INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE MARI, TABATUM AND EMAR: GEOGRAPHICAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS ALONG THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES AND LOWER HABUR

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Presses Universitaires de France | « Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale »

2011/1 Vol. 105 | pages 1 à 4

ISSN 0373-6032
ISBN 9782130587378
DOI 10.3917/assy.105.0001

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-assyriologie-2011-1-page-1.htm
The question as to what happened in the areas formerly dominated by Mari after its conquest by the armies of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, in the year 1761 BC, has been raised again and again in the course of the last few decades. Answers to that question should have been given with the constantly increasing pieces of evidence taken into account. Texts from Terqa and Harradum, progress in the reconstruction of the royal line of the Hana kingdom, studies of seals and inscriptions, etc. yielded a glimpse that not everything had been lost with the fall of the Mari kingdom, and that a part of its royal ideology, social order and territorial structure, survived for decades, if not centuries, after the death of Zimri-Lim. One of the questions that had been viewed askance, however, is whether or not the memory of the Old-Babylonian kingdom of Mari survived as late as the 13th century BC in the name “land of Mari” attested by royal inscriptions from Tell Bderi on the Habur. Some have suspected that this later “land of Mari” has no connection with the Old Babylonian Mari. In the last decade, however, Japanese excavations at Tell Taban brought to light new documentary evidence from Old-Babylonian and subsequent periods as late as late Middle Assyrian. Suggesting a long survival of the cultural heritage of the Old Babylonian kingdom of Mari in the middle Habur area far from Mari (Tell Hariri) and Terqa (Tell Ashara), the new evidence gives us a good opportunity to review the question.

The general idea for this French-Japanese collaboration was first discussed by Nele Ziegler, Dominique Charpin and Daisuke Shibata, when they met in Heidelberg in 2008. Discussions were intensified when Shigeo Yamada joined the three aforementioned at the 2008 Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Würzburg. The plan was officially implemented in January 2009 with Nele Ziegler and Shigeo Yamada as the project leaders on the French and Japanese sides, respectively. The research theme was set as: “The

* Our gratitude goes to Miss Katherine Burge for proofreading this introduction and the final abstracts (pp. 225-228).

historical geography of the Habur valley in the second millennium BC” with the purpose of joining the extensive specialist knowledge of French researchers about the evidence from Mari and the new inscriptive sources and archaeological data uncovered from Tell Taban (ancient Ṭābatu/Ṭabetu, located 19 km south of Hassake, Syria), the site excavated by Japanese missions. The project has followed the good foregoing example of similar international collaboration between French and German researchers (see: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and N. Ziegler, eds., Entre les fleuves: I: Untersuchungen zur historischen Geographie Obermesopotamien in 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr., Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 20, Gladbeck, 2009) and aimed to put questions of historical geography, as well as political, administrative, social and cultural continuities in the region.

The project – given the French code name SAKURA (meaning “cherry (blossom)” in Japanese) – has been supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PAI Hubert Curien) and the Japanese Society of the Promotion of Science who financed the trips to the partner countries. It also benefitted from the invitation of two French members of the research team to Japan in November 2009 during the colloquium «Formation of Tribal Communities – Integrated Research in the Middle Euphrates, Syria» (Tokyo, 21-23 November 2009) organised by Prof. K. Ohnuma and his team (financed by the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Priority Area [2005-2009], the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [Japan]), the financial support for the flight of another two French members to Japan in October 2010 by the Research Center for West Asian Civilization of University of Tsukuba, and the invitation of Sh. Yamada to Paris by the Collège de France in March/April 2011. Last but not least, it is a pleasure for us to pay tribute to the generosity of the Fondation Hugot of the Collège de France, where the two meetings in Paris took place.

The SAKURA project was carried out with the participation of a variety of researchers. The research subjects were not limited to the investigation of topographical questions; many papers dealt with a variety of topics about scribal traditions, religious-cultural issues, politico-military history, as well as archaeological problems concerning the lower Habur and middle Euphrates areas in the second millennium BC. The wider perspective facilitated our active discussions to further the understanding of the historical circumstances in the region during the period in question. The present volume contains fifteen articles, the majority of which were based on the papers read in the workshops held in Paris and Tsukuba during the period of 2009-2011. The meetings were held twice in Tsukuba (Ibaraki, Japan), on November 25, 2009 and October 9-10, 2010, and twice in Paris on March 17, 2010 and March 23, 2011. The titles of the papers read in the four meetings are as follows:

**The 1st meeting: GEOGRAPHY ALONG THE HABUR RIVER**

(At University of Tsukuba, Sogo-kenkyu-Building A, Tennodai 1-1-1, Tsukuba, on 2009.11.25)

M. Guichard, “Salt production and transportation along the Habur River”
L. Marti, “Sugāgu and sugāgūtu in the time of Zimri-Lim”
D. Shibata, “A diplomatic journey of Shalmaneser I and the prince Tukulti-Ninurta in the Jazira-region and its itinerary”
N. Ziegler, “Perspective of the historical geography of the Habur area in the Amorite period (about the Qaṭṭunan district)”
H. Numoto, “Recent discovery of inscriptive sources from Tell Taban”

**The 2nd meeting: TABATUM AND THE HABUR-REGION**

(At Fondation Hugot, 11, rue de l’Université, 75007 Paris, on 2010.3.17)

J.-M. Durand, “Addu of Mahanum in the documentation from Mari”
D. Shibata, “Middle Assyrian dedicatory brick inscription to Adad-Ma’ani: New evidence for the royal line and religion of Tabetu”
D. Charpin, “Did the ‘Land of Hana’ exist in the Old-Babylonian Period and was Terqa its capital?”
Sh. Yamada, “Hana-type adoption contract from Tell Taban: New evidence for the relations between Ṭābatu and Hana”
B. Lyonnet, “The Habur-region from Mitanni to Middle-Assyrian times”
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A. Tenu, “Some trends of the Middle Assyrian occupation in the Habur Valley”
C. Nicolle, “A look from the Habur-triangle: Tell Muhammad Diyab during the second millennium”
L. Marti, “Tabatum and the Province of Qaṭṭunan”
H. Reculeau, “The Lower Habur before the Assyrians: Settlement and land use in the first half of the second Millennium BCE”

The 3rd meeting: GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURE ON HABUR AND EUPHRATES
(At Tsukuba International Congress Center, Takezono 2-20-3, Tsukuba, on 2010.10.9-10)
J.-M. Durand, “Commercial activities in Emar before the Late Bronze Age”
L. Marti, “The Roads of copper from Cyprus to Babylon through the Euphrates”
M. Yamada, “Araziqa and the western expansion of Middle Assyria”
A. Tsukimoto, “Letters to the kings of Apum”
N. Ziegler, “A revolt in the Habur triangle”
D. Charpin, “The ‘kingdom of Hana’ from Ṭabatum on the Habur to Harradum on the Euphrates”
Sh. Yamada, “Pudûm at Tabatum”
I. Nakata, “Itūr-Mēr in the Old Babylonian period and thereafter”
D. Shibata, “Timing a divination concerning Ilī-pādâ’s Illness”

The 4th and final meeting: THE REGION OF EUPHRATES AND HABUR SEEN FROM TABATUM AND MARI
(At Fondation Hugot, 11 rue de l’université, 75007 Paris, on 2011.3.23)
J.-M. Durand, “Benjamins between Habur and Balîh”
D. Feissel, “Toponyms of the Middle Euphrates valley in new Roman documents (third century AD)”
V. Verardi, “Archaeological salvage operations in the region of Halebiye”
B. Lyonnet, “Archaeological evidence for the Mitanni-occupation in the Habur region”
N. Ziegler, “People from Ṭabatum according to two unpublished texts from Mari”
L. Marti, “Take refuge in Ṭabatum?”
Sh. Yamada, “Geographical circumstances of Tabatum from Post-Hammurabi period to the Middle Hana period”
D. Shibata, “The toponym ‘Land of Mari’ along the Habur through the ages”
B. Pongratz-Leisten, “Assyrian Royal Discourse between Local and Imperial Traditions in the Habur Area”

The articles in this volume are assembled in five topical units. The first part: “The lower Habur valley in Old Babylonian time” contains three articles concerning the geopolitical situation in the lower Habur area during the Zimri-Lim period. N. Ziegler scrutinizes the extension of the Qaṭṭunan district in the first article. In her second article, she publishes four letters from Mari relating to the economic administration of Tabatum, while L. Marti publishes a new letter and examines the military situation of the city of Tabatum in the pertinent period.

The second part: “Continuity and discontinuity during the second millennium” is composed of three articles relating to the transition of the political-cultural circumstances along the lower Habur and the middle Euphrates during the entire second millennium BC. D. Charpin discusses the cultural legacies of the kingdom of Mari in the region during the time of Samu-Ilunu, while examining the political circumstances. The articles of Sh. Yamada and A. Tsukimoto publish Hana-style contracts originating in the region, which date to the 15-14th centuries BC and the end of the 12th century BC, respectively, while discussing the continuation of the Hana-style scribal tradition with related issues.

The third part: “The ‘Land of Mari’ and the Assyrians at the late second millennium” contains two articles dealing with geo-political issues along the Habur and the middle Euphrates areas during the period in which Assyrian influence was extended over the region, from the 14-13th centuries BC onward. D. Shibata surveys the attestations of the toponym “the land of Mari” in various documents from the latter half of the second millennium BC, discussing its relations to “the land of Mari” on the Habur known from the texts of Tell Taban or the historic Mari on the Euphrates. B. Pongratz-Leisten discusses the Hurrian background of Assyrian cultural practices and Syrian local response to Assyrian ideological-cultural advance.
The fourth part: “Religious questions, from Mari to Ṭabatum” comprises four articles relating to the religious traditions. I. Nakata’s article draws attention to the persistent prominence of Itūr-Mēr, the city-deity of Mari, in the middle Euphrates region, even after the destruction of the capital city of Mari, and discusses the possible background of the phenomenon. Sh. Yamada examines the cultural milieu of the Old Babylonian Ṭābatum, publishing a monthly rotation list relating to the pudûm ritual unearthed from Tell Taban. D. Shibata publishes a middle Assyrian dedicatory inscription to the god “Adad of Ma’anu” found at Tell Taban and discusses the religious tradition of Tabetu (Ṭabatum) and the origin of the local dynasty. J.-M. Durand investigates documents from Mari that refer to Mahanum, an important ritual place of the nomads in the Western Jazirah for the worship of the weather-god Addu, i.e. “Addu (Adad) of Mahanum”.

The fifth and final part: “The bend of the Euphrates” is devoted to three articles concerning the great bend and the middle part of Euphrates and relating to the city of Emar. J.-M. Durand presents an edition of a long and informative letter of Yatar-kabkab, a person serving Zimri-Lim, king of Mari, and elucidates the commercial and diplomatic relations between Yamhad, Emar and Mari. The article of G. Chambon takes up the term mādidum “measurer”, attested in the very letter edited by J.-M. Durand, and scrutinizes the important role of this official in the commercial-diplomatic order in the region. M. Yamada, reviewing sources from Assyria, Hittite and Emar, historically reconstructs a sequence of military events around the great bend area in the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I and Tudhaliya IV, while discussing the Assyro-Hittite diplomatic relations that were closely connected to those events.

The volume presents the edition of twelve texts. Six letters from the archives of Old Babylonian Mari. Five texts from Tell Taban: an Old Babylonian administrative list, an adoption-contract from early Middle Babylonian time, and three versions of a royal inscription from the Middle Assyrian period. Last but not least is the reedition of a contract from the region of Qaṭṭunan from the late Middle Assyrian period.

The academic communication in the project was mainly in English. We are proud, however, to be publishing this topical volume in the prestigious French journal Revue d’Assyriologie, including contributions not only in English but also in French and German. Our bi-national working team is also delighted with the addition of Japanese abstracts as a sign of this unique cooperation. Thanks are due to the editor of Revue d’Assyriologie D. Charpin and his secretary L. Marti for their hospitality and help, as well as to the Presses Universitaires de France, who have permitted us to go beyond the standard 192 pages of the journal.

The project whose result you now hold concerns the land of Syria, attempting to clarify new aspects of its long and interesting history, in particular along the Habur and the Euphrates some three and a half thousand years ago. This was possible since the recent excavations at Tell Taban brought to light fresh evidence, and since it raised new questions on the long years of research on the archives of Mari and Terqa. Up until 18 months ago, research work in Syria was intensive and fertile. Since it has come to a sudden stop, however, we understand more clearly how great our debt of gratitude is to the cooperation of Syrian colleagues at archaeological sites, the antiquities administration of Dasmascus, in the museum of Der-ez-Zor, in the district of Hassake, as well as in many other places. For all those people and friends there, we sincerely hope that a peace will come back soon to the lovely land, cities and villages of Syria, and that we will be able to collaborate with each other again in further fruitful research work.

Paris and Tsukuba, 1 October 2012