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REVISING THE LOCATIONS OF SEVERAL CITIES
IN THE WESTERN REGION OF THE IRANIAN PLATEAU [*]

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Abstract

One of the most common methods of determining the location of settlements, mountains, and other geographic features related to historical and archaeological studies is to examine the geographic data included in written documents and to investigate them with the locations of a modern region or area. By using and understanding the contents of these sources, it is possible to draw a reliable map within a general or specific framework. This, in turn, can lead to more nuanced research in historical and archaeological investigations, thus providing a better understanding and description of the cultural and political background of these regions. This is particular true of the western region of the Iranian Plateau, especially during the eighth century BCE.

Based on the information provided by royal inscriptions of Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 BCE) and the "Sargon Geography," a text attributed to Sargon of Agade (ca. 2334–2279 BCE), this article examines the geographic position of a settlement called Karzinû/Karzina in the central Zagros and an adjacent settlement called Ḫandakiyaš. New modern locations are proposed for both places. Furthermore, based on Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, especially those from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BE), it appears that there were two cities with the name Bīt-Ištar, rather than just one. The proposed locations of both cities are discussed. Finally, the article examines Bīt-Bagaya and its position within the central Zagros.

Keywords: Assyria, Bīt-Bagaya, Bīt-Ištar, Ḫandakiyaš, Ḫarḫar, Iranian Plateau, Karzinû, Parsua, royal inscriptions, Sargon II, Tiglath-pileser III, Zagros

Introduction

The study of ancient areas such as Mesopotamia, the northern Zagros, the central Zagros, and Anatolia is a topic that has attracted the attention of many scholars over the past century. Prominent scholars who have conducted research in this area include, for example, N.V. Harutjunjan, A. Bagg, I.M. Diakonoff, A. Fuchs, W. Horowitz, Kashkai, L.D. Levine, F. Maniori, I.N. Medvedskaya, S. Parpola, K. Radner, A. Tourovets, R. Zadok, and P. Zimansky (see the *Previous Studies* section below).

According to late eighth-century-BCE Assyrian inscriptions, there was a growth and emergence of many new large and small settlements in the central Zagros area. This is

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clear from the number of places mentioned in presently-extant texts. The most comprehensive descriptions of this diverse and ever-changing region were written by the scribes of king Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 BCE), whose inscriptions contain a wealth of valuable geographic information. In this Assyrian monarch's descriptions of the campaigns that he carried out, including the receipt of tribute from conquered regions, the names of numerous settlements are recorded, as well as the routes along which his armies marched. The aim of the present study, however, is to reassess the locations of three settlements in the central Zagros, namely: a) Karzinû, a place that appears in three inscriptions (RINAP 2 65, 48; 82, vi 33″; 117, ii 60–61); b) "East" Bīt-Ištar (RINAP 2 65, 46; and RINAP 1 17, 6; 47, 30, 37), a city that is often confused with another Bīt-Ištar (RINAP 1 15, 6; 29, 4); and c) Bīt-Bagaya/Bīt-Gabaya (RINAP 2 1, 113; 7, 64; 29, 1), a city that Sargon II renamed Kār-Ištar (RINAP 2 1, 114). In addition, Ḫandakiyaš, a settlement in the vicinity of Karzinû, will be briefly discussed, although it is not mentioned in extant Neo-Assyrian sources.

The name of Karzinû is mentioned for the first time in an Akkadian text attributed to Sargon of Agade (ca. 2334–2279 BCE), a document whose geographic description began and ended with Lullubu (Horowitz 1998, 72, 74);[1] it was called Karzina (*kar-zi-na*.KI) in that source. Between Lullubu and Karzina, the so-called *Sargon Geography* mentions three settlements whose names have a supposed Indo-European suffix *-yaš* (which means "land") (Horowitz 1998, 73–75): ZER/QULiyaš, Surginiyaš, and Ḫandakiyaš. The fact that Ḫandakiyaš (= the land of Ḫandaki) appears beside Karzinû in that text seems to infer that the two places were close to one another. Karzinû is also mentioned in a list of the most important settlements in the central Zagros compiled after Sargon II of Assyria invaded the Median territory in the early part of his reign. The fact that Karzinû was still mentioned in the eighth century BCE indicates that that city had a very strong and lasting economic stability, conditions that allowed it to survive under the same name for nearly two millennia in a highly changeable area. Furthermore, based on information provided in Sargon's inscriptions, it is assumed that Karzinû was an urban settlement during that king's reign. From this, it is hypothesized that the population living in that city had created a strong and stable economic, political, and cultural sphere in their region for nearly two millennia. Resolving the location of this place will be extremely helpful as it will aid in securely placing one of its neighbouring lands, Ḫandakiyaš, on the map.

A proper identification of "East" Bīt-Ištar is significant, especially since it is clear from the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, including those of Sargon's father Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE), that there were at least two different cities with this name in the eighth century BCE. Thus, studying these texts, it will be possible to better understand the cultural conditions of the two Bīt-Ištars ("East" and "West"), as well as the locations of their closest neighbours. Furthermore, considering the location of Bīt-Bagaya, some issues about the location of "East" Bīt-Ištar can be further elucidated.

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1.   Lullubu (later called Lullumê) was the land of a group of people who lived around modern Kermanshah in Iran and the Sharezor plain in northern Iraq (Frayne 1990, 703; Hamblin 2006, 115f.), an area that leads to the central Zagros and further east to Mahidasht.

This article will attempt to answer the following two questions:
- Where were Karzinû, Bīt-Bagaya, and Ḫandakiyaš located in the central Zagros?
- Why there are two incompatible geographic descriptions about a place called Bīt-Ištar?

Previous Studies and Aims of the Paper

Numerous studies discussing the locations of settlements and topographical features of Mesopotamia, the northern Zagros, and central Zagros have already been published.[2] The present article, however, differs from those previous studies in that it aims to establish a direct connection between Karzina, which is mentioned in the *Sargon Geography*, and Karzinû, which is mentioned in Sargon II's inscriptions, and to locate it and its close neighbour Ḫandakiyaš more precisely. Moreover, this paper seeks to prove that there were two cities with the name Bīt-Ištar in the eighth century BCE and to discuss in detail the location of Bīt-Bagaya. This article will propose new locations for the four settlements mentioned above by a) examining the content of written sources from the Neo-Assyrian period, specifically royal inscriptions; b) comparing that information with that in the so-called *Sargon Geography*, and c) evaluating the geographic data contained within all of those texts. The proposals suggested here will be substantiated by the presently-available evidence.

It should be noted here that this study is specifically focused on the central Zagros region in the eighth century BCE, during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. Written sources of the seventh century BCE — especially those written under Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE), and Ashurbanipal (668–631 BCE) — provide details about settlements in southwestern Iran (in Elamite territory) and in the southwestern Zagros region. This information, however, especially that which helps identifying the boundaries of the later, southern Parsuaš (Parsumaš), falls outside the scope of the present paper.[3]

Historical Background: A Brief Overview of the Assyrians' Confrontation with the Medes (858–722 BCE)

The earliest recorded contact between the Assyrians and the Medes took place in the twenty-fourth year (836 BCE) of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE). His annals record that he encountered the "people of the land Amada" (the Medes or Media) after he had received tribute from twenty-seven rulers of the land Parsua (RIMA 3 A.0.102.14, 119–121). The

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2.   Main studies: Bigland 1811; Billerbeck 1898; Streck 1898; 1899; 1900; Herzfeld 1938; 1968; Parpola 1970; Levine 1972; 1973; 1974; 1977; Diakonoff & Kashkai 1979; Salvini 1982; 1983; 1984; Postgate 1984; Harutjunjan 1985; Diakonoff 1985; 1991; Brown 1986; 1997; Lanfranchi 1990; 1995; 2003; Zimansky 1990; Millard 1994; Fuchs 1994; 2007; 2017; 2023; Horowitz 1998; Medvedskaya 1999; 2000; 2002; Parpola & Porter 2001; Zadok 2002; Radner 2003a; 2003b; 2013; 2016; 2017; Hozhabri 2014; Galter 2014; Maniori 2014; Tourovets 2015; Saeedyan & Firoozmandi 2017; Saeedyan 2019; Bagg 2020.

3.   Editions of the relevant sources for that study are SAA 4; RINAP 3/1; RINAP 3/2; RINAP 4; RINAP 5/1; RINAP 5/2; RINAP 5/3.

Medes are mentioned together with the lands Missi (Mēsu), Araziaš, and Ḫarḫar (RIMA 3 A.0.102.14, 120–121). Ḫarḫar was the most important settlement in that region, as suggested by the fact that Shalmaneser III had a statue of himself erected in that city.[4] The Medes are next mentioned by Šamšī-Adad V (823–811 BCE), Shalmaneser's son and immediate successor. In a description of his third campaign (RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, iii 27–36), during which he marched against the "the land of the Medes", the Assyrian army not only conquered and destroyed the royal city Sagbita, along with 1,200 other settlements, but also defeated and massacred the troops of Ḫanaṣiruka, a Median ruler (RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, iii 27–36). The next Assyrian king, Adad-nērārī III (810–783 BCE) also campaigned against Media, although no description of that expedition is presently extant (RIMA 3 A.0.104.8, 5–7). He lists the Medes among the people and places that he conquered in the east. Like in the inscriptions of his grandfather Shalmaneser III, Media is mentioned together with Missi (Mēsu, which is in the vicinity of Taurla, between Parsua and Media), Ḫarḫar (near Media, in the southern parts of Kangavar and Sahneh, on the eastern border of Harsin), and Araziaš (south of Media and northeast of Ḫarḫar).[5] Lastly, Tiglath-pileser III campaigned against the Medes during his eighth regnal year (737 BCE). During that expedition, he claims to have conquered, looted, destroyed, and burned with fire a number of Median cities (RINAP 1 15, 6; 29, 3; 35, ii 25′).

Sargon II's Eastern Campaigns

During the reign of Sargon II, information about the geography of this region is much more detailed than any of his predecessors. This is especially true of an inscription commonly referred to as *Sargon's Eighth Campaign* or *Sargon's letter to the god Aššur* (RINAP 2 65). For example, in lines 42–52 there is a list of lands and settlements that he had captured and from whose rulers he had received tribute in Parsua, which shows that all of these places were located near Parsua (Parsuaš).[6] The list mentions the following places:

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4.   It is worth noting that Ḫarḫar was also the most important place in that area during the reign of Sargon II. This is abundantly clear from his inscriptions (RINAP 2 1, 96b–100; 2, 89–95a; 7, 61–64a; and 82, iii 1″–12 ″), which record that he transformed Ḫarḫar into an Assyrian provincial capital (which he renamed Kār-Šarrukīn), and that its conquest is depicted on one of the rooms of his palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn.

5.   Previous suggested locations of Missi: a) Tash Tepe, south of Lake Urmia, assuming it that it was called Mešta in the Urartian inscriptions (Herzfeld 1938, 164f.; Diakonoff & Kashkai 1979, 57; Diakonoff 1985, 69); b) Hasanlu (Salvini 1982, 390f.; Salvini 1983, 225f.); c) the area between Cham-e Qezel Ozan and the Talvar River and Mount Hamze Arab (Reade 1978, 140f.; Vera Chamaza 1994, 13f.; Reade 1995, 41; Fuchs 2007, 51; and Tourovets 2015, 28; 30f.); d) east of Sanandaj (Maniori 2014, 220). Suggested locations of Ḫarḫar: a) southwest of Mount Alvand, around Malayer and Nahavand (Herzfeld 1968, 32; Reade 1978, 140f.; Reade 1995, 39f.; Radner 2013, 445f.; Bagg 2020, 261); b) east of, or in the middle of Mahidasht, between Kermanshah and Behistun (Levine 1973, 120f.; Levine 1974, 116f.; Brown 1979, 18; Lanfranchi 1990, 91); c) Tepe Gyan (Reade 1978, 140f.); d) north of Ellipi and southwest of Parsua (Bagg 2020, 261). Suggested locations of Araziaš: a) near Ḫarḫar (Streck 1900, 344 n. 1; Fuchs 1994, 423); b) in the Nahavand region (Reade 1995, 35); c) around Tuyserkan and Firouzabad-e Bālā (Radner 2013, 450f.); d) 35 km north of Kermanshah (Tourovets 2015, 25).

6.   During the reign of Sargon II, the Assyrian scribes wrote the name of this land in the Western Zagros region as Parsua (RINAP 2 1, ii 11; 43, 15; 105, ii 10′), Parsuaš (RINAP 2 4, 39′; 65, 38, 41), or Parsumaš (RINAP 2 76, 8′; 130, 15).

The land Ellipi; three unnamed cities of the River(lands) (or Nārtu);[7] the city Ḫalḫubarra; the city Kilambāti, which was near Kišesim;[8] the city Māli; the city Nappi; the city Bīt-Sagbat, which might be the same as Sagbita, the royal city of Ḫanaṣiruka mentioned in Šamšī-Adad V's inscriptions; the city Uriangi; the city Kingaraku; the city Qantāu (also called Qindāu in other inscriptions of Sargon II); the city Bīt-Kapsi; the city Bīt-Zualzaš; the city Kisilaḫa; the city Bīt-Ištar; the city Zakrute; the land Saparda (also called Šaparda); the city Kanzabakanu; the city Karzinû; the city Andirpattianu, which, based on some *queries* of Sargon's grandson Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE), was located near the Salt Desert, probably on its western border;[9] the city Usib; the city Ṣibar; the city Ḫarzianu; the city Aratista; the city Barikānu, which, seems to be the equivalent of the ethnic term Παρικάνοι (*Parikanoi*),[10] or of the toponym Παρικάνη (*Parikanē*), a place in the eastern regions of Persis (Fārs) or Kerman (cf. mid. Persian Bārikān);[11] and the land Uriakku.

After receiving tribute from these settlements, including horses, camels, Bactrian camels, oxen, sheep, and goats, Sargon left Parsua (Parsuaš) and went to the land Missi (Mēsu), which was in Mannea (RINAP 2 65, 50–51).

In an inscription of Sargon II generally known as the *Najefabad Stele* (RINAP 2 117), which was likely composed in 716 BCE, there is additional geographic information about the western portion of the Iranian plateau. This text records the itinerary of the military expedition taken by Sargon's armies during his sixth regnal year (716 BCE; RINAP 2 117, ii 46–70a). According to a passage in the second column, the route was as follows:

the land Ḫarḫar; the city Zakrute; the city Kurabli; the city Saparda, which was in the neighborhood of Ḫarḫar; the lands Bigali and Sikris; the city Kanzabakanu (which is also mentioned in Sargon II 65); the land Uppuria; the land Datumbu; the city Karzinû; the land Birnakan and its principal city Barikanu; the land Sakâ; the city Ḫarzianu; the city Kaiatani; the land Ramānda; the land Irnisa; and the land Uratas.

A similar summary of that same campaign is also known from RINAP 2 82, vi 11″–42″, an annalistic text preserved on a badly damaged clay prism from Nineveh. From this inscription it can be deduced that Karzinû was located near Parsua. Moreover, *Sargon's letter to the god Aššur* mentions that tribute-paying lands (for example, Ellipi and Andirpattianu) were located close to the Salt Desert (a region east of the Zagros Mountains). In a report of another eastern campaign, which took place during his seventh regnal year (715 BCE), quoted in the recension of Sargon's Annals from Room II of his palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn (RINAP 2 1, 104–117a), there is an additional list of cities in the central Zagros area. The campaign proceeded as follows: after passing through the land Naʾiri and by its principal city, Ḫubuškia (west of Mannea, that is, southeast of Turkey and east of Iraqi Kurdistan),[12] Sargon entered Mannea and had a monument erected in its capital

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7.   See Bagg 2020, 427f.
8.   Zadok 2002, 124.
9.   Starr 1990, 64.
10.   Mentioned in Hdt. 3, 92, 94; 7, 68, 86.
11.   For the equivalences, see Zadok 2002, 116. The second proposal, however, does not fit the content and descriptive geography of Sargon's inscriptions.
12.   Previous suggestions for the location of Ḫubuškia: a) around the Upper Zab and southwest of Lake Urmia, near the border of Turkey and Iraq (Streck 1899, 153–158; Levine 1975, 479; Brown 1979, 7;

city Izirtu. Next, the text gives some information about the Upper and Lower River(lands), an area that had been annexed to the land Ḫarḫar during a previous campaign (716 BCE). In this passage, Sargon mentions the lands Bīt-Sangibuti, Uriqatu (east of Parsua, north of modern Hamadan, and northeast of Qorveh, in the Kurdestan province),[13] Sikris, Saparda (both northern neighbours of Ḫarḫar), and Uppuria (west of Hamadan, possibly modern Asadabad).[14] In the River(lands), Sargon claims that he conquered the cities Ka…na, Ḫalbuknu, Šu[…], a city whose name is completely destroyed, and Anzaria. Then he states that he had four cities that he had previously captured rebuilt: Kišešlu, Qindāu (also called Qantāu in other inscriptions), Anzaria, and Bīt-Gabaya (URU.É–ga-ba-ia).[15] These four settlements were renamed Kār-Nabû, Kār-Sîn, Kār-Adad, and Kār-Ištar respectively. Afterwards, the Assyrian army went to Media, specifically to the area around the city Kār-Šarrukīn (the new name of the city Ḫarḫar), where he strengthened the defensive structures there "in order to subjugate Media". In Kār-Šarrukīn, which became a provincial capital, Sargon received tribute from twenty-two city rulers of "the land of the powerful Medes" (KUR.ma-da-a-a dan-nu-ti).[16] Afterwards, he conquered the city Kimirra of the land Bīt-Ḫamban and carried off its possessions and some of its population.

This information, but with some modifications, was also recorded in RINAP 2 7, an inscription now commonly referred to as the *Great Display Inscription*. These alterations are not unexpected, since this text is a different type of royal inscription than the ones discussed above, which are annalistic texts instead of a summary/display text. According

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Russell 1984, 199; Muscarella 1986, 473f.; TAVO, map B IV, 12); b) between Lake Van and Lake Urmia, in the Hakkari-Yuksekova plain, in Turkey (Levine 1975, 479; Salvini 1982, 386; Russell 1984, 194–197); c) in the Sardasht plain, southeast of Muṣaṣir (Levine 1975, 479; Lanfranchi 1995, 136; Reade 1995, 33f.; Zadok 2002, 107f.; Maniori 2014, 144; Fuchs 2007, 51; Radner 2016, 20f.); d) around Mahabad, Peshdar, Ushnavieh, and Ravanduz (Reade 1979, 178); e) in the Botan-Chai valley, southwest of Van Lake (Liverani 1992, 24f.; Salvini 1984, 13f.; Vera Chamaza 1995–96, 246–248; Wießner 1997–98, 154; Medveskaya 2000, 437); f) at the headwaters of the Lower Zab (Kinnier Wilson 1962, 108–110; Reade 1978, 141; Hannoon 1986, 307f.; Liebig 1991, 33f.); g) around Piranshahr and Khaneh (Parpola & Porter 2001, 4f.; 29); h) Tepe Rabaṭ (Saeedyan & Gholizadeh 2019, 125).

13.   According to some scholars, Uriqatu was located in the Ḫarḫar region (Fuchs 1994, 469; Zadok 2002, 126; Radner 2003a, 54 and pl. 5 no. 9; Maniori 2014, 165f.).

14.   Sikris, Saparda, and Uppuria are generally located between Bīt-Sangibuti and Ḫarḫar. Previous proposals for Sikris: a) the same place as Turiš/Tikriš (Herzfeld 1968, 236f.); b) in the Ḫarḫar region (Fuchs 1994, 445); c) between Hamadan and Gonabad, in the eastern part (Maniori 2014, 268f.); d) 75 km west of Kermanshah, around Sarab-e Harsin (Tourovets 2015, 26). As for Saparda, a) in the Ḫarḫar region (Streck 1900, 346f.; Vera Chamaza 1994, 108f.; Diakonoff 1985, 107); b) near Zakrute and Sikris (Fuchs 1994, 460; Zadok 2002, 126; Fuchs 2009, 25); c) east of Malayer (Maniori 2014, 170; 217–219). Lastly, scholars have located Uppuria: a) east of Ḫarḫar (Fuchs 1994, 466); b) at Vei Nesar, in the Kurdestan province (Maniori 2014, 173); c) near Kahriz, in the Kermanshah province (Tourovets 2015, 26; 28).

15.   The spelling of the name in this inscription is a scribal error for Bīt-Bagaya; see the discussion below.

16.   There is contradictory information about the number of Median states conquered in Sargon's inscriptions, as well as whether their payment of tribute was voluntary or was imposed after the conquest. Sargon's conquests and subsequent control over different Median territories suggest that there was a significant level of imposition and military coercion rather than a willing submission by the Medes.

to the *Great Display Inscription* (RINAP 2 7, 59–70a), Sargon conquered Kišesim (modern Tuyserkan, which is southwest of Mount Alvand)[17] and Ḫarḫar and transformed their regions into Assyrian provinces; these settlements were renamed Kār-Nergal and Kār-Šarrukīn respectively.[18] Next, the Assyrian king records the conquest of the cities Kišešlu, Qindāu, Bīt-Bagaya (URU.É–*ba-ga-ia*, URU.É–^m*ba-ga-ia*), and Anzaria (a city located between Bīt-Sangibuti and the northern neighbours of Ḫarḫar); after the conquest, they were transformed into Assyrian centres, and respectively renamed Kār-Nabû, Kār-Sîn, Kār-Adad, and Kār-Ištar. Lastly, Sargon records that he strengthened the garrison at Kār-Šarrukīn, conquered and annexed thirty-four "districts of Media", and captured the area of Erištana, which included Baʾīt-ili (see fn. 15, below, for details).

In addition to narrative texts, epigraphs written on the reliefs decorating the walls of Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn mention the names of some of the aforementioned cities: Ḫarḫar, Qindāu, Tikrakka, Kišesim, Ganguḫtu,[19] and Bīt-Bagaya (RINAP 2 24–28). Most, if not all, of these epigraphs originate from Room II, the chamber whose wall slabs contain the best-preserved copy of the Annals (RINAP 2 1).[20]

Overview of the Assyrian Itineraries to the East

To provide a better context for the geographic information provided by Sargon II's inscriptions, it is necessary to examine the routes mentioned in early Assyrian royal inscriptions, beginning with Shalmaneser III. The routes taken by the Assyrians into the western region of the Iranian Plateau are as follows:

17. Previous locations of Kišesim: a) in Mahidasht, near Najaf Abad, in the Hamadan province (Diakonoff 1991, 16, 18); b) on the border of Media, north of Kangavar (Radner 2013, 444f.; Galter 2014, 333f.); c) between Sar-e Pol Zahab and Garbandeh (Tourovets 2015, 25).

18. After Sargon's death, his son and immediate successor Sennacherib changed the name of Kār-Šarrukīn back to Ḫarḫar (RINAP 3/1 4, 30, and *passim*). The name change was due to the fact that Sennacherib made the city Elenzaš, the capital of Ellipi, a provincial capital, and, thus, the role played by Ḫarḫar was meant to be taken over by that Ellipean city, which was given the new Akkadian name Kār-Sîn-aḫḫē-erība.

19. With regard to Ganguḫtu, its name is reminiscent of the name of a mythical Iranian city called Gangdedjhuxt, whose location is described as Jerusalem in Ferdowsi's tenth/eleventh-century CE Shahnameh (Ferdowsi, Shahnameh, I/ kingdom of Żaḫḫāk, the section mentioning Ferēdūn's conflict with Żaḫḫāk, 342). Based on the available evidence, Ganguḫtu (possibly the mythical Median city Gangdedjhuxt) appears to be located near Kišesim.

20. Information about some of the cities mentioned above is recorded in other inscriptions of Sargon II: 1) According to a version of Sargon II's Annals from Room V (RINAP 2 2, 89–92), the following lands are mentioned after the description of the conquest of Ḫarḫar and the driving out of its ruler Kibaba by the local population: the land Ellipi, the Upper River(land), which is referred to as a region of the land Araziaš, the Lower River(land), which is mentioned as part of Bīt-Ramatua, the land Uriqatu, the land Sikris, the land Saparda, and the land Uriakku, all of which were annexed to Ḫarḫar, a city that was transformed into an Assyrian provincial capital and whose name was changed to Kār-Šarrukīn. 2) Sargon's Annals and display inscriptions (RINAP 2 1, 184; RINAP 2 2, 218–219; RINAP 2 7, 66–68) mention a land called Baʾīt-ili (whose second element is an Akkadian pseudo-etymology for "god") and record that it was an area in Media that bordered the land Ellipi. Several scholars (Hüsing 1898, 341; Billerbeck 1898, 1; Streck 1900, 352) suggested that Baʾīt-ili should be identified with Behistun. Note, however, that there is presently no concrete evidence to prove that Baʾīt-ili was Behistun.

Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE)

1. Arbela → Mount Kullar → Zamua → Munna (Mannea) → Allabria → Parsua (city) → (Bīt-)Abdadāni → (Bīt-)Ḫa(m)ban (RIMA 3 A.0.102.6, iii 58–iv 5);
2. Namri → Parsua → Missi (Mēsu) → Media (Amadāya) → Araziaš → Ḫarḫar → Bīt-Ḫa(m)ban (RIMA 3 A.0.102.14, 119–126a).

Šamšī-Adad V (823–811 BCE)

(Upper) Zab → Mount Kullar → Naʾiri (with its principal city Ḫubuškia) → Sumbi (Sunbu) → Mannea → Parsua[21] → Taurla → Missi (Mēsu) → Gizilbunda[22] → Sagbita (in Media) → Araziaš (RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, ii 34–iii 44a).

Adad-nērārī III (810–783 BCE)

Namri, Ellipi, Ḫarḫar, Araziaš, Missi (Mēsu), Media, Gizilbunda, Munna (Mannea), Parsua, Allabria, (Bīt-)Abdadāni, Naʾiri, Andia (RIMA 3 A.0.104.8, 6–9).[23]

Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE)

1. The route of Tiglath-pileser's eastern march (in his second *palû* = his first regnal year [744 BCE]), according his Annals (Series B), is: Namri, a place whose name is entirely missing, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Abdadāni, Bīt-Sangibuti (RINAP 1 6, 7–8). A list of related and occupied neighbouring lands is as follows: Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, and Bīt-Urzakki (RINAP 1 7, 6).
2. According to RINAP 1 15 (with its duplicate RINAP 1 28, which is part of Annals Series A [as are RINAP 1 27 and 29]), the route of the eastern campaign that took place in his ninth *palû* regnal year (= his eighth regnal year [737 BCE]) was: Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, Bīt-Urzakki, the land of the Medes (Media), Bīt-Zualzaš, Bīt-Matti, Tupliyaš, Bīt-Ištar (our "West" Bīt-Ištar, see below), Kinkangi, Kindigiasu, Kingialkasiš, Kubušḫatidiš, Upušu, Aḫsipuna, Girgirâ, and Kimbazḫati (RINAP 1 15, 5–8; RINAP 1 28, 3–6). In RINAP 1 15 the route continues: Bīt-Ištar (our "West" Bīt-Ištar), (Bīt-)Kapsi, Mount Abirus, […]…ruta, Nirutakta, and Ṣibar (RINAP 1 15, 9–11). The beginning of RINAP 1 16, which continues the description of the campaign, is damaged and there is a break in the narrative. Further geographic information is provided in RINAP 1 17, the next block of the Series B Annals, including a list of lands annexed to Assyria. That same information was also included in RINAP 1 47, a summary inscription presently known from a clay tablet and which is often referred to as *Summary Inscription 7*. The route according to those two texts was: Namri, Bīt-Sangibuti,[24] Bīt-

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21. This is the first and the only extant Assyrian text that mentions "the people of the land Parsua" (KUR.*pár-su-a-a*). Note that the *Nabonidus and Cyrus Chronicle* refers to Cyrus II as the "king of the land Parsu" (TCS 5 7, ii 15, p. 107), a spelling of the land's name used by Darius the Great several times in the Akkadian version of the Behistun Inscription (King & Campbell Thompson 1907, 159, 161, and *passim*; Malbran-Labat 1994, I, VI, and *passim*).
22. Here we mention the lands which include all or some of their occupied cities.
23. It is worth noting that Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions simply list the places, without stating that the king's armies moved from one place to the next; therefore, commas are used instead of arrows.
24. It was the land Qutû (or "land of the Gutians"), according to Tadmor and Yamada 2011, Tigl. III 14: 5; & Tigl. III 26: 4.

Ḫamban, Sumurzu, Bīt-Barrû, Bīt-Zualzaš, Bīt-Matti, Niqqu of the land Tupliyaš, Bīt-Taranzāya, Parsua, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Abdadāni, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, Bīt-Urzakki, Bīt-Ištar (our "East" Bīt-Ištar), and Zakrute, a city that belonged to the "mighty Medes" (KUR.*ma-da-a-a* KAL.MEŠ) (RINAP 1 17, 5–7; RINAP 1 47, 34–36).

3. The most comprehensive list of places conquered by Tiglath-pileser III is included in RINAP 1 47, one of that king's best-preserved summary inscriptions. That text records the names of the following places: Namri, Bīt-Sangibuti, Bīt-Ḫamban, Sumurzu, (Bīt-)Barrû, Bīt-Zualzaš, Bīt-Matti, Niqqu of the land Tupliyaš, Bīt-Taranzāya, Parsua, Bīt-Zatti, Bīt-Abdadāni, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Sangi, Bīt-Urzakki, Bīt-Ištar (our "East" Bīt-Ištar), Zakrute, Gizinkisi, Niššāya, Ṣibar, Urimzan, Raʾusan, Uppuria, Bustus, Ariarma, Saksukni, Araquttu, Karzibra, Gukinnana, Bīt-Sagbat, Mount Silḫazu (designated "the fortress of the Babylonian(s)"), Mount Rūa, and the Salt Desert of the lands of Ušqaqqāna and Šikrakki (areas associated with the land of the "mighty Medes") (RINAP 1 47, 29–32).

4. Lastly, RINAP 1 51, another summary inscription written on a clay tablet, contains the names of following lands before the text breaks off: Namri, Bīt-Sangibuti, Bīt-Ḫamban, Sumurzu, Bīt-Barrû, and Bīt-Zualzaš (RINAP 1 51, 20).[25]

Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 BCE)

1. RINAP 2 1, the Annals from Room II of Sargon's palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn, records the details of an eastern campaign that took place during his sixth regnal year (716 BCE): Bīt-Sangibuti, Uriqatu, Sikris, Saparda, Uppuria, Ka…na, Kinzarbara, Ḫalbuknu, Šu[…], a city whose name is completely destroyed, Anzaria of the land of Upper and Lower River(lands), Kišešlu (renamed Kār-Nabû), Qindāu (renamed Kār-Sîn), Anzaria (renamed Kār-Adad),[26] Bīt-Gabaya (renamed Kār-Ištar), Kār-Šarrukīn (formerly Ḫarḫar), Kimirra of the land Bīt-Ḫamban (RINAP 2 1, 109–117a).

2. Another version of Sargon II's Annals (RINAP 2 4), a damaged text that lined the walls of Room XIV of his palace, gives some further details; specifically, the city Šurgadia (whose inhabitants were called *Gutî*, "Gutians", according to RINAP 2 117, ii 34) was added to the Parsua (Parsuaš) province;[27] the city Kišesim was captured, transformed into an Assyrian provincial centre, and renamed Kār-Nergal; Bīt-Sagbat, Bīt-Ḫirmami, Bīt-Umargi, Ḫarḫubarban, Kilambāti, and Armangu were annexed to the newly established Kišesim/Kār-Nergal province (RINAP 2 4, 38′–42′).

3. *Sargon's letter to the God Aššur* (RINAP 2 65) also includes information about settlements from which the king of Assyria received tribute after his stay in Parsua (Parsuaš) (714 BCE). Therefore, the order of the names is not necessarily related to the route

25. RINAP 1 51 (line 20) duplicates verbatim the information in text RINAP 1 47.

26. Paying attention to the repetition of Anzaria in this section of RINAP 2 1 (Annals of Room II), it is likely that the rest of the description of the events of that year record details about a separate campaign, one summarized in RINAP 2 7. The route of that campaign is also described in detail in that latter text. Thus, RINAP 2 1 mentions their rebuilding and renaming after the statement about their capture.

27. Parsua became a province during the second regnal year of Tiglath-Pileser III (743 BCE), after the flight of its ruler Tunaku (Radner 2006, 57). The Assyrian king appointed an official to rule over it (RINAP 1 6, 7b–10b; 7, 4–6a).

that Sargon took to capture them, but rather to their proximity to Assyria, starting with the closest and ending with the furthest. The list begins with the land Ellipi (in the western part of the Iranian plateau) and then the border of the Salt Desert and the city Andirpattianu. Afterwards, Sargon returned to Parsua (Parsuaš) before marching to Missi (in Mannea) and lists the following places: Ellipi, three unnamed cities "in the River(lands)", Ḫalḫubarra, Kilambāti (near Kišesim; see above), Māli, Nappi, Bīt-Sagbat, Uriangi, Kingaraku, Qantāu, Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Zualzaš, Kisilaḫa, Bīt-Ištar (our "East" Bīt-Ištar), Zakrute, Saparda, Kanzabakanu, Karzinû, Andirpattianu (which is near the Salt Desert), Usib, Ṣibar, Ḫarzianu, Aratista, Barikānu, Uriakku, Parsua (Parsuaš), and → Missi (a district of Mannea) (RINAP 2 65, 42–51).

4. Unlike *Sargon's letter to the God Aššur* (RINAP 2 65), the *Najefabad Stele* (RINAP 2 117) clearly describes the route that the Assyrian marched during that expedition. By following it, one can better geolocate the places mentioned in that annalistic text, including the city Karzinû (see below). Sargon's itinerary was as follows: Mannea (and its neighbours) → Paddira → Nikkur → […] → Kinaḫri → Šurgadia → a city whose name is completely missing → Ḫundir (near Kišesim)[28] → Bīt-Sagabi (in the area of the "Fortress of the Babylonian(s)"; possibly the same place as Bīt-Sagbat) → Ḫarḫar[29] → "the Cold River" → Zakrute → Kurbali[30] → a land whose name is completely damaged → Bigali → Sikris → Bīt-U(m)argi → (from Sikris) to the land Arussa → the Patus River → Uquta → Mount Arusaka → Anzaknê (near the land Uriakku[31]) → Uppuria (which is located between Mount Pattaššun and Mount Darūe), where he set up camp at Mount U*ab*…šu… → Bustus[32] → Datumbu[33] → Karzinû → Birnakan → Sakâ[34] → Darūe River → the land Ramānda → Irnisa[35] and → Uratas[36] (RINAP 2 117, ii 33–70a).

Reassessing the Locations of Bīt-Bagaya, Bīt-Ištar, Ḫandakiyaš, and Karzinû
Of the numerous cities and lands mentioned in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions from the reign of Shalmaneser III to that of Sargon II, three are of particular interest, as mentioned

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28. Bēl-šarru-uṣur of Kišesim brought tribute to Sargon in this city.
29. Sargon also recorded that Arazišu belonged to the Upper River(land) and Bīt-Ramatua to the Lower River(land).
30. Sargon also mentioned that he received tribute from Saparda and a city whose name is completely missing.
31. Sargon stated that Karakku, the ruler of Uriakku, saw the smoke from the burning of the cities of the land Anzaknê.
32. Sargon sent cavalry and archers to Bustus. He also received tributes from this land, in addition to that of Aratišta, Uppuria, and Kanzabakanu.
33. In this land Sargon received tribute from Kanzabakanu.
34. In this city, Sargon received tribute from the cities Ḫarzianu, Kaiatani, and from a city whose name is completely destroyed.
35. At this point, the Assyrian king received tribute from several local rulers, including Battigur of Ḫu[…] and Uardatti of Ṣibar.
36. Here, Sargon received tribute from cities U[…], Tak[…], […]ḫagabtâ, Uratis[*ta*], Qarkasia, Ginkir, and some other cities/lands whose names are now completely lost.

in the introduction: Bīt-Bagaya, Bīt-Ištar, and Karzinû. In addition, Ḫandakiyaš, a settlement mentioned in the *Sargon Geography* as being a neighbour of Karzina, is also of interest because Karzina was the same city as Karzinû. Let us now reassess the proposed locations of these four settlements.

1. Bīt-Ištar

The Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions make it clear that there were actually two cities with the name Bīt-Ištar, and not just one. One of these two cities (our "West" Bīt-Ištar) was located near the city Tupliyaš, a city also known as Ešnunna (modern Tell Asmar), which was near modern Mandali, in the Diyala River valley, in Iraq (Albright 1925, 217),[37] while the other Bīt-Ištar (our "East" Bīt-Ištar) was situated east of Behistun, in the central Zagros, and in the direct path of one of Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns (as stated above). Both Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II mention a city named Bīt-Ištar; and, from their inscriptions, it is clear that Bīt-Ištar was located in the same place. That city was on the route from Bīt-Kapsi (around modern Qazvin, according to Reade 1979, 180)[38] to Zakrute (identified here as Sahneh)[39] and east of Behistun, west of Kangavar, and near Zakrute. Based on the other cities mentioned together with that Bīt-Ištar, it is clear that in the late eighth century BCE that there was more than one settlement with this name. Let us present the available evidence.

"East" Bīt-Ištar was likely the name given to that city (whose original name is presently unknown) by the Assyrians, perhaps in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, possibly because there was an important temple in that settlement dedicated to a goddess, likely a local form of Ištar. That temple was located in the region that included Zakrute, Niššāya (same as Nisāya, which was east of "East" Bīt-Ištar and modern Kangavar), Bīt-Sagbat (located between Najafabad and Hamadan), Bīt-Sangi (situated between Bīt-Kapsi and Bīt-Urzakki and, thus, northeast of modern Qorveh),[40] and Bīt-Kapsi. The proposed location of Niššāya can be used for the location of this Bīt-Ištar on the map. It is evident from two inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (RINAP 1 47), that a Bīt-Ištar was located near

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37. Other proposals for the location of Tupliyaš: a) in the Zagros mountains, in a district around Kermanshah, and near Ellipi (Kinnier Wilson 1962, 113f.; Fuchs 2014, 190f.); b) in the westernmost part of Namri (Fuchs 2017, 126).

38. Other proposals for the location of Bīt-Kapsi: a) Bijar or near it, in the Kurdestan province (Parpola & Porter 2001, 11; Tourovets 2015, 28; 30f.; Bagg 2020, 137); and b) in western Iran, between Mannea and Media (Fuchs 2017, 133).

39. Previous proposals for the location of Zakrute: a) east of Mahidasht, near Behistun (Levine 1974, 118); b) near Ḫarḫar and Saparda (Vera Chamaza 1994, 108); c) north of Ḫarḫar (Zadok 2002, 126); d) in the Malayer plain or east of it (Parpola & Porter 2001, 12; Maniori 2014, 169; 217–219); e) around Shah Abad (Islam Abad)-e Gharb (Tourovets 2015, 25f.; 28).

40. Previous proposals for the location of Bīt-Sagbat: a) between Kangavar and Hamadan, based on the assumption that Mount Silḫazu, the area of the "Fortress of the Babylonian(s)", was modern Mount Alvand and its environs (Fuchs 2017, 144); b) perhaps Ecbatana/Hamadan (Bagg 2020, 147); c) near Kišesim; d) the same place as Sagbita (Streck 1900, 330; Firouzi et al. 2022a, 265), which was located between Najafabad and Hamadan (Firouzi et al. 2022a, 265). For the location of Bīt-Sangi: a) it was the same place as Bīt-Sangibuti (Billerbeck 1898, 80f.); b) it was east of Parsua, between Mannea and Media (König 1933, 50; Fuchs 1994, 133).

Niššāya, which was close to Zakrute. The eastern setting of this city is confirmed from the fact that RINAP 1 47 ("Summary Inscription 7") recorded that the Assyrian army continued marching east past Zakrute, until it reached Mount Silḫazu (modern Mount Alvand) and the Salt Desert. It also introduces the distance from Zakrute (which was near Behistun) to Niššāya, an area that coincides with the modern plain of Nisāya (Streck 1900, 329, 332f.; Herzfeld 1968, 8),[41] via the settlement of Gizinkissi. Because the Bīt-Ištar mentioned in this inscription was relatively close to Niššāya, the suggestion that this Bīt-Ištar's closest western neighbour, Bīt-Urzakki, was located in the Solduz plain or south of Lake Urmia[42] must be rejected. Moreover, the proposals that Zakrute should be identified as Shahabad-e Gharb and Bīt-Kapsi as Bijar likewise need to be dismissed, especially as there is no reason to introduce a Median region in Sargon II's reign for Zakrute. The currently proposed western locations of Bīt-Kapsi, Bīt-Urzakki, and Zakrute are too far from Niššāya and, therefore, cannot be reconciled with the geographic information given in Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions. Thus, these places should all be within the Qazvin plain, as far as the Mahidasht and Malayer plains. Removing the three incompatible proposals of Shahabad-e Gharb for Zakrute, East Solduz for Bīt-Urzakki, and Bijar for Bīt-Kapsi, and considering proposed and similar coordinates, this Bīt-Ištar is assumed to be located south of modern Qazvin, near Hamadan, west of Asad Abad, and east of modern Sahneh; see Fig. 1.

Bearing in mind the proposed location of "East" Bīt-Ištar, now let us look at the other city with that name. According to Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, "West" Bīt-Ištar was bordered on one side by Bīt-Zualzaš (southwest of Media and northwest of Elam and, thus, southwest of modern Mahidasht, south of Shah Abad (Islam Abad)-e Gharb, and north of Ilam) and Tupliyaš/Ešnunna (and on the other side by Girgirâ (modern Gargar-e Olyā; Zadok 2002, 117; Bagg 2020, 233). If we want to draw clear boundaries for "West" Bīt-Ištar and its neighbours, see Fig. 2. In that map, Gargar-e Olyā is located 35 km south of Sanandaj. Bīt-Zualzaš has been identified as the easternmost location suggested by Maniori (as well as other scholars), situated in southeast of Mahidasht and around Harsin (Maniori 2014, 163; 219). Tupliyaš, as stated above, was located in Diyala region, near Mandali or south of it. Therefore, "West" Bīt-Ištar fell somewhere within this triangle-shaped area, which is west of the proposed area for "East" Bīt-Ištar. It is worth noting that the other possible locations of Tupliyaš include the westernmost part of Namri, as well as the Zagros Mountains and the area around Kermanshah, near Ellipi (see fn. 37, above) and, thus, the area in which "West" Bīt-Ištar was possibily located is much larger than the one suggested in the present paper.

41.   Previous proposals for the location of Niššāya: a) it was the same place as Nisāya in Darius' Behistun Inscription (Tavernier 2007, 28); b) Nisāya and north of Ecbatana (Streck 1900, 329; 332f.); c) Nisāya and around Harsin (Herzfeld 1968, 8); d) it was the same place as Missi (Diakonoff & Kashkai 1979, 57); e) the Qazvin region (Diakonoff 1985, 79); f) the region in which Nahvand is located (Sherwin-White & Wiesehöfer 2012).

42.   Bīt-Urzakki was near Ramānda, Karzinû, and Datumbu; it probably can be identified with modern Qorveh, in the Kurdestan province. According to Fuchs 2017, 133, Bīt-Urzakki was east of Parsua and between Mannea and Media.
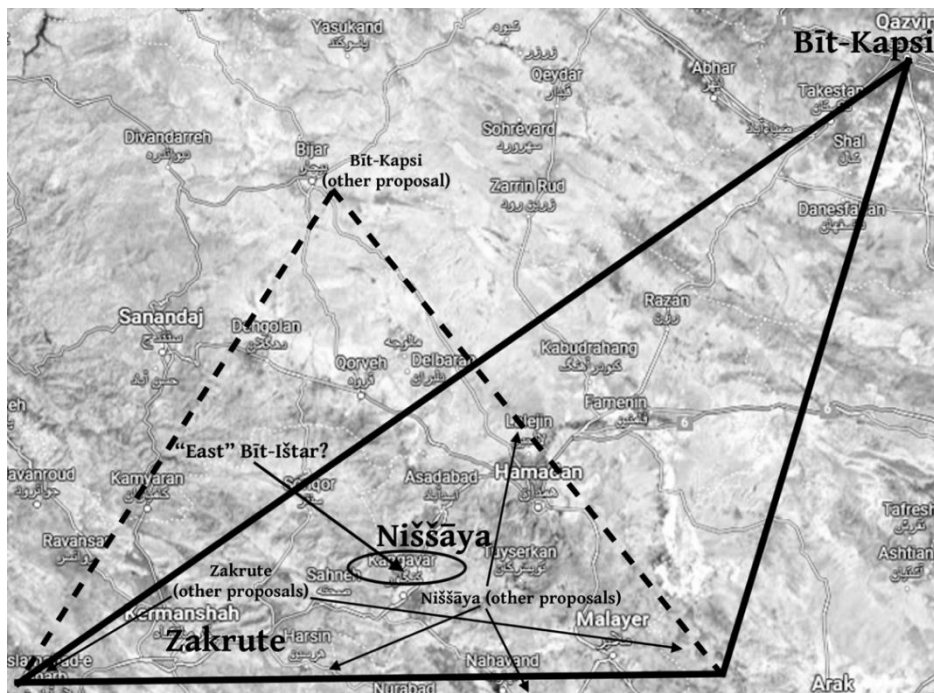
Figure 1. Annotated map of the area in which "East" Bīt-Ištar was probably situated.
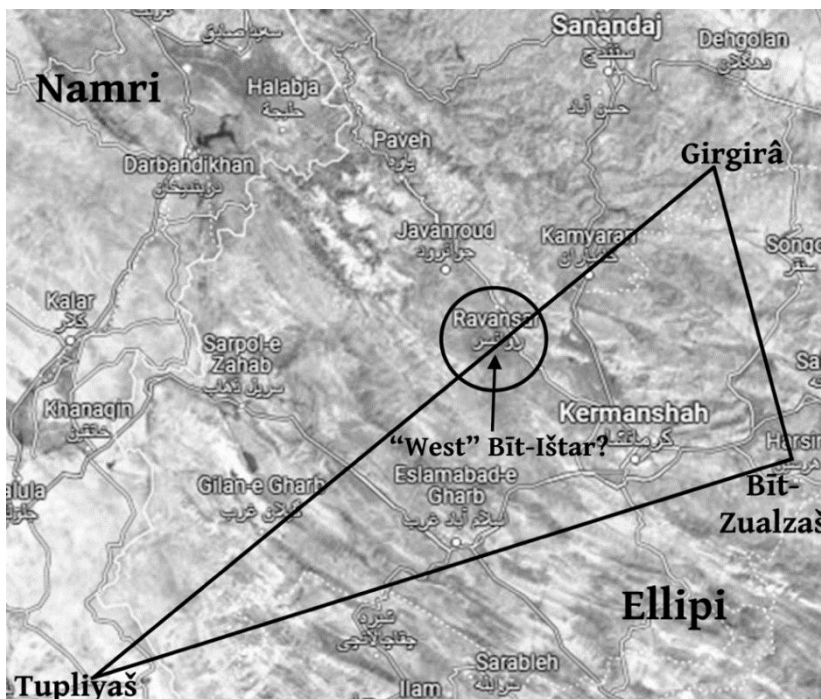

Figure 2. Annotated map of the area in which "West" Bīt-Ištar was probably situated.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, as well as from the location of the neighbouring places mentioned in Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, it can be inferred that the two Bīt-Ištar mentioned in eighth century BCE royal inscriptions were not located in one and the same area. Therefore, it is evident that there were two cities with the name Bīt-Ištar: "East" Bīt-Ištar was located east of Zakrute (around modern Behistun), while "West" Bīt-Ištar was situated somewhere west of modern Harsin and south of modern Sanandaj (Fig. 3).

As mentioned above, "East" Bīt-Ištar was probably named by the Assyrians because there was in that settlement an important temple dedicated to a goddess, likely a local form of Ištar. That town was located in an area close to Zakrute (Behistun), Niššāya (or Nisāya in Media), and Bīt-Sagbat (near Kišesim and Ḫarḫar), together with its closest westernmost neighbour Bīt-Urzakki, which was situated on route to Bīt-Kapsi (when travelling west).

Figure 3. Suggested areas for the possible locations of "East" Bīt-Ištar and "West" Bīt-Ištar.

That area corresponds well to the location of that Bīt-Ištar, at least according to the information given in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. Based on the identification of Bīt-Kapsi with the area of modern Qazvin, one might consider that "East" Bīt-Ištar was in an area that was renown for its temple of Artemis at Concobar (Κογκοβάρ), which is known during the time of Isidore of Charax (first century BCE).[43] This might indicate a continuity of the worship of an important local goddess in that region. It is worth noting that K. Radner has discussed the discovery of a scroll related to a king of a city near modern Hamadan and the presence of a temple under the name Bīt-Ištar in Media. Radner accepted a proposal of D. Stronach (that she had received via personal communication) and suggested locating Bīt-Ištar in the area of Ravansar.[44] The reason for this is that most scholars (for example, Bagg 2020, 134) did not consider that there were two different Bīt-Ištars in the eighth century BCE. The Ravansar area nevertheless works well

43.   Isidore of Charax, *The Parthian Stations*, 5–6.
44.   Radner 2003b, 121–123; 127f.

for the proposed location of "West" Bīt-Ištar.

2. Bīt-Bagaya

Sargon II's inscriptions (RINAP 2 1; 7) provide some details about the location of Bīt-Bagaya/Bīt-Gabaya. Two matters will be addressed here: its name and its location.

First, the different spellings of the name of that city can be explained based on a third inscription, RINAP 2 28. That inscription is a one-word epigraph that identified an image of a city depicted on a bas-relief lining the wall of Room II of Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn as Bīt-Bagaya. In RINAP 2 28 the toponym is written Bīt-Bagaya (URU.É–*ba-ga-ia*), similar to RINAP 2 7 (line 64: URU.É–^m*ba-ga-ia*). The writing of the name in RINAP 2 1 (the Room II Annals) as Bīt-Gabaya (line 113: URU.É–^m*ga-ba-ia*), however, most probably derives form a scribal error, and was correctly rendered in at least two inscriptions (RINAP 2 7; 28). The events related to Bīt-Bagaya and two of its neighbouring cities (Kišešlu and Qindāu) are described in the exact same way in RINAP 2 1 and 7, indicating that the passages in both inscriptions recorded one and the same event. When that passage from RINAP 2 1 was incorporated into RINAP 2 7 (most likely during Sargon's sixteenth year), the scribal error was corrected/not replicated.[45] The correct rendering of the name as Bīt-Bagaya is clear from the fact that the Old Persian word for "god" is *baga*.[46] Therefore, the name was a hybrid Akkadian-Old Persian name, one indicating that the city was the home of an important local god. The name of that deity, however, is not known; compare the discussion about "East" Bīt-Ištar above.

Secondly, Sargon's inscriptions (RINAP 2 1 and 7) provide some information about where this city should be located. This is not unproblematic, as there are some discrepancies in the route taken by the Assyrian army when it conquered the cities Kišešlu and Qindāu. Since both texts describe one event only, there must have been only one route taken during this campaign (715 BCE); however, the two presently attested sources describe how the expedition unfolded in two different ways. According to the Room II Annals (RINAP 2 1, 109b–117a), the Assyrians went from the city Anzaria (in the area of the Upper and Lower River(lands), near Ḫarḫar) to: a) Kišešlu; b) Qindāu; c) Anzaria; d) Bīt-Gabaya (Bīt-Bagaya); and finally e) to Kār-Šarrukīn (formerly Ḫarḫar), where twenty-two city rulers of the land of the "Mighty Medes" paid tribute to the Assyrian king. The *Great Display Inscription* (RINAP 2 7, 59–70a), however, records the route of that same campaign as follows: the king went from a) Kišesim (identified here as modern

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45. It is important to note that both inscriptions were written in the same year.
46. Regarding the identity of this deity, this Baga could have been Ahura Mazda. This is based on the presence of Iranian groups in that region and on a passage of Diodorus Siculus (II, 13), who states that Mount Behistun was sacred to Zeus (who was then regarded as the equivalent to Ahura Mazda). However, this need not have been the case, since the dedication of Mount Behistun to a god or goddess might have stemmed from the fact that a rock relief on its lower face depicted a goddess, perhaps a local goddess related to Inanna/Ištar; the image might have been later attributed to the legendary queen Semiramis (Firouzi et al. 2022b, 90–113). According to this recently proposed theory, Darius the Great was inspired by this sculpture and had his own monument carved at Behistun. The presence of this image of a goddess at the foot of the mentioned mountain near Bīt-Bagaya might have influenced Sargon II when he renamed that city Kār-Ištar (Firouzi 2023, 186–189).

Tuyserkan, which was near Mount Silḫazu [modern Mount Alvand]) to b) Ḫarḫar c) Kišešlu (near Tepe Gyan),[47] d) Qindāu (south of Kangavar, around Harsin),[48] e) Bīt-Bagaya, f) Anzaria (between Bīt-Sangibuti and the northern neighbours of Ḫarḫar), g) back to Kār-Šarrukīn (Ḫarḫar), and h) to the land of Medes, where he claims to have conquered thirty-four districts. Afterwards, he marched against the city Erištana (a Median city on the eastern border of Ellipi and, therefore, south of the Mahidasht region).[49]

According to the present understanding of the geography of this region, the correct route is the one presented in RINAP 2 7, which also includes the correct spelling of the name Bīt-Bagaya. The scribe(s) responsible for the *Great Display Inscription* corrected mistakes in the Room II Annals, specifically a) removing the repetition Anzaria and b) correcting the route so that the Assyrian army marched from Kišesim to Ḫarḫar, before moving onto Kišešlu, rather than travelling directly to Kišešlu from Anzaria and back to Anzaria from Qindāu (see Figure 4).

It is abundantly clear from Sargon II's inscriptions that Bīt-Bagaya — as well as Kišešlu, Qindāu, and Anzaria — was located in the vicinity of Kišesim and Ḫarḫar (Kār-Šarrukīn) and, thus, in the area between Hamadan and Kermanshah. Based on its name, Bīt-Bagaya might be identified with *Bagistanus*, which is mentioned by Diodorus (II, 13) as *Bagistanon* (Βαγίστανον), and *Bagistana*, which was visited by Isidore of Charax (*The Parthian Stations*, 5), a place that he called *Baptana* (Βάπτανα).[50]
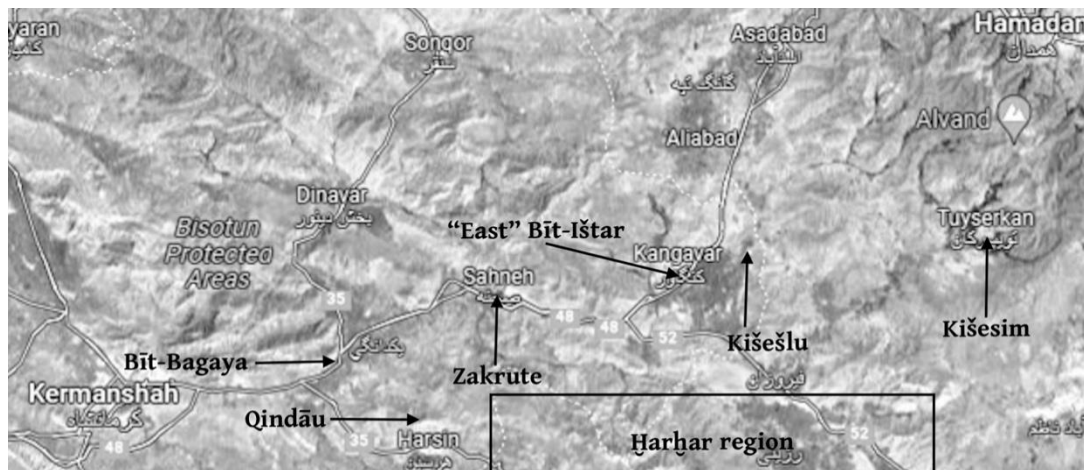

Figure 4. The suggested locations of Bīt-Bagaya and its neighbours.

47.   Karen Radner (2013, 450) described Kišešlu's location as being along the Great Khorasan Road.
48.   Scholars have suggested that Qindāu was located: a) in the Ḫarḫar region (Fuchs 1994, 443; Pongratz-Leisten 1997, 334; Zadok 2002, 125; Maniori 2014, 166f.; 197f.; 218f.); b) along the Great Khorasan Road (Radner 2013, 450).
49.   Here the location of Erištana is suggested west of Ḫarḫar, south of the Mahidasht region, probably to be identified with modern Kuhdasht.
50.   Note that Streck (1900, 352) has already raised the possibility of Bīt-Bagaya and Behistun being one and the same place.

3. Karzinû/Karzina

As mentioned above, RINAP 2 65 contains information about the events after the conquest of numerous regions in the central Zagros, as well as a list of the rulers who paid homage to Sargon and who sent gifts to him while he was in Parsua (Parsuaš) (southeast of the Kurdestan province, northeast of Kermanshah, west of Sonqor, and north of Behistun).[51]

Because this text simply gives a list of the tribute-bearing places, it is not possible to analyse the exact locations of the places in that part of the inscription (RINAP 2 65, 42–50), especially the city Karzinû,[52] and, thus, for studying this issue we need to refer to the information provided in RINAP 2 117. According to the *Najefabad Stele* (RINAP 2 117, ii 33–64), Sargon left the land Uppuria for the land Datumbu (north of Hamadan, on the road to Razan, perhaps around Kabudar Ahang),[53] where he received horses from the king of Kanzabakanu (between ancient Sikris and Uppuria, that is, between modern Kangavar and Asadabad, probably in the area of Vandarabad).[54] The next destination was the city Karzinû and then the land Birnakan.[55] The mention of the lands Sakâ[56] (and its principal city Ḫarzianu[57]) and Ramānda[58] clearly shows that the location of the city Karzinû in Sargon II's description of this campaign in the *Najefabad Stele* should be east of Behistun (Zakrute), in the direction of Bīt-Sagbat (around Hamadan) and Ramānda (modern Rāmand), and south of Bīt-Kapsi (around modern Qazvin). On this route (see Figure 5, below), there is a modern city by the name of Razan (35.38500, 49.03387). Interestingly, its name is similar to Karzinû. According to *Sargon's letter to the God Aššur* (RINAP 2 65),

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51. Previous proposals for the location of Parsua(š): a) east of Sanandaj (Forrer 1920, 90; Reade 1978, 139; Zimansky 1990, 14); b) the Solduz plain, south of western Azarbaijan (Minorsky 1957, 79); c) west and southwest of Lake Urmia (Boehmer 1965, 193–198; Bagg 2020, 453f.); d) around Mahidasht or north of it (Levine 1973, 20–26; Medvedskaya 1999, 60); e) south of Lake Urmia (Fuchs 2004, 342); f) north of Mount Shahu, which is northwest of Sanandaj (Levine 1974, 101; 105–112; Brown 1979, 17f.; Maniori 2014, 213f.); g) between Kermanshah, Kangavar, and Sanandaj (Reade 1978, 139f.; Zadok 2002, 99–106; Lanfranchi 2003, 82 n. 16; 10lf. with n. 97; Fuchs 2004, 340–342; Radner 2006, 57; Fuchs 2007, 51; Radner 2013, 443f.; Fuchs 2017, 125); h) between Kermanshah and Sanandaj (Parpola & Porter 2001, 11); i) northwest and west of Allabria, in Zamua (Tourovets 2015, 25; 28–29; 31).

52. This assessment is based on the fact that Bīt-Zualzaš is mentioned immediately after Bīt-Kapsi. These lands were not located next to one another.

53. Previous proposals for Datumbu: a) in Media and identified as modern Nazemabad, in the Kurdestan province, which is based on the assumption that Bustus was between Qorveh and Sanandaj (Maniori 2014, 174); b) between the Khorram Abad valley and Ab-e Tuyserkan (Tourovets 2015, 27f.).

54. Kanzabakanu has been previously located in the Nazemabad plain, a proposal based on that assumption that Datumbu should be equated with modern Nazemabad (Maniori 2014, 174; 217–220; 268f.).

55. Birnakan was around Avaj, Bi Ab, and Abgarm, and north of Razan.

56. Sakâ was around Saj or Sakznab, in the Qazvin province, and north of Razan. Compare Tourovet 2015, 27f., where Sakâ is equated with modern Nahavand.

57. Ḫarzianu was located between Karzinû and Ramānda and, thus, near modern Rāmand, in the Qazvin province. Compare Maniori 2014, 175; 217–220; 268f., where she suggests that Ḫarzianu was between Qorveh and Sanandaj; this proposal is based on the assumption that Bustus was between Hamadan and Vei Nesar, in the Kurdestan province.

58. Ancient Ramānda was around modern Rāmand, south of Qazvin, as suggested by Zadok (2002, 116). The other suggested locations for this place are Godin Tepe or around the area of Zia Abad, in the Kurdestan province (Fuchs 2007, 51; Radner 2013, 450f.; Tourovets 2015, 27f.).

the ruler of Karzinû (Sarruti) was one of local leaders who gave payment to Sargon immediately before he departed from the land Parsua (Parsuaš) for Missi, a district of Mannea (RINAP 2 65, 42–51). The tentative identification of Razan as Karzinû is not implausible since that modern city is not too far north of Mahidasht, which is Parsua according to the suggestions proposed by Levine and Medvedskaya, and east of Kermanshah-Sanandaj (based on other scholarly suggestions), and, therefore, it can be regarded as an eastern neighbour of Parsua (Figu. 5).

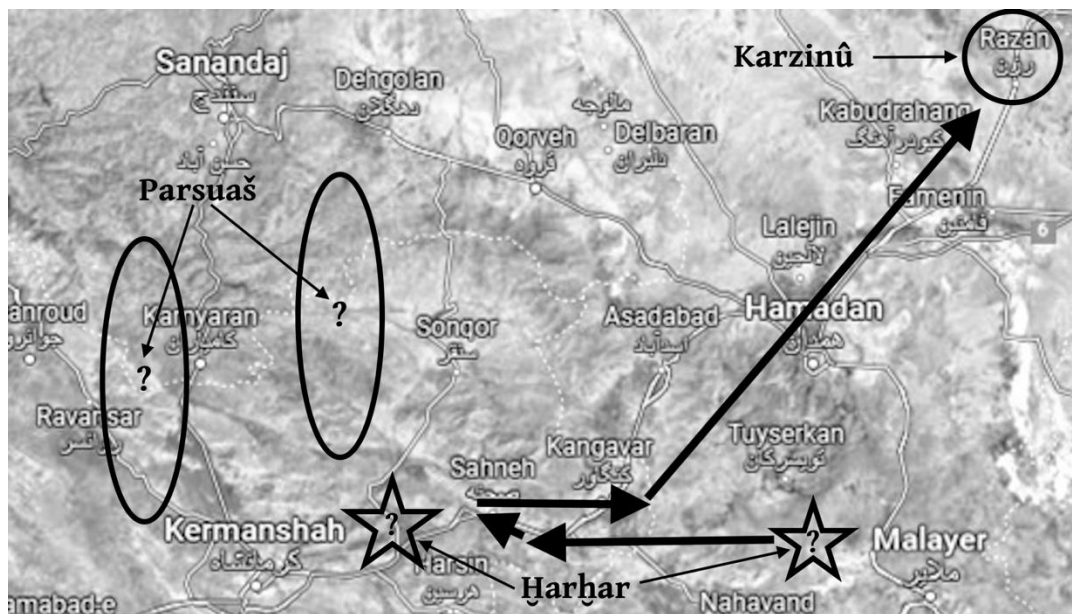Figure 5. Annotated map showing the location of modern Razan (assuming it is ancient Karzinû) and its relative position to the proposed locations of Ḫarḫar and Parsua(š). The arrows indicate the direction of the advance of Sargon's army.

4. Ḫandakiyaš

Assuming that the proposed location of Karzinû/Karzina in the area of modern Razan proves correct, then it might be possible to geolocate other places mentioned in the *Sargon Geography*, specifically Ḫandakiyaš or the land/city Ḫandaki (the suffix -*yaš* is the equivalent of the determinative KI). According to the *Sargon Geography*, Karzina was upstream of Ḫandakiyaš (Horowitz 1998, 73; 90). If Karzinû/Karzina was around modern Razan, then it is possible that Ḫandakiyaš might have been in the area of modern Handareh (35.21882, 48.69213). That city is located west of Kabudarahang, about 60 km southwest of Razan (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Annotated map with the suggested locations of Karzinû and Ḫandakiyaš.

Conclusion

A careful investigation of the geographic information presented in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, especially those of Sargon II, reveals that there were two cities in the eighth century BCE that went by the name Bīt-Ištar. "East" Bīt-Ištar was located in the neighbourhood of Zakrute, a land situated on the eastern side of modern Behistun. "West" Bīt-Ištar was located near Tupliyaš, in an area west of Harsin, south of Sanandaj, and east of Mandali. "East" Bīt-Ištar was, from the north, on the route leading to Bīt-Sangi and Bīt-Kapsi; from the east, one could reach Bit-Sagbat or Bīt-Sagabi, and, from the west, roads headed to Zakrute and Bīt-Bagaya. The location suggested here might be confirmed by later textual evidence recording that there was an Artemis temple in that region; it is clear from the Assyrian new designation "Bīt-Ištar" that that settlement was the home to an important local goddess. Moreover, this paper had proposed that Bīt-Bagaya was located west of Zakrute, perhaps near Bagastana or Behistun. Finally, we suggest here the location of Karzinû/Karzina and Ḫandakiyaš was in the area of modern Razan, a city in Hamadan, and modern Handareh, in Amirababd of Hamadan.

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