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MARI HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE YAKHDUN-LIM DISC INSCRIPTION¹

I BEGIN THIS BRIEF STUDY of the Yakhdun-Lim disc inscription as a historiographic monument by quoting a rudimentary, single line definition of “history”: “History is an intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past.”² However, if we are to ask how does a civilization fulfill this program—how does it *write* history?—then I could suggest that it does so by selecting “facts” and shaping them into a continuous narrative. When strung linearly these “facts”—however scholarly consensus defines the term—can influence each other; but this sequencing rarely yields satisfying “history.” Rather, the “facts” must jostle each other; they must prefigure outcomes even as they make their first appearances; they must establish relationships and predict developments; they must permit comparison and afford contrast; they must suggest cause and effect. In writing “history,” therefore, “facts” are not to stagnate upon a chronological continuum.

By emending the aforementioned definition into “History is an intellectual form in which civilizations render account to *themselves* of the past,” we can broaden the perspectives from which a society perceives bygone days. A civilization may recall its past only to understand the present. To this perspective belong the assessments by Mari historiographers who write to explain the present to future generations. Other cultures can survey texts and monuments to reconstruct what truly happened in distant and alien civilizations. To this second category belong our own attempts at resurrecting Near Eastern history.

Modern scholars who would reconstruct Mari’s history, however, must also come to grips with the vast intellectual gap that separates two distinct senses of history: the Mari of the scribes and that of contemporary scholars. For us to gauge how Mari historians worked their data into a continuous narratives, it is not always necessary to test the accuracy or veracity of their inscriptions. We can simply subject

¹This paper is an abbreviated version of a presentation “On Reconstructing the Histories of Early Israel and of Mari,” presented at the 1983 Strasbourg colloquium on “Bible et Orientalisme.” I have excised the segment about Israel and have redrafted the Mari portion to make allowance for recent research and discoveries.

²J. Huizinga, “A Definition of the Concept of History,” *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*. Edited by R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1936.) p. 9.

them to a literary analysis that includes observing how these scribes structured their material to better fulfill their goals.

As is well known, excavations at Mari continue to yield an abundance of cuneiform documents, most of them stemming from a narrow slice of time during the early 18th century BC. We have a rich storehouse of epistolary, legal, and administrative texts and would like to have more examples of literary documents, theological (i.e. mythological) or fictional.³ Recently a chronicle of Shamshi-Adad has been pieced together and samples from an epic about Zimri-Lim have been published.⁴ We are not wanting in royal date-formulas that allude to events of historical importance, and we have much useful information of political nature embedded in the administrative, epistolary and divinatory archives; however, we are still lacking the type of material with predigested narrative quality that quickens the historian's imagination: Annals, treaties, victory stelas.⁵

As a result of this dearth in historiographic documents, assyriologists have depended largely on Mari's letters to reconstruct what may have occurred there. Yet Mari letter writers do not always tell us what prompted their correspondence and if

³This is what we have (Spring 1989):

Theological (mythological and cultic): G. Dossin, "Un rituel du culte d'Ištar provenant de Mari," *RA* 35 (1938), 1–13 (= *Recueil Georges Dossin* [Paris, 1983], 202–14; collations for ii: 21–27 in *ARMT* 26/1, p. 386); a series of sketches and copies for votive inscriptions from the period of Yasmakh-Adad published by D. Charpin, "Inscriptions votives d'époque assyrienne," *M.A.R.I.* 3 (1984), 41–81.

Fictional: Naram-Sin legend, A. K. Grayson and E. Sollberger, "L'insurrection générale contre Narām-Suen," *RA* 70 (1976), Text M (= A.1252), pp. 113–14. Charpin will publish a highly literary bilingual letter a scribe sends to Zimri-Lim (Acts of the 35 RAI, Philadelphia). Durand mentions the presence of fragments of bilingual psalms (forthcoming in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*).

⁴M. Birot, "Les chroniques 'assyriennes' de Mari," *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 219–42. On the Zimri-Lim Epic, see D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, "La prise du pouvoir par Zimri-Lim," *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 293–343 (especially 325; 332); *ARMT* 26/1, 57, 393, 428.

⁵What we have of victory stelas and treaties are sketches and memoranda:

Treaties: with Babylon, see J.-M. Durand, "Fragments re joints pour une histoire élamite," *Fragmenta Historiae Aelamicae: Mélanges offerts à M. J. Steve* (Paris, 1986), pp. 111–28; with Andarig, unpublished, known to me courtesy of F. Joannès. See also the memorandum published by the last in *Miscellanea Babylonica: Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot* (Paris, 1985), 106. Durand, forthcoming in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, cites a badly mutilated treaty between Zimri-Lim and Ibalpiel II of Eshnunna (ZL 4') as well as a *mišpaṭum* between two Idamarāṣ towns. The letters, however, frequently allude to treaty stipulations.

Stelas: Dossin, "Un projet de stèle de victoire de Zimri-Lim," *Syria* 48 (1971), 1–6. Durand, *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 319–22 recredits the document, arguing that it be allocated to the rule of Yasmakh-Adad. Copies of texts relating to Zimri-Lim's construction of an ice-house at Terqa, see Kupper, p. 249 (IVf7b) of Edmond Sollberger and Jean-Robert Kupper, *Inscription royales sumériennes et akkadiennes* (Littératures anciennes du Proche Orient; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971). A clay fragment of the same text has been found in Terqa; Rouault, *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 2/7 (1979), p. 2.

they do set a date for their letters, it does not include year-names. Furthermore, letters are ordinarily not the best media in which to become introspective about human motivation or to reflect philosophically on history and its lessons. Consequently, when we read about wars or political alliances, we can rarely offer arguments organic to the existence and preservation of Mari as a political entity. We evaluate what drives rulers to act militarily or administratively but can hardly judge whether the reactions they describe in letters are personal and instinctive or are necessitated by state policies. At best, therefore, in writing the political history of Mari, we are merely sketching plausible pages in the biographies of individual leaders, using their capital, Mari, as backdrop for their movements and activities. While biography is indeed one form of history writing, and comparative biography of individual rulers can lead us to a balanced recreation of past events, the results we obtain from these approaches are likely only as long as no new archives come to light. It ought not be surprising, therefore, that the life expectancy of articles written on historical topics is usually short. We can, however, supplement this research by recovering the behavior of Mari as it led its own private life. Thus, with just Zimri-Lim's rule in mind, we can place in sequence hundreds of dated tablets containing a wealth of information on the city, its visitors, and its wealth.⁶ Available to researchers, therefore, is a treasure trove of data that can help measure the pulse of the city for over a hundred and twenty months of its existence.⁷ Not only can the scholar assess each document for its own information, but because it finds place in a chronological continuum, each text becomes invested with temporal dimensions and the individuals that crowd its lines acquire pasts and futures, casting their influence upon their contemporaries in a manner that can be more easily charted.

Historiographic pronouncements are not limited to monumental inscriptions of kings, and they may be available to us in a variety of forms. To gauge the vision of Mari historians we are not required to constantly test the quality and reliability of their assertions; hence we can turn to any text where is found their reflection on the passage

⁶For convenience, see the tables assembled in J. M. Sasson, *Dated Texts from Mari: A Tabulation. Aids and Research Tools in Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 4 (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1980), pp. 81–126. Unless they have been updated regularly, these tables are by now very badly out of date.

⁷See the sketch for one year of royal activity (ZL 4') presented in *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 437–52. An observation can be made on the Zimri-Lim archives: whereas the bulk of the administrative documentation comes from the years ZL 1'–6', the letters, in fact, seem to derive from the years ZL 8'–12'. A possible explanation is that the administration in charge of daily activities may have relocated into the "houses," *bitatum*, at a time when more room was needed for the royal entourage. Durand, "L'organisation de l'espace dans le palais de Mari: le témoignage des textes," in *Le Système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome*, ed. E. Lévy, (Leiden: Brill, 1987), should also be consulted. He posits a period in which the royal family moved out of the palace to explain the uneven accumulation of dated texts.

YAKHDUN-LIM'S DISC INSCRIPTION

I: 1	<i>Yaḥdun-Lim mār Yaggid-Lim</i>	<i>šar Mari Tuttul u māt Ḫana</i>
6	<i>šarrum dannum</i>	<i>gāmer kišād Purattim</i>
9	<i>Dagan Šarrūt il ibbi</i>	<i>kakkam dannam mušamqit šarri nākiriya iddinamma</i>
15	<i>7 šarri abbū Ḫana</i>	<i>ša uqtabbilünim akmišunūti mātišunu ana idiya utēr</i>
21	<i>ḫiBBi ša kišād Purattim assuḫma</i>	<i>māti šubtam neḫtam ušēšib</i>
26	<i>nārātim [II:1] upetti</i>	<i>dalam ina mātiya uḫalliḡ</i>
5	<i>dūr Mari ēpuš</i>	<i>u ḫirissu aḫri</i>
7	<i>dūr Terqa ēpuš</i>	<i>u ḫirissu aḫri</i>
9	<i>u ina sawē qaqqar našmim</i>	<i>ša ištu ūm šiatim šarrum šumšu ālam la ipušu</i>
15	<i>anāku lalām aršima</i>	
17	<i>ālam ēpuš ḫirissu aḫri</i>	<i>Dūr Yaḥdullim šumšu abbi</i>
21	<i>u nāram eptēšumma</i>	<i>(nār) Išim Yaḥdullim šumšu abbi</i>
24	<i>māt il urappiš</i>	<i>išdē Mari u mātiya ukīnma</i>
III: 1	<i>ana ūm šiatim</i>	<i>šumi aškun</i>
3	<i>ša temmēniya unakkaruma</i>	<i>temmēnišu išakkanu</i>
7	<i>awilum šū lū šarrum lū iššakkum</i>	
9	<i>Anum u Enlil erretam lemuttam lirurūšu</i>	
12	<i>Šamaš kakkīšu u kakkī ummanišu lišbir</i>	
16	<i>Ašnan u Sumuqam māssu likkiā</i>	
18	<i>abul mātišu likilā nukūrātum</i>	
20	<i>qablum libtari ina mātišu</i>	
22	<i>šarrūssu adi balṭu ūmšam ḫidirtum limtaḫḫar</i>	
25	<i>Anum u Enlil lū rābiš lemuttišu ana dariātum</i>	

of time and on its consequence upon their contemporaries.

I want to be less abstract now in my observations, hoping that Bill Moran, dean of American Mari studies, will forgive the above didacticism and that he will enjoy reading the sample analysis of a Mari document published long ago by François Thureau-Dangin.⁸ I choose it because it is of a size manageable for this occasion. This is one of two known commemorative inscriptions commissioned by Yakhdun-Lim, a king whom we should still consider Zimri-Lim's father until sharper evidence settles the issue one way or another. Its text was carved on the circular head of a clay baked cone (*sikkatum*) whose stem has disappeared. Kupper, who provided us with a new translation in *Inscriptions Royales* (IV F6a), also contributed a brief study to the *Kramer AV* in 1976.⁹ There, Kupper brought out some features that were peculiar to Yakhdun-Lim's disc inscription: the heading, which gives the king's rather than a deity's name; the lack of precise focus on the object of commemoration and its dis-

⁸"Yaḥdunlim, roi de Hana," *RA* 33 (1936), 49–54.

⁹"L'inscription du 'Disque' de Yaḥdun-Lim," *AOAT* 25, ed. Barry L. Eichler et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1976), pp. 299–303.

(RA 33, 50; Sollberger and Kupper, *Inscriptions Royales*, IVF6a)

- Yakhdun-Lim, son of Yaggid-Lim; king of Mari, Tuttul and the country of the Khaneans;
- The powerful king, who controls the banks of the Euphrates.

Dagan proclaimed my kingship and handed me a powerful weapon, "Destroyer of Kings Hostile to me";

I defeated seven kings—Khanaean chiefs—who successively challenged me, annexing their territory;
I removed the hostile forces from the banks of the Euphrates, giving peace to my land;
I opened canals, thus eliminating well-water drawing throughout my land.

I built Mari's ramparts and dug its moat;
I built Terqa's ramparts and dug its moat.

And in the *burnt-field*—an arid spot—where not one king since days of yore founded a town,
Indeed I, having wished it,

Founded a town, dug its moat and called it "Dur-Yakhdullim";
I then opened a canal for it and called it "Ishim-Yakhdullim."

I, therefore, enlarged my country and strengthened the structure of Mari and of my land,
Establishing my reputation for eternity.

Whoever discards my commemorations, replacing them with his own,
Such a person—be he king or governor—

May Anum and Enlil curse him darkly;
May Shamash snap his weapons and those of his troops;
May Ashnan and Sumuqan starve his land;
May hostilities hold (shut) the gate of his country;
May combat persist in his country;
May trouble hound his kingship, daily, throughout his life;
May Anum and Enlil be evil counsel to him, for evermore.

covery at Mari rather than at Dur-Yakhdullim. I shall come back to these details presently.

The text, written in monumental signs on a larger than normal (40 cm) disc, is allocated to three columns, each 26 lines long. While it will eventually name six gods—seven if one were to include the god Lim—the inscription's main protagonist is Yakhdun-Lim, who will stubbornly occupy center stage from the very outset. Four brief asyndetic phrases begin the narrative. The first two present the king (Yakhdun-Lim son of Yaggid-Lim), and specify that the king's domain extends from Mari to Tuttul, to the north, with a population of non-urban dwellers filling its stretches. The second set of two phrases amplifies this assertion even as it provides us with new information: Yakhdun-Lim is a powerful king (*šarrum*—a word belonging to an urban vocabulary), who pacifies the banks of the Euphrates where the Khanaean tribesmen previously roamed.¹⁰ Laconic as these phrases may seem, they nevertheless foreshadow arguments that are soon developed. This anticipatory promise is fulfilled

¹⁰On titles assumed by the Mari kings, see Charpin and Durand, "Fils de Sim'al": les origines tribales des rois de Mari," *RA* 80 (1986), 142–50.

within three major sections, the first and last segments about equal in length (respectively, 26 lines with 47 words and 24 lines with 50 words), the second occupying appreciably shorter line space, but about equal in word number (20 lines, 43 words).

In the first section the god Dagan enters the stage but, like a Prime Mover, he lingers only to initiate action. He proclaims Yakhdu-Lim's kingship, in language that remains unique to this inscription,¹¹ and hands him an all-conquering weapon. But the language used in these circumstances is deceptively simple and the acts that are registered are pregnant in their implications. To begin with, there is a temporal contrast to Dagan's efforts in behalf of Yakhdu-Lim. The proclamation of Yakhdu-Lim's kingship may well have occurred at the moment that Yaggid-Lim vacated his throne; but there is also the possibility that Dagan's choice was not merely opportune and suitable to the occasion, but that it was fated immemorially. However, when Dagan allows Yakhdu-Lim the use of a powerful weapon, the transfer could occur only to meet present danger. And in this movement from the hoary past to the immediate present, there is also a shift between the centers of power that may be lost to our perception because it is so categorical and abrupt. For not even a conjunction separates the realm where the god actualizes his decisions from the world where mortals brandish their weapons. Only the verb *nadānum*, "to give," with its implicit tactile quality, bridges the gap between heaven and earth. Yet another contrast is observable: *šarrum* and its derivative *šarrūtum* are paraded to realize separate orbits; one is god invested and belongs therefore to Yakhdu-Lim; the other is occupied by *šarrū nākīrū*, belligerent kings, and therefore deserves to be anonymous and doomed to failure. Finally, there is the Akkadian vocabulary that sets the tone to be carried through the rest of the narrative, one that conveys decision and accomplishment.

Dagan's weapon is firmly grasped by Yakhdu-Lim, and he uses it to dominate the course of events narrated in the first section where the first person pronoun impressively controls the verbal constructions.¹² The transition from Dagan's will to Yakhdu-Lim's fulfillment of its promise, however, is conveyed solely by the particle *-ma* in *iddinamma*. The activities of the king are recorded in statements that become progressively briefer, thus neatly capturing the inexorable drive towards achieving predestined goals. But this progress is not linear; rather it is displayed on two planes

¹¹More commonly met are the formulae *ana šarrūtīm DN nabūm or šarrum ša DN ibbūšu*. General remarks on the formulas for divine election and selection can be had in H. Tawil, "Some Literary Elements in the Opening Sections of the Hadad, Zakir ..., " *Or. NS* 43 (1974), 40–65 (esp. pp. 55–57). (Reference courtesy A. Hurvitz.)

¹²This weapon is given an epithet, *mušamqit šarrī nākīrtiya* (see *CAD* M/1, 249 7c). At a recent AOS meeting (1987), D. Charpin reported on a message sent from Halab to Zimri-Lim and referring to the dispatch of the weapon used by Addu (Baal) in his battle against Tamtu (Yam). These weapons, therefore, may have been consecrated and given "life," possibly during actual reenactment of mythological incidents. On the weapons of the gods and their construction at Mari, see D. Soubeyran in *ARMT* 23, pp. 331–43.

that alternate between martial and economic accomplishments.

1. a) Seven kings—and the symbolic value of the number need hardly be stressed—Khanacan chiefs, in fact, are captured,¹³ and
 - b) *their land is annexed*;
2. a) the *ḥiBBi*-opposition is deported,¹⁴ and,
 - b) during the resulting peace, canals are opened in so many places *that dependence on wells, a back-breaking labor, becomes obsolete*.

The first section concludes with laconic testimonies to the might of a king who is now free to strengthen his principal cities. “I built Mari’s ramparts, and dug its moat; I built Terqa’s ramparts, and dug its moat.” This coda, impressively definitive in its contents, also serves as a frame for all the preceding narrative, since its four brief phrases are structurally evocative of the inscription’s introduction. But this coda also provides a subtle transition to the second section since its vocabulary, with its two-fold repetition of *ēpuš*, “I built,” and *aḥri*, “I dug,” draws the attention from the acts that were divinely directed to those that depended entirely on Yakhdu-Lim himself.

The second segment must certainly be viewed as containing Yakhdu-Lim’s main message. As it is, it succeeds in drawing us from the accomplishments of the immediate past to the promise of the future. The dimensions of this section are fairly certain since the information it wishes to convey is set within an *inclusio* created by two references to *ūm šīātīm*, “distant time”: the first referring to the past, the second to the future. As noted above, this section occupies but twenty lines. In word count, however, it is but three words shorter than the preceding segment and six words less than the succeeding section. The pace of the narrative dramatically slackens at the beginning of this statement, with the first sentence stretching out in an uncharacteristic manner. This is especially noticeable because only an interposing conjunction (*u*) separates the preceding phrases regarding Mari and Terqa from the initial words of the second segment.

It begins descriptively, speaking of a *sawūm* that, as explained appositionally, means an “arid spot.”¹⁵ In contrast to the vocabulary of the first section, this

¹³The form *uqtabbālūnim* may be based on a West Semitic verbal root; see *CAD* Q, 292.

¹⁴The translation “hostile forces” for *ḥiBBi* is contextual. See the remarks of M. Held who similarly translates from context in “On Terms for Deportation ...,” *Near Eastern Studies in Memory of M. M. Bravmann* (= *JANES* 11 [1979], pp. 53–62); in particular, see his concluding remark of p. 62. Kupper’s treatment, both in *Inscriptions Royales* and in *Kramer AV*, render our phrase: “j’effaçai les blessures des rives de l’Euphrate,” a rendering that is not an appropriate metaphor. He bases his rendering on further Mari attestations (see *ARMT* 10, p. 252; M. Anbar, *RA* 75 [1981], 187), that do not, however, clarify the meaning in the Yakhdu-Lim occurrence. Note that the idiom in 10 1 needs now to be emended due to Durand’s collations reported in *M.A.R.I.* 4, 433 n. 37.

¹⁵The translation “burnt field” for the *sawūm* is based on context and on the assumption that *qaqqar našmim* is an explanation set appositionally. The other possible occurrence of this vocable (cited in *CAD* S, 202–3) is set in apposition to *ina warkāt dūrim*, “at the other side of the fortification wall,” that itself is contrasted with *ana libbi ālim*.

“primordial condition” is likely artificial, and it is evoked to emphasize the totally unprecedented act that is to follow. The singularity of the event is further underscored by reference to the verb *epēšum*: unlike its appearance in the coda of the section just cited, where it serves twice to confirm Yakhdun-Lim’s creativity, this time the verb accentuates the impotence of previous rulers. The text continues: *anāku lalām arši*,¹⁶ “I, Yakhdun-Lim”—not the gods nor anyone else—“I, Yakhdun-Lim, desiring it,” decided to build a city. Hovering between the decision and the resolve to act upon it is but the briefest of conjunctions, the particle *-ma* attached to the form *arši*.

With this declaration, the pace once more quickens: Yakhdun-Lim founds a town, digs its moat, and names it “Dur-Yakhdullim”; he then cuts a canal for that city. The canal’s name also bears evidence that merely because he felt like doing it, Yakhdun-Lim willed “Ishim-Yakhdullim” into being. The absolute power and authority of the king are thus displayed in this section, wherein are embedded all references to the word *šumum*, “name.”¹⁷ Contrasted with the preceding segment in which the god Dagan proclaimed, and therefore legitimized Yakhdun-Lim’s reign (verb: *nabûm*), in this episode it is Yakhdun-Lim who issues names (verb: *nabûm*) to these newly established entities. Therefore it is Yakhdun-Lim who personally affects the course of his kingdom’s future history. This conscious attempt at paralleling the divine and human spheres in matters of choice and at duplicating them in matters of action, makes it possible to understand the second section’s reference to Mari, its expansion, and its improved condition. Just as Dagan’s wish in behalf of Yakhdun-Lim and his kingdom had resulted in annexing territory and in strengthening the main urban centers, Yakhdun-Lim’s desire, likewise achieves similar results: he enlarges his country, and strengthens the structure of Mari and his land.

In turn, a proper appreciation of Yakhdun-Lim’s message as it is developed in this core segment helps us to understand why the disc bearing this inscription was kept in Mari itself rather than in Dur-Yakhdullim, the town whose founding the disc ostensibly celebrates. The inscription, in fact, is not created merely to commemorate the building of a town or to inaugurate the opening of a canal; rather, it is meant to exalt the king’s powerful creative urges and, as such, belonged where power lay, and not in some miserably arid field to the north of the capital.¹⁸ The inscription, there-

¹⁶Compare with the passage in *Abb* 2 159:11–13 that is to be similarly understood (*CAD* L, 50 2a notwithstanding): “As you, father, know, because I desired it, I have distributed three head of cattle; but I do not have a spare ox” (*kima abi attā tīdu lalām aršima* 3 ÁB.GUD.ĤÁ *uzziz u* GUD ŪR. RA *ul išu*).

¹⁷The verb *šāmum/šamum*, in the context of the name Ishim-Yakhdullim, is difficult to render accurately. The idea is that this canal comes to exist because Yakhdun-Lim has fulfilled his wish.

¹⁸The disc was found at the foot of a wall in a small room (No. 18) that connected with room No. 108. The last contained hundreds of texts. See André Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari*, II; *Le Palais*, tome 1: *Architecture* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1958), p. 195.

The actual site of Dur-Yakhdullim is still to be located. J. D. Safren (“The Location of Dūr-

fore, encourages its readers to conclude that Dagan's initial act allows Yakhdun-Lim to assume the god's authority and, consequently, that Mari is now the temple wherein their common declaration is housed. Only Yakhdun-Lim's death will alter this arrangement, and it is to this eventuality that the next section turns.

The final section is headed by its own introduction that, ostensibly, switches the focus of attention from the present where Yakhdun-Lim's earthly activities unfold, to the future, where the potentially hostile behavior of foreign rulers lurks. It also shifts the center of activity, from where human beings live to where gods make judgments. As such, therefore, it allows the narrative to progress linearly in terms of time and to move circularly in terms of action. The language of this third section does not encourage the readers to believe that the disc and its words will escape abuse and that the consequent curses need never be realized:¹⁹ to the contrary, vocabulary and themes are drawn from the first section of the inscription to further the likelihood that Yakhdun-Lim's disc is destined for harm. For only when future rulers commit disrespectful acts will the gods be moved to fulfill pledges they are making to Yakhdun-Lim. Moreover, only in the wake of the gods' punishing reactions will men come to recognize that the pledge the gods gave Yakhdun-Lim endures beyond his earthly existence.

Linkage between the segments of the inscription is brilliantly established in the opening line of the final section. Repeated are the verbs *nakārum*, "to become hostile," which was important to the mood of the first section, and *šakānum*, "to establish," which in the second segment identified Yakhdun-Lim's aspiration. The curses themselves are laid out in two sets: one that describes the gods' reaction to uncouth attacks against Yakhdun-Lim's memory, and another that records the havoc their decisions perpetrate on earth. Moreover, these two sets are complimentary and are laid out chiasmatically in an *A B C : C' B' A'* pattern, with each pair focusing on a differing order and quality of punishment. Two appeals to the gods Anum and Enlil bracket the series of curses, thus giving integrity to the complete cycle (III:9 || III:25). From the center moving outward, we find that Ashnan and Sumuqan (respectively the gods of grain and cattle) are to cause sterility in the countryside, while within the city's gate the lack of foodstuff will cause starvation (III:16–III:20). Shamash is to destroy an evil king's martial power, while his land is to break out in revolt (III:12–III:22). In the most elaborate of the curses, Anum and Enlil are to curse the scoundrel personally, so that not only will his rule give him no pleasure, but his own judgment will

Yakhdun-Lim," *RA* 78 [1984], 123–140) has shown that it has to be on the right side of the Euphrates, inland, and above the confluence of the Habur. B. Geyer and J.-Y. Monchambert ("Prospection de la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrate," *M.A.R.I.* 5 [1987], 325) place it at Tell Mohasan (No. 25 on their map of p. 307). Durand ("Problèmes d'eau et d'irrigation au royaume de Mari," forthcoming), places it closer to Deir ez-Zor.

¹⁹Context requires us to regard *temmēnum* here as simply a written commemorative. So also concludes Kupper, *Kramer AV*, p. 301 n. 15.

forever be compromised.²⁰ There is delicious irony here in the recall of the word *šarrūtum*, “kingship,” that, in its only two appearances in the inscription, frames the narrative in such an obviously contrasting manner: Dagan’s proclamation of Yakhdu-Lim’s kingship, far in the past, plays counterpoint to Anum and Enlil’s unceasing bedevilment of an unwise future king.

As analyzed above, Yakhdu-Lim’s disc is more than just an inscription commemorating a long-departed king. It is also a literary product that uses its vocabulary to convey an ideology of history. Its eye is omniscient, able to remember the future from any vantage point. It establishes an initial cause and never loses track of its potential. It organizes time in an intricate fashion, progressing linearly when it moves with the text, and cyclically when it is just about to come to an end. It blocks out space in such a fashion that only earthly activities can come for sharp inspection.

The narrative itself is vividly paced, and, especially when it pertains to human interaction, it is also dramatic. Therefore, as in the best of dramatic and historical accounts, it is open to interpretations that may differ radically from those gained through surface impressions. Yakhdu-Lim, throughout, is the protagonist. He is admirable; he is inspirational; he represents the best that Mari can offer—yet he is also mortal. And although the initial situation introduces his foes as nameless in their insignificance, the narrative allows them to gain strength inexorably. So much so, that even as Yakhdu-Lim is reaching pinnacles of prestige, he will stand powerless against their machinations. Only the keepers of the past—the gods—can interfere to prevent their total triumph.²¹

Yakhdu-Lim’s disc inscription is indeed a fine piece of historical writing, and, as is true of practically every inscription recovered from ancient mounds, it remains unique as a collection of words and phrases, of ideas and themes.²² To be sure, we occasionally find echoes of its vocabulary and sentiments in Mari letters, and to gain a better sense of Mari’s intellectual grasp of its history, it will not do to rely just on this document. We must also turn to the letters, first to extract and then to collate various perspectives that were available to Mari’s historiography. In this undertaking,

²⁰Note also Shamshi-Adad’s inscription which ends with similar sentiments: *Sin il rēšiya lū rābiš lemutišu ana darētim*. For details, see A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, Vol. I (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972), p. 21 (§130).

²¹It does not seem that such threats were effective. In the case of Yakhdu-Lim’s own tomb (either in Terqa or in Mari), we know that it was desecrated within a few years of his death, and by people who probably were once close to him. When Samsi-Addu needed bronze to create weapons, he demanded that Mari officials melt down what was used in Yakhdu-Lim’s burial. See for now *N.A.B.U.* 1989/27 (pp. 18–19).

²²See also Kupper’s insight: “il ne s’agit pas d’une inscription de fondation, mais bien d’une inscription d’un genre particulier, qu’on pourrait qualifier d’historique, et qui était exposée dans le palais” (*Kramer AV*, p. 300).

it will be necessary to consider even the most tendentious letter,²³ the most bombastic ultimatum,²⁴ the most apocalypticizing vision,²⁵ the most terrorizing dream,²⁶ and the most self-conscious counsel.²⁷ In brief, it will be necessary to regard the Mari letters (and even the imaginative documents, e.g., the epics) not merely as repositories of political and biographical information, but also as historiographic products, shaped by particular perceptions of the historical process.²⁸

²³Such as, e.g., Yasmakh-Adad's famous plea to his god, *ARM* 1 3, reedited by Charpin and Durand, *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985), 339–42. The idea that gods judge and punish the desecrator and the oath-breaker is well-known to Mari's letters. See, e.g., 10 177 and 13 97. I have discussed the literary construction and historiographic perspective of *ARM* 1 3 in *N.A.B.U.* 1987/109 (pp. 63–64).

²⁴Such as Yarim-Lim's threats against Der; see Georges Dossin, "Une lettre de Igrim-Lim ..., " *Syria* 33 (1956), 63–69. In studying this letter in "Yarim-Lim's War Declaration," *Miscellanea Babylonica*, pp. 237–55, I followed alternative perceptions of it as an authentic declaration of war or as an imaginative simulation by the Mari chancellor.

²⁵Such as the one preserved in *ARM* 10 9; see "An Apocalyptic Vision from Mari? ..., " *M.A.R.I.* 1 (1982), 151–67. The text has been discussed by Durand, "Trois études sur Mari," *M.A.R.I.* 3 (1984), 152–53. He has reedited the text, with important collations, as *ARMT* 26 208.

Two other documents published in *ARMT* 26 report eschatological revelations. Although broken, *ARMT* 26 196 reports a vision or dream in which Dagan summons Tishpak, god of Eshnunna, and in the presence of Yaqrub-El (a divinized Mari ancestor?), condemns him. This revelation, in which deities confront and find fault with each other, reminds of Ps 82, "God takes his stand in the divine assembly, surrounded by the gods he gives judgment...."

ARMT 26 230, apparently a school text, reports the dream of a woman in which an elder addresses the god Itur-Mer who responds to him by ordering Dagan and Ninkhursagga to enter (return to?) the city. Presumably, the fear was that they had abandoned the town.

²⁶Such as the one recalled by Addu-duri in *ARM* 10 50; see "Mari Dreams," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 283–93. Durand has collated and reedited this text as *ARMT* 26 237. Charpin and Durand (*M.A.R.I.* 4 [1985], 327 n. 151) give their opinion on how to render l. 3 *ištu šulum bi abika*.

²⁷Such as recommended by Bakhdi-Lim, *ARM* 6 76; Durand and Charpin have now reedited this text in *RA* 80 (1986), 143–44 (l. 10 is further corrected in *ARMT* 26/1, p. 384). Bakhdi-Lim reminds the king of his advice (15ff):

[Since?] Yakhdun-Lim's land turned back to my lord and [because?] this land is dressed in Akkadian clothing, my lord should respect the symbol (lit. head) of his kingship. Even as you are indeed king of the Khanaean-tribesmen, you are secondly king of an Akkadian (country). My lord ought then not ride horses, but a chariot and mules my lord should ride, and in this way respect the symbol of kingship.

See also E. A. Speiser's remarks on the widely quoted passage of Itūr-Asdu ("No king is powerful on his own...") in "The Biblical Idea of History ..., " *Israel Exploration Journal* 7 (1957), 201–2.

²⁸I am grateful to Hebrew University's Institute for Advanced Studies where this paper was written, for its material as well as intellectual support. While in Jerusalem, I discussed the approach of this paper with A. Shafer and H. Tadmor and was much stimulated by their reactions.