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## Ekallatum, Samsi-Addu's capital city, localised

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BERLINER BEITRÄGE ZUM VORDEREN ORIENT

BAND 30

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Herausgegeben von

Dominik Bonatz  
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und  
Jörg Klinger

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Travels, Routes and Environment as a Basis for the Reconstruction of  
Historical Geography

edited by  
Adelheid Otto and Nele Ziegler



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# Ekallatum, Šamši-Adad's capital city, localised

NELE ZIEGLER\* & ADELHEID OTTO\*\*

The historical geography of Mesopotamia has been the subject of intensive research in recent decades. Nevertheless, there are even capitals that still cannot be located—a problem that naturally also makes it difficult to locate smaller places connected to them. For example, the political capital of one of the most important kings of the 2nd millennium BC—we mean Samsi-Addu, alias Šamši-Adad I—has still not been identified beyond doubt. Although the rough localisation in the surroundings of Aššur seems generally accepted, previous proposals of identification remained unsatisfactory. In fact, due to the combination of philological and archaeological evidence, there is only one possible identification, which we would like to present here.<sup>1</sup>

As shown in the Old Babylonian itineraries<sup>2</sup>, Ekallatum was a day's journey from Aššur. William Hallo had suggested identifying Ekallatum with modern Tell Haikal a few km north of Aššur and east of the Tigris (§ 2.3.1). The geographical proximity and especially the alleged name continuity (Ekallātum → Haikal) made this hypothesis plausible. Surface finds, however, did not confirm an occupation of the site in the Middle Bronze Age, and the Mari archives also made a location east of the Tigris less likely. Even sporadic surveys and, more recently, remote sensing did not reveal any new candidates to be identified with Ekallatum.

The present contribution grew over a longer period of time on the basis of the dialogue between Nele Ziegler, philologist, and Adelheid Otto, archaeologist. Initially, however, the archaeological statement was based more on probability than on certainty. It was not until January 2022 that new archaeological evidence emerged supporting our identification of Ekallatum proposed here. We thank our colleagues Salim Abdallah Ali (SBAH Salahaddin, Iraq) and Nicolò Marchetti (University of Bologna) for informing us about relevant new evidence and findings corroborating this identification.

## 1. The political role of the city of Ekallatum in the empire of Šamši-Adad and in the following period

Ekallatum was one of the main cities of the kingdom of Šamši-Adad (1802-1776 BC), the most important king of Upper Mesopotamia in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. Strictly speaking, Ekallatum was the political capital.<sup>3</sup>

The etymology of the city name *ekallātum* “palaces” makes the toponym a “speaking place name”<sup>4</sup> that describes the peculiarity of the city. It housed the palaces

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1 Our sincere thanks go to numerous colleagues and friends who discussed with us the challenging questions concerning the localisation of Ekallatum, and to Berthold Einwag, who prepared most of the illustrations for this article. D. Charpin read a final draft of this article. We presented this identification in July 2022 at the 66th RAI in Mainz and announced it in a brief note (ZIEGLER & OTTO 2022).

2 See ZIEGLER, OTTO & FINK 2023 in this volume.

3 For more details on Ekallatum, its history in the Old Babylonian period, its role as capital, and on the complementary pair Aššur – Ekallatum, see ZIEGLER 2002. On the reign of Šamši-Adad alias Samsi-Addu, see CHARPIN & ZIEGLER 2003: 75-168 and more briefly CHARPIN 2004a: 153-193. In the following we note the name of the king Šamši-Adad, even if it was read Samsi-Addu in the Old Babylonian period, see ZIEGLER 2006-2008: 632.

4 On this phenomenon in Upper Mesopotamia of the 2nd millennium BC, see the two complementary studies ZIEGLER & CANCEK-KIRSCHBAUM 2017 (on Ekallatum see *ibid.*: 329-330), and CANCEK-KIRSCHBAUM & ZIEGLER 2018.

of Šamši-Adad, but also those of his sons Išme-Dagan and Yasmah-Addu, as well as the residences of the high dignitaries and first ladies of his empire, as repeatedly attested by written sources, especially from Mari<sup>5</sup> and Ašnakum<sup>6</sup> (Chagar Bazar). The peculiar name and the correspondence between etymology and function in the Upper Mesopotamian Empire suggest that the city was named by the ruler Šamši-Adad. He was not stingy in giving new and sometimes unusual city names: Šubat-Enlil “residence of Enlil” is the name he gave to his conquest of Šehna (Tall Leilan), Šubat-Šamaš “residence of the sun god” to the city of Hanzat in the Balih region.<sup>7</sup> For both toponyms we do not know any parallel so far.<sup>8</sup> Ekallatum itself is such a toponym for which there is no real comparison before Šamši-Adad.<sup>9</sup>

We therefore consider it plausible that Šamši-Adad gave the city of Ekallatum its name. It is not clear from the Old Babylonian texts whether Ekallatum was a new foundation or whether the ruler renamed an already existing place, as he did with Šehna (Tall Leilan). The latter seems more likely. In the Assyrian king lists (see below § 2.1) a conquest of Ekallatum by Šamši-Adad is mentioned. This is the clearest and so far the only indication that Ekallatum was not a new foundation of Šamši-Adad, but based on a predecessor settlement.<sup>10</sup>

Old Assyrian sources never mention the toponym Ekallatum, to our knowledge not even texts of the *kārum* Ib phase. It is likely that it was so close to Aššur that a mention under the travel expenses in Kaneš was not necessary. As far as we can see, the closest places to Aššur mentioned in the documents found in Kaneš were Sadduwatum (per-

haps Tall Saadiya Sharqi)<sup>11</sup> about 45 km and Qaṭṭara (Tell Rimah) about 115 km northwest of Aššur.<sup>12</sup> Ekallatum, on the other hand, must be sought much closer to Aššur, logically less than a day’s journey away.

Ekallatum was Šamši-Adad’s political capital, even though he himself spent more time in Šubat-Enlil, more centrally located in his empire, in the last years of his life, and even though he had entrusted Išme-Dagan with the administration of the eastern regions of his empire. Daduša of Ešnunna called his ally Šamši-Adad the “King of Ekallatum”.<sup>13</sup> In his own inscriptions, Šamši-Adad was less affirmative. His various seals do not mention any city or country name, but only the gods Enlil and Aššur and the name of his father Ila-kabkabu.<sup>14</sup> Only in one text, which was written for a possible inscription on a twin vessel in the Dagan temple, does Šamši-Adad bear, among other things, the title “King of Ekallatum”. There, however, he calls himself also “Prince of [Mar]ji” and “Governor of Šubat-Enlil” but above all he was described as the “unifier of the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates”:<sup>15</sup>

“[Šam]ši-Adad, strong king, appointee of the god [Enlil], vice-regent of the god Aššur, beloved of the god Dagan, *unifier* of the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, prince of [Mar]ji, king of Ekallatum, gouverneur of [Šubat-En]lil (...)”

The empire of Šamši-Adad consisted of various central places, but the political capital was and remained Ekallatum. Aššur, on the other hand, seems to have been a religious and economically immensely important centre of

5 VILLARD 2001: 101-106 on the domain of Ekallatum. ZIEGLER 2002: 216-217. GUICHARD & ZIEGLER 2004: 240-241.

6 LACAMBRE & MILLET ALBÀ 2008: 216-218.

7 The identification of Šubat-Šamaš with Hanzat is based on a suggestion by Ilya Arkhipov (2014). For this and for the possible identification of Šubat-Šamaš with Bandar Khan in northern Syria see ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 346 and FINK 2016: 72.

8 CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & ZIEGLER 2018: 89-90.

9 Yakaltum, the West Semitic name of Tell Munbaqa (WU 1992), was, however, occasionally called Ekallatum, especially in the time of Šamši-Adad: several contributions on this, especially by D. Charpin and P. Villard, are enumerated in ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 95-96. In the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium BC, the toponym became Ekalte. The plural ending *-ātu(m)* got lost for this place, while Ekallatum (*ekallātum*) remained Ekallate (*ekallāte*).

10 ZIEGLER 2002: 212 quotes and comments on an extract of the fragmentary Mari text M.10754, which mentions a domain of Ekallatum, the administrator Mubalsaga and “the days of Ilima-rahe”. CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 372 n. 36 and DURAND 1998: 107-108 had suggested that Ilima-rahe might be an earlier ruler of the city of Ekallatum. There is currently no further information supporting this hypothesis.

11 This identification goes back to D. Oates, see bibliography in ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 291-292.

12 If Razama ša Uhakim is identical with the Old Babylonian Razama ša Yamutbal (perhaps Tell Abta), it was distant about 130 km as the crow flies from Aššur.

13 Daduša stela: (col. x 9) *sa-am-se-e-<sup>d</sup>IŠKUR* (10) LUGAL *é-kál-la-tim<sup>ki</sup>*. See already the comment by CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 371.

14 A list of the epithets and elements of the titulary of Šamši-Adad can be found in CHARPIN 1984: 52. The further textual evidence published since then does not change the picture. For the seals of Šamši-Adad and his functionaries cut in the northern Mesopotamian court style of Ekallatum, see OTTO 2000: 151-153, Taf. 35, seal groups 6b and 6c. For the seal of Šamši-Adad, see lastly PATRIER 2015.

15 The text RIMA 1 0.39.7 has been first published and commented on by D. CHARPIN 1984: 47-49, 75. The reedition by GRAYSON 1987: 59 is less complete but the addition of the city name Šubat-Enlil is secured. The text has been found in the palace of Mari, and is perhaps only a suggestion for what was to be inscribed on the vessel. It is not known whether this was done, or whether another, different inscription eventually adorned the vessel. On these models for royal inscriptions and the necessity to use them with caution in historiographical discourse, see CHARPIN 1997, CHARPIN 2004a: 149 and CHARPIN 2006: 153-154.

the empire,<sup>16</sup> the city whose eponym system was adopted as the dating system for the entire empire<sup>17</sup>. Šubat-Enlil, on the other hand, was Šamši-Adad's residential town and administrative centre in the "heart of the country"<sup>18</sup>. N. Ziegler described the special status of Ekallatum thus:<sup>19</sup>

"Le choix d'Ekallatum, 'les Palais', comme capitale affirmait la royauté de Samsi-Addu et de ses successeurs : si Aššur continuait d'appartenir à son dieu, Samsi-Addu n'y exerçant que la fonction de gouverneur (*iššiakkum*), Ekallatum lui permit de s'affirmer pleinement en roi. Aššur était peut-être la première ville du royaume de Haute-Mésopotamie, mais le centre du pouvoir semble avoir été Ekallatum. Ceci se reflète notamment dans les archives de Šušarrā, où Aššur ne figure pas, tandis qu'Ekallatum est mentionnée dans trois lettres."

An anonymous letter found in Hazor also mentions Ekallatum and emphasises the importance of the city. In it the sender, whose name has not been preserved, writes:<sup>20</sup>

"Once my hand has taken Mari, I intend to go to the interior of Ekallatum to perform sacrifices and celebrations."

Ekallatum (and not Aššur) was therefore the place where the victory over Mari was planned to be celebrated. The author's name is broken off, but the letter can probably be attributed to Šamši-Adad.<sup>21</sup>

The role as Šamši-Adad's capital had taken root in the minds of contemporaries and outlasted his death. The term "Ekallateans" was used after the fall of his empire to describe the followers and supporters of his government, no matter where they were born and where they were stranded after the collapse of the great North Mesopotamian empire of Šamši-Adad.<sup>22</sup>

His elder son Išme-Dagan<sup>23</sup> was the new ruler of the truncated part of the Empire, which henceforth bore the name *māt Ekallātim*<sup>24</sup> and consisted mainly of the Tigris region between Tikrit and Qayyara and the surrounding area.<sup>25</sup> He was the hapless successor of his father. Several times he had to leave Ekallatum, went into exile in Babylon, while his administrators tried to hold the fortified cities.<sup>26</sup> Then again, he was able to reconquer his territory and launch attacks on neighbouring territories. From today's perspective, one does not see a success story in the succession of his father, yet another ruler of Aššur, the son of Šamši-Adad II, later bore his name.

Išme-Dagan (I) survived mainly thanks to the constant support of Hammurabi of Babylon, even though he once made the mistake of allying himself with Ešnunna's ruler Šilli-Sin, thereby angering his patron.<sup>27</sup> So far, not a single royal inscription attributable to Išme-Dagan has been known. At the beginning of Išme-Dagan's reign an interesting letter from Kaneš<sup>28</sup> was written by the Assyrian merchants to king Hurmeli of Harsamna which testifies to the adverse circumstances under which the traders had to suffer. A little later, however, commerce seems to have flourished again<sup>29</sup>. With the extinction of the Mari archives, the sources on Išme-Dagan come to an end.

The chronological position of Išme-Dagan's reign remains open. The Assyrian king list assigns him 40 years.<sup>30</sup> His reign spanned the entire duration of Zimri-Lim's rule of Mari, i.e. the years 1775-1762 BC, but it is difficult to imagine that the ageing, foot-lame and tired Išme-Dagan described by the authors of the Mari letters could have ruled for several decades after Zimri-Lim's demise<sup>31</sup>. The only plausible explanation for this high number is to add the years before the death of Šamši-Adad I, during which Ekallatum and Aššur were directly subordinate to King Išme-Dagan, who ruled under the suzerainty of the "Great King" Šamši-Adad<sup>32</sup>. However, according to genuine Assyrian understanding, Išme-Dagan ascended the throne

16 CHARPIN 2004b: 379-381. The letter A.3609 quoted there has been published by DURAND 2005: 17-20 as FM 8 I, and studied again by ZIEGLER 2019.

On other more or less bicephalous kingdoms in Upper Mesopotamia of the Old Babylonian period, cf. CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 373 fn. 44. They compare the situation inter alia with the centres of Mari & Terqa—the political and the religious centre on the Middle Euphrates.

17 ZIEGLER 2021.

18 ZIEGLER 2014.

19 ZIEGLER 2002: 213.

20 The letter Hazor 16803 has been published by N. Wasserman & W. Horowitz, bibliography and transliteration can be found in [www.archibab.fr/T17326](http://www.archibab.fr/T17326). The quotation is Hazor 16803: (22') *tu:iš<sup>ur</sup> má-rí<sup>ki</sup> qa-ti ik-ta-aš-du* (23') *pa-nu-ia a-na li-ib-bi* É.GAL.HI.A (24') *a-na ni-qé-tim ú i-si-na-tim* (25') *e-pé-ši-im ša-ak-nu*. The interpretation differs from the editio princeps. See ZIEGLER & CHARPIN 2004.

21 ZIEGLER & CHARPIN 2004.

22 GUICHARD & ZIEGLER 2004.

23 Cf. CHARPIN & ZIEGLER 2003, for Išme-Dagan see index p. 283. Cf. VEENHOF 2008: 25-26, 141-142.

24 ZIEGLER 2002: 220. See map below Fig. 1.

25 The extent of this trunk kingdom has been studied by ZIEGLER 2002: 220-222, 229-247; map *ibid.*: 238 (reproduced below Fig. 1).

26 CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 372 fn. 43.

27 Briefly CHARPIN & ZIEGLER 2003: 254-257.

28 GÜNBATTI 2014: 87-100.

29 ZIEGLER 2002: 237-238 with further literature; VEENHOF 2008: 26-27; EIDEM 2008; GUICHARD 2008.

30 GRAYSON 1980-1983: 106, for this document see below § 2.1.

31 Doubts about the 40-year reign are also expressed by VEENHOF 2008: 30 — he suspects that Išme-Dagan's reign ended with the events mentioned in Hammurabi's 33 year name. See literature *ibid.*

32 CHARPIN 2004a: 327.



only in 1775 BC after the death of his father, as the merchants of Aššur wrote to king Hurmeli of Harsamna:<sup>33</sup>

“It was just before your tablet arrived here, that the ruler Šamši-Adad, our lord, had gone to his fate and until Išme-Dagan, his son, took his seat on the throne of his father, (...)”

Rare variants of Hammurabi’s 33rd year name mention Ekallatum.<sup>34</sup> Were Hammurabi’s troops able to conquer the city in 1761 BC, and if so, did they necessarily put an end to the rule of the long-time ally Išme-Dagan? K. Veenhof suspects that.<sup>35</sup>

In Mari texts from the later phase of Zimri-Lim’s reign, Išme-Dagan’s son Mut-Asqur<sup>36</sup> is already mentioned, who actively intervened in events. He was Išme-Dagan’s successor, although his name is only mentioned as ruler in KAV 14.<sup>37</sup> Mut-Asqur’s successor Rimuš is also known only from this text.<sup>38</sup> This, and the absence of Mut-Asqur’s and Rimuš’s names in the regular version of the AKL, which seems to attest to a period of anarchy, may suggest that the fortunes of the commercial metropolis of Aššur and the former capital Ekallatum had temporarily split.

In the archives from Tell Leilan, which end two decades later than the Mari archives and are largely contemporaneous with Samsu-iluna of Babylon, Ekallatum is never mentioned, while merchants from Aššur were able to conclude a treaty in their own name with Till-Abnu of Apum to ensure their safety.<sup>39</sup>

The separation of Ekallatum’s and Aššur’s fortunes glimpsed here did not last. What happened in the following three or four centuries remains obscure. In the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods, Ekallatum remained inhabited and retained its name, which indicates stability. Ekallatum was located on the King’s Road (§ 2.2.1) and was a provincial city of the Middle and Neo-Assyrian empires, housing a temple of the Weather God. It was once the victim of a campaign by the Babylonian king Marduk-nadin-ahhe (§ 2.2.2).

## 2. Milestones in the search for the localisation of Ekallatum

Ekallatum has been known from written sources of the 2nd and 1st millennia BC. It had already been obvious since the publication of the Assyrian King List that Ekallatum was Šamši-Adad’s capital (§ 1) and considerations of its location took their course (§ 2.1-2.2), the supporting documentation being exclusively Neo-Assyrian. In the 1960s, a significant new clue was added by the publication of a copy of the Old Babylonian “Road to Emar” texts (§ 2.3.1). Since then, the Mari archives in particular have provided new arguments for localisation (§ 2.3.2-2.3.5). In the following, we present the most important sources that were used in the discussion about its localisation.

### 2.1 The Assyrian Kinglist (AKL)

In the manuscripts of the Assyrian King List there is a lengthy, unusual entry concerning the reign of Šamši-Adad:<sup>40</sup>

“[Šam]ši-Adad, son of Ila-kabkabu, went [to Karduni]aš [dur]ing the time of Naram-Sin. In the eponym-year of Ibni-Adad, [Šamši]-Adad [came up] from Karduniaš and captured Ekallatu. For 3 years he resided in Ekallatu. In the eponymy-year of Atamar-Ištar Šamši-Adad came up from Ekallatu, removed Erišu (II), son of Naram-Sin from the throne, and took the throne. He reigned for 33 years.”

In the entry on which numerous authors have commented,<sup>41</sup> much of the information is questionable. In recent years, research has concentrated on the identification of the two eponyms mentioned, which do not appear in the Old Assyrian eponym lists, although these texts are

33 GÜNBATTI 2014: 87-100 letter kt 01/k 217 l. 12-16.

34 Two exceptional variations of the name of Hammurabi’s year 33 mention Ekallatum. The most complete reference is in text R1ftin SVJAD 69: 38-45 which contains the dating (38) MU *ba-am-mu-ra-bi* LUGAL (39) MA.DA KUR ‘SU’.BIR<sup>ki</sup> (40) *é-kál-la-tum*<sup>ki</sup> (41) *bu-ru-un-da*<sup>ki</sup> (42) *ù* MA.DA *za-al’-ma’-qi*<sup>ki</sup> (43) GÚ’ I, IDIGNA (44) EN.NA I, [UD].KIB.NUN<sup>ki</sup> (45) KI.ŠÈ MI.NI.GAR “Year when Hammurabi the king subjugated the land of Šubartum, Ekallatum, Burundum and the land of Zalmaqum, from the riverside of the Tigris up to the Euphrates.” The bibliography has been summarised and commented on by Stol 1976: 33-39 who identified this variant year name most probably with Hammurabi 33. A commentary of the historical events may be found in CHARPIN 2004a: 327-328. See HORSNELL 1999: 148-149 and also the Archibab website for all the texts dated by Hammurabi 33 <https://www.archibab.fr/N62> (accessed 21/08/2023).

35 VEENHOF 2008: 30.

36 Arguments for a reading of the name Mut-Asqur, instead of Mut-Aškur, see DURAND 1998: 264.

37 Cf. BRINKMAN 1993-1997.

38 The name is fragmentary in KAV 14, but its restoration seems assured. See RADNER 2006-2008.

39 EIDEM 1991, re-edited in EIDEM 2011: 417-426. VEENHOF 2014 has devoted an extensive commentary to this text.

40 GRAYSON 1980-1983 : 105-106.

41 We limit ourselves to YAMADA 1994, PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1997 and VALK 2019 with preceding literature.

well preserved for the period expected for the conquest.<sup>42</sup> The designation “Land of Karduniaš” is also an anachronism for the time of Šamši-Adad.<sup>43</sup> It is probable that it referred to the kingdom of Ešnunna in this text, for a stay of Šamši-Adad in the kingdom of Babylon is unlikely. But which Naram-Sin stood at the beginning of the tradition of a stay of Šamši-Adad in this land? Was it actually the ruler Naram-Sin of Aššur, or not rather his contemporary from Ešnunna?<sup>44</sup> Only the deposition of Erišum and Šamši-Adad's reign of 33 years are considered certain, since the reigns of Šamši-Adad's predecessors are now known thanks to the Old Assyrian eponym lists from Kaniš.<sup>45</sup>

The “ascent” of Šamši-Adad from Ekallatum to Aššur<sup>46</sup> mentioned in the AKL, which led to the deposition of Erišum from the throne in Aššur, initially led to the assumption that Ekallatum was to be sought downstream from Aššur. Emil Forrer suggested Tell ed-Dahab east of the Tigris (see below § 3.3), but this hypothesis was soon rejected. However, here Akkadian *elû(m)* is to be understood as ascension or climbing the career ladder.

## 2.2 Ekallatum – an important provincial city in the Assyrian Empire

In the Assyrian empire, Ekallatum became part of the province of the Inner City (*libbi āli*). The most recent state of research and the documentary evidence have been collected and can be consulted—as far as the texts of the Middle Assyrian period are concerned—in MTT II/2.<sup>47</sup> For the Neo-Assyrian documentation, the RGTC volume is now available.<sup>48</sup> The texts bear witness to an important city which, although it was plundered during a campaign by the Babylonian king Marduk-nadin-ahhe, remained inhabited at least until the end of the Assyrian Empire.

### 2.2.1 The Neo-Assyrian Ekallate on the King's Road

The Neo-Assyrian Ekallate lay on the King's Road (KASKAL LUGAL)<sup>49</sup>, as can be seen from a land grant deed of the time of Adad-nerari III, first published in 1920 as KAV 94. In it, the boundaries of a terrain of “1000 ‘hectares’” are specified. The cadaster ends with the following remark:<sup>50</sup>

“(Land in the province of the Inner City) adjoining the king's road that goes from Ekallat[e to *Bit-šušani*]<sup>51</sup>; adjoining the road that goes from *Bit-šušani*<sup>52</sup> to Samanu.”<sup>53</sup>

Franz Heinrich Weißbach already concluded on the basis of the mention of the King's Road that Ekallatum had to be directly connected to Aššur and should therefore not be searched for on the east bank of the Tigris. He accordingly rejected E. Forrer's suggestion, who had shortly before assumed Ekallatum to be in Tell ed-Dahab (§ 2.1 and 3.3), but he searched for Ekallatum south of Aššur:<sup>54</sup>

“Ganz allein auf assyrischer Seite war das Kriegsglück jedoch nicht, wie es nach den einseitigen Berichten des Assyrer-Königs scheinen könnte. Vielmehr hat Marduk-nâdinaḥê in seinem zehnten Jahr einen Sieg über Tiglat-pileser I. davongetragen, wie er in einer Lehenurkunde erwähnt (King BBSt S. 42ff. I, Z. 4f.<sup>55</sup>). Hierbei hat er die Götter Adad und Šala der Stadt Ekallâti weggeführt (Sanherib, Bawian-Inschrift Z. 48-50), also das Gebiet dieser Stadt seinem Reiche einverleibt. Ekallâti war später ein Bezirk der Statthalterschaft Aššur und hat südlich von Aššur am Tigris gelegen (Forrer *Provinzeint.* S. 11-12). Da sie aber an der Königsstraße lag (KAV I Nr. 94, Vs. Z. 9; über ihre Entfernung von Aššur ergibt sich gegen Unger im Art. Aššur § 6 nichts aus diesem Text), kann sie wohl nicht dem auf dem linken Ufer gelegenen Tell Dhaheb entsprechen, sondern muß auf dem rechten Ufer des Tigris angesetzt werden. (...)”

42 BLOCH 2014 is the most comprehensive.

43 BRINKMAN 1976-1980.

44 This was already assumed by CHARPIN 1985: 57-61, see also CHARPIN 2004a: 150. See likewise VEENHOF 2003: 45, 61.

45 VEENHOF 2003: 39, 57-62. Let us recall, however, that the duration of Išme-Dagan's rule is problematic, see above § 1.

46 GRAYSON 1980-1983: 105 (AKL C) TA <sup>100</sup>É.GAL.MEŠ *e-la-a*.

47 CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2022: 157.

48 BAGG 2017: 166-167. See also MÜLLER-KESSLER 2009 who edits and comments an interesting document in Aramaic from Aššur dated to 659 BC. This debt note mentions Sarru-na'id son of Raši-ilu governor-*hazannu* of Ekallatu (VA 7498, Archiv 18 : (1) šrn'd b[r] (2) rsl . ḫzn . 'glh).

49 For the Assyrian King's roads, cf. KESSLER 1997.

50 SAA 12 No. 1: 9 describes a land donation and gives this road as one of the terrain's neighbours. The area's surface is spelled *ibid.* l. 5: É 1 *li-im* A.ŠĀ.

51 If the toponym in the break was the unlocated *Bit-Šušani* (see below), from which a branch led towards Samanu, the boundaries of the terrain followed this road bend.

52 BAGG 2017: 119 (unique attestation).

53 Samanu is not yet localised; BAGG 2017: 521 assumes it in the region of Šibaniba = Tell Billa.

54 WEISSBACH 1932: 284b-285a.

55 This text has been re-edited by PAULUS 2014: 543-553 (MNA 3).



## 2.2.2 The temple of Adad and Šala in the urban area of Ekallatum

In the so-called “Bavian Inscription”, Sennacherib reports on the plundering of Babylon. However, the ruler also mentions that originally Assyrian deities could be returned to their temples, such as cult statues that had been taken away from Marduk-nadin-ahhe to Babylon in 1107 BC. Sennacherib writes:<sup>56</sup>

“The god Adad (and) the goddess Šala, gods of the city Ekallatum whom Marduk-nādin-aḥḥē, king of Akkad, had taken and brought to Babylon during the reign of Tiglath-pileser (I), king of Assyria — I had (them) brought out of Babylon after 418 years and I returned them to the city E[kallatum], their (proper) place.”

The fact that the return by Sennacherib of the statues looted in the late 12th century is worth mentioning suggests that Adad was the main god of the city.<sup>57</sup> The weather god and his consort Šala were particularly popular in northern Mesopotamia, where rain and dew were essential for society and economy, at least from the third millennium onwards, and where this divine couple was most frequently depicted in cylinder seals and other imagery from the Akkadian period onwards.<sup>58</sup> The theft of the cult statues in 1107, their retrieval by Sennacherib in 689 and their reinstallation in Ekallate shows that the city’s temple must have existed as late as the 7th century and was still of supra-regional importance.

Possibly, we have confirmation of this hypothesis. D. Charpin & J.-M. Durand suggested that a late Old Assyrian legal document, APM 9220<sup>59</sup> might argue for identifying the weather god with the chief god of the political capital. The contract, written in the eponymate of an “Išme-Dagan, son of Šamši-Adad”, mentions an oath sworn to “Aššur, Adad and the king Šamši-Adad”. K. Veenhof had originally dated the text to the reign of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, D. Charpin & J.-M. Durand commented:<sup>61</sup>

“Le fait qu’Ekallatum soit la capitale de Samsi-Addu permet d’expliquer au mieux le serment qu’on trouve dans le texte APM 9220, qui est juré par les dieux Aššur et Adad et le roi Samsi-Addu. K. R. Veenhof avait déjà souligné

les traits babyloniens de ce serment: le fait même que le contrat en comporte un et l’emploi de mu au lieu de niš. On peut aller loin et remarquer la structure babylonienne de ce serment : le nom du dieu de la ville où le contrat est rédigé (Aššur) est suivi par celui du dieu de la capitale (Adad, dieu d’Ekallatum) et celui du roi, de la même façon qu’on a, par exemple, à Dilbat des serments par Uraš, Marduk et le roi”.

The eponym mentioned in this text, however, can no longer be identified with a year of the reign of Šamši-Adad I, but is said to go back to Išme-Dagan II, son of Šamši-Adad II.<sup>62</sup> If the oath attested in APM 9220 invokes Adad, the city god of Ekallatum, this would mean that Ekallatum still formed the political centre of the polity to which Aššur belonged at this time. This hypothesis must be investigated on the basis of future evidence.

## 2.3 Old Babylonian textual sources for the localisation of Ekallatum

Old Babylonian documentation provides decisive clues as to the location of the city. N. Ziegler has devoted a detailed study to the geopolitical situation.<sup>63</sup> In the following we summarise the most important arguments for the localisation of the city.

### 2.3.1 The “Old Babylonian Itineraries”

In 1964, W. W. Hallo published YBC 4499, one of three texts which recorded in writing the stages of the outward and return journey of a group of travellers from Larsa to Imar and which are generally referred to as “Old Babylonian Itineraries” or the “Road to Emar”.<sup>64</sup> Albrecht Goetze had already published one of these documents in which the passage concerning Ekallatum was broken.<sup>65</sup> The document edited a decade later by W. W. Hallo contained the route before and after Aššur with all stages, of which,

56 See on this text and the translation RINAP 3/2 no. 223: l. 48-50 (GRAYSON & NOVOTNY 2014: 316).

57 On the worship of the weather god by Šamši-Adad, see SCHWEMER 2001: 264-282.

58 SCHWEMER 2001; DIETZ & OTTO 2016-2018; SCHWEMER 2006–2008; OTTO 2006-2008; DIETZ 2023.

59 VEENHOF 1982.

60 This cannot be confirmed by the now known series of eponyms.

61 CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 372 following CHARPIN 1987.

62 BARJAMOVIC, HERTEL & LARSEN 2012: 23 “The latter may be regarded as the great-grandson of Šamši-Adad I.” and *ibidem* fn. 63: “Veenhof 1982: 359 w. n. 2 argued that this eponym belongs to the period of Šamši-Adad I (cf. the royal pair Šamši-Adad I – Išme-Dagan I in AKL 39-40). He later revised his conclusion (personal communication), and now considers the eponym to be post-canonical (cf. the later royal pair Šamši-Adad II – Išme-Dagan II in AKL 57-58).

63 ZIEGLER 2002.

64 See in this volume ZIEGLER, OTTO & FINK 2023. We there use the abbreviation RTE.

65 GOETZE 1953.

however, only two toponyms could be reliably identified with archaeological sites:

Sugagu → Aššur (= Qal'at Šerqat) → Ekallatum → Binanu → Saqa → Sanipa → Apqum ša Addu (= Abu Marya)

Ekallatum was mentioned as the first stage on the way from Aššur to Apqum (Tell Abu Marya). There are 130 km between the two as the crow flies. The stages were therefore on average 26 km apart as the crow flies, i.e. slightly more on the ground. It was now clear that Ekallatum had to be sought one stage upstream from Aššur, contrary to earlier assumptions. W. W. Hallo wrote:<sup>66</sup>

“The first station after Aššur reveals one of the outstanding surprises of the new Itinerary. For here, one day's march beyond Qal'at Sherqat, we find none other than the famous Assyrian city of Ekallatum, written É.GAL-latum, which virtually all commentators have long placed south of Aššur, most maps of ancient Assyria have even dispensed with the customary questionmark in localizing it. The old localization of Ekallatum cannot, however be maintained. A new assessment of Babylonian strength vis-a-vis Assyria at a number of periods in their history, and of the significance, in particular, of Tiglathpileser I's loss of the city to Marduk-nadin-ahhe about 1100 B.C. will now be called for. Here there is room only to consider the actual identification of the site. And we find that, exactly 25 km north of Qal'at Sherqat, most maps of the area note a place variously spelled Hākal, Haichal or Hekat, with the further suggestive description 'ancient ruins.' The site is on the left bank of the Tigris, but since there is a ford in the river at this point it could presumably have been easily reached from Assur in a day's march if, indeed, the travellers did not simply encamp opposite it. Thus, although there are several other sites in the same general area that today go by the name of Haikal, it seems probable that the ancient ruins at Haikal on the left bank of the Tigris mark the site of ancient Ekallatum.”

Ekallatum was identified by W. W. Hallo with Tell Haikal—a supposedly ideal day stage.<sup>67</sup> The ancient name would have persisted over the millennia (see § 5.2) and it alone is the argument for the identification. For the fact that the travellers had to cross the river twice with this identification seemed unusual even to W. W. Hallo. It seemed permissible to him, however, since Tell Haikal was situated at a ford—and so W. W. Hallo suggested that

perhaps the travellers camped opposite Haikal on the river.<sup>68</sup>

W. W. Hallo's suggestion seemed plausible and his equation Ekallatum = Tell Haikal has been followed for many decades in ancient Near Eastern studies.

### 2.3.2 An apparent confirmation of the eastward location of Ekallatum: TH 72.2

M. Birot published an excerpt from a Mari letter in 1973 (TH 72.2)<sup>69</sup> which, in his opinion, could confirm the localisation of Ekallatum east of the Tigris near a ford. The author of the letter explained that he had not been able to maintain contact with Išme-Dagan because of the turmoil of war, and suggested to the addressee that he should no longer send his messengers to Išme-Dagan via himself but via another route at night. Birot summed up the data situation as follows:<sup>70</sup>

“L'expéditeur semble être le gouverneur d'un district situé à proximité de Nurrugum (à l'Ouest du Tigre), ville qu'il se fait fort de prendre à condition de recevoir des renforts. Il informe en même temps son maître (on ne peut décider s'il s'agit de Samsi-Addu ou de Iasmaḥ-Addu) qu'il ne peut plus communiquer avec Išme-Dagan. C'est pourquoi, explique-t-il, les messagers qui portent le courrier royal destiné à celui-ci 'ne doivent plus passer chez moi'. Et d'indiquer une autre route, à n'utiliser que 'de nuit et en se cachant' (*mušitamman napzaram*) : elle passe à Gadašum, puis rejoint le Tigre à Adūm (ou Atūm), où le fleuve est franchi, avant de gagner Baninē (ou Maninē ?), le terminus de l'itinéraire étant sans doute Ekallatum, résidence habituelle de Išme-Dagan. Rappelons d'abord que la situation d'Ekallatum a pu être établie par W. W. Hallo : elle se trouvait à une étape au nord d'Assur et W. W. Hallo proposait plus précisément de l'identifier avec un lieu de ruines dénommé Haikal, à 25 km au Nord d'Assur et à l'Est du fleuve. Notre texte confirme bien que la ville de Išme-Dagan était située sur la rive gauche du Tigre. (...)”

The supposed itinerary would therefore have had the following stages:

Gadašum → Adum → Idiglat → *a-lum ba<sup>2</sup>/ma<sup>2</sup>-ni-ne-ē<sup>ki</sup>*  
(Banine = Binanu?) → Išme-Dagan (= Ekallatum)

66 HALLO 1964: 72.

67 The distance between Qal'at Sherqat and Tell Haikal is variously given in the literature as between 15 and 25 km north of Aššur. As the crow flies, it is actually around 15 km, but along the course of the river and including the river crossing, it comes to about 25 km.

68 This seems excluded to us, since the “Old Babylonian Itineraries” attest to camping by a river as such. For camping on the *ah Purattim*, bank of the Euphrates, see in this volume ZIEGLER, OTTO & FINK 2023 § 5.J.3.

69 For the still unpublished letter TH 72.2, see the bibliography in [www.archibab.fr/T16920](http://www.archibab.fr/T16920). It will appear in ARM 29 (in preparation).

70 BIROT 1973: 4. Cf. ZIEGLER 2002: 223.

This interpretation by M. Birot cannot be upheld.<sup>71</sup> Išme-Dagan was not in Ekallatum at the time of the writing of TH 72.2, but in the kingdom of Nurrugum and was besieging Nineveh. Yasmah-Addu, the addressee of the letter, was not in Mari either, but stationed at Razama during this campaign. The itinerary suggested by the sender reflected the security problems of message transmission in those days of war. Also, the supposed variant name of the city of Binanu, as noted by M. Birot “Baninê (ou Maninê)?” did not appear in the text and was corrected by Wu Yuhong to *a-lum-ma ni-ne-e<sup>ki</sup>* = “the city of Nineveh itself”.<sup>72</sup> The route favoured by Yasmah-Addu’s messengers in this letter was accordingly:

(Razama) → Gadaššum → Adum → Idiglat → the city of Nine (= Nineveh)

The letter author suggests a more protected route via Gadaššum and Adum, where the river had to be crossed—beyond which was the city of *ni-ne-e<sup>ki</sup>*, a rare variant of the Old Babylonian name of Nineveh.<sup>73</sup> The text TH 72.2 must therefore be excluded from the discussion on the localisation of Ekallatum.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.3.3 Mari letters raise doubts about the identification Ekallatum = Tell Haikal

In 1988, two groundbreaking works were published with editions and studies of several hundred Mari letters, the volumes ARM 26/1 and 26/2.<sup>75</sup> Several of the letters published there subsequently raised serious doubts about the identification of Ekallatum with Tell Haikal on the eastern bank. Studies in this regard have been published by D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand,<sup>76</sup> by W. Heimpel,<sup>77</sup> and more recently by N. Ziegler.<sup>78</sup> In fact, not a single letter of the Mari archives favours the localisation of Ekallatum on the east bank, while arguments in favour of a location on the west bank of the Tigris accumulate.

The main argument against Hallo’s identification of Ekallatum = Tell Haikal had already been brought into play by W. W. Hallo himself (cf. above § 2.3.1)—the fact that the travellers of the so-called “Old Babylonian Itineraries” had to cross the river twice.

Some of the letters from Mari make a location of Ekallatum west of the Euphrates more plausible. For example, a letter from Yasim-El to Zimri-Lim can be considered, which reported on the difficulties of Assyrian merchants on the way to Karana and introduced this thus:<sup>79</sup>

“300 Assyrians and their 300 donkeys left Ekallatum for Karana.”

D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand had taken this passage as an opportunity to question the localisation of Ekallatum on the eastern bank of the river in their essay “Aššur avant l’Assyrie”.<sup>80</sup> It was unlikely that a caravan of Assyrian merchants would set out from Aššur and travel via a city east of the Tigris on the way to Karana (in or near Tell Afar<sup>81</sup>). A localisation of Ekallatum west of the river thus became more plausible. The wording of the letter is also interesting. One gets the impression that Ekallatum was the actual starting point of the caravan, i.e. the place where the logistics of the caravan had been assembled. For the road that led northwest from Ekallatum, see below § 4.3 and Fig. 3.

Other hints from the Mari archives favour a localisation of Ekallatum to the west of the Tigris.

A city gate of Ekallatum had borne the name “Aššur Gate”, which led Jean-Robert Kupper to assume that there was a direct connection between the two places.<sup>82</sup>

The sender of ARM 26/2 420 mentions flocks of sheep that had come from the Suhum region, i.e. the Euphrates valley south of Mari, and that grazed in the surrounding countryside of Ekallatum and Aššur (see § 2.3.4).

More recently, additional corroborating evidence has been published, such as a letter from the chief of pasture Bannum reporting to Zimri-Lim that he had made the

71 WU 1994. ZIEGLER 2002: 223-225.

72 WU 1994. The proposal is correct and confirmed by collation.

73 ZIEGLER 2004: 20 and cf. also ZIEGLER 2002: 225.

74 However, it played a role in R. Dittmann’s considerations, see below § 3.2.

75 See DURAND 1988 and CHARPIN, JOANNÈS, LACKENBACHER & LAFONT 1988. For English translations cf. HEIMPEL 2003 and SASSON 2015.

76 CHARPIN & DURAND 1997.

77 HEIMPEL’s 1996 note appeared more quickly than CHARPIN and DURAND’s 1997 article, both were written completely independently of each other.

78 ZIEGLER 2002.

79 ARM 26/2 432 ([www.archibab.fr/T7688](http://www.archibab.fr/T7688)): 3-4.

80 CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 368-370; and independently HEIMPEL 1996.

81 ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 179-181.

82 ARM 28 171 ([www.archibab.fr/T7082](http://www.archibab.fr/T7082)): 20 reports the abduction of two informants “*i-na KÁ aš-šu-ur<sup>ki</sup>*” cf. KUPPER 1998: 249: “Comme le montre une lettre d’Iddiyatum relative aux mêmes événements (ARM 26/2 523), la ‘porte d’Aššur’ désigne en réalité une porte de la ville d’Ekallatum. L’épisode conforte la localisation d’Ekallatum sur la rive droite du Tigre; cf. D. Charpin et J.-M. Durand, *MARI* 8, p. 368-369.”

waterholes up to the gate of Ekallatum inaccessible to Išme-Dagan's army:<sup>83</sup>

"I have heard news about Išme-Dagan that goes like this:  
'He is gathering (his troops) in Ekallatum!'  
I have reinforced the mobile police (*bazahātum*) from Saggaratum district to Suhum district. On each 4 double hours (*bērum*) my mobile police troops hold the wells. I have also issued orders and they have covered all the wells up to Ekallatum gate."

The fact that the wells are mentioned from the Euphrates valley to the "gate of Ekallatum" supports the idea of an Ekallatum located west of the Tigris—otherwise Bannum would have named the Tigris as the ultimate point.

More complicated to interpret is a diplomatic incident between Ešnunna and Mari.<sup>84</sup> According to this Mari text, A.3274+, envoys from Ešnunna were not allowed to travel on from Mari to the Yaminite nomad ruler Sumu-dabi whose capital city was close to Mari on the Euphrates. The messengers from Ešnunna threatened that they would move on to Ekallatum, and from there to Andarig or to Kurda in order to reach the Yaminites. According to this letter, Ekallatum had a direct connection with Andarig and Kurda in the Sinjar region. For this reason, it must have been situated west of the Tigris.

### 2.3.4 Aššur and Ekallatum are perceived as one geographical unit

Several texts in the Mari archives mention "Ekallatum and Aššur", or "Aššur and Ekallatum" as a common geographical setting of events. This suggests that both toponyms were close to each other and at least on the same river bank, if they did not share even more topographical similarities. General Iddiyatun reported to Zimri-Lim about raids undertaken by Turukkean freebooters in the area between Ekallatum and Aššur:<sup>85</sup>

"500 Turukkeans made a raid below Ekallatum and Aššur and reached Razama. They captured 100 people and 50 cattle. And nobody stood up to them!"

One can also remind Yasim-Dagan's order, already quoted above, to stop the grazing of the flocks of sheep "in the vicinity of Ekallatum and Aššur".<sup>86</sup>

### 2.4 Summary of the current state of research

N. Ziegler concluded her study on the geopolitical situation of Ekallatum in 2002 as follows:<sup>87</sup>

"For the moment, the question of the exact location of Ekallatum remains open. It seems probable to look for it on the right bank of the Tigris and surely upstream from Aššur. The most probable seems to me to suppose that a distance of about 10 to 30 km separated the two places, which could locate it between Tell Huwaiš (generally identified with Neo-Assyrian Ubase) and Qayyara."

She marked the place name on the map about a day's journey north of Aššur (Fig. 1).

The various indications presented above led to the germination of the idea of a location of Ekallatum north of Aššur and west of the Tigris, and it was gradually defended not only by specialists in the Mari archives. We can mention, for example, Jan Gerrit Dercksen, who, in describing the surrounding area of the Old Assyrian metropolis of Aššur, favoured the localisation of Ekallatum on the west bank, even though he could not rely on Old Assyrian texts for this.<sup>88</sup> The most recent research tools on toponymy summarise the state of research in an equally differentiated manner.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the accumulation of circumstantial evidence, the identification of Ekallatum with Tell Haikal or a site east of the Tigris continues to be found in recent litera-

83 ARM 33 64 (www.archibab.fr/T12431): 17'-21'. The interpretation of this passage differs from the *editio princeps*. DURAND 2019: 176-177 translates "ils se trouvaient occuper les puits" and comments it in n. v. But see AHw 194b *ekēmum* Gt "völlig überdecken". For waterholes and the ancient techniques to cover them see, this volume, CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM 2023.

84 A.3274+ (www.archibab.fr/T4304) with literature. Envoys from Ešnunna announce ll. 39'-42': "If you do not allow [us] to cross the country here, we leave for Ekallatum and fro[m Ekallatum] we approach to Andarig (or) to Kurda. We [will join] the Yaminites!"

85 ARM 26/2 519 (www.archibab.fr/T7868): 25-31. Cf. CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 369. Translation HEIMPEL 2003: 399.

86 ARM 26/2 420 (www.archibab.fr/T7638): 17-18. Cf. CHARPIN & DURAND 1997: 369.

87 ZIEGLER 2002: 228: "Pour l'instant, la question de la localisation exacte d'Ekallatum reste ouverte. Il paraît probable de la chercher sur la rive droite du Tigre et sûrement en amont d'Aššur. Le plus vraisemblable me paraît de supposer qu'une distance d'environ 10 à 30 km sépare les deux lieux, ce qui pourrait la localiser entre Tell Huwaiš (généralement identifiée avec Ubase néo-assyrienne) et Qayyara."

See PORTER 2006 for comments on the use of the map drawn by the Operational Navigation Chart (ONC G-4) by ZIEGLER 2002.

88 DERCKSEN 2004: 156-166.

89 On the Old Babylonian textual evidence cf. ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 94-95, who rule out an identification with Tell Haikal; on the Middle Assyrian documentation see CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2022: 38 and 157; on the Neo-Assyrian evidence BAGG 2017: 166-167.



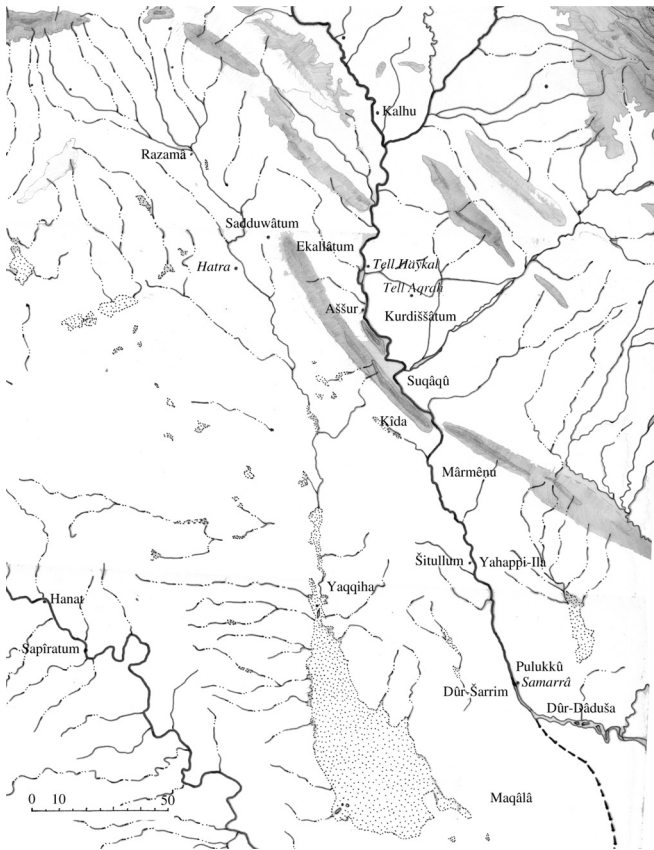


Fig. 1: Map of the Kingdom of Ekallatum as proposed by ZIEGLER 2002: 238 with tentative localisation of Ekallatum

ture.<sup>90</sup> Mark Altaweel, for example, discusses the question and leaves the answer open in his work on the Neo-Assyrian heartland, but places ‘Ekallati’ at Tell Haikal and Ubase at Khuwaish on his map.<sup>91</sup> Douglas Frayne could not be convinced of a localisation of Ekallatum west of the Tigris.<sup>92</sup> And even in a history of Babylonia published in 2018, Ekallatum is placed to the south of Aššur despite all written sources.<sup>93</sup>

90 SCARDOZZI 2011: 10; also the quite cautiously formulated presentation in the 5th Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft on the topic of *Aššur – Gott, Stadt und Land* can be mentioned, see POSTGATE 2011: 88.

91 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 45. Map on Pl. 3, Fig. 9.

92 FRAYNE 2012: 38 suggests a Tell Khoueitla southeast of Aššur and east of the Tigris as an identification. Where this tell might be located, however, cannot be determined; we know of no tell of this name in this area.

93 BEAULIEU 2018: 77 describes the career of Šamši-Adad: “Later he left Babylon and seized the city of Ekallatum, probably located on the Tigris at not too great a distance from Assur. After three years he captured Assur”. In the map “Map 3.2” p. 81 one finds Ekallatum in the south of Aššur near the confluence of the Lower Zab and the Tigris.

## 2.5 Compilation of the search criteria based on the text documentation

When searching for a localisation of Ekallatum, the following criteria must be taken into account, which we compile here telegram-style.

Ekallatum was

- a site west of the Tigris, one day footwalk north of Aššur,
- the capital city of Šamši-Adad, perhaps existing before his conquest under another name,
- the residence city of Išme-Dagan, with residences from other high dignitaries. All members of the Šamši-Adad administration are called “Ekallateans” after the collapse of his reign. The site perhaps continued to play a political role in the following decades, with moments of political difficulties between Ekallatum and Aššur,
- a city with occupation in the Middle Assyrian period,
- an important provincial city in the “Inner City district” of the Neo-Assyrian empire situated on the King’s Road.

## 3. Proposals for identification with archaeological sites to date

Three significant proposals for the localisation of Ekallatum have been made so far. We present these in the following.

### 3.1 Tell Haikal / Hekel (Hig. No. 416), East: 43.272797 / North: 35.597384<sup>94</sup>

As already explained above, Ekallatum has been identified since the proposal by W. W. Hallo with Tell Haikal, which lies about 15 km north of Aššur on the eastern bank of the Tigris. This suggestion was largely based on the alleged similarity of the name. Several authors followed this suggestion of identification regretting that they never visited the site themselves.<sup>95</sup> For example, David Oates writes about Ekallatum:<sup>96</sup>

94 We refer to archaeological sites under their “Hig. No.,” which means the “Higeomes number” assigned to the archaeological tell or site in the French-German HIGEOMES project (funded by ANR/DFG) on the ‘Historical Geograpy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium in Upper Mesopotamia’. For the sites see FINK 2016, for the Old Babylonian textual references see Ziegler & Langlois 2016, for the Middle Assyrian references see CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2016. For Tell Haikal/Hekel see FINK 2016: 69 and ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016: 93–95.

95 HALLO 1964: 72 fn. 8; OATES 1968: 38-39 fn. 5; READE 1978: 170.

96 OATES 1968: 38 fn. 5.

„I cannot help being struck by the similarity of the name to modern Tell Haikal, on the east bank of the Tigris 15 km. north of Aššur. I have unfortunately been unable to visit the site, which is said to be a large mound with evidence of Late Assyrian occupation. Since this note was written the position of Ekallatum north of Aššur has been established by the discovery of a complete copy of the 'Illinois Itinerary' (A. Goetze, JCS, vii (1953), 65. The new text places Ekallatum between Aššur and Apqum (Tell Abu Marya).”

Subsequent researchers adopted this identification Ekallatum = Tell Haikal.

To our knowledge, only Walter Bachmann in 1913, Jorgen Laessøe in 1964/1965 and Reinhard Dittmann in 1989 have visited the mound and published their visit so far.<sup>97</sup> The description by W. Bachmann, a fellow architect of Walter Andrae in Aššur, was found by R. Dittmann in his estate and published in 1995. W. Bachmann describes the “Ruine Hekel” as an extensive city of about 1,5 by 1 km, without any city wall, but with remains of ancient canals,<sup>98</sup> the city area being marked by innumerable small and larger mounds of debris, on which large quantities of sherds of all periods, baked bricks (partly inscribed or stamped) and basalt stones were found. Furthermore, Bachmann mentions the remains of larger buildings in regularly bordered mounds. In the southern part of the ruin directly on the bank break-off, Bachmann notes a building whose 2 m thick mud-brick walls were covered with orthostate slabs from baked clay. Additionally, many fragments of stamped bricks bearing the word *ekalli* were found there; Bachmann therefore concluded that there had been a palace or another kind of large building. Bachmann refers in his notes to this entry to the Sennacherib account of the gods of Ekallate, and thus seems to have assumed as early as 1913 that “Hekel” was to be identified with “Ekallate”. However, W. W. Hallo could not have been aware of this hypothesis, since Bachmann's notes were only published much later.

R. Dittmann dealt in detail with the location of Ekallatum<sup>99</sup>. He doubted the identification of Tell Haikal with Ekallatum because he had surveyed the site for several hours in 1989, but had not found any Old Assyrian material on the surface, although the mounds were covered with looters' holes. He concluded:<sup>100</sup>

97 DITTMANN 1995.

98 DITTMANN 1995: 92.

99 DITTMANN 1995: 100-102.

100 DITTMANN 1995: 101: “Eine bedeutende altassyrische Siedlung ist hier also wohl nicht zu erwarten; eine kleinere sei dagegen nicht ausgeschlossen.”

“An important Old Assyrian settlement is therefore not to be expected here; a smaller one, on the other hand, cannot be ruled out.”

Dittmann found Middle Assyrian pottery of the 13th century as well as Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic pottery. According to Dittmann, the stamped bricks that Bachmann had picked up dated to the Middle Assyrian kings Shalmaneser I and Adad-nirari I.<sup>101</sup>

Jorgen Laessøe<sup>102</sup> was also interested in Tell Haikal because of the Old Babylonian itineraries and convinced by the homophony of Haikal and Ekallatum. He visited the ruins in 1964 and 1965 and commented on the survival of the place name as follows:<sup>103</sup>

“On the map ‘Baghdad’, Series 1301, Sheet N 1-38, Edition 7-GSGS (Director of Military Service, War Office, London, 1962 [World 1:1,000,000]), where the three Isdira villages appear under the designation ‘Sudaira’, there is the annotation ‘Haichat’ (Ruined) (-t obvious truncation for -l) for the area referred to by the local population as Tulul el-Haikal (‘haikal’ locally often pronounced palalised as ‘haičal’). Tulul el-Haikal, ‘Haikal-hills’ (tulul, pluralis of Arab. tell ‘ruinhill’), is linguistically indistinguishable from Akkadian *ekallatum* ‘palaces’, plur. of *ekallum*, one of the relatively few Sumerian loan words (Sumerian é-gal ‘great house’ which has survived in Hebrew *hékhal* ‘royal palace; temple’, Biblical Aramaic *hékhal* and Egyptian Aramaic *haikhêlâ* (same meaning); Thus the Akkadian *ekallum* ‘palace’ was transmitted through Aramaic or Syriac into Arabic, and there was therefore much likelihood that an old place-name like Ekallatum might have survived in the form Haikal.”

J. Laessøe concluded, on the basis of material collected from the surface and soundings by M. A. Mustafa, that

101 DITTMANN 1995: 101.

102 LAESSØE 1966: 32-33 fn 25. Parts of the footnote were translated from Danish into English by J. Eidem in EIDEM & HOJLUND 1997: 31.

103 LAESSØE 1966: 32 Fn. 25 (Translation above by DeepL): “På kortet ‘Baghdad’, Series 1301, Sheet N 1-38, Edition 7-GSGS (Director of Military Service, War Office, London, 1962 [World 1:1.000.000]), hvor de tre Isdira-landsbyer figurerer under betegnelsen ‘Sudaira’, findes notatet ‘Haichat’ (Ruined) (-t indlysende Trykfejlt for -l) for det område, som den lokale befolkning betegner som Tulul el-Haikal (‘haikal’ lokalt ofte udtalt palaliseret som ‘haičal’). Tulul el-Haikal, ‘Haikal-hojene’ (tulul, pluralis af arab. tell ‘ruinhoj’), kan linguistik ikke adskilles fra akkadisk *ekallatum* ‘paladser’, plur. af *ekallum*, et af de relativt få sumeriske læncord (sumerisk é-gal ‘stort hus’ som har levet videre i hebraisk (...) *hékhal* ‘kongepalads; tempel’, bibelsk aramæisk (...) *hékhal* og ægyptisk aramæisk (...) *haikhêlâ* (samme betydning); således et det akkadiske *ekallum* ‘palads’ gennem aramæisk eller syrisk overleveret til arabisk, og der var derfor megen sandsynlighed, for, at et gammelt stdnavn som Ekallatum kunde have levet videre i formen Haikal.”

the flat, extensive ruined site of Haikal was an important city of the Neo-Assyrian, Post-Assyrian—especially Parthian—and Islamic periods. Nevertheless, he remarked with astonishment:<sup>104</sup>

„Tulul el-Haykal was an extensive site with many low mounds, but there was no high mound which might testify a long-term occupation or a zikkurat.”

To explain this, he suggested that Ekallatum (= Tell Haikal) may not have been permanently inhabited. He concluded by mentioning the ruins of the supposed ancient Ubase (see below, § 5.) on the opposite river-bank:<sup>105</sup>

“In sum, it must be regarded as highly likely that the ruins of Ekallatum hide beneath the low mounds of Tulul el-Haikal. Within view is the cone of the zikkurat in Kâr-Tukulti-Ninurta (now Tulul el-Aqr); on the opposite bank towards the southwest the widespread ruins of Assur are visible and directly opposite Haikal are the ruins of the Assyrian Ubase (now Huwaish), which the Assyrian texts firmly associated with Ekallatum.”

In his book on the heartland of Assyria, Marc Altaweel also mentions excavations in Haikal, which also did not record any early layers:<sup>106</sup>

“Recent Iraqi Archaeological excavations have only shown post-Neo-Assyrian remains at the site, but these results are not published.”

Meanwhile, some results of the Iraqi excavations by Burhān S. Sulaiman have been published.<sup>107</sup> However, most of them date to the Christian period. Another publication indicates that structures of monumental buildings, all of them belonging to the 1st millennium B.C. and A.D., were excavated within the extended settlement area consisting of several small elevations of little height.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the identity of Tell Haikal with Ekallatum has also been assumed by some Iraqi colleagues until recently.<sup>109</sup>

The aerial photographs available today confirm the results of the above-mentioned surveys: Haikal is an oval flat settlement of little height, measuring approximately 1300 by 800 m. Neither a city wall nor a prominent main mound are discernible.<sup>110</sup> Pottery and other surface finds date exclusively to the periods between the Middle Assyrian and the Islamic periods. In sum, neither the archaeolog-

ical material found on the surface nor the excavated areas nor the overall structure and lay-out of the site contain even the slightest hint to identify Tell Haikal with Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian Ekallatum.

### 3.2 Tell Aqrah / Akrah (Hig. No. 14; East: 43.420447; North: 35.502376)

The above described lack of positive evidence for the identification of Ekallatum with Tell Haikal led R. Dittmann to search for Ekallatum further inland on the eastern side of the Tigris. According to Dittmann, Tell Aqrah in the Mahmur Plain, about 20km east of Aššur, was an ideal candidate: it is about 15-25 ha in size and consists of a central tell enclosed by a polygonal ring. It was visited in 1913/14 by W. Bachmann, in 1948 by M. al-Amin and M. Mallowan, who also made soundings, and again by R. Dittmann in 1989.<sup>111</sup> Allegedly, the material on the surface dates only from the second millennium and is predominantly Old Assyrian, including Habur and Nuzi pottery. According to R. Dittmann, the site lost importance after the Middle Assyrian period.

Essential to Dittmann's identification proposal is the assumed inland location of Ekallatum, as erroneously suggested by M. Birot in 1973 (see above § 1.3.2.). Therefore, Dittmann proposes to identify Ekallatum with Tell Aqrah, Tell Huwaish with Adum, and Haikal with B/Manine.<sup>112</sup> However, this argumentation is invalid because the Mari text TH 72.2 does not indicate an itinerary to Ekallatum but to Nineveh (see § 2.3.2.), and the Tell Aqrah identification can now be ruled out with certainty.

### 3.3 Tell ed-Dahab

E. Forrer, in his seminal work on the provincial division of Assyria, proposed to identify Ekallatum with Tell ed-Dahab, which lies on the east side of the Tigris south of Aššur and south of the confluence of the Little Zab with the Tigris.<sup>113</sup> The reasoning was based on the Assyrian king lists, and on the reconstruction of Marduk-nadin-ahhe's campaign against Assyria, which could lead to the assumption that Ekallatum was located south of Aššur. Already at the beginning of the 1930s, F. H. Weißbach argued against

104 LAESSØE 1966: 32 fn. 25, translation EIDEM & HOJLUND 1997: 31.

105 LAESSØE 1966: 32 fn. 25, translation EIDEM & HOJLUND 1997: 31.

106 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 34.

107 SULAIMAN 2010.

108 SALEH 2020.

109 AL-HAMIDHA 2020a.

110 The only noticeable structure is a square elevation about 90 m on a side, which looks like a fort.

111 DITTMANN 1995: 95–96, 102, Abb. 6a, 6b; EL-AMIN & MALLOWAN 1950: pl. IV.

112 DITTMANN 1995: 102; for his proposed identifications see his map of the Mahmur plain, *ibid.*: 88, Abb. 1.

113 FORRER 1920: 11-12.

this localisation, even though he still assumed Ekallatum to be south of Aššur (§ 2.2.1). But not only the textual evidence (see § 2) excludes the localisation of Ekallatum south of Aššur, but also the archaeological evidence speaks against the identification with Tell ed-Dahab, since no material from the Old Babylonian / Old Assyrian period has been attested.<sup>114</sup>

#### 4. The new identification of Ekallatum = Tell Huwaish (Hig. No. 417; East: 43.231166; North: 35.593622)

We want to suggest in this study not to equate Ekallatum with any of the three tells mentioned in § 3, neither with Tell Haikal (§ 3.1), nor with Tell Akrah (§ 3.2) and by no means with Tell ed-Dahab (§ 3.3). Instead, we propose to locate Ekallatum in Tell Huwaish on the western bank of the Tigris, about 16 km north of Aššur, i.e. only a short day's journey apart, on an ancient road connection (Fig. 2).

##### 4.1 Archaeological artefacts and features according to inspections of the site by W. Bachmann and D. Oates

The first documented visit of Tell Huwaish was made by Walter Bachmann, who was a member of the German excavation team in Aššur from 1908-1914. Probably in 1914<sup>115</sup>, Bachmann travelled east of the Tigris through the Mahmur plain, which is framed by the Tigris and the Lower and Upper Zab; additionally, he visited a few sites north of Aššur on the west bank of the Tigris. However, his descriptions of the ancient sites were only published in 1995 by R. Dittmann, who had access to his bequest and reproduced Bachmann's notes *verbatim* in his essay.<sup>116</sup>

W. Bachmann described the location of Huwaish on a steeply rising natural plateau, which was naturally protected on three sides. He highlighted the similarity between the location of "Tell Huweish" and that of Aššur: Huwaish was also located at the southern end of a plain, in this case the larger Chenaf plain, just as Aššur is situated at the southern end of the Sherqat plain. Furthermore, it also lay high above the Tigris valley on a steeply sloping pla-

teau. This had been cut on the southern side by the Wadi Chenaf coming from the northwest in such a way that a tongue of the natural plateau rises sharply from north to south. Only the west side thus offered a fortificatory weak point, which in turn had to be fortified by a mighty rampart. W. Bachmann noted the considerable width of this rampart or city wall, which in his opinion was probably made of mudbrick and had no tower protrusions, but gates which were visible in two places. He assumed that if there had been a ditch in front of the wall, it must have been a shallow one.<sup>117</sup> The latter observation is the only one which seems to be outdated today, since the satellite imagery shows clearly a ditch outside the mighty city wall.

Bachman gives the considerable size of the settlement in NW-SE direction as about 1.5 km. As for archaeological material that could give an approximate clue to dating, he mentions gravel paving in some places, which he compares with that of Neo-Assyrian houses in Aššur. He further described baked bricks being common and mentions one inscribed brick fragment referred to the palace of a governor which he had found on the dominant elevation in the

117 W. Bachmann described "Tell Huweish" as follows (cf. DITTMANN 1995: 91-92): "Wie die Stadt Assur am Südende der Scherqätebene, liegt diese Ruine am entsprechenden Ende der größeren Chenafebene. Eine steil abfallende Hochplateauwand begrenzt auch hier die breite Alluvialebene. In dieses Plateau schneidet das von Nordwesten aus der Wüste kommende Wadi Chenaf eine breite, tiefe Rinne ein, die ebenfalls am Südende der Chenafebene den Tigris erreicht. Es entsteht so eine stark ansteigende Hochplateauzunge, die nur von der Wüstenseite her leicht zugänglich war. Diese Zunge war aber leicht mit einfachen Mitteln abzuschließen und zur Befestigung auszubauen. So erklärt es sich, daß nur an der offenen Westseite des Stadtgebietes ein Wallzug vorhanden ist. Das Ruinengebiet selbst ist recht ausgedehnt, in der Nordwest-Südost-Richtung ca 1 ½ km, doch sind die Spuren der Besiedlung verhältnismäßig gering. Fundamente werden überhaupt nirgends an der Oberfläche sichtbar, an einigen Stellen tritt aber Kiespflaster zu Tage, wie man es in Häusern der jungassyrischen Periode in Assur findet.

Bruchstücke von Basaltskulpturen fehlen anscheinend ganz, ebenso Gipsplattenbruchstücke. Gebrannte Ziegel sind häufig. Größere Erhebungen, die auf Terrassierungen oder größere Gebäude schließen lassen könnten, sind nicht vorhanden. An vielen Stellen des Stadtgebietes, vor allem am Südost-Ende der Zunge tritt der Kies-Fels zu Tage.

Der Wall bestand vermutlich nur aus einer lang durchgehenden Mauer aus Lehmziegeln von anscheinend beträchtlicher Breite. Turmvorsprünge markieren sich nirgends. An zwei Stellen ist der Wallzug unterbrochen, so daß man hier Tore annehmen könnte. Ein Graben scheint überhaupt nicht vorhanden gewesen zu sein, beziehungsweise wenn, dann höchstens flach.

Die Scherben finden sich gehäuft an einigen Stellen des südöstlichen Stadtgebietes und in der Nähe des Walls, auffallend wenige im mittleren Stadtgebiet (Plätze?). Ein beschriftetes Ziegelbruchstück fand sich auf der dominierenden Kuppe im Südosten, erwähnt Palast eines Statthalters."

114 DITTMANN 1995: 100 with fn. 20.

115 The sketch map redrawn by DITTMANN 1995: Abb. 2 dates from 1914, therefore we assume that the journey took place in 1914.

116 DITTMANN 1995. The fact that Dittmann's identification for Ekallatum with Tell Aqrah is no longer tenable today was explained in § 3.2. However, his discovery and reproduction of Bachmann's account is of lasting value.





Fig. 2: General situation of Tell Huwaish and Tell Haikal north of Aššur on the Tigris (map B. Einwag based on ESRI satellite image 2023)



southeast. He mentions masses of sherds—unfortunately not saying anything about their dating—in various places in the south-eastern part of the city and near the city wall.

The mound was visited for the second time by David Oates. He describes the site thus:<sup>118</sup>

“...Tell Huwaish, overlooking the Tigris 20 km. north of Assur”

“The site of Tell Huwaish (...) lies on a tongue of elevated land between the Tigris valley and the Wadi Jirnaf, overlooking the modern railway station of Jirnaf. It has no obvious citadel mound. A conglomerate bluff at the southern tip of the ridge may originally have served this purpose, but there seems to be no great accumulation of artificial debris on its summit, which is now heavily eroded. There is a considerable scatter of pottery, including post-Assyrian types, on the slope of the bluff and on the low mounds on the undulating ground to the north. The most prominent feature of the site is the north wall, which runs across the neck of the promontory about 1 km. from its southern end. This is still up to 8 m. high on the exterior face, with traces of a ditch.”

It has to be stressed that D. Oates speaks of the considerable amount of pottery on the surface, but is not explicit about the dating of the potsherds. Since the main interest of his study was clearly oriented towards the late history of Northern Iraq, he mentions that the pottery was “including post-Assyrian types”. However, this has been mis-interpreted by numerous later scholars who never visited the site, but nevertheless claimed that the site dated uniquely to the post-Assyrian period.

#### 4.2 Description of the urban structure of Tell Huwaish after evaluation of the satellite images

Fortunately, more and better satellite images of the area investigated here have been made accessible in recent years, which gives a whole new significance to remote sensing as an important method in the study of historical geography. CORONA images from the 1960s as well as ASTER images and DigiGlobe images are today an invaluable source

in the study of this region north of Aššur and west of the Tigris, which has been largely untouched by archaeological fieldwork.<sup>119</sup>

Indeed, the features described by W. Bachmann and D. Oates can be well traced on the aerial photographs, especially the Corona satellite images from the 1960s,<sup>120</sup> and on aerial photographs of this century (Fig. 2). But even additional and more precise information can be obtained from the satellite images (Figs. 3a, 3b).

The town is of an elongated-oval shape and very large measuring about 1400-1800 m NW-SE and about 700-750 m SW-NE. This makes an area of about 108 ha and a circumference of about 4.5 km—larger than Old Assyrian Aššur and any other Old Assyrian / Old Babylonian mound of the region. It is protected on the northern and western flanks by a mighty city wall with—to judge from the satellite imagery—a moat or ditch in front of it. A large city gate can be seen in the north, named ‘Northern Gate’ by us, and at least three more gates further south in the western flank, and possibly one or two gates in the east.<sup>121</sup> The eastern flank of the town slopes so steeply down to the Tigris valley that no fortification may have been necessary here or has been eroded over the millennia.

Aerial photographs show that the settlement of Huwaish consists of an extensive lower town to the north-west and an elevated citadel to the southeast. The Citadel alone measures about 750-800 by 350-450 metres. Another elevation can be seen on the aerial photographs, situated on the outer southern point of the citadel; we refer to it as the Akropolis.<sup>122</sup>

The fortified city is situated—similar to Aššur—on a natural elevation, which is given a triangular top by the confluence of the Wadi Jirnaf (or Chenaf) with the Tigris. As regards the urban structure and size, it is striking that the citadel's location on the promontory that juts into the valley is, firstly, strategically ideal. Secondly, it becomes evident that prominent buildings such as temples, which should have been erected on the citadel and/or the acropolis, must have shaped the cityscape from afar, similar to Aššur (e.g. in the famous reconstructions by Walter Andrae).

118 OATES 1968: 59-60 with fn. 5. D. Oates had already cautioned against confusing the two sites called Tell Huwaish (*ibidem* fn. 5): “The site of Tell Huwaish (not to be confused with Tell Huwaish south of Beled Sinjar...) lies on a tongue...”. Unfortunately, this happened to us in MTT I/3 (FINK 2016: 69) s.v. Hig. No. 417 (Khuwaish, Tall). Therefore, the following shall be deleted from the entry there: „Grabung“, the dating to the LBA (I), as well as literature “OATES 1985a”. The homonymous site “south of Beled Sindjar” is Hig. No. 63 (Hwesh, Tall) (FINK 2016: 11). The identification there with “mAss: UBASĒ” is to be deleted.

119 The coverage of the area with satellite imagery has been well presented by Simone Mühl (MÜHL 2013 : pl. 3). M. Altaweel's study of the area was predominantly based on satellite images and the results of surveys by previous archaeologists (ALTAWEEL 2008).

120 <https://corona.cast.uark.edu/atlas#zoom=15&center=4812751,4244642>.

121 Possibly one of the southern gates was called the “Aššur Gate”, see § 2.3.3.

122 A single square building stands out on the aerial photographs, which should measure about 50m on a side if the erosion debris on the flanks around it is deduced. What kind of building of what period we are dealing with here, would have to be investigated on site.



Fig. 3a: Modern satellite image of Tell Hūwāish (ESRI satellite 2023)



Fig. 3b. Analysis of the Corona satellite image of Tell Hūwāish and measurements (mapping by B. Einwag on Corona base map, August 16, 1968)



If we summarise all this information, Tell ̤uwaish is a strategically perfectly situated site, strongly fortified on the fortificatory sensitive sides to the west and north-west by a massive city wall with a moat in front of it. The city is located at a particularly wide plain of the fertile river valley, which would guarantee the supply of a medium-sized population. The lower city would offer sufficient space for thousands of people, either in built houses or in camps during periods of war and tension. The more elevated citadel, separated from the Lower Town by another wall, with the acropolis on the extreme edge high above the valley, speaks for a functional differentiation of the urban structure, where presumably public or sacred buildings were to be separated from the more domestic quarters.

Given the remarkable morphology and extensive size of Tell ̤uwaish, it is therefore extremely surprising that the site has not been considered as a candidate for Ekallatum earlier. This is partly because the site was usually identified with Ubase (see § 5) and partly because the dating of the site was uncertain due to lacking excavation or survey data (see § 6).

#### 4.3 Tell ̤uwaish as the starting point of a large long-distance road from the Tigris valley towards the northwest = the King's Road ?

Furthermore, Tell ̤uwaish also seems to be ideally situated in terms of transport and trade, as the Tell is a departure point where a direct route to the north or northwest leads to Jebel Sinjar and further into the Habur Triangle. Starting from the northern city gate, a major route can be observed on CORONA satellite imagery, running dead straight to the NNW (Fig. 4). This route was still visible in the terrain, at least until the 1960s. David Oates described this ancient route, which he followed on his survey of the area:<sup>123</sup>

“An opening near the middle of the wall seems to mark the site of a gate, and from this point the faint trace of an ancient road can be followed across country for some 18 km., running north-west in the direction of Tell Afar.”

This road or route begins directly at the northern city gate of ̤uwaish, and it even continues inside the Lower Town until the Citadel, where a slight depression in the north wall may indicate the Citadel's gate giving access to this major road. It is very likely that an important route is hidden here, which was probably just as much the usu-

al trade route of Old Assyrian merchants as the so-called “King's Road” of the 1st millennium. Because routes from the Tigris valley near Aššur towards the upper Tharthar, Sinjar and Habur triangle (and, if necessary, further in the direction of Anatolia) are only possible here in the approximately 30km wide corridor between the Jebel Najma and the Jebel Makhul in SSE–NNW direction. If one did not take this route, one would have to follow the valley in a NNE direction and then turn NW much further north at the height of Kalhu or Nineveh. However, this meant a diversion, and moreover, there were several valleys and rapids in the Tigris (e.g. the rapids near Qayyara) to negotiate.

This important route can be traced in satellite imagery for more than 25 km (see also Ziegler, Otto & Fink 2023 this volume, Fig. 11). It may even be assumed that it was regularly guarded with towers or road stations. Possibly, these can still be traced on the ground. D. Oates (1968: 59-60) described these features, which are rarely found in archaeology, as follows:

“At intervals of some 4km., where the road crosses the crest of a ridge, there are small mounds between 5 and 10 m. in diameter. On these only a few sherds of indeterminate character were found. Their purpose is obscure; they are well sited for signal stations but seem unnecessarily close to one another. Only four were identified and their siting may be fortuitous. Clearly, however, an important north-west road has at some time gained the Tigris valley at Tell ̤uwaish, and the site itself was important enough to warrant the construction of an imposing rampart on the north, the only side without natural defenses. Excavations would be necessary to determine when this took place.”

The dating of the stations is not clear from Oates' description. However, the fact that this eminent scholar, who was particularly interested and specialized in the Late Period at the time, could not date the sherds he picked up at the stations, could possibly be an indication of the greater age of the sherds.

D. Oates traced the route from Tell ̤uwaish further NW until Tell Afar, i.e. over about 100 km, on his map entitled “North Iraq in the Parthian period”, but the roads in this region, which has been sparsely populated throughout the ages until today, were probably in continuous use.<sup>124</sup> M. Altaweel also assumed due to the “long-distance hollow ways northwest of the site” that Tell ̤uwaish was “a relatively significant settlement” and—on the basis of the visible remains of a road system on the east bank of the Tigris—a major crossing point.<sup>125</sup> He even does not exclude

123 OATES 1968: 59-60 with fn. 5.

124 OATES 1968: 76 fig. 5. See ZIEGLER, OTTO & FINK 2023 (this volume), fig. 10.

125 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 68 fig. 19.

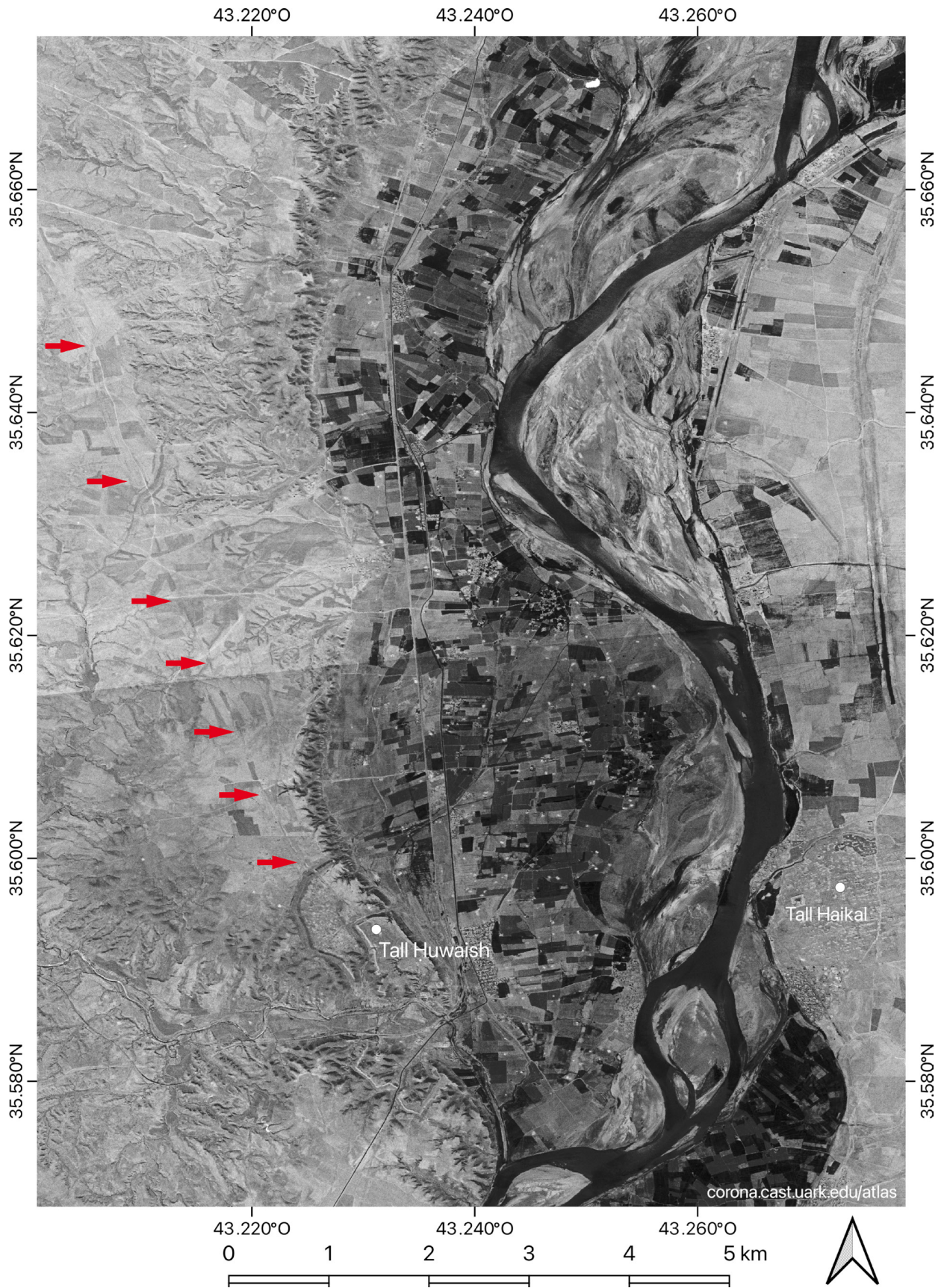


Fig. 4: Major ancient long-distance road starting at the Northern Gate of Tell Ḥuwaish = the King's Road ? (Corona satellite image 1968)



the localisation of Ekallatum in Ḥuwaish but he does not commit himself, as he has never visited the place.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.4 Tell Ḥuwaish and Tell Haikal on either side of a ford

As we have shown in § 1, the strongest argument for an identification of Ekallatum with Tell Haikal was the relative homophony. Can it be that this similarity had reasons in the history of settlement? Or is the phonetic proximity of the two toponyms, separated by millennia, merely due to coincidence?

In the Near East, it was not uncommon for settlements to be located directly opposite each other on both sides of a large river. Especially where rivers could be easily crossed, these settlements also had the function of bridgeheads. Sometimes, over the centuries, a settlement shifted from one bank to the other, which was related, among other things, to the accessibility of the fields located in the valley and the main roads. Good evidence for the existence of two important cities on both sides of the Tigris are Nineveh—Mosul or Seleucia—Ctesiphon. Known examples of two Bronze Age cities on either side of the Euphrates at one ford are Yakaltum/Ekalte (Tell Munbaqa, Hig. No. 90) and Azu (Tell Hadidi, Hig. No. 49), or in the Suhum Yabliya (Tell al-Judafia, Hig. No. 734) and Yabliya-al-kapim (Tell Shishin, Hig. No. 682).<sup>127</sup>

The floodplain at Ḥuwaish measures 3km in a west-east direction and forms a large alveolus; various backwaters on the aerial photographs show that sometimes the Tigris must have flowed right past Ḥuwaish. Directly opposite on the other side of the river is Tell Haikal. It is possible that Ḥuwaish and Haikal were twin settlements whose population may have lived in one place or the other, depending on where the Tigris dug its bed. Today the Tigris runs directly along the western edge of Haikal, but the various meanders show that at times the Tigris must have run directly along the eastern edge of Ḥuwaish. The shift in settlement could therefore have depended to the accessibility of arable land; for in this borderland of the rain-fed farming zone, the broad valley floodplain guaranteed sufficient yields, whereas cereal cultivation on land outside the fertile valley was far less productive, and even

not guaranteed at all in dry years.<sup>128</sup> The Corona images also show that the upper reaches of the Tigris form even larger fertile areas than here in only two places, namely at Nineveh and Kalhu. The place for the supply of a large city was therefore ideally chosen here.

Therefore, it cannot be completely ruled out that settlements were made on both sides of the river at the same time in some periods. As we will see in § 5.1, this is possible for the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods. An important factor for the close connection of the two cities on both sides of the Tigris, and an explanation for why the King's Road begins exactly at Tell Ḥuwaish, is a ford that lies between Ḥuwaish and Haikal. This ford is one of the few easy crossing points along the upper reaches of the Tigris that was indicated on Kiepert's map of 1893.<sup>129</sup>

M. Altaweel also concludes from his study of hollow ways that "Tell Khuwaish... may have been a major crossing point..." and "a major node in a long-distance road system northwest of the site... and possibly to the northeast...", by the latter meaning the hollow ways continuing east of the Tigris.<sup>130</sup>

## 5. Arguments against the identification of Tell Ḥuwaish with Ubase

One of the main reasons why Ekallatum was not identified with Tell Ḥuwaish earlier, is that Ḥuwaish has been identified with Ubase until recently, as well in literature and in maps.<sup>131</sup> However, the localisation of Ubase at Tell Ḥuwaish was not originally the only existing hypothesis. With good arguments it had also been proposed to equate Ubase with Qayyara. In the following we want to get to the bottom of this question. Does Ubase really have to be searched for in present-day Ḥuwaish?

128 As the river valley is deeply cut into the natural ridges, the areas outside the valley can only be irrigated by means of canals running off far above, as was also established on the eastern side of the Tigris: see the canals on W. Bachmann's map, DITTMANN 1995: 88 fig. 1. In general, this region lies at the edge of the rain-fed agriculture.

129 Richard Kiepert made his highly significant map in 1893, on which he recorded many routes of travellers, including Max Freiherr von Oppenheim's journey (KIEPERT 1893). Oppenheim noted this ford on his 1893 journey from Mosul to Baghdad, which he covered on a kelek boat (OPPENHEIM 1900: 207). Overall, he does not note many fords along the Tigris, which can be easily crossed in a few places only.

130 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 68 and caption to Pl. 7, Fig. 19.

131 See for instance most recently AL-HAMIDHA 2020b, SCARDOZZI 2011. For the map by OATES (1968) see ZIEGLER, OTTO & FINK this volume, Fig. 10.

126 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 45 claims: "Other possibilities for the location of Ekallate include Tell Khuwaish and Qaiyara, which might be candidates for the Old Babylonian period location of the town."

127 CHARPIN & MILLET ALBÀ 2009; RUMAIYDH 2010.

## 5.1 The state of the debate on Ubase in the relevant research tools

Before we delve into the question of identification, let us look at how the relevant scholarly research tools present the evidence for the Assyrian site of Ubase.

Khaled Nashef sums up the bibliography on the state of research concerning Middle Assyrian textual documentation:<sup>132</sup>

“E. Forrer, *Provinzeint.* 105 (nach F. Delitsch): = Tall al-Ḥuwēš, ca. 18 km nördlich von Aššur auf dem westl. Ufer des Tigris (s. auch D. Oates bei J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *Wine Lists* 111). Zur Untersuchung des Talls s. D. Oates, *Studies* 595. In *Sites 177* ist Tall al-Ḥuwēš als nA angegeben. W. Andrae, *FWA* 153: = ‘Gajara’ (Qayyāra?), 30 km nördlich von Aššur.”

Similarly, one reads in MTT I/2 on Middle Assyrian Ubase, for which there are four different textual references:<sup>133</sup>

“Stadt in der Nähe von → Aššur. Eine Identifizierung mit dem heutigen T. Ḥuwēš, ca. 15 km nördlich von Assur, ist möglich.”

On the Neo-Assyrian documentation, Ariel Bagg writes a detailed commentary,<sup>134</sup> leaving open whether the toponym is to be identified with Tell Ḥuwaish or with Qayyara—the latter because Ubase is mentioned in connection with bitumen.

In the Helsinki Atlas, “Ubasê” is located in Tell Ḥuwaish and lies opposite “Ekallati”, which is recorded on

the eastern bank of the river at Tell Haikal.<sup>135</sup> Surprisingly, there is no entry for Ubase in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*.

## 5.2 Line of reasoning for the alleged identification of Ubase with Tell Ḥuwaish

The proposal to identify Ubase with Tell Ḥuwaish has a long history but few decisive arguments. E. Forrer wrote regarding this city and invoked only the authority of F. Delitzsch:<sup>136</sup>

“Ubase. Ubase in der Bezirksliste K. 4386, I.6. Es muss eine sehr alte assyrische Stadt gewesen sein, da sie bereits bei Adad-nirari I. vorkommt (Br. M. Nr. 90978. R. 6). Fr. Delitzsch hat sie in den MDOG mit Tell Huwesh am Tigris (14 km im N von Assur) identifiziert.”

J. V. Kinnier Wilson uses a topographical argument suggested to him by D. Oates:<sup>137</sup>

“...Oates allows me to put forward his own suggestion that it is to be identified with the modern Tell Huwaish, about 15 km. north of Assur on the West bank. The Harper letter ABL 626<sup>138</sup>, which mentions in rev. 6-7 a reed-filled wady (*nablu*) at Ubasê can also be brought into the argument since at Tell Huwaish there terminates the only wady to be seen for many miles around.”

The latter is—in our opinion—really not a strong argument, since there are plenty of reed-filled wadis leading towards the Tigris.

M. Altaweel treats both Tell Haikal and Tell Ḥuwaish in detail. He seems undecided about the identifications, but prefers to identify Ubase with Ḥuwaish:<sup>139</sup>

“The town of Ubasê has been associated with Tell Khuwaish on the west bank of the Tigris, which lies about 15 km to the north of Ashur (Oates 1968:59; Nashef 1982:269; Parpola and Porter 2001:17)... There are other alternatives for the location of Ubasê, although none of these other candidates are as likely as Tell Khuwaish. The town of Qaiyara has been proposed by Bachmann and the Iraqi Atlas of Archaeological Sites (Dittmann 1995:88; Directorate General of Antiquities 1976). Both these identified sites have no clear historical data that would seem to support these claims.”

132 NASHEF 1982: 269. For the abbreviations see his bibliographical list p. XIIff. Most of the references are included again below.

133 CANGIC-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2016: 152. Bibliography *ibidem*.

134 BAGG 2017 vol. 2: 620. Abbreviations see vol. 1: XIff.: “Stadt am Tigris, nördlich von → Assur, CTN 3, S. 251 zu Z. 9, Zadok (1995a) 244, 4.2. FORRER (1920) 105 (nach einem Vorschlag von F. Delitzsch, gefolgt von Oates [1968a] 59 Anm. 5 u. auch CTN 1, S. 111) schlägt vor, U. mit Tall al-Ḥuwaiš, ca. 18 km nördlich von Assur am rechten Tigrisufer zu identifizieren. Da nach einigen mA Belegen U. in Verbindung mit Bitumen zu stehen scheint, wird von Andrae (1913) 153 (sowie auch Hannon [1986] 140-142, Postgate [CTN 3, loc. cit.] u. Reade [1978a] 170 Anm. 88) eine nördlichere Lage bei Qayyāra, ca. 40 km nördlich von Assur bevorzugt. Nach einer Inschrift des Adad-nārārī I., wurden ‘Kalkstein und Mörtel aus U.’ für Instandsetzungsarbeiten an der Kaimauer von Assur verwendet (RIMA 1, 76.8, 30; auch in id. 7, 42 im Zusammenhang mit dem Aššur-Tempel). In einer anderen Inschrift steht, dass für den gleichen Bau ‘Kalkstein und Bitumenmörtel’ verwendet wurden (RIMA 1, 76.9, 13-14). Obwohl im letzten Fall kein Herkunftsort genannt wird, ist nach der parallelen Stelle gewiss U. gemeint. TAVO Karte B IV 10 u. 13 (Tall al-Ḥuwaiš); Helsinki Atlas, 10. 28 (Tall al-Ḥuwaiš).”

135 PARPOLA & PORTER 2001: 28.

136 FORRER 1920: 105.

137 KINNIER WILSON & MALLOWAN 1972: 111.

138 Henceforth reedited as SAA 1 144.

139 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 44-45.

### 5.3 Textual evidence against the identification Tell Huwaish = Ubase

We have seen that relatively few meaningful written sources exist on the city of Ubase. This toponym is not known from the documentation of the Old Babylonian or Old Assyrian period. Inhabitants of Ubase are mentioned in texts of the Middle Assyrian or Neo-Assyrian period, without this allowing any conclusions about the location of the city<sup>140</sup>, but Ubase itself is not mentioned frequently.

Ubase was certainly located on the Tigris. Ṭab-šar-Aššur, the chief treasurer,<sup>141</sup> wrote to Sargon that his travelling party, which was following the river, coming from the “palace” had reached Ubase, where they were spending the night. The author announced his arrival for the following day and promised to have the transported cult objects brought to the temple of Aššur. This text, which obviously describes a journey down the Tigris from a Neo-Assyrian city of residence to Aššur, argues strongly against assuming Ubase only 15km upstream from Aššur, because otherwise one would certainly have tried to cover the short distance to Aššur on the same day.

Another text also argues for a greater distance from Ubase to Aššur. J. V. Kinnier Wilson quotes a letter, now SAA 1 144, whose sender needs reed:<sup>142</sup>

“They shall speak to the governor of Kalhu; there is reed in the wadi of Ubase.”

This shows on the one hand that Ubase was situated on a wadi. What is more interesting, however, is the fact that the reed cut in this wadi was in the hands of the governor of Kalhu, which makes an identification with Huwaish, 15 km from Aššur on the western bank, not very likely but rather argues for a more northerly localization (Fig. 5).

### 5.4 The most important product: “Earth from Ubase”

If the city of Ubase itself is mentioned quite little, it is a product associated with this city that was obviously famous: *epru ša Ubasê* “earth, mortar from Ubase”. This material is mentioned in the inscriptions of Adad-nerari I. Mortar from Ubase was used in various constructions, both in the renovation work on the Stepgate (RIMA 1 A.o.76.7) and on the renewed quai walls of Aššur (RIMA 1 A.o.76.8). The inscriptions say uniformly:<sup>143</sup>

140 Neo-Assyrian: BAGG 2017: 620; SAA 14 397: r.12, list not complete.

141 BAKER (ed.) 2011: 1344-1346 (PNA).

142 SAA 1 144 (= ABL 626): r.3-8. Translation PARPOLA 1987: 116.

143 GRAYSON 1987: 140-141; RIMA 1 A.o.76.8: 42.

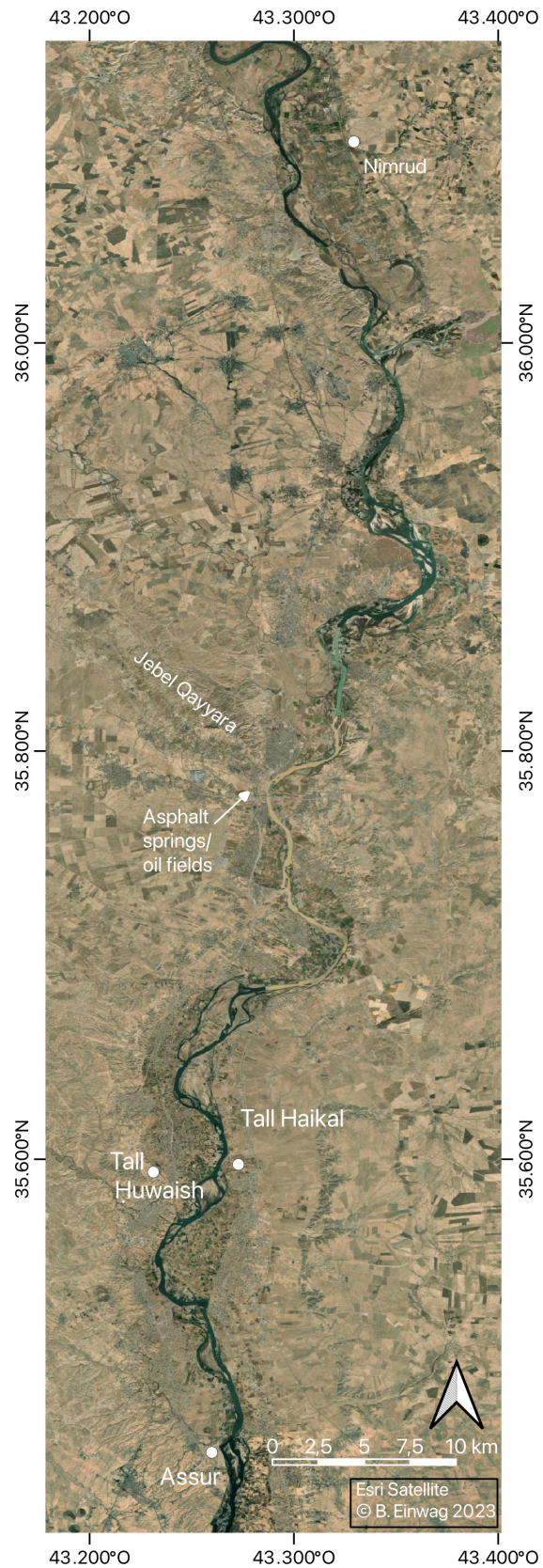


Fig. 5: The Tigris valley from Aššur to Kalhu with the modern oil fields / ancient asphalt springs near Qayyara (map B. Einwag based on ESRI satellite image 2023)



“I built (it) with limestone and mortar from the city Ubase” or more detailed for the renovation of the quay wall of Aššur:<sup>144</sup>

“I restored that facing (of the quay wall) with bitumen and baked brick (and) made it the thickness of 4 ½ bricks. I faced the back of it with limestone and mortar from the city Ubase and deposited my monumental inscription.”

Walter Andrae excavated the broad fortification wall on the river bank of the Tigris in Aššur, which had been built under Adadnirari I. It was very solidly built of large stone blocks with a facing of burnt bricks. The mortar was asphalt or an asphalt-clay mixture. This material is essential for mortaring baked bricks on those walls that are supposed to be watertight and protective against the river.<sup>145</sup> Andrae found several encapsulations in the masonry of this wall along the river, in which foundation documents of Adadnirari I were kept describing the construction work.<sup>146</sup> They mention “earth from Ubase” as the building material. For this reason, Andrae concluded that “earth from Ubase” was an asphalt-like mortar<sup>147</sup> and suggested to identify Ubase with “Gajara”, i.e. Qayyarah 30 km north of Aššur, because the nearest asphalt sources were located there.<sup>148</sup>

Julian Reade also shared W. Andrae’s identification:<sup>149</sup>

144 GRAYSON 1987: 140-141; RIMA 1 A.0.76.7: 29-31.

145 ANDRAE 1913: 149-150: “Sie [die Konstruktion Adadniraris I.] besteht aus einer 2 bis 5 m dicken Schichtung großer Semman-Kalksteinblöcke mit Asphaltmörtel, die an der Flußseite mit einer vier bis fünf Stein starken Verblendung aus gebrannten Ziegeln versehen ist.... Die Ziegel sind in recht gutem Verband in Lehm und Asphalt, an einigen Stellen auch nur in Asphalt- oder in Kiesasphaltmörtel verlegt. Ungefähr in den Mitten der Zähne... sind hin und wieder kleine Hohlräume vorgefunden worden... In ihnen waren die Tontafel-Bauurkunden der Ufermauer niedergelegt.“

146 See above. The various exemplars of the text were edited as RIMA 1 A.0.76.7.

147 ANDRAE 1913: 152-153: “Von den gebrannten, ca. 31 x 18 cm großen, schön beschrifteten Tontafelurkunden Adadniraris I., die... in den „Kapseln“ des Ziegelmauerwerkes niedergelegt gewesen sind, haben sich mehrere Stücke gefunden, davon eines in situ (s. S. 161). Der Hauptteil der Inschrift lehrt uns die beiden Grenzen der Ufermauer kennen, das Ea-Tor „oben“ und das Tigris-Tor „unten“... Die Angabe, daß die Ziegelverkleidung 4 ½ Stein stark gemacht worden sei, stimmt, wie wir sahen, im allgemeinen mit dem Befund überein. Der kutalu aus Bruchsteinen und Erde von Ubasê muß die Hintermauerung aus Semman-Kalksteinblöcken in Asphaltmörtel sein. Wir gewinnen dadurch eine gesicherte Spezialbedeutung für kutalu = Hintermauerung und für êpru ša <sup>34</sup>Ubasê = asphaltartiger Erde, die sich als Mörtel verwenden ließ. Die Stadt Ubasê dürfte in Gajara, 30 km nördlich von Assur, am Tigris, zu suchen sein, weil sich dort die nächsten Naphta- und Asphaltquellen befinden.“

148 ANDRAE 1913: 153.

149 READE 1978: 170 fn. 88.

“Tell Huwaish, on the right bank of the Tigris about 20 km. north of Ashur, is sometimes identified with Assyrian Ubase; see most recently Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, 59, n. 5. Ubase was a bitumen source, however, so probably near Qaiyara.”

The identification as made by W. Andrae in 1913 is still convincing in our opinion. To this day, Qayyarah is an important source of mineral oil (Fig. 5). The asphalt outcrops here on the surface (Fig. 6). In Wikipedia (accessed December 2021) we read that up to 120,000 barrels are intended to raise per day, and that the reserves are considerable:<sup>150</sup>

“Qayyara Oil field in Qayyara subdistrict holds 800 million barrels of estimated reserves. The field was explored by British Oil Development Co. Ltd. in 1927, and production commenced during the 1930s. The extracted oil is very heavy sour crude (API gravity 15°) therefore the production was in small quantities.”

However, the commercialisation of bitumen goes back to much earlier times. Muhammad Rashid al-Feel summarises medieval sources in his PhD:<sup>151</sup>

“Kayara is to the south of Mosul. It was, and still is, famous for its bitumen springs. According to Ibn Batutah who passed through Kayara on his journey and described these springs, the bitumen was taken to the neighbouring towns. Al-'Omari added that these springs brought in a large revenue to the Sultan.”

Max von Oppenheim describes in his 1893 journey how the black-green colour of the asphalt spring polluted the flowing Tigris:<sup>152</sup>

„...rechts El Gijara („Asphaltquelle“), deren schwarzgrüne Farbe den Tigris noch eine Strecke hinab verunreinigt.“

Where the Corona aerial photograph still shows open asphalt springs (and the modern industrial plants next to them) in 1968 (Fig. 6), current aerial photographs reveal extensive oil reservoirs.

Neither modern nor ancient aerial photographs show a conspicuous tell at the modern city of Qayyara west of the Tigris. However, it cannot be ruled out that today the modern city has completely built over a tell that was not very high. Another possibility is to look for the ancient site east of the Tigris, where – exactly opposite the oil wells – lies a not inconsiderable tell, the dating of which, however, is not certain. Therefore, due to the lack of systematic sur-

150 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qayyarah\\_subdistrict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qayyarah_subdistrict).

151 AL-FEEL 1965: 95 describes the bitumen sources based on historical sources of the Mongolian period. The text references can be found there.

152 OPPENHEIM 1900: 206.

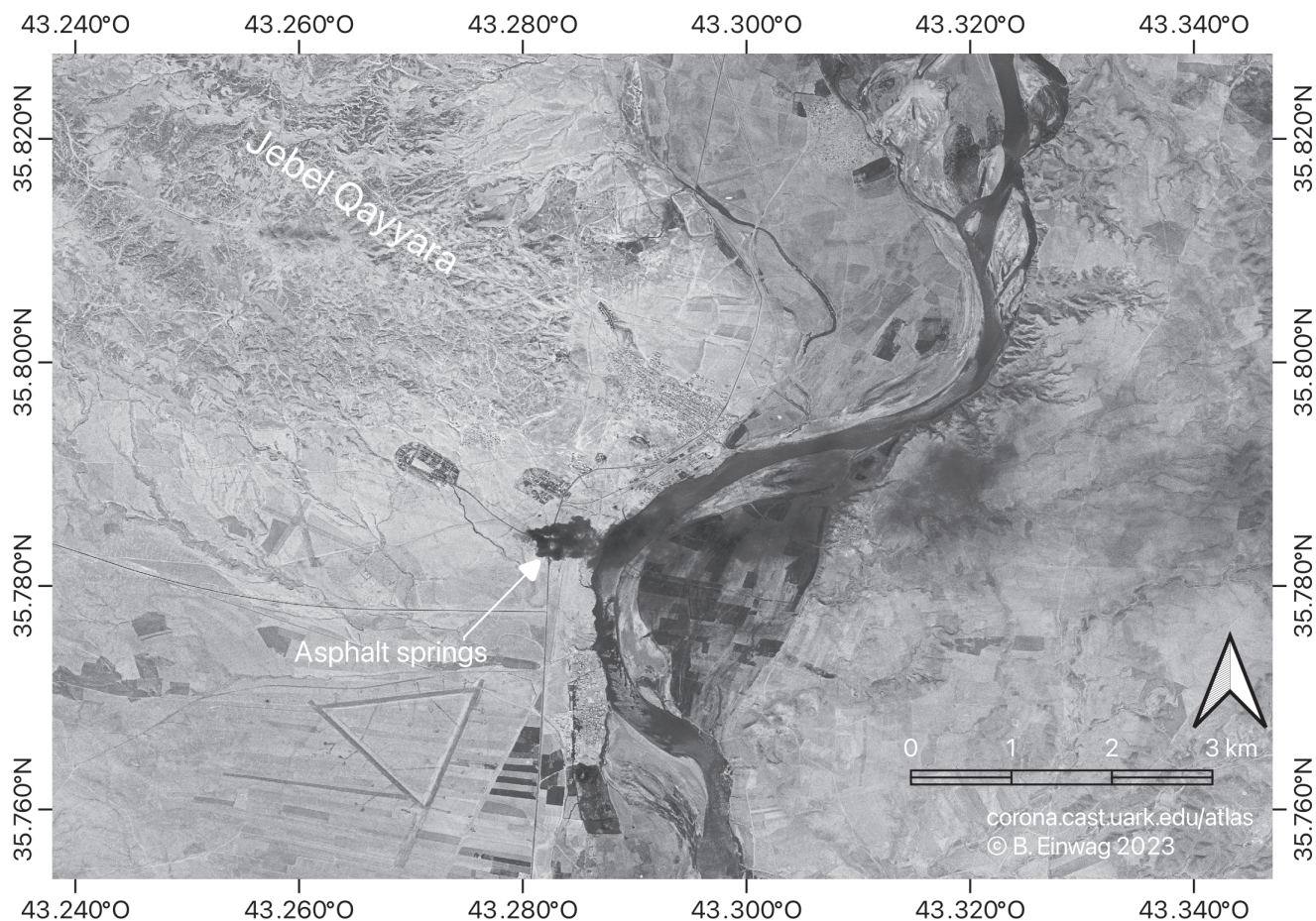


Fig. 6: Asphalt springs near Qayyara (Corona satellite image, August 16, 1968)

veys, it is currently not possible to suggest a specific tell for identification with Ubase, but the textual evidence argues against Ḥuwaish and for a proximity to Qayyara.

## 6. Arguments for the dating of Tell Ḥuwaish

### 6.1 Tell Ḥuwaish and Tell Haikal = two alternating settlements

The biggest problem for the reliable identification of Ekallatum with Tell Ḥuwaish was the until recently quite uncertain dating due to the lack of systematic survey or excavation. D. Oates mentioned the “considerable scatter of pottery, including post-Assyrian types”<sup>153</sup> as the only dating material in Ḥuwaish. M. Altaweel renders this as

if Ḥuwaish had been settled exclusively in the first millennium:<sup>154</sup>

“According to Oates, Tell Khuwaish was occupied in the Neo-Assyrian period and remained a town in the Persian period.”

However, the text passages by D. Oates do not speak about a Neo-Assyrian occupation, but about post-Assyrian sherds among others, for which regrettably Oates mentions no date.

W. Bachmann remarked gravel pavements of possibly Neo-Assyrian houses as well as a brick fragment bearing an inscription mentioning the palace of a governor. All in all, a settlement of Ḥuwaish in the late Middle Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian and post-Assyrian periods seems to be assured. A dating in Islamic times seems to be ruled out, since this pottery can be easily recognised. The decisive

153 OATES 1968: 60.

154 ALTAWHEEL 2008: 44-45.



dating to the Middle Bronze Age was not archaeologically sound until recently (but see now § 6.2, 6.3).

Archaeological artefacts and even remains of a palace from the Middle Assyrian period are mentioned for Tell Haikal, as well as surface finds from the Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic periods, whereas a significant settlement in the Middle Bronze Age was explicitly excluded.

As already explained in § 4.1, we therefore propose that Tell Ḥuwaish and Tell Haikal were two corresponding cities on both sides of the Tigris at a ford, but that in the course of the millennia settlement at the edge of this fertile floodplain repeatedly shifted from one bank to the other. Sometimes (e.g. in the Neo-Assyrian period) there was probably simultaneous settlement on both river banks, as is obvious for bridgeheads at an important ford. The shift of settlement could have taken place over the millennia as follows:

Period	Tell Ḥuwaish, archaeological remains	Tell Haikal, archaeological remains	Text references of Ekallatum / Ekallate / Ekalte
Old Assyrian / Old Babylonian	Yes	No	Yes
Middle Assyrian	Yes	Yes (important, palace)	Yes
Neo-Assyrian	Yes	Yes	Yes
Post-Assyrian	Yes	?	No
Sasanian, Parthian	Probably yes	Yes	?
Islamic	No	Yes	?

Table 1: Shift in occupation of the corresponding settlements at Tell Ḥuwaish and Tell Haikal (bold type denotes good quality of supporting evidence)

## 6.2 Recent archaeological evidence for dating Tell Ḥuwaish to the Middle Bronze Age

Torrential rains in the winter of 2018-2019 led to the exposure of numerous structures and objects on the steeply rising flank of Tell Ḥuwaish, especially at the top and southern edge of Citadel and Akropolis near the Wadi al-Jirnaf (see Fig. 3). The most meaningful structures in terms of dating are two corbel-vaulted chamber tombs from baked bricks which were washed free at the acropolis. The Iraqi colleagues from the SBAH, under direction of Salem Abdallah Ahmed, documented the tombs with the finds. They include numerous pottery vessels, a few bronze weapons, gold rings, carnelian and other beads, and more material that is a clear indication of the elite position of the deceased. The images of the tombs and their inventories

were made available to us thanks to the courtesy of SBAH, but they cannot be illustrated here.

These particularly richly furnished graves can be dated with certainty to the Middle Bronze Age I/II. The pottery includes small pots, beakers and bowls, some of them are painted Habur ware. Especially well datable are flat plates with wide, horizontal rims, finding particularly good parallels in the palace at Mari, dated to Šamši-Adad or Zimri-Lim, and in the palace of Yasmah-Adad at Tuttul.<sup>155</sup> As there has been no real publication of the Tell Ḥuwaish tomb to date and the objects have only been made publicly available on Facebook, we rely on these preliminary informations. The location of the tombs high up on the Akropolis is a clear proof that even the higher parts of the mound date to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium.

The second proof for dating the site to the Middle Bronze Age, comes from a recent visit. We are particularly grateful to Salim Abdallah Ahmed and Nicolò Marchetti for sharing with us the following results of their short visit in January 2022 and for providing us with recent images of the mound (Figs. 7 and 8). S. A. Ahmed and N. Marchetti documented the earthen ramparts in the north and northwest, remarked 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC sherds on the surface of the lower town, and Neo-Assyrian sherds and a brick with an inscription by Shalmaneser III. on the citadel, which is separated from the lower town by a gate well visible on the surface. Additionally, the remains of a buttressed mudbrick wall surrounding the citadel, probably also of Neo-Assyrian date, testifies for the continuous use of the more elevated parts of the city in the first millennium, while the original layout of the city, including the lower town ramparts and perhaps also the citadel fortification walls, seems to go back to Old Babylonian times, or may date even earlier (see § 6.3).<sup>156</sup>

## 6.3 Comparison of the morphology and size of Tell Ḥuwaish with other Middle Bronze Age towns of North Mesopotamia

The attempts to tentatively date settlements based on the comparison of their size, structure and morphology only on the basis of aerial photographs (Fig. 9) may seem audacious.

<sup>155</sup> For comparable plates from Mari see PARROT 1959: 129-130, pl. XXXV. 890 and 1328. For comparable plates from Yasmah-Adad's palace at Tuttul see EINWAG 1998: 92-95, types 46-52.

<sup>156</sup> We would like to thank Nicolò Marchetti and Salim Abdallah Ahmed for providing us with many photos and information in advance for the presentation of our research at the 66th *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* in Mainz in July 2022.



Fig. 7: Citadel and lower town of Tell ʿHuwaish. Aerial photo January 2022 (copyright N. Marchetti & S. A. Ahmed)



Fig. 8: The city wall and the northern city gate. Photo January 2022 (copyright N. Marchetti & S. A. Ahmed)



scious, but this method can be applied with success especially in the Near East.<sup>157</sup> It is an especially useful method in a case like the one here, where no archaeological excavations have been carried out and where no surface pottery has been published so far.

Size is the first relevant indicator. If the size of Tell ̤uwaish is compared with the size of confirmed capitals of the Old Babylonian or Old Assyrian period, ̤uwaish's outstanding position becomes clear (Fig. 9: all cities illustrated at the same scale). An analysis of the satellite images reveals a size of Tell ̤uwaish of about 108 ha and a circumference of about 4.5 km. This makes it larger than the walled residential area of Qal'at Sherqat / Aššur, which in the Old Assyrian period was about 40-55 ha with a circumference of about 3.1 km.<sup>158</sup> Tell Leilan, the ancient Šehna, which was developed by Šamši-Adad into his residential town and renamed Šubat-Enlil, covers about 90 ha, with a circumference of about 3.4 km.<sup>159</sup> Tell Rimah, the town of Qaṭṭara also developed by Šamši-Adad, is smaller at about 38 ha.<sup>160</sup> It is located 110 km northwest of Tell ̤uwaish, about halfway on one of the ancient routes to Šehna.

Structure and morphology are further important indicators. A characteristic feature of Tell ̤uwaish is its division into a lower city and an elevated citadel with additional acropolis which are set off from the urban area. Another striking feature is the shape of the mighty city wall. It is not oval or circular and follows a regular line, but is polygonal and divided into individual segments: the wall sections are either straight, concave or convex, and they abut each other in an angular arrangement.

Both features can be found in other Middle Bronze Age cities of the region. Both Tell Rimah / Qaṭṭara and Tell Leilan / Šubat-Enlil / Šehna show similar city walls which are arranged in angular or concave segments. Tell Rimah is smaller than ̤uwaish, but has a prominent citadel comprising among other features a temple and the palace. Only the central mound goes back "at least another 3000 years", while the hexagonal city wall, c. 600m in diameter and clearly visible on the ground and from the air, was—according to the excavators—the work of Šamši-Adad and had its fortificatory function only during the Old Babylonian occupation.<sup>161</sup>

157 WILKINSON 2003; CASANA 2020.

158 Old Assyrian Aššur was about 40 ha and had about 6000 inhabitants according to estimates by DERCKSEN 2004: 156.

159 Tell Lailan (Fig. No. 83); WEISS *et al.* 1990.

160 For Tell Rimah (Fig. No. 101) cf. OATES 1982; POSTGATE, OATES & OATES 1997. Bibliography for the identification with ancient Qaṭṭara in ZIEGLER & LANGOIS 2016: 271-273.

161 OATES 1985: 587-588.

The city wall in Leilan, on the other hand, was certainly built in the third millennium. However, it is not certain whether the city wall was already built in its segmented form at that time, because it had to be fundamentally restored in the Old Babylonian period after it had suffered damage during the long hiatus in settlement history, as the excavations have shown.<sup>162</sup> The polygonal form could therefore either date back to the 3rd millennium, or it developed in the course of the restoration work. Tell Leilan is particularly similar to Tell ̤uwaish in size and the overall urban structure: the citadel with temples and public buildings also has an elongated oval shape and is located near the western edge of the city. The large lower city contains also a palace of Šamši-Adad.<sup>163</sup> By analogy with Tell Leilan, we can hypothesise for Tell ̤uwaish that temples and at least one palace existed on the citadel and acropolis.

We assume that either the segmented type of city wall dates back to the 3rd millennium in Tell ̤uwaish and other North Mesopotamian cities and continued to be used in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, or that the polygonal, strategically ideal shape was adopted by Šamši-Adad and applied to the fortifications of his main cities. As D. Oates already remarked 40 years ago, the polygonal layout of several North Mesopotamian cities dates to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, but is not attested in later periods—another argument for dating Tell ̤uwaish to the Middle Bronze Age.<sup>164</sup>

The urban structure of Aššur, going back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, also has certain similarities with Tell ̤uwaish as concerns the strategically ideal situation on a triangular mountain spur high above the Tigris, laid out in the spandrel between the river valley and the side arm.

In sum, the location, size and morphology of Tell ̤uwaish point to its origin in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and make it an ideal candidate for a powerful Middle Bronze Age capital.

## 7. Conclusion

If we take all the above evidence and arguments together—philological, archaeological and theoretical—the identification of Ekallatum with Tell ̤uwaish about 16 km north of Aššur on the western bank of the Tigris is by far the most probable.

The arguments in numerous textual sources on Ekallatum are very clear, but the archaeological evidence is now

162 RISTVET 2007; OATES 1985: 590.

163 WEISS *et al.* 1990.

164 OATES 1985.

Ekallatum, Šamši-Adad's capital city, localised



0 0,5 1 km



0 0,5 1 km



0 0,5 1 km



0 0,5 1 km



Fig. 9: Shape, size and urban structure of Tell Hūwāish, Qal'at Sherqat, Tell Leilan and Tell Rimah in comparison (map B. Einwag on Corona base maps from 1967 and 1968)



also conclusive, both with regard to its location on a plateau ideal for fortification and with regard to its considerable size. Another weighty argument is the morphology of Tell ̤uwaish, which points to its origin in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and shows structural similarity to other cities that Šamši-Adad had built or expanded, such as Šubat-Enlil / Tell Leilan and Qaṭṭara / Tell Rimah. The structure of Tell ̤uwaish thus corresponds to what might be expected of a capital of Šamši-Adad's time, namely a strongly fortified large city, ideally situated at a large river, consisting of a lower town and the elevated citadel housing probably temples and the royal headquarter.

Another argument is the long-distance road starting at the north-western city gate and leading NNW towards the Sinjar and Habur area. There is much to be said for seeing this as the Neo-Assyrian King's Road, which was already a main route from Aššur to the north in Old Babylonian / Old Assyrian times.

The arguments put forward earlier for the localisation south of Aššur are no longer tenable. But the identification with Tell Haikal on the east bank is also invalid for many reasons, especially since Ekallatum must have been on the west bank of the Tigris due to the textual sources, and because Tall Haikal shows no material remains of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium.

However, since one of the few Tigris fords exists between ̤uwaish on the west bank and Haikal on the east bank, we do not exclude the possibility that the name Haikal, which has noticeable similarities to Ekallatum, could also have migrated with a shift in settlement (see above, Table 1). The earlier identification of Tell ̤uwaish with ancient Ubase is no longer valid either, since this toponym is associated with asphalt springs that still exist today further north at Qayyara, which is why Ubase must be searched for there.

When we began to write this article, the archaeological considerations were purely theoretical. There was no concrete positive evidence from the archaeological side for a date in the Middle Bronze Age, as previous surveys had never presented the surface finds and had only cited a few finds from the Neo-Assyrian and post-Assyrian periods. We are all the happier that, thanks to the recent fortuitous finds of Old Babylonian elite tombs on the flank of the Acropolis, and thanks to the recent inspection by S. A. Ahmed and N. Marchetti in 2022, the occupation of the mound in the Middle Bronze Age has been secured beyond doubt and is just waiting for a thorough archaeological investigation in the future. All arguments taken together undoubtedly speak for the identification of Tell ̤uwaish with Ekallatum.

## Abbreviations

ARM 26/1	see DURAND 1988.
ARM 26/2	see CHARPIN, JOANNÈS, LACKENBACHER & LAFONT 1988.
ARM 28	see KUPPER 1998.
ARM 33	see DURAND 2019.
FM 8	see DURAND 2005.
MTT I/1	see ZIEGLER & LANGLOIS 2016.
MTT II/2	see CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2016.
MTT II/2	see CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM & HESS 2022.
<i>Daduša Stele</i>	see ISMAIL & CAVIGNAUX 2003.
RIMA 1	see GRAYSON 1987.
RINAP 3/2	see GRAYSON & NOVOTNY 2014.
SAA 1	see PARPOLA 1987.
SAA 12	see KATAJA & WHITING 1995.
SAA 14	see MATTILA 2002.

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