

From Gigimni to Gaugamēla (by way of Ḫalahḫu)

longue durée Studies in the historical Geography of the Transtigris

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Introduction

The past decade of archaeological fieldwork has elucidated many previously obscure aspects of the historical geography of northern Iraq.¹ Particularly fruitful has been what might here be termed the Transtigris, a region in Iraq east of the Tigris stretching from modern 'Arbīl/Hawlêr to Zāḫū/Zaxo, encompassing the riverine plains of Mawṣil and the foothills of the Zagros range up to the modern Turkish border. Not only does this region possess an incredible density of toponyms over multiple millennia, but is now archaeologically comparatively well researched.

Indeed, a breakthrough in the region's historical geography has been afforded by the discovery of a slew of cuneiform tablets at Bāsītka/Bassetki (near modern Dūhok) demonstrating the site's identity with the Early to Middle Bronze-age (EBA to MBA) city of Maridabān/Mardamā(n).² In turn, the discovery and excavation of Neo-Assyrian (NA) rock reliefs accompanying the canal at Fayḍa (also near Dūhok) confirm the adjacent tell of Gir-e Pān as being the EBA-MBA city of Talmuṣ, subsequently Late Bronze and Early Iron-age (LBA and EIA) Talmussa.³ As both cities are well attested during the Old Akkadian (OAKk) and Ur III periods, this has recently permitted Creamer and the present author to localise definitively the important EBA polity of Asimānum/Šimānum at modern Tall Billā (already known to be LBA-EIA Šīb/maniba/e).⁴

Using these three new fixpoints, a historical geography of the plains and foothills north of Ninūa (Naynawā) can now be systematically articulated for the period between the Old Akkadian and Classical periods.⁵ The remarkable continuities in toponymy and the extensive political, cultural, and linguistic detail available now render *longue durée* cultural-historical study of the region viable;⁶ this

¹ The present contribution normalises toponyms ancient and modern following the *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients (TAVO)*, albeit with some emendations; modern toponyms are within Iraq unless otherwise stated; toponyms within Turkey retain their modern Turkish spellings, and for sites within northern Iraq with divergent Arabic and Kurdish toponyms both are given, the latter following the Hawar alphabet and generally favouring a Kurmanji pronunciation. Abbreviations follow the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie (RIA)*.

² Pfälzner/Faist 2020.

³ Already suggested by Reade 1978, 160-161 under its former reading of 'Rimusa'. On the canals at Fayḍa, see now Morandi Bonacossi/Qasim 2022.

⁴ Edmonds/Creamer 2022 [ahead of press].

⁵ Or, more colourfully, between Narām-Suen and Alexander, the first and last individuals to rule Iraq as gods.

⁶ Zadok 2019 takes a similar approach within a more restrained timeframe for Elam and adjacent regions.

study uses such a methodology alongside philological analysis to examine two main unresolved issues in the historical geography of this region (respectively the identity of pre-Hellenistic Tall Gōmel in the cuneiform record, and the localisation of the land and settlement of Ḫalahḫu) and to shed further light on some additional points (such as the localisation of the Assyrian province of Ḫalzu, of Mount Lipapan, or of the Parthian-era regions of Chazēnē and Dolomēnē).

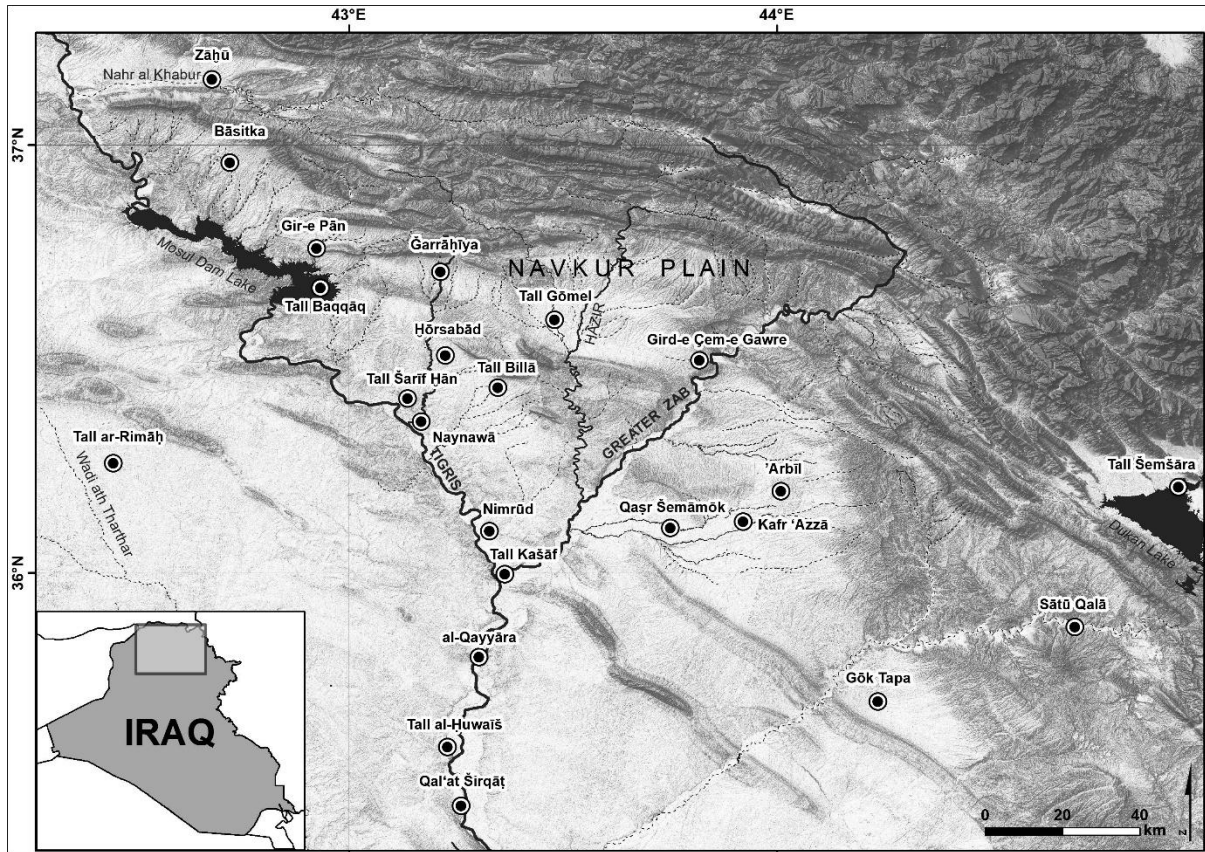


Fig. 1. Major Sites discussed in this Work and their modern Names. Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

Gaugamēla, the *gi/ugamlum*, and a Toponym Gigib/m(i)ni(um)

The site of the Battle of Gaugamēla (Γαυγάμηλα) has proven one of the most enduring debates in northern Iraq's Classical geography.⁷ Marciak and collaborators have now rendered a location at modern Tall Gōmel (Syriac Gōgamel) in the Nawkūr Plain all but certain; the collected evidence includes not only the excellent congruence of their names and a careful reconstruction of Alexander's route, but also remote sensing, and even line-of-sight analyses.⁸

Yet, this decisive ascription of Gaugamēla to Gōmel does present one challenge: Archaeological investigation has demonstrated a sizeable and continuous settlement there from the Late Chalcolithic to Parthian periods dominating the surrounding Nawkūr.⁹ It would be strange for this site not to appear in the cuneiform textual record, particularly as the name Gaugamēla itself has defied any

⁷ Recent contributions include Zouboulakis 2015; Zouboulakis 2016; Zouboulakis 2018 (for a location south of the Ġabal Ba'šīqa) and Marciak et al. 2020; Marciak et al. 2021a (for Tall Gōmel), see also recent discussion in Khudur/Ibrahim 2022.

⁸ Marciak et al. 2020; Marciak et al. 2021a; Marciak et al. 2021b; Pirowski et al. 2021; Marciak et al. 2022.

⁹ Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018.

Aramaic etymology,¹⁰ this implying a foundation prior to the Achaemenid period. The only suggestion hitherto has been that it corresponds to Neo-Assyrian (NA) Gammagara (corrected to Gamgamara), through which a canal dug by Sîn-aḥḥē-erība passed,¹¹ although this interpretation remains contested.¹² The present author should like here to rather to investigate an intriguing (if largely overlooked) footnote from Lewy, who suggests that the “term *gugamlum* and the name of Gaugamela have enough in common to confront us with the question ... whether that famous locality was distinguished by a *gugamlum* of renown”.¹³

The rare Akkadian term *gigamlu(m)* or *gugamlu(m)* is generally interpreted as referring to a paddock or enclosure used to hold, perhaps breed, and certainly buy and sell pack animals.¹⁴ During the Old Assyrian (OA) period, such an institution (attested in the forms *kigamlum*, *kikamlum*, and *kukamlum*)¹⁵ could perhaps be found outside of each important settlement on the Assyrian trade network.¹⁶ There is no clear etymology for this word; the curious *i/u* variation of the first vowel and the structure of could imply substrate origins. The resemblance of the word’s latter half to the Akkadian word *gamlu(m)*, a crooked stick for herding (or a throw-stick) associated with the pastoral god Amurru, is notable considering the *gi/ugamlu*’s use; it may well be that this represents a partial *interpretatio Akkadica* of the underlying word.¹⁷

The *gugamlu* (as this is written from the Middle Assyrian [MA] period onwards) would seem to have survived on as an institution, as an individual’s *gugamlu* is known from the archive of Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur.¹⁸ In the Neo-Assyrian period, there is mention of a sheep from the *gugamlu* in a ritual text,¹⁹ and, in turn, it features as a key element within a much-discussed royal ritual.²⁰

TA *gu-ga-am-li* 3-šu *i-lab-bi-ú* DUMU.MUNUS BIL *ta-za-ar-ru* ^{du}*g**qa-bu-tu* ^{giš}HAŠHUR^{meš}
i-ra-ku-su TA *gu-ga-am-li* [3-šu] *ú-šal-bu-ni i-mar-ru-qu*

“They circumambulate the *gugamlu* three times, the girl scatters roasted grain, she peels a *qabūtu*-dish of apples, they make her circumambulate the *gugamlu* three times”²¹

While the precise significance of this ring-around-the-*gugamlu* need not be explored here, it points to the existence of a *gugamlu* associated with the Assyrian monarchy (whether for economical or ritual reasons) even at this late date. Considering this ritual’s overtly Assyrian character and lack of Babylonian parallels, this may go back to a genuinely Old Assyrian rite evoking the king’s original duties as a mercantile *primus inter pares*.

Returning, then, to Lewy’s thesis, he further notes the congruency of the role of a *gugamlu* as a manner of paddock, especially for pack animals, with Strabo’s story of Darius having willed the

¹⁰ Perhaps the most famous attempt was made by Streck 1910, who proposed an Aramaic etymology **gab-gamela*, with *gab* being a proposed loanword from Akkadian *gabbu* ‘back’ and *gamela* from Aramaic *gmel/gamlā* ‘camel’, thus ‘camel’s back’, although this seems less than plausible.

¹¹ Fales/Del Fabbro 2014.

¹² Bagg 2017, 178.

¹³ Lewy 1960, 43, Fn. 3, followed by Astour 1987, 39, Fn. 268.

¹⁴ Derksen 2004, 259.

¹⁵ *ki-kam-lim* (TCL 14, 7, l. 12 = Thureau-Dangin 1928, Pl. 6); *ku-kam-lim* (TCL 4, 16, ls. 35-37 = Contenau 1920, Pl. 11); *ki-ga-a[m-lim]* (KTS 2, 16, l. 3 = Donbaz 1989, 37-38). The last of these seems to be a settlement, as Imdilum stays there for five months.

¹⁶ Dalley 1984, 157.

¹⁷ A Sumero-Akkadian portmanteau such as *ki/gi-gamlum* ‘place/reed (fence?) of the crooked staff’ seems somewhat far-fetched.

¹⁸ Assur 6096 co, l. 19 = Weidner 1935-1936, 40.

¹⁹ *ša gu-ḡa¹-[am-li (?)]* VAT 10398, l. 9 = Jakob 2018, 110-111.

²⁰ Soden 1939; Dhorme 1941; Scurlock 1992.

²¹ K 164, ls. 30-31, author’s own translation after Soden 1939 and Scurlock 1992.

village of Gaugamēla to a camel. Should *gugamlu* underlie this name, then this could represent a folk memory of the site's function, thus partially circumventing the issue of an Aramaic etymology.²²

That Gaugamēla might genuinely have been called Gi/ugamlu(m) or similar prior to the Classical era is supported by a few points. Firstly, as has been noted, the *gi/ugamlu* seems to have been an OA ubiquity, with examples outside at least Aššur (Qal'at aš-Širqāt) and Kaniš (Kültepe, Turkey), and likely also elsewhere on the network; at least one of these seems to have been a distinct and eponymous settlement, fitting Lewy's supposition.²³ Secondly, the wide and fertile plains of the Nawkūr in which Gōmel lies would be an excellent location for a particularly large pack animal breeding centre, and also a handy halt for caravans to and from the mountains to the north and east; indeed, it is very likely that the later Persian Royal Road (this stretch of which was likely already a NA highway) passed through this area by way of Gōmel.²⁴

The proposition of a *gi/ugamlu* underlying the toponym here is very interesting in light of a previously undiscussed toponym attested three times within the Ur III corpus, a settlement or polity called Gigibinium, Gigibni, or Gigimni (see Fig. 2). That these three writings represent the same toponym can be demonstrated by the otherwise well attested b/m variance found within Hurrian-speaking areas,²⁵ and their loose geographical congruence.

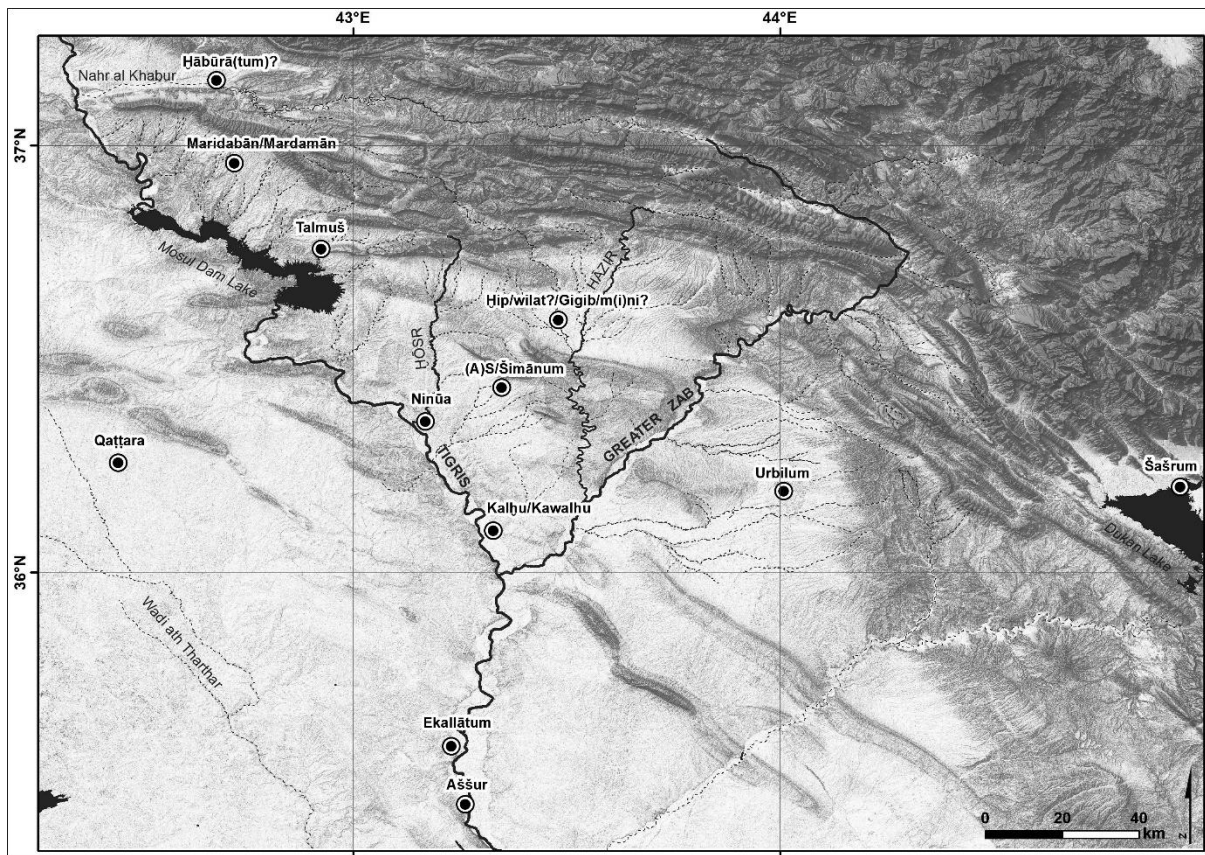


Fig. 2. The Transtigris in the Early and Middle Bronze ages. Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

²² Albeit an Aramaic folk etymology of camel (*gmel/gamlā*) for the second part of this name is cogent.

²³ The attestation KTS 2, 16, l. 3 = Donbaz 1989, 37-38 seems to refer to a settlement, as Imdilum stays there for five months. Note, in turn, the one or more settlements called Kigamlum or Kigamnum are known from the OA/OB corpus at Tall ar-Rimāh, as further discussed.

²⁴ The logistical benefits of which would have been a reason why Darius chose this area to array his forces; this also explains the alacrity of Alexander's subsequent march to Arbēla.

²⁵ Consider Maridabān/Mardamān or Šib/mānum/Šib/manibe, further discussed in Edmonds/Creamer 2022.

The first of attestation is within a list of emissaries from the borders of the Ur III state in which are listed the man of Mardamān, the man of Ḫābūrā, the man of Gigibnium (lú Gi-gi-bi-ni-um^{ki}), and the man of Duḫduḫni respectively.²⁶ This geographical context is interesting, with Mardamān and Ḫābūrā (Zāhū/Zaxo Plain) in the western Transtigris, and Duḫduḫni much further east in western Loristān.²⁷

The second attestation refers to a man of Gigibni (lú Gi-gi-ib-ni^{ki}), the reading of whose name is uncertain, being perhaps Še-á/id-pá-tal or alternately Še-á/id-ba-ri.²⁸ He appears at the end of a list of dignitaries from Šimaški and Anšan (both in modern Iran), Simurru (the Šahr-e Zōr), and Šašrum (modern Šemšāra) in that respective order.²⁹ A rough progression from east to west seems evident, although this is again hardly conclusive in placing Gigibni.

The final attestation is more telling; the apparent proximity of Šimānum to this polity is evidenced by the appearance of Gigimni together with the former under the charge of the same sukkal and maškim in a banquet otherwise attended only by Ur III dignitaries; unfortunately, the name Gigimni's representative is not preserved.³⁰ This would seem to imply a geographical or political propinquity of these two polities, with both Pušam and his unnamed Gigimnian colleague invited to the same banquet.

Hence, one might infer a Hurrian/Substrate-speaking settlement or polity Gigib/m(i)ni(um) within reasonable distance of Ḫābūrā, Mardamān, Šimānum, and Šašrum, for which Gōmel would be extremely attractive. That this toponym is a Sumerian reading of *gi/ugamlu(m)* is supported by the remarkable assonance, especially when it is recalled that l and n are interchangeable in Hurrianising toponymy.³¹ In turn, a possible correlate appears in an Old Akkadian text from Kiš describing large tracts of (conquered?) land, within which the toponyms *Gi-gi-ni* and *Si-ba-ni* occur.³² Should the latter refer to Šimānum, then the former could also be a forerunner of Gigib/m(i)ni(um).

Beyond the toponym Kikamlum from the OA corpus (whereat Imdīlum sojourned),³³ one or more settlements called Kigamnum and/or Kigamlum³⁴ attested from three texts found at Tall ar-Rimāḥ (OA/OB Qaṭṭara) must be considered. The first reference is in a text describing deliveries of wine to Qaṭṭara's royal wine cellar:³⁵

6. 10 'DUG' GEŠTIN MU.TÚM LÚ *Ḫa-bu-ra-ta-a-wi*

7. *i-na* ^{uru}*Ki-ga-am-nim*^{ki}

8. 10 DUG GEŠTIN MU.TÚM *iš-tu*¹ *Ta-al-mu-úš*^{ki}

9. 20 DUG GEŠTIN MU.TÚM *iš-tu* *E-ra-aḫ-a-du?-x*

10. 4 ^{kuš}*zi-qú ša* GEŠTIN *iš-tu* *Gu?*¹ *ma?*¹ *ra-*¹ *ša?*^{ki}

²⁶ OLP 8, 6, obv. l. 12 = Sauren 1977, 9-11, see also Steinkeller 1980, 3.

²⁷ On the location of this toponym, see Goetze 1953; Notizia 2010; Zadok 2019, 90-93.

²⁸ Zadok 1993, 225.

²⁹ Pupil 30 = Genouillac 1924, Pl. 7, see Owen 1997, 389.

³⁰ l(diš) udu niga / [...] / [lú] Gi-gi-im-¹ni¹[^{ki}] / l(diš) udu niga Pu-ša-am lú Ši-¹ma¹-nu-um<^{ki}> / ġiri₃ Ur-Šar-ru-gin₇ sukkal / Īr-ġu₁₀ maškim (OIP 121, 458, 7-12 = (Hilgert 2003: 310). A reading Gi-gi-im-¹ni¹[^{ki}] can be by confirmed from the traces in the cdl photograph (P124188).

³¹ Note the potential of reading *ni* as *li*, and the frequent ambiguities between *n* and *l* in Semitic renderings of Hurrian toponyms, e.g. N/Lullū (later Lulluba/e), Nuḫašše and later Lu'aš/Luḫutu, or Mardamān and Ugaritic *mrđml*, see also Speiser 1940-1941, 27.

³² MAD 5, 12, ls. 7-15 = Gelb 1970, 17-18.

³³ See Fn. 23.

³⁴ Another example of the aforementioned Hurrianising l/n variance.

³⁵ OBTR 251, ls. 6-11 = Dalley et al. 1976, 182-183, Pl. 78.

11. 50 DUG ʾGEŠTIN¹ ʾša² GEŠTIN ša Ši-ir-ʾwu-un^{ki}
12. [x] ʾDUG¹ GEŠTIN ^{uru}ša-ar-ba-at x [x x] x x x x
- 6-7. 10 jars of wine: delivery of the men of Ḫābūrātum at Kigamnum
8. 10 jars of wine: from Talmuš
9. 20 jars of wine: from Erah²-adu²-x
10. 4 skeins of wine: from Gumaraša (?)
11. 50 jars of wine: of Širwun-wine
12. x jars of wine of? Šarbat ...

The broad geographical context is quite evidently the Transtigris. To be noted are Talmuš and Gumaraša,³⁶ and the connection between Ḫābūrātum and Kigamnum.³⁷ Šarbat is by means of contrast near the Singār. Unfortunately, it remains unclear as to whether the delivery is at Kigamnum by men of Ḫābūrātum or from men of Ḫābūrātum who are resident there to Qaṭṭara.

The next attestation is a remark that Kigamnum was the next town on the itinerary of a royal visit after a settlement called Buninewa.³⁸ The actual distance is dependent upon how one understands the remark U₄-um LUGAL iš-tu Bu-ni-ne-wa^{ki} a-na ʾKi¹-ga-am-nim^{ki} il-li-ku; certainly, none of the dates are preserved for the ensuing documents, so it cannot be said when the court actually arrived at Kigamnum. Moreover, the starting point, Buninewa is also less than certain. Should it be equated with the toponym Binanû as known from OA/OB itineraries,³⁹ then it must be a day's march north-westwards of Ekallātum (Tall al-Ḫuwaš, some 16 km north of Qal'at Širqāt),⁴⁰ and thus somewhere in the wide corridor running south-east to north-west between the Ġibāl al-Qayyāra/Yāwan and Makhūl respectively. It seems difficult to reconcile such a southerly location with a wine delivery from men from Ḫābūrātum at Kigamnum, should Kigamnum be only a day's march away from Buninewa (were it to correspond to Binanû).

The final attestation, the Kigamlum at which Ammī-šura, Iltani's brother-in-law living in Aššur, is away on business according another letter is also unenlightening;⁴¹ by the logic of the other attestations, it would be three day's march from Aššur (i.e. two from Ekallātum, and one from Binanû/Buninewa). It remains unclear whether it would be worth Lamassani writing back to her sister so swiftly considering the time which it would take for this response to return to Qaṭṭara, were Ammī-šura only some three days away.

Without more information, Rimāh's Kigaml/num cannot be localised; it is entirely possible that Buninewa must be separated from Binanû and thus that Buninewa and Kigamnum can be placed further north, even east of the Tigris, and thus that Kigaml/num might correspond to a Gigib/m(i)ni(um) at Gōmel (and perhaps the OA Kikamlum of KTS 2, 16), but this remains unproven. Considering the widespread institution of the *gi/ugamlu(m)* in this period, it is also entirely possible

³⁶ Somewhere in the Zagros foothills (note its Hurrian name), perhaps in the 'Atrūš or further afield in the Bradūst/Bradost. A mountainous location for Gumaraša is implied by the delivery of skeins instead of jars, this pointing to its difficult terrain.

³⁷ It should be noted that the Širwun-wine need not have actually been delivered from Širwun, this being rather its provenance.

³⁸ OBTR 259, ls. 11-13 = Dalley, Walker et al. 1976, 187, Pl. 80.

³⁹ Hallo 1964, 65.

⁴⁰ Ziegler/Otto 2022.

⁴¹ OBTR 121, ls. 14-20 = Dalley, Walker et al. 1976, 96-97, Pl. 32.

that multiple homophonous settlements existed within in the region, and the limited coverage of the textual corpus has simply failed to preserve a Kigaml/num in the Nawkūr.

Certainly, this solution of a continuity from a possible OAkk Gigini to Ur III Gigib/m(i)ni(um), perhaps via an OA/OB Kik/gaml/num, to Classical Gaugamēla, Syriac Gōgamel, and modern Gōmel is neat, sidestepping the hoary issue of a supposed Aramaic etymology, and remaining entirely independent of the debate over NA*Gamgamara. Yet, a very significant drawback is virtual lack of attestation during the second and early first millennia despite Tall Gōmel’s central importance within the Nawkūr during these periods. It is with these issues in mind that the present author should like now to consider a second toponym.

The Problem of Ḫalahḫu

The location of the MA/NA settlement and province of Ḫalahḫu has remained a bugbear of historical geographers for some time, particularly as Ḫalahḫu is generally presumed to have lost its status as a province in the Neo-Assyrian period, but to have remained a traditional designation for a region of the Assyrian heartland.⁴² Forrer first located the city of Ḫalahḫu close to Ninūa itself at Tall al-‘Abbāsīya (see Fig. 4), arguing on the strength of the placement of Ninūa’s Ḫalahḫu Gate and that it should be closer to Ninūa than Dūr-Šarru-ukīn (modern Ḫōrsabād).⁴³ Since then, most identifications have favoured a placement in the vicinity of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn itself, particularly in light of a variant of the Ḫalahḫu Gate name as known from Sultantepe, and some administrative documents from the period of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn’s construction which allude to the land of Ḫalahḫu; Radner has gone so far as to maintain that the Assyrian province of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn occupied the land previously belonging to Ḫalahḫu (albeit that this land had previously been annexed to Ninūa).⁴⁴ Some dissent has come from a localisation of the toponym in the Nawkūr Plain by Parpola and Porter,⁴⁵ but Reade has since dismissed this as too distant from Ninūa.⁴⁶ In the following, the present author will re-examine all of the pertinent evidence, submit further information, and provide a novel localisation in harmony with all known sources and present archaeological knowledge.

Perhaps the first point to be made is that Ḫalahḫu designates both a province and a city, meaning that the historical geographer is tasked both with identifying a territory and a specific site as its location. Ḫalahḫu is far better attested as a land than as a settlement, further confounding this work.

<i>Ḫa-la-ḫa</i> (NA)	^{kur} <i>Ḫa-la-ḫi</i> (MA, NA)	^{kur uru} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫi</i> (MA)	^{uru} <i>Ḫa-lah-ḫi</i> (NA)
<i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫi</i> (MA)	^{kur} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫi</i> (MA)		^{uru} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫi</i> (MA)
<i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫu</i> (MA)	^{kur} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫi</i> (MA, NA)		^{uru} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫu</i> (MA)
	^{kur} <i>Ḫa-lāḫ-ḫu</i> (MA)		

Table 1. Writings of the toponym Ḫalahḫu in the Middle and Neo Assyrian periods (compiled from Cancik-Kirschbaum/Hess 2022, 59-60 and Bagg 2017, 194-195)

⁴² See summaries for NA in Bagg 2017, 194-195, and MA in Cancik-Kirschbaum/Hess 2022, 59-60.

⁴³ Forrer 1920, 112.

⁴⁴ Radner 2006, 54; Radner 2011, 326: “there is no evidence that Halahhu ever held this status [i.e. of a province] in the 1st millennium BC and before its integration into the newly created province of Dur-Šarruken, Halahhu must have been belonged to Nineveh, forming the eastern half of that province.”

⁴⁵ Parpola/Porter 2001, 28.

⁴⁶ Reade 2016, 81-82.

A first, hitherto overlooked point is the etymology of this toponym, which evidently hails from the Hurrian root *halv-/hav-* ‘to enclose’;⁴⁷ this passes into Akkadian as *halwu* or *hawu*, describing a field surrounded by a wall.⁴⁸ To this has been attached the common Hurrian suffix *-ohe*; such suffixing corresponds nicely, in turn, to a term used to describe enclosed plots of land at Nuzi (modern Yorgān Tapa), namely *hawalḫu* or *halahwu*, and would seem to possess a cognate in the Assyrian word *hamiluhḫu*.⁴⁹ The latter designates a manner of construction or terrace mentioned both as playing a function within the Assyrian coronation ritual⁵⁰ and as having been renovated by Tukultī-apil-Ešarra I.⁵¹

A phonological transformation from *Ḥawalḫu* to *Ḥalahḫu* is cogent in light of the parallel example of OA/OB *Kamilḫu/Kawalḫu/Kawelḫu/Kawilḫu/Kalḫu*,⁵² MA/NA *Kalḫu/Kalah* (modern Nimrūd) is considered. The likeness of *Kamilḫu* to *hamiluhḫu*, of *Kawalḫu* to *hawalḫu*, and of *Kalah* to *Ḥalahḫu* hardly seems coincidental, and it can be inferred that the Hurrian root *halv-/hav-* is, in fact, common to both, and that a phonetic variation or alteration is evident in the case of *Kalḫu*; that initial Akkadian *k* and *h* can vary in the reproduction of Hurrian (or more generally Zagrine) toponyms is attested by various other examples, perhaps most demonstrably the shift from Ur III *Kar(a)ḫar* to NA *Ḥarḫar*.⁵³ From this philological evidence, an additional series of toponyms might now be investigated; this further underlines the philological points just made.

A Note on Kalzu/Kilizu, Ḥalzu, Chazēnē, and Ḥazza

By the same token (and as a further demonstration of this principle), it can be inferred that MA/NA *Kalzu/Kilizu* (modern Qaṣr Šemāmōk) has its origins in the word *halzu* ‘fortress, province’, and, indeed, that the only slimly attested NA province of *Ḥalzu*, long a nuisance in reconstructing the Assyrian heartland, is, in fact, another (pseudo-antiquising?) name for *Kalzu* (see Fig. 3).⁵⁴ Until now, *Ḥalzu* was located immediately south east of Ninūa, somewhat north of *Kalḫu*.⁵⁵ This was based not

⁴⁷ See *inter alia* Wilhelm 1987, 332, compare Laroche 1980, 90; 99.

⁴⁸ CAD H, 57. This is qualified as a stone wall without explanation. More generally, one might think of the toponym *Ḥalmān* or *Ḥalbān*, see Fincke 1993, 83-85.

⁴⁹ These examples demonstrate the strange metatheses of labials which can occur in Hurrian words, see Speiser 1940-1941, 68.

⁵⁰ See Müller 1937, 14-15 and now KAL 3, 1 = Schaudig 2020, 15-26.

⁵¹ É *a-bu-sa-te šá* É.GAL EN-ti-ia šá ri-¹iš¹ ḥa-mi-luḫ-ḫi ù tam-li-a qàl-la šá e-na-ḫu-ma iš-tu uš-še-šu a-di gaba-dib-bi-šu e-pu-¹uš¹ “I rebuilt from top to bottom the storehouses of my lordly palace which are at the head of the *hamiluhḫu* and the small terrace (and) which had become dilapidated.” (A.0.89.7 v 1-3 = Grayson 1991, 104-105). The inscription from whence this passage hails, the so-called ‘Broken Obelisk’ is now conclusively to be ascribed to Tukultī-apil-Ešarra I, and not his son Aššur-bēl-kala (Shibata 2022).

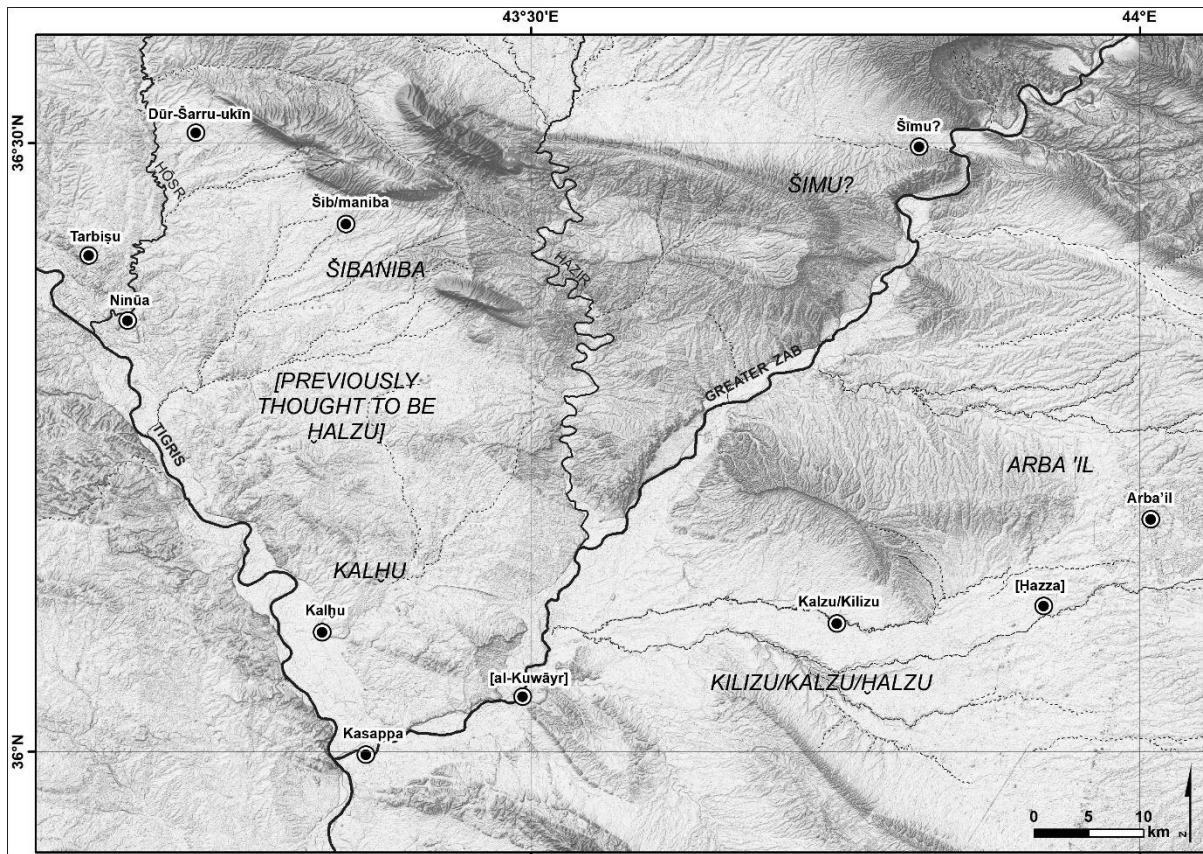
⁵² Ziegler/Langlois 2017, 185-186; for the identity of these names, see also discussion by Marti 2002.

⁵³ Speiser 1940-1941, 44-45; note also the OA examples listed by Kouwenberg 2017, 61; 64.

⁵⁴ There is a single, hitherto unnoticed source which would ostensibly connect *Ḥalzu* to the otherwise unlocalisable Assyrian home province of Šibḫiniš, namely an eponym date in a sale document referencing Iqīsu, governor of KUR *ḥal-zi* (A 920 = Donbaz/Parpola 2001, 74); within the eponym lists, this same gentleman is listed as governor of Šibḫiniš. While this would seem to exclude an identification with *Kalzu/Kilizu*, an equation of *Ḥalzu* with Šibḫiniš actually causes far more problems than it solves, including the reconciliation of this with the gate orientations (potentially provoking the issue of adjacent toponyms of *Ḥalzu* and *Kalzu/Kilizu*), the general lack of attestation for Šibḫiniš, and this toponym’s apparently Hurrian appearance, necessitating placement in a suitable area. In turn, the following, final line of the tablet is broken, and it is not inconceivable that KUR *ḥal-zi*-[(^{na4})AD.BAR] for the province of *Ḥalzi-atbāri* (first attested some 16 years later) is meant. If *Ḥalzu* is, in fact, to be read, then it is noteworthy that the document is dated to the 20th Šabātu (IX), near the end of the year. Coming as Iqīsu’s eponymate (755) does at the end of the very chaotic reign of Aššur-dān III in the year that this king died, he may well have been promoted from Šibḫiniš to the province of *Kalzu/Kilizu* by the new king by the time the tablet was composed (the governor of *Kalzu/Kilizu* is unknown for the reign of Aššur-nārārī V).

⁵⁵ Postgate 1972b; Reade 2016, 68-70.

only upon the orientation of Ninūa south-eastern Ḫalzu Gate, but also mention in a letter of another Ḫalzu Gate at Kalḫu, from which it has been assumed that Ḫalzu must have lain between these two cities, although the letter does not provide any information as to the orientation of the gate at Nimrūd.⁵⁶ This placement is hence puzzling considering that one would logically take Ninūa's Aššur Gate to reach such a location; in turn, the neighbouring Ḫalzu Gate is oriented rather in the direction of Kalzu/Kilizu. Thus, the localisation of Ḫalzu between Ninūa and Kalḫu can be discounted. Assuming that each gate at Ninūa named after a toponym possessed a corresponding road thereto in a radial pattern, then it might be assumed that travellers from the Aššur Gate would pass Kalḫu, crossing the Greater Zāb at the ford at Kasappa (modern Tall Kašāf), while the Ḫalzu/Kalzu/Kilizu-bound traveller would bypass Kalḫu and take the ferry at modern al-Kuwāyr.⁵⁷ Yet another piece of evidence is that although Kalzu/Kilizu is well attested as a province, it is never written with the determinative KUR, only URU;⁵⁸ by means of contrast, the majority of attestations for Ḫalzu are with KUR, with only two known examples displaying a determinative URU, this suggesting that Ḫalzu might have been the (etymologised, and hence pseudo-antique) name for the province, for which the city Kalzu/Kilizu could stand as a synecdoche. Another point is that the Kalzu/Kilizu variance would seem to imply that this name was foreign, which would fit the premise of a Hurrianisation of Ḫalzu or indeed Akkadian *ḫalšu*.⁵⁹ In turn, the esoteric writing BĀD-*a-ta-ni* for Kalzu/Kilizu⁶⁰ may well play upon the city's etymology considering that Sumerian BĀD has the Akkadian reading *dūru* 'wall, fortress', essentially a synonym for *ḫalzu* 'fortress'.⁶¹ The defensive function of this region implied by its name is aptly demonstrated by a clash between Enlil-nārārī of Assyria and Kurigalzu II of Babylonia which occurred at Kalzu/Kilizu.⁶²



⁵⁶ ND 420 = Postgate 1973, 191-192.

⁵⁷ See the discussion of the crossing in Reade 2016, 70.

⁵⁸ Bagg 2017, 284-285.

⁵⁹ Consider the discussion of the relationship of *ḫalšu* to *ḫalzu* in Postgate 1995, 1-2.

⁶⁰ Menzel 1981, 129.

⁶¹ It is worth noting that *a-ta-ni* could stand for Hurrian *adani* 'footstool', see Wegner 2000, 39.

⁶² Assyrian Chronicle Fragment 1 = Grayson 1975, 184-185; Glassner 2004, 184-185.

Fig 3. The Southern Ninevite Plain and the Localisation of Ḥalzu. Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

Turning to later sources, this toponym certainly aligns with later Chazēnē, a province surrounding Ninūa according to Strabo (see Fig. 8).⁶³ In turn, it might be suggested that this toponym inspired that of the later episcopal seat of Ḥazza.⁶⁴ Although this latter episcopate is connected to the village of Ḥazza (Kafr ‘Azzā), some 12 km southwest of ‘Arbīl, this must be a secondary development; Ḥazza’s settlement does not archaeologically predate the Sassanian period.⁶⁵ This would support the contention in some sources that it had been founded by an Ardašīr as Būd-Ardašīr (or Nōdšīragān),⁶⁶ a toponym which appears both to have pertained to a region and perhaps its capital.⁶⁷ Considering that the toponym Ḥazza lacks any cogent Syriac or Persian etymology,⁶⁸ and thus must be assumed to be from an earlier language and to be of greater antiquity, the best explanation would be that the name Ḥazza, previously applied to the broader area, came to be used as a toponym for the provincial centre itself.⁶⁹ Hence, a long toponymic continuity (akin to that of nearby ‘Arbīl) can be reconstructed for the region of Ḥalzu.

There are various other potential examples of such a phonetic variation which might be explored, such as another Kalzu in Šubria,⁷⁰ a Kalzit or Kilizi known from OA/OB itineraries⁷¹ which may well correspond to a Kalše near Apku (Tall ‘Abū Māryā),⁷² the Akkadian word *kalzu* (describing an area or structure near a palace or within a city),⁷³ or the otherwise obscure term *kulišu* ‘province’ used in the inscription of Iddin-Sîn from Haladinī (Qaračātān),⁷⁴ the similarity between the Barḥalzi of Assyria proper and the Birḥiluza of ‘Urūmīya,⁷⁵ and finally the closeness of the name of the prominent polity of Gilzānu (Ḥasanlū, Iran),⁷⁶ also on the ‘Urūmīya, to that of the otherwise unknown settlement of Gilsānu probably somewhere in Assyria’s heartland.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, much like the new history of Kalzu/Kilizu/Ḥalzu presented here, these exceed the scope of the present article and warrant a discrete publication. Understanding Kalḥu and Ḥalahḥu as possessing the same bucolic etymology⁷⁸ is nonetheless of considerable interest, as it points to yet more early Hurrian influence upon toponymy of the Assyrian triangle. That Ḥalahḥu is the younger of the toponyms may imply that the *k*-names

⁶³ Strabo (16.1.1) mentions that the plains surrounding Ninos (i.e. Ninūa) were “Dolomēnē, Kalachēnē, Chazēnē, and Adiabēnē” (καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Νίνον πεδία, Δολομηνή τε καὶ Καλαχηνή καὶ Χαζηνή καὶ Ἀδιαβηνή). With Kalachēnē corresponding to Kalḥu (see Marciak 2017, 257 with literature) and Adiabēnē more or less on the plain of ‘Arbīl, then his list would seem to run roughly northwest to southeast, with Chazēnē between Kalachēnē and Adiabēnē, a region which would correspond to the earlier Assyrian region of Ḥalzu. This equation with Chazēnē is rendered philologically plausible by the assimilation of *l* to *z* already attested for Barḥalzi’s byform Barḥazza/i (Bagg 2017, 94-95) and the disappearance or assimilation of *l* in noted already for the Hurrian root *halv-*, *hav-*. Were this to hold, then it might further be suggested that the final unlocalised land of Dolomēnē (perhaps with its capital at a toponym Dolba) in the Ninevite plains must be north or northwest of the metropolis considering that it is the only remaining plains area unoccupied by a toponym. In this light, it might be suggested that Dolomēnē corresponds to earlier Talmussa; this will be further examined below (Fn. 139).

⁶⁴ See, most recently, Marciak 2017, 413.

⁶⁵ See Nováček et al. 2016, 79-101.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Nöldeke 1879, 19-20.

⁶⁷ Morony 1982, 10-12.

⁶⁸ Syriac Ḥezzā ‘abyss. fundament’ seems unlikely.

⁶⁹ Consider in this respect that Ibn Ḥawqal refers to the broader area as the ‘Arḍ Ḥazza (Morony 1982, 12).

⁷⁰ RINAP 4 33 iv. 6’ = Leichty 2011, 85.

⁷¹ Hallo 1964, 65.

⁷² Bagg 2017, 283.

⁷³ CAD K, 108, see also CTN III 102 = Dalley/Postgate 1984, 165-166.

⁷⁴ Shaffer et al. 2003, 13-14; Ahmed 2012, 259.

⁷⁵ Bagg 2020, 108.

⁷⁶ Bagg 2020, 227-228.

⁷⁷ Bagg 2017, 182.

⁷⁸ i.e. ‘enclosed field’, *vide* nearby Tarbišu (Šarīf Ḥān) < *tarbašu* ‘cattle pen, shelter’.

represent an earlier toponymic stratum; ̤alah̤hu's history and antecedents might now be further considered.

Localising ̤alah̤hu and its Antecedents

In light of the linguistic evolutions here posited, possible toponymic forerunners to ̤alah̤hu might be supposed. The first of these is the Ur III toponym ̤ibilāt, the onomastic evidence for which does seem Hurrian. However, its attestations are invariably accompanied with eastern polities such as ̤arši or Kimaš, and one might suspect that this is yet another 'enclosed-field'-settlement.⁷⁹ By means of contrast, a well-attested OA/OB polity called ̤iwilāt does fit the bill, as this polity is associated with Talmuš, and must rest east of the Tigris.⁸⁰ In turn, this very likely corresponds to the city of ̤iplāt in the land of Šubartum mentioned in another source.⁸¹ Furthermore, a woman named ̤i-wa-la-at-̤i (almost a proto-form for ̤alah̤hu) is attested at Šāgīr Bāzār, Syria.⁸²

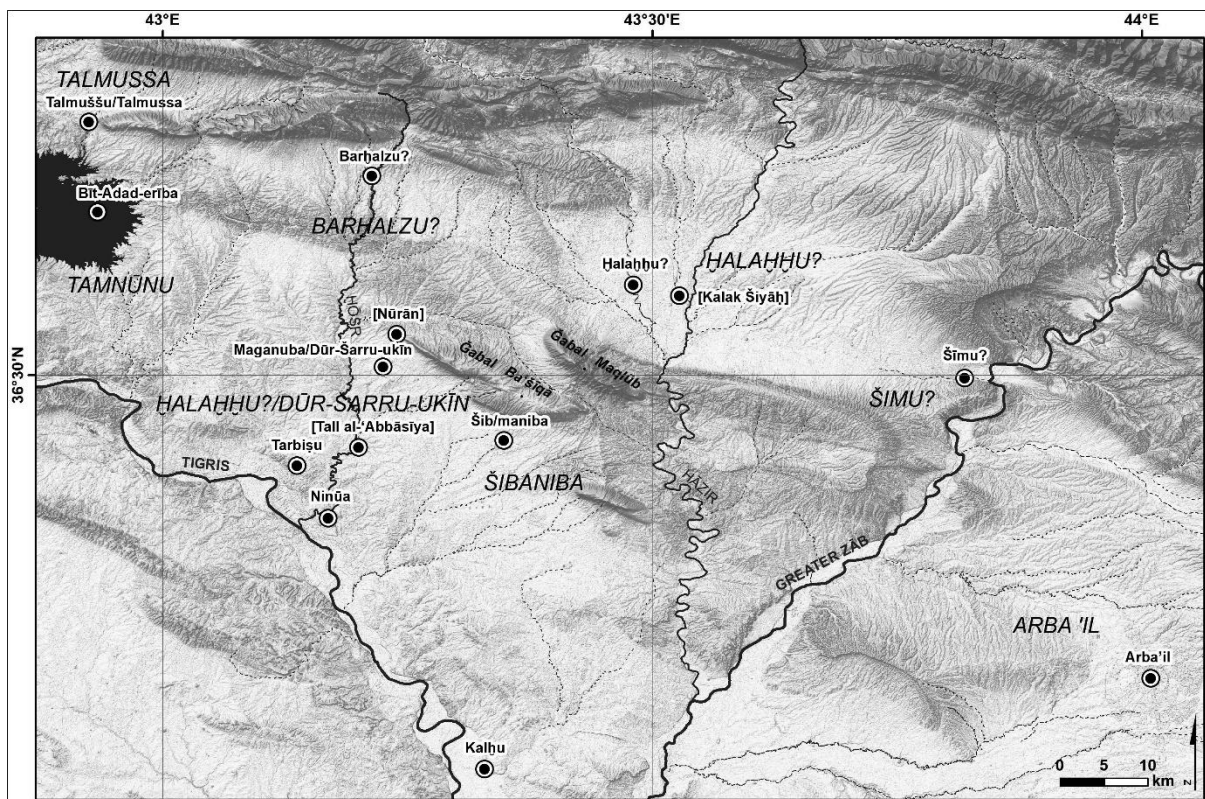


Fig. 4. The northern Ninevite Plain and the Localisation of ̤alah̤hu. Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

Beyond this latter potential toponymic forerunner, ̤alah̤hu first appears within a fragmentary campaign of Ārik-dēn-ili. The geographical context is unclear, although an earlier campaign probably

⁷⁹ Consider not only later ̤almān or ̤albān, with which it may well correspond, but also other examples of identical Hurrian toponyms such as a western Nawar/Nagar (Tall Brāk, Syria) and an eastern Nawar (later Namri, near modern Hānīqīn, Iran), both meaning 'meadow', alongside Nabur, probably a village in Barhalzi (Bagg 2017, 441), and Nabulu (Girnavaz, Turkey) in the Upper Hābūr (ibid.), which are also both most likely derived from this word.

⁸⁰ Ziegler/Langlois 2017, 146.

⁸¹ Ziegler/Langlois 2017, 141; note that Mardamān is also qualified as lying within Šubartum in one text, VAS 29, 6, see van Koppen 2004, 24.

⁸² Gadd 1940, 38.

featuring Tarbišu outside of Ninūa implies that the Ninūa region may still have been contested in this king's reign, and thus that Ḫalahḫu may well not have been all too distant.

Administrative information is more enlightening; within the MA *ginā'u* lists, Ḫalahḫu always appears in the third position in a sequence running Arba'il, Kalzu/Kilizu, Ḫalahḫu, Talmuššu, Idu (Sātū Qalā), and Katmuḫi (İdil Plain, Turkey), after which comes a cluster of Superchaburine provinces.⁸³ This forms a row of provinces running from southeast to northwest, followed by an eastern and western outrider respectively, placing Ḫalahḫu between Kalzu/Kilizu and Talmuššu, permitting either the Naynawā or Nawkūr Plains. These documents also point to the incredible agricultural yield of the region, as reconstructed by Gauthier in his dissertation; indeed, an exceptional sum of four officials was tasked with collecting its harvest.⁸⁴ This implies that Ḫalahḫu must be sought in an extremely agriculturally fertile region of the Assyrian heartland;⁸⁵ it might well be no coincidence, thus, that Ḫalahḫu's governor during the late 12th century, Eru-apla-iddina, is described as the *sukkalu rabū* on his stele.⁸⁶

It is also clear that Ḫalahḫu was serviced by boatmen.⁸⁷ This would imply that its administrative centre lay close to a river, of which the four possibilities are the modern Tigris, Ḫōsr, Ḫāzir, or Greater Zāb. All are navigable by kalak, albeit the Ḫōsr and Ḫāzir only seasonally. The Tigris can be discarded, as Ḫalahḫu cannot have been so far south or west; the Greater Zāb remains a weak possibility as this could scarcely align with the NA indications. Indeed, the only large, viable tell with a good Assyrian presence on the left bank of the upper course of the river is at the crossing at Šamā (Kurdish Çeme), at a site called Gird-e Çem-e Gawre, perhaps corresponding rather to the MA/NA province of Šīmu.⁸⁸ Boat transport on the Ḫōsr from at least modern Ḫōrsabād seems plausible, while Kalak Šiyāḥ (should the modern name originate in *Kalakči 'kalak-boatsman') might hint at viable riverine transport Ḫāzir so far north in the Nawkūr.

Turning to the NA sources, it must be noted that the argument that Ḫalahḫu was administratively defunct by this era, as propounded by Radner, is tacitly based upon the lack of a land of Ḫalahḫu within the Neo-Assyrian eponym lists, and thus has its weaknesses. Firstly, the provinces of eponyms are only sporadically attested prior to the reign of Salmānu-ašarēd III, and there is scarce little coverage within administrative documents for the accompanying period, leaving the provincial organisation of the era obscure. Such a thesis fails to account for various plausible scenarios such as that this vital breadbasket was directly under the control of a high official (and hence 'invisible' within the eponym lists), or that it possessed an additional name under which guise it appears in the later eponym lists,⁸⁹ one good candidate being the still elusive province of Kurba'il, very likely north of the Ġabal Ba'šīqa.⁹⁰

⁸³ See the charts in Rosa 2010, 341, Tab. 1 and Postgate 2013, 94, Tab. 4.1.

⁸⁴ Gauthier 2016, 113-114.

⁸⁵ Although a placement in the north-western portion of the Naynawā Plain remains popular on account of the NA sources, it must be recalled that Ninūa itself was also a province in the *ginā'u* lists.

⁸⁶ Aššur Stele 128 = Andrae 1913, 84-85, see also Freydank 1987, 163.

⁸⁷ Gauthier 2016, 205.

⁸⁸ For this site, see Koliński 2022, 47: The similarity to the modern name (simply meaning 'river' in Kurdish) is likely entirely coincidental (the crossing is rather called Eṣṭwān 'the columns' in Thomas of Margā). This placement follows from the inferences made by Radner 2006, 47-48, and the fact that fugitives from Šīmu appear alongside those of Issutu (perhaps modern Šaqlāwa) in a NA letter (SAA 11 163 = Fales/Postgate 1995, 102-103).

⁸⁹ As attested for Katmuḫu/Šahuppā, Amēdu/Bīt-Zamāni/Na'iri/Sinābu, Zamūa/Māzamūa, Gidāra/Raq(am)mat/Si'mē (see Ahmad/Postgate 2007, 29-30), or (as argued here) Ḫalzu/Kalzu/Kilizu.

⁹⁰ Supporting this is that the province of Kurba'il is only attested as a city and never a land, see Bagg 2017, 354-355. In relation to its location, the presence in its environs of a site called Kadišḫu (Bagg 2017, 275) is telling in this regard considering its composite etymology (Semitic $\sqrt{qdš}$ + Hurrian suffix *-oḫe*) pointing to the linguistic

In the only Neo-Assyrian text describing Ḫalahḫu as a settlement,⁹¹ a list of grain payments found at Nimrūd,⁹² it is listed immediately after Arba'il, and prior to various other, largely unidentifiable settlements within the Assyrian heartland; the entries are listed by quantity of grain contributed rather than any geographical order and are supervised by a *rab danināte*, an otherwise obscure logistical officer.

Turning to the other attestations, the Ḫalahḫu Gate, located at the north-eastern corner of the Ninūa's curtain wall, north of the Šibaniba Gate, has been a central lynchpin in most arguments. In Sîn-aḫḫē-erība's day, the full name of the gate is given as follows:

ba-bi-lat ḫi-šib ḫur-šá-a-ni KÁ.GAL^{kur} ḫa-laḫ/láḫ-ḫi

“Bringing the Produce of the Mountain(s): The Gate, which (leads to) the Land of Ḫalahḫu.”⁹³

A number of observations must be made. Firstly, the gate leads to the land of Ḫalahḫu, rather than to the city itself. The second is the reference to the produce of the mountain(s); considering that Šibaniba by the Ġabal Ba'šīqa is accorded an agricultural and pastoral epithet despite its excellent stone deposits,⁹⁴ the assumption must be that the mountain produce hails from further afield, perhaps in the Zagros' *chaîne magistrale* itself.⁹⁵ The third point is the respective distances of the cities after which various of the gates are named are not necessarily as small as often inferred. While the royal residence of Tarbišu is but a stone's throw from Ninūa, Šibaniba is further afield, as is Aššur (note that nearby Kalḫu does not receive a gate). If, in turn, as argued here, Ḫalzu refers to Kalzu/Kilizu, then this only strengthens the premise. Hence, it is hardly implausible that the Ḫalahḫu Gate refers to a city some distance from Ninūa, especially as a land is meant, rather than a specific site.

Ḫalahḫu and Dūr-Šarru-ukīn

In one (admittedly damaged) school text from Sultantepe, one might note KÁ.GAL *ḫa-la-ḫa šá* ^{uru}BĀD-^{m?}[*Šarru-ukīn?*].⁹⁶ This reading, first proposed by Postgate *en passant*,⁹⁷ has since been qualified by Reade who notes a single vertical wedge following BĀD, although it is unclear if there is sufficient space remaining on the line. This has been particularly central in the connection of Ḫalahḫu with Dūr-Šarru-ukīn, and the now widespread assumption that the new province overlay Ḫalahḫu.⁹⁸ That Dūr-Šarru-ukīn directly overlay the city of Ḫalahḫu naturally contradicts the statement that the village previously there was called Maganuba, and that it overlay Ḫalahḫu further seems less than compatible with the repeated statements that the city was built *ina rebūt/talbūt Ninūa* “in the environs of Ninūa”;⁹⁹ considering the Assyrian fondness for invoking defunct toponyms in royal inscriptions, it is perplexing that the ancient Ḫalahḫu would not be mentioned, but rather Ninūa in the flowery prose

contact zone of the Nawkūr. A good candidate for Kurba'il is the site of Tall 'Āmyān north of the Bardarāš (see now the excavation report by Couturaud 2021).

⁹¹ Bagg 2017, 195 lists two other attestations: The first of these is a misreading on his part, as the original line presents a ^{kur}, while the second is reconstructed within a break and hence speculative.

⁹² ND 2465, l. 2 = Parker 1961, 31.

⁹³ RINAP 4 15 vii 7'; 16 vii 51; 17 vii 83; 18 vii 23' = Grayson/Novotny 2012, 103; 122; 143; 158.

⁹⁴ Layard 1853, vol. 1, 133.

⁹⁵ As noted by Reade 2016, 82.

⁹⁶ STT 372 = Gurney/Hulin 1964, Pl. 254, see also Reiner/Civil 1967, 198.

⁹⁷ Postgate 1972a.

⁹⁸ Certainly, a province of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn continues to exist in the eponym lists until the latter stages of the empire (despite its inaugurator's inauspicious death), and hence its territory (whatever its extent) must have been furnished from one or more existing provinces.

⁹⁹ The reading *rebūt/talbūt*, its derivation, and this word's precise meaning remains unclear but it must refer to the environs of a place, see most recently Frame 2021, 140-141, Fn to ls. 23-25.

of both royal inscriptions and decrees.¹⁰⁰ In turn, the desolateness of this area is emphasised, which, even literary motifs aside, would seem curious for so obviously agriculturally productive a region as Ḫalahḫu.¹⁰¹

Ultimately, all that can be evinced from the Sultantepe source is that the road from this gate led to both Dūr-Šarru-ukīn and Ḫalahḫu. Here, the issue of terrain must be considered. The westernmost spur of the Ġabal Ba‘šīqa extends as far as the modern course of the Ḫōsr and serves as a natural (if low) barrier between the plains of Naynawā and the Nawkūr. Were the city of Ḫalahḫu to be situated north of this chain, which could better reflect the larger province’s agricultural productivity, then the issue would be whether territory south of this spur could also have counted as Ḫalahḫu or not. The low pass just north at Nūrān at the end of the Ġabal Ba‘šīqa (see Fig. 4) does not seem to be a modern creation, as a route from Ḫōrsabād passing through it to reach Nargizlīya in the Nawkūr can be found on the Königlich Preußische Landesaufnahme’s Map 4b, along with a parallel main road from Ḫōrsabād just a little further west following the Ḫōsr upstream already used by Layard to reach ‘Ayn Sifnī/Şēxan,¹⁰² meaning that a location for Ḫalahḫu north-east of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn cannot be excluded, and that a traveller might plausibly pass through Dūr-Šarru-ukīn to reach Ḫalahḫu.

The remaining letters providing intimations are less decisive than might first seem. A central argument articulated by Postgate notes that large land purchases by a palace scribe called Nabû-kabti-aḫḫēšu take place near the village of Buruqu (described elsewhere as being in Ḫalahḫu) as described in a rare tablet found in Room 22 of Šarru-ukīn’s palace at Ḫōrsabād.¹⁰³ In locating Buruqu, it must be noted that it appears to have lain near a watercourse and a wadi, and to have possessed roads to Kalḫu. It is plausible that it lay on the Ḫōsr west of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn. The find site of the tablet, the large areas of land mentioned, and that a palace scribe made the purchase would point to it being land bought up for purposes connected to the monumental building project as Postgate argues.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, important in this regard is a further letter mentioning the lack of a straw delivery in the construction of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn:¹⁰⁵

lúERIM.MEŠ [ina] UGU ŠE.IN.NU ([x x])? ‘ša’ LUGAL ina ^{kur}Ḫa-la-ḫi [id]-di-na-na-ši-ni
[ni]-ik-ti-ri-ik ni-ta-la-ka [ni]-za-bi-la lúERIM.MEŠ [ša] ina ḫi-ri-ti ša 1-en lúGAR-ni
1.ME.25 [la] ŠE.IN.NU ša ra-me-ni-šú-nu [i]-di-nu [la] ša ^{kur}Ḫa-la-ḫi ‘i’-za-bi-lu-ni

“... we gathered men for the straw which the king had given to us in Ḫalahḫu, and went to carry it over. The men working in the ditch, [of] a single prefect and 125 in number, have [neither] delivered straw of their own, nor are they carrying that of the land of Ḫalahḫu” (SAA 1 143, obv. 3’-13’)

¹⁰⁰ Attestations are RINAP 2 42, ls. 15-16; 43, l. 44; 44, ls. 26-27; 45, ls. 8-12; 47, ls. 7-11 = Frame 2021, 218; 228; 233; 236; 240, and SAA 12 19 = Kataja/Whiting 1995, 20-22. In the latter, it is even made clear that the inhabitants are Ninevites (*nap-šat* UN.MEŠ *Ni-na[a²-a²k]ⁱ*, l. 10’).

¹⁰¹ ša 3 ME 50.ĀM *mal-ki la-bi-ru-te ša el-la-mu-u-a be-lu-ut* KUR *Aš-šur^{ki} e-pu-uš-ma il-ta-nap-pa-ru ba-’u-lat* dEN.LÍL *a-a-um-ma i-na-lib-bi-šú-nu a-šar-šu ul ú-maš-ši-i-ma šu-šu-ub-šu ul i-de-ma ḫe-re-e* ID-šu *ul iz-ku-ur* “not one of the three hundred and fifty previous rulers who had exercised lordship over Assyria before my time and had governed the subjects of the god Enlil had noted its (the city’s) site or come to know how to make it habitable; nor had one ordered the digging of a canal for it.” (RINAP 2 43 ls. 45-46 = Frame 2021, 228); compare: *qur-bi-is-su / i-na ú-ga-ri-šu* ^{g[is²]} x x x x ^{g[is²]} APIN *šu-par-ku-ma / i-na ta-mir-t[i-šu]* ... “its woods, in its irrigated fields [... the] plough was left idle, in its meadow lan[d ...]” (SAA 12 19 ls. 8’-10 = Kataja/Whiting 1995, 20).

¹⁰² Königlich Preußische Landesaufnahme 1917.

¹⁰³ SAA 6 31 = Kwasman/Parpola 1991, 29-32. Although he is more than likely justified, Postgate 1976, 80 nonetheless reconstructs all but one writing of Buruqu within this document.

¹⁰⁴ Postgate 1976, 81. John MacGinnis has suggested to the author that the curious detail of access to the village well could have been to supply the builders with water.

¹⁰⁵ SAA 1 143 = Parpola 1987, 115-116.

This information would seem to contradict the belief that the building site was in Ḥalahḥu, implying rather that the land of Ḥalahḥu was within easy transport distance of Ḥōrsabād but administratively distinct, as the workmen have neither their own (locally stored) straw, nor that of Ḥalahḥu with them. In turn, a land grant to a temple of Nabû at Dūr-Šarru-ukīn implies that Ḥalahḥu is distinct from the province of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn:¹⁰⁶

^{uru}Qu-ra-ni i-qa-bu-ni-šú ina ^{kur}Ḥa-láḥ-ḥi É 4.LIM A.ŠÀ ina ŠÀ-bi LUGAL EN i-ti-ši a-na É^dPA ša ^{uru}BĀD-MAN-GIN [it-ti-din] ‘ù’ LUGAL be-li [a-na ^mKi]-‘šir’-Aš-šur tè-e-mu [is-sa-kan ma-a] ‘URU’ ina ku-um URU [ina ^{kur}x x x] a-na ^{lu}GAR.KUR [x x x x x] di-ni

“There is an estate of 4,000 ha of arable land in a village called Qurani in the Land of Ḥalahḥu which the king, my lord, took and [gave] to the Nabû Temple of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn, and (in doing this) the king, my lord, [gave] this order to [Kišir]-Aššur: ‘Give the governor of the land a village in return for the village [...]!’” (SAA 1 106, obv. 6-14)

The next indication is the Governor of Barḥalzi’s appropriation of land in Ḥalahḥu which would imply that the former province bordered upon this region.¹⁰⁷ Knowing that NA Talmussa is located at Gir-e Pān and Tamnūnu somewhere in the region of ‘Askī Mawšil respectively,¹⁰⁸ the present author would probably wish to place Barḥalzi’s provincial capital in the plains before Alqōš at the not unimpressive mound of Ġarrāḥīya, although this must remain presently speculative.

Another minor indication is a series of barley prices mentioned in a letter,¹⁰⁹ wherein the rates in Ninūa, the land of Ḥalahḥu, and the steppe (*mudābaru*)¹¹⁰ respectively are cited, with prices being some 5 seahs lower in Ḥalahḥu than Ninūa, and half the Ninivite rate in the steppe. It is difficult to tell whether it would be meaningful to provide grain prices for a zone less than 16 km from Ninūa (should Ḥōrsabād lie within Ḥalahḥu), and this reference is inconclusive.¹¹¹

A final administrative point is made by Radner, who has cannily noted the presence at Dūr-Šarru-ukīn of Samarian master craftsmen who must have been among the deportees sent to Ḥlāḥ of the Bible, generally assumed to correspond to Ḥalahḥu.¹¹² Again, the presence of these artisans need not mean that Dūr-Šarru-ukīn itself lay in Ḥalahḥu. Indeed, the repeated references to the construction of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn *ina rebīt Ninūa* (should one read it as such) leave one wondering if rather this might rather correspond to the mysterious Reḥōḇōt- ‘īr “square of the city” of Genesis 10:11, as Reḥōḇōt could be understood as an awkward calque of *rebītu*.

Hence, the present author remains somewhat sceptical of the oft-cited location of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn in erstwhile Ḥalahḥu, rather than the northern extremes of the province of Ninūa (as, indeed, the relevant inscriptions state). Rather, Ḥalahḥu is clearly directly adjacent to this area; one might suspect that its western edge began just slightly further up the Ḥōsr, or just over the westernmost tip of the Ġabal Ba‘šīqa.

¹⁰⁶ SAA 1 106 = Parpola 1987, 88.

¹⁰⁷ SAA 10 173 = Parpola 1993, 136.

¹⁰⁸ The latter is demonstrated by the correspondence of Bīt-Adad-erība in Tamnūnu to Tall Baqqāq, see Deller 1990.

¹⁰⁹ SAA 19 19 = Luukko 2012, 20.

¹¹⁰ Considering the cheapness of grain here, Deller 1964, 360, Fn. 4 wonders if this might, in fact, be a toponym rather than (less than fertile?) steppe-land.

¹¹¹ Deller 1964, 360 dates the letter to Šarru-ukīn or Sîn-aḥḥē-erība, which would also leave one curious as to why the new provincial name of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn would not be given in place of Ḥalahḥu.

¹¹² Radner 2019, 117-118; it is likely that the biblical passages refer with Ḥlāḥ to the region rather than the specific city.

Ḫalaḫḫu and Mount Lipapan

Radner's connection between cuneiform and alphabetic sources ushers in a piece of evidence hitherto overlooked, namely the bilingual inscriptions of Ninurta-bēlu-ušur, governor of the city of Ḫadattu (modern 'Arslān Tāš, Syria), the pertinent passages of which run as follows:¹¹³

^{md}MAŠ-EN-PAP šá ^{uru}Ši-ra-ni šá ^{uru}Ḫa-laḫ-ḫi šá pa-an ^{uru}Li-pa-pa-an KUR-e URU É AD-a (B.2-4; A.4-5)

'nrtbl'šr z'y qryt šrn zy ḫlh zy qdm llbn qryt byt 'by (a.4'-6'; b.3-5)

“Ninurta-bēlu-ušur of the town of Širāni of (Akk. adds: the city of) Ḫalaḫḫu which is opposite the town of Lipapan (Akk. adds: the mountain), my ancestral town”

Röllig's assumption is that he was a local Aramean official,¹¹⁴ and thus that Širāni of Ḫalaḫḫu opposite Lipapan must have been somewhere in the west. However, this would necessitate a second, western Ḫalaḫḫu,¹¹⁵ not distant from a mountain and township of Lipapan. While less than desirable, it is true that the diffusion of the Hurrian language (and hence toponymy) across more or less the entire Fertile Crescent renders such Hurrian *toponymie en miroir* conceivable, particularly considering Ḫalaḫḫu's commonplace etymology.¹¹⁶ On closer inspection, however, this thesis is less than securely grounded.

Firstly, the use of Aramaic in an inscription does not imply that the commissioner was a local Aramean as inferred by Röllig.¹¹⁷ Neo-Assyria's linguistic image is presently shifting;¹¹⁸ indeed, it is now demonstrable that the Neo-Assyrian administration was receiving (and perhaps sending) and reviewing Aramaic correspondence in the early 9th century BC,¹¹⁹ implying a greater ubiquity of Aramaic officially than previously thought. Moreover, the Aramaic text displays various obvious errors, such as 'nrtblḫ in text b or the presumed misspelling *llbn* for **lbbn* (i.e. Lipapan) in Text a, which would hardly imply that it was the *Urtext*.

The next issue is Ninurta-bēlu-ušur's name. While many early Neo-Assyrian governors were, in fact, local rulers with both indigenous Aramaic names and Akkadianised (or rather Assyrianised) parallel names in cuneiform sources,¹²⁰ this notion does not resonate for the example of Ninurta-bēlu-ušur of Ḫadattu. Firstly, his stated pedigree hardly fits that of an Aramean lord.¹²¹ In turn, the known Akkadianised (or Assyrianised) names of indigenous governors seem to broadly follow the meanings

¹¹³ Röllig 2009.

¹¹⁴ “Deshalb ist wohl davon auszugehen, daß es sich bei dem Statthalter um einen Parvenü handelt, der noch dazu aramäischer Herkunft war - Verweis auf das *bīt abīja* - und deshalb auch für seine offizielle Inschrift schon das Aramäische benutzte.” (Röllig 2009, 277).

¹¹⁵ Curiously overlooked by Röllig 2009, but inferred by Bagg 2007, 83. Bunnens 2006, 94-95 ingeniously identifies Ḫalaḫḫu with the *ha-ru-ha-na* (URBS) of BOROWSKI 3, 3 § 5 = Hawkins 2000, 230-231, and Širāni with modern-day Šarrīn, Syria (see Einwag 2000, 315-316 for its archaeology), but cannot adequately account for the Lipapan which it must face, this region lacking mountains.

¹¹⁶ Besides the example of the two Nawars, there is another Ḫalaḫ known from the Zagros highlands, see Bagg 2017, 195.

¹¹⁷ Indeed, a fragmentary Luwian text is also attested upon the lions.

¹¹⁸ For a recent summary of the linguistic evidence, see Radner 2021.

¹¹⁹ Edmonds 2021.

¹²⁰ Edmonds 2021.

¹²¹ From his only partially published trilingual inscription, it is clear that Ninurta-bēlu-ušur was a eunuch and directly loyal to the *turtānu* Šamšī-ilu (see Galter 2004, 450), which seems to clash with a local origin. Eunuchs' inscriptions never mention their paternity, so Ninurta-bēlu-ušur's appeal to his ancestral home could be understood as a means of relating his illustrious roots without breaking with the customs of eunuchry.

of their Aramaic names;¹²² *'nrtblšr* is without semantic import in Aramaic, nor does Ninurta possess a clear counterpart in the Aramean pantheon.

Finally, Ḥadattu was a new Assyrian foundation on top of a meagre indigenous village (as its Aramaic etymology from *ḥdš* ‘new’ implies), and designed to compete with or supervise the large local centre at Tall Ḥāḡib scarcely 2 km away.¹²³ It would make little sense for an official with local sympathies or origins to have been put in charge of such a project.

All of these points render Röllig’s thesis of Ninurta-bēlu-ušur being a local Aramean from a second, western Ḥalahḡu from a town called Širāni opposite a Mount Lipapan (rather than a well-heeled official from the Assyrian heartland) quite unlikely.¹²⁴ With this ghost-Ḥalahḡu expunged, the historical geographer might now turn to the question of the location of Širāni, Lipapan, and Ḥalahḡu in the east.¹²⁵

The obvious point at which to begin is the mountain and town of Lipapan. This name is quite clearly Hurrian, containing the element *faban* ‘mountain’. The meaning of the initial *Li-* is presently unclear, but follows an interesting pattern in Hurrianising oronyms with initial *Li-* or *Ni-* which has not yet been systematically investigated.¹²⁶ The Aramaic writing *lbn* remains more difficult to interpret.¹²⁷ Röllig has argued for a confusion with **lbbn*; while the toponym is not extant in the fragmentary Aramaic parallel text, his suggestion is cogent considering the mistake even in reproducing Ninurta-bēlu-ušur’s name.

With the assumption that Ḥalahḡu must be somewhere north-east of Ninūa in an historically Hurrian region, and thus Lipapan not all too far therefrom, then *'Alpāp*, the Syriac name for the modern Ġabal Maqlūb (see Fig. 4) is at once striking; its Syriac folk etymology originates from *'alaṗ* ‘thousand’,¹²⁸ presumably reduplicated for emphasis, thus **'alaṗ-alaṗ* ‘thousands and thousands’, and then reduced via haplology to *'Alpāp* ‘thousands’; this referred to the large monastic presence upon its mount at Mār Mattay in the Middle Ages. The profusion of such toponymic survivals in the area render such a thesis plausible.¹²⁹ One might hence assume that Lipapan refers to the Ġabal Maqlūb (or potentially more broadly to the complex of the Maqlūb and Ba‘šīqa). While such an identification does not rule out a placement of the settlement of Ḥalahḡu south or west of the Ġabal Ba‘šīqa, it does seem to favour a northerly ascription.

Ḥalahḡu, the Persian Royal Road, and the Road to Gaugamēla

A further vital inference is that Ḥalahḡu may be inferred to have lain upon the Persian Royal Road, as demonstrated by the famous itinerary of Naḥt-Ḥōr, an Egyptian Achaemenid official headed from Iran back to his homeland.¹³⁰

¹²² Thus Ḥād°-libbeh (or Ḥ°dā-libbeh) became Ḥadi-/Ḥtadi-libbusu, Sās-nūrī became Šamaš-nūrī, and Hadda-yiṭī became Adad-remanni, see also now Edmonds 2023 with the further example of Ilu-bāni/-ibni.

¹²³ Einwag 2000, 312-313; 325.

¹²⁴ Note, in turn, that the inscriptions on the lions were concealed in an Assyrian manner, rather than on open display in the Syro-Hittite fashion, see Radner 2021, 169.

¹²⁵ There is an additional point in the texts supporting an identity of the Arslan Taş *hlḡ* with the Assyrian home province of Ḥalahḡu: *hlḡ* is not specified as a town (*qrṯt*) in the Aramaic text (i.e. *qrṯt šrn zy hlḡ*, this implying that *hlḡ* is here meant as a region), and yet qualified with the determinative ^{ur} in the Akkadian text (rendering it a city); this ambiguity between Ḥalahḡu as a region and a city mirrors the cuneiform toponym’s attestations.

¹²⁶ Consider Mount Lilimer, later probably Illimer, or Nipur (written Lipur in the west), or Nimuš.

¹²⁷ Toponyms such as Lullube (or indeed Ulluba) come to mind, or, indeed, an otherwise obscure village named Lulubani somewhere in the west.

¹²⁸ See Fiey 1965-1968, vol. 2, 756.

¹²⁹ Consider Gaugamēla as Gōgemal/Gōmel, Musāsīr as Muḡēsīr, Arba’il as modern ‘Arbīl/Hawlêr, and so forth; see Reade 1979, 180 for further discussion and examples.

¹³⁰ TADAE A.6.9 = Taylor 2020, 34-35.

mn 'ršm 'l mrdk pqyd' zy bg[x]kd nbwdlly pqy[d'] zy bl'r ztwhy pqyd' zy b'rzwhn 'sptr pqyd' zy b'rbl hl[h] wmtlbš bgprn pqyd' zy bs 'lm prdprn whw[md]t [p]qy[dy]' zy bdmšq wk['t [h]' nḥtḥwr šmh pqyd' zyl[y 'z]l mšryn 'ntm hbw [lh p]tp mn byt' zyly zy bmdyntkm

“From Aršāma to Marduk, the administrator in [...], Nabû-dalānnī, the administrator in La‘ir, Zātavahyā the administrator in Arzūḥin, Upastābara administrator in Arbel, Ḥalah, and Māt-Talbuš, Bagafārna the administrator [w]ho is in Sa‘lam; Frādafarnā and Hau[maḏā]ta (?) the [ad]minis[trators] who are in Damascus. And now, [behol]d, (he) whose name is Naḥt-Ḥōr, m[y] official, [is goi]ng to Egypt. (As for) you, give [him ra]tions from my estate which is in your provinces.” (TADAE A.6.9, 1-2)

This renowned letter of the Egyptian courtier Naḥt-Ḥōr provides an itinerary for a considerable leg of his journey back to Egypt from the east (see Fig. 5). His itinerary to Arbel is logical: La‘ir corresponds to NA Laḥīru (likely modern ‘Askī Kifrī),¹³¹ while Arzūḥin is evidently NA Arzuḥina (perhaps Gök Tapa).¹³² The stretch from Arbel onwards has received the most discussion; with Damascus as the next clear fixpoint, Sa‘lam is generally understood to lie in northern Syria,¹³³ probably corresponding to ancient Saḥlalu (modern Tall Ṣahlān, Syria).¹³⁴ Between Sa‘lam and Arbel must then lie *hl[h] wmtlbš* respectively, both of which must logically belong to the same administrative entity as Arbel considering their shared administrator, Upastābara.

¹³¹ Bagg 2017, 360-362.

¹³² Bagg 2017, 72-74; Cancik-Kirschbaum/Hess 2022, 105. There seems to be a considerable confusion in the over the location of the ‘Gök Tapa’ (a relatively common toponym within areas settled by Turkmen) at which this site is supposed to be situated, with Parpola/Porter 2001, Stępniewski 2011, and Radner 2017b placing this at a homonymous settlement upriver of Sātū Qalā today called Goptapa, rather than the real site some 11 km south-east of Altūn Kūprī originally identified by Speiser (1926-27).

¹³³ Tuplin 2020, 153.

¹³⁴ For the shift from Saḥlalu to *s‘lm*, see Zadok 1989, 160-161. For its localisation at Tall Ṣahlān, see Bagg 2017, 517 with previous literature.

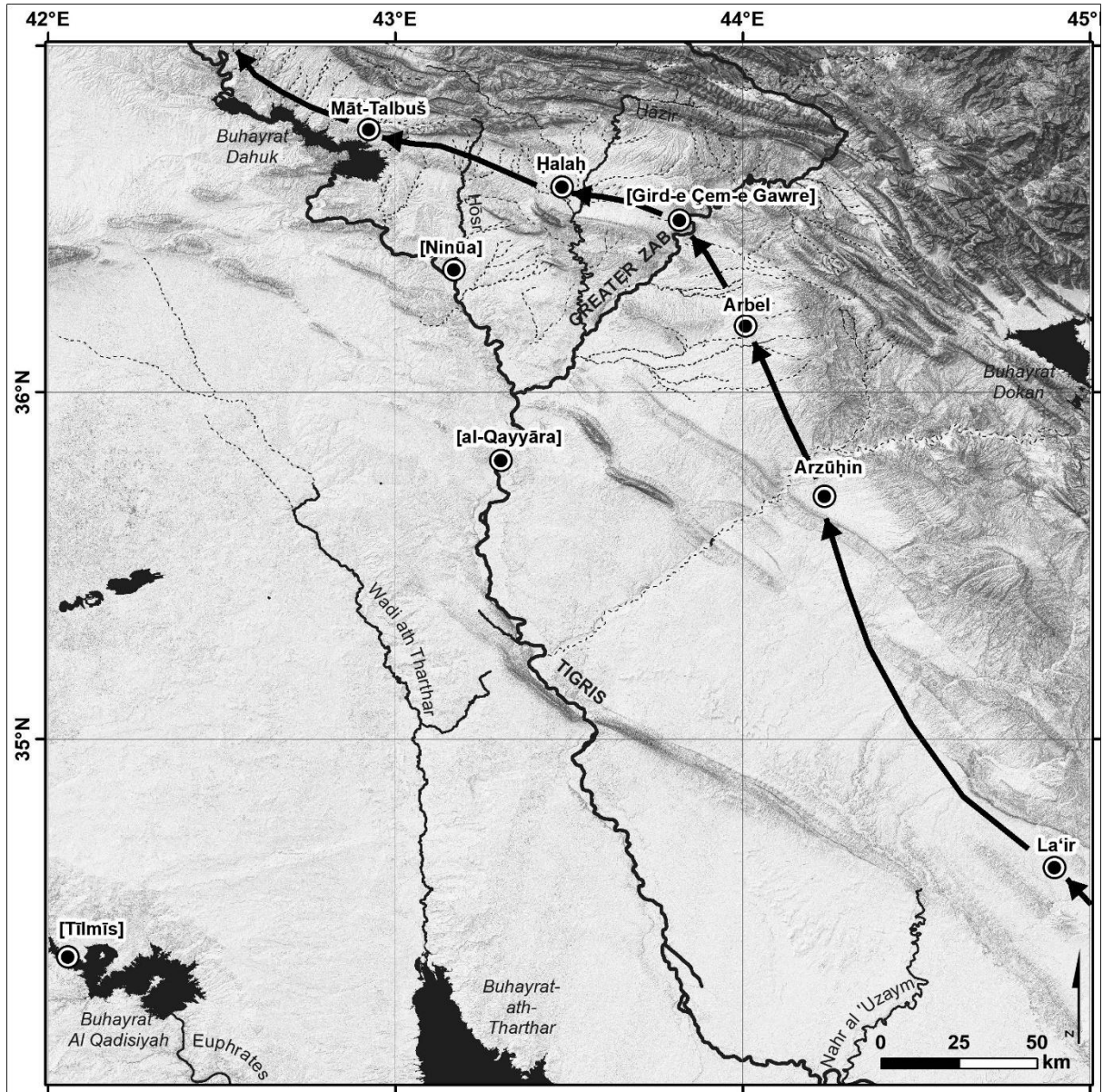


Fig. 5. The Itinerary of Naḥt-Ḥōr. Map by Bartłomiej Szypula

Previously read *hl[s]* (thus corresponding to Ḥalzu and hence now Kalzu/Kilizu), Dalley has since convincingly reconstructed *hl[h]* and thus Ḥalahḥu, which, naturally, is already Biblically attested (and now also within Aramaic, as demonstrated herein), and thus far preferable.¹³⁵ In turn, *mtlbš*, is unlikely to correspond to NA Ubase (al-Qayyāra)¹³⁶ or the Euphratine settlement of Talb/miš (Tilbīs),¹³⁷ but rather a toponym *Māt-Talbuš and thus with NA Talmussa.¹³⁸ Indeed, this toponym

¹³⁵ Dalley 2014, 173-174.

¹³⁶ With Tall Ḥuwaīš now conclusively proven to be ancient Ekallātum (Ziegler/Otto 2022), al-Qayyāra must be Ubase (see Reade 1978, 170, Fn. 88).

¹³⁷ Kuhrt 1995, 244 and Fn. 2, quoting a suggestion by Fales. While philologically pleasing, three key difficulties present themselves: firstly, that it is implausible that the same administrator should be responsible for the city of Arbel and a settlement on the Middle Euphrates (some 250 km from each other as the crow flies), secondly, that this would be an unnecessarily arduous journey to undertake from Arbel across the Wādī at-Tartar, and, thirdly, that this would be entirely incompatible with an identification of *hl[h]* as Ḥalahḥu.

¹³⁸ Already tentatively suggested by Dalley (2014, 175-176) and since followed by Tuplin (2020, 152-153). Certainly, the hoary variance between *b* and *m* in proper names endures into the cuneiform sources of the Achaemenid era, see Roaf 2021. The prefixing of certain regions with *māt* in Aramaic can be elsewhere

even outlived the Persian Empire and was still attested as Dolomēnē by the Parthian period (see Fig. 8).¹³⁹ This presents a logical series of waystations on the way to Damascus via northern Mesopotamia which, most vitally, would seem broadly to follow the route of the King's Road.

With these two fix points, the question is hence as to whether the Persian Royal Road upon which Ḥalahḥu lay ran north or south of the Ġabal Ba'sīqa. Certainly, in the *Anabasis* of Naḥt-Ḥōr's near contemporary Xenophon, the Ten Thousand marched from the Greater Zāb northwestwards through a depopulated Ninevite Plain to the pass at Gir-e Pān.¹⁴⁰ Whether they crossed the Greater Zāb at modern Zangal or further downstream around Wardak (see Fig. 6),¹⁴¹ a Royal Road skirting the south of the Ġabal Ba'sīqa would have been close to hand, and it would be puzzling for them to have instead marched in the opposite direction through such difficult and abandoned terrain to Nimrūd.

This point is further supported by Alexander's itinerary; it is generally thought that the Macedonian army followed the Royal Road from a crossing of the Tigris to the field of Gaugamēla.¹⁴² Darius chose the site of the battle and had even prepared the terrain for use by chariotry, while Alexander permitted him ample time, seeking as he was a decisive engagement. That Alexander continued on from Gaugamēla to Arbēla in pursuit of Darius with such alacrity following his victory implies that his army travelled on good roads, and that a bridge was intact over the Greater Zāb.¹⁴³ Should Gaugamēla be taken to lie at Gōmel, then one might presume Naḥt-Ḥōr to have followed the Royal Road westwards from Arbel to Māt-Talbiš (via Ḥlah), and that Alexander's march from the Tigris to Gaugamēla to Arbēla mirrored this precise route eastwards, implying that Ḥalah must lie somewhere along this route, presumably roughly equidistant from Gir-e Pān and 'Arbīl/Hawlēr.¹⁴⁴ This further detracts somewhat from an identification of Ḥōrsabād with Achaemenid Ḥalah as proposed by Dalley.

suspected, as with (Mā-)Zamūa, which could well be the Aramaic name for the region, or the Seleucid region of the Mygdonios which is more than likely a Macedonian imposition upon an underlying Aramaic toponym *m(t)qdm(y), i.e. Māt-Katmuḥi, although this requires further investigation.

¹³⁹ See Fn. 63 above and Figs. 6 and 8: Dolomēnē's location must be in the north or north-western part of the Ninivite plains and it may very likely have had its capital at Dolba (note the ethnica Δολβαῖος and especially Δολβηνός which would phonologically support the identification of this city with the region considering previously discussed b/m alternation which is also further considered in what follows). An inscription from the Parthian-era temple of Gareus at Uruk also mentions the creation of a statue by a community of Dollamēnoi who must hail from this land (Meier 1960). Considering these variations in the toponym *Dolom/*Dollam and the city name Dolba, it is very tempting to return to Talmussa and *mtlbš* = *Māt-Talbuš and to suggest that a form *Talb/muš stands behind this name, and that the final -uš was reinterpreted in the Hellenistic period as a flexional Greek case ending -os, leading to its omission (an analogy would be the Greek name Alexandros and its Arabic counterpart 'Iskandar, in which the initial Al- was interpreted as a definite article, i.e. al-'Iskandar and subsequently omitted). Supporting a thesis of *Dolom/*Dollam and Dolba would be the b/m alternation mentioned in the previous footnote which is also consistent with the Talmussa/*Māt-Talbuš variance, and the general difficulty of any of the relevant writing systems to express the v of the Hurrian root *talv-* underlying this toponym. Daniele Morandi Bonacossi has informed the present author that Gir-e Pān has yielded Hellenistic material, the existence of which could perhaps strengthen the identification with Dolba herein proposed. That a prosperous region of Dolamēnē might have existed in the vicinity is supported by the cluster of sizeable sites in the plain of Dūhok (see. Palermo 2016, 280-282), which, in turn, may have profited from the Royal Road which had run through *Māt-Talbuš. This is particularly interesting considering that the Dollamēnoi of Uruk were an expatriate mercantile community and that architectural parallels between the temple of Gareus and Hatran architecture have been drawn, but this warrants discrete investigation.

¹⁴⁰ See the detailed analysis by Reade (2015, 192-195).

¹⁴¹ Reade 2015, 192, without naming Zangal; on these fords Marciak et al. 2020, 551.

¹⁴² Marciak et al. 2020 have argued convincingly that this must have been to the north-west near Basorin, Turkey, rather than further south-east near Ninūa.

¹⁴³ Here, the site of Šamā/Çeme, i.e. Gird-e Çem-e Gawre (here suggested to be MA/NA Šīmu) is by far the most likely site for such a bridge, see Koliński 2022, 45-47.

¹⁴⁴ The objection to such a route raised by the presumed bematist Amyntas' mention of a stele of Sardanapallos on a hill outside of Ninūa (Zouboulakis 2015, 37-38, Fn. 43) is premature; it is not stated that Alexander visited

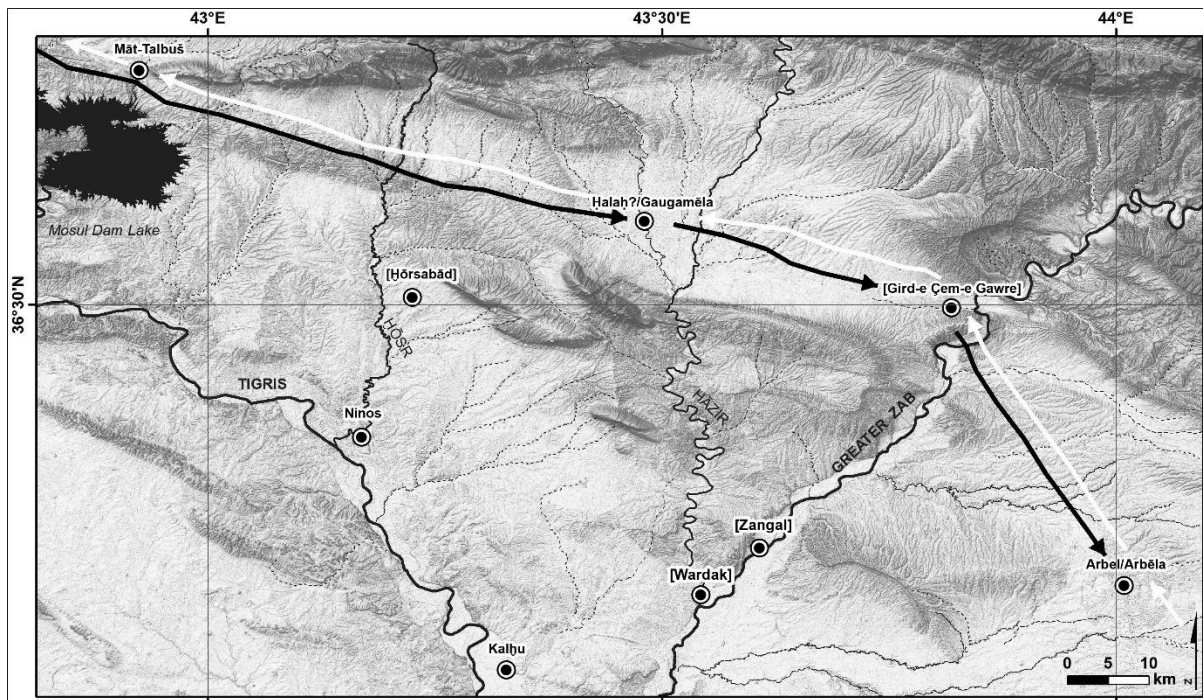


Fig. 6. The Transtigridian Itineraries of Naḥt-Ḥūr (white) and Alexander (black). Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

To summarise, Ḥalahḥu (the name of which means ‘enclosure, walled field’) was a very fertile agricultural area and eponymous settlement somewhere in the Assyrian heartland north-east of Ninūa in a formerly Hurrian-speaking area. Its territory was directly adjacent to the provinces of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn and most likely Barḥalzi and it was accessible by kalak, likely meaning that its capital lay on a river bank. While this latter settlement is well attested in the Middle Assyrian period, by the Neo-Assyrian era it had dropped in importance, and may well have been replaced by another centre, perhaps Kurba’il (which, despite being a province, is never mentioned as a land, only a city), although the land continued to be mentioned as Ḥalahḥu administratively. The region was settled by deportees in the late Neo-Assyrian period. Ḥalahḥu probably lay on the later Persian Royal Road (which very likely passed north of the Ġabal Ba‘šīqa), and the settlement itself was located not far from (and indeed, opposite) a mountain and settlement called Lipapan which is very likely the modern Ġabal Maqlūb (Syriac ’Alpāp). All of these indications put Ḥalahḥu in the Nawkūr rather than the Naynawā Plain, and, indeed, disconcertingly close to Tall Gōmel.

this, and considering the obviously fictitious inscription quoted this seems rather more like hearsay compounded with literary tradition (see Burkert 2009, 506-507). More plausibly, the Macedonians may have encountered Assyrian ruins before or after Gaugamēla, perhaps the remains of Dūr-Šarru-ukīn or the Assyrian reliefs at the canal at Ḥinis, which inspired this anecdote.



Fig. 7. View from the north of Tall Gōmel before the Ġabal Maqlūb. © Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project, University of Udine, photograph by Giancarlo Garna.

Conclusion

The present author should like hence to propose the following solution, which must, nonetheless, be considered a mere hypothesis until it can be proven or disproven by additional epigraphical and archaeological information: That Tall Gōmel corresponds to both Gaugamēla (with an earlier settlement Gigib/m(i)ni, perhaps also an OA/B Kigaml/num) and the land and settlement of Ḫalahḫu respectively.

Together, the two toponymic sequences cover the entire archaeologically documented settlement trajectory of this tell,¹⁴⁵ which was the most important settlement in the Nawkūr for most of its span. Indeed, the recent discovery of very strange non-Assyrian cremation burials in the late Neo-Assyrian Phases of Operation 1 at Gōmel seem even to point to the burial of deportees, reminding once more of the deportations to Ḫlāḫ.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ The settlement of Ḫalahḫu's apparent loss in importance during the Neo-Assyrian period (despite the region's ongoing agricultural significance) would seem to correspond to the reduction in the settlement's size during this period, and would fit neatly to the hypothesis of a relocation of the provincial capital to Kurba'il.

¹⁴⁶ "The very peculiar and certainly non-Assyrian *in-situ* cremation burials excavated, characterised by pits containing the combusted remains of the skeletons and funeral pyres together with the grave goods and personal ornaments of the deceased, resemble discoveries only at the sites of Tell Sheikh Hamad (Eastern Syria) and Ziyaret Tepe, in the Upper Turkish Tigris Valley." (Bonacossi Morandi et al. 2018, 152), compare *ibid.*, 86: "Although other hypotheses cannot be excluded ... , the most plausible interpretation of Gomel's unusual funerary evidence is that the use of a burial practice completely alien to Assyrian traditions can be tentatively explained as a consequence of the presence in the region of the two last capitals of the Assyrian Empire of deportees from Assyrian military campaigns."

<i>Historical Period</i>	<i>Gugamlu-toponym sequence</i>	<i>Ḫalahḫu-toponym sequence</i>	<i>Gōmel Periodisation</i>	<i>Operation Attested</i>
Oakk	Gigini?		13	1, 3
Ur III	Gigib/mi(um)		13	1, 3
OA/OB (Mitanni)	Kig/kamlu(m)?	Ḫawilāt/Ḫiplāt	12	1-3
MA			11	1
NA	(Gammagara?/*Gamgamara?)	Ḫalahḫu	10	1
Achaemenid		Ḫalahḫu/Ḫlāḫ	9	1-2
Hellenistic	Gaugamēla	Ḫalah	8	1
Middle/Late	Gōgamel		7	1
Islamic			4-2	1
Modern	Gōmel		1	1-3

Table 2. A proposed Toponymy of Tall Gōmel (incorporating Morandi Bonacossi et al. 2018, 73, Tab. 1)

This proposition would require what Morandi Bonacossi has termed ‘toponomastic allonymy’,¹⁴⁷ that the same settlement can possess multiple names; this phenomenon continues to be well attested today at the interfaces between different languages and cultures today, with doublets such as German Wien and Hungarian Bécs, Turkish Diyarbakır and Kurdish Amêd, or indeed Greek Konstantinopolis and Turkish İstanbul, all possessing long histories.¹⁴⁸ Some of these within the ancient Near East are so commonplace as to be banal, such as the competing use of Mitanni and Ḫanigalbat to describe the same Upper Mesopotamian state, or the plethora of names used to describe the region of Babylonia over its history. As has already been explored, the Transtigris is a linguistic interface between Akkadian, Hurrian, and Amorite during the Early and Middle Bronze ages, and only truly loses its Hurrian linguistic identity come the Early Iron age, enduring in relict place names. This renders it the ideal region for such a phenomenon, and (as has already been stated with respect to the ‘k-stratum’ coined herein) toponyms certainly underwent linguistic modifications through language and population contact.

The semantic proximity of these the two names renders this allonymy plausible: As has been noted, a *gi/ugamlu* appears to be a substrate word adopted in Akkadian to describe a manner of paddock for keeping livestock (especially pack animals) which could also encompass a structure, institution, or even settlement. Ḫalahḫu, in turn, has been demonstrated to mean ‘enclosure, enclosed land’ in Hurrian, often used to describe fields. Hence, it could be argued that Ḫalahḫu is a Hurrian translation of the substrate name Gi/ugamlum. Alternately, Ḫalahḫu was the name of the wider province, and was used *totum pro parte* for the provincial capital, a phenomenon elsewhere attested in Neo-Assyrian documentation.¹⁴⁹ While still the largest settlement in the Nawkūr in the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, it can still be assumed that it was the agricultural production of its territory which was

¹⁴⁷ Morandi Bonacossi 2000.

¹⁴⁸ This phenomenon frequently seems to occur between two or more mutually unintelligible languages; the encounter between Semitic and Hurrian speaking populations and the resultant effect upon toponymy portrayed here is not unlike that within regions shared by modern Indo-European and Uralic or Turkic speaking populations.

¹⁴⁹ Examples include Sirqu being called 𐎶𐎵𐎶𐎶 *Lāqū* (see Bagg 2017, 363-365, who does not make the connection although one of the references comes from an Assyrian stele from Sirqu itself, Tall ‘Ašāra), or 𐎶𐎵𐎶𐎶 (*Mā-*)*Zamūa* very likely referring the province’s capital, presumably Arrakdi (references and discussion in Bagg 2020, 617-620, although he assumes this to be a discrete settlement; for Arrakdi as (*Mā-*)*Zamūa*’s likely provincial capital, see Radner 2017a, 428).

important, rather than the urban centre itself;¹⁵⁰ its attestations are overwhelmingly administrative in nature, and the invisibility of a toponym Gi/ugamlu in the textual record could well be the consequence of the nature of the sources preserved.

By much the same token, it could be argued that a name Ḥalah would have endured through the Persian administration, where it was an important stop on the Royal Road, until the Battle of Gaugamēla. That a local name descended from *Gi/ugamlu with its own folk etymology was recorded by the Macedonians would have been due to their entirely different perspective (that of a foreign, invading army) to that of Darius' forces (an imperial army which had formed up around a logistical node within the empire's vast administrative landscape): Were Darius to have won, then perhaps Greek historians would have written of Alexander's disastrous defeat at 'Chelach' (*Χελάχ)! Naturally, this thesis can only be confirmed by further archaeological exploration at Gōmel, but it would serve neatly to resolve two long-outstanding issues in the historical geography of the Transtigris.

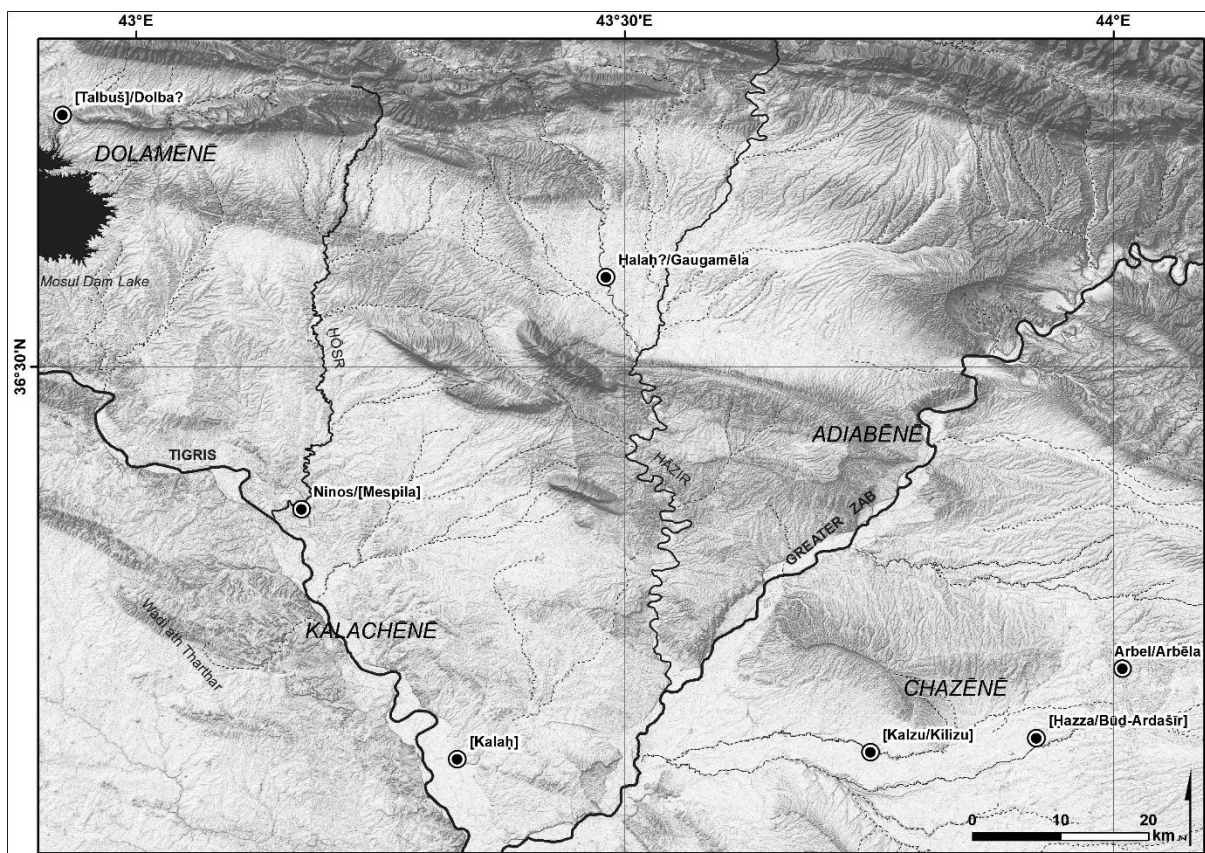


Fig. 8. The Transtigris in the Age of Strabo. Map by Bartłomiej Szypuła

With this investigation, the present author hopes also to have demonstrated the excellent potential for a *longue durée* approach to the toponymy of the Transtigris. With archaeological information and philological investigation of shifts in toponymy, rich continuities and cultural dynamics can be elucidated. This landscape is less a palimpsest and more an ever-updated text in which potential

¹⁵⁰ The present Kurdish name Nawkūr 'Mud-plain' still hints at its fecundity. A case could also plausibly be made for the Syriac toponym for this same region, Margā 'the meadow', as being a translation of the earlier name Ḥalahū.

hybridities such as Maridabān/Mardamā(n)¹⁵¹ composite names such as Kadišḫu¹⁵² and transformations such as ḫalṣu(m)/Ḫalzu/Kilizu suggest a rich history of interaction between different cultural and linguistic groups.¹⁵³ Within this milieu, a proposed toponymic identity of Gugamlu/Ḫalaḫḫu surprises little. Similar discoveries might be expected in future as additional archaeological and historical geographical work continues to ‘tidy up’ the Transtigris. Perhaps even the strangest allonymy of all, the ‘esoteric’ names of Aššur (Antaš), Ninūa (*Dur*-NA), Arba’il (Liburna) and Kalzu/Kilizu (BĀD-*a-ta-ni*) might one day be elucidated.

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¹⁵¹ Mar(i)da/-b/m/-ān, perhaps a root Mar(i)da, related to Mard/tu ‘Amorite’(?) with Hurrian genitive -ve and the Amorite suffix -ān? Compare to the Amorite personal names Mar-da-bu-um (BIN 3, 546, ls. 6; 12 = Keiser 1971, Pl. 73). and Mar-da-ba-nu-um (Amorites 5, l. 4 = Buccellati 1966, Pl. 2; Hilgert 1998, 145). This point is in need of additional research.

¹⁵² See Fn. 90.

¹⁵³ For example, just as one finds Tarbiṣu near Ninūa, one might also note a Hurrianised counterpart (^{uru}tar-ba-āš-ḫe) further to the east, see Cancik-Kirschbaum/Hess 2022, 134.

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