"RIVER BANK", "HIGH COUNTRY", AND "PASTURE LAND":
THE GROWTH OF NOMADISM ON THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES AND THE KHABUR

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Ancient Syria has clearly emerged as a pivotal point in the early development of civilization; and the Khabur region is rapidly acquiring unique prominence within these newly opened vistas. That such dramatic changes may occur at so fast a pace we owe to the extremely enlightened policies of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, whom it is a pleasure to recognize here in the person of our common friend and colleague, Dr. Adnan Bounni. And that the rethinking of the early history of the Khabur region may keep pace with the avalanche of new data we owe, today, to the kindness and the foresight of our host, Dr. Markus Wäfler.

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I reproduce here the text of my oral presentation at the Berne Symposium 'Recent Excavations in the Upper Khabur Region' in December 1986, with some changes and a minimum of documentation which is only indicative in nature. Earlier versions of this paper had been presented at the Symposium on Multi-culturalism in Mesopotamia (Toronto 1983) and at the meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Atlanta in November 1986. This is the first in a series of six articles currently in press or in preparation which deal with the history and geography of ancient Hana. The sequence of articles is as follows:

1. "Salt at the Dawn of History: The Case of the Bevelled Rim Bowls" (to appear in a volume edited by M. van Loon, P. Matthiae and H. Weiss);
2. "River Bank', 'High Country', and 'Pasture Land': The Growth of Nomadism on the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur" (published here);
4. "The Kingdom and Period of Khana" (to appear in BASOR);
5. "The People of Terqa and Their Names (in preparation);

I plan to eventually integrate these articles into a full-size monograph and at that time I will include a fuller documentation than is possible here, and will include in particular photographic illustrations of the geographical phenomena described.
The goal of my presentation is to reflect on some of the presuppositions which may help us focus more sharply on the data we are excavating. If there is something of a general research design that we all broadly share as we wield our tools on the rich mounds of the Khabur plains it is the expectation that we are dealing with major and distinctive political and ethnic configurations. We know that the natural environment sets this region apart from the mountains in the north and the alluvium in the south, and we also know enough already about the material culture to recognize its many original traits vis-à-vis the other great Syro-Mesopotamian cultures. We attribute, further, a certain ethnic and geo-political identity to the various human groups in the region, as when we speak of Amorite kingdoms or of Hurrian consolidation. In my paper I would like to look at the question of the socio-ethnic configuration of the populations of the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur2 from the point of view of the ancient geographical perception of the landscape as documented in the texts.

I will deal with the Khabur plains (which are the proper scope of this Symposium) largely from the vantage point of the Middle Euphrates, inasmuch as
- the major phenomena which I am reconstructing here originated, in my view, on the Middle Euphrates, and
- the pertinent written documentation is especially rich for the Middle Euphrates. But the larger picture which emerges from my analysis fully involves the Khabur plains and thus justifies, I believe, this presentation within the framework of our Symposium.

The chronological scope of the research is the third and early second millennium B.C. It should be noted that the pertinent written evidence is dated primarily to the early second millennium, coming as it does from the archives of Mari and to a more limited extent from Shemshara, Rimah, Chagar Bazar, and Terqa. Yet, inferentially at least, the processes described here can be projected back into the third millennium B.C.: this is done on the basis of a comparison with earlier texts from other regions, the evidence of non-textual sources, and the structural presuppositions inherent in the phenomena here described for the later periods.

REMARKS ON METHOD

I wish to clarify at the onset the two basic concepts which underly the research presented here. The first is the concept of ethnicity, which is generally not defined but is nevertheless in common use and as a result is loaded with a variety of implications and presuppositions which, if not clarified, may obscure a proper understanding of the concept itself. The second is the concept of 'perceptual geography', which is hardly present in the literature and thus requires some explanation. Since the focus of our Symposium is substantive rather than methodological, I will keep my remarks to a minimum.

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2 To some extent, these considerations are also applicable to the Balikh basin, although references to it will not be explicitly introduced here.
The concept of \textit{ethnicity} is on the one hand so pervasive that from reading the literature one would conclude it represents a major reality of ancient Near Eastern history; and yet it is, on the other hand, so vague in its normal acceptation that one wonders at times if it is not simply introduced as a catch-all explanatory mechanism, which loses its power precisely through the diffuseness of its use. At times, for instance, a human group is defined as ethnic simply because it is known to make use of a specific cultural trait, or to exhibit a certain linguistic affiliation, or to be identified by a given proper name. But linguistic affiliation in and of itself can only be ground for linguistic, not ethnic, identification; use of a proper name may have a purely political connotation; specific cultural traits such as material assemblages may reflect functional preferences. To assume ethnicity as a correlative for any one of the above is a form of nominalism which may serve a useful purpose in labeling items of analysis but should not otherwise be taken to necessarily reflect historical reality. Yet, such a nominalistic understanding may be carried to harmful extremes when one hears, for instance, of such presumed historical realities as 'Hittite hieroglyphic blood', whereby a philological concept is raised to the status of biological identifier or, concretely, it is assumed that a human group was racially integrated just because it used a specific type of writing. Quasi-ethnic labeling should remain at most a form of mental stenography, whether for philologists or archaeologists (the latter might find it expedient, for instance, to speak of 'bevelled rim bowl people'), but we must stop at that, and beware of making the next step, which is to assume social integration for the 'people' so labeled (and which then would lead one to speak of 'bevelled rim bowl blood').

While I cannot develop here a description of my theoretical understanding of ethnicity, and while I will not be able to show in any detail how these concepts can be applied to our data, I will at least provide the definitions with which I am operating. I understand an \textit{ethnic group} to be a large and cohesive human group with a long-term and marked sense of identity which derives from an ascribed set of non-organizational factors. 'Large' implies that the solidarity bonds are not based on face-to-face association, and 'long-term' is understood as spanning several generations. 'Identity' is 'marked' in the sense that it has to be explicit (generally through use of a proper name referring to the group), and is perceived both within the group (self-identity) and without. The relevant 'factors' form a 'set', \textit{i.e.} a distributional class of elements which are found to co-occur in a patterned way, and they are both 'ascribed' (they are acquired at birth or through a birth-like process of assimilation) and they are 'non-organizational', \textit{i.e.} they do not in and of themselves motivate the group into a special kind of coordinate and systematic action, and are generally symbolic in

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\footnote{On the subject of ethnic identification derived from the analysis of archaeological data see the recent discussion (with which I am in partial disagreement) in: K.A. Kamp, N. Yoffee, \textit{Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia During the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Prospectives}, BASOR 237, 1980, pp. 85-104. I will not be able to deal in this context with the concept of ethno-archaeology, for which see \textit{e.g.}: C. Kramer (ed.), \textit{Ethnoarchaeology: Implications of Ethnography for Archaeology}, New York 1979, O. Aurenche (ed.), \textit{Nomades et sédentaires: Perspectives ethnoarchéologiques}, Paris 1984.}
nature. On the basis of archaeological and textual sources, I identify a group as 'ethnic' when such a distributional patterning can be found recurrently over a large area and long period of time.

Starting from this definition of ethnic group, I further understand the tribe as an organizational subset of an ethnic group, i.e. a full ethnic group or a portion thereof which is also held together through some form of actual or potential organizational mechanism (political, religious, etc.). Similarly, I use the term nation to refer to an organizational subset of an ethnic group which has additionally achieved full political autonomy as an independent state.

A specific approach that I will use in my presentation is the one that may be considered under the rubric of 'perceptual geography'. By this is meant the cultural understanding of land forms, and as such it can be contrasted with physical geography proper: while the latter tells us (in an -etic\(^4\) fashion) about objective measurements, the former (i.e., perceptual geography) tells us (in an -emic fashion) about the impact that these observable phenomena have on human culture and the way in which they condition the human response. It is natural that such perceptions should be reflected in the language, in fact more so, one might expect, than the 'objective' data of physical geography. But we can only begin to appreciate the full range of information which is being so conveyed in language if we look not for ad hoc and seemingly transparent translations (a river is a river is a river), but rather for structural wholes within which individual words, and the perceptions they represent, acquire new meanings (so that, as we shall see, a river may, after all, be more than just a river). The approach which is normally referred to as -emic implies a systemic overlap of two symbolic systems, so that for instance graphemics is the systemic correlation between writing and linguistic sound, phonemics the systemic correlation between sound and meaning, and so on. Analogously, perceptual geography, viewed '-emically', is the systemic correlation between physical geography and the symbolic categorization of the landscape. This is in line with work done by some historians (first and foremost the French school of the 'paysage')\(^5\) and geographers. The special approach that I will follow here is an attempt to provide a four-way

\(^4\) While I consider the terms '-etic' and '-emic' inappropriate in the acceptation in which they are commonly employed, and this for reasons which I cannot discuss here, their use is so widespread that I retain them here for the sake of simplicity.


match between: the modern perception (as observed in my own field work), the ancient perception (as evidenced in the cuneiform texts), the reality of physical geography, and the evidence of archaeology.

THE "BANK OF THE EUPHRATES"

The major dimension of the urban landscape along the Middle Euphrates is the river. This is obvious enough. What is not obvious instead in the literature is that the river has cut for itself a deep valley which places the irrigable area quite a bit below the surface of the surrounding steppe. The net result is that the area available for agricultural purposes is very limited, since no work of hydraulic engineering could ever have raised the water of the river to an elevation of 200 feet or more. There is a sharp boundary between the two, marked by what is often a steep escarpment at the edge of the irrigated agricultural area. It is, as it is called in modern geographical terms, a 'river oasis'. The local Arabic dialect refers to it today as the *zor*, a distinctive term that is found for instance in the name of the capital of the modern province of Syria, Der ez-Zor. Most maps of the area highlight this phenomenon by including the 200 m. contour line even when the normal interval for the higher elevations is in increments of 500 m. Satellite views of the same region also show well the configuration of the terrain and especially the narrowness of the valley.

One can appreciate such narrowness from a site like Terqa: the distance to the escarpment is about 10 kms. to the west, a mere ten minutes by car - and even less to the east, no more than five minutes by car. It is readily apparent that the agricultural hinterland available to Terqa (or Mari for that matter) is extremely limited.

This fact, quite obviously, could not have escaped the attention of the ancient inhabitants. So, how did they refer to this narrow canyon? We find occasionally the term *amqum*, a West-Semitic noun which means valley: it occurs in the texts of Mari as the "valley of Dūr-Yahdun-Lim" or the "valley of Terqa". But the technical term used in Akkadian to refer to

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7 ARM II: 107, 22-23.
8 ARM III: 30, 16.
the zor was, I propose, the term aḫḫ Purattim.9 Literally, this means the "Bank of the Euphrates", but it is used often in ways that seem to transcend the physical connotation of "edge of the water".10 A simple reference to the river name (e.g. ina Purattim) may also refer to the zor.11 When the meaning intended is "edge of the water", then the term aḫḫ nārim "bank of the river" is used instead.12

Generally, the concept of 'river banks' plays, I think, a major role in the ancient perception of the landscape, as it does today. Along similar lines of reasoning, I think that the Akkadian expression šar kibrātim arba'īm which is normally translated as "king of the four quarters of the world"13 may in fact have meant "king of the four river banks", this being after all the common meaning of the term kibrum; specifically, the four river banks would include the left and right banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris respectively. If so, then the term 'four river banks' would in effect be the ancient equivalent of 'Mesopotamia'14 (Fig. 1), in terms of the semantic substance conveyed if not in terms of the etymology of the word; the title šar Akkade u kibrātim arba'īm15 could then be taken to mean "king of Akkad and of Mesopotamia", i.e. king of the civilized Mesopotamian regions and especially its (current)

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9 This is often understood as a proper name, and as such it is often capitalized: this implies that the term is taken with a connotation wider than that of 'edge of the river' - thus for instance in: M. Birot, J.-R. Kupper, O. Rouault, Répertoire analytique (2nd volume): Tome I-XIV, XVIII et textes divers hors-collection, première partie: noms propres, ARMT XVI/1, Paris 1979, pp. 3-4. However, the specific understanding of the term as zor and its contrast with the steppe above the surrounding escarpment has not, to my knowledge, been noted in the literature.

10 Thus the frequent expression šāb aḫḫ Purattim (ARM I: 60, 17 and passim) or šābum 3a aḫḫ Purattim (ARM I: 23, 10 and passim) "the crew/troop of the Bank of Euphrates" does not imply physical proximity to the water edge, but rather refers to people of the zor as opposed to people of the steppe.

11 ARM III: 12, 10-11: "The Suteans are located in the zor (ina Purattim) some 30 kms. upstream of Tegqa".

12 E.g. ARM VI: 43, 8; see: M.L. Burke, Textes administratifs de la salle 111 du palais, ARMT XI, Paris 1963, p. 132.

13 For a recent discussion of the term see: J.J. Glassner, La division quinaire de la terre, Akkadica 40, 1984, pp. 17-34, esp. pp. 18, 26-29. Glassner interprets the term as referring to four parts of the world such as Elam, Meluḫḫa, Mardu and Subartu, which are viewed as the peripheral regions, outside civilization proper, so that a royal title such as šar Akkade u kibrātim arba'īm would then refer to Akkad and these four regions. Glassner's article is very informative, and the documentation he provides seems to me to indirectly support the interpretation I am proposing here, since his presentation leaves two important questions unanswered. First, how could the term 'river bank' (which is generally recognized as the literal translation of the term) be applicable to Mardu (which refers to the Syrian steppe) or Subartu (which refers to the mountainous area in the north)? Second, why would a title such as this include only one part of the 'civilized world' (e.g. Akkad), and then add to it the regions which are admittedly viewed as the barbarian periphery? (Note how a late text refers specifically to the empire of Sargon as extending to the border of Meluḫḫa, excluding it therefore from his control, see Glassner, p. 25.) Quite obviously, it would not have been politically acceptable for a king such as Naram-Sin to call himself "king of Akkad and of the 'uncivilized, unknown, strange, savage countries which are not a part of the socialized world'" (!) - which would follow inescapably if we were to use the characterization that Glassner, p. 26, gives for the four parts of the world allegedly corresponding to the four kibrātim.

14 The terms discussed by J.J. Finkelstein, 'Mesopotamia', JNES 21, 1962, pp. 73-92, as antecedents of Greek 'Mesopotamia' do not, as the author stresses, refer to the area "between the two rivers", but rather to the area flanked in a semi-circular way by the bank of one and the same river - in its major acceptation, māt biritim refers to the big bend of the Euphrates, and māt ebērtim to the Trans-Euphratian area toward the Amanus range. Note how in this terminology too it is the concept of river bank that is in evidence.

political center. In this light, the royal title acquires a stronger connotation than it would have if it referred to an abstract symmetrical quadripartite sectoring of the world. A similar perception, if different in scope because limited to one river, is reflected in the inscription of Yaḫdun-Lim who boasts control of the "bank of the Euphrates" (kiāḏd Purattim).16

At any rate, the two banks of the river represent two very major points of reference in the geographical perspective of today's inhabitants of the region: for the people on the Terqa side of the river the 'Jezire', which corresponds to the east bank, is quite literally a different world.

There are two well known terms in the Mari texts which clearly apply to the two banks, the aqdamatum and the ajaratum, terms which may be considered West-Semitic because of their phonology. The precise meaning of these two terms remains uncertain. The traditional interpretation places the two in positions exactly opposite of what I am proposing here, and assumes that aqdamatum refers to the East. The reason for the location I am suggesting here

16 RA 33, p. 50, 1 8; Syria 32, p. 8, IV 4. The use of the singular form may be due to the fact that in the air the two banks of the river represent a narrow and well defined strip of land.
Fig. 2: The Middle Euphrates Landscape

(Fig. 2) is derived from the tentative consideration that the two terms may represent the geographical perspective from the vantage point of the two major cities that were situated on the Middle Euphrates, Mari and Terqa. Since both cities are on the west bank, aqadam tum would be the 'frontal bank' or the bank where the main cities are found and abaratum the 'farther bank' or the bank on the other side of the river. The term ebertum occurs a few times in the texts of Mari and Terqa with the meaning 'the other bank' or 'the other side'; this seems to be semantically the Akkadian equivalent of aharatum, and since on one occasion it is qualified by the addition sit ŠamSi, "of the rising of the Sun", it would seem to support the interpretation of aharatum as the left or east bank. The text refers, the gardens are mostly located on the eastern bank of the river.
A term which is occasionally associated with the banks of the river is the one transliterated as ba-za-ḥa-tum. I interpret it as referring to the buffer zone at the edge of the steppe overlooking the valley, a stretch running parallel to the river and extending some 30 or 50 kms. inland from the river banks without any natural boundaries but extending perhaps to the line of the first wells in the steppe. I suggest that it may be read baṣa'ātum, and that it may be a plural form (normally the texts speak of the two buffer zones on either side of the river) from a singular baṣ'ātum attested only once. Knowing what to expect, one never fails finding a corroborating etymology, so here is the one that can be marshalled for the case in point: in Hebrew, baṣa' stands for "break, cut" - in a moral sense in Biblical Hebrew, and in a geographical sense in Mishnaic Hebrew: "fissures produced by an earthquake". Be that as it may, the textual occurrences in Mari make very good sense if the terms are taken in the proposed meaning. The troops "of the baṣa'ātum" appear in this light as the border patrol - not the border of the kingdom as a whole, which includes nominally at least the outer steppe as well, but the border of the urban area which is situated in the "valley", the aḥ Pūrattim.

One reason why the notion of a buffer zone along the edge of the valley makes good sense is because of the general geographical situation. The valley cannot easily be defended from below: the sides of the valley can be very steep, and would give any attacker coming from above the ridge a definite military advantage. Interestingly, and a good example of what is meant by 'perceptual geography', the contemporary inhabitants of the zor refer to this ridge and the steppe beyond it as the jebel, the "mountain". While not very high, being on the average some 200 feet, the demarcation line is so sharp and the discontinuity in land use so substantial that it does in fact appear, perceptually, as an altogether different land form, a real mountain in its psychological impact even if it cannot be so mapped in terms of contour lines. If the same perception was operative in ancient times, what terms were used to express it?

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22 See e.g.: ARM II: 98, 4'-9": "Let the desert rangers (sakbû) remain on the other side of the river from Appan [a town in the zor] up until our well (adî ništîm būrtim): anybody who attempts to go beyond into the central steppe, let them be apprehended and brought over to the Khanaean headmen"; ARM III: 17, 21-24: "The troops of the buffer zone are in full control: they have gone out on inspection some 50 or 60 kilometers and they bring back (reports that all is) at peace".

23 ARM X: 155, 4 (ba-az-ḥa-ti-ia); see also: ARM VI: 64, 3.7 (ba-za-ḥa-tam).

24 Šebu'ot, fol. 16a, see: A.E. Silverstone, Shebu'oth, London 1935, p. 78. I owe this reference to the courtesy of Robert D. Wexler.
"HIGH COUNTRY" AND "PASTURE LAND"

I suggest that the various words that mean 'high' and 'low' in the Akkadian texts apply in many cases to just this distinction. The terms *elû*, *elîtum*, *elênûm*, *elîš* on the one hand (for 'high') and *šaplû*, *šaplîtûm*, *šaplânûm*, *šaplîš* on the other hand (for 'low'), as well as the verbs *elû*, 'to go up', and *arradu*, 'to go down', would refer then in many instances to the geographical differentiation between the valley floor and the higher steppe that surrounds it. If true, this understanding of the terms has far-reaching implications. In the literature, the polarity 'high/lowl is generally understood as referring to a north/south orientation, whereby the *mâtûm elîtûm* would then refer regularly to the northern Khabur plains. Now in some instances this is indeed the case, and it may be explained, perceptually, in terms of the flow of the river. On several occasions, *elênûm* and related terms for 'high' mean 'upstream', while the corresponding terms for 'low' mean 'downstream'. The northern and southern orientation, I think, derived indirectly from this primary perception, the north being, in some cases, upstream, for instance along the Euphrates from Mari to Terqa and along the full stretch of the Khabur. On the other hand, the Upper Sea (*tâmûm elîtûm*) is in fact not directly north, but rather to the west. Also note that in the description of fields contained in contracts, the 'upper side' means upstream along the feeder canal, which is the most advantageous side in terms of irrigation.

There are, however, many instances where the term 'high country' refers not to the north but rather to the steppe east and west of the Euphrates and if so we must redefine the geographical horizon of many among the Mari texts. It is also clear that Fall and Winter transhumance could not have taken the herds to the north (no more than they could have to the zor) because both would have been under cultivation at that time.

The separation between the valley floor and the steppe is also marked by the presence of cemeteries on the edge of the escarpment, Baghuz in the area of Mari and possibly a site called Kishme in the area of Terqa. Here too we can see an interesting perceptual nuance. The steppe is the 'high country' from the point of view of the valley floor, a wilderness that

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25 M. Weippert suggests that *mâtûm elîtûm* may refer to "'mountains' or 'hills' in contrast with the Euphrates valley", and not just the Khabur plains; by this he thinks in particular of the Jebel Bishri; cf. M. Weippert, The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine: A Critical Survey of Recent Scholarly Debate, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 21, London 1971, p. 113. My suggestion, on the other hand, is that the *mâtûm elîtûm* refers to the steppe beginning immediately at the escarpment that flanks the zor.

26 See e.g.: ARM III: 12, 10-11 (quoted above, note 11); ARM VI: 47, 7; ARM XIII: 46, 9-20 (the verb *illiem* refers to Qatna from the point of view of Ešnunna, and the verb *urrad* refers to Mari from the point of view of Karkamiš - along an east-west/northwest transect, corresponding to the course of the river).

27 See e.g.: ARM II: 102, 18-21: "My troops of the buffer zone are strong and will catch any Yaminite trying to go from low to high ground" (*ištu Šaplânûm ana elîš*); ARM III: 12, 17-20: "... the Yaminites are all hostile and they come and go from the high ground to their cities" (*ištu elênûm ana ălănăšunu ilalkûnimma u iturru*); it would hardly be possible to "come and go" from the Khabur plains to Terqa! rather, this is a situation similar to that envisaged in ARM III: 16, where the "enemies" come at night to visit their wives in the valley towns, and go back in the day time - obviously to the steppe); ARM V: 81, 5-12, referring to sheep that have crossed (the river) and are grazing in the lower grounds near a certain city (*GN u šaplîš ire*); ARM XIII: 102, 20-22: "... a vanguard of 1500 Khanaeans has gone down (urrad) to the river".
is known to be above and beyond, but is generally beyond the ken of the city people in the valley floor. One wonders whether kings or scribes ever visited this high beyond. Certainly there are very few explicit references in the texts. The term kašû refers to the inner steppe on either side of the river (much as the term badia does in Arabic); and it is possible that the troops qualified as sakbû were in charge of patrolling this territory, albeit on a rather sporadic and occasional basis.

The only term which occurs frequently in connection with the steppe is nawû, which I think refers properly to the concept of pasture lands. Since the largest extent of such pasture lands is found in the steppe or high ground, the nawû is practically synonymous with 'steppe' (in the specific sense of 'steppe with water holes', for which see presently) but in fact nawû lands can also be found in the valley. Other acceptations of the term are found in the texts, as already suggested by various authors, e.g. 'camp' or 'herd', but in my estimation the meaning of pasture land or (by extension) steppe is the most common meaning of the term in the Mari texts.

Hardly any specific reference can be found in the texts about the landscape of the steppe, or about events that take place in the steppe, or about the nature of human presence in the steppe. It is largely a terra incognita for the scribes and their clientele in the river valley. Perceptually, Mari was much farther from the Jebel Bishri than from Ebla or Kiš. This is in sharp contrast with the picture we can reconstruct of the valley floor, the aḫ Purattim, for which we can reconstruct a very detailed map, which I have in fact drawn up on the basis of the texts of Terqa. While this is not the place to go into the details of the Terqa rural landscape in the valley floor, the simple fact that such map can be established will make one point clear: no picture even remotely resembling such a map of the valley floor could be drawn up for the steppe from all the texts of Mari or other texts from the same period.

One important feature of the steppe landscape that we can, I believe, project back into those time periods from the modern situation is the development of wells. Wells are mentioned seldom in the texts, but they were an essential precondition to the large scale utilization of the steppe that was taking place. These wells dot today the steppe, and make it possible to have an effective utilization of the pasture lands which extended at great distances from nat-

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28 See e.g.: ARM II: 78, 31-35; ARM II: 120, 19-24; ARM VI: 42, 5. New evidence dealing with the steppe landscape is announced, and briefly described, in: D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Sim'al': les origines tribales des rois de Mari, RA 80, 1986, pp. 141-183, esp. pp. 147-148 with note 34, p. 156 with note 76; hereafter cited as 'Fils de Sim'al'.


30 I have done so in my article "The Rural Landscape in the Ancient Zor: The Terqa Evidence" mentioned above in note 1.

31 See e.g.: ARM II: 98, Rv 4-5: "The eastern buffer zone (aḫarātûm) from Appan until our well" - which seems to suggest that the first line of wells was controlled by the state, while the others were by default under direct tribal control.
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One important feature of the steppe landscape that we can, I believe, project back into those time periods from the modern situation is the development of wells. Wells are mentioned seldom in the texts,\(^{31}\) but they were an essential precondition to the large scale utilization of the steppe that was taking place. These wells dot today the steppe, and make it possible to have an effective utilization of the pasture lands which extended at great distances from nat-

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\(^{28}\) See e.g.: ARM II: 78, 31-35; ARM II: 120, 19-24; ARM VI: 42, 5. New evidence dealing with the steppe landscape is announced, and briefly described, in: D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Sim'al': les origines tribales des rois de Mari, RA 80, 1986, pp. 141-183, esp. pp. 147-148 with note 34, p. 156 with note 76; hereafter cited as 'Fils de Sim'al'.


\(^{30}\) I have done so in my article "The Rural Landscape in the Ancient Zor: The Terqa Evidence" mentioned above in note 1.

\(^{31}\) See e.g.: ARM II: 98, Rv 4-5: "The eastern buffer zone (*aḫarāʾtum*) from Appan until our well" - which seems to suggest that the first line of wells was controlled by the state, while the others were by default under direct tribal control.
ural water resources, such as rivers or oases. While oases were certainly used in prehistoric times, and there are occasional indications that wells too were used, we are generally at a loss in determining the 'occupational period' of wells. On the basis of circumstantial evidence I am assuming that they came into use primarily in historic times, i.e. during the third millennium, as herders from the river valleys sought out new territories beyond the restricted limits of irrigable lands. This development may be called the industrialization of the steppe, in the sense that through the systematic development of a large scale network of wells, herding became possible on a massive scale, certainly such as the limited river valley could never have supported. It is significant by way of contrast with the south that wells are not found there in the way they are found in the Syrian steppe: this was observed by David and Joan Oates in a perceptive article on Mesopotamian geography,\(^{32}\) and can be noted by looking, for instance, at the toponymy which shows that geographical names with the word bīr (that is, 'well' in Arabic) abound in Syria but not in Iraq. This dual nature of a steppe landscape is reflected, I think, in the important dichotomy between the Akkadian words šaru on the one hand for 'arid steppe outside the limits of irrigation land' (common in the south and practically unknown in Mari or Terqa) and the word nāwā on the other for 'steppe with water holes' which is common in Mari and which occurs less frequently in the south in the meaning of 'non-cultivated pasture land with access to canals'.

THE AGRO-PASTORALISTS

With this new awareness of the landscape we are in a better position to understand the people who utilized the steppe and their relationship to the people who utilized exclusively the valley. To begin with, there is no reason to believe that there existed in prehistory nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists who would have undergone in the steppe a social and demographic development comparable to that of the populations settled in the river valleys.\(^{33}\) Historic nomadism is not an offshoot of prehistoric wandering bands: there is neither evidence for such a development, nor reason to assume it.\(^{34}\) Instead, large scale nomadism, I suggest, developed as a form of land reclamation: the peasants of the Middle Euphrates outgrew the boundaries of the valley and while they could not bring agriculture to the steppe,

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they discovered that they could bring their herds to it, once they had learned to drill wells. I call them agro-pastoralists. This is quite in line with the Mendenhall/Luke\textsuperscript{35} line of reasoning, and with Rowton's dimorphic society.\textsuperscript{36} If there is a difference, it is because I stress on the one hand the agrarian component, while on the other I view the trend towards nomadism as in course of development. Let me dwell briefly on these two points.

The so-called 'nomads' may in fact be viewed as the rural class, or peasants, who were primarily at home in the valley and by necessity came to 'settle', as it were, the steppe. Such a situation was most likely to develop first, at least on a major scale, along the Middle Euphrates, because of the narrowness of the valley floor available for agriculture. From the beginning of the publication of the Mari evidence, the texts clearly showed that the so-called 'nomads' had, in fact, a very strong sedentary component.\textsuperscript{37} What is becoming clearer is that they were in fact \textit{primarily} sedentary, but in the process of taking up, partially and selectively, pastoral nomadism. The important work by Kathleen Galvin on the faunal remains from Terqa\textsuperscript{38} has shown that culling practices as known from that site in the Old Babylonian period do not correspond to the standards one would expect from fully developed or 'professional' pastoralists: this matches well with the suggestion advanced here that pastoralism as such was just then being developed.


\textsuperscript{36} See the fifteen articles on this topic by M.B. Rowton listed in the bibliography at the end of this article.

\textsuperscript{37} Remember for instance the 'grain tribute of the Yaminites' or the many references to farming on the part of groups which are otherwise generally identified as 'nomadic' on the basis of their name. The 'cities' of the nomads were explained as tents; but whenever these cities are named and can be tracked down geographically, they appear to have been situated in the valley, and certainly there is no archaeological trace whatsoever of them in the steppe - nor does, as already mentioned, the horizon of the scribes extend to the steppe, which is hardly ever described whether in connection with the nomads or otherwise. A military muster tablet of Badi-Lim (ARM XXIII: 429, 423) lists some 354 Yaminites divided in groups, each of them assigned to a town - i.e., they were susceptible to state control inasmuch as they were registered in conjunction with a settlement.

\textsuperscript{38} K.F. Galvin, Early State Economic Organization and the Role of Specialized Pastoralism: Terqa in the Middle Euphrates Region, Syria, Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Los Angeles 1981 (forthcoming in the series Terqa Final Reports); K.F. Galvin, Forms of Finance and Forms of Production: The Evolution of Specialized Livestock Production in the Ancient Near East, in: E.M. Brumfiel, T.K. Earle (eds.), Specialization, Exchange, and Complex Societies, Cambridge 1987, pp. 119-129. - I am happy to acknowledge that it was as a result of Galvin's research that I began to rethink the role of pastoralism in Terqa and its region, out of which the present study has developed.
The situation depicted in the texts is in fact quite fluid: on the one hand there is evidence for movements and institutions similar to those for 'nomads' from other periods, and yet the same types of groups and individuals are also represented as sedentary. This may be explained, I submit, by assuming that we are dealing with an evolving nomadization trend: as I read it, the steppe is the place where one hides from the valley, rather than the irrepressible gene pool from which nomadic waves originate. Rather than seeing only occasional evidence for a sedentary life, I see in the texts pervasive evidence for a peasant settled population that takes to the steppe for economic and to some extent for political reasons. Instead of sedentarization of nomads, I think we must speak of nomadization of the peasants.  

A series of schematic maps (Figs. 3.1-4) will summarize this graphically, bringing out a comparison of my interpretation with the three major previous theories about the origin of nomadism in the Syro-Mesopotamian area:  

- The invasion model (Fig. 3.1) is the one with which we all grew up: large waves from a desert viewed as a major source of demographic pressure (the 'Völkerkammer' of Winckler).  

- The more subtle view of infiltration (Fig. 3.2) is the one made classic by Kupper's great work: the change of perspective was reflected in the metaphor of a river replacing that of sea waves.  

- Luke (building on Mendenhall) and Rowton brought out the systemic interaction of nomadic and sedentary populations (Fig. 3.3), in a symbiotic relationship where both poles

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39 Many of the texts that deal with the 'hostilities of the nomads' may be so interpreted. For instance, ARM III: 16 speaks of 'enemies' who come surreptitiously at night to visit their wives in the valley towns (!), but spend the daytime in the steppe with their comrades to whom they bring news of the valley floor. Also notice how often hostility is described as a change in attitude or temporary state, rather than a permanent disposition (e.g. ARM IV: 80, 4-5). Also interesting is the fact that the victory of Zimri-Lim on the Yaminites is said to have taken place not in the steppe, but in Sagaratum (see already: G. Dossin, Les noms d'années et d'éponymes dans les 'Archives de Mari', in: A. Parrot (ed.), Studia Mariana, Leiden 1950, pp. 51-61, esp. p. 55). ARM XXII: 262 and ARM XXIII: 76, 77, 421 (see the discussion in: G. Bardet et al., Archives administratives de Mari 1, ARM XXIII, Paris 1984, pp. 476-503) relate the restoration to freedom of individuals who had been taken captive during a campaign against the Yaminites: they are handed over to close relatives (in ARM XXIII: 76 without payment of ransom!), who are apparently known to the central administration; this too implies that the 'campaign' had taken place very close to home. Finally it may be noticed that the Yaminites who had been registered on a military roll recorded in ARM XXIII: 428, 429 (already quoted) did not in fact show up for the muster (428, 38-40 and 429, 39-41: ša ... ina Dīr lā itiqū ... ) - a high incidence of desertion (the total being 354 individuals), which points to the general unreliability of the Yaminite troops. - For a similar concept applied to southern Mesopotamia, see: H.J. Nissen, The Mobility between Settled and Non-Settled in Early Mesopotamia: Theory and Evidence, in: L'archéologie de l'Iraq du début de l'époque néolithique à 333 avant notre ère: Perspectives et limites de l'interprétation anthropologique des documents, Paris 13-15 juin 1978, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, N° 580, Paris 1980, pp. 285-290.  


41 See e.g.: H. Winckler, Auszug aus der Vorderasiatischen Geschichte, Leipzig 1905, p. 2.  

were just as much in need of each other and were subsumed under a unified socio-political system, symbolized on my schematic map by the elliptical frames that enclose both the arrows and the settlements.

- My point of view (Fig. 3.4), on the other hand, is that we are dealing with the transitional stage when the peasants have taken so systematically to the steppe that they are in fact becoming nomadic.

By developing a systematic exploitation of the immense range-land of the steppe, made newly possible as a result of the network of wells they had established, they had discovered a new socio-political base which made them much less dependent on the urban state power of the zor. They could come back to the zor, and beyond that they could go as far as the southern alluvium, the northern Khabur plains and even the Orontes and the Jordan valleys with a newly developed sense of power and autonomy. In a sense, we can repose the wave and invasion theory - but, very significantly, not from the core of the desert, but rather from the zor via the desert. This is why we can indeed see in the record evidence for both nomads and peasants: they were two poles of a development that was still in its developmental stages.

Alternative Interpretations of the Interaction between the Middle Euphrates Basin and the Steppe
At what point did this process of nomadization begin? If demographic pressure was a reason behind it, then it would have had to start some time after the beginning of urbanization, that is some time into the third millennium. The texts of Ebla and the pre-Sargonic or Sargonic texts from the south do not show evidence of major 'Amorite' (and consequently, in the sense suggested here, of 'nomadic') presence. A major change is reflected, for the south, at the time of the third dynasty of Ur: this would imply that the process had already evolved to a point where the thrust away from the zor had reached its fullest momentum. The establishment of the 'Amorite' dynasties in the early part of the second millennium would be the result of this thrust. Now the texts of Mari, which give us the most information about the agro-pastoralists, date precisely from this period, i.e. from a period when the process of 'nomadization' would seem to have peaked already. Such a dichotomy, whereby we seem to have continued evidence of a formative stage at a time when a climax had already been reached, is only apparent. The 'climax' does not necessarily mean that the process of nomadization had resulted in the complete dislocation of tribal groups from the zor to the steppe; rather, tribal groups remained fully anchored to their agrarian base, but under certain circumstances they shifted the location of such base. In other words, if they started out, as I am assuming, to use the steppe from their base in the zor, they may at some point have taken up as their new base the urban areas at the other end of the steppe, practically in all directions. It is probably only in the latter part of the second millennium that the steppe develops into a full-fledged home base, with such entities as the kingdom of Amurr.

TRIBAL-URBAN INTERACTION

One fundamental corollary of this interpretation has to do with our understanding of tribal relations. The process whereby large social groups came to maintain and in fact nurture an effective group solidarity not directly tied to territorial contiguity fostered the sense of group self-identity. The organizational imperatives of herding in the steppe were a significant part of this process, but ideological factors seem to have played a role as well. At any rate, these groups, or 'tribes', interjected a new social order in the fabric of urban society as it had developed in the valley. The potential for tribal autonomy within the state was enormous. Not only was there the dimension of ideological self-identity, signaled especially...
by the use of tribal proper names and of a distinctive group of dialects (i.e. Amorite, which I understand as the rural counterpart of urban Akkadian/Eblaite\textsuperscript{47}), but also the real possibility of evading the control of the state by taking to the steppe for indefinite periods of time, i.e. without returning, if so desired, to the home base in the valley.

The provisions taken against this trend by the central power of the state were limited to the valley and the buffer zones: a tribal commissioner (thus I understand the office of the mer'ū), tribal headmen (the sugāū, residing in valley towns and appointed by the palace upon payment of an appropriate fee), the census\textsuperscript{44}, the control of the herds at the time of shearing and when they had to cross the river, the border patrol (bazaḥatum) and (only minimally) the desert rangers (sakbā). The political and administrative apparatus of the state effectively controlled the steppe only insofar as it could intercept in the river valley the people who did use the steppe but who were ultimately still based in the valley: there was apparently no direct effort on the part of the state to control the steppe itself, precisely because there were no people associated exclusively with the steppe. This made it easier for the tribal population to maintain and develop its strong sense of cohesion and political power. It is no accident that we hear so much about this rural population, while we hear so little about their counterparts in the south.

There is another major difference between the Middle Euphrates and the south that needs stressing. In the south the state exercised direct control over the herds, or at least over some herds. There are enough texts that attest to the fact that the state bureaucracy accounted for herds numbering 1000 or more animals down to the minutest details of newborn lambs or dead animals.\textsuperscript{49} No texts of this type have been found in Mari or Terqa, and while this may of course be disproven at any time, it seems to be in fact the pattern that we would expect: on the Middle Euphrates, the herds were not handled by the state but by the tribal elements who alone knew how to exploit the farther recesses of the steppe. I would not expect, therefore, to find in the zor a site that might be the equivalent of Puzriš-Dagan in the south.

Let us review the relationships between the tribal and the non-tribal populations in the valley, which one will also find sketched diagrammatically in chart form (Fig. 4). The

\textsuperscript{47} We may consider in this light the views of Garbini about the chronological priority of Amorite, see e.g.: G. Garbini, Sulle origini della lingua araba, in: A Francesco Gabrieli: Studi orientalistic i offerti nel sessantesimo compleanno dai suoi colleghi a discepoli, Studi Orientali pubblicati a cura della Scuola Orientale 5, Roma 1964, pp. 123–134. I present my views on the socio-linguistic aspect of Amorite vs. Akkadian/Eblaite in the fifth of the articles quoted above in note 1.

\textsuperscript{48} Which is carried out regularly in the zor, e.g. ARM II: 130, 33 (tāḥībtam ina aḫ Purattīm).

\textsuperscript{49} Besides the vast amounts of animals recorded in the public archives of the Ur III period, especially at Puzriš-Dagan, and besides individual texts dealing either with herding contracts (for a recently published example, see: M. Stol, Fragment of a Herding Contract, in: J.-M. Durand, J.-R. Kupper (eds.), Miscellanea Babylonica: Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot, Paris 1985, pp. 273–275) or special topics (see e.g.: I.J. Gelb, Growth of a Herd of Cattle in Ten Years, JCS 21, 1967, pp. 64–69), see especially: F.R. Kraus, Staatliche Viehhalte im altbabylonischen Lande Larsa, Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, N.R. 29/5, Amsterdam 1966, on the public administration of herds in Old Babylonian Larsa.
non-tribal urban population is referred to in many different ways in the texts - for instance as the "sons of a given city" (e.g. מָרָום תֹּברא) or as the "crew" or "troop of the bank of the Euphrates" (אֲבָג כָּרְטַאי). While these were presumably city people, there seem to have been also non-tribal peasants: the term מַשָּׁבָה may well

10 B.-e. ARM III: 6, 5.

51 See above, note 10.

52 See e.g. ARM V: 81, 5 (מַשָּׁבָה אֶת אַבּ כָּרְטַאי: their sheep are mentioned together with those of the Kha-

neans); ARM VI: 3, 10-11; ARM VII: 151, 19; ARM XIV: 81, 37 (אַבּ כָּרְטַאי or the

like); ARM XIV: 48 (אַבּ כָּרְטַאי); ARM XIV: 121, 39-47 (connections with the steppe). See: W. von Soden, מַשָּׁבָה und die Vavall des trößen Islam, ZA 56, 1964, pp. 132-141; R.McC. Adams, Property Rights

have this meaning on a number of occasions. Conversely, there was certainly a phenomenon of urbanization of tribal peasants: leaving aside the witness of onomastics (which is applicable even to the royal family), there are several cases of Khanaeans or Sutaeans, for example, who are listed with various dignitaries as receiving garments or animals from the central administration, or are attested with very urban titles such as suk-kallu (a high court functionary) or professions such as smith. The opposite was also possible: the tribalization of urban people. What this might have meant concretely was that individuals or small groups that had no tribal self-identity could attach themselves to tribes: this may have been the value of the term ḫa-pi-ru in Mari, to judge from the few occurrences where it is found.

If the tribal dimension was so pervasive that it colored directly or indirectly the value of several terms referring to social groupings, it would seem logical that there should be a correlative ancient term used to express the concept of 'tribal people'. As a tentative candidate for a term describing such a social category we may consider the ubiquitous mārū Yamīna and related terms, the 'Yaminites'. They are generally considered to constitute a specific tribe. But there are curious distributional anomalies, which are summarized here briefly in chart form (Fig. 5). There seems to be no individual mentioned by a profession or title (i.e. no urban individual) who is qualified as Yaminite, as is instead true for Khanaeans; also, there seems to be no Yaminite listed as either bringing animals to, or receive-
ing gifts from, the central administration, as is also the case with Khanaeans.\(^61\) In fact, it is rare that single individuals be qualified as Yaminites,\(^62\) whereas normally the term is applied to groups of people. The appellative that is common with other tribal names, in particular the term LÚ(.ME$), "man (men)", is not used with Yamina: the term mārū, "sons", is used instead,\(^63\) which is conversely not otherwise used with tribal names. And, it seems, there are Khanaeans qualified as Yaminites\(^64\) but no Khanaeans, for instance, qualified as Sutaeneans. The expression "sons of Yamina" seems thus to correspond structurally to expressions such as "sons of the city" (mārū ālim) or even better "sons of the plain" (mārū ugārim)\(^65\) - of a type which might recommend, as it were, a rendering with lower case, i.e. mārū yamīna or "yaminites". In any case, there seems to be no human group that is qualified, in and of itself, as Yamīna(a), so that for instance an expression such as BALA Yamīn(a), parallel to BALA Ḥana\(^66\), does not seem possible. Whether Yamina/yamina refers to the south as in the later West-Semitic orientation system, or possibly to the right bank of the Euphrates, meaning the steppe as it extends to the right of the river course (and hence also south if one considers the stretch from the Big Bend to the confluence with the Khabur), in either case the term might be understood in a socio-geographical nuance.

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\(^61\) E.g. ARM VII: 203; see also above, note 54.

\(^62\) To the extent that mār Simʿāl is parallel to mār Yamīna, the most notable occurrence of this type is the one discussed at some length in D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Simʿal', pp. 150-152 with note 47, where the term DUMU Simʿāl is used as a qualification of king Zimri-Lim.

\(^63\) For Ḥana (LÚ(.ME$)) and Yamīna (mārū) respectively, see: M. Birot, J.-R. Kupper, O. Rouault, Répertoire analytique (2e volume): Tomes I-XIV, XVIII et textes divers hors-collection, première partie: noms propres, ARM'T XVI/1, Paris 1979, pp. 13-14 and 39 respectively.


\(^66\) For which see the very insightful suggestions by: D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Simʿal', pp. 166-170. - The (semantically parallel) name of the Aramaic kingdom, Samʿal (B. Landsberger, Samʿal: Studien zur Entdeckung der Ruinenstätte Karatepe, Erste Lieferung, Veröffentlichungen der Türkischen Historischen Gesellschaft, VII. Serie, Nr. 16, Ankara 1948), seems to represent a special case, and is at any rate later.
In much the same way as the 'sons of the city' are the urban classes, so the 'sons of the right (or steppe)' are the tribal-peasant classes. And just as the term 'men of Terqa' entails greater specificity vis-à-vis the term 'sons of the city', so does the term 'men of Ḫana' vis-à-vis the term 'sons of the right'. In this light it stands to reason that no Yaminite should normally appear with titles or professions which are suited for urban individuals: there is in fact at times a derogatory nuance in the use of the term, such as city people traditionally reserve for the rural classes. The formation of a new noun *marmû*, which is generally assumed to be derived from *mārû Yamīna*, is one more distributional phenomenon which seems to be unique for this type of expression, and it may be taken, in the light of my interpretation, as a nominalization of the generic value of 'tribal individual(s)'.

**PATTERNS OF RURAL-URBAN INTERACTION**

The agro-pastoralists of the Middle Euphrates and the lower Khabur represent the major rural class for that region, and what is especially distinctive about them from a socio-political point of view is, as I have pointed out, their ability to escape the controls of the central government and thus develop their own power base within or, as the case may be, against the state. It is useful to compare and contrast this situation with two other regions, to the south (or south-east, and perhaps also the west) and to the north.

In the south we have a rural class that seems to have no distinctiveness of its own, and to be wholly under the control of the urban class. I call them urban A and rural A, and have represented them on the sketch map (Fig. 6) as being wholly overlapping. An argument ex silentio is that we hardly ever hear in texts from the south about any type of political initiative on the part of the local rural classes. And more positively, we know that the state exercised a very close control not only on agriculture but also on herding.

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67 While D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Sim'al', pp. 152-156, are certainly right in saying that Yaminites and Sim'alites are two subdivisions of the Khanaeans, I do not think we can exclude the possibility that the same subdivision may have applied to other tribal groups as well. In other words, there may have been 'southern' and 'northern' portions for several, if not all, major tribes.


69 *i.e.* we do not have, and do not expect to find, a term such as *marmû* from *mārû Ḫana*.


72 See above, note 49.
I have labeled as region B the mid-Euphrates and Khabur basins plus the 'high country', i.e. the steppe in the sense proposed above. The marked differentiation between the urban and the rural components is shown on the map by indicating the territory accessible to the rural population (the agro-pastoralists) as being much larger than the territory under urban control. This differentiation results in the strengthening of ethnic (and also tribal) group identity and in growing nomadization. It results further in the fact that the agro-pastoralists of the zor go out first from the narrow urban strip of the river valley to exploit the resources of the steppe, and then from the steppe to other neighbouring regions, thereby establishing eventually for themselves separate power bases away from their original home base.

See above, section 'The Agro-Pastoralists'.
The situation in the west (the region of Ebla) seems closer to that of the south than to that on the Middle Euphrates. We see there a state control on the herds which is much more like that of southern Mesopotamia than that of the Middle Euphrates. The incidence of autonomous pastoralism is correspondingly much more limited and in fact practically non-existent; if any, it would presumably have to come from the outside (i.e. the Middle Euphrates) rather than as the result of an internal development as at Mari. The Ebla references to the Amorites (in the spelling MAR.TU and MAR.DU) are on the whole rather scanty and inconclusive. They seem to refer, in any case, to a marginal phenomenon, by no means as significant as that represented by the later Amorite presence in the south, or as central as the Khanaeans are in the Mari texts. Whether there are other ways of identifying a distinct rural class in the region of Ebla remains to be seen.

A distinct urban sphere in the north (urban C) is suggested hypothetically on the basis of widespread assumptions about the Khabur plains, to which I will return in the next section. Alongside it, I am postulating a rural sphere C, similar to rural A if we assume full state control over the rural population of the dry-farming zone, and also a rural sphere D, similar to rural B in that it extends much beyond the territorial boundaries of its related urban sphere, but quite different in other respects. Given the geographical situation in the mountains, from the Tur-Abdin to the Taurus and perhaps all the way to the Caucasus, there was no stimulus here for the development of an agro-pastoralist rural class. The archaeological evidence points to the existence of towns which did not develop into full urban centers but which represent a type of settlement completely different from what we know about the steppe. In other words, the rural populations of the north had a vast hinterland where the control of the urban state did not reach - except that the populations that were actually settled in this hinterland, unlike the agro-pastoralists in the steppe, had no 'agricultural' or 'pastoral' reasons to retain any ties with the urban sphere: their ties, we may presume, were commercial in that they were the suppliers of metals, timber and stone. Ethnically, one may consider the possibility that the term 'Subarian' refers to the populations settled in the mountain towns (rural D) and the term 'Hurrian' to the related populations settled in the piedmont cities (urban and rural C). But this is purely hypothetical.

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74 A. Archi, Allevamento e distribuzione del bestiame ad Ebla (forthcoming).
75 See: A. Archi, Mardu in the Ebla Texts, OrNS 54, 1985, pp. 7-13. - James H. Platt has called to my attention the interesting passage in ARET 1: 5 xi 9 which refers to an individual as LÜ.EDIN¹, in a context that includes reference to an EN MAR.TU¹ (ARET 1: 5 xi 3-4).
76 See: M. Kelly-Buccellati, The Outer Fertile Crescent Culture: North Eastern Connections of Syria and Palestine in the Third Millennium B.C., UF 11, 1979, pp. 413-430; M. Kelly-Buccellati, Trade in Metals in the Third Millennium: Northeastern Syria and Eastern Anatolia (forthcoming).
The considerations about the presumed origin and early development of agro-pastoralists along the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur suggest an early spread on their part in the Khabur plains, as much as to the west (Ebla) and the south. Since all evidence points consistently in the direction of a Semitic linguistic affiliation for these agro-pastoralists, we may assume the presence of Semitic speaking people in the Khabur plains at least as early as we can date the beginning of the process of nomadization. The kind of massive 'Khanaean' presence in this area described by Charpin and Durand for the early second millennium77 implies a protracted developmental period during the third millennium. We have as yet no third millennium Semitic texts from the Khabur plains,78 so we do not know whether we can assume the presence of an urban Semitic scribal tradition in the area, as we find in Ebla and presumably in Mari. But that we have at least a rural Semitic presence seems quite certain. It is interesting in this respect to consider the linguistic reconstruction recently put forth by two Soviet scholars.79 Starting from the point of view of Indo-European linguistics, they posit early contacts (as early as the fourth millennium) between Indo-European, Semitic and Hurrian. While such contacts had been suggested before, this theory has gained acceptance with some Indo-Europeanists because it is based on a thorough structural linguistic analysis. It is obviously of interest to us because it supports the idea of a Semitic presence this far north at an early date.

It is a general assumption that we have in the Khabur plains the potential to identify an early urban tradition which may possibly be linked with a Hurrian ethnic group.80 In this respect, we have for now only the most limited number of texts for the third millennium, but one stands out in a very special way: the inscription preserved on the lion of Urkiš.81 The significance of this inscription lies in the incidence of Hurrian words, which is without comparison higher than the ratio between Semitic and Sumerian words at Ebla. From a comparison of the relative degree of Sumerian vs. indigenous graphemic conventions, it appears that the Urkiš scribal tradition was more independent than the corresponding Ebla tradition. While this may of course depend in part on the fact that the Urkiš text is somewhat later than 

77 D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand, 'Fils de Sim'at'.
78 The Chuera sherd which has been interpreted as inscribed with Semitic alphabetic signs (W. Röllig in: A. Moortgat, U. Moortgat-Correns, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien: Vorläufiger Bericht über die siebente Grabungskampagne 1974, SMOS 9, Berlin 1976, pp. 31-33) is extremely problematic; the interpretation of the Byblos script given recently by Mendenhall as being a syllabic script of the third millennium (G. E. Mendenhall, The Syllabic Inscriptions from Byblos, Beirut 1985) would add credibility to such an interpretation, but needs itself to be studied carefully.
80 On the Hurrians, see recently: B. Hrouda, Zum Problem der Hurriter, MARI 4, 1985, pp. 595-613.
81 For a publication of the Urkiš lion from the Metropolitan Museum, see: O. W. Muscarella, Comments on the Urkish Lion Pegs, in: G. Buccellati, M. Kelly-Buccellati, Mozart 1: The Soundings of the First Two Seasons, BM 20, Malibu 1988, Appendix 1, pp. 93-100; chapter 1 includes a brief review of the pertinent literature by Buccellati.
the Ebla texts, still the chronological difference would not seem to be sufficient to explain such a great disparity.

It is for this reason that the existence of Hurrian archives in the Khabur plains seems like a real probability; and that monumental structures of the third millennium in the region are good potential candidates for housing such archives. A sobering thought in this respect comes from the recollection of how many legitimate hopes the Amarna cuneiform archive had raised, exactly a century ago, that one would find the archives of all the various correspondents from Syria and Palestine; yet, Ugarit is the only site that has amply rewarded our expectations, in spite of the enormous number of perfectly good potential sites excavated. Another sobering thought is that sites like Brak and Chuera have in fact been excavated extensively, and have not yielded traces of such a Hurrian scribal repertory. That we shall continue, collectively and undauntedly, to search for a postulated Urkiš or Urkiš-like archive goes without saying. It is a legitimate research design, and we are finding plenty in any case, even if the Hurrian archives were to elude us indefinitely.

Yet another set of observations relating to the early historic periods is of interest in underscoring the unique ethno-historical characteristic of the Khabur plains and the Middle Euphrates. This is derived in part from my conclusions about the origin of nomadism and in part from an observation of settlement distribution in the Euphrates valley. A summary map of major sites with Protoliterate material shows that the Euphrates did not have Protoliterate sites south of Qraya and Ramadi in the zur. It seems a safe assumption that the Euphrates was not used as a communication road south of Mari in prehistoric periods. If so, then it follows that this particular riverine road was in fact opened and developed fully only with the Amorites. And this stands to reason: the river valley becomes extremely narrow below Mari, so that there is no room for an agriculturally exploitable valley floor (as in the zur); there is, in other words, no sizeable resource base for urban life along this stretch of the Euphrates. It was of course a different story with the pastoralists, who could use at will the rangeland on either side of the river and could find all the water they needed by going down to the river banks. A site like Qraya, then, was presumably arrived at from the north (the

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82 After my presentation in Berne, David Oates found exception to this statement on the grounds that in fact the amount of total exposure at Brak is extremely limited in comparison to the total extent of the tell. While this is certainly true, I do think it remarkable that, in comparison for instance with the exposure of a site such as Terqa (even more limited than Brak), so little epigraphic evidence should have been found at Brak. I am thus playing here the role of the devil's advocate against my own fond hopes for the discovery of Hurrian archives in the great third millennium sites of the Khabur.

83 On our excavations at this site in the vicinity of Terqa, see: K. Simpson, Qraya Modular Reports, No. 1: The Early Soundings, SMS 4/4, Malibu, forthcoming.

84 For a different suggestion, see a forthcoming article by J.-C. Margueron to appear in La Recherche (personal communication).

85 Besides the many references in Mari to this region (see: M. Anbar, La région au Sud du district de Mari, IOS 5, 1975, pp. 1–17; see especially the very interesting text ARM V:14), see also the recent excavations at Harāдум: F. Joannès, C. Kepinski, O. Lecomte, Présence babylonienne dans le pays du Suhu au XVIIe siècle av. J.-C.: l'exemple de Khirbet ed Diniye (Irak), RA 77, 1983, pp. 119–142; C. Kepinski, O. Lecomte, Mari et Haradam, MARI 4, 1985, pp. 615–621.
reason possibly being, as I have suggested elsewhere, the procurement of salt from the nearby playas of Buara). If so, then the Khabur plains appear not just as one of the traditional roads linking the west with the south, but in fact as the only major avenue, at least in late prehistoric times. The significance of such privileged status can hardly be underestimated. Since the Khabur plains were at the same time the border zone with the north and the direct link between it and the south, they were the fundamental crossroads in the early period of urban development.

Clearly, in this light the Khabur plains appear rather central than peripheral. Almost symbolic for this reassessment of the region is what can be called epigrammatically the search for three capitals. In reverse chronological order, they are as follows.

- As one of those rare and welcome coincidences in the world of scholarship, a reassessment of the philological sources is proposing that the capital of Mitanni is to be identified not as Waššukanni, but as Ta’idi — and at the same time circumstantial evidence and new discoveries suggest that Ta’idi is to be found either at Brak or at Hamidi.

- The great capital of Šamši-Adad, Šubat-Enlil, which has the potential of rivaling Mari, has been conclusively identified with Tell Leilan, owing to another exemplary convergence of archaeological and philological arguments.

- What is presumed to be the major third millennium Hurrian center, the capital of Tiša-atal and the seat of the main Hurrian god Kumarbi, i.e. the city of Urkiš, is also in all probability to be found in the Khabur plains, although no conclusive evidence has as yet been discovered to link it with certainty to any specific site in the Khabur plains.

It was only a few years ago that we could still think of Mari as an outpost of Mesopotamian civilization. It was difficult to imagine how radically our outlook would shift. Given the pace of current discoveries in the field we can expect even more radical revisions in the near future. And I am sure we all share the conviction that a new Khabur Symposium will be needed soon, and the hope that the initiative taken by M. Wäfler here in Berne may be the start of a recurrent opportunity for us all.

86 In the first of the articles quoted above, note 1.
87 See: W. Mayer, Taide oder Waššukanni?: Name und Lage der Hauptstadt Mitannis, UF 18, 1986, pp. 231-236; I owe to the kindness of the editors of UF, M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, to have shown me the proofs of this article before publication, for which I am most grateful.
89 See: H. Weiss, Tell Leilan and Shubat Enlil, MARI 4, 1985, pp. 269-292; D. Charpin, Šubat-Enlil et le pays d’Apum, MARI 5, 1987, pp. 129-140; and the contributions by H. Weiss and R. Whiting in this volume.
90 For a case against the traditional identification with the tell in Amuda (called Tell Shermola), see: G. Bunnens, A. Roobaert-Bunnens, Tell Shermola (Amouda): Reconnaissance préliminaire, in: G. Buccellati, M. Kelly-Buccellati, Mozan 1: The Soundings of the First Two Seasons, BM 20, Malibu 1988, pp. 78-80; for a case in favor of Tell Mozan see my contribution in the same volume (pp. 19-28).
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TALL AL-ḤAMİDİYA 2

Symposion

RECENT EXCAVATIONS
IN THE UPPER KHABUR REGION

Berne, December 9–11, 1986

with contributions by


VORBERICHT 1985–1987

mit Beiträgen von
C. Bellmann und K. Deller
## CONTENTS

0 Contents .......................... 5

1 Preface ............................ 11

2 Introduction ....................... 13

3 Symposium: Recent Excavations in the Upper Khabur Region .......................... 15

3.1 A. de Pury, Geneva
   Introduction ........................ 17

3.2 A. Bounni, Damascus
   The Khabur and Haseke Dam Projects and the Protection of Threatened Antiquities in the Region (A Preliminary Report) .......................... 19

3.3 D.J.W. Meijer, Leiden
   An Archaeological Surface Survey: Some Assumptions and Ideas .......................... 31

3.4 P.E. Pecorella, Florence
   The Italian Excavations at Tell Barri (Kaḥat), 1980-1985 .......................... 47

3.5 D. Charpin, C.N.R.S. Paris
   A Contribution to the Geography and History of the Kingdom of Kaḥat .......................... 67

3.6 G. Buccellati, Los Angeles
   'River Bank', 'High Country', and 'Pasture Land': The Growth of Nomadism on the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur .......................... 87

3.7 M. Kelly-Buccellati, Los Angeles
   Three Seasons of Excavation at Tell Mozan .......................... 119

3.8 J. Oates, Cambridge
   Tell Brak in the Fourth and Third Millennia: From Uruk to Ur III .......................... 133
3.9 D. Oates, Cambridge
Tell Brak: The Mitanni Palace and Temple 149

3.10 H. Weiss, Yale University
Third Millennium Urbanization: A Perspective from Tell Leilan 159

3.11 R.M. Whiting, Chicago
Tell Leilan/Subat-Enlil: Chronological Problems and Perspectives 167

3.12 M. Wäfler, Berne
The Excavations at Tell Hamidi 219

3.13 Plates 229


4.1 Technische Daten 235

4.2 Vorläufige Stratigraphie 237

4.2.1 Die Zitadelle 237

4.2.2 Die südwestliche Zunge 239

4.3 Die Grabungen 241

4.3.1 Die Zitadelle 241

4.3.1.1 Der mittanische Palast 241

4.3.1.1.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung 243
4.3.1.1.2 Baubeschreibung 243
4.3.1.1.3 Keramik 244
4.3.1.1.4 Kleinfunde 246
4.3.1.1.5 Datierung 250

4.3.1.2 Der mittelassyrische Umbau 251

4.3.1.2.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung 252
4.3.1.2.2 Baubeschreibung 252
4.3.1.2.3 Keramik 252
4.3.1.2.4 Kleinfunde 253
4.3.1.2.5 Datierung 254

4.3.1.3 Der neuassyrische Umbau 254

4.3.1.3.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung 255
4.3.1.3.2 Baubeschreibung 255
4.3.1.3.3 Keramik 255
4.3.1.3.4 Kleinfunde 256
4.3.1.3.5 Datierung 258

4.3.1.4 Besiedlung in hellenistischer-parthischer Zeit 259

4.3.1.4.1 Hellenistisch-parthisch 6 260

4.3.1.4.1.1 Horizontbeschreibung 260
4.3.1.4.1.2 Keramik 260
4.3.1.4.1.3 Kleinfunde 260
4.3.1.4.2 Hellenistisch-parthisch 5
  4.3.1.4.2.1 Horizontbeschreibung
  4.3.1.4.2.2 Keramik
  4.3.1.4.2.3 Kleinfunde

4.3.1.4.3 Hellenistisch-parthisch 4
  4.3.1.4.3.1 Horizontbeschreibung
  4.3.1.4.3.2 Keramik
  4.3.1.4.3.3 Kleinfunde

4.3.1.4.4 Hellenistisch-parthisch 3
  4.3.1.4.4.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
  4.3.1.4.4.2 Baubeschreibung
  4.3.1.4.4.3 Keramik
  4.3.1.4.4.4 Kleinfunde

4.3.1.4.5 Hellenistisch-parthisch 2
  4.3.1.4.5.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
  4.3.1.4.5.2 Keramik
  4.3.1.4.5.3 Kleinfunde

4.3.1.4.6 Hellenistisch-parthisch 1
  4.3.1.4.6.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
  4.3.1.4.6.2 Keramik
  4.3.1.4.6.3 Kleinfunde

4.3.1.4.7 Nicht präzise einzuordnende Kleinfunde der Besiedlung in
ehellenistischer-parthischer Zeit

4.3.1.4.8 Datierung

4.3.1.5 Besiedlung in parthischer-sassanidischer Zeit
  4.3.1.5.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
  4.3.1.5.2 Baubeschreibung
  4.3.1.5.3 Keramik
  4.3.1.5.4 Kleinfunde
  4.3.1.5.5 Datierung

4.3.1.6 Benützung in abbasidischer-ayyubidischer Zeit
  4.3.1.6.1 Abbasidisch-ayyubidisch 3
    4.3.1.6.1.1 Horizontbeschreibung
    4.3.1.6.1.2 Kleinfunde
  4.3.1.6.2 Abbasidisch-ayyubidisch 2
    4.3.1.6.2.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
    4.3.1.6.2.2 Keramik
    4.3.1.6.2.3 Kleinfunde
  4.3.1.6.3 Abbasidisch-ayyubidisch 1
    4.3.1.6.3.1 Horizontbeschreibung
    4.3.1.6.3.2 Kleinfunde
  4.3.1.6.4 Nicht präzise einzuordnende Kleinfunde der Benützung in
abbasidischer-ayyubidischer Zeit
  4.3.1.6.5 Datierung
4.3.1.7 Benützung in spätislamischer Zeit
4.3.1.7.1 Friedhof
  4.3.1.7.1.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
  4.3.1.7.1.2 Beschreibung der Gräber
  4.3.1.7.1.3 Keramik
  4.3.1.7.1.4 Kleinfunde
4.3.1.7.2 Siedlung
  4.3.1.7.2.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
  4.3.1.7.2.2 Kleinfunde
4.3.1.7.3 Nicht präzise einzuordnende Kleinfunde der Benützung in spätislamischer Zeit
4.3.1.7.4 Datierung

4.3.1.8 Benützung in der späten Mandatszeit: Garnison
4.3.1.8.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
4.3.1.8.2 Baubeschreibung
4.3.1.8.3 Kleinfunde
4.3.1.8.4 Datierung

4.3.2 Die südwestliche Zunge
4.3.2.1 Der ältere Bau
  4.3.2.1.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
  4.3.2.1.2 Baubeschreibung
  4.3.2.1.3 Keramik
  4.3.2.1.4 Kleinfunde
  4.3.2.1.5 Datierung
4.3.2.2 Der jüngere Bau
  4.3.2.2.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
  4.3.2.2.2 Baubeschreibung
  4.3.2.2.3 Keramik
  4.3.2.2.4 Kleinfunde
  4.3.2.2.5 Datierung
4.3.2.3 Die Verfallschicht H₁-H₂
  4.3.2.3.1 Horizontbeschreibung
  4.3.2.3.2 Die Störungen
  4.3.2.3.3 Die Gräber
  4.3.2.3.4 Kleinfunde im Verfallschutt
4.3.2.4 Hellenistische Besiedlung
  4.3.2.4.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
  4.3.2.4.2 Baubeschreibung
  4.3.2.4.3 Keramik / Kleinfunde
  4.3.2.4.4 Datierung
4.3.2.5 Die Verfallschicht H₁-H₁₁
  4.3.2.5.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und Beschreibung
4.3.2.6 Die Besiedlung $H_0.1$ - $H_2$
 4.3.2.6.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
 4.3.2.6.2 Keramik
 4.3.2.6.3 Kleinfunde

4.3.2.7 Die Schicht $H_0$ - $H_{0.3}$
 4.3.2.7.1 Horizontenkonkordanz und -beschreibung
 4.3.2.7.2 Keramik
 4.3.2.7.3 Kleinfunde

4.4 Streufunde
 4.4.1 Geritzte Ninive 5 Keramik
 4.4.2 Kleinfunde

4.5 C. Bellmann, München
Probleme am Ziegelmauerwerk

4.6 K. Deller, Heidelberg
Keilschrifttexte (HT 1 - HT 11)

5 Abbreviations

6 Eclectic Bibliography

7 Indices
 7.1 Toponyms
    7.1.1 Ancient Near Eastern Toponyms
    7.1.2 Classical Toponyms
    7.1.3 Modern Toponyms
 7.2 Proper Names
 7.3 Divinities
 7.4 Text References
    7.4.1 Museums
    7.4.2 Publications
    7.4.3 Sites
 7.5 Pottery
    7.5.1 Forms
    7.5.2 Periods
    7.5.3 Wares
8 Keramikdokumentation

8.1 Lippen
8.2 Böden
8.3 Henkel
8.4 Ritz- und plastische Verzierungen
8.5 Bemalung
8.6 Kombinierte Verzierungen
8.7 Oberflächenbehandlung
8.8 Glanzwaren und Glasuren

Pläne

ملخص عن ندوة'عمليات الحفر الحديثة في منطقة خابور العليا' (برن في 9-11 ديسمبر سنة 1986)

" التنقيب عن الآثار في تل الحمدية " بروفيسور دكتور ماركوس فيغلر

جامعة برين-سويسبور-را