

"IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I HAVE NOT COME DOWN TO MY LORD ..." VISIT OBLIGATIONS AND VASSAL PRETEXTS IN THE MARI ARCHIVES

Jack M. Sasson

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**“IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I HAVE NOT COME DOWN
TO MY LORD ...”
VISIT OBLIGATIONS AND VASSAL PRETEXTS IN THE MARI ARCHIVES**

BY
Jack M. SASSON

Ibal-Addu of Ašlakka, a fine precursor to Aziru of Amurru for shrewd ambition and to Rib-Addi of Byblos for persistent neediness, once harangued an officer of Zimri-Lim (likely Ibal-El, his *merhûm*): “Who has grasped the hem of your lord and saved himself?” he rhetorically asked:¹

-Sabbuganni, king of Amaz grasped the hem of your lord, but he was brought to an end (by ...), without finding a savior [*mušezibum*]. Why did your lord Zimri-Lim, not save him?

-Sammatar of Ašnakkum, who even married Zimri-Lim’s sister, people from [...] wrapped him in leather (*ina maškim išpāšu*) and delivered him to Elamite power. Why did your lord, Zimri-Lim, not save him?²

-Yawi-ila of Talḥayum, whom Zimri-Lim set as king, an enemy brought him to an end in his own home. Why did your lord not save him?

-Now Šubram as well as his people, who is (still) grasping the hem of YOUR lord; well, Samsi-Eraḥ, a (mere) commoner, has already plundered his household and goods! Why did your lord, Zimri-Lim, not save him?

As for me too, one of these days, might YOU save me? Who has grasped YOUR hem and saved himself?

You might imagine that Ibal-Addu was audaciously rejecting Zimri-Lim; in fact, he was simply illustrating the steep price paid for loyalty and, no doubt, boosting the expected reward due to him. Politically, the Mari Age was a particularly unstable moment, especially for secondary powers caught between powerful interests. The sense that vassals were being squeezed is pervasive in the archives, with a consequent shift of allegiances. These rulers knew the game to be dangerous and their survival on the throne to be precarious. Yet they had few options to change it. In Kaḥat the number of kings is three in a dozen years; in Kurda, four. There were five in Šeḥna; but in Ašnakkum, eight (maybe nine) ruled by Mari’s demise. Ilaṣura was one of the vassal states with the same ruler during the fourteen years of Zimri-Lim’s reign.³

1. A.3194 cited from Guichard 1999: 28-29; see also Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 222-223. (Second person plural pronouns are in CAPS). Guichard (2011) makes many comments on this text and its context.

2. The image here is of Sammatar packed in leather (verb *šapûm*) for shipment. There might also be allusion to this form of humiliation in the Old Assyrian (parodic?) narrative about Sargon. He dresses (*lubbušum*) the leader of Tukriš in skins, thus turning him feral (line 50-51), when only sandals, belts, and headgears were ordinarily made of leather. The latest discussions of the text are in Alster and Oshima (2007) and in Westenholz (2007). The same punishment is recorded in Genesis 3:21, when animal skins are forced on Adam and Eve, reflecting the animal origins they sought to escape when striving to match divine knowledge, eternity, and grooming; see Sasson 2008: 502-507. We recall also that a haggard and grief-stricken Gilgamesh wears the skins of animals as he roams the steppes, in effect reverting to the yet to be civilized Enkidu.

3. A handy compendium of kings recorded in the Mari archives is in Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 263-68.

VISITS⁴

In the Mari age, deities and kings—no less than merchants, messengers, diplomats, acrobats, or physicians—were constantly on the move. Gods and their symbols shuttled among shrines and witnessed treaties. So did kings, and not just in search of victories or conquests. They made pilgrimage to distant shrines and they visited the nearby tombs of ancestors and kin. They checked on their properties in foreign territories, called on allies in need of bolstering, and visited daughters in foreign harems. Face to face or via proxy, they invited vassals to their capitals.

In this study, offered in tribute and admiration to Paolo Matthiae, I focus on one aspect of this bond: the visits that vassals had to complete at the capitals or shrines of their suzerains. In Zimri-Lim's days, the visits clustered around two important religious moments, foremost being the festival for Ištar in the ninth month, and secondarily one in the eleventh month for the goddess Dēritum, a deity particularly attached to Zimri-Lim's dynasty.⁵ There were other occasions in which the two parties met at centers where suzerains had garrisons. We even have a comic moment when they kept on missing each other.⁶ Here, I accent those who begged for a "rain-check" (a request for postponement) from joining their lord at home. But let it be said at the outset that plenty of such vassals in fact did fulfill their visit obligations.

Why they visited

Those summoned went to Mari to obtain their charters as kings and to deliver the requisite *nēbeḫum*-fees, to renew oaths and commitments, to offer tributes and gifts, and to kiss the feet of their patrons. Furthermore, they went to settle issues with other vassals and occasionally also to pick up a new bride.⁷ The evidence for these engagements comes mostly from the reign of Zimri-Lim because the equivalent testimony from the reign just preceding is largely buried in Šubat-Enlil, where Samsi-Addu held court as the period's alpha-male. To sharpen my points, I discuss here only those involving the kings of two cities, Kurda and of Ašlakka.

KURDA

In the southern Sindjar, Kurda was a major center for Numḫa tribesmen. At one point, its king, Aštamar-Addu, corresponded with Yaḫdun-Lim (Zimri-Lim's father) as his "brother," hence his equal. When Samsi-Addu took control of the region, no sons of Aštamar-Addu (Sumu-Numḫa and Da'irum) were ruling it.⁸ Instead, there was a Bunu-Ištar who promptly took refuge in Zalwar. Bunu-Ištar gleefully shared an anecdote about how his protector fooled Samsi-Addu: When the latter demanded delivery of Bunu-Ištar, a mutilated prisoner was sent in his stead.⁹

4. Fine comments on this subject are in Durand LAPO 16, pp. 408-429.

5. For the goddess, see Dēritum, Durand 2008: 200-201. For the festival in her honor, see Jacquet 2008: 422-423 and in more detail in his 2009: 225-237.

6. Yarkab-Addu of Ḫanzat, who does not qualify his relationship with Zimri-Lim, writes to him (ARM 28 35):

I have listened to the tablet you sent me. You wrote to me, "For quite a while now, we have kept on writing to each other about meeting. I have reached Naḫur and having written to YOU and YOU did not come here, I have returned to Mari." This is what you wrote to me. Well! What about the meeting? No sooner did we confirm the terms of our meeting that your messenger reached me and I heard it repeated, 'He returned to Mari!'

Now then, why did you hold such thoughts as, "You have all been delayed, so I went back to Mari." Now that years have come to an end, let us meet when you wish. Here, all is well...

7. Guichard 2009a: 84. What happens is told in a letter by Amud-pi-ila of Šuduḫum (A.3851; Guichard 2009a: 104-105): "We (went) to my lord and kissed his foot. Our lord had us take an oath in the (temple of Itur-mer) and instructed us as follows, 'band together in answering your enemy so that you pacify the land before I come up (there)'. "

8. Overview in Guillot 1997: 273-276.

9. "When a while back I lived in Zalbar, Samsi-Addu wrote the king of Zalbar for my return. Saying 'Fine,' the king of Zalbar managed to substitute for me a man turned *empty* (1 lú *rēqam ersēm*; likely featureless). Aminum

Simah-ilane

As Zimri-Lim was becoming comfortable on his throne another ruler, Simah-ilane, was in Kurda; but his pedigree is difficult to reconstruct. Quickly, a tussle ensued on how the two rulers should address each other.¹⁰ Protocol being a deadly serious matter, the local oligarchy wanted Simah-ilane to keep parity with Mari by declaring himself a “brother” of Zimri-Lim rather than his “son”; in fact, he had done so in an early letter (ARM 28 162).¹¹ Yet, he headed to Babylon where its king handed him a chariot, throne, and canopy (*andullum*), symbols of his vassalage.¹² It needs to be mentioned here that the Amorite system made it possible for a vassal to obey one lord while his city depended on another patron.¹³ So, with Zimri-Lim in the hunt for vassals and Bunu-Ištar plotting to recapture Kurda, Simah-ilane found it prudent to heed a summons from Mari. In the eleventh month of Zimri-Lim’s first full year-name (Year: “Kaḥat”) and with top Babylonian diplomats (Puzur-Marduk and Ili-tillati) keeping watch on his moves, Simah-ilane reached the outskirts of Mari.¹⁴

Luckily for us, Zimri-Lim was in the Upper country then. We therefore we have a fine trail of events through letters and through administrative accounting for the disbursement of oil.¹⁵ Formalized ceremonials being crucial ingredients in Old Babylonian protocol, Yasim-sumu, then a steward (*abu bîtim*) in Mari wrote on 3.xi (third day of the eleventh month) for instruction on whether or not to genuflect (*šukênum*) to Simah-ilane (ARM 13 29 = LAPO 18 981).¹⁶ As well, he needed the calendric calculation for the forthcoming Dēritum festival. The king directed Addu-duri, his aunt or mother, on planning for those sacrifices (ARM 10 142 = LAPO 18 1098). He also instructed the governor of Mari, Itur-asdu, on how to handle the visitors: If those accompanying them were more than a thousand men, then this large contingent must stay beyond the fortification. If three hundred or less, they may occupy the lower city, between two walls. In either case, the governor must kowtow to Simah-ilane and give him and his immediate servants fine quarters in the inner area (*kirḫum*) (A.2830 = LAPO 16 266). By treating Simah-ilane with such deference, the king was signaling, to him no less than to all, that his legitimacy as prince of Kurda was not to be tested—at least not then. Within a few days (11.xi), Itur-asdu tallied the cortège at one hundred and fifty Babylonians and fifty Numḫeans (A.826 = LAPO 16 267). The next day (12.xi), Simah-ilane was in Mari (FM 3 66), receiving all the genuflections he deserved. The surprise, however, was that he had a hundred (unpredictable) Sutu-tribesmen with him (A. 2810 = LAPO 16 268). He was to remain as guest of Zimri-Lim for a full month.¹⁷

conveyed this man as if it were me, and Samsi-Addu killed him. So the king of Zalbar gave me life. (Since then) I left Zalbar and now live in Kurda” (A.1215; Charpin and Durand 2004: 100:14-22). I can’t begin to imagine the physical state of the poor schnook delivered in Bunu-Ištar’s stead. On the fate and status of *keltū*, dethroned men awaiting a better turn of events, see Sasson 2007; Charpin 2009.

10. Different scenario of events in Charpin and Zeigler FM 2003: 185; Guichard 2002b: 135-136 argues that he once ruled Sapiratum.

11. Lafont 1994: 209-215. On his name, see Durand LAPO 16, p. 416.

12. A.3724+; see Guichard 2002b: 127-132.

13. As suggested by the letter Terru of Urgiš wrote to Zimri-Lim (ARM 28 44bis: 5-22):

Previously, I made my plea in Nagar before my lord. This is what I said, “Because I have cast my lot with my lord, people in my town hate me. A couple of times I have had to save myself (lit. “my head”), escaping death.” This is what I told my lord, but my lord told me, “Until I come (to you), act to protect the life (lit. “head”) of Šadum-labua your lord as well as to keep yourself safe. I personally do not know how your town hates you because of me. You are mine; but the city Urgiš is someone else’s.” This is what my lord told me....

14. See FM 3 95. The notion that Zimri-Lim was embarked to restore kings to the throne they, or their parents, occupied before Samsi-Addu’s control of the region is oft repeated, even if it has too modern a ring to it; see Lafont 1994: 213; Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 183-184.

15. See Birot 1972. The material is reedited in Duponchel 1997; see his comments at 212-215.

16. In ARM 14 122 = LAPO 16 368, Elamite diplomats are much exercised when not receiving the proper curtsies. See Durand, LAPO 16, pp. 592-593.

17. I accept Duponchel’s conjecture (1997: 254 n. to text 111) that Simah-ilane may have stayed in Mari until 12.xii.

What we learn from these preparatory notices is that visits by potential allies forced evaluative decisions on administrators and tested their capacities to react responsibly.¹⁸ Quartering an armed escort separately may well be prudent for hosts. Yet guests can easily feel queasy, the restriction on their movement confining and potentially threatening. For those charged with their comfort, however, protocol needed to be politically sensitive: Too little attention intensified the slight while too much quickened jealousy. Administrators, as always, dreaded blame and avoided independent decisions—hence the rich correspondence.

Three days later, Zimri-Lim was back home to attend to his guests. Immediately, jewelry was set before the king in his private chamber (ARM 21 225), received or to be dispensed, and a banquet was laid out with acrobatic displays for entertainment (FM 3 67). At mid-day in mid-month, a procession made its way to nearby Dēr that included the two kings, the goddess Dēritum, two Babylonian diplomats, a Sutu leader, as well as servants, singers, acrobats, and wrestlers (FM 3 72-81). As a gesture to Simaḥ-ilane, Zimri-Lim graciously rode a *lagu*-donkey when etiquette would have rather had him lifted in a palanquin on the arms of men.¹⁹ The stay in Dēr lasted four days, travel inclusive, and featured circumambulation of Dēr, offerings for Dēritum, food for Sin, and a burnt (*gibbum*) sacrifice for Tuziba, who may have been a Kurda goddess. The party was soon back in Mari where, for two more weeks, Simaḥ-ilane likely participated in more of the same. We do not know what pledges were extracted from him during his sojourn; but a Mari palace official (Sammetar) stopped and quizzed a Babylonian handler who was making his way back from Kurda to Hammurabi's court (A.2983 [Dossin 1972: 120-121] = LAPO 16 376). No doubt, Mari needed to be satisfied that promises were being carried out.

From this batch of notices we learn that in troubled periods vassals feared palace insurrections, subversions by pretenders, or attacks by predators; as much, they also dreaded losing the support that suzerains could give them, even when it lessened their freedom and decreased their treasures. For this reason, they would undertake long journeys to please their overlords, opening themselves to much danger. Simaḥ-ilane himself did not survive his visit for long; within a couple of years, survivalist Bunu-Ištar reclaimed control of Kurda. Described as a broken chariot, too decrepit to leave his home, and so disliked that even his private secretary defected from him (ARM 28 163), Bunu-Ištar pursued an anti-Mari policy (see ARM 2 130 = LAPO 16 336). He sat on a throne three years, tops.

Hammurabi

Kurda's next king was Hammurabi, grandson of Aštamar-Addu (via Da'irum), and his first act was to officially accept the symbols of vassalage Zimri-Lim sent him, namely a throne, garments, and a gift (ARM 28 166).²⁰ Even as he acknowledged those gifts, Hammurabi posted the classic rain-check: "I had all the intentions of travelling to (my father) and was quite ready. However, Aqba-Aḥum, official of my lord, reached me. He (too) was planning to come to my father, but a servant of Zaziya (leader of the Turukkû-tribesmen) came to me to say, 'What? Mari is near you, but Šarbat is (too) distant? Come to

18. The king is known to travel to one of his several palaces without alerting its administrators. Zikri-Addu of Qattunan writes (See FM 2 47), "I have heard from my own sources about my lord's travel to Qattunâ. If my lord is coming here, a note from my lord should promptly reach me so that I can prepare in advance of my lord." Another officer in Qattunan (Akšak-magir, a *kvetcher*) in fact warns the king (FM 2 50), "I keep on hearing about a trip of my lord to Kaḥat. My lord may be relying (wrongly) on the Qattunan palace and so travel provisions and (food for) meals will not be brought from Mari. There is no brewer (here) and there are no millers. I need to receive 2 to 3 *uḡarum* of flour to feed soldiers..."

19. On palanquins and their use, see Arkhipov 2010. Diplomats (and palanquin bearers) were killed for acting too uppity in riding them.

20. Hammurabi writes ARM 28 166 as a "son" of Zimri-Lim. In a letter cited by Zakira-ḥammu of Qattunan (ARM 27 71), he is quoted as delivering via Babylonian messengers a letter to Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum, in which he is cited to say, "since my brother Zimri-Lim has made a treaty with Qarni-Lim (of Andarig) and Šarraya (of Yussan Razama) for them to make war, now then my brother (Išme-Dagan) should petition Hammurabi of Babylon to send me 2,000 men. I will keep them in Kurda while I myself will come to kiss the foot of my father Hammurabi. Just as he [Zimri-Lim] has made an alliance, may my father Hammurabi make an alliance with me."

Šarbat and meet with me’.” Squeezed between two powers, Hammurabi had opted to please the Turukkûs rather than Mari. We are somewhere in Zimri-Lim’s sixth or seventh year on the throne.

Hammurabi of Kurda eventually made his way to Mari and we have a small dossier about the consequent anxiety raised by his voyage. However, the visit took place almost five years *after* the initial invitation and it ended in Terqa, upstream from Mari. There, Zimri-Lim met his guest and offered him gifts.²¹ Occurring during the seventh (Kinūnum) and eighth (Dagan) months, it obviously avoided the Ištar festival of the ninth month (Liliyātum), when ordinarily vassals paid their respects to Zimri-Lim. The purpose is conjectured, but it likely had to do with resolving an immediate crisis, in this case staving off an alliance between their common enemies, Andarig and Ekallatum.²² Hammurabi of Kurda was not Zimri-Lim’s most constant vassal, however, and he eventually accepted protection from his namesake in Babylon.²³ Still, he balanced well on the tightrope, for in the Leilan archives we find an Aštamar-Addu ruling Kurda, likely a son that Hammurabi named after his own ancestor.²⁴

AŠLAKKA

The above brief descriptions of two visits by Kurda kings fairly exemplify two motivations for political encounters: Overlords hustled to line up reliable vassals, while vassals contrived to earn freedom of movement. I shift now to accent some of the reasons—in reality pretexts—vassals gave for not obliging their overlords. An interesting case-study is available in the dossier of Ibal-Addu of Ašlakka.²⁵

The Upper Ḥabur region, then known as Idamarāš, teemed with small principalities, among them Ašlakka. Victories over Ašlakka bracketed Zimri-Lim’s reign, providing him with year-names. He conquered it in his third year and re-conquered it in his final months of rule.²⁶ When Zimri-Lim came to power, Šadum-adal was ruling Ašlakka and in his only extant letter (FM 6 8) he writes as a “son,” hence a vassal, requesting ointment. In other sources, however, Šadum-adal refused to accompany other vassals to Mari and would not even send his elders. He once dripped sarcasm on a rival’s compliance, “Sammetar, king of Ašnakkum, used to be in conflict with Zimri-Lim; but eventually he came around to make peace. If Sammetar went once to Zimri-Lim, (then) I will go twice.”²⁷ Zimri-Lim got rid of him.²⁸

Ibal-Addu

Ibal-Addu lobbied aggressively for Ašlakka’s throne, claiming that his father ruled it as a vassal of Yaḥdun-Lim (ARM 28 48). Like Abimelech, Jephthah, and David, Ibal-Addu once lived the life of a *condotierro*.²⁹ He supported Zimri-Lim’s early moves in the Tuttul region before reaching Mari. Ibal-

21. See Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 233 and 229, n. 543. It may be that cultic acts for Dagan of Terqa had unfolded before Hammurabi made his way back via Saggaratum (ARM 14 42 = LAPO 15 212).

22. Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 229.

23. See Lacambre 1994.

24. See Vincente 1991: 70-71 (87TL-HK). For Aštamar-Addu’s correspondence from Leilan, see index in Eidem 2011: 295-296.

25. On Ašlakka and Ibal-Addu, see the fine overview in Kupper 1998: 65-69 as well as his essay on the king’s early years (2001). On Ašlakka see also Durand’s comments in LAPO 18: 462-463.

26. Whether or not Zimri-Lim had to do a mop up operation the year after his victory is debated, largely because Zimri-Lim is said to be in the same area months later. Guichard (2002a: 146-149) argues how the event might have happened while Lacambre (2002: 4-6) shows that the detail had to do with administrative accounting.

27. Letter of Ḥali-ḥadum, a tribal leader and diplomat: A.488+, cited by Guichard 2002a: 148 and in n. 108; discussion on pp. 139-140.

28. On Šadum-adal’s final days during Zimri-Lim’s fifth year (ZL4’), see Charpin & Ziegler 2003: 183 n.100 and Lacambre 2002: 4-6.

29. Biblical scholars tend to limit their explorations of prototypes for the lives and careers of biblical characters in the Emar (Idrimi) and Amarna Age (many) archives. They will do as well inspecting the many personalities who rose to (and fell from) power as delivered by the Mari archives. Ibal-Addu’s career is an example worthy of study. In his case, like Abimelech of Shechem (Judges 9), he indeed became king. Samsi-Eraḥ, who failed

Addu once complained about his *muškēnum* (that is non-royal) status (ARM 28 77). Yet with Zimri-Lim's support, he took control of Ašlakka.³⁰ Soon afterwards, Zimri-Lim also gave him his daughter, Princess Inib-šarri; but as she had been the newly widowed (but not heir-producing) queen of Ibal-Addu's rival (Zakura-abum, a usurper at Zalluḥan), this was not an inspired choice.³¹ We know little about Inib-šarri's early days at Ibal-Addu's court. She was chaperoned by his sister and had to learn to navigate a harem that could not have wished her well. During appreciable intervals, she was pushed out of the capital and into Naḥur, ceding her place to a rival who openly flaunted the king's affection (ARM 10 74 = LAPO 18 1242; 1244).³² Humiliated, the princess proved a veritable fifth column, reporting on her husband's inconstancy, even disloyalty (ARM 10 73; 77 = LAPO 18 124; 1250).³³

The excuses they gave

Early in his reign, Ibal-Addu wrote (ARM 28 49) that loss of territory (to Sammetar of Ašnakkum) and poor harvest have made him so poor that even diplomats are refusing his paltry gifts. He begged Zimri-Lim not to obligate him by rewarding Ašlakka's messengers and lamented that penury made him unworthy to meet Zimri-Lim. This is among the most inventive excuses for a failure to meet in our records. Occasionally, however, one also meets with a cultic reason.³⁴ Most frequent in the archives, however, is another justification: Instability and internal troubles made it unwise to leave home. Thus, Ibal-Addu claims that a palace conspiracy was hatching just as he was fixing to begin his trek (ARM 28 52:4-14): "My lord was incensed against me because I did not come down (to Mari). I was really eager to come to Mari; *but at my departure there was chaos*. A campaign was plotted against me. In fact, earlier I

to sit on a throne, is another example. His own trajectory as an agitator in the Yapturum region has been reconstructed with verve in Guichard 2011.

30. Ibal-Addu's relationship to Šadum-adal is not known. On the basis of a difficult word in one letter, Guichard (2002a: 149 n. 113) guesses that the two were related by marriage.

31. Guichard (2009b: 22) cites unpublished texts that tell how Inib-šarri was unceremoniously dumped as queen by her first husband's enemy, a certain Ḥatna-amurru. She almost lost her life.

32. ARM 10 74 = LAPO 18 1242 must surely be among the most wrenching notes penned by a scorned wife. Inib-šarri says to her father:

I had written to my lord a few times about my troubles; but my lord wrote me, "Go ahead and enter Ašlakka. Don't resist. Just Go!" This is what my lord wrote to me.

Having now entered Ašlakka, I am facing even more misery. Ibal-Addu's wife is now the reigning queen, continually receiving the donations of Ašlakka and of other towns. As for me, she/he has set me in a corner and has me grasp my cheeks in hand as if a fool. (Ibal-Addu) regularly takes his meals and drinks in the presence of the woman, his wife. My eyes (are full of tears) and I can't open my mouth hungers. He has reinforced the guard over me; but here is more: while my lord's reputation is *strong*, here I am facing even more misery. He did not take the one vat and 2 (gold) vessels that my lord had restored to him and he did not give me the vat and these vessels. If he had love for my lord, should he not also have love for me, your maidservant? Yet more: [...] (my lord) should send his servants to fetch me to my lord, so that I can see my lord's face.

33. At one point, Inib-šarri returns home and tarries there so long that Ibal-Addu, recognizing he had an image problem, begs for her return, promising to move his favorite to a secondary palace (ARM 28 68:6-11; see also ARM 28 67:35-38). Inib-šarri's tale, as well as that of her unappreciative husband, is treated with flair by Guichard 2009b. (There is a novel, if not also a movie, in Inib-šarri's unfortunate tale!)

34. Ḥuziri of Hazzi/akkannum (FM 2 122:3-18, cited by Guichard 1994: 237-240) writes Zimri-Lim

I have heard my lord's message that he conveyed to me. My lord wrote to me about the festival, saying, "Come!" However, the Lady of Nagar—who is protecting my lord and keeping him healthy for endless years—will be taken on a tour into the heartland. I myself must welcome her in the town of Iluna-aḥi while Ḥaya-sumu (of Ilaṣūra) must welcome her in Miškilum. As for me, I must also welcome her in behalf of Ḥaya-abum (of Šeḥna) and make sacrifices to her in Ḥazzakkannum itself. For this reason I have not come to meet my lord, but I have just dispatched to him Ewri, who knows what is going on.

Ḥuziri goes on to construct (34-44) the crudest image of betrayal in our records:

Another matter; why does my lord not write to Kaḥat about Akin-amar? Is this man, Akin-amar, just my enemy but not also my lord's enemy? Why does he remain in good terms with my lord? Once this man sat by my lord and drank a cup (of friendship). Having elevated him, my lord reckoned him among worthy men, clothing him in a garment, and supplying him with a *ḥuburtum*-headdress. Yet, turning around, (Akin-Amar) defecated into the cup he used, so becoming hostile to my lord!"

had written to my lord that they will rise (against me).”³⁵ Elsewhere *ḥābirū* incursions are blamed, but the jeremiad stretches longer (ARM 28 51): “Because I have not come to meet with my lord, I fear that my lord will be angry with me. But the year has been tough and to survive (*aššum butalluṭim*), the *muškēnum*s of Ašlakka made their way across the mountains. More: the *ḥābirū* have become hostile. Yet I must keep my lord’s city safe. Therefore, and as my lord’s servant Itur-asdu knows, it is for this reason that I have not come down to my lord. My lord must not be irritated. I am now conveying three slaves as my lord’s share of (spoils) as well as one ox and one deer (*nālum*) for the Ištar sacrifice.”

Appeal to instability, internal or otherwise, is often invoked, not just because it might carry some truth, but also because it often shifts the onus on the suzerain. Ibal-Addu was not alone to link his coming to Mari to a request for troops to keep the city safe during their absence.³⁶ He asked for thousands of

35. Most justifications cite instability; but they differ in tone or accent. Here is a sample:

1. *Iullu of Ḥurrâ* (ARM 28 47; ZL 11’; see Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 239 n. 660):

My lord wrote to me about my travel (to Mari). My lord knows, however, how unstable the lands are. Apart from Ḥurrâ, there is no one opposing them. Moreover, I am slandered before Turib-Adal (a dignitary in Eluḥut), (saying), “Apart from Hurrâ, there is no other enemy for Eluḥut.” To which Turib-adal answered, “With Hurrâ (hostile), I will not rest until Ḥurrâ is conquered.” *Just now*, I shall go with *troops* and will remove *hostilities*.

On these matters, I have posted a *message* to my lord. I have moreover discussed these matters with Yatar-Asdu (Itur-asdu governor in Naḥur), deciding, “We have indeed heard unacceptable things—but where are we to go? But for having protected our lord’s cities, until our lord arrives here, because of these events (*te¹-mi-im*), I will not come to my lord.

2. *Ḥaya-sumu of Ilaṣura* (ARM 26 352; ZL). Šaknum, Mari’s delegate, writes Zimri-Lim:

My lord had given me instruction on Ḥaya-sumu’s trip to attend the festival of Ištar. I spoke to Ḥaya-sumu who answered me, “My trip is not appropriate as long as I have not pacified the Idamarāš region.” The kings of Idamarāš have just now gathered at Urgiš to (meet with) Qami-Lim (of Andarig) and Ḥaya-sumu. They had a meeting in Urgiš and have now headed for Naḥur district. My lord should reflect as per his royalty and write to Ḥaya-sumu what he wishes.

On another matter (Princess) Kirum (wife of Ḥaya-sumu) gave birth to a boy! My lord should be pleased.

We do know, however, that Ḥaya-sumu did visit Mari on several occasions. From a very sad dossier (LAPO 18 #1221-1230), we also know that he divorced Kirum, mother of his son, and sent her home.

3. *Terru of Urgiš* (ARM 28 44):

Previously, my lord informed via Ḥalu-rabi as follows, “Where are all the good deeds that I have showered on Terru? Why has this person not done the same for me even once?” As soon as Ḥalu-rabi told this to me, I gathered the information that my lord sent me and (sought) to do well by my lord. Since I fulfilled this matter, my city was ready to bury me under stone; but the god of my lord extracted me from the claw of the Elam viceroy. My lord should know this.

My lord must not say anything because I could not come to my lord. People of Ḥurrâ are at war with Šadum-labua because of Išme-Addu. Moreover, in their anger, Ili-sumu is being promoted as a political rival against Šadum-labua. I am keeping control of Ašnakkum’s fortress. As to Šadum-Labua, my lord ought to send him out with honor. As soon as Šadum-labua comes back, I will come to my lord.

4. *Asqur-Addu of Karana*. Sentiments conveyed to Zimri-Lim by ambassador Yasim-El (ARM 26 411:18-26, 43-56):

... I returned to the subject of my lord’s order and when I talked to him about his trip to my lord, he replied, “Ḥabqa-ḥammu (a diviner) and I will go; but is it proper for me to go to my lord empty-handed? There is a city that is *bothering* me. Because the army of my ‘father’ is camped here, I want to raze the town, make plans to calm my land and to take omens on the security of my land, then Ḥabqa-ḥammu and I will go to my ‘father.’” So I keep on hearing about their trip from their own mouths, but I have not yet determined their full intent....

... Ever since my lord’s army has reached Karana, [Asqur-Addu’s] land has become calm, yet he himself is procrastinating about his trip. I could tell that the matter of his trip is evaded, so I told him, “No doubt, your voyage towards your ‘father’ is delayed. I want to leave with you the army assigned for your protection on order of your ‘father,’ and I shall make my way to my lord.” This is what I told him, and he answered me, “My father sent you (here) to affirm the foundation of my throne and to stabilize my land, and now you want to abandon me and depart? As long as I have not attained my objectives by means of my father’s troops and I have not reached my decision, you are detained here. We go as a group.” However, because my lord had written me to do whatever he tells me, I am standing ready to do his bidding.

36. See also ARM 28 106: 34-41 where is cited Šadum-labua: “As I have written my lord: My lord ought to dispatch 50 men and one reliable man, a *bēl pāḥatim*-officer. I can entrust the city to him and he can watch over the

men (ARM 28 54; 57), but elsewhere insisted on just a few hundred (ARM 28 50; 57; 58). The last seems a very modest amount to request, but Ibal-Addu knew that Zimri-Lim could muster at short notice no more than five thousand men. With so many hostile fronts opening at any one time, Mari's king was not likely to respond favorably. In fact, Zimri-Lim answered in kind: he will indeed come North—but one of these days (ARM 28 58). In these tit-for-tat justifications, a balance of unfulfilled expectations was reached, to the satisfaction or frustration of both sides.

Ibal-Addu was not particularly sophisticated in his choice of pretexts. With smug satisfaction, he once even deciphered his delaying tactics to Zimri-Lim himself, in this case involving an Elamite resident-general (ARM 28 57:23-28): “Sir Kunnama, who now stays in Šubat-Enlil, keeps writing to me, ‘Come here and let us meet, it will *please me/you*.’ However, fearing an attack by Atamrum [his supporter], I keep writing to him, ‘Yes! today!—Yes! tomorrow.’ ...”³⁷

WHY THEY DID NOT GO?

Visitation, it seems then, was a power game, played on multiple levels. It can be done “up”—that is, vassals go to suzerains to confirm loyalty. Or it can be played “down”—that is, suzerains go to vassals, ostensibly to give support, but also to check on their loyalty as well as to visit princesses given as trophy wives. From the available records, however, the shuttle does not seem to occur laterally, that is among rulers of equal status.³⁸ Thus, Zimri-Lim goes to visit his sponsor (and father-in-law) in Yamḥad and receives vassals at his court or at theirs; but as far as I know, he made no visits, say, to Babylon or to Qatna. Visitation, or its prevention, was also a tool for establishing a pecking order, especially so in the intricate tier-system that discouraged sub-vassals from leapfrogging authority. There is a wonderful complaint by Yapḥur-Lim of Izallu, a town dominated by Ašlakka, about Ibal-Addu punishing him for taking a trip to Mari: Ibal-Addu appropriated his home, he says, and sold two of his daughters, both priestesses, for fifty shekels (A.1941).³⁹ Pressuring those with lesser power to visit can be done directly; but in this business of demonstrable capacity to force allegiance, no holds are barred, as we learn from this exchange sent to a vassal (Till-Abnu) by his own dependent (Meḥillum) on behalf of an overlord (Ḥalu-rabi): “Why should you be favorably mentioned by Ḥalu-rabi? He said, ‘Why does Till-Abnu not come here and meet with me? Unlike Šepallu (another vassal) who came here once and met with me, he does not come here. Yet, when Šepallu came here, he brought as gift wine, oxen and sheep!’ I myself am staying here all the time by Ḥalu-rabi (so that) you could be mentioned favorably. As for me, whatever news I pick up (I will send you)...” (RATL 106 = Eidem 2011: 179-180).

city while I go to meet with my lord. In this way I can go and fulfill the sacrifice that I will offer, then return home. The troops must stay here during my trip there and back. [More or less the same in 107:6'-8'].

37. Ibal-Addu continues, “...If my lord does not send me troops, I will abandon the city and go. My lord is now aware.”

Around ZL7' (Lafont 2001: 265), when Zimri-Lim was in the neighborhood and had invited Ibal-Addu to the yearly Ištar festival of the ninth month, Ibal-Addu spins a tale of having prepared for the voyage having already posted his luggage, but other vassals (Qarni-Lim of Andarig and Ḥaya-sumu of Ilaṣura) had insisted he goes with them. Why his plans changed is lost to us in a fragmentary passage. Later on there is reference to *ḥābirū* threats and announcement that elders will soon be on their way to explain it all (ARM 28 50).

38. Thus Zimri-Lim treks all the way to Aleppo to pay his respect to his father-in-law and sponsor, Yarim-Lim; but he is there also to help him smother a revolt. There is an invitation to visit Mari that Zimri-Lim sent Amut-pi-El of Qatna (ARM 26 25); but in this case the letter is patently provocative and, given the time stricture (the letter makes its way during the eighth month), there is hardly any chance that the invitation was serious; see my comments in Sasson 2007: 461-462 n. 24. When the king of Carchemish proposes to join Zimri-Lim at the Ištar sacrifices (ARM 28 24), he does so as a “son,” so inferior in status. I do not know how to assess ARM 5 53 (= LAPO 16 261) on whose testimony Durand conjectures a voyage by Išḫi-Addu of Qatna, an equal of Zimri-Lim.

39. “Ibal-Addu told me ‘Why did you go to Zimri-Lim (on your own)?’ This is why he took my house, my people, and my daughters. Once again, I went to my lord. Because I went to my lord, Ibal-Addu sold in Ḥurrā for 50 shekels each of my daughters, one a priestess of Šamaš and the other of Sin. My lord did send to Ibal-Addu his servant Belšunu to say, ‘Release the men of Yapḥur-Lim!’ Yet Ibal-Addu did not pay much attention to what my lord was telling him...” (See Guichard 2009b: 25.) What is galling here is that Yapḥur-Lim had come to power in Izallu as an agent (*sugāgum*) of Zimri-Lim (ARM 28 120) and his visits included bringing tribal elements to Qattunan (ARM 28 118).

PS ON IBAL-ADDU

Whether or not Ibal-Addu made it to Mari is debatable (see ARM 28 65).⁴⁰ In any case, he certainly proved to be a wily vassal: transparently loyal yet ambitious and prone to bullying less imposing vassals. He once even urged a pretender to visit Mari; if not, he would force him to do so (ARM 28 65:33-40). Moreover, he had the chutzpah (or folly) to tell Zimri-Lim about it, likely to bolster his own credentials. In other contexts, Ibal-Addu revealed to Zimri-Lim Mari secrets to which he could not have been be privy (ARM 28 60), just to display his own importance and savvy. Such a personality was not likely to miss opportunities, but also just as likely to run out of luck.

A couple of years before Zimri-Lim’s demise, Ibal-Addu waited for the yearly Ištar festival, when many of his neighbors (Šadum-labua of Ašnakkum and Šubram of Susa) trekked to Mari, to side with Mari’s enemy (Eluḫut) and break into a revolt. By then, Zimri-Lim had enough of his scheming son-in-law. He captured Ibal-Addu’s city and deported his entire harem.⁴¹ Ibal-Addu, however, slipped the noose. The last we hear about him is typical of the careers that ambition carved for folks like him. When last reported, Ibal-Addu was hiding in the Yapturum mountains, likely with the support of *ḫabirūs*. In effect, Ibal-Addu was recycling into his own past.⁴² Let me hope though that he did not drag poor Princess Inib-šarri with him—for in a few more months her father would no longer rule Mari and her value to Ibal-Addu was bound to become negligible.⁴³

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40. Guichard 2009a: 85 n. 96 presumes that he did. ARM 31 142, dated to 21.i.ZL8’, records outlays of gifts and since another document places Zimri-Lim in Mari on this date, Guichard may be correct; see also his 2005: 443. But the gifts are relatively modest and may have been dispensed via diplomats rather than personally to the Ibal-Addu.

41. See Lion 2004; Ziegler 1999: 11-26. A few months after this signal event, gifts were distributed to those ensuring his defeat (ARM 25 682). The delay must not be taken as evidence that Ibal-Addu continued the fight elsewhere (Charpin and Ziegler 2003: 239-240). The gifts were simply handed out a few months after the event, when they were recorded.

42. See Guichard 2009a and ARM 28 120.

43. Relying on ARM 28 68, Guichard (2009b: 28) would like to have her safely back home after Ibal-Addu’s defeat.

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ABSTRACT

In the Mari correspondence, many vassals display dread at the periodic trips they had to make to their suzerain’s capital. In this paper, I comment on the rich display of excuses they offer as well as suggest reasons for their reluctance.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans la correspondance de Mari, nombreux sont les vassaux qui manifestent de l’angoisse à accomplir les voyages périodiques qu’ils doivent faire à la capitale de leur suzerain. Dans cet article, je commente aussi bien le riche panel d’excuses qu’ils livrent que les raisons de leur répugnance.

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37240,
USA