EMAR AND ITS ARCHIVES

Gary Beckman

THE RECOVERY of the cuneiform civilizations of the ancient Near East had begun already in the 1840's with the excavations of P. E. Botta and of H. A. Layard in northern Mesopotamia, the heartland of ancient Assyria. Before the end of the nineteenth century much work had also been carried out in the south of the Land of the Two Rivers, yielding thousands of tablets and corresponding quantities of information concerning ancient Babylonia and the even earlier culture of Sumer. In contrast, little was then known about the history and cultures of Syria prior to the first millennium B.C.E., when the region came within the purview of Biblical and Greek writers. This situation has been greatly rectified in our own century by four major discoveries of cuneiform texts within the boundaries of the contemporary state of Syria: at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) a few kilometers

north of Latakia in 1929, at Tell Hariri (ancient Mari) near the Iraqi border on the Euphrates in 1933, at Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) in the vicinity of Aleppo in 1974 and 1975, and at Meskene (ancient Emar) about 85 kilometers west of the provincial capital of Raqqa on the middle course of the Euphrates from 1972 through 1976. As witnesses to Semitic cultures antedating that of Israel, all of these collections of tablets have captured the attention of students of the Hebrew Bible.6

The particular focus of this volume is on the finds on the Middle Euphrates, an area which had been little explored archaeologically until the plans of the Syrian government to erect a dam at Tabqa, approximately 45 kilometers west of Raqqa, called forth an international campaign to salvage the archaeological record of that portion of the river valley soon to be submerged under the newly-created Lake Assad.7 While tablets were recovered at several other sites in the region, including 14 at Tell Hadidi (ancient Azu) and 81 at Mun-


bāqa (ancient Ekalte), by far the largest group was that excavated by the French expedition to Emar under the direction of archaeologist Jean Margueron and published by the team's epigrapher Daniel Arnaud. These include over 450 practical documents in addition to hundreds of tablets and fragments from a temple library. Beyond these texts, over 250 cuneiform records from the vicinity of Emar have found their way onto the antiquities market and have been treated by various scholars, including the official epigrapher Arnaud and myself. Most of these stray records can be firmly connected with the excavated Emar archives through prosopographic analysis.

At present, the earliest known mention of Emar is in records from Ebla dating to the twenty-fourth century B.C.E., when it was the seat of a monarchy alternately beholden to Mari downstream or to Ebla itself. Similarly, in the nineteenth century, Mari and Ebla's political successor Aleppo disputed control over the city, now seemingly ruled by a council of elders. The interest of the regional powers in domination over Emar may be explained by its strategic location at the juncture of two trade routes between Mesopotamia to the southeast and Syro-Palestine, Anatolia, and the Aegean beyond to the north and west. Throughout premodern history, trad-


10. Published in Emar 6. Parts 1-3 present the archival material and Part 4 the literary and scholarly texts.

11. See Table I.


ers could either proceed from this point northwest along the Euphrates toward northern Syria or head out to the southwest for Palestine via Tadmor/Palmyra. Such activity is attested in the Roman period, for example, when the town known as Barbalissus occupied the site of the earlier Emar.¹⁴

In the Late Bronze Age to which all but one¹⁵ of the tablets found at Emar belong, the town was part of the empire established by the Anatolian Hittites. Indeed, it was the chief city of the border province known as the Land of Aštata, which faced their powerful rival Assyria, and as such it was protected by a number of fortified outposts, two of which (Tell Faq’ous¹⁶ and Tell Fray¹⁷) were also explored during the salvage campaign.

The Emar of this period was a new foundation on the cliffs overlooking the river valley from the west,¹⁸ the older town on the floor of the valley itself having apparently been abandoned due to a change in the course of the Euphrates.¹⁹ This new construction was carefully laid out around a regular grid of streets and reveals the influence of its imperial patrons through elaborate terracing foreign to the region but quite similar to building techniques practiced at the Hittite capital of Ḫattuša in central Anatolia. We may be confident that it is to this very site which the Hittite king Muršili II of the mid-fourteenth century refers in his Annals: “When I arrived in


¹⁵. Emar 6, 836 is an Old Babylonian letter.


Aṣtata, I went up to the city of Aṣtata. I built a fortress, and furthermore I provided it with a garrison.\textsuperscript{20}

Late Bronze Age Emar was occupied for about 150 years. Arnaud has placed its violent destruction in about 1187 B.C.E., on the basis of a tablet dated to the second year of the Kassite king Melišipak of Babylon,\textsuperscript{21} and a record in a private collection, in all probability from Emar, bears a dating by the Assyrian eponym system\textsuperscript{22} which would confirm Arnaud’s point. In any event, there can be little doubt that Emar met its end as a result of the catastrophic displacement of populations known to modern scholars as the invasions of the “Sea Peoples” which ushered in the Iron Age in the Eastern Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{23}

Politically, thirteenth-century Emar was once again governed by a line of kings, which we can follow through at least four generations.\textsuperscript{24} The local monarch was the vassal of the King of Carchemish, himself the cousin and viceroy of the Hittite Great King. In addition, a number of Hittite imperial officials were active in Aṣtata,\textsuperscript{25} most importantly the Overseer of the Land, who seems to

\textsuperscript{20} KBo 4.4 ii 60-63. ed. A. Götze, \textit{Die Annalen des Muršiliš} (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1933) 118-21.


\textsuperscript{22} RE 19 is from the eponymate of Bēr-nāšir (reign of Ninurta-apil-ekur). For the particulars of this dating, see my commentary to this piece in \textit{Texts from the Vicinity of Emar in the Collection of Jonathan Rosen} (forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{23} The most recent extensive consideration of this problem is T. and M. Dothan, \textit{People of the Sea. The Search for the Philistines} (New York: Macmillan, 1992).


\textsuperscript{25} I discuss the Hittite bureaucracy in Syria in “Hittite Provincial Administration in Anatolia and Syria: The View from Mašat and Emar,” \textit{Atti del II. Congresso Internazionale di Hittitologia, Studia Mediterranea} 9, eds. O. Carruba, M. Giorgieri, and C. Mora (Pavia: Gianni Luculano editore, forthcoming), and “Hittite Administration in Syria in the Light of the Texts from Ḫattuša, Ugarit and Emar,” \textit{BiMes} 25 (1992) 41-49.
have been in charge of the defense of this sector of the empire’s frontier, and worthies bearing the title of Prince (dumu.lugal), who were dispatched on special missions by the Kings of Carchemish and of Ḫatti. Despite his subservience to the Hittite authorities, the King of Emar exercised real authority within his own realm, as demonstrated by his intervention in various economic affairs of his subjects, as well as by his frequent witnessing of their contracts.

At the head of the local religious establishment, which apparently enjoyed a significant degree of independence from the monarchy, was the priest bearing the title “diviner” (lilgal). We have some evidence that the imperial authorities in Carchemish on occasion intervened directly in the “diviner’s” sphere of activity, bypassing the Emariote king.26 It is also most interesting that a number of deities of the Hittite masters were incorporated into local Syrian rituals.27 But since D. Fleming considers the city’s cult at some length in another essay in this volume, I will simply mention here that it was the “diviner’s” personal or institutional library which contained the literary texts recovered at Emar.28

The economy of Emar at this time, as in other epochs, was undoubtedly based chiefly on trade, although relatively few records of this activity have come down to us. One text, however, does document the payment of the ransom for a local man—sixty shekels of silver “by the weights of Amurru” on the Mediterranean coast—to a merchant from Tadmor/Palmyra,29 while another represents the settling of accounts between a local trader and an Assyrian from the town of Šuwadika on the lower reaches of the Ḫabur River to the east.30 And a letter sent to Ugarit discusses whether the lawsuit of

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26. See Emar 6, 268, a letter in which Agal-Šimegi, apparently a religious official of Carchemish, corresponds directly with the “diviner” Zu-Ḫa’la concerning the installation of a priest of Ninkur.


a person referred to only as “the man of Emar” comes under the jurisdiction of the ruler of Ugarit or under that of the king of Siyannu just to the south. Although no details of the dispute are given, in this era such a legal case transcending political borders could have arisen only in connection with commerce.

We possess much fuller information concerning agriculture in the vicinity of Emar, which took the form primarily of barley production on individually-held fields, and of the cultivation of vineyards and vegetable gardens. We can say little about the disposal of the surplus on the market which certainly existed or about taxation of natural produce by the state, although the recovered field lists may have been compiled to aid in the latter enterprise.

The local population of Emar was basically of North West Semitic stock, to judge by the language from which the majority of attested personal names were drawn, although certain lexical and morphological similarities to the Arabic dialects have also been observed. Approximately 80% of the collected names belong to this group. Other languages represented in the onomasticon include Akkadian and Hurrian, as well as the Indo-European Anatolian tongues of Hittite and Luwian.

The relevant cuneiform documentation is composed for the most part in a peripheral Akkadian dialect strongly marked by the local West Semitic stratum. On the whole it more closely resembles the Middle Babylonian language of contemporary southern Mesopotamia than does that of the earlier Canaanite Amarna letters. What I would refer to as the “scribal dialect” of Emar—for

32. Emar 6, 168-69.
there is no strong evidence that it was ever actually spoken—is the language of the practical records and of the rituals. But a more standard Akkadian and the traditional literary language of Sumerian are employed in the scholarly materials. Two Hittite-language letters and a handful of divination records in Hurrian have also been recovered, though not yet published.

To conclude this quick survey of language use, mention should be made of the practice by which local Syrians had their names engraved on their personal cylinder or stamp seals in the Hieroglyphic Luwian script of their Anatolian overlords. This “fad”—if I may call it that, for I believe that even fewer Emariotes could understand the hieroglyphs than were literate in cuneiform—has proven very beneficial to the modern philologist, because comparison of the same names expressed side-by-side in the two writing systems has made it possible to assign phonetic values to several hitherto-obscure hieroglyphic signs on the one hand, and to determine the local reading of a number of cuneiform ideograms on the other.

As already mentioned, over 700 documents pertaining to the legal and economic activities of the local population of Emar and its vicinity have been published or are in press. These include sales of real estate (fields, vineyards, gardens, houses, empty lots), transactions involving slaves, loans, sureties, receipts, lawsuits of various


types, royal decrees, letters, and inventories of storerooms, as well as records from the practice of family law (adoptions, arrangements for marriages, testaments, and divisions of property). See Table I for a list by type of tablets from Emar,\textsuperscript{41} other than those from the French excavations published in \textit{Emar 6}.\textsuperscript{42}

It is interesting to observe that a large proportion of these practical records were found in a single temple—that presided over by the “diviner” just mentioned (Temple M\textsubscript{1})\textsuperscript{43}—although they document the personal business of literally hundreds of different individuals. This suggests that the deity of this temple, whose identity is unfortunately still uncertain,\textsuperscript{44} oversaw a sort of central record office for Emar. We can only speculate as to the purpose of such an archive, which by no means reflects common practice in the ancient Near East, where collections of records of this type were usually kept by individual families.\textsuperscript{45} We may, however, be grateful to the god or goddess and to the human servants of this religious establishment for having gathered for us ultimate benefit such a bountiful source of information about life on this stretch of the Euphrates thirty-three centuries ago!

\textsuperscript{41} I wish to thank Joan Goodnick Westenholz for permission to cite tablets in the collection of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{42} J. Huehnergard kindly supplied me with his listing of the \textit{Emar 6} texts by type for use while we await the publication of D. Arnaud’s commentary on this corpus.

\textsuperscript{43} See the listing of texts by place of discovery in \textit{Emar 6}, part 3, p. 5.


Table I
CATALOGUE OF SCATTERED EMAR TEXTS

I. Real estate transactions

A. Concerning field(s)
1. Sales: ActaSum 10, Text D, ActaSum 14, AuOr 5, nos. 1-3, GsKutscher, no. 4, Hirayama 13 (= AuOr 5, no. 5), 14, 15 (= AuOr 5, no. 6), Iraq 54, no. 4, RE 2, 5, 24, 35, 49, 52, 64, 77, TBR 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16-19, 38, 55, 58, 62, 68, SMEA 30, no. 3
2. Gift: RE 86
3. Cultivation contract: TBR 85

B. Concerning vineyard
1. Sales: Hirayama 16, RE 16, SMEA 30, nos. 4, 17, TBR 51
2. Gift: RE 1
3. Rental: RE 90

C. Concerning garden
BLMf-C 20

D. Concerning house(s)
1. Sales: ActaSum 13, Texts B, D(9), AuOr 5, nos. 7, 9, BLMf-C 15-18, Hirayama 7-11, 12 (= AuOr 5, no. 4), RE 9, 12, 20, 29, 34, 54, 59, 70, 79, 80, SMEA 30, nos. 2, 4, TBR 4, 5, 8, 10, 23, 37, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 65-67, 82
2. Gifts: Hirayama 47 (= ActaSum 6 = SMEA 30, no. 6), TBR 29, 47
3. Exchanges: AuOr 5, no. 10, Hirayama 6, RE 4
4. Confirmation of ownership: RE 54, 55
5. Redemption: BLMf-C 19

E. Concerning lot
1. Sales: Hirayama 1-3, GsKutscher, no. 3, RE 3, 11, 14, 29, 31, 33, 38, 43, 68, 71, 81, 86, 91, TBR 1, 13, 14, 24, 64, 81, SMEA 30, no. 5
2. Gifts: RE 22, TBR 31

46. Where a tablet has been published in more than one place, it is cited throughout my essays by the first designation given in this Table. Hirayama 42 and SMEA 30, no. 11 are probably from Tell Mubāqa and have not been included here.
II. Records concerning household affairs

A. Marriages: RE 6, 61, 67, 76, TBR 21-23, 70

B. Adoptions: AuOr 5, no. 14, Hirayama 46, Iraq 54, no. 1, Prima dell'alfabeto, no. 67, RE 10, 13, 25, 26, 30, 41, 63, 82, 87, 88, SMEA 30, nos. 9, 15, TBR 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 48, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78

C. Testaments: ActaSum 13, Text C, ActaSum 16, AuOr 5, nos. 13, 15, BLMJ-C 24, Hirayama 21-23, 24 (= RA 77, no. 3), 25 (= RA 77, no. 1), 26 (= RA 77, no. 2), 27 (= RA 77, no. 4), 29-31, 46, Iraq 54, nos. 2, 6, Prima dell'alfabeto, no. 66, RE 8, 15, 18, 23, 28, 37, 39, 42, 56, 57, 69, 85, TBR 28, 35(?), 41, 45, 50, 69, 71, 73, 76, SMEA 30, nos. 7, 8, 10, 14

D. Disinheritance: Hirayama 28 (= AuOr 5, no. 17)

E. Divisions of property: BLMJ-C 25, DaMitt 1, Hirayama 32, RE 21, 94 (= AuOr 5, no. 16 = JCS 34, no. 1), TBR 30, 80

F. Concerning labor

1. Labor contracts: RE 19, TBR 25, 26
2. Manumissions: RE 27, 66, TBR 32
3. Concerning slaves: ActaSum 10, Text E, AuOr 5, nos. 11, 12, GsKutscher, nos. 1, 2, Hirayama 17, 18 (= JCS 40, no. 1), 19, 20, 40, 41, 45, Iraq 54, no. 5, TBR 44, 52, 79

G. Records of debts

1. Loans: Hirayama 33, 34, JCS 40, no. 3, Prima dell'alfabeto, no. 65(?)
2. Concerning debt servitude: Hirayama 35 (= RA 77, no. 5), 36, 37
3. Concerning debt forgiveness: Hirayama 38
5. Guarantees: ActaSum 13, Text A, TBR 27, 34
6. ḫarrānu- agreement: GsKutscher, no. 5
7. General: RE 58, 65, 72, 75, 84, 89, 96, TBR 49

III. Legal cases: ActaSum 10, Text B, BLMJ-C 22, 23, Hirayama 43, 44, SMA 30, no. 13, TBR 36, 83, 84

IV. Administrative records
   A. Lists of persons: ActaSum 13, Text F, GsKutscher, no. 7, Prima dell’alfabeto, no. 68, RE 36, 46-48, 50, 62, 73, 74, 78, SMA 30, no. 24; TBR 98-100
   B. Concerning corvée duties: RE 60, 95(?) (= JCS 34, no. 2)
   C. List of fields: RE 17
   D. Concerning irrigation rights: TBR 86
   E. Lists of sheep: BLMJ-28, SMA 30, no. 25
   F. Taxation registration: RE 92
   G. Cult inventories: BLMJ-C 31-33, 35, Hirayama 48, TBR 97
   H. Other: BLMJ-C 27, 34, 36, Iraq 54, no. 3, SMA 30, no. 26

V. Miscellaneous Records
   A. Letters: AuOr 2, nos. 2, 3, RE 83, 97 (= SMA 30, no. 1), TBR 94, 95, 96 (= AuOr 2, no. 1)
   B. Vow: BLMJ-C 29
   C. Ritual: BLMJ-C 30; Hirayama 49, 50
   D. Establishment of temple: TBR 87
   E. Appointment as priest: GsKutscher, no. 6
   F. Uncertain: ActaSum 13, Text E, RE 32, 40, 44, 45, 53, SMA 30, nos. 16, 19-23, TBR 88-93

VI. Scholarly Texts
   A. Lexical: ActaSum 9
   B. Magico-medical: SMA 30, no. 27
   C. Uncertain: TBR 101