

ANCESTORS DIVINE?

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Early into the study of the Mari archives, suggestions were made that a few of the many gods cited in the documents were in fact divinized ancestors, real or imagined.¹ Most often placed in this category were two gods, Ikrub-El (commonly written also as Yakrub-El) and Itūr-Mer (rarely also written Yatur-Mer); but similar notions were (and are still) occasionally expressed about deities that are less well displayed, such as Aštabi-El, Tašqi-Mama, and Tar³am-Mer.² Il-aba, especially when linked with Ugaritic *ilib* and when his name is interpreted to mean “God of the ancestors,” often is treated similarly; as are such deities as Lagamal and Latarak.³ But I do not include them in this study for reasons that will soon be obvious. Of these five deities —Itūr-Mer, Tar³am-Mer, Ikrub-El, Aštabi-El, and Tašqi-Mamma— Itūr-Mer is by far the best displayed in our documentation.⁴ In this paper, offered in tribute and respect to Klaas, I review the evidence and draw a conclusion that came to be a major reason why I have added a question mark to my title.

The dingir sign precedes the names of the five gods mentioned above. What makes these names stand out in the onomasticon for the divine is that they were not crafted to sharpen a specific manifestation for one deity (such as Ištar-pišra), to attach a deity to a particular region (such as Amun-ša-Teḫran and Ištar-Ninet), or to serve them emblematically (such as Bēlet-ekallim or Mārat-altim or Ninḫursagga). Rather they are verbal-sentence names that emulate human onomastica, with a divinity as the subject of a verbal action, a phenomenon that, as Stol has shown re-

¹ For ancestor worship, see Theodore J. Lewis’s article (“Ancestor Worship”) in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1, 140-142. Fuller remarks in Van der Toorn 1993, 1994, 1996; Hallo 1992; Matthiae 1989; Archi 1988.

² The vocabulary attached to their status may differ, depending on the prevailing expressions. W. Moran speaks of Ikrub-El as possibly “an apotheosized tribal hero or a form of El, so called (‘El-blessed’) perhaps because the god was represented in a gesture of blessing,” *Supplement to ANET*² 1969, 623-624 note 11. Nakata (1975, 19) comments, “Thus, it makes sense to consider our Ikrub-El and Itūr-Mer to have once been names of heroes who were to be deified after their death.”

³ On Il-aba, see Durand 1995, 152, “En esta serie se han de alinear, a buen seguro, divinidades como Il-aba ... (‘Dios-del-Padre’, escrito por lo general de manera tradicional *il-a-ba*), que es una figura del ‘dios de los antepasados’, encarnación del culto familiar.” See also Lambert 1981, 299-301; Healy 1995.

⁴ Itūr-Mer was recently the subject of a fine paper by Durand (1997a). To the listing by O. Rouault in *ARMT* 15 (1979), pp. 256, 264, add Huffmon 1971, 286-289; Ross 1970; Durand 1997a. See also Lambert 1985, 534, 538.

On the basis of an oath which invokes Dagan and Itūr-Mer, Šamši-Addu and Yasmaḥ-Addu (*ARM* 2 13 [LAPO 17, 457]:27-28), Fleming (1993b) suggests a balanced equivalence in power in which Dagan is head of the pantheon while Itūr-Mer was the city god of Mari.

Regarding Aštabi-El, to the listing by O. Rouault in *ARMT* 15 (1979), pp. 255, 267, see Nakata (1975) who gives a full range for the spelling of the god’s name. I could not confirm Durand’s statement that “.. tal dios aparece atestiguado ya en los textos de época de Akkad ...” (1995, 202).

cently, is not limited in the Old Babylonian period to Mari.⁵ Moreover, these divine names are not, as some have argued, epithetic expansions of the deity cited in the construction (for example, Itūr-Mer as another name for Mer), because the entire verbal-sentence that forms the divine name is treated as a single component when crafting the personal names of mortals. Thus, we have such names as Idin-Itūr-Mer and Yakrub-El-tillati.⁶ Moreover, we have a Yakrub-El, very much an earthling, among the Mari onomastica (*ARMT* 23 236:29).

The divine names we are inspecting include mention of El, Mamma, and Mer (the last also called Wer and ilu-Wer); all of them deities that are discussed in Assyriological literature because they are recalled in a broad spectrum of documents and over an appreciable duration.⁷ Itūr-Mer and Tar²am-Mer are paronomastically paired in a “*šakkanakku*” era (but actually an early Yaḥḏun-Lim) period list of gods. Very likely they were deemed a couple, their names meaning, respectively, “Mer has returned” and “Beloved of Mer.” Ikrub-El’s name looks to mean, “El has blessed,” while Tašqi-Mamma may mean something like “Mamma irrigates.” I do not know how to interpret the name Aštabi-El, but I would not see the Hurrian deity Aštapi as one of its components.⁸ Durand first suggested “El is sated,” from *šāba*^c, but more recently has derived it from *šābā*, “to take as spoil.”⁹ I am not certain about either derivation.

If these five gods were once mortals, a natural question to pose is whether we have any evidence about their earthly career, around Mari or even beyond. There is a Sargonic period record of

⁵ For other deities with human (mostly one-word and obviously abbreviated) names during the Old Babylonian period, see Stol 1991, 203-204, with additional names cited in Van der Toorn 1996, 56 note 73. The Mari deity Ikšudum (*ARMT* 13 111:5-9) has a name that is occasionally taken to be a shortened form of Ikšud+DN, see Edzard 1967, 63 n. 2.

Whether or not the spellings itūr/yatūr and ikrub/yakrub are variations within Akkadian or reflect an Akkadian/Amorite spelling is not of immediate concern to us; see Nakata 1975, 17 (with bibliography).

⁶ Huffmon 1971, 289.

⁷ The literature on El is immense and it is hardly necessary to cite it here. For Mamma see respectively M. Krebernik in the *RIA* 7(1988), 330-331; For Mer, Wer, [Ilu]-Wer and other renderings for the name of this deity, see Lambert 1985, 534-535; Bonechi 1997, 494-497, citing approvingly P. Steinkeller’s theory that the divine name was ultimately derived from an ethnic group known as War(i).

For pronouncing the god’s name Me²ir and thus negating any connection with early spelling of Mari, see Durand 1995, 160.

⁸ This observation obtains even if we have a Mari personal name that could plausibly be read as Ibal-Aštabi, Durand 1997b, 636 n. 483. On Aštapi/Ašdabil in Ebla documents, see Mander 1995, 35-36; in Hittite texts, see Haas 1994, 363 (and index, sv).

⁹ Durand 1995, 229-230. See also his remarks in 1997c, 131 note 20,

“Aštabi est, en effet, une de ces formes du Habour où une initiale a- correspond à une 3^e pers. sg; **yaštabi* ne peut dériver de l’équivalent de l’akkadien *šebūm*/hébreu *šāba*^c, car le ^c serait indiqué par un signe AH dans cet état de langue; une dérivation à partir de l’équivalent de l’hébreu *šābā*^h (=ŠBi) “emmener en butin” serait plus satisfaisante. Dans les deux cas, ce sont des noms commémoratifs, certainement ceux d’ancêtres tribaux. Le lien d’Aštabi-El avec le dieu Aštabi, longtemps pris pour une divinité purement hourrite, tant de conception que de structure morphologique, mais, désormais, attesté par Ébla comme faisant partie du plus ancien stock des divinités syriennes, est étudié dans [ARM] XXVI/3. Aštabi est connu comme la figure par excellence du dieu de la guerre. Rien ne prouve l’existence d’un culte de ces divinités sur le Moyen-Euphrate avant la venue des Bensim²alites puisqu’Itūr-Mêr n’est mentionné ni dans les textes d’Ébla (avant 2400 av.) ni dans les textes dits des Šakkanakus, dynastie de Mari qui correspond aux Empires d’Agadé et d’Ur III d’Irak du sud. On sait que le trop fameux “Panthéon de Mari d’Ur III”, édité par G. DOSSIN, est en fait de l’époque de Yaḥḏun-Lim.”

expenditure for gold ornaments to votive (?) statues of, among others, an Ikrub-[ilum?]. There is an Itūr-^d[xx] who fathered Tir-Dagan, a Mari *šakkanakkum*.¹⁰ Slim picking, obviously, and to link such isolated information or to give them coherence would be a colossal conceit on our part, as well as too accommodating in any search for antecedents.

A more absorbing set of questions come to mind next: Were Mari people aware of the earthly origin of these gods? And did their knowledge or ignorance of these origins influence how they worshiped or venerated them?

The Mari evidence on these issues is mixed. On the one hand, Itūr-Mer and Ikrub-El were deemed “kings” of respectively Mari and Terqa where they had shrines. According to Durand, Aštabi-El, was linked to Ziniyan, in Saggaratum province.¹¹ We have records that are especially ample in the case of Itūr-Mer, that these gods received sacrifices regularly, and artisans worked on paraphernalia associated with their worship, including weapons, scepters, emblems, and palanquins. [See TABLE.] One text records that three kilos of gold were used in creating for one side of a palanquin a tableau that included Dagan, Yakrub-El, and the king. As did other gods, Itūr-Mer could possess all to himself a priest (*ARM* 26 238:7) and a *muḥḥûm*-ecstatic (*ARMT* 23 446:19'). In his temple, but often beyond it via symbols —such as a scepter— and emblems —such as a *pirikkum*, perhaps a lion-pennant—, Itūr-Mer could arbitrate the oaths of antagonists and give health to a sickly child.¹² I am presuming that from the perspective of the Mari's clergy and citizenry, gods were gods no matter what their origins, albeit it was accepted that some gods had a broader appeal or were more locally effective than others and that some gods deserved greater ceremony and regularity of worship than others.

While we have much less evidence on how the other deities functioned among the five gods we are inspecting, we can nevertheless note that the veneration of Itūr-mer and Ikrub-El cannot be confused with the *kispum* accorded to great leaders of time past (for example Sargon and Naram-Sin), to recently deceased rulers (such as Yaḥdun-Lim), or to deceased members of the royal family (likely called *malikū* in the Mari records). In our records, the name of none of those so commemorated is preceded by the dingir sign. In this regard, the Mari testimony differs sharply from what obtains in other Old Babylonian documentation.¹³

On the other hand, certain ceremonies at Mari in which Itūr-Mer is invoked do not easily fit the normal cycle of worship accorded the gods. Two of these ceremonies are of particular interest. Etymologically uncertain is the *qila²utum*, a prominent occasion that took place at seemingly differing periods of the year. At such times, high administrators gave gifts to the king; but less frequently, they also received them. Meals were taken in which the king often participated. So far, no deity other than Itūr-Mer has been associated with this convocation, although one text poten-

¹⁰ See Gelb and Kienast 1990, 355, No. 4.

¹¹ Durand 1995, 152, 229.

¹² A.2879, a letter from the king's personal secretary, Šunuḥra-ḥalu, is cited only in a French translation (Durand 1997c, 66):

Regarding the young Abban who was ill; I was on my way to Tuttul when Dadi-ḥadun wrote to my lord. I had omens taken [x number of times] regarding this child. Itūr-Mer revealed himself to me. I deposited at Abattum [capital of Dadi-ḥadun] the *pirikkum* of Itūr-Mer and the young boy offered a sacrifice. The young boy has recovered; the god of my lord came to his aide.

¹³ An enormous literature is available on this topic; suffice it for me to mention Tsukimoto 1985, Durand and Guichard 1997, 63-70.

tially links the *qila²utim* of Itūr-Mer to the *qerēt*-banquet of Ištar.¹⁴

More intriguing is the evidence of ARM 23 436, a tablet with holes for a leather cord but shaped nothing like the tablets used as labels. Under the heading, Itūr-Mer, *bēl b/pudim* are listed “14 members of the *b/pudum*, assembled to venerate Itūr-Mer.”¹⁵ Each man is assigned to one specific month of a fourteen-month series, as if responsible for the ceremony during an entire month. Prosopography shows that a good number of the men mentioned in this document were commoners and they seem mostly to be weavers.¹⁶ In ARM 23 462 (lines 12-13) we read about grain dispensed *ana b/pudim ša Itūr-Mer*. In the Mari documentation (but not elsewhere, see CAD, sv), the *b/pudum* (plural: *b/pudātum*) is linked to kings and commoners, but so far to no male deity other than Itūr-Mer.¹⁷ The service can take place in the temple but also in the palace,

¹⁴ Charpin derives *qila²utum/qilātu* from *qalū*, to “burn” 1989/90, 104; Fleming 1993a, relates to *kalām*, “to lament.” Here are the references to the ceremonies:

ARM 7 263 i 6 [malt] *ana qerēt Ištar u qí-la-ú-tim* ^d*Itūr-Mer* [charges against an official]
 ARM 11 68:8 [17.xii.ZL4'] grain from Addu-duri's domain, *inūma qí-la-ú-tim*
 ARM 18 42:7 [17.xii.ZL4'] bow from Ḫaya-Sumu; 2 canes from Ḫabdu-Ḫanat, dispatches to Mukannišum, *inūma qí-la-ú-tim*
 ARM 22 276:i:36-42 [ZL2'] 17 kurs of sesame from Yaggid-Lim's estate; 2 kurs of sesame, from Addu-duri's estate, *inūma lugal qí-la-ú-WA ušbu*
 ARM 24 191 [?.i.ZL6'] I leather sac to Šubnalū, *inūma qí-lu-ú-tim*
 ARM 25 89: 12' [4.i.ZL3'] precious objects, donated by the *wedūtum* (top administrators including Sammetar and Addu-duri) and artisans, to the coffer of the king, *inūma qí-la-ú-tim*
 ARM 25 51:12' [2.xi.ZL12'] silver/gold from officials, donations by top administrators (different from ARM 25 89), *inūma qí-la-ú-tim*
 M.6699 mention of festival, Charpin 1989/90, 104
 M.11928 *inūma qí-la-ú-tam ušbu*, Charpin 1989/90, 104
 M.11192 [= Durand 1984, 261] wine for the artisans, from the wine of the queen (*bēltum*), *inūma qí-il-ú*, Charpin 1989/90, 104; Durand 1984, 261 and n. 9.

¹⁵ Šunigin 14 dumu.meš *BU-di-im ša ana puluḫti Itūr-Mer kašrū*. The construction reminds of dumu.meš *nīši/nīš ilīšu*, “people of the oath,” occurring in *AbB* 13 60:5,31.

¹⁶ See the comments of Soubeyran 1984, 385-387. For a possible occurrence of dumu.meš *b/pudim* see also *ARMT* 23 494:6; they are said to dispense wine for cultic ceremonies.

¹⁷ Ninḫursagga is the only female deity to be associated with a *b/pudum*, interestingly enough, in connection with the meals of the queen and her young children (see below). We know about the *b/pudum* also from Leilan, see Vicente 1991, #77 (also pp. 283-284): “clothing, to the youth Ṭabḫu, whom the king led to the *b/pudum*” (Vicente, “who led the king back from the ‘budum’” *ša lugal ana b/pudi uterra[m]*). Here are the attestations from Mari:

A.512:7-15 (Durand 1995, 206) Itūr-asdu writes [from Mari], “On the day I conveyed this letter to my lord, the *b/pudum* of my lord was offered in the temple of Annunitum of Šeḫrum. I have had Dumuzi enter in the temple of Annunitum in Mari. The queen offered a sacrifice in the temple of Annunitum of Šeḫrum.” See below, sub *ARMT* 24, p. 214[a]
 ARM 24 19:1'-2' [6.vi.ZL1'] grain, *ana b/pudim ša é Itūr-Mer* (see *ARMT* 23, p. 114 note 13)
ARMT 23 462:12-13 [4.xii.ZL4 (Kaḫat)] grain, *ana b/pudim ša Itūr-Mer*
 ARM 24 65:10-14 [1.ii.ZL6'] wine jars *inūma lugal BU-da-a-am ša Išar-baḫli ša u4.30-kam imḫuru*, “when the king received/accepted the *b/pudum* for a month duration of Išar-baḫli”
 ARM 25 17 [16.ix.ZL9'] 1 linen coat for Iddiyatum, *inūma b/pudim ša Išar-baḫli*, in the palace's private quarters (*bū mayyāli*) (see *ARMT* 24, p. 213, sub S.108.165)
 TH 84.50 [27.xii.ZL10'] (Ziegler 1999, 18 note 106) bread for the *b/pudum* of Ninḫursagga, plus queen's meal.
 M.11270 [13.x.?] (*ARMT* 24, p. 213) sheep, sacrifice for Išar-bēli, *inūma BU-di*

during which ceremonial clothing was dispensed to important persons. If the root of *b/pudum* proves to be based on a third-weak *pa³*, the ceremony may have had something to do with “freeing, releasing, or absolving” an individual, a terminology which, presumably as in Hebrew, had potentially a spiritual connotation. And I would speculate that Itūr-Mer was deemed the patron saint, so to speak, of those for whom these ceremonies were enacted.

But there is more.¹⁸ From *ARM* 26 458, published years ago, we knew that Itūr-Mer was used to solve crimes. When oxen disappeared, Itūr-Mer takes the round of the city. Within four days of his circumambulation, the remains of two of the bulls belonging to different individuals were recovered from a single house.¹⁹ We have naturally assumed that, as elsewhere, a weapon or another symbol of the god was used in the discovery process.²⁰ But now thanks to two remarkable letters that Durand has cited but has not yet fully published, we find something different.²¹ In A.1890, a merchant claims that (his?) slave is being spirited away by Babylonian messengers. The king orders that Itūr-Mer be made to recline at the city gate and, as the messengers pass through it, the merchant was to state his claims.²² I won’t pretend to know how the process worked, but Itūr-Mer showed that there was no slave to recover, thus saving the king from a potentially embarrassing confrontation with an allied state.

A.747 is a striking letter, even if it is not specified whether the event it reports took place in or outside the temple.²³ I quote what a governor wrote to the king:

My lord had given me the following instructions, “Aštābi-El should lie down on his couch and be interrogated so that his “seer” (*ha-ia-sū*) could speak. Take account of it to keep me informed.”

ARMT 24, p. 214 [29.ix.?] 90 qa bread stuff *inūma BU-di ša Ḥabduma-Malik, Abum-El, and Ittin-Addu*

ARMT 24, p. 214 [12.xi.?] 1/2 qa *ha-za-nu a-na BU-di-im ša lugal i-na é An-nu-ni-tim*

ARM 7 263: hiv:10'-11' sheep reserved for sacrifice ... *inūma Diritum u ana b/pudāt lugal*

ARMT 23 436:1 ... 31 *Itūr-Mer bēl b/pudim ... 14 dumu.m. b/pudim* (see *ARMT* 23 494:6).

¹⁸ Yet to be assessed is the evidence of *ARM* 26 232, on which see my comments in Sasson 1995. Itūr-Mer plays a major role in a report on an apocalypticizing vision (received by a woman) that includes Dagan, Ninḥursagga, and an old man.

¹⁹ Zimri-Lim received a letter (*ARM* 26 458) from Abi-mekim:

Mari City, the palace, the temples and the workshops are all in good order. Another matter; ever since the sacrifices to Diritum, 5 oxen have been missing in Mari. Itūr-Mer was taken around in the city itself. On the fourth day of the god being taken around, 1 bull belonging to Sin-ṇašir, son of Yadratam, and 1 bull belonging to Ili-gamil, son of Zikri-Addu, were found in Sumu-ḥadim’s house. Of these two bulls, I seize the meat and their skins.

²⁰ See Charpin’s comments to this text, *ARMT* 26/2, p. 383, note a). On the use of divine symbols in legal matters, see Harris 1965; Van Lerberghe 1982.

²¹ Durand 1995, 337-338; but see also 1997a, 65-69; 1997c, 129-131.

²² A.1890 (Durand 1995, 337) is a letter a governor sent the king:

The merchant Ur-šulpa²e³a a while ago went to meet my lord and told him, “A slave is now with messengers from Babylon.” This is what this man told my lord and my lord gave him the following instructions, “When the Babylonian messengers leave, Itūr-Mer should be reclining at the main gate where they will exit. As for you, state then your claims.” This is what my lord told this man.

In accordance with the instruction of my lord, Itūr-Mer reclined at the main gate and this man began to state all his claims with regard a slave of his; but Puzur-Marduk and [...]tillati, the Babylonian messengers, had not taken him.

²³ Durand 1995, 338; 1997c, 129-131.

With Warad-Sin as their “arbitrator?” (*ra-b[is-is]sú-nu*), Aštābi-El stretched himself out (*ir-bi-iš*). In accordance with Aštābi-El’s determination, the matter turned out false. The slanderers will (therefore) be spared, in accordance with the god’s determination. However, in my own case, so that sooner or later there could not be a false matter, I have rebuked him/them before the elders of the land.

The two cases are exceptional even if not completely understood as yet, as they involve the statue of a deity, and not just one of its symbols, participating in resolving criminal and civil cases.²⁴ When Klaas heard me present this paper at the Baltimore AOS (1999), he directed my attention to the Deir el-Madina material in which the god’s statue participated in solving civil and criminal problems.²⁵ Potentially comparable, too, are the teraphim (*terāpîm*) of biblical lore. Interestingly enough, some scholars regard these teraphim as figurines for dead ancestors because in parallel clauses (2 Kings 23:24 and Deuteronomy 18:11) words for “teraphim” and for “the dead” are interchanged. But in some contexts, for example in Genesis 31:20 (see Judges 18:24), they are also called ²*elōhîm*, “gods”.²⁶ In Zechariah 10:2, teraphim are said to speak falsity, thus displaying negatively their power to resolve problems. And in Ezekiel 21:26, reporting a context that is replete with Babylonian divinatory practices, the king of Babylon is said to look for answers through teraphim, “For the king of Babylon has halted at the fork where these two roads diverge, to take the omens: He has shaken the arrows, consulted through teraphim, inspected the liver” (*kî ʿāmad melek-bābel ʿel-ʿēm hadderek berōʿš šenē hadderākîm liqsom-qāsem qilqal baḥiṣîm šāʿal batterāpîm rāʿā bakkābēd*). It might be noted how the construction of *šāʿal batterāpîm* takes us back to the unusual conference among Aštābi-El, a “seer,” a *rābiṣum* (an “arbitrator?,” perhaps intentionally punning on the god’s recumbence) and those seeking answers.

Where does all this material leave us? What we have in the Mari archives are interesting fragments of information that set divinities bearing human names, but in particular Itūr-Mer and Ikrub-El, firmly among the gods of the region. There is no indication that these activities were funerary and I cannot point to any evidence that they had a stake in ancestor worship. Conspicuously absent is any trace in our documentation of apotheosis rituals to initiate or commemorate their transfiguration from a presumed earthly state. Moreover, I miss the archeological evidence from Mari for the protracted rites involving the multiple inhumations and reburials that seem characteristic of treatment in the Euphrates valley accorded those dead that were venerated as

²⁴ Charpin (1986, 167-168) discusses whether *YOS* 12 354 and 48 involved the rental of the statue of Adad or, as more readily attested in other documents, of his symbol, for a voyage to settle a legal matter.

²⁵ When citizens sought the restoration of stolen property, they appeared before the statue of the deceased Amenhotep I who, by assenting (nodding his head) upon hearing the name of the culprit when read from a roster, solved the crime. See the delightful chapter, “oracle,” in Romer 1984, 100-105. A more rigorous treatment of the topic is given in McDowell 1990.

²⁶ On the biblical teraphim, see T. Lewis, “Teraphim [*trpym*],” in Van der Toorn (et al.) 1995, 1588-1601. See also Van der Toorn, most recently at 1994 and 1995, 218-225. There is contradictory evidence on whether or not teraphim were anthropomorphic figures. Van der Toorn has vigorously argued that they had human shape (1995, 220-221). However, the term is always given in the plural (hence not likely to refer to a human figurine) and in the story of Micah (Judges 17-18) *terāpîm* occurs in sequence with *pesel* (statue), ²*epôd*, and *massekâ* (pedestal). In Gen 31:30, Laban laments the loss of his “gods” when Rachel steals his teraphim and Van der Toorn tries hard to explain away the usage. Loretz (1992, with rich bibliography of earlier literature) argues that the term is a kakophemism to avoid reference to the *rephāʿîm*.

ancestors.²⁷

The same fragments of information that is cited above, however, set these gods apart as participants or sponsors in some solemn, perhaps even ritualistic, activities that do not quite belong to the normal cult. Their closest analogues are certain practices one reads about in “*marzēah*” texts from the West Semitic world, for example the meetings of people across status and the banqueting and feasting under light sponsorship of the divine. Entirely missing in the documentation are a good number of the steps, such as the initiatory, secretive, and intensively communal phases, centering on deities who allegedly once suffered human fate, that were the feature in the mysteries of the Hellenistic period.²⁸

How to categorize such manifestations of the divine is a problem. An oxymoron such as “demigods” will not do, as it cannot be shown that they received half a worship or delivered half a miracle. Nor can we find in them a consequence of euhemerism or apotheosis, not because we cannot locate an earthly phase for these gods, but because their translation from one world to another does not fully explain the complete cultic service they received as gods.²⁹ I am intrigued by the possibility that these gods may in fact exemplify the opposite phenomenon, what historians of religions used to describe as a “fading gods” but might now be termed “apanthroposis,” referring to gods about to be recalled as heroes from the past.³⁰ Such a fate may well have obtained, among others, in the case of Elijah who was set as a prophet during the Omri dynasty but whose activities and epithet *hattišbī* suggest an incarnated Tešub, the Hurrian storm god.³¹

These are mere speculations on a phenomenon that is in search of a label. I am aware that all five of my candidates, Itūr-Mer, Tar³am-Mer, Ikrub-El, Aštabi-El, and Tašqi-Mamma, may not be undergoing the same metamorphosis when we meet with them in the Mari archives. At this juncture, it may be prudent to strive for a safer conclusion by admitting that we are not likely to gain a more profound grasp of what this phenomenon involves until we begin to discriminate with

²⁷ Upon hearing me make this statement at the Baltimore AOS, Anne Porter (NELC, University of Chicago) kindly presented me with an as yet unpublished paper, “Ancestor Traditions in Antiquity,” in which she reports extensively (and gives profuse bibliography) on the archeological evidence (especially from Tell Banat) for the ritual transfiguration of the dead into an honored ancestor, with burial in above-ground funerary monuments. Of special interest is her reference (ms. pp. 21-22) to a tall conical mound just outside Mari that may well be a third millennium example of such structures.

When the documentation on *ḥumūsum* is fully published, it would be interesting to research whether they have anything to do with the funerary monuments at stake in Porter’s study. According to Durand such a monument was named after Ayyalum, a deceased king of Abatum, and it was visited twice a year by its then current leader, Dadi-ḥadun; Durand 1995, 270. A *ḥumūsum* can be treated as a divinity, receiving sacrifices, as suggested by *ARMT* 23 319:7 (ZL period).

²⁸ On the *marzēah* see the comments of Schmidt 1994, 62-66, 144-147, 245-249 (with bibliography).

²⁹ Stol 1991, 203, “Here we are confronted with something new in Assyriology: down-to-earth human beings presented as gods. The best solution is to assume that deceased members of a family, as “patriarchs” or “ancestors”, could acquire status under circumstances not known to us.”

³⁰ I owe the term “apanthroposis” to my colleague Philip Stadter (UNC). “Kenosis” is a term used in Christian theology to speak of the pouring of divine spirit into the human Jesus, derived from Paul’s letter to the Philippians (2:5-9), “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself (*alla heauton ekenōsen*), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (RSV).

³¹ On Elijah as a humanized avatar of the Hurrian god Tešub, see Astour 1959 and (briefly) 1965, 215, 297.

more certainty among the ritualistic, devotional, funerary, and ceremonial in the many celebrations now known to us, sometimes only by name, not just in the extensive Mari archives, but also in other records from the Old Babylonian times.

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OB Mari	Aštabi-El	Ikrub-El	Itūr-Mer	Tar ³ am-Mer	Tašqi-Mamma
Temple?		Terqa ^a	Mari ^b		
Gate			Mari ^c		
field			Mari ^d		
ration			ZL ^e		
personel			ZL ^f		
statue/depiction		ZL ^g	YA ^h		
paraphernalia			ZL ⁱ		ZL ^j
cult/festivals		ZL ^k	YA ^l , ZL ^m		ZL ⁿ
DN (“pantheon”) & sacrif. lists		YL ^o	YL ^p , YA ^q	YL ^r	YL ^s
inscriptions or their copies			SA ^t		
Literary			ZL ^u		
Jurid. Doc/oaths		ZL ^v	YL, YA, ZL ^w		
[letters]					
greetings/wishes		ZL ^y	ZL ^{aa}		
body	ZL ^x	ZL ^z	ZL ^{bb}		
in PNs		males ^{cc}	males ^{dd}		
in GNs					
Periods:					
Yaggid/Yahdun-lim		Y	Y	Y	Y
Yasmaḥ-Addu		Y	Y		
Zimri-Lim	Y	Y	Y		Y
Non-Mari		OAKk ^{ee}	OB, Ugar. ^{ff}		

TABLE A: ATTESTATIONS OF DIVINE NAMES IN THE MARI RECORDS

Notes to the table

^a *ARM* 8 93:7' [collation: *MARI* 2(1983): 67; See *FM* 2, 282-283] mentions the distribution of children from the plunder of Širwan to Ikrub-El (restored), 4.v.ZL 11'. Albeit published in *ARM* 8, this document is administrative rather than juridical.

^b *ARM* 26 236:7 [= *ARM* 10 5] in a letter to Zimri-Lim (see below)
ARM 24 19: 2' [6.vi.ZL1'] about the *b/pudum* convocation (see above, note 17)
 A.337 (Durand 1997a:62-63) see below also sub oaths
ARMT 23 96:10-11 memorandum about matters in the temple of Itūr-Mer

^c On this gate and its attestations (A.174, *ARM* 13 26), see N. Ziegler 1994: 20-21. Durand (*ARMT* 26/1, p. 538) cites a passage from a letter of La²um (A.2071) with another reference to this gate, "... At the Itūr-Mer Gate, his attestants will fling dirt on his head and on the spot where this word came out from his mouth, a nail should be driven into his mouth." [NB *ARM* 8 85]. See note "w", below.

^d M.6920 (Joannès 1985: 111-112):14, memorandum concerning testimony about field of Itūr-Mer (broken).

^e Records of grain rations, to a) farmhands (*ālik-eqlim*) and b) house workers. The gods Addu and Itūr-Mer generally head (sometimes in reverse positions) the b) segment, each receiving a modest outlay of grain. It is not clear at all why these particular gods are recorded in such texts. On these documents, see lastly Joannès in *ARMT* 23, pp 105-118, especially 114-115. In the list below, "ditto" refers to type of document and not to exact listing in it.

<i>ARM</i> 24 19:2	[6.vi.ZL1'] minus material on farmhands. [For reverse, see sub <i>b/pudum</i> , note 17]
<i>ARM</i> 24 14:24	[11.vii.ZL1'] ditto
<i>ARM</i> 23 106:23	[15.ix.ZL1'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 108:2'	[??.ZL1'] ditto, minus material on farmhands
<i>ARM</i> 24 15:23	[?] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 110:[4']	[?.xi.?] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 109:17'	[?ii.?] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 112:1'	[2.iib.ZL5'] ditto, minus farmhands
<i>ARMT</i> 23 113:18'	[2.iii.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARM</i> 24 16:18	[2.iiib.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 114:18	[2.iv.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 115:19	[?.iv.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARM</i> 24 17:17	[2.v.ZL5'] ditto (month likely)
<i>ARMT</i> 23 117:17	[2.x.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARM</i> 24 18:[?]	[??.ZL5'] ditto (lost in break)
<i>ARMT</i> 23 116:11'	[?.ix.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 118:14	[?.xi.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 119:17	[??.ZL5'] ditto
<i>ARMT</i> 23 120:12	[??.ZL6'] ditto.

^f M.7829+ (cited in Ziegler 1999: 51 n.319) lists personel attached to the palace, to Itūr-Mer, to

Addu-duri, or to Sammetar's estate.

^g *ARM* 25 626:3 "6 mana of gold, plating for 1 Dagan figure, 1 king's figure, 1 Yakrubil figure, 3 figures of mountains and background, in front of the chest (of a palanquin) ..." [ZL?]; see Durand 1990: 139; 149-150.

^h Durand 1997a: 60-61, cites (in French only) A.2140, a letter Mašiya sent to Yasmaḥ-Addu. It deals with the difficulty the artisans are having in accomplishing work for the throne and precious platters, perhaps also a statue.

ⁱ For the weapon and sceptre of Itūr-Mer as used in oaths, See Durand 1997a: 60-61. *FM* 2 17 is a letter Yasim-Sumu sent the king (Maul 1994: 48-50):

I am herewith sending the inscriptions for the chariot of Nergal and for the palanquin of Itūr-Mer. The inscription for the chariot of Nergal, should it be inscribed on the chariot's face ("breast") or the rear ("tail")? My lord should consider the matter; but this inscription should be inscribed on the rear where the weapon is now to be found, so that reader and reciter (ie. verifier) could read it to each other.

As to the inscription for the palanquin that God [Itūr-mer] will be riding, it should be inscribed on the face ("breast") and back. My lord should write me what his decision is so that before my lord could made his way here, these inscriptions are inscribed.

ARM 27 116: 4 Zimri-Lim is advised to have adversaries take an oath by Itūr-Mer's emblems that are with him.

ARMT 23 198:4 [26.v.ZL4'] glue (*šimtum*) for a part of Itūr-Mer's palanquin.

^j *ARMT* 23 46 refers to *šahḫu* garments that were dispensed to Dagan, Nimḫursagga, Tašqi-Mamma (l. 3), Nergal, Admu, and Ištar *ša nubtim*.

^k *ARMT* 23:264-266, sacrifices in Terqa and Ḫišamta (13 and 14.x.ZL?), collations in *MARI* 5(1987): 381.

^l M.8142:24' [= *FM* 1, p. 30] cadaster--broken

M.11976:2 [= *MARI* 3 p. 85 no. 11] "oil for Itūr-Mer", 1.eburum.Awiliya

M.8700:2 [= *MARI* 3 p. 85 no. 9] "oil for Itūr-Mer", 15.tirum.Awiliya

TH 82 121:5 [= *MARI* 3 p. 86 no.14] "oil for Nergal and Itūr-Mer", 7/abum/Nimer-Sin.

^m See Durand 1985b: 386-387 (references to Itūr-Mer sacrifices); *ARM* 21 233:43', reference to Ea-maši, a *muḫḫūm* of Itūr-Mer.

ⁿ *ARM* 24 305, "sheep, grain that were selected at the banquet of (*qerit*) Tašqi-Mamma and assigned to PN; vi.ZL7'" (collation of Charpin 1989/1990: 104).

^o T.142:22, Dossin 1967: 98-100; see Durand 1980: 175. (Line numbering follows Durand 1995: 167-168.) As Durand has shown (1985a: 160-172), T.142 is datable to the period of Yaḫdun-Lim or just preceding it. So in this table "YL" is equivalent to Yaggid-Lim as well as to Yaḫdun-Lim.

It is possible that in some lists ^dLugal-Terqa refers to Ikrub-El (e.g. M. Lambert 1970: 249-252, also "šakkanakku" period), while ^dLugal-mātim and ^dLugal-Mari may refer to Dagan and Itūr-Mer respectively. In T.142, however, the equation of Ikrub-El and ^dLugal-Terqa is compromised by their mention in the same tablet. That T.142 could be a composite, however, is conceded. See Durand 1985a: 162; Lambert 1985: 530 and note 14.

p. T.142:35.

q. *MARI* 3, p. 43 (No. 9:3). For Itūr-Mer in lists, see Durand 1995: 168-169; 214.

r. T.142:34. See above, note "o".

s. T.142:16. See above, note "o".

t. A.2231 (= Charpin 1984: 42 [No.1]; corrections by Veenhof 1985: 190; division into two separate texts copied on one tablette, Grayson 1987: 56-57):

Šamši-Addu, deputy of Enlil, regent of Assur. When Itūr-Mer, my lord, entrusted to me absolutely control and rule of the land of Mari and of the regions along the Euphrates, I presented to him a throne of *medlar* ... that was embellished with gold and infinite craftsmanship.

[Šamši-Addu, deputy of Enlil, regent of Assur.] When Itūr-Mer, having heard my prayer and petition, entrusted absolutely to me the land of Mari and the "Region by the Euphrates" — (being) his domains —, I presented to him and dedicated for his divine splendor a throne of ebony that was embellished with gold and infinite craftsmanship.

u. 1."Epopée de Zimri-Lim", cited in Durand *ARM* 26/1, 393]: 138;

Zimri-Lim, being Dagan's *zikru*, is heroic

Itūr-Mer, being his protection, is champion

2."Valiant Itūr-Mer, striving for Zimri-Lim only, continues to bless him for evermore"; cited in Durand 1997a: 59 ("Péan en l'honneur d'Itūr-Mêr").

v. Cited by Rouault 1992: 249 from an unpublished Terqa document (TQ8-E21): In the presence of Lagamal and Yakrub-El, Kibri-Dagan and a *dayyān šarrim* (see *CAD* D, 29) deliver a judgment on a case.

w. *Yaḥdun-Lim period*

M.11264:3 [= *MARI* 6(1990): 256] loan from Itūr-mer, Šamaš, and Bēlet-mātim.

Yasmaḥ-Addu period

A.2282+ [*MARI* 4(1985): 303 n. 54] oath by Itūr-Mer and lugal Yasmaḥ-Addu

ARM 8:6:9-10 oath by Dagan, Šamši-Addu, and Itūr-Mer

ARM 8:1:28-29 [28.xi.Asqudum] oath by Šamaš, Itūr-Mer, Šamši-Addu

ARM 2:13:27-29 [= *LAP* 17: 457] oath imposed on soldiers regarding booty.

Zimri-Lim period

A.2071 (*ARMT* 26/1, p. 538), see note "c", above.

ARM 8:85 (*MARI* 8(1997): 343-345) oath by Itūr-Mer, Ḥanat, and Zimri-Lim

A.1401:25 [Joannès 1995: 102-103] [1.?.ZL5'] memorandum: "This is what before Itūr-Mer Ištar-kabbar was made responsible in the workshop" [obscure context]

ARM 26 302:20 Yasim-El accused of despising the oath on Itūr-Mer

ARM 27 116: 46 Zimri-Lim is advised to have adversaries take an oath by Itūr-Mer's emblems that are with him (ie. not in Mari).

x. A.747 (see above).

y. Mostly in the greeting formula from the governor of Terqa, Kibri-Dagan: "Dagan and [Ya]krub-

El/Ikrub-El are fine, and so is Terqa"; see *ARMT* 16, p. 255; add a number of references (some in re-edited documents) in the opening lines of *ARM* 26 178, 235, 234, 220, 221, 221b and *FM* 2:121b.

^z *ARM* 26 196:11'; Ikrub-El (as spelled, the name is sandhi for Yakrubil) is involved in judging Tišpak; see Sasson 1993: 290-291; contra Van der Toorn 1998.

^{aa} *ARM* 10:63 was written by Dam-hurāšim in Terqa, "May Dagan, the *bēl pagrê*, and Itūr-Mer, King of Mari, hand your foes and enemies over to you."

^{bb} A.4263: 19(?) (= *ARM* 26/1, p. 407); an official is quoted to say, "I have never been able to see the face of my lord, whom I/he ... (*ša ú-ša-am-mu-ú*), my lord to whom Dagan and Itūr-Mer would give a powerful weapon and an everlasting rule." In A. 489 (Dossin 1938: 110b; latest updated translation in Durand 1997a: 59), Rip²i-Dagan writes:

... I said, "When my lord won a victory over Išme-Dagan and drove Yasmaḥ-Addu out of Mari, and when the Benjaminites fought with my lord, my lord wrote to all of you about sending troops, but you did not give them to him. But on order of the gods Dagan and Itūr-Mer my lord did triumph over his enemies, turning their cities into mounds and heaps and annihilating them one after the other Yet, you did not show my lord any good-will

...

<i>ARM</i> 26 207: 32	(= <i>ARM</i> 10 4); Šibtu's oracle: Itūr-Mer is one of the gods guiding ZL
<i>ARM</i> 26 236: 7	(= <i>ARM</i> 10 10); Kakkalide has a vision in Itūr-Mer's temple
<i>ARM</i> 26 230: 3, 6	Vision of old man in dialogue with Itūr-Mer
<i>ARM</i> 26 238: 7	(= <i>ARM</i> 10 51); Idin-ili is said to be priest of Itūr-Mer
<i>ARM</i> 26 315: 58	Yamsum cautions against an ally, even if Zimri-Lim's god and Itūr-Mer are strong.

^{cc} Yakrub-El-tillati (eg., *ARM* 7 107:2'; 23 217:7:14).

^{dd} To the personal names collected by Rouault in *ARMT* 16, p. 264 (Ana-Itūr-Mer-taklāku [see *MARI* 2(1983): 87 sub *ARM* 7-197:5]; Ḥanna/Idin/Ipqu-Itūr-Mer), a number of which now occur in more recently published documents, we now have such names as Itūr-Mer-gamil (*ARM* 23 436:29) and Itūr-Mer-tillatī (*ARM* 23 85:39). Durand 1995: 163 adds the names Itūr-Mer-ḥišra and Itūr-Mer-ināya.

^{ee} Old Akkadian. No. 22 of Westenholz 1987: 44-45 is an account of gold ornaments for the statues of Šu-Ašdar, Tugalum, Ikrub-[AN?], and Isar-aḥi. Westenholz comments:

There is no convincing clue to the identity of the Akkadians whose statues were decorated so richly. However, as Ikrub-Il is known to be the name of the local patron deity of Terqa, it could just be that the statues in our text are all such local demi-gods, and that they were all gathered to stand in effigy before Enlil as representatives of the provinces of the Empire that Enlil had given the Akkadian king. Against this hypothesis, it should be noted that Ikrub-Ilum, as well as the other names in this text, is not a very uncommon name, and that Itūr-Mer, the local god of Mari, is not represented even though Mari was surely more important than Terqa. Thus, as an alternative hypothesis, the statues were perhaps simply ordinary votive statues of high-ranking, though otherwise unknown Akkadians.

^{ff} Itūr-Mer is cited in an Old Babylonian greeting formula, Kraus 1964: 24-25 (# 29). He also appears in Ḥana contracts, but seemingly exclusively in oath formulae invoking Šamaš, Dagan, Itūr-

Mer, and the reigning king (See lastly Rouault 1992: 250).

Note also ^aUtar-Miri of *RS 34.142:3* (Lackenbacher 1984: 185, and note 3), in a greeting formula, "May Addu, Dagan, Itūr-Meri[?], and the great gods of Mari protect my lord's life." See also Durand's reading in 1997a: 69 *contra* van Soldt's reading (1991: 222 n. 339).