Emar Chronology: a real conundrum or…much ado about nothing?

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[This paper deals with some issues related to the history of Late Bronze Emar: the chronology of the archives (short duration vs long one), the relationship between the so-called Syrian and Syro-Hittite sets of documentation (contemporaneity vs overlap), the alleged First Dynasty. Starting from new evidence (text KŠD 6), Arnaud's pioneering reconstruction (a single ruling dynasty, short duration of the archives and contemporaneity of the two sets of documentation) was overturned. The basis of the new theory (two ruling dynasties, long duration, overlap between Syrian and Syro-Hittite documentation) has been severely questioned (Yamada has challenged the so-called First Dynasty; according to Démare-Lafont and Fleming, Syrian and Syro-Hittite texts served two different populations), but the theory still stands. Based on the text KŠD 6, the author of this article brings new arguments in favour of the earliest reconstruction.]

Keywords: Emar, Late Bronze Age, Syria, Hittites, Hurrians, chronology.

The relative and absolute chronology of the Late Bronze Emar archives is a long-debated question.

1. *The status quaestionis*

There are some major questions related to the chronology of Late Bronze Emar: the duration of the archives (short duration vs long one); the chronological relationship between the two different sets of documentation or scribal traditions of the city, called Syrian and Syro-Hittite, respectively[1] (contemporaneity vs overlap); the alleged First Dynasty (one single dynasty vs two dynasties).

1.1. *The earliest reconstruction: contemporaneity of Syrian and Syro-Hittite texts, short duration of the archives, one single dynasty*

D. Arnaud reconstructed the chronology of the Emar archives even before the publication of the texts.[2] According to him the two sets of documentation were approximately contemporary and dated back to a period between 1310 and 1187 B.C.

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1. Wilcke 1992 and Seminara 1998. According to Démare-Lafont – Fleming 2015, "Conventional Format" and "Free Format", respectively. According to Endesfelder (2017) the so-called Syrian tablets are to be further divided into two different scribal traditions: one concerning the palace and the city, the other the so-called Brothers.

2. Arnaud 1975.

The *terminus ante quem* is based on a synchronism with a Babylonian king of the Kassite dynasty: the text RPAE[3] 26, found at Emar but probably drawn up in Babylon, is dated to the second year of the reign of Meli-šipak/šihu (1188-1181 B.C.). Therefore, the year 1187 was supposed to represent the *terminus post quem* for the dating of the destruction of Emar and the end of the archives. Based on the place of discovery of that document, corresponding to the level of the final destruction, Arnaud assumed that the year 1187 should coincide with the end of the Late Bronze Emar archives.

Another synchronism provided a clue for establishing the *terminus post quem*: in the text RPAE 201 Šahurunuwa, father and predecessor of the viceroy of Karkemiš Ini-Teššup, was instructed by the Hittite king Mursili (identified by Arnaud with Mursili II) to grant some properties to the diviner Zu-Baʻla. On the basis of the chronology established by Gurney for the reign of Mursili II (1339-1306 B.C.), Arnaud proposed the year 1310 as the *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the Emar archives.

The hypothesis of the contemporaneity of Syrian and Syro-Hittite tablets was confirmed by archaeological data: in fact, on the one hand tablets of both types had been found in the same contexts (for example, the M-1 building), on the other hand Margueron's excavations had unearthed just a single period of occupation (corresponding to the Late Bronze II).[4]

Being associated with the title l u g a l and often occurring in the first position in the lists of witnesses (in which case the text is often sealed with the so-called Dynastic Seal), some people mentioned in the texts were likely to have been kings of Emar. Starting from Arnaud's study, the dynasty of Emar was reconstructed as follows: Yaṣi-Dagan (son of Baʻal-kabar), Baʻal-kabar I, Zu-Aštarti, Pilsu-Dagan and Elli.

1.2. *The question of Limi-šarra*

In 1996, Seminara pointed out a small group of Syrian tablets sharing some unparalleled features: these tablets mainly concern the sale of real estate "by Ninurta and the Elders of Emar"; the dating system of these documents is apparently based on eponyms; scribes and witnesses of these tablets never occur in the rest of the documentation; the mayor (*hazannu*) often appears at the end of the witness list or just before the name of the scribe.[5]

Based on this evidence, the author drew the following conclusions:

- compared with the rest of the Syrian documentation, these texts show at least one archaic feature, that is the eponyms;
- this group of texts was likely to be attributed to a separate sector of the city administration, although evidently connected with the local authorities (the king, the city, the elders, the temples);
- this administrative sector was likely to have been run by the family of a certain Limi-šarra.

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3. The following abbreviations refer to Emar texts: AuOr S 1 = Arnaud 1991; KŠD = Sigrist 1993; RE = Beckman 1996; RPAE = Arnaud 1985, 1986, 1987.

4. In the light of the archaeological evidence, Margueron concluded that Late Bronze Emar was a newly founded city. His conclusions were rejected by Finkbeiner (2005 and 2010), who unearthed archaeological layers prior to the Late Bronze Age, revealing a much more complex stratigraphy of the site. However, his results do not affect the chronology of Late Bronze Emar.

5. For the *hazannu* at Emar, see Viano 2018.

The text KŠD 6 shows the special position of Limi-šarra's family at Emar. In this document, Limi-šarra is mentioned in connection with gifts and hostages handed over to the king of the Hurrians by a certain Ir'ib-Baʿal, son of Lala, who, in exchange for this service, obtained for himself and his descendants the office of priest of the temple of Nergal.

1.3. *The text KŠD 6: a ghost dynasty?*

According to Skaist,[6] KŠD 6 and the related texts had been written earlier than all the other Syrian tablets; based on this text, Emar is likely to have been subjected to a Hurrian king, to whom the king of Emar was obliged to pay a tribute of precious metals and hostages.

However, the document raises some historical and chronological questions. First, if Emar was subjected to Hurrian authority, the text should be dated to a period before the conquest of the Hittites, who, according to Arnaud, established the kingship at Emar after defeating the Hurrians of Mittani and expelling them from northern Syria. The text rather mentions a king and a palace, evidently those of Emar. Second, the identity of the king of Emar and that of the Hurrian king are not clear.

Skaist rejected a fundamental pillar of Arnaud's chronological theory: in fact, according to him (p. 47), as no Emar text dates back to the reign of Mursili II, the year 1310 cannot be the *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the Late Bronze Emar archives. Moreover, based on the parallelism between LUGAL *ù* URU *E-mar* (KŠD 6: 20) and *Li(mi)*-LUGAL *ù* URU *E-mar* (KŠD 6: 36), Skaist assumed that the LUGAL and Limi-šarra were one and the same person and that consequently the king mentioned in the text was to be identified with Limi-šarra (p. 61), although he never features as lugal in Emar texts.

Sharing with the kings of Emar both the first position in the list of witnesses of the so-called "Ninurta sale texts" and the association with a payment to the palace (in just one case, in the text AuOr S 1 14),[7] the members of Limi-šarra's family were also likely to have been kings, even though none of them is ever called l u g a l in the texts. Limi-šarra and the members of his family were supposed to belong to a dynasty (the so-called First Dynasty) prior to the known one (which accordingly was called Second Dynasty).[8]

Skaist reconstructed the First Dynasty as follows:[9] Ir'ib-Baʿal, the brothers Igmil-Dagan and Limi-šarra (both Ir'ib-Baʿal's sons), Išbi-Dagan (Limi-šarra's son) and Zu-Baʿla (Išbi-Dagan's son).

1.4. *The second chronological theory: overlap between Syrian and Syro-Hittite tablets, long duration of the archives, two dynasties*

In four 'Ninurta sale texts', Limi-šarra's predecessors, Ir'ib-Baʿal and Igmil-Dagan, are associated with a tribute (called *arana*) to be paid "to the king".[10] By combining these documents with the text KŠD 6, Skaist came to the conclusion that the "king of the Hurrians" to whom Emar regularly paid a tribute could not be any other than the Great King of Mittani.[11] Assuming that at

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6. Skaist 1998.

7. Skaist 1998, 61.

8. Skaist's conclusions were rejected by Adamthwaite 2001.

9 Skaist 1998, 60.

10. For the whole question of the word *arana* and for a different interpretation of these documents, see Yamada 2017.

11. Skaist 1998, 62.

the time of Limi-šarra and his predecessors Emar was vassal of Mittani, the so-called First Dynasty had to be dated to a period before the Hittite conquest of northern Syria by Suppiluliuma I. Even though the Hittite king had left the kingdom of Mittani standing, it was not likely to be in a position to exact tribute from Emar after the defeat. Consequently, the First Dynasty was supposed to have preceded the other one (the Second Dynasty).

According to Skaist, the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I dethroned the last member of the First Dynasty (Zu-Ba'la) during his campaigns in northern Syria and replaced him with Yaṣi-Dagan, first king of the Second Dynasty.[12] Dating this event to 1325 and theoretically calculating the duration of four generations, Skaist proposed approximately the year 1400 as the beginning of the First Dynasty. Dating the beginning of the Second Dynasty to 1325 and calculating the duration of five generations of kings, Skaist concluded that the Second Dynasty came to an end around 1220.[13]

On the basis of this chronological reconstruction, Skaist assumed that Syrian and Syro-Hittite tablets were not only different in size and content, but also belonged to two distinct phases of Emar history: he dated the former set of documentation between 1400 and 1220 and the latter one, based on synchronisms with the viceroys of Karkemiš, between 1275 and 1210.[14]

Based on Skaist's assumptions, some scholars pointed out the separation between the people mentioned in the Syrian tablets and those mentioned in the Syro-Hittite ones.[15] The prosopo-graphical study confirmed the difference between the two formats: in fact, only the Syrian tablets mention the city institutions (the king, the city, the Elders, the god Ninurta); on the contrary, the Syro-Hittite ones refer to the Hittite authorities or to their representatives at Emar (the Hittite king, the viceroy of Karkemiš, the king's son, the overseer of the country, the diviner and his family).

Starting from Skaist's assumption about the two dynasties (the First Dynasty with four generations,[16] the Second Dynasty with five[17]), Y. Cohen and L. D'Alfonso[18] definitively established the chronological overlap of two generations between the two dynasties, that is, the third and fourth generation of the First Dynasty and the first generation of the Second one.[19] Calculating a theoretical duration of about 15 (min.)/25 (max.) years for each of the remaining seven generations, the two scholars estimated approximately 150 years for the duration of the kingship at Emar and established the relative chronology of the Syrian documentation (the only one in which the local kings are mentioned).[20] The relative chronology of the Syro-Hittite texts was calculated in approximately 100/90 years on the basis of the five generations of the diviner's family (Zu-Ba'la).[21]

Unlike the Syrian documentation, the absolute chronology of the Syro-Hittite texts could be established thanks to some synchronisms with the contemporary great empires. In particular, RPAE 201, also known as Zu-Ba'la's testament, links the diviner of Emar with members of the Hittite

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12. Skaist 1998, 64.

13. Skaist 1998, 67.

14. Skaist 1998, 57.

15. See D'Alfonso 2000 and Di Filippo 2004 and 2008.

16. 1. Ir'ib-Ba'al and Igmil-Dagan, brothers; 2. Limi-šarra; 3. Išbi-Dagan; 4. Zu-Ba'la.

17. 1. Yaṣi-Dagan; 2. Ba'al-kabar I; 3. Pilsu-Dagan and Zu-Aštarti, brothers; 4. Elli; 5. Ba'al-kabar II.

18. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 6.

19. See also Di Filippo 2004, 196.

20. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 23.

21. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 24.

royal family: Šahurunuwa, viceroy of Karkemiš, his son and successor Ini-Teššup, and finally the Great King Mursili. Identifying this Mursili with the third Hittite king named Mursili, also known as Urhi-Teššup (1272-1265), and assuming that the document had been drawn up early in the reign of Ini-Teššup, Cohen and D'Alfonso dated the text RPAE 201 approximately to the year 1265.[22] Given that another Syro-Hittite document, RPAE 31, is likely to have been written about 10 years before RPAE 201, the beginning of the Syro-Hittite documentation was dated around 1275.[23]

Moreover, Cohen and D'Alfonso dated the end of the Syro-Hittite documentation around 1175 thanks to the synchronism with the Kassite king of Babylon Meli-šipak/šihu mentioned in RPAE 26, which is dated to the second year of that king (that is, 1175) and certainly contemporary with the end of Emar, given that it was found along with a few other tablets on the floor of the House 5 of *Chantier* A, corresponding to what can be considered the destruction level.[24] This dating is confirmed by other synchronisms with contemporary Assyrian sources.[25] The text RE 19, drawn up in Assyria during the reign of Ninurta-apil-Ekur (1181-1169), mentions a citizen of Emar, showing that the city had not been destroyed at that time. Another Assyrian document (T 96-1), the letter of the governor Ili-ipadda, dated to 1190, that is, during the reign of Aššur-nirari III (1192-1187), mentions Ahi-malik, governor of Emar, in connection with Karkemiš. On the basis of these three documents, one can conclude that Emar survived the collapse of the Hittite empire for a few more years, at least until 1175. Consequently, the Syro-Hittite documentation of Emar is likely to have lasted about 100 years, between 1275 and 1175 B.C.[26]

Given the lack of synchronisms with contemporary sources from the neighbouring empires, the absolute chronology of the Syrian documentation must be linked to the Syro-Hittite one. The most significant synchronism between the two sets of documentation occurs in the texts RPAE 206 (recording the sale of a garden) and RPAE 168, which both link Ba'al-qarrad, son of the diviner Zu-Ba'la, with some members of the third generation of the Second Dynasty (in particular Iṣṣur-Dagan, son of Ba'al-kabar I and brother of Pilsu-Dagan).[27] Therefore, the third generation of the diviner's family (i.e. Ba'al-qarrad) had to be contemporary in part with the third, in part with the fourth generation of the Second Dynasty.[28]

Based on the absolute chronology of the Syro-Hittite texts, Ba'al-qarrad and Elli are likely to have been born in the early decades of the 13th century. Adding 125 years (corresponding to three generations of the Second Dynasty and two of the First one), Cohen and D'Alfonso established that Ir'ib-Ba'al, the first king of the First Dynasty, was born around the last quarter of the 15th century and that the earliest documents of his reign, corresponding to the beginning of the Emar documentation (that is, the Syrian one), dated back to the first decades of the 14th century.[29]

Moreover, the tribute paid by the kings of the so-called First Dynasty of Emar to the Hurrian king was consistent with the Syrian geo-political framework in the first half of the 14th century,

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22. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 13.
23. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 14.
24. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 14.
25. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 14-15.
26. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 15.
27. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 16-17.
28. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 17.
29. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 19.

when Mittani is likely to have ruled over the whole area, including Emar. According to the two scholars, the Hittite conquerors (Suppiluliuma I and his son Mursili II) not only ousted the Hurrians from the area, but were also responsible for the dynastic change at Emar.[30]

Dating back the rise of the First Dynasty, corresponding to Ir'ib-Ba'al's reign, to the beginning (around the first two decades) of the 14th century and calculating a duration of about 150 years for the Syrian documentation, the end of the Emar kingship and of the Syrian documentation was dated around the middle of the 13th century.[31]

Finally, the short overlap time, corresponding to the years of the diviner Ba'al-qarrad for the Syro-Hittite documentation and to the reign of Zu-Aštarti and that of Elli in the Syrian one,[32] accounted for the prosopographical, institutional, scribal separation and for the shortage of synchronisms between the two sets of documentation.

1.5. *The third chronological theory: two separate, but coeval communities*

The chronological reconstruction of Cohen and D'Alfonso has been systematically questioned by Sophie Démare-Lafont and Daniel Fleming.[33] According to them, the differences between the two sets of documentation (called "Conventional Format" and "Free Format", respectively) were not due to a chronological gap, but to social and legal reasons. The two "scribal streams" mirrored two contemporary, but distinct communities: the Syrian or Conventional Format was connected with the "townsmen of Emar" and with the local authorities, the Syro-Hittite or Free Format, on the contrary, with the "non-townsmen" living at Emar as "peregrines" and with the Hittite power system.

Démare-Lafont and Fleming have raised two main objections against the theory of the chronological overlap: first, admitting that the Syrian documentation partly preceded the Syro-Hittite one, one would expect to find among the people recorded in the latter the parents or grandparents of the people reported in the former, but this is not the case; second, one should assume that all the real estate mentioned as city land in the Syrian texts and completely absent in the Syro-Hittite ones had been quickly converted into individual property without leaving any written record, which is also rather unlikely.

To account for the coexistence of the two scribal streams, the two authors compare the situation of Late Bronze Emar with "the ancient Roman notion of the *ius gentium*, by which

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30. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 19-21. This historical-chronological reconstruction is not consistent with the text RPAE 42, in which a king of the Second Dynasty, Pilsu-Dagan, commemorates his victory against a "king of the Hurrians". However, according to Cohen and D'Alfonso, the Hurrian king mentioned by Pilsu-Dagan was not the Great King of Mittani to whom the rulers of the First Dynasty of Emar regularly paid tribute, but rather the viceroy of the Assyrian protectorate of Hanigalbat or a leader of Hurrian tribes or, more likely, the ruler of the Hurrian kingdom after the defeat of Mittani by the hand of Suppiluliuma I. In short, the Hurrian king exacting tribute from Emar at the time of Limi-šarra and his predecessors around the middle of the 14th century had nothing to do with the Hurrian king who besieged Emar during the reign of Pilsu-Dagan (early in the 13th century). Another attack upon Emar, this time by the mysterious TAR-PI, was dated between the end of the 13th century and the first decade of the 12th century (pp. 21-22 and p. 24).

31. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 24.

32. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 24.

33. Démare-Lafont - Fleming 2015.

citizens and non-citizens were served by separate and complementary judicial systems".[34] Accordingly, transactions involving only the townsmen of Emar were recorded in Syrian texts, whereas the legal system of the Syro-Hittite format (called "shared law") applied to "free people from other towns living or trading in Emar".[35]

This reconstruction could account both for the outsiders residing at Emar, mainly merchants,[36] and for the distribution of different kinds of transactions in the two formats: in fact, purchases of real estate belonging to Ninurta are recorded only in Syrian format, showing that this kind of transaction was reserved only for the citizens of Emar; on the contrary, slave sales, whose trade was likely to be in the hands of merchants, are limited to Syro-Hittite texts.

According to Démare-Lafont and Fleming,[37] the crisis of the Emar kingship was due to a dynastic change. The alleged author of this change was Zu-Aštarti, self-styled son of Ba'al-kabar I, after the death of the legitimate king Elli (probably his cousin). However, Zu-Aštarti's power did not last for long, given that the text RPAE 17 reports a plot against him involving a large part of the Emar society. According to Zu-Aštarti, he initially succeeded in quelling the uprising, but in the long run the dynastic change turned out to be so traumatic as to undermine the monarchy. The political crisis eventually forced the Hittite authorities to intervene. The Hittites put an end to the dynasty and in its place Ahi-malik was appointed as "overseer of the country".

According to the two scholars, the fall of the monarchy coincided with the end of the Syrian documentation. The question is when this event took place. Cohen and D'Alfonso had dated the end of the monarchy between 1250 and 1240 on the basis of the synchronism of RPAE 201 (dated around 1265) and assuming that at that time Zu-Ba'la was an elderly man and that his son Ba'al-qarrad was a grown man. On the contrary, Démare-Lafont and Fleming, assuming that in 1265 Zu-Ba'la was still young and that his son was a boy, date the death of the former and the succession of the latter as diviner not to the year 1260, but to 1250.[38] On the basis of the textual evidence, it is likely that Ba'al-qarrad remained in office for a long period, at least until 1220. Given that the synchronisms with Syrian texts, very frequent at the time of Ba'al-qarrad, tend to disappear at the time of his successor Ba'al-malik, it is possible that precisely in the years between the two diviners, that is between 1230 and 1210, both the fall of the Emar kingship and the end of the Syrian documentation took place. The life of the city, together with the Syro-Hittite documentation, lasted for a few more decades, up to the period between 1187 and 1175.

Accepting the hypothesis of two distinct dynasties ruling for a period of seven generations, Démare-Lafont and Fleming date the earliest Syrian texts to the beginning of the 14th century and the earliest Syro-Hittite documents to the first quarter of the 13th century (mostly during the reign of the viceroy of Karkemiš Ini-Teššup).

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34. Démare-Lafont - Fleming 2015, 58.

35. Démare-Lafont - Fleming 2015, 60.

36. It is not always possible to distinguish these foreigners from the citizens of Emar on the basis of personal names, since most of them came from the area of the Middle Euphrates or from neighbouring cities (for example Ekalte or Azu) and therefore shared the same onomastics. However, most of the clearly foreign (i.e. not West-Semitic) personal names from Emar occur in Syro-Hittite texts. For Emar anthroponymy, see Pruzsinszky 2003.

37. Démare-Lafont - Fleming 2015, 65-68.

38. Démare-Lafont - Fleming 2015, 51.

Compared to the previous one, this reconstruction extends the time of the overlap between the two formats to a maximum of 70 years, that is, between the last quarter of the 13th century and 1210 at the latest.

The chronological theories	contemporaneity (Arnaud)	Partial overlap (Skaist)	Partial overlap (Cohen-D'Alfonso)	Two separate communities (Démare-Lafont and Fleming)
Syrian documentation	1310-1187	1400-1220	1390/80-1250/40	?-1230/10
Syro-Hittite documentation	1310-1187	1275-1210	1275-1175	1275-1187/1175

Synopsis of the chronological theories

2. *The text KŠD 6: translation and interpretation*

The two theories, that of the partial overlap of the two formats and that of their contemporaneity, are mutually exclusive.

The key to understanding the whole chronological question is likely to be found in the aforementioned text KŠD 6. In 2013 Yamada[39] questioned Skaist's chronological theory on the basis of a different interpretation of this document, but his assumptions were in turn rejected.[40]

As anticipated above, the text raises two questions: the role of Limi-šarra and the identity of the mysterious king of the Hurrians who for some time exacted tribute from Emar.

Skaist had taken Limi-šarra and the members of his family for as many kings of the alleged First Dynasty. However, both the identification of Limi-šarra as king of Emar and the whole interpretation of the text seem rather questionable. First of all, the first line of the text ("During the days of Limi-šarra") can be interpreted as the indication of an eponymous official during whose office the events recorded in the document took place. Secondly, assuming that the time frame of the first line refers to the whole text content, it would be strange that Limi-šarra was mentioned by name at the very beginning (l. 1), while being mentioned by the title lugal ("king") at the end of the same sentence (l. 14).

On the one hand, the use of two titles for the same person in two different contexts is not accidental at all: the king appears both as "lord" of Irʾib-Baʿal (ll. 15, 17, 19), that is the one who has the right to demand a service from a citizen, and as "king" (lugal, ll. 14 and 20), that is, the authority assigning tasks or privileges (l. 20). It is not clear why the scribe should have further complicated the text by mentioning the ruler by his name at the very beginning of the document: three ways to designate the same person in an official text seem really too many!

On the other hand, the relation between the two most important local institutions is not clear. Irʾib-Baʿal is connected with both the king (also called "his lord") and the city (ll. 15, 17, 19, 20, 36). The two words represent a sort of hendiadys ("his city and his lord" [ll. 15, 17, 19] or "the king and the city of Emar" [l. 20]), showing that the two institutions worked together. However, at least in one case the two terms are not associated: after having paid the tribute in precious metals and

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39. Yamada 2013.
40. Cohen 2013.

hostages, Ir'ib-Ba'al is told to "have satisfied the king of the land of the Hurrians on behalf of the palace", that is, of the king, without any mention of the city, as if to underline that just the king, not the city, was involved. This means on the one hand that the king and the city acted independently of each other, on the other hand that the two passages (lugal *ù* uru *E-mar* [l. 20] and [m]*Li*-lugal *ù* uru *E-mar* [l. 36]) are not necessarily parallel. Therefore, the mention of Limi-šarra and of the city of Emar at the top of the list of witnesses (l. 36) is not necessarily proof that Limi-šarra was the king. Limi-šarra might rather have been a kind of representative of the city and as such in charge of an administrative sector in a limited period of time.[41]

Limi-šarra is once again associated with the temple of Nergal in another document (AuOr S1 87), also dated to "the time of Limi-šarra" (exactly in the same terms as in KŠD 6). This means that the temple may not have been built yet at the time in which the events reported in KŠD 6 took place. Indeed, one might even think that some time, perhaps even a generation, had elapsed between the service rendered by Ir'ib-Ba'al to his king and his reward. This hypothesis is based on the singular circumstance[42] that Ir'ib-Ba'al, son of Lala (ll. 6 and 12), has the same name as Limi-šarra's father (ll. 1-2). Of course, cases of homonymy are very frequent in Emar texts, but it is strange that the scribe did not disambiguate the identity of the two men, adding, for example, the patronymic of Limi-šarra's father. One can assume that the two Ir'ib-Ba'al were actually the same person. In other words, Ir'ib-Ba'al, son of Lala, is likely to be Limi-šarra's father.

This hypothesis would open up a very different scenario. The account recorded in KŠD 6 could be divided into three phases: 1) Ir'ib-Ba'al volunteers to pay the tribute due to the Hurrian king in place of his king; 2) the king grants to his faithful subject and his descendants the priesthood of the temple of Nergal, as a reward for his generosity (and this could be the occasion to draw up the document KŠD 6); 3) the temple of Nergal, however, had not been built (or rebuilt) yet at the time in which the reported events took place and Limi-šarra is appointed as responsible for the construction of the temple he and his descendants will be priests of.

On the basis of these arguments the following translation of the text KŠD 6 is proposed here:[43]

1. *i-na* u$_4$-*ma-ti ša* [m]*Li*-l u g a l
2. d u m u *Ir-ib*-[d]IM *a-šà-*h á *sí-ip-hu*
3. 1 i k u g í d - d a-*ši* 1 i k u *ru-up-ši*
4. *ù* [d]N è - i r i$_{11}$- g a l-*ir-am-ši*
5. d a m-*šu i-na* š à *a-šà-*h á *ir-ṣi-ip*
6. *ù* a - š à - h á *ša* [m]*Ir-ib*-[d]IM d u m u *La-a-la*
7. z a g-*šu* k i - l a m g ù b-*šu hu-hi-nu*
8. e g i r-*šu* k a s k a l[n u] *ša* [d]UD-*ha* u r u *Tu-ša-ú*[ki]
9. *pa-nu-šu* [d]*Da-gan*-e n g a r *ù* 4 d u m u - m u n u s - m e š-*šu*
10. *qa-du* [na4]*nu-bi-šu-nu* 4 *li-im* k ù - b a b b a r
11. 4 *me-at* g í n k ù - s i g$_{17}$ *a-na* l u g a l k u r *Hur-ri ú-ṭà-he-e*
12. *ù* [m]*Ir-ib*-[d]IM d u m u *La-a-la*
13. l u g a l k u r *Hur-ri iš-tu* é - g a l *i-ta-pa-al*

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41. According to Pruzsinszky (2009, 425) Limi-šarra might be "the city's *bēlu*".
42. See Yamada 2013.
43. For the text edition, see Sigrist 1993. Yamada 2013 does not translate the text.

14.*ù* 4 dumu-munus-meš lugal 4 *li-im* kù-babbar
15.4 *me-at* [kù]-sig₁₇ *a-na* uru*ˡⁱ-šu be-li-šu*
16.*ut-te-er-šu ù ma-na-ah-ta* gal
17.*liṭ-ṭi* uru*ˡⁱ-šu ù be-li-šu*
18.*e-te-pu-uš ù ki-i-mu-ú ma-na-ah-ti-šu*
19.*ša liṭ-ṭi* uru*ˡⁱ-šu ù be-li-šu*
20.*ša i-pu-šu* lugal *ù* uru *E-mar*
21.*a-na* lú sanga *ša* è ᵈNè-iri₁₁-gal
22.*ša* ki-lam *ù a-na ra-be bi-ti*
23.dumu-*šu* dumu-dumu-*šu* numun-*šu*
24.numun numun-*šu iš-ku-un-šu*
25.*a-na da-ri-ti*ᴵ lú sanga-*ma*
26.*ù* gal *ša* ᵈNè-iri₁₁-gal
27.*ù a-na* lú *qáb-ba-ri šu-ut-ma*
28.*ur-ra-am še-ra-am ma-am-ma-a-an*
29.*ša-nu-ú-ma iš-tu* é
30.ᵈNè-iri₁₁-gal *ù iš-tu* lú *qáb-ba-rù‹-ti›*
31.*la-a ú-na-kar-šu ša ú-na-kàr-šu*
32.ᵈ*Da-gan* ᵈNin-urta
33.ᵈNè-iri₁₁-gal mu-*šu* numun-*šu*
34.*li-hal-li-qu* ⁿᵃ⁴*si-kà-nam*
35.*a-na* éᴵ*-šu li-iz-qu-up*
36.igi ᵐ*Li*-lugal *ù* uru *E-mar*

1-11. *At the time of Li*(*mi*)-*šarra, son of Ir'ib-Ba'al: the* siphu *fields - 1 iku in length and 1 iku in width, in the midst of which Nergal-ir'amši, his wife, had erected a building -, the fields of Ir'ib-Ba'al, son of Lala -* (*those*) *bordering on the right side with the market place, on the left side with the* huhinnu *street, on the back side with the road of the god Wadha of the city of Tuša'u and on the front side with* (*the property of*) *Dagan-ereš -, his four daughters, together with their jewels, that is, 4000 shekels of silver, 400 shekels of gold:* (*Ir'ib-Ba'al*) *had delivered* (*all of that*) *to the king of the land of the Hurrians.*

12-18. *That way, Ir'ib-Ba'al, son of Lala, on the one hand had satisfied the king of the land of the Hurrians on behalf of the palace, on the other, had returned the four daughters of the king, the 4000* (*shekels of*) *silver* (*and*) *the 400* (*shekels of*) *gold to his city* (*and*) *to his lord, having settled the heavy burden of the hostages* (*that was*) *on his city and on his lord.*

18-24. *Because of the burden of the hostages* (*that was*) *on his city and on his lord, the king and the city of Emar appointed him, his son* (*and*) *his grand-son, his progeny and the progeny of his progeny as* sanga-*priest*(*s*) *of the temple of Nergal of the market place and as superintendent*(*s*) *of the temple.*

25-27. (*Ir'ib-Ba'al will be*) sanga-*priest, superintendent of the* (*temple of*) *Nergal and officer in charge of the burial ceremonies forever.*

28-35. *Nobody should remove him from the temple of Nergal and from his office in the future. If someone removes him, may Dagan, Ninurta* (*and*) *Nergal extinguish his name and his progeny! Let him set a betil in place of his house!*

36. *Witnesses: Li*(*mi*)-*šarra and the city of Emar.*

The text ends with the list of the other witnesses and with the dating formula (ll. 37-45).

3. *The identity of the king of Emar and that of the Hurrian king in the text KŠD 6*

The king of Emar mentioned in KŠD 6 could be the first of the dynasty, Yaṣi-Dagan, who is likely to be partially contemporary of Limi-šarra and of his son Išbi-Dagan.[44] Assuming that Limi-šarra's family has never been a ruling dynasty, both Ir'ib-Ba'al and his sons (including Limi-šarra) may have lived under the reign of Yaṣi-Dagan.

The identity of the "king of the Hurrians" is a subject of debate, as well. According to Skaist, the text KŠD 6 is connected with the so-called *arana*-texts, which record the payment of precious metals "as a tribute (*arana*) of the king" at the time of Limi-šarra's two immediate predecessors, namely Ir'ib-Ba'al and Igmil-Dagan. The king who appears as the recipient of the tribute in all these texts could not be other than a king of Mittani before the conquest of northern Syria by the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I. In fact, around 1325 Suppiluliuma I defeated the kingdom of Mittani, restoring Šattiwaza to the throne as vassal. According to Skaist, from this time on the Hurrians of Mittani were not likely to have been in a position to claim tribute from Emar. However, the event could not be dated after 1258 (during the reign of Pilsu-Dagan or that of Elli), when the Assyrian king Shalmaneser I completely eliminated what remained of the ancient kingdom of Mittani (called Hanigalbat in the Assyrian sources), assimilating it to Assyria.

Accepting Skaist's interpretation, Emar had been ruled by kings even before the conquest of Suppiluliuma I. Since no king of Emar is mentioned until the Hittite Middle Kingdom,[45] one should assume that Emar kingship was established by a king of Mittani. This reconstruction, however, is not consistent with KŠD 6, which records the delivery of hostages by the king of Emar to the king of the Hurrians. It seems that the latter intended to use the hostages to ensure a loyalty that the king of Emar evidently owed to another: probably the Hittite king.

In another text (RPAE 42) Pilsu-Dagan, king of Emar, boasts of having defeated "the troops of the king of the Hurrians". The king mentions his own army, but no Hittite intervention. The Hittites did not intervene even on the occasion of the repression of the conspiracy against Zu-Aštarti, apparently. Both episodes allow to outline a scenario in which it is possible to place the payment of the tribute to the Hurrian king: probably the Hurrian king who besieged Pilsu-Dagan is a successor of the Hurrian king who exacted tribute and hostages from the king of Emar for a certain period of time. The policy of non-intervention maintained by the Hittites in Syrian affairs may have allowed a Hurrian king to exert his power over Emar for some time, between the Hittite conquest of the region and the final elimination of the Hurrians from the political scene by Shalmaneser I around 1258.[46]

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44. Cohen – D'Alfonso 2008, 6 (and n. 12). According to Cohen (2010, 285-286) Yaṣi-Dagan was "a contemporary of Limi-šarra's sons and probably of Limi-šarra's grandson, a certain Zu-Bala".

45. Archi 2014, 142-143.

46. For the political history of Late Bronze Emar, see lately Thames 2020 (where the development of the ritual called *zukru* is connected to political influence), Viano 2023 (from a socio-economic point of view) and Seminara 2024 (based on the 'royal texts').

4. *Critical remarks*

The interpretation of KŠD 6 proposed here does not fit with the theory of the chronological overlap.

Such theory has other weaknesses: Cohen and D'Alfonso, while accepting Skaist's hypothesis of a 'First Dynasty', admit on the one hand that there is no evidence that the members of the family of Limi-šarra have ever been kings and on the other hand that the first king of the alleged Second Dynasty (Yaṣi-Dagan) and Limi-šarra, son of the founder of the alleged First Dynasty (Ir'ib-Ba'al), were roughly contemporary. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the Ir'ib-Ba'al mentioned in the text KŠD 6 lived during the reign of Yaṣi-Dagan.

The reconstruction of Démare-Lafont and Fleming has severely questioned the previous theories, but – in my opinion – has not tied up all the loose ends. First of all, the period of coexistence of the two formats is based on merely theoretical calculations. The texts do not provide any indication about the age of Zu-Ba'la at the time of the events reported in his will and the duration of 15/25 years assigned to each generation is purely theoretical. The coexistence of the two formats is actually demonstrable only in the period between Zu-Ba'la and his son Ba'al-qarrad.

Furthermore, accepting the theory of the two dynasties (corresponding to seven generations), one has to admit that for about a century (from the beginning of the 14th century, that is, from the beginning of the First Dynasty, to the first quarter of the 13th, when the earliest Syro-Hittite texts appeared), only tablets of Syrian format were written at Emar. Assuming that the Syro-Hittite stream of tradition applied to the foreigners residing in Emar, as suggested by Démare-Lafont and Fleming, why was this large part of the population ignored in the Syrian documentation for about a century? Why did it suddenly appear in the Syro-Hittite documentation, just at the beginning of the 13th century? One could admit an extensive immigration in the years prior to that period, but in this case, why did this immigration not leave any trace in the documentation? As a matter of fact, given the position and role of Emar as a hub of trade and commerce since the 3rd millennium, it is unlikely that the city did not host a large community of foreigners even in the period prior to the 13th century. However, the sudden arrival of so many foreigners is hardly consistent with the hypothesis of two distinct legal systems developing within a couple of generations. Finally, if the population had really been so divided on a legal level, the absence of a specific terminology for each of the two communities would be very strange.

Another scenario can be excluded: namely that the earliest Syrian texts (those of the alleged First Dynasty) date back to the 14th century, whereas the other two lots (Syrian texts of the alleged Second Dynasty and Syro-Hittite texts) are roughly contemporary. In fact, Yaṣi-Dagan, the first king of the so-called Second Dynasty, is likely to have been contemporary of Limi-šarra's son, Išbi-Dagan, and his grandson Zu-Ba'la.[47] Given that the third and fourth generation of the (alleged) First Dynasty and the beginning of the (alleged) Second Dynasty overlap, as mentioned above, there should not be any substantial time gap between the two sets of documentation.

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47. Cohen-D'Alfonso 2008, 6.

5. *Conclusions*

Finally, the following conclusions can be drawn:
- Limi-šarra was never king;
- Limi-šarra and the members of his family were rather officials in charge of temples;
- During the Late Bronze Age, Emar was ruled by a single dynasty;
- Setting aside the hypothesis of the two dynasties, the theory of a long duration of the archives is no longer tenable;
- The Syrian and the Syro-Hittite sets of documentation are roughly contemporary.

The Syrian documentation had to be inextricably linked to the local authorities, that is the city and the kingship, and in fact it followed the same destiny, coming to an end at the same time as the fall of the ruling dynasty, which probably occurred around the second half of the 13th century. The Hittite conquerors established the local kingship and laid the foundations for the creation of an administration. The beginning of the Syrian documentation must therefore be dated to the beginning of the 13th century, between the time of the Hittite conquest and the reign of Yaṣi-Dagan (about two generations before Pilsu-Dagan and Elli, contemporaries of Iṣṣur-Dagan who appears in RPAE 201, dated around 1265).

The Syro-Hittite documentation began at about the same time as the Syrian one, but survived the collapse of the local monarchy and lasted until the destruction of the city, dating back to the first quarter of the 12th century. This documentation reflects that part of society that emerged after the arrival of the Hittites. Probably the pivot of this society was represented by the family of the diviner and their school.

6. *Bibliography*

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