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RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROUTE OF SARGON II'S SIXTH CAMPAIGN OF 716 BC IN THE CENTRAL ZAGROS, IRAN

BY

Iraj REZAEI, Sajjad ALIBAIGI and John MACGINNIS

INTRODUCTION

The Najafabad stele (Fig. 1) can be considered as one of the most important sources for Assyrian itineraries in the Central Zagros discovered up until now. One significance of this extraordinary inscription is that it mentions around 50 toponyms, including cities, regions and related geographical features, such as mountains and rivers, listed according to their order of appearance during the march of the Assyrian army. The stele is core to the reconstruction of the historical geography of the Central Zagros in the Neo-Assyrian period. The challenge of interpreting this data was taken up very soon after the discovery of the stele by Lou Levine, who in the early 1970s worked on a doctoral dissertation on the historical geography of the Zagros region during the Neo-Assyrian period. This was published very promptly in two consecutive articles in the journal *Iran* (Levine 1973, 1974), a study which remains of fundamental importance. Since then, other researchers, such as Julian Reade (1995), Inna Medvedskaya (1992, 1999) and Alexandre Tourovets (2015; n.d) have conducted research on this topic. However, the proper understanding of this data is difficult. One issue is that previous scholars have mainly searched for these locations along or near the Great Khorasan Road, along which were such famous localities as Bit Ḫamban, Bit Barua, Arazišu/Aranzêšu, Ḫarḫar, Kišesim and Bit Sagbat, mentioned many times in the texts of the Neo-Assyrian kings. However, many of the toponyms mentioned in the Najafabad stele are lesser-known places that must have been located away from the main section of the Great Khorasan Road: otherwise they, too, should be found in other royal inscriptions.

It is against this background that a new impetus has been given to the study of the Neo-Assyrian presence in western Iran by discoveries made at the site of Quwakh Tapeh (Fig. 2). Here, reconnaissance by Sajjad Alibaigi in 2019 resulted in the discovery of a monumental door socket in the Assyrian tradition (Alibaigi *et al*., 2021; Alibaigi and MacGinnis 2022). In order to better understand the context of this discovery, an archaeological investigation of Quwakh Tapeh was inaugurated in the spring of 2021. Excavation of two trial trenches led to the discovery of two stele fragments of Sargon II (Fig. 3) (Alibaigi *et al*., 2023a). In the present paper we re-evaluate the topographical data from the route of Sargon's sixth campaign, a campaign carried out with the aim of establishing control over the Central Zagros and the land of Mannea, in the light of our knowledge of the geography, culture and historical and contemporary toponymy of the region. As Tourovets (2015: 22) believed, there appear to be cases where modern toponyms in the Zagros bear a phonetic resemblance to their ancient counterparts. This is also the view of the present authors. In this paper we review the toponyms mentioned in the Najafabad stele and compare them to the modern names of mountains, rivers, ancient sites and later settlements in the region.

We are not the first to do this. Levine, the original editor of the Najafabad inscription, devoted considerable attention to analysing the historical geography of the Zagros in the Assyrian period (Levine 1972, 1973, 1974). With regard to the route of the sixth campaign Levine (1972: 29-33) proposed that, setting out from the Shahrizor (Lullume), Sargon crossed the Zagros by moving along the drainage of the Lower Zab. The first objective of the campaign was Izirtu, the royal city of Mannea. Levine suggested a

location for Izirtu in the region of Baneh, and proposed accordingly that Sargon followed the route that led towards Baneh. However, if the identification of Izirtu with Tapeh Qalaichi, near Bukan, is accepted (Lemaire 1998), we can modify this proposal to suggest that Sargon followed a more northerly route. Sargon's next reported encounter is with Karalla (and Allabria). Levine argued for a location of Karalla east of the Shahrizor, more specifically in the locality of Lake Zeribor. But the evidence of the inscription at Tang-i Var, 50 km southwest of Sanandaj, suggests that Karalla was located significantly further south (Frame 2013:438)[1]. The distance from Qalaichi to Tang-i Var is approximately 160 km. After Karalla, Sargon progressed through Paddiri and then a series of Gutian cities (Niqqar, Kinaẖri, Šurgadia), followed by Hundir (where he received the obeisance of Kisešim) and then Ḫarḫar. Ḫarḫar can be considered the linchpin of the sixth campaign, the transition from the progress down the western Zagros to the tour of the central Zagros. Key to Levine's understanding is a location for Ḫarḫar in the Mahidasht. From this point Levine took Sargon to have progressed eastwards along the Great Khorasan Road, following the Bisitun-Sahneh-Kangavar valley system. Levine notes that reconstructing the route of this part of the campaign is hindered by the obscurity of the places mentioned, though the limit of the campaign is likely to have been no further than the eastern end of the Kangavar valley or the Asadabad valley.

The other scholar to have published a reconstruction for the route of the sixth campaign is Alexandre Tourovets. Like Levine, Tourovets (2015: 23) worked out a topological network encapsulating the geographical relationships between the key polities[2]. Tourovets understands Sargon to have attacked Karalla (which he places in Marivan) and Allabria (which he places in the area of Sanandaj) before moving on Mannea; he questions the identification of Qalaichi with Izirtu, which he thinks must have lain further south (thus in accord with Levine's original proposal); and he places Šurgadia in the Kuh-e Sahu. For the subsequent stages of the campaign we reproduce here the map prepared by Tourovets (2015: fig. 4) showing the locations he proposed for the toponyms related in the texts, with the addition of a yellow line to show the route that this implies (Fig. 4). Tourovets suggests a location for Ḫarḫar in the vicinity of Kermanshah. From here, he believed that Sargon progressed out through the Mahidasht, to Islamabad and up to Sarab-e Harasam. Tourovets believes that Sargon then returned north from Sarab-e Harasam to the area of the great Khorasan Road, headed east and then southeast to Nahavand, and finally, via Ramanda (which he identifies with Godin Tepe), up to the foot of Mount Alvand. He identifies Uratas, the limit of the campaign, as Asadabad. After this Sargon evidently headed back west, though by what route is not known. As will be seen, we are in partial agreement with Tourovets, at least with respect to the opening and closing parts of this itinerary - in particular, that is, with regard to the route leading from the Mahidasht to Sarab-e Harasam (although we differ over some of the specific identifications), and also in the approach to Mount Alvand. However, we differ in that we believe that from Sarab-e Harasam Sargon continued on southeast and then east through Luristan. A principal argument for the route which we will propose is the large number of identifications which can be proposed between places mentioned in the text and modern toponyms. Although the identifications proposed by Tourovets are individually plausible in terms of the localised geographical features, they are, with few exceptions, not anchored in any relation to the surviving toponymy. The primary source for this study is the description of the route given in the Najafabad stele, which lists around 50 toponyms; 11 of these also appear in the fragments of a stele of Sargon recently discovered at Quwakh Tapeh. We begin our analysis with the city of Ḫundir, which we believe to have been the point at which Sargon's sixth campaign entered on to the Great Khorasan Road.

1. And it is interesting to note that a memory of Karalla is preserved in *kārāḷī*, the name for a type of pomegranate from precisely the region of Hawraman, where Tang-i Var is located: see Razaei 2021a.

2. A similar grid was also worked out by Reade (1996: 34); the study of Fuchs (2004) on the geography of the Zagros remains unpublished.

Ḫundir

When the Assyrian armies entered Ḫundir, Bēl-šarru-uṣur, the ruler of Kišesim, went to Ḫundir to see Sargon, and by paying a heavy tribute demonstrated his subservience to the Assyrian king (Frame 2021: No. 117. ii 35b–41a). It seems probable that Ḫundir is the same as the Karkarḫundir mentioned in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No.7 10b-12). Radner (2015: 336), furthermore, believes that Ḫundir is a variant of Ḫundur. According to the geography of the Central Zagros, the Assyrians, when coming from the land of Mannea (south of Lake Urmia) would, by progressing along the road leading from Sanandaj to Kamyaran and Kermanshah, have entered the Great Khorasan Road in the area of present-day Kermanshah. Taking into account our proposals for the location of Kišesim and Ḫarḫar (see below), we would put Ḫundir somewhere in the area of the modern road from Kamyaran to Qazanchi, right at the entrance to the northern central Zagros. Sargon did not then proceed eastwards from Hundir, as Kišesim had already demonstrated its fealty, but rather headed southwest to Ḫarḫar in order to put down the unrest which had broken out following the expulsion of Kibaba, the Assyrian puppet king, and the alliance formed between the people of Ḫarḫar and Daltâ, the king of Ellipi (see Frame 2021: No. 117. ii 41b-46a).

Ḫarḫar

Identifying the location of Ḫarḫar is of critical importance for understanding the historical geography of the central Zagros. Over the past few decades there has been much discussion on this issue, leading to a large number of different proposals.[3] Levine, Tourovets and Alibaigi locate Ḫarḫar somewhere near the Mahsidasht-Kermanshah-Kouzaran plain. Following the recent finds from Quwakh Tapeh, including Assyrian stele fragments and evidence for the existence of an Assyrian monumental building (Alibaigi & MacGinnis 2022; Alibaigi *et al*., 2023a), we locate the land of Ḫarḫar in the Kouzaran plain, and believe that Quwakh Tapeh may indeed correspond to Harhar itself: the reason for this is not just the quality of the finds, which make it evident that the site must have been the seat of an important Assyrian center, but also the suggested locations for other places along the route of the sixth campaign (for example, Zakruti, Sikris, Arussa, Ukuta, Anzaknê and Uppuria).

The royal correspondence makes numerous references to administrative centers in the Central Zagros under the control of Assyrian officials who, in addition to maintaining control and reporting on political-military conditions in their areas, were obliged to collect tribute from their districts and send it to Assyria. Administrative letters from cities such as Ḫarḫar and Kišesim (see Fuchs and Parpola 2001) refer to activities in the Zagros over a protracted period, especially in the second half of the eighth century BC. As was the case elsewhere (for example, in Syria and Turkey), these administrative centers will almost certainly have been built in what can be called the imperial architectural *koine*. To date, the only example which has actually been found in Iran is the monumental building at Tapeh Giyan (Contenau & Ghirshman 1935), unfortunately very poorly excavated and recorded. However, the discovery at Quwakh Tapeh of, firstly, a Neo-Assyrian stone door-socket (Alibaigi *et al*. 2021: 43), and now the two inscribed stele fragments, is further material proof of the Assyrian presence in the region. There can be little doubt, therefore, that Quwakh Tapeh harbours the remains of an administrative center. If we are correct about the identification of Quwakh Tapeh as Ḫarḫar, the construction of such a building is directly referred to in a letter to Sargon II from Mannu-ki-Ninua, the governor of Kar-Šarrukin (Fuchs and Parpola 2001: No. 94). The door socket may perhaps have come from this very building. Regarding our proposed location for Ḫarḫar in the Kouzaran plain, we believe that this can also be equated with the Karaḫar referred to in

3. These include identifying Ḫarḫar with Tapeh Giyan in Nahavand (Herzfeld 1968: 32; Reade 1978: 140, fig. 2; Malekzadeh 2003: 49; Radner 2013: 446), in the center or east of the Mahidasht plain (Levine 1974: 117), on the upper part of the Speed-Rud in the north of Hamadan (Diakonoff 1991: 16), on the highland part of the road between the descent to the Hamadan plain and Behistun (Medvedskaya 1999: 55), in the area around Malayer (Parpola & Porter 2001: 9), at Kermanshah (Tourovets 2015: 25) and in the Sanandaj area (Young 1967: 15). In a recent contribution, Alibaigi, Aminikhah and Fatahi (2016), while in general agreement with the proposals of Levine, locate Ḫarḫar at Tapeh Kheibar in the Kouzaran-Mahidasht plain (Fig. 6).

inscriptions of the Ur III period. Admittedly, Frayne (1998: 257; 1999: 148) doubts this, and locates Karaḫar in the vicinity of Qasr-e Shirin. Now, the first stele fragment from Quwakh Tapeh (QTT 1) preserves part of an account of Sargon's sixth campaign, while the second fragment 2 (QTT 2) preserves part of narratives of both the sixth and seventh campaigns. Accepting the results of ICP analysis that these two fragments come from a single stele (Alibaigi *et al*., 2023b), this must be a monument erected in the course of the campaigns of either Sargon's seventh (715 BC) or sixteenth year (706 BC). It can be noted that, while the annals record Sargon erecting two stelae in the Central Zagros - at Ḫarḫar and Kišesim - during his sixth campaign (Frame 2021: Nos. 1.95; 2.94), there is no mention of a stele erected later on in this region. Therefore, in the case of Quwakh Tapeh, we are dealing with a stele that is not mentioned in the Annals. This does not make us doubt our proposed location for Ḫarḫar, and indeed it is perfectly plausible that another stele was set up by Sargon in Ḫarḫar in 715 BCE following his re-conquest of the city after it had revolted (Frame 2021: 1.109). Sargon probably also marched against Ḫarḫar again in the last year of his reign (see Frame 2021: Nos. 13.17; 84.13'). So it is not unlikely that one or more further stelae were erected by Sargon in Ḫarḫar in addition to the one set up in his sixth campaign. The situation can be compared to that at Ziyaret Tepe (Tušhan) in southeastern Turkey, where Kessler (1980: 116-120) has demonstrated that the Kurkh Monolith of Ashurnasirpal II, which dates to the fifth year of that king reign, cannot be the stele which he records setting up in the course of the campaign of his second year. If we are right about our identification of Ḫarḫar, the province must have encompassed the greater portion of the Mahidasht plain, and especially its western part, which is now known as the Kouzaran plain. According to the Najafabad stele, Sargon added six districts - Arazišu, Bit-Ramatua, Uriqatu, Sikris, Šaparda, and Uriakku - to the province of Ḫarḫar following his suppression of the revolt (see Frame 2021: Nos.1 lines 96b-100; 117 line 45; Alibaigi *et al*., 2023a). The location of these toponyms will be discussed below.

Arazišu

According to the Najafabad inscription, the Upper River was located in the land of Arazišu, a name also recorded in Assyrian inscriptions in the forms Araziaš and Aranzêšu. As mentioned above, Arazišu was one of the six lands annexed to Ḫarḫar. In addition to Sargon II, earlier Assyrian kings mention Araziaš and Ḫarḫar together, notably Shalmaneser III (Grayson 1996: 102.14 121) and Adad-nerari III (Grayson 1996: 212 A.0.104.8.6); the place is also mentioned by Shamshi-Adad V (Grayson 1996: 186 A.0.103.1 iii 38). The twelfth-century AD *Farsnameh* of Ibn Balkhi (1995: 257) mentions the location of the Great River in upper Qarmisin (modern Kermanshah), which apparently refers to either the Qarasu or the Gamasiab river. The term "upper" is important here because it indicates a geographical distinction and is reminiscent of the term "upper river" in the inscriptions of Sargon: it probably refers to a river in the north (or northeast) sector of Ḫarḫar (as opposed to a "lower river" further south). Judging by this, the watershed of the Qarasu and Gamasiab, which flow above (north of) Quwakh Tapeh (Ḫarḫar) in the Kermanshah plain, is the best candidate for the Upper River of Arazišu. In the case of the Qarasu, the oldest reference to the name of this river is by Pietro Della Valle (1991: 14), an Italian traveler who visited Iran in 1617. It seems that either at this time, or perhaps shortly before, the Turkish name Qarasu had replaced the ancient name of the river (Rezaei 2021b). When comparing the numerous indigenous (Kurdish, Lori, Laki) names of the toponyms of western Iran with their equivalents in the official Persian, Turkish and Arabic sources, it can observed that in many cases the official new name frequently resembles the local or ancient name but in a form which appears meaningful in the new language. We do not know the ancient name of the Qarasu, but it seems that the Razavar river, a tributary joining the Qarasu 10 km west of Kermanshah, probably has its roots in the ancient name of Arazišu. Putting this all together, we locate the land of Arazišu somewhere west of Kermanshah city, at the confluence of the Razavar and Qarasu rivers (near Qazanchi). We can mention in this context that Tourovets (2015: 25) located Arazišu in the area northwest of Kermanshah city.

Bit-Ramatua

In the Najafabad inscription the term of lower river is used in connection with the land of Bit-Ramatua. This was one of the six lands annexed to Ḫarḫar. Due to the posited location of Arazišu and the Upper River north of Quwakh Tapeh, Bit-Ramatua must have been located south of Ḫarḫar (Quwakh Tapeh). In fact, Bit-Ramatua probably marked the limit of Sargon's advance to the south and was the southernmost land annexed to Ḫarḫar by the Assyrians during the sixth campaign. As mentioned below, the Assyrians probably progressed from the south up to the Kuhdasht and Rumishgan plains in Luristan. Thus, we believe that Bit-Ramatua may refer to the Rumishgan region and the "lower river" probably refers to the Karkheh river in the same region. The region of the Rumishgan valley is also the southern border of the so called Baba Jan III Luristan pottery, which may reflect the culture of Ellipi (Levine 1987: 241-2). The name of some modern toponyms in the Rumishgan region, such as Ramavand and perhaps Rumishgan and Rumiani, are probably related to the old name of Bit-Ramatua.

Unnamed river

The Najafabad inscription states that after leaving Ḫarḫar, just before entering the city of Zakruti the Assyrians crossed a river of cold water. Considering our proposed location for Ḫarḫar and for Zakruti to south of Ḫarḫar, we believe that the river in question corresponds to the present-day Zemkan river.[4] The source of the Zemkan is at the village of Tu-Shami in the mountainous part of the city of Gahwareh (Gawara in the local dialect), 25 km west of Quwakh Tapeh. The name Zemkan consists of two components, *zem* "cold" + *kan* (or *kani*) "spring" (Jalilian 2006: 422) - a meaning which patently corresponds with the description in the Assyrian text.

Zakruti

Zakruti is an important toponym in the Central Zagros, also mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 Nos.17 6, 35 ii 43', 39 18, 41 6'). Previous researchers have located Zakruti in a number of different places, for example east of Kermanshah (Levine 1974: 118; Tourovets 2015: 25) or even in the south of Hamadan province, on the way to Isfahan (Reade 1978). We believe that the correct location is further west, and that Zakruti is to be identified with the mountains overlooking the cities of Gahwareh and Kerend-e Gharb, a high barrier separating the mountainous region of western Iran from the plains of Sarpol-e Zahab (ancient Halman) and lower Mesopotamia. A strong support for this proposal is that, as has been observed before (Sayce 1888: 404-405; Potts 2021), this area has long been known as the Zagros. According to Isidore of Charax (*Parthian Stations* 7: 3), the Zagros mountain forms the boundary between the district of Chalonitis (modern Sarpol-e Zahab) and Media; the city of Carina (modern Kerend), located at the start of Mount Zagros, about 20 km southwest of the Gahwareh, fell within the region of Lower Media. In discussing the borders of Media, Strabo (XI.13.8), gives one limit as the pass "that leads over the Zagros" (τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ Ζάγρου ὑπερθέσεως) which is called the "Median Gate" (Μηδικὴ πύλη); this has been taken to refer to the same mountainous area above Sarpol-e Zahab (Dehpahlavan *et al*. 2019: 130). If we suppose that the route taken by the Assyrians from Ḫarḫar to Zakruti passed through the present-day Ferdin Pass, then the city of Zakruti must have been located somewhere east of the Zemkan river, perhaps at Gahwareh. Accepting this, Zakruti corresponds to the mountainous region above ancient Halman, including the present-day Dalahu Mountains and the modern cities of Kerend and Gahwareh. The principle center of this region in the Assyrian period was a city of the same name (Zakruti).

Kurabli

After leaving Zakruti, Sargon entered the city of Kurabli, where, without any military intervention, he received tribute from Šaparda and from one other polity who name is missing. Kurabli was probably located in the land of Zakruti, not far from the city of the same name. Tourovets (2015: 26) locates Kurabli

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4. Tourovets (2015: 26) takes this to be the Mereg River in Mahidasht.

somewhere in the vicinity of Islamabad-e Gharb. We would agree with this, and propose a location between Gahwareh and Islamabad: the large mound of Barza, located 14 km southeast of Gahwareh, and which has Iron Age occupation, is a good candidate for ancient Kurabli (Fig. 7).

Šaparda

Šaparda was one of the six lands annexed to Ḫarḫar during the sixth campaign; a letter from Sargon's reign attests to its being under Assyrian control (Fuchs & Parpola 2001: xxviii). According to an inscription of Esarhaddon, we know that there was a strategic pass in this locality (Diakonof 1979: 259). Previous researchers have generally located Saparda quite far east (or northeast).[5] We propose the important pass of Char Zabar (in the local dialect: Chwar Zawar), and its southern plain, known as the Zwairi/Zubairi or Hassanabad plain, located on the Great Khorasan Road between the modern cities of Islamabad and Kermanshah (Fig. 8). In early Islamic texts, this plain was called Zubaydia (Golzari and Jalili nd: 81; Ibn Khordadbeh 1889: 19; Yaqubi 1977: 45; Al-Maqdisi 1906: 401; Istakhri 1927: 199; Ibn Hawqal 1987: 103; Ibn Rustah 1892: 165). Char Zabar is an Iranian name and Zubaydia is Arabic. As already discussed, such new names can have a tendency to phonetically resemble the pre-existing names, so in this case we would propose that Zabar/Zubairi reflects the original name of Saparda.

Unknown land

According to the Najafabad inscription, in Kurabli Sargon received tribute from one other land whose name is lost (Frame 2021: No. 117. 47).

Sikris

According to the Najafabad stele, after leaving Kurabli Sargon proceeded in a southwards direction to Sikris; the land was then annexed to Ḫarḫar. Importantly, the toponym is already recorded, in the form of Šikris, in inscriptions of the Ur III period (Zadok 2002: 126; Medvedskaya, 1999: 65). Sikris also appears, as Sikraia, in the Iran Stele of Tiglath-pileser III (Radner 2003: 45, Tab. 2). The toponym Sigiya (Abdi & Beckman 2007: 35), recorded twice in the early second millennium texts from Chogha Gavaneh (located within modern Islamabad), may also be another writing of Sigris/Sikris. Generally, we locate Sikris in the environs of the Islamabad (formerly Shahabad) plain.[6] According to the Najafabad stele, Sargon II received tribute in Sikris from the inhabitants of several additional cities and lands, including Igali, Bit-Uargi and Abrau-[...].

Igali

The land of Igali can also be located somewhere around Islamabad, although its exact location is unknown.

Bit-Uargi

Zadok (2002: 124) has suggested that Bit-Uargi is to be equated with Bit-Umargi. According to other Assyrian inscriptions, such as QTT 2, Bit-Umargi was added to Kišesim along with other lands (Frame 2021: 4.39'; 7.59-60; Alibaigi *et al.*, in press; Frame 2021: No. 1.93-94). This was probably referred to in the final part of lines ii.70-71 of the Najafabad inscription, which are not legible due to damage. If Zadok is right that Bit-Uargi and Bit-Umargi are the same place, then it must be located somewhere in the borders between the provinces of Kišesim and Ḫarḫar.

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5. For example, south of the Zanjan-Qazvin line (Diakonoff 1979: 238) and the Hamadan plain (Reade 1978: fig. 2).

6. Tourovets (2015: 25) located Sikris at either Sarab-e Harasam or Cheshmeh Mahi in Hulilan.

Abrau-[...]

The name of this place is not completely legible, but must once again have been located in the general region of Islamabad.

Arussa

According to the Najafabad stele, Sargon entered the land of Arussa after crossing the land of Sikris. Unfortunately, the events related to this land cannot be read due to damage to the inscription. Based on the phonetic similarity of the name, as well as the route that we believe Sargon followed, deviating to the southeast along the main Islamabad-Khorramabad road, we propose that Arussa is located at Sarab-e Harasam, 35 km southeast of Islamabad, and that the name Harasam is probably derived from Arussa.

Pattaus River

Sargon's route continued along the river Pattaus. The name is mentioned only in the Najafabad inscription. We believe that the river Seymareh is a reasonable identification.[7]

Ukuta

According to the Najafabad stele, after crossing the Pattaus River Sargon entered directly into a land called Ukuta. We locate this in the Kuhdasht area of Luristan. In our opinion, the ancient name Ukuta has a clear phonetic relation with the modern name of the Kuhdasht. This area is located on an important route that connects the central plateau of Iran via present-day Luristan to Mesopotamia and Elam. Furthermore, we suggest that the Ukuta in the Najafabad stele is the same as both the Quda in an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No. 1:18.4) and Akkuddu in the inscriptions of Sennacherib (Grayson & Novotny 2012 Nos. 2.28, 3.28, 4.26). Sennacherib conquered and set fire to the royal city of Akkuddu after his expedition to the land of Ellipi (Grayson & Novotny 2012 No. 2.28), the implication of which is that Akkuddu was in the heart of the country of Ellipi. Parpola and Porter (2001: fig. 1) locate Akkuddu somewhere to the west of the Seymareh River, while Shishehgar and Rouhangiz (2004) identify it with the site of Surkh Dum Laki, 5 km northwest of the Kuhdasht (Fig. 9). In addition to Surkh Dum Laki, another important site of the Kuhdasht is Surkh Dum Luri, which was occupied in the Neo-Assyrian period, especially in 8th century BC (see Muscarella 1981: 332). These two sites, must accordingly have been the key cities of the land of Ukuta at this time. Although the Najafabad stele does not specifically mention the conquest of Ellipi, as Levine (1974: 106) points out, it seems that Sargon entered into Ellipi during his sixth campaign. Probably the main reason for this campaign was punishment of Ellipi for its support of the revolt of Ḫarḫar (see Frame 2021: No. 1.96-97).

Mount Arusaka

After leaving the land of Ukuta, Sargon crossed with great difficulty the high mountain of Arusaka before entering the land of Anzaknê. This mountain, which is mentioned only in the Najafabad inscription, is clearly a major geographical feature of the region. Considering the mountainous landscape of Luristan, as well as the route that the Assyrians took through Ukuta (Kuhdasht) towards the east, we believe that the Arusaka mountain should be located between the Kuhdasht and modern Khorramabad, where, after leaving the Kuhdasht, the huge fold of the Zagros known as the Sefidkuh or Kuh-i Sefid (in Lori, the Aspikuh) - both meaning the "white mountain" - forms a formidable barrier against entry into the valley of Khorramabad.[8] The Sefidkuh runs from northwest to southeast, measuring 30 km across and 200 km long, starting 10 km south of Kermanshah and going on to the west of Khorramabad. The amazing point about

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7. Tourovets (2015: 26) takes the Pattaus to be the present-day Gamasiab.

8 . Tourovets (2015: 26) thought that Arusaka must be the famous mountain of Bisotun in the east of Kermanshah, but this location is not correct because the name Arusaka has no connection with the ancient form of Bagistana, mentioned by historians such as Diodorus and Isidore of Charax.

Arusaka is that the word Auruša in the Avesta (Skt. Aruṣá; Phl. Arūs - Jackson 1892: 52) means "white"! An Iranian etymology should not surprise us, as one of the princes of Ellipi, Ašpa-bara (Frame 2021: No. 7.118; Zadok 2002: 127), also has a name of Iranian (and presumably Median) derivation. In all probability, the name of the land of Arussa, which we have located at the village of Sarab-e Harasam, is also derived from this root. The Sefidkuh has many peaks, each with its own name. For the entire length of the mountain road from the Kuhdasht to Khorramabad, which passes through the Sefidkuh, the elevation is consistently more than 1100 m above sea level (Fig. 10). It is no wonder that the Assyrians, with their heavy military equipment and baggage train, make specific reference to the difficulty of this terrain!

Anzaknê

After crossing the Arusaka mountains, the Assyrian army entered into the land of Anzaknê. This toponym is also mentioned only in the Najafabad inscription. According to our proposed route, we locate Anzaknê in the Khorramabad valley, a northwest-southeast running valley 30 km long and 15 km wide, with the modern city of Khorramabad at the northwestern end of the valley and the district of Azna Sakawand at the other. It seems that the ancient name of Anzaknê is still preserved in some modern toponyms in the area, such as the district of Aznā Sakawand and the mountain Azganeh. According to the Najafabad stele the Assyrians burned the cities of Anzaknê. Karakku, the ruler of the land of Uriakku, saw the smoke of this conflagration, and it served as a warning to him. Unfortunately, the accounts of the sixth campaign make no mention of the cities and settlements of the land of Anzaknê. Taking into account the natural geography of the region, there would have been two possible ways for Sargon to continue his march: either heading east along the route of the Khorramabad-Borujerd road, or heading north along the route of the Khorramabad-Aleshtar-Delfan road. According to the Najafabad stele, it seems that Sargon chose the first of these.

Uriakku

In the Najafabad stele, there is no mention of the Assyrians entering into the land of Uriakku, only the mention of Karakku watching the burning of Anzaknê. Logically, Uriakku must be adjacent to Anzaknê. According to the annals and QTT 2, Uriakku was one of the six lands annexed to Ḫarḫar during the sixth campaign. We propose the Horru plain, east of the village of Zagheh, as a possible location. It seems likely that Horru, the name of both a river and a plain, and also the mountain Warkuh, located in the same area, are all derived from the ancient name Uriakku. Letters in the royal correspondence sent from the eastern provinces indicate that the city lord of Uriakku was deposed and replaced by Sargon, contrary to the wishes of the local population (Fuchs & Parpola 2001: 28). The Room II Annals from Khorsabad mentions the city of Diristanu in the land of Uriakku (Frame 2021: No. 1.185), which would seem to be preserved in the name of the modern village of Dar-astane, 20 km east of Hero in the plain of Borujerd.

The pass of the land of Uppuria

According to the Najafabad stele, after crossing the land of Anzaknê the Assyrians entered the pass of Uppuria between the mountains of Darue and Pattaššun. According to our proposed route, this pass must correspond to the Razan pass on the Khorramabad-Borujerd road, about 25 km northwest of the city of Dorud. The name of the modern city of Dorud probably derives from Darue. It is noteworthy that the Najafabad inscription goes on to mention a river also called the Darue, which according to our proposal would have to be in the north, at the foot of the mountain now known as Mount Garin (or Gari). This means that Mount Garin, which encloses the northern part of Luristan like a wall, was probably the Mount Darue of ancient times. More specifically, we believe that the northern ridge of the Razan Pass, which is a continuation of Mount Garin, corresponds to the ancient Mount Darue; and that the southern ridge of the Razan Pass, a continuation of the well-known Oshtorankuh mountain range, corresponds to the ancient Pattaššun mountain. In overall terms, our proposed location for the Uppuria pass corresponds well with the

description in the Najafabad stele of the Assyrian troops leaving a very mountainous area (Luristan) and entering a vast plain (Silakhor).

The land of Uppuria

After leaving the land of Anzaknê, Sargon entered into the important land of Uppuria through the pass of Uppuria. We locate the land of Uppuria in the plain of Borujerd, 110 km east of Khorramabad. The origin of the name Borujerd, in the local dialect Vuriyerd, is unknown, but it is attested from texts of the early Islamic period onwards (Izadpanah 1976: 510-502). The element *jerd / yird* is derived from the Persian word *gerd, Pahlavi: kart* "city" (Dehkhoda 1998: 19024) (as also seen in numerous names of Parthian and Sasanian centers such as Tigranocerta, Velashgerd, Darabgerd and others). Accordingly, we believe that the first component in Borujerd - *Boru - derives from Uppuria. As is common in Arabic texts, the initial letter *b* in this name is probably a representation of the Iranian phoneme *p*.

The mountain of Uab-[...]-šu-[...]

According to Najafabad stele, after crossing the pass of Uppuria Sargon entered into the land of Uppuria and set up camp at the foot of a mountain with the name, not fully legible, Uab-[...]-šu-[...]. Sargon used the camp in Uppuria as a base from which to attack adjacent areas, sending out contingents of cavalry and archers "against the settlements of Bustus, in order to take booty from the steppe" (Frame 2021: No.117.57). He also received tribute from Uppuria and Aratišta, and the hommage of the rulers of Bustus and Kanzabkan. Following this, the obvious next move would have been to head northwards from the Borujerd plain to the Oshtrinan plain and then on towards the Nahavand plain. However, for whatever reason, Sargon did not do this, and rather next led his army west into the Zagros of northern Luristan. We locate Mount Uab-[...]-šu-[...], somewhere in the Borujerd Plain, probably near Darastane (Diristanu).

Bustus

The city and land of Bustus was one of the places raided, looted and destroyed by Sargon from his base on Mount Uab-[...]-šu-[...]. The toponym appears in the inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser III in the same form, and also in other inscriptions of Sargon in the forms Buštus (Frame 2021: No. 2.vi 26″) and Bustis (Frame 2021: Nos. 1.187, 2.221). The exact location of this place is unknown, but it can be located generally in or around the Borujerd plain.

Aratišta

According to the Najafabad stele, the land of Aratišta[9] is another one of the areas which Sargon did not enter directly, but whose ruler came to Sargon to offer tribute in his camp in Uppuria. Aratišta is probably the same place whose inhabitants are referred to as Irtiašaeans in a letter sent to Sargon by the governor of Kar-Sharrukin, Mannu-ki-Ninua (Fuchs & Parpola 2001 No. 91.rev.9ff). The passage, while fragmentary, appears to record the movement of Irtiašaeans back and forth between Ellipi and the Assyrian province of Kar-Sharrukin (Ḫarḫar); as Fuchs and Parpola (2001: xxvii) note, this could be due to the dictates of transhumation, or political exigency, or both. Based both on the similarity of the name as well as on the course of the route followed by the Assyrians, we identify Aratišta with present-day Aleshtar.

Datumbu

After some time staying in the land of Uppuria, Sargon went on to the land of Datumbu. As the Assyrians must have already controlled the main road between Borujerd and Khorramabad, the logical next step would be to secure the other principal axis of communication in Luristan, the route of the present-day Khorramabad-Aleshtar-Delfan road. We believe that this must have been effected by moving along the

9. This toponym was formerly read as Aradpati (Frame 2021: 281 note to line 49).

present Borujerd-Chaghalvandi road. Datumbu and the associated city of Kanzabkanu must therefore have been located in the same area of the southern part of the district of Beiranvand (Chaghalvandi).

Kanzabkanu

This toponym is mentioned twice in the Najafabad stele, the first time as a land whose ruler came to Sargon in Uppuria and the second time as a city on the Assyrians' way to the land of Barikanu. Accordingly, we would propose a location for Kanzabkanu at Datumbu in the southern Beiranvand (Chaghalvandi) district.

Karzinû

Continuing his journey through the Zagros, Sargon entered the city of Karzinû. The location of this city is unknown. However, considering the route taken by the Assyrians, it was probably located in present-day Selseleh County.

Birnakan

After passing through the city of Karzinû, Sargon entered into the land of Birnakan. This probably corresponds to Barnaka attested in a letter from the reign of Sargon II (SAA 15, 92), which according to Radner (2003: 59) had connections with the Zagros kingdom of Ellipi. It may also be identical with the city of Parnaka mentioned in a broken letter (Fuchs & Parpola No. 92.8), which in turn is equated by Fuchs and Parpola (2001: 27) with the city of the Barnakeans, a polity which became very troublesome for the Assyrians during the reign of Esarhaddon. In several inscriptions Esarhaddon boasts "I crushed the wicked Barnaki, who live in the land Til-Assurri, which is called Pitanu in the language of the people of the land of Miḫranu" (Leichty 2011 Nos. 4: 1 iii 57; 2 ii 17; 3 ii 28'). However, the relation of Barnaki to Birnakan is not certain. As will be discussed below, we locate the land of Birnakan somewhere at the west of the Garin mountains, probably in the northern part of Selseleh County and the southern part of Delfan County.

Barikanu

Barikanu was apparently the capital, or at least one of the major cities, of the land of Birnakan. A number of hypotheses have been made about the possible connection between the Barikanu mentioned in Assyrian texts and the Parikanioi mentioned in Herodotus (Cancik & Schneider 2007: 533; cf. Zadok 2002: 116). Malekzadeh (2002: 39) has identified Barikanu as Barikan in the present-day Taleghan region near Tehran. Taking our proposed route into account, we locate both Birnakan and Barikanu in Luristan in the northern part of Selseleh County and the southern part of Delfan County. Probably, this name is still preserved in the name of the Pari mountain (or Tang-e Pari), located to the west of Nourabad city. The name of the Beiranvand tribe, which today resides mainly in the Hero Plain, may also be derived from Birnakan and Barikanu. In terms of site identification, the Nourabad region has several Iron Age sites with distinctive pottery of Babajan type. This includes, of course, Babajan itself, unquestionably one of the most important settlements in the area in the late Iron Age (Neo-Assyrian) period: perhaps it is indeed to be identified with Barikanu (Fig. 11).

Sakâ

After leaving the land of Birnakan, Sargon entered the land of Sakâ. We locate this land in the northern part of the Khaveh plain in modern Delfan County in Luristan province, extending up to the present-day city of Harsin in Kermanshah province. Probably some of the ethnic names of tribes living in the region, such as Sagvand and Sakavand, are related to the ancient toponym Sakâ. According to Zadok (2002: 116) the Sakâ mentioned by Sargon is not the same as the Sâka of Tiglath Pileser III, which he believes was not in Iran. But we do not believe there is any definitive reason to separate the two, especially since the inscription of Tiglath Pileser (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No. 18.4) mentions Elizanšu and Quda, which we locate near the city of Kermanshah and in the Kuhdasht respectively, at the same time.

Kayatani

According to the Najafabad stele, the city of Kayatani was probably located in the land of Sakâ; we therefore locate it somewhere in the Khaveh plain.

Ḫarzianu

According to the Najafabad stele, it appears that the city of Ḫarzianu belonged to the land of Sakâ. We agree with the proposal of Herzfeld (1968: 8) that Ḫarzianu is to be identified with the present-day city of Hersin. Note, though, that although the Najafabad stele mentions Sargon receiving tribute from the ruler of Ḫarzianu, this does not necessarily mean that the Assyrians went to Ḫarzianu. We would suggest that Sargon received the tribute of the ruler of Ḫarzianu while passing through the lower (southern) part of the land of Sakâ, after which he changed course towards the lands of Ramanda and Irnisa.

Unknown city

The Najafabad stele originally recorded in line 61 another city from the land of Sakâ whose name is lost due to damage.

Darue River

When leaving Sakâ, and before entering the land of Ramanda, Sargon crossed a river called the Darue. As mentioned above, the Assyrian army earlier passed by a mountain of the same name in the pass of Uppuria, which we consider to be the pass of Razan, located on the Borujerd-Khorramabad road. Previously, we had already considered Darue to be the ancient name of the modern mountain range of Garin. Taking into account the route of the Assyrians campaign, the river Darue should be located more precisely in the northern part of the Garin mountain range; accepting our proposal for the location of the land of Sakâ, the Darue river should probably be identified as either the Badavar river in the Khaveh Delfan plain or the headwaters of the Gamasiab river on the eastern side of the Garin range. The only way to leave this mountainous part of northern Luristan (the ancient lands of Sakâ and Birnakan) and enter into the Nahavand plain is through the imposing canyon in the area of Delfan (Fig. 12).

Ramanda

After crossing the Darue river, Sargon entered the land of Ramanda. We locate Ramanda on the eastern hillside of the Garin mountains, at the headwaters of the Gamasiab river.[10] Today, this area includes the rural districts of Gamasiab and Sha'ban Nahavand. In our opinion, the name of the modern village of Ravand in the region derives from Ramanda.

Unknown cities

The Najafabad stele originally recorded (lines 62-63) the names of a number of cities in the land of Ramanda, the names of which are all unfortunately lost due to damage.

Irnisa

After leaving Ramanda, Sargon entered the land/city of Irnisa. In the Nineveh Prism this toponym is rendered as Arnasia (Frame 2021: No. 82. vi 32″). On the other hand, it seems that Irnisa appears as Nišai or Nišša in the inscription of the Tiglath-pileser III (Alibaigi & MacGinnis 2018), where it is often mentioned along with the toponyms Ṣibur and Bit-Ishtar. The authors would locate Irnisa in the Nahavand plain. Mohammed Mehdi Ahadian (2010), based on linguistic data that we find convincing, believes that the modern name of Nahavand is a modified form of Nithāvanta, analysed as a base stem of Nithā,

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10. Zadok (2002: 114) locates Ramanda in present-day Ramand, east of Qazvin, a very remote area. But if we are right in our general reconstruction of the sixth campaign, this is impossible.

corresponding to Nisā(ya), and the Old Persian possessive suffix *-vanta*. According to the inscription of Bisotun, Darius I killed the *magus* Gaumata in a fortress called Sikayuvati in the district of Nisaya in Media (Schmitt, 1991: 53). As the oldest archaeological material collected from the present-day city of Nahavand dates to the Seleucid period (Rahbar & Alibaigi 2011: 133), with no evidence of any Iron Age occupation, it would seem that the ancient city of Irnisa was not located in the current city of Nahavand. As an alternative, we would propose the site of Tapeh Giyan (Fig. 13), 10 km west of Nahavand, occupied in the Iron Age and famous for its remains which include an apparently Neo-Assyrian palace (Reade 1995: 39; Curtis 2002; Radner 2013: 446); it is striking that the proposal that the area of Giyan is to be equated with the land of Nišša was already made by Ghirshman (1954: 93). It is our opinion that the area of Giyan must been part of the land of Irnisa (Nisa) and cannot have been part of Ḫarḫar, as some previous scholars believed (see above under Ḫarḫar).

Ḫu-[...]

According to the Najafabad stele (line 64), Sargon received in Irnisa tribute from the ruler of the city of Ḫu-[...].

Ṣibar

This toponym is mentioned in other Assyrian inscriptions as Ṣibur. According to the Najafabad stele, the ruler of the city of Ṣibar came to Sargon in Irnisa. In other texts, for example the Annals (Frame 2021: No. 56 .10), Sargon talks of conquering "the land of Ḫašmar as far as the city of Ṣibar, which borders on the distant Medes in the east". Fuchs (2023: 689) takes Ṣibar here to be the powerful state of Ṣibar in Gizilbunda, on Media's northwestern border, and presumably located not too far from Irnisa, understanding the passage in the narrative of the sixth campaign to mean that its ruler came to pay hommage to Sargon as the result of an Assyrian raid

Ayalaya

While in Irnisa Sargon also received tribute from the ruler of Ayalaya. This place is also mentioned in a fragmentary inscription on a statue of Tiglath-pileser III from Nimrud (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No. 36 4′). We would locate Ayalaya in present-day Malayer; it may indeed be that the names are related.

River Na-[...]

The name of this river in line 66 of the Najafabad stele is uncertain due to erosion.

Uratas

After leaving the land of Irnisa, Sargon entered the land of Uratas. While there, he received tribute from the rulers of the city of *Ú*-[...]-*'a-ta*ᵂ, the city of *Ha*ᵂ-*gab-ta-a* (Ecbatana?), the land of *Ú-rat-is-ta*ᵂ, the city of *Qar-ka-si-a,* the city of *Gi-in-ki-ir* and the land of *Ru-ur*ᵂ-[...]. The precise relationship between Uratas, U-[...]-'ataᵂ and Uratistaᵂ is not known. Probably they were separate entities (cf. Fuchs 2023: 699); one could imagine that *Ú*-[...]-*'a-ta*ᵂ was the capital of the land of Uratas, and it can in any case be suggested the names shared a common topographic/toponymic element. The suggestion of Alibaigi et al. (2017) that the land of Uratas corresponds to Mount Alvand (Orontes/Oroandes in Greek and Roman texts), which separates the Hamadan plain from the Kangavar-Asadabad-Nahavand plain, is only strengthened by our reconstruction of the route of the sixth campaign. Specifically, we suggest that the land of Uratas refers to the western side of Mount Alvand, including the area of the present-day county of Tuyserkan.

U-[...]

While in Uratas Sargon received tribute from the rulers of a number of cities, the first of which was the city of U-[....], whose ruler was Azamada (line 68).

Qarkasia

The second city from which Sargon received tribute while in Uratas was Qarkasia. This toponym is also listed in the Nineveh Prism (Frame 2021: No. 82 vi 36″) and is very likely identical with the Qarkinšera in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No. 35 ii.33'). Qarkasia has also been equated with Kar-kašši (Adontz 1946: 303; Hastings 2004: 189), a polity known from the time of Esarhaddon, specifically from the oracular enquiries, from which it is evident that it played a major role in Median politics. In particular, Kar-kašši was one of the main centers of the formation of the great anti-Assyrian revolt led by Kaštaritu (see Diakonoff 1979: 248; Zadok 2002: 117; Radner 2003: 61; Dandamayev & Medvedskaya 2006). The revolt apparently brought together against Assyria a huge coalition of Medes, Manneans, Cimmerians, Scythians and other ethnic groups living in western Iran (Olmstead 1960: 359; Dandamayev 2012: 64). A variety of places have been suggested for the location of Kar-kašši.[11] As noted, in the Najafabad stele Qarkasia is mentioned in connection with the lands of Uratas and Ḫagabtâ (Sagbat), implying, in our opinion, that it must have been located somewhere near to Mount Alvand and Asadabad. Very likely, Karkasin, the name of one of the peaks of Mount Alvand between Assadabad and Hamadan, preserves the name Qarkasia. In any case, locations for Qarkasia outside of the Asadabad-Hamadan area, for example in the central plateau of Iran, are impossible.

Ginkir

The fourth city from which Sargon received tribute while in Uratas was Ginkir, whose ruler - Burbuazu - would seem to be the same as Burbuasu the ruler of Uratista. Ginkir must once again have been on the western slope of Mount Alvand (Uratas). Levine (1972: 50) compares Ginkir with the Girgirâ in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 Nos. 15.7, 28.5). The proposal of Zadok (2002: 117) that Ginkir is identical with the modern village of Gargar near Sanandaj is not defensible.

Rur-[...]

The fifth city from which the Najafabad stele records Sargon as receiving tribute while in Uratas was Rur-[...], the name unfortunately not further recoverable due to damage.

Ḫagabtâ

This toponym is very important due to its probable identification, with the Median and Achaemenid Hagmatana (modern Hamadan). It appears variously in the inscriptions of Shamshi-Adad V (811-823 BC), Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, in the forms Sagbita, Sagbitu, Sagabatu, Sadbat, Sagbat, Bit-Sagbat and Bit-Sagabi. Despite the endeavours of scholars such as Levine, Medvedskaya and others, this confusing array has meant that a consensus both on whether these different spellings all denote the same place, and on its location(s), has hitherto been elusive. According to the Najafabad stele, at the beginning of the sixth campaign the ruler of Kišesim hurried to Sargon in Ḫundir with heavy tribute in order to guarantee the safety of Kišesim and its surrounding areas. These included Bit-Sagabi, according to the inscription located in the "Fortress of Babylonians" (Frame 2021: 451 No. 117 ii 35b-41a). Towards the end of the narrative

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11. Most researchers have located Kar-kašši in Media, i.e. in the central Zagros region (Cameron 1936: 178; Stronach 1969: 6; Yamada 2005: 59; Asheri et al. 2011: 151; Radner 2011: 358; Dandamayev 2012: 64). Due to the obvious phonetic similarity, a number of scholars have also linked Kar-kašši to the Kassites (Cameron 1936: 178; Helm 1981: 86; Delaunay 1987). Ghirshman, for example, believed that the name of Hamadan before the Median era was Akessaia, meaning the city of the Kassites (Ghirshman 1954: 55). Diakonoff (1979: 254) also defined Kar-kašši as the home of the Kassites, believing it to be the capital of Bit-kari, which he in turn located in the area of present-day Hamadan, a line of thinking followed by Dandamayev, Grantovskiĭ and Schippmann (1987), and Aliyev (2009: 346). Malekzadeh (1995: 94) considers that Kar-kašši was actually Ecbatana, the capital of the Medes. Yet others seek to locate Kar-kašši further away from the area of Hamadan. For example, Stuart Brown (1988: 127), and following him Kamyar Abdi (1994: 22), believe that the element "kašši" indicates that Kar-kašši was located somewhere to the north of Elam, in Luristan, and not in the land of the Medes. Parviz Azkaei (2014: 154-146), observing the phonetic similarities, identifies Kar-kašši with the modern village of Qarqasin in the province of Qazvin.

recorded in the stele Sargon entered the region of Uratas. At this point Ḫagabtâ is mentioned as one of the polities which sent representations to Sargon while he was in Uratas (Frame 2021: 454 No. 117 ii 68-69). Parpola (1970: 405) identified Sagbita with Ecbatana (present-day Hamadan), a proposal followed up three decades later by Medvedskaya, who argued on linguistic grounds that Sagbita/Sagbat is the older form of the name (Medvedskaya 1999: 56; Medvedskaya 2002: 50; Dandamayev & Medvedskaya 2006). Frame in turn (2021: 454, with note) identified Ḫagabtâ as Ecbatana. Although the linguistic evidence of Medvedskaya is interesting, the authors believe that there are at least two modern-day toponyms in the western part of Mount Alvand with names deriving from ancient Sagbita (and its variants):

(1) Asadabad, a toponym recorded in early Islamic texts either thus (Ibn al-Faqih 1995: 477) or in abbreviated forms such as Asabad (anon. 2005: 141). Although Asadabad is a modern name, this may be another case where the new name bears a phonetic resemblance to its ancient predecessor (Sagbat/Sadbat).

(2) The village of Segavi (Seh Gabi) in Tuyserkan county, whose mound ("Seh Gabi B") has in recent years produced materials relating to the Late Iron Age (and may, therefore, potentially be the site of Bit-Sagabi itself).

Our interpretation of this data is that the Ḫagabtâ and Bit-Sagabi mentioned in the Najafabad stele are two different places. This interpretation is, in fact, in line with the views of earlier scholars such as Billerbeck (1998: 92 & 97) and Maspero (1900: 259), and in turn more recent scholars such as Fuchs (1994: 428-9, 456), Zadok (2002: 124), Potts (2004: 267) and Kessler (2008). We therefore locate Ḫagabtâ (Sagbat) in the area of the modern city of Hamadan or Assadabad and Bit-Sagabi at Tapeh Seh Gabi. In any, event, however, it should be noted that there is no indication that Sargon progressed as far as Ecbatana, only that he received tribute from Ḫagabtâ (Sagbat) in Uratas.

Bit-Sagabi

Identified by the current authors with the site of Tapeh Seh Gabi (see preceding entry).

The Fortress of the Babylonians

According to the Najafabad stele, the land of Bit-Sagabi was located within the "Fortress of the Babylonians" (Frame 2021: 451 No. 117. 40). The exact meaning of this term is not clear, but it presumably refers to a zone once controlled by fortifications belonging to the Babylonians, with the city of Bit-Sagabi located within this. The Fortress of the Babylonian is also mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, where it is glossed as another name for Mount Silḫazu (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 Nos. 16.11, 17.2, 47.31). This suggests that the Fortress of the Babylonian was not a fortified settlement in the plain, but a network of military installations located in the mountains. The inscriptions of Sargon do not mention Silḫazu, and the only text from his reign which mentions the Fortress of the Babylonian is the Najafabad stele. It is tempting to link Silḫazu with the modern name Silakhor. The northern end of what is today considered the Silakhor plain is in the area of Khezel, centered on the city of Firuzan, around 20 kilometers south of Seh Gabi. Accepting the identification of Bit-Sagabi as Seh Gabi, Silḫazu may then be placed in the high ground south of Seh Gabi, near Firuzan and the Silakhor plain, i.e. the same general location as the Fortress of the Babylonians.

Kisasi and Kišesim

One of the most complicated and controversial issues relating to the Najafabad stele is the identification of Kisasi and Kišesim. According to the Najafabad stele, Sargon erected a stele in the city of Kisasi. Very likely this marked the conclusion of the sixth campaign: theoretically, it is possible that the capture of Kisasi was a major (but not final) accomplishment of the campaign, but the location (Najafabad) would actually appear to form a natural finishing point in the proposed reconstruction of the route. We assume that Najafabad corresponds to ancient Kisasi. The Annals make no mention of Kisasi, but they do record Sargon erecting a royal image in Kišesim during this campaign (Frame 2021: No. 1. 95). Renamed Kar-Nergal, Kišesim became the capital of one of the two key Assyrian provinces in the Central Zagros during

this period (the other being Ḫarḫar). The question is, are Kisasi and Kišesim the same place? The majority of scholars - for example Reade (1995: 39), Parpola and Porter (2001: Fig 1), Frame (2013: 437; 2021: 454), Potts (2021: 57) and most recently Fuchs (2023: 689,724) - equate the two. Nevertheless, there have been other proposals with regard to the identification of Kišesim, including Godin Tapeh (Levine 1972: 25) and in the Asadabad plain (Radner 2013: 444). Medvedskaya (1999: 56) places Kišesim/Kišesu between the Sanandaj-Hamadan and Sanandaj-Bisotun roads, while Tourovets (2015: 30) puts it in the northern part of the Mahidasht, in the valley of the Qarasu river. We believe that the location of Kišesim is not yet certain. It is not impossible that the difference in spellings reflects the fact that Kisasi and Kišesim are indeed two different places[12], and that a more tentative approach is justifiable. As Tourovets (2015: 25), we believe that Kišesim must be located further west than Najafabad, closer to the Assyrian borders, next to the land of Ḫarḫar. In general terms we would locate Kišesim in the area of the modern city of Kermanshah. In an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III, Kišesu (Kišesim) is mentioned alongside Karkarḫundir (Ḫundir?) and Erinziašu (Tadmor & Yamada 2011 No. 7 10b-12). In our proposed location, Kišesim would neighbour Ḫundir, Arazišu and Ḫarḫar to the west. Our understanding is that the significance of Kisasi (Najafabad), and the reason why a stele was set up there, is that it marks the easternmost point which Sargon reached in the course of the sixth campaign.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of two pieces of an Assyrian stelae in recent archaeological excavations in Qawakh Tapeh in Kouzaran is a notable development that will help lead to a better understanding of the historical geography of the Central Zagros in the Neo-Assyrian period. It now seems highly probable that either Qawakh Tapeh or the nearby mound of Tapeh Kheibar corresponds to the site of ancient Ḫarḫar. This, together with the identifications proposed above, offers a new lead for our understanding of the limits of ancient Media. One implication of our new analysis is that, contrary to earlier views, the western border of Media in the Neo-Assyrian period was not limited to the present-day province of Hamadan or the eastern part of Kermanshah province. In other words, the border has to be placed considerably further west - not just as far as eastern Kermanshah, but extending along the Great Khorasan Road as far as the western part of Kermanshah around modern Dalahu. Places such as Zakruti and Sikris, which we locate in the present-day county of Islamabad, feature in the inscriptions of the Assyrian period as part of the land of the Medes.

This is supported by the fact that the local rulers could bear Iranian names such as Baga-parna (Frame 2021: No. 65. 47). Accordingly, the Assyrian conception of the geographical extent of Media is largely similar to that of classical historians such as Strabo and Isidore of Charax a few centuries later (cf. Schoff 1976), as well as the tradition found in geographical texts of the early Islamic period (for example, with such terms such as Jibal and Māh). In other words, Assyrian, classical and early Islamic sources are in agreement in locating the western border of Media in western Kermanshah, with Lower Media starting with the section of the high Zagros (Zakruti in Assyrian texts) north of Sar Pol-e Zahab, and Upper Media beginning around Kangavar. On the other hand, the eastern boundaries remain unclear. While it seems that the Assyrians may, notably in the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III and Esarhaddon, have infiltrated into the central plateau of Iran via the Nahavand-Malayer route, there is still no direct archaeological evidence of an Assyrians occupation of Hamadan and its eastern surrounding territory (e.g. along the northern and eastern sections of the Hamadan-Qazvin-Tehran road).

An important outcome of this research is a new proposal for the route of Sargon's sixth campaign. As we reconstruct it, the route headed out from Ḫarḫar (Qawakh Tapeh) southwards in the direction of present-day Islamabad and penetrated into Luristan through the Homail-Harasam-Dizgaran valley system, where the Assyrians passed through numerous settlements around what are now the north-south and east-

12. In the latest edition by Frame (2021: 454) the toponym that occurs twice in line 71 is transliterated ⁱⁱᵘˡⁱKi-saʾ-siʾ and ⁱⁱᵘˡKi-x-x. If the toponym were indeed Kišesim, we would expect ⁱᵘˡKi-še-si-im (Frame 2021: Nos. 7.59, 8.7, 9.14, 26.1, 103.ii.30, 116.16), or possibly ⁱᵘˡKi-ši-si-im (Frame 2021: No. 84.13') or ⁱᵘˡKi-še-si (Frame 2021: Nos. 13.16, 88.6'), but not ⁱᵘˡKi-sa-si. It is impossible to collate the relevant parts of this line from published sources.

west roads running through present-day Khorramabad. In our opinion, the majority (perhaps all) of the toponyms discussed in this article which are located in Luristan - for example, Ukuta, Uriakku, Anzaknê, Aratišta, Barikanu - can be considered part of ancient Ellipi. Although Ellipi is not mentioned as a target for the sixth campaign - either in the Najafabad stele or in any of the other surviving annalistic accounts - we should note that many other places that Sargon passed through during the sixth campaign - such as Ukuta, Anzaknê, Uppuria, Darue, Aratišta, Barikanu and others - are also not mentioned in other Assyrian accounts. Having said that, it may be questioned whether it really is true that the Najafabad stele made no mention of Ellipi as an objective in the sixth campaign. Significant parts of the stele are missing or illegible (for example, the sections relating to Ukuta and Anzaknê), and it is possible that an attack on Ellipi could have been present in one of these damaged sections; at any rate, the support of Ellipi for the population of Ḫarḫar in their revolt means that Ellipi must have been a probable target. Of course, establishing the location of Ellipi, including whether or not it shared a border with Elam, has been a challenge for archaeologists for decades.[13] According to our interpretation, Ellipi encompassed a large portion of Luristan, in which case it must be fairly certain that it did indeed share a border with Elam. Another observation is that the many places designated in the narrations of the sixth campaign as "lands" (KUR, *mātu*) were generally no more than relatively small intermontane plains, usually 10-30 km long. Ellipi must have consisted of an agglomeration of such plains. Due to the fact that many of these smaller settlements are only mentioned in the Najafabad stele, and are not mentioned in the accounts of other campaigns along the Great Khorasan Road, we believe that they were not located along the Great Khorasan Road. This fits well with our proposal that the sixth campaign followed a route through the Mahidasht-Kouzaran plain, to Islamabad, then along the two main axes of communication in Luristan, on through the south and west of Hamadan province, until finally reaching its end in Kisasi. After this Sargon probably returned to Assyria by way of the Kangavar-Kermanshah section of the Great Khorasan Road, via Sanandaj, and Marivan, and so to the land of Zamua.

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13. For example, Levine (1974: 104-6) located Ellipi in northwest Lurestan, Medvedskaya (1999: 63) in the Pishkuh area of Luristan, extending from Mount Garin in the north to the Iran-Iraq border, believing that it had a common border with Elam.

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Fig 1. The stele of Sargon II discovered at the site the Tapeh Qaleh Joq in the village of Najafabad in Asadabad (courtesy National Museum of Iran).

Fig 2. View from Quwakh Tapeh looking southeast
(photo by Reza Azizi, archive of Quwakh Tapeh Archaeological Project).

Fig 3. Fragments 1 and 2 of the stele of Sargon II from Quwakh Tapeh (photo by Sajjad Alibaigi).
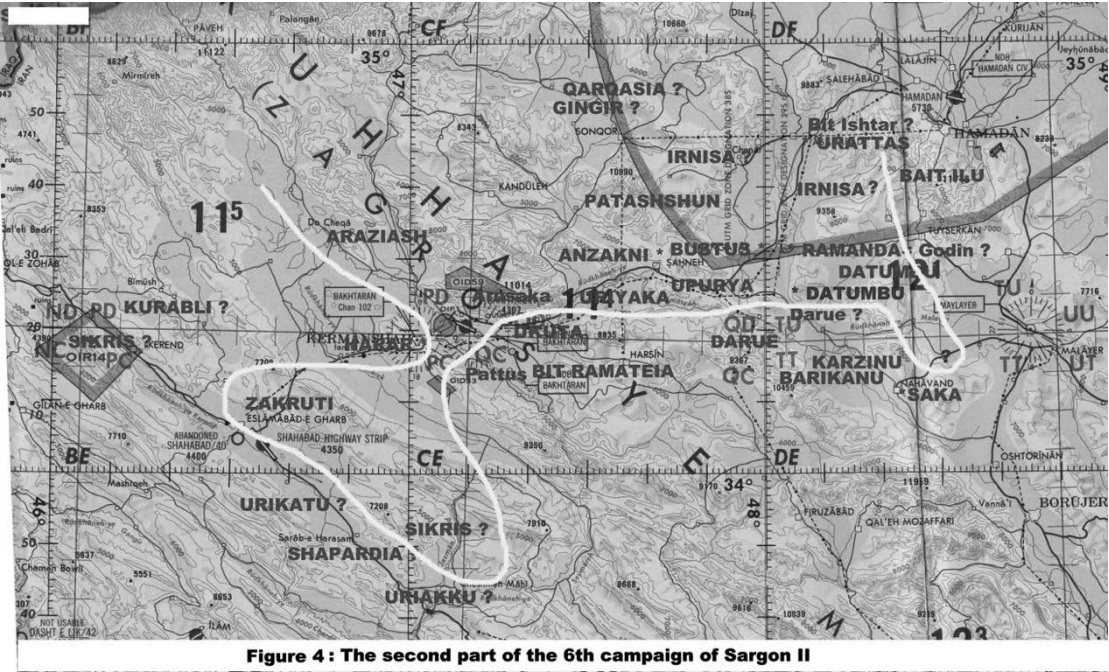
Fig 4. The map prepared by Tourovets showing the locations he proposed for toponyms occurring in the Assyrian texts, with the addition of a yellow line to show the route that this implies (adapted from Tourovets 2015: fig. 4).

Fig 5. The suggested reconstruction for the route of Sargon's sixth campaign in 716 BC
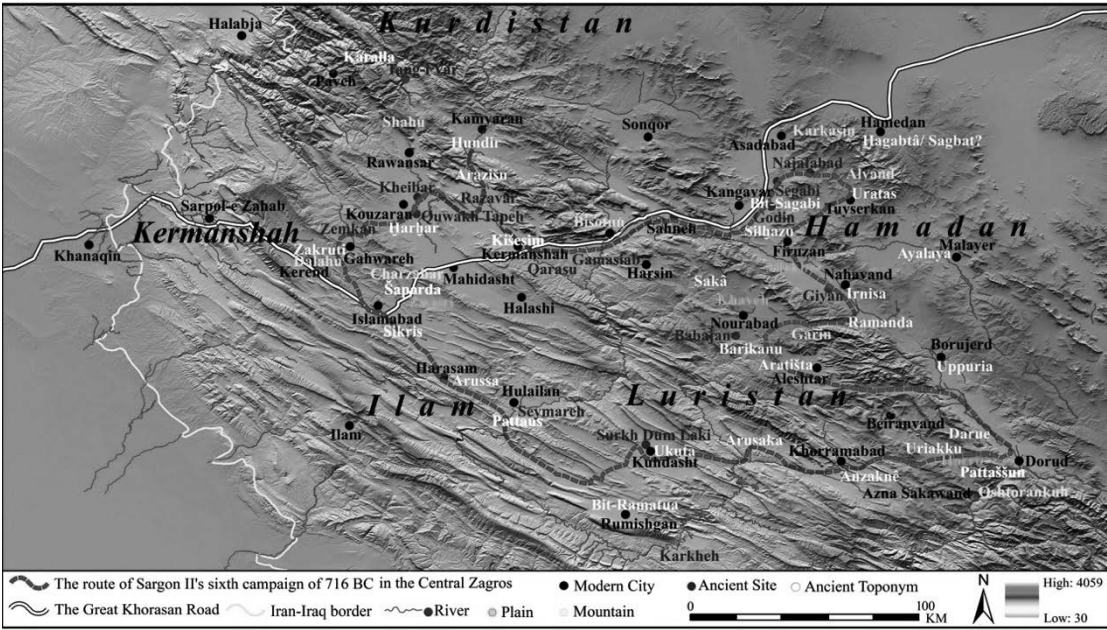(courtesy Hamzeh Ghobadizadeh).

Fig 6. View of Tapeh Kheibar looking southeast
(photo by Reza Azizi, archive of the Tapeh Kheibar Archaeological Project).

Fig 7. View of Tepe Barzeh looking east (photo by Sajjad Alibaigi).

Fig 8. View of the Char Zabar pass looking north with the Mahidasht plain in the distance
(photo by Reza Azizi).

Fig 9. View of ruins of Surkh Dum Laki looking east (courtesy Hamzeh Ghobadizadeh).

Fig 10. A view of Sefidkuh looking west (courtesy of Mahtab Shahverdi).

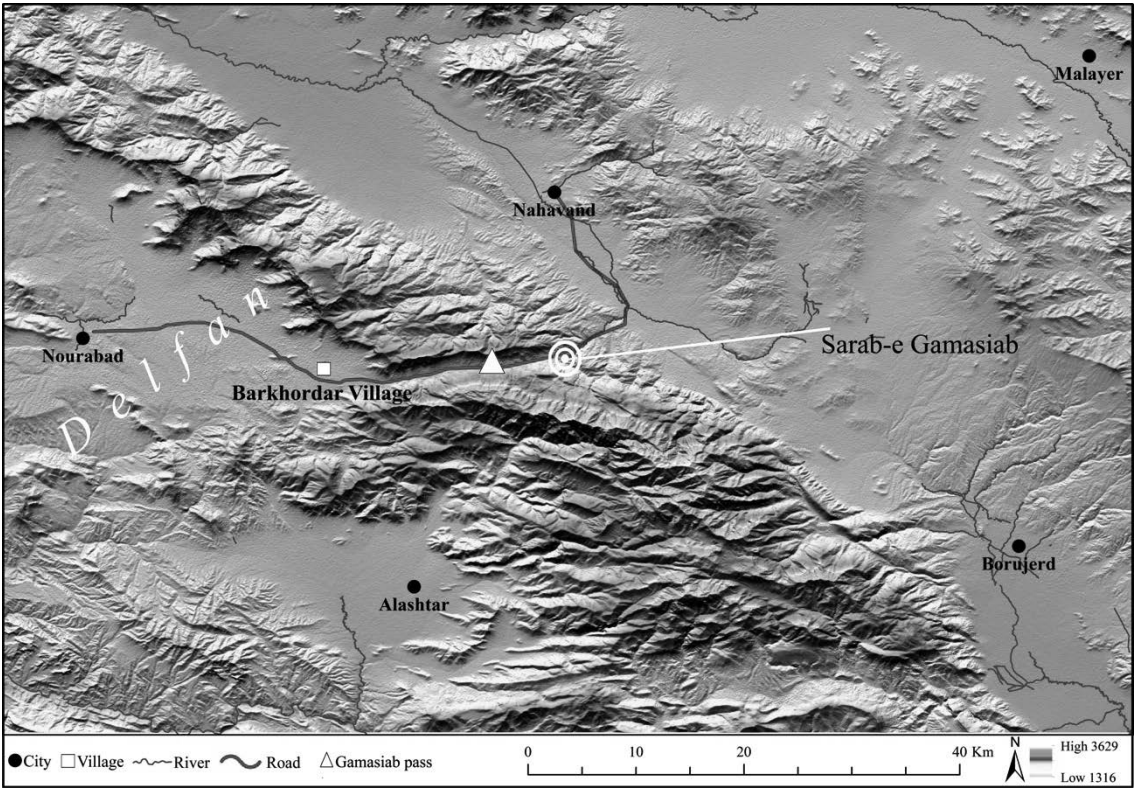Fig 11. A view of Tapeh Baba Jan from the north (courtesy of Mousa Sabzi).

Fig 12. The road connecting Nourabad and Nahavand through the Gamasiab pass (courtesy Hamzeh Ghobadizadeh).

Fig 13. View of Tapeh Giyan looking southwest (courtesy Ali Mohebi).

ABSTRACT

The western half of modern Iran, especially the Central Zagros region, was one of the principal targets of Assyrian campaigns in the ninth to seventh centuries BC. However, among the many toponyms of the region mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, only a handful have been reliably located. One of the main reasons for this failure has been the lack of archaeological excavations oriented towards this issue. Recently, however, an important advance has been made with the excavations at the site of Quwakh Tapeh in the district of Kouzaran, 45 km west of Kermanshah, and the discovery of two stele pieces of Sargon II. One of the important results of this discovery, whose significance for our understanding of the historical geography of the Central Zagros in the Neo-Assyrian period can scarcely be overstated, is that it suggests that Quwakh Tapeh - or at least, more broadly, the region of Kouzaran - was one of the main centers of the central Zagros in the time of Sargon II. This very important development provides a new window into the identification of other Central Zagros settlements in the Assyrian period. The authors believe that the plain of Kouzaran and Quwakh Tapeh are most probably the same as the ancient land and city of Ḫarḫar mentioned in the Assyrian texts. In this paper we study around fifty ancient toponyms of the Central Zagros (corresponding to the modern provinces of Kermanshah, Hamadan and Luristan) conquered by Sargon II during his sixth campaign, as recorded in the famous stele of Najafabad. The results of this re-evaluation are to suggest a new and completely different route for the sixth campaign, a route that starts from Quwakh Tapeh, passes through the modern province of Luristan, and leads to the western slope of Alwand Mountain.

RÉSUMÉ

La moitié occidentale de l'Iran moderne, en particulier la région du Zagros central, a été l'une des principales cibles des campagnes assyriennes entre les neuvième et septième siècles avant notre ère. Cependant, parmi les nombreux toponymes de la région mentionnés dans les inscriptions assyriennes, seuls quelques-uns ont été localisés de manière fiable. L'une des principales raisons de cet échec est le manque de fouilles archéologiques axées sur cette question. Récemment, cependant, une avancée importante a été réalisée avec les fouilles du site de Quwakh Tapeh dans le district de Kouzaran, à 45 km à l'ouest de Kermanshah, et la découverte de deux morceaux d'une stèle de Sargon II. L'un des résultats importants de cette découverte, dont le rôle pour notre compréhension de la géographie historique du Zagros central à l'époque néo-assyrienne ne peut être surestimé, est qu'elle suggère que Quwakh Tapeh - ou du moins, plus largement, la région de Kouzaran - était l'un des principaux centres du Zagros central à l'époque de Sargon II. Ce développement très important ouvre une nouvelle fenêtre sur l'identification d'autres établissements du Zagros central à l'époque assyrienne. Les auteurs pensent que la plaine de Kouzaran et Quwakh Tapeh est très probablement la même que l'ancien pays et la ville de Ḫarḫar mentionnés dans les textes assyriens. Dans cet article, nous étudions une cinquantaine de toponymes anciens du Zagros central (correspondant aux provinces modernes de Kermanshah, Hamadan et Luristan) conquis par Sargon II lors de sa sixième campagne, comme l'indique la célèbre stèle de Najafabad. Les résultats de cette réévaluation suggèrent un nouvel itinéraire, complètement différent, pour la sixième campagne, un itinéraire qui part de Quwakh Tapeh, passe par la province moderne du Luristan et mène au versant occidental du mont Alwand.

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