

CHAPTER SIX

RELIGION

Herbert Niehr

1. INTRODUCTION¹

A systematic approach to presenting the religion of the Aramaeans of Syria is not immediately apparent. The epigraphic and archaeological material from Upper Mesopotamia, northern and eastern Syria, southern Anatolia, and central and southern Syria is as disparate as the regions and periods from which our source material originates. Therefore, an approach based on regional geographic aspects has been chosen to present the religion of the Aramaeans, thus giving justice to the individuality of the sources. In this approach, Syria is divided into three regions: the area between the Tigris and Euphrates, the area between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, and the southwest area east of the Lebanon (cf. the map in the frontispiece).

The religion of the Aramaeans of Syria belongs to the larger sphere of West Semitic religions. They are characterized by the fact that a weather-god heads the panthea, due to the importance of rain-fed agriculture in Syria and Palestine. In the case of the Aramaic pantheon it is the god Hadad. There never was a pan-Aramaean religion, however, any more than there was an overall Aramaean kingdom. Rather, there are many different local panthea, which, depending on their location in Syria, were exposed to different influences. Assyro-Babylonian, Luwian, and Phoenician influences are all apparent in the Aramaean culture in Syria.

¹ Following my overview of the religion of the Aramaeans of Syria (cf. Niehr 2010a) I had the opportunity to present the main features of my work over the course of four guest lectures at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in March 2012. For this invitation as well as the pleasant working conditions in the Bibliothèque des Études Ouest Sémitiques of the Collège de France I would like to thank my colleagues Pierre Bordreuil, André Lemaire, Maria-Grazia Masetti Rouault, Hedwige Rouillard-Bonraisin, and Thomas Römer. In Tübingen I want to thank Alexandra Gath for revising the German version and Jessica Baldwin for the English translation.

The religion of the Aramaeans of Syria must be examined from various perspectives. These perspectives focus on: (1) the pantheon; (2) the monarchy as an intermediary between the divine and the human world; (3) the temples as the seat of deities and the cults as devotions to the deities; (4) prophecy and divination; (5) magic as a means to explore the divine will; and (6) the realm of funeral and mortuary cult.

Sources for the reconstruction of the religion include Aramaic written and iconographic sources, archaeological finds and features, as well as Assyrian, Babylonian, Phoenician, and Hebrew written sources. Another important resource for the history of religion, only mentioned here, is the prosopography of personal names with its theophoric elements and content of their constituent verbs, respectively nouns and adjectives.²

There is considerable difference in the level of information available for the religions of the various Aramaean kingdoms of Syria. Archaeological finds and features as well as written sources are present in different degrees of completeness. As for secondary literature on the religion of the Aramaean kingdoms of Syria, the reader may be referred to a number of important overviews.³

The chronological scope of the following presentation has at its core the time of the Aramaean kingdoms of Syria (ca. 1000–720 B.C.). Due to the incomplete source material this time frame must be extended at some points. However, Emesa, Palmyra, Hatra, and other sites will not be included, because the written and archaeological evidence is significantly more recent than the sources from the Aramaean kingdoms of Syria. Nevertheless, they should not be overlooked in that they preserve significant relics of the Aramaean religion.⁴

2. BETWEEN THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES

The Aramaean kingdoms providing the most source material on the Aramaean religion in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates are Bit Bahiani, with the cities Guzana (Tell Halaf) and Sikani (Tell Fekheriye); Bit

² On Aramaean personal names, cf. Lipiński 1975a; id. 1994; Fales 1977; id. 1978; id. 1991; Zadok 1978; Maraqtan 1988.

³ Cf. Dupont-Sommer 1949: 106–117; Hoftijzer 1968; Gese 1970: 216–229; Greenfield 1987; Xella 1994: 242–251; id. 2007: 69–94; Teixidor 1995: 369–377; Haider – Hutter – Kreuzer 1996: 101–127; Niehr 1998: 148–194; id. 2010a; Lipiński 2000a: 599–640; Martínez Borobio 2008.

⁴ See section 5 and J. F. Healey's contribution in this volume.

Adini, with the cities Til Barsib (Tell Aḥmar) and Hadattu (Arslan Tash); and Balih (also known as Ḥuzirina), with the city Harran.

2.1 *Deities and Panthea*

At Guzana (Tell Halaf), the capital of the kingdom of Bit Baḥiani,⁵ the façade of the Western Palace built by King Kapara gives some insight into the pantheon of this city. Three statues of deities were positioned in the entranceway of this palace.⁶ At the center was a weather-god standing on a bull, his characteristic. This deity can be identified as Addu or Hadad in Aramaic. The goddess at his left, standing on a lion, may be identified as Šala, his *paredros*. She may have been equated with a local Ištar in Tell Halaf. The statue of a young god standing on a lion to the right of Addu/Hadad defies a convincing interpretation.

The Assyrian inscriptions and texts from Guzana,⁷ though, tell little about the pantheon. The divine names found in these texts cannot readily be transferred to the pantheon of Guzana. The identification of the weather-god Addu/Hadad is definite. His position as weather-god is, for example, emphasized by a ritual concerning fields. In this ritual, performed in cases of drought, the people should weep and pray, cleanse the country and fields, and offer up burnt offerings.⁸ This deity also held a function in the legal system since trials took place in his temple and oaths were taken before his statue.⁹ The Aramaic texts from Ma'allanate, located southwest of Guzana, show the importance of the Hadad temple of Guzana for the economy and jurisprudence of that region in the 7th century B.C.¹⁰

The mention of the god Enmešarra in an inscription by the scribe Kam-maki from Guzana is surprising. This deity has probably been adapted in his function as an underworld deity.¹¹

⁵ On the kingdom of Bit Baḥiani and the city Guzana (Tell Halaf), cf. Dion 1997: 38–52; Lipiński 2000a: 119–133; Niehr 2010a: 213–229; and the contributions in Baghdo – Martin – Novák – Orthmann 2009; iid. 2012; Cholidis – Martin 2010; Cholidis – Martin 2011.

⁶ On the issue of their installation, cf. the account of the archaeological context and the discussion in Cholidis – Martin 2010: 113–117, 346–354. On the palace's destruction, cf. Schaudig 2011.

⁷ The inscriptions are edited in Meissner 1933 = 1967; Weidner 1940 = 1967; Ungnad 1940 = 1967; Sader 1987: 11–14; Schwemer 2001: 615f; Fuchs – Röllig 2012: 211.

⁸ Cf. Schwemer 2001: 617f.

⁹ Cf. Lipiński 1994: 217–233 and Schwemer 2001: 616f.

¹⁰ Cf. Lipiński 2010: 120–122, 144, 150, 154f.

¹¹ Cf. Röllig 2003: 422, 424.

The various relief panels of Kapara's palace (pl. VIIa–c) allow further insight into the city's pantheon. Of the original 194 panels 120 survive today.¹² One panel depicts a deity wearing a horned headdress and carrying a curved club and a mace (no. 89). This is the weather-god. A solar deity also plays a significant role, as the deity is equipped with an offering table (no. 2) and appears together with a monarch on another panel (no. 171). Additionally, composite creatures also appear, such as sphinxes and in one case a scorpion-man, distinguished by their horned headdresses as deities.

A key text for understanding the religion of the Khabur River region is an Aramaic-Assyrian bilingual text written on a votive statue from the neighboring Sikani (Tell Fekheriye).¹³ It was found in 1979 and dates to between 850 and 800 B.C. The statue is two meters in height, including its base, and is made of grey basalt. Even though the style is clearly adapted to resemble Assyrian votive statues, the statue is firmly based in the artistic tradition of Kapara's time.¹⁴ It was found in the southern part of the upper city of Tell Fekheriye, where a sanctuary of the weather-god is presumed to be located. The Aramaic text on the votive statue reads in translation as follows:¹⁵

(1) The statue of Haddayis'i, which he has set up before Hadad of Sikani, (2) regulator of the waters of heaven and earth, who rains down abundance, who gives pasture and (3) watering-places to all lands, who gives rest and vessels of food (4) to all the gods, his brothers, regulator of all rivers, who enriches (5) all lands, the merciful god to whom it is good to pray, who dwells (6) Sikani. To the great god, his¹⁶ lord, Haddayis'i, King of Guzana, son (7) of Sasnuri, King of Guzana, set up and gave (the statue) to him, so that his soul may live, and his days be long, and (8) to increase his years, and so that his house may flourish, and his descendants may flourish, and (9) his people may flourish, and to remove illness from him, and for making his prayer heard, and for (10) accepting the words of his mouth. Now (11) whoever afterward, when it is in disrepair, re-erects it, may he put my name on it, but whoever erases my name from it (12) and puts his name, may Hadad, the hero, be his adversary. The statue of Haddayis'i, (13) King of

¹² Cf. Orthmann 2002: 57–89, 103–127 and Cholidis – Martin 2010: 69–195. I follow the numbering of the small panels in Cholidis – Martin 2010: 156–174.

¹³ On Sikani (Tell Fekheriye), cf. the information in Bonatz – Bartl – Gilbert – Jauss 2008 and Niehr 2010a: 223f.

¹⁴ On the statue, cf. Abou-Assaf 1981; Orthmann 2002: 93f; Kühne 2009: 48f with figs. 2–3. For further classification, see Magen 1986: 40–45.

¹⁵ The essential edition of this text is Abou-Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982; the English translation largely follows Millard 2000a. Cf. also Lipiński 1994: 48–72.

¹⁶ Because of the Assyrian *Vorlage* the Aramaic text must be read as *mr' (h)*.

Guzana and of Sikani and of Azran. For continuing¹⁷ his throne, (14) and for the length of his life and so that his word might be (15) pleasing to gods and to people, this image he made better than before. In the presence of Hadad (16), who dwells in Sikani, the lord of the Khabur, he has set up his statue. Whoever removes my name from the furnishings (17) of the house of Hadad, my lord: May my lord Hadad not accept his food and water (18) from his hand. May my lady Šuwala not accept food and water from his hand. When he (19) sows, may he not reap, and when he sows a thousand (measures) of barley, may he take (only) a fraction from it. (20) Should one hundred ewes suckle a lamb, may it not be satisfied. Should one hundred cows suckle (21) a calf, may it not be satisfied. Should one hundred women suckle a child, may it not be satisfied. (22) Should one hundred women bake bread in an oven, may they not fill it. May his men glean barley from a refuse pit to eat. (23) May plague, the rod of Nergal, not be cut off from his land. (KAI 309)

Of the two inscriptions on the statues it is clear that the Assyrian version is the older one. It originates from a lost votive statue from Guzana (Tell Halaf) and is referred to in line 7. The text had been transferred onto the votive statue from Sikani (Tell Fekheriye) and been extended by an Aramaic inscription. Likewise, the statue is an “improved” version of the older one (KAI 309: 15; line 23 in the Assyrian text).¹⁸

Deities mentioned by name in this inscription include Hadad (KAI 309: 1, 5–6, 12, 15–17), Šuwala (line 18), and Nergal (line 23), as well as “all the gods” collectively (line 4; cf. lines 14–15).

This inscription quite obviously presents Hadad as the weather-god and he thus assumes the highest position as a deity. He has taken on theological aspects of the Mesopotamian weather-god Addu, conspicuously visible in the epithets “Regulator of the Waters of Heaven and Earth” and “Regulator of the Waters of all Rivers,” thus cementing the fact that the Assyrian version influenced the theology of the Aramaic version. Hadad is also found in his regional manifestation as “Hadad (of) Sikani” (lines 1, 5–6, 15–16). Thus, the city of Sikani seems to have been a special cult center for Hadad in the kingdom of Bit Bahiani. In the older Assyrian version Hadad is located in Guzana (line 7; cf. also lines 24–25 of the Assyrian version). In line 16 Hadad is additionally named “Lord of the Khabur River,” thus subordinating the Khabur region to “Hadad of Sikani.” As the weather-god he is responsible for the waters of the heavens and the earth;

¹⁷ Cf. Dietrich – Loretz 2006.

¹⁸ Regarding philological questions, questions on the origin and editorial history of the inscription, cf. Abou-Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982; Fales 1983; id. 2011b: 563f; Gropp – Lewis 1985; Lipiński 1994: 19–81; Leonhard 1995; Schwiderski 2003.

he procures pastures, victuals, and offerings for all the deities; and he lets all countries be bountiful (lines 1–5). Hadad's warlike traits are expressed in his epithet *gbr* "Hero" (line 12; cf. *qardu* "warlike, heroic" in line 18 of the Assyrian version).

Hadad of Guzana, the Aramaean weather-god, dominated the Jazira region as Hadad of Aleppo did for the region between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean.¹⁹ The god Hadad, mentioned parallel to the god Ḫaldi (KAI 320) in an inscription on a stele from Bukan southeast of Lake Urmia dating to the 8th century B.C., might be the weather-god of Guzana. The closely related textual equivalents in the curses of the inscriptions of Tell Fekheriye and Bukan bear this out.²⁰

The goddess Šuwala is attested in Anatolia, northern Syria, and northern Mesopotamia from the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.²¹ She is a chthonic goddess and appears often in connection with Nergal, the god of the underworld, such as in Tell Fekheriye, where she is named "Mistress" of the statue's donor as Hadad is named his "Lord". Thus, she apparently is the *paredros* of Hadad and resembles the goddess Šala, who appears in northern Syria as *paredros* to the deities Addu, Kumarbi, and Dagan from Old Babylonian times onward.²²

The third deity mentioned by name in the inscription is Nergal (line 23). He is the god of all ills, and the weather-god's curses threaten pestilence as the scourge of Nergal and his *paredros*.

The deities named collectively in line 4 are the remaining deities of the Sikani pantheon. As they are divine beings, they are called "brothers" of Hadad. The distinction in rank between them and Hadad is expressed by the fact that Hadad, the highest deity, distributes the offerings to them.

Continuing with the kingdom of Baliḫ (or also Ḫuzirina),²³ one finds at the top of the Harran²⁴ pantheon the lunar deity Sin. His cult is attested in Mari from the 18th century B.C. and in Mittani from the 14th century B.C. Researchers are still divided on the origins of this cult. One opinion

¹⁹ Cf. Fales 2011: 233.

²⁰ On the inscription, cf. Lemaire 1998a; id. 1998b; Fales 2003; id. 2011b: 565. On the curses, see section 2.2.

²¹ On the goddess Šuwala, cf. Lipiński 2009b.

²² Cf. Feliu 2003: 288–293; Schwemer 2008a: 147–149; id. 2008b.

²³ On the kingdom of Baliḫ, cf. the details in Lipiński 2000a: 121–123, 127–130, 132 and Niehr 2010a: 229–234.

²⁴ On Harran, cf. the details in Niehr 2010a: 229f; on the cult of Harran, cf. especially Cramer 1986: 642f; Tubach 1986: 129–175; Beaulieu 1989: 43–65; Green 1992; d'Agostino 1994; Gündüz 1994; Lipiński 1994: 171–192; Holloway 1995; Theuer 2000: 323–369; Niehr 2010a: 230–232.

is that the cult came from southern Mesopotamia, possibly from Ur, and migrated from there to Harran. Another holds that the Sin cult of Harran was originally native to the region and contact between Ur and Harran existed only at a later point. The latter seems to be the most plausible concept since lunar cults are traced independently of each other in many places in the Ancient Near East.

During the 1st millennium B.C. the Aramaeans adopted the cult of the moon-god of Harran and identified him with the West Semitic lunar deity Šaḥr/Šahr.²⁵ In addition, the moon-god of Harran appears in various inscriptions as “Lord of Harran”²⁶ or as the theophoric element in personal names, such as Siʿgabbar and Sin-zera-ibni in Neirab.²⁷

The great popularity of the moon-god of Harran can hardly be underestimated. This is reflected not only in a plethora of personal names with the theophoric element Šaḥr/Šahr, respectively Siʿ or Sin, but also in the distribution of the lunar deity cult throughout Syria.

In Semitic cultures the moon-god was generally assigned four spheres of action.²⁸ In the first, the moon-god provided the nomads and their herds with orientation during the night. The second is the sphere of divination. This is also why the moon-god was often called on to witness an oath or contract. In the third sphere, the moon in its different phases offered a determining factor to measure time, which is where the word for “month” originates. Lastly, the moon-god was responsible for the fertility of the herds and humans. The last two aspects are connected in so far as the moon-god gave an indication of the fertility cycle of the herds. This led to a close connection between the moon-god and the weather-god, as both deities retained a bull as a symbol of fertility or could be represented by a bull. This close link between the two deities can be seen on an iconographic level, such as on the stele from Betsaida (pl. XLIII).²⁹ Likewise, the divine name ‘Aglibol (“young bull of Bol”) attested much later in Palmyra still points to this link.³⁰ Furthermore, the crescent moon,

²⁵ On the etymology of the divine name Šaḥr/Šahr, cf. Krebern timer 1993–1997: 364, who refers to the Syrian word *sahrā* (“moon”). Less likely is the interpretation “the vigilant” favored by Green 1992: 39 and Theuer 2000: 368 n. 222.

²⁶ Cf. Lemaire 2001b: 15, 20, the inscriptions from Arslan Tash (see section 2.5), and an inscription of King Bar-Rakkab of Samʿal (see KAI 218 in section 3.1).

²⁷ On Neirab, see sections 3.1 and 3.6. For personal names containing the element *sin*, cf. Lipiński 1994: 174–181 and Zadok 1995a.

²⁸ Cf. on the following especially Theuer 2000 and Novák 2001.

²⁹ See section 4.3.

³⁰ Cf. Tubach 2006: 200–206.

which is perceived as recumbent in the Orient, and the horns of a bull are viewed as one and the same, and thus blend into each other in iconography.

Alongside the moon-god is his wife, the goddess Nikkal, who bore the title of “Mother of the Gods.” Sin and Nikkal as the divine parents were the overlords of the Harran pantheon. Their children were the sun-god Šamaš and the goddess Ištar, the star of Venus. The god of light or fire, Nusku, served as vizier and was considered their son. On the stelae of Nabonidus the connection between Šamaš and Nusku is even closer. They speak of “Šamaš, whose name is Nusku.”³¹

In 1999, an approximately three-meter-tall statue of the weather-god was found in Til Barsib/Masuwari (Tell Aḥmar)³² in the former kingdom of Bit Adini.³³ The weather-god is standing on a young bull and is carrying a battle axe in his right hand and a thunderbolt in his left. He is wearing a horned headdress with the lock of hair typical for a hero and his face is bearded. The god is dressed in a kilt and pointed shoes. Above him is a winged solar disk or a lunar symbol. The stele itself is dated to around 900 B.C. An inscription in Hieroglyphic Luwian (TELL AHMAR 6) is inscribed on three sides of the stele. The inscription highlights the special relationship between the weather-god and the king and, in this respect, is comparable to the Aramaic royal inscriptions of Hamath (KAI 202) and Dan (KAI 310).³⁴

In this inscription the weather-god is invoked as “Weather-god of the Army” or “Heavenly Weather-god.” This suggests relationships to both the warlike weather-god of Aleppo and the god Baʿalšamayin, although both connections require further clarification.

In addition to this newly found stele more stelae were found in Til Barsib that either match the iconography of the new stele or differ from it in several details.

Corresponding in every detail is stele B from Til Barsib, also housed in Aleppo (pl. X).³⁵ It is debatable whether the weather-god brandishes an

³¹ Cf. Schaudig 2001: 499.

³² On Til Barsib (Tell Aḥmar), cf. the details in Niehr 2010a: 235f, additionally Bunnens 2009. The Luwian inscriptions of Til Barsib can be found in Hawkins 2000: 224–245 and in Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 11–31.

³³ On the kingdom of Bit Adini, cf. the details in Dion 1997: 86–98; Lipiński 2000a: 163–193; Niehr 2010a: 234–242.

³⁴ See sections 3.1 and 4.1.

³⁵ Cf. Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: III, 156 fig. 56.

axe or not. The stele's inscription mentions the death of King Hamiyata (TELL AHMAR 1)³⁶ and it is dated to about 900 B.C.

Stele A from Til Barsib, now in the Louvre, differs from the newly found one.³⁷ Stele A is damaged, so it is not possible to determine if it ever depicted a bull, a winged solar disk or lunar symbol, or relief bands at the lower section. The inscription mentions King Hamiyata (TELL AHMAR 2)³⁸ and is dated around 900 B.C. This stele matches one from the Elie Borowski collection,³⁹ also with an inscription of King Hamiyata (BOROWSKI 3).⁴⁰

The common element of all stelae is the representation of the weather-god as "smiting god", a stance known since the Late Bronze Age.⁴¹

Inscriptions in Aramaic, Assyrian, and Hieroglyphic Luwian from Til Barsib and Hadattu (Arslan Tash) mention in addition to the weather-god the god Ashur, the goddess Ištar of Arbela, the moon-god of Harran, a solar deity, the goddess Kubaba, as well as the gods Anu and Enlil. A lack of sources does not allow us to determine whether all these deities were incorporated into the Aramaean cults of this region, or to what extent.⁴²

Lastly, the two amulet tablets found in Arslan Tash must be mentioned. Their inscriptions mention the deities Sasam, Ashur, the highest god of the pantheon, Ba'al, the wife of Horon, the wife of Ba'al Qdš, as well as several demons.⁴³ All these deities of Assyrian, Anatolian, and Aramaean origin clearly show the cultural medley that was present in Bit Adini.

Another important find complex for the reconstruction of the Aramaean pantheon in Bit Adini is the collection of proverbs in the Aramaic *Aḫiqar* novel.⁴⁴ This collection documents the advanced Aramaization of Til Barsib (Tell Aḫmar). The convergence of Hurrian-Luwian and Mesopotamian wisdom tradition in these proverbs is crucial for the localization of the collection's source. It most likely originated from the region of Bit Adini, especially its capital city Til Barsib. This fits with the fact that the Assyrians made Til Barsib an Assyrian administrative center. Aramaeans were

³⁶ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 239–243.

³⁷ Cf. Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 111, 157 fig. 58.

³⁸ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 227–230.

³⁹ Cf. Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 112, 157 fig. 59.

⁴⁰ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 230f.

⁴¹ Cf. the catalogue in Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 156–172 figs. 109–122.

⁴² On the inscriptions, see Green – Hausleiter 2001; Galter 2004b; id. 2007; Röllig 2009.

⁴³ See section 2.5.

⁴⁴ Cf. most recently Grelot 2001; Contini – Grottanelli 2005; Niehr 2007; Weigl 2010.

able to rise through the ranks and hold high positions within the Assyrian administration, as did Aḥiqar, in the later Aḥiqar novel at the court of King Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (680–669 B.C.).⁴⁵

With regard to the religious indications in the proverbs of the Aramaean Aḥiqar,⁴⁶ it has been repeatedly claimed that Hadad, as the chief god of the Aramaean panthea of Syria and Upper Mesopotamia, is not mentioned in the surviving proverbs. However, this is a superficial judgment, as the “Lord of the Holy Ones” in Aḥ 6: 79 is the head of a divine circle of beings. If one looks at the inscriptions from Syria, Hadad leads the panthea of the Aramaean kingdoms. In contrast to the “gods”, the “Holy Ones” constitute the privy council of Hadad.

Another deity occurring frequently is the god El. In this context it must be emphasized that in Aramaic *ʾl* represents the divine name “El”, because the common noun for “god” is *ʾlh*. El is also attested in the Aramaean pantheon of Samʿal.⁴⁷ The proverb collection says about the god El that he is with the individual (Aḥ 6: 91), that he raises the petitioner as a righteous one (Aḥ 8: 109), and that he silences the slanderers (Aḥ 10: 156).

The third deity appearing in the proverbs is Šamaš. He appears herein as the god of justice, as he usually does in the Ancient Near East. Those who suffer injustice should submit their cases to Šamaš, who will obtain redress for the innocent (Aḥ 7: 107–108). Šamaš shall not appear to him who does not praise his father and mother, as he is a bad person (Aḥ 9: 138). The aspect of Šamaš as god of justice is also encountered in the relationship between master and servants (Aḥ 13: 197). Similarly, the beauty of the king is compared to Šamaš (Aḥ 6: 92). The proverbs tell that Šamaš loves the wine drinker who offers him libations, the wise as well as the discreet (Aḥ 12: 187–188).

Varying statements are given about the gods (*ʾlhn*) in general. “They will put good things on the palate of the one they love” (Aḥ 11: 163). “If evil comes from the mouths of people then the gods shall give rise to evil against the people” (Aḥ 11: 172). “Whoever shoots his arrow toward a just man must expect that the gods rush to the just man’s aid and turn the arrow against the shooter” (Aḥ 9: 126). “The shot against a righteous man is a sin against the gods” (Aḥ 9: 128). “The evil that men do does not originate from the gods” (Aḥ 9: 132–135).

⁴⁵ Cf. Niehr 2007: 13f; id. 2010a: 238, and generally against a south Syrian localization of the proverbs, also Weigl 2001: 28f and id. 2010: 37–39.

⁴⁶ Cf. on the following Niehr 2007: 18–20.

⁴⁷ See section 3.1.

If one considers the pantheon to be mirrored in the proverbs, the following becomes clear. The god Hadad is at the head of the pantheon together with a circle of divine beings (*qdšn*; Aḥ 6: 79), El follows as a personal god, and Šamaš as the god of justice and order. There are also some unnamed deities.

2.2 *Kingship*

If the iconographic program of the orthostats in Guzana (Tell Halaf)⁴⁸ is read as royal ideology, it provides an insight into the concept of kingship in Bit Baḥiani at the time of Kapara and his successors.⁴⁹ The manifold subjects depicted in the relief panels range from hunting (e.g., nos. 17, 23, 45, 73) and wild animals (e.g., nos. 21, 34) to the depiction of legends such as the orchestra of animals (nos. 57, 92), nature, and war (no. 182). All these depictions underline the concept that the king holds power over nature, wild beasts, and his enemies. Another dimension to the understanding of such imagery and scenes opens against the background of then-contemporary Assyrian art. As S. M. Maul notes, “Den Jagden kam auch die Aufgabe zu, sichtbar und exemplarisch das grundsätzliche Vermögen des Königs zu offenbaren, alle wie immer gearteten bedrohlichen Kräfte besiegen und so das Land in Frieden und Ordnung halten zu können.”⁵⁰ The king of Guzana sees himself, like the Assyrian king,⁵¹ as the “keeper of world order.”

The motifs of goats and stylized trees (e.g., nos. 40, 50, 65, 66) point to the fertility of the land. In addition, the sphere of demons and hybrid creatures (e.g., nos. 19, 43, 46, 48, 50, 77, 78) transcends the royal sphere toward the supernatural. The gods and demons, before whose renditions altars sometimes stood, protect the royal palace.

One thinks of the audience⁵² for these images as the king and his family, courtiers and diplomats, as well as domestic and foreign visitors to the palace in which the orthostats were mounted.

From Sikani (Tell Fekheriye) comes the royal votive statue whose inscription has already been discussed. Kings often placed votive statues before the divine image in temples, to ensure that they were thus permanently

⁴⁸ See note 12.

⁴⁹ Cf. Denel 2011 and section 2.3.

⁵⁰ Maul 2000: 24.

⁵¹ Cf. Maul 1999.

⁵² On this question, see also Ataç 2010: 86–89 with regard to the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs in Niniveh.

represented in prayer in the deity's presence.⁵³ The prayer to the god Hadad was described as good (KAI 309: 5) on the votive statue from Tell Fekheriye. Given as purpose for the placement of the statue are the length of days and years for the king and his dynasty, the absence of illness, and the esteem the king held in the eyes of the gods and his people. Contrasted to this is the curse of the weather-god and his *paredros* toward the enemies of the king (KAI 309: 6–10, 16–23).

The subject of the statue's votive inscription is an endowment of King Haddayis'i (KAI 309), corresponding to the invocation of the pantheon's high gods, as they were responsible for the welfare of the royal house. Furthermore, the curses in lines 16–23 are within the royal sphere, since "his people" (line 22) and "his country" (line 23) are mentioned as objects of the curse.⁵⁴

The placement of a votive statue in Tell Fekheriye also points to the existence of a temple in the city as well as to the king having built said temple.

According to the proverbs of the Aḥiqar novel the king is as beautiful to look at as the sun-god (Aḥ 6: 92). Only the person whom the god El favors can last before the king (Aḥ 6: 91). The king's subjects are strenuously encouraged to be loyal to the king, otherwise the king shall be to them as fire is to wood or a knife is to meat (Aḥ 6: 88).⁵⁵

2.3 Temples and Cults

The oldest evidence for the existence of a temple in Guzana (Tell Halaf) is provided by the relief panels labeled "temple of the weather-god," because they originally belonged to that temple. They were found in Kapara's palace, where they were mounted in a subordinate position. Perhaps the panels were only intended for such a temple and were repurposed for Kapara's palace before they could be installed. It is also possible that the temple of the weather-god was already derelict at the time of Kapara.⁵⁶

The votive statue from Sikani (Tell Fekheriye) with its inscription (KAI 309) provides another indication for a temple in Guzana. The inscription's

⁵³ Cf. essentially Magen 1986: 40–45.

⁵⁴ Some notable close parallels to curses aimed at an enemy king from Tell Fekheriye (and in part also from Sefire) can be found in the Aramaic inscription from Bukan (KAI 320); cf. Lemaire 1998a: 22–27 and id. 1998b: 297f.

⁵⁵ On Aḥ 6: 84–88 and 6: 91–92, cf. Niehr 2007: 17 and Weigl 2010: 110–160; on the equivalents in Neo-Assyrian literature, cf. Parpola 2005: 102–104.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cholidis – Martin 2010: 23, 27.

Akkadian part mentions the weather-god Hadad residing in Guzana (line 7). Behind this expression stands the Ancient Near Eastern theological notion of the temple as a residence of the gods, which was a prerequisite for establishing a votive statue before a deity.

There is archaeological evidence of offerings. Several altars were found in front of the façade of Kapara's palace. A central altar made of glazed bricks stood on the terrace before the divine statues of Addu/Hadad, Šala/Ištar, and a younger male deity. Other altars were placed in front of certain relief panels of the palace, for instance, an altar in front of the relief of two bull-men carrying the sun-god (no. 2). Remains of a sacrificial dove were found on this altar. Likewise, an altar stood before the relief of the weather-god (no. 13) and another before the sphinx figure to the left of the entrance. One panel (no. 171) even depicts a sacrificial scene in which a man with raised hands stands next to an offering table and a cultic pillar.

Regardless of all this, however, it cannot be concluded that Kapara's palace was a temple, just as it was not a residential palace either. Rather, the building has to be interpreted as a political-cultic center in the service of the monarchy and realm.

The object with the oldest known Aramaic inscription to date is not an altar. Palaeography dates the object to the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 9th century B.C. It is a pedestal with an inscription, whose first part reads: "This is the image of . . ." (KAI 231). Based on this understanding the object is the base of a statue, possibly a votive statue, which was placed before a deity in a temple in Guzana.⁵⁷

The excavations in Tell Halaf have uncovered the so-called "city temple" in the western part of the city, which dates from the Assyrian period. Beneath this building are the remains of an older construction, identified as a temple for the weather-god, which dates to the time of Kapara.⁵⁸ The Assyrian city temple was also a temple for the weather-god. This is demonstrated by 8th- and 7th-century-B.C. texts dealing with judgments spoken by the weather-god. Such texts presuppose an appearance of judicial priests before the divine statue in the weather-god's temple; likewise, the economic texts highlight the economic function of the weather-god temple.

⁵⁷ First edition in Friedrich 1940–1967; cf. now Dankwarth – Müller 1988 and Lipiński 1994: 15–18.

⁵⁸ Thus Müller 1950: 349f.

The votive statue from Sikani (Tell Fekheriye) reveals, because of its existence and especially because of its inscription (KAI 309), several aspects of the city's cult. First of all, it was said of the god Hadad that he resided in Sikani (KAI 309: 5–6). In the language of Ancient Near Eastern cults, this means that the god was present in the temple through his statue or cult symbol. According to the inscription, the weather-god appears as “Hadad of Sikani.” The main temple of the city was, therefore, dedicated to this god's cult. Furthermore, the inscription shows that the statue of Haddayis'i was placed before the god Hadad (KAI 309: 1, 15–16), representing the permanent presence of the votive statue's donor in the temple of Hadad.

Additionally, the inscriptions offer some insight into the cult. It was practiced by prayers (lines 5, 9–10) and the offering of sacrifices and libations (lines 17–19). The goddess Šuwala was also included in these practices (line 18). With these offerings Hadad, as the highest god of the pantheon, provided for the deities of Sikani who were subordinate to him (lines 3–4).

Even though the votive statue provides some evidence for the existence of a temple to the weather-god Hadad, the excavation of said temple is still pending. However, it is clear that the statue was found in the southern part of the upper city of Tell Fekheriye. Since the northern part of the upper city is occupied by a *hilani* building it is possible that the temple of the city's chief god, that is the temple of Hadad, was located in the south. The location where the statue was found favors this interpretation, as it is unlikely that it was removed far from the temple.⁵⁹

Another noteworthy aspect regarding the statue is its damage. It had already been decapitated in ancient times. This type of damage is typical during hostile conquests, with the aim of making certain cults impossible. In this sense the “execution” of the statue can be tied to the Assyrian conquest of the city.

The first mention of the Sin temple in Harran is found in a letter from Mari (18th century B.C.). It mentions the conclusion of a treaty between the Benjaminites and several kings of northern Syria conducted in the Sin temple of Harran (ARM XXVI 24: 10–15).⁶⁰ In the Šattiwazza treaty (second

⁵⁹ On the find spot of the statue, cf. the references in Abou-Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982: 2–4, and on the most recent excavation in Tell Fekheriye, cf. Bonatz – Bartl – Gilibert – Jauss 2008.

⁶⁰ Text and translation in Durand 1988: 152f; cf. also Lipiński 1994: 172f.

half of the 14th century B.C.) the moon-god of Harran is mentioned (§ 19, line 54) together with several other Mittani deities.⁶¹

The oldest 1st-millennium mention of the Sin temple of Harran is a reference that it was built by Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.). In Assyrian sources the temple of the moon-god of Harran is known as É.ĤÚL.ĤÚL, Akkadian *šubat ḥidāti*, both of which translate as “House Which Gives Joy.”⁶²

This mention indicates that Harran already belonged to the Assyrian Empire at that time. The moon-god of Harran also appears in the curses of the treaty between Ashur-nirari V (753–746 B.C.) and Mati’el of Bit Agusi (SAA II, no. 2, IV: 4).⁶³ The 7th century marked a time of economic prosperity for Harran. This is reflected in the renovations made by King Ashurbanipal (669–627 B.C.), one of the few textually recorded details of the temple’s construction history.⁶⁴

After the fall of the city of Ashur (629 B.C.), Harran temporarily superseded it as the capital city.⁶⁵ The last Neo-Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit II, was crowned in Harran in 611 B.C. and was able to remain in power there for only a short while: in 610 B.C. the city was overrun by the Medes and laid to waste. As a result the cult services in the Sin temple were disrupted.⁶⁶ Soon after his ascension to the throne, King Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.) applied himself to the restoration of the Sin temple.⁶⁷

Four stelae of King Nabonidus, excavated at the site of the destroyed mosque in Altınbaşak in 1956, as well as other inscriptions found in 1985 and 1989, show that the temple of the moon-god Sin must have been in this area.⁶⁸

A brief description of the temple is found in the verse account of Nabonidus: “He built its brickwork, formed its layout, its foundation he firmly established, raised its spires, let its façade gleam with plaster and asphalt, an impetuous wild bull he plac[e]d before it just like (in) Esangil.”⁶⁹ The plaster and asphalt elements mentioned are the orthostats made of limestone and basalt used as facing for the temple’s façade.

⁶¹ CTH 51; cf. the translation in Wilhelm 2005: 113–121.

⁶² Cf. Postgate 1972–1975: 124 and Dion 1997: 49.

⁶³ Text in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 8–13.

⁶⁴ Cf. Gadd 1958: 72.

⁶⁵ Cf. Lipiński 1994: 184 and Theuer 2000: 327.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lipiński 1994: 190f and Theuer 2000: 328.

⁶⁷ Cf. Gadd 1958: 74f; Beaulieu 1989: 104–115; Dandamayev 1998–2001: 9f.

⁶⁸ Cf. Gadd 1958: 35–44; Postgate 1972–1975: 122f; Green 1992: 99; Lipiński 1994: 171f.

⁶⁹ Following Schaudig 2001: 574. Cf. also Nabonidus’s É.ĤÚL.ĤÚL cylinder in Schaudig 2001: 436–438 and, on the placement of the wild bull, 419 note 540.

The moon-god of Harran is mentioned multiple times as the recipient of gold, which was paid as fines⁷⁰ benefiting the temple treasury of Harran.

Babylonian descriptions convey an impression of how the cult image of the temple may have looked: the anthropomorphic figure of a man with flowing hair and outstretched right hand.⁷¹

Much more popular and widespread in the Ancient Near East, however, was the symbolic representation of the moon-god of Harran. This was the image of a recumbent crescent moon lying on a standard. In some cases the crescent moon encompassed a circular full moon. On the link between the standard and the crescent moon two tassels are suspended left and right. These tassels distinguish the representation of the moon-god of Harran from representations of other lunar deities. U. Seidl interpreted them as the pictorial representation of the word *riksu* (“contract, treaty”); since this noun is derived from *rakāsu* “to bind” it is an allusion to the role of the moon-god in swearing oaths and concluding contracts.⁷²

The cult of the god of light or fire, Nusku, may have been conducted in the temple of Sin, with Nusku appearing as a *theos synnaos*, though there are sources that mention a separate temple to Nusku.⁷³

2.4 *Prophecy and Divination*

Both the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription TELL AHMAR 6 and the inscription on another stele (TELL AHMAR 5) attest to the phenomenon of prophecy in Bit Adini. This suggests a comparison with prophecy from Hamath and Tell Deir ‘Alla.⁷⁴ TELL AHMAR 5 refers to the message from someone who was inspired by the gods telling the king that he should establish the cult of the weather-god at the military camp (§§ 22–23).

2.5 *Magic*

The two amulet tablets from the 7th century B.C. found in Hadattu (Arslan Tash) are usually discussed within the context of the Phoenician religion. However, due to the locality of the find and the special circumstances of

⁷⁰ Cf. Lemaire 2001b: 14f, 20.

⁷¹ Cf. Lee 1993.

⁷² Cf. Seidl 2000: 93f.

⁷³ Cf. Streck 1998–2001d.

⁷⁴ Text and translation of TELL AHMAR 6 in Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 11–31 and of TELL AHMAR 5 in Hawkins 2000: 231–234; cf. also the inscriptions from Hamath (see section 3.4) and from Tell Deir ‘Alla (see section 4.4).

their epigraphy the situation of these amulets is somewhat more complex. Both tablets were inscribed by an Aramaean scribe. This is indicated by the use of the Aramaic script, Aramaisms in the language, and regional peculiarities such as mention of the god Ashur, who does not appear in Phoenician inscriptions. Thus, an Aramaean scribe likely copied a *Vorlage* written in Phoenician and possibly even modified it. Moreover, the incantations were found in a city populated by Aramaeans and were therefore part of the Aramaean religion.

Tablet I (KAI 232) mentions the god Sasam as tutelary deity of the contract, Ashur, the chief deity of the pantheon, Ba'al, the wife of Horon, the wife of Ba'al Qdš, as well as two female demons called "the flyer" and "the strangler."⁷⁵

The amulet tablet is perforated at the top presumably to hang it at the house entrance. On the obverse is the image of a winged sphinx ("the flyer") and below it a wolf ("the strangler") devouring a child. The reverse shows a striding god (Ba'al?) brandishing an axe in his right hand and fighting demons. When the amulet was suspended in the house entrance the two demons, the sphinx and the wolf, probably faced outward while the god faced inward into the house.

Tablet II's shorter but contextually more difficult inscription⁷⁶ mentions the god Ba'al and a demon Šyy. In terms of content the inscription is an incantation against the evil eye. The subject of the evil eye eating and drinking is already found in the Late Bronze Age in the Northwest Semitic region in an incantation from Ugarit (KTU 1.96).⁷⁷

This tablet is also perforated so that it could be hung. On its reverse a human-shaped demon is in the process of devouring a man. This is a visualization of the demon with the large evil eye, mentioned in the inscription.

All in all, incantations are only sparsely documented within the Aramaean culture of Syria. This makes the philological edition of the amulet tablets from Arslan Tash all the more difficult.

⁷⁵ First edited in du Mesnil du Buisson 1939a; cf. other editions, especially Caquot 1973; Donner – Röllig 3-51971–2002: 43–47; Röllig 1974: 17–28; id. 2000b; Gibson 1982: 82–88; Pardee 1998; Conklin 2003; Kutter 2008: 236–245; Berlejung 2010.

⁷⁶ First edited in Caquot – du Mesnil du Buisson 1971; cf. other editions, especially Röllig 1974: 28–36; Gibson 1982: 88–92; Pardee 1998.

⁷⁷ Cf. Niehr 2008: 254 (with further literature).

2.6 *Funeral and Mortuary Cult*

Three building complexes in Guzana (Tell Halaf; cf. pl. XXX) will be discussed in connection with the mortuary cult. These are the two burial vaults north of Kapara's palace, the two mortuary cult complexes ("Grabkultanlagen") near the southern citadel gate, and the cult room ("Kult-raum") near the southern city gate.

The *southern burial vault* near Kapara's palace had a barrel vault and interior dimensions of 3.90×2.50 m with a crown height of 2.12 m.⁷⁸ The walls were 1.80 m thick. Access to the vault was via a gate in the narrow eastern side, which had been walled up after the burial. In the narrow western side there was a 20×30 cm niche with a depth of 25 cm, 18 cm above the floor. Its purpose is uncertain. Perhaps it once housed a statue of the deceased. Thirty-two centimeters above the threshold of the walled up entrance to the vault is a 2.40 m wide by 4 m long rammed-earth platform. This platform directly in front of the burial vault offered space to conduct the royal burial and ancestor worship rituals.

The burial vault had not been looted and yielded several finds. Foremost, the remains, which had been buried with the head to the east, various remnants of the deceased's garb such as a golden mouth covering, a plaque that was part of the headdress, golden appliqués on the sandals of the deceased, and three earrings. Additionally, there were grave goods made of silver, bronze, and ivory.

The *northern burial vault* on the palace terrace near the *hilani* building is larger than the southern vault.⁷⁹ It has a double burial vault containing two burial chambers separated by a central wall. The northern of the two chambers is 5.62×2.12 m, the southern one 5.62×2 m large. The thickness of the outer walls varies between 1.30 and 1.68 m. The interior height of the vault was at least 2 m. Access to the vault was through a door on the northwest corner. The southern chamber was only indirectly accessible though the northern chamber via a door in the central wall. Both chambers had already been looted by the time they were excavated. In the northern chamber the remains of a clay tub were spread on top of the rubble on the floor.

⁷⁸ Cf. on the following von Oppenheim 1931: 192–194; Langenegger 1950: 100–103; Voos 1986: 38–40; Orthmann 2001: 222f; id. 2002: 47–49.

⁷⁹ Cf. on the following von Oppenheim 1931: 193; Langenegger 1950: 103f; Voos 1986: 38–40; Orthmann 2001: 223f; id. 2002: 50.

The interments in this vault must be seen in connection with the palace and the royal mortuary cult even though there are neither textual material nor archaeological finds that would offer further clarification.

The two *mortuary cult complexes*⁸⁰ are distinguished from one another as northern and southern.

The *northern mortuary cult complex* consisted of a 3.65 × 2.20 m chapel with an entrance in the east. Visible from the entrance is a basalt statue placed in a niche in the west wall. This sitting statue (1.42 m high, 45 cm wide, 72 cm thick) represents an enthroned woman (pl. XVIII). She wears a crown on her head, which resembles the crown on the female figure of the double sitting statue from the sanctuary. The figure's lap is designed like a table, inviting the placement of offerings; the statue's hands rest on its knees, with the palm of its right hand facing upward, holding a cup.

Beneath the floor of this chapel and directly in front of the statue is a brick-lined grave shaft about 1 m deep. At its base was a clay vessel filled with cremation remains and grave goods made from gold, bronze, and ivory. Next to the clay vessel were four bronze cups, which also belonged to the grave goods in this shaft.

The *southern mortuary cult complex* was nearly square, although due to the high level of deterioration its exact dimensions cannot be determined. In this complex the statue of the deceased stood directly above the grave shaft. The statue (1.92 m high, 82 cm wide, 95 cm thick) also represents an enthroned female figure. The side-locks are especially noticeable as they are the only ones completely carved out of the stone slab. This figure's lap is even more table-like than the previous one's. Both feet rest on a stool and both hands on its knees, the right hand once more holding a cup. The block-like design of the figure can probably be attributed to an inexperienced hand and is therefore dated older than the previous smaller figure.

The 2-m-deep grave shaft was plastered with gypsum mortar and contained at its base a clay vessel with the cremation remains and grave goods. The opening of the vessel was covered with a bronze bowl. Placed next to the vessel were further grave goods made of clay and bronze, as well as a golden mouth covering and a tripod vessel.

⁸⁰ Cf. on both mortuary cult complexes Langenegger 1950: 159–163; Voos 1986: 34–37; Bonatz 2000a: 154f; Orthmann 2002: 52f with figs. 29 and 30; Niehr 2006: 124–128; Martin 2010a.

The main characteristics of these two mortuary cult complexes are that the bodies were cremated prior to burial and that ancestor cult occurred in the burial chapels in front of the statue of the deceased and in the immediate vicinity of the tomb and its urn.

Whether the drainage systems discovered nearby are associated with the offerings to the dead or whether they are a later installation can no longer be determined.

The practice of ancestor cult in the two mortuary cult complexes is indicated by the bowls in the hands of both statues, the surfaces on the statues' laps to deposit offerings, and ash found in both buildings. With the cups in their right hands the statues stand in a long tradition of ancestor statues, which began with a cult standard from Ebla (ca. 2400–2300 B.C.),⁸¹ as well as with statues from the royal tombs of Ebla (first quarter of the 2nd millennium B.C.)⁸² and Qatna (18th–14th century B.C.)⁸³ and continued in Tell Halaf.

The mortuary cult complexes provide a clear picture of the threshold where ritual contact could be made between the living and the dead. Likewise, the sitting statues, representing deceased royal personages as suggested by the crown on the later statue, are in an obvious action context with the offering rituals conducted on or in front of these statues.

Another important observation is that both statues, as well as the rooms they are in, are orientated to the east, facing the sunrise. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the role of the solar deity in Guzana, except in juridical contexts. What further implications or consequences of the royal ancestor cult were connected with the sun-god cannot be determined due to a lack of written sources.⁸⁴

Both mortuary cult complexes are located on the so-called mud brick massif, which is currently being reinvestigated. Meanwhile, it is clear that the discontinuation of the mortuary cult practices in these complexes did not happen under King Kapara but was due to the invading Assyrians.⁸⁵

The third building complex associated with the mortuary cult is the *cult room* ("Kultraum")⁸⁶ located at a small square near the southern city

⁸¹ Cf. Matthiae 2009.

⁸² Cf. Matthiae 1992.

⁸³ Cf. Novák – Pfälzner – Elsen-Novák 2003: 156–162 and Pfälzner 2009.

⁸⁴ Cf. similar observations for Sam'al; see section 3.6.

⁸⁵ Cf. on the current state of research Martin – Fakhru 2009; Martin 2010a; Martin – Novák 2010: 14f; Martin – Fakhru – Heitmann 2012.

⁸⁶ Cf. on the cult room von Oppenheim 1931: 170–174; Müller 1950: 357–360; Naumann 1950: 394f; Orthmann 2001: 226; id. 2002: 53–55; Niehr 2006: 128–132; Martin 2010b: 221–230.

gate. A funerary relief was also found in the square. The excavators found a cella with an entrance to the east and three small adjoining rooms on the south side. The east entrance is a vestibule of 4×3 m, which leads to the 4.50–4.80 m wide and 15 m deep cella. The adjoining rooms in the western half of the south side cella were accessible though the cella. Their interpretation by researchers as vestry, treasuries, or tombs is controversial, as none of these rooms was further excavated.⁸⁷

On the side opposite of the entrance was a 40-cm-high pedestal of plastered mud bricks. The statue of a seated couple as well as several statuettes were located on top of this pedestal. To the left a separate pedestal protrudes into the room, upon which was a statue, on its own base, of a standing man. Particular mention should be made of the 50-cm-high brick course along the inner north wall. It is interpreted as a bench on which offerings could be placed.

The statue of a seated couple (80 cm high, 88 cm wide, 43 cm thick) is carved out of a single stone slab (pl. VIII). The couple is sitting on a bench. The man is wearing a garment with a thick rolled hem and no headdress. The woman, who is wearing crown and dress, resembles the later statue in the northern mortuary cult complex. She also wears two necklaces and a bronze choker with a crescent-shaped pendant.⁸⁸ The hands of both figures rest on their knees. Compared to the female statues from the northern and southern mortuary cult complexes, the cups held in the figures' right hands becomes smaller over time until it is completely absent in the statue of a seated couple. This lack of vessel can be explained neither by the assumption that the hands originally held only the stems of cups, which were later smashed, nor by the notion that the cups were placed on the closed fist for certain cultic rituals. It should be noted that a libation bowl was found in front of the altar, perhaps making superfluous libation vessels in the hands of the couple. The unnamed couple is in all probability a royal couple of Guzana, who were deified after their death.

Left of the pedestal with the statue of a seated couple was another pedestal, this one almost square, which held the statue of a standing man. This statue is 1 m tall and is anchored to a large and heavy basalt slab with a pin (pl. IX).

⁸⁷ In the summer of 2007 W. Orthmann rediscovered the cult room; cf. Orthmann 2009 and id. 2011: 366–369.

⁸⁸ Cf. Martin 2010b: 224 with fig. 552, 231.

Max von Oppenheim first interpreted the statue as a deity,⁸⁹ an idea partly adopted by later research. The fact that the figure is similar to the central figure of gods in the entrance to the *hilani* in Guzana favors this interpretation; both carry a sword and a curved club and are dressed similarly. Likewise, there is a certain similarity to the relief panel on the *hilani* building, which shows a weather-god with a curved club and mace (no. 13). Since the figure in the relief is wearing a horned headdress and is identified by the inscription as a weather-god, its interpretation as a god is certain. However, such a horned headdress is missing on the statue from the sanctuary. It is therefore not extreme to interpret the statue as being that of a king deified after his death. This interpretation is reinforced by the so-called cult room, as it is an urban mortuary cult chapel such as those found in Ugarit (“*sanctuaire aux rhytons*”), Carchemish (*hilani* building), and Sam'al (find spot of the Kuttamuwa stele). The character of this chapel as sanctuary for the royal cult is particularly visible in Ugarit. It is possible that the statue from the cult room depicts Baḥianu, the founder of Guzana's dynasty.

The figures of the enthroned couple stood upon a pedestal on which were, among others, stone statuettes, stone and metal figurines, as well as shells, beads, and mobiliary art.⁹⁰ The pedestal was immediately followed by the pedestal with the statue of the deified king. In front of the pedestal with the many figures was an altar, which showed the burned remains of sacrifices. In front of the altar was a slab of basalt with a slight indentation used to receive libations. Like the mortuary cult complexes the statues of the sanctuary face east, toward the rising sun.

Any interpretation of the complex must consider the parallel worship of the deified couple and the deified king, which is evident from their arrangement. Since both were placed on a pedestal, respectively a base and an altar and basalt slab were installed in front of this pedestal, it is evident that the same ritual worship was accorded to both statues. The cult of the dynasty's founder was joined by the cult of a deified royal couple as well as other ancestor statuettes of men and in some cases women.

Another sitting statue from the time after Kapara was found during construction work in the city area of Guzana in 1999. It is the fragmentary statue of Kammaki (45–55 cm tall, 37 cm wide, 31.5 cm thick), in whose

⁸⁹ Von Oppenheim 1931: 172.

⁹⁰ Cf. the detailed list in the finds journal, published in Cholidis – Martin 2010: 231–235.

right hand is a cup for receiving libations.⁹¹ The head of the statue was not found. It is dated to the first half of the 8th century B.C. and thus represents the most recent example of this type of statue. Kammaki was probably a member of the royal family of Guzana.⁹² By means of this statue he was able to have his descendants bear his position in remembrance and assure his claim to the appropriate ancestor cult.

Other sitting statues from the kingdom of Bit Baḥiani can only be summarized here.⁹³ These are statues not of members of the royal family, but only of members of the upper class, who emulated in many respects the customs of the royal family. One of these comes from Bozhöyük northeast of Guzana, three more from Girbel further to the northeast. These four sitting statues are in the Mardin Museum. Even though they were found in secondary contexts current scholarship assumes these statues fulfilled a function in the ancestor cult.

There is not much archaeological evidence of burials or mortuary cults of the Aramaeans in Sikani.⁹⁴ Instead, the inscription on the votive statue of Haddayis'i found here proffers a clue. The inscription ends with the following curses, lines 16–18:

(16) Whoever removes my name from the furnishings (17) of the house of Hadad, my lord: May my lord Hadad not accept his food and water (18) from his hand. May my lady Šuwala not accept food and water from his hand. (KAI 309: 16–18)

It is important to note that bread and water are not offerings for the gods but are rather gifts for the deceased within the funerary cult representing the so-called *kispum*.⁹⁵ The inscription thus implies that a future ruler will conduct the ancestor cult under invocation of the deities Hadad and Šuwala. Common sacrifices to the god Hadad and the royal ancestors are also attested in Sam'al.⁹⁶

If the deities refuse to accept the gifts, because the new king ordered a *damnatio memoriae* on his predecessor by erasing his name, then this

⁹¹ Published in Röllig 2003.

⁹² Cf. Röllig 2003: 428; Niehr 2006: 132; Dornauer 2010: 64.

⁹³ Cf. Schachner – Schachner – Karabulut 2002.

⁹⁴ For the inhumations in Tell Fekheriye cf. e.g., Pruß – Bagdo 2002: 321 and Bonatz – Bartl – Gilibert – Jauss 2008: 98–100, 109f, 113f.

⁹⁵ Cf. Greenfield – Shaffer 1985: 51–53; van der Toorn 1996: 165f; Niehr 2010a: 228f.

⁹⁶ Cf., below, section 3.6.

leads to a rift between the ruler and the royal ancestors and is therefore disadvantageous for the new ruler.⁹⁷

The curse on the one who erases the inscription is referred to not only in the inscription of Kammaki from Tell Halaf⁹⁸ but also in a Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription from Carchemisch:

If in future they shall pass down to (one) who shall . . . , and shall *overturn* these orthostats from (their) place(s), or shall erase my name, against him may Tarhunzas, Karhuhas and Kubaba litigate! From him may they not take up bread and libation! (KARKAMIŠ A 11a § 21–27)⁹⁹

For a larger necropolis, one can point to the burials in Shiouq Fawqani, where cremation was notably practiced.¹⁰⁰

3. FROM THE EUPHRATES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

In this region the kingdoms of Bit Agusi, with the cities Arpad, 'Ain Dara, Aleppo, Neirab, and Sefire; Bit Gabbari, with the cities Sam'al (Zincirli), Ördekburnu, and Tell Sifr; Unqi, with the city Kunulua; Hamath, with the cities Hamath and Hadrak (Tell Afis); and the kingdom of Kittika will be discussed.

3.1 *Deities and Panthea*

There are several important literary sources for the pantheon of the kingdom Bit Agusi.¹⁰¹

First, there is the treaty between King Ashur-nirari V (753–746 B.C.) and King Mati'el of Arpad (SAA II no. 2)¹⁰² from 754/753 B.C. Then there are three stelae inscribed with Aramaic texts recounting a treaty between King Bar-Gayah of Kittika and King Mati'el of Arpad from Sefire (KAI 222–224).¹⁰³ This treaty must have been concluded before 740 B.C. Neither treaty recites the entire pantheon of Bit Agusi, but both mention some of the most important deities.

⁹⁷ Cf. van der Toorn 1996: 116.

⁹⁸ Cf. Röllig 2003: 422–424.

⁹⁹ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 96.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Tenu 2009.

¹⁰¹ On the kingdom of Bit Agusi, cf. Dion 1997: 113–136; Lipiński 2000a: 195–219; Niehr 2010a: 243–263; and Fales – Mazzoni 2009–2011.

¹⁰² Text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 8–13.

¹⁰³ Text and translation in Fitzmyer ²1995.

The treaty between King Ashur-nirari V and King Mati'el of Arpad concludes with a list of Assyrian oath deities (SAA II no. 2 VI 6–17) and deities of Arpad (SAA II no. 2 VI 18–26). The oath deities of Arpad include Hadad of Aleppo, Palil, the Sebeti, Dagan and Mušuruna, Melqart and Ešmun, Kubaba and Karhuha, and Hadad and Ramman of Damascus. This list encompasses not only Aramaean deities but also deities of Anatolian, Assyrian, and Phoenician origin.

The treaty texts from Sefire list the oath deities of Kittika first¹⁰⁴ and then the oath deities of the kingdom of Arpad: Hadad of Aleppo and the Sebeti, El and Elyan, Heaven and Earth, Seabed and Springs, Day and Night (KAI 222: 10–12).

In both treaties Hadad of Aleppo leads the list of oath deities of Bit Agusi.¹⁰⁵ The weather-god of the old cult center Aleppo is mentioned by his Aramaic name, Hadad. This corresponds to the invocation of Hadad in his aspect of weather-god in KAI 222: 25–26, since he would have let maladies of all kinds and hail rain down upon Arpad in case of a breach of contract. In lines 38 and 39 of this text Hadad appears as the god of war and is supposed to break Mati'el's bow.

As in Assyria, the Aramaean deities of Sefire are also arranged in pairs. Hadad of Aleppo is joined by the Sebeti, i.e., the Seven or Pleiades. However, it is notable that the preposition *qdm* ("before"), which introduces each divine pair, also precedes the Pleiades. Hadad thus likely retained his supremacy and the Pleiades are associated with him as an astral power.

The next pair is El and Elyan. Of these, the god El is attested in the pantheon of Sam'al¹⁰⁶ while Elyan appears neither in the religion of the Aramaeans nor anywhere else and thus eludes detailed explanation. The connection to the god El Elyon from the Old Testament, however, is definite, as the two Aramaean deities fused to become one divine name for the god YHWH.¹⁰⁷

The following divine pairs represent the cosmos (Heaven and Earth), the waters (Seabed and Springs), and time (Day and Night). This list of

¹⁰⁴ See below.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the Esarhaddon treaty with its summary of Assyrian deities (SAA II no. 5 IV 8–9) and the beginning of the new paragraph in line 10. Contra to Voigt 1994: 65–67, who assumes the Sefire treaties were concluded on equal terms and thus assumes two lists of seven oath deities each. Also Fales 1990: 162. Inapplicable also Koch 2008: 60–68, according to whom the deities of Bit Agusi are only tangible in the closing phrases.

¹⁰⁶ See below.

¹⁰⁷ Gen 14: 18–20; cf. Zobel 1987–1989.

nature deities is a legacy from the list of oath deities in Hittite treaties.¹⁰⁸ The north Syrian Aramaeans adopted this legacy into the *Vorlagen* of their treaties.

A third major source for the deities worshipped in Bit Agusi is a votive inscription (KAI 201), written on the base of a stele dedicated to the god Melqart, found in Breğ. This text allows insight into the cult of a Phoenician deity in northern Syria. Breğ, located approximately 7 kilometers north of Aleppo, was not inhabited during the Iron Age. The Melqart stele was found in the remains of a Roman wall and was perhaps brought from the region around Aleppo to Breğ on the occasion of the site's construction.¹⁰⁹ The inscription reads:

(1) The stele which Bar-H(2)adad, the son of Attarsumki, the son of Adrame (3), set up for his lord Melqar(4)t, to whom he made a vow (5) and who heard (4) his voice.

The stele and its Old Aramaic inscription, dating to the second half of the 9th century B.C., show the Phoenician cultural influence in northern Syria. This influence is also visible in contemporary Sam'al (cf. KAI 24) and in Phoenician inscriptions later in Karatepe (cf. KAI 26). Melqart was actually the god of the city of Tyre in southern Lebanon, but he was also worshipped in northern Syria, as the treaty between Ashur-nirari V and Mati'el of Bit Agusi (SAA II no. 2) shows according to which Melqart appears in this region together with Eshmun.

One might imagine a colony of people from Tyre in this area around Aleppo who formed the basis for a cult of Melqart. Perhaps the god Melqart had a prominent sanctuary here, where King Bar-Hadad paid his respects when he was rescued from some danger mentioned in the inscription.

The image on the stele, today in the National Museum of Aleppo, represents the god facing left. In his right hand he holds an *ankh* symbol or a situla and in his left hand a fenestrated axe leaning on his shoulder. The bearded god is dressed in a kilt and wears a horned headdress.

A fourth source is a trilingual inscription from Incirli, which, from an epigraphic viewpoint, is very problematic. The Phoenician part of the text mentions the King of Arpad's sacrifice to the god Hadad (lines 11–12). It

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Haas 1994: 460–467.

¹⁰⁹ On the stele and its inscription, cf. Dunand 1939; Bordreuil – Teixidor 1983; Pitard 1988; Puech 1992; Lipiński 2000a: 215f; Niehr 2010a: 247f.

also appears to deal with the replacement of human sacrifice with an animal sacrifice (lines 11–15).¹¹⁰

Two other deities, Bethel and Anat-Bethel, from cultic centers in the kingdom of Bit Agusi should be mentioned. The god Bethel¹¹¹ is a deified sacred stone and is worshipped as an independent deity. The oldest evidence for the god Bethel and the goddess Anat-Bethel is found in the list of oath deities in the treaty between King Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.) and King Ba'al of Tyre from 675/674 B.C. (SAA II no. 5 IV 6).¹¹² However, the deities are older than this attestation, perhaps from the 8th century B.C. Both deities reappear in the list of oath deities in King Esarhaddon's succession treaty (SAA II no. 6 467 § 54A) in 672 B.C.¹¹³ Beth Laha, about 30 km west of Aleppo, comes to mind when one thinks of the cultic city of Bethel. This city is possibly identical with the place Bethel (KAI 224: 34) mentioned in the treaties of Sefire, an identification also supported by the find of a clay tablet in Aramaic from Sefire (?). The tablet is a certificate of credit from 571/570 B.C., which contains several personal names with the theophoric element "Bethel" (KAI 227).

The goddess Anat-Bethel is the *paredros* of the god Bethel. She is known from Ugarit and other places from the Late Bronze Age. Her double name is grammatically a *status constructus* and expresses the affiliation the goddess Anat had with the god Bethel.

The subsequent history of this divine couple first leads from their north Syrian place of origin to Samerina. In Samerina YHWH was worshipped as the country's god at the same time that other imported Aramaean deities were also worshipped (2 Kgs 17: 29–33). The deities Bethel and Anat-Bethel, in particular, were brought into a close relationship with the country's god, YHWH. The Israelites identified Bethel with YHWH and against this background Anat-Bethel became the *paredros* of YHWH in the form of Anat-Yahu. The literary expression of this process is found in the Elephantine papyri from the 5th century B.C.¹¹⁴ although the religio-historical connection of Bethel and Anat-Bethel with Yahu can be traced back to Samerina in the late 8th and early 7th centuries B.C.

¹¹⁰ Textual reconstruction and translation in Kaufman 2007.

¹¹¹ On this god, cf. especially van der Toorn 1992: 83–85; id. 1997: 3–7; Rölliig 1999b; Pfeiffer 2011.

¹¹² Text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 24–27.

¹¹³ Text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 28–58; the deities' names are partly reconstructed; cf. *ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁴ On the mention of the goddesses Anat-Yahu and Anat-Bethel in Elephantine, cf. the attestations in Porten – Yardeni 1989: TAD B 7.3: 8; Porten – Yardeni 1993: C 3.15: 128.

The cult of the weather-god Addu of Aleppo dates back to the 3rd millennium B.C. and by Early Christian times had lost none of its standing. As Hadad of Guzana was the mighty weather-god of the Jazira, so Hadad of Aleppo was the most important weather-god of the countries between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean.¹¹⁵

Texts from Ebla, Mari, and Ugarit provide some insight into the characteristics of the weather-god of Aleppo, because they mention the weapons with which the weather-god fought the sea. These weapons were on display in the temple of the weather-god in Aleppo.¹¹⁶ The most famous literary expression of this battle, which occurred along the northern part of Syria's Mediterranean coast, is found not only in a section of the Ba'al cycle from Ugarit (KTU 1.1–2), but also in the Hurrian-Hittite mythology of Anatolia.¹¹⁷

During the Aramaean period in Aleppo, mention of the cult of the weather-god Hadad is found in the treaty between King Ashur-nirari V (753–746 B.C.) and King Mati'el of Arpad (SAA II no. 2)¹¹⁸ and in the texts from Sefire (KAI 222 A 11). As no myths were transmitted from Aleppo, the mere mention of the weather-god and his iconography¹¹⁹ must suffice as source material for the 1st millennium B.C. It is reasonably certain that the cult of the Aramaean god Hadad was in direct continuity with the cult of the god Addu of Aleppo.

During the 2nd millennium B.C. the goddess Ḫebat is encountered as the *paredros* of the god Addu.¹²⁰ Even though she is not attested in Aleppo during the 1st millennium B.C., she is probably found in the divine iconography of Sam'al,¹²¹ which makes a contemporary cult of her very likely in Aleppo.

The only written information about the deities worshipped in Neirab comes from the Aramaic inscriptions (KAI 225 and 226) on two sepulchral stelae from the late 8th century B.C. (pls. XVII and XIX).¹²² In both

¹¹⁵ Cf. Fales 2011a: 233.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Haas 1994: 553–555; Schwemer 2001: 211–217, 226–237; Durand 2002: 1–15.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Smith 1994 on Ugarit and Niehr 1994c: 170 on Anatolia.

¹¹⁸ Text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 8–13.

¹¹⁹ On the iconography, cf. the reliefs of the weather-god mounting his chariot (see section 3.3) and the striding weather-god (see section 3.3), both found in the temple in Aleppo, as well as the so-called Babylon stele with the inscription BABYLON 1 (see section 3.3); on the inscription, see Hawkins 2000: 391–394.

¹²⁰ Cf. on the goddess Trémouille 1994: 87–105; ead. 1997; Archi 1999.

¹²¹ See below.

¹²² Today both stelae are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 3026 and 3027); on the Aramaic inscriptions and the stelae, cf. most recently Yun 2006 and Niehr 2010b.

cases priests of the moon-god Šahr had died, thus their god is mentioned first. Šahr is also the chief god of Neirab. Other deities worshipped there are the sun-god Šamaš, the lunar goddess Nikkal, and the fire-god Nusku. In Mesopotamia the moon-god is the father of the sun-god, who acts as judge. The deities mentioned last, Nikkal and Nusku, show an Assyrian influence that reached from Harran to the cult in Neirab. The sequence of Sin, Nikkal, and Nusku as divine family is also present in Harran.

Even though the inscriptions mention the moon-god by his Aramaean name Šahr,¹²³ it is clear that this is the moon-god of Harran. Si'gabbar, mentioned in a letter from the governor of Harran to King Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), is described as a servant of King Sargon in Neirab, which places him in the last quarter of the 8th century B.C.¹²⁴ At the same time this letter illustrates the integration of the priest Si'gabbar in the state cult of the Assyrian Empire. The stele (AO 3026) mentioning the priest Sin-zeraibni is generally considered to be a bit older.

Further insight into the cult of Neirab comes from terracotta figures of dressed and naked women, goddesses, heads of men, gods, equestrians, as well as various creatures such as lions, sphinxes, and horses found during the excavations of 1926.¹²⁵ A detailed religio-historical interpretation of these finds is not possible, however, due to a lack of relevant written sources.

The fragment of an 8th-century stele comes from Tell Sifr. Its relief and inscription illuminate small aspects of the adoption of the Luwian religion by the Aramaeans. In two consecutive lines the inscription mentions the deities Rešep and Kubaba. The relief above it shows the hindquarters of a striding bull, referring to a weather-god, possibly Hadad.¹²⁶

The co-occurrence of an Aramaean god with a Luwian goddess is also seen in the inscription from Ördekburnu, where the gods Rakkab'el and Kubaba of Aram (?) are mentioned.¹²⁷ The inscription from Tell Sifr herein not only mirrors the circumstances in Sam'al, but its script is also very similar to the one found in Sam'al texts. The cult of the goddess Kubaba, shown on the fragment of the stele from Tell Sifr, probably derives directly from her nearby cultic center of Carchemish.

¹²³ On the etymology of the divine name, see footnote 25.

¹²⁴ Text in Parpola 1985; id. 1987: 149f n. 189; and Theuer 2000: 373f n. 242.

¹²⁵ Cf. Carrière – Barrois 1927: 201–207 and Abel – Barrois 1928: 307–313.

¹²⁶ Cf. Michelini Tocci 1962.

¹²⁷ See below.

No major written sources exist to provide the names of the deities of 'Ain Dara. Because of this the temple's iconography (pl. XL) must be utilized.¹²⁸

Of the many individual finds from the temple area several objects are worth mentioning, the relief of a striding goddess, for example. On the basis of typological comparisons, she can be identified as Ištar or Šauška. This relief (96 cm tall, 68 cm wide, 50 cm thick) is dated to the 12th or 11th century B.C. and stands in the mixed northern Syria–Hittite–Mesopotamian tradition. It was found on the south wall in the ante-cella and thus can hardly be the central cultic image of the temple.¹²⁹

Furthermore, a fragment of a relief depicting a striding man was found 13 meters from the left side of the temple's main façade in the corner of a house. It is 30 cm tall, 80 cm wide, and 36 cm thick, and dates to the first building phase of the temple (between 1300 and 1000 B.C.). The fragment is part of an image depicting a deity or king. However, there are three parallel lines immediately below the missing outstretched right hand. A. Abou-Assaf interprets these as the remains of a thunderbolt, making it the representation of a weather-god. Due to its provenance and rendition in relief this image also cannot be the main cultic image of the temple of 'Ain Dara.¹³⁰

Another group of finds is the orthostat facing of the cult pedestal (E1–E7) in the temple's cella. Each panel depicts a representation of a weather-god flanked by two hybrid creatures. All figures have their hands raised and thus carry, like atlases, the potential cultic image on the cult pedestal.¹³¹

The final important finds are the fragments of the cultic plinth. This was originally set in front of the cult pedestal in the cella. All four sides show a relief frieze of various mythological creatures. Regarding the plinth in the order of sides A, D, C, and B results in the sequence of mountain-gods, lion-men, mountain-gods, bull-men, bird-men, lion-men. Because the cultic plinth stood before the cult pedestal it was not used as a base for the cultic image of the temple. It probably held a cultic installation that served as an altar or table. Such an object was presumably made of wood with a metal coating and would have fallen victim to the sack of the temple.¹³²

¹²⁸ On the temple of 'Ain Dara, cf. especially Abou-Assaf 1983; id. 1990; id. 1993; id. 1994; id. 1996; Kohlmeyer 2008; Novák 2012; and M. Novák's contribution in this volume.

¹²⁹ Cf. Abou-Assaf 1983.

¹³⁰ Cf. Abou-Assaf 1992.

¹³¹ Cf. Abou-Assaf 1990: 28, 57f with plates 43–46.

¹³² Cf. Weippert 2003.

The treaties from Sefire list the deities of Kittika as follows: Ashur and Mulliš, Marduk and Šarpanītu, Nabu and Tašmetu, Ir and Nusku, Nergal and Laš, Šamaš and Nur, Sin and Nikkal, and Nikkar and Kadiah (KAI 222: 7–10). Thus, there are six divine couples from the Assyrian-Babylonian pantheon and two Aramaized deities, Nikkar and Kadiah.¹³³ Thus, it follows that the pantheon of Bet Šullul / Kitikka was largely Assyrian.

The distinction between the oath deities of Kittika and Arpad is visible in the Sefire treaties where the gods of the desert and the fertile land (KAI 222: 10) are a blanket term summarizing the preceding list of Assyrian-Aramaean oath deities. Hadad of Aleppo, the supreme god of the Aramaeans of Syria, heads the list of oath deities of Arpad in analogy to the god Ashur.¹³⁴

In Sam'al, the capital of Bit Gabbari,¹³⁵ the Phoenician inscription (KAI 24)¹³⁶ of King Kulamuwa (ca. 840–820 B.C.), dated to 830–820 B.C., mentions in its final part the personal gods of the first two Aramaean kings of Sam'al. In addition, the dynastic god of King Kulamuwa appears.

Ba'al Šemed appears as the personal god of the first Aramaean king of Sam'al, Gabbar (KAI 24: 15). The meaning of this god's name is controversial, as it is not attested outside of Sam'al. The classic interpretation of this name can be found in Benno Landsberger's publication of 1948. He defined the god Ba'al Šemed as "Lord of the Chariot," and therefore a mounted god of war. Benno Landsberger, however, saw a problem of a doublet with the god Rakkab'el and tried to evade it by assigning an ox team to Ba'al Šemed, so he would be seen as a weather-god.¹³⁷

The common occurrence of the elements *ba'al* and *šemed* in northwest Semitic cultures can be explained better if one takes a look at the interpretation of the god's name. In Ugaritic mythology the weapon Kotharu crafts for Ba'al for his fight against the sea-god is known as *šmd* (KTU 1.2 IV 11–26). What type of weapon it was, such as a mace or a double axe, is still controversial.¹³⁸ But even without a closer definition of this weapon

¹³³ Cf. Fales 1990: 162f.

¹³⁴ See above, footnote 105.

¹³⁵ On the kingdom of Bit Gabbari and on Sam'al, cf. the references in Dion 1997: 99–112; Lipiński 2000a: 233–247; Wartke 2005; id. 2008; Hawkins 2008; Niehr 2010a: 267–270; id. 2013: 185–189; Casana – Herrmann 2010; Fales 2011b: 560–563.

¹³⁶ Cf. on the inscription especially Tropper 1993: 27–46, 153f; Hamilton 1998: 222–225; Green 2010: 136–156.

¹³⁷ Cf. Landsberger 1948: 46f n. 116.

¹³⁸ Cf. Smith 1994: 338–341; del Olmo Lete – Sanmartín 2004: 784f s.v. *šmd*; Dietrich – Loretz 2009: 173–177; Schmitz 2009: 138f.

it can be assumed that due to the mythological concept of the weapon of Ba'al the divine name Ba'al Šemed was derived. That would mean that Ba'al Šemed shows an Ugaritic heritage. In connection with this interpretation of the name one should think back to the weather-god of Aleppo, who is called "God (of the) Mace" in inscriptions, climbing into his chariot.¹³⁹ Alternatively, one can assume a heritage from the cult of Aleppo, as the weather-god of Aleppo had also played a role in Ugarit, where he was sometimes identified with the god Ba'al from Ugarit.¹⁴⁰

It was after a dynastic change that the second Aramaean king of Sam'al, Banah, introduced Ba'al Hammon as his personal god (KAI 24: 16).¹⁴¹

The god Ba'al Hammon may be called the "Lord of the Amanus Mountains." It is fitting that the oldest evidence for this deity comes from Sam'al, which lies at the foot of the Amanus Mountains. Ba'al Hammon thus describes an old mountain god from the region of Sam'al. An amulet from Tyre originating from the 6th century B.C. must also be considered. It names both Ba'al Hammon and Ba'al Šaphon, two important mountain gods from the west Syrian mountain region.¹⁴² King Banah of Sam'al had thus chosen a local mountain god as his personal god.

The gods Ba'al Šemed and Ba'al Hammon are no longer mentioned in the younger royal inscriptions from Sam'al. The dynastic changes following the reigns of the kings Gabbar and Banah brought their prominent positions in the pantheon of Sam'al to an end. King Kulamuwa chose a different god, Rakkab'el,¹⁴³ as his dynastic god. Rakkab'el now bears the title of "Lord of the House" (KAI 24: 16).

The god Rakkab'el is the only god mentioned in all the major inscriptions from Sam'al (KAI 24: 16; 25; 214: 2–3, 11, 18; 215: 22; 216: 5; 217: 7–8). His name can also be found in personal names such as Bar-Rakkab and in the inscription of Ördekburnu. Outside of Sam'al, Rakkab'el is mentioned

¹³⁹ Cf. Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005: 99 fig. 138; Kohlmeyer 2009: 200; Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 65f, 79; and, on the setting, Popko 1998: 120f. According to Hawkins 2009: 169 "the 'god mace' refers not actually to the deity himself but to the divine weapon that he shoulders."

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Schmitz 2009.

¹⁴¹ On the god Ba'al Hammon, cf. in general Xella 1991 and Lipiński 1995: 251–264.

¹⁴² Published in Bordreuil 1986a. Cf. also a Phoenician seal from the second half of the 7th century B.C. with the place name *p'r ḥmn* (Pa'ar of the Amanus) in Bordreuil 1986b: 21f.

¹⁴³ On the discussion about the vocalization of the element *rkb* as *rākib* (Part. G) or *rakkāb* (*qattāl* as a noun) cf. Landsberger 1948: 45; Fales 1980: 144; id. 2011b: 563; Tropper 1993: 46; Lipiński 1994: 206; id. 2000a: 615 n. 125; Hawkins 2008: 601f; Green 2010: 220 n. 1.

under the name “Ba’al Rakkab of Sam’al” in a letter to King Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.).¹⁴⁴

Benno Landsberger had already submitted the following explanation for the name of the god Rakkab’el: “Dieser Stammesgott heisst somit einfach ‘Herr des Kriegswagens’. Die phönizischen Schreiber haben ihn durch den Titel ‘Streitwagenfahrer des El’ in den (von ihnen kreierten) Götterhofstaat von Sam’al eingeordnet. Man hat sich Rakkab-El ursprünglich wohl als das auf einem Streitwagen der Heeresphyle des Haya-Geschlechtes voranfahrende Göttersymbol zu denken.”¹⁴⁵

The element *rkb* (“to drive”, “to ride”) is therefore linked to the driver of a chariot. Not to be overlooked is the possible reference to the motive of *rkb ʾrpt* (“Rider of the Clouds”) attested at Ugarit.¹⁴⁶ The common element is that Ba’al as the weather- or war-god rides on the clouds. However, the relevant mythical contexts, which could explain the background of this notion, are missing in Sam’al. It is also unclear whether the element *’el* is a divine proper name or an appellation of a god.

King Kulamuwa dedicated an object, commonly referred to as a golden scepter sleeve, to this god Rakkab’el. The dedicatory inscription (KAI 25) invokes Rakkab’el without his title “Lord of the House,” as in KAI 24: 16. King Kulamuwa asked Rakkab’el for a long life, which makes it clear that Rakkab’el also held the position of a personal god.

From the town of Ördekburnu, about 18 km south of Sam’al, comes an inscription on a sepulchral stele. Only some lines of the inscription are identifiable. The stele is dated to sometime between the reigns of kings Kulamuwa (ca. 840–810 B.C.) and Panamuwa I (ca. 790–750 B.C.).¹⁴⁷ However, due to the difficulties of textual reconstruction, the relationships of the gods among themselves are unclear.

The god Rakkab’el appears first. He is called “(my?) god”. The goddess Kubaba¹⁴⁸ follows, with the epithet “of Aram”. This reading is not entirely certain. The epithet might refer to north Syria¹⁴⁹ and thus represent a certain manifestation of the goddess comparable to that of the god Hadad-sikani found in the inscription from Tell Fekheriye (KAI 309: 1, 15–16).

¹⁴⁴ CT 53,46; the most recent edition by Luukko – van Buylaere 2002: 58–62, esp. 61.

¹⁴⁵ Landsberger 1948: 45.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. KTU 1.2 IV 8.29; 1.3 II 40; III 38; IV 4.6; 1.4 III 11.18; V 60; 1.5 II 7; 1.10 I 7; III 36; 1.19 I 43–44; 1.92: 37.40.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. for the state of research Lemaire – Sass 2012 and iid. 2013.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. for the goddess Hawkins 1980–1983 and id. 1981.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. on “Upper-Aram” and “Lower-Aram” the Sefire treaties (KAI 222 A: 6) and also Grosby 1995 and Lipiński 2000a: 214.

Furthermore, the inscription indicates that this goddess appeared next to the Sam'alite dynastic god Rakkab'el. Researchers have regarded her as the main goddess of the kingdom of Sam'al. Perhaps she had absorbed a major Aramaean goddess. Kubaba's important position in Sam'al is underscored by the mention of her next to the "Hadad of the Vineyards" in the Kuttamuwa inscription.¹⁵⁰

King Panamuwa I (ca. 790–750 B.C.) had a royal necropolis founded at Gerçin, 7 km northeast of Sam'al. The inscription on the Hadad stele (KAI 214) from that necropolis dates from before 750 B.C.¹⁵¹ This dedicative and commemorative inscription identifies the most important gods of Sam'al in the following significant order: Hadad, El, Rešep, Rakkab'el, and Šamaš (KAI 214: 2). The transposition of Rešep and Šamaš in the following line 3 is linked to the fact that in the further course of the inscription the god Rešep is emphasized. This amended order is maintained also in lines 11 and 18–19 of the inscription.

There is a long discussion about the identification of the divine symbols inscribed on the stelae of the kings Kulamuwa and Bar-Rakkab.¹⁵² This discussion has made apparent that a correlation of the symbols with the gods referred to in the inscription cannot easily be made. In fact, one should take the inscriptions and the images as sources *sui generis* and interpret them accordingly. It follows from the stelae that the kings Kulamuwa and Bar-Rakkab styled themselves as loyal vassals of the Assyrians, and in addition to matching the clothing of the Assyrian kings also adjusted the pictorial representations of the gods Ashur and Rakkab'el.

The weather-god Hadad is, as in the other Aramaean kingdoms, the supreme god of Sam'al. His relevance is seen clearly in the attested evidence: Hadad is at the head of the pantheon in all inscriptions of Sam'al (KAI 214: 1–2, 11, 18; 215: 22). He commissions the king to construct the necropolis (KAI 214: 13–14). The heir apparent is pledged both to the cult of Hadad and the cult before his statue (KAI 214: 15–18, 21–22). Hadad is the god of the kingdom (KAI 214: 8–9; 215: 2). The only statue of a god found at Sam'al is a Hadad statue and Hadad alone enforces the curse contained in the inscription (KAI 214: 23–24).

¹⁵⁰ Cf., below, section 3.6. Pardee 2009a: 62 interprets the spelling *kbbw* as a dittography, while Younger 2009a: 166–170 leans toward a consequence of cuneiform writing.

¹⁵¹ Cf. on the inscription especially Tropper 1993: 54–97, 154–159; Hamilton 1998: 225f; Green 2010: 175–193.

¹⁵² Cf. the discussion in Tropper 1993: 24–26; Mayer 1995a; Niehr 2004b: 310f.

The find of a bronze disc with a relief also points to the god Hadad.¹⁵³ It has, together with an Old Aramaic inscription, three bosses and a bucranium at the center. This disc, with a diameter of 25 cm, was used as the plating on a shield and names a captain of the guard as its owner. The disc comes from Sam'al or the surrounding region according to the inscription and comparison with a similar object. The bucranium stands for Hadad, the chief god, in his capacity as the weather-god.

The sepulchral stele of the vassal Kuttamuwa (pl. XX), found in Sam'al in 2008, expanded our knowledge of the cult of the god Hadad as two previously unknown manifestations of the god occur therein.¹⁵⁴ Thus, line 3 of the inscription mentions a *hdd qrpdl* ("Hadad of Qrpd"). This is perhaps a local manifestation of the god. This explanation, however, suffers from not knowing the exact place name. As an alternative, the Aramaic version of a Luwian title "companion" (from *harpatalli*) has been adduced.¹⁵⁵ Line 4 of the inscription has a *hdd krmn*, i.e., a "Hadad of the Vineyards." This manifestation of the god Hadad can be explained by means of contemporary inscriptions naming the Tarḥunzas of the vineyard¹⁵⁶ as well as by using weather-god representations, especially from Tabal, that depict the god Tarḥunzas with grapes or with vines in his hand.¹⁵⁷

Second in the hierarchy of the deities of Sam'al is the god El (KAI 214: 2.11.18; 215: 22). That the worship of El in Sam'al came by way of the Phoenicians or the Aramaeans is doubtful, given the very sparse evidence of this god in Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions.¹⁵⁸ Especially in the case of the god El a direct legacy of Ugarit in the northern Syrian–Anatolian borderland can be assumed as with the god Ba'al Šemed. Strictly speaking, this cannot be proven.¹⁵⁹ But it has to be considered a possibility, in view of the once high prominence of the god El in Ugarit, 350 years before the destruction of the city. That the cult of a formerly mighty god continued to be practiced by the descendants of his worshippers, who had fled abroad, is not a singular phenomenon.

¹⁵³ Cf. Krebernik – Seidl 1997 and Gubel 2012.

¹⁵⁴ Cf., below, the text in 3.6.

¹⁵⁵ See Yakubovich 2010: 396f.

¹⁵⁶ Cf., among others, the inscription SULTANHAN in Hawkins 2000: 463–467.

¹⁵⁷ Cf., among others, the reliefs of Ivriş, Niğde, and Ereğli; also Aro 1998: 223–225, 281 with pl. 84 B 126; ead. 2003: 317–320, 335f with pls. XXXVII, XXXIX; Hutter 2003: 224, 276f; Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 58f, 163.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. on this Röllig 1959 and Yakubovich 2010.

¹⁵⁹ But cf. also the archaeological finds indicating the existence of refugees from Ugarit in the region of Sam'al; cf. Pruss 2002: 172f.

In support of this assumption the case of the god Elkunirša, as he is known in a Hittite myth from Hattusa before 1200 B.C., can be cited.¹⁶⁰ This myth stands clearly in an Ugaritic narrative tradition. Another mention of the god Elkunirša as “El, creator of the Earth” occurs in the Phoenician inscriptions of Karatepe (KAI 26 III 18), dated between 720 B.C. and the beginning of the 7th century B.C. A continual presence of this god can be demonstrated here for a period of more than 500 years.¹⁶¹

Third place in the pantheon is the god Rešep (KAI 214: 2.3).¹⁶² This deity looks back on a history in northern Syria from the time of Ebla (second half of the 3rd millennium B.C.). A connotation of the god Rešep to a certain sphere of responsibility cannot be seen directly in the inscriptions of Sam'al. Rešep is otherwise attested as the god of the underworld, the plague, and of war or healing. It is clear that Rešep, who appears as Arq-Rešep (KAI 214: 11) in Sam'al, has to do with the interests of the kingdom. Herewith the combat aspect of the god Rešep, which can already be found in west Semitic religions, especially in Ugarit, is accentuated. Thus, Rešep could be considered a protective, and therefore positive deity.¹⁶³

To explain the divine name Arq-Rešep (KAI 214: 11) a northern Arabic influence has been accepted. Some researchers want to see the northern Arabic war god Ruḏa in this name. He is later attested in Palmyra as Aršu.¹⁶⁴

The god Rakkab'el, following Rešep in the inscription of Panamuwa I, was already attested as a dynastic god by the time of King Kulamuwa (KAI 24: 16). The epithet “Lord of the House,” given to him in the Kulamuwa inscription, does not appear in the inscription of Panamuwa I. Only in more recent inscriptions is his particular position emphasized again.

Šamaš, for the most part, placed last in the god lists (KAI 214: 2–3, 11, 18; 215: 22);¹⁶⁵ he will probably have been attributed the area of law. However, this can only be inferred from Šamaš' usual functions and is not clearly stated in the inscription.

More clearly defined, however, is the relevance of Šamaš in the realm of death and the underworld. This is shown first on an archaeological level,

¹⁶⁰ Text in Hoffner 1990: 69f.

¹⁶¹ The most recent citation of this god is attested in KAI 129 from Leptis Magna. In light of it being dated to the early 2nd century B.C., the cult of Elkunirša is attested over a period of about 1500 years.

¹⁶² On the god Rešep, cf. most recently Lipiński 2009a.

¹⁶³ Cf. Lipiński 2009a: 225–227.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Landsberger 1948: 48f n. 122; Tropper 1993: 23; Lipiński 1983; id. 1994: 208–211; id. 2009a: 225–228.

¹⁶⁵ On Šamaš, cf. most recently Kutter 2008.

as both the statue of the deified dynastic founder found on the acropolis as well as the grave next to the *hilani* I building are aligned to the east, facing the sunrise.¹⁶⁶ The stele of Kuttamuwa was also set up facing the sunrise.¹⁶⁷ The inscription of Kuttamuwa calls for the offering of a ram to the sun-god at the time of his funeral. Furthermore, a hardly recognizable winged solar disk of approximately 13.5 cm in height fills the upper image field of the Kuttamuwa stele.¹⁶⁸

Deified ancestors also belong to the divine realm. This concept from the West Semitic area is already known from Ugarit and is found in the expression of *'lh 'bh* ("the god of his father")¹⁶⁹ in the inscription of King Panamuwa I in the context of an oath (KAI 214: 29) in Sam'al.

King Bar-Rakkab (ca. 733–713/11 B.C.), the successor of King Panamuwa II (ca. 740–733 B.C.), erected a stele with a memorial inscription (KAI 215) around 733/731 B.C.¹⁷⁰ Although found in Tahtalı Pınar, half way between Sam'al and Gerçin, it belongs, like the inscription on the Hadad stele of Panamuwa I (KAI 214), in Gerçin.¹⁷¹ Since the two inscriptions are only twenty years apart and the same royal family remained in power, significant differences cannot be expected to appear in the cult of the gods of Sam'al.

In the inscription for Panamuwa II Hadad appears as the divine personal protector of the king (KAI 215: 2). Otherwise, "the gods of Yādiya"¹⁷² are called on in general (KAI 215: 2). At the end of the inscription, Hadad, El, Rakkab'el, with the title "Lord of the House," Šamaš, and "all the gods of Yādiya" appear (KAI 215: 22).

The construction and memorial inscriptions of King Bar-Rakkab¹⁷³ focus on the special position of the god Rakkab'el as the dynastic god in Sam'al (KAI 215: 22). He had held this position since the time of King Kuttamuwa I (KAI 24: 16; 25) and continued to hold it until the time of kings

¹⁶⁶ See below, section 3.6.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Struble – Herrmann 2009: 36.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Struble – Herrmann 2009: 20.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. van der Toorn 1993 and id. 1994: 47–49.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. on the inscription esp. Younger 1986: 91–99; Tropper 1993: 98–131, 159–162; Green 2010: 194–219.

¹⁷¹ Cf. von Luschan 1893: 48, 53f and Sachau 1893: 65 and later Dion 1974: 3; Tropper 1993: 98 and Niehr 1997: 298f; id. 2006: 118. If Hamilton 1998: 227 places the stele along the northeastern road leading away from Sam'al he ignores the cultic and royal ideological context of the stele's placement.

¹⁷² On Yādiya, cf. Starke 1997b: 458 with note 121 and id. 1999: 525.

¹⁷³ Cf. on the inscriptions especially Younger 1986: 100–102; Tropper 1993: 132–169, 163f; Hamilton 1998: 226–230; Green 2010: 220–231.

Panamuwa I (KAI 214: 2–3, 11, 18) and Panamuwa II (KAI 215: 22). King Bar-Rakkab accordingly carries the name of this god. None of the other royal names known from Sam'al contains the name of a deity from Sam'al as a theophoric element. Furthermore, Bar-Rakkab credits his enthronement to the god Rakkab'el (KAI 216: 5) and sees himself as a servant of this same god (KAI 217: 2–3) and the “gods of his father's house” in general. In return Rakkab'el should help his servant find favor before his sovereign king, Tiglath-Pileser (KAI 217: 7–9).

An inscription of King Bar-Rakkab of Sam'al on an orthostat (KAI 218) shows the adoption of the moon cult of Harran in the pantheon of Sam'al (pl. III). In this inscription, dated between 733/732 and 727 B.C., Bar-Rakkab, who usually calls Rakkab'el, the dynastic god of Sam'al, his lord, now calls a “Ba'al Harran” his lord. That “Ba'al Harran” stands for the moon-god Sin is shown by a depiction of a crescent moon with the tassels typical for the moon-god of Harran on the orthostats.¹⁷⁴

An iconographic representation of Aramaean deities from Sam'al in Luwian dress can be found on the reliefs of the outer castle gate (pl. II).¹⁷⁵ They are the weather-god, a god of war, and two goddesses. More precisely, the orthostats of the east side of the outer castle gate form a procession of gods, including a goddess with a mirror in her hand standing between a god of war and the weather-god. This goddess is interpreted as the wife of the god of war and is seen as the goddess Kubaba.¹⁷⁶ This interpretation, though, is not supported by any inscriptions. The sitting goddess following the image of the weather-god might be Ḫebat, the wife of the weather-god of Aleppo.¹⁷⁷

Seven silver medallions from Sam'al depict a goddess standing on a lion, behind whom the star of Ištar is visible. In this case the identity of the goddess is not recorded, but the circle of stars and the lion make plausible the interpretation as the goddess Ištar or Astarte.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, a naked goddess holding her breasts is depicted on a horse's head-piece. She can be interpreted as “mistress of the animals.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ This does not mean that the dynastic god Rakkab'el is to be interpreted as moon-god as proposed by Krebern timer 2006–2008. Cf. already Tropper 1993: 146.

¹⁷⁵ Hawkins 1984: 76f. Regarding the identification of the goddesses, cf. Orthmann 1971: 274–279.

¹⁷⁶ Wartke 2005: 87 and Cornelius 2012: 16.

¹⁷⁷ On the identification of Ḫebat, cf. Wartke 2005: 87 and Cornelius 2012: 16.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Kreuzer 1996: 110f; Niehr 2010a: 277; Cornelius 2012: 19–21.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Cornelius 2012: 18f, 20 with fig. 3 and see below the head-piece from Unqi.

Another silver medallion originating from the area of Sam'al shows a scene of the moon falling to the earth. This Hittite myth still finds itself in the iconography of the 1st millennium B.C.¹⁸⁰

An amulet without inscription, also from Sam'al, shows on one side a man with a dagger standing over a person lying before him and on the other side a standing armed man.¹⁸¹

Representations of winged genii, sphinxes, and griffins are also found in Sam'al.¹⁸² The position of these hybrids within the religion, whether as a protective spirit or demon, cannot be ascertained in any detail due to a lack of written sources.¹⁸³

The only written indication of Aramaean deities in Unqi¹⁸⁴ is an Aramaic inscription on a horse's head-piece, which came as a votive gift to the Heraion of Samos,¹⁸⁵ and on one of the blinders of a bridle, which was a votive gift to the temple of the god Apollo Daphnephoros of Eretria in Euboea.¹⁸⁶ The inscription reads:

That which Hadad gave to our lord Hazael from Unqi in the year when our lord crossed the river.¹⁸⁷

To understand the inscription it must be said that it pertains to the booty that the god Hadad gave to King Hazael of Damascus¹⁸⁸ on the occasion of his campaign over the Orontes and into the kingdom of Unqi.

The authors of the inscription were possibly the inhabitants of Unqi, who called Hazael of Damascus their lord. More precisely, one can think of the priesthood of the god Hadad, who presented the conqueror Hazael with a gift in the name of their god.¹⁸⁹ This gift then was brought to the temple in Damascus and from there found its way as a votive gift to Samos or Greece. This is not to say that King Hazael himself sent votive gifts to

¹⁸⁰ Cf. the text in Hoffner 1990: 33–35 and the interpretation of the silver medallion in Seidl 2002.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Wartke 2005: 79 fig. 79.

¹⁸² Cf. von Luschan 1902: 205f, 217–219, 221–226; pls. XXXIV; XXXVI; XXXVII a/d; XXXVIII; XLII; XLIII; XLIV; id. 1911: 242 fig 149; 330–333, pls. LV–LVI; Wartke 2005: 80 fig. 80; 83 fig 88.

¹⁸³ On this problem, cf. Landsberger 1948: 95f.

¹⁸⁴ On Pattina/Unqi, cf. the information in Niehr 2010a: 284–289; Hawkins 2009; id. 2011.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Braun-Holzinger – Rehm 2005: 11, 33 no. 16 (with literature) and pl. 5.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Braun-Holzinger – Rehm 2005: 11, 30 no. 4 (with literature).

¹⁸⁷ Cf. on the inscription especially Bron – Lemaire 1989; Eph'al – Naveh 1989; Amadasi Guzzo 1996; Fales 2006a.

¹⁸⁸ On King Hazael and his expansionist politics, cf. e.g., Lemaire 1991a and Niehr 2011.

¹⁸⁹ So Bordreuil 1993b: 256 and id. 1998: 56f.

a Greek sanctuary. Although, there is evidence of votive offerings of international provenance in Samos,¹⁹⁰ the horse blinders were probably loot made by Greek mercenaries in the service of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (756–727 B.C.) during the sack of Damascus in 732 B.C. They then brought these pieces to Samos, respectively to Eretria.¹⁹¹

This mention of the god Hadad of Unqi corresponds to a dedication of a metal disc with an Assyrian inscription found in Tell Tayinat. It says: “For Adad, the regulator of the waters of Heaven (and) Earth, the great lord . . .”¹⁹² Like in the inscription on the statue found in Tell Fekheriye (KAI 309) the Aramaean weather-god with epithets typical for Addu is adapted to the Mesopotamian weather-god.

Further information about the pantheon of Unqi can be found in the iconography of the horse’s head-piece and the horse blinder.

Depicted on the head-piece (pl. XXVI) is a naked goddess wearing a winged solar disk on her head. She is standing on a lion’s head and holds in each of her hands another lion’s head on each of which stands another naked goddess holding her breasts. Between the two goddesses and below the solar disk is another naked breast-holding goddess. This central figure represents the “mistress of the animals” and might be the goddess Astarte.¹⁹³

Shown on the blinder are a lion and a hero holding two other lions’ hind legs.

There is another head-piece from Tell Tayinat connecting the motifs of the blinder and the above-mentioned head-piece. On it a woman holding her breasts stands above lion heads; above her is a hero striding over two lions and holding two sphinxes by their tails.¹⁹⁴

The oldest references to the pantheon of Hamath on the Orontes¹⁹⁵ are the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions from Hamath and its surroundings.

Under the aspect of religio-historical cultural contact the goddess Pahalatis is of particular interest. She is mentioned in the Luwian inscriptions from Hamath and its surrounding area. Her name is traced back to the Semitic *ba’alat* (“mistress”, “lady”), a title, which the goddess of Byblos

¹⁹⁰ On the international provenance of the votive gifts in the Heraion of Samos, cf. Petersen – Wagner 2005; Ebbinghaus 2006; Bumke 2007.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Ebbinghaus 2006: 209–212 and Luraghi 2006: 38–41.

¹⁹² The text is found in Schwemer 2001: 620.

¹⁹³ Cf. Uehlinger 1998–2001: 53–64, this 64.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Braun-Holzinger – Rehm 2005: 36 n. 30 with pl. 7.

¹⁹⁵ On the kingdom of Hamath, cf. the references in Dion 1997: 137–170; Lipiński 2000a: 249–318; Niehr 2010a: 289–300.

wore in the form of *bēltu ša gubla* or *b'lt gbl*. This goddess, who was known in Hamath by her Luwian name Pahalatis, possibly held the position of *paredros* of the weather-god. The inscription HAMA 4 refers to her high rank. According to this inscription Urḫilina himself built the “seat” of Pahalatis and cared for the income of the temple.¹⁹⁶ The latter is made apparent in the inscription HAMA 8 where the king himself allocates a granary to the goddess.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, according to two other inscriptions, the king had stelae made for the goddess.¹⁹⁸ Her position as *paredros* of the weather-god and therefore highest-ranking goddess of Hamath is referred to in the inscription HAMA 5, which instead of Pahalatis as in HAMA 4 shows the divine name Tarḫunt¹⁹⁹ about whom the same conclusions can be drawn as for the goddess. It is also referred to in a fragment of an inscription from Hamath, which mentions both divine names together (HAMA fr. 1).²⁰⁰ Additionally, there is an Aramaic graffito of a personal name with the theophoric element *b'lt* (KAI 204).²⁰¹

On a religio-historical level the Phoenician influence finds itself not only in the form of Pahalatis but also in the theophoric element Adon in personal names from Hamath around 720 B.C.²⁰² In addition, there is the god Ba'alšamayin, who appears in the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202 A). All three deities, Pahalatis, Adon, and Ba'alšamayin, originated in Byblos.

From the region around Hamath two more names of goddesses should be cited. The inscriptions MEHARDE and SHEIZAR mention “the goddess” or “the mistress of the land,”²⁰³ a title that most likely references the goddess Kubaba. Attested since the 2nd millennium B.C., the “goddess or mistress of the land” comes originally from Carchemish and expanded her sphere of cultic influence to Anatolia and north and middle Syria. The goddess is depicted on the stele from Meharde. This representation also incorporates motifs of Kubaba.²⁰⁴

The most important testimony on the religion of the kingdom of Hamath during the time of the Aramaeans is found in the inscription of

¹⁹⁶ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 403–406.

¹⁹⁷ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 409f.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. the inscriptions HINES (text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 409) and SHEIZAR (text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 416–419).

¹⁹⁹ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 406f.

²⁰⁰ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 419.

²⁰¹ Cf. Otzen 1990: 278 n. 2.

²⁰² Cf. on the references Otzen 1990: 275–277 n. 1.

²⁰³ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 415–419.

²⁰⁴ Photo in Hawkins 2000: pl. 225.

King Zakkur of Hamath (KAI 202). It was written on the lower part of a stele; the upper part once held a statue of which only the feet on a stool are extant. The statue was most likely a representation of King Zakkur and was placed before the god Iluwer in one of his sanctuaries.²⁰⁵ The stele was not found in Hamath, though. In all likelihood it was discovered on the acropolis of Hazrak, modern Tell Afis²⁰⁶ in 1903. The obverse of the inscription (A) states the following about the god Ba'alšamayin:

(1) The monument which Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'aš, set up for Iluwer [in Afis.] (2) I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'aš. I am a man of 'Anah and Ba'alšamayin [raised (3) m]e and stood beside me, and Ba'alšamayin made me king [over] (4) Hazrak. Then Bar-Hadad, son of Hazael, king of Aram, united against me s[even](5)teen kings. Bar-Hadad and his army, Bar-Gush and his army, [the ki(6)ng of] Que and his army, the king of Amuq and his army, the king of Gurgu[m] (7) [and] his [ar]my, the king of Sam'al and his a[rmy], the king of Melid [and his army] ... (8) [...] seven[teen kings], [th]ey and their armies. All these kings laid siege to Hazra[k] (10) and they raised a wall higher than the wall of Hazrak, they dug a ditch deeper than [its] dit[ch]. (11) Now I raised my hands to Ba'alšamayin and Ba'alšamayin answered me [and] Ba'alšamayin [spoke to (12) me] through seers and diviners. [And Ba'alšamayin said to (13) me]: "Do not be afraid! Since I have made [you king, I will (14) stand] beside you. I will save you from all [these kings who] (15) have besieged you." [Ba'alšamayin] also said to [me, " ...] all these kings who have [besieged you ...] and this wall [...]."²⁰⁷ (KAI 202 A: 1–15)

The god Iluwer mentioned in first place is the god to whom King Zakkur erected the stele as a sign of his personal devotion (line 1). During the second half of the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. the god Wer or Mer, later Iluwer, was one of the most important weather-gods in the Middle Euphrates area between Tuttul and 'Anah.

There is no direct evidence of the cult of Iluwer in the Euphrates region imported by Zakkur to Hamath during the 1st millennium B.C., to which the Zakkur inscription belongs.²⁰⁸

According to this inscription, the god Ba'alšamayin often acted favorably on behalf of his protégé Zakkur. In addition, Ba'alšamayin appears as

²⁰⁵ In regard to the surviving feet on a stool of the royal statue, cf. the Aramaean royal statue from 'Ain et-Tell (ca. 800 B.C.) in Orthmann 1975: fig. 411.

²⁰⁶ On Afis as the citadel of Hazrak, cf. Lipiński 2000a: 255–258 and Niehr 2003: 94.

²⁰⁷ Cf. on the English translation especially Gibson 1975: 9–13; Lipiński 2000a: 255; Millard 2000b.

²⁰⁸ Cf. on Iluwer Schwemer 2001: 200–210; id. 2008: 27–29; Masetti-Rouault 2009: 145.

the highest-ranking god of the pantheon (lines 23–27) in the part of the inscription (B) on the left side of the stele.

An examination of the composition of the Zakkur inscription shows that it contains features of commemorative and dedicatory inscriptions. In this case the beginning and ending of a dedicatory inscription bracket a commemorative inscription.²⁰⁹ This insight is important for determining the role of the gods mentioned in the inscription namely Iluwer as the personal god of the king and Ba'alšamayin as the god of the kingship and kingdom. The older commemorative inscription encompasses the events surrounding Hazrak (A 2–B 10) in which the god Ba'alšamayin appears as kingmaker and liberator of King Zakkur.

Considering that the Zakkur inscription originates shortly after 800 B.C. it is not only the earliest Aramaean evidence of the god Ba'alšamayin but also the earliest evidence of his worship. The only older mention of "Ba'al of the Heavens" is in the Yeḥimilk inscription (KAI 4) from Byblos from about 950 B.C. Additional Phoenician mentions of "Ba'al of the Heavens" in the inscription from Karatepe (KAI 26) and the mentions of Ba'alšamayin in the inscription from Hassan Beyli²¹⁰ and in the treaty of Esarhaddon (SAA II no. 5 IV 10'–13')²¹¹ are from the 8th and 7th century B.C. The history of the god Ba'alšamayin during the period between 950 B.C. (KAI 4) and 800 B.C. (KAI 202) cannot be reconstructed as we lack written sources pertaining to this topic.

Ba'alšamayin and Iluwer are mentioned together with the divine pair Šamaš and Šahr in the curses of the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202: 23). The weather-gods could carry out their curse by sending too much or too little rain, the solar deity acts as an agency of justice, and the moon-god could strike someone with leprosy.

Information about another god, Ašima' from the kingdom of Hamath originates from other sources.²¹² When Hamath was defeated in the battle of Qarqar in 720 B.C. the Assyrians deported part of the population to the former kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 17: 24–28), which had been annexed as an Assyrian province under the name Samerina. According to the Old Testament Ašima' was the god of the people of Hamath who were deported

²⁰⁹ Cf. Parker 1997: 107–109 and id. 1999: 53–55.

²¹⁰ Cf. Niehr 2003: 59f.

²¹¹ Text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 27 and additionally Niehr 2003: 43–45.

²¹² On Ašima', cf. van der Toorn 1992: 86; Cogan 1999b; Niehr 2003: 191–195; Merlo 2009.

to Samaria (2 Kgs 17: 30). A god Ašima' is also mentioned in the 4th century B.C. Aramaic inscriptions from the North Arabian oasis Tayma.²¹³ A combination of this divine name with the god Bethel from the Aleppo region appears in the Jewish-Aramaean papyri from Elephantine in the 5th century B.C. where this god appears as Ašim-Bethel.²¹⁴ Another occurrence is in a Greek inscription from the Aleppo region dating to the 3rd century B.C., which contains a god Συμβετυλος.²¹⁵

Small finds give further evidence of deities worshipped in Hamath, even though these representations of deities evade identification by name. Well known is the 9.5-cm-tall statuette of an enthroned god wearing a horned headdress. The gold-plated bronze figure shows a bearded man who holds what may be a scepter in his right hand and a cup in his left.²¹⁶ As this figure belongs to the type of enthroned high god one may consider it a representation of the god Hadad.

Then there are a number of clay plaquettes or clay models of goddesses.²¹⁷ As they are naked and holding their breasts they are referred to as goddesses of the Astarte type, without meaning to say that a goddess of that name was worshipped in Hamath. Perhaps they represent the goddess Pahalatis/Ba'alat the chief goddess of the kingdom known from Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions of Hamath and its region.

Furthermore, there are fragments of several statues whose condition do not permit any attribution to deities or kings, as well as fragments of thrones, altars, and stelae.²¹⁸

The connection of the god Iluwer with Tell Afis, located 45 km southwest of Aleppo, can be made through a broken piece of pottery found there in 1997 on which the letters *lwr* are written, which expand to read the divine name Iluwer.²¹⁹

3.2 *Kingship*

It is above all the royal inscriptions and royal iconography that provide a glimpse of the royal ideology of the Aramaean dynasties of Sam'al.²²⁰

²¹³ See below H. Niehr's contribution on Tayma.

²¹⁴ Cf. Porten – Yardeni 1993: TAD C 3.15: 127.

²¹⁵ Cf. Lidzbarski 1908: 323f.

²¹⁶ Cf. the illustrations and descriptions in Riis 1948: 138 fig. 186 and Orthmann 1975: XLVIII, 482.

²¹⁷ Cf. Riis – Buhl 1990: 192–203.

²¹⁸ Cf. Riis – Buhl 1990: 54–64.

²¹⁹ Cf. Mazzoni 1998a: 196; ead. 2012: 35; Soldi 2009: 104f with figs. 5f.

²²⁰ Cf. especially Euler 1938; Landsberger 1948; Czichon 1995; Dion 1997: 242–270; Brown 2008; Green 2010: 136–156, 307–315; Gilibert 2011: 55–135; Niehr 2013: 200–203.

According to inscriptions and iconography, the kings of Sam'al made the following statements. King Kulamuwa (ca. 840–810 B.C.) wrote in his inscription (KAI 24) at first negatively about the achievements of his predecessors in order to highlight his own architectural and political achievements. He “sat on the throne of his father and was father and mother to his people.” Because he was then beleaguered by foreign kings, he called on the Assyrians to help him.²²¹ This corresponds to the notable fact that King Kulamuwa had himself depicted in the image field of the orthostat wearing the jewelry and clothing of an Assyrian king. He not only elevated his own status as an Aramaean petty king but also displayed his status as loyal vassal to his Assyrian overlord.²²² This agrees further with the image in the upper frame of his orthostat where Kulamuwa turns to the gods Ashur and Rakkab'el in the *ubāna tarāšu* speech gesture. Thus the chief Assyrian god and the dynastic god of Sam'al were revered in tandem.²²³

King Panamuwa I (ca. 790–750 B.C.) wrote in his memorial inscription (KAI 214) of himself that the gods stood with him and placed the scepter of lordship into his hands. After he had sat on the throne of his father, the gods gave him all he asked for, as well as abundance and fertility for his land. This abundance manifested itself in the construction of temples for the gods of the city and a necropolis for the king's royal funerary cult. He pledged his successor to the throne, under threat of harm, to invoke his name along with the name of the highest god Hadad and to hold the royal mortuary cult at Gerçin, which included a joint sacrifice to Hadad and his death spirit.

King Panamuwa II (ca. 740–733 B.C.) was instated by the king of Assyria, according to his memorial inscription (KAI 215), which his son and successor Bar-Rakkab drafted in his honor. In return he gave his political loyalty, which he never abandoned during his lifetime; he died during the campaign against Damascus, as a vassal of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III.

King Bar-Rakkab (ca. 733–713/711 B.C.) was, according to his inscription (KAI 216), instated by the dynastic god Rakkab'el and the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III, because of his father's loyalty as well as his own. With Bar-Rakkab the loyalty of the rulers of Sam'al to the Assyrians reached its peak.

²²¹ On the correspondence of Kulamuwa's domestic politics and foreign affairs according to KAI 24, cf. Gilibert 2011: 80f with fig. 45.

²²² Cf. esp. Czichon 1995; Brown 2008; Gilibert 2011: 79–84.

²²³ For the gods Ashur and Rakkab'el, see above, section 2.1; for the *ubāna-tarāšu*-gesture, cf. Magen 1986: 45–55 and Czichon 1995: 369–371.

More insight into the royal ideology is granted by an orthostat depicting the enthroned king Bar-Rakkab. The statement of the relief is usually reduced to the depiction of the enthroned king and his scribe.²²⁴ This view, however, disregards the overall statement of the relief. In this scene the king is the guarantor of law and order. He is seated on his throne while an official approaches him with writing utensils in his hand and a diptych under his arm.²²⁵ Between the two figures in the center of the scene is the symbol of the moon-god of Harran representing the divine guarantor of treaties and oaths. The king says the words: "I am Bar-Rakkab, son of Panamuwa. My lord is Ba'al Harran" (KAI 218), which commit him to follow the legal order.

This situation is reflected by the expression *šdq*, referring to loyalty, in other inscriptions of King Bar-Rakkab. Because of this loyalty the god Rakkab'el and the overlord Tiglath-Pileser placed Bar-Rakkab on the throne of Sam'al (KAI 216: 4–7; 219: 4–5). Bar-Rakkab describes himself as more loyal than the other vassal kings (KAI 217: 3–6).

The relationships of the gods to the kings and vice versa in these inscriptions can be summarized as follows: The gods place the king on his throne, hand him the scepter of lordship (KAI 214: 2–3, 8–9), and support him during his reign (KAI 214: 4, 10–14; 215: 1–2). Accordingly, the kings build temples to the gods for them to live in and provide for them (KAI 214: 19–20). Furthermore, the kings build necropoleis (KAI 214: 11–15), prove themselves loyal to the gods and their political overlords (KAI 215: 1–2, 11–18; 216: 4–7; cf. 217: 4–6 and 219), and their death spirits are invoked together with Hadad and their descendants sacrifices bring after their death (KAI 214: 14–22; 215: 21).

In addition to the already discussed reliefs and statues of the kings Kulamuwa, Panamuwa I, Panamuwa II, and Bar-Rakkab there are further reliefs and orthostats at other locations in the city of Sam'al. They too grant insight into the royal ideology of Sam'al.²²⁶

There is a deliberate sequence of stelae from the southern city gate (A) to the outer citadel gate (D) and the *hilani* buildings on the citadel. At the Southern city gate were eight orthostats (Zincirli 3–10) with battle

²²⁴ E.g., Gilibert 2011: 86 "In *Zincirli* 66 the king is shown engaged in administrative matters...."

²²⁵ Cf. von Luschan 1911: 347, who sees a "Buch... dessen Deckel durch ein richtiges Scharnier verbunden sind."

²²⁶ I follow Gilibert 2011: 191–221 in the numbering of the reliefs and orthostats.

and hunting scenes, mythical creatures, and two lion statues guarding the gate.²²⁷ They present an image of the king as a victor, hunter, and vanquisher of demons. The king portrays himself as the victor over the natural and supernatural powers of chaos and thus as the guarantor of the divine order. Forty orthostats (Zincirli 12–51) were placed to both sides of the street leading to the outer citadel gate and several aniconic orthostats without any decorations were placed inside the gate. Their arrangement is such that the eastern side depicts martial and hunting scenes and scenes from the ancestor cult and the king, while the western side shows demons, processions, divine beings, and musicians.²²⁸ Five orthostats depicting courtiers (Zincirli 78, 79, 80, 81, 82)²²⁹ were found in the *hilani* III building. At the entrance to the *hilani* IV building were orthostats showing King Bar-Rakkab (Zincirli 66), courtiers (Zincirli 68), a banquet scene with King Bar-Rakkab (Zincirli 69), several musicians (Zincirli 70–73)²³⁰ as well as representations of King Bar-Rakkab standing before divine symbols without a libation vessel (Zincirli 74) and with a libation vessel in his hand (Zincirli 75).²³¹

With regard to the overall ensemble it is important to note that the reliefs decorate not the inside of buildings but rather outdoor spaces along gates, squares, and palaces. These outdoor spaces were therefore likely intended for ceremonies.²³²

These insights are complemented by the results of excavations conducted since 2006, which revealed the existence of a processional road lined with orthostats leading from a temple outside the city gates to the southern gate. One of these orthostats (1.25 m tall) depicts a Tree of Life and a royal servant adjacent to it.²³³

The inscription on the stele of King Zakkur (KAI 202) found in Hamath points to the close relationship between the god Ba'alšamayin and the king. Ba'alšamayin had rescued Zakkur (lines 2–3), stood by him (lines 3, 13–14), and made him king over Hazrak (lines 3–4, 13). For his part Zakkur

²²⁷ Cf. the overview in Koldewey 1898: 111–130; von Luschan 1902: 201–236 and pls. XXXIV–XLVIII; id. 1911: 325–380; Pucci 2008: 52–54; and Gilibert 2011: 55–67.

²²⁸ Cf. the overview in Koldewey 1898: 122–127; Pucci 2008: 52–57; Gilibert 2011: 61–68.

²²⁹ Cf. the overview in Koldewey 1898: 151–154; Pucci 2008: 71f; Gilibert 2011: 88–90.

²³⁰ Cf. the overview in Gilibert 2011: 85–88.

²³¹ Cf. Gilibert 2011: 87f, 215.

²³² Cf. Pucci 2008: 52–80, 163–177 and Gilibert 2011: 97–114.

²³³ Cf. Schloen – Fink 2009b: 215f and id. 2009c: 8, 11 fig. 29.

raised his hands in prayer to Ba'alšamayin and the god answered him (lines 11–12). Ba'alšamayin spoke to the king by means of seers and prophets (lines 11–13) and promised him liberation from his enemies (lines 13–15). Thus, Ba'alšamayin is the god of the kingdom of Hamath.

In the kingdom of Bit Agusi the royal name Adramu or Adrame (“Addu/Haddu is exalted”) is found in the inscriptions on the stelae from Antakya and Pazarcık as well as on the stele from Breğ.²³⁴ This name reflects the king's close connection to the chief god of the pantheon. Furthermore, there is a close connection between the royal name Bar-Hadad (“Son of Hadad”) and the chief god Hadad, as can be seen both in the inscription KAI 201 found in Breğ near Aleppo and in the royal names from Damascus. In the latter case the question arises whether and in what way the names are based on a perception of divine sonship of the king. A throne name would also be a possibility,²³⁵ although without further written sources from Arpad or Damascus this question must remain unanswered.

3.3 *Temples and Cults*

Excavations have been conducted on the citadel of Aleppo since 1998. This has made it possible to confirm the existence of the temple of the weather-god of Aleppo. Archaeological remains of a temple are attested in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. This temple was in use until the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. It burned down during a phase of rebuilding in 900 B.C. and was abandoned.²³⁶ Nevertheless, a continuity of cultic practices, among others, can be established from written sources.

The earliest of these is an Assyrian text according to which King Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) received tribute from King Adramu/Adrame of Bit Agusi, whereupon he offered sacrifices to the weather-god of Aleppo.²³⁷

The inscriptions from Sefire reveal that the sanctuary of Aleppo could grant asylum, as residents from Kitikka fled to Aleppo (KAI 224: 4–7). King Mati'el was supposed not to grant them refuge but to repatriate them to Kitikka instead.²³⁸

²³⁴ Cf. RIMA III A.O.104.2, 5.9; RIMA III A.O.102.3, 11; KAI 201: 2; cf. Lipiński 2000a: 212–216.

²³⁵ See below, section 4.2.

²³⁶ On this temple, cf. Kohlmeyer 2000; id. 2009; id. 2012; Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005 and the contribution of Novák in this volume.

²³⁷ On this text, cf. Schwemer 2001: 620 with n. 5007.

²³⁸ Cf. Greenfield 1991a and Fitzmeyer 1995: 147–149.

In 1899, R. Koldewey found a stele in Babylon with the depiction of the weather-god of Aleppo identified by a Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription (BABYLON 1)²³⁹ together with two votive vessels. The stele was brought to Babylon as booty in the wake of a Syrian campaign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.). It is dated to around 900 B.C. and was used as a cultic image during the Aramaean period in Aleppo. The 1.28-m-tall and 0.53-m-wide stele shows a weather-god facing left. He is bearded, with hair locks, and wears a horned headdress, shirt, kilt, and pointed shoes. In his right hand he holds an axe and in his left a thunderbolt. A sword is strapped to his side. However, it is not clear if this stele comes from the temple of the weather-god on the citadel or from another temple in or near Aleppo.²⁴⁰

K. Kohlmeyer's excavations on the citadel of Aleppo brought to light further reliefs with representations of the weather-god of Aleppo.

The first relief shows the weather-god, whom the inscription names "God (of the) Club," mounting his war chariot, which is drawn by two bulls.²⁴¹ The god wears a horned headdress and holds a club in his right hand and the reins in his left. The club forges a connection between the weather-god of Aleppo and the god Ba'al of Ugarit in his representation as *Ba'al au foudre*, as mentioned previously.²⁴² It also connects to the description of Ba'al's weapons in the Ba'al Cycle (KTU 1.2 IV 11–26) and to the god Ba'al Samed from Sam'al.

The second relief shows a weather-god with a horned headdress facing to the right. He is dressed in a shirt and kilt with a sword strapped to his side. He faces a king who is depicted on the adjacent relief.²⁴³

Archaeological studies of the citadel have not yet been able to place the Hellenistic temple. In all probability it is a northeastern extension of the Iron Age temple in the area in front of or below the later Ottoman barracks.²⁴⁴

²³⁹ This text in Hawkins 2000: 391–394 and an illustration in Hawkins 2000: pls. 209 and 210 and Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005: 15 fig. 10.

²⁴⁰ Hawkins 2000: 391 assumes a provenance from the temple of the weather-god of Aleppo because of his mention in the inscription, more reservedly Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 113 n. 9.

²⁴¹ Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005: 99 fig. 138.

²⁴² Cf. above 3.1.

²⁴³ Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005: 92 fig. 124.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Kohlmeyer 2000: 22 and Gonnella – Khayyata – Kohlmeyer 2005: 15f. On the continuation of the temple's cult up to the 3rd century A.D. See below, section 5.

Despite excavations in Neirab there is as yet no archaeological evidence of a temple there.

Two sepulchral stelae from Neirab offer an important clue to the existence of a temple to the moon-god Šahr. The wording "... *kmr šhr bnr̥b*" ("... priest of Šahr in Neirab"; KAI 225: 1–2; 226: 1) in these inscriptions indicates that Šahr's cultic site was in Neirab. Even though Aramaic syntax does not distinguish between the location of the priest and that of the god, there are similar Aramaic expressions in the texts from Elephantine that mention "Yahu [who is] in the fortress Yeb" that can be used for clarification.²⁴⁵ Thus, the temple of the moon-god Šahr in Neirab is clearly distinguished from the temple of the moon-god Sin in Harran.

The temple on the acropolis of 'Ain Dara has been especially well investigated.²⁴⁶ It is of the "long-room" type with exterior dimensions of 38 × 32 m. This type of temple is mainly known from north Syria, in for example, Tell Tayinat,²⁴⁷ Alalāḥ, Ebla (Tempel D), and Emar (temple of Ba'al and Astarte). It is also found in Palestine in, for example, Hazor and Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem is a "long-room" with a tripartite interior. The Old Testament gives its length as 30 m (cf. 1 Kgs 6: 2), which accurately corresponds to the temple in 'Ain Dara.

The Sefire treaties mention the location in which they were placed (KAI 223 C: 2–3, 7). The *bty 'lhy*' mentioned here are widely understood to mean "betyls".²⁴⁸ This is inaccurate, because the term refers to the temples in which the treaty stelae were placed before the gods. Thus, Sefire was a cultic site for the treaties' oath deities, i.e., the gods of Kitikka, who ensured that the treaties were observed. This is also indicated by the list of oath deities where the deities are requested to open their eyes over the treaty.²⁴⁹

A Neo-Babylonian inscription written on the torso of a statue found in Sefire also points to the existence of a temple at this site. It refers to a residence for the god of Sefire and the installation of his statue.²⁵⁰

The temple of the kingdom of Kitikka, where the stelae were located, was probably a sanctuary located near the border of Bit Agusi, although the fact that the inscription mentions several temples means that the stelae

²⁴⁵ Porten – Yardeni 1986: TAD A 4.7: 6; 4.8: 7 [incompl.]; B 2.2: 4; 3.3: 2; 3.5: 2; 3.10: 2; 3.11: 2; cf. similar expressions in Niehr 2003: 194.

²⁴⁶ Cf. the references in footnote 128.

²⁴⁷ See below.

²⁴⁸ Cf. for example Alt 1934 = 1959; Donner – Röllig ^{3–5}1971–2002: 259, 263; Lemaire – Durand 1984: 128, 142; Fitzmyer ²1995: 125.

²⁴⁹ See below on the textual finds from one of the temples in Tell Tayinat.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Warmenbol 1985 and Lipiński 2000a: 206, 209 fig 213.

were duplicated. Therefore, a corresponding temple must exist in the kingdom of Bit Agusi.

At Sam'al the inscription of Panamuwa I on the Hadad statue depicts the king as the builder of a temple (KAI 214: 19–20). With this, an important trait of Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology is adopted.

The fragmentary text of lines 19–20 reports that Panamuwa built a temple for “the gods of this city,” i.e., for the gods of Sam'al. The verb in line 19 is unclear. Most often “to plan” or “to promise” is amended. The verb *bnh* “to conduct construction work” (partially reconstructed) denotes building activity. In general, the construction of a temple included the establishment of the cult; the phrase “and I let the gods live therein,” alludes to the introduction of the statues of gods and divine symbols into the temple.

The topographical part of the claim “the gods of this city” cannot refer to Gerçin, the site where the statue of Hadad was found. It may rather refer to Sam'al as the capital. The construction notice in KAI 214: 19 gives the impression that the main gods of Sam'al were worshipped in a temple, Hadad taking the highest position, while the other gods can be addressed perhaps as *theoi synnaoi*.

The remark that the king had given the gods “a place of rest” (KAI 214: 20) during his reign is probably a reference to this temple's cultic continuity. Compare to this the Aramaic inscription on the statue from Tell Fekheriye, according to which Hadad “gives rest and vessels of food to all the gods, his brothers” (KAI 309: 3–4).

The inscription of King Bar-Rakkab for his father and predecessor Panamuwa II (KAI 215) also contains an allusion to gifts for the gods, which merely states that the cult proceeded in the correct manner. The same inscription speaks of a sacrifice to Hadad and the invocation of his name. Despite the fragmentary context the crown prince can still be identified as the one offering a sacrifice to the chief god of the kingdom of Sam'al. The peculiarity of this passage lies in the combination of the sacrificial offering to the god Hadad with the royal mortuary cult.

After this insight into the textual foundations let us now consider the archaeology of Sam'al. The recent excavations, in particular, which began in 2006 and have continued regularly, have led to some interesting insights regarding to the remains of temples and shrines.

The difficulty in locating a central temple building within the city of Sam'al does not mean that there was no temple at all.²⁵¹ Rather, the problem

²⁵¹ This is the assumption of Novák 1999: 201; id. 2004a: 325–327; id. 2005a: 254f, who wants to localize the kingdom's religious center in Tilmen Hüyük.

lies in defining what typical temple architecture is. One can generally expect that a certain part of the palace served cultic purposes, without it being visible in the architecture today.

With regard to the acropolis, the assumption was made that perhaps a temple had once been situated on the eastern corner (Area 2).²⁵² This was due to the discovery of a lion figure marking an entrance. The eastern corner of the acropolis is also its highest part.

The excavations in the residential area of the northern lower city (Area 5) demonstrate the most interesting and often overlooked instance of a city sanctuary. The discovery of the stele of Kuttamuwa in July 2008 led to an ongoing investigation of the building in whose annex (A/II) the stele was erected. Meanwhile, however, it should already be clear that Kuttamuwa had created a mortuary chapel for the veneration of his memory. The reason for this chapel was the existence of an adjacent neighborhood temple (A/III). Comparable neighborhood temples exist, for example, in the form of the *sanctuaire aux rhythons* in Ugarit, two chapels in Carchemish, the stela temple of Hazor, the shrine of Tell Qasile, and the two chapels and so-called cult room from Tell Halaf, which are contemporary to the shrine of Sam'al.²⁵³

Meanwhile there is also evidence for the existence of an extra-urban shrine (Area 7). A row of stela was located about 100 m outside of the southern city gate as was a rectangular structure, which has been interpreted as having been a shrine. A more detailed interpretation must await the results of further excavations.²⁵⁴

There are two temples in close proximity to each other in the upper town of Tell Tayinat (Kunulua). Temple I (building II), excavated between 1935 and 1937, is located south of one of the *hilani* buildings (building I). The approximately 2.05-m-thick mud brick walls of the temple were reinforced with wooden beams. The temple was open to the east, and was about 11.75 m wide and 25.35 m long. It is divided into three parts, a vestibule, cella, and adyton. The vestibule is 5.92×7.62 m with two antae and two columns on double lion bases. It is followed by a 9.60×7.62 m large cella, which adjoins a 3.25×7.62 m adyton. There was a pedestal to place offerings near the right-hand pillar in front of the adyton. Of the interior fittings of the adyton only the remains of a 3.55×2.60 m mud brick

²⁵² Cf. Schloen – Fink 2009c: 6 with figs. 12 and 13.

²⁵³ Cf. Struble – Herrmann 2009: 36–42 and Herrmann forthcoming.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Schloen – Fink 2009b: 210f; iid. 2009c: 6, 8, 11 with figs. 29 and 30.

altar and a pedestal are visible. Another altar stood before the temple.²⁵⁵ Researchers have long since recognized the structural similarity of the Temple of Jerusalem to Temple I of Tell Tayinat.²⁵⁶

Excavations carried out in Tell Tayinat between 2007 and 2009 have unearthed a second temple. This Temple II (building XVI) lies east of the *hilani* building (building I), and opens to the south. Thus, the temples are oriented toward each other by way of a common fore-court. Temple II is somewhat smaller than Temple I, with a width of 9 m and a length of 21 m, but is also divided into vestibule, cella, and adyton. The adyton contains a pedestal reached by four steps that fills almost the entire room. The east side shows the remains of a mud brick altar. Eleven Neo-Assyrian clay tablets with scientific, lexical, and juridical texts were found on the west side of the adyton. Additionally, furnishing remains were found in the cella and adyton.²⁵⁷

The two temples cannot be assigned to Hadad or other deities due to a lack of written material from that time. The inscription on the horse's blinder and head-piece makes the dedication of one of the temples to Hadad highly probable.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, one can refer to the Late Bronze Age double temples in Emar, dedicated to Ba'al and Ḫebat, and in Alalah, dedicated to Teššup and Astarte, which tend to confirm a dedication of the Tell Tayinat Temples I and II to Hadad and Astarte.²⁵⁹

Several large buildings (buildings I–V) were exposed during excavations on the southern part of the acropolis of Hamath between 1931 and 1938. The following statements can be made in terms of the existence of temples:

Building III is identified as a temple based on the remains of an archive containing tablet fragments of hymns, rituals, magical and medicinal texts, omens, exorcistic rituals, and correspondence. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the previous building contained a stele for a deity, possibly the weather-god Tarḫunt. Building III was thus used at least partly as a temple.²⁶⁰ One can assume that the goddess Pahalatis was worshipped here together with the weather-god. Small finds include the

²⁵⁵ On this temple, cf. Busink 1970: 558–562; Haines 1971: 53–55; Werner 1994: 114f; Harrison 2012: 6–10.

²⁵⁶ Cf., for example, Busink 1970: 558–562.

²⁵⁷ On this temple, cf. Harrison 2012: 10–18 and, on the texts, Lauinger 2011.

²⁵⁸ See above, section 3.1.

²⁵⁹ See also Harrison 2012: 18f.

²⁶⁰ For a different view, cf. Werner 1994: 141 and Matthiae 2008: 210f.

remains of orthostats with lion representations, a basalt stele depicting a scene of a meal, an aniconic stele, and various fragments of bowls.

Four large blocks of basalt with Hieroglyphic-Luwian dedicatory inscriptions provide further evidence for temples and sanctuaries in Hamath. These inscriptions mention, among others, the goddess Pahalatis' temple (HAMA 4) and that of the weather-god Tarḥunt (HAMA 5).²⁶¹

Of particular interest are the polished red bricks with Aramaic inscriptions containing predominantly personal names. They have been dated to the 8th century B.C., i.e., before the fall of Hamath in 720 B.C.²⁶² Outside the main entrance to building III were two 30-cm-high pedestals, whose surface was made up of these inscribed bricks. Ten bricks were found on the northern pedestal, two of which were inscribed, and six bricks were found on the southern pedestal, three of which were inscribed. Another three bricks were found in the immediate vicinity and probably belonged to this structure. The writing style of the inscriptions indicates that they were written mostly by uneducated persons. Researchers assume these inscriptions fulfilled a religious function as pleas, votive inscriptions, or commemorative texts.²⁶³

Three other buildings on the citadel of Hamath are also referred to as temples or sanctuaries. One is a small building north of building III, in which Aramaic graffiti were found on the floor. Another is an open-air sanctuary between buildings II and IV, where three bricks with Aramaic inscriptions were found.²⁶⁴

Beneath the mosque west of the citadel are the remains of a Roman temple and a Christian church. This situation is similar to the one in the area of the Umayyad mosques of Damascus and Aleppo. The dedication of the Roman temple is unknown.

Excavations in Tell Afis, the citadel of Hazrak, uncovered a temple and a ceremonial courtyard used for cultic functions in the 8th century B.C.²⁶⁵ The courtyard spans 15 × 15 m, while only 2-m-thick brick walls remain

²⁶¹ Text and translation in Hawkins 2000: 403–407.

²⁶² Cf. on the inscriptions and their find spots Riis 1978–1980; Otzen 1988; id. 1990.

²⁶³ For a different view, cf. Lipiński 2000a: 266–280, who argues against a religious character and for texts concerning deliveries. Such an interpretation poses the question whether the find situation was appropriately considered.

²⁶⁴ Ussishkin 1966b designates building IV as a temple because of its structural similarity to the temples of Tell Tayinat and Jerusalem. Differently, Werner 1994: 81 and Matthiae 2008: 208.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Mazzoni 2008: 24–29; ead. 2010; ead. 2012; Soldi 2009: 105–108.

of the temple. There are no written sources that allow us to attribute this temple to a specific deity.

The acropolis of Hazrak is most likely the origin of the stele with the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202). The inscription mentions that the stele was erected before Iluwer, i.e., before his statue (KAI 202 A: 1; B: 13–15), as a votive offering.

A basalt stele from the 8th or 7th century B.C., found in 1994, offers another indication of cult practices in Hazrak (Tell Afis). The stele is rounded at the top and depicts an eight-pointed star above a recumbent crescent moon in its upper image field. Even though this stele was found in a necropolis outside of the ancient city, it comes from the more highly situated acropolis where the Zakkur stele (KAI 202) was also erected.²⁶⁶ The fragmentary inscription might point to King Hazael's way to Unqi.²⁶⁷

3.4 *Prophecy and Divination*

The trilingual inscription of Incirli gives a possible indication of the phenomenon of prophecy in Bit Agusi. The text reports that while the king was about to conduct a sacrifice a wise man rose and advised him not to offer a human sacrifice. The very fragmentary text unfortunately allows no further insight.²⁶⁸

Prophecy is explicitly attested for the kingdom of Hamath, though. When the city of King Zakkur of Hamath was beleaguered by a coalition of Aramaean kings he called upon his tutelary god Ba'alšamayin for help and the god spoke to him through "seers" (*ḥzyn*) and "messengers" (*'ddn*). They gave the king the following oracle:

(15) "Do not be afraid! Since I have made [you king, I will (14) stand] beside you. I will save you from all [these kings who] (15) have besieged you."²⁶⁹ (KAI 202 A: 13–15)

The prophets mentioned here are probably visionaries or ecstasies and their messengers, who were in the service of the temple of Ba'alšamayin.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Cf. Mazzoni 1998b and Amadasi Guzzo 2009.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Amadasi Guzzo 2009: 341–344 and above, 3.1.

²⁶⁸ Textual reconstruction and translation in Kaufman 2007.

²⁶⁹ Cf. on the translation Gibson 1975: 9, 11 and Millard 2000b.

²⁷⁰ On prophecy in Hamath, cf. Ross 1970; Zobel 1971; Greenfield 1972; Lemaire 1997: 172–175; Lipiński 2000a: 509. On prophecy in the religion of the Aramaeans, cf. the texts from Til Barsib (see above, section 2.4) and Tell Deir 'Alla (see below, section 4.4).

To the practice of divination belongs an 8th-century-B.C. bronze bowl with Aramaic inscriptions and astral imagery, which was described by R. D. Barnett and intensively studied by A. Lemaire and K. L. Younger.²⁷¹ The bowl provides a glance into the astronomy of the Aramaeans of Syria, and probably originates from a royal court, where it would have been used for divinatory purposes. As Younger notes, “This bowl undoubtedly had divinatory purposes that addressed particular royal concerns. It is likely that it portrayed certain astral configurations that could be used in astral divination in order to avert any possible evil portents and ensure the beneficent outcomes that the king desired. If this bowl was used as a censer, it may well have served in either lecanomancy, libanomancy, or both, with the oil or smoke pattern touching or covering different astral entities on the bowl, and thus giving ‘signs’ of the portents that would need to be averted.”²⁷²

3.5 *Magic*

The Sefire treaties also contain, aside from curses that become effective in the event of a breach of terms and are intended bring all kinds of distress to the kingdom and its people, the so-called nullity curses (KAI 222 A: 14–35). Additionally, there are some comparative curses that give instructive examples of the practice of sympathetic magic:

(35) Just as this wax is burned by fire, so may Arpad be burned and [her *gr*] *eat* [daughter-cities]! (36) May Hadad sow in them salt and *weeds*, and may it not be mentioned (again)! This *gnb*²⁷³ and [] (37) (are) Mati’el; it is his person. Just as this wax is burned by fire, so may Mati’el be burned by fire! (38) Just as (this) bow and these arrows are broken, so may Inurta and Hadad break [the bow of Mati’el], (39) and the bow of his nobles! And just as the man of wax is blinded, so may Mati’el be blinded! [Just as] (40) this calf is cut in two, so may Mati’el be cut in two, and may his nobles be cut in two! [And just as] (41) a [ha]r[lot is stripped naked], so may the wives of Mati’el be stripped naked, and the wives of his offspring, and the wives of [his] no[bles! And just as (42) this wax woman is taken] and one strikes her on the face, so may the [wives of Mati’el] be taken [and].²⁷⁴ (KAI 222 A: 35–42)

²⁷¹ Cf. Barnett 1966; Lemaire 1999; Younger 2012.

²⁷² Younger 2012: 230.

²⁷³ Meaning uncertain.

²⁷⁴ Cf. on the translation Fitzmyer ²1995: 47.

These are rites for the *demonstratio ad oculos* accompanying the treaty's conclusion ceremony. That they were actually conducted is shown by the expressions "this wax" (line 37) and "(this) bow and these arrows" (line 38). These rites using wax effigies and weapons are a legacy of Hittite magical practices, which passed into the Aramaean Sefire treaties by way of the Luwians.²⁷⁵

3.6 *Funeral and Mortuary Cult*

The oldest evidence for a royal mortuary cult in Sam'al is given by the statue of a ruler (Zincirli 63) that was found at the palace of Zincirli (pl. XV). This statue was erected outside the southeastern wall of Palace J, not within the area of the royal tombs. The king's statue was standing on a base formed by two lions, which were tamed by a hero depicted in a kneeling run (Zincirli 64). Because such bases were used as pedestals for divine statues the divine status of the king, represented as a royal statue, can be assumed. This impression is reinforced by the cuplike holes embedded in the heads of the lions and of the hero that served to receive libations. The statue dates to the time before King Kulamuwa, i.e., in the first half of the 9th century B.C. Thus, it is one of Kulamuwa's predecessors who is represented here, perhaps even the founder of the dynasty, King Gabbar.²⁷⁶ Every visitor to the palace had to pass this cult site.

Felix von Luschan, who excavated Sam'al, had already realized that the statue was oriented toward the rising sun, the same direction toward which the grave next to the *hilani* I and the stele of Kuttamuwa were oriented. The same situation is also found in Guzana (Tell Halaf), where the two grave shrines and the so-called sanctuary point east.²⁷⁷ The solar component in the mortuary cult is explicitly acknowledged in the stele of Kuttamuwa, which faces east and lists the sacrifice of a ram to the sun-god.

A new epigraphic analysis of the sepulchral stele from Ördekburnu²⁷⁸ by A. Lemaire and B. Sass in April 2008 indicates that the first royal necropolis existed south of Sam'al during the reigns of the kings Kulamuwa

²⁷⁵ On the construction of ritual effigies and their usage in magic, cf. Haas 2003: 569–613.

²⁷⁶ Cf. von Luschan 1911: 362–369; Niehr 1994b: 58 with references in n. 5; Bonatz 2000a: 14, 24–27, 76–78, 154 and pl. II A 6; Hawkins 2008: 604; Gilibert 2011: 76–79, 83f.

²⁷⁷ Cf. von Luschan 1911: 363; Niehr 2006: 112, 127, 129–131; Kutter 2008: 302–307. For the actual situation, cf. Orthmann 2009.

²⁷⁸ Cf. on the stele von Luschan 1911: 329f with fig. 239; Bonatz 2000a: 21, 59, 68 and pl. XIX C52.

(ca. 840–810 B.C.) and Panamuwa I (ca. 790–750 B.C.).²⁷⁹ As part of the sacrificial rules in the stele's inscription, line 9 states: *wbmqm.mlky.š'yn.ly* ("and in this necropolis of kings two rams for me"). The speaker is a princess or queen of whose name only the element *Pīya*-remains.²⁸⁰ A. Lemaire and B. Sass clarify the exact origin of the stele of Ördekburnu as follows: "On pourrait songer au tell de Karapınar Höyük ou à celui de Karapınar Mezarlık. Ce dernier, situé à environ 2 km d'Ördekburnu, pourrait avoir été le lieu d'origine de la stèle."²⁸¹ It is possibly the necropolis of King Hayyan (ca. 870–850 B.C.), whose ascent to the throne marked a change in dynasties.

Whatever persuaded King Panamuwa I to build a new royal necropolis in Gerçin (cf. KAI 214: 1) a few decades later is unknown except that the god Hadad commissioned it. A dynastic change is unlikely to have been the cause.²⁸²

This site is located seven kilometers northeast of Sam'al on a bed-rock hill that visibly dominates the surrounding landscape. In Gerçin the remains of five statues were found, some of which had inscriptions. These inscriptions, and the statues themselves, clearly refer to the practice of the royal ancestor cult and the existence of a necropolis in Gerçin. However, Gerçin has not yet been archaeologically explored. There have been only two small efforts so far to inspect and recover the statues, one in June 1888 and one in February 1890. Therefore, any statements made today about royal funerals and ancestor worship in Gerçin are based only on stray archaeological finds, especially the statues, and on epigraphic evidence.

This refers specifically to the following five statues (statue fragments):

1. A 2.85-m-tall basalt statue of an upright standing god with a horned headdress. According to its inscription (KAI 214) it is a statue of the god Hadad. The statue was broken into several pieces in antiquity. The head (in two pieces) and the upper body were found at the foot of the hill, while the lower body, with the 24 lines of the inscription, still lay on its crest. The original height of the statue is estimated at 3.50 m to 4 m.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Cf. Lemaire – Sass 2012 and iid. 2013.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Lemaire – Sass 2012: 239 and iid. 2013: 123f.

²⁸¹ Cf. Lemaire – Sass 2012: 240.

²⁸² Cf. Lipiński 2000a: 243.

²⁸³ Cf. von Luschan 1893: 49–52 with fig. 19 and pl. VII; Orthmann 1971: 75f; Voos 1986: 28f and catalogue no. 5; Wartke 2005: 25–28 figs. 24–27; 33–36, 68 fig. 61.

2. Fragment of a basalt statue of a standing male; a remnant of the beard survives, while the head and legs are missing; the partially preserved arms were folded over the chest.²⁸⁴
3. Torso of a male statue, without head or legs, made of basalt; the partially preserved arms were folded over the chest.²⁸⁵
4. Double statue of basalt without heads or legs.²⁸⁶
5. Lower part of the basalt statue of a standing man found in Tahtalı Pınar; 1.93 m tall. The original height was probably 3.50 m. A 23-line inscription on the garment (KAI 215) identifies the figure as King Panamuwa II (ca. 740–733 B.C.).

Based on the inscriptions it is certain that the statue fragments of Gerçin are in one case (no. 1) from a statue of a god and in another (no. 5) from that of a king. Fragments 2, 3, and 4 remain unassigned. The double statue (no. 4) could have its counterpart in that of a seated couple in Tell Halaf and is therefore interpreted as a depiction of a deceased royal couple. The question arises, whether one statue of Hadad (no. 1), the chief god, sufficed for the cult area of Gerçin and whether, therefore, numbers 2 and 3 could be considered fragments of royal statues. A statue of King Panamuwa II can be expected, based on the inscription KAI 215: 14–15.

However, even if these statues and fragments of statues were the most striking evidence for the royal ancestor worship in Sam'al and Gerçin, the practice mentioned in the inscriptions should be investigated.

King Panamuwa I describes his building activities in his inscription on the Hadad statue, found at Gerçin:

- (14) And I [erec]ted this statue of Hadad and the necropolis of Panamuwa, son of Qarli,
- (15) king of Yādiya, next to the statue (in) the cham[ber]. (KAI 214: 14–15)

The above-mentioned statue of the god Hadad was therefore not placed directly in the grave chamber, but probably at a central cult place on the hilltop of Gerçin.²⁸⁷ In the grave chamber, which is yet to be identified, there would have been a statue of King Panamuwa I, of which perhaps some remains may be found among the surviving statue fragments.

²⁸⁴ Cf. von Luschan 1893: 52 and 44 fig. 13.

²⁸⁵ Cf. von Luschan 1893: 52 and 44 fig. 14.

²⁸⁶ Cf. von Luschan 1893: 53–55 with figs. 16 and 17.

²⁸⁷ Cf. the map of Gerçin drawn by Robert Koldewey and published in Wartke 2005: 25 fig. 24 and Niehr 2001.

The Hadad statue and grave chamber presented an architectural and ritualistic ensemble for the king's funeral and the royal mortuary cult. This ensemble is also indicated by the fact that the inscription on the Hadad statue (KAI 214) mentions the cult of the deceased king.

In this context, the following instructions with regard to the cult are to be considered. To the descendant of Panamuwa I, who follows him on the throne, the request to conduct the royal ancestor worship is addressed:

- (15–16) Whosoever from my sons should grasp the [scep]ter and sit on my throne and maintain power and do sacrifice to this Hadad
- (17) let him then say:
“[May] the [spi]rit of Panamuwa [eat] with thee, and may the spirit of Panamuwa dri[nk] with thee.” Let him keep remembering the spirit of Panamuwa with
- (18) [Had]ad. (KAI 214: 15–18)

In this way, the person conducting the sacrifice calls (“to call by name”) the late king, Panamuwa, before Hadad to invite the deceased. The successor to the throne who refuses this ritual must reckon with the punishment of Hadad (KAI 214: 20–24).

The Aramaic interpretation of *nbš* / *npš* must be stressed, by which *nbš pnmw* is understood as the spirit of Panamuwa, who is present in the royal statue. This is the oldest evidence for the Aramaic use of *nbš* / *npš* in terms of “spirit of the dead”. In more recent Aramaic inscriptions this use of *nbš* / *npš* is often attested.²⁸⁸

Otherwise, the “god of his father” (KAI 214: 29–30) appears in Sam'al. To him a member of the royal house should, in case of an allegation, raise his hands and take an oath. The *'lh 'bh* named here is reminiscent of the death spirit known as *'il 'ib*²⁸⁹ from Ugarit, which, in addition to the cult of the gods El, Ba'al Šemed, and Rešep, shows a further connection between Sam'al and Ugarit.

As part of the royal ancestor cult of Sam'al, Hadad, as the chief god of the pantheon, is tasked to assign portions of the sacrifice, as is written in the inscription on the statue of Tell Fekheriye (KAI 309: 3–4). The sacrifice is made to Hadad, who invites the *nbš* of Panamuwa to partake in the celebration. It should be mentioned here that as part of the Hittite royal

²⁸⁸ Cf. Greenfield 1973: 46f, 49f; Niehr 1994b: 63–65; Kühn 2005: 117–233; Pardee 2009a: 62f.

²⁸⁹ Cf. above, note 169.

ancestor cult images of the deceased king were placed in various temples, and also in the temple of the weather-god.²⁹⁰

The stele erected by King Bar-Rakkab (ca. 733–713/11 B.C.) for his deceased father Panamuwa II, which had been originally at Gerçin, was brought later to Sam'al and left halfway there at the town of Tahtalı Pınar.²⁹¹ The relevant text states:

- (16) ... and my father Panamuwa died while following his lord Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, in the campaigns; even [his lord, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, wept for him],
- (17) and his brother kings wept for him, and the whole camp of his lord, the king of Assyria, wept for him. His lord, the king of Assyria, took ...
- (18) his spirit [eat and drink]; and he set up an image for him by the way, and brought my father across from Damascus to this place.²⁹² In my days ...
- (19) all his house [wept] for him. (KAI 215: 16–19).²⁹³

Thus, King Tiglath-Pileser takes care of the spirit of the deceased, which becomes even more important since the funeral in the royal tomb cannot take place immediately. In light of the newly found Kuttamuwa inscription from Sam'al it is clear that the construction of an image by Tiglath-Pileser concerns the spirit, that is the *nbs̄*, of the dead king. Benno Landsberger noted this, translating the relevant passage in the following manner: "... und es nahm sein Herr, der König von Assur [...] seine Seele und stellte für sie ein Relief auf am Wege. ..." ²⁹⁴ One made an effigy, in which the spirit of the deceased took residence, and had the body brought to Gerçin, where the burial took place. This points to an act of lamentation by the family. Following these actions, Bar-Rakkab ascended the throne of his father.

The statue also prescribes some rules for the cult of the deceased king. However, this text is too fragmentary to deduce the precise rituals for the

²⁹⁰ Cf. Niehr 2001: 85–89. On eating and drinking with a god, cf. the text of a sepulchral stele from Kululu in Tabal; text and translation of KULULU 2 in Hawkins 2000: 487–490 and cf. also Aro 1998: 247.

²⁹¹ See note 171.

²⁹² In concurrence Sachau 1893: 77, 80; Landsberger 1948: 70; Gibson 1975: 81; Sader 1987: 168. Against Tropper 1993: 126 "nach Assu<r>", who assumes an orthographic mistake and interprets the burial of Panamuwa II at Ashur and not in Sam'al as "Ehrung und Auszeichnung für den Toten." This is not attested anywhere else.

²⁹³ Adopted from Gibson 1975: 81.

²⁹⁴ Landsberger 1948: 70.

royal funerary cult. It can be seen at most as a royal offering rite. As the inscription puts it:

- (21) And the king shall lay [his hand] upon a fitting ram, and he shall send forth this ram to the tomb of my father Panamu[wa]. (KAI 215: 21)

This ritual is not quite clear. There have been attempts to explain it as a substitution rite following the Hittite royal ancestor cult in which the transgressions of the deceased are transferred to an animal.²⁹⁵ The question remains, though, why the ram is sent with the king's *materia peccans* to the grave of his deceased predecessor. The text shows a rather close connection between the person administering the sacrifice and the offering and the subsequent transfer of the offering to the deceased. Perhaps it deals with a cleansing rite of Bar-Rakkab that is a one-time act and not a repeating ritual prior to his ascension.

From the reign of King Panamuwa II comes the stele of the vassal²⁹⁶ Kuttamuwa, which was found in situ in the northern part of Sam'al (Area 5). This find is more important than other stelae with banquet scenes as they have almost never been found in their original archaeological context.²⁹⁷

Key to understanding the cultic installation and its function is the fact that the corpse of Kuttamuwa had been interred elsewhere and that the stele and its inscription are about the one-time inauguration festival of the mortuary cult chamber²⁹⁸ and the yearly celebration for the care of the deceased's spirit (*nbš*).²⁹⁹

The inscription on the stele³⁰⁰ reads:

- (1) I am Kuttamuwa, vassal of Panamuwa, who commissioned for myself a stele while
- (2) still living and I placed it in my mortuary cult chamber³⁰¹ and established a feast (at)

²⁹⁵ So Haas 2003: 43f, 783f.

²⁹⁶ On Kuttamuwa's status as vassal or local dynast, cf. Struble – Herrmann 2009: 41 and esp. Masson 2010: 51 with note 30, who refers to the Luwian title *tarwani* as an equivalent to Aramaic *ʾbd*. On this title, cf. Jasink 1998; Giusfredi 2009; id. 2010: 90–97.

²⁹⁷ For the stele, cf. esp. Struble – Herrmann 2009 and Herrmann forthcoming.

²⁹⁸ Cf. also Masson 2010: 52 and Lemaire 2012: 134.

²⁹⁹ Also Nebe 2010: 324 and Lemaire 2012: 135.

³⁰⁰ For the *editio princeps*, cf. Pardee 2009a and also id. 2009b.

³⁰¹ According to Mazzini 2009 *swd* means "hall", "audience-chamber", "reception-hall". Cf. also Nebe 2010: 320f and del Olmo Lete 2011; Lemaire 2012: 133f translates "chapelle d'éternité" and mentions in this context the Hittite term *hešta*, whereas Masson 2010: 52 proposes a comparison with Hittite ^{NA4}*hekur* in the sense of "... chapelles mortuaires des-

- (3) this chamber: a bull for Hadad (of) QrpdI,³⁰² a ram for Nika-
- (4) rawas,³⁰³ a ram for Šamaš, a ram for Hadad of the Vineyards,³⁰⁴
- (5) a ram for Kubaba, and a ram for my spirit that is in this stele.
- (6) Henceforth, whoever of my sons or
- (7) of the sons of anybody (else) should come into possession of
- (8) this chamber: Let him take from
- (9) the produce of this vineyard a sheep³⁰⁵
- (10) every anniversary.³⁰⁶ He is also to perform the
- (11) slaughter in (proximity to) my spirit³⁰⁷
- (12) and is to apportion
- (13) for me a leg-cut.³⁰⁸

The inscription tells of the installation of the stele (*nšb*) in a mortuary cult chamber (*syd 'lm*), an opening ceremony in this chamber, in which the god Hadad (of) QrpdI was offered an ox, and Šamaš, Hadad of the vineyards, Kubaba, and the death spirit (*nbš*) of Kuttamuwa were offered a ram each. With the sacrifice to the god Hadad, the vassal expressed his loyalty to the highest god of the kingdom, who is also found in the mortuary cult of King Panamuwa I (KAI 214: 17, 21–22). The god Šamaš is included in the mortuary offerings because of his involvement with the underworld. This corresponds to the eastern alignment of the stele.

The stele was placed in the annex of the intra-urban shrine built by Kuttamuwa. Vessel fragments were found within close proximity of the stele. They form the archaeological evidence of offerings given to the spirit of the deceased Kuttamuwa. No grave or urn of the deceased has been recovered.

The descendants of the deceased would regularly deposit more offerings (lines 6–13). These yearly offerings might have been made at the beginning of a new year, i.e., the day of the new moon in the first month.³⁰⁹ Particularly remarkable is that a stele inhabited by the spirit of the dead is called *nbš*. This is the first attestation of such language use traceable as

tinées à perpétuer, voire rendre éternel, le culte d'un défunt." The element *'lm* stands for "tomb" and "netherworld"; cf. Tropper 1993: 60f; Niehr 1997a; Kutter 2008: 298 with n. 17.

³⁰² Cf. above, section 3.1 n. 155.

³⁰³ On the Anatolian god Nikarawas/Nikaruas, cf. Masson 2010: 53.

³⁰⁴ Cf. above, 3.1.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Lemaire 2012: 135.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Lemaire 2013a: 149f.

³⁰⁷ Here *nbš* stands for the stele housing the spirit of the dead.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Pardee 2009a: 53f.

³⁰⁹ So Lemaire 2012: 135f and id. 2013a: 149.

far as the inscriptions from Tayma (4th century B.C.),³¹⁰ from further sites in northern and southern Arabia,³¹¹ and in the Nabataean and Palmyrene dialects.³¹² One should not overlook the fact that already in Ugarit during the Late Bronze Age stelae enabled the dead to participate in funerary meals.³¹³

A bearded man carrying a bowl and a pine cone in his hands is depicted on the left side of the stele. Before him stands a table on which a meal is laid out in a request for food offerings.

In Sam'al more images of funerary banquets are found on a gravestone,³¹⁴ on orthostats,³¹⁵ and on a gold pendant (?).³¹⁶ The stele from Ördekburnu also shows a scene featuring a meal above the funerary inscription.³¹⁷

Stelae with scenes depicting a dining table begin to occur in northern Syria and southern Anatolia during the 1st millennium B.C. These scenes are used for deceased members of the upper class as well as the royal house, but not, as far as we know, for dead kings.³¹⁸

The necropoleis of Hamath were uncovered during excavations in a valley west and south of the citadel mound, as well as along its slopes. The more than 1,600 burials are characterized by the coexistence of inhumations and cremation remains.

Bodies were buried in the necropoleis from the 12th century B.C. onward until the Assyrians destroyed the city in 720 B.C. Because of the two burial customs' coexistence, inhumation and cremation, an ethnic differentiation between Luwian and Aramaean burials cannot be made.

After cremation the bones of the deceased were recovered and buried in pottery urns. The grave goods were placed partly inside and partly outside of the urns. They consisted of arrowheads, bracelets and necklaces, knives, sickles, needles, pottery vessels, bullae, seals, jewelry, and amulets.

During construction work in 1889, inhabitants of Neirab unearthed a large basalt sarcophagus from a tumulus on the town's Southern edge. Two years later they found two sepulchral stelae with Aramaic inscriptions

³¹⁰ Cf. Kühn 2005: 136–141 and see the contribution of H. Niehr on northern Arabia in this volume.

³¹¹ Cf. Kühn 2005: 141–164.

³¹² Cf. Kühn 2005: 164–184.

³¹³ Cf. Niehr 2012a.

³¹⁴ Cf. von Luschan 1911: 325–328, pl. LIV; Bonatz 2000a: 38–40 and pl. XVII C46; Wartke 2005: 72 fig. 69.

³¹⁵ Cf. von Luschan 1902: 214 fig. 105; id. 1911: 242f fig. 149, 328–330.

³¹⁶ Cf. Wartke 2005: 82 fig. 85. This interpretation, however, is not quite clear.

³¹⁷ Cf. von Luschan 1911: 329f; Bonatz 2000: 40f and pl. XIX C52.

³¹⁸ Cf. Bonatz 2000a; id. 2000b; id. 2001b.

(KAI 225 and 226; pls. XVII and XIX) close to the location of the original find.³¹⁹ These two stelae lay north and south of the sarcophagus, so that a relationship with it can be assumed. Inside the sarcophagus were the remains of two burials, not of the two priests mentioned in the stelae's inscriptions but rather of one of the priests alongside a woman. The gender of the second individual is inferred from the discovery of a necklace and two gold pieces of jewelry.³²⁰

Because of their Aramaic inscriptions, the two sepulchral stelae provide an account of the town's burial practices. The inscription³²¹ on the first stele (AO 3026) reads:

(1) Sin-zero-ibni was priest (2) of Šahr at Neirab. He died. (3) And this is his image (4) and his sarcophagus.³²² (5) Whoever you are, (6) who drags away this image (7) and this sarcophagus (8) from its place, (9) may Šahr and Šamaš and Nikkal and Nusku tear away (10) your name and your place from the living, and with evil death (11) may they kill you, and may they cause your offspring to perish. But if (12) you guard this image and this sarcophagus (13) in the future may yours be guarded. (KAI 225)

The inscription can essentially be reduced to an introduction of the deceased and curses on potential grave robbers, coupled with blessings upon the one who protects the stele and sarcophagus. Thus, the inscription is intended to protect the peace in death of the priest Sin-zero-ibni.

The representation on the stele shows the priest Sin-zero-ibni facing right (pl. XIX). His right hand is raised in blessing and a band in his left hand signifies his rank. The priest addresses the reader in the last section of the inscription, blessing the one who protects the grave.³²³ The peg on the bottom of the stele is a provision for erecting it on something or at the grave of the deceased.

The inscription³²⁴ on the second stele (AO 3027) reads:

(1) Si'gabbar was a priest of Šahr at Neirab. (2) This is his image. Because of my righteousness before him, (3) he established a good name for me and prolonged my days. (4) On the day I died, my mouth was not closed to words, (5) and with my eyes I was looking at children of the fourth (generation). They wept for (6) me and were greatly disturbed. And they did not place

³¹⁹ See above, section 3.1.

³²⁰ Cf. Clermont-Ganneau 1897: 183–187 and Voos 1986: 93–98, 117–119.

³²¹ Cf. the editions in Gibson 1975: 95–97; Yun 2006: 21–27; Niehr 2010b: 43–47.

³²² On the discussion of *ʾršt'* as sarcophagus, cf. Niehr 2010b: 45.

³²³ Cf. on this interpretation Niehr 2010b: 51f.

³²⁴ Cf. the editions in Gibson 1975: 97f; Yun 2006: 21–27; Niehr 2010b: 47–50.

with me any vessel (7) of silver or bronze. With my garment (only) they placed me, so that (8) in the future my sarcophagus would not be dragged away. Whoever you are who do wrong (9) and drag me away, may Šahr and Nikkal and Nusku make his dying odious, (10) and may his posterity perish. (KAI 226)

In contrast to the previous inscription, KAI 226 particularizes biographical aspects. It is also followed by a curse against potential violators of the grave but offers no blessings to any protectors.

The phrasing of the inscription in the first-person singular creates the impression that the deceased spoke these words during his lifetime. This occurs also in the Phoenician grave inscriptions of the kings Tabnit (KAI 13) and Ešmunazor (KAI 14) from Sidon, and in the Assyrian grave inscription of Adda-Guppi, mother of King Nabonidus.³²⁵ Furthermore, it has been noted that the grave inscription of the priest Si'gabbar exhibits a structural similarity to a Hieroglyphic Luwian grave inscription from Sheizar near Hamath.³²⁶

The image on the stele shows a dining scene (pl. XVII). On the left side the deceased priest Si'gabbar sits on a chair with his feet resting on a stool. He holds a drinking vessel in his right hand for receiving libations and his left hand touches the table indicating that the food placed there is intended for him. On the opposite side of the table stands his son with a fan. He is responsible for the care of the dead.

Both inscriptions indicate that the stelae are an image (*šlm'*) of the deceased (KAI 225: 3, 6, 12; 226: 2). However, this statement refers not to the scene but rather to the overall representation of the deceased, indicating his presence at his place of burial and his ability to receive the care of his descendants. This set of facts is explicitly stated on the stele of Kuttamuwa.

The two priests' burials were part of a larger necropolis of the 7th century B.C. It was intensively researched during the excavations of 1926 and 1927 and the burial customs of this Aramaean necropolis are well documented.³²⁷

³²⁵ Cf. the text in Schaudig 2001: 500–513 and also Tawil 1974: 57–65.

³²⁶ Cf. Hawkins 1980: 215f, 219f; the Hieroglyphic Luwian text is now found in Hawkins 2000: 416–419.

³²⁷ Cf. Carrière – Barrois 1927; Abel – Barrois 1928; Nunn 2000b: 436–439.

4. MIDDLE SYRIA

The following kingdoms and cities give insight into the religion of the area east of Lebanon: the kingdom of Šobah, with the city Ba'albek; Geshur, with the city Betsaida; and Aram, with the cities Damascus, Malaḥa, and Tell Deir 'Alla, and other smaller towns in the Damascus region.

4.1 *The Pantheon*

In Ba'albek, in the kingdom of Šobah,³²⁸ the Graeco-Roman divine name Jupiter Heliopolitanus cannot hide the fact that we are dealing with a Semitic weather-god. He can be determined to be the god Hadad. The aspect of Hadad as weather-god is alluded to by the Semitic elements in his iconography, such as images of bulls and astral symbolism. The gift of the life-giving water also falls under the jurisdiction of Hadad.³²⁹

To elucidate this one needs to elaborate on the etymology and semantics of the place name "Ba'albek". In recent years it has become clear that the origin of that place name is not "Ba'al of the Beqa'" as often claimed. S. Wild has shown that this etymology must be abandoned because of Semitic linguistic reasons. A change of the middle consonant *qof* to *kaf* and the loss of *ayin* at the end of the element *beqa'* would be expected in Semitic linguistics. It is more likely that the original divine name is *ba'al nebek*, which can be interpreted as "Ba'al of the Spring".³³⁰

However, the question remains whether the element "Ba'al" represents a divine name or the divine epithet "Lord", which is more likely in an Aramaean cultural context with a view on Palmyra. In this case the original form is "(Hadad, who is) Lord of the Spring".

At the side of the god Hadad of Ba'albek was the goddess Atargatis, who became known there as Venus.³³¹

Important evidence for the cult of the moon-god in the kingdom Geshur³³² comes from the city Betsaida near the Sea of Galilee. During excavations in the 1990s a stele with a relief was recovered from the area

³²⁸ On the kingdom of Šobah, cf. the references in Dion 1997: 172–176; Lipiński 2000a: 319–345; Niehr 2010a: 301–304.

³²⁹ On Jupiter Heliopolitanus, cf. esp. Fleischer 1973: 326–369; Hajjar 1977; id. 1985: 21–135, 205–229; id. 1990: 2468–2484.

³³⁰ Cf. Wild 1973: 219–223.

³³¹ On the goddess Atargatis of Ba'albek, cf. esp. Fleischer 1973: 273–275; id. 1986; Hajjar 1985: 135–157, 229–236; id. 1990: 2485–2488; Drijvers 1986: 357.

³³² Cf. Niehr 2010a: 304–308.

of the gate to the upper city. It measures 115 × 59 × 31 cm and dates to the 9th or 8th century B.C. The relief shows a bull's head mounted on a pole. Four bent limbs extend from the left and right side of the pole, two to each side. They should be understood as arms and legs. A sword is strapped between the limbs and on the right side there is a rosette made of four spheres (pl XLIII).³³³

Two opposing interpretations of this figure exist. One interpretation favors the representation of a weather-god with lunar aspects, while the other sees a tauromorphic moon-god where the crescent moon forms the horns. This image is constructed against the backdrop of the symbol of the moon-god of Harran. That means it is the image of a crescent moon, which is mounted on the pole and thus an argument in favor of interpreting the stele's image as one of the moon-god.

A comparable representation of the moon-god comes from Gaziantep in southern Anatolia³³⁴ as well as from three further stelae from the southern Damascus region of Hauran, specifically 'Awas (near Salḥad), Tell el-Ash'ari (near Tafar),³³⁵ and eṭ-Ṭurra³³⁶ in northern Jordan.

In the kingdom of Aram³³⁷ the god Hadad was chief god of the pantheon of Damascus. His name is found as a theophoric element in the royal names Bar-Hadad and Hadad-Ezer. The oldest evidence of the god Hadad of Damascus is found in the inscription on the Dan stele. It reports that Hadad called Hazael to be king and marched before him in battle (KAI 310: 4–5). Hadad of Damascus had the epithet *rammānu* ("the Thunderer").³³⁸ He was known in Hellenistic-Roman times as Zeus or Jupiter Damascenus. Contemporary inscriptions describe him as "Heavenly God" and "God of the Fathers or Lords".³³⁹ The goddess Atargatis appears as *paredros* of Hadad of Damascus.³⁴⁰

³³³ Published in Burnett – Keel 1998.

³³⁴ Cf. Burnett – Keel 1998: 10f.

³³⁵ Cf. Burnett – Keel 1998: 8–10.

³³⁶ Cf. Wimmer – Janaydeh 2011.

³³⁷ On Aram and Damascus, cf. the references in Pitard 1987; Sack 1989; ead. 1997; Dion 1997: 182–216; Lipiński 2000a: 347–407; Burns 2005: 1–79; Niehr 2010a: 308–313; and also the Numéro Spécial sur l'Archéologie et les Découvertes Récentes in AAAS 51/52 (2008/2009).

³³⁸ Cf. the references from the treaty between Ashur-nirari V and Mati'el of Arpad (SAA II no. 2: 24–25; text and translation in Parpola – Watanabe 1988: 8–13) and the Old Testament (2 Kgs 5: 18). Zec 12: 11 confuses him with a vegetation deity; cf. Niehr forthcoming a.

³³⁹ Cf. Niehr 2003: 101 and Freyberger 2006: 167–169.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Freyberger 2006: 167f.

Furthermore, there are references to the cult of the god Ba'alšamayin in Damascus. While excavating near the house of Ananias in the Christian quarter of the city, an altar with a Greek inscription was found that names the god of the heavens. This is a Greek translation of the divine name Ba'alšamayin. Because of the altar's discovery it was speculated that this was the location of a temple for the god Ba'alšamayin. The assumption of a temple where the god of the heavens was worshipped found additional support when another altar, this one with the relief of a bull, was found at this location. Nothing is known about the cult's followers.³⁴¹

The inscription mentioning the god of the heavens is dated to the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. Beyond the find spot near the house of Ananias it was supposed that the altar with the Greek inscription might have originated from the area of the great temple of Jupiter Damascenus, which was dismantled for its stones during Christian times. No further hypotheses can be built upon these considerations, due to a lack of reliable evidence.³⁴²

Other deities worshipped in Damascus were Adonis³⁴³ and the river-god Barada.³⁴⁴

There are several other small towns in the Damascus region³⁴⁵ that give insight into the cults of this region.

A cylinder inscription of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (726–722 B.C.) mentions booty from King Hazael of Damascus's royal city of Malaḥa. The loot came from the temple of the moon-god Šēru, who is otherwise known as the Aramaean moon-god Šahr.³⁴⁶

The local pantheon of the southern Damascus region is illuminated by Inscription I from Tell Deir 'Alla, dating to the 8th century B.C.³⁴⁷ During that time the region belonged to the kingdom of Aram.³⁴⁸ The use of the Aramaic script makes clear that a scribe trained in the Transjordanian region wrote it.³⁴⁹ This text mentions the deities El, Šamaš ("solar deity"), Šagar ("lunar deity"), and Aštar ("morning star") by name, although their roles are not quite clear because of the fragmented textual evidence.

³⁴¹ Cf. Niehr 2003: 101f.

³⁴² Cf. Niehr 2003: 102.

³⁴³ Cf. Haider 1996: 193.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Haider 1996: 193 with fig. 76.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Niehr 2010a: 314–316.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Grayson 1996: 151 n. 92; Dion 1997: 179; Lipiński 2000a: 350f, although Malaḥa is, contrary to Lipiński, not to be identified with the city Hazor.

³⁴⁷ Cf. the publication of the inscription in Hoftijzer – van der Kooij 1976: 31–308; also Müller 1982; Weippert 1991; Blum 2008.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Dion 1997: 199f and Niehr 2011: 344f.

³⁴⁹ Cf. van der Kooij – Ibrahim 1989: 65–67.

The pantheon in general is called *ʾlhn* and has a sub-group *šdyn*, which may be considered a council of gods.³⁵⁰

Although the cults of various Aramaean deities ranged from the region of Damascus to the Decapolis, only the deities Atargatis, Baʿalšamayin, Hadad, Jupiter Heliopolitanus, and Zeus Damascenus are mentioned here without going into further detail.³⁵¹

4.2 *Kingship*

There is some evidence on the topic of kingship from Damascus but it does not lend itself to constructing a coherent picture.

Noticeable is the number of recorded royal names with a theophoric element, such as Hadad, Bar-Hadad, Hadad-Ezer, and Tab-Ramman.³⁵² In these cases it can be assumed that the theophoric element Hadad refers to the chief god of Damascus. Whether and how the idea of a divine sonship of the king is behind the royal names is a question that must be asked especially for the name Bar-Hadad (“son of Hadad”).³⁵³ Given the absence of myths and rituals from Damascus this question will have to remain unanswered. Another question is the potential existence of throne names. During the Neo-Assyrian period it is attested that his predecessor on the throne could bestow a new name upon the crown prince.³⁵⁴ This is also conceivable for the kingdoms of Damascus and Bit Agusi.

The inscription on the Tel Dan stele (KAI 310) offers further insight into the conception of kingship. It states that Hadad, the chief god of Damascus, first raised the current king to his position: *[w]yhmłk hdd ʾ[lyty]* (“And Hadad made me king”; KAI 310: 4) and then granted him military protection by marching into battle before him and arranging for a favorable outcome.

The inscription further illustrates that the deceased king went to his ancestors: *wyškḇ ʾby wyhk ʾl ʾbḥw]h* (“and my father lay himself down and went to his [fathers]”; KAI 310: 3). This concept of entering the nether-world³⁵⁵ is comparable to the concept of joining the *rapiʾūma* in Late Bronze Age Ugarit as shown in KTU 1.161. This text, KTU 1.161, shows that joining the ancestors was not simply accomplished by burial but was

³⁵⁰ Cf. on the state of research Niehr 1990–1993: 1082 and Jericke 2010: 161f.

³⁵¹ Cf. esp. Sourdél 1952: 19–31, 39–44; Niehr 2003: 229–264; Freyberger 2006: 168f.

³⁵² Cf. the overview in Lipiński 2000a: 407.

³⁵³ See above, section 3.2.

³⁵⁴ Cf. Radner 2005: 33–35.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Suriano 2007: 164–166.

accompanied by a ritual of its own.³⁵⁶ This may also have been the case in 9th-century Damascus.

A reference found in more recent sources, which reveal the deification of the deceased kings of Damascus, favors such an assumption. Evidence of this is found in a later reminiscence from the *Antiquitates Judaicae* of Flavius Josephus. He reports on the common cult of Adados and Azaelos in Damascus:

Then he (Azaelos) took over the royal power himself, being a man of action and in great favour with the Syrians and the people of Damascus, by whom Adados and Azaelos who ruled after him are to this day honoured as gods because of their benefactions and the building of temples with which they adorned the city of Damascus. And they have processions every day in honour of these kings and glory in their antiquity, not knowing that these kings are rather recent and lived less than eleven hundred years ago.³⁵⁷

Josephus tried to euhemerize the genesis of the gods of Damascus and their cults. The god Hadad is easily recognized in the name Adados, while Azaelos is none other than King Hazael. This mention of a common cult of the pantheon's chief deity and a deceased king is reminiscent of the royal funerary cult of Sam'al in the Aramaean religion of Syria during the second half of the 8th century B.C.³⁵⁸

Josephus' source is the historian Nicholas of Damascus. He was born 64 B.C. in Damascus and penned a history of the Ancient Near East and Greece. He was also well-versed in the religious traditions of his hometown.³⁵⁹ Thus, there is evidence of rituals from the 1st century B.C. This means that in Damascus the cult of the deified King Hazael persisted into the 1st century B.C. and perhaps even up to the Christianization of the city.

4.3 *Temples and Cults*

The area of the great temple of Ba'albek has only been excavated on a very small scale, the results of which have not been published. There are only a few scattered notes. Recent investigations in 2004 and 2005 have brought to light finds from the Neolithic to the Middle and Late Bronze

³⁵⁶ Cf. Niehr 2008: 248–253 and id. 2012b.

³⁵⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* IX § 93–94; text and translation in Marcus 1966: 48–51; cf. Dussaud 1922: 220; Millar 1994: 314–316; Dion 1997: 203f; Schwemer 2001: 624 n. 5037; Niehr 2011: 352.

³⁵⁸ See above, section 3.6.

³⁵⁹ On Nicholas of Damascus, cf. the references in Niehr 2011: 352, since then also Parmentier – Barone 2011.

Age, although they have not yet been able to shed light on the function of this complex.³⁶⁰

The appearance of the divine statue of the weather-god Hadad from the great temple of Ba'albek is known from copies, which were sold in part as devotional objects; from coins; and from an ancient description. The image on the coins shows a weather-god holding a whip and a sheaf of grain standing between two bulls. His robe is decorated on the front with the busts or heads of the planetary deities and on the back with an eagle flanked by thunderbolts. On his head he wears a kalathos.³⁶¹

The goddess Atargatis is depicted enthroned between two sphinxes. She wears a long cloak and a polos crown and holds a sheaf of grain in her left hand.³⁶²

The find spot of the moon-god's stele in Betsaida argues in favor of the god's cult taking place at one of the city's gates.³⁶³ Approaching the upper city of Betsaida from the north, the stele of the moon-god was located on a pedestal to the right of the city gate. In front of the stele was a basin with the remains of three incense bowls. The basin had drainage and was a cultic installation for receiving libations.

Further stelae were found near the gate. Four flanked the outside and inside of the gateway; they and other stelae were not decorated with reliefs. Deposition benches and an altar with horns were also found near the city gate. On the city side of the gate a pit with burnt animal bones was excavated, exemplifying the sacrificial character of this place.

In general, cultic activities at the city gate, a fortification's most vulnerable location, placed it under the protection of the gods. The cult of the moon-god points to the legal sphere, making the area around and inside the city gate one of law and concluding contracts. An interpretation of the other stelae is not as straightforward; perhaps they were ancestor stelae. The practice of erecting such stelae is known from other cities.

The complex may have been destroyed during the campaign of Tiglath-Pileser III against Aram-Damascus in 733/732 B.C.

There were other sacrificial sites within the city of Betsaida. The site located on the city side of the southwest gate is especially important. It

³⁶⁰ Cf. van Ess 2008. I thank my colleague Konrad Hitzl (Tübingen/Kiel) for pointing this out.

³⁶¹ Cf. Fleischer 1973: 326–369; Hajjar 1985: 21–118; id. 1990: 2468–2477.

³⁶² Cf. Fleischer 1973: 273–275; Hajjar 1985: 136–153; id. 1990: 2485–2487.

³⁶³ Cf. the overview in Bernett – Keel 1998: 2–7, 45–74; Haettner-Blomquist 1999: 49–57; Jericke 2010: 126–129.

consisted of a paved platform with a horned altar made of basalt. Nearby was a pit containing animal bones, ash, and pieces of pottery vessels.

In Damascus a temple complex of the weather-god was built upon a raised platform south of the Barada River beginning in the 10th century B.C.³⁶⁴ The Old Testament mentions a temple of the god (Hadad) Rimmon in Damascus (2 Kgs 5: 18).

One of the archaeological finds from this temple is an 80 × 70 cm large basalt relief depicting a sphinx and dating to the 8th century B.C. It was built into the temple's northern wall during Hellenistic times and is therefore no longer in situ. The sphinx was probably one of a pair, which framed the doorway or a central relief.³⁶⁵

The temple complex of Jupiter Damascenus included a 385 × 305 m outer courtyard (*peribolos*) and a 150 × 100 m inner courtyard (*temenos*) in the middle of which was the cella. At certain festivals a market could be held in the outer courtyard. The temple was probably rebuilt during Augustan times and was heavily restored during the reign of Septimius Severus (193–211 A.D.). Parts of the building's decoration, which survive today, date from that period.

The temple's cella is believed to lie beneath the courtyard of today's Umayyad Mosque and has not been excavated. The former walls of the inner courtyard have been built into the mosque's southwest wall. The temple itself lasted until the end of the 4th century A.D.

Some impressions of the cult statues of Zeus or Jupiter Damascenus and his *paredros*, the goddess Atargatis, can be gained from their representations on coins of the 1st century A.D.³⁶⁶

Coins from the time of Antiochus XII (87–84 B.C.) show a god standing on a two-tiered pedestal, which is flanked by two bulls. He wears a flowing gown with a cloak and a polos crown. As a symbol of fertility he holds an ear of grain in his left hand and wears a solar symbol on his chest as an indication of his solar aspects. His resemblance to Jupiter Heliopolitanus of Ba'albek is evident.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Cf. Watzinger – Wulzinger 1921: 3–42; Dussaud 1922: 225–234; Freyberger 1989; id. 2006: 158–167.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Abd el-Kader 1949; Trokay 1986; Caubet 1993.

³⁶⁶ Cf. on these two deities' iconography Dussaud 1922: 221f; Fleischer 1973: 263–269, 379f; id. 1986; Haider 1996: 189–191; Freyberger 2006: 167–169.

³⁶⁷ See above.

On coins from the early 1st century B.C. the goddess Atargatis is also shown standing on a two-tiered pedestal. She wears a veil and long, flowing gown. In her left hand she is holding a fruit or flower and on her chest is the emblem of the moon. An ear of grain grows on either side of her.

Texts from Tell Deir 'Alla mention not only prophecy but also cult personnel. The first column of the Tell Deir 'Alla inscription refers in line 13 to a *'nyh* "a (female) fortune-teller", *rqht mr* "woman who prepares myrrh", and *khn* "priestess". Because of the fragmented state of the text no statements can be made about the activities of the cult personnel.³⁶⁸

4.4 *Prophecy and Divination*

The inscription on the stele from Tel Dan (KAI 310) gives a first look into the area of prophecy, from which inferences can be drawn on the practices of prophets at the royal court of Damascus. According to this inscription the god Hadad made Hazael king. The act is preceded by an inquiry into the divine will by prophets,³⁶⁹ a practice explicitly noted in the inscription of King Zakkur of Hamath (KAI 202), which also notes his salvation from a siege.

Bala'am, mentioned in Inscription I from Tell Deir 'Alla, functions as seer of the gods (line 1).³⁷⁰ The inscription says nothing about the realization of such an act of divination, though fasting and chanting probably played a role. The revelation takes place at night, which could mean it is a dream revelation or incubation dream.

The existence of a prophet's writing is particularly noteworthy. It was first written on a scroll and later copied onto an interior wall of a house in Tell Deir 'Alla.³⁷¹ Later, the prophetic character of Bala'am was incorporated into the Old Testament (Num 22: 2–24: 55), where he is the only non-Israelite prophet in the service of the god YHWH.³⁷²

5. OUTLOOK

The defeat of the last anti-Assyrian rebellion led by King Ya'ubidi of Hamath near Qarqar in 720 B.C. did not seal the fate of the religion of the

³⁶⁸ Cf. Müller 1982: 228f and Lipiński 2000a: 507f.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Lemaire 1998c: 6f and Suriano 2007: 166f.

³⁷⁰ Cf. on Bala'am esp. Lemaire 1990a.

³⁷¹ Cf. van der Kooij – Ibrahim 1989: 64–69.

³⁷² Cf. in detail Weippert 1991; Levine 2000: 267–271; Seebaß 2007: 2–107; Noort 2008; Puech 2008.

Aramaeans of Syria. Only a few selected references to its survival far into Christian times can be presented here.

Emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363 A.D.) writes in a letter dated between the 10th and 12th of March 363 A.D. to Libanios about the sacrifices he made to the weather-god of Aleppo who is now called Zeus:

From Litarbae I proceeded to Beroea, and there Zeus, by showing a manifest sign from heaven, declared all things to be auspicious. I stayed there for a day and saw the Acropolis and sacrificed to Zeus in imperial fashion a white bull.³⁷³

It is remarkable that there is a continuity of the cult in the weather-god's temple on the citadel of Aleppo.³⁷⁴

The cult of the moon-god of Harran is reported as existing even longer than the cult of the weather-god of Aleppo. Julian the Apostate also sacrificed to him in 363 A.D. Even the destruction of the moon-god's temple by Emperor Theodosius (379–395 A.D.) did not end the cult of the moon-god of Harran. The latest references date to the 10th century A.D., as the moon-god's cult endured in the religion of the Šābians. Of particular importance is the textual evidence from Sumatar Harabesi in the Tektek Mountains about 50 km from Harran.³⁷⁵ The cult of Ba'alšamayin enjoyed a comparable continuity and is attested in Harran and Nisibis until well into the 6th century A.D.³⁷⁶

In Guzana (Tell Halaf) the cult of the weather-god is also documented into Christian times.³⁷⁷

In Hierapolis (modern Manbiğ), the goddess Atargatis was worshipped from the 4th century B.C. Her name, Atargatis, is a composite of the names Astarte and Anat. The most important source about her cult, cult personnel, and followers is the *De Dea Syria* of Lucian of Samosata. Atargatis was worshipped together with her *paredros* Hadad. Her cult far overshadowed his and this old Syrian weather-god now took second place behind the goddess. Other important cult sites of Atargatis in Syria are Edessa, Harran, Hatra, Aleppo, Damascus, Palmyra, and Dura Europos. Given the

³⁷³ Text and translation in Wright 1923–1961: 200–203.

³⁷⁴ See above, section 3.3, on Aleppo.

³⁷⁵ Cf. esp. Chwolsohn 1856; Cramer 1986: 643f, 645–650; Tubach 1986: 132–175; Green 1992: 44–217; Gündüz 1994; Lipiński 1994: 190–192; Strohmaier 2011.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Niehr 2003: 315–317.

³⁷⁷ Cf. Müller-Kessler – Kessler 1995; on the region of Guzana during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, cf. Luther 2012.

criticism of the church fathers about the cult of Atargatis it is clear that this cult was active well into the 5th century A.D.³⁷⁸

In Damascus the cult of Jupiter Damascenus is documented into the 4th century A.D. At this point his temple was demolished and in place of the temple's cella a church dedicated to John the Baptist was built. The church in turn had to give way to the forecourt of the Umayyad Mosque in the 8th century A.D.³⁷⁹

North of Damascus is Emesa, modern Homs, which was under the influence of Hamath, as the history of Qaṭna during the 1st millennium B.C. shows.³⁸⁰ After Hamath was destroyed in 720 B.C. and Qaṭna abandoned in the middle of the 6th century B.C. the city of Emesa experienced a major upturn. The cult of the god Elagabal is documented here. The divine name refers to a deified mountain and demonstrates the deification of mountains in the Aramaean religion. Elagabal was worshipped in the shape of a divine stone (*betyl*). Even though his cult complex is thought to be located on the acropolis based on epigraphic finds, recent excavations have not yet yielded sufficient evidence.³⁸¹ Elagabal gained supra-regional importance when his priest, Varius Avitus, became emperor under the name of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus in 218 A.D. He brought the revered stone of Elagabal from Emesa to Rome, where the god was placed at the head of the pantheon and made equal or superior to Jupiter or the sun-god. A temple was built for him on the Palatine Hill to which his cult image was transferred. After the emperor's death in 222 A.D. it was brought back to Emesa.³⁸²

It can be assumed that the cult of Palmyra, in keeping with the other Aramaean regions, also worshipped Hadad, although the name Hadad was replaced with the epithet Ba'al ("the lord"), Bol in the Palmyrene dialect. Two bulls accompanied him, which fits with the cult of the Aramaean weather-god Hadad. They were named 'Aglibol ("bull calf of Bol") and Yarḥibol ("young bull of Bol"). In Palmyrene epigraphy and iconography the chief god of this triad appears under the slightly varied name of Bel. This shows the reception of the Babylonian god Marduk who carried the epithet *bēlu* ("Lord") and thus connects well with the Aramaean god Bol

³⁷⁸ On the cult of Hierapolis, cf. esp. Hōrig 1979; Fick 1996: 210–216; Niehr 2002 (with literature).

³⁷⁹ On this basilica, its location, and destruction, cf. Dussaud 1922: 234–250; Creswell 1958–1968: 59–73; id. ²1969: 151–196; Burns 2005: 88–91, 111–124.

³⁸⁰ Cf. al Maqdissi – Morandi Bonacossi 2009 and Morandi Bonacossi 2009.

³⁸¹ Cf. Moussli 1983: 254–261 n. 2; id. 1984; King 2002; Young 2003.

³⁸² Cf. Niehr 1997b (with literature).

of Palmyra. His accompanying bulls were made astral deities and depicted anthropomorphically. Yarḥibol became a sun-god and 'Aglibol a moon-god. Bel's followers in Palmyra were members of the tribe of Bani Komare, a tribe with an Aramaic name ("the sons of priests").

Another divine triad of Palmyra was worshipped in the temple of Ba'alšamayin, as the gods 'Aglibol and Malakbel were under his sovereignty; 'Aglibol took the role of moon-god and Malakbel that of sun-god.³⁸³

The triad consisting of the deities Maran ("Our Lord"), Martan ("Our Lady"), and Barmaren ("Son of our Lords") dominated the pantheon of Hatra. Maran and Barmaren featured prominently in the religious life of Hatra. The goddess Martan occurs rarely on her own in inscriptions. Maran was the chief god of Hatra. He was originally the sun-god, which becomes apparent in two inscriptions where he is called son of Šamaš. On coins from Hatra he is depicted as Helios. Barmaren is depicted with horns, a crescent moon, and a radiant crown. This suggests a lunar aspect of the god Barmaren, who is thus determined to be the moon-god of Hatra. He has also taken the title *mr'lh* ("Lord of the Gods") from Semitic moon-god theology. If he is shown alone he gains solar aspects and is characterized as cosmocrator. The goddess Martan is represented with a tower-like hairstyle. She has lunar aspects, which reflect her affiliation to the chief god who possesses solar aspects.

Other important deities from Hatra are Allat, Atargatis, Ashurbel, Heracles-Nergal, and Ba'alšamayin. Heracles-Nergal was regarded as the protector of the city of Hatra and numerous statues testify to his omnipresence in the temples there. Chthonic aspects can be seen in his representation with a dog. Ba'alšamayin most likely came with merchants from Palmyra to Hatra. He presided over a pantheon of several gods, which was located in his temple. At the same time he was subordinate to the triad of Hatra, as inscriptions from his temple show.

Furthermore, the moon-god Šahr, the god of luck or fate *g(n)d'*, and *zqyq'*, a spirit of the dead, all appear in the inscriptions from Hatra.³⁸⁴

The preceding pages were only able to give a glimpse into the present state of research on the religion of the Aramaeans of Syria. Further excavations and discoveries of archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic finds will probably further expand our knowledge.

³⁸³ On the religion of Palmyra, cf. esp. Hoftijzer 1968: 25–50; Niehr 1998: 170–186; id. 2003: 103–163; Dirven 1999; Kaizer 2002; Tubach 2006; Martínez Borobio 2008: 417–428.

³⁸⁴ On the religion of Hatra, cf. esp. Hoftijzer 1968: 51–61; Tubach 1986: 213–335; Niehr 1998: 186–190; id. 2003: 169–179; Martínez Borobio 2003: 429–437.