

On a recent volume of Mari letters¹

Gonzalo Rubio - The Ohio State University

Volume 28 of the *Archives royales de Mari* includes 184 epistolary exchanges between Zimri-Lim and the kings of Babylon (Hammurabi), Qatna, Aleppo, Karkemiš, diverse towns in the Ḫābūr triangle (mostly the region of Idamaras or Yadamaras)² and in the area northeast of the Ḫābūr and south of Jebel Sinjār, Turukkū, and Elam.³ Correspondence from places such as Urkiš (Tell Mozan),⁴ Karanā (perhaps Tell Rimah; see p. 251 n. 281), Ašnakkum (part of Idamaras, in the northwest of the Ḫābūr plain, perhaps modern Chagar-Bazar),⁵ and Elam will most certainly yield a more complete picture of the political history of these regions for this period.⁶ Moreover, the volume includes photographs of 41 texts and copies of 164. Most texts of which photographs are reproduced, appear also in copies. The 13 letters published

1. Review of Jean-Robert Kupper, *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim* (Archives royales de Mari XXVIII), Paris 1998, pp. vii, 401.

2. The two spellings of the name of this Amorite tribe (and their settlement area) are to be analyzed /yayda^c-maras/ and /ṯada^c-maras/ "He who worries has become aware"; see M. P. Streck, *Das amurritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit, I* (AOAT 271/1), Münster 2000, 191 n. 3. The pattern of this Amorite tribal name is somewhat similar to that of Akkadian names like *Illum-limras* and *Limras-libbi-ili*; see J. J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung* (MVAG 44), Leipzig 1939, p. 166; Streck, *op. cit.*, p. 155. Although Gelb regarded the element *maras* as a theonym, this cannot be anything but a divine epithet; cf. I. J. Gelb, *Computer-aided analysis of Amorite* (AS 21), Chicago 1980, p. 25b. On Idamaras in general, see J. D. Hawkins, "Idamaraz," *RIA* 5: 28-30; J.-M. Durand, *Cahiers de N.A.B.U.* 1, 1990, 117-18; M. Anbar, *Les tribus amurrites de Mari* (OBO 108); Freiburg 1991, pp. 102-106.

3. The name of the king of Mari is transcribed here as Zimri-Lim, /ḏimri-lim/ "The Tribe is my protection." On the length of the vowel in Lim, see M. Krebernik, "Lim," *RIA* 7: 17a; E. E. Knudsen, "Amorite grammar: A comparative statement," in *Semitic studies in honor of Wolf Leslau, I*, Wiesbaden 1991, pp. 866-885 (esp. 875); M. P. Streck, *Das amurritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit, I*, p. 235 n. 2.

4. See G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, "The royal storehouse of Urkesh: The glyptic evidence from the southwestern wing," *AfO* 42-43, 1995-96, 1-32.

5. Against the identification of Ašnakkum with Chagar-Bazar, see J.-M. Durand, *M.A.R.I.* 7, 1993, 165 n. 1; Kupper, *RA* 93, 1999, 80 n. 6. Durand (*AuOr* 17-18 [1999-2000], 195) has suggested that Chagar-Bazar may correspond to ancient Qirdahat, Šubram's city before he became king of Šuša/Susā.

6. For a short overview of the political and military relations between Mari and some of these northern towns, see A. Finet, "Mari et le nord," in *XXXIV^{me} Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, 1987, Istanbul*, Ankara 1998, pp. 315-320. On the problems of delimiting territories and defining political units in the area, see B. Lafont, "Le proche-orient à l'époque des rois de Mari: Un monde sans frontières," in *Landscapes: Territories, frontiers and horizons in the ancient Near East; 44th RAI. Part 2: Geography and cultural landscapes*, Padova 1999-2000, pp. 49-55.

previously in ARM 2 are not copied again. These 13 are not the only texts reedited here since 8 other letters were published by Jean and Dossin respectively. These previously published texts now reedited in this volume were also translated and annotated by J.-M. Durand in *Les documents épistolaires du palais de Mari, I-III* (LAPO 16-18), Paris 1997-2000. Two of the texts (no. 16 and 109) appear only in transliteration. One should be quite thankful for the inclusion of copies and even photographs in the book, which are much more useful than the rather pointless microfiches with which in recent years some other volumes of the same series have provided us. Furthermore, this edition proves again the exceptional fruitfulness and longevity of Kupper's scholarly career.

This volume has already been the object of detailed reviews by Fleming and Heimpel.⁷ As Heimpel points out, the importance of these letters cannot be overstated and only future research will be able to extract all the information they offer and integrate it within the general picture of Mari and its sphere of influence at the time. For instance, Kupper himself has published an interesting study on some aspects of the political history of Ašnakkum during Zimrī-Līm's reign, which makes ample use of information contained in letters from ARM 28: nos. 44-46, 63, 65-6, 94, 98-9, 101-2, 109.⁸ Other letters have offered additional insights into the religious and almost sacred aspects of war and campaigning in Mari culture—in certain respects, perhaps coming shy of what some would understand by *jihād*, albeit lacking the infidel/believer dialectics—as M. Guichard has explored in “Les aspects religieux de la guerre à Mari,” *RA* 93, 1999, 27-48 (especially ARM 28: 44 *bis*, 77, 145). Incidentally, besides Guichard's valuable ideas on the matter, this article is of special interest due to the small quotes from the unpublished *Épopée de Zimrī-Līm* sparingly included in it.

The importance of these letters goes beyond political history. For instance, some of them offer further information on marriage customs and women. In a letter from Sibkuna-Addu, king of Šudā in Zalmaqum (no. 27), he tells Zimrī-Līm that after the latter had given him a bride (*kallatum*) he, Sibkuna-Addu, installed the gods of the king of Mari (DINGIR.MEŠ-*ka IZ-zi-i[z]-ma*). This is another instance of the relationship between princesses and the importation of cultic practices and deities from their hometowns; see N. Ziegler, “Le harem du vaicu,” *RA* 93, 1998, 1-26 (esp. 6-7); and *Le Harem de Zimrī-Līm*, (Florilegium marianum 4 / Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 5), Paris 1999, pp. 40-41. Ziegler suggests that this *installation* may have consisted of emblems representing the divinities whose cult had been brought by the princess, rather than of statues carried by her or her entourage. In another letter (no. 86), Hāya-Sūmū, king of Ilān-šurā in the region of Šubat-Enlil (perhaps modern Tell Leilan),⁹ sends a respectable amount of silver (half a mina) to Zimrī-Līm in order to obtain from him “a pretty and skillful singer” (1^{mi}NAR *na-wi-ir-tam le-i-tam*). The use of the adjective *nawirtum*—translating it with Kupper and Ziegler as “pretty,” rather than with the general sense of “in good health” when said of humans (see CAD N/1: 244a)—seems to emphasize the multidimensional function of many entertainers in ancient Syro-Mesopotamia. This was probably the case of the women at the *bīt tegētīm* or “house of the *tigi*-drums”; on this, see Ziegler, *Le harem de Zimrī-Līm*, pp. 94-96 (who translates *tigūm* as “lyre,” see p. 94 n. 583).

Concerning grammar, two of these letters exhibit occurrences of the allomorph -š of the enclitic pronoun -šu (nos. 14 and 113). Kupper (p. 17) explains that this allomorph is rarely attested outside literary Akkadian. The dialectal distribution is actually somewhat more complicated. The short or “apocopated” forms of the 3rd singular pronouns (accusative -šu and -ši, possessive -šu and -ša) are

7. D. Fleming, “Chroniques bibliographiques, I: Recent work on Mari,” *RA* 93, 1999, 157-174 (on ARM 28, pp. 165-174); W. Heimpel, “Observations on the royal letters from Mari,” *Or.* n.s. 69, 2000, 88-104.

8. J.-R. Kupper, “Un épisode de l'histoire du royaume d'Ašnakkum,” *RA* 93, 1999, 79-90.

9. See D. Charpin, “Šubat-Enlil et le pays d'Apum,” *M.A.R.I.* 5, 1987, 129-140.

attested in the so-called "hymnic-epic dialect," in Old Akkadian, and, to a lesser extent, in Old Assyrian.¹⁰ On the other hand, there are also instances of this *-š* in Middle Assyrian and in later dialects (Neo- and Late Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian).¹¹ In the other East Semitic language besides Akkadian, Eblaite, there is at least one instance of a short possessive suffix *-š*.¹² This phenomenon cannot be separated from the similar occurrences of *-k* for *-ka* and *-ki*, as well as those of other pronouns without the final short vowel (*-šun* for *-šunu*, *-šin* for *-šina*, etc.). Moreover, the status of final short vowels in general and the "loss" of mimation are structurally linked phenomena. Although the later occurrences are usually regarded as the result of a loss or dropping and the earlier ones are simply labeled as dialectal, both short and long forms may have coexisted in the spoken language of all periods, with diatopic (geographic) and diastratic (social) variations, but without implying any diachronic evolution from long to short.¹³ It is important to point out that there seem to be no instances of these short suffixes in peripheral Akkadian (Emar, Amarna, etc.), the variants of Akkadian which most likely were nobody's mother tongue and, therefore, did not exhibit most of the variables that would explain the distribution of these short suffixes. The situation clearly resembles that of early Arabic, in which dialects with *i{rCEb}* (final short vowels in nominal and verbal forms) and dialects without *i{rCEb}* are attested side by side. For instance, the inscriptions from Qaryat al-Fiw lack *tanwẓn* (nunation) and probably cases, which plausibly implies a general lack of *i{rCEb}*.¹⁴ The debate on *i{rCEb}* and *tanwẓn* in early Arabic dialects is quite relevant to our Akkadian problem. The fact that middle and low Arabic dialects exhibit no significant trace of *i{rCEb}*—although they do have traces of *tanwẓn*—has been regarded as a case of loss, a *corruption* of the classical language (*{Arabiyya}*). However, even in the Qurʾān, *i{rCEb}* endings are dropped for prosodic reasons (e.g., pausal forms) and they are not read in some traditions of canonical recitation (*tajwīd*) reflecting dialectal preferences. Thus, the most likely scenario assumes the original coexistence of both *i{rCEb}*-less and *i{rCEb}* dialects.¹⁵ Similarly, the data from Old Akkadian and Eblaite point to the cohabitation of both short and long suffixed pronouns, as well as nouns with and without mimation, from the beginning.

Regarding lexicon, the term *ḥipšum* in no. 36 is explained by Kupper, after Durand, as a designation of "la communauté de sang, originaire ou conventionnelle" (p. 45). This interpretation fits perfectly the context and seems more than adequate. Nevertheless, this word might need more explaining. The best Semitic candidate for this word is **ḥbθ*, from which we have also Biblical Hebrew *ḥupāšah* "she was set

10. See W. von Soden GAG³ § 42h n. 7; ZA 40, 1931, 176-181; and I. J. Gelb, *Old Akkadian writing and grammar* (MAD 2), 2nd ed., Chicago 1961, p. 131; and K. Hecker, *Grammatik der Kültepe-Texte* (AnOr 44), Rome 1968, §§ 45a, 49a.

11. See von Soden, ZA 40, 1931, 177-78; GAG³ § 42k; W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Grammatik des Mittelassyrischen* (AOATS 2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970, § 61; P. Stein, *Die mittel- und neubabylonischen Königsinschriften bis zum Ende der Assyrerherrschaft: Grammatische Untersuchungen*, Wiesbaden 2000, p. 31-32; and J. Hämeen-Anttila, *A sketch of Neo-Assyrian grammar* (SAAS 13), Helsinki 2000, p. 50. As Hämeen-Anttila points out, the conservative nature of the orthographic conventions may conceal the actual frequency of these short suffixes.

12. On the sequence *E₂ a-bi-iš* "the house of her father", see P. Fronzaroli, *Testi rituali della regalità* (ARET 11), Rome 1993, p. 137; G. Pettinato, *Il rituale per la successione al trono ad Ebla*, Roma 1992, p. 179; and *id.*, "I pronomi personali indipendenti e suffissi in Eblaite," in *Alle soglie della classicità: Il Mediterraneo tra tradizione e innovazione. Studi in onore di Sabatino Moscati*, ed. E. Acquaro, Pisa 1996, vol. 3, pp. 1193-1202 (esp. 1200). The parallel text has A-MU-*sù*. This *-sù* is used as a logogram for masc. and fem., pl. and sg., 3rd person pronouns; see D. O. Edzard, "Der Text TM 75.G.1444 aus Ebla," *StEbl* 4, 1981, 35-59 (esp. 48); and J. Krecher, "Sumerogramme und syllabische Orthographie in den Texten aus Ebla," in *La lingua di Ebla*, ed. L. Cagni, Naples 1981, pp. 135-154 (esp. 150-51). In fact, *-sa* (marking 3rd fem. sg.) occurs only twice in this ritual (ARET 11 1 rev. ix 11-12, § 79). The presence of the possessive -MU as a frozen orthographic element in these spellings (as well as some aspects of the OB UGU-MU lexical list) is the object of a study the reviewer is preparing.

13. For an overview of the NBab data, orthographic analysis, and a diachronic approach, see J. P. Hyatt, *The treatment of final vowels in early Neo-Babylonian*, New Haven 1941.

14. See A. G. Belova, *Историческая морфология арабского языка*, Moscow 1994, pp. 125-133.

15. See F. Corriente, "Marginalia on Arabic diglossia and evidence thereof in the *Kitāb al-Aḡānī*," *JSS* 20, 1975, 38-61; and *id.*, "From Old Arabic to Classical Arabic through the pre-Islamic koine," *JSS* 21, 1976, 62-98.

free" (Lv 19:20)¹⁶ and Ugaritic *hbθ* "to emancipate oneself, to flee," and *hpθ* "fugitive" and "soldier of fortune, mercenary." The latter meaning of Ugaritic *hpθ* occurs in its cognates: Akkadian *hupšu* (AHw 357a; CAD H:241-42) and Hebrew *hopšî* "free, set free."¹⁷ It is especially interesting for our case that the Ugaritic term *hpθ* denotes the membership to a social group constituted by fugitives, escapees, and disenfranchised individuals, which explains its further specialization to refer to soldiers of fortune or mercenaries (see Del Olmo and Sanmartín, *op. cit.*, p. 196).¹⁸ The common Arabic terms *habuθa* "he was wicked, impious," *habaθ* "refuse, scum," etc., are likely to be cognates of these Ugaritic and Hebrew words, as Del Olmo and Sanmartín point out (*op. cit.*, p. 189a), and not simply occurrences of a homophonous root. The semantic derivation that took place in the Arabic cognates is very similar to that from Akkadian *muškēnu*, indicating a social group or status, to Arabic *maskīn* "poor, miserable," and from the latter to its Romance reflexes (Italian *meschino*, Spanish *mezquino*, French *mesquin*, etc.), with a wide variety of meanings: "poor, meager, mean, sordid." The term attested in this Mari letter, *hupšum*, exhibits a *pirs* nominal pattern (typical of *nomina actionis* in Akkadian and Amorite), whereas its close Akkadian and Hebrew cognates (*hupšu* and *hopšî*) have a *purs* pattern.¹⁹ Another possible Semitic candidate would be the root **hbš*, as in Arabic *habasa* "he blocked, confined, captured, arrested"; Hebrew *hābaš* "he saddled, wrapped, bound up"; Ugaritic *hbš* "girth, belt, waist"; Syriac *hbaš* "he captured, tied up," and so on.²⁰ An irregular, albeit attested, reflex of **h* as *h* in Akkadian would not be a real obstacle. Neither would be the fact that an Akkadian word *abšu* (< **habšu*) designating some sort of strap or band occurs at least once in a lexical list (see CAD A/1: 66; AHw 7). However, semantically speaking the derivation from **hbθ* seems much more probable. Readers of this letter, this reviewer included, are looking forward to J.-M. Durand's surely definitive article on this term and social structures in Mari, forthcoming in *Amurru 2* (as advanced on p. 45).

This volume proves once again that Mari and the ARM series provide a seemingly inexhaustible wealth of information, which can shed light not only on the oft-taken road of Biblical parallelisms (see the recent articles in *RA* 92, 1998), but on the rather more dynamic realm of Syro-Mesopotamian studies. In spite of the texts that are still unavailable (including the tantalizing *Epic of Zimri-Lim*), the field of *Marilog*y is now certainly mature enough to produce a scholarly synthesis, which would enjoy an

16. The form *hihtapeš* in 2 Ch 35:22 is an emendation based on the Septuagint, the Vulgata, the Peshitta, and Hebrew manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah. However, the Masoretic text has *hihtapeš* "he let himself be searched for" (meaning perhaps "he disguised himself").

17. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon to the Old Testament*, I, Leiden 1994, pp. 341-42; and G. del Olmo and J. Sanmartín, *Diccionario de la lengua ugarítica*, I, Sabadell (Barcelona) 1996, p. 189a, 196. The forms with /p/ show devoicing of the bilabial, which is not uncommon in Semitic and Ugaritic in certain environments; see J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (AOAT 273), Münster 2000, p. 137. The relationship between this root and Arabic *haffaša* "he remained in his tent" postulated by Koehler and Baumgartner (*op. cit.*, p. 341b) is impossible in the light of the Ugaritic cognates with /h/ and /θ/; on the Arabic verb, see J. G. Hava, *Al-Faraid: Arabic-English dictionary*, 5th ed., Beirut 1982, p. 132a.

18. Such a context bears a certain resemblance to some of the scenarios proposed in order to explain the origin and use of *hāpiru*; see, for instance, Oswald Loretz, *Habiru-Hebräer: Eine sozio-linguistische Studie über die Herkunft des Gentiliziums 'ibrî vom Appellativum habiru* (ZAW Beiheft 160), Berlin 1982.

19. On these two patterns in Akkadian, see GAG §§ 55c-d. On the same patterns in Amorite, see Streck, *Das amurritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit*, I, pp. 323-25. On these patterns in Semitic, see B. Kienast, *Historische Semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, Wiesbaden 2001, pp. 73, 80-81, 85-86, 91-92, 98-99, 101-103.

20. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon to the Old Testament*, I, p. 289; G. del Olmo and J. Sanmartín, *Diccionario de la lengua ugarítica*, I, pp. 172-73; and K. Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, 2nd ed., Halle 1928, p. 213. The inclusion of Ethiopic languages in this list of cognates (as Koehler-Baumgartner does) is misleading since this word is an Arabic loanword in Ethiopic Semitic (and eventually in Cushitic languages too); see W. Leslau, *Comparative dictionary of Ge'ez*, Wiesbaden 1991, p. 225a.

extensive and well-deserved readership among Assyriologists and other Ancient Near Eastern scholars, Biblicists included. The editor of ARM 28 deserves both our gratitude and our admiration for his excellent work and his enviably productive vitality.

Addendum

Exclusively on the semantics of the noun *ḫipšum* and the verb *ḫuppušum*, see now Jean-Marie Durand, *Le culte d'Addu d'Alep et l'affaire d'Alahtum* (Florilegium Marianum VII), Paris 2002, pp. 69, 74, 155.