

Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien

52e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
International Congress of Assyriology and
Near Eastern Archaeology
Münster, 17.–21. Juli 2006

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2014
Ugarit-Verlag
Münster

Casus belli in the Mari Archives¹

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The Verdict of the Gods

Sometime during the early months of 1764 in the much maligned Middle Chronology, an obscure warrior named Yeškid-El wrote his king a note about the victory of the forces of Babylon and Mari over Larsa, "... Given that I had previously witnessed the zeal of the nomads, I have never observed their zeal (as fully as now). Today, the god of my lord went before my lord's armies. The spear of the evil foe is now broken. Larsa is taken. There is no fault or foul up. My lord's armies are safe...; we are well..." (ARM 26 386).

In these lines we have the enthusiasm of the just, the verdict of God, the moral weakness of the foe, the predestined fall of evil, the correct behavior of the warriors, and the physical if not also the moral well-being of the victors. In all, a perfect confirmation for the adage, "To the victors, all their wars are just"; and "justified" one might add. The phrase *casus belli* is used in Medieval Latin for the grievance section of an ultimatum or a declaration of war; but in modern scholarship it is applied to the broad variety of events that provoke or justify a war.

As we marshal our evidence from the Mari archives, it might be prudent first to discriminate between what our studies of the sources suggest and what those composing our sources declare about them. In the first category, our geo-political omniscience gives us ample justification to treat war as resulting from territorial ambition, economic envy, ethnic diversity, dynastic dysfunction, or plain personal opportunism. In the second, however, the

¹ Much has been written about war, its causes as well as its legal and moral justification. The last subjects are vetted periodically, especially in the wake of wars that split communities; see Ph.M. Brown, "Undeclared Wars", *The American Journal of International Law* 33 (1939): 538-541; J.G. Sidak, "To Declare War", *Duke Law Journal* 41 (1991): 27-121. For the ancient Near East, see Bustenay Oded's specialized treatment *War, peace, and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1992). Mario Liverani has thoughtful pages on diverse aspects of war and alliances, based mostly on historiographic records, *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600-1100 B.C.* (Padova: Sargon, 1990), especially pp. 115-197. Similar themes are reprised in his *Guerra e diplomazia nell'antico Oriente: 1600-1100* (Rome: Laterza, 1994).

In addition to studies that will be cited below, a number of papers deal with "just wars" including, L.B. Kutler, "Features of the Battle Challenge in Biblical Hebrew, Akkadian, and Ugaritic", *Ugarit-Forschungen* 19 (1987): 95-99; D. Elgavish, "Did Diplomatic Immunity Exist in the Ancient Near East?", *Journal of the History of International Law* 2 (2000): 86-88; and A. Altman, "Hittite Imperialism In Perspective: The Hittite And The Roman Treatment of Subordinate States Compared", in: G. Wilhelm (ed), *Ḫattuša-Boğazköy: das Hethiterreich im Spannungsfeld des Alten Orients* (6. Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 22.-24. März 2006 in Würzburg; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008): 377-393.

explanation for hostilities are mostly about the sense of betrayal, trickery, or false peace; and the appeals are for justice and revenge, with gods invited to choreograph them. Ultimatums, which might give reason for conflicts, are few, occasionally emblematic, and so far seemingly always cited by third parties. They do not mention the gods. Declarations of war remain rare for antiquity in general, with Mari yielding the only example so far not embedded in a literary retrospective. In it (A.1314), Yarim-Lim of Yamhad describes acts of kindness that were answered by lies and provocation. Inviting the gods to adjudicate between him and Yašub-yahad of Transtigradian Der, Yarim-Lim affirms his intent to bring troops to its gates come springtime. While a prime source for how wars are reasoned, this document generates so many issues of historical reconstruction that I reserve its treatment to an Appendix (see below).

Here, I will focus on the second category of perception, on how the impulses for war are displayed in the Mari archives; but I will also broaden the subject to include issues of motivations and involuntary participation. I need not add that the records from Mari are so profuse and their authors so garrulous, that it is possible to binge on the evidence and not see the forest for the trees.

Retrospective Documents

Luckily, the phrase *casus belli* is both singular and plural, inviting us to investigate not just the diverse ways in which explanations or justifications for combat are presented but also the occasions in which they are conspicuously missing from our evidence. We first notice that the type of documents in which they are embedded or implied matters a great deal. In retrospective documents, such as Yahdun-Lim's inscriptions and Yasmah-Addu's letter to a god (ARM 1 3 = LAPO 18 931), as well as in some of the some of the prophetic documents (such those emanating from Nur-Sin then in Yamhad), the tendency is to look backwards for lessons about the future. In such retrospectives, texts implicate the gods as arbiters of justice, their mere presence certifying the righteousness of combat. There is a certainty that gods march with the king (ARM 26 207) and that they grant him divine weapons with which to impose a pre-charted victory. But there is also implicit reciprocity in that if wars are just when gods help men to intended triumphs, they turn holy when men battle for the gods, filling their temples with their share of the spoils.

When gods enter the fray in behalf of their clients the success of the ventures are assured, whether they are set for the future or evoked for a past in the process of actualization. In rare cases, such as in the prophecies I have termed apocalypticising, terrestrial warfare is but manifestation of tensions among the gods, building on a theme from the Sumerian laments then still in fashion.² In one instance, when Dagan confronts Tišpak, we know that Mari cannot but triumph over Ešnunna, for good measure tying this prediction to the fall of

2 See my "Apocalypticism at Mari? Speculations on ARM X:9", *Mari: Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires* 1 (1982): 151-67; "Mari Apocalypticism Revisited", in: K. van Lerberghe and A. Schoors (eds), *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East. Festschrift E. Lipiński* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 285-295.

Ekallatum (ARM 26 196).³ A personalized version of the same is found in the published fragments of the Zimri-Lim Epic, where the king becomes avatar for the gods. Zimri-Lim is a champion of the gods, such as Enlil and Annunitum; in fact, he is their *zikrum*, “image.” The causes he espouses are cosmic and benefit Mari only paradigmatically.⁴ Under these circumstances too, explanations for confrontations are eschewed and victory is achieved without any need for verisimilitude.

In the year-formulae, however, the accent shifts from gods to rulers. In embossing the capture of towns and the defeat of enemies on a temporal matrix, there is a retrospective collusion between a military venture and its arrest in time, making a justification or an explanation superfluous. This is quite different from what we find in the chronicles, such as the one from Mari featuring the activities of Samsi-Addu’s family. There, time is also segmented into yearly units, each of which is linked almost exclusively with battles or the captures of cities; but the events are now presented “neutrally”, that is defeats and victories are listed without hints of causation and, as far as we can tell, with hardly any mention of divinity.⁵ War just happens, and fault is hardly at issue.

Entangling Alliances

In reviewing the year formulae of Zimri-Lim, we note too that they include a number of statements about aiding an ally, such as Yamhad, Elam, or Babylon. Here too, explanations for martial activities are superfluous, for fault cannot be found when fulfilling treaty terms supervised by the gods. In fact, when we inspect the many occasions in which hostilities are reported, we quickly realize that a good deal of them are beyond a need for justification. They are adopted or inherited because of ties that linked rulers and vassals, to each other and to other units of power. Because our documents are mostly drawn from the archives of a palace, in them there is practically a metonymy between rulers and their states. Consequently, the political metaphors they draw on are those of kinship. They include becoming “one house”, “one heart”, or “one finger” (of the same fist). Allies are said to “recline on (the same) couch”, a fine image for kinship. We read about an impressive array of magical or symbolic acts such as exchanging blood, drinking from the same cup, sharing pre-worn garments, and hugging (each other?) by the throat (*lipit napištim*). Such acts were meant to effectively transform individuals laterally into “brothers” or “older brothers” (*ahum rabûm*) and vertically into “fathers” and “sons.”⁶ From this perspective, dynastic continuity need

3 See also ARM 26 208 where an assembly of deities secure the defense of Mari.

4 M. Guichard makes similar points in “Les aspects religieux de la guerre à Mari”, RA 93 (1999): 34-35.

5 The “Mari Eponym Chronicle” was published by M. Birot, “Les chroniques ‘assyrienne’ de Mari”, MARI (1985): 219-242. Many comments on it are in the literature. Durand is to publish an edition of it with important new readings.

6 See B. Lafont, “Relations internationales, alliances et diplomatie au temps des royaumes amorrites. Essai de synthèse”, Amurru 2 (2001): 254-261. Regarding what was implied by *lipit napištim*, “touching the throat”, I take my cue from B. Lafont (ibid., p. 313 n. 415; see also pp. 262-263 and 274-275), who interprets it via a statement attributed to Samsi-Addu recorded in SA1 71 (J. Eidem and J. Læssøe, The Shemshāra Archives, 1: The Letters [Historisk-filosofiske

not always depend on DNA matches. When kings speak of “ascending on the throne of (their) fathers”, as we know from a number of references (ARM 26 372; LAPO 16 281), they could be using the thrones sent by their political “fathers”, thereby publicly and constantly affirming their allegiance.⁷

Yet, this *Heimischkeit* is not quite as wholesome as, say, sharing a Coke and “teaching the world to sing in perfect harmony”; for many of these bonds were involuntary, and the coalitions that were created did not always have the most willing participants. At one point, Hammurabi rejected the terms of an oath Zimri-Lim wants him to take as “too tough”, likely because they carried with them demanding obligations.⁸ When Samsi-Addu forced his son to marry the daughter of Išhi-Addu of Qatna, lovely though she may have been, the liability she brought to the marriage was not particularly inviting to someone with Yasmah-Addu’s personality. Sure enough, within months, Samsi-Addu had him send troops toward the Mediterranean, the act itself provoking battles on multiple fronts (FM 5, pp. 101-103). Under these circumstances, we only have immediate rather than organic causes of such wars, the latter already far removed from our inspection. So we advance scenarios that seem most plausible to us, such as, in this case, competition between Yamhad and Qatna. But we cannot be categorical about them.

The pledges exchanged among allies allow us to speculate also about potential *casus pacis*, that is justification for peacemaking.⁹ For example what drove Zimri-Lim and

Skriver, 23, Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2001]). In that text, Samsi-Addu is cited as telling a prospective ally, “I will have a gold statue of you and one of me, holding each other around the neck” (*šalamka u šalmī ša hurāšim lušēpišma ahum kišad ahim likīl*). Lafont links this statement to a ritual basin from OB Ebla that shows two men embracing each other, their hands reaching to each other’s mouth. Lafont asks, “Ce geste d’alliance, qui est donc désormais attesté d’Ebla à Shemshāra, serait-il à mettre en relation avec le geste du *lipit napištim*?”

We know from the Leilan tablets that human blood was transported from one place to another for the purpose of taking oaths; L87-937, text #185 in J. Eidem, *The Royal Archives from Tell Leilan* (PIHANS 117; Leiden: NINO, 2011), 228-229. J.-M. Durand (*Annuaire du Collège de France 2000-2001*, pp. 693-705) proposes that mingling of blood may be behind the notion of *lipit napištim*. I don’t know how transported blood was prevented from coagulating.

7 ARM 26 372:47-54 records the gifts that an overlord (Hammurabi of Babylon) sent to a prospective vassal (Atamrum of Andarig) and they include textiles, garments, a wig (*huburtum*), and a throne. The vassal indicates his acceptance by promptly wearing the garments and using the throne. Ibal-pi-El of Ešnunna sent Zimri-Lim a throne, a signal that he welcomed him as a vassal; see LAPO 16 281, pp. 436-437. Simah-Ilane, then king of Sapiratum, indicates his acceptance of fealty when he leaves Babylon with a chariot, a throne, and a canopy, indicating the acceptance of his fealty (A.3274; cited from M. Guichard, “Les relations diplomatiques entre Ibal-pi-El et Zimri-Lim: Deux étapes vers la discorde”, RA 96 (2002): 131-132. Other references to the thrones of fealty are in ARM 10 158+ (= LAPO 18 1179), about which W. Heimpel has an interesting take: the throne is one Zimri-Lim had given to Atamrum, now dead; see his “Inbatum Goes Home”, NABU 2000/31 (pp. 34-35).

8 A.2968+:73-74; see M. Guichard, “‘La malédiction de cette tablette est très dure!’ Sur l’ambassade d’Itūr-Asdû à Babylone en l’an 4 de Zimri-Lim”, RA 98 (2004): 73-74.

9 The great document on how peace is established in the Mari era is ARM 26 404. It shows that aside from elaborate sacrifices and ceremonial activities (including the symbolic seeding of a field), there were also the exchange of ultimatums condemning alliances with an enemy: (51-59)

Hammurabi, king of Kurda, was excluded from their covenant. Atamrum [of Andarig] told Asqur-Addu [of Karana], “I fear that through tricks and distortions Hammurabi will release

Hammurabi into each other's arms is itself a complicated matter because other big powers, such as Ešnunna and Yamhad, were competing for their support and because each had allies that were their enemies.¹⁰ What made them support Elam is even more of a puzzle because the lore was that "Elam devours its enemies as well as its allies" (ARM 26 306:36-38). So much so, that even Elam's alleged allies were perpetuating such metaphors.¹¹ Moreover, Elam had the subtlety of a drunk, once sending the same ultimatum to both Larsa and Babylon, demanding troops from one with which to fight the other (ARM 26 362). Needless to say, the two compared notes and ignored the threat. Still, once under oath to each other, allies found themselves willy-nilly forced to take up their military cause. When Elam decided to attack Ešnunna, its reasons are obscure to us but may have to do with resurrecting an ancient antagonism.¹² But the flare-up puts Zimri-Lim in a quandary, for just months earlier he and Ibal-pi-El (II) of Ešnunna had drawn up solemn accords. Still, Zimri-Lim does join a coalition that dismembers Ešnunna. Within a couple of years, however, the tables were turned and Babylon, Mari, and Ešnunna were at war against Elam. Again, Zimri-Lim is dragged into it.

In this context, it is important to realize that the copy of the oath that Zimri-Lim had Hammurabi swear to prevent either of them from acting independently against Elam (LAPO 16 290) is likely to be the reverse of the pledge initiated by Hammurabi to bind Zimri-Lim to his cause. For the evidence is that Elam resented losing hard-won territory to its erstwhile ally Babylon. This is clear from the most sharply-worded ultimatum we have

to you property of yours that is now under his control. If you make peace with him, then I shall be hostile to you!" Asqur-Addu, on his part, told him, "I fear that he will release to you property of yours that is now under his control. And if you make peace with him, I myself shall be hostile to you! Until our 'father' Zimri-Lim comes up, our enemy and our ally are in common." This is the answer Asqur-Addu gave.

Proposals for what must be done in exchange for peace are cited frequently in the diplomatic archives, a fine example is in ARM 26 392, where Hammurabi of Kurda states the terms for making peace with Atamrum of Andarig (lines 16-42). Essentially, they involved the restoration of towns. To advance his point, Hammurabi constructs a fine parable by referring to houses and their foundations (44-55). It is worth noting that arbitration by outside parties took place after acceptance of peace treaties: ARM 26 410:13³-17; 468:8⁷-9⁷.

10 Zimri-Lim had Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum as an enemy during the first years of his career, no doubt because he was the heir of Samsi-Addu. During that same period, Išme-Dagan was an ally of Hammurabi, no doubt because of compacts between Samsi-Addu and Hammurabi.

11 Cited from A.2996, as edited by D. Charpin "Hammu-rabi de Babylone et Mari: Nouvelles Sources, Nouvelles Perspectives", in: J. Renger (ed.), *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Modern* (2. Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 24.-26. März 1998 in Berlin, Saarbrücken: SDV, Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 1999): 125 n. 50. See also A.1931 (p. 126 n. 53), in which Ibal-pi-El writes to Zimri-Lim, "Is it too little that earlier Hammurabi led an army of [x] thousands against Elam and captured Ešnunna? But it is the whole country that he covets. He now has changed his plans and he set out to devour the land of Babylon. Had not the God of my lord stood by, [the sukka] would have long ago made the seed of the land of Babylon as never born. Still, when a messenger of the sukka of Elam, mentions [Hammurabi], his lips are sweet, saying 'it is peace!'" see also Charpin's citation of A.4474 (*ibid.*, n. 55) that clarifies the last clause.

12 D. Lacambre thinks it had to do with the tin trade, "Études sur le règne de Zimri-Lim de Mari", *RA* 96 (2002): 8; but it could be a rematch from earlier battles. See FM 5, pp. 217-218.

in our archives, demanding Hammurabi's acceptance of Elam's yoke and removal of Babylonian forces from towns taken from Ešnunna.¹³ Why would Zimri-Lim allow himself to be tangled in this way is not clear to me. It has been proposed that ethnic pride and racial bonds played a role. This is possible; but it was not well displayed just a couple of years earlier when Mari and Babylon helped Elam gain a footing in their regions of influence. Samsi-Addu certainly did not obey any such instinct.

One last illustration: when Hammurabi fought Larsa, he claimed he was responding to its provocative incursions and even credited Šamaš and Marduk for prompting him to war (26:385:14'-15'). Zimri-Lim himself (as they say in Tennessee) "did not have a dog in that fight"; yet he was under oath and sent his troops even when he had doubts about his capacity to retrieve them. For even among allies, there was tit-for-tat: when Babylon had sent an army to help Mari against Ešnunna a few years earlier, Hammurabi had difficulty extracting them from there (FM 6 14:12'-17').

Quandaries for Vassals

For vassals, the burden of covenants was perhaps even heavier than among overlords, as they were pawns in games not within their control. Their overlords rarely empathized and kept them on a short leash. True, there were frequent gifts (*qištum*) or bakhsheesh (*nēbehum*), not to say also spoils, to prompt their martial participation or to deflect their support for potential enemy.¹⁴ But especially when their lands were located between the

13 A. 3618, cited from D. Charpin, "Hammu-rabi de Babylone et Mari" (CDOG 2): 122 n. 37; Yasim-Dagan writes:

The sukkal of Elam wrote to Hammurabi, "Atamrum is selected [but see OBO 160/4, p. 214]. While I am here, bring your affair to an end. The cities of Ešnunna that you are holding, are they not mine? Release them and submit to me [lit. place your neck under my yoke]. Otherwise, I will keep on raiding your land. From Mankisum, the army will set out, making a crossing there. I shall make a crossing at the head of the army and will attack your land." This is what the sukkal told Hammurabi. A copy of the tablet he conveyed to him reached Atamrum, the army leaders, and me. He is really eager to battle the Babylonian leader.

Hammurabi seems to have treated Elam's attack as an infringement of a divine oath. When matters were turning in his favor militarily, he refused to discuss peace terms with Elam's envoys, treating them disdainfully. His officers Irranada and Sin-iddinam tell the envoys, "Why do you make so much noise at the palace gate, tearing at your garment. Your lord has transgressed the terms of his oath, planning to sin and act despicably. Let him come here and may Enlil judge the intentions he has in mind. As for you, you must not come over and try to meet with the king" (ARM 26 370:14'-19'). The messengers did indeed protest; but no one paid much attention to them and they suffered further indignity.

14 To compromise a potential ally of an enemy, an agent of Zimri-Lim proposes sending 20 minas of silver (a large sum!); see A.49:46-57 cited in G. Dossin, "Le *madārum* dans les 'Archives Royales de Mari'", in: D.O. Edzard (ed), *Gesellschaftsklassen im alten Zweistromland und in den angrenzenden Gebieten* (18 RAI; München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1972): 63:

Another matter; the land of Šinamum and Tuškhim is on a par with Elahut itself; but there is no prince (*madārum*) guiding it, so they are looking to Elahut for leadership. If my lord would

territories of powerful adversaries, vassals faced precarious existence. Enemies took much pleasure in defeating each other's vassals, in one case sending an overlord a present along with this message: "Here is the head of one who trusted in you" (ARM 28:56-58). There is a text from Shemshara (SH 809 = SA1 1) that is heavily cited as a paradigm for perfect inconstancy. In it Samsi-Addu railed against Yašub-Addu of Ahazum who broke his oath more often than his bread, including twice to Samsi-Addu himself.¹⁵ Instead of fickleness, however, we may conjure from it an image of a ruler desperately fleeing the burdens of shifting entanglements. We need to keep in mind that alliances exposed vassals to aggression as readily as they protected them from it. Moreover, allegiances were constructed many levels deep, increasing danger both vertically and horizontally; for vassals inherited both the new friends and the new enemies of their overlords, leading to uncomfortable conditions.

Political disorder occurred frequently enough, especially when new bullies entered the scene. Such was the case involving the *sukkal* of Elam and Hammurabi of Kurda. The last was at that time a vassal of Atamrum of Andarig, who himself was a follower of Elam. The *sukkal* threatened torrid punishment if Hammurabi continued to correspond with Babylon and Mari. Kurda and likely even Andarig were simply caught in a changing political reality and could not move fast enough for cover. The threat itself brings as close to a true ultimatum as we have from Mari (see above); yet we only have it in the language of a Mari diplomat who was reproducing it for his boss from memory; we should not doubt its gist, but we might be cautious about its rhetoric.¹⁶

As much as possible, vassals tried to keep some options open because total loyalty simply increased danger. In one of the most biting letters in our archives Ibal-Addu of Ašlakka recites to a Mari ambassador a litany of rulers who had forfeited their thrones – if not also their lives – because they committed too heartily to Zimri-Lim "Why did your lord

order it, my messengers would keep on going to these people, so that with 20 mina of silver I could bribe them (*lugammeršunūšim*) and make them enemy of the ruler of Elahut in a very short time. In the future, when my lord plans to place himself where he wants, the king of Elahut will not be able to join the enemy of my lord as an ally, and he will find himself [lit. "foot"] stuck in his own country.

15 Yašub-Addu is called *sarrum*, "criminal" in SA1 2:6 and deemed so crazy that he is no longer responsible for his own words (SA1 4). In SA1 3 Samsi-Addu dangles gifts (*gištum*) before Kurwari should he do the dirty job. SH 802+ (= SA1 69) is yet another letter in which third parties are paid to use force in solving a knotty problems.

16 A.6 (= LAPO 17 556) is letter sent to Zimri-Lim by his representative in Kurda (Haqba-Hamu); J.-M. Durand, "L'empereur d'Elam et ses vassaux", in: H. Gasche (et al.), *Cinquante deux réflexions sur le Proche Orient ancien offertes en hommage à Léon de Meyer* (Mesopotamian History and Environment, 2, Occasional Publications, 2; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 15-16:

In this tablet of mine which I am conveying to my lord is a copy of the tablet that the *sukkal* of the Elamites sent to Hammurabi (of Kurda), [line drawn across table]: "Thus says the *sukkal* to Hammurabi: 'My servant Atamrum has taken you as a client; but I constantly hear that you are sending your letters regularly to Babylon and Mari! You must not keep sending your tablets to Babylon and Mari. If you continue to send your tablets to Babylon and Mari, I shall *rage* against you'". The *sukkal* of the Elamites sent this message to Hammurabi. I have heard this message myself.

not save him?” was Ibal-Addu’s bitter refrain.¹⁷ This kind of *chutzpah* was not easily forgiven and Zimri-Lim eventually brought Ibal-Addu’s rule to an end.

The terms for pledges between overlords and vassals may seem simple enough. For example, Hammurabi distilled them for his new vassal Atamrum of Andarig, informing him that he needed “to be hostile to my enemies and be in good terms with my friends” (ARM 26 378:58-59). But, we are around Hammurabi 30 (ca. 1763), and the Babylonians were up to their eyeballs then in military struggles, dragging Atamrum along. Not surprisingly, the story of Atamrum is one of total absorption in warfare. In the handful of years in which we can follow his career, his allegiances were on a rollercoaster, shifting him in and out of pledges to Elam, Ešnunna, Mari, and Babylon while at the same time keeping a swarm of kings under his control (ARM 26 404:15). Soon after his marriage to Zimri-Lim’s daughter, Atamrum died suddenly, a demise his father-in-law attributed to an avenging God (ARM 26 185b); for in Mari (as elsewhere) abrupt ends are signs of divine justice unfolding.¹⁸

A change in an overlord’s political commitment or in a vassal’s attachment might trigger a chain reaction on all levels and fronts. Ostensibly, suzerains are there to protect vassals; but their own modish entanglements and drifts made their capacity to do so suspect.¹⁹ Yassi-Dagan, a Mari general, cites the taunts and false information Zaziya, a Turukku leader, was using to peel vassals away from Zimri-Lim. Zaziya mocked these rulers by asking: “Where is Zimri-Lim whom you are seeking to be your ‘father’; behind whom you march while he himself rides a palanquin? Why has he not come here to save you?”²⁰ Yet vassals do not have the luxury of choosing their battles. In a memorandum full of advice for his (future³) son-in-law, Yarim-Lim of Yamhad cites his own behavior as worthy of emulation: He once executed a vassal who despite warnings continued to attack his protégés (LAPO 16 249, pp. 390-393).²¹

17 A.3194, partially cited in Guichard’s RA 93 (1999): 28-29; see also Charpin and Ziegler FM 5 pp. 222-223. The same sort of challenge is issued by Zaziya; see below.

18 For Atamrum, see the assessments of Joannès (ARM 26, pp. 242-251) and of Lafont (Amurru 2, pp. 239-240). On justifying the sudden death of rulers (especially erstwhile allies), see A.2730:15 (cited in ARM 26/2, p. 33; Qarni-Lim); A. 350+ (LAPO 16 333; premature announcement of Zuzu’s death, on which see my comments in “On Reading the Diplomatic Letters in the Mari Archives”, Amurru 2 (2001): 329-338); FM 7 8 (Sumu-Epuh, related by his own son!).

19 A.449 is a moving example of how difficult it was to keep suzerain constant; cited in J.-M. Durand, “Peuplement et sociétés à l’époque amorrite (I) Les clans bensim’alites”, Amurru 3 (2004): 169-170; see already Lafont, Amurru 2, p. 240.

20 LAPO 17 545:13-19, “Moreover, Sir Zaziya is threatening at the edges of Hatnu-rapi and of his land with plans to destroy it. He has turned public opinion against my lord. He has told the kings the following, ‘Where is Zimri-Lim whom you are seeking to be your fathers and behind whom you march while he himself rides a palanquin? Why has he not come here to save you?’ This is what Zaziya said to Bunu-Ištar [of Kurda], Hatnu-rapi [of Qattara], Šarrum-kima-kalima [of Razama] and Zimriya [of Zurra], and to other kings”.

21 This text must be read with Durand’s collations. Lines 3-19 give, “You wrote to me about the conflict that has occurred in Zalmaqum. This conflict has not occurred at all. It happened only in people’s minds. I am always writing my vassal (servant), ‘You must not fight these people! These men are my father’s vassals, my father having sustained them; moreover I myself am sustaining them.’ So I told him, ‘Don’t fight these people.’ But when he proceeded to fight them [l. 17-18 *šū ilqema kakkī it[tišunu] itepiš*], I proceeded to cut his head off.”

A safer avenue for vassals was to strengthen their overlord and so diminish the risk of his failure. And so we find them working actively to neutralize potential threats against a suzerain (ARM 26 37:5-16), to draw other minor powers to their own side (FM 6 18:27-31) or to occupy towns desired by their overlords.²² Others simply murdered vacillating neighbors. In penance for his own infraction against Zimri-Lim, Terru of Urkiš unilaterally decided to behead Išme-Addu of Ašnakkum, a neighbor with shifting loyalties. The head is delivered; but other vassals tried to share the benefit of acting beyond the call of duty.

Imponderables

Yet by no means were all military struggles imposed or even inherited. Clashes galore are known to occur that seem (as far as I can tell) to have local consequences. Revolts can be instigated by third parties, but they can also be spontaneous, the last invariably suppressed brutally, with much casualties (ARM 26 365). Not unknown are insurrections led by a ruler's own commanders, a showy example of which is the insurrection led by Kukkutanum, army chief of Asqur-Addu of Karana. Kukkutanum, however, chose the wrong person to double-cross, for Asqur-Addu was not raised on the milk of human kindness. His *putsch* having failed thanks to Zimri-Lim's interference, Kukkutanum fled to Atamrum of Andarig but was exchanged for 5 refugees Atamrum himself wanted. His end was atrocious (ARM 26 412; 511; 413).

Tribal razzias are mentioned frequently, some with comic touches such as when Numha tribesmen back off when they realize they are attacking their own "brothers" (ARM 27 68).²³ When Turukku tribesmen (and others as well) are reported to make raids (verbs: *sadādum* and *šahātum*), which is fairly frequent in our sources, it is hard to tell whether they are motivated by political conditions or by tribal ethos; perhaps a bit of both.

Some hostilities we know about are tied to personal peeves. At Saphum near his frontier with Karana, Išme-Dagan did not react well when those he wanted to rule called him a "cripple". He burned down the homes of the insolent men, but also carried away those who might spread the news of the slander (26 519:5-19).²⁴ Whether or not Karana's king, Asqur-Addu, retaliated is lost to us.

22 A.262 is cited in ARM 26/1, p. 275; see LAPO 16, p. 568. Zimri-Lim captures Azara and gives it to Yarim-Lim, earning prestige. See the sentiments expressed in SH 913 (SA1 39), a letter exchanged between two vassals of Samsi-Addu:

Šikšabbum, your enemy, is trouble for you and for me. We should plan to besiege it. As soon as you listen to this tablet, promptly muster your full army and the Lullu-tribesmen and march on. Let us promptly besiege Šikšabbum and gather prestige with our lord (*šumam* [igi *bēlim*] *rašūm*).

Indeed, I am now at the Tarum frontier, waiting for you. Promptly come here for us to bring it to account, before the king reaches (it). Within 3-4 days the king should seize Nurrugum, and will proceed with his army to Šikšabbum. But before the king comes here, we ought to carry out a great feat for our lord! Don't delay, just come here.

23 It is also likely that they changed their minds when they saw too many guards (*šābum mušallimī*).

24 Simply to teach a lesson, towns can be destroyed; see ARM 28 50:19'-27'.

There are other imponderables for us to consider when recovering the motivation or justification for wars. In a culture where there is much fear of personal humiliation, loss of face, and spread of scandal, thin skins could play a role in opening hostilities. Išhi-Addu of Qatna may not have launched a war against Išme-Dagan, his daughter's brother-in-law, when slighted by the paltry reaction to his lavish gift; but the letter he sent to him (ARM 5 20 = LAPO 16 256) is as close to a psychological ultimatum as one could get. The same morbid fear of dishonor of perceived degradation could provoke even allies toward hostility. Labeling each other "brother", rather than "son", or simply "servant" was provocation.²⁵ Mistreating a king's *šaknum* or his *hazzanum* at a vassal's court was another. Giving precedence, better gifts, or more conspicuous attention to a delegation of a lesser power was yet a third way to harm relations.²⁶ Here also belong the confrontations arising from advancing the causes of *keltū*, men such as young Zimri-Lim himself, who found shelter at influential courts while keeping their focus on the thrones they were denied. The reverse is also known: men against whom coalitions are organized because they were deemed too ambitious. Ibni-Addu of Ta'dum illustrates both situations well. Haya-sumu of Ilašura dislodged him from his throne, jailed, then threatened to kill him; but his resurrection is supported by Zimri-Lim's ambassador to Ilašura, a man with little sympathy for Haya-sumu.

More relevant for us, perhaps, is the fate of four Yaminite leaders who fled westward after a failed attempt at insurrection. Zimri-Lim had information that they had headed to Emar and, to flush them out, he sent his ambassador Dariš-libur to its suzerain, Yarim-Lim of Yamhad. Yarim-Lim issued an ultimatum to Emar's elders: "The Yaminite kings ought not to stay in Emar. Expel them (*šūšēšunūti*)! From now on, they must not remain here. Should these men try again to enter Emar, Zimri-Lim and I will war against you". This is a solid ultimatum; but also a hollow threat, for Yarim-Lim knew that the fugitives were no longer there. In fact, in a subsequent update on events, Dariš-libur simply skipped over this part of the interview.²⁷

Equally difficult to assess is the relevance of the rich Mari documentation on divination. We take it for granted that aside from feeding the diviners and their circles well, the hundreds of sheep that were butchered for divination gave rulers options for acting on pressing military issues. We know that their counsels were taken seriously, sometimes with farcical results, as when armies were sent out on omens, with diviners in tow, to find no enemy at their destination; see Lacambre RA 96 13-17. Vengeful acts (ARM 26 156:20-34), the dispatch (ARM 26 100b:29-34) or the acceptance (ARM 26 155:7-10) of allied troops had to await the diviner's reading of the omens. What is striking, however, is how often the

25 See Lafont, *Amurru* 2, pp. 234-238.

26 When Hammurabi of Babylon wished to stimulate tension between ostensible allies (Mari and Yamhad) he would disburse garments to their ambassadors without concern for their different status; see ARM 2 76 (= LAPO 16 404). Hammurabi's majordomo angers a Mari delegate by openly suggesting equality between Mari and a lesser ally; see A.2968+:3-34, M. Guichard, RA 98 (2004): 16-25.

27 See my comments to "Scruples: Extradition in the Mari Archives", in: *Festschrift für Hermann Hunger*, zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern (= WZKM 97; Wien: Institut für Orientalistik)3: 453-473. Incidentally, Zimri-Lim never really got to find them; like Mullah Omar, they simply vanished into the tribal landscape.

diviners seem ready to interfere in diplomatic and military matters or even are wont to take personal credit for the success they read in the innards of sheep (ARM 26 108). While the cynical among us (and I must not be included among them) may imagine that diviners catered to their bosses, our material nonetheless finds them urging attacks as often as retrenchments. The dossier Durand published affecting Sumu-Dabi, one of the Yaminite leaders mentioned above in the Yamhad incident, is remarkable for the forceful advice his diviners gave him. Their motivation, couched as it is on the logic of extispicy, escapes easy decipherment; yet we may note Zimri-Lim's diviners were better at the task, since Sumu-Dabi lost that battle. On another occasion, however, Zimri-Lim's diviners did not do as well. They advised their king (ARM 26 160) not to share with Babylon control of Id (Hit) a town on the Euphrates that was rich in naphta and prestigious as place for river ordeals (see ARM 26 468-19'-29'). Their advice proved dire; for Hammurabi, a poster-child for calculating patience, was good at turning slights into causes.²⁸

Moving Frontiers

So far, I have underscored the challenge to assess the impetus for conflicts when their beginnings and ends are veiled. Our material, however, does indicate that the desire to reset frontiers seems indeed occasions for launching them. Zimri-Lim's officials (Ibal-pi-El among them) were haunted by Samsi-Addu's appetite for the territories of others and were there to warn their king against the domino effect that such moves fostered.²⁹ The fear of major powers expanding their reach was palpable enough that Ašmad, a *merhûm* in charge of tribal troops for Zimri-Lim, used a potential threat by Ešnunna to fabricate an ultimatum with which to frighten vassals into submission to his boss (A.3591).³⁰ Even smaller powers

28 On the problems raised by Hit, see S. Lackenbacher in ARM 26/2, pp. 451-457.

29 A.2119 (LAPO 17 442), studied by D. Charpin, "De la vallée du Tigre au 'triangle du Habur': Un engrenage géopolitique", in: J.-M. Durand, *Recherches en Haute Mésopotamie. Tell Mohammed Diyab. Campagnes de 1990 et 1991 (Cahiers de N.A.B.U 2; Paris. SEPOA. 1992): 97-102*. Ibal-pi-El writes Zimri-Lim, "I have heard about the release of Yariha-Abum [Mari's ambassador] from Ešnunna. My lord knows how full of deceit that 'house' (dynasty) is. I fear that until it captures Andarig, it will try to fully deceive my lord. But as soon as it seizes Andarig, it will aim for Kurda. Subsequently, it will cross Mount Saggar [Sinjar], and all of Šubartum will shout 'Hail, my Lord' to it. Indeed, this 'house' has begun to behave like Samsi-Addu in progressively resetting its frontier. Seizing Ekallatum, he [or: it] then [*moved*] toward Qattara and Allahad. Once he [or: it] would seize a town, he would force it under his control. This house is indeed full of deceit."

30 This letter, from Zimri-Lim's first year, is edited in M. Guichard, "Au pays de la Dame de Nagar", FM 2, pp. 256-57; with comments by Charpin in OBO 160/4 [2004]: 285 n. 1490 and by Charpin and Ziegler FM 5, p. 197):

I have listened to the tablet my lord conveyed to me. My lord wrote to me the following, "The ruler of Ešnunna has just left on his campaign." As soon as I listened to my lord's tablet, I conveyed tablets to all the kings, telling [17 regional kings, by name and city], "The ruler of Ešnunna is coming up, thinking, 'I shall stabilize my frontier' and 'I am heading for Šubat-Enlil.'" This is what the ruler of [Ešnunna] wrote to [my lord]...."

A close reading of the letter reveals that this quasi-ultimatum (it has no specific demands) was likely fabricated by Ašmad for the occasion, as one notices the disjunction between what Zimri-

played the game. Wishing to move his boundary toward Tehranum, Sumu-lanasi of Abi-ili first reminded Zimri-Lim of their heroic youth when, in the gardens of Carchemish, they plotted their return to power. This pastoral was background to recalling how their fathers once agreed to the frontier Sumu-lanasi wished to have now.³¹ Strangely enough, we read about commanders signaling to an enemy general their intent to occupy a frontier town they plan to dispossess. The examples we have lack specific demands to make them true ultimatums, but threat is clearly there and the presumption is that intimidation worked best when backed by forces acknowledged to be superior by all sides.³²

The Death of Leaders

In our records, the conflicts with longest durations and most prolonged consequences go beyond territorial greed, usurpation of throne (legitimate or otherwise), or personal vendettas.³³ Rather, they tend to follow on the deaths of leaders, even those on relatively low rungs of power. At such moments there certainly was room for opportunism; but above all there was also reason to forgo the pledges and covenants that were charted primarily between rulers but only secondarily with the kingdoms they controlled.³⁴ Old Babylonian treaties, it seems, were limited to the lifetimes of the signatories. Samsi-Addu's superiority as a strategist and his virtuoso wielding of carrots and sticks notwithstanding, what above all hurried the collapse of his empire was not so much his sons' military weaknesses but the breakdown of his carefully constructed systems of allegiances. Tribal leaders once loyal to him chased away (if not also killed) his son Yasmah-Addu, handing the throne to Zimri-

Lim is quoted to have said (Ešnunna is initiating hostilities) and what Ašmad attributes to him when seeking to keep vassals under control. Nevertheless, I doubt that Zimri-Lim lectured his servant on accuracy.

31 J.-R. Kupper, "Dans les jardins de Carkémish", FM 6 (2002): 195-200.

32 Charpin and Ziegler (FM 5, p. 194) label an "ultimatum" a statement in ARM 26 479 attributed to Šallurum, an Ešnunna general. In fact, it is merely a clever move on his part to avoid bloody encounters. Buqaqum reports:

"5000 soldiers are building Yabliya city while Šallurum is fortifying Harbe with 15,000 men. Your servant [general] Yassi-Dagan wrote to me, 'Dispatch to my lord the elders that he sent to you; don't keep them.' About Šallurum – He told your servant Yassi-Dagan, 'I wait for all of you 5 days; I will then bring about hostilities (*šiltam ašakkan*).' A relief force should reach me. I have written to my lord and he should act as he sees fit. About the people of Hurban, I have told my lord a couple of times that these people worry me. Moreover, my omens (about them) are bad. Troops should hurry here."

33 See A.2962. Originally thought to contain Hammurabi's imprecations against Zimri-Lim, this text is now thought to concern Išme-Dagan; see the latest edition (with bibliography) in Charpin and Ziegler FM 5, pp. 255-257.

34 It may have been otherwise during the lifetime of the king with whom a covenant is pledged. When Za'ikum of Yabliya decided to cast his fortunes with Ešnunna, his own people turned against him for "abandoning his king and the gods of town"; see ARM 26 156:20-26.

Lim, with similar moves all along the fronts he had created.³⁵ Early in his rule, Zimri-Lim espoused a *status ante quem* policy for the territory under his sphere of influence: In a notice surviving only in the copies that were kept in the archives rather than sent out, Zimri-Lim advocated the return of rulers to the seat of their fathers and urged cities to open their doors to him, presumably hoping to incite revolts within them.³⁶ There is reason to believe that such a posture kept Zimri-Lim at war well beyond his early years, for it invited massive disarray when few cities had not experienced frequent changes at the top.

In the half century in which we have records from Old Babylonian Mari a number of major rulers died, giving ample cause for renewed conflicts. Among them were Daduša and Ibal-pi-El of Ešnunna, Yahdun-Lim of Mari, Sumu-Epuh of Yamhad, Samsi-Addu (and likely also his son Yasmah-Addu), Išhi-Addu of Qatna, and Rim-Sin of Larsa. Scores of lesser lights also died, rarely peacefully. We can follow the turbulent days that followed their demises in the pages of Charpin and Ziegler's authoritative *Mari et le Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite* (*Florilegium marianum* 5, *Mémoires de N.A.B.U.*, 6; Paris: SEPOA, 2003), and they unfortunately confirm Voltaire's judgment about history being a record of misfortune and misery.³⁷

Yet, when we meet with the Old Babylonian archives at Mari, Western Asia was set at an interesting historical cusp in which larger numbers of regional powers were coalescing around progressively fewer dominant centers. How much change overtook the region in a few years is clear from one of the most cited excerpt from the Mari archives. In A.482 Itur-Asdu of Mari claims that Babylon, Larsa, Ešnunna, Qatna, and likely also Mari, each had fifteen vassals, while Yamhad had twenty. The statement comes from Zimri-Lim's fifth or sixth year. Less than ten years later, half of these kingdoms will either disappear or lose their influence. Yet we know from documents immediately after the end of the Mari archives that while much became different politically, culturally little really changed: Elite powers did not stop from amassing influence and vassals continued their scramble to avoid murder or defeat.³⁸

35 See M. Guichard and N. Ziegler, "Yanûh Samar et les Ekallâtéens en détresse", pp. 229-247 in: J.G. Dercksen (ed), *Assyria And Beyond: Studies Presented To Mogens Trolle Larsen* (PIHANS, 100; Leiden: The Netherlands Institute for the Near East, 2004): 229-247.

36 "The entire region came under my control and every (ruler) returned to his father's throne! I heard it said, 'The land of Idamaraš that he holds in fortresses, heeds Zimri-Lim only.' Write to me and I will come to take a holy oath for you. Hand over a city to me and I shall give it give it (back) to its owner. As for all of you, and your belongings as well, I shall set you up wherever you say. Do send promptly an answer to my letter...". We only have two copies of the circular. One of them was to be sent to Tiš-ulme of Mardaman (LAPO 16 247, pp. 386-388). It was found still in its envelope, bearing the imprint of seal declaring Hadni-^d[x] as the father of Zimri-Lim. Much ink has spilled on this remarkable reading, about which see now Charpin and Ziegler FM 5, p. 183 and n. 103. The other letter was destined for Abi-Samar and Ikšud-la-šemišu (ARM 28 148). They may have remained at Mari, the first because of its mistaken (?) attribution, the second because the two addressees may never have been plausible candidates.

Worth noting is that Ibal-pi-El II of Ešnunna also makes reference to Zimri-Lim's policy in A.1289+ (LAPO 16 281, pp. 435-436).

37 "... l'histoire n'est que le tableau des crimes et des malheurs"; L'ingénu, ch.10 [1767]).

38 See lastly Charpin and Ziegler FM 5, pp. 206-207. Noticeable is the absence of Elam.

“The Future will be worse than the Past”

I began this paper by quoting an obscure official who gloated about the message that victories deliver. Let me end by citing an equally shadowy Yaminite diplomat who wrote Asqudum, Zimri-Lim’s diviner and top advisor (ARM 26 39). Threatened with incarceration for failing to achieve peace between Zimri-Lim and Šura-hammu, a defeated leader of the Amnanum tribe, Nahimum first defended himself before offering thought that time cannot fully dull:

Is it fair that all of you have set your mind to be unjust? That upon news of peace you plan to despoil your colleagues, (thinking) “Peace is distant, and we must be constantly concerned about war”. Don’t you know that when hostilities break out, they will never go away, the future becoming worse than the past? Indeed, because of these conditions, will not evil rather than decent people have reason to gloat?

Appendix

Yarim-Lim’s war declaration revisited

A.1314, a text Georges Dossin published half a century, is often cited whenever the glory of Middle Bronze Aleppo is evoked, for it contains an impassioned sermon Yarim-Lim of Yamhad delivers as he declared war on an ungrateful king, Yašub-yahad of Transtigradian Der.³⁹ The text itself is in fine shape physically and although it does contain a couple of odd verbal forms, it includes just one crux that might compromise how to understand a single event. It reads easily enough, not just because its Akkadian is relatively straight-forward, but because it is full of balanced vocabulary and arguments that are launched with military precision:

Tell Yašub-yahad; Yarim-Lim, your brother, says: Šamaš ought to investigate your conduct and mine and come to judgment. While I have acted as father and brother toward you, toward me you have acted as villain and enemy. What good was it that, by means of the weapons of Addu and Yarim-Lim, I saved the city of Babylon and gave life to your land and to you? Were it not for Addu and Yarim-Lim, 15 years ago, the city of Der might have been cast to the winds as if it were chaff; one would never have found it and you could not have treated me like this? Certainly, Singamil, king of Diniktum, very much like you would keep answering me with hostility and provocations. Having moored 500 skiffs in Diniktum’s quay, I sank⁴⁰ his land as well as him for 12 years! Now, as to you being like him: you are continually

39 “Une lettre de Iařim-Lim, roi d’Alep, Iašub-Iahad, roi de Dêr”, *Syria* 33 (1956): 63-69. It is now translated with collations by Durand as LAPO 16 251 (pp. 394-397).

40 Durand LAPO 16, p. 396, treats the difficult *ú-DA-AB-BI* as “la conjugation emphatique en *-i* de *ři ‘ābum*”, translating, “et cela fait 12 ans que je ne manque pas de faire du bien à son pays et à lui même.” Durand’s translation changes the tenor or Yarim-Lim’s action at Diniktum: rather than occupying a defeated town for 12 years, he would now be protecting it for the same interval. Stylistically, however, it would not do for Yarim-Lim to be mentioning weal when he is about to bully.

responding to me with hostility and provocations. I swear to you by Addu, my city's god, and by Sin, my personal god: [may I be punished] should I ever go away before annihilating your land and you! Now therefore, I shall come at springtime and shall pitch camp at your city's gate.⁴¹ I shall have you witness the galling weapons of Addu and of Yarim-Lim.

Yarim-Lim wants the gods to judge between good and evil by detailing acts of kindness that were answered by lies and provocation. Obviously certain about the divine verdict, Yarim-Lim pledges to destroy Yašub-yahad, setting the coming spring as the time of reckoning.

A Historical Background?

Some 30 years after its publication, in 1985, Charpin and Durand reassessed its historical significance. By then, the chronology of Zimri-Lim's reign had been reconstructed giving indication that Yarim-Lim had died just around mid- ZL9'. They proposed that Yarim-Lim's threat against Der was a joint move with Mari and Babylon against Elam, with whom Der and Diniktum might have wanted to side; see LAPO 16, p. 385. In fact, that alliance was taking shape just as Yarim-Lim was giving up the ghost and the war itself stretched for 8 more months before the Elamites pulled back from the region. Of Yašub-yahad, there is still not yet a supplementary word. A broken passage in a Mari letter may imply that during the Elam battle an [...]Ištar controlled Der.⁴² A year or so later, the king there was definitely a Warassa (ARM 26 372:44); so maybe it is a nickname for the same person (*Warad-Ištar). As far as the threat against Der is concerned, the scenario of Charpin and Durand remains plausible, though not yet demonstrated, if only because Yarim-Lim's son and successor, Hammurabi, did indeed help the cause, albeit not, as far as we know, by sending troops to Der.⁴³

Our real problem is to explain what happened 15 to 12 years earlier, when Yarim-Lim allegedly helped Babylon and anchored his navy in Diniktum. We know that Yarim-Lim came to the throne when his father Sumu-epuh died in battle, although we debate exactly when this took place.⁴⁴ Krebernik has it at 1779 (Līmu Asqudum);⁴⁵ Charpin and Ziegler place it at 1781 (Limu Awīliya; FM 5 121-122), so giving Yarim-Lim 13 to 16 years of reign. Either of these reckonings would in any case be definitely too tight an interval for

41 On the verbal form, see Durand, LAPO 16, p. 396 n. 1.

42 A.3669:1" [...]Ištar lú *de-er*^{ki}, cited in D. Lacambre, "La bataille de Hirītum", MARI 8 (1997): 446-451 (439-454). Lacambre restores the name of Ipiq-Ištar of Malgium, likely from ARM 26 372:41 and 373:30-31; but neither this king nor Malgium is mentioned in this text.

43 ARM 28 12; see also 2 71 = LAPO 17 576; A. 266 = LAPO16 298, p. 466. Claudio Saporetti proposes that the event occurred during Ibal-pi-El II's early years; but he is just banking on plausible alignments of murky events; *La rivale di Babilonia: storia di Ešnunna, un potente regno che sfidò Hammurapi* (I volti della storia, 118; Rome: Newton & Compton, 2002), 263-264. (Ref. courtesy M. Stol.)

44 Samsi-Addu gloats over Sumu-epuh's death (LAPO 16 321) which, as implied by Yarim-Lim's own testimony (FM 7 8:8-20), likely occurred in battle.

45 Cited in FM 5, p. 122 n. 308.

him to carry out his ambitious programs.⁴⁶ Especially puzzling for someone with such achievements is Yarim-Lim's total eclipse from the records of the Samsi-Addu era. How Yarim-Lim's troops could have threaded territory controlled by Samsi-Addu and Daduša of Ešnunna is yet another difficult condition to explain. In fact, just after Samsi-Addu died, Yarim-Lim tried to expand his hold over the Zalmaqum area but was soundly defeated by Hanzat, a relatively minor power.⁴⁷ Moreover, if we backtrack some 15 years or so from the death of Yarim-Lim in 1765, we would be around 1780, so Hammurabi 13, when Babylon was doing quite well on its own. Hammurabi had already taken Isin and Uruk, had had successful raids against Malgium, and had occupied Rapiqum, a gift from his new friend Samsi-Addu. Soon (1777) he was to craft a treaty with Ešnunna. All in all, not at all a portrait of a leader who needed the help of distant Yamhad. These reflections about contexts difficult to reconcile historically take me back to the other study on A.1314 published in 1985: my own contribution to the *Mélanges Birot*.⁴⁸

Declaring War

The core of that study was a stylistic analysis of Yarim-Lim's letter. I dubbed it a "declaration of war" because, unlike an ultimatum, it made no demands for change but simply announced a forthcoming war. I surveyed our literature from antiquity and found that despite our noblest sentiments about the decency of declaring wars, the genre existed only *post factum*, embedded in historiographic monuments (such as those about the Lagash-Umma conflict), in annals (such as those of Mursili II and Ashurbanipal), and in literary texts (such as Gilgamesh's ultimatum from Sultantepe).⁴⁹ Since 1985, no document I know has appeared to contravene the assessment that declarations of wars were literary rather than realistic creations. Pamela Gerardi has argued that a florid Seleucid document in which Babylon threatened war against Assyria was a declaration of war when it was manifestly a literary presentation of the same.⁵⁰ There are now fragments of a Hittite letter in which Suppiluliuma I argued with Pharaoh Aye about the murder of his son Zunnanza. In it, there

46 Jesper Eidem displays similar hesitations in "From the Zagros to Aleppo and Back", *Akkadica* 81 (1993): 23-28.

47 See FM 6 5:30-67 and Guichard's commentary on it.

48 "Yarim-Lim's Declaration of War", in: J.-M. Durand and J.-R. Kupper (eds.), *Miscellanea Babylonica. Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot* (Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1985): 237-255. There is certain truth in what Charpin says about A.1314, "L'historicité de la lettre que le roi d'Alep Yarim-Lim envoya au roi de Dêr Yašûb-Yahad, le menaçant d'une attaque éclair, a été mise en question par certains auteurs; s'il s'agissait d'une lettre apocryphe, elle n'en resterait pas moins signifiante d'une pratique qui devait être assez générale pour qu'un tel écrit ait été jugé vraisemblable"; *OBO* 160/4 (2004): 285-286.

49 F. Joannès locates examples of a war declaration at ARM 26 405:9-12 [see at ARM 26/2, p. 271 b)] as well as in 404:55 and 58. The last two examples are standard threats embedded in an oath during peacemaking. The first is a statement to Zimri-Lim by an officer explaining why he did not fight Kurda troops, "Because I am not hearing any enmity to Hammurabi (of Kurda) expressed by my lord (*aššum nukurti Hammurabi ina pi bēlīya la šemēku*), I keep on pulling away from personal involvement, refusing to give the army permission to fight, thinking..." None of these contexts suggests the activation of a war.

50 The last two types of documents are cited in P. Gerardi, "Declaring war in Mesopotamia", *AfO* 33 (1986): 30-38. M. van der Mieroop accepts Gerardi's interpretation of BM 55467 as a declaration of war; see his "Revenge, Assyrian Style", *Past and Present* 179 (2003): 20.

are threats and appeals to divine justice gods; but also an offer of brotherhood, the sense being of a war not yet fully launched.⁵¹

I had also in mind (but did not cite then) the insights from the sixth century BCE Chinese general Sun Tzu who, in his *Art of War*, praised the military values of deception, secrecy, speed, surprise, and the foreknowledge that is from spies rather than omens.⁵² He warned against besieging cities and if the terrible experience of Atamrum of Andarig in blockading a neighboring city is any guide (he lost half of his men and left without success), a siege could not be recommended for an army that had *schlept* hundreds of kilometers from its home.⁵³ In sending a letter to Yašub-yahad, Yarim-Lim was disregarding such wisdom; and if we insist on regarding it as historical, we must then applaud Zimri-Lim for blocking its delivery when its barely credible threat could have cast doubts on his father-in-law's grasp of reality.

Recall of implausible events, lack of military acumen, and appeals to the gods to resolve diplomatic impasse (the last a major feature when retrojecting *casus belli*), continue to persuade me that A.1314 was an imaginative product of intellectuals. Admittedly, I cannot pin down the reason for their products; but they might include inspiration from a famous text the Mari scribes had at their disposal. The report of a revolt against Naram-Sin of Agade opens on Sargon having liberated Kish from Uruk's oppression only to have its citizen rebel against his son.⁵⁴ Given later traditions about Naram-Sin, the portrait we would have here of Yarim-Lim as a bombastic and impotent leader, may also be mocking

51 I thank Ellen Morris for bringing this letter to my attention. See W. Murnane, *The Road to Kadesh: A Historical Interpretation of the Battle Reliefs of King Sety I at Karnak* (Revised edition, *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization*, 42; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1990): 25-28; T. van den Hout, "De zaak Zannanza. Een Egyptisch-Hettitisch Brievendossier", *Phoenix* 39 (1993): 159-167 and his "Der Falke und das Kücken: der neue Pharao und der hethitische Prinz?", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 84 (1994): 60-88.

52 The impression one gets is of armies and their siege engines showing up unexpectedly, so hoping to spreading panic in the city and melting its resolve; see FM 6 7:17-23. Sun Tzu, in fact, recommended against wasting energy and time surrounding cities: "What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategies. Next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. And the worst policy is to attack cities"; cited from the *Wordsworth Classics of World Literature* (1998), p. 25. At <http://www.chinapage.com/sunzi-e.html> is posted the full text in English.

There is a nice letter from Ešnunna that bolsters the sense of security that walls create. An anonymous writer tells his king (Bilalama), "The army is well and the city is safe. My lord's garrison is so strong that were Amorites to battle (us) for 10 years bringing 10 battering rams and 10 siege towers (so 20 siege engines), I would still be in control. My lord should not worry"; number 9 in R.M. Whiting, Jr., *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar* (*Assyriological Studies*, 22; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1987): 46-47.

53 See D. Charpin "Données nouvelles sur la poliorcétique à l'époque paléo-babylonienne", *MARI* 7 (1993): 193-203. We hear much about sieges and, aside from occasional triumphalist statements one gains the impression of tediousness, boredom, and of melting resolve in the face of frequent sallies by defenders to harass besiegers (ARM 26 318, 405). Armies can be stuck for a long time at a gate arguing about peace (FM 6 14). From the other letters (FM 6 15-17), they eventually succeeded in taking the town.

54 See the edition of D. Charpin "La version mariote de l'insurrection générale contre Naram-Sin", *FM* 3 1 (pp. 9-18, and especially his comments pp. 13-14).

his son, Hammurabi. At the time of A.1314 was being fabricated, this king was striving to circumvent Mari for a direct link with Babylon.

A Risky Proposal?

It has not helped either that the Sin-gamil mentioned by Yarim-Lim in A.1314 continues to be known elsewhere only from two copies of the same inscription said to come from near Harmal. He is called there a *rabiān amurrim* of Diniktum.⁵⁵ The script is generic monumental and cannot be narrowed for a date. Were it not for Sin-gamil's association with our text, we could have assigned him to an earlier period, closer to that of Itūr-šarrum, another *rabiān amurrim* from Diniktum; this one likely was a contemporary of Ipiq-Adad I of Ešnunna.⁵⁶ As it happens, there was another *rabiān amurrim*, whose foundation stone gave him credit for fortifying the gates of Me-Turran.⁵⁷ He was cited there as Arim-Lim, so plausibly Yarim-Lim, a ruler whose death may have been reported in a year-name occurring in the *šimdatum*-“protocol” between Neribtum and Šadlaš. If so, this Yarim-Lim may have ruled in the early days of the Hammurabi dynasty.⁵⁸ So, with Sin-gamil and Yarim-Lim sharing a neighborhood, a title, perhaps also an era, let me imagine that A.1314 is actually recalling events a century earlier than the Mari periods. The advantage in such a hypothesis is that I would be tucking difficult-to-explain events in an era too dark for us to categorically refute. The disadvantage is that I would have to explain how a text written in a Zimri-Lim era style and script preserved the memory of such goings-on, so forcing me yet again to resort to the same sort of speculation that I offered in 1985. Some Mari documents simply do not easily reveal their mysteries.

55 D. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595)* (RIME 4; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), §E4.13.2 (pp. 684-85, with bibliography). On the location of Diniktum see B. Groneberg, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der altbabylonischen Zeit* (RGTC, 3; Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients. Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften, 7/3; Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1980): 54. The title of C. Saporetti's article, “McC. Adams 851 = Diniktum?”, *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 24 (2001): 97-102, reveals that Diniktum is yet to be sited. For our purposes, it is enough to know that that the town was near Ešnunna.

56 The title *rabiān amurrim* itself seems favored also at slightly earlier Larsa. See CAD R (s.v.); M. Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian History* (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 40; Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 1976): 87-89.

57 Frayne, RIME 4 §E4.16.1 (pp. 700-701).

58 OBTIV 326, published in S. Greengus, *Old Babylonian Tablets from Ishchali and Vicinity* (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 44; Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1979): 74-77. The text is widely discussed, among others, by F.R. Kraus, *Königliche Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit* (SD, 11; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984): 90-93; Wu Yuhong, *A Political History of Eshnunna, Mari and Assyria during the Early Old Babylonian Period: From the End of Ur III to the Death of Šamši-Adad* (Changchun. China: Institute of History of Ancient Civilizations, Northeast Normal University, 1994): 53-6.