

## Introduction

When one begins to peruse the available material on the origins of the Arameans, it doesn't take long to realize that one of the only things certain currently is the uncertainty of their origins. W. M. Schniedewind (2002: 276) comments on the paucity of material when he writes, "The rise of the Aramean states is shrouded in darkness. The deafening silence in our sources continues to make it difficult to penetrate this darkness." This is followed by descriptions of their origins as "obscure"<sup>1</sup> and similarly by W. Pitard that the "the early development of the Arameans is, in fact, shrouded in obscurity." Somewhat older, but not much less accurate is that by E. Kraeling (1918:1) when he writes, "The history of the Arameans cannot yet be written. Through the gloom that enshrouds their destinies our sources only now and then cast a fitful glimmer. We possess merely flash-light pictures, taken here and there, and preserved in papyri or engraved on stone or written on clay. These the chronicler must piece together."

This then is our goal: to chronicle in this terse essay some of the latest material concerning the origins of the Arameans. It is generally undisputed that the oldest extra biblical direct reference to the Arameans is the 1112(1111) B.C. inscription of Tiglath-pileser I. Using this as a starting point for their already established presence in the Near East, we will attempt to reconstruct a history of origins prior to this date. We will begin by covering some introductory issues concerning geography and reviewing the models of the formation of the Aramean states. We will then proceed to the examination of *Aram* in early literary and epigraphic sources. Finally, we will try to make a succinct assessment of the connections between the Ahlamu and Sutiens and their relationship to the origins of the Arameans.

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<sup>1</sup> Lipinski 2000:11

### **Geographical Considerations**

Ran Zadok (1991:104) writes that “The ancient history of the Arameans can be divided into two initial stages. The first one is their pre-history which ends in 1111, the date of the earliest ascertained occurrence of the ethnonym ‘Aramean’ in a concrete historical context. The second stage, their proto-history, extends over the next two centuries, ending in 912.” The reason we bring this up now is to understand that there exists a people that shows itself to be territorial expansionist in its history. Therefore, there is a wide range of geographic area that intersects this history. The primary area under consideration ranges from the coastal and inner coastal ranges of the Levant (ie. Damascus at the base of Mt. Hermon in the Anti-Lebanon Range) on the Mediterranean; north and east through the desert and steppe land of Syria; continuing east to the upper Mesopotamian region; east towards the banks of the Tigris River; and finally south of the region of Suhu to the borders of Babylon and eventually east of the Tigris river on the plains of Elam where they are found in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

It is attested that in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century there existed a “base” of sorts for the Ahlamu at the foot of Mt. Bishri in eastern Syria (Tiglath-pileser I inscription). At least in this point in Aramean history, this was at a minimum, a tentative geographical center to the Aramean city-states. Seeing this as a “central” location helps to discuss some of the agricultural and geographical realities of the areas being examined.

Beginning in the southern Levant in what is now Lebanon consists of two major mountain ranges. The western coastal range of the Lebanon mountains. The inner coastal range east of the Lebanon range is that of the Anti-Lebanon range. Between these two ranges is the Beqa valley containing rich soils and drained by two rivers. The Litani

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<sup>2</sup> Rainey 2000:107.

river flows south and empties into the Mediterranean while the Orontes river flows farther north and also empties also into the Great Sea. These areas receive a significant amount of rain as opposed to the inner desert and steppe lands of Syria. This makes it an ideal place for agricultural and sedentary lifestyles. This also provides for greater stability and the development of cultures and societies versus those of the semi-nomadic or pastoralists of the inner regions.

From the far areas of the north Levant above Ugarit and south to Gaza exists what is known as the Coastal plain. Just south of Mt. Carmel, the coastal plain begins to extend farther inland and widens considerably versus its northern counterparts. These areas aren't as necessary for our discussion of the Arameans due to the strong presence of the Sea Peoples arrival in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (ie. Phoenicians, Philistines).

The eastern portions of Syria are very relevant in trying to piece together the origins of the Arameans. Were they sedentary or semi-nomadic pastoralists? Based on later Assyrian inscriptions, as well as others, it is known that there clearly existed Aramean city states through the areas mentioned above. Understanding the geography should help shed some light on the answers to these questions.

There are two major geographical zones in Eastern Syria. The first is the upper Mesopotamian plain known as the *el-Jezireh* (the "island" in Arabic) because of its location between the two rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates. It is further divided on a north-south line by the tributaries Balikh and Khabur of the Euphrates. This region is important because this becomes one of the main areas of the migrations and expansions of the Arameans. Understanding the need to go where the food is helps us understand a more northerly migration pattern for the Arameans as well as other peoples. The moister

parts of the area largely situated near the Turkish border, have in the past supported a dry-farming regime based on winter wheat. The broad expanse and the high annual precipitation of the upper Habur “triangle” can support large human population.<sup>3</sup>

The second zone is known as a desert-like marginal zone that receives less than 8 inches of rain per year but is bisected in such a way by the Euphrates that it creates several oases (Tadmur, el-Qom, Damascus). The area of Southeast Syria is a semi-arid steppe or desert with average rainfall below 8 inches per year. Agriculture is largely impossible here with the exception of irrigation by means of underground water sources at the desert oases. This area has served as grazing land for transhumant pastoralists.<sup>4</sup>

The final geographic consideration is to highlight briefly the Assyrian topography. The city of Assur is on the western banks of the Tigris river. With the Jerizeh steppe land to its east and the Zagros mountains to its north and east, the only room for expansion is either west or south towards Babylon. This becomes important when understanding the Tiglath-pilaser I inscription and the continuing need for the Assyrians to go west and be confronted with the Arameans, among others. K. Younger comments, “The western borderline of the heartland does not have a natural boundary that would have prevented the Assyrians from penetrating into the dry framing belt of the Habur region. Thus the Jezireh was Assyria’s hinterland steppe and caused Assyria to be essentially a stepped-bound empire. The geo-climactic position of Assyria and the Jezireh is responsible for its economic potential and thereby its historical disposition throughout its existence.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rainey 2006:33.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See Younger’s forthcoming book. *Preliminary Issues: 1.1.2.*

These geographical considerations should help us to understand why the Arameans are not necessarily always a sedentary people. They are considered to be semi-nomadic, but history has shown that they have taken advantage of the geography as well as being forced to migrate when the geographical factors have dictated.

### **Models of Aramean Advance**

Epigraphic history shows clearly the presence of the Arameans no later than 1112 BC. Their presence in skirmishes with Assyria at this time imply that they had some sort of military organization even though they were handily defeated according to the Tiglath-pileser I inscription. We will eventually get to their pre-historic origins, but it is helpful to briefly survey the models of their *introduction* to the region.

It is well documented that the period of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and the early 12<sup>th</sup> was one of crisis and transition. Most of the Late Bronze centers of the eastern Mediterranean saw violent destruction some time during the first quarter of the twelfth century. The archaeological evidence is clear and widespread: the main palaces of the Mycenaean world, the capital of the Hittite empire and other major Anatolian centers, Alalakh and Ugarit on the Syrian coast, several coastal towns, such as Ashkelon and Ashdod, and inland sites such as Hazor and Aphek. None can deny that these destruction levels represent outbreaks of unprecedented violence throughout the region.<sup>6</sup>

It is within a short time of this transition time in the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the epigraphic evidence shows the Arameans already a organized force to be reckoned with. Was there success as an adversary of the Assyrians due to the collapse of the major empires of the previous century? Thus allowing them freedom to fill the vacuum so to speak? H. Sader (2000:61) agrees with Rainey when she writes, “The political landscape

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<sup>6</sup> Rainey 2006:104.

of the Late Bronze Age Syria drastically changed in the first millennium B.C. A quick look at the map shows that with the exception of Carchemish, all local second millennium kingdoms disappeared towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. leaving almost no trace of their capitals and cities in the surviving toponyms of the Iron Age.” She goes on to speak of the arrival of new political entities. “The emergence of the first millennium kingdoms in Syria was made possible by the vacuum left after the collapse of Late Bronze Age regional and local powers.”<sup>7</sup> The questions that naturally arise are whether the Arameans were an indigenous people group that took advantage of this vacuum by rising to some sort of recognizable force in the area or were they foreigners who came into this region conquering while there were no major powers to stop them?

Pitard comments on the general view of the Arameans as conquerors when he writes, “They are viewed as nomadic hordes from the Syrian desert that swept northward and invaded the lands where they are founding the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, conquering the native populations and quickly Aramaizing the area. From their new foothold along the Middle Euphrates, according to the common reconstruction, the Arameans began to spread out, moving southwest into Syria and southeast into Babylonia.”<sup>8</sup> This seems to be one of the more accepted scholarly beliefs concerning the relationship, tension, and inevitable conflict between pastoral nomadism and sedentary agriculture. A. Malamat (1973:134) describes the origins of the Arameans as “spreading out from the fringes of the Syro-Arabian desert, fanning out over the Fertile Crescent... This burgeoning forth - unparalleled in the ancient Near East- was held in check by the great powers of the day, till their decline let it loose over the civilized regions of Hither Asia.” Pitard goes on to

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<sup>7</sup> Sader (2000:62).

<sup>8</sup> Pitard (1994:208).

criticize this somewhat antiquated dichotomy of pastoral nomadism and sedentary life as well as the traditional invasion model as being inadequate as an explanation for the appearance of these peoples.<sup>9</sup>

Younger has weighed in on this apparent myopic viewpoint when he writes, “The very complexity of the geographic situation in Syria demands that the ‘collapse model’ may explain some, but not all the Arameans states’ rise.” He goes on to speak about geographical as well as the socio-economic factors that played part in the rise of the Arameans over a wide and diverse area.<sup>10</sup>

All these deliberations help to give some elucidation to the rise of the Aramean states in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but they don’t help to pinpoint the origins of the people groups themselves. Where did they originate from? Is the term *Aramean* an ethnic term or simply a reference to peoples living in a geographic area? Although presently there is no clear epigraphic evidence appearing earlier than Tiglath-pileser I’s inscription in 1112 B.C. is it possible to see some other eponymous clues to the origins of the Aramean people groups? This we will discuss in the next sections.

### ***Aram* in Early Epigraphic Sources**

We begin this section by examining various epigraphic sources that date prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It has proven to be very difficult in trying to establish a connection between the occurrence of *Aram* and the Arameans. It has been noted by most scholars that the first potential occurrence of *A-ra-mu* occurs in the toponym as early as the third millennium at Ebla. However, there has been some consistency in rejecting this as having any genuine connection to *Aram*. Lipinski (2000:26) mentions that the name is also partly attested

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>10</sup> Younger (forthcoming: 154-155).

among the lexical texts of Uruk. He claims that these must have originated from a geographic list composed in Mesopotamia. He dismisses it is a Hurrian toponym as others have suggested<sup>11</sup> and instead describes it as pre-Semitic, pre-Sumerian, and pre-Hurrian. Although these judgments are taken to be most likely accurate, I cannot help but “dream” for a moment of the connection between Abraham’s family (Bethuel, Laban, etc.) being called Arameans (Gen. 25:20; 28:5) and the location of a toponym in Uruk. This location just being north of Ur where Abraham’s family was originated seems potentially close for a connection to be made. Was Abraham’s ancestors from a city of Aram near there and then as they migrated north to Harran did they retain an Aramean distinction? We might not ever know this from any extra-biblical source, but the Bible does speak of his nephew as being an Aramean (more in the next section).

In addition to those mentioned by Lipiński, Aram is mentioned as a place-name as early as the twenty-third century B.C. in an inscription of Naram-Sin of Akkad, which refers to a region on the Upper Euphrates, and in c. 2000 B.C. in documents from Drehem, as a city on the lower Tigris. It occurs as a personal name in the latter documents, in the Mari texts (18<sup>th</sup> century) and at Alalah (17<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>12</sup> Most of these are still considered inconclusive due to them being so closely related to toponyms instead of ethnic contexts.

Younger comments that there are two possible exceptions to the dismissal of *Aram* as having any legitimate appearance before the 12<sup>th</sup> century. He writes of an Egyptian list of place names from the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352 BCE). The first occurrence speaks of “the one of Aram” while a later occurrence in a papyrus from

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<sup>11</sup> Zadok (1991:106).

<sup>12</sup> Malamat (1973:134).

the time of Merneptah (1213-1203) speaks of an officer arriving from a town in the “district of Aram.”<sup>13</sup> Lipiński mentions that this latter reference speaks of a connection tentatively in southern Syria, or perhaps in the Beqa Valley, or in the oasis of Damascus. He goes on to make a connection with the town of Merneptah which would preclude any geographical connection with Syria.<sup>14</sup> R. Zadok disagrees and writes, “this is linguistically plausible because the *-w* can be a Semitic nominative in which case a Hrrian etymology is excluded... If this proves to be correct, then the *terminus post quem* for the Aramean penetration into Syria is to be fixed a century earlier than the sources would allow.”<sup>15</sup> This certainly would challenge the current paradigm of understanding the origins of the Arameans.

The other exception mentioned by Younger is that of an occurrence of *Aram* in 13<sup>th</sup> century texts from Ugarit. However, these occurrences are not proving themselves to be conclusive as pre-12<sup>th</sup> century epigraphic attestations of *Aram*. What can we say from here? Do we give up? Do we disavow any possibility of older attestations for *Aram*? The world of archaeology is ever progressing and the potential for future attestations grows more and more each day.

### ***Aram(eans)* in Early Literary (biblical) Sources**

The designation used here of early literary sources isn't meant to speak specifically concerning the redaction or writing of the Pentateuch, but instead the chronology gleaned from a straightforward exegesis of the narrative. The dates for understanding the appearance of *Arameans* in the Bible stems from the differentiations of the dates of the Exodus. If one takes an early date of the Exodus at approximately 1445 B.C., with Israel

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<sup>13</sup> Younger (Forthcoming: 157).

<sup>14</sup> Lipiński (2000:32)

<sup>15</sup> Zadok (1991:106).

entering the Promised Land in 1405 B.C., then the time of Abraham based on the biblical chronology is approximately 560 years prior.<sup>16</sup> This puts Abraham and his nephew Bethuel the Aramean (and his son Laban the Aramean) in the time frame of 2000-1950 B.C. Of course, if one takes a later Exodus date, then we can reduce this number by approximately 200 years. Regardless, the chronology of the narrative speaks of *Arameans* in the early second millennium B.C. To make matters even more difficult, when based on early Exodus, the time of Isaac's marriage to Rebekkah the Aramean is 20 years prior to this. The most conservative viewpoint then puts the Arameans back into the late third millennium B.C. According to this time frame we have the story of Laban and Jacob naming a heap of stones (Gen 31:47) no earlier than around 1950 B.C. or no later than 1750 B.C. (late Exodus date).

What is interesting about this chronology is the presence of Aramaic being spoke by Laban and Hebrew by Jacob. Assuming for a moment that Moses actually wrote Genesis in approximately 1400 B.C. or 1200 B.C., he tells the story and describes specifically the difference in names given to the heap of rocks. It is hard to imagine that later redactors would be adding an Aramaic twist to the story. If the story is not taken at face value, there seems to be irreparable harm done to the point of destroying it altogether. However, it is plausible and most likely probably that there was some anachronistic elements not fully understood happening in the text.

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<sup>16</sup> We arrive at this number by starting with the arrival of Israel (Jacob) in the land at 130 years old (Gen 47:9). Abraham was 100 when he had Isaac (21:5) and Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekkah (25:20). Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (25:26) which means Abraham was 160. By adding 430 years of sojourn in Israel (Ex 12:40-41) to Jacobs age at arrival (130) we get 560. Add this to tentative early date of Exodus and we arrive back at 2005 B.C. for Jacob's birth. Add an additional 20 years of marriage and we arrive at 2025 B.C. which is well into the third millennium for Rebekkah the Aramean.

There are also geographical names given for patriarchal origins. One is called Aram-Naharaim in Genesis 24:10. Another synonym seems to be Paddan-Aram. What is interesting about the former is that according to Younger there are a number of extrabiblical sources that make reference to this land during the last half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. Several Egyptian pharaohs fought with or had dealings with a state called in Egyptian sources, Naharin(a). Attestations of this name are found in the inscriptions ranging from 1493-1153 B.C.<sup>17</sup> These attestations simply show the older use of these distinctions that are not used later. It seems to demonstrate that there was either a deliberate intentionality on the part of later redactors to make the text appear older or else the text was written during a time that was consistent with older anachronistic place names.

Finally, it bears some brief comment concerning the confession found in Deut. 26:5. God had commanded the Israelites when they had come to permanence in the land that they were to take a fruit offering to the priest and review their history of sojourning as to acknowledge God's faithfulness in bringing it to an end. They were to say, "My father was a wandering Aramean." There are various interpretations of the Hebrew and none seem to be without disagreement. Regardless of the exact derivations considered, the context would seem to demand the most rendered readings of either *wandering* or *roaming* Aramean. It seems very clear that there is to be a juxtaposition between that of wandering and that of permanence. All of the patriarchs spent much time nomadically traveling around the land of promise. The main issue God seems to be trying to inculcate in the hearts of His people is His faithfulness in bringing them into the Land on a permanent basis.

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<sup>17</sup> Younger (Forthcoming, Connections with Biblical Patriarchs, *Origins of the Arameans* manuscript, 7)

Who does “my father” refer to? Younger writes that there are four possibilities: It could refer to Abraham, Jacob, Jacob’s entire family, or the entire ancestry of Abraham and his family.<sup>18</sup> The viewpoint that I am taking would be that it refers to Jacob. Jacob was nephew to Laban the Aramean and a great nephew of Bethuel the Aramean. It was clear that he had Aramean in his blood since Rebekkah was his mother and the daughter of Bethuel. So from a biblically ethnic perspective he could easily be considered an Aramean. This doesn’t answer how and when Bethuel became known as an Aramean. Did he take this distinction because he was of a different ancestry and moved to Paddan-Aram (land of Aram)? Such as someone with French descent moving to America as a baby and growing up claiming to be American. We don’t know those answers except to say that Jacob ostensibly fits all the descriptions. He certainly was a wanderer, an Aramean, and he also went down to Egypt. Now there is a shift in the wording when he begins to be spoken of collectively (which is very consistent with the rest of the Hebrew Bible). It reads in part, “and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.” All these describe Jacob. This is an especially powerful confession in light of the name that was given to the national entity God had redeemed out of Egypt. They were called Israel or Jacob collectively. They (he) did go down as a group “few in number” and then came out “a mighty nation.”

The comment that J. Tigay makes seems a fitting close to this section. “This clause is probably very ancient, for it is unlikely that Israelite tradition would have chosen to describe Israel’s ancestors as ‘Arameans’ once the Arameans of Damascus

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

became aggressive toward Israel in the ninth century B.C.”<sup>19</sup> The connection with the later changes made in the Targum Onqelos seem to affirm even greater the antiquity of the Hebrew text.<sup>20</sup>

It would be incomplete not to at least mention the biblical mention of the geographical origins of the Arameans as prophesied by Amos 9:7, “...and the Arameans from Kir.” Along with the warning of Amos 1:5 and the fulfillment in 2 Kings 16:9, the Arameans of Damascus were destined to be sent back to their ancestral homeland of Kir. Some scholars have sought to connect Kir with Elam due to the passage in Isaiah 22:6.<sup>21</sup> So far there hasn’t been any conclusive evidence that will pinpoint the exact location of the ancient region/city of Kir.

#### **The Aramean Link with the Ahlamu and the Sutians**

The existence of the connection between the Arameans and the Ahlamu is pretty clear in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. If we begin with Tiglath-Pileser’s 1112 inscription where he describes his victories over the Ahlamu/Arameans, a certain connection is made between the two names. Moving back in history creates more challenges, but still allows for epigraphic instances of Ahlamu to occur. We already have seen some potential opportunities for Aram to occur in the ancient epigraphic field, but the Ahlamu is much more conclusive. According to Lipinski the Ahlamu were nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes, partly settled along the fringes of Syrian and Mesopotamian society. They were mentioned in southern Babylonia as early as the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and clearly

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<sup>19</sup> As quoted by Younger, *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Lipiński (2000:55).

<sup>21</sup> Malamat (1973:139); E. Kraeling (1918:16) goes so far as to say that Tiglath-pileser actually did deport captives to the region of the lower Tigris (ATU, 104, 178). He also seems to try and make a case that Kir is none other than the city of URU and may have been a by-name of Ur.

have Semitic name connections.<sup>22</sup> He goes on to describe the term Ahlamu not as a proper name of a particular ethnic or linguistic group, but a nomadic designation of the raiding forces that were making forays or razzias for the capture of flocks, slaves, food supplies, etc. Thus the Arameans have obviously belonged to this category of roaming tribes and they became its most conspicuous representatives towards the end of the second millennium B.C.<sup>23</sup> This should help us to understand some categories. Thus, the broad category of Ahlamu speaks of a nomadic tribe. The Arameans were a sub-group within this category along with other groups. However, we can see a definite shift in descriptions of this people group at the beginning of the latter half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. Younger comments, “The word *ahlamu* generally disappears from the Assyrian royal inscriptions, except for a few clearly anachronistic occurrences. Babylonian scribes continue its usage for a time, but by around 1000 BCE, *ahlamu* becomes an accepted archaism for ‘Aramean,’ being included in the lexical texts and other materials where the label ‘Ahlamite’ means Aramaic or Aramean.”<sup>24</sup> So we can see that there is a definite connection when speaking of these peoples. Are they same the peoples with different names? Possibly. The Ahlamu could be the ancestors of what we know later as the Arameans.

When trying to discern the origins of the Arameans, another link that seems to be just as conclusive is that of the term Sutians. Zadok writes, “The Arameans’ pre-history is virtually that of their forerunners, viz. the West Semitic semi-nomads (Ahlamu, Sutians) who generally were ethno-linguistically undifferentiated. At least certain components of these semi-nomads probably were the ancestors of the Arameans

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<sup>22</sup> Lipiński (2000:37)

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Younger 2007:159.

according to J-R. Kupper.<sup>25</sup> Whereas we saw the clear connection and designation of the Ahlamu Arameans in the Tiglath-Pileser inscription, later we see Sennacherib boast, “I uprooted all the Sutilian Ahlamu” where the Arameans are really who is meant.<sup>26</sup> We have attestations of the Sutilians as nomadic tribes in the Syrian steppe to the west of the Middle Euphrates as early as 18<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their presence in the Syro-Palestinian area in the 19<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. is confirmed by the repeated mention of the *Swtw* in the Egyptian execration texts.<sup>27</sup> Although there is some evidence of distinction between the Arameans and the Sutilians, Younger writes, “like the term *ahlamu*, the term *sutu* was certainly used in later times anachronistically to refer to the Arameans.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This paper began highlighting the paucity of material that is available in trying to chronicle or piece together a history of the Arameans. Although, it still remains somewhat clouded, there has been considerable progress in developing an *Origins of the Arameans*. We have seen that the clearest epigraphic evidence of the Arameans begins with Tiglath-pileser’s inscription of his victory of the Ahlamu Arameans around 1112 B.C. Yet we have sought to delve farther back in antiquity in trying to bring forth a cohesive collaboration of the available material. Our attempts at this began with covering some introductory issues concerning geography and reviewing the models of the formation of the Aramean states. We then proceeded to the examination of *Aram* in early epigraphic and literary sources. Finally, we made a succinct assessment of the connections between the Ahlamu and Sutilians and their relationship to the origins of the

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<sup>25</sup> Zadok 1991:104.

<sup>26</sup> Lipiński 2000:39.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39; see also Rainey 2006:107 for 14<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century attestations.

<sup>28</sup> Younger 2007:163.

Arameans. As brief as this essay was, we have been able to peek through the shrouds of darkness and obscurity to see that the origins of the Arameans is becoming ever more clear.

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