosschecking of Sargon's inscriptions shows that Sargon II besieged Samaria in 721 and conquered the capital of Israel in 720 BCE.

The missed capture of Jerusalem by Sennacherib during his 3<sup>rd</sup> campaign is famous, but its dating remains controversial because mainstream historians continue to ignore his co-regency with Sargon II from 715 BCE.

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	
713	1	X	8	(1)	8	12	[25]	
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I	9	(2)	9	13		
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						[26]
712	1	X	10	(3)	10	14	[27]	
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						[A] <b>Sargon II</b> , King of Assyria (Is 20:1, 36:1)
	5	II						[B] <b>Sennacherib</b> , Crown Prince (2Ki 18:13-17)
	6	III						[C] <b>Merodachbaladan II</b> , King of Babylonia (Is 39:1)
	7	IV						[D] <b>Hezekiah</b> , King of Judah
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						

As we saw, Rezin (750-732), the powerful king of Damascus, formed a coalition to resist Tiglath-pileser III's attack. Pekah (758-738), the king of Israel, joined the coalition but not Jotham, the king of Judah: *Then Hoshea the son of Elah formed a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and he struck him and put him to death; and he became king in his place in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jotham (in 738 BCE) the son of Uzziah (2Ki 15:30). Now in the days of Ahaʒ son of Jotham son of Uzziah, the king of Judah, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah, the king of Israel, came up to wage war against Jerusalem, but he could not capture it (...) This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: It will not succeed, nor will it take place. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within just 65 years Ephraim will be completely shattered and cease to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria*

<sup>6</sup> In the beg[inning of my royal rule (January 721), I besieged the town of the Sama]rians ... I besieged and conquered Samaria (Sa-me-ri-na), led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it (...) I conquered and sacked the towns Shinutu (and) Samaria and all Israel (Bit Hu-um-ri-ia) () in the second year of my rule (from April 720), Ilubi'di of Hamath (...) Samaria [revolted against me].

is the son of Remaliah (Is 7:1,7-9). Given that the head of Samaria (Ephraim/Israel) was Pekah who died in 738 BCE, the shattering of Ephraim (inhabitants of Samaria) must have occurred in 673 (= 738 - 65).

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	[F]					
674	1	X	6		6		22	[A] <b>Esarhaddon</b> , King of Assyria					
	2	XI						[64] [C] <b>Esarhaddon</b> , King of Babylonia					
	3	XII											
	4	I	7	(0)	7		23	[B] <b>Sin-nâdin-apli</b> , Crown Prince					
	5	II						[E] <b>Manasseh</b> , King of Judah					
	6	III											
	7	IV											
	8	V											
	9	VI											
	10	VII											
	11	VIII											
	12	IX						[65]					
673	1	X						8	(1)	8		24	[A] <i>Defeat in Egypt dated 05/XII/7 (ABC 1)</i>
	2	XI											[A] <b>Esarhaddon</b> , King of Assyria (Ez 4:2)
	3	XII											[B] <b>Aššurbanipal</b> Coregent (Ez 4:9,10)
	4	I	[E] <b>Manasseh</b> , King of Judah (2Ch 33:11)										
	5	II	[F] End of the 65-year period (Is 7:8-9)										
	6	III											
	7	IV											
	8	V											
	9	VI											
	10	VII	***										
	11	VIII											
	12	IX											
672	1	X	9	(0)	9	(0)	25	[A] <b>Ešarra-hamat</b> , <i>Esarhaddon's wife died</i>					
	2	XI						[B] <b>Aššurbanipal</b> , Crown Prince (Ass)					
	3	XII						[D] <b>Šamaš-šum-ukîn</b> , Crown Prince (Bab)					
	4	I											
	5	II											
	6	III											
	7	IV											
	8	V											
	9	VI											
	10	VII											
	11	VIII											
	12	IX											
671	1	X	10	(1)	10	(1)	26						
	2	XI											
	3	XII											
	4	I											

Sargon II destroyed Samaria the capital of Israel in 720 BCE but the shattering of Israel occurred later when Assyrian kings took into exile some nations and settled them in the cities of Samaria: *they immediately approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the paternal houses and said to them (in 537 BCE): Let us build along with you; for like you, we worship your God and we have been sacrificing to him since the days of King Esarhaddon of Assyria, who brought us here (...) and the rest of the nations that the great and honourable Asenappar (Aššurbanipal) took into exile and settled in the cities of Samaria, and the rest in the region Beyond the River (Ezr 4:2,10). In addition, regarding King Manasseh: So Jehovah brought against them the (two) army chiefs of the king of Assyria, and they captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with*

two copper fetters and took him to Babylon. In his distress, he begged Jehovah his God for favour and kept humbling himself greatly before the God of his forefathers. He kept praying to Him, and He was moved by his entreaty and heard his request for favour, and He restored him to Jerusalem to his kingship. Then Manasseh came to know that Jehovah is the true God (2Ch 33:11). The harmonizing of all the information is consistent: two Assyrian kings, Esarhaddon (681-669) and Aššurbanipal, came in 673 BCE to take into exile some foreigners to settle them in the cities of Samaria and they also brought back King Manasseh to put him in jail but they released him rapidly. This version of events is partly confirmed by the annals of Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal. In addition the Prism B of Esarhaddon<sup>7</sup> is dated the eponym Atarilu, in 673 BCE, which corresponds exactly to the biblical dating.

The last synchronism between the Israelite and Assyrian chronologies is very well documented because it occurred at the end of the Assyrian Empire in 609 BCE with the Fall of Haran just after the Battle of Megiddo: *In his days Pharaoh Necho the king of Egypt came to meet the king of Assyria (Aššur-uballit II)<sup>8</sup> by the Euphrates River, and King Josiah went out to confront him; but when Necho saw him, he put*

<sup>7</sup> The Prism B of Esarhaddon reads: *I called up the kings of the country Hatti and (of the region) on the other side of the river (Euphrates): Ba'lu, king of Tyre, Manasseh (Me-na-si-i) king of Judah (Ia-ú-di), Qaushgabri, king of Edom, Musuri, king of Moab, Sil-Bel, king of Gaza, Metinti, kong of Ashkelon, Ikausu, king of Ekron, Milkiashapa, king of Byblos, Matanba'al, king of Arvad (...) together 22 kings of Hatti, the seashore and the islands; all these I sent out and made them transport under terrible difficulties, to Nineveh, the town (where I exercise) my rulership.* The same events on the Rassam Cylinder are dated the 1<sup>st</sup> campaign of Aššurbanipal: *In my 1<sup>st</sup> campaign I marched against Upper Egypt (Magan) and Ethiopia (Meluhha). Tirbakah (Tarqú), king of Egypt (Mušur) and Nubia (Kásu), whom Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, my own father, had defeated and in whose country he (Esarhaddon) had ruled (...) During my march (to Egypt) 22 kings from the seashore, the islands and the mainland: Ba'al, king of Tyre, Manasseh (Mi-in-si-e), king of Judah (Ia-ú-di), Qaushgabri, king of Edom (...) Tirbakah heard un Memphis of the defeat of his army (...) Tirbakah has been driven out of Egypt (...) They (the officers) arrested these kings and put their hands and feet in iron cuffs and fetters (...) Those kings who repeatedly schemed, they brought alive to me to Nineveh. From all of them, I had only mercy upon Necho and granted him life. I made (a treaty) with him (protected by) oaths which greatly surpassed (those of the former treaty) (...) In my 2<sup>nd</sup> campaign I marched directly against Egypt and Nubia (...) In my 3<sup>rd</sup> campaign I marched against Ba'il, king of Tyre.* Given that the 1<sup>st</sup> campaign of Aššurbanipal (669-627) as King is dated 668, the events relate rather to during his 1<sup>st</sup> campaign as co-regent (in 673).

—A cross-checking of all the documents concerning Aššurbanipal, Annals and Chronicles, shows that some have been modified. For example, an unknown son of Esarhaddon named Sin-nâdin-apli was appointed as crown prince in 674, then in 672 two others were appointed as crown princes respectively for Babylonia and Assyria: Šamaš-šum-ukîn, his eldest son, and Aššurbanipal. On the other hand Esarhaddon's Chronicles show that the campaign against Egypt is clearly dated 3/VII/10 (October 671), which corresponds to the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Aššurbanipal as coregent, but dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in his annals (Upper Egypt is dated to his 1<sup>st</sup> year). This 1-year discrepancy is very troubling but could be explained by the fact that Sin-nâdin-apli "Sin has given the heir" and Aššur-bani-pi "Aššur has created the heir" were actually the same person. The former name represented the prince's original name and the second the throne name (for example, the throne name of Esarhaddon name was Aššur-etel-ilâni-mukîn-apli but he never used it), which events could explain that Ashurbanipal was chosen twice, once in 674 as Crown Prince and again in 672 as Crown Prince (for Assyria only). Unfortunately Ashurbanipal's Chronicles for events of his Year 8 are broken at this location and his Year 9 was omitted. We just learned that Esarhaddon's first wife Ešarra-ḥamat died the 5/XII/8 (March 672) and there were seven substitute kings (a false king appointed to neutralize a bad omen) between 679 and 669. Clearly, the year 8 of Esarhaddon (in 672), when Manasseh was released, was damaging for the Assyrians but they did not give any reason. On the contrary Year 10 of Esarhaddon is better known because of the victory over Taharqa (in 671), commemorated on the Nahr El Kelb Stele, near Beirut. Lines 31-35 of the fragmentary inscription read as follows: *Ashkelon ... which Taharqa to their fortress ... Tyre ... 22 kings ...*

<sup>8</sup> Aššur-uballit II (612-609) was the last king of Assyria and in 609 BCE Necho II was satrap of Egypt.

him to death at Megiddo. So his servants transported his dead body in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his grave. Then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoachaz and anointed him and made him king in place of his father. Jehoachaz was 23 years old when he became king (...) Pharaoh Necho imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, to keep him from reigning in Jerusalem, and then imposed on the land a fine of 100 silver talents and a gold talent. Furthermore, Pharaoh Necho made Josiah's son Eliakim king in place of his father Josiah and changed his name to Jehoiakim; but he took Jehoachaz and brought him to Egypt, where he eventually died (2Ki 23:29-34). The end of Assyrian dominion replaced by the Babylonian dominion had to have occurred at that time<sup>9</sup>: After all of this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, King Necho of Egypt came up to fight at Carchemish by the Euphrates. Then Josiah went out against him. So he sent messengers to him, saying: What does this have to do with you, O king of Judah? I am not coming against you today, but my fight is against another house, and God says that I should hurry. For your own sake, refrain from opposing God, who is with me, or he will bring you to ruin. However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but he disguised himself to fight against him and would not listen to the words of Necho, which were from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Plain of Megiddo. And the archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants: Get me out of here, for I am severely wounded. So his servants took him out of the chariot and had him ride in his second war chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. Thus he died and was buried in the tomb of his forefathers, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned Josiah. And Jeremiah chanted over Josiah, and all the male and female singers keep singing about Josiah in their dirges down to this day (Lm 4:18-20); and a decision was made that they should be sung in Israel, and they are written among the dirges (2Ch 35:20-25). Herodotus recorded this famous battle and the Egyptian campaign in his writings (The Histories II:159)<sup>10</sup> and the Babylonian Chronicles give many historical details from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> year of Nabopolassar. Using ancient Babylonian records and texts that are lost to us, Berosus published the *Babyloniaca* in three books (c. 280 BCE) and Josephus quoted some extracts (Against Apion I:133-137)<sup>11</sup>. Combining all the data enables the reconstruction of the following chain of events: after the destruction of Nineveh (August 612 BCE) Nabopolassar appointed his young son Nebuchadnezzar (likely c. 20 years

<sup>9</sup> According to Berosus, in 609 BCE Necho II was satrap of Egypt for Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.

<sup>10</sup> *Necos, when he gave up the construction of the canal, turned all his thoughts to war, and set to work to build a fleet of triremes, some intended for service in the northern sea, and some for the navigation of the Erythraean. These last were built in the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea) where the dry docks in which they lay are still visible. These fleets he employed wherever he had occasion, while he also made war by land upon the Syrians (Assyrians?) and defeated them in a pitched battle at Magdolos (Megiddo), after which he made himself master of Cadytis (Kadesh), a large city of Syria. The dress which he wore on these occasions he sent to Branchidae in Milesia, as an offering to Apollo. After having reigned in all 16 years, Necos died.*

<sup>11</sup> *I will quote Berosus' own words, which are as follows: His father Nabopalassar, hearing of the defection of the satrap in charge of Egypt, Coele-Syria and Phoenicia [Necho II], and being himself unequal to the fatigues of a campaign, committed part of his army to his son Nabuchodonosor, still in the prime of the life, and sent him against the rebel. Nabuchodonosor engaged and defeated the latter in a pitched battle and replaced the district under Babylonian rule. Meanwhile, as it happened, his father Nabopalassar sickened and died in the city of Babylon, after a reign of 21 years. Being informed ere long of his father's death, Nabuchodonosor settled the affairs of Egypt and the other countries. The prisoners — Jews, Phoenicians, Syrians, and those of Egyptian nationality — were consigned to some friends, with orders to conduct them to Babylonia, along with the heavy troops and the rest of the spoils; while he himself, with a small escort, pushed across the desert of Babylon.*

old) as Crown Prince (at that same time the king of Assyria, Sin-šar-iškun, died); after the fall of Haran (October 609 BCE) the king of Assyria, Aššur-uballiṭ, disappeared (and died), Nabopolassar appointed the defeated Egyptian king (Necho II) as satrap of Egypt but the latter rebelled a few years later (June 606 BCE); finally Nebuchadnezzar inflicted a defeat upon the Egyptians at Carchemish and defeated them completely (August 605 BCE).

BCE			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	[F]			
610	1	X	54	1	15	(0)	29		[A] <b>Psammetichus I</b> , king of Egypt [B] <b>Aššur-uballiṭ II</b> , king of Assyria [C] <b>Nabopolassar</b> , king of Babylonia [D] <b>Nebuchadnezzar II</b> , Crown Prince [E] <b>Josiah</b> , king of Judah (2Ki 22:1)		
	2	XI									
	3	XII									
	4	I		2	16	(1)	30				
	5	II									
	6	III									
	7	IV									
	8	V									
	9	VI									
	10	VII									
	11	VIII									
	12	IX									
609	1	X	1	3	17	(2)	31		[A] <b>Necho II</b> , king (satrap) of Egypt  <i>Battle of Megiddo</i> (2Ki 23:29-30) [E] <b>Jehoachaz</b> (2ki 23:31-32) <i>End of Assyrian Empire</i>		
	2	XI									
	3	XII									
	4	I									
	5	II									
	6	III									
	7	IV									
	8	V									
	9	VI									
	10	VII								0	1
	11	VIII									
	12	IX									
608	1	X	2	18	(3)	1		[A] <b>Necho II</b> , satrap of Egypt [E] <b>Jehoiakim</b> (2ki 23:34-36) [F] 70-year period (Jr 25:11-12; 29:10) (70 = October 609 – October 539)			
	2	XI									
	3	XII									
	4	I									
	5	II									
	6	III									
	7	IV									
	8	V									
	9	VI									
	10	VII									
	11	VIII									
	12	IX									
607	1	X	3	19	(4)	2		2			
	2	XI									
	3	XII									
	4	I									
	5	II									
	6	III									
	7	IV									
	8	V									
	9	VI									
	10	VII									
	11	VIII									
	12	IX									
606	1	X	4					3			
	2	XI									

	3	XII						
	4	I		20	(5)	3		
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII					4	
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
605	1	X	5					
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I		21	(6)	4		
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI			0	1		
	10	VII						5
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						

*Battle of Carchemish* (Jr 46:2)  
[C] **Nebuchadnezzar II**, king of Babylonia  
[D] *Egyptian reckoning* (2Ki 25:1)

This sequence of events has consequences on the Judean chronology because the Judean rulers fell under the authority of Babylon for 70 years (Jr 25:11-12, 29:10), first through the satrap of Egypt Necho II (609-605) and directly afterwards (605-539). Consequently the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian year 0, is reckoned as year 1 (Jr 25:1, 46:2) according to the Egyptian reckoning, which explains why Jerusalem was destroyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jr 52:12) which was in fact his 18<sup>th</sup> (Jr 52:29).

In conclusion, a correct review of Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian and Israelite chronology, based on a chronology anchored on dates validated through astronomy, shows a perfect agreement between the four chronologies, if the co-regencies are taken into account, which mainstream historians refuse to do. Edwin R. Thiele was the first scholar to pass (in 1943) his PhD the goal of which was to determine a scientific biblical chronology. All his thesis was based on the following hypothesis: given that Ahab is mentioned in the Kurk Stele which records the Assyrian advance into Syria/Palestine at the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE and Jehu is mentioned on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III paying tribute in 841 BCE, and that these two events are securely dated by Assyrian chronology as being 12 years apart, consequently Ahab might have fought the Assyrians in his last year and Jehu paid tribute in his first year. Despite the various criticisms Thiele's methodological treatment remains today the typical starting point of scholarly treatments of the subject, and his PhD dissertation, published in his book: *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, is considered to have established the date of the division of the Israelite kingdom. The work of Thiele and those who followed in his steps has achieved acceptance across a wider spectrum than that of any comparable chronology, so that Assyriologist D. J. Wiseman, biblical scholar and archaeologist and Professor of Assyriology at the University of London, wrote: *The chronology most*

widely accepted today is one based on the meticulous study by Thiele, and, more recently, Leslie McFall, former lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament and now researcher in Biblical Studies: *Thiele's chronology is fast becoming the consensus view among Old Testament scholars, if it has not already reached that point.*

Contrary to appearances the purpose of these biblical scholars is not to establish a reliable chronology of the Bible but to discredit it. For example, in his book: *Secrets of the Times. Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, the biblical scholar Jeremy Hugues explained how he proceeded to achieve his goal. This book is a revised version of his PhD dissertation which was submitted to the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Oxford University in 1986. He wrote: *841 BC (Nisan) is in fact the date of a key synchronism between Assyrian and Israelite chronology, corresponding to the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Shalmaneser III, when the latter conducted an inconclusive campaign against 'Hazael of Aram' and received tribute from various rulers including 'Jehu the Omrite'. Since Assyrian campaigns almost invariably began in the spring it is probable that Jehu's payment of tribute occurred in the late summer of 841 BC, in which case he must presumably have come to the throne either during or before the Israelite year 842 BC (Hugues: 1990, 183-184, 264-266).* This claim of Hugues is based on two prejudices which are widespread but wrong: 1) Assyrian narratives are more accurate and reliable than biblical narratives and 2) the date 841 BCE marks the beginning of Hazael's reign (instead of the end). The conclusion of Hugues reflects perfectly the frame of mind of mainstream historians, he wrote: *A major part of this study has been concerned with the task of reconstructing the original pre-schematic chronology of the book of Kings and using this to construct a historical chronology of the Israelite and Judean kingdoms (...) the chronology of Kings is historically inaccurate, but it is not corrupt. The reason it is inaccurate is that the Biblical writers were more interested in chronological schematism than in historical accuracy. Biblical chronology is essentially mythical (...) The mythical purpose of chronological schematism is that it serves to express a belief that history is governed by a divine plan (...) There are fundamentalist groups which see history as a succession of 'dispensations' or ages, and there are others who believe that events are controlled by stars or planets, and that we are currently living in the age 'age of Aquarius'. These are fringe beliefs which are not taken seriously by most people.*

The work of Hugues was in fact an in-depth study, which was concerned with the task of "improving" the original chronology of the book of Kings and using this to construct a new chronology of the Israelite and Judean kingdoms (with a time lag of 45 years for Rehoboam's reign), but replacing Bar-Hadad II by Hadad-ezer involves a chronological nonsense because there would have been afterward a king of Syria reigning during the period 805-780 with two different names: King Mari' and King Bar-Hadad depending on inscriptions (!), but it is unprecedented<sup>12</sup>. The checking of chronologies shows that the chronological data from the Bible (Old and New Testament) are absolutely correct from 1533 BCE to 140 CE (Gertoux: 2016, 1-202).

<sup>12</sup> Some kings changed their name or took a throne name but never used two names simultaneously.

In order to check the accuracy of the Bible chronology from 977 BCE to 2038 BCE, one must use, as was done previously, only the durations given by the biblical text (marked by #).

n°	HEBREW	BCE	#	reference	Biblical character vs archaeology
	<b>Abraham</b> (in Ur)	<b>2038</b> -1963	75	Gn 12:4-5	Kudur-Lagamar king of Elam
	Canaan-Egypt	1963- <b>1533</b>	430	Ex 12:40-41	
	<i>Birth of Isaac</i>	1963- <b>1938</b>	25	Gn 21:5	
	<i>Isaac is weaned</i>	1938- <b>1933</b>	(5)	Gn 21:8-9	
	<i>Period of servitude</i>	<i>1938-1488</i>	450	Ac 13:17-20	Hyksos dynasties (1748-1533)
	<i>Period of affliction</i>	<i>1933-1533</i>	400	Gn 15:13	Apopi (1613-1573) Dynasty XV met
	<b>Moses</b> ( <i>Exodus</i> )	<b>1533</b> -1493	40	Ex 16:35	Pharaoh Seqenenre Taa (1544-1533)
	<i>Pacification period</i>	<i>1493-1488</i>	5	Jos 14:7,10	Hazor is destroyed (c. 1500 BCE)
1	Joshua	<b>1493</b> -1463	30	Jos 24:29	
2	Without judge	1463-1452	[11]	Jos 24:31	
	<i>total n° 1-2</i>	<i>1493-1452</i>	41	Nb 32:13	Tribe of Asher (Amenhotep II)
3	Cushan-rishataim	1452-1444	8	Jg 3:8	Šauštatar I king of Mitanni (1455-1435)
4	Othniel	1444-1404	40	Jg 3:11	
5	Eglon	1404-1386	18	Jg 3:14	Bedouins those of Yehua (Soleb)
6	Ehud	1386-1306	80	Jg 3:30	Sisera (Jg 4:1-16) king of Ušnatu
7	Madian	1306-1299	7	Jg 6:1	
8	Gideon	1299-1259	40	Jg 8:28	Jerubbaal the priest of Iehuô
9	Abimelek	1259-1256	3	Jg 9:22	
10	Tola	1256-1233	23	Jg 10:2	
11	Jair	1233-1211	22	Jg 10:3	
12	Anarchy	1211-1193	18	Jg 10:8	Israel Stela (Merenptah)
	<i>total n° 1-12</i>	<i>1493-1193</i>	300	Jg 11:26,30	
13	Jephthe	1193-1187	6	Jg 12:7	
14	Ibzan	1187-1180	7	Jg 12:9	
15	Elon	1180-1170	10	Jg 12:11	
16	Abdon	1170-1162	8	Jg 12:14	
17	[Eli] Philistines	1162-1122	40	1S 4:18	The Sea Peoples
18	Samson	1122-1102	20	Jg 16:31	
19	Samuel's sons	1102-1097	[5]	1S 8:1-3	
20	Saul	1097-1057	40	Ac 13:21	Tell Qeiyafa ostrakon (king enthroned)
21	David	1057-1017	40	1Ki 2:11	
22	Solomon (year 4)	<b>1017</b> -1013	4	1Ki 6:1	House-of-David (Tell Dan Stela)
	<i>total n° 1-22</i>	<i>1493-1013</i>	480	1Ki 6:1	
23	Solomon	<b>1017</b> - 977	40	1Ki 11:42	

The above chronological reconstruction, going from the birth of Abraham in 2038 BCE to the reign of King Solomon (1017-977), can be verified in four different ways:

- ✓ There is absolutely no contradiction between the sum of Hebrew reigns going from n°1 and their total given in the biblical text: 41 years (n°1-2), 300 years (n°1-12) and 480 years (n°1-22). Similarly: a 430-year period of alien residence began when Abraham entered Canaan in 1963 BCE and ended with the departure from Egypt in 1533 BCE; a 450-year period of servitude began

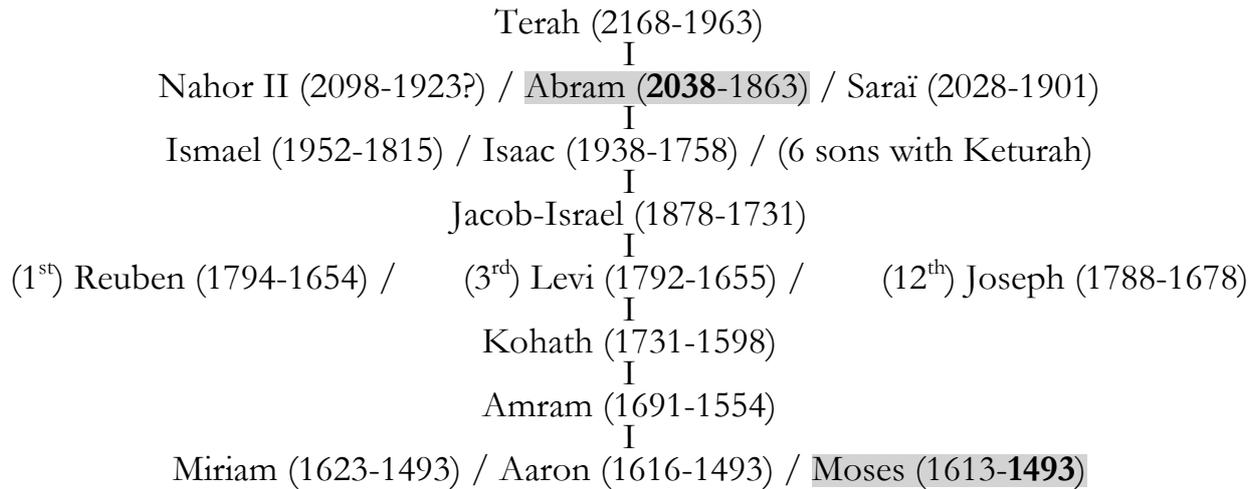
when Isaac the ancestor of the people of Israel was born in 1938 BCE and ended with of the complete pacification of Canaan in 1488 BCE; a 400-year period of affliction began when Isaac was persecuted by Agar's son (Gn 21:8-9) and ended with the departure from Egypt in 1533 BCE, the end of slavery (Ga 4:25-29). The 400-year period began with the persecution<sup>13</sup> of Isaac when he was weaned at 5 years old and not from his birth.

- ✓ The exodus from Egypt in 1533 BCE, when Moses was 80 years old, can be dated precisely because this central event in Israel's history was marked by the death of Pharaoh (Seqenenre Taa) in the Red Sea (Ps 136:15) as well as his firstborn son (Ahmose Sapaïr) who was crown prince (Ex 12:29-31).

BCE				[A]	[B]	[C]						
1534	7	IV	XI	10	(10)	79	[A] Pharaoh <b>Seqenenre Taa</b> [B] Crown Prince <b>Ahmose Sapaïr</b> [C] <b>Moses</b> was 80 years old when he came into Egypt. He was a former pharaoh 40 years earlier (Hyksos Apopi).					
	8	V	XII									
	9	VI	I									
	10	VII	II									
	11	VIII	III									
	12	IX	IV									
1533	1	X	V	11	***	0	Beginning of the 10 plagues					
	2	XI	VI									
	3	XII	VII									
	4	I	VIII									
	5	II	IX					***	(1)	1	[B] Death of <b>Crown Prince</b> (Ex 12:29-31) [A] Death of the <b>Pharaoh</b> (Ps 136:15) [B] Prince of Thebes <b>Kamose</b> . <i>Tjaru is sacked. Kamose became Horus (1<sup>st</sup> year) of Egypt</i>	
	6	III	X					(1)				
	7	IV	XI									
	8	V	XII									
	9	VI	I					(2)				[C] Year 1 of the <b>Exodus</b> (departure to Palestine)
	10	VII	II									
	11	VIII	III									
	12	IX	IV									
1	X	V	(2)	2	[C] Year 2 of the <b>Exodus</b> [B] <b>Kamose</b> Horus (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) of Egypt. *** <i>Israelites defeated by the Amalekites in the south of Palestine, likely near Sharuben (Nb 1:1, 14:34-45). Exodus for 40 years in Sinai (Egypt).</i>							
2	XI	VI										
3	XII	VII										
4	I	VIII										
5	II	IX										
6	III	X										
7	IV	XI				(3)						
8	V	XII										
9	VI	I										
10	VII	II										
11	VIII	III										
12	IX	IV										
1531	1	X	V	3	3	[B] <b>Kamose</b> Horus (3 <sup>rd</sup> year) of Egypt. <i>Nefrusy is sacked and Wawat is annexed. Buben stela of Iy dated year 3 of Senwosret I (sic), III Shemu 10.</i>						
	2	XI	VI									
	3	XII	VII									
	4	I	VIII									
	5	II	IX									
	6	III	X									
	7	IV	XI									
	8	V	XII									
	9	VI	I									
	10	VII	II									
	11	VIII	III									
	12	IX	IV									

<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the Hebrew verb in Genesis 21:8-9 is “mocking”, not “playing”. The Talmud (Sotah 6:6) even mentions of abuse.

- ✓ The genealogy<sup>14</sup> of Moses' ancestors, which can be accurately calculated (DiTommaso: 1998, 81-91), confirms the birth of Abraham in 2038 BCE:



- ✓ When Abram arrived in Canaan he was 75 years old (Gn 12:4-5) and because Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael 10 years later (16:3-4), the War of Nine Kings (Gn 14:1-17), which occurred a year before, must be dated in 1954 BCE. During that war, Abram shot Chedorlaomer the king of Elam. However according to biblical scholars there is a big problem with this major event of Abram's story: *it is historically impossible that, at any time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, the five cities of the Dead Sea were vassals of Elam, and could Elam have been at the head of a coalition that have united four Middle East powers* (De Vaux: 1986b, 211). Indeed mainstream historians have great faith in the current chronology of Elam, despite its many uncertainties, but an important issue is the following: Is the current chronology (“Middle Chronology”) reliable?

#### WHY BABYLONIAN “MIDDLE CHRONOLOGY” IS NOT RELIABLE?

Archaeological excavations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century showed that the city of Ur (Tell al-Muqayyar, Irak) had been the capital of a vast Sumerian empire that was ruled by the kings of Ur III dynasty. These new archaeological data confirmed the biblical data that describe Ur as a powerful city in the land of Shinar (Sumer) and after its collapse Ur, dated 2004 BCE in the “Middle Chronology”, became a small city in the land of the Chaldeans (Old Babylonia). If the “Middle Chronology” is right, there is really a problem with the biblical narrative because Abraham would have left an important city in 1963 BCE that in fact had collapsed 41 years earlier!

One must know that the Middle Chronology is anchored on the fall of Babylon dated 1595 BCE, instead of 1499 BCE, by a majority of Assyriologists. This date, based on the Venus Tablet (astronomical tablet), is chosen mainly as it is consistent with the chronology accepted by most historians of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, hence the name of Middle chronology. According to the Venus Tablet,

<sup>14</sup> Terah (Gn 11:25-26,32); Abram (Gn 16:16, 17:17; 25:7); Sarai (Gn 23:1); Ishmael (Gn 16:16, 25:17); Isaac (Gn 25:26, 35:28); Jacob (Gn 47:9,28); Levi (Ex 6:16); Joseph (Gn 41:46-50, 50:22-23); Kohath (Ex 6:18); Amram (Ex 6:20); Miriam (Nb 20:1,29, Ex 2:1-4); Aaron (Ex 7:7; Nb 33:39); Moses (Dt 34:7).

there are only 4 possible dates for the fall of Babylon. This astronomical tablet (*Enuma Anu Enlil 63*), copied in 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, describes the rising and setting of Venus during the reign of Ammisaduqa (a descendant of Hammurabi). Although the interpretation of this astronomical tablet is difficult, because much data appears to have been poorly copied, the fall of Babylon can be dated to the period 1500-1700 only according to 4 possibilities (below):

Chronology (BCE):	Ultra-Low	#	Low	#	Middle	#	High	#
Fall of Ur	1912		1944		2004		2064	
Reign of Hammurabi	1697-1654		1729-1686		1793-1750		1849-1806	
Reign of Ammisaduqa	<b>1551-1530</b>		1583-1562		1647-1626		1703-1682	
<i>Venus rises year 1 (computed)</i>	14-Feb 1549	0	24-Feb 1581	0	14-Mar 1645	0	31-Mar 1701	0
<i>Shabatu 18 Year 1 (observed)</i>	27-Feb 1549	13	19-Feb 1581	-5	9-Mar 1645	-6	28-Mar 1701	-3
Fall of Babylon	1499		1531		1595		1651	

Despite the excellent agreement with the fall of Babylon in 1499 BCE the Ultra-Low chronology is considered too low compared to Kassite (!) and Hittite chronologies. This criticism is unfounded (Gasche: 2003, 205-221), because these chronologies are very approximate: most durations of reigns are unknown and they have no link with any astronomical events.

Two astronomical elements help eliminate the chronologies called Low, Middle and High:

- ✓ The many astronomical events described in the Venus tablet were observed 13 days (1549 BCE) after the date calculated with the Ultra-Low Chronology (in green) when they should have been observed prior to the calculated date with the other chronologies (in orange), which is impossible to explain<sup>15</sup>.
- ✓ Actually the best way for dating the fall of Babylon is to use a couple of well known lunar eclipses. A tablet of astronomical omens (*Enuma Anu Enlil 20*) mentions a lunar eclipse, dated 14 Siwanu, at the end of the reign of Šulgi (14/III/48) and another (*Enuma Anu Enlil 21*) mentions a lunar eclipse, dated 14 Addaru, at the end of the Ur III dynasty ending with the reign of Ibbi-Sin (14/XII/24). These two lunar eclipses were separated by 42 years of reign<sup>16</sup>. Over the period 2200-1850 there were only three couples of eclipses (P means partial), spaced by 42 years, matching the description of astronomical omens.

1 <sup>st</sup> eclipse (14/III/48)	Magnitude	2 <sup>nd</sup> eclipse (14/XII/24)	Magnitude	gap (1 <sup>st</sup> - 2 <sup>nd</sup> )		Chronology
13/08/2189	1.21	12/03/2107	1.00	82 years		
12/05/2175	1.80	"	"	68 years		
04/07/2150	1.32	"	"	43 years		
25/07/2095	1.32	04/05/2063	1.78	32 years		
[2106]#		[2064]#				High
"	"	13/04/2053	0.63 (P)	42 years	OK	
"	"	11/02/2031	1.14	64 years		

<sup>15</sup> Astronomical predictions could solve the problem but these extremely complex astronomical cycles were predictable only from 19<sup>th</sup> century CE.

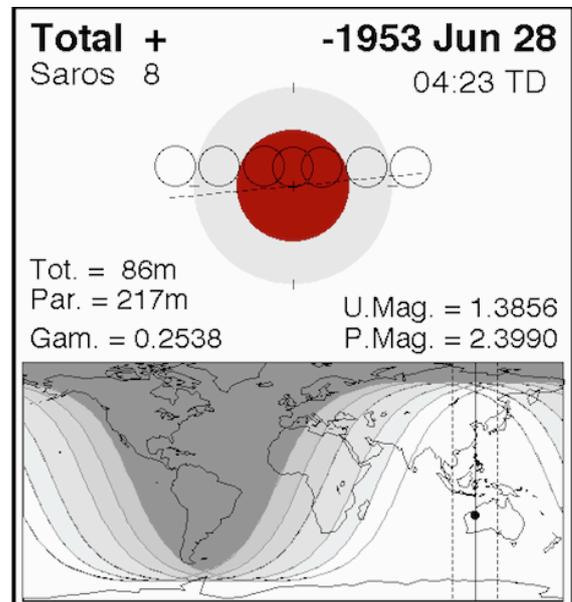
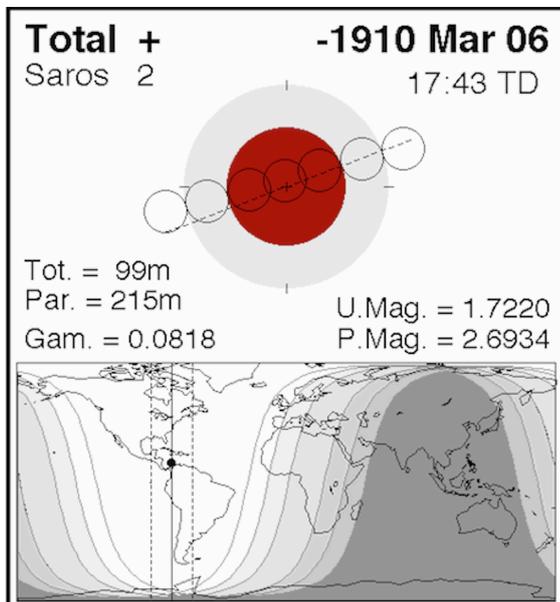
<sup>16</sup> 42 years = 9 years of Amar-Sin + 9 years of Šu-Sîn + 24 years of Ibbi-Sin.

[2046]#		[2004]#				Middle
26/06/2019	1.07	24/04/2016	1.84	3 years		
"	"	15/03/1977	0.82 (P)	42 years	<b>OK</b>	
"	"	04/03/1976	1.47	43 years		
25/05/2008	0.96	15/04/1969	1.84	39 years		
18/07/2002	1.08	23/02/1929	1.63	73 years		
[1986]#		[1944]#				Low
27/06/1954	1.39	06/03/1911	1.72	42 years	<b>OK</b>	<b>Ultra Low</b>
18/07/1937	0.75 (P)	14/02/1901	0.94	36 years		
18/05/1915	1.47	14/02/1882	1.58	33 years		
"	"	27/03/1875	1.82	40 years		
28/06/1908	1.04	"	"	33 years		

The result is irrefutable, there is no lunar eclipse according to the Low, Middle, and High chronology, neither at the end of Shulgi's reign, nor at the end of Ibbi-Sin's reign. In contrast, with the Ultra-Low chronology there was a total lunar eclipse at the end of each of these two reigns, the first one on 6 March 1911 BCE (06/03/-1910\*) for the 14/XII/24 of Ibbi-Sîn and the second on 28 June 1954 BCE (28/06/-1953\*) for the 14/III/48 of Šulgi.

BCE			King	
<b>1912</b>	1	X	<b>23</b> Ibbi-Sîn	
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I	<b>24</b>	
	5	II		
	6	III		
	7	IV		
	8	V		
	9	VI		
	10	VII		
	11	VIII		
	12	IX		
<b>1911</b>	1	X		Lunar eclipse dated 14/XII/24
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I	(25) Collapse of Ur	
	5	II		

BCE			King		
<b>1954</b>	1	X	<b>47</b> Šulgi		
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I	<b>48</b> Lunar eclipse dated 14/III/48		
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	<b>0</b>	8	V	<b>0</b> Amar-Sin	
		9	VI		
		10	VII		
		11	VIII		
		12	IX		
<b>1953</b>		1	X		<b>1</b>
		2	XI		
		3	XII		
		4	I		
		5	II		



The majority of Egyptologists agree on the outline and many details of the chronology of Ancient Egypt. This scholarly consensus is the so-called “Conventional Egyptian Chronology”, which places the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the beginning of the New Kingdom in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Despite this consensus, disagreements remain within the scholarly community, resulting in variant chronologies diverging by about 300 years for the Early Dynastic Period, up to 30 years in the New Kingdom, and a few years in the Late Period. In addition, there are a number of “alternative chronologies” outside of scholarly consensus, such as the “New Chronology” proposed in the 1990s, which lowers New Kingdom dates by as much as 350 years, or the “Glasgow Chronology” (proposed 1978–1982), which lowers New Kingdom dates by as much as 500 years. Radiocarbon dating gives dates with a precision of +/- 20 years (Ramsey et al: 2010, 1554-1557).

Despite the general consensus regarding the “Conventional Egyptian Chronology”, each prominent Egyptologist has developed his own Egyptian chronology. Contrary to the monotheism of the Bible with the uniqueness of its truth, in Egyptology the truth belongs to each one, it is a polytheistic truth. For example, a sample of chronologies performed by 5 prominent Egyptologists:

EGYPT	Dodson	Shaw	Malek	v. Beckerath	<sup>14</sup> C dates	Krauss
Mentuhotep II	2066-2014	2055-2004	2050-1999	2046-1995	2042-1991	2009-1959
Mentuhotep III	2014-2001	2004-1992	1999-1987	1995-1983	1991-1981	1958-1947
Mentuhotep IV	2001-1994	1992-1985	1987-1980	1983-1976	1981-1975	1947-1940
Amenemhat I	1994-1964	1985-1965	1980-1951	1976-1947	1975-1948	1939-1910
Senwosret I	1974-1929	1965-1920	1960-1916	1956-1911	1948-1903	1920-1875

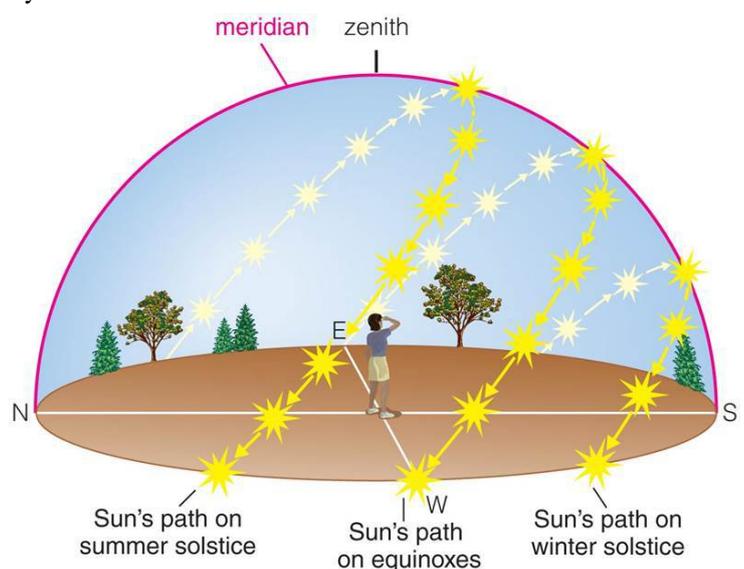
According to Aidan Dodson (“Conventional Egyptian Chronology”), Abraham would have met Senwosret I, but according to Jürgen von Beckerath he would have met Amenemhat I and according to Rolf Krauss he would have met Mentuhotep II. Faced with this complex situation most people consult Wikipedia which obviously uses the “Conventional Egyptian Chronology” despite the fact that the only ancient Egyptian chronology published in a peer committee book was Beckerath's study (Hornung, Beckerath, Warburton: 2006, 490-491). However, because chronology is the backbone of history, the establishing of historical truth deserves an effort. The answer of the following question is crucial: is the “Conventional Egyptian Chronology” reliable?

#### WHY THE CONVENTIONAL EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY IS NOT RELIABLE

Susan L. Cohen explains in her PhD dissertation (Cohen: 2002, 12-13) the origin of disagreement among scholars: *Disagreements concerning absolute chronology for the Middle Kingdom have also provided “high” and “low” dates for the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Absolute dating for the Egyptian Middle Kingdom is derived by moving backward from dates established for the New Kingdom and later periods, using fixed dates established through astronomical observation. The astronomical data are based on the sightings of the star Sothis*

—the “dog” in the constellation Orion— assumed to have been made from one fixed observation point. The two pivotal dates for the Bronze Age are a sighting recorded at Illahun, used to establish a fixed date in the Middle Kingdom, and one mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus, which determines the beginning date for the New Kingdom. Disagreement concerning absolute dating hinges on establishing the observation point used for the Sothic sightings. Although a sighting point from Thebes has long considered the basis for the absolute dates derived for the Middle to the “high” chronology, an alternative sighting point at Elephantine, originally suggested by Krauss, results in a set of lower dates for this period. For example, whether the star was observed from a more northerly point at Illahun, near Thebes, or it was seen from a southern one on Elephantine, then year 7 of Senwosret III would be either 1872 or 1830 BCE, respectively, leading right away a discrepancy of 42 years in absolute dating. This has resulted in two alternative sets of dates for the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty: High (v. Beckerath) or Low (Krauss). While evidence exists that a Sothic sighting was, indeed, made in the north, the use of Elephantine as a sighting point rests, at the moment only on conjecture. Despite its technical nature this comment gives two major indications: there are only two Egyptian chronologies that rely on absolute dates: Krauss' chronology (“Low”) or Von Beckerath's chronology (“High”) according to whether the observation was made at Elephantine (conjecture) or at Thebes (likely); other Egyptian chronologies are not based on absolute dates, including the *Conventional Egyptian Chronology*, and consequently are of no scientific value<sup>17</sup>. How can one know if Von Beckerath's chronology is the true chronology? The answer is simple: one must use another astronomical dating in order to confirm it, which is possible now since Luc Gabolde, a French Egyptologist, found such a dating in 2010.

In his article dedicated to the orientation of the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak (Thebes), Luc Gabolde gave the precise measurement of the azimuth of the sunrise at winter solstice<sup>18</sup> based on the axis of the temple: 116° 43' 7,35" (*Cahiers de Karnak*, 2010, 243-256). Due to the precession of equinoxes, the azimuth of sunrise has changed slowly over time. If one observes the sun at the horizon, its path on azimuth moves through three particular positions easy to observe: the sunrise at summer solstice, the sunrise at winter solstice and the culmination of the sun at summer (or winter) solstice on the celestial meridian. To highlight this special and unique day, the Egyptians built a central corridor in several of their temples in order to let sunrays cross these temples on this very day of the



<sup>17</sup> Except the dates based on radiocarbon dating with an accuracy of +/- 20 years.

<sup>18</sup> The winter solstice occurs on 21 September in our Gregorian calendar, but in the astronomical Julian calendar, it occurred on January 5 c. 1950 BCE, <http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/temps/saisons.html>

year, as in the Senwosret I's temple in the Karnak Temple Complex on the day of winter solstice, which occurred on 5 January -1946 at 4:46 UTC<sup>19</sup>.



Given that the construction of the temple of Senwosret I was decided at the time of his accession, the direction of the corridor was set at this time which fixes his 1<sup>st</sup> year of reign in 1946 BCE. If we use the reigns' duration coming from the Turin Canon (TC), we get the following chronology:

Dynasty XII		TC	absolute	v. Beckerath	<sup>14</sup> C dates	#
Amenemhat I	Sehetepibre	29	1975-1946	1976-1947	1975-1948	27
Senwosret I	Kheparkare	45	1946-1901	1956-1911	1948-1903	45
Amenemhat II	Nebkaure	38	1901-1863	1914-1876	1903-1870	33
Senwosret II	Khakheperre	8	1863-1855	1882-1872	1870-1863	7
Senwosret III	Khakaure	19	1855-1836	1872-1853	1863-1825	38

It is seen that the chronology of Von Beckerath is partially confirmed but there are still several small shifts of a few years because he assumed the existence of a few co-regencies. In order to solve these small disagreements, we can use now the El-Lahun papyri, which describe numerous lunar festivals that occurred during the 19 years of Senwosret III's reign, followed by the 45 years of Amenemhat III, consequently the 10-year co-regency between Amenemhat I and Senwosret I was not taken into account. These papyri show the lunar days *psdntym* which were dated in the civil calendar (highlighted in brown):

Colour	Event
	Lunar day 1 ( <i>psdntym</i> ) dated in the civil calendar
*	Lunar day 1 shifted one day compared to the theoretical cycle
	<i>Wag</i> Feast dated in the civil calendar
	Heliacal rising of Sirius dated in the civil calendar

<sup>19</sup> The azimuth of sunrise (altitude 0°) at winter solstice (5 January), seen from Senwosret I's temple in Karnak (32°39' East, 25°42' North) at exactly 4:44:20 UTC, was -63.264° or 116.736° (116° 43' 48"), which is the value for the axis of the temple: 116° 43' 7,35" ( <http://www.fourmilab.ch/cgi-bin/Yourhorizon> ). Given that the azimuth of Sirius at its heliacal rising was 111°7', that star was not used to align the temple.

	BCE	AKHET				PERET				SHEMU				5		
		I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV			
King	1857	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.			
	1856	1	1	30	29	29	28	28	27	27	26	26	25	25		
	1855	2	19	19	18	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14		
Senwosret III	1854	1	3	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3
	1853	2	4	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	24	24	23	23	23	
	1852	3	5	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	
	1851	4	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1
	1850	5	7	25	25	24	24	23	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	
	1849	6	8	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	
	1848	7	9	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	16	30	29	29	28
	1847	8	10	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	
	1846	9	11	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	8	8	7	
	1845	10	12	2	1	1	30	30	29	28	28	27	27	27	26	
	1844	11	13	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	
	1843	12	14	10	9	9	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	4
	1842	13	15	29	28	28	27	27	27	26	26	25	25	24	24	
	1841	14	16	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	
	1840	15	17	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2
	1839	16	18	26	26	26	25	25	24	24	23	23	22	22	21	
	1838	17	19	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	
	1837	18	20	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	17	1	30
	1836	19	21	24	24	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	
Amenemhat III	1835	1	22	13	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	9	9	8	
	1834	2	23	3	2	2	1	1	1	30	29	29	28	28	27	
	1833	3	24	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	18	17	17	
	1832	4	25	11	11	10	10	9	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	
	1831	5	1	1	30	29	29	28	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	
	1830	6	2	19	19	18	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	
	1829	7	3	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3
	1828	8	4	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	24	24	23	23	23	
	1827	9	5	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	
	1826	10	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1
	1825	11	7	25	25	*25	24	23	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	
	1824	12	8	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	
	1823	13	9	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	30	29	29	28	
	1822	14	10	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	
	1821	15	11	12	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	8	8	7	
	1820	16	12	2	1	1	30	30	29	28	28	27	27	27	26	
	1819	17	13	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	
	1818	18	14	10	9	9	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	4
	1817	19	15	29	28	28	27	27	27	26	26	25	25	24	24	
	1816	20	16	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	
	1815	21	17	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2
	1814	22	18	26	26	26	25	25	24	24	23	23	22	22	21	
	1813	23	19	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	12	12	11	11	
	1812	24	20	*6	5	4	4	3	3	*3	2	1	1	1	30	
	1811	25	21	24	24	23	23	22	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	
	1810	26	22	13	13	13	12	12	11	11	10	10	9	9	8	
	1809	27	23	3	2	2	1	1	1	30	29	29	28	28	27	
	1808	28	24	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	18	17	17	
	1807	29	25	11	11	10	10	9	9	8	8	*8	7	6	6	
	1806	30	1	1	30	29	29	28	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	
	1805	31	2	19	*20	*19	*19	18	*18	17	*17	16	15	15	14	
	1804	32	3	9	*9	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3
	1803	33	4	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	24	24	23	23	23	
	1802	34	5	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	13	13	12	12	

1801	35	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1
1800	36	7	25	25	24	24	23	23	23	22	22	21	21	20

We can see that few *wag* feasts have been dated (highlighted in night blue) and they all fall on lunar day 17 (instead of theoretical day 18). This document can be dated precisely thanks to the Sothic rising of IV Peret 16, Year 7 of Senwosret III (highlighted in orange) since, according to astronomy, it took place in Thebes on 11 July at that time<sup>20</sup>. Conclusion: according to absolute chronology, Abraham met Pharaoh Amenemhat I (1975-1946), in his 14<sup>th</sup> year of reign (1963 BCE), then he founded Tanis in his 20<sup>th</sup> year (1957 BCE) of reign and led a military action against Kudur-Lagamar in his 23<sup>rd</sup> year of reign (1954 BCE). Paralleling of all chronologies:

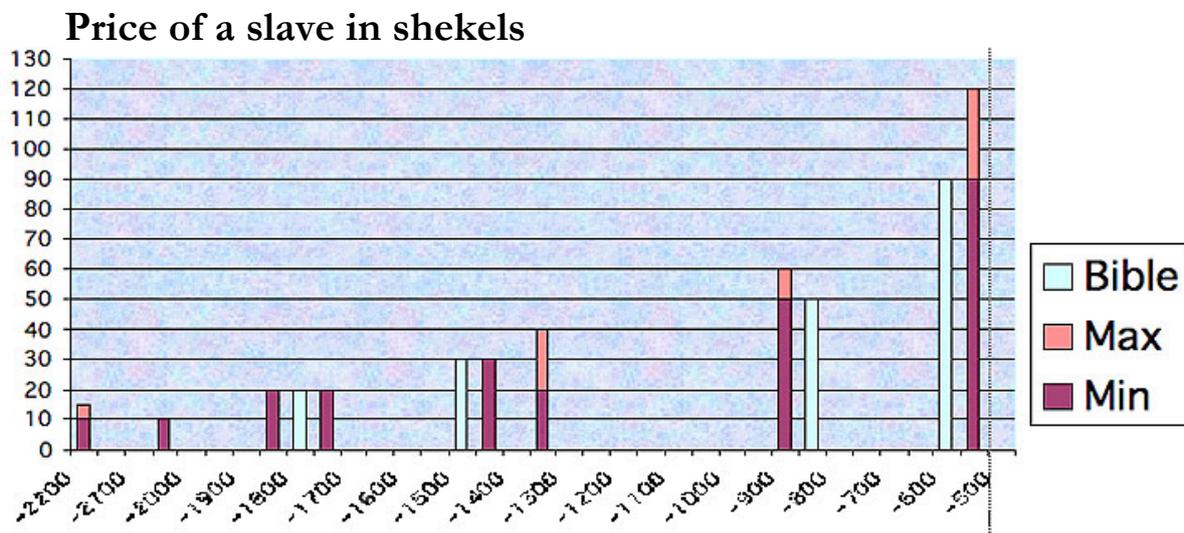
BCE	[A]	bis	[B]	[C]	bis	[D]	[A] = Egypt, [B] = Sumer, [C] = Elam, [D] = Canaan,
1968	9		34	22	0	70	[A] Amenemhat I King of Egypt
1967	10		35	23	1	71	[B] Šulgi King of Ur, King of the 4 corners
1966	11		36	24	2	72	[C] Kudur-Lagamar King of Elam and King of Akkad
1965	12		37	25	3	73	[D] Age of Abraham (who dwelt in Ur)
1964	13		38	26	4	74	
1963	14	1	39	27	5	75	[D] Abraham age 75 arrives in Canaan, Hebron is founded, shortly after Abraham went into Egypt (Gn 12:4-13:1,18)
1962	15	2	40	28	6	76	
1961	16	3	41	29	7	77	
1960	17	4	42	30	8	78	
1959	18	5	43	31	9	79	
1958	19	6	44	32	10	80	
1957	20	7	45	33	11	81	[A] Tanis is founded 7 years after Hebron (Nb 13:22)
1956	21	1	46	34	12	82	[A] Senwosret I Coregent of Egypt
1955	22	2	47	35	13	83	[C] Revolt of Transjordan kings against Kudur-Lagamar (Gn 14:4)
1954	23	3	48	36	14	84	[C] Kudur-Lagamar shot by Abraham (Gn 14:5-17)
1953	24	4	1	1	1	85	[A] Nesu-Montu, Army General of Amenemhat I, commemorated his military activities along the eastern border of the Delta in Year 24
1952	25	5	2	2	2	86	[D] Hagar ran away to Egypt (Gn 16:6-7,16, 21:17-21)
1951	26	6	3	3	3	87	[B] Amar-Sîn King of Ur, King of the 4 corners
1950	27	7	4	4	4	88	[C] Tazitta I Man of Anšan / Ebarat I Man of Šimaški
1949	28	8	5	5	5	89	
1948	29	9	6	6	6	90	
1947	30	10	7	7	7	91	
1946	1		8	8	8	92	[A] Senwosret I King of Egypt
1945	2		9	9	9	93	
1944	3		1	10	10	94	[B] Šu-Sîn King of Ur, King of the 4 corners
1943	4		2	11	11	95	
1942	5		3	12	12	96	
1941	6		4	13	13	97	
1940	7		5		14	98	[C] Ebarat I Man of Šimaški (new Elamite dynasty)
1939	8		6		15	99	[D] Sodom (Shutum) is destroyed. At the age of 99 Abraham returned to settle near Egypt (Gn 17:1; 20:1). Birth of Isaac (Gn 21:5).
1938	9		7		16	100	

<sup>20</sup> The heliacal rising of Sirius was on 11 July at Thebes (Longitude 32°39' East, Latitude 25°42' North) with an *arcus visionis* 8.5° ( <http://www.imcce.fr/langues/fr/grandpublic/phenomenes/sothis/index.html>). This heliacal rising of Sirius is dated between 1849 and 1846 BCE owing to the equality: IV Peret 16 = 11 July. The chart checks that the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar cycle of 25 years (beginning on I Akhet 1) coincided with the full moon of 30 November 1857 BCE. In addition, the Sothic rising, dated 11 July, 1848 BCE, coincided with the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar crescent, which may have been a remarkable event (IV Peret 1 coincided with the full moon of 26 June 1848 BCE).

## DATING EVENTS BY CHRONOLOGICAL MARKERS

Some details provide information that can be compared with fingerprints. Three chronological markers (datable elements but insignificant at the time of writing) allow the dating of an event: the rate of inflation in the price of a slave, the proportion of certain names in documents and the structure in treaties.

- 1) The price of a slave changed, it has increased over time in line with inflation (Blaklock, Harrison: 1983, 417). However inflation was a complex variation with fluctuations up to 50% depending on cities and time (Jursa: 2010, 232-235, 740-751, 773-816). It was 10-15 shekels in Akkad (c. 2200 BCE), 10 shekels in Ur III (c. 2000 BCE), 20 shekels in the code of Hammurabi and in Mari (c. 1700 BCE), 30 shekels in Nuzi (c. 1400 BCE), between 20 and 40 shekels in Ugarit (c. 1300 BCE), 50 to 60 shekels in Assyria (900-800), and between 90 and 120 shekels at the beginning of the Persian period (600-500).

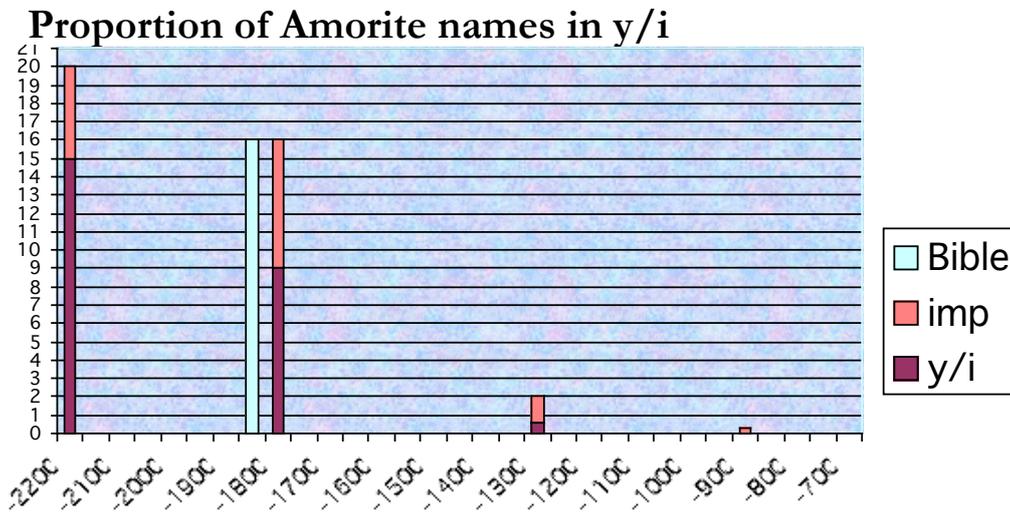


The correlation between biblical dating and the period when events are expected to have occurred is excellent. The price of 20 shekels set to buy Joseph (aged 17) as a slave (Gn 37:28) is in agreement with the period when he was sold (c. 1770 BCE) as that of 30 shekels (Ex 21:32) with the period when Moses is supposed to have lived (c. 1500 BCE). Similarly, the price of 50 shekels (2Ki 15:20) corresponds to the period when Menahem reigned (c. 770 BCE). Finally, the price of 90 shekels<sup>21</sup> at Zechariah's time (c. 520 BCE).

- 2) The proportion of Amorite names with a conjugated form in the imperfect (starting with an i or y) with respect to all names is linked to a specific period. It is obvious that some names are characteristic of a time, which allows dating them<sup>22</sup>. At the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE among 5000 names, there remained only 0.25% in the imperfect, of which 1.6% starting with y/i:

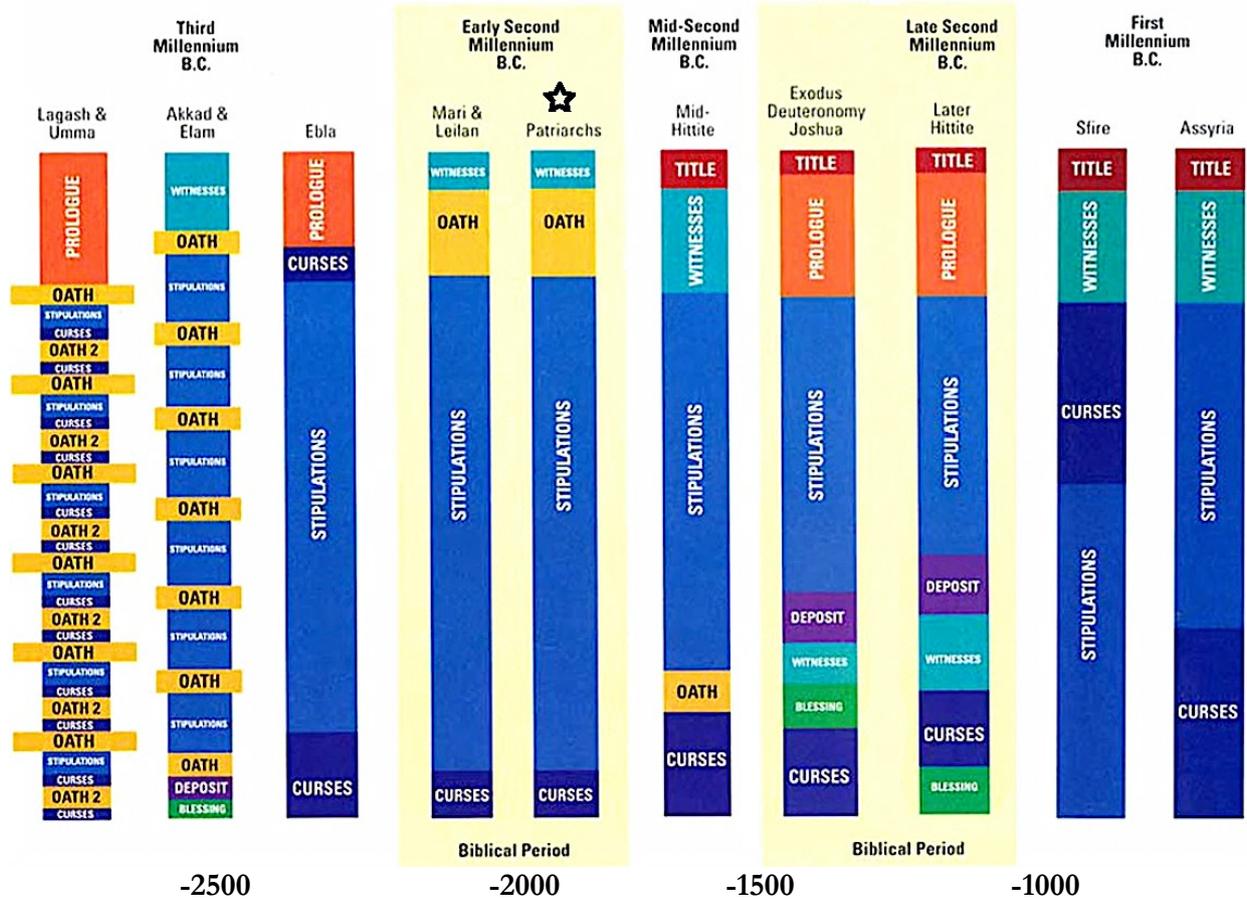
<sup>21</sup> 90 shekels = 3x30. The sum of 30 shekels is accounted for a month's salary (Zc 11:8,12) and it represented a third of the price of a slave (assuming the ratio of 1/3 was almost constant). A shekel was worth 3 denarii and a denarius corresponded to a day's work in the first century (Mt 20:2).

<sup>22</sup> A study of over 360 Akkadian names of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, showed a proportion of 20% of names in the imperfect, 80% starting with y/I (Di Vito: 1993, 306-317). Another study involving 6000 names showed that near 1800 BCE there were 16% in the imperfect, 55% starting with y/I (Kitchen: 1989, 25-28). Around 1300 BCE among 4050 names only 2% were in the imperfect, 30% starting with y/i.



In chapters of Genesis, 24 of Abraham's descendants appear and among them 4 have a name beginning with y/i (Ishmael, Isaac, Yacob, Yoseph), or a proportion of 16%. The period 2000-1750 BCE when these characters lived is actually in very good agreement with the archaeological data<sup>23</sup>.

3) The structure of treaties is also characteristic of an era. For example the Bible records 3 treaties during the patriarchal era<sup>24</sup>. A study involving 57 treaties (Kitchen: 1995, 48-57,88-95) showed that they contained specific parts (witnesses, titles, oaths, stipulations, curses, blessings, deposit) presented in a sequence characteristic for each era (Kitchen: 1995b, 67-92):



<sup>23</sup> Detail of interest, all the deities whose name starts with y/i are very old, especially before the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE as: Ishtar, It, Igigi, Inanna Ishkur, Ishara, Inshushinak.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham's treaty with Abimelech (Gn 21), Isaac with Abimelech (Gn 26), and Jacob with Laban (Gn 31). These three treaties have the same structure: 1) *witnesses* (Gn 21:22; 26:28, 31:44-52), 2) *oath* (Gn 21:23; 26:28, 31:44), 3) *stipulations* (Gn 21:24,30; 26:29; 31:52), 4) *curses and blessings* (Gn 21:33; 26:29, 31:53).

# Absolute chronology sheds light on Abram's journey from Ur

According to the previous chronology, which is an absolute chronology, Abraham's departure from his hometown of Ur and his arrival in Canaan are dated in 1963 BCE when Abraham was 75 years old (Gn 12:4-5). The revolt of Transjordan kings against Chedorlaomer occurs in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of his dominion (Gn 14:4). The following year Chedorlaomer was slaughtered by Abraham (Gn 14:5-17) and the following year, 10 years after their arrival in Canaan, Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael (Gn 16:3-4) who was born when Abraham was 86 years old (Gn 16:16). Ishmael was 13 when Abraham was 99 years old (Gn 17:1,24). Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gn 21:5):

BCE	[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[A] = Elam, [B] = Sumer, [D] = Canaan, Egypt, Negeb
1967	1	35	71		[A] Chedorlaomer King of Elam
1966	2	36	72		[B] Šulgi King of Ur
1965	3	37	73		[C] Age of Abraham ( <i>who dwelt in Ur</i> )
1964	4	38	74		
1963	5	39	75	0	[C] Abram age 75 arrived into Canaan, Hebron is founded (Gn 12:4-9)
1962	6	40	76	1	<i>then fled to Egypt because of a famine (Gn 12:10-20)</i>
1961	7	41	77	2	
1960	8	42	78	3	
1959	9	43	79	4	
1958	10	44	80	5	
1957	11	45	81	6	[D] Tanis is founded 7 years after Hebron (Nb 13:22), then Abraham
1956	12	46	82	7	<i>went up out of Egypt to the Negeb (Gn 13:1).</i>
1955	13	47	83	8	[A] Revolt of Transjordan kings against Chedorlaomer (Gn 14:4)
1954	14	48	84	9	[A] Chedorlaomer is shot by Abram (Gn 14:5-17)
1953		1	85	10	[D] Hagar pregnant with Ishmael (Gn 16:3-4)
1952		2	86	0	[D] Birth of Ishmael (Gn 16:16)
1951		3	87	1	[B] Amar-Sîn King of Ur
1950		4	88	2	
1949		5	89	3	
1948		6	90	4	
1947		7	91	5	
1946		8	92	6	
1945		9	93	7	
1944		1	94	8	[B] Šu-Sîn King of Ur
1943		2	95	9	
1942		3	96	10	
1941		4	97	11	
1940		5	98	12	
1939		6	99	13	[C] Sara pregnant with Isaac (Gn 17:1,24)
1938		7	100	14	[C] Birth of Isaac (Gn 21:5)
1937		8	101		

According to the above reconstruction, Chedorlaomer would have intervened in Transjordan in the last years of Šulgi's reign. Elamite chronology of this period can be determined through several Mesopotamian synchronisms.

It is noteworthy that the average duration of Elamite reigns over the period 1700-1500 is consistent only with the Ultra Low chronology (Vallat: 2000, 7-17). All these reigns can be set through the following synchronisms highlighted in grey (Vallat, Gasche: 2002, 374-391):

ELAM	reign			SUMER	reign
AWAN I/II					
Pieli	2390-2365				
Tari	2365-2340				
Ukku-tahiš	2340-2315			UR I	2340-2250
Hišur	2315-2290	(SUSA)		LAGASH I	2340-2220
Šušun-tarana	2290-2265	[unnamed]		En-anatum I	2290-2280
Napil-ħuš	2265-2240			(KISH III)	AKKAD
Kikku-sime-temti	2240-2215			Sargon of Akkad	2243 -
Luhhi-iššan	2215-2190				-2187
Hišep-ratep	2190-2175	Emahsini		Rimuš	2187-2178
<i>Ešpum (governor)</i>	2175-2165			Maništusu	2178-2163
<i>Ili-išmani (governor)</i>	2165-2140			Narâm-Sîn	2163 -
<i>Epir-muḫi (governor)</i>	2140-2115				-2126
?	2115-2090			Šar-kali-šarri	2126-2101
Hielu	2090-2065				
Hita	2065-2040			URUK IV	
Puzur-Inšušinak	2040 -			Utu-ḫegal	2032-2021
		SIMAŠKI	reign	UR III	
	-2015	[unnamed]	2020 -	Ur-Nammu	2020-2002
?	2015-1990	(ANŠAN)	-1990	Šulgi	2002 -
?	1990-1954	Girnamme	1990-1955		-1954
		Tazitta I/ Ebarat I	1955-1940	Amar-Sîn	1954-1945
		Ebarat I	1940-1935	Šu-Sîn	1945-1936
		Tazitta II	1935-1925	Ibbi-Sîn	1936 -
		Lurrak-luhhan	1925-1915		
		Kindadu	1915-1904	(Collapse of Ur)	-1912

Several anomalies appear in this reconstitution: 1) it lacks two or three kings at the end of the Awan dynasty (where Chedorlaomer should have to appear) because Akkad kingdoms conquered by Puzur-Inšušinak were recovered by Šulgi associated with the kings of Simaški (*Shabdad?*) and thus opposing a king of Awan<sup>1</sup>; 2) the first kings of Simaški are lacking as well because Puzur-Inšušinak mentions one, at least, in his inscriptions without naming him, moreover he declares himself *king of Awan, governor of Susa and viceroy of Elam*. The first kings of the Simaški dynasty probably ruled simultaneously different capitals of Elam (Susa, Anšan, Simaški) rather than co-regencies. Information about Elam comes almost exclusively from Sumerian King lists which are incomplete, biased and difficult to interpret, because the reversals of alliances among changing coalitions of kings, even from very remote areas, were frequent during the period 2000-1700. The chronological reconstruction based on synchronisms shows that royal dynasties from Sumerian lists all took place in

<sup>1</sup> Because very few Elamite writings have been unearthed, archaeology is just beginning to interpret what happened during the reigns of the kings of Awan (*Godin Tepe*) in Loristan (Rothman: 2014, 89-90).

parallel and some successions seem artificial (Kish I, II, III and IV). However, all these dynasties appear fairly consistent and can be used to date Sumerian reigns. The Awan dynasty is a special case because it appears after the dynasty of Ur I (2340-2252) and before the dynasty of Kish II (2325-2244) which is impossible since these two dynasties were parallel (Glassner: 2004, 138-141):

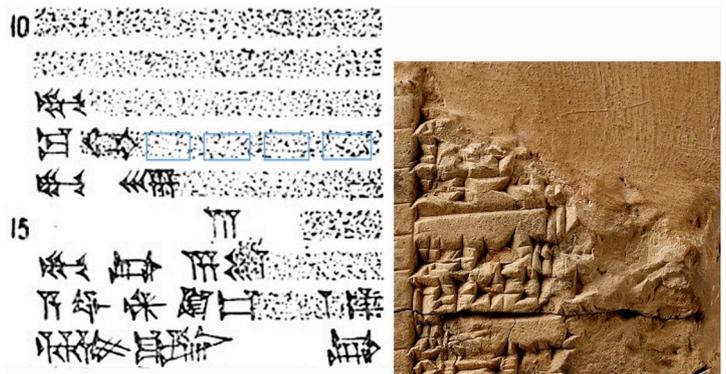
*(Dynasty of Ur I) Meš-ane-pada was king 80 yrs; Meš-ki-ag-nuna, son of Meš-ane-pada, was king 36 yrs; Elulu reigned 25 yrs; Balulu reigned 36 yrs; 4 kings reigned 177 yrs. Ur was defeated, its kingship passed to Awan:*

*(Dynasty of Awan I) [-] was king [- yrs]; [-]-lu, he reigned [- yrs]; Ku-ul-[-] was king, he reigned 36 yrs. 3 kings ruled 356 yrs. Awan was defeated, its kingship passed to Kish:*

*(Dynasty of Kish II) Susuda, the Fuller, was king 201+ yrs; Dadasig, he reigned 81 yrs; Mamagal, the Boatman, he reigned 360 yrs; Kalbum, son of Mamagal, he reigned 195 yrs; Tuge, he reigned 360 yrs; Men-nuna, he reigned 180 yrs; Enbi-Ištar, he reigned 290 yrs; Lugalmu, he reigned 360 yrs. 8 kings reigned 3,195 yrs. Kish was defeated, its kingship passed to Hamazi.*

The transcription of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last name of the Awan dynasty is read *ku-ul-[-]* but as no Elamite name begins in *ku-l*<sup>2</sup> the reading should be *ku-du<sub>7</sub>-[-]* because Elamite names starting in *ku-* are always in *ku-du[-]* and the *ul* sign may also be read *du<sub>7</sub>*. The last king mentioned on this prism is Šîn-mâgir (1732-1721), a king of Isin. The name *Ku-du<sub>7</sub>-[-]* in line 13 has between 5 and 7 signs (max per line) because when the name has 4 signs or less, years of reign (36 in line 14) are written in the same line. Kudur-Lagamar's name is located in a part of the prism (right below) which is unfortunately very damaged but three important data have been preserved: a mighty king of Elam at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, whose name was *Kudu[-]*, died without a successor.

10 [mu xx i-a<sub>5</sub> ]  
 [ mu [ xx i-a<sub>5</sub> ]  
 ku-du<sub>7</sub>[-ur -la -ga -mar ] ⇒  
 mu 36[ i-a<sub>5</sub> ] ⇒  
 15 mu-bi 3 [lugal ]  
 mu-bi 356 [ib -a<sub>5</sub> ]  
 a-wa-an<sup>ki</sup> giš[tukul ba-a]n-sig  
 nam lugal bi



Scholars generally assume that the ancient Sumerian dynasty of Awan I had to be placed during the Ur I dynasty (2340-2252) but it is impossible for three reasons: the first Elamite kings: Ukku-taḫiš (2340-2315), Ḫišur (2315-2290), Šušun-tarana (2290-2265) and Napil-ḫuš (2265-2240) were not powerful enough to conquer the land of Akkad, on the contrary En-me-baragesi (2500-2485), a king of Kish I, was able to attack Elam, none of these Elamite names match those on the Sumerian list and above all the only Elamite king who

<sup>2</sup> There are only two Elamite words that start with *ku-l* (not *ku-ul*) which are *kula* “request” and *kullak* “sacrifice”. Elamite proper names begin only with *kudu-*, *kuk-* or *kutir-* (*kudur-*), never with *ku-l*.

succeeded in founding a (brief) Akkadian empire is Puzur-Inšušinak, currently regarded as the last king of Awan II. As Shulgi had to reconquer the land of Akkad he had to oppose the successors of Puzur-Inšušinak because Elamite kings of Šimaški agreed to cooperate (he even married some of his daughters with Elamites princes). The brief Awan I dynasty in the Sumerian list therefore started with Elamite king Puzur-Inšušinak. After the collapse of Awan Dynasty, the Sumerian (!) god of Susa: In-šušinak “*Lord of Susa*” (NIN.NINNI.ERIN), was replaced by the Elamite god of Anshan: Napi-riša “*God great*” (DINGIR.GAL).

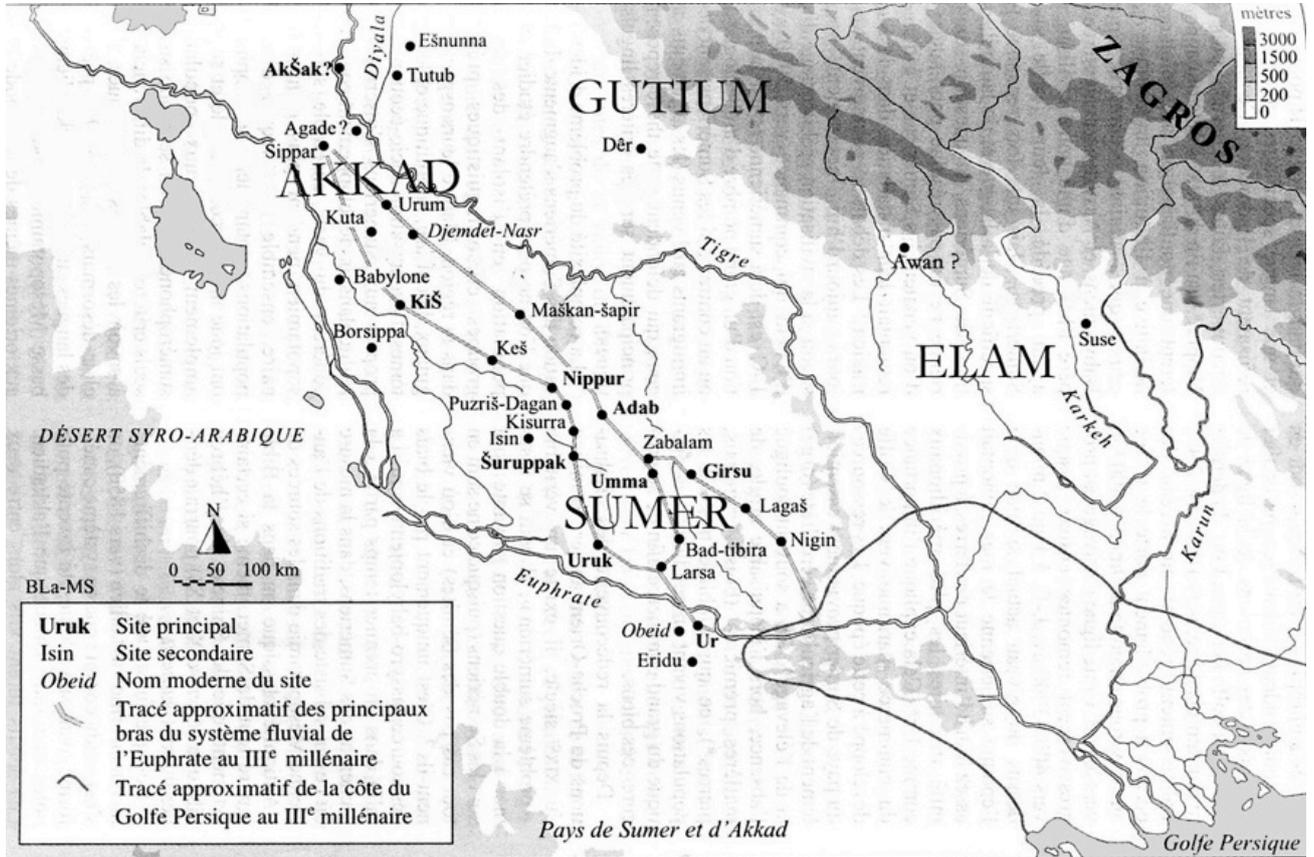
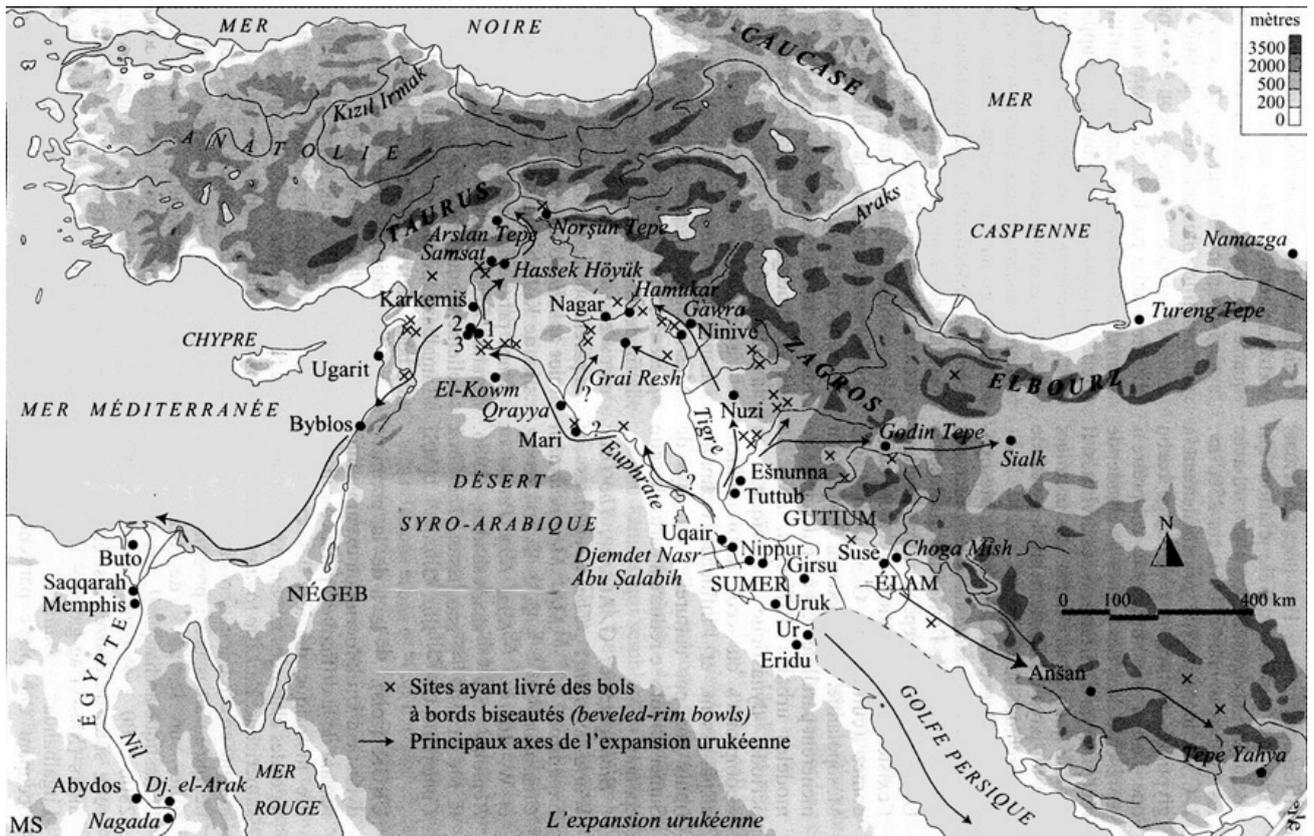
The synchronisms between the Mesopotamian and Elamite chronologies (highlighted in grey) confirm the location of the Awan I dynasty that inserts exactly in its chronological niche: 2040-1954 BCE (below). Accordingly, Kudu[r-Lagamar] was the last king of the Elamite dynasty of Awan I.

AKKAD	reign	LAGASH II	reign	GUTIUM	reign	ELAM	AWAN I
Šarkallišarri	2126 -	<i>Lugal-ušumgal</i>	2130-2120	Zarlagab	2121-2115	<i>Epir-mupi</i>	2140-2015
		<i>Puzur-Mama</i>	2120-2110	Šulme	2115-2109?		2115 -
	-2101	Ur-Ningirsu I	2110-2100	Silulumeš	2109-2103		
Irgigi, Imi Nuhum <i>Ilulu</i>	2101 - -2098	Pirig-me	2100 - -2090	Inimabakeš	2103-2098		
Dudu	2098-2077	Lu-Ba’u	2090-2080	Igeša’uš	2098-2092		-2090
Šu-Turul	2077 -	Lu-Gula	2080 -	Parlaqaba	2092-2077	Hielu	2090 -
				Ibate	2077-2074		
				Yarlangab	2074-2071		
			-2070	Kurum	2071-2070		
		Inim-kug	2070 -	Apil-kîn	2070-2067		-2065
				La’arabum	2067-2065	Hita	2065 -
	-2062			Irarum	2065-2063		
URUK IV			-2060	Ibranum	2063-2062		
Ur-Nigin	2062 - -2055	Ur-Ba’u	2060 -	Hablum	2062-2060		
				Puzur-Su’en	2060-2053		
Ur-Gigir	2055-2049		-2048	Hablum	2053-2046		
Kuda	2049-2043	Gudea	2048 -	Yarlaganda	2046 -		
Puzur-ili	2043-2038				-2039		-2040
Ur-Utu	2038-2032			Si’um	2039-2032	Puzur-	2040 -
Utu-ḫegal	2032 -		-2028	Tirigan	2032 -	Inšušinak	
		Ur-Ningirsu II	2028-2023		-2024		
		Ur-gar	2023-2022?		2024 -		
	-2021	Ur-abba	2022-2021				
UR III		Ur-Mama	2021-2020				
Ur-Nammu	2020 - -2002	Nam-mahazi	2020-2017		-2016		-2015
		( <i>Ur's vassal</i> )		<i>Awan's vassal</i>	2016 -	[Hie?]-lu	2015 -
Šulgi	2002 -	<i>Ur-Ninsuna</i>	1996-1986?				-1990
		<i>Ur-Ninkimara</i>	1986-1976?			Ku-du[r-	1990 -
	-1954	<i>Lu-kirilaḫa</i>	1976-1954?		-1954	Lagamar]	-1954
Amar-Sîn	1954-1945	<i>Ir-Nanna</i>	1954 -			Tazitta I	1955-1940
Šu-Sîn	1945-1936		-1933			Ebarat I	1955-1935
Ibbi-Sîn	1936 -	<i>Ur-Ningirsu</i>	1933-1928			Tazitta II	1935-1925
		<i>Ur-Nanše</i>	1928-1923			Lurrak-	1925 -
		ISIN				luḫḫan	-1915
	-1912	Išbi-Erra	1923 -			Kindadu	1915-1904
			-1890			Idadu I	1904-1890

An overlap of all available documents leads to the following conclusion (De Grief, Tavernier: 2012, 293-303): Puzur-Inšušinak was the first Elamite ruler (Awan I) who was able to dominate a major chunk of Babylonia by means of alliances to control main trade routes to Syria. That chunk was not insignificant, since included in it were northern Babylonia and the adjoining Diyala region, therefore more than half of the traditional Babylonian territories. Puzur-Inšušinak's dominion in the east were equally (if not even more) impressive, since, apart from the Susiana and the state of Awan, he put under his (military) rule the Zagros territories as far as the Hamadan plain (Kimash and Hurti). If he also controlled Anshan, Puzur-Inšušinak probably was the 1<sup>st</sup> Elamite ever both to establish commercial hegemony over the entire western section of the Iranian plateau and to integrate the Susiana with Elam in a vast conglomerate or “commercial empire”. This control of trade routes in Akkadian cities in the north sparked rivalries and opposition from Sumerian cities in the south. Puzur-Inšušinak's occupation of northern Babylonia having been terminated, it would not have been possible for Gudea to obtain for the Eninnu project all the foreign materials he claims to have brought from Syria and the Zagros mountains (Kimash) by a route to the land of cedar (Lebanon). For the same reasons, it also follows that those foreign acquisitions must have been later than the removal of Tirigan by Utu-hegal. It is highly significant that both Ur-Nammu and Gudea claimed, using virtually the same language, to have opened up trade routes from the south to the north. Archaeology has shown (Joannès: 2001, 887-890) that the trade route taken by the Elamites (from Susa to Ugarit) overlapped exactly that used by the ancient Urukian cities, because these ones imported copper from the Iranian Plateau, wood and stone from Zagros and Syria, pearls from the Persian Gulf, etc.

Mesopotamian kings indeed used to intervene westward to the Mediterranean. Sargon of Akkad and Naram-Sin had walked to the Taurus Mountains and Elam sent its armies to Syria (in Qatna). The famous King Gilgamesh (2460-2400) had already reached Mount Hermon (Saria) in Lebanon from the city of Uruk (Epic of Gilgamesh IV:12) and Lugalzagesi (2235-2211), king of Uruk III, claimed in his inscription that Enlil gave to him: *all the lands between the upper and the lower seas (=Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf)*. Several archaeological surveys have shown that these trips were quite frequent (Mazar: 1990, 105-108; Butterlin: 2003, 15-18,196-198). Around 2000 BCE, Assyrian merchants were going regularly into Anatolia (Kanish) to trade with the Hittites. Samsi-Adad I boasted of having erected a stele in Lebanon and having mobilized 20,000 soldiers to help his friend, the king of Qatna. The war of Abraham is located at a time when Mesopotamian kingdoms competed with each other and with the Elamite kings to trade in the west. The east-west axis was an important trade route for the Elamites because it was the “tin road” (necessary for the manufacture of bronze) connecting Susa to Ugarit and Byblos

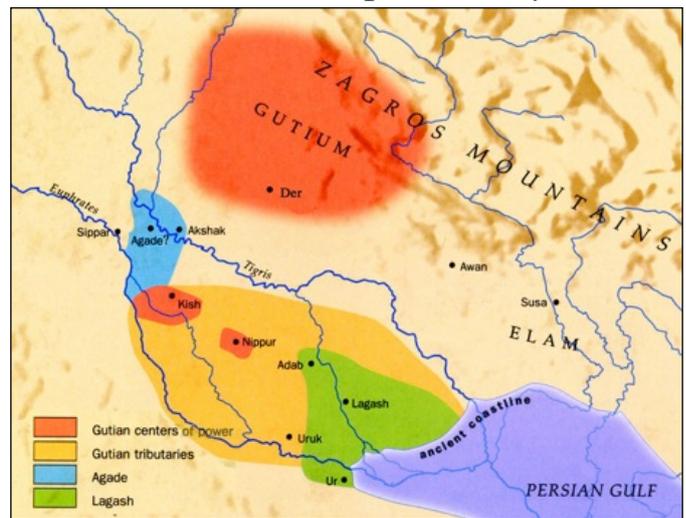
(Joannès: 1991, 67-76), or Kanesh (and major Hittite cities of central Anatolia) via Assur (the capital of Assyria). Economic reasons explain some alliances between cities and the emergence of conflicts (which was rarely written about).



The king of Elam Puzur-Inšušinak founded his very brief empire (Awan I) by allying with the military aristocracy of kings of Gutium and joining the kings of Akkad to control the trade route towards Syria. Taxation (and plunder) of

this important trade route severely disadvantaged Sumerian cities causing their resentment. On the other hand, the growing prosperity of this region attracted massively nomadic Amorites living in Syria and Mesopotamia.

The relationship between the “emperor” of Elam, the Mesopotamian kings and the Amorites was complex because it wavered between vassalage and rebellion, which complicates a bit more the reading of documents. To illustrate the complexity of relations between Mesopotamian kings and their multiple alliances, the case of Šulgi is exemplary because he took as wife a daughter of a Šakkanakku of Mari, an ENŠI of Eshnunna (country of Akkad) and at least 6 of his daughters married princes of the Iranian plateau (country of Elam). When they are mentioned in the texts of Lagash, the rulers of Umma are called ENŠI (governor), such as those of Lagash, while in their own inscriptions they use the title of LUGAL (king). At the beginning of his reign, Ur-Nammu controlled neither Uruk, since he did not adopt immediately the title EN (lord), nor Girsu where there was the “*Dynasty Gudea*” nor Umma held by vassals ENŠI of the last Gutian kings. Between the political set formed by Uruk, Ur and Lagash and another involving Gutian principalities (Adab) and Umma, there was a fairly marked border<sup>3</sup>.



Puzur-Inšušinak conquered Susa, then Anšan, and he seems to have managed to impose an initial unity on the Elamite federation by subduing also the king of Šimaški. His successors, however, were unable to hold Susa within the Elamite sphere. Puzur-Inšušinak left several documents in his name at Susa, it is noteworthy that some of them are written in Linear Elamite, a new writing (which remains undeciphered) used only during Ur III dynasty (Steve: 2000, 73-84). Unfortunately, although Puzur-Inšušinak traded with the Sumerian kings of Lagash (Gudea), Umma (?), Ur (Ur-Nammu), Uruk (Utu-hegal) and those of Gutium (Tirigan), there is no text that mentions them. Texts closest to this time are likely those of Šar-kallišarri (2126-2101) mentioning the governor of Lagash, Lugal-ušumgal (2130-2120), and the king of Gutium, Zarlagab (2121-2115).

Although the kings of Elam dominated Babylonia for more than a century, from the capture of Tiragan (2024 BCE), king of Gutium, to the destruction of Ur (1912 BCE), their names rarely appear in Babylonian inscriptions but only the cities they ruled<sup>4</sup> (in an inscription, found at Isin, Ur-Nammu names Puzur-Inšušinak as one of his adversaries). The only way to know the role and the name of these Elamite kings is to reconstruct the chronological frame of the

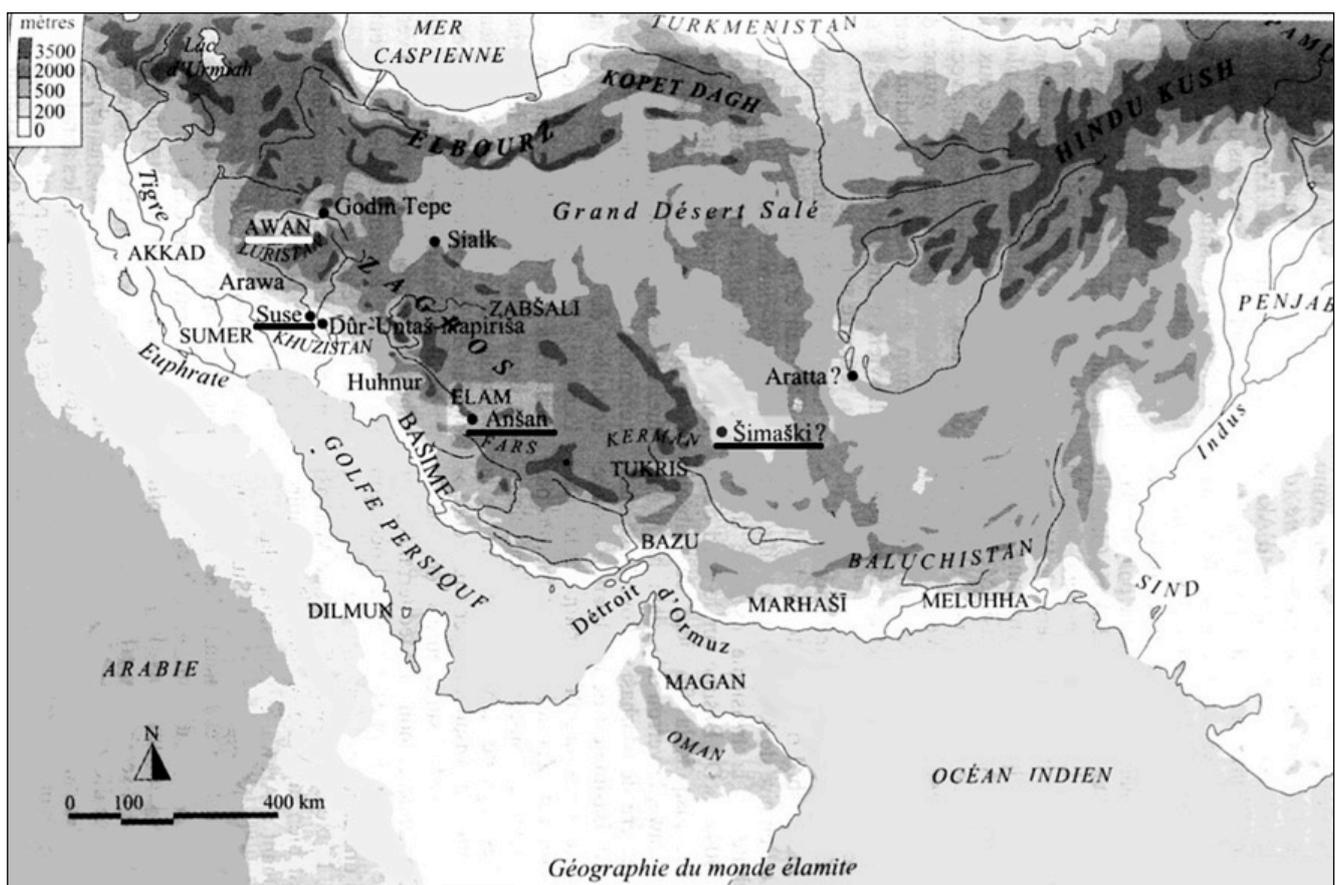
<sup>3</sup> The chronological pattern of these changes is difficult to establish even by prosopography.

<sup>4</sup> Like: Anšan, Šimaški, Susa and Awan. Similarly when Narâm-Sîn (2163-2126), king of Akkad made a treaty c. 2140 BCE with the governor of Susa whose name (Epir-mupi) is not mentioned.

events mentioned in the Babylonian inscriptions with all the accounts or contracts referring to these events (De Grief, Tavernier: 2012, 85-146):

KING		BCE	Important events recorded in Sumerian inscriptions
<b>Utu-ḫegal</b>	<b>8?</b>	2024	<i>Utu-ḫegal vowed to the goddess Inana of Uruk to destroy <b>Gutium</b>. Tirigan, king of Gutium, is attacked and captured in Dubrum (near Umma)</i>
<b>Ur-Nammu</b>	<b>4</b>	2016	<i>Expulsed <b>Gutians</b> [smote <b>Susa</b> and turned it into booty]</i>
	<b>9</b>	-2011	<i>Goddess Inana of Uruk chosen by omens</i>
	<b>16</b>	2004	<i>The wall of Ur built to stop the <b>Tidnumites (Amorite invaders)</b></i>
<b>Šulgi</b>	<b>21</b>	1981	<i>Der sacked (Šulgi's name is written with a divine determinative from year 20)</i>
	<b>24</b>	1978	<i>Karabar sacked</i>
	<b>25</b>	1977	<i>Simurru sacked</i>
	<b>26</b>	1976	<i>Simurru sacked for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time</i>
	<b>27</b>	1975	<i>Harši sacked</i>
	<b>30</b>	1972	<i>King's daughter married to the governor of <b>Anšan</b></i>
	<b>31</b>	1971	<i>Karabar sacked for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time</i>
	<b>32</b>	1970	<i>Simurru sacked for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time</i>
	<b>34</b>	1968	<i><b>Anšan</b> sacked (Šulgi's name is written without divine determinative!)</i>
	<b>37</b>	1965	<i>The wall of the land built to stop the <b>Tidnumites</b></i>
	<b>42</b>	1960	<i>Šasru sacked</i>
	<b>44</b>	1958	<i>Simurru and Lullubu sacked for the 9<sup>th</sup> time.</i>
	<b>45</b>	1957	<i>The king overtook Urbillum, Simurru, Lullubu &amp; Karabar as a single group</i>
	<b>46</b>	1956	<i>Kimaš, Hurti and their lands sacked in a single day</i>
	<b>47</b>	1955	<i>Booty of <b>Šimaški</b> when Šu-Enlil, the prince, smote? <b>Šimaški</b>.</i>
<b>48</b>	1954	<i>Harši, Kimaš, Hurti and their territories were sacked in a single day.</i>	
<b>Amar-Sîn</b>	<b>1</b>	1953	<i>Raši, ambassador of Zidanum in <b>Elam</b>, arrived at Puzriš, remaining until year 4, ambassadors from <b>Šimaški</b> also present</i>
	<b>2</b>	1952	<i>Urbillum sacked</i>
	<b>6</b>	1948	<i>Šaššurum sacked for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time</i>
	<b>5</b>	1949	<i>Royal dedication of a bronze basket for the goddess Inana of Uruk</i>
	<b>7</b>	1947	<i>Huhnuri sacked</i>
<b>Šu-Sîn</b>	<b>7</b>	1938	<i>The king sacked the land of Zabšali, dedicated a statue of himself made of gold taken as booty in the lands of <b>Šimaškians</b>, Šulgi captured</i>
<b>Ibbi-Sîn</b>	<b>3</b>	1933	<i>Simurru sacked</i>
	<b>4</b>	1932	<i>En-amgal-ana, priestess of the goddess Inana of Uruk installed</i>
	<b>6</b>	1930	<i>The great walls of Nippur and Ur built to stop the <b>Tidnumites</b></i>
	<b>9</b>	1927	<i>The king marched with heavy forces against Huhnuri, the 'open mouth' of the land of <b>Anšan</b></i>
	<b>13</b>	1923	<i>Accession of Išbi-Erra as governor of Isin, vassal king of Ibbi-Sîn.</i>
	<b>14</b>	1922	<i>The king roared like a storm against <b>Susa</b>, Adamdum and the land of <b>Awan</b>, made them submit in a single day and took their lord as bound captive</i>
	<b>17</b>	1919	<i>The <b>Amorites</b> of the southern border submitted to the king</i>
	<b>22</b>	1914	<i>The king held firm the cities of Ur and Larsa? which had been which had been devastated by the flood [of <b>Gutians</b>] which had been commanded by the gods and which shook the world</i>
	<b>23</b>	1913	<i>The people (of its country) brought a stupid monkey [Išbi-Erra] to Ibbi-Sîn</i>
	<b>24</b>	1912	<i>Ur attacked by <b>Elamites</b> &amp; <b>Šimaškians</b>, Ibbi-Sîn taken to <b>Anšan</b> as a prisoner</i>
<b>Išbi-Erra</b>	<b>16</b>	1907	<i>The king smote the armies of the <b>Šimaškians</b> and of <b>Elam</b></i>
	<b>19</b>	1904	<i>Idadu I, son Kindadu, king of <b>Anšan</b></i>
	<b>26</b>	1903	<i>Expulsion of Kindadu, king of <b>Šimaški</b> commemorated</i>

This reconstruction highlights four distinct periods (Laffont 2009, 1-25). During the 1<sup>st</sup> period (2024-1970) the oppressors are only the kings of Gutium who robbed caravans according to the monumental inscription of King Utuhegal (Sollberger, Kupper: 1971, 130-132). Afterwards Ur-Nammu expelled them from Sumer, then Šulgi attacked some of their cities (from his 21<sup>st</sup> year of reign). Relationships with the kings of Elam remained cordial since Šulgi married one of his daughters with the governor of Anšan and in Susa were found 4 bricks commemorating Šulgi's restoration of the temple of Inšušinak. For an unknown reason in the year 34 of his reign Šulgi sacked the city of Anšan which starts the 2<sup>nd</sup> period (1968-1954). The hostility against Elam during this period was mainly directed against the king of Awan through attacks against the cities of his vassals (the kings of Gutium) because other Elamite kings (Anšan or Šimaški) seem cooperative (Ebarrat I is one of the 12 kings of Šimaški). Indeed, the large booty paid in year 47 was offered in compensation (Šimaški was not attacked or threatened) and the presence during year 1 of Amar-Sîn of ambassadors from Šimaški was likely due to the death of Kudu[ur-Lagamar] in 1954 BCE, king of Awan. Among the capitals of Elam, Susa was the most westerly and Šimaški the most easterly (Joannès: 2001, 272-276,700).



Cooperation of the kings of Sumer with the kings of Šimaški was good during the 3<sup>rd</sup> period (1953-1930) since Ir-Nanna was both grand vizier (*sukkalmah*), governor (*ensi*) of Lagash, Sabum, Hamazi and Kardahar, prefect (*šagina*) of Šimaški, Usar-Garshana, Pasime, Urbilum (Arbela) and the countries of Karda. The term ENSI “Lord” was used in Ur III documents to refer to

appointed governors as well as to independent foreign rulers (mayor or king). The 4<sup>th</sup> period (1927-1912) begins with the attack against the country of Anšan in the year 9 of Ibbi-Sîn and ends with the final and utter destruction of Ur by Kindadu the Elamite king of Šimaški<sup>5</sup> (Shahdad?).

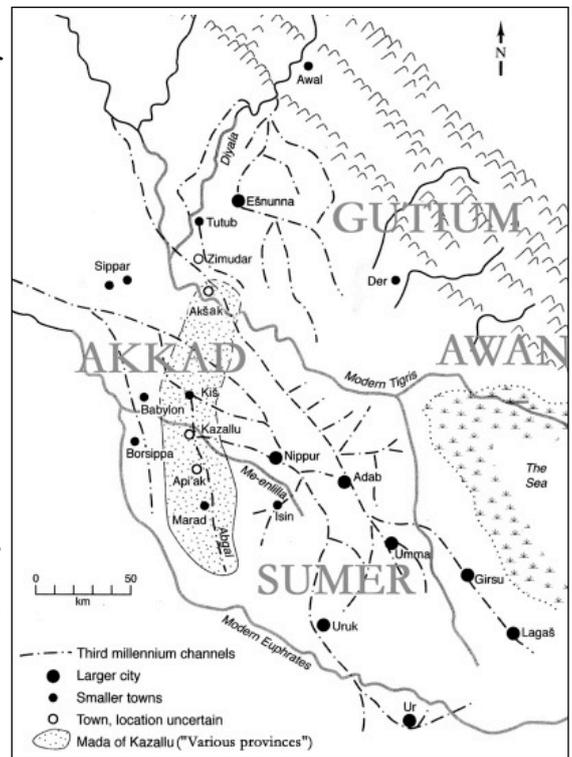
Thus the kings of Sumer (Ur III) were oppressed on two occasions: once by Kudu[r-Lagamar] (1968-1954), king of Awan, and once by Kindadu (1915-1904), king of Šimaški. These two kings of Elam left a bad unforgettable memory in Sumerian annals. The lament over the destruction of Sumer and Ur ends with a curse against those who had caused misfortune in the land of Sumer: the land of Tidnum (Amorites), the land of Gutium and the land of Anšan (Elam). To defeat Ibbi-Sîn (1936-1912), the last king of Ur, Kindadu therefore allied with a king of Gutium (unnamed) and was supported by some Amorite tribes (from Syria). Išbi-Erra (1923-1890) a former governor of Isin seems to have had a very opportunistic behaviour with the kings of Elam. Some idea of the size of the empire of Ur can be discerned by the seal inscriptions of Ur-appointed city governors (Hamblin: 2006, 102-123, 154-163). Eventually the rulers of Ur are known to have had dependent governors in at least 15 Mesopotamian cities<sup>6</sup>. At the height of its power the empire of Ur III was divided into 3 zones, each with a different relationship to the city of Ur. In the central heartland of Sumer and Akkad (southern and central Mesopotamia), the cities were ruled by governors directly appointed by the king of Ur, directly paying taxes (*bala*) of goods and services. The second zone, along the central Tigris valley and parts of Elam, consisted of conquered lands which had garrisons of soldiers (*erin*) with prefects or military commanders (*šagina*) appointed from Ur. These provinces paid the “tribute of the provinces” (*gun mada*) in livestock and other products. The 3<sup>rd</sup> zone consisted of allied and vassal states, who had their own independent rulers but were dependent in some way on Ur. This region is rather amorphous and informal, with changeable relations with specific cities, but included at different times parts of western Iran, the upper Tigris, the middle Euphrates and parts of Syria. These regions sent ambassadors to Ur, intermarried with the royal family, and sent various forms of tribute or diplomatic gifts. The middle Euphrates, including Mari and Ebla, seemed to have some type of tributary status to Ur, while ambassadors were received from as far away as Byblos (Gubla) on the Mediterranean coast<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Šimaški was divided into 6 (unknown) groups: Zabšali, Sigiriš, Iapulmat, Alumiddatum, Garda, Šatilu.

<sup>6</sup> Umma, Push, Kish, Lagash, Kazallu, Nippur, Sharrakum, Adab, Ishkun-Sin, Shuruppak, Marad, Simudar, Kutha, Uruk and Eresh. There were undoubtedly other governors as well, for whom we lack records, along with additional vassal states. There were other cities with known Sumerian governors outside of Sumer itself, including Ashur, Babylon, Eshnunna, Simur-rum, and Susa in Elam; Ashur was governed by a viceroy (GIR.NITA) named Zariqum during Amar-Sîn's reign (1954-1945).

<sup>7</sup> For example, in 1955 BCE Šulgi, king of Ur, received tribute (*gun*) from Ebla (in Syria) consisting of “500 *tilpanu*-weapons of *sudianum*-wood and 500 bows and quivers”. This substantial tribute in weapons points to some type of vassalage on the part of Ebla (in Syria) to Ur. That tribute further emphasizes the importance of archery in Neo-Sumerian armies. In 1947 BCE Amar-Sîn, king of Ur, received the ambassador of Ibdati, king of Byblos (*KU-ub-la* in Akkadian).

During the period of Ur III, Sumerian kings were in competition with the kings of Elam to rule the country of Akkad. The two empires, Sumerian and Elamite, were competing to turn the kingdom of Akkad into a protectorate. Despite this aggressive expansionism (the need of protection was imposed) however it was not achieved by war. Each provincial governor paid a fee to a king in order for his merchants to benefit from police protection (Joannès: 2001, 878-882). Those of an area in Akkad called: *ma-da-ke<sub>4</sub>-ne* “various provinces”, including at least: Akšak, Kiš, Kazallu and Marad, depended on Elamite kings (Michalowski: 2011, 128-137). Given that Utu-hegal, a king of Sumer, attacked Tirigan, a king of Gutium (2024 BCE), this proves that the country of Akkad had been annexed by Puzur-Inšušinak, a king of Elam (Awan), by the intermediary, the allied king of Gutium. Then as Ur-Nammu claims (2016 BCE) that he expelled the Gutians and smote Susa<sup>8</sup> (Elam), the country of Akkad, actually the area called “various provinces”, came back under control of Sumerian kings. As Šulgi's daughter got married to the governor of Anšan in 1972 BCE one can deduce that the country of Akkad had been ruled peacefully by both kings of Sumer and Elam, but given that afterwards Šulgi sacked the city of Anšan (1968 BCE), and accused of conspiracy several cities of Akkad belonging to the “various provinces”, the country of Akkad was forced to come back again under control of the king of Elam. Chronological situation:



SUMER		AKKAD		ELAM		
URUK IV		(Uruk)		AWAN II	(Susa)	
Ur-Utu		2038-2032		Puzur-	2040	- 12 <sup>th</sup>
Utu-hegal	2032-2021	GUTIUM	(Der?)	Inšušinak		
UR III	(Ur)	AWAN I	(Susa)		-2020	SIMASKI (Anšan?)
Ur.Nammu	2020 -	2020-2015			1 <sup>st</sup>	[unamed] 2020 -
	-2002		2015	-[Hie?]-lu	2 <sup>nd</sup>	
Šulgi	2002 -	-1990				-1990
		1990-1968		Kudu[r-	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Girnamme 1990 -
	-1954	1968-1954		Lagamar]		-1955
Amar-Sîn		1954-1945				Tazitta I 1955-1940

We can see that during the Elamite domination by the Awan Dynasty, the kingdom of Akkad was governed in part by the Empire of Ur and in part by the Elamite Empire. This situation was unique in the Sumerian annals. Paradoxically

<sup>8</sup> At that time, by the power of my king Nanna [Moon god], I [Ur-Nammu] liberated Akšak, Marad, Girkal, Kazallu, their (surrounding) settlement and Ušarum, which were all in servitude to Anšan (Elam).

Šulgi never mentioned Kudur-Lagamar but only his capture of the famous goddess Nanaya, why? The answer comes from the “*Lament for Sumer and Ur*” written after the destruction of Ur (Michalowski: 1989, 36-69). Although it is an epic poem recounting the inevitability of fate, it contains a brief summary of some dramatic events that preceded the final destruction of Ur.

#### A KEY EVENT: THE CAPTURE OF THE GODDESS NANAYA STATUE

The capture in Elam of Uruk's goddess Nanaya during the 1<sup>st</sup> Elamite domination was seen as a bad omen announcing the fatal outcome during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Elamite domination<sup>9</sup>. Nanaya, the “*mistress of the world*”, was the most powerful goddess and had a special link with the king (Streck, Wasserman: 2012, 183-201). A question arises: who captured the goddess Nanaya and why was it so important? The importance of Nanaya, goddess of war and seduction, in the pantheon of Uruk derived from her position as daughter of An, and also as

<sup>9</sup> *Lines 25-28: after Enki had altered the course of the Tigris and Euphrates, after Utu had cast his curse on the roads and highways; so as to obliterate the divine powers of Sumer, to change its preordained plans, to alienate the divine powers of the reign of kingship of Ur (...) 33-37 that Šimaški and Elam, the enemy, dwell in their place; that its shepherd be captured by the enemy, all alone. That Ibbi-Sîn be taken to the land of Elam in fetters, that from Mount Zabû, which is on the edge of the sea-land, to the borders of Anšan, like a bird that has flown from its nest, he not return to his city (...) 56-59 Its fate, which cannot be changed, who can overturn it — who can oppose the command of An and Enlil? An frightened the (very) dwelling of Sumer, the people were afraid. Enlil blew an evil storm, silence lay upon the city (...) 63 Inana handed over (victory in) strife and battle to a rebellious land (...) 75-78 Enlil then sent down Gutium from the mountains. Their advance was as the flood of Enlil that cannot be withstood. The great storm of the plain filled the countryside, it advanced before them. The extensive countryside was destroyed, no one moved about there (...) 98-105 The rich left his possessions and took an unfamiliar path. In those days the kingship of the land was defiled. The crown that had been on the head (of the king) [-] by itself. The lands that had taken the same road, were split into factions. The food offerings of Ur, the shrine (that received) magnificent food offerings, were changed for the worse. Nanna traded away his people numerous as ewes. Its king sat immobilised in the palace, all alone. Ibbi-Sîn was sitting in anguish in the palace, all alone (...) 143-146 Keš, built all alone on the high steppe, was haunted. Adab, which stretches out along the river, was deprived of water. The snake of the mountains made his lair there, it became a rebellious land. The Gutians bred there, issued their seed (...) 150-153 Inana abandoned Uruk, went off to enemy territory [Elam]. In the E-ana the enemy laid his eyes upon the sacred Gîpar shrine. The sacred Gîpar of en priesthood was defiled. Its En priest was snatched from the Gîpar (and) carried off to enemy territory (...) 166 Enlil brought down the Elamites, the enemy, from the highlands (...) 172-173 The province of Lagaš was handed over to Elam. And then the Queen also reached the end of her time (...) 197 At the place of Nanna where evil had never walked, the enemy walked (...) 205 Its En priest was snatched from the Gîpar (and) carried off to enemy territory (...) 230 We are being wiped out by the Gutians, the vandals (...) 254-257 To the south, the Elamites stepped in, slaughtering ... To the north, the vandals, the enemy, ... The Tidnumites daily strapped the mace to their loins. To the south, the Elamites, like an onrushing wave, were (...) 260-261 This is what Enlil, the one who decides the fates, then did: For the second time he sent down the Elamites, the enemy, from the mountains (...) 373-374 Nanna who love his city, left his city. Su'en took an unfamiliar path away from his beloved Ur (...) 387-388 Ur, which had been confident in its own strength, stood ready for slaughter. Its people, oppressed by the enemy, could not withstand (their) weapons (...) 405-406 Elam, like a swelling flood wave, left only the spirits of the dead. In Ur weapons smashed heads like clay pots. Its refugees were (unable) to flee, they were trapped inside the walls (...) 419 were defiled. The great tribute that they had collected was hauled off to the mountains (...) 441-448 (Musicians) no longer played the balag instrument in the sacred bed-chamber of Nanna. The sacred box that no one had set eyes upon was seen by the enemy (...) The statues that were in the shrine were cut down (...) Forsake the sacred rites and decrees, they go off to a foreign city (...) 486-492 Indeed, the storm that blew on Sumer, blew on the foreign lands. Indeed, the storm that blew on the land, blew on the foreign lands. It has blown on Tidnum, it has blown on the foreign lands. It has blown on Gutium, it has blown on the foreign lands. It has blown on Anšan, it has blown on the foreign lands, (and) it levelled Anšan like a blowing evil storm. Famine has overwhelmed the evildoer — may (that) people submit (...) 514-519 O Nanna, your kingship is sweet, return to your place. May a good abundant reign be long lasting in Ur. Let its people lie down in safe pastures, let them reproduce. O mankind [-] O Nanna — oh your city! Oh your temple!*

daughter of Inana, with whom she syncretized at a very early date<sup>10</sup> (Beaulieu: 2003, 182-189). The close relation between Nanaya and kingship is portrayed in some literary compositions of the Old Babylonian period. After the abandonment of Uruk and other southern sites under Samsu-iluna (1654-1616) the cults of An, Inana, and Nanaya migrated to Kish<sup>11</sup>. Nanaya's role clearly appeared when Utu-hegal, king of Uruk, decided to get rid of the domination of Gutium<sup>12</sup>. After the defeat of Tirigan (2024 BCE) kings of Gutium are no longer considered a legitimate dynasty of Akkad. When Išbi-Erra of Isin became the only king of Sumer and Akkad after the demise of the kingdom of Ur (1912 BCE), he wrote a hymn to Nanaya<sup>13</sup> with an invocation of blessing (Hallo: 2010,

<sup>10</sup> The connection between Nanaya and Uruk is already fully apparent in archival texts of Ur III.

<sup>11</sup> The syncretism between Inana/Ištar and Nanaya was a basic tenet of Babylonian theology from very early times. Nanaya was the Queen of Uruk (*šarrat Unug*) and Ištar was the Lady of Uruk (*bêltu ša Unug*). Nanaya's cult was transferred onto Ištar as show the annals of Sennacherib (Luckenbill: 1924, 54,87,125).

<sup>12</sup> *Lines: 1-12: Enlil, the king of all the lands, entrusted Utu-hegal, the mighty man, the king of Uruk, the king of the four quarters, the king whose orders cannot be countermanded, with wiping out the name of Gutium, the snake, scorpion of mountains, who acted with violence against the gods, who carried off the kingship of Sumer to foreign lands, who filled Sumer with wickedness, who took away spouses from the married and took away children from parents, who made wickedness and violence normal in the Land (...) 16-23 He (Utu-hegal) went to his lady, Inana, and prayed to her: "My lady, lioness in the battle, who butts the foreign lands, Enlil has entrusted me with bringing back the kingship to Sumer. May you be my help. May the hordes of Gutium be eradicated!" Tirigan, the king of Gutium opened his mouth. Nobody came out of his city to face him; he already occupied both banks of the Tigris. In the south, in Sumer, he blocked the water from the fields, in the uplands he closed off the roads. Because of him the grass grew high on the highways of the land. 24-34 But the king, endowed with power by Enlil, chosen by Inana with her heart, Utu-hegal, the mighty man, came out from Uruk to face him. In the temple of Iškur he offered a sacrifice. He addressed a speech to the citizens of his city: Enlil has given Gutium to me and my lady Inana will be my help! Dumuzi (who is) Ama-ušumgal-ana has declared my fate and assigned Gilgameš, the son of Ninsun, to me as a constable! The citizens of Uruk and Kullab rejoiced and followed him with one accord. He lined up his elite troops (...) 51-59 (...) and prayed to him: "O Utu, Enlil has given Gutium to me, may you be my help!" To hostile territory of Gutium he set fire, he led his troops against him. Utu-hegal, the mighty man, defeated his generals. 60-65 Then Tirigan the king of Gutium ran away alone on foot. He thought himself safe in Dabrum, where he fled to save his life; but since the people of Dabrum knew that Utu-hegal was a king endowed with power by Enlil, they did not let Tirigan go, and an envoy of Utu-hegal arrested Tirigan together with his wife and children in Dabrum. He put handcuffs and a blindfold on him. Before Utu, Utu-hegal made him lie at his feet and placed his foot on his neck. He made Gutium, the snake, scorpion of mountains (...) He brought back the kingship of Sumer*

<sup>13</sup> *Lines 1-15 Lady of the princely attributes, emerging brightly like the daylight, eternally summoned in appropriate beauty, Nanaya, ornament of E-ana, created for the goddess (Inana). Omniscient one, appropriately summoned as queen of all the lands by the Hierodule (Inana), Nanaya, you teach the nation science in E-ana. As good as An, woman of the pure head (?), fitting for the "flying lady" (Inana). Nanaya, properly educated by the holy Inana, heavenly shining woman that you verily are, wise lady who is available for everything, righteous long-suffering woman, because you pass (the day) in being available at the command of Inana(?), counselled by the holy Inana, beloved by the Hierodule (Inana). Nanaya, great judge, deity who occupies the high throne of the sanctuary of Uruk. Righteous woman who is the favourable verdict of the nation, who knows all the lawsuits, Nanaya, who understands justice for city and scattered people, lofty woman honoured by holy command, lady created in beauty, Nanaya, pride of E-ana, ... of the nation. By An, the benevolent eye of the nation, the king of all countries (...) 20-35 Išbi-Erra, ceaseless provider of E-ana summoned in song (?), your Nanaya, who is beloved by the nation and the Hierodule (Inana), Išbi-Erra, eternally may you be the one who "makes her words good". Great queen, created in the "place of sustenance", counselled (?) by the Hierodule (Inana). Luxurious attributes have been generously given to you by the Hierodule. Nanaya, great queen, created in the "place of sustenance", counselled (?) by the Hierodule. Of the people, oh Išbi-Erra, you are their king (and) shepherd. Nanaya, you are the queen of all the countries [by An's] spoken command. In the chapel, in Kullab, ... he verily declares it, the people turn their hearts towards you, you verily address them. Nanaya, righteous woman, you are the ... of the blackheaded ones [Sumerians]! Your wise word is brightly made good for the goddess (Inana). The hero summoned in beauty by the Hierodule, the son of Enlil (Išbi-Erra). Nanaya, the goddess has verily caused your holy attributes to grow ... for you. You have verily opened the righteous eye of life upon (his) bedstead, Išbi-Erra (is) the hero summoned in beauty for his beauty.*

212-215). As for Utu-hegal goddess Nanaya played a key role in the legitimacy and success of the kingship of Išbi-Erra as king of Sumer and Akkad. This explains why the capture of this goddess by the king of Awan, Kudu[-Laga]mar, caused (later) such a scandal in the lament for Sumer and Ur. Statues of gods or goddesses were viewed as talismans and it is for this reason they were frequently moved in procession. Šulgi sacked the city of Anšan (1968 BCE), even though he had entered into an alliance with Elam just 4 years earlier (the Awan dynasty was considered as powerful as that of Ur III). This turnaround could be explained by the seizing of Nanaya by Ku-du[r-Laga]mar, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last king of Awan I. This capture was in fact a claim to supremacy over the land of Sumer and Akkad. In the same way Šu-ilišu (1890-1880) “*god of his country (Sumer and Akkad) and king of Ur*” brought back the (statue of) god Nanna from Anšan to Ur in order to show his supremacy over the land of Elam when Tan-Ruhuratir I (1890-1875) was governor of Susa. The kings of Awan I (as Puzur-Inšušinak) had a special status during the Ur III dynasty since they were both governor (ENSI) of Susa, viceroy (GIR.NITA) of Elam and king (LUGAL) of Awan<sup>14</sup>. After the fall of Ur (1912 BCE) the legitimacy of the Isin dynasty founded by Išbi-Erra was challenged by the kings of Larsa<sup>15</sup>. It is interesting to note that to confirm the legitimacy of his kingship over Sumer and Akkad, Bur-Sîn (1800-1779), king of Isin, made a statuette of the goddess Nanaya (Sollberger, Kupper: 1971, 178-179, 186-187) that Sumu-El (1800-1771), king of Larsa, also invoked for his own account as “*king of Ur*” and also “*king of Sumer and Akkad*”. The manufacture of this statuette shows that its role in the legitimacy of the kingship over the lands of Sumer and Akkad was still recognized and that the original did not come back home (Uruk). Paradoxically, the sacking of the city of Susa by Ashurbanipal (646 BCE) would allow Nanaya to return to its place of origin.

The capture of the goddess Inana of Uruk, during Šulgi's reign, was a key event that was reported ambiguously in the Šulgi hymns (Vacin: 2011, 22, 76-77, 90-96, 145). For example Enlil, while naming the king with a ‘throne-name’, calls him: *the one providing the foreign land (or highland) generously* (Šulgi G ll. 21-3), which one would not expect in a text that supposedly originated in the beginning of Šulgi's reign when the very existence of his kingdom was insecure. Likewise, the couplet: *At the irresistible foreign land he roars for him (namely for Enlil), he stabilizes the countryside, the people lie (in peace) at his feet*, seems to fit better in a time when Šulgi really ‘roared’ at the lands and the countryside was already ‘stabilized’. Finally, the similarly warlike (l. 33): *the king defeated the rebellious land with Inana's axe*, could point to a campaign against a rebellious region (Elam in

<sup>14</sup> During this period Girnamme (1990-1960) is supposed to have been “*governor of Šimaški*”, Tazitta I (1960-1940) is only called “*man (LU) of Anšan*” and Ebarat I (1960-1935) is called “*the man of Šimaški (SU)*” then “*(one of) the 12 kings (LUGAL.MEŠ) of Šimaški*” (Roach: 2008, 66-71; Shayegan: 2011, 262-264).

<sup>15</sup> Gungunum (1838-1811), king of Larsa, took the city of Ur to Lipit-Ištar (1839-1828), king of Isin, then the cities of Uruk and Kisurra to Ur-Ninurta (1828-1800). Finally Abî-sarê (1811-1800) killed Ur-Ninurta, but Bur-Sîn (1800-1779) managed to temporarily take control of the city of Ur to Sumu-El (1800-1771).

year 34?). Another hymn<sup>16</sup> talks about this major event (Black, Cunningham, Robson, Zólyomi, Gabor: 2004, 197-205). Although the name of Šukaletuda meaning “spotty” has been forgotten, likely a pseudonym for Kudur-Lagamar according to the context, however the capture (or religious rape) of the goddess Inana of Uruk was a memorable event. The responsibility of king Šulgi is unclear but he was later made responsible for these misfortunes.

Ashurbanipal, after his conquest of Elam and Susa (Arnaud: 2007: 203-213), ransacking, describes his booty taken in Susa<sup>17</sup>. This report (Prism F) also describes an exceptional event: *(As for) Nanaya — who had become angry 1,635 years ago, had gone away (and) settled down in Elam in a place not befitting her, and who, in those days, (in agreement) with the gods her fathers, had (already) called me to the lordship of the lands — she entrusted me with the return other godhead (saying): Assurbanipal will bring me out of the evil land of Elam and cause me to enter E-ana. (This) utterance of their divine*

<sup>16</sup> *Inana, daughter of Suen, decrees (the following) destiny for Šulgi, son of Ninsun: 'I am the one who walks in front of you in battle, I am the one who like a squire carries (your) weapon in combat' (Shulgi X, ll. 46-50). The myth "Inana and Šukaletuda" reads: 15-19 Inana left heaven, left the earth and climbed up into the mountains. She left E-ana in Uruk and climbed up into the mountains (...) As she had gone up from E-ana, ... shrine (...) 101-119 He raised his eyes to the lower land and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun rises. He raised his eyes to the highlands and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun sets. He saw a solitary ghost. He recognized a solitary god by her appearance. He saw someone who possesses fully the divine powers. He was looking at someone whose destiny was decided by the gods (...) after Inana had gone around the heavens, after she had gone around the earth, after she had gone around Elam and Subir, after she had gone around the intertwined horizon of heaven, the mistress became so tired that when she arrived there she lay down by its roots. Šukaletuda noticed her from beside his plot. Over her genitals, as a loincloth (?), Inana tied the 7 divine powers (...) 123-138 Šukaletuda undid the loincloth (?) of 7 divine powers and got her to lie down in her resting place. He had sex with her and kissed her there. After he had sex with her and kissed her, he went back to beside his plot. When day had broken and Utu had risen, the woman inspected herself closely, holy Inana inspected herself closely (...) Inana was considering what should be done because of her genitals. She filled the wells of the Land with blood (...) it was blood that the black-headed people drank. No one knew when this would end. She said: I will search everywhere for the man who had sex with me. But nowhere in all the lands could she find the man who had sex with her (...) 179-184 His father replied to the boy; his father replied to Šukaletuda: My son, you should join the city-dwellers, your brothers (...) He went at once to the black-headed people (the Sumerians), his brothers, and the woman did not find him among the mountains (...) 233-244 holy Inana inspected herself closely. Ab, who will compensate me? Ab, who will pay (?) for what happened to me? Should it not be the concern of my own father, Enki. Holy Inana directed her steps to the Abzu of Eridug and, because of this, prostrated herself on the ground before him and stretched out her hands to him: Father Enki, I should be compensated! What's more, some one should pay (?) for what happened to me! I shall only reenter my shrine E-ana satisfied after you have handed over that man to me from the Abzu 288-290 holy Inana spoke to Šukaletuda: So! You shall die! What is that to me? Your name, however, shall not be forgotten. Your name shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet. A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace (...) destiny was determined, praise be to ... Inana*

<sup>17</sup> *I opened their treasures, where were crammed silver, gold, property and possessions which had been assembled and tightened by ancient kings of Elam until kings quite our contemporaries, and in which no enemy other than me, had put hands. I carried in loot. I carried the booty in the land of Assyria silver, gold, and many possessions of [Babylon] whole than the previous kings of Elam had looted up to 7 times and taken into Elam (...) I storey tower destroyed them Susa, built in bricks with blue glazes. I broke its melted horns in polished copper. I carried as booty in the land of Assyria, Šušinak, the god of their oracles, who lived in secret, who nobody could see behaving, Sumudu, Lagamaru, Partikira, Ammankasibar, Uduuran, Sapak, whose kings worshiped the deities of Elam, Rabiga, Sungursará, Karsa, Kirsamas, Sudanu, Aipaksina, Bilala, Panintimri, Napirtu, Kindakarbu, Silagara, Napsá, these gods and goddesses with their outfit, their possessions, their equipment, as well as their priests. I took to the land of Assyria 32 royal statues of gold, silver, bronze, marble, in Suse, Madaktu and Huradi, in addition to the statue of Ummanigaš son of Umbadara, the statue of Ištar-Nabunde, the statue of Hallusu, the statue of the young Tamaritu who had been my servant, by order of Assur and Ištar. I despatched the (statues of) geniuses, male and female, which were guarding the temples, all as there were (...) I devastated the provinces of Elam for 1 month and 25 days (...) Elam was no longer a threat. Ummanaldasi could once again descend "move in mourning in a city [...] destroyed ravaged and looted" and reign as puppet king*

command, which they had spoken in distant days, they now revealed to the latter generations. I led her great godhead in procession, and in joy she took the straight road to E-ana. In the month Kislimu, on the first day, I made her enter Uruk and caused her to establish residence in Ehilianna, which she loves, the eternal sanctuary (Beaulieu: 2003, 188-189). The number of years assigned to Nanaya's captivity seems exaggerated but it comes from Sumerian lists that put the Elamite dynasty (Awan I) just after the dynasty of Ur I (instead of Ur III) which ends with King Balulu. The duration of 1,635 years would place indeed the capture around 2282 BCE (= 1635 + 647) which corresponds to the reign of Balulu (2276-2252)<sup>18</sup>. The estimate given by the Assyrian scribes is excellent because the eponyms were recorded only from Erišu I (1873-1834), moreover, before Aššur-dan I (1179-1133) Assyrian years were lunar not solar. The capture of the statue Nanaya is attributed to the last king of Awan I who was indeed Kudu[r-Laga]mar (1990-1954). A chronological study (Vallat: 2002, 137-144) about the statue of Nanaya/Inana, also called “*the [Babylonian] Lady made captive*”, confirms the surprising statements of Ashurbanipal. Reconstitution of the course of this famous statue:

Event	Place	Date
Utu-hegal vowed to the goddess Inana of Uruk [Nanaya] to destroy Gutium	Uruk	2024
Kudu[r-Laga]mar, king of Awan, captured the goddess Inana of Uruk.	Uruk	<b>1968</b>
According to the lament over the destruction of Sumer and Ur: <i>Inana abandoned Uruk and went off to enemy territory [Elam]</i>	Susa	1912
Idadu(-Inšušinak) I mentioned on the basin he dedicated to Inšušinak the gods Inšušinak, Šamaš, <sup>d</sup> MUŠ ( <i>Inana</i> ) and Sin.	Susa	1905-1890
When Susian prince Tan-Ruhuratir marries Mekubi, the daughter of Bilalama from Eshnunna, the latter sends a dedication to <i>Inana</i> ( <sup>d</sup> MUŠ)	Susa	1890-1875
Under Atta-hušu, installed on the throne of Susa by Gungunum, king of Larsa, several sacrifices are performed in honor of <i>Inana</i> ( <sup>d</sup> MUŠ)	Susa	1735-1715
Igi-Halki, installed by Kurigalzau I, said that it is Manzat as Ištar ( <i>Inana</i> ) who gave him the kingship	Susa	1405-1385
An agate of Humban-umena ends: <i>For his life, to his Lady Inana, he dedicated (this)</i>	Susa	1355-1345
Untaš-Napiriša dedicated a temple to <i>Inana the Lady of yore</i> .	Susa	1345-1305
Šilhak-Inšušinak built a temple for Dilbat, <i>the Lady of Susa [who was] made captive in Babylon</i>	Susa	1155-1125
Ashurbanipal took to king Humban-haltas III the ancient statue of <i>Nanaya</i> which was in Susa for 1635 years (after Ur I, actually 1321 years after Ur III) to give it back to Uruk	Uruk	<b>647</b>
Offerings to the Lady of Uruk (Ištar) and <i>Nanaya</i> are recorded in the years 39 and 40 of Nebuchadnezzar II (Joannès: 1987, 147-158)	Uruk	566
Gubaru, governor of Babylon and Beyond-the-River, ordered an offering to Ištar of Uruk and <i>Nanaya</i> in year 2 of Cambyses (Kuhrt: 2010, 711-712)	Uruk	528

<sup>18</sup> Consequently the date 2282 BCE must be lowered to 2252 BCE (100 lunar years = 97 solar years). According to the synchronisms with the dynasty of Lagash I, kings of **Ur I**: Mesannepada (2340-2320), Aannepada (2320-2318), Meski'agnuna (2318-2294), Elulu (2294-2276), Balulu (2276-2252). Kings of Ur II: Nannê (2250-2245), Mes-ki'ag-Nanna (2245-2240), [?]gi (2240-2238), [?]lu-Utu (2238-2236).

Some Assyriologists concluded that the Elamite king responsible for the capture of Nanaya was Kutir-Nahhunte II (1160-1155) because Ashurbanipal's inscription explains: *Kudur-Nabundi, the Elamite, who did not respect the oath by the great gods, who in his madness [trusted] in his own strength, brought his hand against the sanctuaries of the land of Akkad and ruined the land.* However, the inscription does not say that this king was the same as the previous one. In fact, it is unlikely for the following reasons:

- ✓ Ashurbanipal exposed in his annals the main misdeeds of Elamite kings and those caused in 1155 BCE by Kutir-Nahhunte II who ravaged Babylon had remained famous because he put an end to the Kassite dynasty (Vallat, Gasche: 2002, 465-466) crushing its last king Enlil-nadin-ahi (1158-1155).
- ✓ Kutir-Nahhunte II brought back to Elam the statue of Marduk which came from Babylon (Brinkman: 1968, 19,33,78-91) and not the statue of Nanaya which came from Uruk.
- ✓ For chronological reasons (war booty of Elamite kings in Babylonia spreading during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE) some have replaced Kutir-Nahhunte II by Kutir-Nahhunte I (1645-1620) but this Elamite king never attacked Babylon (Vallat: 1993, 25-26).
- ✓ The duration of 1635 years refers exactly to Kudu[r-Laga]mar, king of Awan I, in Sumerian royal lists (in fact this king took the statue of Nanaya in 1968 BCE). In addition, this king is never described as having destroyed Babylon.

#### KING CHEDORLAOMER (KUDUR-LAGAMAR) IDENTIFIED

The Spartoli tablets describe the attack of Babylonia by the king of Elam named Kudur-KUKUmal<sup>19</sup>. Although damaged and often unintelligible they clearly refer to very old events in Babylonia and Elam (Granerød: 2010, 113-115). In the part preserved, the Elamite king presses his claim to the vacant throne of Babylon. The Babylonians answer that this claim is unfounded; they hope for the coming of a legitimate king. They predict a defeat of Elam to occur in the hot season. His claim spurned, the Elamite king invades Sumer and Babylonia, destroying holy places and incurring the wrath of the gods. The narrative explains the events for some theological purpose from a Babylonian viewpoint. Several points (underlined) in this narrative correspond to the Elamite king Kudu[r-Laga]mar of Awan: *With their firm counsel, they established Kudur-KUKUmal, king of Elam. Now, one who is pleasing to them [-] will exercise kingship in Babylon, the city of Babylonia (...)* *What king of Elam is there who provided for Esagila and ... ? The Babylonians ... and [-] their message: “(As for) [the wo]rds that you wrote: ‘I am a king, son of king, of [royal seed e]ternal, [indeed] the son of a king's daughter who sat upon the royal throne. [As for] Dur-šil-ilani son of Eri-e[A]ku, who [carried off] plunder of*

<sup>19</sup> The name was read initially Kudur-laḡumal by Theophilus G. Pinches in 1902. Although late (i.e. 140 BCE) these three tablets were copied from an inscription dating from the time of Ashurbanipal around 650 BCE (Astour: 1966, 65-112).

[-], he sat on the royal throne ... [-] [As for] us, let a king come whose [lineage is] firmly founded] from ancient days, he should be called lord of Babylon (...) When the guardian of well-being cries [-] The protective spirit of Esharra [-] was frightened away. The Elamite hastened to evil deeds, for the Lord devised evil for Babylon. When the protective genius of justice stood aside, the protective spirit of Esharra, temple of all the gods, was frightened away. The Elamite enemy took away his possessions, Enlil, who dwelt therein, became furious. When the heavens (?) changed their appearance, the fiery glare and ill wind obliterated their faces. Their gods were frightened off, they went down to the depths. Whirlwinds, ill wind engulfed the heavens. Anu (the gods') creator had become furious. He diminished their (celestial) appearances, he laid waste (?) his (own celestial) position, with the burning of the shrine E-ana he obliterated its designs. [-] Esharra, the netherworld trembled. [Enlil?] commanded total destruction. [The god had] become furious: he commanded for Sumer the smashing of En[lil]'s land. Which one is Kudur-KUKU[mal], the evil doer? He called therefore the Umman-man(da he level)led the land of Enlil, he laid waste (?) [-] at their side. When the [-] of Ê-zida, and Nabu, trustee of all [-] hastened to [-] He set [out] downstream, toward the ocean, Ibbi-Tutu, who was on the sea, hastened to the East, He (Nabu) crossed the sea and occupied a dwelling not his own. The rites of E-zida, the sure house, were deathly still. The Elamite [enemy] sent forth his chariotry, he headed downstream toward Borsippa. He came down the dark way, he entered Borsippa. The vile Elamite toppled its sanctuary, he slew the nobles of ... with weapons, he plundered all the temples. He took their possessions and carried them off to Elam. He destroyed its wall, he filled the land [with weeping ...] (...) an improvident sovereign [-] he felled with weapons Dur-šil-ilani son of Eri-[e]Aku, he plundered [-] water over Babylon and Esagila, he slaughtered its [-] with his own weapon like sheep, [-] he burned with fire, old and young, [-] with weapons, [-] he cut down young and old. Tudhula son of Gazza[-], plundered the [-] water over Babylon and Esagila, [-] his son smote his pate with his own weapon. [-] his lordship to the [rites] of Annunit[um] [king of] Elam [-] plundered the great ..., [-] he sent like the deluge, all the cult centers of Akkad and their sanctuaries he burned [with fi]re Kudur-KU[KU]mal his son c[ut?] his middle and his heart with an iron dagger, [-] his enemy he took and sought out (?). The wicked kings, criminals, [-] captured. The king of the gods, Marduk, became angry at them (...) [The doer] of evil to him [-] his heart [-] the doer of sin must not [-] (Foster: 2005, 369-375).

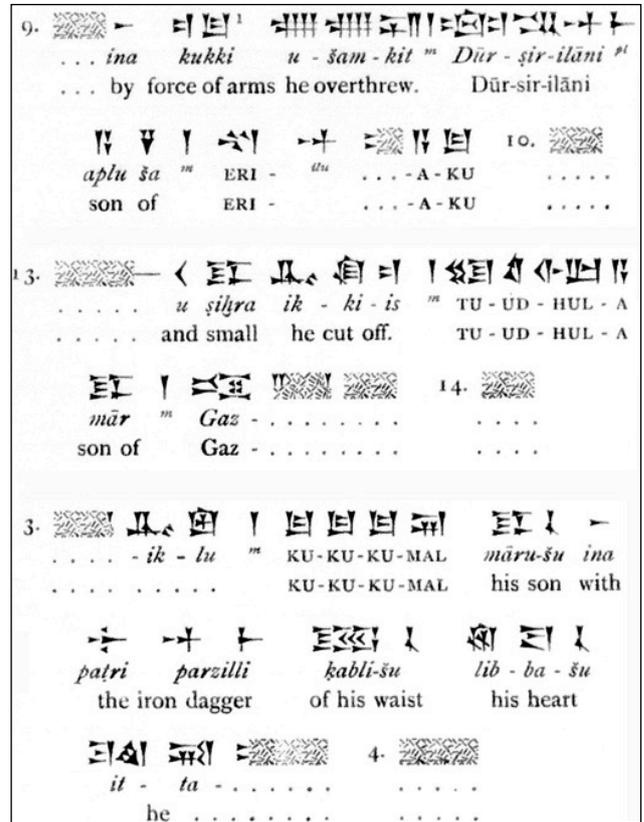
Several features attributed to Kudur-KUKUmal<sup>20</sup> in the narrative correspond exclusively to Kudu[r-Lagamar] king of Awan: 1) he legitimately dominated Babylonia for a time, 2) he then did evil in particular by addressing the shrine of E-ana (Uruk), 3) he associated with the Umman-manda or hordes of Gutium (Adali: 2009: 279-282), 4) he took goods and carried them off to Elam and he subdued some nobles. The wicked and criminal kings who are associated with Kudur-KUKUmal: Eri-e-Aku, Dur-šil-ilani son of Eri-e-Aku and Tudhula son of Gazza[-] are unknown. However Eri-e-Aku could have been king of Larsa according the inscriptions of Kudur-Mabuk who was king<sup>21</sup> of

<sup>20</sup> Some features could have been borrowed from Ur's destruction in 1912 BCE by Kindadu (1915-1904) and Babylon's sack in 1155 BCE by Kudur-Nahhunte II (1160-1155).

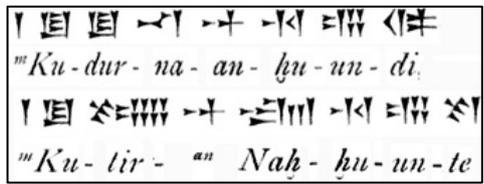
<sup>21</sup> He was also father of two kings of Larsa: Warad-Sîn (1740-1727) and Rim-Sîn I (1727-1667).

Larsa for a year (1740 BCE). These kings attribute their kingship to the goddess Nanaya<sup>22</sup>, as kings of Ur III did (Sollberger, Kupper: 1971, 202-203). The Akkadian name Warad-Sîn, king (LUGAL) of Larsa, is written Eri-Aku (*e-ri-a-ku*) which is a transcription of the Sumerian name IR-AGA “servant of the lunar disc” (Pinches: 1902: 218-221) translated into Akkadian as (*u*)-*ar-du-a-gû* Warad-Agu, an equivalent of Warad-Sîn “servant of the Moon (god)”. Thus Eri-Aku could be the name of a former king (ENSI) of Larsa and by deduction Tudhûla son of Gazza[-] would have been a king of Gutium. These kings are located in a period (1990-1954) that has not been registered since the last known king (LUGAL) of Gutium is Tirigan (2032-2024) and the 1<sup>st</sup> king (ENSI) of Larsa is Naplanum (1931-1910).

The reading of the name written KU-KU-KU-KU-MAL in cuneiform (King: 1898, IX-LVI) is controversial because the sign KU is very polyphonic (the simplest reading of KU is “ku”).

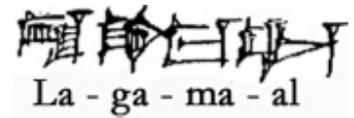


Some Assyriologists proposed to read Ku-dur-naḫ-ḫun-ga in order to match it with Kudur-Nahhunte but as we have seen it is unlikely (Lambert: 1994, 67-73). Cuneiform writing of the name KU-KU-KU-KU-MAL is likely Ku-dur-KU-KU-mal (KU sign is polyphonic), because Elamite names beginning in Ku- are always written Kudur-. Ku-dur-naḫ-ḫun-ga reading is unlikely because no scribe would have written this well



<sup>22</sup> To Nanaya, queen full of charm, whose grace is superabundant, princely daughter of the great An, their mistress. Kudur-Mabuk, father of Yamutbal, son of Simti-šilḫak, and Rim-Sîn, his son, the prince who reveres Nippur, who provides for the needs of Ur, the king of Larsa, king of Sumer and Akkad, have for their live, built E-ša-ḫula, its beloved house, have raised its pediment and made it standing like a mountain. From this, Nanaya, queen of protective goddesses, having been delighted, may the protective goddess, as a reward, ask for them to Anu and Inana a joyful kingship, a reign of goodness.

known name in such a fanciful way because the last syllable (-ga) has no connection with that of Nahhun-te. This former king was known to Babylonians and Assyrians and his name was written Kudur-Nahundi in Akkadian or Kutir-Nahunte “*bearer of Nahunte[’s statue]*” in Elamite. The reading Ku-dur- of KU-KU- is usual but the second part (-KU-KU-mal or -KU-mal) has obviously been simplified<sup>23</sup>. As the first part of the name means “[*statue’s*] *bearer*” in Elamite the second part has to be an Elamite god or goddess. The only name of a deity that ends in *-mal* is precisely the antique Elamite goddess Lagamal, written Lagamar in Akkadian (Grillot-Susini: 2008, 12). The name of this goddess, which means “*no mercy (Lâ-gamâl)*” in Akkadian<sup>24</sup>, appears in the name of another king of Elam Šilhina-ḥamru-Lagamar (1105-1080). The name Kutir-Lagamal, transcribed Kudur-Lagamar into Akkadian, calls to mind the famous king of Elam named Kedor-La’omer in Hebrew (Gn 14:1) especially as the chronological coincidence requires such an identification:



URUK IV	reign			GUTIUM	reign	ELAM	
Utu-ḥegal	2032-2021			Tirigan	2032-2024	Puzur-	2040 -
UR III		LARSA	reign	?	2024 -	Inšušinak	-2015
Ur-Nammu	2020 - ? -2002			?	-2016 2016 -	[Ḥie?]-lu	2015 - -1990
Šulgi	2002 - ? -1954	Eri-Aku	1970-1954	Tudḥula	-1970 1970-1954	Kudu[r- Laga]mar	1990 - -1954
Amar-Sîn	1954-1945?		1954 -			Tazitta I	1955-1940
Šu-Sîn	1945-1936		-1931			Ebarat I	1955-1935
Ibbi-Sîn	1936-1912	Naplanum	1931-1910			Tazitta II	1935-1925

Documents concerning Elam over the period 2020-1954 are few and difficult to interpret. It appears that the kings of Ur III considered the powerful kings of Elam (Awan I) as both partners and rivals since there was no war between them, except in 2016 and 1972 BCE, and Šulgi even married one of his daughters to a governor of Anšan in 1968 BCE. Both wars were sporadic because other war campaigns of these kings all took place against cities of Gutium (presumably in retaliation against looting Sumerian merchants on the Route of tin). The war against Susa (2016 BCE) could be linked with the expulsion of Gutians and the war against Anšan (1968 BCE) could be linked with the capture of Nanaya (De Grief, Tavernier: 2012: 285-290). The only victories of the kings of Ur commemorated by inscriptions are those of Šu-Sîn (against the Šimaškians in 1938 CE) and Ibbi-Sîn (against Susa and the land of Awan in 1922 BCE). The two main threats that Šulgi tried to neutralize during his reign were looting by the Gutians (from 1981 BCE) and invasion of Amorite

<sup>23</sup> The simplest way of reading the unknown name KU-KU-MAL was Ku-dur-mal.

<sup>24</sup> Inšušinak “*Lord of Susa*”, as lord of the netherworld for Susians, executed his judgements thanks to 2 assistants who assumed the role of lawyer-defender: Išnikarab “*He hears the prayer*” and accuser: Lâgamâl “*[She who has] no mercy*”.

migrants (from 1965 BCE). These facts are actually related in several Babylonian chronicles but although the attack against Elam is not mentioned in contrast this king was held responsible for subsequent misfortunes. After the destruction of Ur the kings of Elam were blackened because they were charged with all misfortunes that occurred in the land of Sumer. Paradoxically, the famous king Šulgi was also made responsible for these misfortunes according to a Babylonian Chronicle written around 251 BCE. This brief account<sup>25</sup> (Glassner: 2005, 267-271,289) is chronological since he began sacking the cities of the enemy's country (from 1981 BCE) then he strengthened the wall of Ur in 1965 BCE (built in 2004 BCE by Ur-Nammu). The booty of the treasures of the Esagila and Babylon (prior 1965 BCE) could refer to the spoiling of Nanaya.

Two other texts (written c. 1100 BCE) confirm that Shulgi made a catastrophic partnership with Elam: an older Babylonian Chronicle<sup>26</sup> and the enigmatic text called "Shulgi prophecy"<sup>27</sup> (Foster: 2005, 357-358). Muršili, king of the Hittites, fulfilled the prophecy when he destroyed Babylon (in 1499 BCE). The meaning of the name "Baldaha" is unknown but as this city (?) is related to the war of Šulgi in Elam, it had to be Anšan attacked in 1968 BCE.

<sup>25</sup> *Ur-Namma reigned 18 years / The divine Šulgi, king of Ur, son of Ur-Namma, reigned over all lands, commanded [...] - bangar and Rabsisi, kings of Subartu (Zagros), (and) sacked [the citie]s (?) of the enemy's country. He look out as booty [the treasures] of the Esagila and Babylon. He laid out and comp[leted] the [E]gišnugal, Sin's temple, in the middle of Ur. He built the [wal]l of Ur and strength[ened] the foundations of the city. The divine Šulgi, son of a daughter of King Utu-legal of Uruk, with the blind Lu-Nanna, the scholar [...] — there was [spiteful]ness in their hearts' — improperly tampered with the rites of the cult of Anu, Uruk's regulations, [the] secret [know]ledge of the wise, [and] put down in writing the forced labour exacted by Sîn, lord of Ur. [During] his [re]ign, he composed untruthful stelae, insolent writings, [(concerning) the rites of pur]ification for the gods, and left them to posterity. [(But) An]u, the king, whose decisions are venerable, regarded him with anger and [...] his grave faults [...] he covered his body [with ... The divine Šulgi] rei[g]ned 48] years/.*

<sup>26</sup> *Naram-Sîn destroyed the living creatures of Babylon and twice (Marduk) raised the army of Gutî against him; (the latter) goaded on his people. He entrusted his kingship to the army of the Gutians. The Gutians, (being people given to arouse) cries of woe, did not know how to honour the gods nor how to perform divine rites and ceremonies correctly. Utu-legal, the fisherman, caught a fish at the seashore (in order to make) an offering. This fish, to be offered to the great lord Marduk, was not presented as an offering to any other god. But the Gutians pulled the cooked fish out of his hands before it was offered. By his exalted command, (Marduk) removed the Gutian army from the kingship of his country and entrusted it to Utu-legal. (Later), Utu-legal, the fisherman, raised the hand of evil against his city, and the river carr[ied away] his corpse. (Then Marduk) entrusted the kingship over all their lands to Šulgi, son of Ur-Namma, but he did not perform his rites in their totality, contaminated his cleansing ceremonies, and his mind [was deranged (?)]. Amar-Sîn, his son, changed the sacrifices of the large ox[en] and sheep and goats at the New Year's festival in the Esagila; it is said (that he died) from being gored by an ox, (but) he died from a "bite" of his shoe. Šu-Sîn, for his well-being (and) his life, [restored] the Esagib [similar] to the celestial writing. [-] that Šulgi had committed. His fault, his son Ibbi-Sîn [-].*

<sup>27</sup> *I (am) Šulgi, beloved of Enlil and Ninlil: the noble one, Šamaš, has told me, Ištar my lady has revealed (this) to [me]. Father and mother, (personal) god [and (personal) goddess], whatever my fathers heard from the mouth of the [great] gods [...], may Ur always s[ing], may Larsa (...) I was lord of the four world regions, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun. I founded Nippur, Bond of Heaven and Earth. When I spoke, the gods would listen to me. At my own expense, I built that wall and made it firm. Enlil ordered me, "Build ..." Enlil gave me the order, and I annihilated Baldaba. Enlil ordered me, "Make war!" and I annihilated Baldaba. I ... from his family over the four world regions. Ninlil ordered me, "Put Humba(n) [Elamite deity of Awan Dynasty] in order (?)" The [-] of the king of Susa (?) (...) Babylon ... the citizens of Nippur [and?] Babylon. [The god/dess] will not stand ..., nor will (s)he give him [sceptre], nor will (s)he give him reign. [A king of the] four world regions [..., who?] has neglected the citizenry of Nippur [and Babylon] and rendered no righteous judgment, [-] that prince will proceed with "Woe!" and "Alas!" All lands are given as one to the king of Babylon and Nippur. Whichever king shall arise after me, on account of(?) Balda[ba] (and) the land of Elam to the east, he will be [thrown into] complete [disorder]. The Hittites will [conquer] Babylon [...].*

Moreover, Humban was the main Elamite deity of the Awan Dynasty. The rest of the text is not clear but it could refer to *the goddess [Nanaya] that will not stand ..., nor will she give him [Kudur-Lagamar] sceptre, nor will she give him reign. A king of the four world regions [..., who] has neglected the citizenry of Nippur [and Babylon] and rendered no righteous judgment.* According to this chronological interpretation, the departure of Nanaya (in procession) would have initially been accepted by Šulgi (to enter into an alliance with Awan), but he was deceived by Kudur-Lagamar who kept the goddess. Thereafter Šulgi tried unsuccessfully to recover his statue in 1968 BCE. In fact, the year 1968 BCE was a hinge date in the history of Sumer.

In 1968 BCE Abram was 70 years old and because he lived in Ur, the seat of Šulgi's kingdom, he must have learned that Chedorlaomer had confiscated the statue of the goddess Nanaya. The duration of 1635 years given by Ashurbanipal refers exactly to Ku-du[r-Laga]mar, king of Awan, in Sumerian royal lists and as the Spartoli tablets describe the attack of Babylonia by the king of Elam named Kudur-KUKUmal, this king of Elam must have been Chedorlaomer. Prior to 1968 BCE relationships with the kings of Elam remained cordial since Šulgi married one of his daughters with the governor of Anšan in year 30 of his reign. One can suppose that Šulgi sacked the city of Anšan in his year 34 presumably because Kudur-Lagamar refused to give back the statue of Nanaya. From this date Kudur-Lagamar behaves as “King of Akkad” and, in the same way as Sargon of Akkad, he chose to open a new trade route to the west as far as Egypt. The title of Ur III's kings changed between years 23 and 36 of Šulgi: “*King of Sumer and Akkad*” was replaced by “*King of the 4 corners [of Universe]*” or “*King of the World*” (Frayne: 2008/ Sollberger, Kupper: 1971), indicating that Akkad was no longer under full control of the king of Ur:

King		BCE	Event in Sumer
Šulgi	12	1990	<i>The year the god Ningirsu was brought into his Bagara temple. Šulgi King of Sumer and Akkad.</i>
	14	1978	<i>The year the god Nanna of Nippur was brought into his temple. Šulgi King of Sumer and Akkad.</i>
	23	1979	<i>The year the king [was given] supreme power.</i>
	30	1972	<i>The year King's daughter married to the governor of Anšan.</i>
	34	1968	<i>The year Anšan was sacked.</i>
	37	1965	<i>The year the temple of god Nergal was built. Šulgi, mighty man, king of Ur, king of the 4 corners</i>
	45	1957	<i>The year Šulgi, mighty man, king of Ur, king of the 4 corners, having overtaken Urbillum.</i>
	46	1956	<i>The year Šulgi, mighty man, king of Ur, king of the 4 corners, sacked Kimaš.</i>
	47	1955	<i>The year after Šulgi, mighty man, king of Ur, king of the 4 corners, sacked Kimaš. Booty of Šimaški when Šu-Enlil, the prince, smote? Šimaški.</i>

Despite the importance of the Awan dynasty, no king's name appears in the Ur III documents. Two reasons can explain that: 1) the absence of major conflicts during this period (2020-1912), hence a lack of synchronisms, and 2) commercial contracts almost never mention the name of kings. For example,

none of the kings of Assyria, Hatti, Egypt and Gutium appear during this period. Only two kings of Ebla (Igriš-Ḫeba, Ibbi-Lim) are known but it is unclear if they had dealings with the last kings of Ur III (Bonechi: 1997, 33-38) and there are only a few documents mentioning kings of Elam<sup>28</sup>. In fact, commercial contracts rarely mention the kings names from their own country of origin and they almost never do with foreign kings<sup>29</sup>. In addition, it seems that for geographical and strategic reasons (alliance) the kings of Awan traded with kings of Akkad and the kings of Sumer with kings of Šimaški.

One can note that the title of Ur-Nammu the first king of Ur III Dynasty (2020-1912) was “*King of Ur, King of Sumer and Akkad*”, then later the title changed to “*King of Ur and the 4 corners*”, from Year 34 of Šulgi (1968 BCE), until the end of this dynasty in 1912 BCE. Given that the title of Puzur-Inšušinak the first king of Awan (I) Dynasty was “*Governor of Susa, viceroy of Elam, king of Awan*” we can suppose that the two kings who followed kept the same title:

SUMER	reign	Title in inscriptions	ELAM	reign	Title in inscriptions
Utu-ḫegal	2032-2021	<i>King of Uruk &amp; the 4 corners</i>	Puzur-	2040 -	<i>governor of Susa, viceroy</i>
Ur-Nammu	2020 - -2002	<i>Lord of Uruk, King of Ur</i> <i>King of Sumer &amp; Akkad</i>	Inšušinak	-2015	<i>of Elam, king of Awan</i>
Šulgi	2002 - -1968	<i>King of Ur</i> <i>King of Sumer &amp; Akkad</i>	[Ḫie?]-lu	2015 - -1990	("?")
	1968-1954	<i>King of Ur &amp; the 4 corners</i>	Kudu[r- Laga]mar	1990-1968 1968-1954	("?") ( <i>&amp; king of Akkad?</i> )
Amar-Sîn	1954-1945	<i>King of Ur &amp; the 4 corners</i>	Tazitta I	1955-1940	<i>The man of Anšan</i>
Šu-Sîn	1945-1936	<i>King of Ur &amp; the 4 corners</i>	Ebarat I	1955-1935	<i>The man of Šimaški</i>
Ibbi-Sîn	1936-1912	<i>King of Ur &amp; the 4 corners</i>	Tazitta II	1935-1925	?

Given that King Kudu[r-Laga]mar the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last king of Awan (I) Dynasty (2040-1954) is also mentioned as “*King of Akkad*” in the King List WB 444 (Weld-Blundell Prism), we can suppose that he was “*Governor of Susa, viceroy of Elam, king of Akkad, king of Awan*” during the period 1968-1954. Apparently there is a contradiction between the Sumerian King List placing Kudur-Lagamar, the king of Awan, as 3<sup>rd</sup> king of Akkad whereas he got this title (according to inscriptions) only after half of his reign and also with the Elamite King List placing Puzur-Inšušinak (called Kutik-Inšušinak in Linear Elamite), the founder of the Awan (I) Dynasty, as 12<sup>th</sup> and last king of Awan (II). This disagreement, between inscriptions written at their epoch and royal lists written much later, comes from official interpretations that have changed over time. Puzur-Inšušinak conquered Susa, then Anšan, and he seems to have managed to impose an initial unity on the Elamite federation by subduing also the kings of Šimaški. Puzur-Inšušinak founded his brief empire by allying with the military

<sup>28</sup> Only a few kings of Šimaški such as Girnamme in year 44 of Šulgi (1958 BCE), Tazitta I in year 8 of Amar-Sîn (1946 BCE) and in year 2 of Šu-Sîn (1943 BCE), Ebarat I in year 7 of Amar-Sîn (1947 BCE) and in year 6 of Šu-Sîn (1939 BCE).

<sup>29</sup> Exceptionally, in a contract dated year 4 of Amar-Sîn (1951 BCE) are mentioned: Libanukšabaš Lord (*ensz*) of Marhaši (region south of Šimaški), Guraia a man (*lu*) of Ebla, Lilla a man of Mari, Iašilim governor (*ensz*) of Tuttul and Ibdati governor of Byblos (Sollberger: 1959-1960, 120-122).

aristocracy of kings of Gutium and joining the kings of Akkad to control the trade route towards Syria (Qatna, Ebla and Mari). Puzur-Inšušinak was not really “*King of Akkad*” but rather “*Owner of Akkad*”. Accordingly a retroactive classification was made in the royal lists. Puzur-Inšušinak who was the 12<sup>th</sup> and last governor of Susa<sup>30</sup> (Legrain: 1922, 12-14) just before Girnamme, the 1<sup>st</sup> governor of Šimaški, was ranked as the 12<sup>th</sup> and last king of Awan (II) in Elamite king lists but as the 1<sup>st</sup> king of Awan (I) in Sumerian king lists.

It seems strange to us, but early Old Babylonian kings seem to have shared the area which they governed with at least one other king. Each of the rulers had his own, accepted sphere of influence, whether over the urban population which lived in brick buildings or over an encampment of nomadic or semi-nomadic people. The peaceful co-existence of such kings may explain why some records contain oaths by two kings, or an oath by one king and a date by another<sup>31</sup>. The various peoples of the Old Babylonian period were sometimes ruled by two “kings” who were in an alliance relationship rather than vassaldom. In addition the Sumerian word LUGAL “king”, was also understood as *be-el* “lord, owner” in Akkadian (Dalley, Yuhong: 1990, 159-165), thus Ur-Nammu was “*Lord of Uruk, King of Ur, King of Sumer and Akkad*” while Puzur-Inšušinak was “*Governor of Susa, viceroy of Elam, king of Awan, [Owner of Akkad]*”, however as ruler of Elam, he had no need to mention that he was also the owner of Akkad.

ELAM	reign		reign	SUMER	reign
AWAN (KING)		SUSA (GOVERNOR)			
Īielu (10 <sup>th</sup> )	2090-2065	Ilišmani (10 <sup>th</sup> )		URUK IV	
Īita (11 <sup>th</sup> )	2065	Šimpi-išhuk (11 <sup>th</sup> )		Ur-Nigin	2062-2055
				Ur-Gigir	2055-2049
				Kuda	2049-2043
	-2040			Puzur-ili	2043-2038
Puzur-Inšušinak (12 <sup>th</sup> ) / (1 <sup>st</sup> )	2040	Kutik-Inšušinak (12 <sup>th</sup> )		Ur-Utu	2038-2032
				Utu-ḫegal	2032-2021
		SİMAŠKI (GOVERNOR)		UR III	
	-2015	[unnamed]	2020 -	Ur-Nammu	2020-2002
[Īie?]-lu (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	2015-1990		-1990	Šulgi	2002 -
Kudu[r-Laga]mar	1990-1954	Girnamme (1 <sup>st</sup> )	1990-1955		-1954
		Tazitta I (2 <sup>nd</sup> )/Ebarat I	1955-1940	Amar-Sîn	1954-1945
		Ebarat I (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	1940-1935	Šu-Sîn	1945-1936

As the sole criterion of truth in history is chronology, identifying Chedorlaomer, king of Elam who dominated for 14 years Transjordanian cities (1968-1954), according to chapter 14 of Genesis, with the king of Elam Kutu[r-Laga]mar (1990-1954), who received officially in 1968 BCE the title of “King of Akkad” when he confiscated the goddess Nanaya to Shulgi, the king of Ur, is chronologically perfect. However most scholars refuse such identification, mainly for linguistic reasons.

<sup>30</sup> Šimpi-išhuk, the 11<sup>th</sup> governor of Susa was the father of Puzur-Inšušinak and the brother of Īita.

<sup>31</sup> It may also help to explain why the Assyrian king list contains two separate lineages.

## CHEDORLAOMER AND KUDUR-LAGAMAR ARE THEY THE SAME PERSON?

When Theophilus Pinches, lecturer in Assyriology at University College, London and at the University of Liverpool, published the Spartoli tablets (Pinches: 1902, 215-238) he made a connexion between the biblical names: Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, Tidal (Gn 14:1) and: Hammurabi, Eri-e-Aku, Kudur-laḡgamal, Tudḡula. Unfortunately this deduction has three major errors: Hammurabi (1697-1654) would have reigned three centuries after the events, his name is very different from that of Amraphel and the reading *lah* of the sign KU is not documented. Many scholars have sought to identify the kings mentioned in Genesis 14 with the names of known kings supposing a more or less exact transcription but this assumption is rarely checked. For example comparison of well-known name transcripts shows that very often deformations are important:

Name (English)	Sumerian	Akkadian transcription	Akkadian translation	Elamite	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (LXX)	reference
Shinar	KI.EN.GI(R)	Šanḡar	Šumeru (?)		Šin'ar	Sennaar	Gn 10:10
Chaldeans	ŠÚ	Kiššatum	Entirety/ Kishite		Kašdim	Kaldaiôn <sup>32</sup>	Gn 11:28
Ur	URI	Ur	?		'Ur	-	Gn 11:28
Babylon	KA.DINGIR.RA	Babilla	Gate of god		Babel	Babulôn	Gn 10:10
Akkad	UR.RA	Akkad	?		Akad	Arkad	Gn 10:10
Uruk	UNUG	Uruk	?		Erek	Orek	Gn 10:10
Nergal	NÈ.IRI.GAL	Nerigal	Lord of netherworld		Nergal	Ergel	2K 17:30
Marduk	AMAR.UTU(K)	Marduk	Sun's bull calf		Merodak	Mordek(a)	Jr 50:2
Euphrates	BURANUN	Purattu	?		Perat	Euphrates	Gn 2:14
Tigris	HAL.HAL	Idiglat	?		Hiddeqel	Tigris	Gn 2:14
Ashtoreth	INANA	Ištar	Lady Star		Aštarôt	Astarte	Jg 2:13
Sîn	NANNA	Suen	Moon (nannar)		San-	Sen-	2K 18:13
Baal	EN	Bêl	Lord (baal)		Ba'al	Baal	Jg 2:13
Chedor-Laomer	KU.KU- -	Kudur-Lagamar	carrying No-merciful	Kutir-Lagamal	Kedor-La'omer	Chodol-Logomor	Gn 14:1
Elam	ELAM	Elamtu		Haltamti	'Élam	Ailam	Gn 14:1

Hebrew transcriptions of names in the biblical text are in good agreement with their Akkadian transcriptions. This implies that the biblical author was likely Babylonian (Abraham was indeed a former Babylonian). Kedor-Lagomer corresponds to Kudur-Lagarma which is an Akkadian transcription of Kutir-Lagamal “*bearer (servant) of Lagamal*” (Zadok: 1984: 24-26). According to the Bible (Gn 10:10), Shinar (Sumer) was a region south of Mesopotamia composed of at least 3 major cities<sup>33</sup>: Babylon (Babel), Uruk (Erech) and Aggad (Akkad). In time the name Babylon came to mean the whole of Babylonia (Dn 1:2). The etymology of the name of this region is complex (Lipinski: 1987, 1201). During the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE the Sumerians designated their country as KI.EN.GI, which was pronounced *kenger* in a Babylonian dialect, then in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium

<sup>32</sup> The Greek *kaldaiôn* comes from the Assyrian *kaldû* which comes from the Babylonian *kašdu* (prior 1400 BCE) homonym of *kišatu*.

<sup>33</sup> Some translations add a fourth unknown city “*and Kalneh*”, but the Hebrew word should rather be vocalized *wekullanah* and therefore be translated as “*all of which are [in the land of Shinar]*”.

BCE this name evolved into *šanhar* and was translated *šumeru* into Akkadian (meaning unknown) from which derives the name Sumer. Egyptians (of the time of Thutmose IV) pronounced this name *šanger* written *s3-n(w)-g-r*, which confirms the Canaanite pronunciation *šan'ar* or Akkadian *šanhar*. The Hebrew transcription of Sumer (Shinar) is quite close to its pronunciation in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. The letter *ayn* does not exist in Sumerian and in Akkadian it was vocalized either "g" or "h". For an unknown reason, the letters "t" and "d" are regularly interchanged in Akkadian transcriptions. Transcription and translation of Sumerian names of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC are not yet fully assured. For example, the sign 𒄨UL-a is generally transliterated *hul-a* but it should be noted that the usual translation of *hulu* as "to destroy" is questionable<sup>34</sup> (De Grief, Tavernier: 2012, 287). The verb *hulu* is frequently found in year names consisting of clauses/sentences such as: *Year: Simurru and Lullubum were hulu for the 9<sup>th</sup> time*. It is hardly likely that Simurru could have been "destroyed" 9 times in the period from Šulgi year 25 to year 44, and twice in two consecutive years (25-26).

Names appearing in Spartoli tablets were probably changed because they can be read (in Babylonian) as: Dur-šil-ilani "*The rampart protection of the gods*" son of Eri-e-Aku and Tud-ḫula "*looter*" son of *Gazzu[-]* "*shorn[-]*". These names are likely of Sumerian origin<sup>35</sup>: Eri-e-Aku "*servant of the temple of Aku [Moon-god]*" and Tud-Gula "*engendered by Gula [Lady of Health]*". Tid'al's name must probably be from a former "Tidgal" since the Hebrew letter *ayn* corresponds to an Akkadian "g". The fourth name Amraphel (king of Shinar), which does not appear in Spartoli tablets, could come from the Akkadian Amru-âpilu(m)<sup>36</sup> "*saw [by] the diviner*". The matching between names in Genesis 14 and those from Spartoli tablets is relatively good. Ellasar could be a distorted name from "Larsa" and Goiim, *gwym* in Hebrew, is probably a deformation of "Gutium" written *qù-ti-im* in the inscription of King Erridupizir (2136-2130), which corresponds to *gwtym* in Hebrew. Some replaced "Goiim" by "Hittites", instead of "nations" (LXX), but this is unlikely because the Hittites were already known at the time of Abraham (Gn 15:18-20) and consequently would have been mentioned. Furthermore, at that time (c. 2000 BCE), the Elamite Empire only had alliances with Mesopotamian kings in Akkad and Sumer, not with a distant Hittite king.

<sup>34</sup> The usual translation "to destroy" is based on Akkadian renderings in 1<sup>st</sup> millennium bilingual texts, in which Sumerian ḫul(u) is translated into Akkadian as either *ubbutu* or *šulputu*. However, the rendering of ḫul(u) as *ubbutu* is a "hapax" translation that may stem erroneously from a confusion between ḫul(u) and gul—the latter being the usual equivalent of Akkadian *abātu/ubbutu*, "to destroy". As regards *šulputu*, in the dictionaries, in addition to "to destroy", one also finds the meanings "to ruin, to overthrow, to defeat" and "to desecrate, defile (a temple, a palace, etc.)". Be that as it may, neither *abātu/ubbutu* nor *šulputu* was employed in 3<sup>rd</sup>-millennium texts for translating ḫulu. In their place, *na'râum*, "to smite, strike (mortally)", *ḫulluqum*, "to annihilate", was used. Thus ḫulu should rather be translated "to raid, to carry out a punitive expedition, to sack, to raid".

<sup>35</sup> Warad-Sîn is a translation of Eri-Aku and a king of Lagash around -2080 is called Lu-Gula "*man of Gula*".

<sup>36</sup> The Hebrew form Amra-pi-El "*word from the mouth of God*" is less likely because the *aleph* of "El" has dropped, in addition, the name Amraphel was probably of Akkadian origin, the language of that time.

Name	Hebrew (MT)	Greek (LXX)	Spartoli tablets	Akkadian	Sumerian
Chedorlaomer	Kedorla'omer	Khodollogomor	KudurKUKUMal	KudurLagamar	KU.KU.
<i>king of Elam</i>	Elam	Ailam	Elam	Elamtu	ELAM
Tidal	Tid'al	Thargal	Tudḥula	Tud-Gula	TUD.ME.ME
<i>king of Goiim</i>	Goyim	nations	Umman-manda	Gutium	GU.TI.UM
Amraphel	Amraphel	Amarphal	-	Amar-âpilu(m)?	IGI.A.BIL?
<i>king of Shinar</i>	Šin'ar	Sennaar	Šumeru	Šanḥar	KI.EN.GI(R)
Arioch	Aryok	Ariôk	Eri-e-Aku	Eri-Aku	IR.AGA
<i>king of Ellasar</i>	Ellasar	Ellasar	(Larsa?)	Larsa?	LARSA

Likely there was a coalition of kings from Sumer, Larsa and Gutium united under Kutur-Lagamar, because all these kings were vassals or allies of the king of Elam, moreover, they came from neighbouring regions. However, their identification is much more difficult (Granerød: 2010, 112-115). Firstly, vocalization and interpretation of certain Sumerian-Akkadian names is far from easy<sup>37</sup> (Di Vito: 1993, 16-17) because the transcription depended on the target language, for example the Elamite king Šutruk-Naḥunte was called Šutur-Naḥundi by the Assyrians and Ištar-ḥundi by the Babylonians. Secondly some names are sometimes abbreviated (hypocoristic) what obscures their meaning. Tud-Gula is located in a period where the kings of Gutium, vassals of Elam, are not known because they were in conflict with the kings of Ur. However, these kings ruled until the fall of Ur in 1912 BCE since Kindattu, king of Elam, partnered with them to destroy the city of Ur.

Among the four kings of Genesis 14 the more difficult to identify is Amraphel because despite his being the first to be mentioned, he does not appear in the Spartoli tablets. Given that the king of Shinar (Sumer) was Shulgi (at that time), accordingly Amraphel was only “a king of Shinar” (among tens), but not “the king of Shinar”, furthermore, a king was the king of a city not the king of a land, except “great kings” (or “emperors”) like Shulgi, king of Ur, or Kudur-Lagamar, king of Awan. Consequently Amraphel was a Mesopotamian king whose city was ruled by Kudur-Lagamar. Given that the name of this city ruled by Amraphel is not given in the biblical text, it implies it was not as important as Ur, Uruk, Babylon, Larsa, etc., but on the other hand as Amraphel is cited first “*in the days of Amraphel of Shinar*” (Gn 14:1), we can suppose that he

<sup>37</sup> For example, IR-nanna (1954-1933) governor (ENSI) of Lagaš and vassal of the king of Ur was contemporary of a governor named IR-gu who could be Eri-aku, king of Larsa. Syllabic pronunciation of this name is *ur-du-um-gu* “*servant of [A]gu*”, a hypocoristic of Eri-Aku. As IR-nanna is never said to be governor (ENSI) of Girsu and as IR-[A]gu is never said to be governor of Lagaš, they rather were to be homonyms (Huber: 2000, 10). Thus IR-[A]gu was supervisor (*ugula*) for the tribute of NI-ḪI (?) in the year 48 of Šulgi (1954 BCE) and IR-nanna was supervisor for the tribute of Urbilum (Arbela) in the year 7 of Šu-Sîn (1938 BCE). IR-[A]gu appears in Šulgi's letters but his title is not specified, we only know that he was “escort of governor commissioner (*aga-us<sub>2</sub> ensi<sub>2</sub> maškim*)” in the year 45 of Šulgi (1957 BCE). This character must have been powerful since he was general of NI-ḪI, he had to collect the tribute of Subir (north-western Syria) and pacify it (as the territories of Dilmun in Bahrain), control the workforce of Mari, Rapiqum and Gutium, and patrol up to Simurru (Zagros), etc (F. Huber: 2001, 169-206). As Lagaš came under the control of Larsa, the last governors of Lagaš can also be classified as the first kings of Larsa.

was well known at that time. It could have been a small city (like Girsu or Umma), but because Abraham could have known of it, we can suppose that the city was small but ancient and prestigious like Kish for example<sup>38</sup>.

The chronological position of Kudur-Lagamar (1990-1954) could solve a riddle concerning the identification of an exceptional ruler deduced from a magnificent head<sup>39</sup> made of arsenical copper portraying a Mesopotamian king (below) dated c. 2000 BCE. Its heavy-lidded eyes, prominent but unexaggerated nose, full lips, and enlarged ears all suggest a portrait of an actual person. While the date and place of manufacture of this piece have been much debated, its apparent similarity to the magnificent bronze head found at Nineveh makes a late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium date most likely. The headdress, however, is similar to that of later Middle Elamite small figurines found at Susa, one of gold and the other of silver. The eyes, eyebrows and nose also seem to render a related ethnic type. In the case of the copper head, the statue may have been made for an Iranian ruler. The head (left below) is cast almost solid (making it extremely heavy); a dowel hole at the base would have served to join it to a body or other support, most likely for display in a temple setting (Harper, Aruz, Tallon: 1992: 94,176). Some investigators identify this anonymous king as Ur-Nammu (head in stone right below), others suppose, because there is no crown on his head, that it could be Abraham (Isbouts: 2008, 57,77).



Several clues rather focus towards identification with a powerful Elamite king ally to the Ur III Empire. Indeed, at that time in Mesopotamia only kings and gods were honoured by having their own statue because their manufacture required artists and highly skilled craftsmen (sculptors, engravers, designers, smelters, etc.). In addition, as these items were very expensive to make, they were generally small (around 50 cm high) and made of steatite (quite soft stone) like the one of Iddin-ilum (1995-1990) a king of Mari, or diorite (very hard black

<sup>38</sup> However despite its fame, none of its kings are known between King Ur-Zababa (2230-2222) of Kish IV Dynasty and King Ḫalium (1800-1785) of Mananâ Dynasty.

<sup>39</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1947 (47.100.80).

stone) like the ones of Gudea (2048-2028) or Ur-Ningirsu II (2028-2023), kings of Lagash, or Puzur-Eshtar (1958-1933), king of Mari. Statues from life are rare, moreover, only those for the gods were made of metal (copper, silver or gold). There were only a few exceptions: the head in copper of Sargon (2243-2187), a powerful Amorite king, the statues in copper of Pepi I (2237-2192) and of Amenemhat III (1836-1791), who were both powerful Egyptian kings. Consequently the large head made of arsenical copper implies that the anonymous Mesopotamian ruler had to be very powerful.

*Iddin-Ilum**Gudea**Ur-Ningirsu II**Puzur-Estar**king of Meluhha*

The stone statue of a ruler (17.5 cm height) from Mohenjo-daro belonging to the Indus civilization, to the southeast of the ancient Elamite empire called Meluhha, is dated 2000-1900. This anonymous dignitary looks like some Elamite kings because he wears a fillet or ribbon headband with circular inlay ornament on the forehead and his upper lip is shaved and a short combed beard frames the face. Given the high value of the copper head and its artistic finish, this exceptional object has been achieved during the heyday of the neo-Sumerian empire, which occurred with the reigns of Ur-Nammu (2020-2002) and Shulgi (2002-1954). This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that since there was no copper mine in Mesopotamia it was imported from Elam. Note that the tools were made with an alloy of copper and lead in Susa whereas they were made with an alloy of copper and arsenic in Ur (Joannès: 2001, 212-213) as well as in Awan (*Godin Tepe*) during the period Godin III:4 dated 2100-2000, which is located between two empty gaps c. 2250-2100 and 2000-1900 (Frame: 2007, 17-24,143). Taking into account this last point one might conclude that the arsenical copper head was made for Ur-Nammu (or Shulgi), but it is unlikely because all the statues of neo-Sumerian kings, without exception, were featured with a cylindrical crown on the head and all statues of king Ur-Nammu represent him beardless (Pritchard: 1969, 150-151), again without exception. It is therefore more logical, because of the origin of the copper as well as the artistic

style, to attribute this copper head to a powerful Elamite king (in Awan) who was an ally of Ur-Nammu or Shulgi. Two points support this conclusion: the Elamites fabricated some metal statues (in Susa) for their gods and kings with a headdress (below), which is a kind of cap but not a crown. The ancient gods like Inšušinak (2100-2000) possess in addition a tiara made of horns.



Copper statue of the God Nergal riding in a Chariot  
Susa acropolis 1600 B.C.



*Horned demon (copper) god Inšubushinak (copper) god Nergal (copper) Elamite king in gold (1500-1200)*

Three points are crucial: the only metal statues in arsenical copper at the Neo-Sumerian period are<sup>40</sup> 1) those of a demon, gods Inšušinak and Nergal; 2) the statues of Elamite shepherd-kings; 3) statues without crown on their head but rather a sort of cap. The arsenical copper head of the anonymous king fulfils these three essential points consequently it must have belonged to a powerful Elamite king in Awan around 2000 BCE. In conclusion, the third and last king of the Awan I dynasty named Kud[ur-Laga]mar (1990-1954), best known as Chedorlaomer, appears to be the best and only candidate.

The three Elamite kings of the dynasty of Awan I: Puzur-Inšušinak, [Hie?]-lu and Kudur-Lagamar were regarded as genuine kings of Akkad in parallel with the Sumerian kings of the dynasty of Ur III (Ur-Nammu, Šulgi). Besides they used Akkadian in their writings, in place of Elamite, and they quoted Mesopotamian gods rather than their Elamite divinities. For example, when Puzur-Inšušinak (2040-2015) conquered Susa he did not impose his own pantheon. With the exception of the goddess Narundi, whose origin is debatable, and of Šugu, a god otherwise unknown, it was the Suso-Mesopotamian divinities to whom he was devoted<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Inšušinak, (Louvre Sb 2823); Nergal (Louvre Sb 2824); Elamite shepherd-king (Louvre Sb 2758).

<sup>41</sup> He built various monuments for Inšušinak, the local god. Two statuettes were dedicated to Belat-Terraban ("Lady of Terraban") and Narundi respectively; in curses on those who might mutilate these monuments he invoked Inšušinak and Šamaš, Enlil and Enki, Ištar and Sin, Nin-hursag and Narundi, and sometimes Nergal. Furthermore, from the economic texts (Legrain) it seems that the majority of personal names were of Mesopotamian origin and that the divine names from which they were composed were almost always the names of Mesopotamian deities, especially Ea, Šamaš, Erra, Adad, Ištar, and Innana. Aside from Narundi and Manzat, few Elamite divine names are attested in such contexts.

A statue of goddess Narundi<sup>42</sup> made of limestone and 86.5 cm high (opposite figure) was dedicated by Puzur-Inšušinak, *King of Susa, Prince of Anshan*. The tiara with three pairs of horns and the tiered tufted woollen attire are Sumerian in origin. Beneath the feet of the divinity, we see the animal attribute of the goddess Inanna, goddess of war and sexuality, with two lions lying down separated by a flower rosette. Regarding these statuettes, Puzur-Inšušinak wrote (in Akkadian): *to Belat-Terraban, Puzur-Inšušinak the governor of Susa, the viceroy of the land of Elam, the son of Šimpi-išbuk: his statue is neither made of silver nor in copper, but in stone, it is not been made to be plated with tin // to Inšušinak, his Lord (bel), Puzur-Inšušinak the son of Šimpi-išbuk, the governor of Susa, the viceroy of the land of Elam (...) he placed at the gate of Inšušinak, his Lord; and when he had opened the channel Sidari, he erected his statue in front of him; and at the gate he placed a clay nail in copper and cedar* (Sollberger, Kupper: 1971, 124-127). These inscriptions show that Puzur-Inšušinak had complied to the Sumerian custom of making stone statuettes (generally less than 50 cm high) for the gods (or kings) rather than manufacturing them in copper or silver according to the Elamite custom. We can see that the huge “statuette” of the anonymous Elamite ruler therefore comprises two exceptions: 1) it is a life-size statue, 2) which was manufactured in Arsenical copper, according to Elamite custom not according to Sumerian custom. Therefore, the only possible candidate for the anonymous Elamite king around 2000 BCE is the king Chedorlaomer.



According to the Bible Chedorlaomer, a powerful king of Elam, led a coalition of three other kings (vassals or allies), two from Sumer (Eri-aku and Amar-apil) and one from Gutium (Tud-gula), to make reprisals against cities of Transjordan, the latter having refused to pay their tributes (Pirrot, Clamer: 1953, 247-256). The operation is described as a simple police operation and not a war of conquest<sup>43</sup>. Similarly, Abraham's retaliation against the Mesopotamian kings is not presented as a war but as an ambush at night to kill enemies (Gn 14:15-17). The biblical text speaks of a slaughter (LXX, Hb 7:1) and not a defeat<sup>44</sup>, which involves the death of most of these kings. This event is described through many details, chronological and geographical, which allows an investigation. The paralleling of all these events in chronological order allows us to understand their sequence. The biblical text reads:

<sup>42</sup> Louvre Sb 54 + 6617.

<sup>43</sup> Many archaeologists believe that the imperial armies for war were made up of thousands of soldiers, which is true, but the expeditionary corps for remote police operations (in Syria for example) was much smaller and consisted of a regiment (among a total of 9) of only 600 soldiers, consequently the regular forces of Akkad consisted of 5400 soldiers in case of war (Abrahami, Battini: 2008, 1-22), but only around 2000 soldiers for 4 kings against a regiment of 318 elite warriors and some men of 3 allies (Gn 14:1,14,34).

<sup>44</sup> The word *hakot* means “striking” (1Sa 17:57,18:6; 2Ch 25:14), “strike a mortal blow” (Gn 4:15, 8:21).

*Now it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Gutium, that these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is to say, Zoar). All these marched as allies to the Low Plain of Siddim, that is, the Salt Sea. 12 years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the 13<sup>th</sup> year they rebelled. And in the 14<sup>th</sup> year Chedorlaomer came, and also the kings who were with him, and they inflicted defeats on the Rephaim in Asheroth-karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, down to El-paran, which is at the wilderness. Then they turned about and came to En-mishpat, that is, Kadesh, and defeated the whole field of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. At this point the king of Sodom went on the march, and also the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboim and the king of Bela (that is to say, Zoar), and they drew up in battle order against them in the Low Plain of Siddim (salt valley), against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Gutium and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings against the five. Now the Low Plain of Siddim was pits upon pits of bitumen; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah took to flight and went falling into them, and those who remained fled to the mountainous region. Then the victors took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on their way. They also took Lot the son of Abram's brother and his goods and continued on their way. He was then dwelling in Sodom. After that a man who had escaped came and told Abram the emigrant<sup>45</sup>. He was then tabernacling among the big trees of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were confederates of Abram. Thus Abram got to hear that his brother had been taken captive. With that he mustered his trained men, 318 slaves born in his household, and went in pursuit up to Dan. And by night he resorted to dividing his forces, he and his slaves, against them, and thus he slaughtered them and kept in pursuit of them up to Hobab, which is north of Damascus. And he proceeded to recover all the goods, and he recovered also Lot his brother and his goods and also the women and the people. Then the king of Sodom went out to meet him after he [Abram] returned from slaughtering Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him (in 1954 BCE), to the Low Plain of Shaveh, that is, the king's Low Plain. And Melchizedek king of [the city of] Salem<sup>46</sup> brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of the Most High God (Gn 14:1-18).*

During the period 2000-1950 the two main actors in the Mesopotamian world were the kings of Ur III and the kings of Awan I. The power of these two empires depended on trade and therefore control of trade routes (Bancroft Hunt: 2004, 18-19). They earned money through vassal kings who levied customs duties on traders passing through their territories and had to pay to their “emperors” for ensuring their security (by means of military force). Šulgi (2002-1954) controlled the main part of the “route of tin” which ran from Susa to Ugarit (and Byblos) through his vassal kings in Syria (Mari, Ebla, Aleppo, Qatna) and Kudur-Lagamar (1990-1954) controlled the highway which ran from Eshnunna to Dilmun (via Susa and Ur) through his vassal kings of Gutium, Akkad and Šimaški. Shipping routes from Byblos<sup>47</sup> and Ugarit were controlled by the Phoenicians who rented their services primarily to the Egyptians. In this context, the capture of the goddess Nanaya served to justify the westward expansionist projects of Kudur-Lagamar. Indeed, change in titularies confirm his new role of “king of Akkad”. This case already happened in the past at the

<sup>45</sup> The word *ha'ibri* may be transcribed "the Hebrew" or translated "the emigrant (the one from beyond)".

<sup>46</sup> The name Salem (Ps 76:1) refers to the city written in Akkadian: *uru-salimu* “city of peace” (Heb 7:2).

<sup>47</sup> For example, the governor of Byblos, Ibdati, sent his ambassador, Idati, to Drehem in Year 9 of Amar-Sîn (1954-1945).

end of Narâm-Sîn's reign (2163-2126), who was “King of the 4 corners (Akkad)”, when he was challenged (due to numerous insurrections) by Erridupizir (2136-2130), king of Gutium, who took the same title “King of the 4 corners”. Kudur-Lagamar probably wanted to create a new major trade route from Susa to Egypt in the same way that Sargon of Akkad (2243-2187) began a new era by opening a major commercial thoroughfare from Ur to Ugarit and Gebal (Byblos) which traded (by ship) with Egypt<sup>48</sup>.



The route taken by Abraham and that one followed by Chedorlaomer are in agreement with the major communication routes of the time (May, Day: 1993: 66-67). Furthermore the route for the return trip taken by Chedorlaomer is specifically described in the biblical text. The places passed through are: Kadesh-[barnea], the mountain of Seir, down to Elparan, which is at the wilderness, the Low Plain of Siddim (salt valley according to the Septuagint) and Hôbah, which is north to Damascus<sup>49</sup> (Gn 14:6-8, 15). This road was known as the “King's Road”. The name Hôbah is mentioned as an area north of Damascus in the Execution Texts (2000-1800), but its spelling fluctuates: Apu (*'i-p-w-m*) or Aupa' (*'i-w-p3-3*) in hieroglyph (Ahituv: 1984, 193), Api or Ubi in syllabic cuneiform (El-Amarna letter 189) and Hbt in alphabetic cuneiform (Dussaud: 1935, 228). The Canaanite cities of Sharuhén (Tell el-'Ajjul?) which appeared later (c. 1750 BCE) and Kadesh-barnea ('Ain Qadeis) marked the southern boundaries with Egypt (Jos 15:1-4; 19:6).

<sup>48</sup> For example, ‘etched’ beads produced in the Indus Valley was brought to Abydos (Egypt) from 1900 to 1750 BCE via various intermediate traders, in places such as Ur and Byblos (Grajetzki: 2014, 159-169).

<sup>49</sup> Damascus, *dimašqa/i* or *dumašqa* in Akkadian, was often called URU/KUR *ša-imêrišu* “place of donkey driver”, which alludes to its role as a caravaner relay.

Chedorlaomer's route and the description of his actions show that this king came to this region near Egypt in order to maintain control over this new land trade route. The same way that main cities on the path from Ur to Ugarit or Byblos were vassals of Šulgi and paid him taxes, Chedorlaomer had made vassals some major cities on the King's Road. The revolt which occurred in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of his rule was likely caused by an excessive withdrawal. During this year (1955 BCE) Šulgi's archives report an exceptional booty that the king got from Elam<sup>50</sup>. Chedorlaomer's trip was therefore a police operation to force rebel kings to pay, but as they refused their cities were looted.



<sup>50</sup> It is related later (in 1938 BCE): *Šu-Sin dedicated a statue of himself made of gold taken as booty in the lands of Šimaškians (Elamites), Šulgi captured.*

Those cities drew their wealth from exports to Egypt of precious materials<sup>51</sup>. Trade in this area south of Canaan was very intense with Egypt (Baud: 2015, 269-272).



<sup>51</sup> Such as silver, the ratio silver/gold was 2/1 in Egypt, copper and galena from Punon (Faynan), grain grinding stones in quartzite from Gaza (Tell es-Sakan), resins, spices and malachite (Manley: 1998, 48-49).

The deeds of Chedorlaomer performed in Shinar (Sumer) and mentioned in the Bible have been confirmed exclusively by the use of absolute chronology as well as a correct dating of Babylonian documents. However the deeds of Chedorlaomer performed in the region of Sodom (Shutu) then in the northern Delta around Kadesh-barnea<sup>52</sup> are much more difficult to confirm by the use of absolute chronology, because there are only three documents coming from the Middle Bronze period dated ca. 2000-1800 BCE (MB IIA). Accordingly, that period remains relatively unknown and enigmatic for archaeologists. Amihai Mazar, a professor at the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, explains why: *The character of the relations between Egypt and Asia [Canaan] during the Middle Kingdom (corresponding to MB IIA) is open to different interpretations due to the nature of evidence. Egyptian documents relating to Asia are few: 1) the Execration Texts, 2) the Story of Sinuhe, and 3) a few more short references (...)* The discoveries at Tell el-Dab'a led M. Bietak to return to a low chronology for our period. MB IIA finds of Canaanite origin were detected at Tell el-Dab'a in contexts dated to the latter part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in Egypt —i.e. to the 19<sup>th</sup> century BCE (...) Thus Bietak suggested to start the MB IIA ca. 1900 BCE and to end it ca. 1700 BCE. This low chronology raises many difficulties for archaeologists of Palestine. If accepted, it will create difficulties in correlation with Mesopotamian chronology and cause the abandonment of the Mesopotamian "Middle Chronology" which is considered the most acceptable by many scholars (Mazar: 1990: 185,190). Once again chronology is the key attaining the truth. As we have seen, the Mesopotamian "Middle Chronology" is wrong by 92 years because the fall of Babylon is dated 2004 BCE instead of 1912 BCE (absolute chronology). What makes the situation still more complex is the fact that archaeologists use now the "Conventional Egyptian Chronology" which is still rejected by many Egyptologists. Welcome to the world of great chronological disorder!

Susan L. Cohen wrote in her PhD dissertation about "The Relationship of Middle Bronze Age IIA Canaan to Middle Kingdom Egypt": *The Middle Bronze Age IIA (MB IIA) in Canaan is one of the most complex and least understood periods in the history and archaeology of the Levant (...)* Additionally, there is a lack of consensus regarding the chronology of the MB IIA period. Suggestions for its duration have ranged from a mere 50 years to 2 centuries, while proposed dates for its beginning span from as early as 2000 BCE (B. Mazar 1968) to as late as 1800 BCE (Bietak 1984). Since the dating of subsequent periods hinges on this chronology, such discrepancies only serve to cloud further understanding of MB IIA and its associations with those eras which precede and follow it. Since the MB IIA period in Canaan is so poorly understood, it is not surprising that even less is known about the relationship between Canaan and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean during this time (Cohen: 2002, 1). Consequently, in the same way that we had to get a Mesopotamian absolute chronology before investigating Abram's journey from Ur, similarly we must get again an Egyptian absolute chronology before investigating Abram's journey to Egypt.

<sup>52</sup> Kadesh-barnea is 'Ain Qedeis, Hazzar-addar 'Ain el-Qudeirat and Azmon 'Ain el-Qeseimeh (Nb 34:3-5).

## INVESTIGATING ABRAM'S JOURNEY IN EGYPT

Abram's journey in Egypt is extremely well dated in the Bible. Abram was 75 years old and he came to Canaan via Haran, then Hebron<sup>53</sup> was founded (Gn 12:4-9; Nb 13:22) but shortly after Abram went into Egypt due to a famine in Canaan (Gn 12:10-15). When Abram entered Egypt, the pharaoh he met wanted to marry Sarai, his wife. Despite his failure to marry Sarai, he gave him a lot of cattle as well as male and female servants (Gn 12:14-20). When Abram returned to Canaan, the Transjordan kings revolt was at its peak (Gn 14:4), presumably because taxes (or looting) became unbearable.

BCE	[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[A] = Egypt, [B] = Sumer, [C], [D] = Elam ( <i>Awan</i> ), ( <i>Šimaški</i> ),	
1970	7	32	20		[A] Amenemhat I King of Egypt.	
1969	8	33	21		[B] Šulgi King of Ur, King of Sumer and Akkad.	
1968	9	34	22	0	[C] Kudur-Lagamar King of Awan, Viceroy of Elam, <i>confiscated</i>	
1967	10	35	23	1	<i>the goddess Nanaya and became "King of Akkad"</i>	
1966	11	36	24	2	[B] Šulgi King of Ur, King of the 4 corners.	
1965	12	37	25	3	[D] Girnamme Governor of Šimaški	
1964	13	38	26	4		
1963	14	1	39	27	5	[A] Abraham age 75 arrived into Canaan, Hebron is founded, shortly
1962	15	2	40	28	6	<i>after Abraham went into Egypt (Gn 12:4-13:1,18)</i>
1961	16	3	41	29	7	
1960	17	4	42	30	8	
1959	18	5	43	31	9	
1958	19	6	44	32	10	
1957	20	7	45	33	11	[A] Tanis is founded 7 years after Hebron (Nb 13:22)
1956	21		46	34	12	[D] Tazitta I Man of Anšan, Ebarat I Man of Šimaški
1955	22		47	35	13	[C] Revolt of Transjordan kings against Kudur-Lagamar (Gn 14:4)
1954	23		48	36	14	[C] Kudur-Lagamar shot by Abraham (Gn 14:5-17)
1953	24	1			**	[B] Amar-Sîn King of Ur, King of the 4 corners
1952	25	2			**	
1951	26	3			**	
1950	27	4			**	<i>After a stay of 4 years in Ur ambassadors of Šimaški return home</i>

According to the biblical timeline Abraham met an anonymous pharaoh (Amenemhat I) during the short period 1963-1957 BCE. Two major events, which occurred during the reign of this anonymous pharaoh, are verifiable: 1) Tanis was founded during his reign and 2) the scale of military activity carried out by Chedorlaomer in the area south of Palestine (Shutu) and north of Egypt (Sinai) had to have worried that pharaoh.

## WHO FOUNDED TANIS: ABRAHAM OR AMENEMHAT I?

According to archaeologists, Amenemhat I built Bubastis, Khatana (Qantir) and Tanis (Grimal: 1988, 212) and according to the Bible, Tanis (San el-Hagar), former capital of the Hyksos (Ps 78:12,43), was founded in 1957

<sup>53</sup> According to Genesis 23:2, the city called Kiryat-arba "City of four" was renamed Hebron "Confederation" by Abraham. The name of Tanis, *šo'an* in Hebrew (Tsoân), means "moving tents", whereas in Egyptian *da'an* (Djaân) does not mean anything.

BCE, 7 years after Hebron (Nb 13:22). The chronological agreement is excellent. Tanis was founded by Abram because its name, *Ṣo'an* in Hebrew, means “moving tents” (Is 33:20), whereas in Egyptian *Da'an* (Djaân) does not mean anything. Qantir is believed to mark what was probably the ancient site of Ramses II's great capital, Pi-Ramses or Per-Ramses. The ancient site of Avaris is about 2 km south of Qantir, later on, Avaris was absorbed by Pi-Ramses. Tanis' history is very poorly known. In the *Report of Wenamon* (c. 1085 BCE) Tanis is written *Da'an*, however in *The Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling* (c. 1400 BCE) we read (line 14): *Sehet-Da'aw* “Field of Tanis” (Caminos: 1956: 19-20), the same expression as in Psalm 78, which appears in the sequence [*Sht*]-*D'w* (*Fields of Tanis*), *Hwt-w'rt* (*Avaris*), *Rhty* (?). It is precisely the same sequence: *Sht-D'(n)*, *Hwt-w'rt*, *Rhty* that we find in the geographical procession in Ramses II's temple. The 400 Year Stela, found at Tanis, is a large slab of stone erected (c. 1280 BCE) by Ramses II to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the reign of the god “*Seth, Great of Power, the Ombite (the Baal 'Lord' of the Hyksos)*”. A paleographical study of the name *D'(n)* shows that this toponym must go back to the end of the Old Kingdom (Yoyotte: 1982-1983, 220). The city of Tanis must have been founded at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty because the statues of almost all the sovereigns of this dynasty, including Amenemhat I, remained there in that city. However, apart from the doorways erected in Bubastis, Khatana and Wadi Natrûn, Amenemhat did not leave any other buildings in the Delta (Habachi: 1954, 443-458). From an inscription unearthed in Khatana, alongside a statue depicting Amenemhat sitting, it is clear that the king was responsible for erecting a building here to which the door gave entrance. In addition one of the officials who lived under the reign of Amenemhat made a stela in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> line reads: *year 20[? under] the majesty of...* that enables us to date the building to 1957 BCE, exactly the same date as the biblical chronology. Seeing that the doorway is still in its original place and that during the reigns of Amenemhat I and Senwosret III, who were concerned with the doorway, the district was flourishing. Given that the doorway is still lying near its original place, we can suppose it was the same for Tanis where there was also a statue depicting Amenemhat I sitting.

The few buildings built by Amenemhat I in the Delta were made to win the sympathy of the people in this region because of the prophecy of Neferty (Posener: 1956: 38-40) which reads: *He (Neferty) was concerned for what would happen in the land. He thinks about the condition of the east. Asiatics ('3mw) travel with their swords, terrorizing those who are harvesting, seizing the oxen from the plow (...) All happiness has gone away, the land is cast down in trouble because of those feeders, Asiatics (Styw) who are throughout the land. Enemies have arisen in the east, Asiatics ('3mw) have come down to Egypt. A fortress is deprived of another beside it, the guards do not pay attention of it (...) Asiatics ('3mw) will fall to his sword, Libyans will fall to his flame, rebels to his wrath, traitors to his might, as the serpent on his brow subdues the rebels to him. One will build the*

*“Wall of the Ruler”, life prosperity and health, to prevent Asiatics (‘3mw) from going down into Egypt (Hoffmeier: 1996, 58-59). The famous prophecy of Neferty could be related to the 400-year prophecy from Genesis 15:13 given to Abraham<sup>54</sup>. We can conclude that when Abram arrived in Egypt in 1963 BCE he transformed the little village that had hosted him into a large city, with of course the agreement of Amenemhat. This new Egyptian city was completed in 1957 BCE, year 20 of Amenemhat I, and was called Tanis “moving tents” in Hebrew.*

#### WHO THREATENED KING AMENEMHAT I MILITARILY?

For Egyptologists the move to the North and establishing of a new capital by Amenemhat I, remains a complete mystery. Dieter Arnold and Peter Jánosi explain: *The massive rock-cut tombs of the officials in the surrounding limestone cliffs were also left unfinished. One deduces from these circumstances that the king and his court must have abandoned the Theban residence and its cemetery. Highly unusual, this move is comparable only to the New Kingdom ruler Akhenaten’s later relocation from Thebes to a new residence at Amarna. The rejection of the tombs, in particular, presents a mystery (...) What was the impetus for the move north? One possible explanation is that Sinai tribes and Libyan Bedouins threatened the Nile Delta from the east and west, respectively. The vulnerability of Egypt’s border is a common topic in the ancient literature, but there is no direct evidence of significant invasions. Construction of the Wall of the Ruler, which was built by Amenemhat to secure the country’s eastern border, perhaps following an older fortification named the Way of Horus, suggests that the king’s situation may have been dangerous indeed (...) The defense of Lower Egypt against foreign invasions possibly required the king’s presence and immediate response —a convincing reason for him to reside in the north (...) Having abandoned his Theban tomb for unknown reasons, the king seems to have begun a second monument in the north (...) This second tomb, which was a pyramid, poses another mystery of the king’s reign. The name of the pyramid: “the place of desire is glorious” (...) A papyrus fragment found at Lisht mentions “the place of desire is glorious” and suggests that a pyramid administration existed in the king’s 14<sup>th</sup> regnal year (...) The removal of an entire pyramid complex and the construction of a new one was a huge technical undertaking and must have had a compelling motive, which is sadly lost to history (Arnold, Jánosi: 2015, 54-57). It is obvious that Sinai tribes were not able to threaten seriously the powerful Egyptian Empire, but in contrast the powerful king of Elam could.*

In fact the ambitious project of Chedorlaomer, powerful king of Elam, had to have worried Amenemhat I because southern Canaan was a big source of supply from the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Husson, Valbelle: 1992, 66-67), including labour<sup>55</sup> (Menu: 2010, 171-183). For example, Sinuhe as high-ranking administrator of Amenemhat I bore the title: *Nobleman and overlord, governor and canal-cutter, sovereign among the Asiatics (ity m styw)*. Whereas kings of Ur III regarded the kings of Syria as vassals, the Egyptian royal administration regarded the kings of Canaan

<sup>54</sup> This prophecy was given to Abraham in 1953 BCE when Nesu-Montu, Army General of Amenemhat I, came along the eastern border of the Delta, but started in 1933 BCE when Isaac was 5 years old.

<sup>55</sup> The Annals of Amenemhat II read: *Number of prisoners brought from these foreign lands (Sinai): 1,554 Asiatics.*

mainly as providers under the aegis of the crown and was only charging a toll for foreigners (Menu: 2004, 196-202,224). It is noteworthy that the absence of taxes on goods favoured trade<sup>56</sup>. The arrival of Chedorlaomer in northern Egypt and his military interventions caused great concern as can be seen on the stela of Nesu-Montu dated year 24 of Amenemhat I (1953 BCE): *Year 24, month 4 of Shemu, under the majesty of (...) Amenemhat (...) I [Nesu-Montu] trained the troops in ambush, and at daybreak the landing stage surrendered. When I grasped the tip of the bow, I led the battle for the two lands. I was victorious, my arms taking [so much spoil] that I had to leave [some] on the ground. I destroyed the foes, I overthrew the enemies of my lord, there being none other who will the like. As for the words of this tablet, it is the revelation of that which happened by my arm, it is that which I did in reality. There is no boast, there is no lie therein. I destroyed the Asiatic nomads, the Bedouin, I overthrew their strongholds, I creeping like the desert fox on the desert margin. I came and went through their streets without an equal therein by command of Montu* (Arnold: 1991, 5-48). There are two anomalies in the text of that stela: 1) Nesu-Montu commemorated his military activities along the eastern border of the Delta without mentioning any enemy, and 2) because it reads: *his arms took [so much spoil] that he had to leave [some] on the ground*, the abundant spoil took in that area in northern Sinai (inhabited only by Bedouins) must have actually come from the taking of a rich city in the south of Canaan.

There are a number of sources attesting to the difficulties Amenemhat faced in the region of the Nile delta. A literary source, *The Prophecy of Neferty*, says in its description of the chaos before the coming of the new king: *Foes have risen in the East, Asiatics have come down to Egypt*. Later, in describing the results of Amenemhat's takeover, the text refers at length to his consolidation of the eastern and western Delta frontiers. The building of an eastern "Wall of the Ruler" is mentioned specifically. This east Delta fortification wall reappears in the Story of Sinuhe and must therefore have actually existed. Archaeologically, a fortress built by Amenemhat I at the western frontier, in the Wadi Natrun, has been located and thus corroborates the claim of newly established frontier fortifications, while substantial building activities in the eastern Delta, including the erection of a palace, show the importance that the king assigned to this area. Finally, the above-quoted stela of Nesu-Montu and an important biographical text in the tomb of the nomarch Khnumholtep I at Beni Hasan describe actual military activities on the eastern border of the Delta. This situation necessitated prolonged operations in the area. The course of action that finally led to success was, apparently, a combination of punitive campaigns and the establishment of Egyptian border forts. During the operations in Lower Egypt the Upper Egyptian Amenemhat learned to appreciate the importance of the northern part

<sup>56</sup> International trade was often placed under the control of palaces or temples. These organisms managed surplus, produced and acquired revenues by levying taxes. After the fall of the empire of Ur III, merchants became more independent. To promote trade towards the Hittite kingdom, Assyrian king Erishu I (1873-1834) cancelled taxes on metals, seed and wool. Result of these measures, the trade route between Ashur and Kanesh became one of the major trade routes of the time (Grandpierre: 2010: 248-251).

of the country. His first step in reorganizing the country after the Delta and its neighbours were subjugated was therefore the transfer of his residence from Thebes to the north. He founded Itj-tawy as the new capital of Egypt, instead of Memphis, probably about year 20 of his reign (1957 BCE) when his son Senwosret was established as co-regent. However, the period of military activity seems to have stopped after the year 24 since the story of Sinuhe describes peaceful relations between Egypt and Syria (Cohen: 2002, 36-41). The only Egyptian military actions at this time were the conquest of Nubia which began in the year 29 of Amenemhat I in 1948 BCE and ended in the year 18 of Senwosret I in 1929 BCE (Vandersleyen: 1995, 52-67). The *Tale of Sinuhe*, a fictional account composed during the reign of Senwosret I, indicates an increased interest in the southern Levant and its inhabitants. There is a clear shift of focus in Egyptian perspective between the literature of Amenemhat I and that dating to the reign of Senwosret I. Instead of focusing on an Asiatic presence and threat within the borders of Egypt, Sinuhe presents a picture of Asiatics in the southern Levant itself. However, it must be remembered that, like the rest of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty literature, the *Tale of Sinuhe* has a propagandistic slant in which the glorification of Senwosret I and his reign is juxtaposed with the traditional theme of the pharaoh's subjugation of all foreign peoples. The Egypto-Canaanite relationship portrayed in the story continues to be one of détente and reasonably cordial relations. Several elements in the story relate peaceful encounters between Egyptians and Canaanites. When Sinuhe leaves Egypt and travels out into the desert, he is saved by a group of Bedouins, the chief of whom is described as: *a man who had been in Egypt*. Furthermore, the Bedouin chief is said to *recognize Sinuhe*; thus, not only had the chief been in Egypt (and consequently spoke Egyptian), but he may also have been at the capital, which is where Sinuhe, as a courtier, would have resided prior to his flight. This incident may indicate that, despite the bellicose rhetoric about smiting and crushing sand-dwellers and the like, there were comparatively peaceful relations between the Egyptians and their Asiatic neighbours.

Further evidence for this can even be found in some of the propagandistic elements of the story. In his hymns of praise for Senwosret I, Sinuhe again juxtaposes the traditional view of the pharaoh as conqueror with a glimpse into the “Realpolitik” of the times. The praise for the pharaoh is effusive: *He will conquer southern lands, while ignoring [being able to ignore the] northern lands, though made to smite Asiatics and tread on Sand-farers*. However, Sinuhe then admonishes Amusinenshi, the local chieftain (somewhere in Syria) with whom he resides while in exile, to: *Write to him [Senwosret I] and let him know your name. Do not cast a spell against his Majesty, for he will not fail to do good to a foreign land which is loyal to him*. The implications of this advice are clear. Although Senwosret I would have no compunctions about waging war against Canaan, Egypt would be just as happy to deal with these territories in a diplomatic way, albeit as lesser and subordinate

powers. Although this statement, as part of an encomium, must be read as a propagandistic element within the text, the very fact that Sinuhe urges Amusinenshi<sup>57</sup> to establish diplomatic ties speaks more for semi-peaceful relations than for bellicose Egyptian expansion. Other events in the tale attest to the conducting of diplomatic activity between Egypt and the Levant. Sinuhe says that the: *envoy who came north or went south to the residence stayed with me. I let everybody stay with me.* However, the destination of the messengers is unknown; it seems more probable that the diplomatic relations alluded to were between Egypt and other regions further north in Syria, since Sinuhe implies that the messengers only passed through his territory. In any event, a relatively peaceful situation in Canaan may be implied by the fact that the messengers were able to pass unhindered through the Levant on their way north. Finally, on his return to Egypt, Sinuhe's advice to the king includes a recommendation for diplomatic overtures to individuals presumably located somewhere in the southern Levant, or at least in regions with which Sinuhe had contact while residing in Yaa. He says: *May now Your Majesty command that there be brought to you Me[l]ki chief from Qedem (Lebanon), the mountain chiefs from out of Kesbu, and the Menus (harbours?) chief from the lands of the Fenkhu (Phoenicia). They are rulers with renowned names who grew up in love of you. I need not even mention Retenu (Palestine), for it belongs to you like your hunting bounds.* Egypt is clearly the dominant power in any relationship that might develop, and Sinuhe's statement does, in fact, indicate that Retenu was subordinate, or at least not hostile to Egypt.

The Egyptian relationship to Canaan as characterized by Sinuhe appears neither militaristic nor imperialistic; the overall tone is one of detente. Nowhere in the story is there any mention of military activity in Canaan, whereas diplomatic activity or other informal relations of some type are alluded to more than once. In fact, the reference to letter writing between the pharaoh and the petty rulers of the Levant strongly evokes the flavour of the later Amarna Age, characterized by a relatively peaceable relationship between a stronger power and its weaker neighbours. While Egypt had the power to control much of the Levant, and certainly believed it had the right to do so, in reality the impression is of reasonably pacific and detached relations, in which Egypt mostly ignored policies in the southern Levant. Although hostile actions occurred, as illustrated by the Nesu-Montu stela, they may have been no more than peacekeeping forays, or campaigns for the purpose of "showing the flag," and need not necessarily represent normal Egyptian policy. Thus, despite the fictional nature of the story, and the clear propagandistic elements within it, the *Tale of Sinuhe* supports the impression that the relationship between Egypt and the southern Levant in the early 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty was primarily a peaceful, although watchful, one. Despite this rather peaceful approach to their Semitic neighbours dwelling

<sup>57</sup> Amusinenshi means "Asiatic-son-of-Ensi" in Egyptian. "Ensi" is a Sumerian word meaning "Lord", the equivalent of the Akkadian word "bel", the Canaanite "baal" and the Egyptian "neb" or "heqa", accordingly Amusinenshi was a Canaanite ruler (in Syria) whose father came likely from Sumer.

outside Egyptian territory, the Egyptians appear to have controlled rather stringently who and what crossed their borders. Movement between Egypt and Canaan was almost certainly monitored by the: *Walls of the Ruler which were made to repel the Asiatics and crush the Sand-farers*. In Sinuhe's own account of his flight from Egypt, he: *crouched in a bush for fear of being seen by the guard on duty upon the wall*, who would have, presumably, prevented him from leaving, or at least detained him. This same border control is in evidence during Sinuhe's return, despite his changed status from fugitive to prodigal expatriate. When he obeys the summons to return to Egypt, Sinuhe proceeds south, where he: *halted at the Horus-ways*. *The commander in charge of the garrison sent a message to the residence to let it be known*. *Then his majesty sent a trusted overseer of the royal domains with whom were loaded ships, bearing royal gifts for the Asiatics who had come with me to escort me to Horus-ways*. In other words, Sinuhe was detained at the official border crossing, where he had to wait for proper clearance to arrive from the capital before he was allowed into Egypt. For a long time archaeologists have questioned this amazing information about the “permission for travellers to move inside Egypt” because it was unique. However, several hieroglyphic inscriptions have been found by archaeologists<sup>58</sup>, which clearly show that the portable clay tokens regularly found in the archives were presumably used as *laisser-passer*, a practice which implies the presence of check-points along the roads. As a matter of fact, it has been surmised that the watching posts already in use in the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> dynasty were manned by Egyptian in order to check the move along the roads towards the main Egyptian cities (Förster, Riemer: 2013, 283-294).

The only period of real conflict with the northern Delta is restricted to a brief period from year 20 to year 24 of Amenemhat I. Although this was not a war, but rather a police raid at the borders of Egypt, the intervention of Nesu-Montu was the first serious incident between Egypt and Canaan. It is not a coincidence that the oldest execration texts are dated from this period (20<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Execration rituals were stylized magical actions aimed at thwarting or eradicating foes and were similar in nature to other protective measures, such as apotropaic animal sacrifice or walking on depictions of enemies. Execration rites took place from at least early in the Old Kingdom through the Roman Period. Execration rites “bewitching” could be aimed at political, preternatural, or personal enemies. The political and preternatural were often tied together. The *Book of Felling Apophis*, for example, instructs that the rite would fell the enemies of Ra, Horus, and Pharaoh. Political rituals likely began as attempts to deal with rebellious Egyptians, but soon included rebellious vassals and foreign enemies, and were almost always directed toward potential problems as a type of proactive apotropaic measure. The victims of these rites were those who, whether dead or alive, would in the future rebel,

<sup>58</sup> In Jebel Uweinat then near Bahariya and Dakhla (in 2007). El-Bahariya is a depression in Egypt and was called Djesdjes in Egyptian during the Middle Kingdom. It is approximately 370 km south-west from Cairo. Several inscriptions found in Jebel Uweinat mention Mentuhotep II (2045-1995).

conspire rebellion, or think of speaking, sleeping, or dreaming rebelliously, or with ill-intent. *These vague enemies, as well as specific individuals, groups, or geographic locations, were named for things they might do in the future* (Muhlestein: 2008, 1-4), though some individuals presumably were included because of things they had already done. The standardization of the texts, the concern with foreign entities, and the desire to protect the state, ruler, and divine, combined with the knowledge of foreign politics, geography, and leaders that the texts demonstrate, all indicate that these were state-sponsored rites. Thus various magical measures were taken to prevent chaotic forces from acting before they could even begin.

In summary, the reaction of Amenemhat I, a mighty pharaoh of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, is not mysterious, but on the contrary entirely understandable. Indeed, Chedorlaomer had established a protectorate over the southern Palestine for 14 years in a wealthy area called Shutu[m] by Egyptians (Sodom in the Bible) and in addition this mighty Mesopotamian king had obviously intended to expand in the Egyptian Delta, which constituted a serious threat to Egypt. In this context extremely dangerous for Egypt why had Amenemhat wanted to meet Abraham?

#### WHY DID AMENEMHAT WANT TO MEET ABRAM?

The Bible does not give the reason why the Pharaoh of the time wanted to meet Abraham, it indicates only that he had wanted to marry Sarai, the half-sister of Abraham, which usually brings a smile to Egyptologists for whom such a meeting is strictly a fairy tale. A careful review of the historical context shows whether this surprising story is true or not.

Amenemhat I had to have known of the existence of the kingdom of Elam (Awan I), through the Mesopotamian merchants who came to Byblos<sup>59</sup>, however the Egyptians never went to Canaan (and of course farther) from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Vandersleyen: 1995, 28-30), because no Egyptian objects like scarabs, between Pepi II (2181-2127) and Senwosret I (1946-1901), have been unearthed in Palestine<sup>60</sup>. Thus, Abraham was a person of distinction<sup>61</sup> for Amenemhat because he came from a far away country (Shinar/ Sumer), which was little known by Egyptians. Furthermore he had information about Chedorlaomer that could be of outstanding importance to Amenemhat I.

Egyptologists do not believe that Abraham's journey took place so early because at the time (c. 2000 BCE) there was no commercial land route between Shinar (Sumer) and Egypt, but this statement is wrong (Mazar: 1990, 105-108).

<sup>59</sup> Merchants were considered as reliable informants (sometimes also as spies) because they were eyewitnesses of what was happening in many cities. As there was no mail service at that time, international merchants were also often used as messengers.

<sup>60</sup> However, a few pharaohs, like Mentuhotep II (2045-1994), could have reached the city of Sharuhén, north of Sinai (Ward: 1961, 37-40).

<sup>61</sup> The Bible gives very few details on the social position of Abraham when he came into Egypt, it says only that he had accumulated goods and had acquired people in Haran (Gn 12:5) and then he founded the city of Hebron (Gn 13:18, 23:2; Nb 13:22), which entails having many servants in his service.

There was a commercial land route between Sumer (Ur, Uruk) and Lebanon<sup>62</sup> (Ugarit, Byblos) used by Babylonians merchants with their donkeys, then a commercial sea route between Syria and Egypt (Heliopolis) used by Phoenicians with their ships and a commercial land route between Egypt (Sinai) and Syria<sup>63</sup> used by Bedouins with their camels (Gn 37:25). Archaeology confirms that there was a trade route from Uruk to Ugarit or Byblos along the Euphrates (Butterlin: 2003, 15-18,196-198). The first historical data about this international trade comes from the archives of Mari (Michel: 1996, 385-426), which give numerous details about the Assyrian merchants who travelled from Assur in Assyria to Kanesh (Kültepe) in Anatolia via Carkemish in Syria from the time of Erišu I (1783-1834). The long route followed by Abraham (along the Euphrates)<sup>64</sup> for completing his trip from Ur (Sumer) to Haran, then to Shechem and finally to Tanis (Egypt), is in harmony with the historical context of that time. We know for example that Assyrian merchants needed around 3 months for their travels from Assur to Kanesh (c. 1500 km) with a caravan of 300 donkeys (each donkey could carried a load of 90 kg) and 300 men (for security reasons). There was an important trade of tin, which came from Elam to Carchemish (then to Aleppo and Ugarit) via Larsa and Ešnunna. Consequently, Abraham could have left Ur to go to Carchemish with a caravan of 300 donkeys and 300 men (i.e. a crowd of around 1200-2000 people). When he arrived at Haran “caravan city”, Abraham had to buy camels to continue his trip to the south of Canaan (Negeb) by the road called the King’s Road, because some parts of that road crossed dry and hot regions (northern Arabia). When he arrived in Canaan, Abram broke camp and journeyed toward the Negeb but afterward went down toward Egypt because of a famine (Gn 12:9-10). The way to Egypt is called the “way to Shur<sup>65</sup>” in the Bible (Gn 16:7, 20:1) and many scholars (Hoffmeier, Moshier: 2013, 485-510) think that the “Ways of Horus (*w3wt Hr*)” was the actual name of that route, which connected Egypt and Asia (the earliest occurrences date to the 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty). It had a dual function, military and trade.

It is interesting to note that the biblical description of southern Canaan as well as northern Egypt is rigorously accurate and in line with what archaeologists have discovered. According to the biblical text, Abraham founded Hebron “*Confederation*” (Gn 23:2) and then Beer-Sheba “*Well of the Oath*” (Gn 21:31) and finally Tanis “*Moving tents*” (Nb 13:22). The geographical description of these cities as well as their location (below) with respect to the “*Way of Shur*” (the “*Ways of Horus*”) is in full agreement with archaeology. The

<sup>62</sup> For example we know that Gilgamesh, a king of Uruk (2460-2400), and Sargon, the 1<sup>st</sup> king of Akkad (2243-2187), reached Lebanon with its famous cedars (Epic of Gilgamesh III:9-12).

<sup>63</sup> For example the silver goblet from Ain Samiya, near Jericho (southern Canaan), dated c. 2100-2000 BCE was likely manufactured in northern Syria from a Sumerian copy (Mazar: 1990, 167-171).

<sup>64</sup> There was a sea route on Euphrates. For example, AZInum (c. 1680 BCE) managed a flotilla of 15 boats on Euphrates with a capacity of 300 *gur* each (1 *gur* = 253 l), each boat was manoeuvred by 6 men.

<sup>65</sup> Shur means “wall” in Hebrew (Gn 49:22), this could have a link with the “Walls of the Ruler” built by Amenemhat I.

city called Kadesh “*Holy place*” (Gn 14:7) corresponds to ‘Ain Qadeis in Sinai (“*Holy Fountain*” in Arabic) close to ‘Ain-Qudeirat/ Hazzar-addar (Nb 34:3-5).

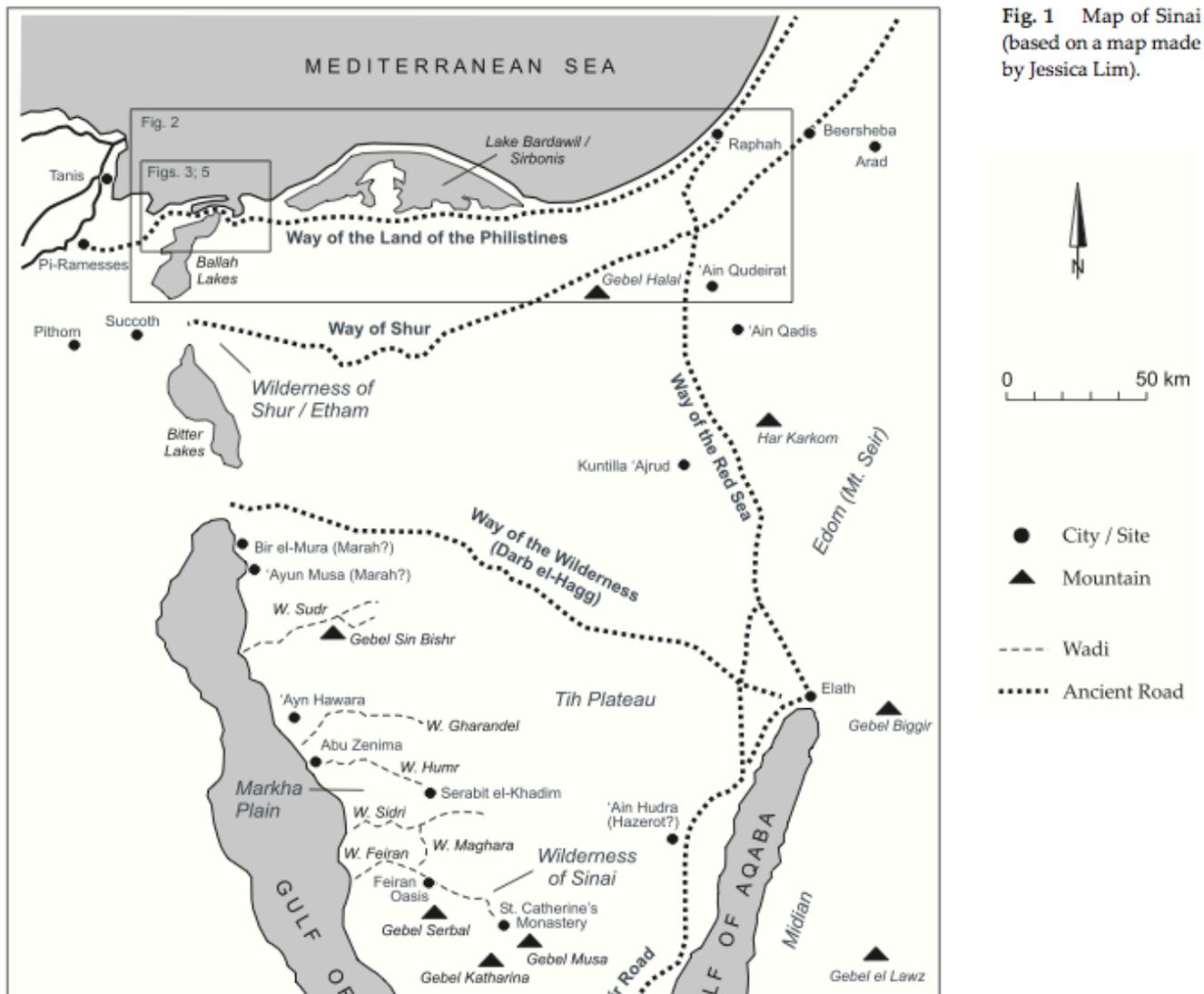


Fig. 1 Map of Sinai (based on a map made by Jessica Lim).

Given that Egyptologists refuse the existence of Chedorlaomer, they do not understand why Amenemhat I took action against the Asiatics of Canaan (*Aamu*) because they were not a threat for Egypt at that time (in any case much less so than Libyans and Nubians)<sup>66</sup>. Two main sources highlight the situation: that of Neferty written during the reign of Amenemhat I (1975-1946) and that of Sinuhe written during the reign of Senwosret I (1946-1901). The Prophecy of Neferty says: *Ameny (Amenemhat I) will build the 'Walls of the Ruler', life, prosperity and life, to prevent Asiatics ('3mw) from going into Egypt. They beg water in the customary manner in order to let their flocks drink.* However the Sinuhe story says: *I reached the 'Walls of the Ruler' which were made to repulse the Asiatics (sttyw), to trample the Bedouin (mniv š').* There is an apparent anomaly because the Asiatics were first of all Canaanites ('3mw) whereas they were afterwards sand-dwellers (sttyw) and Bedouins of Sinai. Besides, Sinuhe as high-ranking administrator of Amenemhat I bore the title: *Nobleman and overlord, governor and canal-cutter, sovereign among the Asiatics (ity m styw).* Furthermore, when Sinuhe was returning to Egypt from his

<sup>66</sup> After Amenemhat I's death: *He [Senwosret I] had been sent (...) to smite those who were among the Libyans* (The Story of Sinuhe, l. 15).

stay in Syria-Palestine, he and his entourage stopped at the 'Ways of Horus'. We are informed that there was a military commander to whom he reported. He in turn dispatched a message to Itj-tawy, the new capital, to inform Senwosret I of his arrival. The officer was a: *ts im nty m-s3 phrt* "commander in charge of the patrol", thus the military commander of the 'Ways of Horus' had mainly a control mission of travellers, without showing any animosity towards those who were coming from Canaan. Thus, who were those mysterious Asiatics targeted by these ancient texts? The biblical explanation is excellent, the Mesopotamian kings who controlled southern Canaan were potential enemies, even if this threat had been punctual and had lasted only 14 years (1968-1954).

Two points indirectly confirm the biblical narrative about Abraham and Chedorlaomer: 1) although the Egyptians never went into Canaan before Amenemhat I, the Execration Texts contain a very well informed report about many Canaanite cities (who was the informant?), 2) in addition, the spelling of these Canaanite cities is not Canaanite but their ending is in Old Babylonian characterized by mimation (ending in *-um/-im*), a language spoken in Ur which disappeared after the collapse of this famous city (Huehnergard: 2000, 258-259; Vacin: 2009, 59-60). Several points show that Amenemhat I took the Elamite threat very seriously. He feared that, after having annexed the south of Canaan (Sodom area), which was a wealthy area, Chedorlaomer would succeed in annexing the Sinai and then northern Egypt (Delta). One has to know that trade and diplomacy were closely linked at that time. The main income of a king came from taxes levied on traveling merchants who benefited in return of armed protection (provided by a contingent of about 300 to 600 soldiers) on the territory crossed. To avoid being attacked by an enemy, several kings of a region (between 10 to 20)<sup>67</sup> could forge alliances with a great king in order to receive "international" protection in case of aggression. A great king could unite a set of other great kings and thereby form a confederation of vassal kingdoms (which had to pay tribute to their great king). These big confederations functioned as empires. If a vassal king was breaking his alliance with the "emperor" (by stopping to pay tribute), he was attacked by an army provided by the other kings of the confederation (with a total of 10,000 troops in case of war, if 20 kings had given a garrison of 500 soldiers). This is apparently what happened with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah<sup>68</sup> who rebelled and were therefore attacked by an expeditionary force (of around 2000 soldiers because there were 4 kings) led by Chedorlaomer (Gn 14:1-5). Amenemhat I had likely feared that Chedorlaomer would forge alliances with the nomarchs of northern Egypt and consequently that the Delta region would become a vassal kingdom of Elam. To thwart this annexation, he undertook radical and unprecedented measures (in

<sup>67</sup> According to a letter from Mari (c. 1680 BCE): *There is no king who alone is powerful — 10 or 15 kings follow Hammurabi, the lord of Babylon, as many for Rim-Sin, the lord of Larsa, as many for Ibal-pi-El of Eshnunna, and as many for Amut-pi-El of Qatna, [but] 20 kings follow Yarim-lim, the Lord of Yambad [Aleppo].*

<sup>68</sup> In the Execration Texts that region is called Upper Shutu[m] and Lower Shutu[m].

1957 BCE) which can not be explained otherwise: 1) he moved his capital in the south (Thebes) to the north of Egypt (Itj-tawy) to better control the area; 2) he named his son co-regent (Senwosret) to ensure his succession in case of assassination (which moreover happened); 3) he established checkpoints on the “*Ways of Horus*”, this line of fortifications was called the “*Walls of the Ruler*” (Hoffmeier: 2006, 1-20). Given this exceptional context the arrival of Abram in Egypt was perceived by Amenemhat as providential because this eminent character, who was an “international merchant” coming from Shinar, knew well therefore Chedorlaomer and, by luck, also his expansionism in southern Canaan. Accordingly, for Amenemhat I, Abram was the providential “whistle-blower of Chedorlaomer’s conspiracy”.

In which language did Abram speak to Amenemhat I? The answer is likely Old Babylonian, or Old Canaanite<sup>69</sup>, with an interpreter because we know that there were only two international languages at the time: Egyptian to the south of Byblos<sup>70</sup> (Canaan) and Old Babylonian to the east of Byblos<sup>71</sup> (Syria). At least three indices can be used to date the oldest execration texts around the time of Amenemhat I: 1) the link to historical period of conflict, 2) the transcription of Palestinian city names and 3) the transcription of Byblos name:

- ✓ As execration texts were state-sponsored they had to be linked with an Egyptian conflict situation. During the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty only two conflicts with the land of Canaan are mentioned: a first one in the northern Delta dated year 24 of Amenemhat I with the army general Nesu-Montu and a second one to Shechem during Senwosret III's reign (1855-1836) with the army general Khu-Sobek. It is likely that for this second police operation, the same methods were used and same “bewitching” texts were copied again (Vandersleyen: 1995, 91).
- ✓ Most Palestinian cities are transcribed with early Old Babylonian features (Dusseaud: 1940, 170-182), especially the mimation (however the spelling of city names, founded on shards and figurines, is variable<sup>72</sup> and confusing). As the final *m* that appears on all singular, feminine plural nouns and on the dative pronouns, was lost quite early in the Old Babylonian period (Huehnergard: 2000, 258-259), after the collapse of Ur (Vacin: 2009, 59-60), execration texts had to have been written prior to 1912 BCE.

N°	Name	written	pronounced	N°	Name	written	pronounced
E 2	Ashkalon	<i>I-s-q-3-i</i>	Asqala[na]	E 36	‘Anaq	<i>I-‘-n-q-i</i>	A‘aneqa
E 5	Migdol	<i>M-‘-k-t-r-y</i>	M‘aktoley	E 37	Megiddo	<i>M-k-ti</i>	Meketa

<sup>69</sup> Egyptian interpreters were able to speak Old Canaanite (Gn 42:23).

<sup>70</sup> For example, a prince of the land Iry, which was most probably situated near Sidon, had the throne name of king Amenemhet III (1836-1791) translated into West Semitic “*justice of Râ (Šaduqa-Râ)*” but written in hieroglyph *Ddq3-R*‘; bore the epithet “*beloved of Baal (written with the logogram of Seth), lord of Iry (nb i-3-y)*”.

<sup>71</sup> Ibni-[Addu], king of Hazor, whose name is written in Old Babylonian, appears in the letters to the kings of Mari (dated c. 1700 BCE). Ibni is called Yabin in the Bible (Jg 11:1,10).

<sup>72</sup> The Egyptian letter “3” was frequently used, at that time, for rendering the Canaanite letters “q” or “r”, similarly, Egyptian “t” was used instead of Canaanite “d” (Briend, Seux: 1977, 30-36).

E 6	Shechem	<i>S-k-m-i-m</i>	Sekemim	E 43	Yibleam	<i>Y-b-3-i-[mw]</i>	Yebleamu
E 8	Pella	<i>P-i-h-3-w-m</i>	Pahilûm	E 45	Jerusalem	<i>3w-w-š3-3-m-m</i>	[U]rushalimum
E 9	Aphek	<i>I-p-q-w-m</i>	Apeqûm	E 47	Abel	<i>I-b-w-3-m</i>	Abûlum
E 13	Mishal	<i>M-‘š-i-3</i>	Ma‘shal	E 49	Acco	<i>‘k-y</i>	‘Akey
E 14	Rehob	<i>i-3-h-b-w-m</i>	a-Rehobûm	E 52	Sodom (upper)	<i>š-w-t-w</i>	Shûtû[m]
E 15	Hazor	<i>H-d-w-i-3-i</i>	Hadjura	E 53	Sodom (lower)	<i>š-w-t-w</i>	Shûtû[m]
E 17	Ta‘ap ?	<i>T-‘p-w-m</i>	Tj‘apûm	E 54	Arqat	<i>‘3-q-t-m</i>	‘Arqetum
E 20	Beqa	<i>B-q-‘t-m</i>	Beq‘atum	E 56	Qarqar	<i>Q-3-q-3-m</i>	Qarqarum
E 25	‘Ashtaroth	<i>‘s-[ti]-3-t-m</i>	As[t]artum	E 58	Ekron	<i>‘q-3-i</i>	Aqra[n]
E 32	Kanah	<i>Q-n-i</i>	Qena	E 61	Arqat	<i>‘3-q-t-i</i>	‘Arqeta
E 33	Hobah (upper)	<i>I-p-w-m</i>	Apûm	E 62	Megiddo	<i>M-k-ti</i>	Meketa
E 34	Hobah (lower)	<i>I-p-w-m</i>	Apûm	E 63	Byblos	<i>K-b-n-i</i>	Kubena
E 35	Tyr	<i>D-w-3-w-y</i>	Djûrûy	F 1	Arameans	<i>‘3-m-w</i>	those of Aram

✓ The name of Byblos was well known since it had already appeared at Ebla (c. -2300), but it is transcribed into Egyptian *Keben*, not Akkadian *Ku-ub-la<sup>ki</sup>* (c. 2000 BCE). This choice shows that the Egyptians knew this area better than the rest of Canaan, with the exception of Phoenician and Philistine coasts whose city names generally are written without mimation (Aharoni: 1979, 144-147). However, the spelling *Keben* is typical of the Old Kingdom because it became *Kepeni* (*kpnj*) only from the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as in the Tale of Sinuhe<sup>73</sup> (line 52). Therefore the change in spelling took place prior to Senwosret I who reigned from 1946 to 1901 BCE (Horn: 1963, 52-61).

The short period 1965-1945 was eventful since it was marked by the end of the reigns of several great kings: Amenemhat I (1975-1946) in Egypt, Šulgi (2002-1954) in Sumer (Shinar) and Kudur-Lagamar (1990-1954) in Elam, all related to the life of Abram. When Amenemhat understood that the confederation of trans-Jordanian kings had been organized by Kudur-Lagamar and might extend south of Canaan as well as in northern Egypt he organized a defensive alliance to neutralize that “offensive” alliance made of Canaanite kings. As Abram had planned to return to this region, Amenemhat made a covenant with him so that he became an ally on his return to Canaan. For that he gave him a lot of money and gold, but especially a military escort consisting of 318 “trained men” (Gn 14:14), that is a crack regiment, so that he could build alliances with some Canaanite kings.

The Bible states that among the many Egyptian menservants that Abram received (Gn 12:16) there were 318 trained men generated in his household (Gn 14:14). The phrase *hanîkaîw yelîdé betô* literally means “dedicated men born ones of his house” or “borne of/ brought forth” (Gn 21:9) / “produced” (Job 38:28) “of his house” and corresponds exactly to the Akkadian phrase: *wilid bîtim* “house-born slaves” (Chirichigno: 1993, 90-91). These trained men were given to Abraham and not purchased, they were Egyptian servants not Hebrew children, because Abraham was a rich businessman who was the head of a large farm (Gn 13:5-9), not a

<sup>73</sup> It is interesting to note that in the story of Sinuhe no Canaanite city is mentioned, there are only Egyptian names such as “Reten” and “Qedem” instead of “Canaan” and “East (Lebanon)”.

slave merchant (Gn 37:27-28). These “*dedicated men*” were not born in Ur because training an army was the privilege of kings, furthermore, the word “*elite men*” appears for the first time in the Egyptian execration texts (c. -1950), it was never used in Mesopotamia. In addition, if Abram had entered in Egypt with an army of 318 trained men, he would not have been allowed to pass the check points along the “*Way of Shur*” to Egypt because he would have been stopped immediately by the military commanders of the “*Ways of Horus*” who had a control mission of travellers. The term *hanik* “*trained man*” is unique in the whole Bible, but it appears in the execration texts to designate Egyptian elite warriors (Pritchard: 1969, 328-329). Amenemhat therefore had considered Abram as a potential ally (against Chedorlaomer) who could secure the south of Palestine on his return to Shechem (Gn 12:6). Thus, when he came back to Canaan, Abram was considered as a mighty chief of God (Gn 23:6) or a king of God (LXX) who had authority to associate with other chiefs to form a confederation.

Amenemhat I made a strange strategic choice but it is explained by the fact that Egypt had never yet intervened in Canaan and until then Egypt had no standing army but only some warriors or mercenaries recruited as needed. For example, when Pepi I (2237-2195) led a military expedition to southern Palestine during his 18<sup>th</sup> census (year 30) he recruited a few hundred fighters (Vercoutter: 1992, 324-326) as can be inferred from a relief at Deshasheh showing an (unidentifiable) city in Asia (Mazar: 1990, 141-144), but at the same time an army of 20,000 men to quell a revolt in Nubia<sup>74</sup> (*wawat*). The first Egyptian military campaign in Canaan, as far as Shechem, was led by General Khu-Sobek (Peet: 1914, 3-22) under Senwosret III (1855-1836). This police operation, rather than military, did not have the same scale as that led by Abram since there were only 60 soldiers involved: *His majesty went down the river to overthrow the Bedouins of Asia*<sup>75</sup> (*mntw stt*). *His majesty arrived at a region whose name is Sechem (written Skmm as in Execration Texts). His majesty made a prosperous return to the Residence of Life, Prosperity, and Health (his palace). Then Sechem fell together with the vile land of Retenu (Palestine), while I was acting as rearguard. Then the army soldiers came to close quarters to fight with the Asiatics (‘3mw). I struck one down, and caused his arms to be taken away by 2 soldiers, without pausing from the combat. My face pressed on, and I did not turn my back on the Asiatic. As Senwosret (III) lives, I have spoken truly. Then the king placed a staff of electrum in my hand, and a bow and dagger worked with electrum together with handle. Member of the elite, high official, steadfast, easy of bearing, loyal to the one who makes him advance, one to whom the lord of the Two Lands gave his splendor (...) He (Khu-Sobek) says: I was born in year 27 under the majesty of the dual-king Nubkaura (Amenemhat II), justified. When the majesty of the dual-king Khakaura (Senwosret III) arose in the double crown on the Horus throne of the living, his majesty caused me to adopt the profession of warrior of the guard, by the side of his majesty among the 6 men of the Residence.*

<sup>74</sup> Pharaohs of this time could also put military escorts hundreds soldiers to protect the 1600 workers in the turquoise mines (Roccati: 1982, 248-270).

<sup>75</sup> Region of Sinai.

*Behold, I was skilled at his side, and his majesty caused me to be made a Follower of the Ruler, and 60 men were given to me. When his majesty went upstream to overthrow the desert Nubians, I captured a Nubian [at Kenekef?] in the presence of my townsmen. Then I proceeded downstream in attendance with 6 men of the Residence. He appointed me to Inspector of the Followers, 100 men have been given to me as a reward.*

Three factors enabled Abram to defeat the mighty emperor of Elam: 1) he had a crack regiment of 318 Egyptian elite men at his disposal, 2) he attacked him by surprise and held out a ambush at night and 3), finally, the expeditionary force led by Kudur-Lagamar came to perform a police operation with likely 2000 soldiers, not a war which could have mobilized ten times as many soldiers. It may seem surprising that the Elamite Empire (Awan I Dynasty) collapsed after the death of Chedorlaomer, but this amazing phenomenon occurred several times in history. Indeed, large centralized empires were powerful but completely dependent on the will of its emperor. For example, Ibbi-Sîn (1936-1912), last king of the mighty Sumerian empire of Ur III, could mobilize 20,000 men in case of war, but was defeated by the surprise attack of an Amorite king, with 1500 troops (Hamblin: 2006, 158-159), who was a mercenary ally of Išbi-Erra (1923-1890) King of Isin<sup>76</sup>. The mission given to Abraham therefore succeeded beyond expectations when Chedorlaomer was eliminated. When Nesu-Montu, Army General of Amenemhat I, came along the eastern border of the Delta (1953 BCE), it was not to fight against an enemy (not mentioned) but to repatriate the Egyptian crack regiment as well as to take a share of the huge spoils taken initially by Chedorlaomer (Gn 14:21-24).

A few scholars have considered that Abraham's story could have some historical grounds but the famous episode in Egypt between Pharaoh and Abram's wife is considered completely fanciful by all of them (even those who are believers)<sup>77</sup>: *Now a famine arose in the land and Abram made his way down toward Egypt to reside there as an alien, because the famine was severe in the land. And it came about that as soon as he got near to entering Egypt, then he said to Sarai his wife: Please, now! I well know you are a woman beautiful in appearance. So it is bound to happen that the Egyptians will see you and will say, 'This is his wife.' And they will certainly kill me, but you they will preserve alive. Please say you are my sister, in order that it may go well with me on your account, and my soul will be certain to live due to you. So it happened that, as soon as Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians got to see the woman, that she was very beautiful. And the princes of Pharaoh also got to see her and they began praising her to Pharaoh, so that the woman was taken to the house of Pharaoh. And he treated Abram well on her account, and he came to have sheep and cattle and asses and menservants and maidservants and she-asses and camels (Gn 12:10-16). Indeed, the biblical text includes serious anomalies:*

- ✓ Pharaoh (Amenemhat I) had wanted to marry Sarai, a simple commoner, which was impossible since the pharaohs married women coming only from

<sup>76</sup> After a victory, Ishbi-Erra instructed his officials to divide the booty from the Elamite campaign with the Amorites, giving: *890 sheep and goat skins for wrapping silver as gifts for the Amorites when Elam was defeated.*

<sup>77</sup> Paradoxically, Bible scholars have often more faith in archaeology than in the Bible.

- royalty or high clergy. For example Vizier Joseph married Asenath (*ns-n.t* “*She belong to Neith*”) the daughter of Potiphera the priest of Heliopolis (Gn 41:45).
- ✓ Although Abram had induced the pharaoh in error, which prevented the wedding, the latter gave him many and valuable gifts (Gn 12:17-13:2).
  - ✓ Sarai (2028-1901) was 65 years old when she met Amenemhat I in 1963 BCE, but the biblical text reads that she was: *a woman beautiful in appearance*. Although aged 65, Sarai was only half his age<sup>78</sup> (Gn 23:1). Today (2016), female life expectancy at birth in The United States is around 81 years, accordingly, is it still possible to find *a woman beautiful in appearance* when she reached the age of 40 years old? Obviously, even without plastic surgery.
  - ✓ Contrary to what Abram had said, Sarai was not his sister (Gn 12:19). In fact Abram was not a liar because his wife was truly his sister, the daughter of his father but not the daughter of his mother (Gn 20:12).

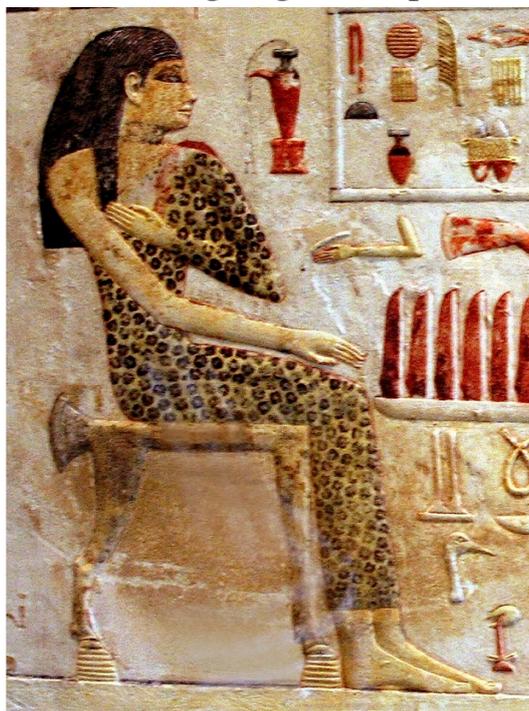
#### WHY DID AMENEMHAT TRY TO MARRY SARAI AND IS THIS STORY REAL?

Concerning Pharaoh’s attempted marriage with Sarai, most Bible scholars see it as a moral tale without historical value. For example, according to the Jewish Encyclopaedia: *The story of Sarah's life, brief and incomplete as it is, presents nevertheless curious repetitions, e.g., the incident with Pharaoh and a similar incident with Abimelech (Gen. xii. 10 et seq. and xx. 1 et seq.). Marriages with half-sisters were, in primitive matriarchy, regarded as anything but incestuous. From the point of view of the history of culture these episodes are very instructive. But it is not very probable that Abraham would have run the risk twice. Moreover, a similar incident is reported in regard to Isaac and Rebecca (ib. xxvi. 6-11). This recurrence indicates that none of the accounts is to be accepted as historical; all three are variations of a theme common to the popular oral histories of the Patriarchs. That women were married in the way here supposed is not to be doubted. The purpose of the story is to extol the heroines as most beautiful and show that the Patriarchs were under the special protection of the Deity.* It is obvious that this pharaoh was not a womanizer, as shows the text of Genesis 12:16, but by marrying Sarai, officially Abram's sister, he wanted to seal an alliance with him. Indeed, marrying a princess was an ancestral way of sealing an alliance with a foreign kingdom. For example Šulgi (2002-1954) took as wife a daughter of a Šakkanakku “Governor” of Mari as well as an ENSI “Lord” of Eshnunna and at least six of his daughters married Elamite princes (Joannès: 2001, 40-42, 822-824, 870-872, 885-887). Similarly, Amarna letters (14<sup>th</sup> century BCE) show that several pharaohs got married to Hittite and Mitannian princesses to seal alliances with these foreign kingdoms. Even the Bible gives some examples of this ancient custom: Havor, a Hivite chieftain, who inhabited the city of Shechem, asked Jacob (1878-1731) to give Dinah his daughter as wife for his son in order to seal an alliance (Gn 34:1-19). King Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh when he married one of his daughters (1Ki 3:1). A difficulty remains to be explained because all these

<sup>78</sup> Similarly Abraham aged 75 was less than half his age (Gn 25:7).

women were princesses and although Sarah means “princess” she did not belong to a Royal Family, she was only the wife of a wealthy businessman who came from Sumer. However King Amenemhat was also a commoner (Bonhême, Forgeau: 2001, 40-42, 822-824, 870-872, 885-887).

Regarding the royal family, Egypt was a special case because pharaoh, as Pontiff, appointed priests and priestesses who became his representatives and were therefore considered to belong to the royal house. Thus Pharaoh gave Joseph, his vizier (in 1758 BCE), Asenath the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On (Heliopolis) as a wife (Gn 41:45). It is interesting to note that the most prestigious title that a pharaoh could grant a woman was to be appointed as his personal funeral priestess, as was the case for Nefertiabet a daughter of Pharaoh Khufu (Dodson, Hilton: 1988, 255-260) depicted with a long wig and a panther skin garment (opposite figure). As we have seen, Amenemhat I presumably considered making a covenant with Abram by marrying his sister: *When Pharaoh's officials saw her they sang her praises to Pharaoh and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household. And Abram was very well treated because of her* (Gn 12:15-16). A cursory reading might suggest that the enormous gift to Abraham by the Pharaoh (Gn 12:20) could be a compensation to clear his name, but this is not the case because Pharaoh was innocent. For this marriage to take place, Amenemhat I had to ennoble Sarai by naming her to the prestigious post of personal funeral priestess. The alliance of an Egyptian king with a foreign sovereign, furthermore sealed by wedding, has always been an exceptional event in Egyptian history. This kind of exceptional event was carved on stelae or pictured by royal statues<sup>79</sup>. Although the wedding of Amenemhat I with Sarai was finally cancelled, it was nearly consumed and has therefore been depicted. As incredible as it seems, we still possess several statues which were made to commemorate this exceptional event.



#### WHEN A STATUE OF AN ANONYMOUS OFFERING BEARER GIVES ANSWER

The statue of the offering bearer dated in the early reign of Amenemhat I, is a masterpiece of Egyptian wood carving which was discovered in a hidden chamber at the side of the passage leading into the rock cut tomb of the royal chief steward Meketre.

<sup>79</sup> Amenemhat (I) emerges now (2015) as more active in his sculptural activity, in the Delta and in the Memphite area, and more creative than is generally assumed. In addition, a small sphinx head found in Tyre bears testimony to an internationalism activity not generally attributed to him (Freed: 2015, 143).



This exceptional woman<sup>80</sup> is not identified whereas she has several features that are absolutely unique throughout Egyptian history: 1) the offering bearer is represented alone whereas usually they are two to four; 2) the size of this statuette (112 cm) is 3 or 4 times the normal size (25 to 40 cm); 3) the finishing of this statuette is exceptional compared to statues of that era; 4) this woman wears a royal wig that proves she belonged to the royal family of Amenemhat I; 5) this woman wears a multi-coloured dress of Canaanite type, which is a unique case because Egyptian women, from female servant to Queen, always wore a white linen dress (Tooley: 1989, 230), without exception<sup>81</sup>.

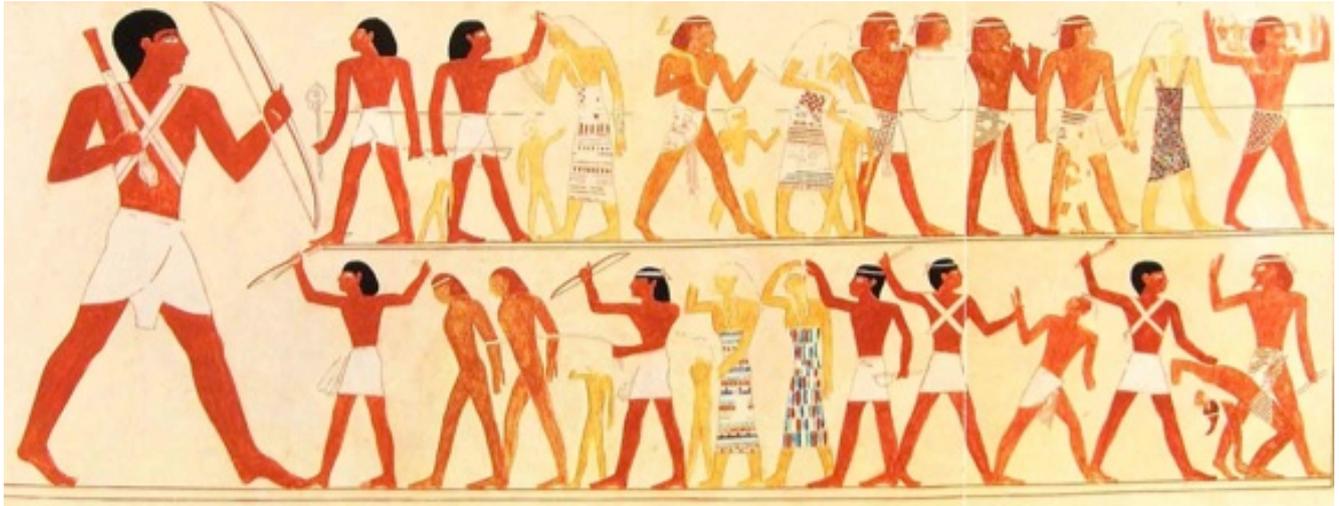
The most surprising anomaly is the fact that this woman belonged to the royal family of Amenemhat I (but was in Meketre's tomb) and she had worn a dress of Canaanite origin, which is absolutely paradoxical. Representations of such colourful and highly patterned textiles are seen in some representations from the early Middle Kingdom, for example, in the Tomb of Inyotef (Jaros-Deckert: 1984, 5) who was Overseer of the audience chamber in the reign of Senwosret I (1946-1901).

<sup>80</sup> Two copies in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York): Accession Number: 20.3.7.

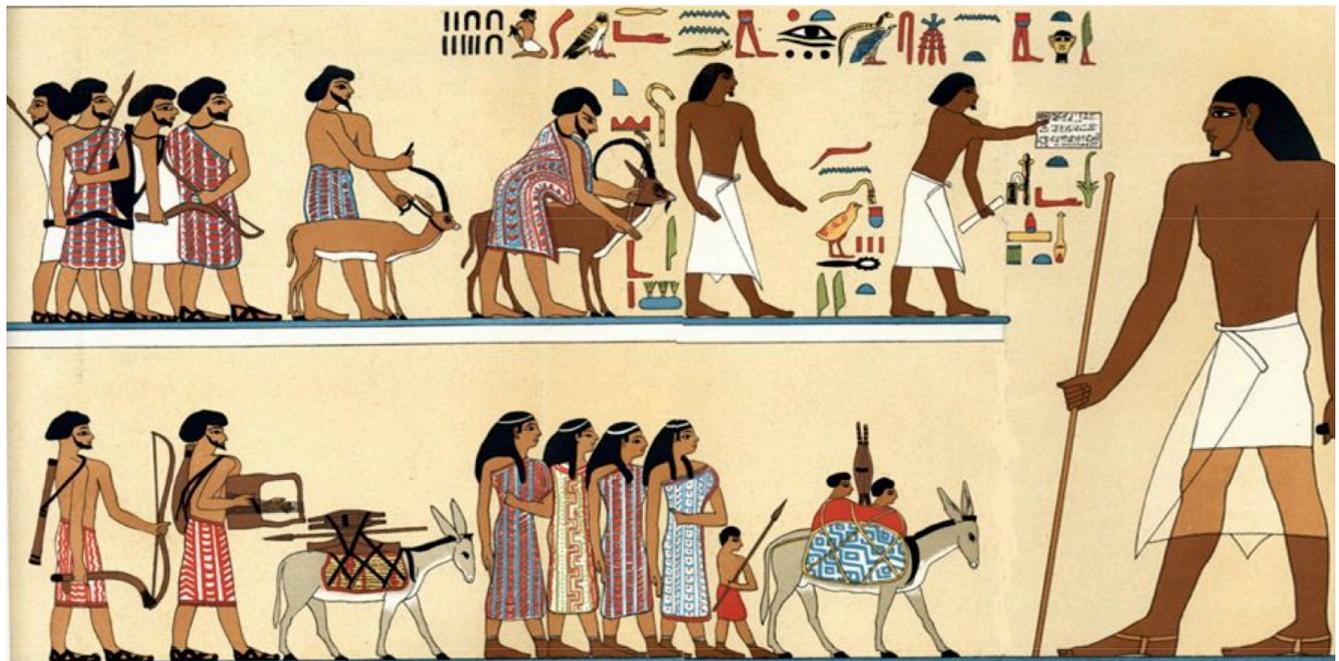
One copy in the Musée du Louvre (Paris): Accession Number E 10781.

<sup>81</sup> Nefertiabet wore a panther skin garment which was a characteristic of Sem priest, not a multi-coloured dress. From the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty the goddess Hathor wore a multi-coloured dress, but Hathor was not a woman of the earthly world.

The scene shows several representations of Asiatic women, who were dwelling in the south of Canaan (Schulman: 1982, 165-183), wearing their multi-coloured dress.



Another illustration often cited as a classic example of Egyptian-Asiatic contact in the early Middle Kingdom is the painting in Tomb No. 3 at Beni Hasan (Kamrin: 2013, 156-169). The Tomb belongs to the nomarch Khnumhotep III, who was Administrator of the Eastern Desert in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Senwosret II's reign (1863-1855).



As a result the female offering bearer in the tomb of Meketre, who belonged to the royal family of Amenemhat I, wore a dress of Canaanite origin, which is apparently an enigma. However, an extensive study of this unique statue (Arnold: 1991, 5-48) help us to define the exact time of its manufacture as well as of its original owner.

First point, the statuettes of offering bearers were placed in the tomb of the deceased to accompany him on his journey into the afterlife in order to continue serving him. According to this Egyptian custom, the female offering

bearer in the tomb of Meketre would have belonged to his staff but it is not the case since there are already in his tomb his four personal offering bearers (below left) in addition of the two Canaanite female offering bearers.

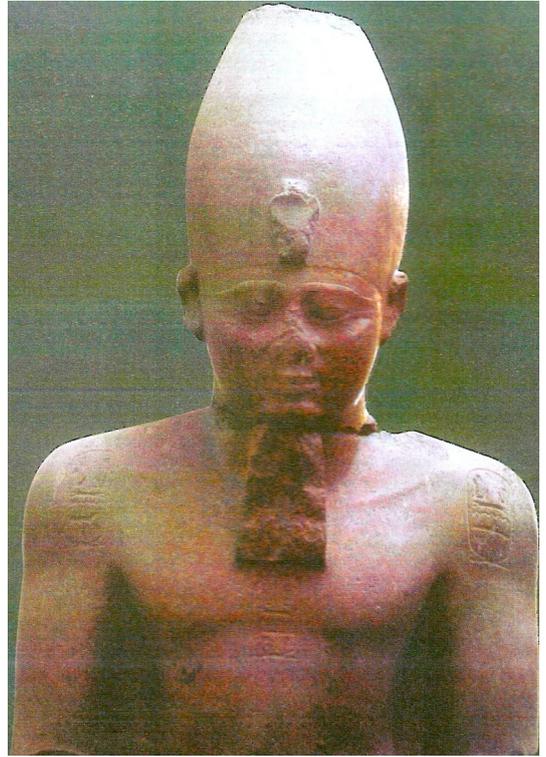


The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York): Accession Number: 20.3.8.

It is noted that whereas the two female offering bearers of Meketre wore royal wigs (quite rare) they nevertheless wore white linen robes, which was the norm (above right). The only explanation of this extraordinary situation is as follows: the other exceptional female offering bearer found in his tomb had been originally intended for the tomb of Amenemhat I, but because of an unexpected event there was a change and this magnificent masterpiece was given to Meketre who placed it then in his own grave. Given that the royal statue of the offering bearer was placed in the tomb after the death of Meketre it is thus important to determine this date in order to know at what time this woman of high status lived. As Meketre was an important character, his career can be reconstituted with accuracy as well as his lifespan (c. 2025-1960)<sup>82</sup>. We know that the statuette of the female offering bearer of Canaanite origin was completed before Meketre's death, which can be fixed precisely.

<sup>82</sup> Meketre first appears in the Shatt er-Rigal rock inscriptions. He is listed there as 'Overseer of the Six Great Tribunal', a judicial title of high rank. The date of the inscription is most probably year 39 of Nebhepetra (2007 BCE). At that time Khety, the owner of the tomb 311, was chancellor. In the year 46 of Nebhepetra, a man named Meru held the office of chancellor, as is known from his stela, now in Turin. Meketre finally appears with the title of chancellor in the limestone reliefs of Mentuhotep II Nebhepetra's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. He must have followed Meru in office after year 46. At the most that leaves years 47 to 51 for Meketre's term of office as chancellor under Mentuhotep II Nebhepetra. Assuming Meketre to have been 20 years old at the time of the Shatt er-Rigal inscriptions, he was around 30 when Nebhepetra died (1994 BCE). At the ascension of Amenemhat I (1975 BCE), Meketre was therefore around 50 years old. He would have been around 65 years old if he died while the funerary monument in the valley northwest of the Ramesseum was still under construction.

Meketre's tomb must be dated during the reign of Amenemhat I because all the proportions of the model figures found in his tomb are from this period<sup>83</sup> (early Dynasty 12) and probably around year 15 of Amenemhat I (1962 BCE)<sup>84</sup>. A second clue allows us to fix the date on which the statuette of the Canaanite woman was manufactured. Indeed, the finishing of this statuette is exceptional and if we compare it to statues of that era, like the colossal statue in red granite of Amenemhat I from Tanis (opposite figure), one can identify the artist who produced such masterpieces<sup>85</sup>: chief steward Nakht. As he was an important character, his career can be reconstituted with accuracy as well as his life span (c. 1992-1932)<sup>86</sup>



because we know that he had served under Senwosret I and must have died in about that king's 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> year (1932 BCE). If he was around 60 when he died it must have been born around 1992 BCE and, consequently, have had started his career when he was around 25-30 years old (1967-1962). Accordingly the statuette of the female offering bearer of Canaanite origin would have been made for Amenemhat I during the period 1967-1962 and then given in 1962 BCE to the Chancellor Meketre (apparently for no reason). According to the biblical account, when Sarai arrived in Tanis (in 1963 BCE) Amenemhat had wanted to marry her in order to seal an alliance with Abram. Amenemhat likely prepared this exceptional wedding but when he learned that Sarai was Abram's wife he cancelled its process and gave the beautiful statues of his future royal

<sup>83</sup> The proportions of the statuettes are very different, for those belonging to the reign of Mentuhotep II (2045-1994) the height of bust is 70% of the skirt and the height of head 30%, but for those belonging to early Dynasty 12 (1975-1900) the height of bust is 55% of the skirt and the height of head 51%.

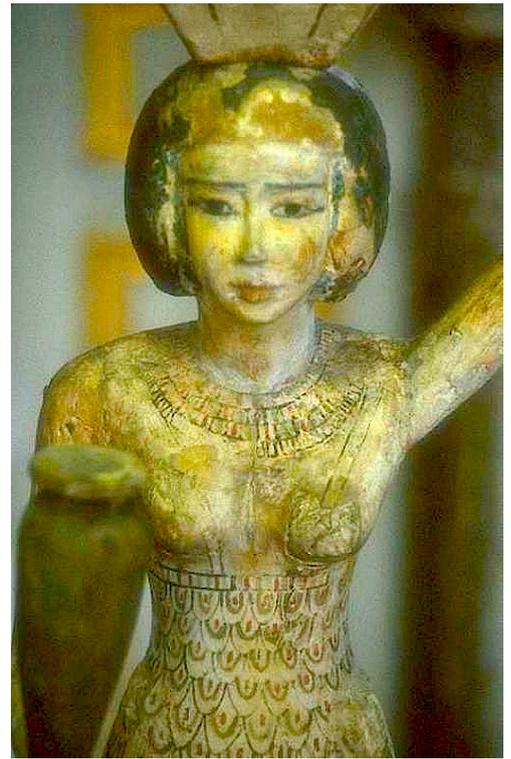
<sup>84</sup> In the valley behind the Ramesseum the burials of the chancellor Intef, who may have been the brother or son of Meketre, and Meketre's 'overseer of the storehouse', Wah, were laid down during the years following Meketre's death. Judging from his mummy, Wah was in his thirties when he died and may have been the son of Meketre. The linen sheets used for the mummy's wrapping were marked in ink with the dates "year 2", "year 5", and "year 5" each coupled with Wah's name. A "year 15" seems to be followed by another person's name. If the "year 15" mark dates from the reign of Amenemhat I, Wah was buried after year 15 of Amenemhat I (1962 BCE) and Meketre died just before this date.

<sup>85</sup> The colossal statue of Amenemhat I is now in the Egyptian Museum (Cairo JE 37470). The similarities of the face of the two Meketre women is striking: eyes and mouth are well distanced from each other and the smooth cheeks occupy a fair amount of space. In reliefs, the tense indentations at the nostrils do not disappear with Amenemhat I. They are still prominent in the kings' and deities' faces on the Lisht reliefs.

<sup>86</sup> Among statues of non-royal persons, the granite statue of Nakht found in his tomb at Lisht North, and now in Cairo, is surely one of the most important works of the time. But the style of statue points to an origin in the reign of Amenemhat I because of its close relationship to the two statues of that king and it is consistent with the location of Nakht's tomb near the pyramid of Amenemhat I at Lisht North. Nakht's life may well have spanned part of the reigns of Amenemhat I and Senwosret I; the statue for his tomb was probably created when Nakht was still serving the older king.

wife to Meketre his Chancellor in order to honour his death, which had just happened (in 1962 BCE), by his royal gifts. There was no need for Amenemhat to keep a statue of a wedding that failed.

Amenemhat probably gave a third copy of this beautiful statue (opposite) now exhibited in the Louvre (ref. E 10781): the offering bearer is represented alone whereas usually they are two to four; the size of this statuette made of coated and painted ficus wood (H. 1.08 m) is 3 or 4 times the normal size (25 to 40 cm); the finishing of this statuette is exceptional compared to statues of that era; this woman wears an Egyptian wig but also a multi-coloured dress of Canaanite type. However, contrary to the two other offering bearers, she does not wear a royal wig and her face is obviously non-Egyptian (small eyes and fleshy mouth). These two details confirm the biblical account: the woman was very beautiful and the wedding had not begun (Gn 12:14-16).



If one combines all the chronological, historical and archaeological information, the following scenario is obtained: When Abram arrived in Egypt in 1963 BCE with his group of servants (about 2000 people) he settled in a place that would become the city of Tanis (Zoan). Pharaoh Amenemhat I was informed immediately of his presence and contacted him because he was concerned about the powerful confederation created by Kudur-Lagamar in the region called Shutu[m] in southern Canaan. To block the progress of this powerful Mesopotamian king, Amenemhat I had planned to create an Amorite rival confederation and in order to achieve his goal he proposed an alliance to Abram who accepted. Amenemhat began preparations for this alliance by appointing Sarai as a bearer of offering to his personal service (which was a prestigious function) then by marrying her to seal this alliance. When Amenemhat was informed that Sarai was Abram's wife, he offered the magnificent statues of Sarai to Meketre, his Chancellor, but even though he was a bit annoyed by Abram's omission<sup>87</sup>, he did not change his plan and put a crack regiment in Abram's service and gave him a lot of gold and silver so that he could negotiate alliances with Amorite leaders in southern Canaan (Negeb). In the year 20 of Amenemhat I, in 1957 BCE, Tanis was built exactly 7 years after Hebron (Nb 13:22), the capital city of Egypt (Thebes) was moved to the north (Itj-tawy "*Seizer of the Two Lands*") and his son (Senwosret) was established co-regent. Abram went up out of Egypt to the Negeb with Lot (Gn 13:1) and formed an Amorite confederation with 3 princes Aner, Eshcol and Mamre (Gn

<sup>87</sup> Abram's fear of being killed by Pharaoh (Gn 12:12) was therefore unfounded (Gn 12:16,19-20).

14:24). In 1955 BCE the confederation of Transjordan kings around Sodom and Gomorrah refused to pay tribute and rebelled against Kudur-Lagamar (Gn 14:3-4). In 1954 BCE, Abram mustered his army of 318 Egyptian elite men as well as his three Amorite confederates (Gn 14:13-14,24) to retaliate against the four Mesopotamian kings by means of an ambush at night, thus Chedorlaomer was "cut out" (Gn 14:15-17, LXX). In 1953 BCE, Nesu-Montu, Army General of Amenemhat I, repatriated to Egypt the army which had been given to Abram as well as a part of the booty (Gn 14:24).

Abram's victory over the king of Elam and his three allies, even if it was largely due to the army lent by Amenemhat I, was a turning point in human history: 1) the Elamite Empire of Awan disappeared forever and was replaced by the (much less powerful) Elamite kingdom of Šimaski, in addition, the Elamites never came back in that region<sup>88</sup>; 2) the kingdom of Gutium disappeared forever and was not replaced; 3) Egyptian fears against the Canaanites disappeared and the small Canaanite kingdoms were once again considered as business partners, however, because Sodom area was destroyed in 1940 BCE, the region called Shutu[m] disappeared forever and was replaced several centuries later by the land of Moab; 4) the empire of Ur III was weakened by the loss of its kings belonging to the kingdom of Akkad managed by Chedorlaomer from 1968 BCE, which resulted in a decline that would lead finally to its collapse in 1912 BCE. For historians the rapid collapse of the powerful empire of Ur III remains a mystery (Joannès: 2001, 878-882). In fact after the collapse of the Elamite empire (in 1954 BCE) several Sumerian kings continued associating with the Elamite kingdom of Šimaski rather than returning to the former empire of Ur. Finally, Išbi-Erra (1923-1890), Sumerian king of Isin, decided with Kindadu (1915-1904), king of Šimaski, to rebel against Ibin-Sîn (1936-1912) the last king of Ur III.

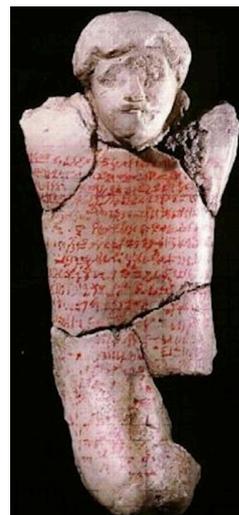
What happened in Canaan after the death of Chedorlaomer in 1954 BCE? In fact nothing special, except a peaceful atmosphere:

- ✓ In **1955-1954 BCE** was the culmination of Chedorlaomer's expansionism. When Abram returned to Canaan, the Transjordan kings revolt was at its peak (Gn 14:4), presumably because taxes (or looting) became unbearable. This confiscation must have been important because an exceptional booty from Šimaški (Elam) was reported during the year 47 of Šulgi (1955 BCE). It was not a looting of Šimaški because its ambassadors arrived at Ur just after the death of Šulgi (1954 BCE), which demonstrates good relations between the two cities. When Chedorlaomer conducted once again a razzia in the region, in which Lot was the victim (Gn 14:11-12), Abraham was not caught off guard and was able to mobilize immediately the expeditionary corps Amenemhat I had placed at his disposal. Having lived in Mesopotamia, Abraham knew well the imperialist aims of Chedorlaomer (from 1968 BCE)

<sup>88</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Mesopotamian king who returned to the region was the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681-669).

and was therefore able to inform Amenemhat of the operation of the Elamite Empire. Abraham was also supported by 3 local Amorite allies (Gn 14:13).

- ✓ In **1953 BCE**, Abram remained in the Negeb and Hagar<sup>89</sup>, his Egyptian maidservant, was pregnant with Ishmael (Gn 16:1-5). The fact that Hagar ran away to Egypt when Abram was 86 years old (Gn 16:6-7,16, 21:17-21) proves that the region was once again peaceful. The biblical text does not say, but it seems logical to assume that most of the Egyptian mercenaries made available to Abraham, the task force of “318 trained men”, returned with Army General Nesu Montu during his expedition along the eastern border of the Delta in the year 24 of Amenemhat I.
- ✓ In **1948 BCE** a graffito inscribed on a rock at Korosko reads: *Amenemhat came to overthrow Wawat (Nubia) in his year 29, however he claimed later in his teaching to his son Senwosret (Menu: 2004, 152-156): I subdued the people of Wawat (Nubia), and brought away the Medjay (a Nubian tribe). I have made the Asiatics (Styw) walking like dogs (Teaching of King Ammenemes I to His Son Sesostris §12).* Having sponsored Abraham, Amenemhat I took legitimately the credit of his victory over the “Asiatic” kings. The execration texts were written on figurines (opposite) depicting “bewitched” characters<sup>90</sup> without beard, accordingly those kings were not Canaanites (*a’amu*) but Sumerians.
- ✓ In **1946 BCE** Amenemhat I was murdered and Senwosret I started to reign but because of some troubles in Egypt, Sinuhe, a high official decided to flee to the north of Canaan (eastern Lebanon): *I set off for Byblos and approached Qedem (East), and spent a year and a half there. Amusinenshi —he was a ruler of Upper Retenu (Palestine)— took me and said to me: You will be well with me, for you will hear the speech of Egypt. He said this because he knew my reputation (30-35) He (Senwosret I) has been made to smite the Asiatics from Sinai (sttyw) and trample the nomads. Let him know your name. Do not plot anything against His Majesty, he will do everything for you that his father did, he will not fail to do good for the country that will be loyal to him (72-75) Now you are here, you shall stay with me. What I shall do for you is good. He placed me at the head of his children. He married me to his eldest daughter and let me choose for myself from his country, from the choicest of his surrounds on the border of the next country. It was a fair land, called Iaa (77-81).* Several points confirm the biblical account: Sinuhe encouraged the Canaanite king to forge a covenant of peace with Egypt. Unlike Abraham, Sinuhe who had lived in Egypt did not know at all Canaan since he was unable to name a single city (except Byblos), or country, and the only one that is mentioned (Iaa/ Arar?) is completely unknown. To forge an alliance of peace, the Canaanite king Amunsienshi married Sinuhe to one of his daughters. The last puzzling detail in the story of Sinuhe, the



<sup>89</sup> The name Hagar was a surname meaning “flight/ fugitive” a word similar to the Arabic name Hegira.

<sup>90</sup> The text ends with: *all the Asiatics [a’amu] of Byblos (...), Jerusalem (...) and of Yasapa. Their warriors, their allies (...) those who would revolt, plot, fight, think to fight, and those who would consider revolting in this entire country.*

Canaanite king Amunsienshi was not Canaanite but was the son of a Sumerian king (from Shinar) because in Egyptian his name means: “*Asiatic-son-of-Ensi* (*'mw-s3-n-nšī*)” and the word “Ensi” means “Lord” in Sumerian<sup>91</sup>.

- ✓ In **1940 BCE** Sodom (Shutu[m]) was destroyed (Gn 19:24-28). At the age of 99 Abraham returned to settle near Egypt (Gn 17:1; 20:1). Abimelech, king of Gerar<sup>92</sup> (north west of Beer-sheba), wanted to marry Sarah<sup>93</sup> (Gn 20:1-11) in order to forge an alliance of peace (Gn 21:27-34). Like Pharaoh, Abimelech was not a womanizer, as the text of Genesis 20:6 shows (in fact, Abraham had been excessively cautious exhibiting his wife as his sister).
- ✓ In **1938 BCE** birth of Isaac (Gn 21:5), Ishmael was 14 years old (Gn 16:16). Five years later (in 1933 BCE) Ishmael was mocking Isaac (Gn 21:9), that event was symbolically the beginning of the affliction in Egypt (Ga 4:22-25), which ended in 1533 BCE, 400 years later (Gn 15:13).
- ✓ In **1912 BCE** collapse of Ur III Empire.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed a few years before Isaac was born. The exact meaning of the names is uncertain but presumably they are of Semitic origin (MacDonald: 2000, 52). The region of Sodom is called Shutu[m] (*Šwtw*) in Execration Texts. This megalopolis must have been important at that time because there were several princes whose names are all Semitic<sup>94</sup> (Dussaud: 1927, 213-233). Archaeology showed there were several big sites in that region<sup>95</sup>, which all disappeared around 2000 BCE. The interpretation of this huge and sudden collapse is controversial and the reasons of one of the greatest crises in the history of the land are still unknown (Mazar: 1990, 169-171). The name of this region appears for the last time in the form “*Shu[tum]*” in Tomb No. 3 at Beni Hasan<sup>96</sup> (dated 1858 BCE). One of the inscriptions that accompanies the painting describes the arrival of the Asiatics, led by Absha[r], a *ruler of a foreign land* (*ḥq3 ḥ3st*) who are bringing black eye-paint to the nomarch Khnumhotep<sup>97</sup>. As galena, the material from which the black eye-paint is ground, is commonly found along the Red Sea coast and near Aswan, these Asiatics had to be Bedouins from Shutu[m], a region which would then be called Moab (*Mw-i-b-w*) by Egyptians from Ramses II (Ahituv: 1984, 143,184). This name change is

<sup>91</sup> The Sumerian word ENŠI<sub>2</sub>, meaningless in Canaanite, is translated *iššakku* “city-ruler” into Akkadian.

<sup>92</sup> The Philistine city of Gerar (Tel Haror) flourished in the period 2000-1550 (Negev, Gibson: 2006, 254).

<sup>93</sup> At that time Sarai was aged 88 years, which represented 2/3 of her life and was therefore equivalent to an age of 54 for a woman with a life span of 81 years (in 2015).

<sup>94</sup> Ayyabum “*where [is] Father*”, Kushar “*prosperity*”, Zabulanu “*elevation*”, Shumuabu “*edict of Father*”.

<sup>95</sup> The archaeological survey of the area southeast of the Dead Sea conducted by Walter Rast and Thomas Schaub showed several Early Bronze sites (c. 3300–2000 BCE) like Bab edh-Dhra, Numeira, Safi, Feifa and Khanazir, which proves its antiquity.

<sup>96</sup> The Tomb belongs to the nomarch Khnumhotep III, who was also an “*Overseer of the Eastern Hill Countries*”. Besides illustrating the presentation of various types of “cattle” to the nomarch, the painting depicts the arrival of a group of 37 Asiatics who are being led by an Egyptian with the title “*Overseer of hunters*”. They are bearded and wear the traditional dress of Semites; they carry weapons typical of Middle Bronze Age Canaan, including what appear to be composite bows and a “duckbilled” axe.

<sup>97</sup> Here designated as the “*Administrator of the Eastern Desert*” in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Senwosret II's reign (1863-1855). Absha[r]'s name (*Ibš3*) is Semitic and means maybe “*Father [is] prince*”.

consistent with the biblical text since the former region of Sodom (Gn 10:19) became the “*field of Moab*” (Gn 36:35). Moab was Lot's firstborn who dwelt near Sodom (Gn 19:23-38). The historical existence of Sodom and Gomorrah is still in dispute by archaeologists, as little archaeological evidence has ever been found in the regions where they were supposedly situated<sup>98</sup>. According to the famous geographer Strabo (-64 24): *Many other evidences are produced to show that the country is fiery; for near Masada are to be seen rugged rocks that have been scorched, as also, in many places, fissures and ashy soil, and drops of pitch that emit foul odours to a great distance, and ruined settlements here and there; and therefore people believe the oft-repeated assertions of the local inhabitants, that there were once 13 inhabited cities in that region of which Sodom was the metropolis, but that a circuit of about 60 stadia [=11 km] of that city escaped unharmed; and that by reason of earthquakes and of eruptions of fire and of hot waters containing asphalt and sulphur, the lake burst its bounds, and rocks were enveloped with fire; and, as for the cities, some were swallowed up and others were abandoned by such as were able to escape* (Geography XVI:2:44). Among the 650 place names appearing in the (partial) geographical atlas found at Ebla<sup>99</sup> (c. 2300-2200), there is a trade route from Ebla to Seir (region of Sodom), which was important at that time as archaeology confirmed (Ibrahim: 2009, 81-95)<sup>100</sup>. The names Sodom, Admah and Zeboiim (Gn 14:2) also appear as: *Sadam/Sidamu*, *Admut* and *Sabiim* on some tablets (Pettinato, Dahood: 1981, 287)<sup>101</sup>, however the transcriptions of Canaanite names in the Ebla geographical atlas are approximate. Furthermore the link between the Ebaite *Sadam*, the Egyptian *Šutu* and the Canaanite *Sudum* (Sodom) is far from easy<sup>102</sup>.

The use of absolute chronology confirms the existence of Abraham (2038-1863) as well as the reign of the king of Elam: Chedorlaomer (1990-1954). How do archaeologists manage to cancel all this evidence and consequently discredit the Bible? What are the objections used by archaeologists to deny the historicity of Abraham?

<sup>98</sup> Among scholars who locate the cities of the Plain in the southern area of the Dead Sea, there are some who posit that Sodom, Gomorrah, and other cities have been submerged by rising waters.

<sup>99</sup> The Syrian city of Ebla had to be mighty at that time because an alabaster vase on behalf of Pepi I (2238-2195) was discovered in the palace of Iš'ar-Damu (2245-2210), the last king of Ebla.

<sup>100</sup> For example, the names of a few cities are recognizable on this ancient path (from north to south): n°199 LÚ-*a-bi-ra-um*<sup>ki</sup> (Ibleam), n°202 babbar<sup>ki</sup> (Lebona), n°210 *ad-mu-ut*<sup>ki</sup> (Admah), n°211 *sa-dam*<sup>ki</sup> (Sodom), n°214 *i-ti-ru*<sup>ki</sup> (Ataroth), n°215 *'a-wu-ru*<sup>ki</sup> (Aroer), n°217 *sa-ri-at*<sup>ki</sup> (Seir) and n°219 *aq-qá-bū*<sup>ki</sup> (Aqabah).

<sup>101</sup> Tablet TM.76.G.524 *si-da-mu*<sup>ki</sup>, Tablet TM.75.G.2231, obv. X 4 *sa-dam*<sup>ki</sup>, Tablet TM.75.G.2231, obv. I 7 *ad-mu-ut*<sup>ki</sup>, *sa-bi-im*<sup>ki</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> The word *sadam/sidamu* does not mean anything in Akkadian but it is close to the unusual Hebrew word *siddim* in Genesis 14:3 which means “(cultivated) fields” and makes the link between the “*Valley of Sodom*” and the “*Valley of the (cultivated) fields*”. In Old Babylonian the word *šutu(m)* means “tenant farming” similar to the word *siddim* (Gn 14:3). In Numbers 24:17 (LXX) the chiefs of Moab are compared to Seth's sons but it is likely a wordplay (buttock's sons) because Moab's father was Lot and the word *seth* (נש) means “buttock” in Hebrew (Is 20:4) or “setting” (Gn 4:25). Consequently, the former name of Sodom was probably Šutum in Akkadian (c. 2000 BCE) and was transcribed Šutu into Egyptian. Change of consonants was frequent at that time. For example, in Egyptian Execration texts: Šekem is transcribed Sekemim, Megido => Meketa, Yibleam => Yeblea, Aškalon => Asqala, Ekron => Aqra and so on.

# Abraham historicity: frequent objections

André Parrot (1901-1980) was a French archaeologist specializing in the ancient Near East<sup>1</sup>. Conservative deputy of the national Museums (1937), he was the first director of the Louvre Museum, a position he held from 1968 to 1972. He led the journals *Syria* and *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*. Thus Parrot was an outstanding archaeologist whose scientific competence was universally recognized, but what is more important, he has always supported the historicity of Abram's account. He wrote for example: *To understand or try to understand the religion of the patriarchs, it is therefore necessary to place them in their context and in their time. But here and all impartial specialists really agree: life as it appears in the narratives of Genesis devoted to them, is perfectly in line with what we know today, through other channels, of the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium but imperfectly with another later period* (Parrot: 1962, 11). But now, since the 70s, it has become fashionable to be sceptical about everything and according to mainstream Egyptologists as well as prominent archaeologists, Abram's story, as it is written in the Pentateuch, is a myth because there is no mention of Abram in ancient sources, there would never have been any Hebrew writings before 1200 BCE, so three centuries after the time when Moses is supposed to have written his book (Dt 31:24), nor Philistines (Gn 21:34), nor Hittites (Gn 23:10), nor Arameans (Dt 26:5), nor Chaldeans (Gn 11:28), and finally there is no way to date the biblical events in the time of Abraham. Paradoxically, it is easy to prove that all of these assertions are false. Let us examine some of them.

## WHY DO WE FIND NO MENTION OF ABRAM IN ANCIENT SOURCES?

One must know that although the three "emperors" of the powerful Elamite dynasty of Awan ruled the land of Akkad for almost a century at Abram's time, there is still no Akkadian tablet found with their names. Accordingly the fact that Abram's name does not appear in any neo-Sumerian tablets is quite normal. Indeed, the names on neo-Sumerian tablets belong mainly to aristocracy as well as to high officials who were of Sumerian origin, but almost never to Amorite foreigners who spoke in Akkadian. Abram was a rich businessman who was the head of a large farm (Gn 13:5-9), as a result he did not belong to Sumerian aristocracy, he was not an international trader (even if he knew Old Babylonian)<sup>2</sup>. However the presence of Abram and his

<sup>1</sup> He led excavations in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, and is best known for his work at Mari, Syria, where he led important excavations from 1933 to 1975. He studied art history at the École du Louvre. Conservative deputy of the national Museums (1937), he became chief curator at the Louvre (Oriental Antiquities and Islamic Arts) in 1946, Secretary General of the excavations and archaeological missions Commission (1958). He was director of excavations of Mari (Syria), from 1933 (the 13th campaign in 1963). He was responsible for teaching language and Hebrew literature (1937-1949) and History of Religions (1950-1955) at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Paris and professor at the Ecole du Louvre (Eastern Archaeology and History of art) from 1937.

<sup>2</sup> The Babylonian name: Kudur-Lagamar is used rather than the Elamite name: Kutir-Lagamal.

forefathers in Ur is quite in concordance with the context of that time regarding Semitic people because among all the Sumerian dynasties, the one of Ur I was an exception in this regard<sup>3</sup>. Despite there being no document mentioning Abram's name, the presence of Serug, Nahor and Terah the parents of Abram, agrees with all the archaeological data we have.

For example Nahor II, Abraham's brother, who died before his arriving in Haran (Gn 11:29-31) would have given his name to the city of Naḥur (Til-Naḥiri), mentioned in the Cappadocian tablets (1800-1750) and in the letters of governor Itur-Asdu to King Zimri-Lim (Parrot: 1962, 48-49). Serug (*Ša-ru-gi*) appears as a personal name in Girsu, modern Tello (Millard, Hoffmeier: 1994, 122), which was used during the Ur III period. Unfortunately this does not prove the existence of the patriarchs because these names can be homonyms<sup>4</sup>, except if one had found “*Nabor son of Serug*” or “*Nabor son of Terah (tu-ra-ḥu)*”. However linguistic analysis of these biblical names, shows that they are mostly original Amorite (North Semitic) or Old Canaanite (West Semitic)<sup>5</sup> rather than Old Babylonian or Akkadian (East Semitic). None is of Sumerian origin, except Arioch (king of Larsa) who was not a patriarch. In Abram's narrative there are several names of North Semitic origin (Mesopotamia): *ša-ru-gi* “*branch of wine*”; *na-ḥu-ru* “*snorer*”, *ab-ra-ma-ma* “*Father [is] exalted*”, *ša-ra-a-a* “*my princess?*”; names of East Semitic origin (Shinar): *ku-dur-la-ga-mar* “*carrier (of) Lagamar*”, *eri-a-ku* “*servant of the Lunar disk*”, *tu-ra-ḥu(m)* “*ibex*” and names of West Semitic origin (Canaan): *ma-li-ku-ša-da-qu* “*king of righteousness*”. The link between the linguistic sphere of these names and their geographic area is perfect<sup>6</sup>. Despite all the previous evidence, archaeologists continue to deny the historicity of Abram because of some so-called anachronisms, but are these anachronisms proven?

#### IS THE WRITING OF THE PENTATEUCH IN 1500 BCE ANACHRONISTIC?

Criticism against the writing of the Pentateuch around 1500 BCE is all based on an absence of evidence that would be evidence of the absence and, according to the “documentary hypothesis”, there would not have been any biblical writing in the time of Moses. However, the oldest epigraph in Paleo-Hebrew is dated 1550-1480 BCE (Dalley: 2009, 1-16, 112). One has to notice that this latter example comes from a professional scribe who inscribed his

<sup>3</sup> For example, Queen Puabi who lived during the reign of Mesannepada (2340-2320), the 1<sup>st</sup> king of Ur I, bore a name in Akkadian: *pu-Abum* “*Word of the Father*”. Similarly Elulu (2300-2280), the 4<sup>th</sup> king of Ur I, whose name (*ululum*) means “*cleansed*” in Akkadian. Meski'agnuna (2318-2300), the 3<sup>rd</sup> king of Ur I, wrote the oldest writing in Akkadian: [*Nanna for the life of Mes-ki'a*]ga-nuna, king of Ur, *He-še-nu-zi-gid-nun*, his wife, dedicated (*this bowl*) (Sollberger, Kupper: 1971, 43).

<sup>4</sup> *Ab-ra-mu* was found in the clay tablets from Ebla but they are dated two centuries before Abram. The Hyksos of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty dated c. 1700 BCE called *Yaquab-baal* (*Y'qb'ṛ*) was not patriarch Jacob. The name *Ya-ab-qu-ub-el* which appears repeatedly in Lower Mesopotamia at the time of King Manana (c. 1800-1770) could fit to Jacob(el?) when he spent 20 years (1801-1781) near Haran in Mesopotamia (Gn 30:25; 31:41).

<sup>5</sup> There was no clear cut between East & West Semitic in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE (Lipinski: 2001, 48-57).

<sup>6</sup> Melchizedek in Canaan (West Semitic) would have been called *šar-mi-ša-ru(m)* in Mesopotamia (North Semitic) or Terah (North Semitic) would have been called Jael (Job 39:1) in Edom (West Semitic).

name in cuneiform: *Ali-dîn-ili of Kup[patu?]* (*a-lî-di-in-î-lî ša ku-up-[pa-tu?* “high building”) and engraved it in paleo-Hebrew (below line 1) on the edge of the tablet as: 'LDN'L GB' (*Aldinel of Gaba* “hill?”). This paleo-Hebrew script is close to 1) 

𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈
𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑

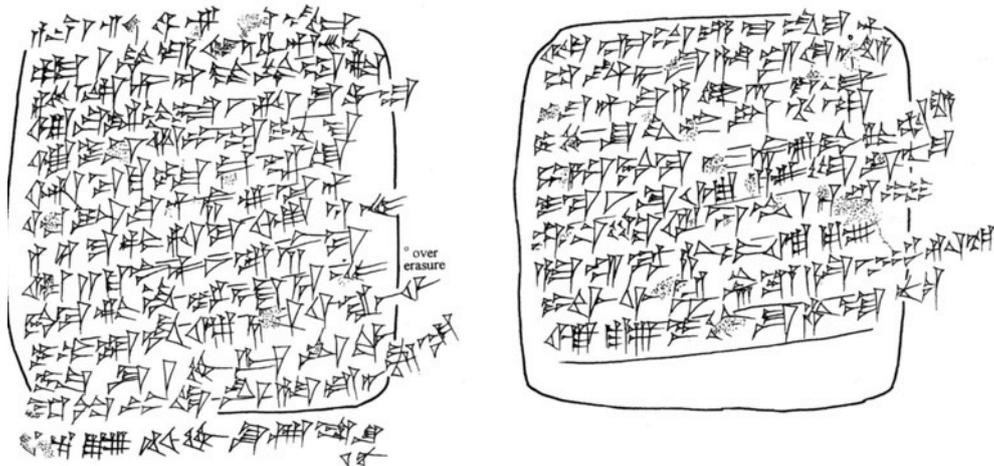
 2) 

𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈
𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑

' L D N ' L G B '

If the scribe Aldinel of Gaba was able to write in paleo-Hebrew around 1500 BCE, so was Moses. In fact the Semites who came from Egypt (Hyksos) and lived in Palestine knew the old writing called proto-Canaanite, the ancestor of Old Hebrew. For example, several inscriptions in proto-Canaanite have been discovered in Egypt (Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai and Wadi el-Hôl north of Thebes) and in Palestine (Lachish, Gezer and Shechem). These inscriptions are difficult to date, between 1850 and 1500 BCE for those in Serabit el-Khadim or Wadi el-Hôl and around 1600-1500 for those in Palestine. However the paleo-Hebrew was scarcely used because the language of trade was either Old Babylonian Standard in Canaan or Egyptian in Phoenicia. For example the Amarna letters (on clay tablets), which are mostly diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan and Amurru (dated 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE) have shown that the scribes of Canaan knew Old Canaanite because despite these letters were being written primarily in Old Babylonian Standard, the regional language of diplomacy for this period, there are marginal notes in Old Canaanite (in cuneiform), their mother tongue.

Although syncretism was widely spread in the past, Egyptians, Canaanites and the Hyksos who had arrived in Canaan after their leaving Egypt (and their stay in Sinai), did not express themselves in exactly the same way when they were speaking of God as shown by a letter exhumed in Taanach and dated around 1450 BCE (Horowitz, Oshima, Sanders: 2006, 132-134,218).



Recto (left) 6 first lines (Taanach 2 letter):

- 1) *a-na Tal-wa-šur [q]i-bí*
- 2) *um-ma Ah-ia-mi ba'alu ilānu*
- 3) *ZI-ka li-iš-šur ahu at-ta*
- 4) *ù na-ra-mu i-na aš-ri šu-wa-at*

To Talwashur say  
 Message of Ahiami: May the Lord God guard your life. You are a brother and a beloved friend in that place.

5) *ù i-na ŠA-bi-ka i-nu-ma*6) *ar-ba-ku i-na É ra-qi*13) *ša-ni-tam pí-qi-id a-na URU.DIDLI.ĤÁ-ka*14) *ù lu-ú ti-pu-šu ip-ša-šu/-nu*15) *UGU SAG.DU-ia ma-am-ma-an*16) *ša it-tab-su a-na URU.KI.DIDLI.ĤÁ*

Verso (right) 4 last lines:

21) *ša-ni-tam li-ru-ba-am<sup>m</sup> Ilu-ra-pi-i*22) *a-na URU Ra-ĥa-bi ù lu-ù*23) *i-wa-ši-ra awilu-ia a-na mah-ri-ka*24) *ù lu-ù i-pu-šu ĥa-at-nu-tam*

Now, it is in your mind that

I have entered into an “empty house”

Furthermore, command your cities  
that they should do their workOn my head is everything  
which took place in regard to the cities.Furthermore, let Elrapî enter  
into Rehob and I will certainly  
send my man to you  
and I will certainly arrange a marriage.

Talwashur was the local Canaanite ruler of Taanach at that time in association with Ahiami (lines 13-16). Taanach (modern Tell Ta‘annek) is 8 km South-East of Megiddo. According to the Bible, under the command of Joshua, the Israelites defeated the king of Taanach around 1490 BCE (Jos 12:7,21) but the Manassites failed to drive out the Canaanites from this and other cities. Eventually these Canaanites were put to forced labour (Jg 1:27-28). Given that Taanach is mentioned in the account of the Battle of Megiddo by Pharaoh Thutmose III, dated Year 23 (1450 BCE), as a southern bypass to Megiddo and as a place where Egyptian troops were mustered, the Egyptian governor of Gaza who had come from Egypt, called Amanhatpa in Taanach letters, had to have been the crown prince Amenhotep (Thutmose III's son).

Taanach letters show two important points: 1) these letters between Canaanite and Egyptian rulers are all written in Babylonian cuneiform but never in Egyptian hieroglyphs, nor in proto-Canaanite<sup>7</sup>; 2) god’s concept was different for Egyptians, Canaanites and former Hyksos. For example, Guli-Adad, a Canaanite mayor, sent a letter: *To Talwashur say: Thus says Guli-Adad: Live well! May the gods (ilâni) attend to your welfare, the welfare of your house, and your sons* (Taanach 1, lines 1-5), but Amenhotep wrote: *To Talwashur say: Thus says Amanhapta: May Ba‘al guard your wife. Send me yours brothers together with the chariots and send me the horse, your tribute and an audience gift, and all the prisoners who are now with you* (Taanach 5, lines 1-12) and Ahiami wrote: *To Talwashur say: Message of Ahiami: May the Lord God (ba‘alu ilânu) guard your life. You are a brother and a beloved friend in that place* (T2, lines 1-4). The phrase: *May Ba‘al guard your wife* is odd coming from an Egyptian ruler, but Amenhotep II (1418-1392) was the first to venerate the Canaanite deities such as: Astarte, Baal and Reshef.

Ahiami and Elrapî had to have been former Hyksos because these two names are typically Israelite<sup>8</sup>, but above all the expression “*the Lord God*”, which

<sup>7</sup> Two inscriptions in proto-Canaanite discovered at Lachish (on a bowl and ewer) are dated c. 1350 BCE.

<sup>8</sup> The name Elrapî means “*God is a healer*” (Nb 13:9). The meaning of Hammurabi as Hammu-rapî “*the ancestor is healer*” is controversial. The meaning of “Ahiam” (2Sa 23:33) is not clear (in addition the name could also be read as Ahia or Ahiauw). The name Ahiami could be understood as *Ah-ya-mi* “My brother” the last part *-mi* being an enclitic. The city called Rehob “*street*” could be Tel Rehov south of Beth-Shean (*Near Eastern Archaeology* 70:4 December 2007).

is plural with a verb in the singular, was absolutely unique at that time (Smith: 2010, 55-57), furthermore it was the usual Jewish substitute for God's name ('*adonay 'elohim*), the exact counterpart of the expression in Old Canaanite. Consequently, although Old Canaanite was spoken in Canaan, the usual writing of that time was Old Babylonian Standard (however, Ugaritic language, which was very close to Hebrew, was written with a specific cuneiform alphabet).

If Moses spoke Old Hebrew (Old Canaanite) and was able to write in Paleo-Hebrew, how did he get 40 chapters of the story of Abram, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (Gn 11-50)? Probably orally from his father Amram who was a grandson of Levi (brother of Joseph). In addition, the Bible mentions (Gn 31:47-48) that Jacob spoke Old Hebrew as well as Old Aramaic (Aramite). Given that Abram had lived in Ur he was able to speak and write Old Babylonian, in addition, because he was able to speak with Abi-melek, king of Gerar (north west of Beer-sheba) and Melki-zedek, king of Jerusalem, who both were Canaanite, Abram was also able to understand and speak their language. Was Old Canaanite spoken in Abram's time? The answer is given by the spelling of names of Canaanite cities in execration texts (dated c. 1950 BCE) because their meanings are clearly Old Hebrew (Old Canaanite), not Akkadian:

City	Vocalisation	Hebrew name	Meaning	Akkadian
<i>M-ʿ-k-t-r-y</i>	Mʿakteley	Migdol	<i>Tower</i>	Gigunnûm
<i>S-k-m-i-m</i>	Sekemam	Shekhem	<i>Shoulder</i>	Bûdum
<i>I-p-q-w-m</i>	Apeqûm	Aphek	<i>Strength</i>	Dannûtum
<i>M-ʿ-š-i-š</i>	Maʿshal	Mishal	<i>Prayer</i>	Ikribum
<i>i-š-h-b-w-m</i>	aRehebûm	Rehob	<i>Open place</i>	Ugârûm
<i>H-d-w-i-š-i</i>	Hadjûara	Hatsor (Hazor)	<i>Settlement</i>	Dintum
<i>B-q-ʿ-t-m</i>	Beqʿatem	Beqa	<i>Valley</i>	
<i>Q-n-i</i>	Qena	Kanah	<i>Place of reed</i>	Appârûm
<i>I-p-w-m</i>	Apûm	Hobah	<i>Hiding place</i>	
<i>D-w-š-w-y</i>	Djûrûy	Tsûr (Tyre)	<i>Rock</i>	Abnum
<i>M-k-ti</i>	Meketa	Megido	<i>Place of troops</i>	
<i>šw-w-š-š-m-m</i>	[U]rûshalamem	Yerûshalem	<i>City completed</i>	Alu-shalamum
<i>I-b-w-š-m</i>	Abûlem	Abel	<i>Meadow</i>	Ugârûm
<i>ʿ-š-q-t-m</i>	ʿArqetem	Arqat	<i>Gnaw</i>	
<i>Q-š-q-š-m</i>	Qarqarem	Qarqar	<i>Soft ground?</i>	
<i>ʿ-q-š-i</i>	Aqera	Ekron	<i>Eradication</i>	
<i>b-w-t-š-m-š-w</i>	Bûtshemeshû	Bet-Shemesh	<i>House of the Sun</i>	Bît-shamshum
<i>ʿ-š-m-w</i>	Aramû	Arami	<i>High region</i>	Elum

The dating of past events only by linguistic criteria is misleading because it implicitly transforms our ignorance of history, resulting in the very limited corpus on which it operates, in (wrong) evidence (Millard: 1986, 1-3). Rare words of the Bible were often supposed late, and therefore anachronistic. For example, in a reference dictionary (BDB), the words *ketem* “gold” (Job 28:16,19), *pardes* “park” (Ct 4:13; Ec 2:5, Ne 2:8) and *keroz* “herald” (Dn 3:4) were supposed late and borrowed from Greek c. 400 BCE (i.e. *paradeisos* “paradise”; *kerux* “herald”). According to a later dictionary (Black, George, Postgate: 2000,

159,171,266) these rare words already existed in Akkadian: *kutîmu* from the Sumerian KU.DIM “goldsmith” (prior 2000 BCE), *pardêsu* “enclosure” from the Old Persian *pari-dîdâ*<sup>9</sup> “wall around” (c. 600 BCE) and *kirenzi* “proclamation” which would be borrowed from Hurrian language (c. 1500 BCE). The assertions of anachronisms are now anachronistic, in fact they were based on an illusion, the missing words were actually hibernating words. Linguistic conclusions are still skewed by the following difficulties:

- ✓ *Some archaic technical terms have been updated, which generated artificial anachronisms.* For example the word “daric” (1Ch 29:7) is anachronistic since this monetary unit, appearing in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, was unknown at the time of David four centuries earlier. Ezra, the alleged compiler of the book of Chronicles<sup>10</sup>, completed the conversion of an old unit, unusual in his time, into a more familiar “daric”, as he did in Ezra 8:27. In contrast, the *qesitab* (Gn 33:19, Jos 24:32, Job 42:11) was not converted by Ezra, but the translators of the Septuagint translated this unknown exchange value into “*lamb*”<sup>11</sup>.
- ✓ *The geographical areas of the ancient world have changed over time.* According to the texts of the New Testament (Ga 4:25; Ac 7:29-30) Sinai (northern Egypt) was a mountain in Arabia. Similarly, the translators of the Septuagint located (c. 280 BCE) the land of Goshen in Arabia (Gn 45:10, 46:34). There seems to be an anachronism, however, this definition of Arabia agrees with historians of that time. Thus, Strabo (c. 20 CE), a Greek geographer, described the borders of Arabia from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Nile in the West (Geography 16:4:2, 17:1:21-31), which means that for him the Arabian Peninsula and the Sinai Peninsula were included in Arabia. Similarly, the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 450 BCE) called Arabia the entire region from east of the Nile to the Red Sea (The Histories 2:8,15,19,30,75,124,158). Arabia in the Septuagint and New Testament is therefore different from that of the Old Testament (which corresponds to the present definition), but was consistent with that of the Greek geographers of their respective eras.
- ✓ *The relationship between ethnicity and geographical area has changed.* The precision “*Ur of the Chaldeans*” (Gn 11:28,31; 15:7) at the time of Abraham, for example, is considered anachronistic because the Chaldeans appear only 1000 years later. In the Bible, Chaldea refers to a region in the south of Babylonia. The Septuagint translated the phrase “*Ur of the Chaldeans*” as “*country of the Chaldeans*”, which refers to a geographical area, not to an ethnic area. According to Strabo, a Greek geographer: *In Babylonia a settlement is set apart for the local philosophers, the Chaldaeans, as they are called, who are concerned mostly with*

<sup>9</sup> The Old Persian word *pari-dîdâ* “wall around” would come from the Mede word *pari-daiza*. Mede language has been spoken in Ecbatana back to 1000 BCE (Joannès: 2001, 517).

<sup>10</sup> According to the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 14b, Sanhedrin 4:7 21b) the biblical text in paleo-Hebrew character was rewritten in Aramaic by Ezra (c. 400 BCE), called now “square Hebrew”.

<sup>11</sup> Their translation, otherwise unattested, is perhaps inspired from an archaic Greek pattern. At the time of the Trojan War, a slave, for example, was worth “4 oxen” and a tripod “12 oxen” (Iliad XXIII:703-705).

astronomy; but some of these, who are not approved of by the others, profess to be astrologers. There is also a tribe of the Chaldaeans, and a territory inhabited by them, in the neighbourhood of the Arabians and of the Persian Sea, as it is called. There are also several tribes of the Chaldaean astronomers. For example, some are called Urukeans, others Borsippeans, and several others by different names (Geography XVI:1:6). The location of the Chaldeans is related to a profession not an ethnic group. Herodotus described them as priests-astronomers and not as an ethnic group apart (The Histories I:181,183). The Greek word *kaldaiôn* “Chaldeans” comes from the Assyrian *kaldu* which comes prior to 1400 BCE (Rainey: 1996, 41-42) from the Old Babylonian *kašdu* (Black, George, Postgate: 2000, 152, 162). The Hebrew word “Chaldeans” in the Bible is not *kaldu* but *kašdim* which corresponds to *kašdu* a word coming from *kiššatu*, which meant both “entirety” and “Kishite”. However the Chaldeans are relatively poorly known<sup>12</sup>. Whereas Chaldeans were found in some major Babylonian cities (Sippar, Kuta, Kiš, Nippur, Uruk), their privileged dwelling place seems to have been southern Babylonia and the land of marshes (Joannès: 2001, 175-176, 448-449). The term “*Ur of the Chaldeans*” therefore means “*Ur in Chaldea*”, the Chaldeans (*Kašdim*) being the inhabitants south of Shinar (Sumer) called the “*people of Sealand*” by Babylonian scribes. The kings of Sealand constantly claimed their connection to the ancient kingdom of Kiš (Yoffee: 2013, 527-544), as did King Ayadaragalama (1498-1482) calling himself: *šanu kiššati* (MAN ŠÚ) “*viceroys of [the] entirety (kiššatum)*” (Dalley: 2013, 177-185), which can be translated into Hebrew: “*king of [the] Kašdim*”. Chaldea and Sumer (Shinar)<sup>13</sup> are merely geographical designations because despite the land of his birth being Chaldea, Abraham was neither a Chaldean, nor a Babylonian. Similarly, although he lived in the land of Sumer he was not a Sumerian. When Abraham resided in Canaan, then in Egypt, he was qualified as Aramean (*a’amu*) because he was a nomad of Aramaic language (close to Hebrew at that time, see Gn 31:47-48). He was in fact a son of Eber, that is a Hebrew (Gn 10:21; 14:13). The word *Eber* means “*to pass-over*” in Hebrew<sup>14</sup> or “*to cross over (eberum)/ migrant*” in Babylonian (Durand: 2000, 205). When Moses wrote the book of Genesis (c. 1500 BCE), “*Ur of the Chaldeans*” meant “*Ur of ancient Shinar (Sumer)*”.

- ✓ *Some original documents were updated.* In the oldest copy of the Execration Texts (probably written c. 1950 BCE): *the princes of Shutu[m] are Ayyabum, Kushar, Zabulanu (...)* *the princes of Qbrmu are Hammu-yatar, Hamasanu, Hammu-yakin (...)* *the princes of Ashkelon are Haluyakim, Hikisanu (...)* *the princes of Jerusalem are Yaqirhammu, Sažanu,* but in a later copy: *the prince of Ashkelon is Muri (...)* *the prince of southern Qbrmu is Hamiya, the prince of northern Qbrmu is Yasarkuna (...)* *the princes of*

<sup>12</sup> They appear for the first time in 872 BCE in an inscription of Ashurbanipal II.

<sup>13</sup> The native designations for the “land of Sumer” are *kingir* (KI.EN.GI) in Sumerian and “*mat šumerim*” (translation) in Akkadian or *šanhar* (transcription). This toponym has been transcribed: *šanhar* (Hittite), *tngr* (Ugaritic), *s-n-g-r* (Egyptian), *šin’ar* (Hebrew).

<sup>14</sup> Abraham *passed over* the Euphrates, Moses *passed over* the Red Sea and Jesus *passed over* the Jordan River.

Jerusalem are [?], [-]haddu (...) the prince of Upper Shutu (Moab) is Shumu-abu, the prince of Lower Shutu is [?] (Briend: 1977, 31-37). Furthermore when Chedorlaomer ruled the region of Sodom (Egyptian Shutu) from 1968 to 1954 BCE, the kings of that area were: Bera (Sodom), Birsha (Gomorra), Shinab (Admah), Shemeber (Zeboim) and the king of Jerusalem was Melchizedek. The comparison between the execrations texts and the biblical text is very difficult for two reasons: 1) the Egyptian list was updated (we don't know why) and 2) the name of several biblical kings have probably been changed, some in a positive way like Melchizedek "King of righteousness" others in a negative way: Bera "Son of evil", Birsha "Son of wickedness" (Massoretic text) and Shemabad "Name lost" (Samaritan Pentateuch).

If we take into account all these problems of transmissions of the text, from its date of origin (c. 1950 BCE) until its date of final writing by Ezra (c. 400 BCE), the accuracy and reliability of all the details of linguistic and geographic nature and, above all, the perfect chronology of events, prove that the story of Abram, as it is written in the Pentateuch, was given by an eyewitness and was not invented by an anonymous brilliant storyteller.

Last question of archaeologists: if Moses wrote the Pentateuch c. 1500 BCE, why are there no tracks of it before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE (Qumran)? The answer is simple, because the Pentateuch was never copied before King Josiah (2 Ki 15:8-13) contrary to what would have to be done (Jos 1:8). Although the Law of Moses was not copied some Israelite priests must have known it.

It is noteworthy that the excavations at Tell Qeiyafa (the camp enclosure of 1Samuel 17:20?) have identified the city Shaaraim (Garfinkel, Ganor: 2008 art. 22; Levin: 2012, 73-86) which was inhabited until the reign of David (1Ch 4:31; 1Sa 17:52). The end of this city has been dated -1010 +/- 40 by C14 through olive pits found in the site. Another inscription: *Ishba'al ben Beda'*, dated 1020-980, has also been found<sup>15</sup>. Not only does this town date back from the time of David but these excavations have also unearthed a Hebrew inscription (opposite figure), which reads:



1 אל תעשק : ועבד אֵל : א : 'ב'זה  
 2 שפט (?) ובכ אלמ'נ' (?) שלט  
 3 בגר . ובעלל . קצמ(?) יחד :  
 4 אֵד'מ' ושרמ יסד מלכ :  
 5 חרמ <ששמ> עבדמ : מדרת .

[... *your neighbour?*]  
 1) *do not exploit and serve G[od]. Despised by* (Lv 19:13)  
 2) *the judge, and the widow cried, he had power*  
 3) *over the foreign resident and the child he suppressed together.*  
 4) *Men and leaders have made a king.* (1Sa 8:10)  
 5) *Devoting <sixty> servants among the generations.*

As Puech noted (2010, 162-184), this text describes a situation identical to that of the biblical text when the elders of Israel asked Samuel to enthrone a

<sup>15</sup> Names with "baal" like Ishbaal (1Ch 8:1,33); Baalyada (1Ch 14:7); Baalyah (1Ch 12:5); Jerubbaal (Jg 6:32); Mephibaal (2Sa 4:4) belong only to Davidic era (Garfinkel, Golub, Misgav, Ganor: 2015, 217-233).

king (Saul) in order to replace his sons who became corrupt judges (1Sa 8:1-5). The first line implicitly refers to a well-known passage of the Law of Moses: *do not exploit your neighbour* (Lv 19:13). With the establishment of kingship in Israel the number of documents in Paleo-Hebrew increases as well as texts referring to the Bible. However, documents relating to the early Judean kings are scarce<sup>16</sup> because their reigns took place during a period of decline of the two great empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Among the 113 kings in the Levant listed during the period 1000-600 BCE, including those of the Bible, only 16 are mentioned in inscriptions (Millard: 1997, 46).

#### ARE ABRAHAM'S CAMELS ANACHRONISTIC?

From the mid 50s, numerous studies mention relics, texts and animal remains that support domestication of the camel in Arabia (Ad Saud Abdullah: 1996, 129-131) starting prior to 2000 BCE (Epstein: 1954, 247-268; Lambert: 1960, 42-43). Many petroglyphs occurring on rocks in Saudi confirm this (Anati: 1968, 109-111; 1974:128,234; Žába 1974, 237-238) such as the presence of camel bones dating to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. A camel carrying a man on his back is shown on a terracotta tablet found at Gurna, near Luxor (Keimer: 1929: 84-106) and a vase-shaped kneeling camel was exhumed from a I<sup>st</sup> dynasty tomb (c. 2800-2700) at Abusir el-Meleq, 10 km south of Cairo (Mikesell: 1955, 231-245). Apart from Egypt, camels appear near cities that fell all along the *Incense Route* linking the Persian Gulf to Egypt along the Mediterranean Sea (Bulliet: 1975, 57-71). An Old Babylonian text found at Nippur, dated 2000-1700, explicitly refers to camel milk (The Assyrian Dictionary Vol. 7: 1960, 2). Some scholars say that those camels were wild animals, but how is it possible to get milk from a wild animal (these scholars don't explain)? A text found at Alalakh, dated between 1800 and 1700 BCE, evokes fodder for camels (Goetze: 1959, 29,37).



Gurna (Iran, 2800-2700 BCE)



Abusir el-Meleq (Egypt, 2800-2700 BCE)

<sup>16</sup> Because of this scarcity certain epigraphists suggested that the writing of Qeiyafa could be Phoenician instead of Old Hebrew (Rollston: 2011, 67-82). In fact, now archaeology and epigraphy are systematically used to discredit biblical and historical testimonies (Finkelstein, Fantalkin: 2012, 38-63).

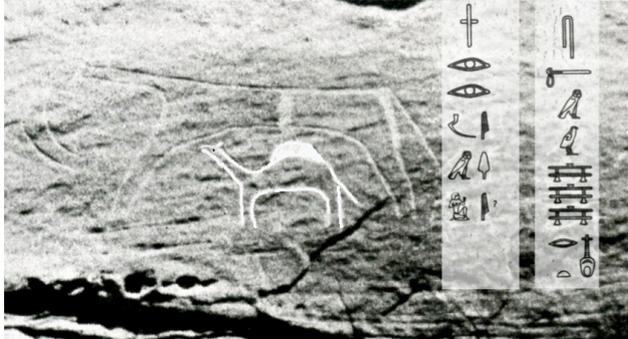
These elements coming from archaeology are usually deliberately ignored by most Egyptologists. In fact many experts still refer to statements by Albright of 1940, for whom camels in the Bible were anachronistic, persisting in ignoring archaeological evidence of domestication c. 2000 BCE (Rosen, Saidel: 2010, 74-76). Edward Lipiński, Professor of Eastern history and biblical studies, in contrast, states: *Camel seems to have been domesticated in Arabia since the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. In South Arabiche he is called gml, certainly the same as ġamal in classical Arabic, gāmoul in Coptic, and as the plural GIM-L-N, or GM-IL of Numidian inscriptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE ("Bactrian camels" or maybe "cameleers"). The Sumerian pseudo-ideogram and the Akkadian word are clearly borrowings from former Arabic appeared in parts of the Persian Gulf. The determinative ANŠE indicates that it is a pack animal, as donkey. The repetition of m in a loan word does not seem significant, in the same way Hebrew double the l in plural for no apparent reason. The shape ANŠE-GAM without the sign MAL is not certified. The original structure of the word, before the domestication of camel, which has found traces in Tunisia from the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, however, had a monosyllabic basis: gam or kam. It is found in Egypt (qm3), Paleo-Nubian (kam), Coptic (qam) and even as a-l+gem (plural i-legm-an) in the modern Berber dialects. It is impossible to specify the period to which the suffix –al was added to the base word, but its employment with the names of domesticated animals suggests to date the form gml in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE (Lipiński: 2004, 205-212).* Given the abundance of evidence regarding the domestication of camels up to 2000 BCE, the frequent reference to Finkelstein claiming that this domestication began around 1100 BCE (main argument used to discredit the Bible) is indicative of the propensity to believe media disinformation. Claiming that the camels of Abraham are anachronistic, as do most Egyptologists, reflects a serious disregard of archaeological and linguistic data. This recurring criticism of anachronism is often taken up by conformism inside academia. The “unveiling anachronisms” by Finkelstein is in fact atheist propaganda. This misinformation is deliberate since he knows well his subject.

Apart from these stone engravings, the Bedouins (mainly passing on the Incense Route) have apparently left no text. The current opinion is that this animal was introduced into Syria by the Arameans in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and gained importance in the Neo-Assyrian both as pack and riding animals used for war in particular by the Bedouins<sup>17</sup>. In fact, the petroglyphs of camels are quite common, but the main difficulty is dating them because stones cannot be dated by Carbon-14. There are really only two ways that allow them to be dated:

- ✓ The study of the immediate environment of petroglyphs such as typical pottery or wooden objects datable by Carbon-14 for example, gives an approximate date. Studies of rock art Bir Hima (Syrian Djezireh) have revealed numerous camel petroglyphs (unfortunately not yet published) dating back prior to 1500 BCE (Peregrine, Ember: 2002, 257).

<sup>17</sup> The Arab king Gindibu sent 10,000 male camels to the Battle of Qarqar won in 853 BCE by Shalmaneser III.

- ✓ Sometimes, exceptionally, some petroglyphs are accompanied by a text containing the names of characters that can be dated. This is the case of this representation discovered in the desert east of Edfu (Rothe, Miller, Rapp: 2008, 132) on which the inscription reads: *The guide of good ways, pilot Imai*. The name Imai (*Im3i*) is uncommon and appears only during the reign of Pepi II (2179-2121), which situates the inscription to 2150-2100 BCE.



*Eastern Edfu (2150-2100 BCE)*

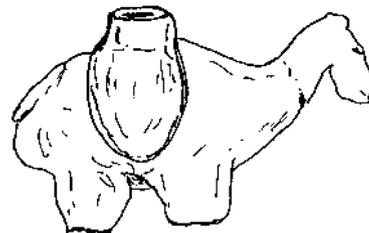


*Assuan (2200-2100 BCE)*

Apart from Bedouins, other civilizations had little interest in camels. Sumerians and Egyptians, for example, considered the camel (the Bactrian camel was ignored in Egypt) as an exotic pet, which is still the case today in most countries. In addition, despite some animals having been known to the Egyptians, such as cats and hens, they were not represented on their monuments. However, there remain some vestiges revealed by the excavations in Egypt (Kitchen: 2003, 338-339,640). Thus, a braided cord of camel hair, dated c. 2500 BCE, was exhumed at Pi-Ramesses in the Fayum. In Wadi Nasib (in Sinai), a caravan of camels appears, of which one being pulled by a man appears on the rocks (Yunker: 1997, 47-54). A statuette in the shape of a camel carrying amphorae has been found in Rifeh. These accidental archaeological discoveries show that if Pharaonic Egypt did not mention the camel it was not ignorant of it (Ripinsky: 1985, 134-141; Free: 1944, 187-193).



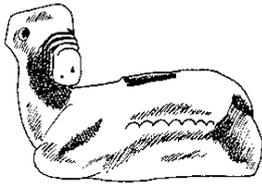
*Wadi Nasib (Sinai, c. 1500 BCE)*



*Rifeh (Egypt, 1300-1200 BCE)*

As most of these objects were found near the Egyptian deserts, their former owners must have been Bedouins rather than Egyptians. These camels are represented on seals (Aruz: 2003, 374-375), a bitumen stela in Susa (Villeneuve: 2002, 57-59), silver vases in Gonur (Potts: 2008, 165-194) or by a container (Berlin Egyptian Museum) from Abusir el-Meleq. A small kneeling camel in gold has also been found in Ur (Blaklock, Harrison: 1983, 115-116), a city from which Abraham left. This jewellery was part of a necklace dated Ur III Dynasty (c. 2000 BCE) similar to a Bactrian camel statue<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/324256>



Byblos (c. 2000 BCE)



Ur (1900-1700 BCE)

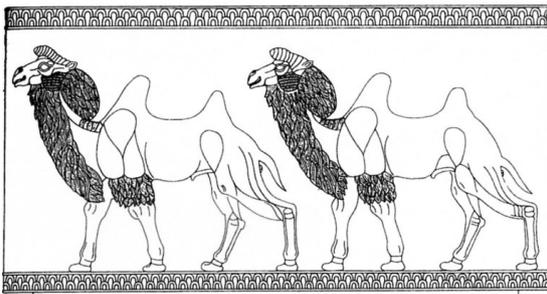
All these discoveries prove that the domestication of camels dates back to 2000 BCE, at least in Arabia.



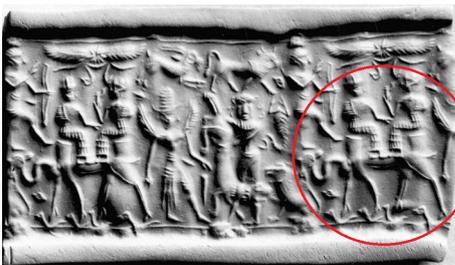
Susa (c. 2300 BCE)



Seal from Central Asia (c. 2000 BCE)



Gonur. Iranian Vase (deployed) in silver (2100-2000 BCE)



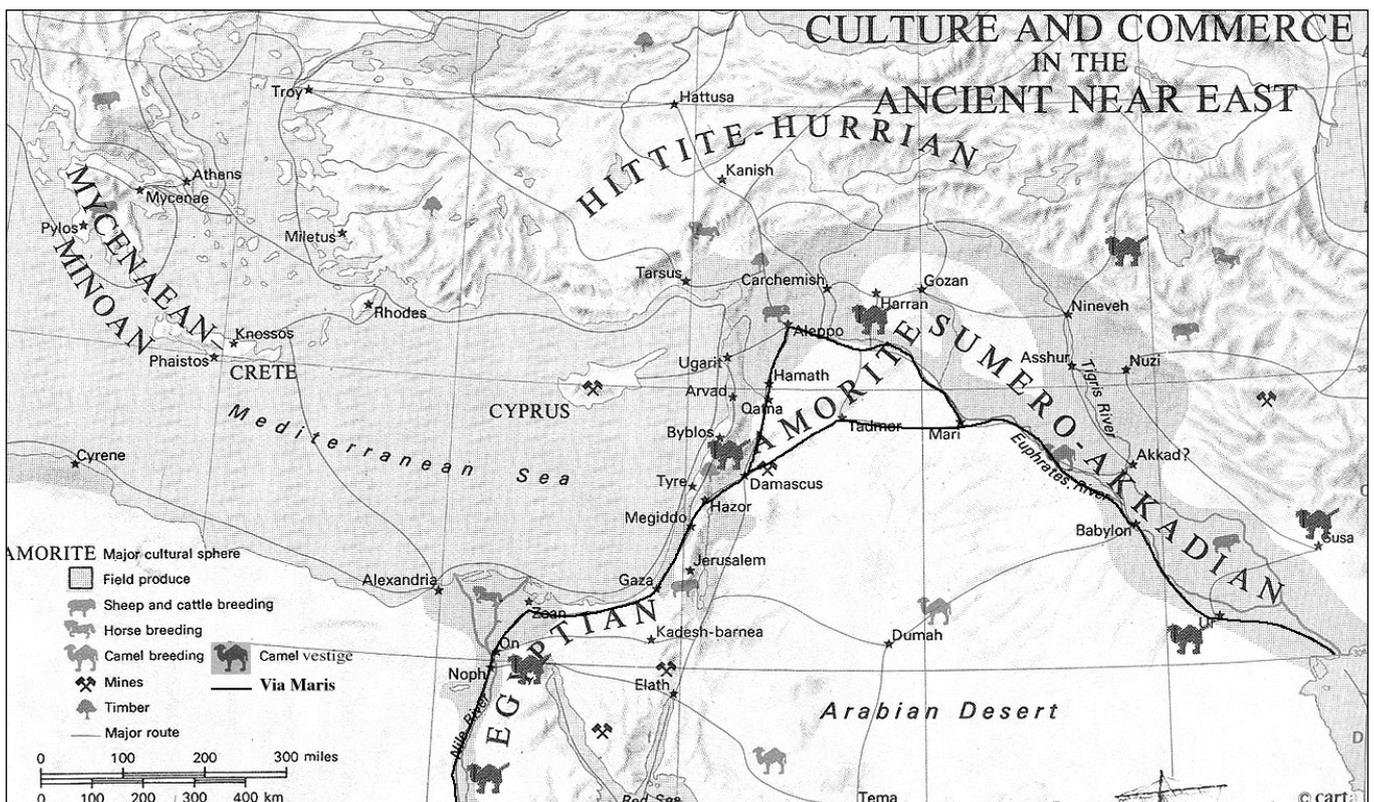
Syrian seal (1800-1400 BCE)



Bactrian camel statue (2300-1700 BCE)

Even if the texts mentioning this domestication are rare, they are not non-existent. In addition, grammatical analysis would rank camels among domestic animals because the last radical *-b* would be an original determinant for wild animals (eg *kaleb* "dog") while the determinant *-l/r* (eg *gamal*) would be for domestic animals (Haelewyck: 2007, 146). The camel was actually called AM.SI ȜAR.RA.AN "*pachyderm of Haran*". Again at Nippur, a Sumerian list of exotic animals (Civil: 1998, 11), dating back to Ancient Babylonian (1900-1500), ranks camel with tiger and Asian elephant. The word "camel" is derived from the Akkadian *gammalu*, corresponding to Sumerian [ANŠE]-GAM-MAL. The meaning of another Sumerian word to describe the camel ANŠE-A-AB-BA "donkey of the sea" (*ibilu* in Akkadian) illuminates the role of this animal in this early period.

The summary ranking of the camel by the Sumerians in the category of donkey shows that this exotic animal was not well known and the surprising mention "of the sea" is an indirect confirmation of its Arabic origin. Indeed, the camels were mostly used by Arab caravaneers (without camels, deserts of North Africa would have been uninhabitable) especially for selling incense (Is 60:6). These traders took the *Incense Route* linking the Persian Gulf to Egypt passing along the Mediterranean Sea (2Ch 20:2), hence its later name "*Way of the Sea* (*Via Maris* in Latin)" quoted in Isaiah 8:23 (Stern: 2000, 58-65). A letter from Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad I demonstrates the use of this route by his army about 1700 BCE (Margueron, Pfrsch: 2005, 199), and the sale of Joseph to Ishmaelite merchants illustrates the role of this ancient trade route (Gn 37:25). From the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE Assyrian texts mentioning domesticated camels such as the one of king Assur-bel-kala (1073-1056) are more numerous (Kuhrt: 1999, 179-184). Archaeological discoveries have thus confirmed an early domestication of the camel in Arabia (Köhler-Rollefson: 1993, 180-188), even though its development was very slow. In addition, without camels, Bedouin would have been unable to cross any deserts.



The reading of the biblical account sometimes gives the impression that camels were used extensively in Mesopotamia in the patriarchal period, but this is not the case. Some points can be checked. Abraham had camels only after he left Haran and went through the Negeb (Gn 12:5-9,16). The owners of these animals were Bedouin Arabs (Gn 32:3,15; Jg 6:3,5) for the most part. Possession of camels was a sign of wealth especially for Arab peoples (Job 1:3) such as the Midianites and Edomites. In fact, the biblical data about camels is consistent with archaeological discoveries. Camel owners were essentially in Arabia. Job,

who mentions caravans of Tema (Job 6:19), was an Oriental. The Queen of Sheba, arriving with her camels, was staying in the south of Arabia (2Ch 9:1). Abraham was a rich businessman who lived in the prosperous city of Ur until he was 75; he made a wise choice in acquiring a caravan of camels, probably from Arab traders, as these animals are very well suited for nomadic life. Abraham, although living in tents is not presented as a Bedouin, but as a prestigious chief, a sedentarized livestock farmer, sometimes moving due to external events. Another anachronism is frequently raised concerning Abraham: a too early Philistine presence in Palestine (Gn 21:32-34).

#### PHILISTINES IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM ARE THEY ANACHRONISTIC?

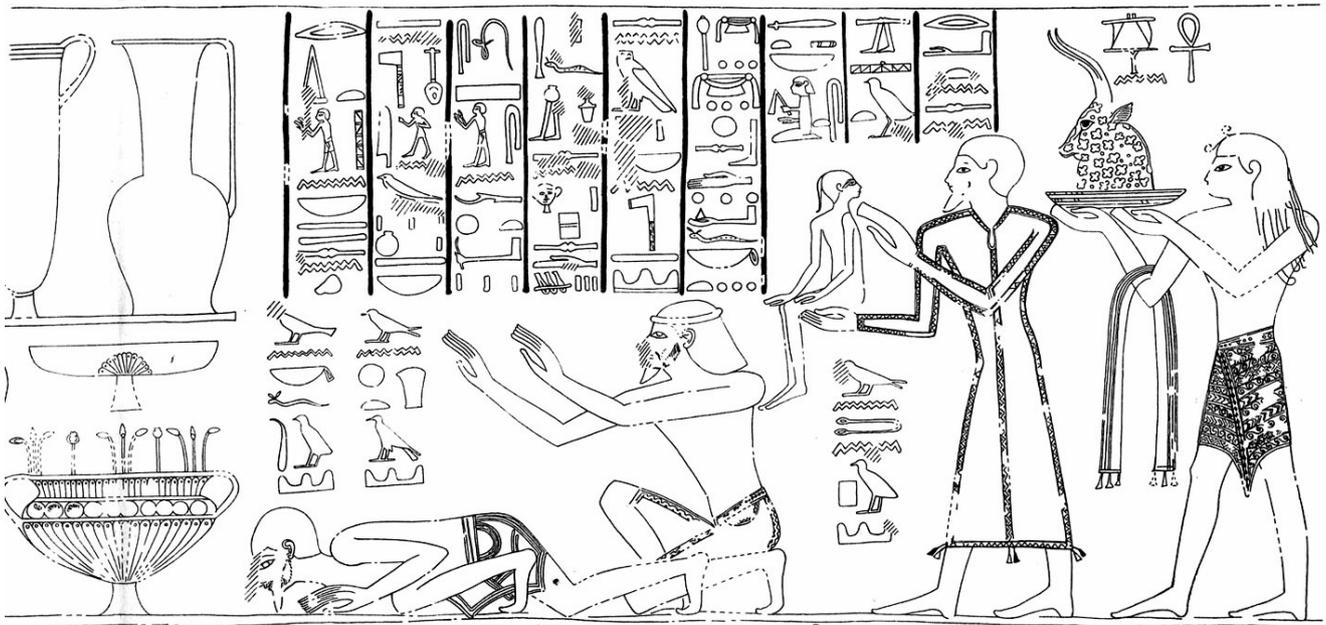
The Philistines (*philištī*) are mentioned for the first time in the Great inscription of Ramses III, year 8 (1185 BCE), among the list of Sea Peoples. Amenemope's Onomasticon (c. 1100 BCE) then locates the Philistines (*p-w-l-j-s3-ti*) in Ahsdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, and [Ekron?]. This massive influx of Philistines in the southern coastal plain of the Levant is mentioned 23 years before they annexed the land of Israel (1162-1122). According to Justinus (Philippics Histories XVIII:3:5), the Sidonians had already pushed back the Philistine ships one year prior to the Trojan War (1186 BCE). On the walls of Medinet Habu pirates from the Sea Peoples appear with plumed helmets while a Philistine (*p-w-l-s3-ti*) chief (Sandars: 1978, 117-138,164-170) is wearing a kind of beret (opposite figure). Emergence of the Philistines in Palestine (the name of which means “*land of the Philistines*”) is concomitant in Israelite and Egyptian chronologies. However, this synchronism is problematic because, according to the Bible (Dt 2:23, Jr 47:4, Am 9:7), the Philistines who came from Crete (Caphtor) were already settled in the region<sup>19</sup> (c. 2000 BCE) in the time of Abraham (Gn 21:32-34). These Philistines associated with the Sea Peoples, were therefore installed in their ancient colonies before dominating the Israelites. If biblical research experts agree that the Philistines were from Crete (the system of their confederation of five tyrants inspired by Aegeans, for example, differed from surrounding Canaanite kingdoms), the Akkadian Kaptaru or Egyptian Keftiu, they consider however their mention in the Bible prior to Ramses III as an anachronism (De Vaux: 1986, 468-480). In fact, the translation of the Egyptian word Keftiu, “*those of Crete/ Cretans*” instead of “*Crete*”, not only solves many paradoxes in Egyptian data, but also confirms the great antiquity of the Philistines, which the Egyptians called, in accordance with their origin: *Cretans from islands in the middle of the [Mediterranean] sea* (= the Minoans, at that time). The term Philistia appeared during the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty shortly after the term Keftiu disappeared during the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Steindorff: 1939, 30-39). Vercoutter,



<sup>19</sup> Heth (Hittites' ancestor) and Caphtor (Cretans' ancestor) were contemporary of Kainan (3033-2573) according to Genesis chapter 10.

despite the large number of documents analysed, concluded that the identification Keftiu to Crete was based only on a strong conjecture because other elements placed this country rather in North eastern Egypt (not western):

- ✓ The Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Ekron are mentioned in the execration texts dated c. 1950 BCE and archaeological excavations have shown that the Philistine city of Gerar (Tel Haror), cited in Genesis 26:1, flourished in the period 2000-1550 BCE (Negev, Gibson: 2006, 254).
- ✓ Egyptian texts that describe geographically Keftiu frequently associate it with the city of Byblos and often locate this country near Syria (Vercoutter: 1956, 38-157). The Asian list of Amenhotep III (1383-1345), for example, lists the city of *i-k3-r-j-ti* Ugarit beside *k-f-tyw* Keftiu (Simons: 1937, 132-133).
- ✓ A scene in Menkheperreseneb's tomb TT86 (c. 1450 BCE) pictures a prince of Keftiu-land as Syrian type (De Garies Davies: 1933, Pl IV), the 1<sup>st</sup> character with a cap and a little beard (below left), while his offerings are of Aegean type, as with the 4<sup>th</sup> character with wavy hair and the ideogram “navigation” above his head (below right):

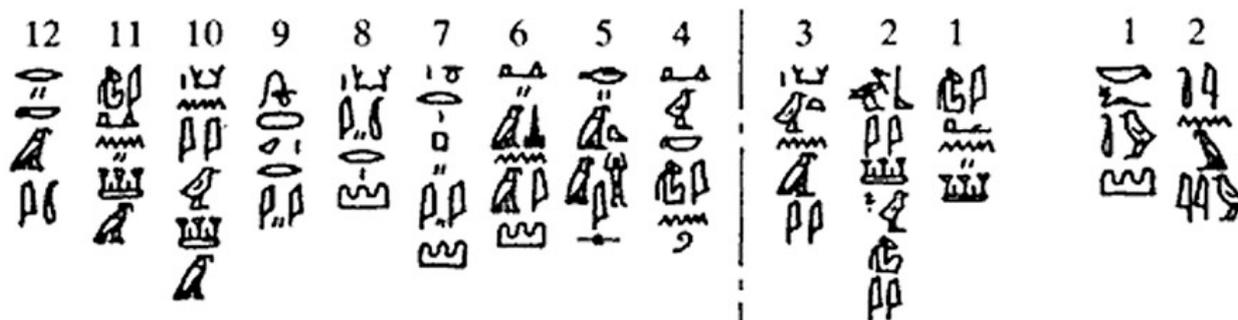


- ✓ In the Decree of Canopus (238 BCE), the word Keftiu is rendered in Greek as “Phoenicia”, a country equated with Lebanon (*fenhu*) by the Egyptians.
- ✓ In the inscription citing all the Sea Peoples, the Tjekker (installed in Dor according to the story Wenamun) and the Philistines are not described as coming from the sea.

These elements are converging to support the identification of the country called Keftiu “*those of Crete*”, a geographical name, or “*Philistia*”, an ethnic name (Vandersleyen: 1985, 41-53). In addition, Crete was never a vassal of Egypt as was the case of southern Palestine (between 1530 and 1350 BCE). As noted Vercoutter the final w in the word Keftiu (*k-f-ti-w*) is abnormal (plural marker) but can be explained linguistically since the Akkadian name *kaptaru* “Crete” corresponds to the Egyptian *k-f-ti-[r]* with a disappearance of the final r. Thus *keftiu* can be translated as “*those of Kaphto[r]*” which refers to Cretans in an ethnic

way, not geographic, similarly Tanayu “*those of Dananu*”, called Danuna in Amarna letter EA 151, referred to Cilicians. (Moran: 1992: 238,389).

The Aegean list of the funerary monument of Amenhotep III (1383-1345), at Kom el-Hetan, includes a series of Aegean toponyms (Kythira, Mycenae, Nafplion), and also Cretan (Amnisos, Phaistos, Knossos, Kydonia) including Keftiu. However, the names Keftiu “*those of Crete*” (Philistia) and Tanayu “*those of Danuna*” (Cilicia)<sup>20</sup> are isolated and on the right, north-east of Egypt, while all other names are on the left, north-west of Egypt (Strange: 1980, 21-27):



1) Amnisos 2) Phaistos 3) Kydonia 4) Mycenae 5) Dikte (Boeotia) 6) Messinia 7) Nafplion  
8) Kythira 9) Ilios (Troy) 10) Knossos 11) Amnisos 12) Lyktos

1) Keftiu 2) Tanayu  
[Philistia] [Cilicia]

This arrangement of names shows that for the Egyptians all of these cities, or countries, formed a western geographical entity whereas Keftiu and Tanayu were eastward. Cretan archaeology (Joannès, 2001, 208-210) has illuminated the role and exchanges between the great Aegean, Egyptian and Babylonian empires from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE (Treuil, Darcque, Poursat, Touchais: 2008: 138-140,153-154,161,419,456). The first Babylonian stamps in the name of Sargon (2243-2187) appeared in Crete around 2200 BCE (Weidner: 1939, 138-139) and a stela written under Pharaoh Senwosret I (1946-1901) contains the expression *Horus Kefti* which can be translated as “*Horus of Crete*” by analogy with *Horus Tehenu* “*Horus of Libyans*”. Similarly, the Treasury of Tod (discovered in Upper Egypt) enclosed in 4 chests bearing the cartouche of Pharaoh Amenemhat II (1901-1863) contains 153 silver cups of Minoan manufacturing. These findings show that trade with Crete began prior to 2000 BCE and mainly concerned the exchange of metals (and of precious materials).

Mesopotamia imported mainly Cretan tin and Cypriot copper to make bronze while Egypt favoured Cretan vases including silver rhytons. Some inventory tablets, archived in temples, allow us to reconstruct the route of these materials (Wiener: 1991, 325-350). A tablet found in the palace of Mari, dated year 9 of Zimri-Lim (1680-1667), indicates that 500 kg of tin came from Crete (*kap-ta-ra-i-im*) and had passed through several Syrian cities: Aleppo, Hazor and Ugarit, and copper came from Alashiya (Cyprus)<sup>21</sup> and Dilmun (Bahrain) via Magan (Oman). A letter (EA 114) sent by Rib-Hadda, mayor of Byblos (Moran: 1992, 188-190), to his suzerain, Pharaoh Amenhotep III (1383-1345), confirms the crucial role of this port city, as well as the cities of Tyre, Beirut and Sidon,

<sup>20</sup> The Denyen (Danuna), mentioned amongst the Sea Peoples (in 1185 BCE) are associated with Cilicia.

<sup>21</sup> The Amarna letter EA 40 shows that Alashiya was the Egyptian name of Cyprus.

for ships transporting from Cyprus to Egypt (Wachsmann: 1987, 93-101). Cretans must have regularly resided in Canaan because during the stay of King Zimri-Lim at Ugarit, it is reported that: *on the dock of Ugarit, the Mariotes met Cretan merchants and their interpreters* (Michaud: 2005, 12). Due to coasting, Cretan ships made stopovers in Cyprus for copper boarding, then they unloaded a portion of their cargo (tin and copper) in Byblos, node in maritime trade, which was then transported overland before they completed their journey to Egypt (to discharge silver vases). This trade route was sometimes interrupted (after the expulsion of the Hyksos and the destruction of the great harbour of Avaris by Kamose) as deplored an Egyptian scribe of that time: *Really now, nobody can sail to north, towards Byblos. How we will be providing us cedar wood for our coffins that contain our mummies, products with which must be buried pure priests, oil, which is coming as far as [those of] Crete (Keftiu), with which must be embalmed nobles. These wonders will never return* (Admonitions of Ipuwer 3:6-8). This interruption did not last long since the funerary inscription of Sennefer (Urk IV, 535:2-16), a Chief Treasury of Tuthmose III (Grimal, Menu: 1998, 122-123), reported the purchase of 60 cubits of cedar beams brought into Egypt by sea from Byblos. Thus the Egyptians of that time considered “*those of Crete*” (Keftiu), that they rubbed shoulders with in “*Philistia*”, were coming from these “*islands in the middle of the sea (Crete)*” with which they traded (Duhoux: 2003). Knossos must have been the main focus exporter (Fernandez: 2008, 22,103-108,156-159), at least until 1370 BCE (date of the destruction of the palace at Knossos).

To sum up, until -1370, the Egyptians had relations with Cretans who were living on the islands in the middle of the sea (Minoans in Crete) mainly through those who were residing in their colony of Palestine (Philistines). This extraterritorial extension of Crete explains the paradoxes concerning the location of Keftiu and the representation of its inhabitants. The term Keftiu signifying Aegean figures (Minoans from Crete) in the tomb of Rekhmire (c. 1450 BCE) also appears in tombs of Menkheperreseneb (TT86) and Amenemhab (TT85), but here this term signifies Syrian figures (Philistines), some of which carry Aegean objects. The earliest iconographical hybrid with Aegean elements is known from the tomb of Puimre (TT39). The figure from the scene with four foreign princes in the tomb of Puimre shares elements in skin colour and hair style with Aegean figures and clothes with Syrian figures. Syrian-Aegean iconographically hybrid figures are known from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb where they occupy the second and third register of the scene with foreigners together with Syrian figures and only a few Aegean figures<sup>22</sup>. A

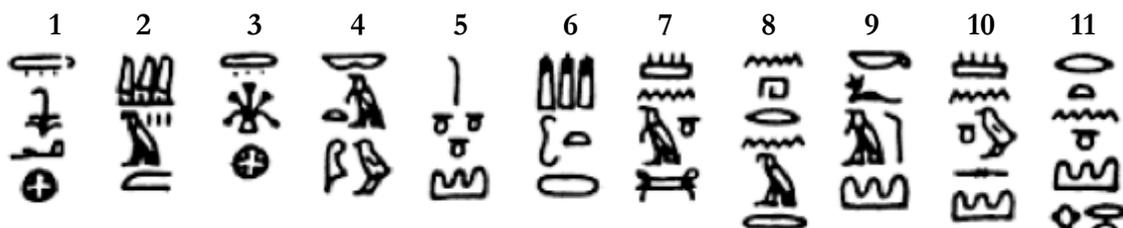
<sup>22</sup> Aegean figures are distinguished by their reddish skin colour (similar to the skin colour of Egyptian men in iconography), curly hair, beardless faces, and breechcloths in the tombs of Senenmut, Intef, Puimre, Useramun and the first phase of the tomb of Rekhmire, and Aegean kilts in the tombs of Menkheperreseneb and the second phase of the tomb of Rekhmire. Syrian figures are recognised by a yellow skin colour, bearded faces and clothing which might be described as particular kilts different from those of the Aegean and long robes. Hybrid iconographical figures are also known from these tombs (Matic: 2012, 235-253).

text from the tomb of Amenemheb accompanies three registers with foreigners bringing tribute at the time of Thutmose III, it reads: *All chiefs of Upper Retenu, all chiefs of Lower Retenu, Keftiu, Mennus, all lands united. They say: How great is Your might, victorious king.* Thus Keftiu was a land located near Palestine (Upper Retenu). It appears frequently among countries around Palestine in topographical lists (Strange: 1980, 53-60). For example, on a column drum in Amenhotep III's temple of Soleb in Nubia is engraved the following topographical list:



1) Kadesh 2) Tunip 3) [----] 4) [----] 5) Ugarit 6) Keftiu 7) Sangar (Shinar) 8) Naharina 9) Hatti 10) -

Another list of names, painted as a row of foreign captives on the base of the king's throne, is in the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93), chief steward to Amenhotep II (1420-1392):



1) Upper Egypt 2) Oasis Dwellers 3) Lower Egypt (Delta) 4) Bowmen of the Desert (Sinai) 5) Tehenu (Libya) 6) Tentdwellers of Nubia 7) Bedouins of Asia (Moab) 8) Naharina 9) Keftiu 10) Minnos (?) 11) Upper Retenu

Another list of names, painted in the tomb of Anen (TT120), accompanies a row of captives on the throne base of Amenhotep III: 1) Sangar (Shinar) 2) Kush 3) Naharina 4) Aram 5) Keftiu 6) Tentdwellers of Nubia 7) Tehenu (Libya) 8) Bedouins of Asia (Moab) 9) Shasu (Bedouins in Palestine).

Greek historians provide some information that illuminate the ethnic origin of the Philistines. According to Homer:

*Amid the vast sea is the beautiful and fruitful island of Crete thousands of men live, and 90 cities are enclosed in this country, where people speak different languages. There are Achaeans [Mycenaeans], magnanimous Cretans Aboriginal, Kydonians, Dorians divided into 3 tribes, and divine Pelasgians. Amidst this country stands the city of Knossos, where Minos reigned for 9 years (Odyssey XIX:173-177). Plato confirms this tradition on the primacy of Cretans (Laws I:1)<sup>23</sup>.*

According to Thucydides (The Peloponnesian War I:3-4), it was Minos, at the time of Pelasgians, who established the first organized colonies and according to Diodorus:

*Tectamus, the son of Dorus, the son of Hellen, the son of Deucalion, sailed to Crete with Aeolians and Pelasgians and became king of the island (...) the Cretans go on to say, not a few heroes were to be found in*

<sup>23</sup> A scholion on this passage says that the epithet of Zeus Pelasgikos was also read as Pelastikos. Pelasgians were originally called Pelastians (Sergent: 1995, 107-108) from which derives the name Philistines (the Greek words *pelagos* "high seas", *pelasgoi*\* (*pélas-koi*) "seamen" and *pelastoi* "philistines" are close).

*Crete, the most renowned of whom were Minos and Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon (...) Now Minos, by virtue of his being the eldest, became king of the island, and he founded on it not a few cities, the most renowned of which were the three, Knossos in those parts of the island which look toward Asia, Phaestos on the sea-shore to the south, and Cydonia in the regions to the west facing the Peloponnesus (...) But now that we have examined these matters it remains for us to discuss the peoples who have become intermixed with the Cretans. That the first inhabitants of the island were known as Eteo-Cretans and that they are considered to have sprung from the soil itself, we have stated before; and many generations after them Pelasgians, who were in movement by reason of their continuous expeditions and migrations, arrived at Crete and made their home in a part of the island* (Historical Library IV:60:2, V:78:1-2, V:80:1-2).

Herodotus states that the subjects of Minos were the inventors of the mane helmet (The Histories I:171), that is in agreement with crested helmets represented on the Phaistos Disc (dated around 1700 BCE).

Archaeology confirmed the claims of ancient historians that the Pelasgians lie prior to 1800 BCE (Papahatzis: 1978, 12-18), thanks to the similarity of Minoan and philistine ceramics (Delcor: 1966, 1233-1288; Killebrew, 2005, 197-245). Egyptian execration texts (dated to 1900-1800 BCE) directed men like Haluyakim, Hikisanu, Muri, princes of Ashkelon, and Yarpilu, a prince of Ekron (Briend, Seux: 1989, 13-15), whereas the names of these princes are Indo-European the names of the five Philistine cities look Semitic<sup>24</sup> (Old Canaanite), which implies that these Philistine colonists had likely adopted the language of their host country (Canaan). Current interpretation of archaeological data assuming the occurrence of Philistines only from the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE contradicts historical data, including some archaeological data showing that these cities were already inhabited prior to 1200 BCE (Mazar: 1990, 242). Thus, despite the extreme difficulty of excavation (scarcity of remains and cities still inhabited), some Philistine objects were found on the site of Ekron in the layer IX dated 1470-1400 BCE and on the site of Ashdod in the layer XIV dated 1300-1200 BCE (Ehrlich: 1996, 9-11). Chronological reconstruction of Philistia:

- ✓ Around 2000 BCE, massive departure of Pelastians (former Philistines), a migratory ethnicity of Crete, towards Palestine (from whom it owes its name). Founding of sale counters at Ashkelon and Ekron (maybe also Ahsdod, Gaza and Gat). “Philistia” is perceived by the Egyptians as a province of the Minoan kingdom (Faure: 1987, 37-40, 253-254).
- ✓ About 1930 BCE, Abraham met Abimelech, a Canaanite king in Philistine territory (east of Gaza) and Phicol (Indo-European name), his army commander. Abimelech gave to Sarah 11 kilos of silver (Gn 20:16), a rare metal in Palestine but abundant in Crete.
- ✓ Circa 1530 BCE, expulsion of the Hyksos. “Philistia” is perceived as a Cretan principality that became vassal of Egypt. According to the biblical text, the Philistines were experts in the art of forging (Jg 1:18-19, 1Sa 13:19). An Egyptian list gives (c. 1500 BCE) some Cretan (*keftiu*) names (Vercoutter: 1956, 45) such as: Akashu (*'ik3š3w*), close to Achish, king of Gath (1Sa 17:1)

<sup>24</sup> Ahsdod “fortified place”, Ashkelon “migration?”, Gaza “strong”, Gat “a wine-press”, Ekron “eradication”.

and Ben-Neṣabal (*bn-nd3b3r*), a Semitic name (“*son of God has placed*”).

- ✓ Around 1370 BCE, destruction of the palace of Knossos, at this time the name Keftiu disappears in Egyptian documents<sup>25</sup>. Philistia (formerly Keftiu) became an Egyptian province without a specific Egyptian name. Widya (an Indo-European name), mayor of Ashkelon and Ya[h]turu (?), mayor of Gaza, were under the orders of Egyptian commissioners (EA 296 and EA 320-327).
- ✓ Circa 1185 BCE, Philistines associated with Sea Peoples and revolted unsuccessfully against Egypt. Philistia is now called by the Egyptians according to its ethnic origin (Philistines) and not according to its geographical origin (Cretans). It became a province subordinate to Israel. The name Goliath was close to the Lydian name Alyattes and to the name written ‘LWT’ on an inscription (dated c. 900 BCE) found at Tel es-Safi (Gath?).
- ✓ Circa 800 BCE, Adad-nerari III attacked Philistia (Palaštu) which became, despite several harshly repressed revolts, a vassal country of the Assyrian empire (Garelli, Lemaire: 1997, 93-96).
- ✓ In 604 BCE Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Ashkelon, which would then have been attached to Tyr. The province of Philistia was integrated into the Babylonian empire and lost all autonomy.
- ✓ Circa 450 BCE, Herodotus named Syria-Palestine the region that covered ancient Philistia, Judea and Samaria<sup>26</sup>.
- ✓ In 238 BCE, in the Decree of Canopus the Egyptian word Keftiu was rendered in Greek as “Phoenicia”, a country often equated to Lebanon (*fenḥu*) by the Egyptians. The lands of Fenḥu (*fnḥw* means “carpenters” in Egyptian) were close to Qedem (Lebanon) in The Story of Sinuhe (line 221).
- ✓ In 147 BCE, Demetrius, son of Demetrius, came from Crete to the country of his fathers, Syria-Palestine. The Philistine temple of Azotus (Ashdod), dedicated to Beth-Dagon, was then burned (1Maccabees 10:67, 83; 11:4). The Philistines are then no longer mentioned.

Archaeologists have long believed that the Aegeans representations in Egyptian tombs fell more under artistic convention than historical accuracy. This negative bias, as for biblical data on Crete and Philistines, has since been refuted by a thorough analysis of all these representations (Panagiotopoulos: 2001, 263-283). Keftiu referred to Crete but was associated with Syria (Matic: 2014, 275-289). The first trade links between Egypt and the Aegean world could even go up to 2400 BCE because there was discovered on the island of Cythera, a glass in marble on behalf of the Solar Temple Userkaf (Vercoutter: 1992, 292). These trips could possibly have been by sea because a boat with about twenty sailors on board (Egyptian and Phoenician) was represented on the walls of the mortuary temple of King Sahure at Abusir (Jenkins: 1983, 102-103).

<sup>25</sup> The country of Keftiu (*kf-ti-n*) is quoted in the temple of Ramses II (1283-1216) at Abydos, but it is in fact an Asian “standardized” list because it is next to Naharina (*n-h-r-n*) while this country (Mitanni) had been conquered by Shalmaneser I (in 1264 BCE).

<sup>26</sup> The Histories I:105, II:106, III:5.91, VII:89.

As the history of Philistines is only beginning to emerge we cannot use its shortcomings to discredit the biblical data, which are further confirmed by archaeological discoveries. Cretan language (Linear A) remains unknown as well as Philistine language<sup>27</sup>. Consequently when the Bible says that Abraham met some Philistines, it meant “*those from Crete*” (Gn 10:14), not those who arrived later in Philistia (from Crete) with the Sea Peoples (in 1185 BCE).

#### HITTITES IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM ARE THEY ANACHRONISTIC?

A Bible reference dictionary states: *At the beginning of the XII<sup>th</sup> century several waves of migration from Europe spread through Western Asia. One of them, assigned by the Egyptian texts to the Sea Peoples, destroyed Ugarit and probably passes through Anatolia where it mingles with other movements of people and put an end to the Hittite Empire around 1170 BC. The collapse of Hittite Empire did not mean the end of Hittite civilization. It survives in a series of small neo-Hittite states of northern Syria, as Carchemish and Hamath, or in states of mixed Arameo-Hittite civilization as Sam'al and Bit-Adini (Beth-Eden). Assyrian and Babylonian texts describe these Hittite states and extend this term for the entire Syro-Palestine, including even Philistine and Phoenician cities on the coast. This practice continued after the subjugation and annexation of the Neo-Hittite and Aramaic states by Assyria and there is evidence until time of Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BC). Most biblical references to the Hittites are related to the latter use of this term and should be used only as some anachronistic archaisms. This refers both to the mention of the Hittites in the lists of pre-Israelites people of Palestine as stories certainly postexilic from Gn 23:3-20 (cf. 2;9s; 49,29-32) and 26:34s; 27:46. In reality, the Hittites of history have never dominated or even inhabited Palestine. The Israelites, however, known neo-Hittite states of Syria and the Bible made explicit reference of it in 1R 10:29 - 2Ch 1:17; 1R 11:1, 2R 7:6 (Lipiński: 1987b, 591). This short excerpt contains an untruth: the Bible never said that the Hittites had lived in Palestine, and a big contradiction: if most biblical references were “anachronistic archaisms” why did the author of the Bible Dictionary write at the beginning of his article: the Hittites of history are a people of central Anatolia, formed by the merger of Indo-European immigrants, settled in the country from the XX<sup>th</sup> century BC, with the indigenous inhabitants who were the real Hittites, but whose language is now called "Hatti" to distinguish it from the Hittite, which is the main idiom of Indo-European immigrants. They took over the name of the indigenous group, but eventually imposed their language, they began writing in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, using the cuneiform tradition borrowed from a provincial northern Syria. From the XV<sup>th</sup> century, they also made use of "Hittite hieroglyphics", which is a system of symbols, some of which appear before this date as isolated symbols. This original pictographic writing was used until the VII<sup>th</sup> century BC.*

What does the Bible exactly say about the Hittites and does this information contradict the meagre data we have on them? The Hittites appeared

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps they have a common bond (Frank M. Cross in: *The New York Times* 13 March 2007) and could be an Indo-Iranian language. Some scholars believe that the script of the Deir 'Alla tablets can be related to the Cypro-Minoan type of writing thought to have been used there by the Philistines (Naveh: 1982, 22). The first Philistine inscription (found at Tel Miqne in 1996), dated c. 600 BCE, is written in Phoenician.

at the time of Abraham (Gn 23:10; 50:13), at the time of Moses (Nb 13:29) and finally in the period of the kings with David (2Sa 11:3) and Solomon who traded with Hittite kings of Carchemish (1Ki 10:28-29). The Neo-Hittite kingdom was a remnant of the vast Hittite empire (Bryce: 2012) which collapsed suddenly in 1185 BCE during the attack of the Sea Peoples in Year 8 of Ramses III. Egypt was the centre of a conflict, at first for trading, that escalated into war (pirates becoming mercenaries) between two great coalitions<sup>28</sup> (Mycenaean and Hittite). This explains the presence of prisoners from both coalitions on representations of the campaign of Ramses III in Amurru (Pritchard: 1969, 4,250).



The 1<sup>st</sup> prisoner (left) is a Prince of Hatti (*ht*), the 2<sup>nd</sup> a prince of Amurru (*'im'r*), the 3<sup>rd</sup> the leader of the Tjekkers (*tjkrj*), the 4<sup>th</sup> the leader of the Shardanes (*š3rd3n*), the 5<sup>th</sup> the Chief of the Siculi (*š3[krs]*) and the 6<sup>th</sup> is an Etruscan (*twrš3*). The kingdom of Amurru being in the sphere of Hittite influence, partly controlled by Egypt, this explains the order of the prisoners: first Hittites, at the origin of the conflict, then the Sea Peoples, the new attackers called “*conspirators in the islands*” by Ramses III. This momentous event marked a turning point in Hittite history and its chronology (Freu: 2008, 5-8).

Carchemish, the capital of the Neo-Hittite kingdom from 1185 BCE, was in fact an old city since it had been vassal of kings of Ebla (c. 2000 BCE), then Aleppo and finally of Hittite kings (Joannès: 2001, 444-449), likely from Muršili I (1510-1500). At the time of Joshua, Carchemish was the capital of the Hittite empire immediately after Hattuša. For example, Piyaššili<sup>29</sup> (1325-1310) was made King of Carchemish and Muršili II, Šuppiluliuma's successor, became King of Hattuša. The presence of Hittites in the area of Carchemish (northern

<sup>28</sup> Ramses III's account describes the following protagonists: on one hand Sea Peoples (coalition of Philistines from Crete, Tjekkers from Troas, Sicilians from Sicily?, Denyens and Wesheshs, federated by Mycenaean) and on the other hand Hatti and its vassal kingdoms (coast of Cilicia, Carchemish, Western Anatolia, Cyprus) who were destroyed in one fell swoop. The coordination of these coalitions reflects remarkable logistics (Leclant: 2005, 1712), which proves the existence of a war.

<sup>29</sup> Piyaššili was a Hittite prince, and a middle son of King Šuppiluliuma I; younger than the heir Arnuwanda II, but older than the eventual successor Muršili II. After Šuppiluliuma concluded a treaty with Šattiwazza, son of King Tušratta of Mitanni, and married one of his daughters to him, Piyaššili led a Hittite army that put Šattiwazza on the throne of Hanigalbat. According to Hittite sources, Piyaššili and Šattiwazza crossed the Euphrates at Carchemish, then marched against Irridu, already in Hurrian territory. After having reduced Irridu and Haran, they continued east towards Waššukanni and perhaps conquered the capital Taite as well. After Šattiwazza had been made a vassal ruler of Hanigalbat, Šuppiluliuma gave to Piyaššili the Hurrian name Šarri-Kušuh. In fact, the whole former territory of Hanigabat west of the Euphrates seems to have come under direct Hittite rule and was governed by Piyaššili.

Syria), at the time of Muršili I (c. 1500 BCE), was therefore important.

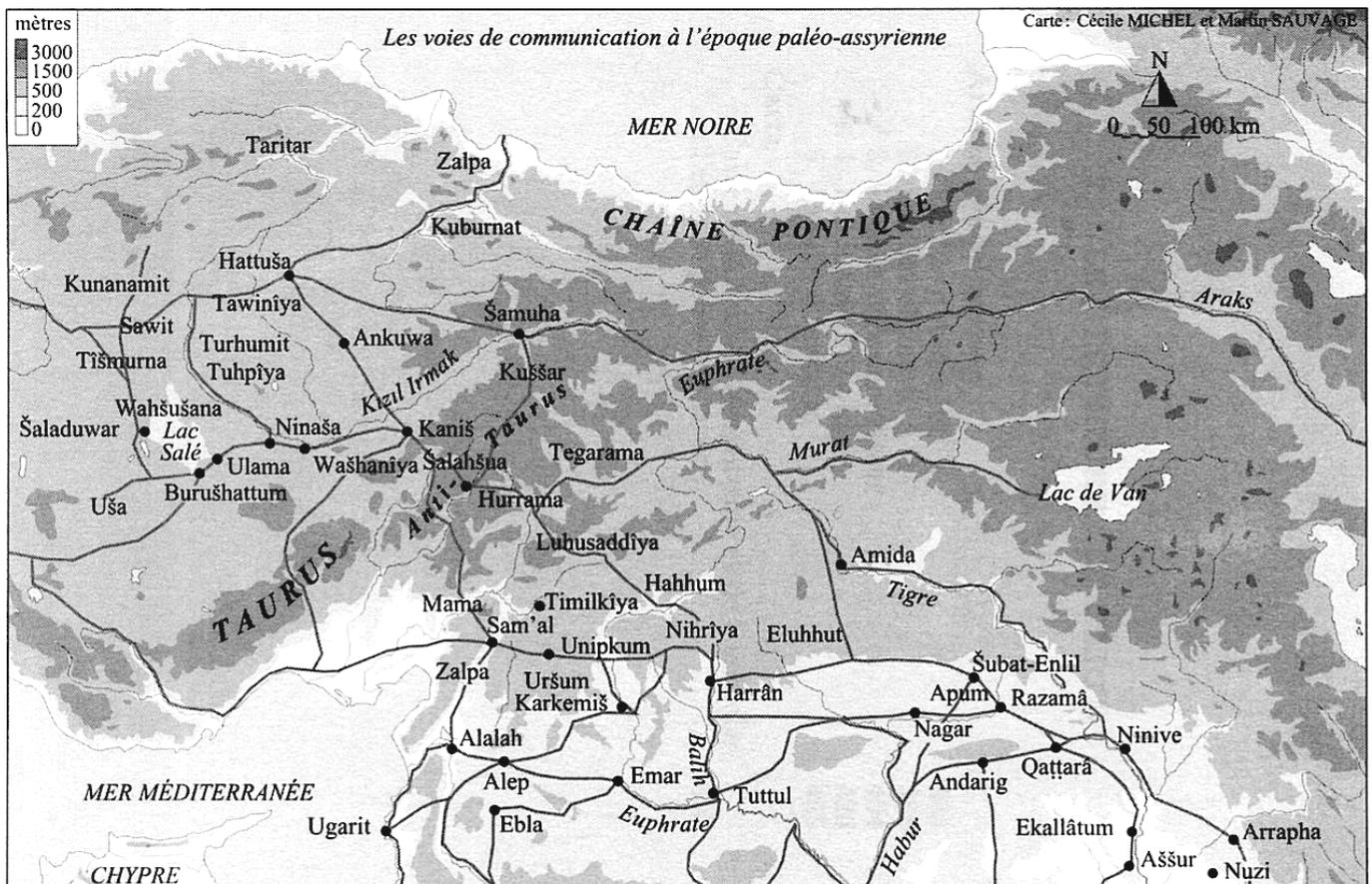
All specialists agree that the origins of Hittite history are still full of darkness and many uncertainties remain (Margueron, Pfirsich: 2012, 212). According to a well-known tradition, Naram-Sin of Akkad (2163-2126) marched against a coalition of 17 kings including Pamba king of Hatti, and Zipani king of Kanesh. The existence of Hittite homeland is thus very old, but this Hittite kingdom of Pamba is doubly paradoxical: it only covered a small part of Hatti (a region around the city of Hattusa) and the Hittite language was not used, they spoke Nesite (or Neseli). The Hattians were an ancient people who inhabited the land of Hatti (Bryce: 2005, 11-20). The group was documented at least as early as the empire of Sargon of Akkad (2243-2187), until it was gradually absorbed c. 2000-1700 by the Indo-European Hittites, who became identified with the “*land of Hatti*”. The oldest name for central Anatolia, “*land of Hatti*”, was found on Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets from the period of Sargon the Great of Akkad: on those tablets Assyrian-Akkadian traders implored King Sargon for help. This appellation continued to exist for about 1500 years until 630 BCE, as stated in Assyrian chronicles. According to later Hittite documents, Sargon the Great had fought with the Luwian king Nurdaggal of Burushanda. The Hattians spoke Hattic, a non-Indo-European language of uncertain affiliation<sup>30</sup>. The few texts that have survived are predominantly religious or cultic in character. Thus the use of the word “*Proto-Hittite*” to refer to Hattians is inaccurate (Freu, Mazoyer, Klock-Fontanille: 2007, 15-16). Hittite, also called Nesite because it was spoken in Nesa/Kanesh, is an Indo-European language, linguistically distinct from the Hattians. The Hittites continued to use the term Land of Hatti for their new kingdom and they always called themselves “*people of the land of Hatti (Heth)*”. The Hattians eventually merged with people who spoke Indo-European languages such as Hittite, Luwian and Palaic<sup>31</sup> and were organized in feudal city-states and small kingdoms or principalities (perhaps up to six). These cities were well organized and ruled as theocratic principalities.

Nesite was the official language of the Hittite kingdom and was mainly spoken by its ruling class. Primarily for this reason Nesite (Hittite) continued to be used as the official chancellery language in Hattusa when the Hittite kingdom was established, and as the language of written communications between the

<sup>30</sup> Many Northwest Caucasian family names have prefixes like “*Hath*” or “*Hatti*”, and one of the well known Adygean tribes has the name “*Hattico*” (in the meaning of “*Hatti-son*”). Evidence of a Hattic civilization is provided by the remnants of one of the non-Indo-European languages found in the later Hittite archives. The language is identified in several of the texts in which it appears by the term *battili*- “(*written in the language of Hatti*)”.

<sup>31</sup> Luwian, Palaic, Nesite were the languages originally spoke in Luwiya (in Lydia), Pala (North of Hattusa) and Nesa. Since Nesite was the official language of the Hittite kingdom, it is a natural assumption that this was the language spoken by its ruling class. Its use may have spread quite widely beyond the Nesa region, perhaps already serving as a kind of *lingua franca* in Anatolia. It would have been much more readily learnt and understood in many parts of western and south-eastern Anatolia where Luwian was spoken, than the Hattic language, or any other language spoken within the sphere of Assyrian merchant activities.

royal court and the various peoples of Anatolia, particularly in the west<sup>32</sup>. Those who occupied the throne frequently proclaimed their genealogical links with their earliest known predecessors (as in Genesis 23:2-10). These links helped substantiate their claims to the throne<sup>33</sup>. Hittites from this period (2000-1700 BCE) are known mainly through Assyrian merchants letters (written in Paleo-Assyrian). These merchants lived temporarily in towns near the road linking Kanesh to Assyria but traded with the inhabitants in the south of Anatolia (Joannès: 2001, 440-441) where there were major Hittite commercial centers such as those in Mama, Zalpa and Urshum, three cities near Carchemish. The two most important city-states of this time in the Land of Hatti were Kanish (former Nesa) and Mama (Michel: 2001, 105,117-130).



The Hittites living in Syria must have played an important role in Hittite history because the first Hittite cuneiform use for writing was that of the Ur III dynasty (c. 2000 BCE) and not the one from Assyrian merchants established in Asia Minor up to 1900 BCE, thus this diplomatic writing (very different from hieroglyphic Hittite) must have been acquired in Syria, their place of origin

<sup>32</sup> There may have been other reasons for the continuing use of Hittite, at least within the royal court. The royal succession in Hatti remained the prerogative of a small group of families throughout the entire history of the Hittite kingdom.

<sup>33</sup> Nesite was to remain the language of royalty throughout the period of the Hittite kingdom, it reflected the retention of an important dynastic tradition. This does not mean that the use of Nesite was confined to the members of the royalty. At the very least it extended down through the various levels of the kingdom's administrative hierarchy. It was, for example, the language used by scribes and other officials in the kingdom's regional centres, as illustrated by the personal notes exchanged, as appendages to official dispatches, between Hattusa-based bureaucrats and their counterparts in Tapikka.

(Riemschneider: 1955, 9-16). The Hittites who lived in Syria, and sometimes in Canaan, wanted to define themselves by their genealogical link “*people from the land of Hetb*” as does the Bible (Gn 26:34; 36:2), the original land being likely the region around Hat(ti)-tuša (Hattusa). Chronology of the Hittite lands:

		HATTIAN PERIOD			
HATTUŠA	BCE	KANESH (NESA)	BCE	CARCHEMISH	BCE
?		Nur-Daggal	c. -2200	?	
Pamba	2150-2130	Zipani	2150-2130	?	2150-1910
?		?		?	1900-1860
?		Ḫurmeli	1750-1730	?	
?		Ḫarpatiwa	1730-1710	?	
?		Inar	1710-1690	Adni-Anda	1700-1690
?		Waršama	1690-1670	Aplah-Anda I	1690-1670
?		Pithana	1670 -	Yatar-Ami	1670-1668
?			-1650	Yahdun-Lim	1668-1650
Piyušti	1650-1630	Anitta	1650-1630	Aplah-Anda II	1650-1630
<i>Hattuša destroyed</i>		Zūzu	1630-1610	?	
<b>EARLY EMPIRE</b>		KUŠŠAR			
		Ḫuzziya I ?	1605-1585	?	
		Tuḫaliya ?	1585-1565	?	
		PU-Šarruma ?	1565-1550	?	
<i>Hattuša rebuilt</i>		Labarna	1550-1530	?	
Ḫattušili I	1530-1510			(vassal of Hattuša)	
Muršili I	1510-1500	(Babylon destroyed)	1499 BCE	?	1530 -
Ḫantili I	1500-1495				-1490
Zidanta I	1495			?	1490 -
Ammuna	1495-1485			(Joshua)	
Ḫuzziya II	1485				
Telipinu	1485-1480				
<b>MIDDLE EMPIRE</b>					
Alluwamna	1480-1475			?	
Ḫantili II	1475-1470				
Taḫurwaili I	1470				
Zidanza (II)	1470-1465				
Ḫuzziya III	1465-1460				-1460
Muwatalli I	1460-1455			?	
Tuḫaliya I	1455-1435				
Ḫattušili II	1435-1425			?	
Tuḫaliya II	1425-1395				
Arnuwanda I	1395-1370			?	
Tuḫaliya III	1370-1355				
<b>LATE EMPIRE</b>				(co-regency with Hattuša)	
Šuppiluliuma I	1353-1322			Šarri-Kušuh	1325 -
Arnuwanda II	1322			(Piyaššili)	-1310
Muršili II	1322 -			Šaḫunuruwa	1310 -
	-1295				
Muwatalli II	1295-1275				
Urḫi-Teshub	1275 -				-1255
	-1268			Ini-Tešub I	1255 -
Ḫattušili III	1268-1241				
Tuḫaliya IV	1241 -				-1220

	-1209			Talmi-Tešub I	1220 -
Arnuwanda III	1209-1207				
Šuppiluliyama II	1207-1185				-1185
<i>Hattuša destroyed</i>		<i>Sea Peoples invasion</i>	1185 BCE	<b>NEO-HITTITE</b>	
		<i>Philistines ruled Israel</i> (Jg 13:1)	1162 - -1122	Kuzi-Tešub	1185-1150
				Ini-Tešub II	1150-1115
				Tudḫaliya V	1115-1080
				Sapaziti ( <i>David</i> )	1080-1025
				Ura-Tarhunza	1025-990
				Suhi I ( <i>Solomon</i> )	990-955
				Suhi II	955-920

According to the Bible, when Joshua entered the Promised Land (in 1493 BCE) he expelled a number of nations, including the Hittites<sup>34</sup>. These Hittites were located north of Syria<sup>35</sup>. After the death of Joshua all these nations returned to their places of origin<sup>36</sup>. The few scattered references that we have to Hantili's reign (1500-1495) indicate that he intended on maintaining Hittite influence on Syria. In the tradition of Hattušili and Muršili, he conducted military operations in the region, reaching Carchemish on the Euphrates. Very likely his campaign was directed against Hurrians. How successful this campaign was remains unknown (Bryce: 2005, 100). The Hittites, south of Euphrates, mentioned in the time of Joshua and Hantili I, are therefore the same.

The Hittites met by Abraham were not quite the same as those of Joshua since they are identified as *sons of Heth*<sup>37</sup>, not *Hittites*. In the biblical narrative (Gn 23:2-10), Ephron (“*of a calf*”), son of Zohar (“*tawny*”), was not a Hittite in the usual manner because his birth name and that of his father are not Hittite but Canaanite, implying that they had been settled in this region for a long time. Consequently the history of Hittites is complex, its official beginning is the

<sup>34</sup> *When Jehovah your God at last brings you into the land to which you are going so as to take possession of it, he must also clear away populous nations from before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations more populous and mighty than you are (Dt 7:1).*

<sup>35</sup> *Every place upon which the sole of your foot will tread, to you people I shall certainly give it, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon to the great river, the river Euphrates, that is, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun your territory will prove to be (...) And it came about that as soon as all the kings who were on the side of the Jordan in the mountainous region and in the Shephelah and along the whole coast of the Great Sea and in front of Lebanon, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, heard of it, they began to assemble themselves all together to make war against Joshua and Israel unanimously (Jos 1:3-4; 9:1-2).*

<sup>36</sup> *Accordingly Jehovah let these nations stay by not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into Joshua's hand (...) And the sons of Israel dwelt in the midst of [not with] the Canaanites, the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites (Jg 2:23; 3:5).*

<sup>37</sup> *So Sarah died in Kiriath-arba, that is to say, Hebron, in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came in to bewail Sarah and to weep over her. Then Abraham got up from before his dead and proceeded to speak to the sons of Heth, saying: “An alien resident and settler I am among you. Give me the possession of a burial place among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” At this the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him: “Hear us, my lord. A chieftain of God you are in the midst of us. In the choicest of our burial places bury your dead. None of us will hold back his burial place from you to prevent burying your dead.” Thereupon Abraham got up and bowed down to the natives, to the sons of Heth, and spoke with them, saying: “If your souls agree to bury my dead out of my sight, listen to me and urge Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is his, which is at the extremity of his field. For the full amount of silver let him give it to me in the midst of you for the possession of a burial place.” As it was, Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. So Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth with all those entering the gate of his city.*

period called Early Empire (c. 1530 BCE) but previously there was a period called Hattian period, with 3 ancestors kingdoms, those of Hattusa, Kanesh and Carchemish. Those ancient Hittites, called Hattians by scholars or *sons of Heth, son of Canaan* in Genesis 10:15, were the ancestors of the Hittites.

#### ARAMEANS IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM ARE THEY ANACHRONISTIC?

Javier Teixidor<sup>38</sup> concludes at the end of his study about the Aramean origin of biblical patriarchs:

*The theme of the military conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land, which is the third element of the historical credo of Deuteronomy 26:5-9, derives from the stay of these Arameans/ Hebrews in Egypt (...) Our knowledge of the ancient Oriental world is based on two research areas: the archaeological excavations with the analysis, classification and study of monuments and objects of all kinds, and literary or epigraphic. Archaeological finds of recent years have greatly increased our knowledge of the history of Western Asia, a story that gradually reveals the cultural cohesion of political and religious institutions in many Semitic populations. The corpus of ancient texts is important, and it is growing. Watched closely, taking into account the research done on the field but also the review of documents have long been known, these texts can explain more accurately, and consistently, certain books of the Old Testament. Better analysis of literary sources can, in fact, shed a new light on the life and works of biblical characters. We have today, perhaps more than ever the sense of what is likely; Orientalists will not be able perhaps not always tell what was happening, but they often know that could not happen. In the passage of Deuteronomy that I called the « historical credo », the second element, the sojourn in Egypt, has been studied here from epigraphic and literary documents of the VII<sup>th</sup>, VI<sup>th</sup> and V<sup>th</sup> centuries concerning Judah from Egypt and it is in the middle they originate which has arisen the writing of Exodus, which is a national epic and not a historical document. With respect to the third element of that « credo », the conquest of Canaan, one must stick firmly to the present archaeological research which seriously question this episode. After the exile, had to find in this tradition the explanation of present, a political present, even religious, and imagining that there had been a victory over the inhabitants of Canaan a reality was given to the promises made by Yahweh to his people (Teixidor: 2003, 211-218).*

Roland de Vaux<sup>39</sup> was even more severe on the authenticity of the Aramaeans in the time of Abraham:

*But can we talk about the Arameans at the time of the patriarchs? (...) The first guaranteed mention of the Aramaeans in cuneiform texts is dated Tiglath-Pileser I, who in the fourth year of his reign, around 1110 BC, fought the Ahlamu-Arameans along the Euphrates (...) One could go a little earlier with an Egyptian document: a geographical list of the reign of Amenhotep III contains the name p3 'rm that can be interpreted as « the land of Aram », or because of the person determinative « the people of the land of Aram », the Arameans. Unfortunately, the other names in this fragmentary list are not identifiable and the geographical placement of this group is uncertain. Anyway, unless much rejuvenating the Patriarchs, the present state of our information invites us to consider as an anachronism references to Aram and Arameans in the stories of Genesis (De Vaux: 1986b, 194-198).*

It is sufficient to consult a popular encyclopaedia, like Wikipedia, to see that the previous conclusions are wrong:

<sup>38</sup> Honorary professor at the Collège de France (Chair in Semitic Antiquities).

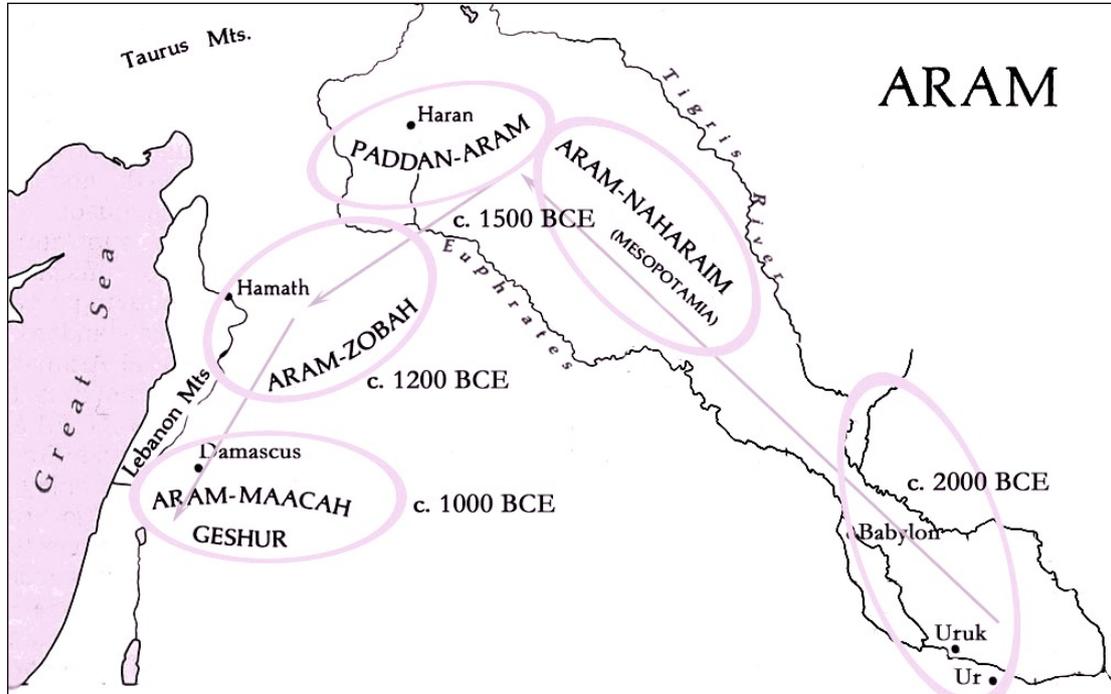
<sup>39</sup> Roland de Vaux was OP Director of the Ecole Biblique, a French Catholic Theological School, member of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies and co-director of the Jerusalem Bible.

*The origin of the Arameans is still uncertain, arising from the limited amount of evidence regarding the mention of Arameans in Mesopotamian inscriptions. The toponym A-ra-mu appears in an inscription at Ebla listing geographical names, and the term Armi, which is the Eblaite term for nearby Aleppo, occurs frequently in the Ebla tablets (c. 2300 BCE). One of the annals of Naram-Sin of Akkad (c. 2250 BCE) mentions that he captured "Dubul, the ensi of A-ra-me" (Arame is seemingly a genitive form), in the course of a campaign against Simurru in the northern mountains. Other early references to a place or people of "Aram" have appeared at the archives of Mari (c. 1900 BCE) and at Ugarit (c. 1300 BCE). There is little agreement concerning what, if any, relationship there was between these places, or if the Aramu were actually Arameans; the earliest undisputed mention of Arameans as a people is in the inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser I (c. 1100 BCE). The Ablamû ("wanderers") are first mentioned in the el-Amarna letters alluding to the king of Babylon; the presence of the Ablamû are also attested in Assyria, Nippur and even at Dilmun (Bahrain); Shalmaneser I (1274-1245) defeated the Shattuara, King of Mitanni and his Hittite and Ablamû mercenaries are mentioned in the Jazirah. The term appears equivalent to the Egyptian term Shasu ("wanderers"), who replaced the outlaw 'Apiru (SA.GAZ) as the major source of instability in the Egyptian Levantine empire from the reign of Tutankhamun onwards. In the following century, the Ablamû cut the road from Babylon to Hattusas, and Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208) claims that he conquered Mari, Hana and Rapiqum on the Euphrates and "the mountain of the Ablamû", apparently the region of Jebel Bisri.*

In addition, an ethnic group called Ḫalmeans (Arameans) is mentioned (prior to -1900) north of Babylonia (*The lamentation over the destruction of Sumer and Ur*, line 255). What does the Bible say about the Arameans and do archaeological finds confirm, or refute, this information? "Aram" is used to designate: the descendants of Aram (Gn 10:23), a geographical area (first Mesopotamia, later Syria) and a language (Aramaic). Very often this word is translated as "*Syria/ Syrian*" which is only correct after the entry into the Promised Land (c. -1500). Arameans were semi-nomads (*wanderers*) who moved during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium from Mesopotamia to Syria (Kupper: 1982, 260-263).

The geographical area, as well as the language changed during this period. For example, Jacob who lived in Canaan met Laban (c. -1800) in Haran, a city of Paddan-Aram (Gn 31:18,20). The two men spoke almost the same language with the exception of certain words like "*witness heap*" rendered as *jegar-sabadutha* in Aramaic but *galeed* in Old Canaanite (Gn 31:46-47). However, about 1100 years later, the two languages became so different that the Jews who spoke Hebrew could no longer be understood by Assyrian messengers if they spoke in Aramaic (2Ki 18:26-28). The region covered by Aram is sometimes specified. During the first campaign of David (1049-1042), for example, a king of Hamath named To'î (2Sa 8:9-10) or To'û (1Ch 18:9-10) is mentioned and he is presented as a contemporary of Hadadezer king of [Aram]-Zobah (1Ch 18:3-10; Ps 60 Sup). At this time there were at least 3 Arameans areas: Aram-Naharaim, Aram-Maacah and Aram-Zobah (1Ch 19:6). As the word *Naharaim* means "*two rivers [i.e. the Euphrates and the Tigris]*" in Hebrew, it has been translated into Greek as Mesopotamia "*midst of (2) rivers*". The Amarna letters (c. -1350) use it under the form *Naharima* (letter EA 288), a syllabic transcription of (Aram)-*Naharaim*, to

designate a region also known by them as Mitanni (*Metēn*). Though at the time of David (c. -1050) the “*kings of Aram*” could be called “*kings of Syria*” (Damascus kingdom) four centuries earlier the area named Aram-Naharaim covered mainly Upper Mesopotamia. It is evident that there exists a connection and a geographical, historical and linguistic continuity between the OB Amorite nomadic tribes and the MB Aramean ones (Bodi: 2014, 383-409):



Cushan-rishathaim<sup>40</sup> ruled the land of Israel (1452-1444) as king of Aram-Naharaim<sup>41</sup>. The period 1480-1450 corresponds to a period of expansion westwards of Mitanni (as far as Syria), mainly due to the policy of conquest of two kings: Barattarna I then Šauštatar I (Freu: 2003, 40-51). The Egyptians were concerned about that aggressive expansion. During his first campaign, in year 22 (in 1450 BCE), Thutmose III states that he fought 330 rebel princes who were under the orders of the king of Kadesh and were thus indirectly in the wake of the “*prince of Naharim*”.

Šauštatar I (1455-1435) the king of Mitanni<sup>42</sup> corresponds well to Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram-Naharaim (Jg 3:8). However, the word Aram-Naharaim refers to a geographical area (land), not ethnic or linguistic, because kings of Mitanni were of Indo-Aryan origin and spoke Hurrian. The word *paddan* means

<sup>40</sup> His name was amended by derision because it means “*Kushan of double wickedness*” in Hebrew. There is the same emendation in Jeremiah 50:21: *Go up against the land of “double rebellion”* (Darby Bible Translation). The transcription Khusarsatos (for *kušaršata?*) in the Septuagint is probably more authentic.

<sup>41</sup> *At this Jehovah’s anger blazed against Israel, so that he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim the king of Aram-Naharaim and the sons of Israel continued to serve Cushan-rishathaim 8 years. And the sons of Israel began to call to Jehovah for aid. Then Jehovah raised a saviour up for the sons of Israel that he might save them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb. The spirit of Jehovah now came upon him, and he became the judge of Israel. When he went out to battle, then Jehovah gave Cushan-rishathaim the king of Aram into his hand so that his hand overpowered Cushan-rishathaim* (Jg 3:8-10).

<sup>42</sup> Mitanni (modern name) was called Maittani or Naharena by Egyptians, “*Hurrian country*” by Hittites, Subartu “*northern country*” or Hanigalbat “*large region aside Hana?*” by Assyrians and Babylonians.

“*area*” in Aramean thus the name *Paddan-Aram* (Gn 47:8) could be translated as “*area of Arameans*” (Lipiński: 1987c, 949). The area covered by the Mitanni around -1500 was travelled by Aramaean tribes who came from Lower Mesopotamia (Joannès: 2001, 63-68). The term *Ahlamû* “Arameans” was used to designate nomadic enemies of Assyria (Luckenbill: 1926: 73,116,166,209) during the period 1350-1100<sup>43</sup>. Around -1350, the term *Ahlamû* (see El-Amarna letter EA 200) was used to designate some disruptives in the Nippur area (De Vaux 1986b, 194-198) under Burna-Buriaš II (1360-1333).

Historical context of Mesopotamia around 1450 BCE:



According to the Bible, the Aramaeans had settled mainly in Lower Mesopotamia prior to 1800 BCE:

*Joshua then said to all the people: Yahweh, the God of Israel, says this: From time immemorial, your ancestors, Terah, father of Abraham and Nabor, lived beyond the Euphrates, and served other gods. I then brought your ancestor Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the length and breadth of Canaan. I increased his descendants and I gave him Isaac (Jos 24:1-2); In the presence of Yahweh your God, you will then pronounce these words: My father was a wandering Aramaean, who went down to Egypt with a small group of men, and stayed there, until he there became a great, powerful and numerous nation (Dt 26:5); The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham, while he was in Mesopotamia before settling in Haran, and said to him: Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for this country which I shall show you (Ac 7:2-3); Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and Jacob went to Paddan-Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramaean and brother of Rebekah the mother of Jacob and Esau (Gn 28:5); Jacob fled to the countryside of Aram, Israel slaved to win a wife, to win a wife he looked after sheep (Ho 12:13).*

<sup>43</sup> Especially during the reigns of kings: Aššur-rêš-iši I (1133-1115), Tukultî-Ninurta I (1242-1206), Salmanazar I (1271-1242), Adad-nêrârî I (1302-1271) and Arik-dên-ili (1313-1302).

The term Aram designated the country of the Arameans at that time (2200-1800). This country is therefore very ancient, it appears as a toponym (A-ra-mu<sup>ki</sup>) in an inscription at Ebla listing geographical names (c. -2200)<sup>44</sup> and in a Sumerian administrative document, from the Ur-III period (c. -2000), which lists animals brought to the central-park at Puzriš-Dagan (near Nippur) a city A-ra-mi<sup>ki</sup> is mentioned after Ešnuna (Lipiński: 2000, 26-31). Archaeological and biblical data are consistent: the Aramean cattle breeders were originally installed to Lower Mesopotamia (2200-1800) and later moved westward, first to Upper Mesopotamia (1800-1500) and finally to Syria after 1200 BCE. The long journey of Abraham from Ur of Egypt was at the time of Sinuhe when Orientals were called *a'amu* by Egyptians. For example *The Prophecy of Neferti* (c. -1950), makes mention of Asiatics<sup>45</sup>:

*He (Neferti) was concerned for what would happen in the land. He thinks about the condition of the east. Asiatics ('3mw) travel with their swords, terrorizing those who are harvesting, seizing the oxen from the plow (...) All happiness has gone away, the land is cast down in trouble because of those feeders, Asiatics (Styw) who are throughout the land. Enemies have arisen in the east, Asiatics ('3mw) have come down to Egypt. A fortress is deprived of another beside it, the guards do not pay attention of it (...) Asiatics ('3mw) will fall to his sword, Libyans will fall to this flame, rebels to his wrath, traitors to his might, as the serpent on his brow subdues the rebels to him. One will build the "Wall of the Ruler", life prosperity and health, to prevent Asiatics ('3mw) from going down into Egypt (Hoffmeier: 1996, 58-59).*

The Egyptian words *Aamu* ('3mw) and *Retenu* (Rtnw) are usually translated as *Asiatics* and *Syria-Palestine*, they fit well to the biblical terms *people of Canaan* and *Canaan*<sup>46</sup>. As the Execration Texts transcribe the names Aškalon and Yerušalem by 'Isq3nw, for Ašqalun<sup>47</sup>, and 3wš3mm, for [U]rusalimum (Dussaud: 1940, 170-182), the Egyptian letter 3 being used for sound r/l (at least up to 1800 BCE), the word '3mw, could be read Aramu "those of Aram".

#### IS THERE NO WAY TO ACCURATELY DATE THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD?

Dating ancient texts by linguistic and epigraphic data is an extremely difficult exercise because the corpus of ancient documents is very limited or non-existent. Usually the date of writing of a book is determined by the last event mentioned which can be dated historically. This method of dating is

<sup>44</sup> ENSI Si-mu-ur Dub-ul ENSI A-ra-me<sup>ki</sup> ik-mi-ù.

<sup>45</sup> The Egyptian word Setiu (*Styw*) "those of Seth" is also translated as *Asiatics*, but refers more specifically to Suteans [of Moab], called *sons of Seth* in the Bible (Nb 24:17). When Idrimi (1500-1470) fled to the south of Syria, he met the *Sutu* [Suteans], and then lived 7 years with the *Habiru* [Hebrews] in the country of *Ki-in-anim<sup>ki</sup>* [Canaan] (Garelli, Durand, Gonnet, Breniquet: 1997, 139-140).

<sup>46</sup> The term Canaan, which is Semitic, does not appear in Egyptian texts, except perhaps as "sand dwellers" (Aharoni: 1979, 67-77), moreover, because of migration, it has designated different areas according to the time: Lebanon at the time of Ebla, around -2300. The name Canaan appears in the sentences: *kù nig-ba<sup>d</sup>BE(lum) Ga-na-na-im* "gift (for) the lord of Canaan"; *é<sup>d</sup>Ga-na-na-im* "temple of divine Canaan" (Tubb: 1998, 15; Archi: 2005, 81-100), covering later: 1) Upper Mesopotamia at the time of Mari, c. -1800, the name Canaan is written *Ki-na-ah-nu* (Dossin: 1973, 277-282), 2) Syria-Palestine at the time of Idrimi (c. -1500) and 3) Philistia at the time of Merenptah (c. -1200).

<sup>47</sup> Aškalon is written 'Isq3rmmw (instead of 'Isq3nm) during Amenhotep II's reign.

considered as the only reliable one. For example, the book of Flavius Josephus entitled *Jewish Antiquities* was written in Aramaic before being translated into Greek (Jewish War 1:3), but no writing of Josephus in Aramaic has been found and the oldest Greek writing appears almost 10 centuries after the original<sup>48</sup>. In fact this old book is dated 94 CE thanks to the mention of the death of Agrippa II (in 93 CE). If one applies this method to the Pentateuch its dating is based on the well identified event: Moses wrote his book just prior to the end of the Exodus (Dt 34:1-5). However, although some biblical scholars recognize that the historic core of the Pentateuch could be authentic they assume that it had been transmitted orally until its writing from 900 BCE but this is unlikely. Indeed, for some very complex historical situations it would have been impossible to transmit them without a written medium. Biblical scholars then pleaded exceptional memory of men of the past, but this argument is unrealistic because those who were endowed with such storage capacities always did it from writing (as poetry recitation) and not from an oral transmission (unreliable). In addition why and for whom would these prodigious transmitters have achieved such a feat (and for how long)? For example, when Herodotus wanted to write an accurate biography of Cyrus, only 80 years after his death, he had to choose from at least 3 different stories, none of them keeping the exact circumstances of the death of this well-known king. This example shows the unreliability of oral transmission, as Herodotus himself reminds us (The Histories I:5, VII:152). It is always difficult to keep a lot of unique and complex information as shown also in the following example: to resist the Assyrian expansionism Pekah the king of Israel was allied with Rezin the king of Syria (Damascus), but in vain (2Ki 16:5-9), because the regions of Galilee and Gilead, which previously had been recaptured in part by Jeroboam II (2Ki 14:25), were finally annexed by Tiglath-pileser III (2Ki 15:29) with the participation of the fierce king of Edom (Am 1:13-15) and Shalman the king of Moab, devastating the Gileadite city of Beth-Arbel (Ho 10:14), the modern Irbid. This powerful coalition (Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Tyre, Assyria) left a painful memory (Ps 83:4-8). The chronological agreement among all these characters is remarkable<sup>49</sup>. Consequently all these historical, geographical and chronological details regarding many kingdoms, whose situations were extremely complex and changing, prove that the writing of the biblical text had to have been done at the time of the facts. In addition, their complexity involved a long report (1Ch 9:1; 2Ch 16:11), which excluded limited supports such as clay tablets.

<sup>48</sup> The oldest evidence of this book is actually a Latin manuscript of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, despite the widespread diffusion of Josephus' book, since its edition has been supported by the imperial administration, the initial version in Aramaic cannot be found and the oldest Greek copies are dated 11<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>49</sup> For example: Ahaz king of Judah (742-726), Jeroboam II king of Israel (823-782), Hosea governor (738-729) then king of Israel (729-720), Pekah king of Israel (758-738), Qa'ushmalaka king of Edom (760-732), Rezin king of Syria (750-732), Shalman king of Moab (740-720), Tiglath-pileser III king of Assyria (745-727) and Babylon (729-727).

# Attacks on the Bible unveiled

Today, according to mainstream Egyptologists as well as prominent archaeologists *there would never have been any biblical writing in the time of Moses, neither domesticated camels in the time of Abraham, nor Philistines, nor etc.* As can be seen, accusations of anachronism are false and dishonest. The academics who publish this information deliberately ignore the evidence when it is available. In fact we could reverse the questioning on the Bible: How does one explain that the author of the Pentateuch knew that, at the time of Abraham (c. 1950 BCE), camels were already domesticated by the Arabs, that the Philistines in Palestine came from Crete, the Hittites had settled in Syria and that the Arameans had gradually migrated from Lower Mesopotamia to Upper Mesopotamia and finally to Syria (c. 1500 BCE). In fact, the most vicious attack against the Pentateuch scaffolded by Egyptologists, thanks to archaeologists, consisted in asserting that it is a myth built from an insignificant “true story”, which happened in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was then embellished (Kitchen: 2003, 299-312). The historical core of the Exodus would have come from a revolt of Apiru (Hebrew) workers led by an Egyptian called Mes (Moses) under Ramses II. This minor event would have been amalgamated with other important historical events such as the explosion of Santorini and was finally written down much later, perhaps on the return from the Babylonian exile (Desroches: 1996, 248-256). It is amazing that this “scholarly fairy tale” was able to seduce so many seasoned Bible scholars. There are yet many other absurdities: Ramses II died of old age rather than abruptly in the Red Sea (Ps 136:15); his eldest son who was Crown Prince (Ex 12:29) did not die but simply changed his name (Obsomer: 2012, 265-270); on the death of Ramses II there was no mass exodus of Semites from Egypt to Palestine (Nb 1:46) and the Egyptians suffered no disaster that looks like the 10 plagues; the Exodus is located around 1500 BCE (1Ki 6:1), not around 1250 BCE, and the eruption of the Santorini volcano is dated about 1625 BCE by dendrochronology (Treuil, Darcque, Poursat, Touchais: 2008, 296). The Exodus version proposed by Egyptologists is therefore completely ludicrous. The only question that counts for a scientific mind is the following: since several million Semites stayed in Egypt for at least 200 years during the Hyksos period (1730-1530) before going back to southern Canaan (*Upper Retenu*), what do Egyptian documents say exactly particularly of the dramatic end prior to the Exodus? In this matter chronology is crucial to check the authenticity of this major event. Not only do archaeologists not have any reliable chronology and refuse to consider the biblical texts as historical, but they also systematically refuse any other texts supporting the biblical accounts, such as those of Hecataeus of Abdera (315-305), a Greek historian and sceptic philosopher, and Manetho (c. 280 BCE), an Egyptian historian and priest, who both described (before the Septuagint) the Exodus of Moses at the time of Pharaoh Ahmose (1530-1505).

Today the majority of academic scholars accept the theory that the Torah does not have a single author, and that its composition took place over centuries (McDermott: 2002, 21). From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a general consensus around the documentary hypothesis, but this general agreement began to break down in the late 1970s (Wenham: 1996, 3-13), and today there are many theories but no consensus, or even a majority viewpoint. Variations of the documentary hypothesis remain popular especially in America and Israel, and the identification of distinctive Deuteronomistic and Priestly theologies and vocabularies remains widespread, but they are used to form new approaches suggesting that the books were combined gradually over time by the slow accumulation of “fragments” of text, or that a basic text was “supplemented” by later authors/editors (Van Seters: 2004, 74-79). At the same time there has been a tendency to bring the origins of the Pentateuch further forward in time, and the most recent proposals place it in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Judah under the Persian empire (Knoppers, Levinson: 2007).

Several variant views of the documentary hypothesis exist, but perhaps the most popular is that of Julius Wellhausen proposed in 1895. Wellhausen put dates to the alleged four sources and none were earlier than around 900 BCE. As highlighted Gleason Archer, an Old Testament scholar: *Although Wellhausen contributed no innovations to speak of, he restated the documentary theory with great skill and persuasiveness, supporting the JEDP sequence upon an evolutionary basis* (Archer: 1994, 95). Even though a great many scholars and much of the public have now accepted this view, is it really true? First of all, one must be aware that these scholarly attacks to discredit the authenticity of the Old Testament, made by some academics (for the most part Egyptologists and archaeologists) as a means to eradicate religious obscurantism, are in fact, paradoxically, the result of an ideological propaganda initiated by the Nazi Party in 1933 to impose a vision of a world governed solely by eugenics (the Brave New World). Despite the aversion of the Nazis against culture, German scholars (nation with the most Nobel prizes at that time) were able opportunely to provide their service to Nazi authorities showing them clear links between the ideology of Plato's Republic and Hitler's Mein Kampf (Chapoutot: 2008, 53,92,179,244-249). One must know that shortly after being introduced to Reichsführer-SS Himmler in September 1933 at a conference of the Nordische Gesellschaft, Karl Maria Wiligut was inducted into the SS under the pseudonym “Karl Maria Weisthor” to head a Department for Pre- and Early History which was created for him within the SS Race and Settlement Main Office<sup>1</sup> (RuSHA).

<sup>1</sup> In Berlin, where he worked in the office of Karl Wolff, chief adjutant of the SS, Wiligut developed his plans for the rebuilding of the Wewelsburg into an allegorical “centre of the world” (a kind of Nazi Vatican). Wiligut's friend Manfred von Knobelsdorff attempted to practise Wiligut's Irminism on the Wewelsburg. Wiligut identified Irminism as the true German ancestral religion, claiming that Guido von List's Wotanism and Armanen runic row was a schismatic false religion. Wiligut's medical records of 1924 reflect violence at home, including threats to kill his wife, eccentric behaviour and occult interests. In esoteric currents of Neo-Nazism, Wiligut's writings enjoyed renewed interest in the 1990s.

Two academic areas have been particularly active in supporting the Nazi propaganda: doctors, in order to teach the theory of evolution and its practical applications such as eugenics, as well as archaeologists, in order to teach a new Indo-Aryan prehistory<sup>2</sup>. The number of archaeologists multiplied by 6 during this period (*Archéologia* n°442 mars 2007, 42-57). This figure is impressive when we consider that fewer than 10% of the population held a Nazi membership card. As explained PhD Joseph Goebbels in his diary, the purpose of all this academic teaching was to eradicate the “Judeo-Christian gangrene” from European people (Goebbels: 2007, 394, 665, 684). As no Nazi archaeologist was involved at the Nuremberg Trial, they were able to train a new generation of archaeologists according to their former (Aryan) ideology. This poorly known point explains why archaeologists and Egyptologists of today are generally opponents of the Bible.

The Nazi regime was a complete disaster for the civilized world but also for the intellectual world since the Nazi doctors were able to paganize the world, replacing the divine origin of man, creation of Adam according to the Bible, by the myth of Tarzan popularized by the theory of evolution, and the Nazi archaeologists have succeeded in replacing the origin of confusion of languages (Tower of Babel) by the Indo-European myth (Demoule: 2014, 593-596). These post-war archaeologists as well as most Egyptologists began publishing articles, mainly from 1980 (Hoffmeier: 1996, 3-5), to prove that the text of the Old Testament should be considered without historical value. It is to be noted that the more these academics are close to political power the more their attacks against the Bible are virulent and ideological. For archaeologists, Abraham is only a mythical figure used for religious parables, like the one mentioned in Luke 16:22, accordingly he was a symbolic character similar to the “*good Samaritan*” (Lk 10:33). Although Luke quoted indeed Abraham once in a parable, he always depicted him as a historical figure:

*Seeing that many have undertaken to compile an account of the facts that are given full credence among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and attendance of the message, I resolved also, because I have traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them in logical order (...) When Jesus began his work, he was about 30 years old, being the son, as the opinion was, of Joseph (...) son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Nabor, son of Serug (Lk 1:1-4, 3:23-35). Similarly Abraham was real for the apostle Paul: Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a 10<sup>th</sup> of everything. First, his name is translated “King of Righteousness” and then also king of Salem, that is “King of Peace<sup>3</sup>” (Heb 7:1-2).*

<sup>2</sup> Thus 69% of German doctors were members of, at least, one of the Nazi organizations (Nazi Party, League of Nazi doctors, SA or SS) and the number of doctors increased by 35% between 1939 and 1944 (Hasapis: 2010, 19-20). In 1931, there was only 1 rescue archaeological unit in Germany upgraded to 9 in 1939 and then to a staggering 14 in 1943, at the height of the war. The archaeological profession was particularly prone to political engagement, and no less than 86% of all registered archaeologists adhered to the Nazi party (Legendre, Olivier, Schnitzler: 2008, 135-138).

<sup>3</sup> Paul’s translation is accurate because the names Melchizedek and Jerusalem mean “*my king is righteousness*” and “*foundation of peace*” in Hebrew, but “*king of righteousness*” and “*city at peace (Ps 76:2)*” in Old Canaanite.

Consequently Abram (2038-1863) was a real character and his wife Sarai even had the privilege of enjoying a royal statue as “offering bearer” when Amenemhat I (1975-1946) planned to marry her (Gn 12:19) in 1962 BCE.

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