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**ITINERARIES AND TRAVELLERS IN THE MIDDLE ASSYRIAN PERIOD\***

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In the historical period known as Middle Assyrian (15th to 11th century BC) we can follow the rise and consolidation of Assyria as a territorial state, in which the successful circulation of goods, people, and information became a fundamental function of politics. Hence, most of the relevant cuneiform texts, especially administrative records and letters, originated in an official context of state administration. However, the texts are less concerned with the route of the journeys than with the persons who travel, their instructions and provisions during the trip. Therefore we will start with a brief mention of the documented itineraries and then focus on the people who, in a compelled or voluntary way, made use of the roads, as well as on the organisational aspects of the travel. The material will be presented according to a systematic rather than a strictly historical pattern, namely, production, taxation, state service, government, diplomacy, and trade. The greater part of our material comes from Aššur, the capital of the Middle Assyrian kingdom, and dates to the 13th and early 12th century BC. Yet, an important corpus of new texts from Syrian sites such as Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad (ancient Dūr-Katlimmu), Tall Ḥuwēra (ancient Ḥarbe), and Tall Šabī Abyaḍ corresponding to the same period is in course of publication.

As has been noticed, the Middle Assyrian texts often refer to persons or groups of people going from one point to another within the Assyrian borders. But at best we learn the point of departure and the destination;<sup>1</sup> in other cases we only know a place where

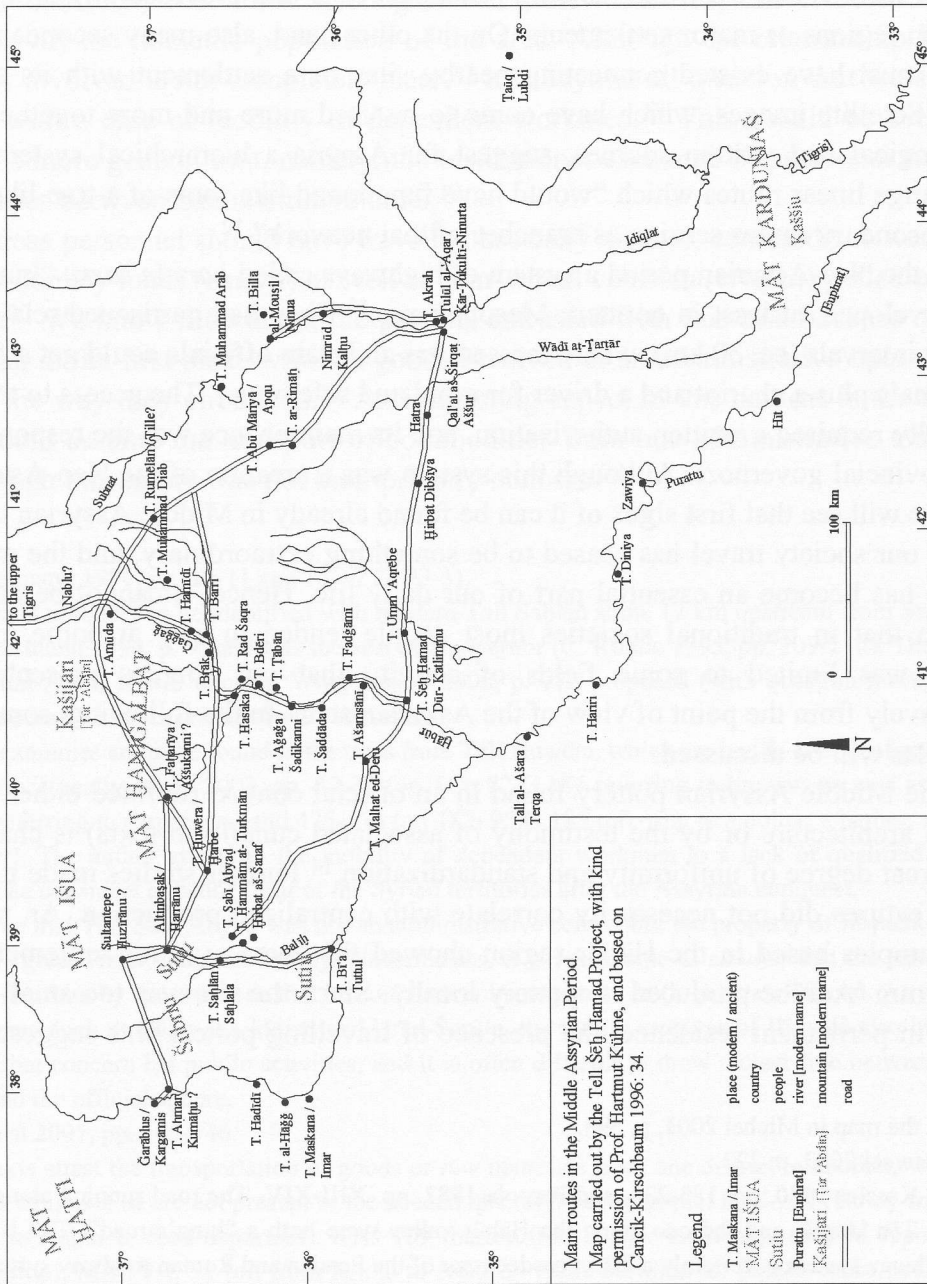
\* The text is the unchanged version of a paper read at Udine on September 2004 on occasion of a conference organized by Frederick Mario Fales and untitled "Treading the (military, commercial, and cultural) itineraries of the Ancient Near East". I am much indebted to Dr. Brigitte Finkbeiner for reviewing my English as well as to Prof. Harmut Kühne and his team of the Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad Project for having prepared the map for this publication.

1. For example KAJ 249: Nineveh→Aššur (as well as Ḥatti→Aššur).

they pass through.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, there are some exceptions to this state of affairs (cf. map). The most eloquent text is an itinerary found in Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad /Dūr-Katlimmu, which describes the road stations of a contingent of soldiers (*hurādu*) marching from Ta'idu, now to be identified with Üçtepe on the upper Tigris,<sup>3</sup> to Dūr-Katlimmu on the lower Ḥābūr valley, although the exact location of most of the resting-places and the function of the text are still under discussion.<sup>4</sup> The other two itineraries that are worth mentioning are parts of larger texts, that is, a letter also discovered at Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad and an administrative record from Aššur.<sup>5</sup> The letter written by an Assyrian official (probably the *sukkallu* Sîn-mudammeq) to his superior (presumably the *sukkallu rabi'u* Aššur-iddin) contains a report about an assault on foreign traders coming from Karkemiš, and in this context mention is made of the route of the caravan between Karkemiš and the Ḥābūr-triangle.<sup>6</sup> The other itinerary is at the beginning of a list of provisions for members of the royal court who were on a trip through Nineveh towards the south.<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious that we owe these references to specific, yet random circumstances. Archaeological evidence points to the existence of a steppe route communicating Aššur with the region of the lower Ḥābūr<sup>8</sup> and perhaps also with the lower Balīḫ.<sup>9</sup> The meal tickets of diplomats discovered at Tall Ḥuwēra, which we will discuss later, suggest that a northern road through the Ḥābūr-triangle was also in use.<sup>10</sup> On that score, the Old As-

2. For example CTMMA I, 99 (Postgate 1988, pp. 144-146).
3. Radner – Schachner 2001, pp. 754-757 and Radner 2004, pp. 113-115.
4. DeZ 2521 (Röllig 1983): Ta'idu→Marirtu (Ğagğag or an affluent of this river)→Magrisi (Tall Ḥasaka)→Naprara (on the Ḥābūr)→Latiḫi (Tall Šaddāda)→Qatun (Tall Fadgāmī or Tall Ašamsāni)→Dūr-Katlimmu. The distance marched each day was about 25-30 km. Indirect evidence can be brought up for a route along the Balīḫ valley: BATSH 4, 2: 4-10.
5. A very fragmentary itinerary along the Šišsar (probably the Wādī aṭ Ṭartār south of Aššur) is also attested in VAT 9968 (Weidner 1966). Differing from the opinion of the first editor the text is now considered to date to Middle Assyrian times; see Deller – Postgate 1985.
6. BATSH 4, 6: 16' ff.: Karkemiš→Kumāḫu (Til Barsip/Tall Aḫmar)→Ḥuzīrānu (Ḥuzīrīna/Sultantepe)→Ajjānu→Ḥarrānu (Altınbaşak)→Penkibe. For a discussion of the toponyms see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, pp. 122, 114 and 31 (map with reconstructed route). For another proposal concerning the first leg of the route see Röllig 1997, pp. 286-287 (followed here on the map). An unpublished letter from Tall Ḥuwēra (TCh 92.G.151 mentioned by Jakob 2003, pp. 291-292) also makes allusion to a route in the same region used by Assyrian couriers: Aššukanni→Ḥarbe→Saḫlala→Ḥarbe →Aššukanni.
7. MARV III, 1: 1-9: Nineveh→Dunnu-ša-mār-šarri→Kalḫu→Ša-Sîn-rabi. Cf. Llop 2002 for a brief presentation of the passage.
8. Pfälzner 1993, pp. 89-96. For a march from Aššur to Dūr-Katlimmu (ca. 240 km) he proposed a duration of 11 days assuming a distance of 23 km per day. See also H. Kühne 2000.
9. H. Kühne 1983.
10. See C. Kühne 1995, p. 210b. Cf. also the text cited in fn. 2, above (esp. p. 146).



syrian texts suggest that there were two main northern routes, one passing through the southern part of the Ḥābūr-triangle, the other one running along the foot of the Ṭūr ‘Abdīn.<sup>11</sup>

All these roads were undoubtedly principal roads that provided a rapid connection between regions or major settlements. On the other hand, also many secondary or local routes must have existed connecting nearby sites or a settlement with its associated fields. Satellite images, which have come to be used more and more together with archaeological and written sources, suggest for Assyria a hierarchical system of main long-range linear routes which “would have functioned like roots of a tree-like network with secondary routes serving as branches of that network”.<sup>12</sup>

In the Neo-Assyrian period a system of highways called *ḥarrān šarri*, “king’s road”, was developed, at least in northern Mesopotamia.<sup>13</sup> They had garrisoned relay points at regular intervals (ca. 30 km), where messengers and state officials could get a fresh team of animals plus a chariot and a driver for rapid and safe travel. The access to this service generally required a written authorization, and its maintenance was the responsibility of the provincial governors. Although this system was a creation of the Neo-Assyrian empire, we will see that first signs of it can be found already in Middle Assyrian times.

In our society travel has ceased to be something extraordinary, and the mobility of people has become an essential part of our daily life. Hence, it cannot be emphasized enough that in traditional societies most people tended to stay at home, or nearby. Travel was limited to some fields of activity that our sources presented almost exclusively from the point of view of the Assyrian state. In the following, some selected examples will be discussed.

The Middle Assyrian pottery found in an official context (defined either by monumental architecture or by the testimony of associated cuneiform texts) is characterized by a great degree of uniformity and standardization.<sup>14</sup> Further studies made it clear that these features did not necessarily correlate with centralized production. An analysis of clay samples based in the Ḥābūr region showed that even a minor settlement such as Tall Umm ‘Aqrēbe produced its pottery locally. Since the site was too small to need a potter in permanent residence, the presence of travelling potters was suggested.<sup>15</sup> This

11. Cf. the map in Michel 2001, p. 593.

12. Altaweel 2003, p. 222.

13. Cf. Kessler 1980, pp. 183-236, and Parpola 1987, pp. XIII-XIV. The road running along the foot of the Ṭūr ‘Abdīn and the one along the Ḥābūr valley were both a “king’s road”. The Neo-Assyrian highway system is certainly a direct predecessor of the Persian and Roman roadway system, although still unpaved.

14. Pfälzner 1997.

15. Pfälzner 1993, pp. 81-86.

seems to be confirmed by a letter addressed to Mannu-kī-Adad, the steward of the farmstead located at Tall Šabī Abyaḍ in the upper Balīḥ region.<sup>16</sup> He was urged to send a potter from Saḥlala to the brewer of Dunni-Aššur, who apparently needed some jars to produce (additional) beer for a meeting between the local Assyrian authorities and (a delegation of) the nomadic population of the area. Although the relationship between the places involved is not completely clear,<sup>17</sup> it is beyond all question that we are dealing here with a case of mobility of dependent workmen.<sup>18</sup> This should be seen as an aspect of a more general trait, namely, the institutional exchange of personnel as well as commodities between administrative units.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas personnel should have travelled basically on foot, commodities were transported by donkey loads (*emāru*) as well as four-wheel vehicles (*ereqqu*) pulled by a pair of mules.<sup>20</sup> We know little about the persons entrusted with this task because our texts are dealing in the first place with the goods involved in an administrative operation and not with the way they circulated.<sup>21</sup> An interesting aspect in this context is the fact that traders could assume the transport of commodities from one administrative unit to another, though this surely was not their primary concern.<sup>22</sup>

16. Wiggermann 1994, pp. 10-11 and 15-17 (T 93-3).

17. Saḥlala is probably to be identified with modern Tall Saḥlān some 12 km upstream from Šabī Abyaḍ (Wiggermann 1994, p. 9) and was the seat of a governor (C. Kühne 1995, pp. 209-210). The location of Dunni-Aššur is still unclear. Wiggermann 2000, p. 172 proposed (with question mark) the Tall Abyaḍ some 12 km upstream from Tall Saḥlān.

18. More examples are to be found in the texts from Tall Ḥuwēra, which are just in course of publication. See provisionally Jakob 2003, pp. 32-33 (on TCh 92.G.184 referring to brewers as well as TCh 90.G.23 referring to carpenters) and 475-476 (on TCh 95.G.185 referring to a potter, a barber, and an oil presser). The author attributes the mobility of dependent workmen to a lack of qualified workers, which he considers a distinct trait of the Syrian territories after the Assyrian conquest.

19. It is true that Tall Šabī Abyaḍ was not an administrative centre, but the property of Ilī-padâ, *sukkallu rabi'u* "great vizier", and his family. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the territory was granted to him by the crown so that he could cover his expenses as (high) state official. As with other statesmen such as Bābu-aḥa-iddina and Urad-Šerū'a, the family archives of Ilī-padâ also include records that concern his public activities, and it is often difficult to draw a clear line between the private and the official sphere.

20. Cf. Faist 2001, pp. 145-146.

21. The texts attest the transportation of goods or raw materials from one district to another, where they are not available or are not present in the needed quantity. For example: KAJ 113 (barley from Amasakku to Naḥur to feed deportees), KAJ 109 (barley from Naḥur to Šuduḥu to feed deportees and their cattle), MARV I, 51 (oil from Kilizu to Aššur to make perfume for palace consumption), KAJ 249 (bronze from Nineveh to Aššur to cast axes for a military campaign).

22. KAJ 249 (cf. Faist 2001, pp. 90-92). A donkey driver is attested in Billa 26 (for a new reading cf. Jakob 2003, p. 374).

As one may expect, river transport was preferred for bulk items such as grain, and is mainly attested in connection with taxation. The best example is given by an administrative document recording taxes delivered by diverse cities and districts, and dating to the reign of Tiglatpileser I (1114-1076 BC).<sup>23</sup> The taxes were agricultural products (barley, syrup, dried fruits, and sesame) that had been transported down the Tigris to the capital, where they were presented as regular offerings (*ginā'u*) to the god Aššur. The captains of the ships (*malaḥḥu*) are mentioned by name and took responsibility for the cargo.<sup>24</sup> We shall recall in this context at least two preserved stipulations of the Middle Assyrian laws which deal explicitly with the regulation of river traffic.<sup>25</sup> Since not all the places mentioned in our text were located next to the river or to a tributary of it,<sup>26</sup> we may assume that a combination of overland and river transport was in operation.

The Tigris was also used to transport tribute or booty coming from adjacent regions.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the texts from Dūr-Katlimmu testify the existence of water canals in the Ḫābūr region, which might have served not only for irrigation but also for traffic.<sup>28</sup> The Ḫābūr River seems inappropriate for the latter purpose because of its numerous meanders. The written evidence has been strengthened by archaeological remains of a canal running east of the Ḫābūr and dated to the Middle Assyrian period on account of the associated pottery.<sup>29</sup>

The ambitious building programme undertaken during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I (1243-1207 BC according to the middle chronology), including a new capital at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta and a new palace in Aššur, required the mobilization of manpower on a large scale. This is attested by texts recording the allocation of barley for persons working at those sites. The workmen came from quite different, often distant places and regions and had to be lodged and fed for the period of their stay.<sup>30</sup> Some of them were

23. MARV I, 56: 42-52.

24. According to MARV II, 20, the captains were responsible for any losses during the transport.

25. Roth 1997<sup>2</sup>, p. 189 (tablet M § 1-2).

26. For example, Apqu/Tall Abū Māriyā is located 40 km westwards of the Tigris (Nashef 1982, p. 33). The same holds true for many other cases; for example, MARV II, 20, in which a shipment of barley from Tille (probably to be identified with Tall Rumēlān east of Nusaybin; Nashef 1982, p. 261) is registered.

27. For example, MARV IV, 34 (barley from Babylonia). Cf. also KAJ 106 (with commentary by Freydank 1982, p. 42), in which (captured) ships from Babylonia are mentioned.

28. BATSH 4, 8: 28'-33', and BATSH 4, 17: 10-12.

29. Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, p. 44.

30. The administrative record MARV II, 17, attests the issue of rations for periods of 10 days up to periods of 4 months and 20 days.

carrying out compulsory labour owed to the state, others were prisoners of war.<sup>31</sup> They were organised in groups listed on waxed boards (*lē'u*) under the control of state officials who were responsible for the issue of rations to them.<sup>32</sup> Since the local production could not possibly cover the required amounts of barley, it had to be got from elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> All this implied a considerable organisational effort coordinated by representatives of the king (*qēpūtu ša šarri*) who gave the directives to the district administrators (*bēl pāhete*) and local authorities from Aššur and Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.<sup>34</sup>

The army was another sphere of state activity that required the mobilization of numerous people. The main part of it consisted of men doing military service and acting as infantry soldiers (*šābū hurādātu*). As in the case of the civil service, the Assyrian administration kept lists of these men on wooden writing-boards (*lē'u*). Their supply was primarily a concern of the governor (*bēl pāhete*) whose district the military units were stationed in or passing through. In the correspondence of Dūr-Katlimmu we find several references to military operations in the Syrian territories (called Ḫanigalbat by the Assyrians), which were the responsibility of Sîn-mudammeq, probably *sukkallu*, "vizier". Most of these operations sought to suppress rebellious activities steered by the Hurrian neighbours who felt threatened by the Assyrian expansion.<sup>35</sup> On one occasion mention is made of a chain of garrisons in the land Ḫarrānu in the upper Balīḫ and at the foot of the Kašijari, the modern Ṭūr 'Abdīn.<sup>36</sup> We may assume that these garrisons also served to protect the northern route that crossed Assyria from east to west.

31. MARV II, 17, records rations for many teams of workers involved in the construction of the palaces at Aššur and Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta during a certain period of time. For example: l. 7-14 (2362 people, among them chariot makers, gate guards, fatteners of animals, deportees who had been settled in Arba'il, temple personnel, engineers, and people from Subartu), l. 35-48 (1604 people, among them exorcists, diviners, and scribes). Cf. also MARV I, 1: I 54'-59' (Hurrian people who built the city wall of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta as well as people from Na'iri who also worked there), MARV I, 12 (people from Ḫarallu, Qumani and Mušri working in Aššur). MARV I, 27 + MARV III, 54 records the assignment of ca. 6630 kg of wool as a royal present to master builders, architects, and deportees from Ḫanigalbat, Katmuḫi, and Na'iri, who have been working together at the palace of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.

32. For *lē'u* see Postgate 1986, pp. 22-26, Postgate 2003, pp. 133-136, and Jakob 2003, pp. 29-31.

33. MARV I, 1: IV 48-60 (barley from Ša-Sîn-rabi and the storehouse of Kidin-Ellil together with a comparatively small amount of barley from Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta), MARV II, 20 (barley from Tille transported by ship). The normal ration for a male adult is about 1 *qa* a day (ca. 0,84 l); cf. Jakob 2003, pp. 48-50.

34. Jakob 2003, pp. 273-278.

35. Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, pp. 37-38.

36. BATSH 4, 7: 1"-15".

Government also needed some mobility. Here we have to distinguish between members of the Assyrian administration and those serving in the courier service, although officers could also act as messengers.<sup>37</sup> Among the most mobile officials were undoubtedly the *qēpūtu*. As representatives of the central power they travelled regularly to the different provinces assuming controlling functions in the fields of, among others, agricultural production, stock farming, taxation, and redistribution.<sup>38</sup> The governors (*bēl pāhete*) in turn went to Aššur in order to pay their respects to the king and give account of their activities.<sup>39</sup> An interesting point connected with our subject is the fact that a *qēpu* could be entrusted with a trade mission (*qēpu ša harrāni*) on account of the palace or the household of a high official, thus competing with traders (*tamkāru*) to whom we will return later.<sup>40</sup>

According to the texts from the Syrian provinces the *sukkallu rabi'u*, “grand vizier”, who was responsible for all the western part of the Assyrian realm, as well as the *sukkallu*, “vizier”, who followed him in the administrative hierarchy, also travelled frequently since their sphere of action extended beyond a single district.<sup>41</sup> The available evidence seems to confirm what we already know for diplomatic missions, namely, that statesmen used to travel in two-wheel chariots pulled by horses (Bab. *narkabtu*, Ass. *mugerru*)<sup>42</sup> and could be escorted.<sup>43</sup> This applies all the more to the king.<sup>44</sup> He, too, is

37. This was the case of Aššur-tappūfī who must have been a high-ranking official according to BATSH 4, 10, and Tokyo D (Tsukimoto 1992, pp. 36-38) and was sent as a messenger to Dūr-Katlimmu by the king (BATSH 4, 9: 4-16).

38. See Jakob 2003, pp. 261ff.

39. This is attested by administrative texts from Aššur recording the *nāmurtu*, “audience fee”, given by the governors on occasion of their visit in the capital; see Postgate 1974, pp. 156-162.

40. Faist 2001, pp. 120-122.

41. Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, pp. 91-185; C. Kühne 1995, pp. 212-220.

42. TCh 92.G.220 (cf. Jakob 2003, p. 211: record of provisions for a high functionary and a chariot driver), TCh 92.G.155 (Jakob 2003, p. 293: letter-order of the governor of Tall Ḥuwēra to his mayor concerning the provisions for a man and a chariot driver). For the transport of diplomats in two-wheel chariots pulled by horses see C. Kühne 1973, pp. 106-107.

43. CTMMA 99: 3-6 (record of provisions for some diplomats and local dignitaries escorted by a cavalryman), BATSH 4, 3: 24-30 (the *sukkallu rabi'u* Aššur-iddin is asking for an escort of 50 soldiers). Cavalrymen (*ša pethalle*) seem to be used for escorting travelling parties as well as for policing. A use in war developed at the end of the 12th century BC. See Jakob 2003, pp. 212-213; Wiggermann 2000, p. 196.

44. For example, EA 15: 12-15, EA 16: 9-11: “I have sent you as a present a beautiful royal chariot that I drive myself and two white horses that I also drive myself and (in addition) one unhitched chariot” (after CAD N/1, p. 354b).



attested on his way.<sup>45</sup> Such a royal journey seems to have happened more often than we may admit at first glance, since the Middle Assyrian Palace decrees, a collection of regulations dealing with the internal activities and behaviour of the palace personnel, took it into consideration. For example, a decree from the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I runs as follows:

When the king [leaves] the Inner City (*i.e.* Aššur), the palace personnel who travel with the king on the journey [shall bring] their containers (?) [into the palace; only] the palace commander shall open (the containers holding) the jewellery, the clothing, [the wool], and the oil rations of the palace personnel who travel with the king ...<sup>46</sup>

A visit by the king such as it is attested in a letter from Dūr-Katlimmu might have flattered the local authorities.<sup>47</sup> But at the same time it must have represented a great challenge not only on an organisational but also on a material level. Like his peers all over the world, the Assyrian king always travelled in the company of members of his court and numerous palace personnel. Moreover, it seems unlikely that he and his entourage were supplied with assignments of barley only.<sup>48</sup> Last but not least, he might have expected to be entertained by musicians or the like. The available evidence does so far not support the assumption of a system of credit entries between the provinces and the capital as in the case of travelling diplomatic missions which we will discuss later.

The maintenance of the courier service was a matter of the provinces, too. The correspondence uncovered at Dūr-Katlimmu is a good example for the way information and orders circulated within the administrative hierarchy. It refers to written (*našpertu, ša pī ṭuppi*) as well as oral instructions (*ina abat + personal name, ša pī mār šiprutte*).<sup>49</sup>

45. BATSH 4, 10, and the unpublished Dūr-Katlimmu texts Dez 2532 and Dez 4022 (mentioned by Jakob 2003, p. 124), MARV III, 1, A. 842 (Donbaz 1992).

46. Translation according to Roth 1997<sup>2</sup>, p. 199.

47. BATSH 4, 10. This journey is the more interesting as the Assyrian monarch travelled with the defeated Babylonian king, his wife, and a delegation of Babylonian statesmen. For 19 accompanying women (Assyrian as well as Babylonian) six coachs (*utmannu*, pl. *utmannāte*) are explicitly mentioned, *i.e.* ca. 3 women a coach.

48. Cf. for example A. 842 (Donbaz 1992), where beer, *tariḫu*-vessels, and good bread is attested. The almost desperate search for additional linen attested in BATSH 4, 6: 1'-7' and BATSH 4, 7: 14'-29' might have been connected with the preparations for the king's visit; see Faist 2001, pp. 133-134 with fn. 121.

49. See especially BATSH 4, 9 (with commentary by Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, pp. 142-143 *sub* No. 4) and BATSH 4, 1 (*ibid.* 93 *sub* No. 4). For a general treatment of the topic see Postgate 1986.

It also suggests a regular communication between the capital and the provinces. The running messenger (*lāsīmu*), well attested in former periods, probably served short distances only and was largely replaced by emissaries (*mār šipri*) and couriers (*kalli'u*) going in a chariot pulled by two horses.<sup>50</sup> Due to the mobility inherent to their way of life, the nomadic people of the Jezirah (regularly referred to as Sutilian), who appear to have been on good terms with the Assyrian authorities, occasionally served as messengers and informers.<sup>51</sup> According to the evidence from Tall Ḥuwēra, a messenger in a wheeled vehicle could travel an average of 30–40 km a day, implying one travelling day of 60–80 km and one relay day. With a daily exchange of horses even 80 km per day were possible.<sup>52</sup> For our journey from Aššur to Dūr-Katlimmu (ca. 240 km) this would imply a duration of 6 days in the first case and of 3 days in the second case.<sup>53</sup>

Foreign diplomats (*mār šipri, ubru*) going to or coming from the capital are attested as well.<sup>54</sup> Although we cannot say that certain roads were used for specific functions (such a differentiation did probably not exist), it is perhaps not purely by accident that the diplomatic missions, even those travelling to Amurru and Egypt, preferred a northern route through the Ḥābūr-triangle. More favourable ecological conditions (especially in connection with water resources) and a higher population density should have made travel more comfortable and provisioning easier than in the case of the southern steppe route. We cannot prove the existence of a relay system as in the Neo-Assyrian period. Yet, administrative notes recording the issue of rations to travellers as well as letter-orders giving instructions with the same purpose suggest that some level of organisation was reached in this respect.<sup>55</sup> The service was accessible to diplomats as well as to high Assyrian officials such as the aforementioned representatives of the king or the grand vizier. The provinces maintained it, but the letter-orders found at Tall Ḥuwēra clearly show that in the case of foreign delegations the assignments could be credited against the taxes, at least during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta.<sup>56</sup>

50. See Jakob 2003, pp. 303–309 (especially on TCh 90.G.50) and 355 (especially on MARV II, 17: 97–99).

51. For example BATSH 4, 2: 40–44, MARV II, 22: 10–13. For nomads serving as caravan leaders for the Assyrian administration see Streck 1997, p. 275 (review of the Dūr-Katlimmu letter No. 14).

52. Jakob 2003, pp. 291–292.

53. For comparison see fn. 8, above.

54. For example, CTMMA I, 9: 3–6, TCh 92.G.226: 16–20 (cf. Jakob 2003, p. 213), and the letter-orders discovered at Tall Ḥuwēra: 92.G.208, 92.G.209, 92.G.211, 92.G.222, 92.G.212 (C. Kühne 1995, pp. 216–219).

55. See fn. 42, above.

56. For this purpose the *bēl pāḥete*, “governor” (i.e. the addressee), had to send back the letter-order (*tuppu*) to the *sukkallu*, “vizier” (i.e. the sender), within a month. In return, he would get a sealed document (*kiširtu*). The functionary entrusted with the accreditation of the service was the *ša piqitte* “responsible for the supply”; cf. Jakob 2003, pp. 173–174.

Three embassies are referred to in those texts: a Hittite one led by Telišarruma and formed of seven wheeled vehicles (four pulled by a pair of horses and three by a team of mules) and six donkeys, an Egyptian one led by the Sidonian Milku-rāmu and composed of one chariot pulled by horses as well as three donkeys, and finally an Am-rite one headed by Jabna-ilu and formed of ten donkeys only. The stipulated supply (*piqittu*) was for two days and included barley for the animals as well as bread and beer for the men. The mission of Telišarruma, the most prominent one, was provided, in addition, with three sheep, ca. 2 litres of oil and 2 litres of spice plants.<sup>57</sup>

Not included in this system of state supply were the traders.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to the model postulated for contemporary Ugarit and preceding Nuzi, which supposes that the merchants were servants of the state (“palace economy”), the Middle Assyrian evidence rather supports a view of independent entrepreneurs who travelled at their own expense and risk. The main trade relations were held with the Syrian territories dominated by Hittites (especially Karkemiš and Emar) and to the mountain regions in the north (notably for the acquisition of horses). Accordingly, our texts referred not only to Assyrian but also to foreign merchants travelling through Assyrian territory in rather small donkey caravans. There is no mention concerning the imposition of any toll, but for imported goods, customs duties had to be paid.

Since we do not have a single merchant’s archive, most information comes from official sources. This leads necessarily to a very restricted view. Thus, traders are mainly attested when commissioned by the palace or the household of an important statesman to procure the desired commodities, mostly raw materials and luxury goods such as metals, wood of good quality, (semi-)precious stones, cosmetic oils, and elaborated textiles, as well as horses. In addition, merchants aroused the attention of the Assyrian state when they were assaulted on the road. The correspondence of Dūr-Katlimmu shows that even at the height of its power, the Assyrian administration could not prevent disturbances in Ḫanigalbat nor attacks on caravans. The security of the roads did not only concern the Assyrian state. It was a general problem, and we only have to remember the agreements between Ugarit and Karkemiš on this matter. Likewise, the Assyrian authorities made an effort to compensate (*mullāʾa malāʾu*) the merchants for their losses, especially when they were foreigners.<sup>59</sup>

57. For further details see Jakob 2003, pp. 288ff. and 355-356 (daily rations for animals: horse, 5 *qa* of barley, mule, 3 *qa*, donkey, 2-2.5 *qa*). Concerning the rations for men see also fn. 33, above.

58. For the following remarks see Faist 2001.

59. See especially BATSH 6: 16"ff. and BATSH 4, 2: 53-60.

Finally, a brief mention is owed to aspects unattested so far. In the religious realm, we do not have any indications referring to pilgrimages to the important shrines. This may be conspicuous if we consider that the main god Aššur had only one sanctuary at the capital. On the other side, Aššur never became a deity with a close relationship to the common people. He was the god of the ruling dynasty, and his worship remained in an official context of state cult.

In the period chosen for our contribution we witness the first step of a state development that would culminate in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, when Assyria became the incontestable power in the Near East. On the contrary, in the second half of the second millennium BC international politics was determined by competing powers like Egypt and Hittite Anatolia, and Assyria was only one of them, and it was the youngest. The two letters sent by Aššur-uballiṭ (1363-1328 BC) to the pharaoh give us a vivid impression of the increasing self-confidence and self-esteem of the Assyrian king.<sup>60</sup> The Egyptian diplomatic mission attested in the aforementioned letter-order from Tall Ḥuwēra took place at the peak of Assyrian power, shortly after the two successful campaigns to Babylonia by Tukultī-Ninurta I. As I have proposed elsewhere, there was perhaps a connection between both events.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the content of the message which the Assyrian king sent in response to the Egyptian pharaoh. Anyway, the official answer might have been only one part of the story.

In a letter of August 20, 1755 AD, the Prussian king Frederick the Great wrote to his sister Wilhelmine who had been on an Italian journey and had sent some enthusiastic reports from there:

... I have a very high regard of the beauty of Italy, her wonderful climate, her monuments, her past greatness as well as her modern buildings. ... But I also believe the Italians to be great braggarts; they exaggerate the beauty and the value of their paintings, their statues, and a thousand things more. Everything is *uno spavento, una maraviglia*; big words that do not stir my ear more than would the noise of a turnspit. ... I believe if I saw Italy I should not always agree with the *ciceroni*, which would console me for my fatherland's barrenness; otherwise, the comparison would be too humiliating for poor Germany ...<sup>62</sup>

60. EA 15, EA 16.

61. Faist 2001, pp. 224-225.

62. From: Friedrich Wilhelm Prinz von Preußen – Kirsten Heckmann-Jans – Sibylle Kretschmer, "... *so-lange wir noch zu zweit sind*". *Friedrich der Große und Wilhelmine Markgräfin von Bayreuth in Briefen*, Munich, 2003, p. 255. Translation into English by Dr. Brigitte Finkbeiner.

Sources of that nature, relevant to the cultural aspect of travel, are completely absent from our material. Nevertheless, I can imagine Tukultī-Ninurta I reclined on his throne and musing in a similar way after having received the Egyptian delegation.

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