

forme (désinence *-um* au second millénaire, désinence *-ate* au premier), ne constitue pas une objection contre cette identification. Dans cette perspective, il est encore plus regrettable que la provenance exacte des tablettes de Bruxelles ne soit pas connue: il doit s'agir d'un tell d'importance moyenne sur le Balih, occupé à la fois à l'époque paléo-babylonienne et à l'époque néo-assyrienne.

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39) **A Satisfying Oath** — *ARM(T) II* : 37 is one of the best publicized Mari letter, not the least because it speaks of a donkey-foal ritual offering. I need here refer only to the latest philological discussion of the document by M. Held, *BASOR* 200 (1970) 32-40: «Ibal-Addu's letter from Ashlakka having reached me, I went to Ashlakka but when they fetched for me a puppy-dog and a goat for the donkey-foal killing (covenant ritual) between the Khana-tribesmen and the land of Idamaras, I feared my lord; I therefore did not give (permission to use) the puppy and goat<sup>(1)</sup>, but I myself had them kill a foal of a she-ass instead. In this way I established peace between the Khana-tribesmen and Idamaras. In Khurrraya – throughout Idamaras in fact – the Khana-tribesmen indeed will be sated, and sated people lack belligerence. My lord should be pleased».

I am interested here in lines 15-18, wherein Ibal-El moves from describing the peace-making ceremony to giving his opinion on what is to follow: *ina hurraya / ina idamaras kališu / hanû išabbī-ma šabi'um / gerēm ul išu*. The rendering given above follows the dictionaries which attach the forms to the verb *šabûm* (*CAD* G, 61; *AHW*, 286b, 1120a, 1229b; Finet, *ALM*, 17 [10a]). Indeed this is confirmed by another occurrence where the verb *šabûm* is construed with grain, *še'um*: X: 31: 15, [4?]; on which see Durand, *MARI* 3, 165 for collation and new rendering; Charpin and Durand, *MARI* 4, 328 for dating.

I think that Ibal-El is here punning, relying on the aural proximity obtaining in verbs best known to us from Hebrew *sābēa*<sup>c</sup>, «to be sated, satisfied» and *šāba*<sup>c</sup>, «to take an oath». True, the latter is usually conjugated in Hebrew in the N stem (but cf. *BDB* s.v.), and the voiceless palatal fricative (š) has a tendency to be represented by the voiceless dental fricative (s) (but cf. *ALM* 18 [11]). However, the logic in Ibal-El's transition from one topic to the other is best explained by his play on verbal roots which is available to his Amorite audience. Otherwise, this shift may seem far-fetched, for we have no reason to believe that the deal Mari struck between the erstwhile enemies is to relieve famine.

Therefore, I would footnote the translation of II: 37: 15-18 with an alternate rendering: «In Khurrraya – throughout Idamaras in fact – the Khana-tribesmen indeed will be under oath (perhaps read *iššabīma*) and people under oath lack belligerence. My lord should be pleased».

(1) Why does Ibal-El fear (or defer to) his lord is still unclear. Perhaps he did not want to be accused of *lêse majesté*, since the sacrifice ought to be done by Zimri-Lim himself. Note that he merely had others – i.e. those immediately affected by the agreement – slaughter the donkey (*hayaram mār atānim anāku ušaqtīl*). Note that outside of Mari the idiom for the covenant making ceremony is ANŠE *mahāšum* (N-stem; *OBTT* 326: 35 [Kraus, *SD* 11, 91 n. 204]) and probably also (*šēp*) *imērim lapātum* (*BaghMitt* 2, 58: iii: 11; 14). It is likely that *imērum* construed with the N of *dākum* (Mari, *RAI* 26, 142: ii: 10, 15) is covenantal, but between gods and kings.

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40) **ARM IV, 20** — *ARM IV, 20* is now better understood thanks to Durand's collations and remarks in *MARI* 5, 206 ff. Durand points out that the writer is Išme-Addu, probably the king of Ashnakkum, rather than Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum. In this he may well be right, although it has to be noted that the vocabulary used in l. 5-7, especially the Mari use of *sehûm* in the stative is so far found only in the Išme-Dagan correspondence (*IV*: 23: 7-10). (The sender is perhaps also the same as the writer of the letter Finet recently published in the *Birots Festschrift*; Finet's copy, however, is against such a reading).

When *IV, 20* was regarded as a product of Samsi-Adad's son, Dossin detected paronomasia within it (cf. *ARMT* V, p. 139 sub No. 72). While Dossin's specific example is no longer plausible, I nevertheless want to point out that ll. 14-16 do contain a pun, playing on the aural similarity which obtains between *ina qātiya* and *ina tikkātiya*. If so, then we may want to understand the phrasing as loose from normal idiomatic requirements and the meaning as hyperbolic. From this perspective, it may be necessary neither to follow the *CAD*'s tortured translation (K, 509) nor accept Durand's brave reshuffling of the signs in l. 14.

The pun itself is sandwiched between two repetitions of *mimma la tanahhid* of lines 12b and 17 and it seems to draw on a tendency to mention items in pairs: two «brothers» (9-10), city and king (10 – according to Durand, although the singular in *salimšu*, is against it), contiguous repetition of «throne» (13). At this point, there is a balance between two separate entities in each of the phrases: