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The Theses of the Dissertation

**The Eastern Expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire**

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In my dissertation, I will examine the five provinces (Zamua, Bīt-Hamban, Parsua, Kišessim and Harhar) which were shaped by the Neo-Assyrian Empire (912–609) in the Zagros mountains. I will identify the position, the establishment and the functioning of these provinces. While previous reserarches elaborated on the chronological, geographical and socio-historical settings of the Western conquest of the Assyrians in deteail (Kessler 1980, Lamprichs 1995, Yamada 2000, Bagg 2007), while the Eastern expansion has not yet been treated in a monographic synthesis.

#### SOURCES

The sources of my research were cuneiform texts, archaeological sources and pictorial depictions. Under the philological procession of the *cuneiform texts*, I have exemined the Assyrian royal inscriptions, the royal correspondence, the texts of the royal administration, the Assyrian Eponym (*limmu*) Lists, the Babylonian royal inscriptions, the Babylonian Chronicles and an inscription of a bronze object, probably manufactured in the Zagros. As regards the *archaeological sources* I have scrutinised the publications of the excavations of the Central Zagros sites (Godin Tepe, Tepe Nush-e Jan and Baba Jan-Tepe), and the archaeological surveys of the Mahidasht and the Kangavar valleys, and the *pictorial evidences* will include the study of the scenes of the palace reliefs and the two royal stela found in the Central Zagros.

## THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE NEO-ASSYRIAN ZAGROS

As we study the extension of the Eastern conquests of Assyria, we will run into historio-geographical problems. This is well illustrated with the last summary of the Neo-Assyrian provinces, in which Karen Radner drew everything on the map with the exception of the Zagros provinces (Radner 2006).

In this chapter, I will first introduce the most important geographical problems of the literature of the Neo-Assyrian Zagros. After calling and analysing all the relevant written sources, I will try to localize the position of the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros. On the one hand, it can help to throw light on the validity of the contradictory opinions about the subject; on the other hand, it can help us gain a better understanding of the extension of the Assyrian imperial expansion.

In the period under study, hundreds of Zagros toponyms became known from Assyrian sources. Only a few archaeological investigations were conducted in these severe mountains; therefore very limited written sources were discovered in the Zagros, which could help us to draw the toponyms on maps. For the historio-geographical reconstruction of the area we have to make a net of the toponyms known from the sources, then we have to find those solid points, around which we can anchor our net of toponyms. Not all the historio-geographical questions of the area can be answered without new evidences, but from the parallel theories I could validate the minimalist conception developed

by Louis D. Levine in the 1970s (Levine 1974 and 1974). The newly discovered sources and new critical arguments will help me refute these opposing theories.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire created only a very few provinces in the geographical areas of the high mountains. During her western expansion, the Empire had not encountered such areas for a long time. The northernmost Assyrian province – Amīdu (now Diyarbakır) – lies in a middle of a plateau at the height of 600 m, the area of the severe mountains stretches from north of it. Moving on to the East, the next Assyrian province was Tušhan (Ziyaret Tepe), which lay in the Tur Abdin, whose elevation (600–1200 m) is incomparable with the lofty mountains of the other side of the Tigris. The Assyrians never created provinces in the mountainous area lying between Assyria and Urartu, so they only created vassal relationships with the small states of Šubria, Ukku and Kummu (today Beytüşşebap area).

The first – and almost only – area, where the Assyrians created provinces in the severe mountains, was in the territory examined in my dissertation. These valleys lay at the height of 1300–1600 m, and the surrounding mountains were sometimes 3000 m high. The roads connecting these valleys ran through on 2000-meter-high passes. This practically meant that these provinces were isolated for 3-4 months a year, and no military aid could reach their territory during this time.

For the effective control of this geographically special territory, the Assyrian imperial expansion had bring into existence a special form of domination.

#### THE ASSYRIAN FITTING OUT IN THE ZAGROS PROVINCES

In this chapter, I will examine the creation, the function and the characteristics of the Assyrian provinces established in the Central Zagros. First, I will try to reconstruct the conditions before the Assyrian conquests: the ethnical settings of the local population, their lifestyles and the settlement settings and to explain the theoretical and practical difficulties of this reconstruction. I will identify those social subsystems which made possible the effective and longlastin function of the imperial administration after the creation of the Zagros provinces (II.1). Then I will examine the process and practical consequences of the Assyrian conquests: deportations, town building programs, the foundation of fortresses and ports of trade. So these efforts that the Assyrian power used in order to bring into harmony this territory with the subsystems of the Assyrian Empire (II.2.). The main aim of the third subchapter (II.3) is the reconstruction of the levels of the Assyrian administration in this area, and the separation of the functions of the offices. After this, I will identify those political "tools" with which Assyria was able to bring influence in the periphery without military conflicts (the *adê*, the *qēpu* and the "speak kindly to them" [*dibbī ṭābūti issīšu(nu) dabābu*] institutions) (II.4).

Socio-historical and institutional questions emerge at the time of presenting the imperial integration. For the inhabitants of the Central Zagros, the most complex form of political integration was the kin-based chiefdoms, so the rule of the chiefs (*bēl āli*) signified the highest level of political power. The Assyrian Empire – grew from the environment of the Mesopotamian cities and complex power structures – had to create herself those subsystems with which the imperial control could integrate this territory. The most interesting aspect of the Zagros provinces was that the local ruling elite (*bēl āli*) could save its power and get into connection with the imperial administration by using loyalty oaths (*adê*), which established the possibility of a mutually advantageous assimilation strategy. In my dissertation, I wish to identify the levels and jurisdictions of the Assyrian administration in the Zagric provinces. Its most important outcome was the recognition and confirmation of the process of how the local ruling elite could stay in power and create a parallel branch of power. The Assyrian administration did not change the kin-based local society, but integrated it into the empire with the preservation of its own social institutions. This process imposed tasks for the provincial administration which were previously not known from other parts of the empire, namely, the creation and the maintenance of the friendly attitude of the local elite.

## THE DRIVING FORCES OF THE EXPANSION

In what ways did the Assyrian empire benefit from all this? If it had not created provinces in the area of high mountains (except Tabal between 713–711), why – of all places – did the empire had to do it here? The historical scholarship gave a number of answers for this question, from the preventive war theory to the compulsion of the conquest of the horse-breeding areas. In the third chapter of my dissertation, I do not want to explain with one reason the expansion of the Assyrian provincial administration in the Zagros. I only would like to emphasise three factors:

1. The most important trade route between Iran and Mesopotamia, the Great Khorasan Road, cross this territory. The long-distance trade could gain more importance as the sea-routes between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley ceased to function.
2. Today it is becoming widely accepted that Assyria was able to breed horses in her own provinces. The fertile pastures of this territory (at the elevation of 1500–2000 m) could guarantee very good conditions for horse-breeding.
3. In closing I would like to stress the importance of the human resources, as an important motivation of the Assyrian expansion. From the 9th century on, until the creation of the Zagric provinces (8th century), Assyria forcefully enlisted into military service thousands of the defeated soldiers of the Zagric states. With the creation of the provinces, the local ruling elite, year after year, went to war

with the Assyrian army. These contingents were formed by mounted soldiers, whose equipment and training would have been very costly otherwise.

In the last part of my dissertation I will publish in Hungarian translation the royal inscription that reporting on the campaigns against these territories and the transcription and Hungarian translation of the correspondence and administrative texts related to the Zagric provinces.

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