# The local elite and the Assyrian administration in the Neo-Assyrian provinces in the Zagros

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*ABSTRACT*

In the second half of the eighth century BC, the Neo-Assyrian Empire conquered the mountain area of the Central Zagros and created provinces there which stayed integral part of the Empire until its last decades. In this paper I argue that due to the special circumstances of this region the Assyrian imperial administration, in order to maintain its power, practised unusual methods in connection with the local ruling elites. In the consequence of these methods, the local rulers preserved their power and lived in a symbiotic relationship with the Assyrian Empire.

*KEYWORDS*

Assyrian Empire, Neo-Assyrian period, Assyrian provinces, Zagros Mountains, Local elite, *Bēl āli*, Imperial administration, Deportation, *Adê*-treaty, Great Khorasan Road

# 1.Introduction

Along with the Western expansion of the second half of the eighth century BC, Assyrians campaigned to the East as well, and created four provinces in the valleys of the central Zagros.[1] First, Tiglath-pileser III conquered the foothills and the western ranges of the Zagros (744[2] and 737 BC[3]) and established the provinces of Parsua and Bīt-Hamban. Next, Sargon II led a series of campaigns to the central Zagros (716[4] and 715[5]), and in the valleys of the Great Khorasan Road – which connected Mesopotamia and Iran, and a few hundred years later became a very important route of the Silk Road[6] – established the provinces of Kišessim and Harhar. During these campaigns, the Assyrians rebuilt and renamed six cities in these provinces and turned Kišessim to Kār-Nergal[7] (capital city of the province), Harhar to Kār-Šarrukīn[8] (capital city of the province), Kišešlu to Kār-Nabû, Qindau to Kār-Sîn, Anzaria to Kār-Adad, and finally, Bīt-Bagāia to Kār-Ištar (cities in the province of Harhar/Kār-Šarrukīn).[9] That is, in a very limited area, on the eastern periphery of the Empire along the Great Khorasan Road, the Assyrians created altogether six new *kārus*, trading emporiums.[10]

# 2. The creation of the provinces from smaller units

Along with the Western expansion, the Assyrians usually chopped up the conquered political entities into smaller units and created separate Assyrian provinces from the latter. After the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-732 BC), the kingdom of Damascus was divided into five provinces (Dimašqa, Haurīna, Manṣuāte, Qarnīnu Ṣubutu), and by the beginning of Sargon II's reign the Kingdom of Israel was divided into four provinces (Dor/Du'ru, Magiddû, Samerīna, Gilead).[11] However, the organization of the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros Mountains followed a basically different way.

The best description of the creation of the Zagric provinces is in the Summary Inscription 7 of Tiglath-pileser III, which is a summary of the Assyrians campaigns led into the Central Zagros region.

obv. 29–32 As with a bird-snare, **I ensnared the lands** Namri, Bīt-Sangibūti, Bīt-Hamban, Sumurzus, (Bīt)-Barrūa, Bīt-Zualzaš, (and) Bīt-Matti, the ciy Niqqu of the land Tupliaš, the lands Bīt-Taranzāya, Parsua, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Abdadāni, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, (and) Bīt-Urzakki, the cities Bīt-Ištar (and) Zakruti, the lands Gizinikissi (and) Niššāya, the cities Sibur (and) Urimzan, the lands Ra'usan, Uparia, Bustus, Ariarma – the land of roosters – Sa[k]sukni, Araquttu, Karibra, Gukinnana, (and) Bīt-Sagbat, Mount Silhazu, [which] they call the fortress of the Babylonian(s), Mount Rūa, as far as the salt desert of the lands Ušqaqāna (and) Šikrakki – (the land) of gold – (and) **the districts of the mighty Medes** to their full extent.

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[1]    For the chronology of the Assyrian campaigns in this area see RADNER 2003.

[2]    RINAP 1, no. 6 (Ann. 10), 7–12; no. 7 (Ann. 11); no. 8 (Ann. 12); no. 9 (Ann. 17), 1'-2'; no. 35 (Iran stele), 5'–20'.

[3]    RINAP 1, no. 15 (Ann. 14), 5–12; no. 16 (Ann. 15), 5–12; no. 7 (Ann. 16); no. 35 (Iran stele), ii 25'–44'. There are signs for a further Assyrian campaign in this territory under the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. Assyrian sources (RINAP 1, no. 13 (Ann. 19), 18–20; no. 41 (Summ. 3), 13'–15'; no. 47 (Summ. 7), 42) may refer to a campaign led by Aššur-da"inanni, the governor of the adjacent Assyrian province, Zamua in 738 B.C. (Cf. KLENGEL 1966, p. 368). For a later date of Aššur-da"inanni's campaign (between 737 and 727 BC) see BROWN 1987–90, p. 620.

[4]    FUCHS 1994, Ann. 78b–100; the inscription of the Nejafehabad stele rev. 23–71. (LEVINE 1972, pp. 37-45. For a new translation of this section by Grant Frame and Andreas Fuchs see GOPNIK, ROTHMAN 2011, pp. 293–295.) Fragments of prism from Nineveh (K 1669 = FUCHS 1998, pp. 25-27; K 1673 ii' = FUCHS 1998, pp. 27–28); and a fragment of a prism from Aššur (VA 8424 ii' = FUCHS 1998, p. 29).

[5]    FUCHS 1994, Ann. 101-116.

[6]    STRANGE 1905, pp. 61-64; LEVINE 1973, pp. 5-14; POTTS 1994, pp. 39-40.

[7]    FUCHS 1994, Ann. 95; Prunk. 60.

[8]    FUCHS 1994, Ann. 100 and 115; Prunk. 63 and 66.

[9]    FUCHS 1994, Ann. 114; Prunk. 65.

[10]    On the roles of this *kārus* see YAMADA 2005 and VÉR 2014.

[11]    For these Assyrian provinces see OTZEN 1979. But see also RADNER 2006, pp. 57-63 for a different opinion, who argues that the Assyrians created only two provinces – Magiddû and Samerīna – from the territory of Israel.

[33–34a] **I inflicted a heavy [de]feat upon them. I carried off 60,500 people**, together with their possessions, their horses, their mules, their Bactrian camels, their oxen, (and) their sheep and goats, without number. I destroyed, devastated, (and) burned with fire their [cit]ies. I turned (them) into mounds of ruins.

[34b–36a] **I annexed to Assyria the lands** Namri, Bīt-Sangibūti, Bīt-Hamban, Sumurzu, Bīt-Barrūa, Bīt-Zualzaš, (and) [Bīt]-Matti, the city Niqqu of the land Tupliaš, and lands Bīt-Taranzāya, Parsua, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Abdadāni, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, (and) Bīt-Urzakki, (and) the cities Bīt-Ištar (and) Zakruti, (cities) of the mighty Medes.

[36b–38a] **I rebuilt the cities inside them** (those lands), set up the weapon of (the god) Aššur, my lord, therein, (and) **brought the people of (foreign) lands** conquered by me therein. **I placed** [...] eunuchs of mine as **provincial governors over them**.

RINAP 1 no. 47
(Summery Inscription 7 – all highlights are mine)

Reading the inscription, it is salient that the circle of the conquered territories is much larger than the circle of those which were incorporated into the two newly established Assyrian provinces. Moreover, although the provinces of Bīt-Hamban and Parsua were led by Assyrian governors, as they were conglomerated from many small chiefdoms or districts (*nagûs*), the former leaders of these districts (the *bēl āli*s) retained their power and formed the lower stratum of the Assyrian administration – as we shall see it in the followings.

## 3. The localization of the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros

"Thus, for the present, specific identifications remain largely in the realm of guess-work." – wrote Louis D. Levine, one of the best experts of the historical geography of the Neo-Assyrian Zagros on the localization of the Zagric toponyms mentioned in Assyrian texts in 1989.[12] And indeed, there were only a few archaeological excavations in this vast

territory, so none of the toponyms mentioned in the Assyrian texts can be identified archaeologically, while the scant Assyrian inscriptions turned up in the Zagros neither provide a firm base on which the reconstruction of the historical geography of the Neo-Assyrian Zagros could be built up. Due to the archaeological surveys and excavations, a leap in the quality of the historical geographical research of the Zagros emerged in the 1970s. Louis D. Levine took part in the excavations of Godin-Tepe in the second half of the 1960s, and together with T. Cuyler Young accomplished the survey of the Mahidasht plain in the 1970s. In 1973-74 he published his synthesis[13] in which he combined the information of the itineraries of the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions with his field experience. Drawing the toponyms on map, Levine starts with the more sure and gets on to the less certain identifications. His work is still the most important starting point in the research.

In his article, Julian E. Reade (1978) depicted in diagram the network of the relative positions of the toponyms emerged in the Akkadian sources.[14] From this point on, the sequence of the toponyms was no longer a subject of debate.[15] The next step of the research was the drawing of the map this network. As the network has hardly any point which could be unequivocally identified with modern settlements or characteristic landmarks, there are great differences in the localizations of ancient toponyms by certain

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[12]  Levine 1989, p. 83.

[13]  Levine 1973; 1974.

[14]  Reade 1978, p. 138. This diagram with minor modifications also was published in Reade 1995, p. 34; and SAA 15, xxv.

[15]  A notable exception is the itinerary of Sargon II's eighth campaign (714 BC): Paul Zimansky (1990) collected the different previous suggestions about the route of this campaign and he tried to make a new reconstruction on the basis of satellite images assuming that in the last 2700 years there was not any major changes in the physical geography of the Central and Northern Zagros. Levine's observations contradict this assumption: along with the spreading of the Iranian *qanat*-systems the water sources of the surface had been narrowing and due to the grand scale logging the process of erosion dramatically strengthened from the middle ages: Levine 1976, p. 161; and Reade 1995, p. 31. The itinerary of Sargon II's eighth campaign was processed in detail by Galo W. Vera Chamaza (1994, 1995-96) and he rejects Zimansky's reconstruction. For a new analysis of the route of this campaign with previous literature, see Maniori 2014.

scholars. By the publication of the royal inscription of Sargon II's rock relief in Tang-i Var,[16] the exact location of Karalla – a small buffer state between Mannai and Assyria – became clear but to this solely identification we are not able to anchor the whole network of toponyms of the Neo-Assyrian Zagros.

Currently there are two main directions in the localization of the Neo-Assyrian Zagric toponyms. According to the minimalist, there is no evidence in the Assyrian written, pictorial or archaeological sources which would underpin the supposition that the Assyrian kings would have created provinces in the Iranian Plateau. Furtermore, Levine remarks that there is no evidence that the Assyrians would have ever led a campaign over the Zagros Mountains. The representatives of this minimalist school are Freidrich W. König, Louis D. Levine, Stuart C. Brown, Theodore Cuyler Young Jr. and Karlheinz Kessler.[17] However, according to the maximalists – with the acceptance of certain premises – the Neo-Assyrian written sources could be interpreted as the Assyrian army crossed the chains of the Zagros and the Assyrians created provinces in the Iranian Plateau. The representatives of this maximalist school are Igor M. Diakonoff, Edvin A. Grantovsky, Ernst Herzfeld, Inna N. Medvedskaya, Julian E. Reade, and Simo Parpola.[18]

All in all, the exact locations of these Assyrian provinces are highly debated,[19] although one thing seems to be sure, as all the experts agree that these Assyrian provinces were located in the high mountain area of the Central Zagros.

During its existence, the Assyrian Empire very rarely created provinces in high mountain areas. Along its western expansion, the empire did not meet with such geographical formations for a long time. The northernmost Assyrian province was Amīdu (now Diyarbakır in Turkey) which is situated in the middle of a plateau with an elevation of only 600 m, the real mountains starts just to the north of this city, beyond the Assyrian border. Moving to the East, the next Assyrian provinces were Tīdu and Tušhan located to the south of the river Tigris, in the Tur-Abdin, which seems only a hilly country with its elevation of 600-1200 m comparing with the high mountains on the northern shore of the river. The Assyrians never created provinces in the mountains of the border zone with Urartu, they were only trying to establish vassal dependency with the states of Šubria, Ukku and Kumme (the latter was probably located in the Beytüşşebap area in Turkey[20]) which were situated in 1400-2000 m high valleys fenced by 3000 m high mountains.[21]



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[16]   FRAME 1999.

[17]   See *inter alia*: KÖNIG 1938; LEVINE 1973, 1974; BROWN 1987-1990; YOUNG 1967; KESSLER 2006-2008.

[18]   See *inter alia*: DIAKONOFF 1985, pp. 58-88; GRANTOVSKY 1983, pp. 28-29; HERZFELD 1968, p. 238; MEDVEDSKAYA 1992, 2002; READE 1978, 1995; PARPOLA, PORTER 2001.

[19]   To demonstrate the contentiousness of this topic let me mention for example that Karen Radner didn't draw these Assyrian provinces – and only these provinces – on the map in her article "Provinzen C" in *RlA* (RADNER 2006).

[20]   For the localization of the these toponyms see RADNER 2012, esp. the map on p. 244.

[21]   For the relationship between Assyria and these smaller highland states see DEZSŐ 2006; RADNER 2012.

The first – and almost only[22] – zone where Assyria created administrative units in the high mountain area was the Central Zagros where these four provinces were created. In order to efficiently control this area blessed with peculiar geographical features the Assyrian expansion had to develop a special form of domination, and it came at a price.

Those valley-systems where these Assyrian provinces were created lay at an elevation of 1300-1600 m, the surrounding mountains reached the 3000 m, and the roads between these valleys run through passes on 2000 m height. In practically, it meant that these four provinces lived in an absolute closeness during 3-4 months in wintertime. A well-trained courier might have been able to cross the meters high snow bars of the passes, but the military aid from the core territories of Assyria was impossible. (fig 1.) It is worth to recall the words of Nabû-bēlu-ka"in, governor of Harhar who wrote in his letter to Sargon II that he won't be able to fulfil the royal order to go to Calah to the first of Nissan because of the snowy weather:[23] SAA 15 83 = SAA 19 190: obv. 15-rev. 2., "The year before last, (when) there was as much snow, and the rivers were frozen, and the men and horses who were with me died in the snow. I shall be in the king my lord's presence on the sixth or seventh of Nisan."

## 4. Mass deportations in the Zagric provinces

Beyond the frozen communication and supply channels, it was a further challenge for the Assyrian administration that the local people lived in a very different ecological system than the inhabitants of the foothills or the alluvial plains. A good example for the different ecosystem is in the letter of Aššur-bēl-uṣur, an Assyrian governor in the Central Zagros where he writes to the king that:[24] "Moreover, the king knows that the bulls of this country are very small. Would I not know (the size of) the bulls (given as) audience gift to the house [of my lords]?"

A village community deported from Israel to Guzana could have farmed under the more or less same ecological conditions in its new dwelling. However, the deportees from the foothills or plains could have hardly adapt themselves to the natural conditions of the high mountains in the Zagric provinces. It is may not by accident that according a letter[25] 2000 deportees from Tabal arrived to Parsua – on the north-western border of the Assyrian Empire Tabal was also a high mountain area.

Bustenay Oded wrote in his fundamental work on the Assyrian deportations: "It is thus clear that the Assyrian kings used the deportation system to a much greater extent in areas to the south and east of Assyria than in areas to the north and west."[26] – examining all the relevant written evidences I can't agree with professor Oded. Maybe the number of the deportations were very high from the eastern part of the empire, but the volume of the population change remained at a relatively low level.

In the written sources on the mass deportations from the Zagros the most locii refer to the capture and deportation of members of the local elite. Another major part of the sources is concerned with the forced recruitment of Zagric warriors, craftsmen, and other specialists in limited numbers. Broader parts of the local population were rarely involved in the mass deportations.

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[22]    For a very short time (between 713 and 711 BC) Tabal in South Anatolia was an Assyrian province (they named it Bīt-Purutaš), see Radner 2006, p. 63; for the relevant Assyrian inscription: Fuchs 1994, pp. 462-463.

[23]    The heavy snow usually meant insolvable challenge for the Assyrian army: Van Buylaere 2009.

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[24]    SAA 15 61: obv. 9-11.

[25]    SAA 15 84.

[26]    Oded 1979, p. 26.

Deportations from the Central Zagros

*Local rulers (and their families)*

834: Ianzû and his family, ruler of Namri and Hamban (Black Obelisk, RIMA 3. A.0.102.14: 124-126.)

820–819: Pirišati, ruler of Uraš in Gizilbunda (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: iii 14-15.)

744: Mitāki and his family, ruler of Uršanika and Kianpal in Parsua (RINAP 1, no. 7: 8-10.)

737: Burdada, ruler of Nirutakta in Parsua (RINAP 1, no. 15: 10-11.)

716: Ittī and his family, ruler of Allabria (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 89-90.)

716: Aššur-lē’i, ruler of Karalla (he was flayed in Aššur) (Fuchs 1994, Prunk. 56; Nejafehabad stele: rev. 31, cf. Frame 1999, 49.)

716: Šēpī-šarri, ruler of Šurgadia in Parsua (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 92-93.)

716: Bēl-šar-uṣur, ruler of Kišessim (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 93-94.)

716: Nahri, ruler of Šurgadia in Parsua (Nejafehabad stele: rev. 34-35, cf. Levine 1972, 38-39.)

715: Dajukku and his family, ruler of a *nagû* in Mannai (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 103, Prunk. 49.)

Before 708: Son of Karakku, ruler of Uriakku (SAA 15 85)

After 712: an unnamed *bēl āli* (SAA 5 203)

After 708: the ruler of the city Zabgaga (SAA 15 90)

After 708: Asrukanu (*bēl āli* of an unknown territory) (SAA 15 95)

After 708: The murderers of an Assyrian administrator *(rab āli)* (SAA 15 98)

After 708: The son of Ludû, a prince of Ellipi (SAA 15 100)

After 708: Uppite and his son, ruler of Uriakka (SAA 15 101)

676?: Šidirparna and Eparna with their people, *bēl āli*s from Madā (RINAP 4, no. 1: iv 48-52)

*Forced recruitment*

881 Zamua (KUR.Dagara) 1200 warriors (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: ii 30-31.)

881 Zamua (URU.Bāra) 300 warriors (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: ii 31-33.)

880 Zamua (URU.Ammali) "many troops" (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: ii 56.)

843 Namri, cavarlymen (RIMA 3, A.0.102.6: iv 12.)

834: Bīt-Hamban, (Black Obelisk, RIMA 3. A.0.102.14:126.)

820–819: Gizilbunda (URU.Uraš) 1200 warriors (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: iii 14-15.)

820–819: Madā (URU.Sagbita) 140 cavarlymen (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: iii 33-34.)

*Workers with special knowledge*

843: Allabria palace women (RIMA 3, A.0.102.6: iv 1.)

843: Namri palace women (RIMA 3, A.0.102.6: iv 19.)

744: Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, Bīt-Urzakki craftsmen (*ummânu*) (RINAP 1, no. 7: 8.)

*Mass deportations*

881: Zamua (URU.Uzê, URU.Berutu, URU.Lagalaga) – (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: 30)

881: Zamua (Mt. Nimuš) – (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: 38)

881: Zamua (URU.Larbusu, URU.Dūr-Lullumu, URU.Bunisu, URU.Bāra) – (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: 45)

880: Zamua (URU.Hudun) – (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1: 57)

834: Namri (URU.Sihišalah, URU.Bīt-Tamul, URU.Bīt-Šakki, URU.Bīt-Šēdi) – (RIMA 3. A.0.102.14: 118-119)

827: Parsua – (RIMA 3. A.0.102.14: 174)

820–819: Gizilbunda (URU.Uraš) – (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: iii 15)

820–819: KUR.Madā (KUR.Araziaš) – (RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: iii 41-43)

744–737: Parsua and Bīt-Hamban 60.500 people (this is a sum of the 3 campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III) (RINAP 1, no. 47: 33)

716: Population of Harhar – (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 97)

715: Andia 4200 people (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 107.)

715: from the cities of the province of Harhar 4800 people (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 112-113)

715: Bīt-Hamban (URU.Kimirra) 2530 people (Fuchs 1994, Ann. 116)

702: Namri (URU.Bīt-Kilamzah) „*ṣeher u rabi*" (RINAP 3/I, no. 3: 22)

702: Ellipi „*ṣeher u rabi*" (RINAP 3/I, no. 3: 30)

Before the formation of the Assyrian provinces in the Zagros these were one-way deportations, so the Assyrian administration didn't provide new settlers to the place of the deported local population. We have information only after the eastern campaign of Tiglath-pileser III about that some of the rebuilt cities of the Assyrian provinces were repopulated by people from other parts of the empire. We also have some scanty information about the measures of the deportations only from this time, but it's not easy to assess its ratio. However, according these data we can admit that Oded was about right that the Assyrians many times executed deportations in the Central Zagros, but in the most cases these deportations affected only certain members of the local elite, or those who had some special skills (e.g. the art of cavalry), and the few data about the mass deportations show relatively low numbers.

These low numbers could be illuminated if we presume that the deportations were confined to the populations of the urban centres, or a complementary explanation could be if we suppose that the deportations were executed only in those parts of the new provinces where Assyrian administration controlled the local level directly, and not through the *bēl āli*s, so only the provincial centres and their immediate surroundings were affected by the deportations.

A double mechanism of control was created: along with the establishment of Assyrian provinces they didn't eliminate the traditional power of the local elite. Of course, we can state this only if we are able to proof somehow that after the creation of the Assyrian provinces the local elite was retained in its position of power.

## 5. *Bēl āli*s retained in power

The special geographical and ecological circumstances of the territory did not allowed the Assyrian administration to exercise their will in these Zagric provinces in the accustomed way, controlling efficiently the most subsystems of the conquered societies. Although at the creation of these provinces the Assyrians made special efforts to set up social subsystems which are compatible with the empire, after all, the local chiefs preserved their power. They are called city-lords or *bēl āli* in the Assyrian sources, and they lived in the new Assyrian provinces, but ruled their traditional territories in a dynastic way.

The Assyrians didn't eliminate this traditional type of regime, but they were trying to utilise it, and they used different political tools to manipulate or influence the power relations of these small communities, and gave allowances never seen elsewhere to the Zagric elite in order to maintain the pro-Assyrian attitude of the *bēl āli*s.

Sargon II led his famous eighth campaign against Urartu in 714 BC. On his way to Urartu he turned south in Mannai, and collected the tributes (and may be the troops) of the Zagric elite in Parsua. In the list of the tribute bearers we find many local rulers, whose territories had been incorporated into the Assyrian provinces years before (TCL 3, 39-50.).

| *bēl āli* | territory | other attestations | province / year of subjugation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Uaksatar[1] | Nārtu | Khorsabad Ann. 98. | Harhar (716) |
| Dūrēsi | Nārtu | Khorsabad Ann. 98. | Harhar (716) |
| Anzî | Halhubara | Khorsabad Ann. 95. | Kišessim (716) |
| Paiukku | Kilambate | Khorsabad Ann. 96 | Kišessim (716) |
| Makirtu | Bīt-Sagbat | Tigl.-pil. Summ. 7: 36 / Sarg. Khorsabad Ann. 95. | Parsua (737), Kišessim (716) |
| Kitakki | Uriangi | Khorsabad Ann. 99. | Harhar (716) |
| Uzitar | Qantaju | Khorsabad Ann. 113. and palace relief | Harhar (715) |
| Paiukku | Bīt-Kapsi | Tigl.-pil. Ann. 11:6 | Parsua (744) |
| Humbê | Bīt-Zualzaš | Tigl.-pil. Ann. 14:6 | Parsua (737) |
| Burburazu | Bīt-Ištar | Tigl.-pil. Ann. 14:8–9 | Parsua (737) |
| Baga-parna | Zakrute | Tigl.-pil. Summ. 7:36 | Parsua (737) |
| Dārî | Šaparda | Nejafehabad-stele 47. | Harhar (716) |
| Usrā | Kanzabakani | Nejafehabad-stele 58. | (716) |
| Sarruti | Karzinū | Nejafehabad-stele 60 | (716) |
| Birtātu | Şiburaja | Tigl.-pil. Summ. 7:37 | Parsua (737) |
| Zardukka | Harzianu | Nejafehabad-stele 62 | (716) |
| Mašdakku | Aratište | Nejafehabad-stele 58. | (716) |
| Satarpānu | Barikanu | Nejafehabad-stele 61 | (716) |
| Karakku | Uriakka[2] | Khorsabad Ann. 99 | Harhar (716) |

[1] In an Assyrian letter (SAA 15 101) a certain Uaksatar is mentioned as he helps the Assyrian administration to capture an other Zagric city-lord.

[2] From the city of Uriakku many *bēl āli*s are known from the period of Sargon II's reign. Karakku was tax-payer during the campaigns of 715 and 714 BC. The son of Karakku was captured by Nabû-bēlu-ka"in, the governor of Harhar/Kār-Šarrukīn, and he appointed Rametî as *bēl āli* of the city. The inhabitants did not agree with this action, and in a damaged context they demanded the son of Irtukkanu – cf. SAA 5 85. This son of Irtukkanu appears in the letter SAA 15 95 as the *bēl āli* of Uriakku who brings taxes to Harhar/Kār-Šarrukīn when the magnets left the city (probably in 707 or in 706 BC). In the letter SAA 15 101 Uppite, the *bēl āli* of Uriakku appears with his four sons as fled from the Assyrian governor.

In a series of orthostat reliefs of the palace at Khorsabad a number of Zagric tribute bearers are depicted – their garments make it unequivocal. They bring horses as gift and a kind of mock-up of a city – this may refer to the meaning of the Akkadian phrase *bēl āli* which means city-lord, and this is the traditional denomination of the Zagric rulers (fig. 2). As far as I know, this is the only scene in the Assyrian relief productions where an outlander tribute bearer could march to the king with spear in his hand!

At the end of the year of 708 BC Mannu-kī-Ninua replaced Nabû-bēlu-ka"in as governor of Harhar / Kār-Šarrukīn. The newly appointed governor tried to get in touch with the local leaders of his province. The governor visited the fortresses of the *bēl āli*s, and concluded a treaty *(adê)* with them.

Letter of Mannu-kī-Ninua, governor of Harhar / Kār-Šarrukīn to Sargon II about an *adê* treaty with the members of the Zagric elite
(SAA 15 90 = ABL 129)

obv. 7–13 And when I went and concluded a treaty with the Kulumaneans, and pacified them, they too (= the Zabgagaeans) [mad]e peace with them. They appealed to me on account of Zabgaga, saying: "Return our ci[ty-lord] and [ins]tall him ove[r us]!" I [told them a]s the king, my lord, [had wr]itten to me: "The k[ing] has taken your ci[ty-lord......]"

obv. 25b–rev. 6 I dres]sed them in [purple] garmen[ts], put silver bracelets [on their wrists, and] sai[d to them a]s follows: ["Just as [you] previo[usly stood at the dis]posal of Nabû-bēlu-ka"[in, found out wha] tever there was to report and [tol]d it to him, [in like] manner [stan]d now at my disposal and send me whatever news [of th]e Medes you hear! I shall protect you just as Nabû-bēlu-ka"in protected you and shall say a good word about you before the king, my lord."

rev. 7–rev. 11 And they said to me as follows: "The king o[rd]ered us to stand at the disposal of the governor of [Kār-Šarrukīn], so we shall no[w] stay [at your disposal]. We [are the king's subjects]."
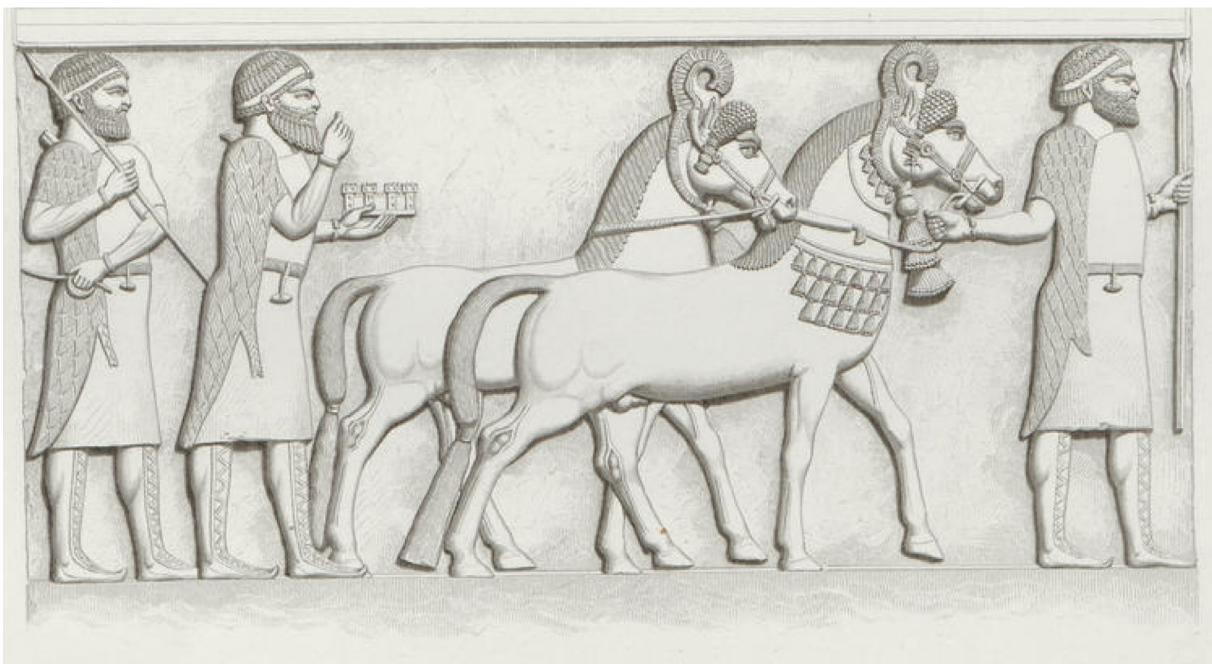
Within the frames of this treaty ceremony the governor gave Assyrian prestige goods to the local leaders, colourful garments and silver jewels,[27] and subjected them to an oath of loyalty. In exchange, he promised that he will protect them and will send good reports to the king about them. The fights between the members of the Zagric elite are well attested in our sources. Kibaba, the ruler of Harhar was chased by his own *bēl āli*s in 720 BC.[28] In 672 BC Esarhaddon was visited in Nineveh by a few *bēl āli*s from the Zagros because other Zagric rulers threatened them.[29] The Assyrian king enroached many times into the appointment of the *bēl āli*s, and changed the order of inheritance.[30] So an Assyrian guarantee for the keeping of their own power could have been very precious for the local rulers.

For the words of the governor, the local rulers responded that they are the subject of the Assyrian king, and the king ordered them to stand at the disposal of the governor. With this answer on the one hand they accepted the governor's conditions, but on the other hand, they made clear that their oath bind them directly to the king, and not to the governor. So this *adê* treaty meant a fairly moderate grade of vassal dependence.

A generation later eight *bēl āli*s went to Kalhu from their Zagric homes in order to take the oath to Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty (SAA 2 6). This treaty was ordered to deal with the succession of Esarhaddon's two sons, Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šum-ukin. Hundreds of pieces of eight treaty samples was discovered in 1955 at the excavation

in Kalhu. The participants in all the eight samples were *bēl āli*s from the Zagros,[31] one of them a certain Larkutla, a *bēl āli* from Māzamua. Māzamua/Zamua became an Assyrian province in the reign of Assurnasirpal II, in the first quarter of the ninth century BC, some two hundred years before this treaty. Mario Liverani published his famous article ("The Medes at Esarhaddon's Court) in 1995 in which he suggested: it's not accidental that all the samples of the treaty were signed by "foreign" warriors, most probably the crown prince Assurbanipal had a bodyguard unit from Zagric warriors led by this eight leader. In this case this treaty is not a succession treaty, but a treaty with the captains of the bodyguard unit – who otherwise were not the subjects of the Assyrian king. However, after the discovery of a new sample from Tell Tayinat in 2011,[32] in which the provincial governor of the Assyrian province Kunalia took the oath to a very similar treaty which were discovered in Kalhu. It became clear that the Zagric *bēl āli*s took the oath to a treaty together with the officials of the empire,[33] not as foreign bodyguards but as the members of the Assyrian administration.

Finally, I would like to mention briefly some archaeological evidence for the symbiotic and mutually advantageous relationship of the Zagric elite and the Assyrian administration. Godin Tepe is a tell in the Kangavar Valley in the valley-system of the Great Khorasan Road which was excavated between 1965 and 1973 by a Canadian expedition.[34] In level 2 (which chronologically belongs to Iron Age III) they found a manor of a local ruler. The changes in the main building in Godin Tepe highlight that the *bēl āli*s of the Zagric provinces could have gained increasing power and wealth during the Assyrian domination.[35]

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[27]   For the identification of the jewels, see POSTGATE 1994. For the ceremony, see RADNER 2011, pp. 44-49.

[28]   FUCHS 1994, Ann. 96.

[29]   RINAP 4, no. 1. (Nin. A prism) IV 40-41.

[30]   SAA 15 85 (The governor of Kār-Šarrukīn / Harhar, Nabû-bēlu-ka"in imprisoned the son of Karakku, *bēl āli* of Uriakka); SAA 15 90 (The citizens of Zagbaba ask the governor Kār-Šarrukīn / Harhar, Mannu-kī-Ninua to give back their *bēl āli*, but the governor replies as the king ordered: "The king took away your *bēl āli*."); SAA 15 95 (By the order of the king, presumably the same governor, Mannu-kī-Ninua seizes and sends to the king Asrukanu); SAA 15 101 (Probably it was the same governor, Mannu-kī-Ninua who seized Uppite, another *bēl āli* of Uriakka with his son and sent them to the Assyrian capital); SAA 5 203 (The governor of Zamua, Šarru-ēmuranni reports to Sargon II about the seizure and deportation of an unnamed *bēl āli*).

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[31]   Humbareš *bēl āli* of Nahšimarti, Bur-Dadi *bēl āli* of Karzitali, Hatarna *bēl āli* of Sikris, Larkutla *bēl āli* of Māzamua, Ramataja *bēl āli* of Urakazabanu, Tunî *bēl āli* of Ellipi, [xxx] *bēl āli* of Izaja, [xxx] *bēl āli* of [xxx].

[32]   LAUINGER 2012.

[33]   FALES 2012, pp. 145-148.

[34]   GOPNIK, ROTHMAN 2011.

[35]   BROWN 1986.

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