

## Historical Geography: Past and Present

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*To Eugen Wirth in admiration*

From our stand-point today, it may seem that the ideas of historical geography originated only in modern times and in no respect formed the focus of research in the last century or the early decades of this century. While this view is not completely misleading, it requires correction. Questions with reference to historic-geographical topics were already raised at the beginning of our discipline and continued to be relevant throughout the following decades. Nevertheless, the changing intensity of research in this field, on the one hand, and particular ideas on the other have created, in the last twenty years, a checkered picture of our field of studies. Taking this into account, I would first like to direct your attention on former periods of historical geography. Later I will outline some of the ideas prevalent in historical geography today.

### 1. The history of historical geography

#### 1.1. *The period of travelogues*

The roots of historical geography go back further than do those of "Assyriology". Stimulated by the vivid images in the Old Testament, not only scholars but also interested non-specialists started to show interest in the geographical background of Biblical narratives, especially in the stories of patriarchs in the books of Genesis and Exodus. For this reason, the opening of the Near Eastern countries at the beginning of the 19th century—a result of Bonaparte's military campaign into Egypt—was most welcomed. Following earlier travellers such as Carsten Niebuhr, scholars such as Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, R. Wood, Charles M. Doughty and others travelled on their spectacular journeys not only to Mesopotamia, but also and mostly to Syria-Palestine and to Arabia<sup>1</sup>. These regions, most being under Ottoman rule at that time, had been toured before by merchants, diplomats or private travellers and their first reports of spectacular finds, monuments and ruins had reached the educated public in Europe. As a result, illustrated books describing these dangerous and adventurous journeys in an exotic world were published and gave a first impression of the landscape and the natural setting of ancient cultures. Besides the Biblical sources, classical authors, too, had also been studied by these travellers—and the formers' often misleading entries were used as tools to understand the ancient world now found anew. Today, travelogues can be used as a source for an early stage of exploration of long-lost cultures and as descriptions of their environmental situations which no longer exist.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the travel reports C. Niebuhr, *Beschreibung von Arabien. Aus eigenen Beobachtungen und im Lande gesammelten Nachrichten*, Kopenhagen 1772; Engl. version: *Travels through Arabia and other Countries in the East*, trans. R. Heron, Edingburgh 1892; J.L. Burckhardt, *Reisen in Arabien*, Weimar 1830; J.S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia*, 2 vols., London 1827; Ch.M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, Cambridge 1888. In general cf. E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology*, London 1925 and S.A. Pallis, *The Antiquity of Iraq: A Handbook of Assyriology*, Copenhagen 1956, pp. 70-93.

### 1.2. *The period of the first discoveries*

This situation changed when the first monumental ruins were discovered in Persia and Mesopotamia and cuneiform scripts had been successfully deciphered. In 1784 systematic investigations were started by Joseph de Beauchamp in the ruins of Babylon<sup>2</sup> and a few decades later by Claudius James Rich at the same site (1811) and at Nineveh (1820)<sup>3</sup>. Only a little later Robert Ker Porter, after having copied the inscriptions at Persepolis, published a travel report (1821-22) for a general educated public in England and on the continent<sup>4</sup>. The plans and maps Rich had drawn of the ruins of Nineveh and their surrounding area now made it possible for excavations to be carried out on the basis of some fixed points. Excavations were conducted by Henry Rawlinson and Austen Henry Layard at Nineveh, by Emile Botta at Chorsabad, by Hormuz Rassam at Nimrud and Nineveh, and by William Kennett Loftus at Uruk<sup>5</sup>. Based on their results, the initial identification of the prominent sites of Assyria and Babylonia was established. In cuneiform texts which had been deciphered at the same time, the first Assyriologists found more and more historical and geographical information—much more than had been known before through Biblical or classical sources. As a result, the discovery of so many *tells* scattered all over southern and northern Mesopotamia which could not be identified at this early stage of research, necessitated deeper digging into the problems of historical geography.

### 1.3. *Early studies on geography*

It is not without importance that the first attempt to give a comprehensive survey of Babylonian and Assyrian geography made by Friedrich Delitzsch is entitled *Wo lag das Paradies?*<sup>6</sup>. It is true that it dealt mainly within the context of the Old Testament and the lengthy discussion of place names, rivers, regions etc. is only a postscript of this book. But this section takes up more than half of this small-print volume and is—with certain reservations—still useful even today. Delitzsch meant to present a collection of the material available at that time (1881) and not an exhaustive geographical compendium. Nevertheless, he created a reference work for further research. Fritz Hommel's monumental *Ethnologie und Geographie des Alten Orients* had different aims. The work was started and printed in a first version in 1904. Only in 1926 was a final version published, though already outdated by ongoing research during the interval<sup>7</sup>. This publication focuses on etymologies and historical data, excluding the geographical aspect for the most part. That is to say that no real progress in crucial geographical questions was made by such a voluminous publication (1108 pages!).

At the same time as new cuneiform material of historical relevance, originating partly from Nippur, Assur and Babylon, was published, mostly by the British Museum, new questions arose concerning historical geography, especially with regard to the identification of cities, mountains, rivers and regions. In this context, the names of Maximilian Streck and Adolf Billerbeck are to be mentioned. Billerbeck concentrated his research on the border area between Iran and Mesopotamia,

<sup>2</sup>J. de Beauchamp, *Mémoire sur les Antiquités babyloniennes qui se trouvent aux environs de Bagdad*: Journal des Sçavans, Dec. 1790, pp. 797-806.

<sup>3</sup>C.J. Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh*, London 1836; id., *Narrative of a Journey to the Site of Babylon in 1811...*, London 1839.

<sup>4</sup>R. Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia...*, London 1822.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. the exhaustive history of archaeological research and bibliography in A. Parrot, *Archéologie mésopotamienne*, vol. 2: *Les étapes*, Paris 1946, and the "Chronological List of Excavation Sites" (with bibliographical references) in Pallis, *The Antiquity of Iraq*, pp. 340-384.

<sup>6</sup>F. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies? Eine biblisch-assyriologische Studie*, Leipzig 1881.

<sup>7</sup>F. Hommel, *Grundriß der Geographie und Geschichte des alten Orients*, München 1904; a new edition and revision of this 400 page preprint is *Ethnologie und Geographie des alten Orients* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 3. Abt., 1 Teil, 1. Band), München 1926.

taking into consideration Assyrian annals which had been published by the end of the last century<sup>8</sup>. Streck tried to outline the geography of the Neo-Assyrian period using both the cuneiform texts published until then and the works of Arab geographers. With a series of articles in periodicals he considerably increased our knowledge of the geographical background of the Assyrian empire<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, the summary of all his detailed studies was left unpublished and the material he had gathered was destroyed in World War II.

The fact that neither these latter scholars nor the others had ever travelled to the Near East is the reason why they continued to be unfamiliar with the natural setting of the landscape and of *tells*, the changing of river-beds, the quality of soil and woodland. On the other hand, these scholars were familiar with the source material of the classical Arab geographers, which could be used for comparisons, in spite of the fact that continuity was often lacking and, therefore, information from these sources could lead one astray or induce incorrect results.

#### 1.4. Further explorers of the Near East

At the beginning of this century and during the decades that followed, a new generation of travellers toured the Near East. They could make use of the literary sources now available and were able to reach regions far away from the centers of those civilizations known until then. Three names stand out and must be mentioned in this context: Max von Oppenheim<sup>10</sup>, Carl-Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt<sup>11</sup> and Gertrude Bell<sup>12</sup>. Oppenheim not only identified a number of ancient sites in northern Syria, but also registered the bedouin tribes in Mesopotamia and Syria as well as Palestine and described their customs, manners, tribal areas etc<sup>13</sup>. In this he also blazed the trail to a better understanding of living conditions in ancient times. Lehmann-Haupt explored the largely unknown mountainous regions of the former kingdom of Urartu, giving a vivid impression of the almost insurmountable peaks in the headwater region of the river Tigris. He also discovered the first Urartean inscriptions and the capital of that kingdom in Van/Tuşpa. Gertrude Bell, for her part, made known to the public many regions off the main routes. Her keen interest in the life of the bedouins helped her to understand former civilizations. For reconstructing the human geography of a long-lost world, the contributions of these and other travellers and excavators are of great interest.

#### 1.5. Geography and political institutions

A first step in creating a complex picture of the geographical and political situation—especially of the Neo-Assyrian period—is Emil O. Forrer's PhD thesis entitled *Die Provinzeinteilung des assyrischen Reiches* (1920). Based on the royal inscriptions, letters and administrative documents published so far, he gives a full documentation of the geographical parts of the Assyrian empire and tries to identify the provincial centers and their surrounding villages and districts. Although he rarely quotes his predecessors and never discusses the existing proposals on the subject he is writing about, he summarizes in his booklet the results of research which had been carried out in the preceding

<sup>8</sup>A. Billerbeck, *Das Sandschak Suleimania und dessen persische Nachbarlandschaften zur babylonischen und assyrischen Zeit*, Leipzig 1898.

<sup>9</sup>M. Streck, *Keilinschriftliche Beiträge zur Geographie Vorderasiens, I*: MVAG 11/3 (1960); id., *Das Gebiet der heutigen Landschaften Armenien, Kurdistan und Westpersien nach den babylonisch-assyrischen Keilinschriften*: ZA 13 (1898), pp. 57-110; 14 (1899), pp. 103-172; 15 (1900), pp. 257-382; id., *Die alte Landschaft Babylonien nach den arabischen Geographen*, Leiden 1900-1901; id., *Seleucia und Ktesiphon*: *Alter Orient* 16/3-4 (1917).

<sup>10</sup>M. Frh. von Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf. Durch den Hauran, die Syrische Wüste und Mesopotamien*, 2 vols., Berlin 1899-1900.

<sup>11</sup>C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, 3 vols., Berlin-Leipzig 1910-1931; id., *Materialien zur älteren Geschichte Armeniens und Mesopotamiens*, Berlin 1907.

<sup>12</sup>G. Bell, *The East Bank of the Euphrates from Tel Ahmar to Hit*: *Geographical Journal* 36 (1910), pp. 513-537; id., *Amurath to Amurath*, London 1911.

<sup>13</sup>M. Frh. von Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen*, vols. 1-4, Berlin-Leipzig 1939-1968.

decades. His idea was to proceed according to the model of organization used by the Assyrian kings for the administration of their empire. Toponyms mentioned in historical events which lead constantly to an expansion of this empire made it possible to pinpoint some districts situated at the periphery and enabled Forrer to make more identifications than his predecessors. But Forrer, too, like most of those before him, had no well-founded knowledge of Near Eastern geography but based many of his identifications on phonetic allusions alone. Nevertheless, it is no surprise that by publishing this book a certain point was reached which could not be surpassed in the following years.

In this period, i.e. the years after World War I, new political units were created in the Near East and the responsibility of European countries for cultural development of their various regions was laid down. Mesopotamia, now being under British influence, witnessed a new wave of excavation activities. Syria, under the French protectorate, began to awaken from a long sleep. At this point we have to mention the monumental *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* by René Dussaud, published in 1927<sup>14</sup>. It presents a collection of an immense amount of information about single places and whole regions (including northern Lebanon), beginning in Assyrian times but focusing on the Roman period and the Middle Ages. The book proved to be the first historical description of a modern state in its geographical entirety, extending from its western shore to its north-eastern frontier, site by site and city by city, giving information about the geographical situation and, often, a lengthy history—which relies on Yaqūt and other Arab geographers. With the exception of Palestine, no other Oriental state has yet been the subject of a description of its territory comparable in its completeness. Nevertheless, the value of this book for modern research on ancient Near Eastern geography is limited. The spectacular excavations at Mari, Ugarit and—during the last 20 years—Ebla, with their abundance of new textual material and, therefore, new information about geographical features, have completely changed our picture of the ancient world. Sumer, Babylon and Assur do not play such prominent roles any longer. New centers came into scope and, along with them, new questions for geography and ethnography. This development went hand in hand with new problems brought to light by a better understanding and interpretation of the Old Assyrian texts from Kültepe, owing to the pioneering work of Julius Lewy<sup>15</sup> and Benno Landsberger<sup>16</sup>. The Anatolian plain now also came into view, in particular with the progress of the publication and evaluation of the Hittite texts from Hattuša<sup>17</sup>. As a result, in the early fifties, an astounding amount of textual evidence was at hand, but still no new concept of historical geography.

### 1.6. *New methods in archaeology and far-reaching geographical models*

While in the beginning the goal of archaeological research was the excavation of a single *tell*, the discovery of monuments and such prominent architectural structures as temples and palaces, and the finding of new textual material or a special type of pottery, in the fifties the methods changed. It came to be understood that a site was part of its surrounding landscape<sup>18</sup> with its natural features such as rivers and mountains, channels and moats, fertile and sterile soils etc., and that larger or smaller settlements existed, but that these were to be seen in relation to one or more centers. Therefore, an increasing number of survey activities especially in Mesopotamia (Iraq) could be noted, for example

<sup>14</sup>R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale*, Paris 1927.

<sup>15</sup>Many of the numerous and well-documented articles of Julius (and Hildegard) Lewy contain inter alia also discussions about topics of historical geography, cf. the bibliography in Kh. Nashef, RGTC 4, pp. XXIX-XXX.

<sup>16</sup>B. Landsberger, *Assyrische Handelskolonien in Kleinasien aus dem 3. Jahrtausend*: *Alter Orient* 24/4 (1925).

<sup>17</sup>A first attempt to give a picture of Hittite geographical information has been J. Garstang - O.R. Gurney, *The Geography of the Hittite Empire*, London 1959.

<sup>18</sup>These ideas have been developed in Chicago in close cooperation by geographers, assyriologists and Near Eastern archaeologists, cf. K. Butzer, *Environment and Archaeology*, Chicago 1972<sup>2</sup>.

the Uruk survey, the Nippur survey, that of Lower Sumer etc.<sup>19</sup>. These works produced a great deal of new information about settlement patterns, early irrigation works, agricultural conditions, population density and so on. By means of a combination of aerial photographs and field work a very large number of remnants of ancient settlements and watercourses could be discerned and fixed on large-scale maps.

The activities mentioned above took place in southern Mesopotamia; the northern part, Assyria, was left untouched. During the following years, however, large irrigation projects and dam-building activities promoted the archaeological investigations in this region, too. The construction of the Hamrin dam in the upper Diyala plain, the Rania plain activities and—last but not least—the Eski Mossul dam helped to make an inventory of the archaeological sites in these regions and to start a program of rescue excavations<sup>20</sup>. But the results—insofar as they have been published—have been disappointing. On the other hand, excavations of the classical kind, for example at Nimrud, Tell Taya and Tell Rimāḥ, produced new insights into the historical situation in northern Mesopotamia from the period of Akkade to the end of the Assyrian state<sup>21</sup>.

But another field of research came into focus in the sixties and seventies: northern Syria. The excavations at Mari and Tell Brak continued on a wide scale, but new sites as Tell Chuera, Tell Barri, Tell Bi'a, were added and a large rescue project in connection with the Tabqa dam created a new picture of the interrelationship between Mesopotamia in the south and Syria in the north-west. Various surveys—the Sinjar survey by Seton Lloyd, the survey of Northeastern Syria by Dietrich J.W. Meijer, the Habur survey by H. Kühne and myself, the Queiq survey by J. Matthers<sup>22</sup> etc.—gave a first impression of the rich field of study in this region, which was the strategic corridor for the Assyrian empire, sometimes forming a central part of its strategic glacis and its economic resources. This holds true also for another region: eastern Turkey. The nearly inaccessible provinces on the borders between Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and the former Soviet Union was—as a matter of fact—highly influenced by Assyria, often the object of military campaigns, sometimes associated with the Assyrian empire. Here our Italian colleagues developed their activity with surveys in the Malatya-Gaziantep region<sup>23</sup> and also in the Zagros mountains<sup>24</sup>. The strong Assyrian influence during the first millennium B.C. has been demonstrated by the impressive presentation of material from these surveys—but the evaluation in terms of historical geography has not yet been completed.

### 1.7. *New concepts in philology and the Répertoire Géographique*

The presentation of a very large number of newly edited texts after the Second World War made it necessary to adopt a new approach to the study of Historical Geography. Therefore, in 1951 at the 2nd Rencontre Assyriologique in Paris, a small group of Assyriologists (Jean Nougayrol, Jean-Robert Kupper and W.F. Leemans) resolved upon to publish of a geographical lexicon, later to be called the "Répertoire Géographique", which was foreseen as a collection of names of cities, villages, rivers,

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Th. Jacobsen: Iraq 22 (1960), pp. 173ff. with note 1; H.J. Nissen: AS 20 (1976), p. 12 note 17 with references; R. McC. Adams, *Heartland of Cities. Surveys of Ancient Settlement and Land Use on the Central Floodplain of the Euphrates*, Chicago 1981.

<sup>20</sup>It is a deplorable situation that, with the exception of some maps, no real survey reports about these regions have been published.

<sup>21</sup>Stimulating and rich in facts, a comprehensive report about the results of decades of excavations and surveys in Northern Mesopotamia is the book by D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq*, London 1968.

<sup>22</sup>S. Smith - S. Lloyd, *Some Ancient Sites in the Sinjar District*: Iraq 5 (1938), pp. 123-142; D.J.W. Meijer, *A Survey in Northeastern Syria*, Istanbul 1986; J. Matthers (ed.), *The River Qoueiq, Northern Syria, and its Catchment*, 2 vols., Oxford 1981. The Habur survey is in preparation for publication.

<sup>23</sup>S.M. Puglisi - A. Palmieri, *Researches in Malatya District 1965-1966*: TAD 15/2 (1968), pp. 81-100; J. Yakar - A. Gürsan-Salzman, *A Recent Archeological Survey in the Malatya and Sivas Provinces*: Tel Aviv 6 (1979), pp. 34-53.

<sup>24</sup>Pecorella and Salvini, ZU. In this context also the research of the German Archaeological Institute Abt. Teheran in the heartland of Urartu are to be mentioned, cf. Kleiss and Hauptmann, TKU.

channels, mountains from cuneiform texts in order to provide a compendium of all the available geographical information.

The intention was not to solve the countless problems of identification, but to provide the material base for a frame of reference for further research. After an initial phase of intensive collection, the files were stored in the office of Leemans in Arnhem but never found their way to publication. In 1971, after the Special Research Area "Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients" or TAVO was established with the aim of producing and publishing geographical-historical maps of the Near East, the material was handed down to Tübingen and a concept developed to publish the material in 15 volumes<sup>25</sup>. Most of these volumes have been published by now based, obviously, on newly gathered material and on the re-evaluation of older material. The volume on Neo-Assyrian toponyms has not yet been published, but since 1970 a computer-assisted collection by Simo Parpola based on earlier text-editions has made a first draft available for this period as well. The series *State Archives of Assyria* with its comprehensive glossaries now presents a welcome supplement to NAT<sup>26</sup>.

Parallel to this undertaking, a project with a different aim has been inaugurated here in Rome: on the basis of a painstaking interpretation of the Assyrian rulers' historical inscriptions, the material foundation of the source material has been investigated and classified<sup>27</sup>. Taking into consideration also socio-economic conditions, a new effort was made to gain access to an understanding of the historical-geographic informations in source materials. The aim of this project, too, is the publication of historical maps and some of these have already appeared<sup>28</sup>.

The publication of modern maps on different periods and aspects of the history of the ancient Near East was the aim of a further project of the TAVO. The results of this research have been published during the last few years in a series of maps which cover all the important regions and stretch over the millennia<sup>29</sup>. It has been attempted—but only occasionally with success—to bring into focus all the principles which I will discuss later, especially consideration of the geographical conditions and circumstances of certain historical events or developments, the interdependence between special features of archaeological sites and changing settlement practices, etc. All the authors of these maps are aware of the fact that they constitute only one step in a certain direction, and that further research will reveal all the gaps and mistakes of these maps and will render a new attempt necessary.

A new philological investigation of certain historical material based on these principles has been undertaken by K. Kessler<sup>30</sup> and has corrected many traditional identifications based on the thesis of E. Forrer. This investigation attempted the reconstruction of the provincial administration in Neo-Assyrian times. In a comparable manner, but depending mostly upon archaeological data, Julian

<sup>25</sup>Cf. W. Röllig, *Aims and Organization of the "Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes" and Historical Geography*: Sumer 42 (1986), pp. 40-43. So far the volumes 1-6/2, 8-12/1 have been published. Volumes 7 (Neo-Assyrian texts), 12/2 (Texts from Syria 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Mill.), 13 (Literary texts), 14 (Geographical texts) and 15 (Indexes) have not yet appeared.

<sup>26</sup>Parpola, NAT. Besides the admirable edition of the Neo Assyrian letters etc. in the SAA series the critical edition of all the Assyrian historical texts, now in preparation by completion of the Neo-Assyrian volume of RGTC.

<sup>27</sup>E. Badali - M.G. Biga - O. Carena - G. Di Bernardo - S. Di Rienzo - M. Liverani - P. Vitali, *Studies on the Annals of Assurnasirpal II. 1. Morphological Analysis*: VO 5 (1982), pp. 13-73; Liverani, ATA.

<sup>28</sup>*Atlante Storico del Vicino Oriente Antico*, Fasc. 2.5; 4.2; 4.3; 5.3; 6.5, Roma 1986-1992.

<sup>29</sup>They are the TAVO-maps B I 16-18; B II 7-9.12-15; B III 6-8; B IV 8.10-14.17-22. With regard to the history of Assyria see:

B II 7: Kh. Nashef, *Babylonien und Assyrien in der zweiten Hälfte des zweiten Jahrtausends*.

B IV 8: F. Prayon - W. Röllig - A. Wittke, *Östlicher Mittelmeerraum und Mesopotamien um 700 v. Chr.*

B IV 10: K. Kessler, *Assyrien bis 800 v. Chr.*

B IV 11: B. Groneberg - F. Vallat, *Die Elamischen Reiche (3200-521 v. Chr.)*.

B IV 12: W. Röllig, *Syrien und Palästina vor der Annektion durch Assyrien (732 v. Chr.)*.

B IV 13: K. Kessler, *Das Neuassyrische Reich der Sargoniden (720-612 v. Chr.) und das Neubabylonische Reich (612-539 v. Chr.)*.

<sup>30</sup>Kessler, UTN.

Reade made his praiseworthy investigations into the geographical conditions in the central regions of Assyria<sup>31</sup>.

## 2. Further tasks for historical geography

### 2.1. Identification of sites

One of the central tasks of a historical geography is and remains the obligation to determine settlements accurately, but solely from the available text-material. Without being able to establish fixed points on the map, it will be impossible to reconstruct the course of historical processes. Already identified sites form the framework for every historical reconstruction. In this respect close cooperation of both archaeologists and philologists is indispensable and, of course, has been practised over the last few decades. The problems arising, for example, from the fact that places changed their names in a relatively short time are well known to everybody today. Therefore, the identification of an ancient site with a modern *tell* does not always solve the problem, but poses new questions; see, for example, the discussion about Tell Rimāḥ and its identification with Karanā and/or Qaṭarā<sup>32</sup>.

### 2.2. Natural setting of settlements

While the centre of interest in the beginning of historical geography was the identification of sites and their correlation to Biblical stories, another aspect is prominent now. It is important to recognize the natural setting of a settlement, the natural elements favouring settlements—be it the neighborhood of a river, an abundant spring, the soil conditions, the position at the top of a mountain, a hillside, in the vicinity of the sea, or the situation on an overland trade route. A city cannot be seen without its surroundings, the agricultural, mining or manufacturing conditions. In other words, its ecology is to be taken into consideration. In this respect, too, close cooperation is required of archaeologists and philologists with specialists in disciplines such as botany and zoology, geography and geomorphology, anthropology and ethnography to name only the prominent fields.

### 2.3. Agriculture and industries

For a fair historical-geographical reconstruction of ancient civilizations, the economic base of cities and villages is significant. It is important to know the kind of cereals which could be cultivated, whether the soil conditions, for example, prohibited an adequate harvest because of salt or gypsum, or whether only pastoral economy based on sheep and goat or also cattle and camels was possible. Further on, resources of metals, precious stones, bitumen, forests, gardens and swamps enable us to reconstruct the wealth or poverty characterizing the living conditions in particular districts<sup>33</sup>. Raw materials and their use, production, importation or exportation are also subjects of historical geography.

<sup>31</sup>J. Reade, *Studies in Assyrian Geography: Sennacherib and the Waters of Nineveh*: RA 72 (1978), pp. 47-72, 157-180.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. at last B. Groneberg: ZA 69 (1979), pp. 261-265; St. Dalley: RIA V/5-6 (1980), pp. 405-407; J.-M. Durand - D. Charpin: RA 81 (1987), pp. 125ff.; B. Lafont - J.-M. Durand: NABU 1991/35.

<sup>33</sup>This is useful also in comparison or in contrast to modern cultivation methods. A stimulating tool for such research has been E. Wirth, *Agrargeographie des Irak*, Hamburg 1962. For modern Syria see for example G. Meyer, *Ländliche Lebens- und Wirtschaftsformen Syriens im Wandel*, Erlangen 1984; H. Hopfinger, *Öffentliche und private Landwirtschaft in Syrien*, Erlangen 1991.

#### 2.4. *Roads and commercial routes*

With the publication of the famous Emar itinerary by Albrecht Goetze and William W. Hallo<sup>34</sup> it became obvious that ancient routes existed and their reconstruction could be used not only for a better determination of certain sites, but also for a reconstruction of daily stops and, consequently, the distances between places named in the itineraries. Insofar as it is possible to fix such routes, the length of their existence must be considered:

- whether they followed natural features as channels, river-beds, depressions in hillsides;
- whether they crossed borders and what happened in such a case;
- whether they were protected by forts or watch-towers;
- whether the towns or villages took care of the travellers and how this was organized.

We learned a great deal about such subjects through the study of Larsen on Old Assyrian caravan procedures<sup>35</sup>—but it is open to discussion whether this highly developed commercial trading system can be transferred to other periods and institutions, however. The question of an interaction between commercial and military routes—if it existed at all—is not yet solved. The same is true for the various questions of overland transportation, whether and how much river boats were used, whether desert routes could be opened by drilling of wells. If we consider the famous desert march of Nabonidus on Yathrib in this respect, it is to raise the question of accommodation of such a huge number of soldiers.

Further on, numerous questions arise with respect to long-distance trade, the importation of particular merchandise or of raw materials, the export of complementary goods. The places where special goods were produced should be determined, and the location of mines of copper, tin, silver, gold and other materials should be determined as well. Here, as in other fields of historical geography, there should be close cooperation amongst such disciplines as ancient history and prehistory, classical archaeology and the history of mining.

#### 2.5. *Nomads and sedentary peoples*

The ethnographic aspect of geography should not be neglected. In the course of the exploitation of the Mari texts the problem of antagonism between sedentary peoples and nomad tribes came into focus<sup>36</sup>. In contrast to the situation in Europe, the natural conditions in the Near East always produce a population group which is not settled but extremely mobile. One of the constant problems for the political administration in Mesopotamia and Syria was guaranteeing the security of the sedentary population vis-a-vis this nomadic element. The living conditions of the sedentary people on the one hand and of the nomads on the other are also subjects for historical geography. In this field, cooperation with social anthropology and a thorough study of the reports of early travellers is required, but also familiarity with modern forms of nomadism and pastoralism.

#### 2.6. *Concept of the world*

In a wider sense, questions of principal importance arise: the concept of the whole world, the philosophy of an individual's relationship to environment, the ideas of center and periphery, of the human world and the Netherworld, phenomenology and the vision of an ideal world. It may be that

<sup>34</sup>A. Goetze, *An Old Babylonian Itinerary*: JCS 7 (1953), pp. 51-72; W.W. Hallo, *The Road to Emar*: JCS 18 (1964), pp. 57-88; A. Goetze, *Remarks on the Old Babylonian Itinerary*, *ibid.* pp. 114-119.

<sup>35</sup>M.T. Larsen, *Old Assyrian Caravan Procedures*, Istanbul 1967. Compare also K.R. Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and its Terminology*, Leiden 1972; Kh. Nashef, *Rekonstruktion der Reiserouten zur Zeit der altassyrischen Handelsniederlassungen*, Wiesbaden 1987.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. the classical publication by J.-R. Kupper, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari*, Paris 1957. Further on J.T. Luke, *Pastoralism and Politics in the Mari Period*, Univ. Microfilm, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1965; H. Klengel, *Zwischen Zelt und Palast*, Leipzig 1974; M. Anbar, *Les tribus amurrites de Mari*, Freiburg-Göttingen 1991. In general: P. Briant, *Etat et pasteurs au Moyen-Orient ancien*, Paris 1982.

specific texts, e.g. the famous Sargon legend, will reveal a projected panorama coloured by desires for a new, better world with ideal living conditions—and thus they give us *e contrario* a hint of actual living conditions. May I mention only two publications in recent years which are stimulating in this respect: the article about *Mental Maps and Ideology: Reflections on Subartu* by Piotr Michalowski<sup>37</sup> and the comprehensive publication of *Babylonian Topographical Texts* by A.R. George<sup>38</sup>. There is no question: the lists in the latter publication are products of the Babylonian school of scholars, and therefore to be handled with care. But even these texts, based on a special kind of Babylonian geographical knowledge, if not "historical" in the strictest sense of the term, make it evident how central the problems of geography—including "historical geography"—are to our discipline.

In the framework of the historical geography of western Iran in Neo-Assyrian times, the problem of the location of Hubuska has been much debated in the past. Leaving aside older ideas discarded by modern research<sup>1</sup>, in recent times two diverging proposals have been advanced. The first is that Hubuska should be looked for in the mountainous area north of Assyria, between Lake Van and Lake Urmia, on the Yuksekoyun/ Bakran plain<sup>2</sup>; the second is that it must have been located east-south-east of Assyria, in the valley formed by the Lower Zab headwaters, south-west of Lake Urmia<sup>3</sup>. A third, intermediate position has been proposed by Russell, who has located Hubuska in the mountain area east of Rowanduz and south of Musasir<sup>4</sup>.

Both proposals rely exclusively on the reconstructions of the itineraries followed by the military campaigns of the Assyrian kings, which are described in their royal inscriptions. The question has been briefly, but adequately summed up recently by M. Livonani and M. Lising<sup>5</sup>. A northern location of Hubuska is backed up by the following elements: it is close to Musasir (on the Baradost); to Kirur/ Habarur (the Dasht-e Harir plain), and to Giltzane (western-south-western shores of Lake Urmia); it is separated from Assyria by one of the two Zabs, usually identified as the upper one. The south-south-eastern location, however, is backed up by its proximity to Mannea (east of Assyria), and again by its proximity with Musasir and Kirur/Habarur. As for Russell's proposal, he identifies the Zab (mentioned by Sargon in his "Letter to the God" as separating Hubuska from Musasir) as the Rowanduz river, a western tributary of the Upper Zab.

The possibility that other texts such as Neo-Assyrian letters may offer some clues to the solution has never been seriously taken into account, probably because of the poor state of the editions and of the fragmentary information they offer. Nevertheless, when they contain geographical data, the letters represent a first-rank source for historical-geographical reconstruction, on the condition that they are adequately understood and that their historical and contextual background is fully appreciated. All this obviously implies the knowledge and the control of a wide series of elements, such as chronology, administrative background, communicational and rhetorical questions, and many other problems, which generally pile up on each other to such an extent that, as has been aptly stated, the final impression is that of a swamp of innumerable unrelated data<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>The bibliography is aptly assembled in ATA, p. 23 ff. 61.

<sup>2</sup>U, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>J.V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Kurba'il Summe of Sargonid III*, Iraq 24 (1962), pp. 108-110; P. Hulin, *The Inscription on the Curved Tablet, Base of Sargonid III*, Iraq 25 (1963), p. 58; J. Reade, *Kassites and Assyrians in Iran*, Iran 16 (1978), p. 141; *Sochi's Mesopotamian Geography II*, BA 72 (1978), pp. 173-179; *Mesopotamia, Gilgamesh, and Related Cosmogonies*, AMI 19 (1979), pp. 123-124; M. Lising, *Iranian Geography and Sargon's Eighth Campaign*, JNES 49 (1990), p. 49; M. Lising, *Iranian Geography and Sargon's Eighth Campaign*, JNES 49 (1990), p. 49; M. Lising, *Iranian Geography and Sargon's Eighth Campaign*, JNES 49 (1990), p. 49.

<sup>37</sup>In H. Weiss (ed.), *The Origins of Cities in Dry-Farming Syria and Mesopotamia in the Third Millennium B.C.*, Guilford, Conn. 1986, pp. 129-156.

<sup>38</sup>A.R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, Leuven 1992.

<sup>6</sup>See also the discussion in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, April 34 (1975), pp. 199-204.

Cf. De. I and 2, 2000.

PLAS II, p. 21.