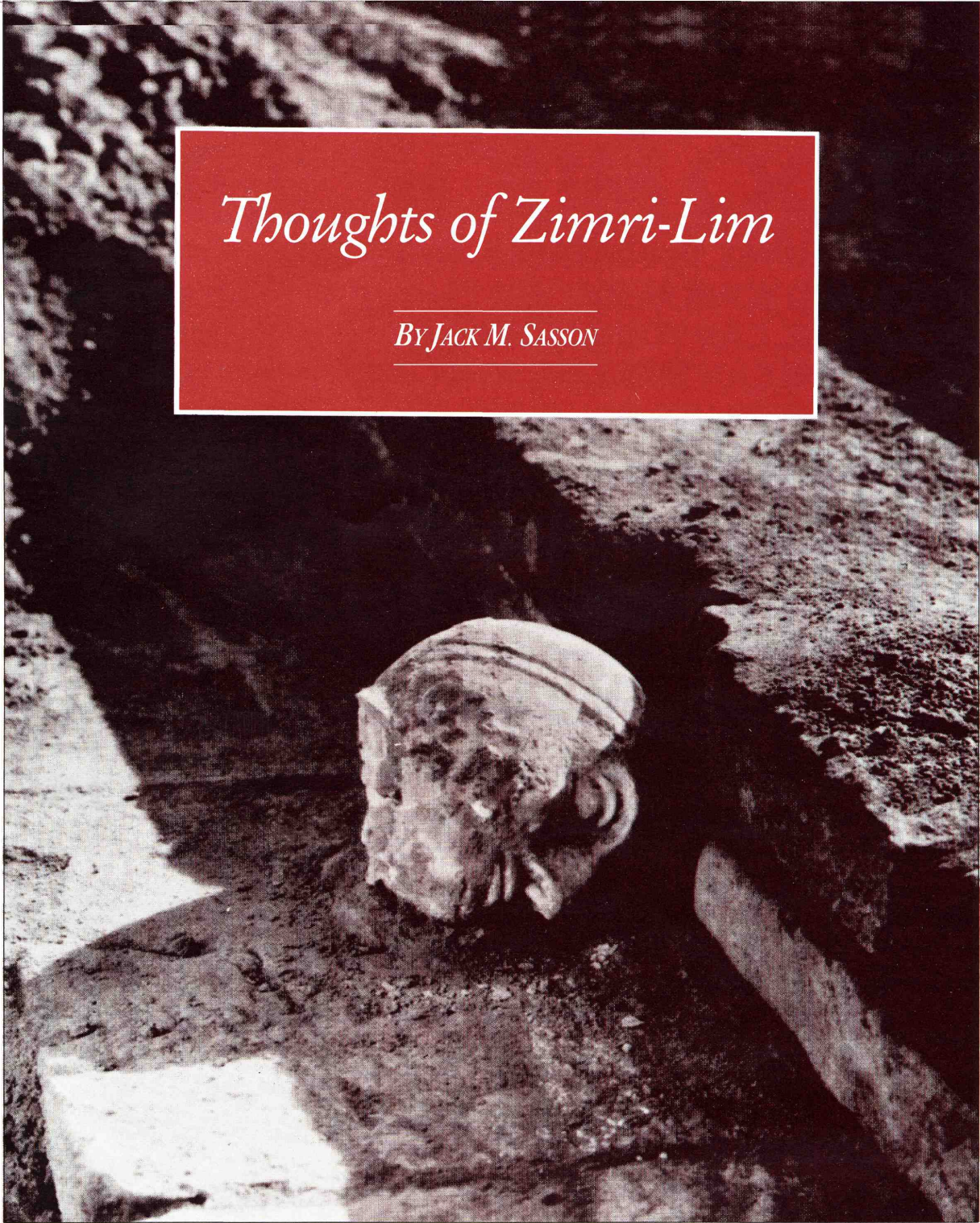


Thoughts of Zimri-Lim

BY JACK M. SASSON



Shrewd historians have come to recognize that recreating the past is essentially an imaginative undertaking in which facts culled from a variety of sources are blended together to form a plausible reality. It is a common verity of the profession, however, that when it comes to reconstructing moments from Mesopotamian life, modern historians have largely failed to invest their narratives with the vision necessary to persuade and command attention. I have therefore elected to reverse the usual mode of inquiry and to offer in the following pages a work in which the facts are available to you in the notes supplied at the end but in which the vision comes from two decades of my immersion in the Mari archives. I hope that you will read this as fictional history (but not as historical fiction) and that you will find the experiment not devoid of didactic benefits. I also hope that you will note the ambiguity of the title and realize that Zimri-Lim's thoughts are, in effect, hardly distinguishable from my own reconstructions.¹

Zimri-Lim paced back and forth in the small reception room to which the Ugaritic emissary would be brought upon touring the palace.² He thought again of the prophecy he had received from Addu-duri.³ Although everyone had told him to ignore it, he kept returning to it. Addu-duri was competent and not prone to hysterics, and the dream she reported was bloodcurdling.

He was suddenly angry with himself for dwelling once more on the old woman's dream, and he stopped to stare at the griffin that had been painted on the wall. Its fierce profile both attracted and repelled him. If he was worried, he told himself, he should look for signs of trouble in his own affairs. If something was wrong, it could be corrected. He began to pace again.

There were no obvious problems. Mari was prosperous. Certainly the metal and leather goods, the clothing, and the weapons she manufactured would continue to find ready markets, and her place as an important station on the great trade route was assured. His wharfmasters were dispatching rich tolls exacted from ships sailing the Euphrates. The political situation also was satisfactory. His vassals in the Upper Country were faithful (although it was tedious keeping track of their changing relationships with each other), and the Benyaminite nomads were no more restless than usual. To the West, relations with Hazor, Qatna, and Yamkhad remained friendly, as did those to the Southeast with Eshnunna and Babylon.⁴

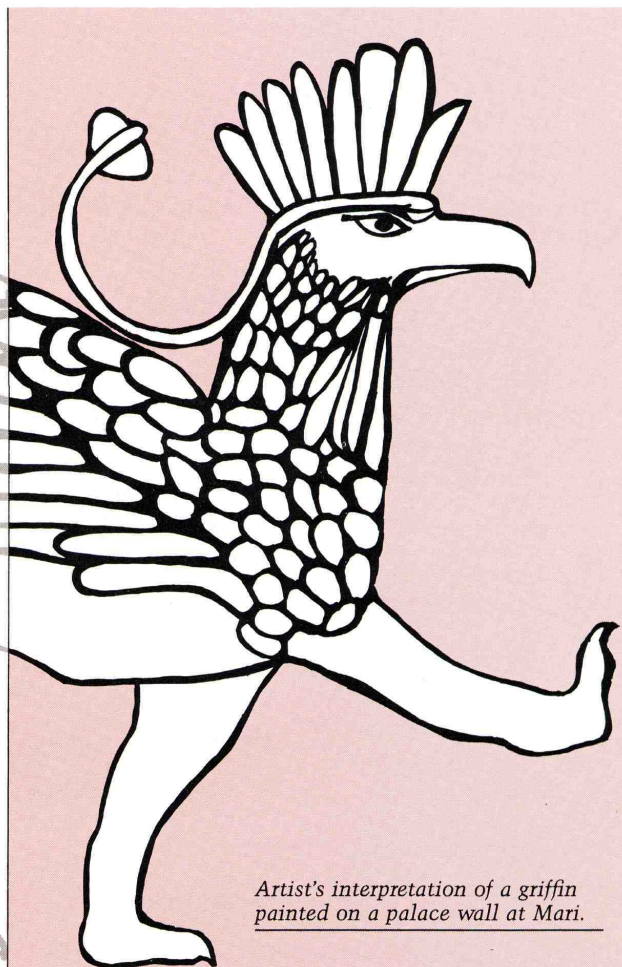
The thought of Yamkhad caused him to slow his pace. Yarim-Lim was still king there, and Zimri-Lim was completely confident of his support; Yarim-Lim was, after all, his father-in-law. But now he was seriously ailing, and the future king, Hammurabi, seemed to favor his namesake in Babylon over Zimri-Lim. Truth to tell, Zimri-Lim no longer really felt like acting as the faithful client.

The changing relationship with Yamkhad was troubling but not, he thought, serious. And one of the reasons he wanted to meet less formally with the emissary from Ugarit was to see what he could learn from him about the latest from Yamkhad. Hammurabi himself had made the request that the emissary from Ugarit be allowed to visit Mari.

Zimri-Lim felt a little better, and he decided to relax on the comfortable divan. If he fulfilled his responsibilities to his people and especially to the gods, he should be all right. He would not make the mistakes his father Yakhdun-Lim had. Once, when he was waiting to get into this very room to see his father, one of his father's vassals, a visiting king, stormed out angrily. Two of his followers were trying very hard to calm him down. When they were almost out of sight he thought he could make out the word "haughty."

Zimri-Lim agreed even then. His father had sacrificed the well-being of Mari to his own vanity—launching battles at

In the preceding papers in this issue, the sound "kh" has been indicated by ḫ, and the sound "sh" by š. In the present paper, these sounds have been spelled out so that readers unfamiliar with the diacritical marks can gain a better sense of the pronunciation of affected words. **Ed.**



Artist's interpretation of a griffin painted on a palace wall at Mari.

Addu-duri's Dream

To properly introduce this dream, recorded in ARM X.50, I need to mention three matters. The first came to light only after I had written my analysis of this dream (Sasson 1983a) and concerns our discovery that Addu-duri died when Zimri-Lim was master of his own house; in fact, at the height of his powers. From this perspective, Zimri-Lim may well have regarded Addu-duri as a Cassandra-like figure, and merely have dismissed the burden of her vision.

The second matter refers to a convention in Mesopotamian as well as, for that matter, Hebrew theology, that holds that gods leave their shrines when they decide to abandon a city to its enemies. Finally, I alert you to the fact that two crucial terms are kept, in my opinion, purposely ambiguous. In the first paragraph, *shulumum*, carries opposite meanings: restoration as well as destruction of a dynasty; in the last paragraph *Tura-Dagan* can be regarded as the name of a previous occupant of Mari's throne or as a full sentence, which appeals to Dagan to return.

Upon presenting her own nightmare, Addu-duri turns hurriedly to a prophecy that confirms the negative thrust of her own nightmare. She then sends along material that will be used by Zimri-Lim's diviner to authenticate the reliability of the dreamer as carrier of divine messages: a lock of her own hair, and fringes of clothing she was presumably wearing when she had her dream.

Since the restoration/destruction of your father's house, I have never had such a dream as this. Previous portents of mine were as this pair.

In my dream, I entered the chapel of the goddess Belet-ekallim; but Belet-ekallim was not in residence! Moreover, the statues before her were not there either. Upon seeing this, I broke into uncontrollable weeping.—This dream of mine occurred during the evening watch!—

I turned around, and Dada, priest of the goddess Ishtar-pishra, was standing at the door of Belet-ekallim's chapel; but a hostile voice kept on uttering: "Return, O Dagan, Return, O Dagan!"; this is what it kept on uttering.

More! A female ecstatic of the goddess Annunitum arose in the temple to announce: "Zimri-Lim! Do not go on a journey; stay in Mari, and I myself will be responsible (for you)."

My lord, therefore, should not neglect his own protection. I have herewith sealed a lock of my hair and fringes of my garment, sending them to my lord.

minor provocations, marching his unhappy armies across hundreds of miles to challenge the deeds of half-forgotten predecessors, memorializing his victories with inscriptions in a vocabulary properly reserved for the acts of immortals, creating cities and naming them after himself. When Yakhdun-Lim heard rumors about his own wife, he humiliated her by setting her outside the palace. He punished allies for imagined slights by abandoning them to powerful Shamshi-Adad of Asshur in the north.⁵

All this tempted the gods — though Yakhdun-Lim never had to face the consequences of his vanity. No. That was left to others. Sumu-Yamam had not been on the throne long when he was struck down by a harem conspiracy, and Zimri-Lim had to flee for his life.

Those were dark times, thought Zimri-Lim. To wait in hiding all those long years while Shamshi-Adad took control and put his son Yasmakh-Adad on Mari's throne was excruciating.⁶

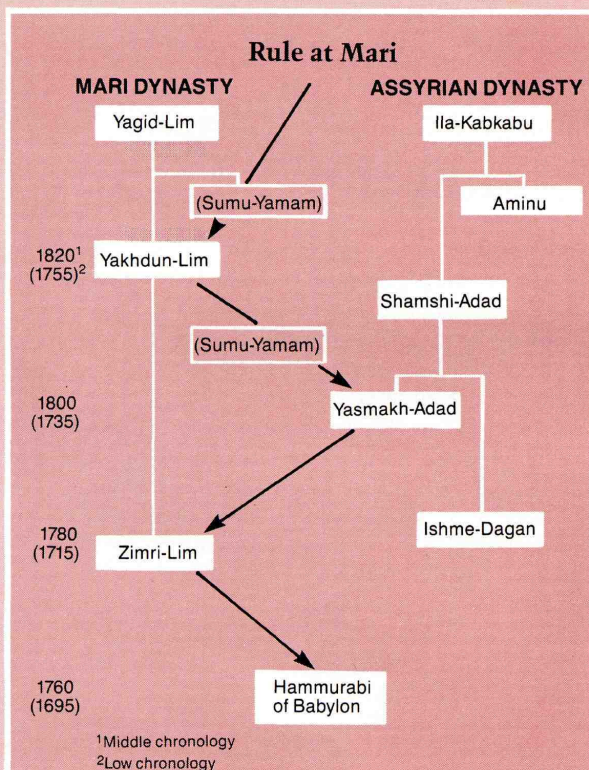
But enough of that! He'd gotten through, and now he was king. He fulfilled his responsibilities. His affairs were clear. The dream meant little — no more than the many others he'd received, most of which foretold good fortune.

At that moment he noticed that his personal secretary Shunukhrakhalu was standing in the doorway. He wondered how long he had been there and he waved him away. Zimri-Lim knew what he wanted to talk about. A few days earlier he had received a letter from Yaqqim-Addu, the provincial governor of Saggartum Province saying that his sister Yamama's husband had drowned.⁷ Zimri-Lim had liked Asqudum; a diviner and an all-purpose palace functionary, he had been useful (and it hadn't been that easy to find a husband for Yamama).

It would be necessary to honor Asqudum with a *kispum* ceremony soon,⁸ but Shunukhrakhalu was concerned lest Zimri-Lim postpone the festival of Ishtar that was soon to take place.⁹ His secretary was a stickler for proper cultic procedure. Zimri-Lim could already hear him arguing that festivals could not be postponed since they were meant to remind the gods, no less than humans, of ancestral covenants. "If we are to hope for Ishtar's fulfilling her part of the pledge," he was likely to say, "we must have our own celebrations and prayers coincide with that particular moment in the past when vows were exchanged between her and us." He could not be stopped from giving his sermons (pedants are rarely stifled), even if one stated his agreement in advance. But because Shunukhrakhalu was cautious and often timid, just to be sure, he would ask that a haruspex be ordered to perform liver divination; and Zimri-Lim would have to participate. He hated the messy procedure passionately. But he would do it.

He stood up and walked back to the wall. He had always had the uncomfortable feeling that the griffin was about to turn and look at him. It was a very effective painting.

Zimri-Lim began to feel impatient. His son-in-law Bakhdi-Lim should have finished showing the Ugaritian around by now. He needn't take him to all two hundred and fifty rooms! His annoyance against him did not last long, though. He liked



Adapted from a chart in volume 10 of *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971).

his son-in-law very much. In fact, he planned to ask him to become majordomo in the palace. He only wished that all the marriages he had arranged for his daughters had worked as well.¹⁰

He thought of Kirum and Shimatum. Marrying them both to Khaya-Sumu of Ilansura had been a mistake, no question. His advisors had warned him of it, but Khaya-Sumu had asked for their hands before concluding a treaty, and Zimri-Lim depended on him to troubleshoot among his inconsistent allies in the Upper Country.

It might have worked, he thought, if Shimatum had not proven so fertile (twins no less!). Kirum's letters had become increasingly strident, and he was beginning to think he would have to ask his wife Shiptu to arrange for Kirum's return lest she do something to hurt herself. She has threatened to do so often!

As bad as they were, however, her letters were no worse than the ones he received from Inib-sharri, whom he had married to Ibal-Addu of Ashlakka. Ibal-Addu was a faithful vassal, but not terribly sensitive. He insisted on favoring his first wife, even in Inib-sharri's presence. Zimri-Lim shook his head.

It hurt him to think of the dowry that his daughters would abandon should they return home. Even Erishti-Aya, who, inspired by her aunt the priestess, had insisted on entering a cloister, was less trouble. Her letters from the Sun-god's establishment in Sippar were always sanctimonious and full of vapid blessings (and lately also resentful comments about Shiptu), but at least these could be ignored.

He was thankful for Inib-shina's marriage to Bakhdi-Lim, and for the good matches he had arranged for his daughters Tispatum and Ibbatum. The former was happily married to Ili-Ishtar of Shuna, the latter to Khimdiya, a rising star at the court of Andariq. But more than anything, he longed for a son. His thoughts easily drifted to his wife of recent years, Shiptu. She is young and healthy, he thought, and one day she will surely bear that son. He remembered well the day when he went northward, just after his splendid victory over the dreary Benyaminites, to meet her father the king of Yamkhad. They each had huge retinues. The father of the bride carried gifts, many coming from as far away as Caphtor in the midst of the Great Sea, but he expected even more from his future son-in-law. Zimri-Lim had worn a splendid tunic from Tunip, many-colored, and embroidered with mythological scenes all along its broad hems. He chose to ride a glossy mule, on that occasion, because he wanted all to know that he was king of the Amorites and not merely a ruler of nomads. Shiptu herself came out from the tent, a mere child, huddled against her nursemaid Zizi. But since then, she had come to take command of the palace, seeing to it that all was well managed when her husband went on his frequent battles or tours of duty. Yet Zimri-Lim knew well that she had come to be much resented for her efficiency, and feared because of her potential for bearing the future prince of Mari.¹¹

But Bakhdi-Lim was now standing at the threshold, and Zimri-Lim motioned him to usher in the emissary from Ugarit.

"How do you find my palace? Yes? Did Bakhdi-Lim show



One of thirty-two clay liver models found in room 108 of the Mari palace. Liver divination involved inspecting an animal's organ for abnormal state, shape, and coloring in order to predict future events. The photograph is used courtesy of Musées Nationaux, Paris.

Trials by the River-god

Although many of the leaders in the Upper Country were vassals of Zimri-Lim, they did not necessarily get along with each other. In the following excerpts from lengthy letters, territorial disputes became so entangled that only recourse to ordeals by the river-god could resolve the situation. The characters that appear in the two texts include: Khaya-Sumu, king of Ilansura, married to two of Zimri-Lim's daughters; Ili-Ishtar, king of Shuna and the land of Shabasim, married to Zimri-Lim's daughter, Tispatum; Shubram, writer of the first letter, king of Susa (not the Elamite city) and the land of Apum, possibly another son-in-law of Zimri-Lim; Ili-Addu, king of Kidukh. The city in dispute is Shunkhum.

The second letter was sent by Meptum, Zimri-Lim's high official. The two letters may be concerned with the same land dispute. The two texts, in transliteration and translation but not in copies, can be found in Bottéro (1981: 1034–44).

First Letter

Formerly, when my lord was in Tadum and when Ili-Ishtar of Shuna wrote my lord concerning Shunkhum: "The city is mine; they seized it by force, and Ili-Addu of Kidukh has been raiding me constantly ever since"—these and much more Ili-Ishtar having written my lord—, my lord summoned me and gave me instructions:

"Ili-Ishtar and his elders, Ili-Addu and his elders, you and the elders of Apum as leaders, ought to get together and have Khaya-Sumu render a decision for all of you. Whatever decision

Khaya-Sumu renders for you, you will have to accept it." This is what my lord instructed me.

When Khaya-Sumu came back here from my lord's presence, according to my lord's instructions, we went to Khaya-Sumu—I and the elders of Apum as leaders, Ili-Addu and his elders—, at a time set by him; but [Ili-Ishtar] did not show up, and did not even send his elders! Instead, he dispatched Zakku, his servant, along with a page. Khaya-Sumu set for us the following conditions:

"[Ili-Ishtar!] If this is indeed your city, two men and two women from Shuna should grasp earth from Shunkhum and plunge in the (divine) River declaring: 'The city is certainly mine, and has indeed been attributed long ago as share to the land of Shabasim; the people of Apum have never ceded it as gift (to us).' They ought to make this declaration and, upon agreeing to plunge, they may take over the city.

Otherwise, two men and two women from Apum should grasp earth from Shunkhum and plunge into the (divine) River declaring: 'The city is certainly Shubram's, and has indeed been attributed long ago as share to the Khanean (tribesmen).' They ought to make this declaration and, upon agreeing to plunge, they may take over the city."

Khaya-Sumu had set for us these conditions. But Ili-Ishtar did not accept the conditions which Khaya-Sumu set for us; instead he decided to pillage the citizens of Apum, raiding instantly whether one travels at dawn or finds night shelter. I have repeatedly written to him, but he does not respond to me or accept the decision. . . .

Second Letter

With regard the plunging-team of Shubram and of Khaya-Sumu which my lord sent to me, I sent trustworthy inspectors with this plunging-team, (and here is my report):

First, they made a woman plunge (into the river); she came out (safely). After her, they made an elder plunge; he went about 40 meters into the (river) God, and came out (safely). After him, they led another woman; she came out (safely). After her, however, the River-(god) covered up a third woman, and since they had established for her the same distance as the elder, 40 meters, but the River-(god) covered up the third woman, the men from Khaya-Sumu's team refused to plunge the remaining three women and formally declared: "The city and the land are certainly yours [Shubram's]!"

The elder then threw himself at the feet of Shubram's men saying: "Do not have the remaining women plunge; they ought not die. We will secure a document of no-contest concerning city and land, and henceforth and evermore, no one will contest the matter. The city and the land are certainly Shubram's."

He dictated a no-contest document before your inspectors, the Babylonian representatives, and the citizens of the (disputed) city. I am now dispatching this team to my lord; my lord may question the plungers. . . .

you my icehouse? I had an Elamite engineer working on it for a full year. I am told—and I can't say that I quite understand it all—that last winter the cool evening air was made to freeze water in a shallow pond so that ice could be cut and stored in deep vaults. No matter, we should be able to have cool sherbets this summer. Well perhaps I'll take you myself.

"I assume all is well in Ugarit? I would like to visit there someday. I'm told it's pleasant on the sea. We have now, as you doubtless know, an agent there, dispensing tin to points south. Have you met him? He goes around with a translator in case he meets with strangers from across the seas.

"You look tired. Have you recovered from your trip? If you didn't sleep well I'd be glad to have my private physician suggest something for you. I'm not sure what—I've never had trouble sleeping—but I know he gave Shunukhrakhalu a potion that was effective. My physician is very well-thought-of, especially since he stopped the spread of a contagious disease recently. He isolated the poor woman, Nanna. She's much better now.¹² Personally, I think he might be a little too quick with the knife. Please let me know if you require anything.

"Let's sit down. You too. No. This isn't Babylon. We're not so formal here. My ambassador there, Ibal-pi-El, tells me that Hammurabi has his scribes preparing a law code for him? Have you heard about this? 'The best code ever.' Good luck to him! Does he not know that such collections are meant only for the gods? But I think them to prefer good deeds over noble words, don't you? Certainly Hammurabi has done good deeds. Did he not make room for one of my daughters in a cloister? Oh, other things too.

"The reason I wanted to talk informally with you today is to tell you why we cannot have a party in honor of your visit. I think you've heard of the death of my sister's husband? Yes. We are all saddened by it. I naturally can't conduct official business at such a time, and soon we will be having the *kispum* of Asqudum. We have these even for nonroyal individuals here. I have ordered it: Loyal and faithful attendants should be so honored. Perhaps you would like to participate. There is nothing to prevent us from having a fine meal during the ceremonies. We have just received fruits from the South, the first pick of the early season. I have already tasted the medlars, which ought to ripen a bit more when spread on the palace's roof. And we have truffles. I admit that I gave Yaqqim-Addu a hard time when he first sent them to me from Saggartum, but Amadugga, the head of the kitchen detail, tells me that they have been pickled successfully. (You like the name Amadugga? It means "Sweet Mama" in Sumerian, you know.) We also have pickled grasshoppers from Assyria, fine wines from Carchemish sent to me by king Aplakhandu, fish roe from the Balikh river, and deer meat stored from last season.¹³ I think you would enjoy taking part, despite, of course, the sadness of the occasion.

"I appreciate your understanding and I sympathize with your hesitation. I would rather forgo all this myself and attend the spring festivals that will soon be breaking out in the villages and in my provincial palaces. Just yesterday I received

the first of the numerous requests I am sure to get to let the gods leave Mari in order to visit their own shrines.¹⁴ I would much rather have the peasants keep their gods where they please, sacrifice when they want, and avoid these yearly plaints to let the gods go home. But I am advised against it. They say it's the best way to guarantee political loyalty. I don't know. I feel that loyalty is assured by honest and fair management on my part; and the gods know that I have striven to act accordingly.

"The paintings on the walls of this room? Yes, they are good. Yasmakh-Adad had some of them done. He did much to decorate the palace. I think it's all his father would permit him to do on his own. The concubines tell me he was kind to the women, though.¹⁵

"Why don't we go see the icehouse now? In passing, I'll show you something that no foreigner has ever seen. I'll take you to the inner walls protecting the royal chambers. They are built to last. The gods themselves swore to protect them eternally."

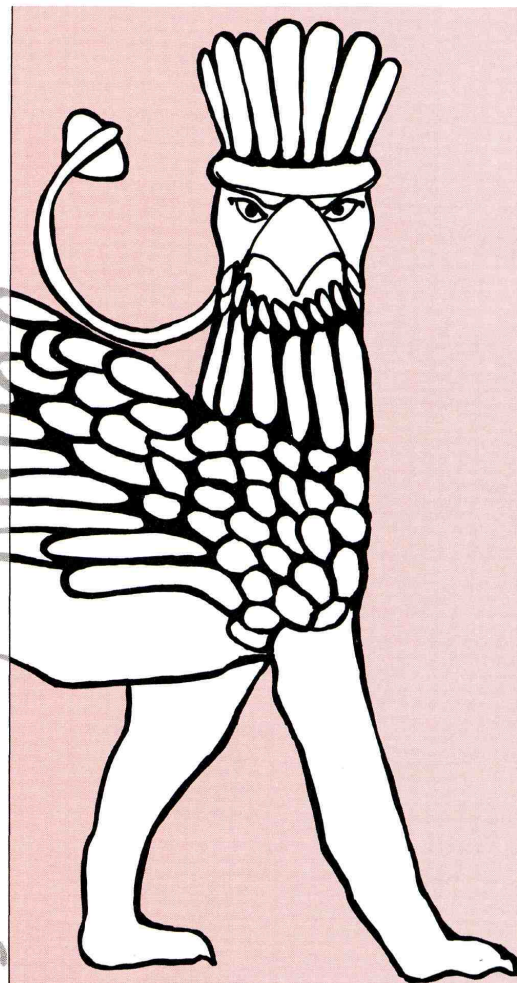
After about ten years Zimri-Lim fell victim to Hammurabi of Babylon. Mari was defeated and its ramparts dismantled within two years; it never again reached the political prestige it had achieved during the preceding millennia. The fate of Zimri-Lim is unknown, but it could not have been enviable. Shiptu and the other women from Mari were probably taken to Hammurabi's palace—entered into the Babylonian's harem, handed over to musicians for dancing instruction, or assigned to weaving establishments. The male population was not left on the site; the men were probably distributed among Hammurabi, his allies, and his officers. Those entering the palace as Hammurabi's private share from the Mari spoils were probably given tasks commensurate with their training, with the majority likely assigned as palace and temple menials. No doubt a few were sold by Hammurabi's merchants as slaves to foreigners.

Notes

¹⁴I have explored these observations in more detail with regard to recreating Israel's premonarchic history (Sasson 1981), as well as that of Mari (Sasson 1984).

Our appreciation of Zimri-Lim's career is undergoing major revisions as a result of recent inspection of the Mari archives. The biographical details heretofore presented had him, still a young man, escaping to Aleppo when Shamshi-Adad successfully fomented a coup against either his father, Yakhdun-Lim, or his brother(?), Sumu-Yamam. In Aleppo, Zimri-Lim is supposed to have married the daughter of the powerful Yarim-Lim and remained with his father-in-law until the death of Shamshi-Adad gave opportunity for regaining his legitimate throne.

It is now more likely that Zimri-Lim may have never lived in Aleppo, and that his marriage to Shiptu, the daughter of Yarim-Lim, occurred when he had acquired control, and indeed had reached the zenith of his power, at Mari. A recent reading of a sealing of a cylinder belonging to Zimri-Lim has also raised the possibility that he too was a usurper, as were so many of his contemporaries. Rolled upon the cover of a letter that belongs



On cloudless winter nights, when air temperature was just above freezing, a properly constructed system could cause ice to form in a shallow pond.

Ice at Mari

During the winter at Mari, air temperature on clear nights was usually only a few degrees above freezing. A properly constructed system could affect conditions so that ice would form. In turn, a proper storage facility could permit its preservation for use during the summer, when temperatures often went above 100° Fahrenheit. The

main component of the system would be a shallow, rectangular pond 10 to 20 meters wide and several hundred meters long. Its long axis would run east-west, and a wall would be built along its south side to a height sufficient to keep the entire width shaded from the low winter sun during ice-making season. There would also be lower walls on the east and west ends to shield the pond from early morning and late afternoon sun.

On cloudless winter nights the pond would be filled with water. The water would lose heat to the sky by radiation; at the same time the walls, blocking off the wind, would reduce the amount normally gained by convection. Under these circumstances, even with the heat gained from the ground by conduction, the net heat loss was sufficient to freeze the water.

The depth to which the water should freeze would vary with the air temperature, although the rate of ice formation could be increased by adding a few centimeters of water at a time throughout the night. The amount of ice produced could also be increased, of course, by employing more than one pond.

On the following day ice could be cut up and stored in the second component of the system: a storage pit presumably 10 to 15 meters deep.

We know quite a bit about ice and its storage from almost a dozen or so Mari citations. While the ancients, it seems, drank their beer warm they, and their gods for that matter, liked nothing better than to chill their wine with ice. And to do so, they built centrally located facilities from which they could convey ice — at night, and in wooden crates or buckets.

We know that Zimri-Lim built such ice-storage facilities in Sagaratum and in Terqa, two cities where the king had palaces. In fact it is likely that all four such provincial capitals, in which the king kept a full-fledged court when away from Mari, housed similar constructions. A text (ARM XIV.25) gives us the dimensions of such a structure: about 6 meters by just less than 12 meters. The construction was elaborate and required specific measures for channeling water within it, apparently in order to keep the temperature below freezing. We know that special expertise and much effort was necessary to successfully complete the task. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Zimri-Lim completed the icehouse (*bit šurīpim*) at Terqa, to the north of his capital, he ordered preparation of the following dedication:

Zimri-Lim, son of Yakh-dun-Lim, king of Mari, of Tuttul and of the Hana-land, builder of an ice-storage facility which never before has any king built on a bank of the Euphrates. He had ice conveyed from [. . .] and he built an ice-storage facility at the bank of the Euphrates, at Terqa, the city well-loved by the god Dagan.

Jack M. Sasson

The ice-making system presented above, which might have been used at Mari, is based on a traditional method used in Iran and described by Mehdi N. Bahadori in his article in *Scientific American* (February 1978, volume 238, number 2, pages 144–54) entitled “Passive Cooling Systems in Iranian Architecture.”

to Zimri-Lim’s early moments on the throne — a letter which, incidentally, was apparently never sent to its destination — is a statement that gives Khatni-[xxx] as the name of Zimri-Lim’s father, and not Yakh-dun-Lim. My own “solution” now is to propose that Yakh-dun-Lim and Khatni-[xxx] are the same person, holding a name with variations on the root *KH.D.N (“to embrace”) as the first of its elements. On all this, see Charpin and Durand, 1984.

²Many unpublished texts from Mari refer to Ugarit, a metropolis that becomes better known to us in documents from the Late Bronze Age, for it was an important commercial depot already in the third millennium B.C.E. Elamite tin, traded through Babylon, was shipped to Ugarit for international transport (Dossin 1970).

The letter carrying a request to visit Mari is published in Schaeffer and others 1939: 16 and 17. It was sent by Hammurabi of Yamkhad later in Zimri-Lim’s reign: “*The Ugaritian wrote to ask: ‘Show me Zimri-Lim’s house so that I can visit (it).’ Now, I am herewith sending this servant to you.*” See also the epigraph to the paper by Gates appearing in this issue of *BA*. I have obviously retrojected this event for dramatic purposes.

³A good English translation of selected prophecies and dreams from the Mari archives is found in Moran (1969). An overview of the Mari dreams is provided in Sasson 1983; in particular see the appendix: 290–92. For Addu-duri’s nightmare, see the text accompanying the present article; this particular prophecy is also given a literary analysis there.

⁴The relationship between Mari and Babylon deserves a special monograph since we have an abundance of sources on the matter. The evidence indicates that Zimri-Lim came to the aid of Babylon on a number of occasions and that Hammurabi likewise sent his troops to support Mari. How and why the relationship soured to the point that Hammurabi came to destroy Mari is a subject of much speculation. We can document the coming crisis through letters, prophecies, diviners’ reports, and administrative records.

ARM II.76 gives an inkling of Mari’s deteriorating friendship with Babylon, as well as glimpses of Hammurabi’s formal court procedures, which followed a strict etiquette and included a code of proper dressing when in the king’s presence. The writer of this letter is a certain La’um. Since there existed a number of persons by that name, two of whom were important officials in the courts of Yasmakh-Adad and Zimri-Lim, this particular letter cannot be securely dated. However, many bureaucrats lived to give service to more than one regime, and our La’um could easily have continued his diplomatic missions under Zimri-Lim.

To clarify this text, one ought to bear in mind that we are dealing with two diplomatic missions: one that came from Yamkhad/Aleppo; and the other from Mari. The second delegation is composed of three separate groups: the diplomats themselves (three persons, including the writer of the letter), delegates, and messengers.

“We proceeded to have a meal before Hammurabi, entering the palace’s chamber, — Zimri-Addu, myself, and Yarem-

Addu. They provided the three of us with formal attire, and they provided attires to all the Yamkhadians who entered with us. However, since all the Yamkhadians got dressed, but the delegates who are servants of my lord had nothing to wear, I protested to Sin-bel-aplim about them as follows:

“Why do you set us apart, as if we were criminals?

Whose servants are we? And the delegates, whose servants are they? Are we not all the servants of our lord?

Why do you stir trouble between right and left groups?”

This is what I said in protest to Sin-bel-aplim, myself quarreling with him. As to the delegates of my lord, they got angry, and stormed out of the palace’s chamber.

They told Hammurabi of the incident. Subsequently, they provided them with attire, and since they got dressed [... Hammurabi addressed me in assembly] as follows:

‘... Why do you continually create difficulties in my presence? Do you imagine you can control my palace in the matter of formal wear? I provide and deny clothing at will! I won’t come back to this affair; I will not provide clothing to the messengers at dinner!’

This is what Hammurabi said to me. My lord ought to know this.”

⁵Our knowledge of Yakhdun-Lim’s reign comes from a few juridical and bureaucratic texts, from his year-name formulae, and, above all, from his monumental inscriptions. I offer a translation of one of these in the text accompanying the present article; a fuller study of this can be found in Sasson 1984. The text of a larger inscription is translated by Oppenheim (1969: 556–57).

Yakhdun-Lim’s reign will be better known when a recently found small archive from his period is published.

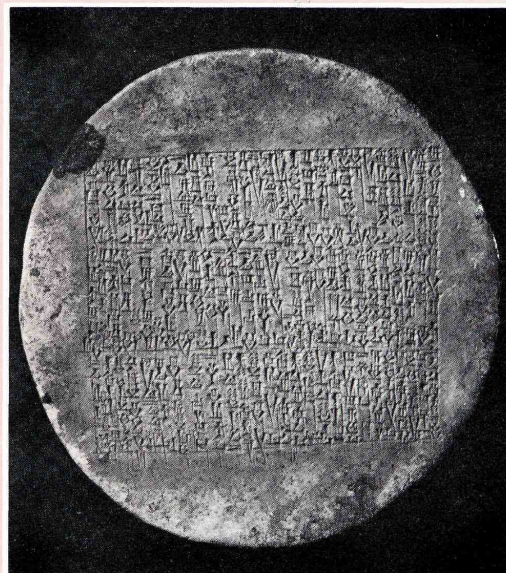
⁶The rule of Yasmakh-Adad, placed on the throne by his father Shamshi-Adad, is well documented through an abundance of published letters; a few hundred more are still awaiting final editing. Recent archaeological and artistic opinions have suggested that Mari reached the apogee of its influence during Yasmakh-Adad’s reign and was actually entering a period of decadence when Zimri-Lim lost power (Parayre 1982).

ARM I.3 is a letter sent by Yasmakh-Adad to an unknown but obviously important god, accusing Yakhdun-Lim and Sumu-Yamam of having broken their oaths and, hence, of deserving the fate that overcame their dynasty. Unfortunately the text contains large gaps and cannot be followed in its entirety. An English translation is given in Grayson 1972: 12 and 13.

Sumu-Yamam’s reign is still in deep shadows, even if we have a few texts dated to his reign. It is interesting that Zimri-Lim’s scribes rarely recall Sumu-Yamam within sequences of Mari’s past leaders.

⁷Asqudum, diviner and all-purpose palace functionary, will become much better known to us as soon as the harvest of texts found in his private villa are published. A good overview of these texts is available in Charpin 1984a. For his role as diviner, see Finet 1965/66. On the art of the diviner, see Starr 1983.

His death is reported in ARM XIV.4, a letter sent by



Inscribed disk of Yakhdun-Lim. Height is 39 centimeters. Used courtesy of Mission archéologique de Mari.

In Praise of Myself: Yakhdun-Lim Builds a City

This text was not recovered from the site where a new city, Dur-Yakhdulim, was to be founded—as would be expected of a foundation inscription; rather, it was found at Mari, in a corner of the palace. Hence it served purposes other than commemorative. This becomes clearer as one reads the second paragraph of the text wherein Yakhdun-Lim praises his own creative urges, failing even to pay lip service to those of the gods.

I have restructured the text in order to bring out the tripartite division of the document, but, as I show in Sasson 1984, each section plays on themes that are shared by all.

*Yakhdun-Lim, son of Yaggid-Lim; king of Mari, Tuttul and the Hana-land;
the powerful king, who controls the banks of the Euphrates.*

*Dagan proclaimed my kingship and gave me a powerful weapon, — “destroyer of kings hostile to me” —, so that
I defeated seven kings — Hanean chiefs — who opposed me, annexing their territory;
I removed the hostile forces from the banks of the Euphrates, and gave peace to my land;*

*I opened canals, thus dispensing with water-drawing
throughout my land.
I built Mari's ramparts and dug its moat;
I built Terqa's ramparts and dug its moat.*

*And in the burnt-field—an arid spot—where not one
king since days of yore founded a town,
Indeed I, feeling like it,
founded a town, dug its moat, calling it “Dur-
Yakhdulim”;
and I opened a canal for it, calling it “Ishim-
Yakhdulim.”
I, therefore, enlarged my country and strengthened
the structure of Mari and of my land,
establishing my reputation for eternity.*

*Whoever discards my commemorations, replacing
them with his own,
such a person,—be he king or governor—,
may Anum and Enlil curse him darkly;
may Shamash snap his weapons and those of his
troops;
may Ashnan and Sumuqan starve his land;
may hostilities close shut the gate of his
country;
may combat persist in his country;
may trouble hound his kingship, daily,
throughout his life;
may Anum and Enlil be evil counsel to him,
forevermore.*



Only the head remains of an alabaster statue representing an unnamed Mari warrior found on the palace stairs near court 148 and room 210. The chin piece shown on this statue is also worn by the warrior that appears in the mural painting from room 132 of the palace. The photograph at the beginning of this article shows the statue head found in situ. Height is 19.8 centimeters. It is now in the Aleppo Museum. Photographs from Mari by André Parrot, Editions Ides et Calendes, CH-Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

Yaqqim-Addu, the provincial governor of Saggaratum Province: “The day after the 20th of the month, the following news reached me: ‘River currents carried away Asqudum from the boat, together with the men who rode with him, and he met his fate.’ I am writing instantly to my lord.

Burqan died along with him; but I have not yet gotten the names of all those who died with him. I will write as soon as I gather the information.

As to his house here, I have given stiff orders to his butlers, that they ought not harm either his slaves or his property.”

⁸On the *kispum* ceremony, see Birot 1980, who gives a bibliography and footnotes. This ceremony, in which the departed are called to memory, was a very important cultic occasion. In Mari, it occurred at least once, sometimes even twice, monthly, with modest amounts of food partaken at one point during the ritual. Normally, the *kispum* was in honor of dead kings, but in Mari we have information that even nonroyal individuals were so honored. It cannot be ascertained whether the dead were recalled during such moments in order to rest their souls in peace (compare the Jewish *kaddish*, in its eventual application) or to prevent their malevolence were they to feel neglected. I suspect that both issues were at stake.

Zimri-Lim received this letter, ARM III.40, from Kibri-Dagan, the governor of Terqa province: “The gods Dagan and Ikrub-El are well; the city of Terqa and (its) province are well. Another matter. On the very same day I send this letter to my lord, the ecstatic of Dagan came here and spoke the following: ‘God sent me! Write the king forthwith and let him present funerary offerings in honor of Yakhdun-Lim’s ghost.’

This is what this ecstatic spoke and I am writing it my lord. My lord may do as it pleases him.”

⁹An English rendering of the elaborate ritual *cum* pageantry presented before Ishtar is given in Sasson 1973a: 153, note 9. The text was published long ago in Dossin 1938. On the art of divination, with many pages devoted to the Mari formulations, see Starr 1983.

¹⁰The daughters of Zimri-Lim, their joys and tribulations, are discussed in Sasson 1973b and in Batto 1974. The roster of such princesses can be almost doubled now. Most of their letters are published in ARM X. See the text accompanying the present article, where Khaya-Sumu is assigned to settle a territorial dispute by means of a river ordeal.

The last article to study the cloister and its institutions, especially the one at Nippur, is Stone 1982. The article is rich in bibliographical details.

A dowry, apparently for a princess, is recorded in ARM XXI.219. Among other items, the list includes three female servants, much jewelry, clothing, furniture, vessels, kitchen utensils and cutlery, and so on.

¹¹Riding a donkey as sign of kingship over urban dwellers is an act attested to as early as the third millennium B.C.E., see Sasson 1976: pages 72 and 73. ARM VI.76 contains the advice offered by Bakhdi-Lim to Zimri-Lim: “May my lord honor his kingship. Since you are the king of Hanean (tribesmen), and also are the king of the Amorites, may my lord not ride horses;

instead, he ought to ride a chariot or mules, so that he could honor his kingship.” Therefore, when Christ entered Jerusalem on a donkey, the population, as well as the authorities, knew how to read the symbolism at stake (Matthew 21).

¹²On preventing the spread of infectious diseases, see ARM X.129, in which Zimri-Lim writes his wife: “I have heard: ‘Nanna has an infection, and since she is often at the palace, it will infect the many women who are with her.’ Now give strict orders: No one is to drink from the cup she uses; no one is to sit on the seat she takes; no one is to lie on the bed she uses, lest it infect the many women who are with her. This is a very contagious disease!”

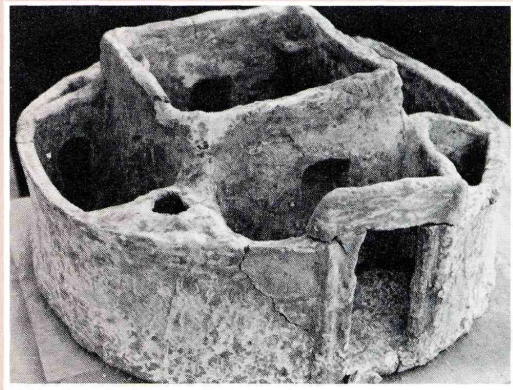
¹³The food at the Mari royal table is discussed within Bottéro’s charming overview of Mesopotamian culinary arts (Bottéro 1982). On the much appreciated spring mushroom, the truffle, and its gathering for the royal table, see ARM XIV.35, written by Yaqqim-Addu: “Ever since I reached Saggaratum five days ago, I have continuously dispatched truffles to my lord. But my lord wrote me: ‘You have sent me bad truffles!’ But my lord ought not to condemn(!) with regards to the truffles. I have sent my lord what they have picked for me....”

¹⁴Yaqqim-Addu writes in ARM XIV.8 to Zimri-Lim: “The mayors of the district took hold of me regarding the gods that are held in the cities of Saggaratum and Dur-Yakhdulim, saying about the matter: ‘It is time for sacrifices; release the gods so that they can offer them sacrifices in their own temple.’ But since I had not asked my lord, I am not releasing the gods. May my lord write me whether the gods are to be conveyed to the villages or not, this or that, so that I could follow my lord’s order.”

¹⁵On the harem of Zimri-Lim, Durand’s recent study in 1984 demonstrates the well-known phenomenon that new rulers enjoyed the harem of the dethroned. Note how Absalom treated his father’s concubines, although he undoubtedly went too public in pressing his temporary advantage (2 Samuel 16:20–23). Reuben’s curse (Genesis 49:3–4) evokes his premature usurpation of his father’s concubine (and Rachel’s maidservant) Bilhah (Genesis 35:22).

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A house model found at Mari. Jean Margueron believes that in spite of its circular plan, the model reproduces the normal plan of local habitations. The higher central section of the model is thought to indicate the existence of a roof. Photograph is used courtesy Mission archéologique de Mari.



This seated statue of a temple superintendent, Ebi-il, was found in the pre-Sargonic Ištar Temple at Mari. An inscription carved into the shoulder of this alabaster statue is one of the earliest known votive inscriptions in the Semitic language. The man is shown in the attitude of a worshipper; his wide-open eyes are inlaid shell and lapis lazuli set in bitumen. Although his head is shaved he wears a full beard whose curls are meticulously stylized and reveal the use of a drill—a hallmark of Mari sculpture. His upper body is shown naked, but from the waist down he wears the kaunakes garment which some scholars believe was woven to simulate sheepskin. It is 52.5 centimeters high and is in the Louvre. Mission archéologique de Mari, tome 65, plate XXVII.



Portrait of a king from the mural in room 132 of the palace. Although the king's identity is uncertain it may represent Zimri-Lim. The ruler is shown in the ritual act of pouring libation before a god.

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