

CHAPTER EIGHT

ARCHITECTURE

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

Aramaeans architecture can hardly be discussed in isolation from Luwian or “Neo-Hittite” architecture. As far as we can observe, Aramaeans and Luwians coexisted in most of the small political entities that had emerged after the collapse of the Late Bronze Age world with its huge empires. Sometimes, Luwian and Aramaean scripts and languages appear in one and the same region at the same time; in other cases it can be difficult to determine if the élites were Aramaean or Luwian in origin. Politically, the Luwo-Aramaeans world was fragmented into a number of relatively small kingdoms and chiefdoms, some of them urban, some still with a strongly nomadic component. A political or cultural center never existed, although there are some hints that Carchemish played a prominent role.

Another issue that modern scholars have to face when they are dealing with the culture of the Luwo-Aramaeans world is the rise of Assyrian influence, which we see beginning to emerge in the late 10th century in the east and slightly later in the west. As a result, Aramaean and Neo-Hittite characteristics were altered by Assyrian ones. The process accelerated after the incorporation of the principalities into the quickly growing empire.

In the following, the Aramaean architecture will be dealt with by categories rather than entities (these could also be a reasonable alternative). But it has to be taken into consideration that, due to the political fragmentation, regional differences may have been significant, even between neighboring entities.

¹ I am indebted to Alexander Sollee for improving the English manuscript.

2. CITY PLANNING

When trying to apply modern terms, it seems ridiculous to speak of Aramaean “city planning.” Not all Aramaean sites fulfill modern criteria for a “city,” nor can we prove any institutional “planning” e.g. of the alignment of streets in written sources. However, at least the capitals of the Aramaean principalities can be identified as real “cities” in an urban sense, being characterized by a stratified population with a non-agricultural economic subsistence; the existence of governmental, administrative, and cultic institutions; and a rural hinterland, which supplied the city with agricultural products in return for crafts and luxury goods. Some of the sites clearly show a planned layout. Moreover, even in smaller settlements and in cities with a seemingly organic and unorganized inner structure, some kind of regulation must have existed to prevent internal struggles such as the narrowing or blocking of streets by adjacent residents, thus inconveniencing their neighbors. Hence, it is justified to speak of “city (or rather town) planning” even when referring to long-lived settlements of reduced size and organic structure.

Two types of Aramaean cities can be distinguished: those with a long settlement history even before their (violent or peaceful) occupation by Aramaeans (or at least by Aramaean élites), and those that were newly founded after the consolidation of the principalities.

The first category is represented by Dimašqa (Damascus), Hamath, Hazrak, and Masuwari/Til Barsib. Unfortunately, little is known about their layout during the preceding periods of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Dimašqa (Damascus)² was the capital of the most powerful Aramaean principality, named *Aram* in the Bible and *Ša-imērišu* in Assyrian sources of the 9th and 8th centuries B.C.³ The city is already mentioned by name both in the Mari (17th century B.C.) and the Amarna (14th century B.C.) letters, as the center of a land named *Apium/Upi*. As far as it can be traced within the Old Town of modern Damascus, the citadel, situated at the periphery of the fortified settlement close to the Barada River, may have already existed during the Aramaean period. The main temple of the city, dedicated to the storm-god Ba'al-Hadad, was the predecessor of the Roman Jupiter temple, the Byzantine cathedral dedicated to John the Baptist, and, today, the Great (Umayyad) Mosque. Thus, as far as can be

² Sack 1989: 7–9 fig. 1.

³ Lipiński 2000a: 347–407.

reconstructed from the available evidence, the temple was situated in the center of city. So far, the alignment of the fortification walls and streets is unknown.

Presumably, Hamath was under Luwian control until the late 9th or even early 8th century B.C.,⁴ as the majority of inscriptions was written in Hieroglyphic Luwian.⁵ However, this does not necessarily mean that the population was Luwian instead of Semitic, since neither the official language, nor the personal names indicate “ethnic” constitutions.⁶ Hamath definitively fell under Aramaean rule in the late 9th or early 8th century B.C. during the reign of a certain Zakkur, a man who originated from ‘Anah on the Middle Euphrates and resided in a town called Hazrak, presumably modern Tell Afis (pl. XXVIII). His realm was named Lu’aš, known as Nuḥašše in the 2nd millennium B.C. However, it is unclear if the layout of Hamath changed significantly in the following decades. At the end of the 8th century B.C., it became the residence of an Assyrian governor. As indicated by its topographical situation, the heavily fortified and highly elevated citadel was situated directly on the bank of the Orontes River. The lower town appears to have extended below the Old Town of modern Hama south of the citadel mound. Thus, it is likely that the citadel was situated at the town’s periphery.

Hazrak, modern Tell Afis, shows an irregular outer shape, formed by its long settlement history through the Bronze Ages (pl. XXVIII).⁷ The highest elevated area was a citadel, located halfway between its center and its northern periphery. As a prominent part of the city, it seems to have been called *Apiš*, the origin of the modern toponym.⁸ No major break within the urban layout of the pre-Aramaean and the Aramaean period is visible.

Before and after its incorporation into the Aramaean entity of Bit Adini in the 11th or 10th century B.C., Til Barsib on the Euphrates⁹ was known under its Hittite name Mazuwati/Masuwari (XXIX).¹⁰ To what degree

⁴ Lipiński 2000a: 254.

⁵ Hawkins 2000: 398–423.

⁶ Cf. Bunnens 2009 for the use of the Luwian language, script, and art by Semitic (Aramaean) élites in Til Barsib. The situation does not differ so much from Sam’al, where an adoption of Luwian patterns in art and onomastics can be observed (see below).

⁷ Mazzoni 2008 and Soldi 2009.

⁸ Soldi 2009: 108 n. 42 with further reading. The situation is reminiscent of Zion as the name of the citadel of Jerusalem.

⁹ Thureau-Dangin – Dunand 1936a and iid. 1936b.

¹⁰ Bunnens – Hawkins – Leirens 2006: 88 and Bunnens 2009.

the original layout was changed by the Aramaean dynasty is not clear at this point. The city was characterized by an extended semicircular lower town and a citadel on the bank of the Euphrates. Few remains of the Early Iron Age occupation preceding the Assyrian seizure have been excavated so far,¹¹ almost none of them within the lower town. Hence, it cannot be determined if the circular layout and the citadel at the town's periphery already existed in Luwian times or if they should be identified as either Aramaean or Assyrian additions.

Some of the sites, which were newly founded or at least re-founded by the Aramaeans once their rule had been established, are much better investigated than these towns.¹² The most prominent of these are Sam'al (modern Zincirli), Arpad (modern Tell Rifa'at), and Guzana (modern Tell Halaf), the capitals of Yādiya/Bit Gabbari, Bit Agusi, and Pale/Bit Baḥiani, respectively.¹³ Aside from these large cities a number of medium- and small-sized towns, presumably of Aramaean origin, have been excavated, giving further information on Aramaean city planning. Among these are Tell Šaiḥ Ḥassan and Hadattu (modern Arslan Tash).

The outline of the city of Guzana¹⁴ was rectangular, defined by a moat and a mud brick wall at its western, southern, and eastern flanks (pl. XXX).¹⁵ The Ğirḡib, a branch of the Khabur River, protected its northern side. A strongly fortified citadel with a steep slope on its northern, western, and eastern side was situated halfway along the city's northern flank on the southern bank of the river. It was accessible via a main gate from the Lower Town to the south. Another entrance was the so-called "Quelltor" in the northeast of the citadel. It connected the citadel with the river and an important spring nearby.¹⁶ Hardly anything is known about the alignment of streets in Guzana and the position of the city gates. The concept of city planning as represented by Guzana (rectangular with a citadel at its periphery) was known in Assyria since the 2nd millennium B.C., as

¹¹ Mainly the east building, the neighboring walls from Stratum 5, and a building with pebble mosaic pavement. Cf. Bunnens 2009: 73f fig. 5.

¹² Mazzoni 1994 and Novák 2005a.

¹³ On the history of these entities and the identification of the towns, cf. Lipiński 2000a: 233–248 (Bit-Gabbari/Yādiya with Sam'al), 195–220 (Bit-Agusi with Arpad) and 163–194 (Bit-Adini with Til Barsib).

¹⁴ Von Oppenheim 1950; Baghdo – Martin – Novák – Orthmann 2009; iid. 2012; Martin – Novák 2010.

¹⁵ Novák 1999: 192–196.

¹⁶ However, it cannot be determined if the "Quelltor" dates back to the Aramaean period or if it was added during the Assyrian phase.

demonstrated by Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta.¹⁷ Since Upper Mesopotamia had belonged to the Middle Assyrian Empire for at least two centuries, comparable cities may have already existed in this region before the founding of Guzana. So far, no other Aramaean city with a rectangular layout has been identified. This might be the result of the meager archaeological evidence. Other important cities in the region of former Middle Assyrian dominion such as Amida (Diyarbakır)¹⁸ and Nasibina (Nusaybin)¹⁹ have not been investigated yet.

At least three important Aramaean towns west of the Middle Assyrian sphere of influence show a tentative or almost perfect circular or semicircular layout: Sam'al (Zincirli),²⁰ Arpad (Tell Rifa'at),²¹ and Til Barsib (Tell Aḥmar).²² Some smaller settlements followed the same pattern.

The city of Sam'al had an almost perfect circular outline with three gates at regular distances from each other (pl. XXXI).²³ The public buildings, namely the palaces, were concentrated inside a strongly fortified citadel, which was situated almost precisely in the center of the city. As recent geophysical prospecting has demonstrated, the streets were laid out in a regular system of concentric and radial streets.²⁴

The layout of Til-Barsib is reminiscent of Sam'al but it was only semicircular, and its citadel was situated on the bank of the river. The fact that Sam'al was not located on a river may be the reason its citadel was built in the city center.

As mentioned previously, we cannot judge if the semicircular layout of Til Barsib was created by the pre-Aramaean population, the Aramaeans, or the Assyrians. The same is true for the nearby town of Hadattu (modern Arslan Tash), which was mid-sized and had a circular layout.²⁵ There is no historical or archaeological evidence for its existence in the period preceding the Assyrian occupation of the territory between the Euphrates and Balikh. Still, its Aramaean name, meaning "the new (one),"

¹⁷ Novák 1999: 124–128.

¹⁸ Lipiński 2000a: 135–161 and Szuchman 2009.

¹⁹ Lipiński 2000a: 109–117.

²⁰ Von Luschan 1898; Novák 1999: 196–202; Wartke 2005; Schloen – Fink 2009a; id. 2009b.

²¹ Seton-Williams 1961 and id. 1967.

²² Thureau-Dangin – Dunand 1936a; iid. 1936b; Bunnens 1994; id. 2009; Novák 1999: 183–188.

²³ Von Luschan 1898 and Novák 1999: 201f.

²⁴ Schloen – Fink 2009a: 4 fig. 3.

²⁵ On the layout, cf. Novák 1999: 173–175; on the inscriptions, cf. Galter 2004a and id. 2004b.

and its shape, which is not representative of Assyrian tradition, indicate an Aramaean origin. Another small-scale settlement of similar shape is Tell Šaiḥ Ḥassan on the eastern bank of the Euphrates south of Til Barsib (pl. XXXII), a likely candidate for the site of ancient M/Naubai.²⁶ If the excavated site represents the entire settlement and not just its fortified citadel, with an otherwise unknown lower town, it was a small but very well fortified stronghold of almost circular shape, controlling the road that followed the eastern bank of the Euphrates downstream. The town confirms the Aramaeans' affinity for circular layouts, at least in this region.

However, there are also divergent examples: close to Til Barsib the small stronghold Pitru (Tell Aušariya) overlooked the Euphrates from its western bank.²⁷ Its layout followed the natural landscape and does not show any planned geometric system. This is also the case with a mid-scale town of unknown ancient name, excavated at Tell Mastuma not far from Idlib.²⁸

Conclusively, a variety of formal types can be observed: There are rectangular, circular or semicircular cities, and cities with a non-geometric layout, following natural conditions or preserving an organic morphology, the result of a long settlement history going back to the 2nd or even 3rd millennium B.C. There might have been regional preferences as attested by the concentration of circular shapes in the northwestern and northern parts of the Aramaean world, whereas rectangular shapes are more frequent in the east. Still, there are too few examples to further clarify the picture.

A striking similarity among most of the known cities is the existence of a strongly fortified citadel. Most often, the citadel is found situated at the urban periphery, close to the bank of a river and thus connected to a direct water supply. The only prominent exception is Sam'al, where the citadel is located in the city center, probably due to the lack of an available watercourse.

Little is known about the street alignments of Aramaean cities. Smaller towns, like Tell Mastuma, show an irregular system, obviously the result of organic growth. In contrast, Sam'al was well organized and consisted of concentric and radial streets. There is hardly any evidence to determine whether there were open plazas or not. Hopefully, the renewed

²⁶ Boese 1995 and Bachmann – Boese 2006–2008.

²⁷ Cf. J. Eidem at <http://www.aushariye.hum.ku.dk>.

²⁸ Wakita – Wada – Nishiyama 2000.

excavations of Aramaean cities will produce more information for the reconstruction of their urban organization.

3. CITADELS AND FORTIFICATIONS

The Aramaean and Luwian cities were heavily fortified. In times of permanent military conflicts among the small principalities and the growing threat of the expanding Assyrian Empire, this is not surprising. These conflicts resulted in innumerable sieges, which are mentioned in the royal inscriptions²⁹ and depicted often in Assyrian art.³⁰

The fortification systems consisted of a single or double wall with buttresses and towers more or less regularly distanced from each other. The walls were built of mud brick, sometimes resting on a stone foundation or protected by a stone curtain.³¹ An example of a double-wall fortification with foundations of basalt stones and a moat was excavated in Sam'al.³² In contrast, Guzana seems to have had only one wall, which was completely built of mud bricks.

Towers and buttresses are attested by archaeological evidence and depicted in Assyrian reliefs, which show that the towers were higher than the walls, and that both were crowned by merlons. From these structures, the defenders were able to fire upon the attacking enemies below.

Moats in front of city walls are occasionally mentioned in Aramaic and Assyrian sources, several times in the context of Aramaean cities under siege. Thus, they seem to have been an integral part of the fortification systems. Adad-nirari II (912–891 B.C.) describes two sieges of Aramaean cities in the land of Hanigalbat³³: Gidara/Raqammatu and, shortly later, Nasibina.³⁴ In both cases, moats are explicitly mentioned. The one in Nasibina is described as having been extraordinarily wide and deep, reaching all the way down to the natural bedrock. In his inscription, Zakkur of Hazrak mentions how his enemies ran up against the moat.³⁵ Archaeological data is still scant, but at least in some cases, like Guzana, the moats are

²⁹ Cf. KAI 202: A9–10 in Delsman 1982–1985: 627.

³⁰ Eph'al 2009.

³¹ On the building materials, cf. Naumann ²1971: 33–54; on the building techniques, *ibid.*: 55–203.

³² Schloen – Fink 2009b: 207.

³³ This is the Assyrian name of Upper Mesopotamia, in general, and the Khabur triangle, in particular.

³⁴ Hecker 2005: 63.

³⁵ KAI 202: A9–10 in Delsman 1982–1985: 627.

still visible. Archaeological evidence of the existence of steep *glacis* and revetment walls is not yet attested in Aramaean cities, but as both elements had been known in Mesopotamian fortification architecture since the 3rd millennium B.C.,³⁶ it is very likely that the lack of proof might simply reflect the need for additional research.

The gates of city walls and citadels were of significance.³⁷ They were the most vulnerable parts of the fortification, transmission points in the daily traffic from the inside to the outside of a city, contact zones and links between the urban community and the inhabitants of the hinterland, thus, symbolically, also between civilization and wilderness. Thus, it is not surprising that they were, on the one hand, strongly fortified with flanking buttresses, retaining walls, and one or more chambers inside, and, on the other hand, richly decorated with reliefs and statues celebrating either the city gods or the power of the king. Since Aramaean and Luwian cities were much more frequently besieged than Babylonian or Assyrian ones, their gates were more strongly protected and hence more defensible. While the gates in Assyria and Babylonia were extremely broad with straight axis passages, which gave a free view from outside deep into the city center, the gates in Aramaean cities were far less broad and monumental. In order to enhance security, bent axis accesses were preferred. Retaining walls in front of the gates forced any would-be intruder to approach not frontally but at a sharp angle. Hence, the visual axis of the urban layout was different as well.

An integral part of the fortification of an Aramaean or Luwian city was its citadel. A citadel is defined as an elevated area within a city, being separated from the residential sector both by its height and strong fortifications. In contrast to a castle, which is not necessarily connected to a larger settlement, it is a substantial urban element. Access to the fortified citadel by the population of the lower town was restricted. This indicates segregation, be it of ethnic, religious, or social nature. Furthermore, the citadel had a strong symbolic value: It was well visible from inside and outside the city due to its elevation, showing that there was an élite controlling the city and its hinterland from a heavily fortified stronghold.

In general, citadels were not Babylonian or Egyptian urban concepts. They do not appear in these regions until very late, in contrast to Anatolia,

³⁶ Cf. in general Burke 2008.

³⁷ Naumann ²1971: 288–302; Chadwick 2001. On the symbolic value of gates, cf. Mazoni 1997.

the northern Levant, and Upper Mesopotamia. The development of citadels appears to date back at least to the 2nd millennium B.C., as proven by such imperial Hittite cities as Hattusa, Alṣar, and Kuṣaklı. A few examples of 3rd millennium citadels are attested both in Anatolia and Upper Mesopotamia, like in Troy (Level II) and Armanum (Ĝabal Bazi within the Tell Banat compound),³⁸ respectively. However, citadels became a characteristic element of Mittanian cities, like Waššukanni (Tell Fekheriye), Ta'idu (Tell Ĥamidiya), Emar, Baširu (Tell Bazi), and Nuzi. This is not surprising, since the term for "citadel" in almost all cuneiform written languages was Hurrian *kerḫu* as opposed to *adaššu* "lower town".³⁹ In Carchemish, such a *kerḫu* is attested by literary sources for the Middle Syrian Period (14th century B.C.). After the seizure of the city by Šuppiluliuma I, only the lower town was plundered, while the citadel (*kerḫu*), including the temples, was spared.⁴⁰

Almost every important Luwian or Aramaean royal city was characterized by a heavily fortified citadel, in which the main palaces and presumably also the central temples were situated.⁴¹ Most of the citadels were located in the peripheral areas of the cities, preferably close to a watercourse. Prominent examples are Carchemish, Til Barsib, Guzana, Hamath, and Damascus. Only in Sam'al did the citadel occupy the center of the city, probably because a nearby watercourse was not present. The main advantage of a location close to the urban periphery was not only the supply of fresh water, but also the ability of the citadel's inhabitants to escape quickly in case of danger, without having to cross the dwelling quarters. Not only during the seizure of a city by foreign forces, but also in the event of an uprising by the local population, the option to flee might have been of value. As the Assyrian records mention, such rebellions did occur from time to time, often initiated by the Assyrians themselves.

Most of the Luwian and Aramaean citadels have only been sparsely investigated and thus are not very well known. Nevertheless, some examples help to reconstruct their layout and inner structure.

³⁸ Otto 2006: 10 fig. 6.

³⁹ Haas – Wegner 1995.

⁴⁰ Güterbock 1956: 95, DŠ, pl. AIII, lines 26ff.

⁴¹ Huge citadels overlooking vast lower towns dominated the contemporary Neo-Assyrian cities, too. Whether they were a result of Neo-Hittite influence or of an indigenous development is still under discussion. Cf. Bunnens 1996b, who sees a Syro-Anatolian influence on Assyrian town planning (mainly the development of the citadel) and the present author in Novák 2005b, who pinpoints an autonomous Assyrian development.

As far as can be judged at present, the access from the lower town was only possible through a single gate. This was surely the case in Sam'al and Guzana, where the gates were situated in the south of the citadel. In Guzana, there was another gateway at the riverside, the so-called "Quelltor", which probably also served as a secret path of escape (pl. XXXIII).

Citadels seem to have been divided into two distinct areas, separated by an internal wall. After passing through the citadel's gate, a visitor coming from the lower town first entered an "exterior area" of the citadel. A second gate gave access to the interior zone. Examples of such a separation into two parts can be observed in Sam'al, Guzana, Kunulua, and Hamath (?). The pattern might have come from Carchemish: As W. Orthmann has convincingly suggested,⁴² the "King's Gate" with the "Processional Entry" was the outer citadel's entrance from the lower town into a central plaza, which was enclosed by the "Temple of the Storm God," the "Long Wall of Sculptures," the "Herald's Wall," and the "Lower Palace." The "Great Staircase" between the "Temple of the Storm God" and the "Lower Palace" gave access to the inner and more elevated part of the citadel. Presumably, this was the location of the main palaces ("Upper Palace") and the temple of the city's tutelary goddess Kubaba. The situation in Kunulua (Tell Tayinat) is comparable: a gateway inside the citadel separated an outer area, in which the temples were located, from an inner area, which held the palaces. In Guzana the "Südliches Burgtor" was the outer citadel's gate, whereas the "Skorpionentor" gave access to the inner part of the citadel with the great *hilani* palace inside (pl. XXXIII). The structure of the citadel of Sam'al is the same (pl. XXXIV). There is no evidence so far that a temple was located in the exterior areas of the citadels of Sam'al and Guzana, as was the case in Carchemish and Kunulua (pl. XXXV). There is not enough information on the structure of the citadels of Hamath and Til Barsib,⁴³ but their layout might have been similar.

Summing up, the existence of a fortified and elevated citadel was not the only characteristic element of Aramaean and Luwian urbanism. Their location at the periphery of the city and their subdivision into an outer and an inner part followed some standardized pattern as well. The regulation of access to the buildings located both in the outer (if existent) and in the inner part of the citadel, and the accentuation of the entrances with the use of pictorial decoration, including ritual scenes, were expressions

⁴² Orthmann 2006.

⁴³ Bunnens 2009: 74 fig. 5.

of the elite's power. This was emphasized by the prominent visibility of the citadel from inside and outside the city. Nevertheless, the citadels provided safety and security, from both external as well as internal threats.

The high standard of Aramaean fortifications, consisting of citadels, walls and moats, buttresses, and the like, is reflected in the difficulties that even the superior Assyrian armies faced when they laid siege to the larger cities.⁴⁴

4. PALACES

In general, a palace is defined as the residence of a ruler or his representative.⁴⁵ In size and decoration, it superseded all ordinary dwellings and primarily fulfilled secular functions, although it may have included rooms for religious or cult activities as well. As a governmental and administrative center and home of the royal family, it was both a symbol of power and a place for economic activities.

The common Aramaic expression for "palace" was *hekala'*, which derives from Sumerian É.GAL meaning "Great House". Through the Akkadian word *ekallu(m)*, it was borrowed by several West Semitic languages, as, for example, Ugaritic *hkl* and Hebrew *hēkal*. In Sumerian and Akkadian this word was almost exclusively used to denote palaces, whereas in West Semitic languages it may also have been used as an expression for a temple. Even in the cuneiform inscriptions from Guzana, where "É.GAL-*lim U*" means the "Temple of the Storm-God," this was the case.⁴⁶

During the Late Bronze Age, two principles of palatial architecture were common in the Levant: (1) complex, multi-core buildings with a series of connected apartments, each of them centered around a courtyard, as represented by the palace of Ugarit; (2) relatively small units consisting of just a few rooms, often without an inner courtyard, as represented best by the palaces of Tilmen Höyük (Palace E, Middle Bronze Age) and Alalāḥ (Level IV, Late Bronze Age). The latter principle was the predecessor of a palace type that became predominant in the Luwian and Aramaean architecture of the early 1st millennium B.C.⁴⁷ Its spatial arrangement seems to have been quite standardized, as far as can be judged by the

⁴⁴ Fuchs 2008a.

⁴⁵ Postgate 2003–2005: 195–200 and Novák 1999: 313f.

⁴⁶ Dornauer 2010: 51 n. 104 with earlier references.

⁴⁷ Naumann ²1971: 411–429 and Novák 2004a: 336–346.

limited number of known examples. The palace had a tripartite inner structure with a main hall, presumably the throne room, in its center. The monumental doorway was generally situated on one broad side of the building and characterized by one or more columns, supporting a wide lintel. It gave access to a broad entrance hall, which was flanked by two tower-like square rooms. Adjacent to it lay the throne room, behind which a row of small rooms formed the back of the tripartite ensemble.

The origin of this kind of palatial architecture is still disputed. Some scholars propose a Hittite origin,⁴⁸ others a north Levantine one.⁴⁹ At present, it seems most likely that it derives from the valley east of the Amanus Mountains. Here, in Tilmen Höyük, the earliest testimony can be traced; nearby Kunulua (pl. XXXV) and Sam'al (XXXVI) provide the majority of its Iron Age representatives.⁵⁰ Anatolian influence is merely testified by the arrangement of single buildings around a central plaza inside the citadel.⁵¹

Palaces of this type have been found both in Aramaean cities like Sam'al, Sakçagözü, Tell Šaiḥ Ḥassan, Guzana (pl. XXXVII), and Sikani (former Waššukanni = Tell Fekheriye), and in Luwian cities like Kunulua and Carchemish.⁵² While an ethnic distinction in the layout of the palaces cannot be observed, presumably some regional differences did exist. Those from west of the Euphrates, for example, have staircases in one of the tower-like rooms flanking the entrance. In the palaces excavated further east, bathrooms were situated at this location.

The identification of this type of building as a palace is supported by the installations found inside such as movable hearths in some of the throne rooms. Hardly anything is known about the decoration of the interior rooms. Contrary to Assyrian palaces no bas-reliefs were found inside the buildings and it is not attested if there were wall paintings or curtains instead. However, the outside was often richly decorated with reliefs on basalt or limestone orthostats, clearly demonstrating the ritual importance and power of the inhabitant of the palace, the king.⁵³ In several cases, the column bases and the jambs of the monumental entrance

⁴⁸ E.g., Margueron 1980.

⁴⁹ Frankfort 1954.

⁵⁰ Novák 2004a: 342–344.

⁵¹ The pattern of Ḥattuša is still visible when compared with Sam'al.

⁵² Cf. on most of the examples Naumann ²1971: 411–429 with further reading. On Tell Šaiḥ Ḥassan, cf. Bachmann – Boese 2006–2008: 554, on Sikani, cf. Pruiß – Bagdo 2002: 314–316.

⁵³ Gilibert 2011.

consisted of stone statues, showing sphinxes, lions, bulls, griffins, and the like. The columns themselves were made of wood. Guzana is probably the only remarkable exception.⁵⁴

Although the internal structure of Luwo-Aramaeian palaces was quite simple and is in no way comparable to the complexity of their Assyrian and Babylonian counterparts, some of their characteristics aroused the interest of the Assyrians and had a substantial impact on Assyrian palatial architecture. In Assyrian sources a “Palace of the Hatti-countries”⁵⁵ is mentioned frequently, which “was called *būḫilāni* in the language of the Amurrū.”⁵⁶ One of its predominant characteristics was the columned entrance. Much has been written on the identification of the *būḫilāni*,⁵⁷ the etymology of its designation,⁵⁸ and its adoption in Assyria.⁵⁹ However, it seems very likely that *būḫilāni* was the name of the tripartite Luwo-Aramaeian type of palace.

5. TEMPLES

Attestation of Luwo-Aramaeian temple architecture is sparse, since only a few examples have been excavated so far. In detail, only the temples in Ḥalab (Aleppo), ‘Ain Dara in the Afrin-valley,⁶⁰ Kunulua/Tell Tayinat, Carchemish,⁶¹ and Hazrak (Tell Afis)⁶² can be listed as well as some buildings from coastal sites.⁶³ Surprisingly, no important temple has come to light so far in the major Aramaean cities like Sam’al, Til Barsib, Guzana, Hamath, or Damascus. Whether this is an archaeological coincidence, or

⁵⁴ It is not absolutely certain whether Max Freiherr von Oppenheim’s famous reconstruction of the caryatids representing the local triad standing on the attribute animals is really correct. The bases might have been supporting wooden columns instead of the so-called gods. Actually, there is no real proof that the statues were positioned on top of the animals, as recent investigations have shown. Cf. Cholidis – Martin 2010: 69–117.

⁵⁵ General Assyrian expression for what is nowadays northern Syria, including parts of southeast Turkey.

⁵⁶ Assyrian designation of the Western Semitic languages spoken in Syria and the Levantine.

⁵⁷ Frankfort 1954; Naumann ²1971: 411–429; Novák 2004a: 336–346.

⁵⁸ Renger 1972–1975.

⁵⁹ Novák 2004a; Gillmann 2008; Reade 2008; Schmid – Novák 2010.

⁶⁰ Abou Assaf 1990 and Novák 2012.

⁶¹ Naumann ²1971: 470–472.

⁶² Soldi 2009: 106–109 and Mazzoni 2010 with further reading.

⁶³ Mazzoni 2010: 363f with references.

the reflection of a specific Aramaean religious policy, at least in the newly founded towns, is still under debate and is therefore difficult to evaluate.⁶⁴ In written sources, at least, a temple of Ba'al in Damascus is attested. Further important sanctuaries known only from textual references include the temples of the moon-god in Harran and the storm-god in Sikani (Tell Fekheriye).

However, it is quite remarkable that all the known temples, with the exception of Kunulua, could already look back on a century-long history by the time that the Aramaeans entered the picture. This indicates that the new Aramaean (and Luwian) elites adopted the established, traditional cults.

The most prominent example is the famous temple of the storm-god of Ḥalab (Aleppo), which dates back to the late 3rd millennium B.C. (XXXVIII). It underwent several renovations, some of them quite smooth, others with wide-reaching changes of the inner structure and even the axis of the entrance. From the early 2nd millennium on, it was characterized by a broad cella. In front of it lay a rectangular vestibule, which was open to the outside along its full breadth and was flanked on both sides by two square buttress-like rooms with staircases. Thus, this building can be considered an early example of a so-called *miqdol*, a tower temple.⁶⁵ Tell Afis, ancient Hazrak, has revealed a sanctuary with a very similar entrance, but in contrast to the temple of Ḥalab, its cella was a long room flanked by small chambers on each side (pl. XXXIX).

The temple of 'Ain Dara, a still unidentified ancient town in the Afrin-valley northwest of Aleppo, was presumably built in the 13th or 12th century B.C. (pl. XL). From its initial phase, it was situated on top of an artificial terrace. A gallery, circulating the proper sanctuary, was added later. At first, it was open to the outside, similar to a *peripteros* with pillars. Later, during the terminal stage of the temple, this gallery was closed by the addition of an outer enclosure wall. Both in its initial and its terminal layout the temple belonged to the well-known type of the *templum in antis*.⁶⁶ The lateral walls of such a building are prolonged on the façade side, thus forming an open, niche-like vestibule. In the case of 'Ain Dara, this *portico* between the two *antis* has revealed two circular basalt bases

⁶⁴ On some contrary arguments, cf. Niehr 2004b and Novák 2004b.

⁶⁵ Cf. Kohlmeyer 2009: 194.

⁶⁶ On the early history of the temple *in antis*, cf. Castel 2010; on its further evolution, cf. Werner 1994.

of wooden columns.⁶⁷ It gave direct access to the inner rooms of the building: a rectangular antechamber and an adjacent square cella with a podium, presumably for a divine symbol or statue. Its layout looks like an illustration of the Biblical description of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6).

The best parallels for the columned porticos of the 'Ain Dara temple are to be seen in the nearby temples in Kunulua. These are the only known Luwo-Aramaeian temples without Bronze Age forerunners.⁶⁸ The main difference is that the cellae of the temples of Kunulua were long rooms, with lateral walls longer than the front and back walls. Furthermore, they were situated close to the palaces, just outside the inner area of the citadel, in contrast to the isolated temples in Ḥalab, Hazrak, and 'Ain Dara. It has been proposed that this difference reflects their decisive functions as dynastic temples (Kunulua) in contrast to the sanctuaries of the tutelary city gods (Ḥalab, Hazrak, and 'Ain Dara).⁶⁹

Another temple was excavated in the lower part of the citadel of Carchemish: the sanctuary of the storm-god just beside the "Great Staircase," which was identified by an inscription. It is uncertain if the so-called *hilani* at the southeast of the triangular plaza south of the "Great Staircase" was a palatial or a sacral building.⁷⁰ At least the temple of the storm-god has some features in common with the known temples *in antis*. It has an entrance niche and an almost square cella, but lacks an antechamber. Neither of these two buildings can be identified as the central sanctuary of the tutelary city goddess Kubaba, which might have been located on the highest part of the citadel.

A distinctive type of sanctuary was devoted to the ancestor cult. The so-called "cult room" in the Lower Town of Guzana, a long room with a vestibule and three small adjacent chambers, has convincingly been identified as such. Some similar, though smaller shrines were situated immediately east of the outer entrance to the citadel.⁷¹ Although no comparable buildings have been excavated so far, there is clear evidence for a similar ancestor's cult in other Aramaean cities.

⁶⁷ Columned porticos in a *templum in antis*, giving the temple a similar appearance to the later Greek *megaron* buildings, go back to the 3rd millennium B.C. A testimony is the temple of ar-Rawda, cf. Castel 2010: 158 fig. 6.

⁶⁸ Harrison 2009b: 187.

⁶⁹ Mazzoni 2010: 362, following an idea of P. Matthiae.

⁷⁰ As has been already argued by Naumann ²1971: 470–472.

⁷¹ Orthmann 2011.

Irrespective of the question of whether or not there was an antechamber, if the portico was flanked by buttresses or simple *antis*, and if the cella was a long square or broad room, all the temples have some crucial elements in common. They had only a limited number of rooms, meaning that there was no decisive inner complexity, and they show a strict axiality (direct visual and passage axis from the outside into the cella and to the podium). The main feature, however, was an open portico, indicating a transparency similar to that of the palaces. All these elements were already characteristic of Bronze Age temples in the northern Levant and Upper Mesopotamia. New elements that were introduced by the Aramaeans cannot be traced so far and might have never existed.

Moreover, the position of temples within the urban landscape can differ strongly: There are sanctuaries situated on the highest point of the citadel (Ḥalab, Hazrak), at its periphery opposite to the gate of the citadel (‘Ain Dara), or inside the outer part of the citadel, separated from the inner part by a wall (Kunulua, Carchemish). These differences may reflect the temples’ function rather than any ethnic or political diversity. Still, a satisfying explanation has not been brought forward so far.

6. HOUSES AND WORKSHOPS

Domestic architectural remains were occasionally excavated in Aramaean settlements, but no comprehensive investigation has been undertaken so far. Although examples are known from some of the major sites, like Sam’al,⁷² Til Barsib,⁷³ and Guzana,⁷⁴ only fragmentary remains have been explored there. Some of the minor settlements, like Tell Mastuma (pl. XLI) and Çatal Höyük, have provided more substantial remains.⁷⁵ The variety of types of houses continued to be wide. Beside more advanced structures with central courtyards and standardized allotment houses consisting of a vestibule and a main room, buildings composed of an irregular agglutination of small compounds seem to have been the dominant

⁷² Struble – Herrmann 2009. Further structures were detected by geophysical prospecting, cf. Schloen – Fink 2009a and iid. 2009b.

⁷³ Bunnens 2009: 69 fig. 1.

⁷⁴ Müller in von Oppenheim 1950. Note that the early phase of dwelling architecture discovered in the Lower Town dates to the Aramaean period and the later one to the Assyrian.

⁷⁵ An overview and a typology of domestic architecture was presented by F. Braemer 1997.

type. In general, the units were quite modest considering their sizes and inventories.

Artisan and craftsmen's quarters with workshops were excavated in Tell Mishrife, a town of unknown name covering the ruins of the famous Bronze Age city of Qaṭna (pl. XLII).⁷⁶

7. CONCLUSION

A distinct Aramaean architecture cannot be identified. On the one hand, it cannot be distinguished from the Luwian (or "Neo-Hittite") style due to general difficulties with respect to political, linguistic, and cultural conditions. On the other hand, it did not provide any new features: Almost all its elements, like fortified citadels, the tripartite *bītḥilāni* palaces, and the temples *in antis* had already existed before the Aramaeans. Moreover, almost all important sanctuaries of the Aramaean world looked back on a long history and did not undergo significant changes in their layout.

Regional differences are evident with respect to city planning and variations of buildings. However, taking into consideration the political fragmentation of the Luwo-Aramaean world on the one hand and the different regional heritages that the new entities had to face on the other, the consistency of the architecture from the Amanus Mountains in the west and the Khabur triangle in the east appears astonishing. In some cases, elements like the *bītḥilāni* emerged in regions where they had no local tradition at all. This indicates a common cultural identity. How, when, and where it was developed is still difficult to see. But the recently awakened interest in Luwo-Aramaean archaeology might cast more light on this question.

⁷⁶ Morandi Bonacossi 2009.