The Temple of *ʿAin Dāra* in the Context of Imperial and Neo-Hittite Architecture and Art[*]

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ʿAin Dāra is one of the largest pre-classical archaeological sites in the *ʿAfrīn* valley in Northwestern Syria (Fig. 1). Situated close to the Turkish border at the bank of an important tributary of the Orontes River, it is famous for an impressive temple with its fine sculptural decoration on the outer façade and inner walls. The depictions of gods and animals carved in a Hittite style made it a unique feature in Syrian archaeology until the more recent discovery of the Storm-God temple in Aleppo.

The archaeological site had been recognized in 1954 when the first sculptures were discovered. Excavations were conducted by the General Department of Antiquities and Museums in Damascus in 1956, 1962, 1964 under the responsibility of F. Seirafi and, after a longer interruption, 1976, 1978 and 1980 – 86 under the direction of A. Abū Assāf[1]. Additionally, a lower town survey was undertaken in 1982 – 84 by an American team led by E. Stone and P. Zimansky[2].

The fast publication of a first volume made the architecture and decoration available to the public[3]. Immediately afterwards, a discussion on the cultural background and precise dating of the temple arose and continues until now. Due to the lack of any written sources from *ʿAin Dāra* itself, its history and even its identification has remained obscure. Was the temple a product of one of the Luwo-Aramaean principalities, which constituted themselves after the collapse of Hittite Empire around 1200 B.C.E.? Or was it already built during Imperial Hittite domination over Northern Syria in the Late Bronze Age? Do the reliefs date to the 9th and 8th cent. B.C.E. as supposed by the excavator or do they represent the very early stage of the Neo-Hittite art as argued by W. Orthmann[4]? Or may the time-span of their production even cover both the late Imperial Hittite and the Neo-Hittite Periods as style and iconography indicate in the opinion of K. Kohlmeyer[5]? The discovery of the temple of the Storm-God on the citadel of Aleppo[6] with its sculptures in a similar style to that one from *ʿAin Dāra* brought new insights into the development of Syro-Hittite art of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages and therefore also new arguments for the chronology of *ʿAin Dāra*.

Beside its chronology, also the layout of the temple and the iconography of its decoration arose broad attention in the scientific world due to its obvious similarity to Solomon's temple in

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[1] Abū ʿAssāf 1990, 1.
[2] Stone / Zimansky 1999.
[3] Abū ʿAssāf 1990.
[4] Orthmann 1971 and 1993. Cf. also Orthmann 2002.
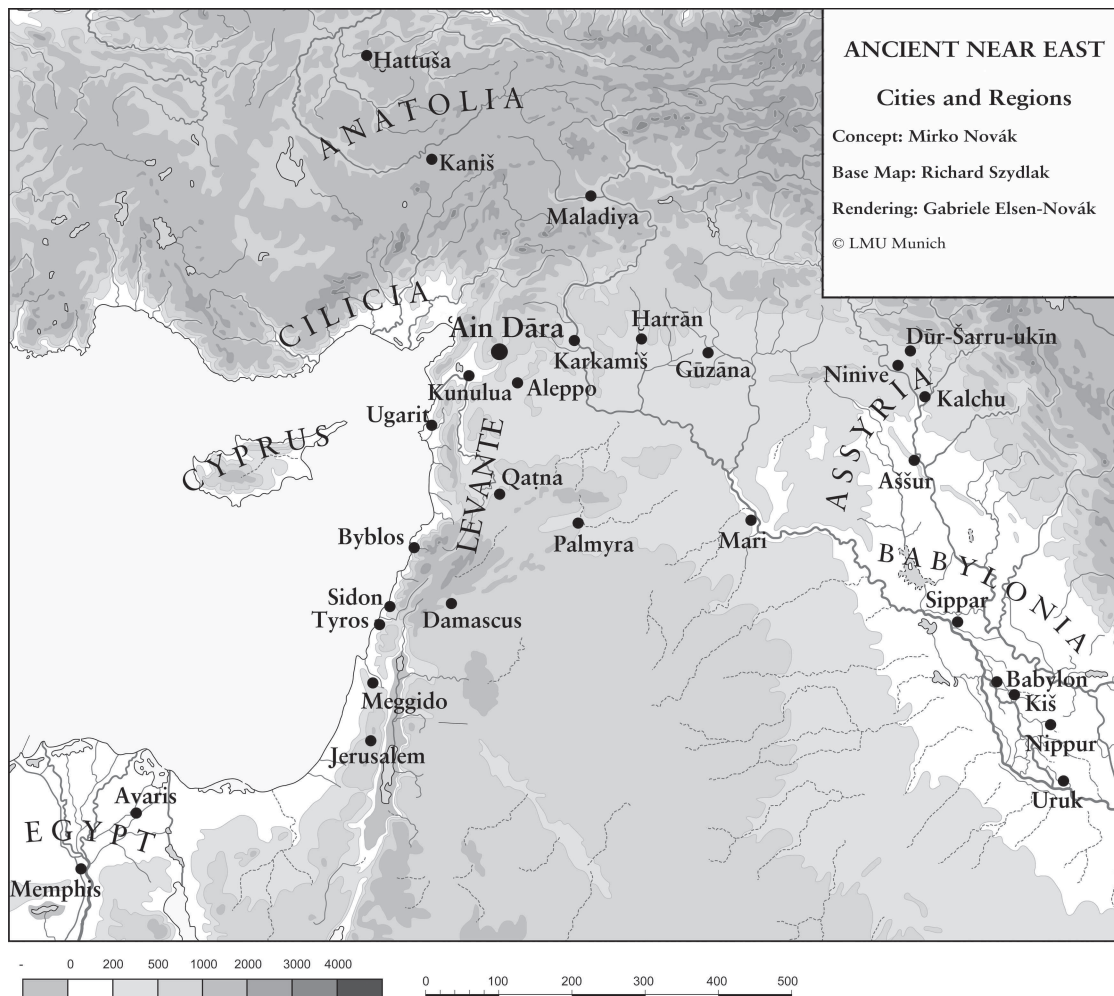[5] Kohlmeyer 2008.
[6] Gonnella / Khayyata / Kohlmeyer 2005.

Fig. 1.   Map of the Ancient Near East with the position of ʿAin Dāra.

Jerusalem as described in 1 Kgs 6. This questions the cultural relationships within the greater Levant during the Early Iron Age[7].

In the following article I will try to give a brief overview on the material and the main arguments for its cultural context and dating.

1. The Site

ʿAin Dāra is situated 40 km northwest of Aleppo and 7 km south of the town of ʿAfrīn at the east bank of the ʿAfrīn-river, a tributary of the Orontes. The hilly landscape is characterised by a plenty of water supply and a fertile ground, giving good conditions for human settlements. The spring, which gave the place its name, is located approximately 800 m to the west.

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[7] Weippert 2003, 227.

Fig. 2.   Topographical plan of the site of 'Ain Dāra (after: ABŪ 'ASSĀF 1990, Abb. 2).

The site itself consists of a high citadel mound measuring 125 m in north-south and 60 m in east-west direction, situated close to the river, and a flat lower town of 270 m to 170 m, which is adjacent to the north and the east of the citadel (Fig. 2). The morphology indicates that the Lower Town was strongly fortified. This urban layout with a high citadel at the periphery of the town, neighbouring a river, is reminiscent of a number of Luwo-Aramaean towns such as Carchemish at the Euphrates and *Guzāna* at the Ḫabūr.

   Excavations and surveys have revealed the long history of occupation, starting in the Neolithic period and lasting, with only few interruptions, until medieval times. Of particular interest for our aims here is the fact that both lower town and citadel mound show a dense settlement in the Late Bronze Age as well as in the Early and Middle Iron Age (Table 1)[8]. Some Aegeanizing ceramic sherds were discovered at the site, giving further chronological indications and attesting relationships to the west[9].

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[8] STONE/ZIMANSKY 1999, 10–14.
[9] Cf. LEHMANN 2007, 495, 502–503, *passim*.

Period	Date	Historical Development	Style Period	Development of Art
LB II	1350–1180 B.C.E.	Incorporation of Northern Syria into Hittite Empire	Middle Syrian / Imperial Hittite	Introduction of Hittite elements into Syrian art; development of a "Syro-Hittite" art
IA IA	≈ 1190–1100 B.C.E.	Hegemony of the Hittite dominion of Carchemish; far reaching migrations	Late-Hittite I	Syro-Hittite art with regionally differentiated traditions of Mittani, Middle Assyrian and Canaanite elements
IA IB	≈ 1100–950 B.C.E.	Fragmentation of political unities		
IA IC	≈ 950–900 B.C.E.	Intrusion of Semitic nomads	Late-Hittite II	
IA IIA	≈ 900–820 B.C.E.	Foundation of Aramaean principalities		Creation of new styles and types
IA IIB	≈ 820–720 B.C.E.	Particularism; Assyrian expansion	Late-Hittite III	Adaption of Assyrian elements
IA IIC	≈ 720–580 B.C.E.	Incorporation into Assyrian Empire	Provincial Assyrian	Imitation of Assyrian court style
IA III	≈ 580–330 B.C.E.	Babylonian and Persian Provinces	Babylonian / Persian	Babylonian / Persian influences

Table 1.   Chronological chart of Late Bronze (LB) and Iron Ages (IA) in the Levant
(based on: MAZZONI 2000, Tab. 1 and LEHMANN 2007, Tab. 1).

The internal structure of the citadel is sparsely known (Fig. 3). If it was fortified not only to its western river front but also towards the lower town, has not been investigated so far. Some trenches show, however, traces of fortifications at its eastern and south-eastern flank. Analogies to other Luwo-Aramaean towns like *Kunulua* (*Tell Taʿyīnāt*), Carchemish, *Til Barsip* (*Tell el-Aḥmar*), *Guzāna* (*Tell Ḥalāf*) and others make such a distinction most likely [10]. In most of these cases, the citadel was further divided into an outer and an inner part, being separated from each other by a wall [11]. If such a division existed also in *ʿAin Dāra* is unknown so far, but is indicated by the find spot of a lion's sculpture, serving as a gate guardian. It is situated to the south of the temple, halfway to the south-western edge of the citadel mound and may have been part of a separating gateway within the citadel.

2. The Temple

The temple area covers the northern quarter of the citadel mound in an elevation of about 20 m above the plain level. The proper building rests on a 70 cm high artificial terrace and measures 38 m in length and 32 m in breadth, oriented from southeast to northwest (Taf. 10A). Most likely,
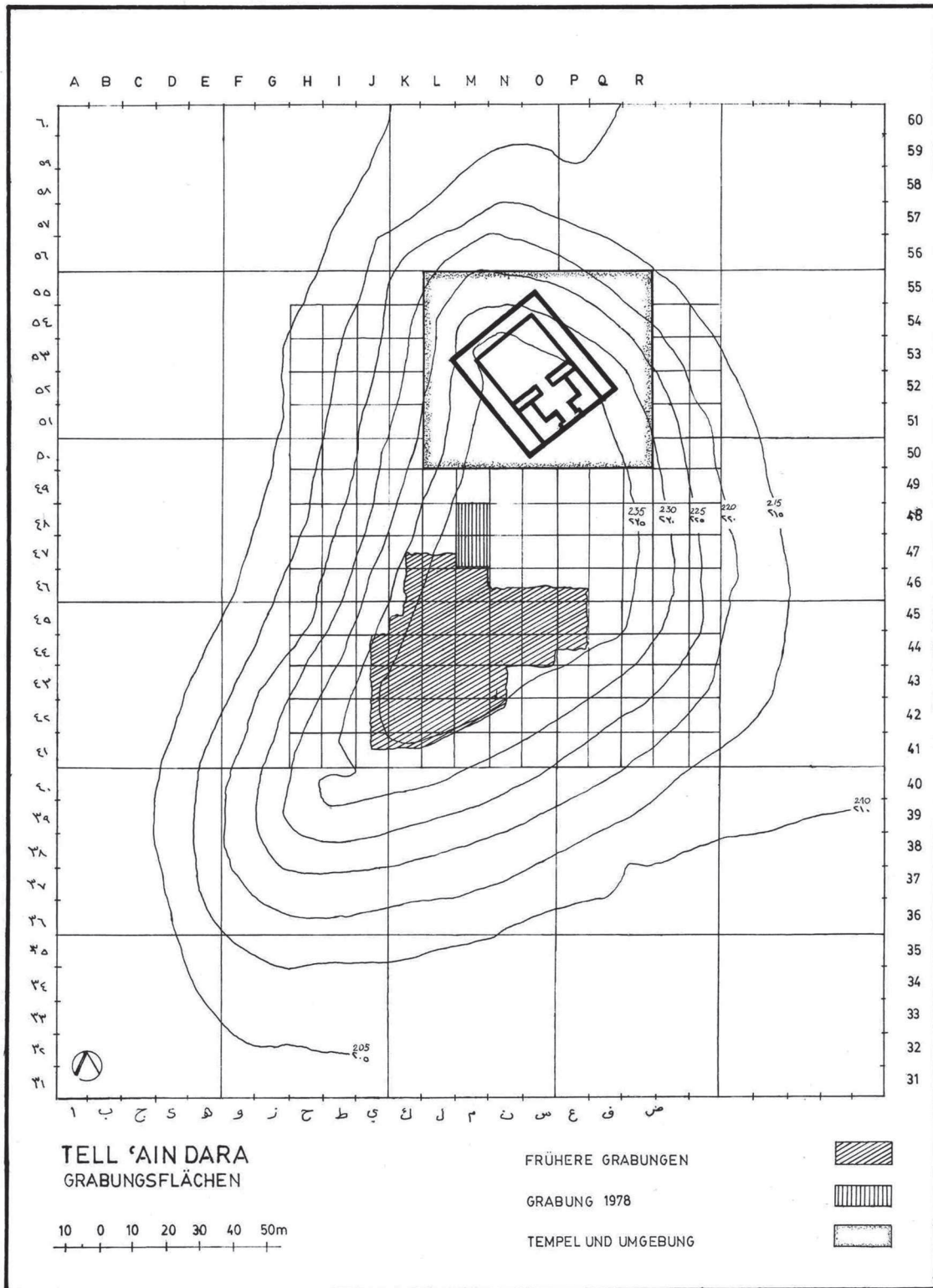
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[10] NOVÁK 1999.
[11] ORTHMANN 2006.

Fig. 3. Plan of the citadel (after: ABŪ ʿASSĀF 1990, Abb. 3).

it was part of a larger *temenos* of which an extended courtyard to the south and southeast is attested. This courtyard is paved with altering basalt and limestone slabs (Taf. 10B) and contains a well and a stone basin, situated 14 m south of the eastern corner of the temple. These installations were used either for washing or libation activities in front of the temple's entrance.

On its south-eastern narrow side, the temple terrace is accessible through an 11 m broad stone staircase with four to five stairs made of basalt monoliths (Taf. 11A). The front room of the temple is a broad niche between two *antae*. Two circular basalt bases prove the existence of wooden columns between the *antae* and a roof covering the niche. The entrance niche gives direct access to the inner rooms of the building: a rectangular *antecella* (15.80 m broad and 6.00 m deep), and an adjacent square *cella* (16.70 × 16.80 m), both paved with limestone slabs (Fig. 4). The thresholds are flat limestone monoliths, two at the entrance of the *antecella* and one further at the entrance of the *cella*. The first one is decorated by two parallel large footprints of approximately 1 m length, carved into the stone. The second one shows a left footprint of the same size, the third threshold a right one. This unique feature finds no parallel in the Ancient Near Eastern architecture and lacks a clear interpretation. Probably the way should have been indicated, which was gone by the supernatural owner of the temple.

Almost halfway inside the *cella* a row of decorated orthostats is running cross to the axis of the temple. It may be the rest of either an otherwise not preserved podium or of a secondary wall, which was reducing the depth of the room similar to the situation in the Storm God's temple of Aleppo [12].

The inner walls consist of basalt stone blocks, which were originally basing mudbrick superstructures, of which only poor traces were recognized. The basalt stones contrast strongly with the limestones used for the pavement.

Inside the eastern outer wall, close to the dividing wall between *antecella* and *cella*, a small staircase was inverted, giving access either to the roof or to a second story on top of a gallery (Taf. 10A) [13]. This gallery is surrounding the proper temple at its outer side, situated on an enlargement of the terrace. It was most likely divided into regular units by a number of buttresses ("*Stelae*") at the outer wall and corresponding steles and pillars at the very edge of the terrace, the latter unified within an enclosure wall.

The excavators distinguished several building phases [14]. Following their observations, an initial temple was erected on an earlier terrace. The second phase consisted of the new terrace and the proper temple. The gallery, situated on an extension of the terrace, was added during a third and last building phase. Being first open to the outside similar to a *peripteros* with pillars, it was closed with the help of an outer enclosure wall during its terminal stage.

Both in its initial and its terminal layout the building belonged to the well-known type of the *templum in antis* [15], which is attested in the Northern Levant and Northern Mesopotamia from the Early Bronze Age III (examples: *Tell Ḫuēra*, *Ḥalāwa* Tell A, *Tell Kabīr* near *Tell Banāt*, and Ebla [*Tell Mardīḫ*]) through Middle (example: Ebla) and Late Bronze Age (examples: Emar [*Tell Meskene*], Ekalte [*Mumbaqāt*]) until Iron Age (examples: *Kunulua*, Carchemish). As a Syro-

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[12] GONNELLA / KHAYYATA / KOHLMEYER 2005, 88ff.

[13] ABŪ ʿASSĀF 1990, 16.

[14] ABŪ ʿASSĀF 1990, 20–21.
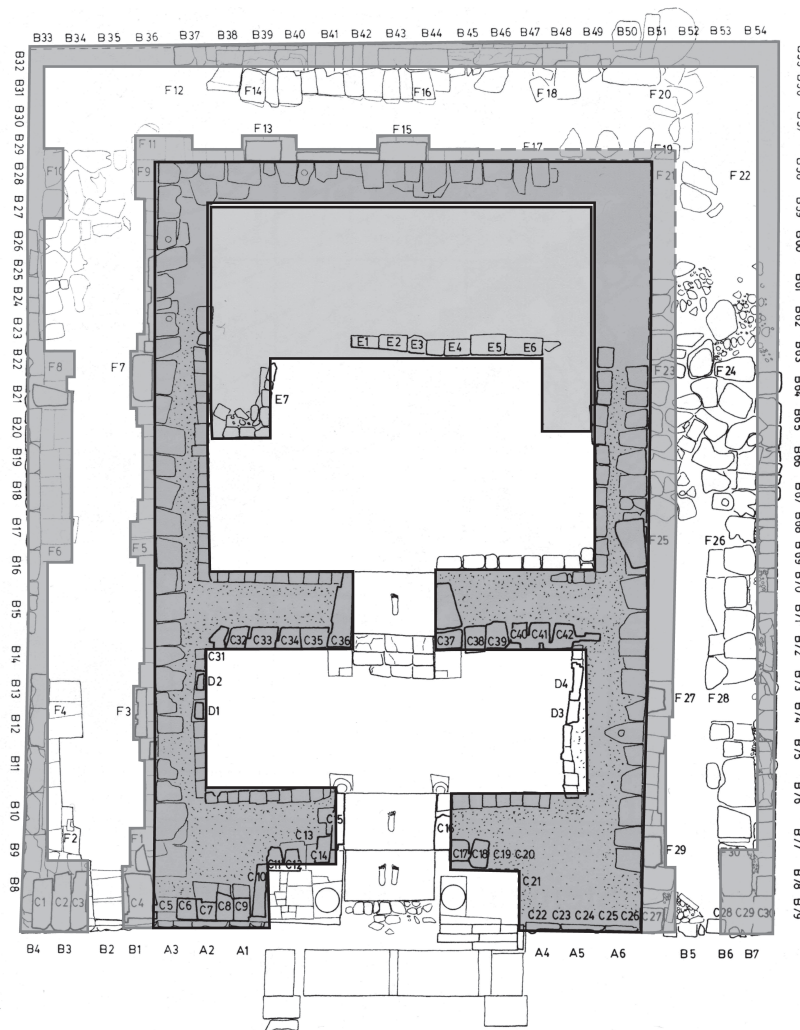
[15] Cf. WERNER 1994; CASTEL 2010.

Fig. 4.   Plan of the temple with its three building phases
(drawing by G. ELSEN-NOVÁK after
ABŪ ʿASSĀF 1990, Abb. 18).

Levantine creation it was still a characteristic type within the Luwo-Aramaean architecture of the
Iron Age [16]. The temple *in antis* shows striking differences to Assyrian and Babylonian temples [17]
on the one hand and Imperial Hittite temples on the other, both characterised by a complex inner
structure with central courtyards and a number of additional rooms beside the *cellae*. Buildings
of the temple *in antis* type never appeared in Babylonia, Assyria or Central Anatolia [18].

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[16] MAZZONI 2010.

[17] Cf. in general HEINRICH 1982.

[18] The only parallels outside the Northern Levant and Northern Mesopotamia are the so-called *megaron*
buildings, which appear in Western Anatolia almost contemporary to the temples *in antis* in Syria,
during the Early Bronze Age (so *e. g.* in Troy II). As far as we know, they were exclusively used for
palatial uses in the Aegean world until the end of the Bronze Age, followed by the Classical *peripteros*
temples only in the Iron Age.

The columned portico of the *ʿAin Dāra* temple has its best parallels in the near-by temples in *Kunulua*.

We can therefore conclude that the architecture of the temple is of local Syrian origin and is not influenced by any foreign tradition. However, it cannot give us any hint on the dating of the building due to the longevity of the temple *in antis* type.

3. The Decoration and Its Parallels

The temple is decorated on its outer façade and its inner walls by well modelled and deep cut reliefs on basalt stone blocks and orthostats. The decoration shows a wide range of motifs carved in a relatively homogeneous style.

This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of the reliefs in general and their iconography in particular. Instead, I will concentrate on just a few examples, which might help to figure out the temple's cultural context and its chronological framework.

The outer façade of the terrace is decorated with lions and sphinxes shown in profile but turning their heads *en face*. Apart from some reliefs from the gallery, like the depiction of a sitting person (F 13), and additional lions and sphinxes belonging to a renovation phase of the front part, they may represent the latest figures of the temple. Some details make it most likely that they should not date earlier than the 11th cent. B.C.E.

Slightly different in style are the protomen figures, which flank the entrance at the front façade of the *antae* of the core temple and the inner sides of the entrance niche. Stylistically and iconographically they correspond to Imperial Hittite examples from *Ḫattuša* and Aleppo[19]. From the same period derive some specific slabs situated inside the *antecella*, showing a rectangular framed guilloche decoration. These slabs might have imitated windows and are known from the Aleppo Temple[20].

Of particular interest are the mountain deities, which are depicted both in the *antecella* and at the podium within the *cella*. Head and torso are shown *en face* whereas the feet and the long skirt with the parallel sheds as symbols of mountains are given in profile (Taf. 11B). At the podium they stand in alternating rows with lion- or eagle-headed winged deities or bull-human-hybrids. Mountain gods of this type are known from Imperial Hittite art. They appear in Chamber A in Yazılıkaya both as independent gods in the row of male gods[21] and as subjective gods carrying the Storm God in the main scene[22]. Similarly to this, mountain gods constitute the base of the images of the Storm God and the Sun Goddess at the spring sanctuary at Eflatun Pınar[23]. If we consider a similar function of the mountain gods at *ʿAin Dāra*, keeping in mind that the examples at the podium are lifting their arms in an Atlantes gesture, we could conclude that an image of the Storm God might have been standing or sitting on top of the podium. All datable parallels to

[19] KOHLMEYER 2008, 123.
[20] GONNELLA / KHAYYATA / KOHLMEYER 2005, 90 – 91, Abb. 120 and 122.
[21] SEEHER 2002, 114, Fig. 2, Gods No. 15, 16a and 17.
[22] SEEHER 2002, 116, Fig. 7 and 8.
[23] EMRE 2002, 222, Fig. 4.

the mountain gods belong to the Imperial Hittite Period [24], probably also those from the Aleppo temple [25] and from the quarry of Yesemek [26].

The most famous relief from ʿAin Dāra was found within the wall between *antecella* and *cella*, directly at its south-western end (Taf. 12). It shows the depiction of a female figure turning to the right, wearing a long coat kept by a belt and open below. In an anatomic incorrect way the lower part of the coat covers her right leg whereas her left leg and her pubes are shown naked. Although her head and shoulders are badly preserved one wing is visible which is growing out of her left shoulder. The iconography identifies her as Ishtar/Shaushga, goddess of war and of (sexual) love. A good parallel, although with a covered pubes, is represented in the gods' procession in Chamber A in Yazılıkaya, dating to the 13th cent. B.C.E. [27]. Being situated as only female in the row of male gods, she is identified by a Hieroglyph inscription. She also appears in the same way in the Lion's Gate in *Malatya* (Arslantepe), here additionally holding a weapon [28]. In both cases, Yazılıkaya and *Malatya*, her aggressive character as goddess of war is pinpointed whereas no indications for her sexual aspects are given. Opposed to that, the depiction of a nude goddess from the "Long Wall of Sculptures" in Carchemish is symbolizing sexuality in a very explicit way [29]. She is shown standing *en face* and holding her breasts. Two wings are growing out of her shoulders and thus connect her with the images of the war goddess. Obviously, it is the iconography of Ishtar/Shaushga as goddess of love and sexuality. The relief from ʿAin Dāra now combines in a unique way both aspects of the goddess. Due to its iconography and style, W. ORTHMANN [30] convincingly dated the relief into the late Imperial or very early Neo-Hittite Period. The fine modelled style is mostly reminiscent to the one in which the relief at the "King's Gate" in Ḫattuša was carved, making a late Imperial date more likely.

The find spot makes it quite improbable that Ishtar/Shaushga was the main deity of the temple. Her image then should have been situated in the focus of the building on top of the podium. Due to the close connection of the mountain gods with the Storm God as attested in Yazılıkaya and Eflatun Pınar and the fact that they obviously carry something or somebody standing on top of the podium it seems more likely to attribute the temple to the Storm God himself. Still, this proposal lacks a solid proof.

In general, the iconography of the reliefs imbed the temple of ʿAin Dāra closely into the Hittite imaginary world. There are no elements which are unknown to Imperial Hittite art or which even make a Syrian origin likely.

Contrary to this, the black-and-white decoration, created by an altering setting of limestone and basalt orthostats has no parallels in Anatolia, only in Syrian architecture. It is known from the 'Long Wall of Sculpture' at Carchemish and the backside of the Western Palace ('Hilani') at *Guzāna* and is also described in the É-ḫul-ḫul of Sin in Ḫarrān:

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[24] Cf. the overview given in WEIPPERT 2003.
[25] GONNELLA/KHAYYATA/KOHLMEYER 2005, 101, Abb. 142.
[26] ALKıM 1974.
[27] SEEHER 2002, 114, Fig. 2, No. 38.
[28] ORTHMANN 1971, Tf. 40 b and d.
[29] ORTHMANN 1971, Tf. 24 b.
[30] ORTHMANN 1993.

12   Er [Nabū-na'id] schuf sein Ziegelwerk, formte den Grundriß,
13   seine Gründung legte er fest, zog empor seine Spitzen,
14   von Gips und Asphalt ließ er strahlen seine Fassade,[. . .]
15   einen ungestümen Wildstier wie (in) Esangil stell[t]e er vor ihm auf [31].

This shows that in the Neo-Hittite architecture playing with alterning colours was known. But in contrast to these examples, in *'Ain Dāra* only basalt stones have pectoral decorations. Limestones are restrictively used for the pavement and the thresholds. The only exceptions are the thresholds with the monumental footprints. So even with that, the temple of *'Ain Dāra* remains a singular feature without close parallels. So how about the medium, the orthostats?

Undecorated slabs and orthostats were known in North-Western Syria since the early 2nd mill. B.C.E., as represented by pieces from *Qaṭna* (*Tell el-Mišrife*), Alalaḫ (VII), Ebla and Aleppo, the latter showing also some early examples of reliefs. Decorated slabs at the outer facades of buildings and gates were developed in Central Anatolia from the Imperial Hittite period on (*Ḫattuša*, Alacahüyük). The first examples of relief orthostats inside of rooms are known from the Storm God's temple in Aleppo.

We therefore can safely conclude that orthostat reliefs as decoration of outer facades and inner rooms is a Syrian creation of the Imperial Hittite Period and became later a characteristic feature of late Hittite architecture in South-Eastern Anatolia and Northern Syria, which even influenced Assyrian art. The temples in Aleppo and *'Ain Dāra* may mark the beginning of this development.

4. Chronological and Cultural Considerations

The precise date of the *'Ain Dāra* temple and its three building phases remains uncertain on the base of pure architectural indications. Inventories and inscriptions were either not found or not published in a reliable amount and are thus also not helpful in establishing a precise chronology. Therefore, the temple's decoration remains the only source for chronology. Its style and iconography differs significantly from Neo-Hittite reliefs found in Carchemish, *Samʾal* (Zincirli) and *Kunulua*. Since at least the latter two cities are neighbouring *'Ain Dāra*, no regional aspects may help as an explanation. Thus, it seems more likely that chronological differences are to be considered. As we have seen, the best parallels both for the style and the iconography can be found in Imperial Hittite art. From that point of view there is no direct need for a dating after the collaps of the Empire although it cannot be excluded. Anyhow, according to K. KOHLMEYER [32], the comparison to Aleppo hints to a date of the reliefs from the gallery to the 11th cent. B.C.E. or even later, which might be a little too late in the opinion of the present author. There are only slight differences in the quite homogeneous style of the reliefs from *'Ain Dāra*, thus indicating a relatively short time-span of production. Since a strong impact of Hittite art could not emerge in Syria before the beginning of direct Hittite rule on the one hand and may have been connected with an increasing immigration of Luwian people into the more stabile provinces in Syria following the collapse of Hittite power in Western Anatolia on the other hand, the date of *'Ain Dāra* should be estimated in the time between 1250 and 1100 B.C.E.

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[31] SCHAUDIG 2001, 574: P1. Strophengedicht II, 12 – 15.
[32] KOHLMEYER 2008.

Now what about the cultural context of the temple and its decoration? As we have seen, the formal type of the temple follows a long-living regional tradition and shows a pure Syrian character. There are no Anatolian elements traced in the architectural layout of the building. In an absolute contrast to this, the iconography of the decoration is almost exclusively Hittite, that means Anatolian and not Syrian, in origin. Only the style differs to most of the Anatolian examples and shows some Syrian influences. Perhaps the more developed quality of Syrian stone-cutters might have influenced Hittite art in general during the late Imperial Period as some elaborated reliefs in *Ḫattuša* might indicate. But how can this contrast between architecture and art be explained?

If the observations of the excavators concerning the building phases are correct, it seems likely that a temple *in antis* already existed long time before the first reliefs were carved. It might even date back to the Middle Bronze Age since the architectural type was already known in that period and ceramic of that period is attested at the site. So the site might have been an important sanctuary even in the time before it became part of the Hittite Empire. Then, either Anatolian immigrants or local inhabitants, willing to adapt Hittite culture, decided to adorn the temple by adding reliefs of deities, lions and sphinxes in a pure Hittite iconography, probably inspired by temples and open air sanctuaries in Anatolia.

Such projects were undertaken probably on several sites, as the example of Aleppo strongly indicates. The result of the connection of different cultural traditions was the creation of a new style of art and architecture as the expression of a newly structured cultural identity. As one aspect of this process, the cuneiform script, which already had a 1200 year old history in the Northern Levant, vanished soon after this and was replaced first by Luwian hieroglyphs and later by West Semitic alphabets.

It is very likely that new Luwian or Luwianized elites in the cities of the Northern Levant pushed forward this process in a conscious act.

5. The Impact on Levantine Sacral Architecture and Solomon's Temple

At the end of the Late Bronze Age foundations were laid for the emergence of a new culture, created by the connection of Syrian and Anatolian traditions. Many ethnic groups participated in this new development, among them Luwians, Semites and Aegean immigrants. Neo-Hittite art and iconography was quickly diffusing even outside the Luwian speaking areas, as we can see *e. g.* in *Samʾal* and *Guzāna*.

The temples excavated in *Kunulua*, not far from ‘Ain Dāra in the *Amūq* valley, and the temple of *Tell ʿĀfiṣ* follow this given pattern[33].

The decoration concept using stone blocks and orthostats for reliefs was adapted throughout South-Eastern Anatolia and the Northern Levant and became a major characteristic of Neo-Hittite art. It might have even influenced the development of Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs.

Even in the Southern Levant some influences can be traced. Let us have a look on the description of Solomon's temple as an example for that (1 Kgs 6)[34]: The building is said to have had the layout of a long room with a columned niche as its entrance. It was surrounded by a gallery with three stories, of which the second one was accessible by a staircase from the inner

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[33] Cf. the overview given by MAZZONI 2010.
[34] On Solomon's temple cf. ZWICKEL 1999 and MONSON 2006.

cella. The roof of the gallery was not directly connected with the outer wall of the core temple since pillars in front of the wall were carrying it. Inside the temple there were depictions of two Cherubim.

Not knowing that this description is of a temple in Jerusalem, nobody would doubt that the *ʿAin Dāra* temple is described here. An entrance niche with two columns, a gallery with more than one story, an upper one accessible through a staircase from the inside of the *antecella* are all features attested very well in that building. Even the images of Cherubim are reminiscent of the lion- or eagle-headed and winged demons standing side by side with the mountain deities.

All in all, the cultural impact of the Neo-Hittite art and architecture, as articulated for the first time in the Late Imperial Period in *ʿAin Dāra* and Aleppo, on the development of the Iron Age Levant cannot be underestimated.

6. Conclusion

Irrespective of the question if the art of *ʿAin Dāra* was created already before or shortly after the collapse of the Hittite Empire, the temple and its decoration vividly show the connection of Anatolian and Syrian traditions and thus mark, together with the temple of Aleppo, the beginning of Neo-Hittite art and a pattern for the following Levantine sacral architecture, including Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Thus, the temple was one of the first culmination points of a newly defined cultural identity, which emerged all over the regions of Southern Anatolia, the Northern Levant and beyond.

Zusammenfassung

Tell ʿAin Dāra, dessen antiker Name bislang noch nicht identifiziert werden konnte, ist einer der größten bronze- und eisenzeitlichen Siedlungshügel im Tal des *ʿAfrīn* in Nordwest-Syrien (Fig. 1). Durch Grabungen und Surveys konnte der Nachweis erbracht werden, dass der Ort während der Spätbronze- und Eisenzeit aus einer weitläufigen, durch einen hohen Wall eingefassten Unterstadt und einer peripher gelegenen, hohen und in zwei Bereiche unterteilten Zitadelle bestand (Fig. 2). Diese Siedlungsform passt sich somit gut in das Bild der luwischen und aramäischen Städte der „späthethitischen" Kultur ein.

Von besonderer Bedeutung ist der reich dekorierte Tempel, der am Nordrand der Zitadelle freigelegt wurde (Fig. 3). Obgleich er an Außen- wie Innenwänden mit reliefierten Orthostaten versehen war, bleibt seine genaue zeitliche Einordnung in Ermangelung von Inschriften ebenso unklar wie die in ihm verehrte Gottheit und seine Erbauer. Daher können nur baugeschichtliche Überlegungen und die Betrachtung von Stil und Ikonographie seines Baudekors Hinweise zur chronologischen und kulturhistorischen Einordnung liefern.

Das Bauwerk kann als ein Musterbeispiel für einen Antentempel gelten: Auf einem künstlichen Podium inmitten eines großen, mit einem Altar und einem Brunnen ausgestatteten Temenos situiert, war er als länglich-rechteckiges Bauwerk mit axialer Erschließung konstruiert (Fig. 4; Taf. 10A–B). Der Zugang erfolgte über einen mit zwei Säulen versehenen, offenen Vorraum, der beidseitig von den zungenartig vorspringenden Seitenmauern, den Anten, eingefasst wurde und über eine Freitreppe zugänglich war (Taf. 11A). Über einen als Vor-Cella fungierenden Breitraum konnte die annähernd quadratische Cella betreten werden. An der dem Eingang gegenüberliegenden Seite war ein monumentales Podest positioniert, von dem nur noch Teile erhalten sind. Um das Gebäude herum verlief am Rand der Plattform eine ursprünglich offene, peripterale Gallerie, die später durch Zusetzungen der Pfeiler zu einem geschlossenen Umgang umgebaut wurde. Eine kleine Treppe in der Ante-Cella machte ein mögliches Obergeschoss oder das Dach der Gallerie zugänglich.

Der Baudekor bestand aus Steinblöcken und Orthostaten, die an ihren Außenseiten geglättet und mit Reliefs verziert waren. Die Platten bestanden überwiegend aus Basalt, einige jedoch aus Kalkstein, sodass mit dem Farbwechsel eine besondere Wirkung erzielt werden konnte. Unter den bildlichen Darstellungen fanden sich neben Löwen, Sphingen und verschiedenen anthropomorphen Figuren vor allem sogenannte „Berggötter" (Taf. 11B), die aus der hethitischen Bildkunst unter anderem als Träger des Wettergottes bekannt sind. Da sie sich insbesondere am Podest fanden, könnte dies als Hinweis auf den in dem Tempel verehrten Gott gedeutet werden. Von besonderem Interesse ist das Relief der Kriegs- und Liebesgöttin Schauschga (Taf. 12), deren Ikonographie ihre beiden Aspekte vereint.

Stil und Ikonographie legen eine Datierung der Entstehung des Baudekors in die Zeit zwischen 1250 und 1100 v. Chr. nahe, also in den letzten Abschnitt der Spätbronze- und den ersten Abschnitt der Eisenzeit.

Kulturgeschichtlich ist das Bauwerk als eine der ersten Äußerungen der sogenannten „späthethitischen" Kultur von größter Bedeutung: Der Bauplan ist levantinisch-syrischen Ursprungs, das Medium der Bauplastik ebenfalls; die Ikonographie dagegen weist ausnahmslos hethitische Motive auf, allerdings stilistisch wohl von syrischen Vorbildern geprägt. Unabhängig von der Datierung kann folglich der Bau als das Ergebnis einer Transkulturation angesehen werden, die entweder von einer aus Anatolien neu zugewanderten luwischen oder von einer lokalen, sich an anatolischen Vorbildern orientierenden Elite vollzogen wurde.

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A.   View on the temple from the south (photo by the author).

B.   View on the entrance of the temple and the paved courtyard in front of it (photo by the author).

M. Nᴏᴠᴀ́ᴋ: The Temple of ʿAin Dāra (Seiten 41 – 54)

A. View on the entrance of the temple with the stairs (photo by the author).

B. Hittite mountain deity from the cella (after: Abū ʿAssāf 1990, Taf. 44a – 45b).

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Relief of Ishtar / Shaushga, goddess of war and love (after: Orthmann 1993, Taf. 25:1).

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