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CONTINUITY OF EMPIRE (?)

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AN ASSYRIAN VIEW ON THE MEDES *

Karen Radner

1. Introduction

The evidence for Medes in the Assyrian sources of the 9th to the 7th century BC has found much attention. This, however, is not primarily due to the contents of the material itself;¹ the attraction stems to a large extent from the assumption that the Assyrian sources on the Medes would allow modern scholarship to pinpoint the hatching and evolution of that enigmatic nation which would eventually bring about the fall of Assyria and lay the foundations for the Achaemenid state: the Median empire.

It is highly doubtful whether modern research would at all consider the existence of a Median empire without the testimony of Herodotus' *Mēdikos Logos*. The Assyrian sources completely fail to support Herodotus' account on the genesis of the Median empire who credits a certain Deioeces with uniting the six Median tribes and thereby founding Media, with Ecbatana as its capital. As Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg put it: "The Median empire exists for us because Herodotus says it did."²

That the Assyrian sources do not know of a united Median territorial state that would be comparable to Assyria itself or other contemporary principalities such as Elam, Mannea or Urartu is a fact. Nevertheless, many scholars are reluctant to assign no historical relevance whatsoever to Herodotus' account and hence intricate models have been forwarded to accommodate Herodotus' information within the chronological framework presented by the Assyrian sources (e.g., Scurlock 1990), identify-

* In preparation of this paper, I have made use of the electronic Corpus of Neo-Assyrian Texts of the *State Archives of Assyria Project* of the University of Helsinki. I wish to thank Simo Parpola who kindly granted me access to this invaluable data base. My paper has benefitted from the discussion during the symposium at Padua, and I especially wish to thank G.B. Lanfranchi, J.E. Reade and M. Roaf for their suggestions.

1. The Assyrian material concerning the Medes has been studied extensively in the larger context of the historical geography of Iran in the early first millennium BC, see especially the contributions by Levine 1973, Levine 1974, Reade 1978a, Reade 1995 (with a summary of the previous research on p. 31). A recent attempt to put the many Iranian toponyms on the map is Parpola – Porter 2001, but cf. vii: "The western Zagros, in particular, is an area where much is yet uncertain." R. Zadok (Zadok 2002a and 2002b) has tried to specify the "ethno-linguistic character" of Iran in the Neo-Assyrian period.
2. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988, 199; see also Helm 1981, 85 who rejects Herodotus' account as being an "artificial chronology and an unhistorical narrative constructed from independent sagas based on the lives of a few originally unrelated Zagros heroes" and Kienast 1999, 66, who describes Herodotus' report as a "Median heroic tale".

ing the Median kings as given in Herodotus' account with individuals attested in the Assyrian sources, bearing identical or similar names.³

Stuart C. Brown has advanced the theory that the Median nation came into existence by ways of “secondary state formation” (see especially Brown 1986), directly stimulated by the Assyrian forays to central western Iran and the political interdependency created from this. Although he justly criticises traditional scholarship such as advanced by Olmstead for adopting a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* argumentation (Brown 1986, 110) in its portrayal of the Medes as “hordes” (Olmstead 1951, 159) and “savage tribes” (Olmstead 1951, 654) with “too much Nomadism in the Median blood to permit them to be content in mountains more conspicuous for picturesqueness than for fertility” (Olmstead 1951, 244), he does not distance himself from this description of the Median principalities, but seems to silently follow the old assumption that these were tribal nomadic societies previous to the Assyrian intrusion that finally brought about the emergence of “economic intensification, social stratification, and coercive power” (Brown 1986, 116).

In the following, I will detail how the Median principalities are described in the Assyrian sources of the 9th to the 7th century. The set-up of this paper is therefore chronological and solely from an Assyrian perspective, in order to approximate the identity attributed to the Medes by the Assyrians; hence, the classical sources have been disregarded on purpose. Whenever possible, I will focus on the way of living among the Medes as portrayed in the Assyrian sources; it must be stressed already at this point that the Medes are usually described as living in fortified settlements, and there is no indication of a tribal organisation of the Medes.⁴ One problem exists that seriously obstructs our research: it is unknown how exactly the designation “Median” for regions and people is used in the Assyrian sources; is it ethnic, linguistic, religious, economic or political? We can only be certain about the fact that, through the centuries, the term “the country of the Medes” does not refer to a clearly defined geographic region.

2. Horse raids (835-745 BC) (Table 1)

The earliest mention of the Medes in the Assyrian texts is found in an inscription of **Shalmaneser III** (858-824), in the inscription of the so-called Black Obelisk (RIMA 3, A.0.102.14). Detailing the events of the campaign of his 24th regnal year, in 835, Shalmaneser reports his mission against the country of Namri and its king Ianzû, who had been nine years earlier, in 843, installed in this position by Shalmaneser himself. Shalmaneser pursued the fugitive Ianzû from Namri to the country of Parsua where he received tribute from twenty-seven kings.

Moving on from the country of Parsua, I descended onto the country of Messu, the country of the Medes (KUR *a-ma-da-a-a* in l. 121), the country of Araziaš, and the country of Ḫarḫar. I captured

3. Deioces is equated with Daiukku, a Mannean governor during the reign of Sargon II, see Brown 1988, 75f., and Phraortes with Kaštaritu, city lord of Kār-Kašši during the reign of Esarhaddon, see Brown 1988, 76-78. See the strong arguments against this forwarded by A. Fuchs in PNA 1/II 369f. *s.v.* Daīku and Daiukku and in PNA 2/I 608 *s.v.* Kaštarītu. Cyaxares and Astyages pose no problems; they are attested in the Babylonian chronicles as Umakištar and Ištumegu, respectively, see Brown 1988, 75 and Roaf 1995, 62.
4. Although there are some principalities in Iran, the names of which are formed according to the principle *bīt* + personal name, these are not Median territories but rather Kassite ones, such as Bīt-Ḫamban or Bīt-Barrû = Ellipi. The Median principalities with names using *bītu* as a formative element do not seem to be based on personal names. Medes are never referred to as sons of particular tribes, such as the Arameans often are, e.g., *mār Dakkūri*, *mār Amukāni*.

the cities of Kuakinda, Ḫazzanabi, Esamul, and Kinablila, together with the towns in their environs; I massacred them, I plundered them, I razed, I destroyed, I burned the towns. I erected my royal image in the city of Ḫarḫar (RIMA 3, A.0.102.14 120-125).

It seems likely to assume from this account, that Ianzû was finally tracked down in Ḫarḫar; he was then brought to Assyria.

Because of the mention together with Araziaš und Messu, there can be no doubt that the writing *a-ma-da-a-a* indeed denotes the Medes; written *ma-ta-a-a* and *ma-da-a-a*, they are attested with the very same toponyms in an inscription of Šamši-Adad V (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1 iii 27, 33) and in a text of

	year	Assyrian king	source
A. Horse raids	835	Shalmaneser III	inscription (Black Obelisk)
	820-819	Šamši-Adad V	inscriptions (Kalḫu Stela; Eponym Chronicle)
	809	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	800	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	799	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	793	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	792	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	789	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	788	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	787	Adad-nerari III	Eponym Chronicle
	766	Aššur-dan III	Eponym Chronicle
B. Colonization	744	Tiglath-pileser III	inscriptions (Iran Stela; Kalḫu Annals)
	737	Tiglath-pileser III	Eponym Chronicle, inscriptions (Iran stela; Kalḫu Annals)
	716	Sargon II	inscriptions (Khorsabad Annals; 711 Annals; Najafehabad Stela)
	715	Sargon II	inscriptions (Khorsabad Annals)
	714	Sargon II	inscriptions (Khorsabad Annals; Letter to Aššur)
	713	Sargon II	inscriptions (Khorsabad Annals; 711 Annals)
C. Symbiosis	702	Sennacherib	inscriptions (Bellino Cyl., Rassam Cyl., Taylor Pr., Chicago Pr.)
	676?	Esarhaddon	inscriptions (Nineveh Prisms; no precise dating available)
	672	Esarhaddon	“Vassal Treaties” (SAA 2, 6)
	656?	Ashurbanipal	inscriptions (Prism B, Prism C; no precise dating available)
D. Silence	—		
E. Median Attack	615	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Babylonian Chronicle
	614	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Babylonian Chronicle
	612	Sîn-šarru-iškun	Babylonian Chronicle
	610	Aššur-uballiṭ II	Babylonian Chronicle

Table 1. Assyrian contact with the Medes.

Adad-nerari III, there with the additional mention of Parsua (RIMA 3, A.O.104.8 7). However, the writing with an initial *a-* is not used in the inscriptions of later kings; it is ambiguous as it is easily confused with the gentilic based on the Syrian city of Ḥamath.⁵

The attestation in the Black Obelisk is the first occurrence of the Medes as a historical people; it does not provide us with any information beyond the geographical data. This information, however, is highly important. The land of the Medes lies in direct proximity of the countries of Messu, Araziaš and Ḥarḥar; from later sources we know that Messu was seen as the southernmost district of Mannea⁶ while Araziaš and Ḥarḥar were then perceived to be Median areas.⁷ Whether the fact that they are mentioned individually here (and also in the inscriptions of Šamši-Adad V and Adad-nerari III) implies that they were not Median at that time must be left open for discussion. All these places can be reached from Assyria via the route Namri / Bīt-Ḥamban⁸ – Parsua.⁹ This is the Great Khurasan Road, that part of the Silk Road which from the plains of Mesopotamia follows the course of the Diyala into the Zagros mountains and runs through it to the Iranian plateau (Roaf 1995, 56-57 with fig. 22). We also learn the names of four cities in the region, Kuakinda, Ḥazzanabi, Esamul, and Kinablila; none however is attested in any of the later sources.

After the first encounter between Medes and Assyrians, further contact is only attested some twenty years later; however, the report found in the inscription of the Kalḥu stela of Šamši-Adad V (823-811) is very detailed and greatly enhances our information on the Medes as they were then seen by the Assyrians. When describing the course of his campaign directed against the east of Assyria,¹⁰ Šamši-Adad reports in great detail how he fought in the country of the Medes. Interestingly, we see the Assyrian army taking a different route than twenty years before: instead of following the Great Khurasan Route along the Diyala and crossing Namri in order to reach the country of the Medes, the Assyrians march up the Zab, cross Mount Kullar (*i.e.*, the Kullar ranges, see Levine 1973, 17-18) and after going to Ḥubuškia, reach Mannea, the southern part of which, Messu, they use to enter Gizil-

5. Note that KUR.ma-ta-a-a in the inscription on the throne base from Fort Shalmaneser (RIMA 3, A.O. 102.29:13), on a door sill from the same building (*ibid.*, A.O.102.30:22) and on two monumental bull colossi from Kalḥu (*ibid.*, A.O.102.8:13') refers to Irḥulena king of Ḥamath; it is a variant of KUR.a-mat-a-a and KUR.ḥa-ma-ta-a-a, used elsewhere in Shalmaneser's texts in connection with Irḥulena king of Ḥamath.

6. According to Sargon's account of the campaign of 714: KUR.mi-is-si na-gi-i ša KUR ma-an-na-a-a (Mayer 1983, 72, TCL 3, 51); on its location see Levine 1974, 114.

7. Ḥarḥar and Araziaš were perceived to be Median cities under Sargon II, see Fuchs 1994, 423 *s.v.* Aranzešu and 437 *s.v.* Ḥarḥar. When in 714 Sargon II created the province of Kār-Šarrukīn with Ḥarḥar as its centre, Araziaš was made part of that province, see Fuchs 1994, 104 and 318, Khorsabad Annals 98-99. Araziaš (Aranzešu) is called Upper Nartu, while Lower Nartu is referred to as Bīt-Ramatua; both regions become part of the province of Kār-Šarrukīn. Note that in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, a ruler of Araziaš with the name Ramatua is mentioned (see Tadmor 1994, 48, Kalḥu Annals 12, 1); Bīt-Ramatua most certainly took its name from this man.

8. See Reade 1978a, 137-139 on the location of the Kassite principalities Namri and Bīt-Ḥamban.

9. See Reade 1978a, 139-140 on this region which must not be confused with Parsumaš, the later Fars (Persis). For the interchange of the writings Parsua and Parsuaš compare the example of another toponym in the Zagros, Bīt-Zualza (e.g., SAA 15, 68, 9) vs. Bīt-Zualzaš (e.g., in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, see Tadmor 1994, 296 *s.v.*). Note that Zadok 2001a, 30 recently suggested to locate Parsua further north in Qal'eh Paswē.

10. This campaign cannot be dated to a precise year, but probably took place in the years 820-819, cf. Zadok 2001b, 34, and see below.

bunda¹¹ and the country of the Medes. In the following centuries, both the Namri and the Mannea route will be used by the Assyrian army to reach the Median territory.¹²

I marched to the country of the Medes (KUR *ma-ta-a-a* in iii 27). They took fright in the face of the angry weapons of Aššur and of my strong warfare, which have no rival, and abandoned their cities. They ascended a rugged mountain, and I pursued them. I massacred 2,300 soldiers of Ḫanaširuka the Mede (¹*ḫa-na-ši-ru-ka* KUR *ma-ta-a-a* in iii 32-3). I took 140 of his riders (*pet-ḫal-la-šu* in l. 33) from him and carried away his property and possessions in numbers beyond counting. I razed, destroyed and plundered Sagbita, the royal city (URU *sag-bi-ta* URU MAN-*ti* in l. 35), together with 1200 of his towns (RIMA 3, A.O.103.1 iii 27-36).

Šamši-Adad then turns against the country of Araziaš, battling and killing its king Munirsuarta. Interestingly, Araziaš, perceived as a Median region in the reign of Sargon II (see above, fn. 7), is here mentioned as a separate principality from the country of the Medes, with a king of its own. The account of the third campaign ends with a list of kings “of the Na’iri lands” onto whom tribute and tax in the form of teams of horses was imposed “forever”. Among them are rulers of regions that reappear in later Assyrian accounts: Ursi the Ginḫuḫtean (RIMA 3, A.O.103.1 iii 58) ruled over a region which is certainly identical with the city of Ganguḫtu known from Sargon’s time, annexed to the province of Parsua in 716, and Zarišu the Ḫundurean was the ruler over the territory around Kišessim, made the center of an Assyrian province by Sargon in 716 (for both regions see below).

In respect to the early history of the Medes, the inscription of the Kalḫu stela is important for several reasons. First of all, Ḫanaširuka is the first known individual to be called a Mede by the Assyrians; his name is not of Indo-European origin and currently cannot be safely attributed to any known language (for an analysis see R. Schmitt in PNA 2/I, 450f., *s.v.* and Zadok 2002b, 67). The Medes are described as a settled people, living in cities; they are clearly not nomadic. As Sagbita is called a “royal city”, the Assyrians seemingly perceived Ḫanaširuka as a king; note that this is will remain the only instance of a Mede being portrayed as a king in the Assyrian sources. Sagbita is probably identical with Bīt-Sagbat, as attested in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II (see below), and has been put forward as a possible candidate for identification with Ecbatana, the Median royal city known from the classical sources, modern Hamadan;¹³ its role is only prominent in the account of Šamši-Adad V — however, in the Assyrian sources, nothing is reported about its fate in the 7th century. The ruler of Sagbita, Ḫanaširuka, is pictured as the master of a great many warriors and towns: the Assyrian account speaks of 2,300 killed soldiers and 140 deported riders¹⁴ and, even more sensationally, 1,200 towns belonging to Ḫanaširuka are said to have been conquered. This fantastic number should certainly not be taken at face value; but as the use of numbers that are very obviously based on the numbers 60 or 100 is a common *Stilmittel* to express large quantities (Millard

11. Described as “a district, which is situated in remote mountains in a distant place, barring the way like a barricade in the region of the country of the Mannaeans and of the country of the Medes” in an inscription of Sargon II (Mayer 1983, 74, TCL 3, 64-65).

12. Note that Roaf 1995, 57 claims that traversing the Zagros mountains in north-southern direction, as necessitated by taking the route via Mannea, is impossible for large armies.

13. Medvedskaya 2002b.

14. Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884) is the first Assyrian king for whose army cavalry is attested, and by the time of the reign of Sargon II (721-705), the cavalry had replaced the chariotry as the elite arm of the army, see Postgate 2000, 98-100.

1991, 214), it can at least be seen as an indication of the fact that the Assyrians looted a very high number of Median settlements.¹⁵ As the distinction between *ālu*, “city / town”, and *kapru*, “village”, is not clear-cut in the Assyrian usage (Fadhil – Radner 1996, 423 fn. 21), many of these settlements may well have been nothing more than small villages. Interestingly, the Medes appear as a people of riders. This sets them distinctly apart from their neighbours in the countries of Messu and Gizilbunda from where Šamši-Adad has teams of horses deported (and also Bactrian camels from Messu), but mentions no riders. Also in later attestations for the Medes, they are rather associated with cavalry than with chariotry, and in the depiction of Sargon’s campaign against the Medes on the orthostat reliefs in Room 2 of his palace in Dūr-Šarrukīn (Khorsabad), the Medes are always shown on horseback, never in chariots as are the attacking Assyrians (Albenda 1986, pls. 109-130). Is being a rider what makes a Mede a Mede in the eyes of the Assyrians?

The events of the campaign described in Šamši-Adad’s stela from Kalḫu cannot be dated precisely with the data given in this text. Therefore, it is important to note that while one edition of the Eponym Chronicle (source B 10) mentions a revolt to have taken place in Assyria, just like in the five preceding years, another copy (source B 4, 22’) mentions a campaign against the city of Sikris ([*a-na URU.si-i]k-ri-is*).¹⁶ Interestingly, this city is known as a Median principality in later inscriptions from the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II (see below). As Šamši-Adad leads a campaign against Mannea in the following year 819, it seems to be certain that these two entries in the Eponym Chronicle should refer to the events reported in the Kalḫu stela. Šamši-Adad’s campaign to the east must hence have taken place in the years 820/19.

The inscriptions of **Adad-nerari III** (810-783) are a rather disappointing source of information about the Medes. This is especially regretful as no less than eight campaigns against the Medes are known to have been conducted during this king’s reign, as noted in the Eponym Chronicle (source B 1, see Millard 1994, 33-37); in each case, the brief remark “to the Medes” (*a-na mad-a-a*) is inserted after the mention of the year’s eponym, indicating that the yearly campaign was directed specifically against the Medes in the years 809, 800, 799, 793, 792, 789, 788 and 787. Note that there seems to be some kind of confusion around the campaigns in 800 and 799 which are conducted against the country of Medes according to one copy of the Eponym Chronicle (source B 1); however, another copy of the text (source B 10) attributes these campaigns of 800 and 799 to Mannea, the northern neighbour of the country of the Medes.¹⁷ There were two more campaigns against Mannea in 807 and 806; and 797 also saw a campaign against Namri. As has been shown above, the route along the Zab into Mannea and the route along the Diyala into Namri are the passageways to reach the country of the Medes, and when campaigning in Mannea or Namri, the Assyrians often also made contact with the Medes in order to extract tribute.

These eleven campaigns conducted against the Medes, Mannea and Namri reported in the Eponym Chronicle indicate a strong increase of the Assyrian interest in the east. It has been suggested that the high number of eastern campaigns is rather to be seen as the result of an Assyrian initiative based on economic need than as the result of aggression from Iran against Assyria; Brown has argued that a need of food supplies to provide for the urbanised regions of central Assyria stimulated Assyrian expansion into the east (Brown 1986, 111).¹⁸ A far more likely reason is that western Iran had been

15. The common stock phrase “beyond counting” to express high quantities (cf. Millard 1991, 214) is already used in the description of the abducted property.

16. Reading according to the copy in Millard 1994, pl. 15.

17. Correct the dates given by Brown 1987-90, 620.

18. However, it has been reasonably argued that central Assyria was self-sufficient for food-production, see Reade 1978b, 175.

discovered as a source for horses (Reade 1978a, 139-140; Reade 1979, 179; Kessler 1986, 68), a commodity of unappeasable demand to Assyria;¹⁹ the army was entirely dependent on horses, without which the army's backbone, the chariotry, could not exist. Until the 9th century, the Assyrians had gained their supply of horses mostly from the wide plains of Inner Anatolia. However, this source was quickly drying up with the fast rise of Assyria's new archrival in the North, Urartu. By the time of Adad-nerari III, acquiring horses from the north was basically impossible, and this coincides with the rise of Assyrian interest in Iran. Quickly, Iran became the most important source for horses to the Assyrians. This is clear from the lists of booty found in the royal inscriptions as well as the depiction of tribute being brought before the Assyrian king on reliefs (for references see Bär 1996, 238) and, for the 7th century, also from the so-called horse-reports (recently re-edited in SAA 13, 85-123.). By then, Egypt, by virtue of the conquests of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (Onasch 1994), had become an equally important source for horses, and three breeds of horses were common in Assyria: horses from Egypt, from Kuš/Nubia (Heidorn 1997, 106-110) and from Messu in Iran.²⁰ In the 9th and for most of the 8th century, however, Egypt was not yet accessible to Assyria, and indeed Assyria was completely dependent on Iran to satisfy its need.

The only mention of the Medes in an inscription of Adad-nerari III is found on a stone slab from Kalḫu; the land of the Medes is mentioned in a summary section listing the countries that Adad-nerari had subdued:

Conqueror from Mount Siluna in the east, (from) the country of Namri, the country of Ellipi, the country of Ḫarḫar, the country of Araziaš, the country of Messu, the country of the Medes (KUR *ma-da-a-a* in l. 7), the country of Gizilbunda in its totality, the country of Munna (Mannea), the country of Parsua, the country of Allabria, the country of (Bīt-)Abdadani, the country of Na'iri to its full extent, the country of Andia, which is far away, (from) the mountain of BADḫu in its totality until the shore of the Great Sea in the east (RIMA 3, A.0.104.8, 5-11).²¹

Again, we find the land of the Medes mentioned in the already familiar context of the countries of Ḫarḫar, Araziaš, Messu and Gizilbunda. His seven campaigns brought Adad-nerari only to regions in the east in which already his predecessor Shalmaneser III had campaigned: the exploits in Ḫarḫar, Araziaš, Messu, Gizilbunda, Parsua and Namri have been mentioned already earlier on, and in Ellipi, Munna (Mannea) and Allabria Shalmaneser had been active in the course of his first campaign directed against Namri in 843.

For more than twenty years, our sources concerning the Medes dry up completely; in general, this is a period of extremely scanty documentation. The only data available is provided by the Eponym Chronicle: for the year 766, one campaign conducted by Aššur-dan III (772-755) against the Medes is reported, again in the form of the laconic note *a-na mad-a-a* (Millard 1994, 40). As no annalistic inscriptions are known from the reign of Aššur-dan III, we have no means at our disposal to flesh out this dry piece of information.

19. Horses were never bred in central Assyria. This is due to the horse-breeding practise of that time. Horses were not bred in stables; instead, young adult animals were caught from herds of wild-living horses and broken, to be used as mounts and draft animals (illustrated well by a passage in an inscription of Sargon II, see Mayer 1983, 84, TCL 3, 171). As central Assyria was an agricultural region, keeping free-roaming horse herds there was simply an impossibility.

20. For these see, e.g., SAA 13, 88, r.9; 90, 9, 12, r.3; 104, r.2, 6; 109, 8, 15, r.5, cf. Cole – Machinist 1998, xviii.

21. See Fuchs 1994, 397 for the principle of order employed in this geographic list.

3. Colonisation (744-713 BC)

Tiglath-pileser III (744-727) conducted two campaigns against the east, in 744 and in 737. The latter campaign is noted in the Eponym Chronicle as a campaign against the Medes, again with the brief mention of “to the Medes” (*a-na mad-a-a*, see Millard 1994, 44). The 744 campaign, however, is only referred to as “to Namri” in the Eponym Chronicle, but as is known from the more detailed information offered in Tiglath-pileser’s inscriptions, the Assyrian troops came in close contact with the Medes during this campaign as well.

Both reports on the 744 and the 737 campaigns are found on Tiglath-pileser’s Iran Stela, of which hitherto three fragments have been located on the art market (Tadmor 1994, 91). Tiglath-pileser’s first eastern campaign is directed against the countries of Namri and Bīt-Sangibuti;²² from this it is clear that the Assyrians entered Iran by using the Great Khurasan Road. The campaign results in the establishing of two new provinces, Parsua and Bīt-Ḥamban, where Tiglath-pileser had his eunuchs installed as provincial governors.

This marks a new era in the relations between Assyria and the Zagros: for the first time, Assyria directly controlled territory situated along the Iranian part of the Silk Road. Bearing in mind the close connection between Assyrian actions in Iran and the supply of horses, we observe that the reign of Tiglath-pileser III saw the emergence of the *tamkār sisē*, royal trade agents procuring horses (Dalley 1985, 47, and cf. Radner 1999, 103); the trade with Iran and Nubia certainly was these agents’ principal interest. Tiglath-pileser’s activities in Iran also resulted in the presence of Medes and men from Bīt-Sangibuti at the royal court of Kalḫu as witnessed by one of the Nimrud wine lists.²³ It is interesting to see that we find the personal name Madāyu, “The Mede”, attested from now on;²⁴ if the name is but sparsely attested in the eighth century, it falls completely out of use after the reign of Sennacherib.

In the Iran Stela, the report of the 744 campaign continues with the mention of the tribute gained from the neighbouring rulers which Tiglath-pileser received, apparently while staying inside the territory of his new provinces.

I received the tribute of Daltâ of Ellipi, of the city lords of the country of Namri, of the country of (Bīt-)Sangibuti and of the Medes (*mad-a-a* in l. 12'), all (the city lords) of the mountains of the east: horses and mules broken to the yoke, two-humped camels, cattle and sheep without number (Tadmor 1994, 99, Iran Stela IB, 11'-4').

The report of this campaign is concluded with an account of the submission of the Mannean ruler Iran-zû in the city of Suk[...], probably renamed Dūr-Tukultī-apil-Ešarra (cf. Tadmor 1994, 166, Kalḫu Annals 7, 40).

22. This country is only mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II (for attestations see Fuchs 1994, 429 *s.v.*, and Tadmor 1994, 296 *s.v.*); note also the reference to trade between Nippur and Bīt-Sangibuti in a letter from the early Neo-Babylonian archive found in Nippur, the so-called “Governor’s Archive”, see Cole 1996a, no. 94, 14: É-LÚ.*sag-gi-bu-ti*. In texts written in Neo-Assyrian, we find the toponym mentioned as KUR.*šin-gi-bu-ti*, see SAA 15, 69, 11 (letter from the reign of Sargon II).

23. CTN 1, 13, r.7: 2-BÁN 1 ṛ*qa* KUR.*ma-da-a-a* KUR. *si-in-g[i-bu-ta-a]* (instead of the unlikely KUR.*si-in-g[i-ir-a-a]*) as suggested in the edition); because of the mention of Bīt-Sangibuti (see previous fn.), the text should date to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III.

24. Attested in texts from the years 738 (CTN 2, 106, 9; as a witness), 717 (SAA 6, 10, r.10; as a witness) and 710 (SAA 6, 29, 6; as the creditor), in a letter from the reign of Sargon II (SAA 15, 182, 6'; as a royal official) and in a text from the reign of Sennacherib (SAA 6, 86, 3'; as a slave being sold). See now also K. Åkerman – H.D. Baker in PNA 2/II, 673f. *s.v.*

Seven years later, in 737, the Assyrian army returned to the east:

In my ninth regnal year, I ordered (my armies) to march against the Medes (*mad-a-a* in l. 25'). As for the unsubmissive city lords, I conquered their cities, defeated them and took their spoil. I set up my stelae in [the country of Tikrakka (Šikrakka)], in the city of Bīt-Ištar, in the city of Šibar(a), in the country of Ariarmi, in the country of Silhazi (“the Fortress of the Babylonian”), in the mighty mountains. As for the submissive ones, I received their tribute (Tadmor 1994, 104, Iran Stela IIB, 25'-29').

A detailed list of rulers and the number of horses given by them, ranging from thirty-two to three-hundred, follows (Table 2).

	principality	ruler	horses given	attested elsewhere	alternative spelling
1	Bīt-Ištar	—	130[+x]	Sargon [714]	
2	Ginizinanu	—		—	
3	Sadbat	—	120	—	
4	Sisad[...]	—		—	
5	Bīt-Kapsi	Upaš	100	Sargon [716; 714]	
6	Nikisi	Ušrû	100	—	
7	Qarkinšera	Uksatar	100	—	
8	Amat	Iaubitir	100	—	
9	Šibar	Bardada	300	Sargon [714]	Šibura
10	Kitku[...]	Amaku	33	—	
11	Upparia	Šataqupi	32	Sargon [716; 713]	Uppuria
12	Kazuqinzani	Ramateia	100	—	
13	Upparia ²⁵	Metraku	100	Sargon [716; 713]	Uppuria
14	Šaparda	Šatašpa	200	Sargon [716; 714]	
15	Mišita	Uitana	100	—	
16	Uizak[...]	Ametana	100	—	
17	Urba[...]	[...]parnu	[x]	—	
18	Sikraia	[...]bâ	[x]	Sargon [716; 713]	Sikris
19	Zakrutu	[...]ia	[x]	Sargon [716; 714]	
	rest broken				

Table 2. Median city lords bringing tribute in 737 (Iran Stela IIB, 30'-43').

An account of the events of 737 is also found in an annalistic inscription found on a stone slab from Kalḫu.

In my ninth regnal year, Aššur my lord strengthened me and I marched against the country of Bīt-Kapsi, the country of Bīt-Sangi, the country of Bīt-Urzakki, the country of the Medes (*KUR ma-da-a-a* in l. 6), the country of Bīt-Zualzaš, the country of Bīt-Matti, and the country of Tupliaš (Tadmor 1994, 70, Kalḫu Annals 14*, 5-6 [= Kalḫu Annals 4, 3-4])

The results of the two campaigns against the eastern countries found their way into three Kalḫu inscriptions summing up Tiglath-pileser's major successes. They are presented in the form of a table (Table 3 on the following pages)²⁶ in order to make their parallels and differences more obvious.

25. Is this the same Upparia as no. 11 or another place with the same name?

26. Compare also Zadok 2001a, 30f. and Zadok 2002a, 30f.

	Kalḫu Annals 7, 29-34a (Tadmor 1994, 164)	Kalḫu Annals 7, 34b-42 (Tadmor 1994, 164-166)	Kalḫu Annals 3, 4'-15' (Tadmor 1994, 132)	Kalḫu Annals 1, 17-20 (Tadmor 1994, 124)
	I ensnared like a trapped bird	I annexed to Assyria	I annexed to Assyria	I ruled over
1	KUR.Namri	KUR.Namri		
2	KUR.Ḫit-Sangiḫuti	KUR.(Ḫit-)Sangiḫuti		
3	KUR.Ḫit-Ḫamban	KUR.Ḫit-Ḫamban	KUR.Ḫit-Ḫamban	KUR.Ḫit-Ḫamban
4	KUR.Sumurzu	KUR.Sumurzu	KUR.Sumurzu	KUR.Sumurzu
5	KUR.(Ḫit-)Barrua	KUR.Ḫit-Barrua	[KUR.Ḫit-Barrua]	KUR.Ḫit-Barrua
6	KUR.Ḫit-Zualzaš	KUR.Ḫit-Zualzaš	KUR.Ḫit-Zualzaš	KUR.Ḫit-Zualzaš
7	KUR.Ḫit-Matti	KUR.Ḫit-Matti	KUR.Ḫit-Matti	KUR.Ḫit-Matti
8	KUR.Tupliaš	KUR.Tupliaš	[KUR.Tup]l[i]aš	KUR.Tupliaš
9	URU.Niqu of KUR.Ḫit-Taranzaiu	URU.Niqu of KUR.Ḫit-Taranzaiu	[URU.Niqu] of KUR.Ḫit-Taranzaiu	URU.Niqu of KUR.Ḫit-Taranzaiu
10	KUR.Parsua	KUR.Parsua	KUR.Parsua	KUR.Parsua
11	KUR.Ḫit-Zatti	KUR.Ḫit-Zatti		
12	KUR.Ḫit-Abdadani	KUR.Ḫit-Abdadani		
13	KUR.Ḫit-Kapsi	KUR.Ḫit-Kapsi	KUR.Ḫit-Kapsi	KUR.Ḫit-Kapsi
14a	<i>see below</i>	<i>see below</i>	as far as URU.Zakrutu	as far as URU.Zakrutu <i>ša</i> KUR <i>ma-da-a</i> KALAG.MEŠ- <i>te</i>
15	KUR.Ḫit-Sangi	KUR.Ḫit-Sangi		
16	KUR.Ḫit-Urzakki	KUR.Ḫit-Urzakki		
17	KUR.Ḫit-Ištar	KUR.Ḫit-Ištar	URU.Ḫit-Ištar	
14b	URU.Zakrutu	URU.Zakrutu <i>ša</i> KUR <i>ma-da-a</i> KALAG.MEŠ	<i>see above</i>	
18a	<i>see below</i>		URU.Niša	
19	KUR.Gizinkissi		KUR.Gizinkissi	
18b	URU.Niša		<i>see above</i>	
20	URU.Šibur(a)		URU.Šibur(a)	
21	URU.Urimzan		URU.Urenzan	
22	KUR.Ra ³ usan			
23	KUR.Upparia		KUR.Upparia	
24	KUR.Bustus		KUR.Bustus	
25	KUR.Ariarmi		KUR.Ariarmi	
26	Country of the Cockerels		Country of the Cockerels	
27a	<i>see below</i>		Mount Rua, as far as the Salt Desert	
28a	<i>see below</i>		KUR.Ušqaqan(a)	
29	KUR.Saksukni			
30	KUR.Araquttu			
31	KUR.Karziḫra			
32	KUR.Gukinnana			
33	KUR.Ḫit-Sagbat			

27. Cf. Sagbita, called the royal city of Ḫa-naširuka the Mede during the reign of Šamši-Adad V, in RIMA 3 A.0.103.1 iii 35.

Kalḫu Annals 7, 29-34a (Tadmor 1994, 164)	Kalḫu Annals 7, 34b-42 (Tadmor 1994, 164-166)	Kalḫu Annals 3, 4'-15' (Tadmor 1994, 132)	Kalḫu Annals 1, 17-20 (Tadmor 1994, 124)
34a		KUR.Šikrakka (Tikrakka)	
35	<i>see below</i>	Til-Aššurī	
36	KUR.Silhazi “which they call the Fortress of the Babylonian”	“Fortress of the Babylonian”	
27b	Mount Rua, as far as the Salt Desert	<i>see above</i>	
28b	KUR.Ušqaqana	<i>see above</i>	
34b	KUR.Šikrakka (Tikrakka)	<i>see above</i>	
37	(the land) of gold		
38	the districts of the mighty Medes (<i>na-ge-e ša</i> KUR <i>ma-da-a-a</i> KALAG.MEŠ) to their full extent.		
	I inflicted a great defeat on them. I took away 6,500 people with their possessions, their horses, their mules, their two-humped camels, their cattle and their sheep without number. I utterly destroyed their towns, burnt them and reduced them to mounds of ruins.		

28. *I.e.*, the two governors ruling the newly installed provinces of Bit-Ḫamban and Parsua, founded in 744. Although the number of new governors is broken away in Kalḫu Annals 3 and 7, I see no reason to assume the founding of additional provinces after 744 as nothing to this extent is mentioned in other texts referring to the campaign of 737 (but cf. Tadmor 1994, 166).

29. Here, an account of the submission of Mannean ruler Iranzū at Dūr-Tukulfir-apil-Ešarra is inserted, see Tadmor 1994, 166, Kalḫu Annals 7, 39-41. However, this event took already place in 744 (see above).

Table 3. Tiglath-pileser’s campaigns in Iran according to the Kalḫu annals

Note that the most detailed account in Kalḫu Annals 7 consists of two parts, one enumerating the countries and cities which were attacked by the Assyrians, the other listing those regions that were incorporated into the two new provinces, Bīt-Ḫamban and Parsua.

The eunuch Aššur-daʿinanni who is sent against the Medes according to Kalḫu Annals 3 and 7 is the governor of Mazamua and acts as eponym in the year 733; keeping an eye on the situation in Iran was clearly one of the main duties of his post as is also obvious from a letter he sent to the king (NL 100 = Saggs 2001, 118f.; cf. K. Åkerman in PNA 1/I 177 s.v.). It is not clear whether Aššur-daʿinanni’s activities took place during the course of the 737 campaign or whether they are a separate military operation; however, the latter would seem more likely to me, especially in view of the situation during Sargon’s reign when the king’s magnates frequently undertook campaigns to collect tribute in the country of the Medes.

Kalḫu Annals 1, 3 and 7 differ considerably in their description of the extent of the two new Assyrian provinces in Iran. The most exhaustive enumeration is found in Kalḫu Annals 3, but it is more probable that the information found in Kalḫu Annals 7 mirrors the extent of the territories controlled by Tiglath-pileser’s governors more closely: the inscription distinguishes carefully between a larger number of regions which Tiglath-pileser “ensnared like a trapped bird” and a smaller number of places that were actually “annexed to Assyria” and put under the control of Tiglath-pileser’s governors. Those place names mentioned in Kalḫu Annals 3 as newly incorporated Assyrian territory which are not listed in the relevant part of Kalḫu Annals 7 are however all part of the enumeration of attacked regions in Kalḫu Annals 7. Hence, the text of Kalḫu Annals 3 clearly combines the two lists given in Kalḫu Annals 7. The correct list of regions incorporated into Assyria as the provinces of Parsua and Bīt-Ḫamban is found in the second part of Kalḫu Annals 7. Therefore, all places where Tiglath-pileser III had stelae erected in 744 were outside the borders of the Assyrian empire, with the notable exception of Bīt-Ištar. The mention of the erection of royal stelae in Kalḫu Annals 7 is paralleled in the text of the Iran Stela, with slight differences (see Table 4).

	Iran Stele IIB, 28'-29' (Tadmor 1994, 104)	Kalḫu Annals 7, 37-38 (Tadmor 1994, 166)
	I placed my commemorative stelae in	I erected my royal stela in
34	[KUR.Tikrakka]	KUR.Tikrakka
17	URU.Bīt-Ištar	URU.Bīt-Ištar
20	URU.Šibar(a)	URU.Šibur(a)
25	KUR.Ariarmi	KUR.Ariarma
26		the Country of the Cockerels
36	KUR.Silḫazu	KUR.Silḫazu “which is called the Fortress of the Babylonian”
	the mighty mountains ³⁰	

Table 4. Tiglath-pileser’s erection of stelae in Iran.

30. M. Roaf (personal communication) suggests that perhaps here the mention of “the mighty mountains” in the Iran Stela is not a general description of all these places but refers specifically to the “Country of the Cockerels”, mentioned in the Kalḫu inscription.

While the account of the 744 campaign brought us to the already familiar territory along the Great Khurasan Road, we find a wide range of new toponyms mentioned in the report of the 737 campaign, most importantly Bīt-Sangibuti, Bīt-Zualzaš, Bīt-Matti, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, Zakrutu and Mount Bikni. Even if Tiglath-pileser's claim to have integrated all these countries into Assyrian territory is an exaggerated statement, it is still clear that the Assyrians indeed reached these regions, hence expanding the knowledge of the east far beyond the horizon of his predecessors. If Mount Bikni is indeed to be identified with Mount Demavend (Medvedskaya 1992, 78; Reade 1995, 40), the Assyrians even reached the shore of the Caspian Sea. Nevertheless, Tiglath-pileser's forces often came into contact with regions that had been in contact with the Mesopotamian mainland already earlier on. "Silhāzi which is called the 'Fortress of the Babylonian'" and Til-Aššurī, also known as Pitanu "in the language of the people of the country of Miḥranu" (Borger 1956, 51, Nin. A iii 57-58) during the reign of Esarhaddon, with its Marduk sanctuary (Tadmor 1994, 72, Kalḫu Annals 15, 11), are clear proof for this; Silhāzi and Til-Aššurī are Babylonian colonies, probably founded in the late Kassite period (Brinkman 1968, 258f., cf. Tadmor 1994, 72f.).

Despite of offering a wealth of geographical details, Tiglath-pileser III interestingly does not mention the city of Ḥarḥar (Levine 1972-75, 120f.) at all and the city of Kišessim but once, and only in reference to its ruler, Bisīhadir of Kišessim (Tadmor 1994, 48, Kalḫu Annals 11:12), without reaching the city itself. This is a curious fact, given that these cities are later the main focus of the attack of Sargon II who after their ultimate capture transformed them into the capitals of his new provinces. From Sargon's inscriptions and also reliefs we get the impression that Ḥarḥar and Kišessim are the most important cities in the region. Tiglath-pileser clearly seems to have avoided conflict with these centres of local power. This fits well with the general idea that his forays into Iran had rather the character of reconnaissance missions than that they were ever intended to conquer the area. That the Assyrian army was able to penetrate far into the eastern territories without serious obstacles from the local power centres—that we know to have posed considerable resistance to Sargon's troops only twenty years later—seems to indicate that not only was there no shadow of a territorial state, there was not even any substantial feeling of solidarity among the inhabitants of the eastern territories at that time. This fits well with the fact that in the Assyrian sources, from Tiglath-pileser III onwards, the rulers of the region were referred to as "city lords": *bēl-āli* = (LÚ.)EN-URU. This term seems to be used by the Assyrians exclusively in reference to rulers in the mountain lands to the east of Assyria³¹ (however not only specifically to Medes, as seems to be assumed by some scholars³²) and highlights the geographically limited interest and influence these rulers had rather well. To a certain degree, this is preconditioned by the highly fractured geography of the area; however, at the end of the eighth century similarly small-scope surroundings such as Tabal north of Cilicia or Cyprus were divided up between numerous rulers with extremely limited geographical influence, and still the Assyrians called these rulers "kings". Whether the Assyrian term is a translation of a local term³³ or whether it is an approximation of the political status these rulers had according to the Assyrian interpretation, is unclear.

31. See most recently Lanfranchi 1998, 101 fn. 7 on the term and cf. Radner 1999-2001, 17.

32. Note that the rulers of Namri, clearly a predominantly Kassite region, and of Bīt-Sangibuti, neatly differentiated from the Medes in the Nimrud Wine List CTN 1, 13, r.7', are called "city lords" as well, see, e.g., "the city lords of the countries of Namri, of the Sangibuteans and of all the mountains in the east" (Tadmor 1994, 108, Iran Stele IIIA, 26'-27') and "the city lords of the countries of Namri, Sangibuti, Bit-Abdadani and the Medes" (Mayer 1983, 72, TCL 3, 48).

33. Diakonoff habitually translates the term with Iranian *vispati-*, see, e.g., Diakonoff 1978, 65. Cf. Zadok 2002a, 15 with fn. 3 on p. 126.

However, the latter seems more likely as the term was already used in Old Akkadian and Old Assyrian texts for “kinglets ruling small countries” (Kienast 1999, 62).

Note, that in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III we find the Medes for the first time qualified as “mighty” (*dannu*); this practice is continued in the inscriptions of Sargon II, but abandoned in the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings of the 7th century. It is unclear what was meant to be expressed by this term. As the Assyrian inscriptions usually only use derogatory appellations such as “wicked” or “treacherous” to describe foreign peoples, it is especially remarkable that *dannu* has an undeniably positive ring to it.

The sources for the Assyrian contact with the Medes are more numerous than ever for the reign of **Sargon II** (721-705). The detailed evidence from the royal inscriptions is supplemented from an interesting new angle by the correspondence of Sargon with his governors and vassals in the area, especially after the new provinces Kār-Šarrukīn and Kār-Nergal were founded.³⁴

In 716, Sargon’s army reached the country of the Medes for the first time, after campaigning in Mannea; already in 719, he had fought in Mannea in order to crush the separatist war of Mitatti of Zikirtu against the Mannean king Iranzû (an Assyrian vassal since 744), but had not entered Median territory then. In 716, Sargon took the northern route to Media, passing Allabria and Karalla. He subdued Bīt-Kilamzaḥ, [...]lama, Ganungu[ḥtu] and three other cities of the region of Niksama, as well as the city of Šurgadia, whose city lord Šepe-šarri was taken prisoner; these places were annexed to the existing Assyrian province of Parsua.³⁵ Sargon II then conquered the city of Kišessim, ruled by the city lord Bel-šarru-ušur, renamed it Kār-Nergal and made it the centre of a province which included also the regions of Bīt-Sagbat,³⁶ Bīt-Ḥirmami and Bīt-Umargi and the cities Ḥarḥubarban, Kilambati and Armangu; he also had a stela set up there.³⁷ Subsequently, Sargon conquered the city of Ḥarḥar, whose inhabitants had dethroned the city lord Kibaba four years earlier, in 719, and had withheld their tribute —horses, naturally— ever since. The rebellion of Ḥarḥar was certainly part of the events surrounding the brother war in Mannea caused by the ill feelings of many against the pro-Assyrian politics of such rulers as Iranzû of Mannea and Kibaba of Ḥarḥar. The Assyrian conquest of 716 tried to put an end to such tendencies: Sargon renamed the city Kār-Šarrukīn and made it the capital of his second new Zagros province of the same name, which also included Aranzešu (Araziaš, *alias* Upper Nartu) and Bīt-Ramatua (*alias* Lower Nartu), Uriqatu, Sikris, Šaparda and Uriakku, six cities that hitherto were independently ruled by city lords.³⁸ Sargon then continued further into Median territory and received tribute from “twenty-eight city lords of the mighty Medes” (28 LÚ.EN—URU.MEŠ ša KUR *ma-da-a-a dan-nu-ti*, Fuchs 1994, 105 and 318, Khorsabad Annals 100); this part of the campaign is described in great detail and with the mention of the names of various cities and their rulers in the Najafehabad Stela (Levine 1972, 40-44, Najafehabad Stela ii 46-70).

34. See Lanfranchi – Parpola 1990 for letters from Allabria, from Mazamua and the Mannean frontier, and Fuchs – Parpola 2001 for all others.

35. Fuchs 1994, 101 and 317, Khorsabad Annals 91-93; Fuchs 1994, 209 and 346: *Prunkinschrift* 58; Levine 1972, 38, Najafehabad Stela ii 33-35.

36. Cf. Sagbita, called the royal city of Ḥanaširuka the Mede during the reign of Šamši-Adad V, in RIMA 3, A.0.103.1 iii 35 (see above).

37. Fuchs 1994, 102f. and 317f., Khorsabad Annals 93-95; Fuchs 1994, 209-210 and 346, *Prunkinschrift* 59-60; Fuchs 1998, 26 and 55f., 711 Annals iii.b 11-21; Levine 1972, 38, Najafehabad Stela ii 36-41.

38. Fuchs 1994, 103-105 and 318, Khorsabad Annals 96-100; Fuchs 1994, 210 and 346, *Prunkinschrift* 61-62; Fuchs 1998, 27f. and 55f., 711 Annals iii.c 1-12; Levine 1972, 38 and 40, Najafehabad Stela ii 41-46.

Already in the next year, in 715, Sargon returned to Mannea and the country of the Medes, where the inhabitants of the new province of Kār-Šarrukīn were revolting against Assyrian rule. The ensuing bloody battle resulted in the crushing of the revolt: 4,000 heads of enemies were cut off, 4,820 persons were deported and the cities Kišešlu, Qindau, Anzaria and Bīt-Bagaia (Bīt-Gabaia) were renamed Kār-Nabû, Kār-Sîn, Kār-Adad and Kār-Issār and turned into Assyrian strongholds, with improved fortification walls.³⁹ Some of these cities, Qindau and Bīt-Bagaia, together with Kišessim and Ḥarḥar and two more cities, Tikrakka (known from Tiglath-pileser's 744 campaign) and Ganguḥtu,⁴⁰ are depicted in siege scenes on the reliefs in room II of Sargon's palace at Khorsabad (Albenda 1986, 87-91; Gunter 1982, 105), identifiable because of the labels accompanying the reliefs (Fuchs 1994, 276) which show the events of the campaign in 716 (Reade 1976a, 103f.).

Although it was distinguished from the country of the Medes in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, Ḥarḥar is now clearly perceived as Median territory. This is obvious from both the royal inscriptions which make it the main objective of Sargon's forays into Iran "to subdue the Medes around Kār-Šarrukīn" (Fuchs 1994, 108f. and 319, Khorsabad Annals 114f.; 211f. and 347, *Prunkinschrift* 65-66) as well as from letters from the governor of Kār-Šarrukīn who reports on "the Medes around us" (cf. SAA 15, 85, 98, 100). From now on, whenever the Assyrians leave familiar territory in the east, they describe the region as Median (see especially Sargon's letters and Esarhaddon's oracular queries); compared to the descriptions found in the inscriptions of earlier kings, the Assyrians in the late 8th and 7th century clearly connected a much vaster geographical area with the Medes. Whether this is due to an actual Median expansion from their original homeland around Sagbita/Bīt-Sagbat, or due to the Assyrians' better understanding of the political, cultural and/or economic realities which unite the region or, quite on the contrary, due to their employ of a less concrete but more generalizing terminology, is beyond our knowledge.

It is interesting to see that Sargon II took the trouble to rename no less than six cities, after taking them over as Assyrian strongholds. Although this is by no means without prior examples —note, e.g., Shalmaneser III's renaming of several Syrian cities, Til-Barsip as Kār-Salmānu-ašarēd, Nampigu as Līta-Aššūr, Alligu as Ašbat-lā-kunu and Rugulitu as Qibīt-[Aššūr] (e.g., RIMA 3, A.0.102.2 ii 34-35), and Tiglath-pileser's renaming of the city of Suk[...] as Dūr-Tukultī-apil-Ešarra (see above)— it is striking that for all the new names of the Median cities the formative element *kāru*, "harbor, trading station" (CAD K, 231 s.v. *kāru* A) is used; note also that Sennacherib followed this rule when he changed the name of Elenzaš to Kār-Sîn-aḥḥē-erība after annexing the city from Ellipi to the province of Kār-Šarrukīn (see below). The designation *bīt-kāri*, attested from the reign of Sargon II onwards,⁴¹ may well refer to the totality of these Zagros cities (Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvi).

Does the connection with *kāru* imply that the cities were indeed trading centres? This is certainly true for Til-Barsip = Kār-Salmānu-ašarēd and Sidon = Kār-Aššur-aḥḥē-iddina. The mere fact that the Great Khurasan Road, that part of the Silk Road which leads from the plains of Mesopotamia along the Diyala river into the Zagros mountains to the Iranian plateau (Roaf 1995, 56f. with fig. 22), runs through the area in which the provinces of Kār-Nergal and Kār-Šarrukīn, including the cities Kār-Nabû, Kār-Sîn, Kār-Adad, Kār-Issār and Kār-Sîn-aḥḥē-erība, were situated would suggest this connotation also for the Iranian cities. That the route of the Silk Road was used already in Assyrian times

39. Fuchs 1994, 108f. and 319, Khorsabad Annals 109-115; Fuchs 1994, 210f. and 346f., *Prunkinschrift* 64-65.

40. To be identified with Ganungu[ḥtu] which was made part of the province of Parsua in 716, see Fuchs 1994, 435 s.v. Ganguḥtu.

41. The term *bīt-kāri* is already attested in the correspondence of Sargon II (SAA 15, 60, r.9') and hence cannot refer to a new Zagros province which would have been only established in the 7th century, as is apparently assumed in the index of Starr 1990, 364.

(and long before) is beyond doubt: witness for example a caravan from Kār-Šarrukīn mentioned in a letter from the reign of Sargon II (SAA 15, 54), the Chief-of-trade (*rab-kāri*) in action in Bīt-Kapsi in another such letter (SAA 15, 58), the evidence for trade between Nippur and Bīt-Sangibuti in an 8th century letter from Nippur (Cole 1996a, no. 94) and the growing importance of horse trade from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III onwards. The cities situated in the mountain lands along the Great Khurasan Road must have profited enormously from the trade between Mesopotamia and Iran and beyond. Before the camel came into regular use by caravans, the southern route across the desert was impossible to use and the route across the Zagros was without alternative; one can easily imagine how the heavily fortified strongholds, as we find them depicted in Sargon's palace, offered excellent opportunities for their masters to enrich themselves by extracting heavy tolls from the passing caravans, protecting those that paid and plundering those who would not oblige. As a comparison, the castles of the medieval robber-barons of Salzburg and Tyrolia, also a mountain area that is passable only along narrow river valleys and across a few mountain passes, who fed off the commodities shipped from the salt, copper, silver and gold mines and forests in the mountains as well as the trade between northern and southern Europe for centuries, come easily to mind; indeed, the architecture of these castles resembles the fortified citadels depicted on Sargon's reliefs and excavated in the area, such as Godin Tepe. The designation as "city lords" for such robber-barons would seem quite appropriate.

However, when camel caravans were introduced, a rival arose to the route across the Zagros. The possibility of trade across the Arabian desert changed the relationship between Elam, Assyria and Babylonia completely, as Macguire Gibson has convincingly argued (Gibson 1991, 36): Elam and Babylonia became natural allies in trade, blocking Assyrian interests. In this context, an 8th century letter archive from Nippur offers interesting information. It shows Nippur as a regular commercial partner of Iran; the letters specifically mention horse trade with Elam and Bīt-Sangibuti (Cole 1996a, no. 57 and no. 94, and cf. Cole 1996b, 66f.), which certainly insulted Assyria's military and economic interests. This changing of parameters may well be one of the reasons why the Assyrian military involvement in the Zagros area seems to diminish in the 7th century while the mixing in Babylonian and Elamite and also Arabian politics grows, until its climax during the reign of Ashurbanipal. Also Medes participated in the desert trade, however, in the East: from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III onwards, we have evidence for the use of camels among the Medes, and Sargon's reference to Medes encountered in 713 as "Arabs of the East" (see below) could not illustrate their role as desert traders any better. It seems a logical step that those who used to control the Great Khurasan Road branched out into the camel caravan business once the Assyrians made their presence felt with the establishing of the Zagros provinces: diversification was obviously the best solution here.

Our view of the Medes as robber-barons living in castles and participating in the Mesopotamia-Iran trade by extracting tolls from the passing caravans radically differs from that of the tribal nomadic societies which Stuart Brown took as a point of departure for his theory of "secondary state formation". The emergence of "economic intensification, social stratification, and coercive power" (Brown 1986, 116) clearly predates the Assyrian annexation of Zagros territories in the 8th century, and if specific outside influence is considered a necessary ingredient, then the earlier Kassite involvement surely is a likelier cause to have jump-started an evolutionary process in the structural set-up of the local polities. However, the creation of the Assyrian Zagros provinces deeply influenced the relations between the local principalities, Median and otherwise: pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian tendencies among the ruling elites caused various alliances and conflicts not only with Assyria, but also among the Zagros polities. If we want to harmonise Herodotus' account of the creation of the Median empire with the Assyrian sources, we have to use another beginning for the story: wealthy robber-barons guarding their commercial interests have different reasons to unite their forces than leaders of nomad tribes.

The Assyrians used the existing power structures to strengthen their own presence in the Zagros. They clearly felt that the local rulers merited a special treatment. They were bound to the Assyrian king with loyalty oaths (*adê*) which obliged them to obey and pass on information while it was the governor's duty to protect them against local enemies and to defend their interests at court; however, their ultimate allegiance belonged to the king only, and it was not them who came to Assyria to swear the oaths but the governor in charge had to go and visit them for the occasion (Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvi). Differently from the elites in the western regions conquered by the Assyrians, that were either executed or absorbed into the Assyrian administrative system, the city lords kept their powers (on the special status of the “Zagros *élites*” see Lanfranchi in this volume). This policy caused two parallel power structures to coexist in the new Zagros provinces, and evidence for the special status of the city lords is amply attested in the correspondence of Sargon with his eastern governors (Fuchs – Parpola 2001, chapters 3 and 4). Much depended on the good will of the local rulers, especially as the tough climate could always be relied on to pose problems enough,⁴² and the Assyrian officials were eager to interact positively with them. On the other hand, at least some of the local rulers saw the collaboration with Assyria not as a horrible fate forced onto them, but as a good possibility to find access to a well-established system which offered numerous political and economic advantages to those who were willing to follow the rules.⁴³

Already in the next year, in 714, Sargon returned to Iran. On his way to Urartu, he collected the tribute of the rulers of Mannea, Ellipi and the Medes, before entering Mannean territory (Fuchs 1994, 100f. and 320, Khorsabad Annals, 127-128). When he came to the province of Parsua, “the city lords of Namri, Bīt-Sangibuti, Bīt-Abdadani and of the mighty Medes” —the destruction caused by Assyrian campaign of the previous year still fresh in their minds, as Sargon points out— met him in order to deliver their tribute: horses, mules, camels, cattle and small cattle (Mayer 1983, 70-73, TCL 3, 39-50). Introduced by the mention of Daltâ, the king of Ellipi, twenty-six rulers are listed (see Table 5 on the next page).

It is interesting to see that despite the fact that several of these cities can be demonstrated to be situated in the new provinces of ȜarȜar (Kār-Šarrukīn) and Kišessim (Kār-Nergal), their city lords were still in power and treated in the same manner as Daltâ of Ellipi, an at least nominally independent king; this clearly illustrates that the city lords stayed locally in power, despite the Assyrian take-over. Other regions mentioned here, such as Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Zualzaš and Bīt-Ištar, were already included in the Assyrian administrative system since the reign of Tiglath-pileser III and should hence belong to the provinces of Parsua or Bīt-Ȝamban. Note that from the list given below (Table 5) it is not obvious which of the principalities were considered as belonging to Namri, to Bīt-Sangibuti, to Bīt-Abdadani or to the Medes: however, comparison with the lists of Median principalities in other inscriptions shows (cf. tables 2 and 6) that most of them (if not all) were Median.

Sargon then continued to Mannean territory, entering Messu, where in the city of Sirdakka (Zir-diakka) he met with the Mannean king Ullusunu, son of Sargon's old vassal Iranzû. While staying in the city, Zizî of Appatar and Zalaia of Kitpattia, two city lords from Gizilbunda, “a district, which is situated in remote mountains in a distant place, barring the way like a barricade in the region of the

42. The negative effects of snow and cold in the mountains are stressed in several letters, see, e.g., SAA 15, 60, 61 and 83. Note that the Assyrians built with fired bricks in Kār-Šarrukīn (see SAA 15, 94; on *šahātu*, “to fire (bricks)”, see Radner 1997-98).

43. See Lanfranchi 1998, 109 on SAA 5, 243. In this context it is noteworthy that according to Dr. Behzad Mofidi Nasrabadi some Neo-Assyrian texts were found during excavations at Choga Gavaneh, the ancient tell of Islamabad near Kermanshah, in the 70s; they are not published.

country of the Manneans and of the country of the Medes” (Mayer 1983, 74, TCL 3, 64-65), brought him “countless horses broken to the yoke, cattle and small cattle” (Mayer 1983, 74, TCL 3, 70) as tribute. Despite Sargon’s claim that the cities of Appatar and Kitpattia were unknown to his predecessors who had never received tribute from them, Tiglath-pileser III had conquered the city of Kitpattia in 744 (Tadmor 1994, 46, *Kalḫu Annals* 11 4) and made it part of the province of Parsua; however, in 714 we see it ruled by an independent city lord who in turn submitted to Sargon — yet another indication of the continuing power wielded by the city lords of regions included into the Assyrian provinces. Subsequently, the two cities were annexed to Parsua, with an Assyrian *qēpu* (royal delegate) installed

	principality	ruler	attested elsewhere	alternative spelling	province
1	Nartu	Uksatar	Sargon [716]	“Upper Nartu”/“Lower Nartu”	Ḫarḫar
2	Nartu	Durisi	Sargon [716]	“Upper Nartu”/“Lower Nartu”	Ḫarḫar
3	Nartu	Satarešu	Sargon [716]	“Upper Nartu”/“Lower Nartu”	Ḫarḫar
4	Ḫalḫubarra	Anzī	Sargon [716]	Ḫarḫubarban	Kišessim
5	Kilambate	Payukku	Sargon [716]	Kilambati	Kišessim
6	Mali	Uzī	—		
7	Nappi	Uakirtu	—		
8	Bīt-Sagbat	Makirtu	TP [737], Sargon [716]		Kišessim
9	Uriangi	Kitakki	Sargon [716]	? Uriqatu	Ḫarḫar
10	Kingaraku	Mašdayukku	—		
11	Qantau	Uzitar	Sargon [715]	Qindau	Ḫarḫar
12	Bīt-Kapsi	Paukku	TP [737]; Sargon [716]		
13	Bīt-Zualzaš	Ḫumbê	TP [737]		
14	Kisilaḫa	Uzumanda	—		
15	Bīt-Ištar	Burburazu	TP [737]		
16	Zakrutu	Bag-parna	TP [737]; Sargon [716]		Ḫarḫar
17	Šaparda	Darī	Sargon [716]		Ḫarḫar
18	Kanzabakani	Ušrâ	Sargon [716; 713]	Kazabakani/Kanzabkanu	
19	Kār-Zinû	Šarruti	Sargon [716; 713]		
20	Andirpattianu	Mašdakku	Sargon [713]		
21	Usi[...]	Akkussu	—		
22	Šibura	Birtatu	TP [737]	Šibar/Šibara	
23	Ḫarzianu	Zardukku	Sargon [716; 713]		
24	Aratisti	Mašdakku	Sargon [716; 713]	Aratišta/Aratista	
25	Barikanu	Satarpanu	Sargon [716; 713]	Birnakan	
26	Urikaia	Karakku	Sargon [716]	Uriakku	Ḫarḫar

Table 5. Eastern city lords bringing tribute in 714 (TCL 3 42-49).
(TP = Tiglath-pileser III)

44. Mentioned in SAA 15, 101 and 110, see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvii.

45. Mentioned in SAA 15, 272, 4', see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvii.

46. Mentioned in SAA 15, 91 and 93, see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvii.

47. For the corrected reading see Fuchs 1998, 41, fn. 120.

48. Mentioned in SAA 15, 85, see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvii.

to watch over them (Mayer 1983, 74, TCL 3, 64-73).⁴⁹ Sargon then left Sirdakka and headed towards Panziš, on his way to battle Mitatti who ruled, independently from the Mannean king Ullusunu and openly opposing Assyria, over a part of Mannea with its centre in Zikirtu ever since 719. Note that as a description of the trip to Panziš, it is stated that Sargon and his troops marched for thirty double-hours “between the country of Mannea, of Bīt-Kapsi and of the mighty Medes” (Mayer 1983, 74, TCL 3, 75). Panziš is the point of departure for the foray into enemy territory that would see battle with Mitatti of Zikirtu and later his ally, the Urartian king Rusâ; as is well known, the campaign of 714 resulted in the sack of Mušašir and the suicide of Rusâ.⁵⁰

As for the country of the mighty Medes, it saw the return of Sargon and his troops already in the subsequent year, in 713. After swarthing a rebellion in Karalla and annexing the country to the province of Mazamua (*i.e.*, Lullumu) and cleaning up in Ellipi on behalf of the loyal king Daltâ, Sargon entered new Median regions: these are Ba”it-ili, “a district of the country of the Medes at the border of Ellipi”, the countries of Absaḥutti, Parnuatti and Utirna, the city of Diristanu in the country of Uriakku, the country of Rimanuti, “a district in the country of Upparia”, the countries of Uiadaue, Bustis, Agazi, Ambanda and Dananu, “far-away districts in the area of the ‘Arabs of the East’”, called “those districts of the mighty Medes that had shed the yoke of Aššur and roamed desert and mountains like thieves” (Fuchs 1994, 120-121 and 323, Khorsabad Annals 184-190, 213; and 347, *Prunkinschrift* 67-70).

The reference to “Arabs of the East” and Medes that “roam the desert and mountains like thieves” is singular, but has greatly fuelled the pre-conceived image of the Medes as nomads. However, one may also interpret this in a more specific sense as a description of Medes that specialize in desert trading with camels, as this is more than anything what the Assyrians associate with the western Arabs; avoiding the Great Khurasan Road by engaging in desert trade basically equals stealing to those who now controlled the old traffic route, the Assyrians. Sargon claims to have completely devastated these areas; in the inscriptions, only the city of Erištana in Ba”it-ili is singled out as having been conquered and plundered (Fuchs 1994, 213 and 347, *Prunkinschrift* 67-68). After this, Sargon received 4,609 horses, mules and cattle as well as small cattle without number as tribute from Ullusunu of Mannea, Daltâ of Ellipi, Bel-aplu-iddina of Allabria and forty-five anonymous “city lords of the mighty Medes” (Fuchs 1994, 122f. and 323, Khorsabad Annals 191-194). A list of twenty-three city lords is given in an earlier version of the annals, mentioning their names and those of their principalities (Fuchs 1998, 40f. and 68f., 711 Annals vi.b 14-37); Andreas Fuchs explains the missing twenty-two city rulers by assuming that they must have been mentioned in the following part of the text which is lost today and should have described Sargon’s campaign further into the country of the Medes (Fuchs 1998, 70).

Most of these principalities are known from earlier contacts with the Assyrians. Bīt-Barrî is Bīt-Barrua, part of Assyria since 737. Sikris is known as a part of the province of ȚarȚar (Kār-Šarrukīn) since 716. The city lord of this city as well as the rulers of Uqutti, Uppuria, Buštus, Kanzabkanu, Aratista, Țarzianu, Kaitanu, Arnasia, Kār-Zinû, Barikanu and Qarkasia gave tribute to Sargon II, as is recorded in the Najafehabad Stela (Levine 1972, 40-42); however, due to the fragmentary state of preservation it is unknown whether in the course of the 716 campaign these cities were annexed to the

49. This episode is also related in a shortened version in the Khorsabad Annals, see Fuchs 1994, 101 and 320, Khorsabad Annals, 128-130. The name of the Assyrian delegate at Kitpattia is Buzî and is mentioned in SAA 11, 31, 3.

50. See now A. Fuchs in PNA 3/I, 1055f., *s.v.*

province of Kišessim (Kār-Nergal). If this is the case, we would have more examples of city lords who, despite living amidst an Assyrian province, are treated like independent vassals, as is clearly the case for the city lord of Sikris.⁵¹

	principality	ruler	attested elsewhere	alternative spelling
1	Sikris	[...]parnua	TP [737]; Sargon [716]	Sikraia
2	[...]sanâ	Šutirna	—	
3	Ḫa[...]ta[...]na	Uppammâ	—	
4	Amakki	Mašdaku	—	
5	Išteuppu	Ištesuku	—	
6	Uqutti	Uarzan	Sargon [716]	Ukutta
7	Kakkam	Ašpabara	—	
8	Bīt-Barrî	Satarešu	TP [737]	Bīt-Barrua
9	Bīt-Barbari	Parurasu	—	
10	Uppuria	Satarpanu	TP [737]; Sargon [716; 713]	Upparia
11	Andirpattianu	Parkuku	Sargon [714]	
12	Buštus	Ariya	TP [737]; Sargon [716; 713]	Bustus / Bustis
13	Kanzabkanu	Ušrâ	Sargon [716; 714]	Kazabakani / Kanzabakanu
14	Aratista	Maštukku	Sargon [716; 714]	Aratišta / Aratisti
15	Ḫarzianu	Zardukku	Sargon [716; 714]	
16	Kaitanu	Ištesuku	Sargon [716]	
17	Kaitanu	Awarisarnu	Sargon [716]	
18	Arnasia	Arbaku	Sargon [716]	Irnisia
19	Kār-Zinû	Sarruti	Sargon [716; 714]	
20	Barikanu	Satarpanu	Sargon [716; 714]	Birnakan
21	Zazaknu	[...]	—	
22	Qarkasia	[Šummušra]	Sargon [716]	
23	Partakanu	[...]	—	

Table 6. Median city lords bringing tribute in 713 (Annals 711 vi.b 14-37).
(TP = Tiglath-pileser III)

The reception of the tribute of the Iranian rulers marks the end of Sargon's eastern campaign in 713; it is also the last time that he himself seems to have visited the country of the Medes although he continued to campaign in the region, against Ellipi in 707 and Karalla in 706. From the military point of view, the new provinces were well established and the presence of the king himself was apparently not considered necessary anymore. The collecting of the tribute and the meeting with the local rulers were from now on in the hands of the royal magnates, as is demonstrated by the letters of the royal

51. Note that in 672 Ḫatarna, city lord of Sikris, concluded one of the so-called "Vassal Treaties" with Esarhaddon, see SAA 2, 6, variant T.

correspondence (e.g., SAA 5, 199-200, 210; SAA 15, 3, 54, 94-95) and also the Khorsabad reliefs: ⁵² in these sources, we find the governors of Kār-Šarrukīn, of Parsua, of Mazamua, of Arrapha and of Našibina campaigning against the Medes — the royal inscriptions however are silent on their exploits. The royal correspondence also shows that, regarding administrative and communication matters, the oldest of the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros, Mazamua (established under Shalmaneser III), and its governor Šarru-emuranni provided the link between Central Assyria and the other Zagros provinces. ⁵³

province	capital	est.	later attested	known governors
Parsua ⁵⁴	Nikkur ⁵⁵	744	Sargon II: SAA 6, 25 (717)	reign of Sargon II: Nabû-remanni: SAA 15, 53, 55 unknown reign: Ilu-taklak: SAA 7, 128
Bīt-Ḫamban	Bīt-Ḫamban	744	Sargon II: SAA 5, 22 6 Esarhaddon: SAA 4, 35-40	—
Kār-Nergal	Kār-Nergal (Kišessim) ⁵⁶	716	Esarhaddon: SAA 4, 43	reign of Sargon II: Aššur-bel-ušur: SAA 15, 59-62, 64 ⁵⁷
Kār-Šarrukīn	Kār-Šarrukīn (Ḫarḫar)	716	Esarhaddon: SAA 4, 51, 77-78	reign of Sargon II: 1. Nabû-bel-kaʿin: ⁵⁸ SAA 15, 85 2. Mannu-ki-Ninua: SAA 15, 90, 94, 100, 105 ⁵⁹

Table 7. The Assyrian Zagros provinces established in 744 and 716. ⁶⁰

52. Taklak-ana-Bel, governor of Našibina and eponym of 715, conducted a campaign against the Medes according to the information provided by the depiction of an Assyrian army camp with the caption *uš-ma-nu šá ʾtāk-[lak-a-na-EN]*, “Camp of Taklak-ana-Bel” (see Fuchs 1994, 279 and 364) in room 14 of Sargon’s palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn, see Reade 1976a, 99.

53. Mazamua and Parsua: SAA 5, 199; Mazamua and Bīt-Ḫamban: SAA 5, 226; Mazamua and Kār-Šarrukīn (Ḫarḫar): SAA 15, 100; Mazamua and Kār-Nergal (Kišessim): SAA 5, 207.

54. Parsua is attested in SAA 11, 1 ii 15, a list of toponyms which Forrer 1920, 54 assumed to date to the reign of Ashurbanipal; however, recently it has been suggested convincingly that the text is better interpreted as a lexical list, see Fales – Postgate 1995, xiv. Hence, the text is better not used as secure evidence for the existence of an Assyrian province of Parsua during the reign of Ashurbanipal (contra, e.g., Diakonoff 1991, 16 with fn. 10; the toponyms discussed by Diakonoff are not attested in ADD 952).

55. See Forrer 1920, 90 and cf. SAA 15, 53 in which a messenger from Parsua is quoted, giving news from Nikkur.

56. Kār-Nergal is also attested in SAA 5, 207, 6 and SAA 11, 1, ii 1.

57. See Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxiv for the possibility that he was either Nabû-remanni’s successor as governor of Parsua or governor of Kār-Nergal.

58. For a *curriculum vitae* of this man see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxxviii-xxxix.

59. Mannu-ki-Ninua succeeded Nabû-bel-kaʿin as governor of Kār-Šarrukīn, see SAA 15, 90, 28-r.11 and cf. Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xli.

60. Note the statements about the assumed division of the existing provinces into smaller division under Senacherib by Diakonoff 1991, 17; I cannot follow his argumentation which is unfortunately not backed up with attestations from the written record.

4. Symbiosis (712-656 BC)

After observing the intensity with which Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II devoted themselves to military actions in the Zagros mountains, we see that **Sennacherib** (704-681), despite being active in the area, operated only on a very low-key level compared to his predecessors. This can be taken as implicit evidence for the fact that after the initial problems to control the new provinces Kār-Šarrukīn and Kār-Nergal things proceeded smoothly in the eastern Assyrian territories after 713; the dual system with the Assyrian provincial administration on one hand and the local city lords on the other hand seems to have found an equilibrium that was profitable for both sides.

That the provinces founded by Tiglath-pileser and Sargon remained part of Assyria at least until the reign of Esarhaddon can be demonstrated by the extant sources; no sources are available for the time after that.

According to his inscriptions, Sennacherib himself only once had contact with Medes in their own country, in 702, when he conducted a campaign against the Zagros kingdom of Ellipi. During this occasion he received tribute from the “distant Medes” (KUR.ma-da-a-a ru-qu-(ú)-te/ti, see Borger 1979, 72, Chicago Prism ii 33 // Taylor Prism ii 30 // Bellino Cylinder 33 // Rassam Cylinder 31). This denomination, here attested for the first time, seems to refer to the Medes living outside of the regions controlled by the Assyrians; it is attested again in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon, likewise referring to Medes living outside of the Assyrian administration units. The earlier appellation of the Medes as *dannu*, “mighty”, is, for whatever reason, not used anymore in the texts of the 7th century. Sennacherib cannot have entered very far into Median territory as it can be shown that he returned to Nineveh before the seventh month of 702, which necessitates to assume a quick return to central Assyria (Frahm 1994, 10).

As for those Medes already integrated into the Assyrian empire, the sources are silent. Generally speaking, no information about people living in Assyria itself is to be expected from the royal inscriptions, and the royal correspondence, scholarly reports and imperial administrative texts of the reign of Sennacherib have not yet been uncovered. However, it is known from the inscriptions that Sennacherib added territory to the province of Ḫarḫar (Kār-Šarrukīn): in 702, he conquered the Ellipian city of Elenzaš, renamed it as Kār-Sîn-aḫḫē-erība (like Sargon using the component *kāru*) and handed it over to the governor of Ḫarḫar (Borger 1979, 72, Chicago Prism ii 27-32 // Taylor Prism ii 23-29 // Bellino Cylinder 32 // Rassam Cylinder 30); as always, he avoids using his father’s name, and this is probably the reason why the old name is used instead of Kār-Šarrukīn (Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvi). The annexation of Elenzaš to the province of Ḫarḫar marks the highpoint of Assyrian territorial influence in the Zagros.

Our sources are again numerous and even more diverse than ever before in the reign of **Esarhaddon** (680-669). For the Medes living outside of the Assyrian administrative units, the royal inscriptions are an important source. It is probably in 676, in any case certainly before 672,⁶¹ that the city lords Uppis of Partakka, Zanasana of Partukka and Ramateia of Urakazabarna, called “Medes from a distant place (KUR.ma-da-a-a šá a-šar-šú-nu ru-u-qu) who during the reign of the kings, my fathers, have not crossed the border of Assyria nor trodden its ground” bring horses and lapislazuli as tribute to Nineveh, submit to Esarhaddon and enlist his help (*kitru*⁶²) against rival city lords (Borger 1956, 54f., Episode 15). The designation as “Medes from a distant place” is of course reminiscent of the “distant Medes” in Sennacherib’s inscriptions, and the three rulers are clearly portrayed as coming

61. This *terminus ante quem* results from the connection with SAA 2, 6, variant A, see below.

62. See Liverani 1995, 61f. for a discussion of the term in this context.

from regions beyond the Assyrian Zagros provinces. This account is followed by an episode detailing how Šidir-parna and E-parna, two city lords from the country of Patušarri, were deported to Assyria; Patušarri is described as “bordering onto the salt desert, amidst the country of the ‘distant Medes’ (*šá qé-reb* KUR.ma-da-a-a ru-qu-(u)-te), near Mount Bikni, the mountain of lapis, where none of the kings, my fathers, have ever trodden the earth.” The city lords as well as their people, their riding horses, their cattle, their small cattle and their camels were brought to Assyria (Borger 1956, 55, Episode 16). The Medes are again portrayed as a people of horseback riders — their horses are specifically referred to as riding animals (ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ *ru-ku-bi-šú-nu* in l. 51). Esarhaddon is here seen active at the shore of the Caspian Sea, as the country of Patušarri, Mount Bikni⁶³ and the salt desert can be identified with a high degree of certainty with the Mazandaran area, the Demavend mountain range and the desert of Dasht-i Kavir (Medvedskaya 1992, 78). Note also the mention of camels, invoking the image of the “Arabs of the East” used in Sargon’s inscriptions.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that Esarhaddon did not expand the Assyrian territory in Iran, as his predecessors, including Sennacherib, had done. Note however that another event reported in Esarhaddon’s inscriptions concerns the subjugation of the people of the country of Barnaka, who live in “Til-Aššurî, which is called Pitanu in the language of the people of the country of Miḫranu” (Borger 1956, 51, Nin. A iii 57-58). In this inscription, Til-Aššurî is not connected with the Medes, but from the annals of Tiglath-pileser we know that this king reached the city in 737 during his second campaign against the east and sacrificed in its Marduk sanctuary (Tadmor 1994, 72, Kalḫu Annals 15:11); Barnaka is also attested in a letter from the reign of Sargon II (SAA 15, 92), there in connection with the Zagros kingdom of Ellipi. The case of Til-Aššurî which also was known under another name in another language is instructive: the names Til-Aššurî and Pitanu have no resemblance whatsoever to each other, and the toponym Pitanu is the only testament of the Miḫranean language known to us. The reference bears witness to the fact that numerous languages were spoken in the Zagros, most of them not even known by any specific designation to us.

The incidents reported in Esarhaddon’s inscriptions tell of the different options which were at the disposal of the Assyrian king when dealing with Median city lords standing outside of the Assyrian administrative system. One is open conflict, the other the forging of an alliance, here interestingly described not as the outcome of (the threat of) an Assyrian attack, but as a voluntary initiative by three hitherto independent city lords who approach Esarhaddon in Nineveh, bringing tribute and seeking his help in a local conflict. The *do ut des* approach of the would-be confederates could not be better illustrated. That the three Median rulers did not simply want to recruit the Assyrian king as a “gun for hire” but had a longer-lasting alliance in mind need not only be assumed; this is clear from the fact that the loyalty oath (*adê*) sworn by one of them, Ramateia, the city lord of Urakazabarna, has survived to the present day in the form of one of the famous *adê* tablets found in Nimrud (SAA 2, 6, variant A). Mario Liverani has demonstrated that the modern denomination as “Vassal Treaties” is wrong; instead, the texts document the oaths taken by the ones responsible for the armed guards stationed in Assyrian palaces, more specifically the crown prince Ashurbanipal’s bodyguards (Liverani 1995, 60; followed by Lanfranchi 1998, 105). Indeed, the clauses found in the tablets contain regulations that pertain to the duties of those who are to protect the crown prince’s life and well-being, while clauses regulating taxation and conscription, which were to be expected in a “real” vassal treaty, are entirely missing; Liverani’s interpretation hence seems very probable. He concludes that Median soldiers were em-

63. First mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, who in his Kalḫu annals claims to have received tribute from the Median city lords “as far as Mount Bikni”.

ployed as palace guards, a position which would have led to “a fairly good knowledge of Assyrian military organization and of their urban fortification”, maintained until the time it proved to be useful, *i.e.* 615 and after (Liverani 1995, 62). This may well be the case; it is however of importance to stress that not only Medes were put in this privileged position. Only three of the seven rulers mentioned in the *adê* tablets rule over principalities which can be proven to be Median; these are the already mentioned Ramateia, Ḫatarna, city lord of Sikris (SAA 2, 6, variant T)⁶⁴ and Būr-Dadi of Kār-Zitali (SAA 2, 6, variant G).⁶⁵ Tunî is described as an Ellipean city lord (SAA 2, 6, variant F), a principality scrupulously differentiated from the country of the Medes in all Assyrian sources; Larkutla is a city lord in Mazamua (SAA 2, 6, variant a), an Assyrian province since the reign of Shalmaneser III;⁶⁶ and Ḫumbareš, the city lord of Naḫšimarti (SAA 2, 6, variant H), would appear to be Elamite. Liverani (1995, 61) has drawn attention to the usage of the term *kitru* in connection with the Median city lords approaching Esarhaddon for support; it is interesting to see that the same term is used in a letter mentioning Ḫumbareš, here clearly an Elamite (CT 53, 638; cf. H.D. Baker in PNA 2/I, 478 *s.v.* Ḫumbarēš). It follows that the *adê* to fulfil duties as the crown prince’s troops were not sworn exclusively by Median city lords on behalf of their subjects, but also by other rulers, all of whom had however two things in common: they came from regions east of central Assyria and were designated by the Assyrians as “city lords”.

Lanfranchi (1998, 107f.) has drawn attention to the possibility that these eastern soldiers did not only serve as protectors of the crown prince’s body, but that they were members of the crown prince’s army corps (*kišir mār šarri*), a subdivision of the *kišir šarrūti* created in the reign of Sennacherib (see Dalley – Postgate 1984, 41). This seems very reasonable, especially as it allowed to make better use of their expertise as horseback fighters: we know in the case of Sargon II, that his personal entourage consisted of riders.⁶⁷ However, the subjects of the eastern city lords were not the only ones serving as palace or body guards. Contingents of soldiers from various places inside the Assyrian empire serving in the cities in the heartland of Assyria are amply attested; most prominent among the “foreigners” serving as bodyguards are the Itu’eans, and during the reign of Sargon, Sidonites appear to have served as the crown prince’s guard (see SAA 1, 153). But no *adê* tablets similar to the ones prepared on behalf of the eastern city lords were found for any of these (Liverani 1995, 62; Lanfranchi 1998, 105). If we do not want to attribute this to the chances of archaeology, I suggest to see the special status of the city lords as an explanation for this. Above, I have already suggested that the continuing usage of the term and concept of “city lord” after the creation of provinces in the Zagros hints towards the existence of a parallel power structure alongside the official Assyrian administration in the east, necessitating to bind them to the Assyrian king with methods that are unnecessary for regular subjects.⁶⁸ Once the subjects of the city lords served inside the Assyrian army corps however, they did not hold a special role among the other ethnic groups inside the “supranational Assyrian empire” (Lanfranchi 1998, 109).

64. Sikris is known as a city near Ḫarḫar from Sargon’s inscriptions (Fuchs 1994, 104 and 318, Khorsabad Annals 99; 108 and 319, Khorsabad Annals 110).

65. The country of Kār-Zitali is mentioned in an oracle query in context with E-parna, a Median city lord known from Esarhaddon’s inscriptions, and the Salt Desert: SAA 4, 60, 7 and 9.

66. See also Lanfranchi in the present volume.

67. Cf. Fuchs 1994, 133f. and 326, Khorsabad Annals 248-249.

68. Note that also Lanfranchi (1998, 101) stressed the fact that from SAA 2, 6 it follows that the city lords were “true reigning dynasts” and “being in control of a territory which could be handed over to their descendants, and of a population which they were entitled to take care of.”

More evidence about Esarhaddon's interaction with Medes is found in the oracle queries which the king had presented to the god Šamaš in order to seek divine advice for precarious decisions. Many of the surviving queries mention the country of the Medes (see SAA 4, 41-73). The difference between the situation in the Zagros area as described in the Sargon correspondence and in the oracle queries of Esarhaddon is striking: while "going into the country of the Medes" in order to collect tribute for Sargon's officials is a regular and rather unspectacular duty of the various governors after 713, the east is perceived as full of dangers in the time of Esarhaddon (cf. Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxix). This is not only due to Assyria's old adversaries in the region, the Medes and the Manneans; the trouble makers active in Iran at that time include the Cimmerians (*Gimirrāyu*) who had made their first appearance in the historical records during Sargon's reign, then threatening Urartu (e.g., SAA 5, 92, 144, 145), and the Scythians (*Iškuzāyu*), newly arrived at the stage of history. The Assyrian officials nevertheless needed to enter "the country of the Medes", obviously used only as a designation for those areas not earlier transformed into Assyrian provinces, in order to procure horses, and we find *bīt-kāri*, the summary designation for the Assyrian trading centres in the Zagros (see above), as the point of departure for this in several oracle queries as well as a letter.⁶⁹

Potential danger in the east originated most prominently from the actions of Kaštaritu, the city lord of Kār-Kaššī, who is mentioned in most of the oracle queries relating to Median affairs. From the queries it is clear that at the time the Assyrians saw Kaštaritu as a political leader of substantial influence and a force to be reckoned with; we see Esarhaddon worrying about Kaštaritu plotting with other Median city lords (SAA 4, 41), mobilizing against Assyria (SAA 4, 42) and attacking the Assyrian provincial capital Kišessim (SAA 4, 43), the city of Kilman⁷⁰ near Ḥarḥar (SAA 4, 51), the city of Šubara/Šibara (SAA 4, 48), as well as other cities (SAA 4, 44-45, 49-50). No wonder Esarhaddon was cautious when Kaštaritu suggested a treaty to him (SAA 4, 56-57). From the extant sources, it is not known whether a peaceful or military solution for the trouble with Kaštaritu was ever found; the inscriptions' silence about this matter would rather suggest a negative answer. Kaštaritu's principality Kār-Kaššī is likely to be identical with the toponym Qarkasia, as attested in Sargon's inscriptions.⁷¹ Kār-Kaššī, which means "Trading port of the Kassites", may refer to the earlier history of relations with Babylonia in the second millennium (cf. Starr 1990, lx); alternatively, it could be a late popular etymology of a completely unrelated name.

Not only the attacks against Assyrian strongholds show that the control of the east was slipping during the reign of Esarhaddon. Saparda, which was made part of the province of Ḥarḥar (Kār-Šarrukin) in 716,⁷² was not under Assyrian control anymore: alongside the nefarious Kaštaritu, its city lord Dusanni is mentioned as an enemy of Assyria in several oracle queries (SAA 4, 45, 50-51, 64). After the conquests of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II and Sennacherib, Assyria started to lose territory in the east under Esarhaddon.

The historical sources concerning the Medes become very sparse for the reign of **Ashurbanipal** (668-ca. 630). The only information to be gained from his inscriptions pertains to a battle against three

69. Oracle queries: SAA 4, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71; letter: SAA 13, 102. Note also the letter SAA 10, 87, asking the king on how to treat delegates from *bīt-kāri*.

70. Kuluman/Kilman is an important city connected with Kār-Šarrukīn/Ḥarḥar, see Fuchs – Parpola 2001, xxvii.

71. The change between /š/ and /s/ can be explained due to the fact that the sibilant is represented differently in the Neo-Assyrian queries and the Standard Babylonian royal inscriptions (see now also Zadok 2002a, 61); for the similar case of Šaparda/Saparda cf. the following footnote.

72. In accordance with Neo-Assyrian phonetics, this city's name appears as Šaparda in the royal inscriptions, written in the Standard Babylonian dialect: Fuchs 1994, 104 and 318, Khorsabad Annals 99; Levine 1972, 38 and 40, Najafehabad Stela ii 45.

Median city lords, Birishatri as well as Sarrati and Parihia, the sons of Gagi. This incident is told following the account of Ashurbanipal's fifth campaign, conducted against Mannea, and is probably to be dated to 656. After detailing how he disposed of the disloyal king of Mannea, Aḫšeri, Ashurbanipal reports that the three Median city lords (whose cities are not named) had rebelled against Assyrian rule whereupon he conquered their cities, plundered them and had the rulers brought to Nineveh (Borger 1996, 37 and 221f., Prism iv 3-8 // Prism C iv 130 – v 12). Their further fate there is left unmentioned, and the account closes with the report on the battle against Andaria, a Urartian governor, who had attacked the northern Assyrian provinces of Uppumu and Kullimeri, established on former Šubrian territory during the reign of Esarhaddon. The three Median ruler are described as city lords, as customary in Assyrian texts since the time of Sargon II. This would seem to indicate that the power structure among the Medes was still the one encountered by the Assyrians in the 8th century.

5. Silence (655-616 BC)

It is completely unclear whether the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros, Parsua, Bīt-Ḫamban, Kišessim (Kār-Nergal) and Ḫarḫar (Kār-Šarrukīn), were still part of the empire during Ashurbanipal's reign; there are simply no attestations whatsoever, even the eponym titles, usually a good source for the existence of Assyrian provinces, fail us here completely. Interestingly, even the reports on Ashurbanipal's five campaigns against Elam contain no mention of Median involvement whatsoever. However the information vacuum is to be interpreted, the fact remains that the account of the defeat of the three city lords during the fifth campaign of Ashurbanipal is the last mention of Medes in the Assyrian sources.

Although we have no information on the situation in the Zagros region for the second half of the 7th century, we have sources pertaining to persons with a Median background who live in Assyria. From the reign of Sargon II onwards⁷³ until the last years of the existence of the Assyrian empire, people designated as *ḫundurāyu* are attested in the city of Assur.⁷⁴ The term is used to designate a profession of unknown specifications, working within the temple of Aššur; its etymological origin, however, is clear: it is a *nisbe* based on the Zagros toponym Ḫundur,⁷⁵ the region around Kišessim. Note that in one instance (Jakob-Rost – Fales 1996, 28, 3), the designation *Ḫarḫarāyu*, “Man from Ḫarḫar”, is used instead of *ḫundurāyu*; the regional affiliation of the professional title with these Median regions was apparently well enough known to use another toponym without obliterating its meaning. Whether the *ḫundurāyu* are carpet weavers (Fales – Jakob-Rost 1991, 23f.) or not, cannot be decided with certainty but seems plausible.⁷⁶ Whatever the nature of the craft performed by these professionals may be, the fact alone that craftsmen with a Median background were operating in Assur and even in the service of the Aššur temple constitutes an important piece of information: it demonstrates that not only the Zagros regions were subjected to Assyrian influence, but that also

73. The earliest known attestation stems from a ritual text concerning the Aššur temple from Kalḫu, dated to 714 (ND 1120, 17: KUR.ḫu-un-dir-a-a, see Wiseman 1952, 65f. and pl. 23).

74. Most of the available data stems from the private archive of the *ḫundurāyu* Mudammiq-Aššur (N 9), published by Fales – Jakob-Rost 1991; on the family history and its connections with other *ḫundurāyu* see Fales – Jakob-Rost 1991, 10-13, Åkerman 1999-2001, 222-229 and cf. the entry on Dād-aḫḫē in PNA 1/II 359 (no. 1).

75. See Fales – Jakob-Rost 1991, 24 (however, not located in Mannea) and Postgate 1995, 405.

76. The argument rests on the interpretation of a letter from Assur (SAA 13, 41) and the afore-mentioned ritual text. The suggestion of Postgate (1995, 405) that the *ḫundurāyu* is a “professional transporter” fails to take the ritual text into account.

Assyria adopted Zagros traditions. The designation *ḥundurāyu* probably reflects the fact that the craftsmen performed a specific trade which the Assyrians connected with the region of Ḥundur. Interestingly, none of the numerous *ḥundurāyu* attested in Assur over the years bears a name related to the outlandish names attested for the various Zagros rulers known from the royal inscriptions; instead, they usually have Assyrian names such as Upaqa-ana-Aššūr, Erība-Aššūr, Aššūr-dēni-āmur, or Mudammiq-Aššūr. However, the original *ḥundurāyu* may have come to Assur from Ḥundur and Ḥarḥar together with their craft, in view of the known attestations, probably as a direct consequence of the establishing of the new provinces Kišessim and Ḥarḥar under Sargon II, and have been quickly Assyrianized.⁷⁷

6. Median attack (615-610 BC)

The Medes reappear some forty years later in 615, courtesy of the Babylonian chronicles of Nabopolassar (Grayson 1975, 90-96, Chronicle 3), then, however, in the spotlight of history, attacking the heartland of Assyria and allying with the Babylonian forces (see Reade in this volume).

Nothing in the extant Assyrian sources can enlighten the question how Umakištar, the Cyaxares of the classical sources, came to be the ruler of a united Median army and how this unity came into existence in the first place. This alone is reason enough why the fall of Assyria in 612 is an event that strikes modern scholars to this day as completely sudden and out of the blue. But we must keep in mind that before the fall of Assyria, we are facing decades displaying a striking lack of sources concerning Assyria's internal and foreign politics; our knowledge of the second half of the 7th century is extremely fractured in comparison to the well documented preceding century. Puzzling as they are for us, the events of 615 may well have been less unexpected for the contemporaries.

7. Concluding remarks

After reviewing more than two centuries of Assyrian evidence on the Assyro-Median relations, the Median identity remains somewhat of an enigma. At the heart of the problem lies the fact that the Assyrian sources are never specific about what makes a Mede a Mede in their eyes. Constituent elements of the identity attributed to the Medes by the Assyrians may be political organization, language, life style, material culture or religion. Of course, the Assyrian view on the Medes may very well reflect a self-attributed identity; however, the Assyrian sources are completely silent about this aspect.

In contrast to such polities as Mannea, Elam and Urartu, the texts do not hint at the existence of a “national” spirit or sense of unity among the Medes at any time. Although the Medes are neatly differentiated from the Manneans in the Assyrian sources, we do not even know whether this is only a political distinction⁷⁸ or also due to a linguistic and/or cultural barrier. Mannean translators existed at the Assyrian court (SAA 11, 31, 6-8), but their Median equivalents are hitherto not attested — could a Mannean translator also render the words of Median or Sangibutean envoys (CTN 1, 13 r.7') understandable? We have no clue whether speaking a certain language was a valid criterion for being seen

77. In view of the fact that the city of Assur was conquered by a Median army in 614, it seems worthwhile to point out that the *ḥundurāyu* families lived in the houses in the so-called “Außenhaken”, a residential area established in the end of the 8th century inside the city's northwestern gate complex. The strategically important position of their houses may well have been crucial in the battle for Assur, should the *ḥundurāyu* families have retained their Median “identity” during the century of their residence in Assur.

78. The segregation of part of Mannea under the leadership of Mitatti of Zikirtu during the reign of Ianzû proves that there were at times more than one Mannean political entity.

as a Mede by the Assyrians; it is noteworthy, however, that the names of the known Median rulers cannot be traced to one specific language: some are Indo-European, some are Kassite, some are even Akkadian and most are simply unidentifiable. Although the Assyrian sources distinguish the Medes doggedly from other “people” such as the Bīt-Sangibuteans or Gizilbundeans they fail to make clear why exactly they were considered different at all, as from the information to be gained from the written sources one gets the impression that these mountain-dwelling, cattle raising, horseback riding societies shared many social, economic and political characteristics. The underlying similarities of Medes and other polities in the region are best illustrated by the institution of the city lords, a position guaranteeing inheritable political leadership over a specific region with a fortified settlement as its center, rooted so deeply in society that even the establishing of the Assyrian administrative system in the region did not cause its disappearance. We should not forget that it is possibly religion that creates the Median identity. Interestingly, the Assyrian sources are extremely silent on the religious beliefs of the Medes and other Zagros people: if they speak about sanctuaries at all, they usually hint at an origin linked to earlier contact with Mesopotamia;⁷⁹ however, this may well be the reason why these temples are mentioned at all. Whatever other cults were practiced in the region is unknown from the Assyrian descriptions; it should not be forgotten, however, that some of the Indo-European names of Median rulers contain certain elements that are considered central to the religious beliefs held by the Achaemenids, such as *farnah*-, “splendour of fortune”⁸⁰ (e.g., E-parna, Šidir-parna, Bag-parna); this might hint towards the existence of a religion which was common to the Medes and possibly a constituent element to their identity as perceived by the Assyrians.

I have stressed the importance of the evidence for Median engagement in overland trade along the Great Khurasan Road and later also in desert trade with camel caravans. This might well be what made the Medes special in the eyes of the Assyrians — and special they were, as is best witnessed by the appellation “mighty” (*dannu*) given to them in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. The hypothesis of the Median principalities’ deep involvement in the international trade would well explain their setup as small independent units as well as their little developed sense of solidarity, especially as these characteristics are also typical for such trader peoples as the Greeks and the Phoenicians. However, the Medes played a far less active role in the trading process than these peoples: rather than travelling overland themselves they provided protection for transient caravans which in the wilderness of the Zagros were utterly at their mercy. In this way, the Medes were able to capitalize on their most valuable assets: the position of their settlements along an important traffic route and their supreme skills as horseback warriors.

79. Cf. the Marduk temple at Til-Aššurī and the water sanctuary at Bīt-Ištar, see my other contribution in this volume.

80. See R. Schmitt in PNA 1/II 251 s.v. Baga-parna.