

## The Chronology of Zimri-Lim's Reign A Report

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[Since the first efforts to create a relatively secure chronological order for Zimri-Lim's reign years, scholars working on OB Mari history have been dealing with the difficulties the dated administrative documents present. Their intention to construct a reliable framework wherein to place an ordered myriad of political events has a fairly long history; several works were based on different approaches to the materials at hand, all along with the publication of new translated tablets. As the chronological scheme, in consequence, has been changed at several points, it is worth analyzing the process of its creation up to now.]

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### 1. *Introduction*

Among the most intriguing themes of the Mari history one stands out particularly, due probably to the known aura of mystery that surrounds it: the chronological scheme of the reign of Zimri-Lim, especially the succession of the events in his debut on the throne. The scholars have intended to “reconstruct” a relatively accurate chronology of those turbulent years based on available Mari administrative dated documents, although naturally the several conclusions that they drew differ substantially. Not only the personal approaches are different, but also there has been a real advance in the number of classified and translated materials that the French team headed by J.-M. Durand has collected during the last decades. Some of them are not even published yet, though the French scholars cite these materials as part of their supportive base, a practice that we cannot be happy with in America but it is certainly a sign of this fundamental advance.

Recently D. Charpin and N. Ziegler have offered to the readers what appears to be the last word regarding the order of the year names and the succession of the historical facts throughout the years of Zimri-Lim, a view that contrasts with the one of their colleague Durand published in 1997. The topic is actually crucial, since on top of our interest in knowing the way the ancient peoples organized the calendar and how this setting of the time intersected with politics any change in the Mari chronology affects the synchronisms with other kingdoms and the relative chronology of the whole Old Babylonian period.

The present work is intended to be a review of the long process of piecing together the evidence in order to construct a coherent chronological scheme for the Zimri-Lim's reign.

## 2. Year names of Zimri-Lim

In 1978 M. Birot informed us of the number of year names attested in the Mari documents for the reign of Zimri-Lim. They were thirty six at that moment, after the addition of new translated materials to the previous list of thirty two established by G. Dossin in 1950.<sup>1</sup> The order of this year names was completely ignored in the middle of the seventies, and the work of Birot seems to have been the first serious and systematic intent to organize the available data. As he recognized, the conclusions he arrived at lacked any certainty though.

One of the first important things to take into account was that, before the publication of this article of Birot, he and other scholars had found that many year names were actually duplications of the same year, in other words a different name for the same year, or sometimes provisional names used at the beginning of the year, and then the ruling period of the king of Mari was easily reduced to around fifteen years.<sup>2</sup>

Birot continued the previous work of J.-R. Kupper by expanding the sequence of four years that the Belgian scholar had found in his research on the administrative documents of the room 135, which was *Ah-Purattim*, *Yaminites*, *Ašlakkā* and *Throne of Šamaš*. Based on the texts S.108-787, S.108-194 and 237 of the room 52, Birot traced the sequence *Throne of Šamaš*, *Census*, *Dūr-Yahdun-Lim* and *Hattā*, which is added to the first to form a provisional list of seven year names. Later he introduced the series *Hattā*, *Tillūt Elamtim*, *Addu of Mahanum* and *Tillūt Bābīli*, after reading the tablets M.7309, S.143-97 and M.5033. Finally the texts S.108-888 and S.143-85 provided the last sequence for the years *Tillūt Bābīli*, *Throne of Dagan* and *Ašlakkā II*.<sup>3</sup>

A more detailed summary of the Birot's analysis about the sequence of year names can be read as follows:

1) The text S.108-787, dated on 9.III.Census, mentions a repair of the ramparts of Dūr-Yahdun-Lim. We can guess that this repair was taken for naming the next year.

2) The text S.108-194, dated on the third month of Dūr-Yahdun-Lim, lists the total number of deliveries of metal made during the year Throne of Šamaš; after that, the scribe added a sum of not dated deliveries, and the general total sum is mentioned as *ša MU 2 KAM ITI 3 [KAM]* "for two years and three months". Therefore we can obtain from this data a sequence of *Throne of Šamaš – [x=Census]- Dūr-Yahdun-Lim*.

3) Text 237 of the room 52 allows us, according to Birot, to trace the sequence *Census – [x=Dūr-Yahdun-Lim] – Hattā*.<sup>4</sup>

4) The text M.7309 registers two deliveries of garments, one during Hattā, the second in 2.I. Tillūt Elamtim.

5) The text S.143-97 is a long record of precious metals' account. At the end of it we can read "quantities received by *Mukannišum*...over a year and nine months, from *Urāhum* of *Tillūt Elamtim* to the month of *Lilliyatum* of *Addu of Mahanum*."<sup>5</sup>

6) The text M.5033 lists accounts for the succeeding years *Addu of Mahanum* and *Tillūt Bābīli*.

1. M. Birot, "Données nouvelles sur la chronologie du règne de Zimri-Lim", *Syria* 55 (1978) pp. 333-334.

2. K. Veenhof, "Eponyms of the 'Later Old Assyrian Period' and Mari chronology", *MARI* 4, 1985. p. 208.

3. M. Birot, *op. cit.* pp. 334-335.

4. A sequence already confirmed by *ARM* VII 120.

5. *namharāt Mukannišum...ša MU 1 KAM ITI 9 KAM ištu warah Urāhim MU Zimri-Lim Tillūt Elamtim (=NIM.MA) illiku adi warah Lilliyatim MU Zimri-Lim [kussām rabūtam] ana<sup>d</sup>Addu [ša Maha]nim [ušēlū].*

7) The text S.108-888, dated on 29.I. Ašlakkā II, registers grain deliveries as *šibšum ša <MU> Zimri-Lim kussām rabītam ana d[...] ušēlū*, “tax of the year Zimri-Lim raised up a great throne for...”

8) The text S.143-85 reads “for a period of 6 years and three months, from the month of Abum of the year Dūr-Yahdun-Lim to the month of Hibirtum of the year Ašlakkā II.”<sup>6</sup>

As can be seen in the summary above the reconstruction of the sequence of year names is based mostly on pure logic, since the sequences of three or four year names reconstructed by Birot start precisely with the last name mentioned in the alleged previous sequence. However, it must be noted that in the text S.108-888 Birot only assumed that the name of the god Dagan fits in an actually broken space in the tablet, and in spite of we understand that this is probably the best reconstruction possible of the chronology of Zimri-Lim we should recognize as well the presumptive character of at least part of this work.

After establishing that the year *Throne of Dagan* matched the year 30 of Hammurabi of Babylon<sup>7</sup>, Birot addressed the complicated matter of how to conciliate the actual thirty six year names attested with the dates of king Samsi-Addu's death and the fall of Zimri-Lim of Mari. As Birot stated, the death of Samsi-Addu could not have taken place before the year 10 of Hammurabi, and the fall of Zimri-Lim must have occurred during the year 32 of the king of Babylon. Between these “anchors” there could be a period of twenty two years at most, that means the maximum extension of Zimri-Lim's reign.<sup>8</sup> To reduce the number of year names Birot then sifted them to extract the real year names and separate these from duplications.

For seven of these twelve year names we have years II attested in the documentation.<sup>9</sup> As Birot noted, these repetitions bear the Akkadian expression *šanītum šattum* (MU 2 KAM) “a second year” or in only one case the logograms MU EGIR, but almost never the adverb *šanīš* “secondly, again”. For some reason that is not explained in Birot's article he thought this fact was sufficient evidence to understand the years II as *ús-sa* years, the formulae which were used in the first months of an actual year by delaying the name of the previous year into the next, allegedly in times when the court had not chosen yet the name of the new year. Indeed, Birot noticed that the few texts he had for *Hattā II*, *Throne of Dagan II*, and *Kahat II* were redacted only during the first month *Urāhum*, and the seven dated texts for *Throne of Šamaš II* covered just the first two months of the year.<sup>10</sup>

However, the matter seems not to be so clear: it is attested a juxtaposition of names, for instance in the first two months of *Census* where some documents are dated with this year name and not with the alleged previous *Throne of Šamaš II*, as if the authors of the seven tablets dated with the *ús-sa* year name simply ignored the existence of a new formula. On the other hand, the twenty tablets bearing the date *Yaminites II* were written during the first eight months of the year. It is only by the ninth month that the scribes started to name the year with the year name *Ašlakkā*, and the same Birot seems to be pretty surprised with this extreme delay in adopting the name for the year.<sup>11</sup>

6. *Ša MU 6 KAM ITI 3 KAM ištu warah Abim MU Zimri-Lim Dūr-Yahdun-Lim ipušu adi warah Hibirtim gamerma MU Zimri-Lim Áš-la-[ka] MĪN ? ù...iṣ-ba-[tu]*

7. Birot cites the texts S.108-220 and S.108-1045, where we can see that Mari troops participated in the Babylonian victory over Larsa, a fact apparently mentioned to have happened during the year name Throne of Dagan. Cf. M. Birot. *op. cit.* p. 337.

8. M. Birot, *op. cit.* pp. 337-338.

9. Birot listed a *Mārtam II* year name, but we have no “real” year name with this form. It is quite striking that the author never referred to this matter through his work. Cf. p. 339.

10. M. Birot, *op. cit.* p. 339.

11. M. Birot, *op. cit.* pp. 339-340.

The work of Maurice Birot left many questions without a precise answer, sometimes not even a hint to the solution of the enigmas. It is quite clear after reading his work that no strict paradigm could be applied to the use of year names and the duplications of them in Mari; however, Birot concluded that all the years II of Zimri-Lim must be considered *ús-sa* years, offering as a possible explanation for the delays in the adoption of the new year names the supposed rivalries among the officials of the kingdom. Therefore, the picture we have of this matter is one of a relative chaos and confusion.

Despite this fact Birot traced the list of year names based on the available documents by that time. It is worth noting that if we subtract the seven years II from the previous list of thirty six we would obtain a final list of twenty nine. Since in the final list Birot constructed we count only twelve years, the legitimate question we can arise is: where is the rest of year names? What are we missing here? The successive works of other scholars seem not to have given a clear response to this rather simple question.

The following is the table Birot provided:

- 1' Ah Purattim
- 2' Yaminites
- 3' Yaminites II/Ašlakkā
- 4' Throne of Šamaš
- 5' Throne of Šamaš II/Census
- 6' Dūr-Yahdun-Lim
- 7' Hattā
- 8' Hattā II/Tillūt Elamtim
- 9' Addu of Mahanum
- 10' Tillūt Bābīlī
- 11' Tillūt Bābīlī II/Throne of Dagan
- 12' Throne of Dagan II/Ašlakkā II

As can be seen in the table above the list of year names start with prime numbers, which is a way of differentiating them from a special previous time. Indeed, the scholars understood that before the first year name of Zimri-Lim called *Ah Purattim* or “Euphrates banks” takes place there was a relatively short period, in which the rule of the king had not been fully imposed yet over all the tribal organizations of the Middle Euphrates valley. Between the day when Yasmah-Addu was defeated and allegedly decided to leave the city of Mari and the day when Zimri-Lim got in through the city gate to establish his rule in the traditional capital city of the land a rather obscure period seemed to have occurred –according to the interpretation of the French scholars during the 80's–, a period whose existence we would know of from some few documents. This period would have lasted one or two years, according to the “*consensuel*” knowledge achieved in Paris those years.

With the arrival of the 80's the Mari team fell into the hands of Jean-Marie Durand, who conducted a real reform and revision of everything that was done in the past about Mari history<sup>12</sup>. The first seminal article about the chronology of Zimri-Lim's reign was published in 1985 by Jean-Marie Durand and

12. I am using this term as referring actually to the whole region of the Middle Euphrates and Northern Syria, of which the massive archive of Mari is a good representation. Besides the geopolitical extension of the Mari kingdom in Old Babylonian times it is worth to notice the diversity of interests and topics the French scholars of the Mari team were dealing with, including material culture, ideology, religious practices, economy, etc.

Dominique Charpin<sup>13</sup>. After a long introduction going through the times of his predecessors Yahdun-Lim and Yasmah-Addu, Durand and Charpin built a detailed analysis of Zimri-Lim's reign, which is clearly the main object of their concern.

The first question they address is the gap appearing to exist between the period of the eponyms, or rather the time of Yasmah-Addu's reign, and the reinstallation of the original system of year names under Zimri-Lim. It was a common assumption among assyriologists to take for granted an abandonment of the city right after the defeat of Yasmah-Addu, or rather a relatively short dark period of time due to the unavoidable sacking of Mari. However, an analysis of the supplies' list for the harem demonstrates that the city of Mari was never abandoned: the same group of women continued living in the same rooms and with the same status as before the arrival of Zimri-Lim. This means primarily that we do not need to assume the existence of any gap in the documentation. According to a previous work of Charpin with the eponyms of Yasmah-Addu, the eponymal year would have had a difference of five months with the Babylonian years system, and then the last *limu*, the one called *warkī Ṭāb-ṣilli-Aššur*, would have corresponded to a whole Babylonian year since it is attested for the months six, seven, eight, nine and ten. Charpin and Durand argue therefore that the bensim'alites of Zimri-Lim captured the city of Mari by the end of that year, and the new king did not have any difficulty reestablishing the old system of year names beginning right in the first month of the year: *Urāhum*.<sup>14</sup> This assumption makes sense indeed in relation to the contextual information.

There was no "year zero", but how long does this transitional period last, before the known sequence of year names (ZL 1'-ZL 12') that Maurice Birot provided? The year called "Accession" extends itself over the twelve months of the calendar, in the same way "Euphrates Banks" does, and therefore they are not equivalent but different years. One of the arguments Durand and Charpin use to differentiate ZL 1 from ZL 1' is that, given that the arrival of Zimri-Lim to Mari was an outcome of a *coup*, a phrase like "re-arrange the Euphrates Banks" would not be the most convenient to refer to the first year of rule<sup>15</sup>. We do not know for certain what contemporary or historical political events these scholars had in mind at the moment of making this statement, but it does not make very much sense, at least to me. It seems to be precisely because Mari was taken by force that he would need to legitimate his rule through the use of this sort of "reconstructive" discourses, no matter how disorganized the country could be before his arrival. In any case, the information in the dated documents, such as one from the harem showing that princess Šimatum was given in marriage a year before the "Euphrates Banks", does not seem to need any further political interpretation intending to reinforce the conclusions through the use of implicit analogies.

On top of "Accession" there is another year name that could be placed in this transition: the one called "Throne of Annunītum". According to Charpin and Durand this year appears in the texts to be no doubt before ZL 1, although at the time of their article's publication they were not able to specify what was its exact place in the list of year names. There does exist the possibility that "Throne of Annunītum" be another name for the year of accession to the throne of Mari, a chance that is recognized by the authors<sup>16</sup>, but Durand and Charpin chose to interpret this year name as an independent year occurring right after the accession.

13. D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, "La prise du pouvoir par Zimri-Lim", *M.A.R.I.* 4 (1985) pp. 293-343.

14. D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, *op. cit.* p. 304.

15. The phrase was apparently taken from the text *ARM X 31*, which is a letter of Kirū, the princess daughter of Zimri-Lim who was married to Haya-Šumū of Ilān-Surā.

16. D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, *op. cit.* p. 305.

The following is the definite list Durand and Charpin (and Birot) built:

1776 BCE	<i>Ṭâb-šilli-Aššur/warki Ṭâb-šilli-Aššur</i>
1775 BCE	ZL 1 “Accession”
1774 BCE	ZL 2 “Throne of Annunītum”
1773 BCE	ZL 1’ “Euphrates Banks”
1772 BCE	ZL 2’ “Benjaminites”
1771 BCE	ZL 3’ “Ašlakkâ”
1770 BCE	ZL 4’ “Throne of Šamaš”
1769 BCE	ZL 5’ “Census”
1768 BCE	ZL 6’ “Dūr-Yahdun-Lim”
1767 BCE	ZL 7’ “Hattâ”
1766 BCE	ZL 8’ “Reinforcements of Elam”
1765 BCE	ZL 9’ “Addu of Mahanum”
1764 BCE	ZL 10’ “Reinforcements of Babylon”
1763 BCE	ZL 11’ “Throne of Dagan”
1762 BCE	ZL 12’ “Ašlakkâ II”

While it seems necessary to go through all the published works between 1978 and 1985 to see whether we can find any trace of an analysis of the Mari year names or there was a complete lack of interest in this matter before *La prise...* was published, it is still true that in a monumental work of synthesis like this we always expect to see crucial questions addressed in some way. Nothing related to the questions I came up regarding the article of Birot appear here, and we continue wondering why the ruling years of Zimri-Lim were considered to be fourteen. Instead of recognizing the weak points of this reconstruction of the chronology of the reign of Zimri-Lim and going through these points more in-depth Durand and Charpin followed Birot’s style by saying that, since now on, all the events causing the redaction of a year name are simply “well placed”.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Some “new” year names. How to locate them in the list?

Among the thirty six year names that Birot counted from the reading of published and unpublished tablets the one named “Reinforcements of Andariq” needed at some point to find itself its precise place in the final list of 14 years of Zimri-Lim that was already presented above. This year name is attested in the document M.5705, which is a long list of names arranged in six columns. Durand provided a transcription of a passage and a short analysis of it in one of his contributions for *M.A.R.I.* 5<sup>18</sup>. It is actually a census text, a registration of soldiers appearing to have taken place in the surroundings of Zurrâ the 8-iv of this year MU Zimri-Lim ana šüzub alim andariq ilû “*Year when Zimri-Lim went up to rescue the city of Andariq*”.

According to Durand king Zimri-Lim was in Zurrâ the 29-iii-ZL 11’, where he received a present from the elders of the city. Therefore Durand claimed that the year name “Reinforcements of Andariq” must be compatible with the first months of ZL 11’= Throne of Dagan”<sup>19</sup>. Now, can we be completely sure about the physical presence of the king in Zurrâ by the time of the census taking after reading the text

17. *Ibid.*

18. J.-M. Durand, “Noms d’années de Zimri-Lim”, *M.A.R.I.* 5 (1987), pp. 616-617.

19. J.-M. Durand, *ibid.*

M.5705? It seems at least dubious, to judge only from the passage cited by Durand<sup>20</sup>. While we can easily recognize the importance of the king's presence in order to guarantee that the census was properly done, this was not always the case<sup>21</sup>. However, as in the previous instances cited above, Durand's word has been the last regarding this topic. Lines 1-5 of the aforementioned text runs "in total two hundred and fifty three Haneans, who are in Zurrâ, have been reviewed, responsibility of Ibal-Addu, month of Abum, day eight, year when Zimri-Lim went up to rescue the city of Andariq".

On the other side, the question of where to place in the list the year names "Kahat" and "Addu of Alepo" has originated much more discussion among the scholars. The same Durand suggested in M.A.R.I. 5 that "Addu of Alepo" was to be considered as another name for ZL 3'. His examination of the harem lists provided a documental base for one of his main arguments: according to ARMT XXII 204 princess Qihila married Narâm-ilî-šu in ZL 2', and as the mention of this marriage appears only at the end of the text Durand supposed that the wedding ceremony took place at the end of ZL 2' as well. The princess is living in the royal harem on 1-xi "Kahat" (M.5469+M.13184) and on 2-ix ZL 2' (M.6472), but she is no longer there in the texts dated on "Addu of Alepo" (ARMT XXII 44+XXII 46+M.6363).

A logical conclusion of Durand's analysis would be that "Kahat" must be placed before ZL 3' and "Addu of Alepo" after ZL 2'. However, a different approach was offered later by Pierre Villard, who in the early nineties still thought that both formulae were not unquestionably set in the chronological frame as we knew it by that time. After identifying the administrative texts and letters that we can link with some degree of certainty to these years, Villard built a sequential list of events against which any proposal of chronological reconstruction could be checked. This study allowed him first to argue that all the data related to the year "Kahat" refer actually to the travels of king Zimri-Lim and the mission of Asqudum and Rîšiya to the royal court of Alepo in order to prepare princess Šibtu's wedding.<sup>22</sup>

According to Villard, the following events that took place in the year "Kahat" are of crucial importance:

-The king is absent from Mari on 15-x, when he is in Hadatum for the sacrifices (M.13142 and M.13170); on 27-x he goes to the "upper district", from where he is back on 15-xi (M.11089). During this trip the monarch exchanges dated letters with Addu-dûrî, who is in charge of setting up the sacrifices for Dêrîtum (ARM X 142, of 8-xi) and with both Yasîm-Sûmû and Itûr-Asdu, officials assigned with the task of welcoming Simah-ilâne, king of Kurdâ, in Mari (ARM XIII 29, of 3-xi). In consequence, Zimri-Lim was out of Mari all through this relatively short period.

-Later the king of Mari departs for Dîr on 16-xi (M.13188) in order to participate in the sacrifices for Dêrîtum.

-During the month x Asqudum carried the *terhatum* ("bride payment") of Šibtu out to Alepo.<sup>23</sup> In the text M.13254 a double cargo of oil was registered on 1-x to have been sent to both Yabliya and Emar to

20. [šuni]gin 2 me 53 lú-meš ha-[na], [š]a i-na zu-ur-ra ki, [i]p-pa-aq-TU, šu i-ba-al-<sup>d</sup>IM, iti a-bi-im, u<sub>4</sub> 8-kam, m[u] zi-im-ri-li-im, a-[n]a šu-[z]u-ub a-lim<sup>ki</sup>, [a]n-da-ri-ig k', i-lu-ú.

21. An important letter from the days of Samsi-Addu's kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia provides a good example about an interesting aspect of the *tebibtum* or "census": it seems not to be an exclusive prerogative of the monarch to perform the registration of people and the ceremony that perhaps involved a kind of oath taking. Indeed, in ARM I 42, where king Samsi-Addu informed his son in Mari in regards of a military campaign's preparation and gave him commands to set up a force, was well stated that Yarîm-Addu, a *merhûm* "chief of pastures", registered a good deal of mobile shepherds with a status of "Haneans" (most likely belonging to the Sim'alite confederacy). In his report to the king Samsi-Addu he declares to have entered all of their names in a tablet.

22. P. Villard, "La place des années de Kahat et d'Adad d'Alep dans la chronologie du règne de Zimri-Lim", *M.A.R.I.* 7 (1993), p. 315.

23. P. Villard, *op. cit.* p. 316.

fix the ships that went up with Asqudum. On 26-x oil was sent for the chariots Asqudum took to the land of Yamhad (M.13180). And finally the document M.6049 let us know about some garments that on 5-xii left the house of Asqudum towards Yabni-Dagan's in Terqa.<sup>24</sup>

Several proposals had been offered in the past years to identify the year of Kahat in the relatively long sequence of year names in Mari, but not a single one among them seems to fit in the corpus of evidence available to us before Villard's article was published. Materne equated Kahat with ZL 4'<sup>25</sup>, while Sasson suggested identifying it with ZL 2'<sup>26</sup> and Anbar on the other hand has proposed an earlier ZL 1'<sup>27</sup>. Villard is right to argue that the evidence cited above allowed us to readily discard the first two hypothesis of Materne and Sasson, since we can see the presence of princess Šibtu in the capital city of Mari during ZL 2' and 4'. Another Villard's point was that one can think of the *terhatum* for the princess as having always been sent before the marriage, which makes sense according to the other known instances in ancient history, but never after the wedding ceremony took place. It is also worthy of notice that for ZL 2' (28-x and 12-xi) and 4' (14-xi) there are documents providing information regarding royal banquets in the capital city with the physical presence of the king: as was seen earlier, Zimri-Lim was absent from Mari in these dates during Kahat.<sup>28</sup> Based on more solid grounds, Anbar's proposal did not make it either through the further critiques, among which we can even count his own: ten years after the publication of that proposal, the Israeli scholar recognized that the text ARMT XXV 205 seems to be proof enough of the Zimri-Lim's presence in Mari the 6-xi of ZL 1'<sup>29</sup>.

In "La prise du pouvoir", Durand and Charpin had pointed out that the seizure of the city of Kahat should be dated before the wedding of princess Kirûm with Haya-Sûmû of Ilân-šurâ, an event taking place very likely in ZL 2'; on top of that, according to a Mari harem list dated on 2-vi of ZL 1', princess Šibtu had not arrived yet to Mari by those days. However, women captured in Kahat were already in the capital city harem, which would support the Durand's idea of identifying the year name Kahat as another name for ZL 1', called in other sources "Euphrates Banks"<sup>30</sup>.

The following table represents the chronological scheme with which the French scholars agreed around early nineties:

- ZL 1 "Accession"
- ZL 2 "Annunîtum"
- ZL 1' "Euphrates Banks" = "Kahat"
- ZL 2' "Benjaminites"
- ZL 3' "Ašlakkâ" = "Addu of Alepo"

Villard came up with a different order for these same year names. First he is right to assume that princess Šibtu's physical presence in Mari is a matter of great importance, a key information due to the fact that one can figure out the sending of the *terhatum* during the year of Kahat, as said above, as a previous stage for her wedding and arrival to the city capital. He cites in support of his arguments the text M.6033, where Šibtu is sending garments together with the notable Ištarân-našir and the Mariote high

24. P. Villard, *ibid.*

25. Cf. J.-P. Materne. "L'Année de Kahat dans la chronologie du règne de Zimri-Lim", *M.A.R.I.* 2 (1983) pp. 195-199.

26. Cf. J. Sasson, *Miscellanea Babylonica* (1985) p. 252.

27. Cf. M. Anbar, *IOS IX* (1979) pp. 6-7.

28. P. Villard, *op. cit.* p. 317.

29. Cf. M. Anbar, *N.A.B.U.* 1989/18.

30. Cf. D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, *op. cit.* p. 330.

official Asqudum, a proper action reserved to her alleged status of queen (according to Villard) and not to princesses<sup>31</sup>. Is the new queen in Mari at this moment? This is difficult to say, but she is probably married already to Zimrî-Lîm when the tablet was written. The date of this text was set on 10-ii "Year of the Destruction of Mišlân and Samânum Ramparts", an event most likely associated with the Yaminite rebellion and the further war against Mari and its Sim'alite king Zimrî-Lîm during ZL 2'. An earlier date in ZL 1' for text M.6033 cannot be discarded although. But either in ZL 1' or in ZL 2', the year Addu of Alepo, when Šibtu is reported to be in Mari, should be placed most likely after Kahat, something that Durand and others had recognized before<sup>32</sup>.

With this in mind, Villard's attention shifts towards the question of Addu of Alepo. He criticizes the by that time present standard view that consisted of equating ZL 3' with Ašlakkâ and Addu of Alepo: his argument points out that in many cases the sources do not support Addu of Alepo's location so late in the period. The proposal of Francis Joannès, which is based in an identification of a gap in a series of documents related to craftsmanship activities and dated with numerical denominations for Zimrî-Lîm years as belonging to the year Addu of Alepo, because that gap would correspond to ZL 3' and the year name is attested in the series, is indeed not a decisive argument<sup>33</sup>. The same can be said about Jack Sasson's standpoint: he thought the fact that the statue was not finished by the end of ZL 2' (cf. ARMT XXII 248) as a hint to locate the consecration of it during the next year<sup>34</sup>, but actually he was only taking a guess. Later the publication of ARMT XXV demonstrated that the statue was in construction also during the year Addu of Alepo, making it clear that the year name was chosen before the statue were offered in Alepo<sup>35</sup>.

On the other hand, Jean-Marie Durand also made his proposal based on a study of the harem lists. The data he presented however seems to lead to a different equivalence, while Durand chose ZL 3' anyways as the place for Addu of Alepo. Princess Qihila got married by the end of ZL 2' (cf. ARMT XXII 204), and she is present in Mari in the month xi of Kahat (list TEM 4) and month ix of ZL 2', but her absence in the lists corresponding to the year Addu of Alepo would be a proof of a date later than ZL 2'. However, the case of princess Kirûm does not permit the same reasoning: she got married in month ix or x of ZL 2' and is present in Mari on 28-iv-Addu of Alepo (cf. ARM XXI 350), which supports the opposite argument that places Addu of Alepo in or before ZL 2'.

According to the work of Villard, an equivalence ZL 1'=Addu of Alepo fits the best in the cuneiform data available. Indeed, many administrative documents dated in Euphrates Banks and in Addu of Alepo show remarkable similarities:

a) ARMT XXII 193 (19-i of ZL 1') is an accounting list of copper and bronze used for manufacture sickles, which in turn are sent to different individuals, among them Bêl-šunu, Lipit-Ea and Ahî-libluṭ. These same men appear in the text ARMT XXV 322 (22-i of Addu of Alepo), where it is attested that ten minas of copper (part of the stock for Dagan of Terqa) are sent to them for the manufacture of forty sickles. As the identities of the recipients seem to be exactly the same, the documents cited here might belong to a single series. Such an assumption has confirmation in the text ARMT XXV 562 (24-i of Addu of Alepo), in which was registered the same exact amount of copper belonging to Dagan of Terqa and

31. Here it would be worth to note that Villard argues that the sending of the garments is something to put exclusively on a royal account, in this case the royal status of a queen, but at the same time the cargo included the pieces sent by prominent men, not considered in any way of royal status.

32. Cf. P. Villard, *op. cit.* Pp. 318-320.

33. Cf. F. Joannès, *A.R.M.T. XXIII*, p.133 note 2.

34. Cf. J. Sasson, *M.A.R.I. 5*, pp. 577-589.

35. Cf. P. Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

assigned to produce the forty sickles mentioned above. The three tablets were certainly redacted between 19 and 24 *urâhum* of the same year ZL 1'=Addu of Alepo.

b) M.5952 (9-i of ZL 1') has entries for some knitting thread that had been sent to Šamaš-kîma-ilî. The same formula is attested in M.5939 (24-i of Addu of Alepo).

c) The quite coherent archive of the craftsmen shows striking similarities between documents dated in ZL 1' and the ones from Addu of Alepo.

d) In the "palm courtyard" of the royal palace of Mari there was a structural group of a sâhirtum and goddesses lamassâtum, which got fixed during the year Euphrates' Banks. Other works upon this structure were done much later, in ZL 4'. The texts ARM XXI 307 and ARMT XXIII 192, dated on Addu of Alepo, also mention this work.<sup>36</sup>

e) Administrative documents about the fabrication of the ex-voto for Addu of Alepo were dated on the following years: Addu of Alepo, ZL 1' and ZL 2'.<sup>37</sup> Villard points out that the year name was chosen before the ex-voto was done, as seen above, since they made the main structure of the statue during ZL 1' and then finished it in ZL 2'.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, Villard offers another source to prove the equivalence ZL 1'=Addu of Alepo=Euphrates' Banks: if we check again the attested dates for the king's absences from Mari in the year Addu of Alepo (that is 17-24 *urâhum*, 9-22 IGI.KUR) we will see that they coincide in full with the information regarding the year Euphrates' Banks.

After reviewing all the possibilities and discarding those not supported by the evidence, Villard finally made his proposal for the reconstruction of the first years of Zimrî-Lîm's reign:

ZL 1 "Accession"

ZL 2 "Annunîtum" = "Kahat"

ZL 1' "Euphrates Banks" = "Addu of Alepo"

ZL 2' "Benjaminites"

The alteration of the order, the one proposed by Durand and others few years before the publication of Villard's article, makes this piece one of the seminal contributions of French scholarship to the reconstruction of the Mari history. Since this article on the relation of the historical events would not longer be the same, in particular those linked to the crucial process of the concentration of political power in the Zimrî-Lîm hands during the first years of his reign, how he came to seize Mari and achieved to get the political recognition of both Sim'alite and Yaminite tribal organizations. Villard's work turned to be controversial to some extent, although to judge only from his style and arguments he never intended to produce any radical change; yet his work was impeccably constructed through the use of dated administrative documents that in all the cases support his arguments and conclusions. It seemed for all the end of the story regarding the chronology, but new approaches will come again to alter the order.

#### 4. *An unexpected turn: the hypothesis of the décalage*

In the article "Les rituels de Mari", Jean-Marie Durand and Michaël Guichard dedicated themselves to the study of the great rituals texts found in the main palace, focusing mainly on two important questions: when are they dated to and how many ritual acts do they take into consideration. Although a

36. Cf. P. Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

37. Cf. ARMT XXV 322, ARM XXI 265, ARMT XXV 186, ARM XXI 325, ARMT XXV 169, and ARMT XXII 248.

38. Cf. P. Villard, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

different matter at first glance, their work will have yet serious consequences for the relative chronology of Zimrî-Lîm's reign.

In response to the first question they argue that while the Mariote pantheon list is dated to the times of Yahdun-Lîm, the other texts are from the Yasmah-Addu's period.<sup>39</sup> This argument shows to have good foundations, starting with the fact that all these texts possess the same features regarding style and form of the tablets, which leads to think in a homogeneous group. But there are more worth mentioning:

- Everything related to some toponyms and anthroponyms appearing in the texts used to be grouped for a relatively short period of time, in a series of documents belonging to a narrow chronological scheme, which match with the concept that the rituals are themselves not a typical event and usually refer to the same religious moment.

- The second Eštar ritual text, the number 3, mentions that the goddess worshipped is the one from Ekallâtum, homeland of the Samsî-Addu's family. During the Yasmah-Addu's ruling period in Mari, the statue of that deity came to live temporarily in the Mari palace. There are elements linking this text to the first Eštar ritual text (number 2): the garment the king wears for the ceremony is said to be the *lullumtum*, which is not attested elsewhere, save for the text ARMT XXVI/2 285, letter of Ušur-awassu to Yasmah-Addu about tailoring the garment precisely in occasion of the Eštar ceremony. Later, when Zimrî-Lîm took the power, the *lullumtum* garment was replaced by the *taddêtum*.<sup>40</sup>

- In both rituals is attested the presence of a special personnel.

- The form of the texts is the same as Kispum Ritual's, which on the other hand is dated to the month *addarum* in an eponym calendar.

While the ritual texts provide a good deal of data regarding the historical period they belong to, they are not regrettably well articulated, so we cannot precisely date each one of them. Durand and Guichard proposed to include in here the information from administrative texts in order to help the task of chronological reconstruction of the religious life in the Mari kingdom.<sup>41</sup> Hence the lens turn now to the Zimrî-Lîm's period, since it is for the time of the Sim'alite rule that we are better informed about the religious festivals. Then they arrived to the following conclusion: during Yasmah-Addu's years, Eštar of Irradân travelled to Mari from Ekallâtum, her place of residence, to be worshipped during the festival dedicated to her in the capital of the Middle Euphrates, but in times of Zimrî-Lîm the Sim'alites replaced this goddess for Dêrîtum, a sign of the political change in the area. Durand and Guichard wonder if this shift was a true replacement or rather a syncretic assimilation of the two divine figures.<sup>42</sup> If this would be the case, we do not have the chance to know the cult for the true Dêrîtum, but the form this cult took under the Sim'alite power in Mari. However, one might assume that any process of syncretism lasts a good deal of time, following more the rhythm of ideological changes than the political faster one. It is hard to think in a so rapid ideological movement.

How these studies on the religious festivals affect our quest for the Zimri-Lim's chronology? Concomitantly with a change in the goddess who is to receive the rites during the festival, which is truly a sign of a socio-political alteration in the Middle Euphrates region, some other adjustments might have occurred. The Durand and Guichard's review of the chronology of the ritual texts detected some problems with the annual frequency of the festivals, as we will see, that demanded an argument to solve the enigma. Not that the authors produced any change in the order of the year names, a matter already settled after Villard's work. However, Durand and Guichard have gone through all the ritual and administrative texts

39. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, "Les rituels de Mari", *Florilegium Marianum III* (1997) p. 27.

40. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, *op. cit.* p. 28.

41. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, *op. cit.* p. 29.

42. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, *ibid.*

and came up with a thesis slightly altering the historical events of the time of Zimrî-Lîm. To be sure, it is not the order of the events either what is at stake here; instead, it is the time span of at least the first half of Zimrî-Lîm's ruling years.

The texts from Asqudum describe a cultic calendar for the late months of ZL 1, starting with the month ix. As we can check this data with the information the texts from the year Kahat (ZL 2) provide, rites in Terqa usually took place from 21-x through 27-x, and in Dêr from 13-xi through 18-xi. Then the rites continue in the capital city. This calendar does not match although with the data in Eštar texts dated to the second half of Zimrî-Lîm period, which offer a different calendar: 30-viii (mid-November) to 30-ix. This shift into a different ritual annual schedule could be interpreted as a radical turn, whose introduction were due to mathematical-astronomical reasons, but we do not know whether this "correction" came to resolve a problem originated one or more generations ago or rather was a result of a recent set of changes made for ideological-political purposes. Durand and Guichard followed this last hypothesis in his work, and built a case for a modification of the calendar and time delay of about 2-3 months taking place in the beginning of Zimrî-Lîm reign.

According to Durand and Guichard then, Zimrî-Lîm deliberately had his administrative cadre start his reign period the first day of the first month of the year of his accession to the Mariote throne. This decision is thought to mark the best the rupture with the previous eponyms system and the re-taking of year names, and produced later the need for adding more months intercalated to fix the gap in respect to the solar year. Indeed, the year ZL 1 is attested in the documentation from the very beginning of month i.<sup>43</sup> The text A.373 is cited in order to support their line: the supreme priest Iddin-Sîn reminded the king about a previous conversation they had, in which the king assured the priest that they were in the month *ebûrum*, so that the priest had to take it as it were *urâhum*.<sup>44</sup> The last month attested for the rule of Yasmah Addu should have been taken as a month xii, and immediately after that Zimrî-Lîm could begin to reign in Mari. But when the last dated text of Yasmah-Addu was written?

According to Durand and Guichard the last text in the eponyms era was that of 11-v, corresponding to a month x of Zimrî-Lîm. However, today we know of the existence of a text dated on 13-vi (13-xi in Z-L calendar), almost a month later.<sup>45</sup> If this alleged *décalage* truly took place, it was for a shorter period, maybe little more than a month. Then a different approach, no matter how lightly different could be, was needed.

### 5. *The ultimate solution*

Dominique Charpin, the most renowned academic mate of Durand in Paris, and Nele Ziegler have criticized in a long piece of detailed historical events the hypothesis of the *décalage* and offered another proposal of chronological reconstruction for the first years of Zimrî-Lîm.

First, it is true that the texts from the very first year of Zimrî-Lîm are chronologically distributed in a quite irregular way, since we have two texts for the first month, one for the second, and five for the eleventh month; furthermore, there is an impressive gap between the second month and the tenth, with only one solitary written record dated on the month v. But this is not the consequence of a long absence of the king from Mari, as Durand suggested, because in the smaller palace of the "A Area" the French team unearthed some Asqudum texts showing roughly the same distribution, with also a gap between month i

43. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

44. Cf. J.-M. Durand and M. Guichard, *ibid.*

45. Cf. D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite, Florilegium Marianum V* (2003) pp. 170-172.

and month xi. It cannot be related to the absence of Asqudum either, who seems to have gone along with the new king in his military campaign, because the “bureaucratic” machine in the diviner’s house needs not to be stopped because the lord is out. As Charpin and Ziegler have pointed out, at several points during the reign of Zimri-Lim the scribes in that small palace kept writing while Asqudum was out to accomplish diplomatic tasks.<sup>46</sup>

Second, the lot of texts corresponding to the very first year of Zimri-Lim is copious enough to think in a pretty profuse activity within the state apparatus. The written dated administrative documents in the Dabium’s archive amount to 16, and other 137 bearing the seal print of Asqudum (but with no dating formula) covered the period of two months and a half and clearly seem to pertain to the same year ZL 1. Both groups did start in 24/ix, which is surprising in the case we separated them as being two complete different lots; on the contrary, Charpin and Ziegler suggest to put them together as facets of one single archive.<sup>47</sup>

The textual evidence that Charpin and Ziegler introduced into the first year “Accession/Throne of His Father” has not done nothing but complicate the analysis. Now we have a really impressive gap, a dark hole between the months i-ii and ix-xii: indeed, in this last period we can place 161 documents. However, as usual, the more complex the problem the more bright the solution to it: Charpin and Ziegler (and Durand?) made a right decision focusing on the interplay of different calendars by the time the new king took over the Mari throne, a fact the scholars knew for sure but never took it to being at stake in the solution of the enigma.

According to the Charpin-Ziegler’s proposal, the events (mostly military) during the first months of Zimri-Lim as king in Mari were counted using the calendar that he and his Sim’alite kinship would have kept when Yahdun-Lim was defeated by Samsi-Addu.<sup>48</sup> The new king was actually out of Mari, undertaking a military campaign, and this historical fact makes it easy to understand the temporary interplay of calendars, because amidst the administrative corps in the city capital they continued using both the classic compute of the kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia, that based on eponyms, and the Mari calendar. There was no time to fix a “zero hour” for the beginning of Zimri-Lim’s reign, this makes good sense in the political context we know. But the question is now to know why the Mari calendar the Sim’alites kept in use differs from the same one that the Mari administration used: indeed, a *décalage* did exist.

When the new king made his entry in Mari it was the month of *Liliatum* (ix), in his own calendar. The first text bearing the dating formula “Throne of His Father” appeared on 4/xi. Later, by the end of the month *Eburum* (xii), a new year was named: “Annunitum”, which is attested for the entire twelve months of the year. However, the alleged previous year-name appears in some documents up to the month v *Hibirtum*, and this is precisely because in the eponyms system this month represents the moment for a change of year.<sup>49</sup> The Mari administration then added the year name “Kahat”, starting in the month vi *IGI.KUR*. Finally, when “Annunitum” ended, the Mari administration decided to put the double calculation to an end: from ZL 2 “Euphrates Banks/Addu of Alepo” on there was only one single calendar. To be sure, the *décalage* between the two versions of the Mari calendar, the one used by the Yasmah-Addu’s administration and the one Zimri-Lim brought to Mari, should be explained by considering the

46. Cf. D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

47. Cf. D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

48. Cf. D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *ibid.* See Charpin’s historical account in his piece “Histoire politique du Proche-Orient Amorrite”, in D. Charpin, D. Edzard and M. Stol, *Mesopotamien*, Academic Press Fribourg, 2004. For only later years, see W. Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2003.

49. Cf. D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *ibid.*

efforts made to combine different calendars in Mari throughout the years of the kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia. In that time one can guess they added intercalating months, while the Sim'alites probably did it in a different way (or never did it?).

In sum, we have now a novel table of year names for the first years of Zimrî-Lîm, one in which they seem to overlap in an interesting manner:

Eponym *warki Ṭâb-šilli-Aššur* (ix - iv) / “Throne of His Father” (ix – v) / “Annunitum” (i – xii) / “Kahat” (vi – xii bis)

And there we go. Any prospected “historical reconstruction” must these days be built over the Charpin-Ziegler thesis, which is to be considered in my view the ultimate version of the year names' order, especially for the first half of the Zimrî-Lîm's reign. A last doubt remains though, and this doubt comes from the fact that we still have a good deal of year names looking for their right place in the chronology, to judge from that list Birot published in 1978...