



**History of the Ancient Near East / Studies - Vol. IX**

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**History of the Ancient Near East / Studies - Vol. IX**

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**FOOD AND IDENTITY**  
**IN THE ANCIENT WORLD**

**Edited by**  
**Cristiano Grottanelli and Lucio Milano**

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**S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria**  
**Padova 2004**



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	R.F. Harper, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i> , Chicago 1892-1914.
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i> .
AHw	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Wiesbaden 1959-1981.
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> .
AMT	R. Campbell Thompson, <i>Assyrian Medical Texts</i> , Oxford 1923.
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , Berlin.
AntAfr	<i>Antiquités africaines</i> .
ARM	<i>Archives royales de Mari</i> (= TCL 22-31), Paris.
ARMT	<i>Archives royales de Mari, Textes</i> , Paris 1950– .
ASNP	<i>Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa</i> .
BAM	F. Köcher, <i>Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen</i> , I-VII, Berlin 1963– .
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i> .
BibMes	<i>Bibliotheca Mesopotamica</i> .
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i> .
BM	Inventory number of the tablets in the British Museum, London.
Bo	Inventory number of Boğazköy tablets excavated in the years 1906-1912.
BRM	<i>Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan</i> , New Haven 1917– .
BSAg	<i>Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture</i> .
BWL	W.G. Lambert, <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> , Oxford 1967.
CAD	<i>The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary</i> , Chicago.
CH	<i>Cahiers d'histoire</i> .
ChSI	V. Haas - M. Salvini - I. Wegner - G. Wilhelm (eds.), <i>Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler</i> . I. Abteilung. <i>Die Texte aus Boğazköy</i> , Roma.
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i> .
CTN	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud</i> , London 1972– .
DHA	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne</i> .

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DJD	AA.VV., <i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (of Jordan)</i> , Oxford 1955– .
Diocles	<i>Diocles of Carystus</i> , ed. Ph. van der Eijk, Leiden 2000.
EV	<i>Enciclopedia virgiliana</i> .
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , Berlin 1923-1958.
GCCI	R.P. Dougherty, <i>Goucher College Cuneiform Inscriptions</i> , New Haven 1923-33.
GIF	<i>Giornale italiano di filologia</i> .
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i> .
IGLS	L. Jalabert <i>et alii</i> , <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de Syrie</i> , Paris 1929– .
ILAlg	St. Gsell <i>et alii</i> , <i>Inscriptions latines d'Algérie</i> , Paris 1922-2003.
ILS	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , Berlin 1892-1916.
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society (of the Columbia University)</i> .
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> .
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i> .
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Voor-Aziatisch-Egyptisch-Genootschap</i> .
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i> .
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i> .
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> .
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> .
JSS	<i>Journal of the Semitic Studies</i> .
KAR	E. Ebeling, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts I/II (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 28, 1919; 34, 1923)</i> , Leipzig – Berlin.
KBo	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköy</i> , Leipzig – Berlin 1916– .
KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköy</i> , Berlin 1921– .
LAS	S. Parpola, <i>Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Part I: Texts (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 5/I)</i> , Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970.
LAS II	S. Parpola, <i>Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Part II: Commentary and Appendixes (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 5/III)</i> , Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1983.
MARI	<i>Mari, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</i> .
MD	<i>Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici</i> , Pisa.
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome, Antiquité</i> .
MSL	<i>Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon</i> , Roma 1937– .



MusAfr	<i>Museum africanum.</i>
NABU	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires.</i>
OBTR	S. Dalley – C. Walker – J. Hawkins, <i>Old Babylonian Texts from Tell al Rimah</i> , London 1976.
OECT	<i>Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts.</i>
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung.</i>
Oppert 1	J. Oppert – J. Ménant, <i>Documents juridiques de l'Assyrie et de la Chaldée</i> , Paris 1877.
PNA	<i>The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> , Helsinki 1998– .
<i>Pyr. Texte</i>	<i>Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte</i> , herausgegeben und erläutert von Kurt Sethe, Leipzig 1918-1922
QAL	<i>Quaderni di archeologia della Libia.</i>
QS	<i>Quaderni di storia.</i>
RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale.</i>
RE	G. Wissowa (hrsg.), <i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischer Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart – München 1893-1978.
REJ	<i>Revue des études juives.</i>
RES	<i>Revue des études sémitiques.</i>
RHPPhR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses.</i>
RIMA	<i>The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods</i> , Toronto 1987– .
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i> , Berlin – New York 1928– .
RLAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , Stuttgart.
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân.</i>
SAA	<i>State Archives of Assyria</i> , Helsinki 1987–
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin.</i>
SCO	<i>Studi classici e orientali.</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.</i>
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> , Paris 1969.
SP	Sumerian Proverbs, as edited by B. Alster, <i>Proverbs of Ancient Sumer</i> , Bethesda 1997.
StBoT	<i>Studien zu den Boğazköy Texten</i> , Wiesbaden.
STT	O. Gurney – J. Finkelstein, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> , I / II, London 1957, 1964.
TB	<i>Babylonian Talmud.</i>
TCL	<i>Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre</i> , Paris.
TDP	R. Labat, <i>Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux</i> , Leiden 1951.

<i>Textes des Sarcophages</i>	<i>Les textes des sarcophages égyptiens du Moyen Empire</i> , introduction et traduction de P. Barguet, Paris 1986.
Theth	<i>Texte der Hethiter</i> , Heidelberg.
Urk.	<i>Urkunden des aegyptyschen Altertums</i> , zweite Abteilung, Heft 3 ( <i>Hieroglyphische Ukunden der griechischen-römischen Zeit III</i> , bearbeitet von Kurt Sethe), Leipzig 1916.
VAS	<i>Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der königlichen Museen zu Berlin</i> , Berlin.
VDI	<i>Vestnik drevnej istorii</i> .
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i> .
YOS	<i>Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts</i> , New Haven.
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie</i> .

## INTRODUZIONE

Il tema dell'identità è di moda. Nel momento in cui abbiamo cominciato a pensare a un seminario sui valori culturali dell'alimentazione nel mondo antico, questo fatto è stato per noi un deterrente piuttosto che un incentivo, soprattutto perché conoscevamo certe interessanti e recenti reazioni contro questa moda, come il libro di Francesco Remotti, *Contro l'identità* (1996). Ma quel tema ci si è imposto subito, nonostante la nostra diffidenza, semplicemente perché esso è ineludibile quando ci si trovi a trattare le problematiche del cibo e del gusto in una prospettiva antropologica. La diffidenza ci è servita, semmai, perché ci ha indotto a concepire l'identità in una maniera problematica, usandola come perno di un ventaglio ampio di questioni legate alle modalità, alle funzioni, alle valenze economiche, alle forme sociali del bere e del mangiare.

L'esempio più chiaro della complessità delle valenze identitarie del cibo ce lo fornisce proprio il saggio che si distingue dal complesso del volume perché riguarda un'area culturale — quella cinese — diversa dal mondo mediterraneo e vicino-orientale. Marco Ceresa mostra quanto semplicistica sia l'idea di un rifiuto e di un disgusto del latte e dei latticini da parte dei Cinesi, che, secondo quel popolo, ma anche secondo gli occidentali, avrebbe costituito da sempre un elemento di identificazione. In realtà, l'avversione dei Cinesi nei confronti del latte, molto meno diffusa e sistematica di quanto non si pensi, e certamente non dovuta a carenze fisiologiche di quel popolo, deriva da complessi fattori socio-politici che l'autore ci descrive.

In un seminario su cibo e identità, parlare di divieti alimentari è d'obbligo, e quindi numerosi contributi includono questo argomento, anche se — ne siamo ben consapevoli — molti casi importanti di divieti sono stati tralasciati. Ci siamo sforzati tuttavia di concedere altrettanto, se non maggiore, spazio alla problematica più ampia delle scelte alimentari, e di mettere in risalto le forme molteplici dei divieti e il modo complesso in cui essi si combinano con altri fattori identitari. Soprattutto, abbiamo mirato a valorizzare il fatto che l'identità è conseguita non mediante puri e semplici tabù, bensì attraverso sistemi coerenti e modelli complessi.

Il contributo di Francis Schmidt si concentra sulle regole di consumo carneo secondo la legislazione di Qumran, viste come un aspetto fondamentale del rito religioso e della sua organizzazione spaziale. Quella legislazione allontana l'area di macellazione e di consumo profani dall'area di macellazione e di consumo delle carni sacrificali. Si tratta di una separazione — o meglio di una gerarchizzazione — che rappresenta una delle espressioni rituali dell'estensione dell'elezione sacerdotale al complesso della città santa — e non ancora, come avverrà nella legislazione rabbinica, all'intero popolo di Israele.

Il divieto, così diffuso, della carne suina è affrontato da Stefano de Martino per l'Anatolia ittita e da Cristiano Grottanelli per il Mediterraneo antico, fra il mondo ebraico ed egizio da un lato, e quello greco e romano dall'altro. In Anatolia, secondo de Martino, sono attestate due diverse tradizioni: mentre nel Sud-Est il maiale sembra essere stato vietato, nella parte centrale della penisola il suo consumo è attestato in occasione di festività religiose, prevalentemente nelle fasi più antiche della storia ittita. La progressiva messa al bando delle carni suine potrebbe essere in rapporto con l'influenza di costumi hurriti. Grottanelli si sforza di mostrare che, dai tempi di Erodoto all'età imperiale romana, una ricca letteratura descrive in greco e in latino il rifiuto della carne di maiale da parte degli Egiziani e degli Ebrei. È possibile rintracciare in quei testi una serie compatta di temi ricorrenti, che non trova riscontri nelle tradizioni ebraiche (bibliche e talmudiche) ma somiglia a quella che trovano nelle culture vicino-orientali antiche, specie mesopotamiche, che non vietavano il consumo del porco — come d'altronde non lo proibiva la cultura egiziana di età faraonica.

Il confronto fra usanze e divieti di comunità diverse in contatto fra loro nell'ambito del mediterraneo antico è il tema scelto da Philippe Borgeaud, studioso della religiosità greca antica, e da John Scheid, specialista del mondo religioso romano. Pur partecipi di una tradizione metodologica comune, i due autori affrontano in modo diverso il problema della comparazione. Per Borgeaud, esiste nell'antichità una riflessione comparatista che riguarda le pratiche rituali e in più in particolare i divieti. L'obiettivo della ricerca di quello studioso è una rilettura ed un uso ragionato di tale tradizione comparativa antica in funzione di un comparativismo critico moderno. Un esempio interessante egli lo trova nell'incrocio di divieti, fra Egizi, Greci ed Ebrei, che è possibile ricostruire in base a passi di Erodoto, della Genesi e di altri testi, greci ed egiziani. Per Scheid, il punto di partenza è la negazione di una categoria universale definibile "divieto alimentare", omologa alla negazione delle categorie "sacrificio" e "banchetto":

semmai, egli afferma, merita attenzione il modo antico di costruire un sistema di opposizioni culturali che si basa sull'interpretazione di dettagli del comportamento, anche alimentare. Il divieto alimentare era utilizzato nel quadro di opposizioni destinate a esprimere determinati aspetti di una funzione sociale, di una divinità, di una situazione rituale, senza peraltro "creare una specifica identità culturale e culturale". D'altra parte, "a Roma esisteva un certo numero di divieti che riguardavano o un alimento, o la partecipazione ai riti e ai banchetti sacrificali. Quello che è vietato non è mai un alimento in quanto tale, ma una modalità di consumazione di questo alimento" (che si configurava come divieto o come privilegio). "Questi divieti e questi privilegi costruivano, a modo loro, l'identità civica e sociale" del cittadino romano.

L'intervento di Stefania De Vido coniuga scelte alimentari e identità in modo ancora diverso rispetto ai contributi che abbiamo considerato finora. A partire da Erodoto, una duplice differenziazione fra usi alimentari contrappone da un lato i Greci ai Libi — che si configurano come un universo multiforme — e dall'altro gli uomini alle donne: "nelle colonie greche di Libia, le donne non mangiano carne, e non mangiandone dichiarano una differenza che pur attraverso una negazione è letta da Erodoto come un frammento ancora attivo di una specifica identità". Claudia Antonetti presenta le concezioni elleniche relative alla fauna marina: i pesci di cui i Greci antichi si nutrivano erano considerati animali ctonii, caratterizzati da valenze erotiche e consacrati o associati a specifiche divinità. Per molti di essi, identificati come "pesci sacri", valevano in determinate occasioni proibizioni alimentari, come quelle che caratterizzavano il comportamento degli iniziati ai Misteri Eleusini; mentre era generalmente accettato che situazioni di necessità potessero condurre alla trasgressione dei divieti. Come notato anche (ma in una diversissima prospettiva) da Philippe Borgeaud, certi comportamenti accomunano, per esempio, Egiziani e Pitagorici, ma con differenti — e spesso opposte — giustificazioni.

Accanto a questi interventi che si incentrano soprattutto su divieti, o almeno ne trattano, altri mettono a fuoco differenziazioni di classe, particolari modi o occasioni di confezione e di consumo di alimenti, criteri di partizione e di distribuzione di certi cibi. Jack Sasson si occupa del "pasto del re" (*naptan šarrim*) nella città di Mari in epoca paleobabilonese, indagando sugli ingredienti, sulla tecnologia alimentare e sugli aspetti più propriamente identitari, come l'etichetta, il complesso cerimoniale del banchetto, e i rapporti fra questo e le pratiche sacrificali. Nel rituale della tavola regia "intorno ai pasti

sacramentali offerti dal re, erano messi in scena elaborati codici di comportamento, il cui fine principale era l'inclusione delle persone ritenute meritevoli di far parte della sua cerchia, ma insieme l'esclusione di coloro che non si credevano meritevoli". In questi pasti, determinati comportamenti (come quelli che emergevano nell'uso del lessico della parentela per indicare i rapporti all'interno della corte) esprimevano la gerarchia interna.

Mark Geller propone un confronto tra il modo di trasmettere informazioni sulla dieta nel Talmud babilonese e quello in uso nei trattati medici greci, dalla letteratura ippocratica a Galeno. Mentre nei testi greci si trovano consigli dietetici suggeriti sulla base delle stagioni, degli alimenti e delle condizioni fisiche dei pazienti, la tradizione babilonese che è alla base di quegli scritti talmudici non prende in considerazione né la salute fisica né un sistema di divieti, ma si basa su una serie randomica di singole associazioni fra alimenti, divinità e occasioni culturali, valide caso per caso. All'ambito babilonese, soffermandosi sulla letteratura cuneiforme, fa riferimento anche Lucio Milano. Esaminando un famoso testo in cui si descrivono ricette burlesche, egli ne mette in evidenza l'ambiguità. La struttura delle ricette rivela infatti una sapiente associazione tra cibi commestibili e non commestibili o addirittura ripugnanti, combinando in modo insieme comico e creativo i paradigmi dei saperi culinario, medico e magico.

I contributi di Paola Corò e di Ettore Cingano affrontano il tema della distribuzione di carni di animali sacrificati, mettendone in risalto il valore onorifico, in ambiti molto diversi. Corò studia casi di assegnazione di porzioni di carne nel quadro del sistema di prebende in vigore nella Babilonia di età seleucide, sottolineandone, accanto alle valenze economiche, la funzione di identificatore di rango sociale. Cingano discute il gesto dei figli di Edipo che, in un noto frammento della *Tebaide*, tentano di disonorare il padre attribuendogli una porzione spregevole e suscitandone l'ira. Mentre ciascuno di questi due interventi si concentra su un contesto molto specifico, facendo emergere il valore identitario delle porzioni dal punto di vista della struttura sociale, Simo Parpola mette in gioco il rapporto fra diverse identità linguistiche e culturali — l'assira, l'aramaica, l'iranica — nell'ambito del Vicino Oriente. La destinazione dei resti dei banchetti regali e divini — quelli donati da Ciro ai cortigiani, quelli concessi dal re assiro ai suoi funzionari, e quelli attestati da un *corpus* di tavolette relative al culto del dio Aššur — delinea modalità di attribuzione cerimoniale e di selezione sociale di cui Parpola sottolinea la continuità dalla cultura assira a quella della Persia achemenide.

\* \* \*

I testi raccolti nel volume sono versioni rielaborate dei contributi presentati e discussi in occasione del Convegno *Scelte alimentari e identità nel mondo antico*, che si è tenuto a Venezia presso il Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità e del Vicino Oriente dell'Università "Ca' Foscari" nei giorni 27 e 28 marzo 2000. Nel frattempo, alcuni dei partecipanti hanno pubblicato lavori che approfondiscono in vario modo i temi qui trattati e che ci sembra utile ricordare. Philippe Borgeaud ha continuato ad occuparsi di comparazione antica e moderna nell'intervento "Una disciplina da costruire: la storia (comparata) delle religioni antiche", presentato a un convegno torinese (aprile 2001), intitolato *La storia comparata delle religioni*, organizzato da Giovanni Filoramo e da Natale Spineto, i cui atti sono stati recentemente pubblicati come fascicolo 6 della rivista *Storiografia* (2002): il contributo di Borgeaud è alle pp. 3–12. Uno sviluppo ulteriore, anzi un importante punto di arrivo di queste riflessioni si trova nel libro appena uscito dello stesso Borgeaud, *Aux origines de l'histoire des religions*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2004. John Scheid è tornato sui rituali degli stranieri nell'antica Roma e sugli aspetti identitari del modo di sacrificare dei Romani nella sua *Leçon inaugurale* del 7 febbraio 2002 (Collège de France, Paris 2002), specie alle pp. 14–19. Francis Schmidt sta curando, con Stella Georgoudi e con Renée Koch Piettre, gli atti di un seminario parigino del 2001 sul sacrificio: *La cuisine et l'autel. Le sacrifice en question dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études – Section des Sciences Religieuses)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, dove pubblica un contributo dal titolo "L'espace sacrificiel dans le Judaïsme du Second Temple", incentrato su temi analoghi a quelli trattati nel presente volume. Sul rapporto fra sacrificio e cibo carneo, Cristiano Grottanelli è nuovamente intervenuto con "Uccidere per l'ospite. Cerealicoltura e 'doppio regime'", in *Donum Natalicium. Studi in onore di Claudio Saporetti in occasione del suo 60° compleanno*, a cura di P. Negri Scafa e P. Gentili, Roma, Borgia Editore, 2000, pp. 123–146; e Lucio Milano ha trattato temi analoghi in "Aspects of Meat Consumption in Mesopotamia and the Food Paradigm of the Poor Man of Nippur", in *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 12 (1998) [uscito nel 2001], pp. 111–127. Sul tabù alimentare relativo alla commistione di carne e latte Jack Sasson si sofferma nel saggio: "Ritual Wisdom? On 'Seething a Kid in its Mother's Milk'," in Ulrich Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf (eds.), *Kein Land für sich allein. Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnári für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag*

(OBO 186), Freiburg, Universitätsverlag, 2002, pp. 294–308. Vogliamo infine segnalare, tra gli studi che Mark Geller sta dedicando in questi anni alla problematica dei rapporti tra la tradizione medica mesopotamica e quella greca, un suo recente contributo dal titolo “West Meets East: Early Greek and Babylonian Diagnosis”, in *Archiv für Orientforschung* 48–49 (2001–2002), pp. 50–75.

\* \* \*

A conclusione di queste note non ci rimane che esprimere il nostro ringraziamento a quanti — relatori e partecipanti al Convegno veneziano — hanno voluto contribuire al comune pasto con una loro personale ricetta. Vogliamo anche ringraziare chi non ha potuto consegnarci un testo scritto, come Carmine Ampolo, Emanuele Ciampini, Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, Francesca Pullia e Paolo Scarpi (animatore, quest’ultimo, del gruppo di *Homo Edens*, da tempo impegnato sul versante della storia alimentare). Anche gli Assiri dicevano nei loro rituali “il pasto è servito”, ben consapevoli del fatto che un successivo pasto sarebbe stato necessariamente uguale, e nonostante tutto diverso, da quello appena servito. Oggi le scelte alimentari continuano ad influenzare potentemente atteggiamenti culturali, in funzione, a seconda dei casi, identitaria o anti-identitaria. Per quanto ci riguarda, pensiamo che studiare i meccanismi di queste scelte e ricostruirne i processi formativi sia il nostro, personale, modo di mangiare “con giudizio”. Così continueremo a fare, certi che un prossimo libro dovrà essere molto diverso da questo.

Cristiano Grottanelli

Lucio Milano



## THE KING'S TABLE

### FOOD AND FEALTY IN OLD BABYLONIAN MARI <sup>1</sup>

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The theme I am exploring is about the disbursement and ceremonial consumption of food in a city that lost its primacy around 1760 BCE. The topic is deceptively accessible to us. First, because the archaeological reports on the excavations at Tell Ḥariri, the site of ancient Mari, include reference to kitchen installations in a palace of large

1. Aside from abbreviations that are commonly employed in Assyriological studies, the following are also relevant: FM 1 = J.-M. Durand (ed.), *Florilegium marianum*, *Recueil d'études en l'honneur de Michel Fleury* (*Mémoires de N.A.B.U.* 1), Paris, 1992; FM 2 = D. Charpin – J.-M. Durand (eds), *Florilegium marianum*, 2. *Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Maurice Birot* (*Mémoires de N.A.B.U.* 3.), Paris 1995; FM 3 = D. Charpin – J.-M. Durand (eds), *Florilegium marianum*, 3. *Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Marie-Thérèse Barrelet* (*Mémoires de N.A.B.U.* 4), Paris 1997; FM 4 = N. Ziegler, *Florilegium marianum*, 4. *Le Harem de Zimri-Lim* (*Mémoires de N.A.B.U.* 5), Paris 1999; LAPO 16-18 = J.-M. Durand, *Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari*, 1-3 (*Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient*, 16-18), Paris 1997-2000; CEO 8 = “La religión en Siria durante la época de los reinos amorreos según la documentación de Mari”, in P. Mander – J.-M. Durand, *Mitología y Religión del Oriente Antiguo*, II/1, *Semitas Occidentales (Ebla, Mari)* (*Estudios Orientales*, 8), Sabadell 1995, pp. 127-533.

proportion.<sup>2</sup> Second, because the extensive administrative archives uncovered there track the handling of food products and because the letters exchanged mostly among the elite refer to the taking of meals. Yet, while the archives yield extensive information on the raw ingredients, on the personnel that processed them into food, and on the tables that received them, they do not help us to measure how satisfied were the appetites, eye, and stomach, of their consumers. Opinions on the caliber of meals are indeed embedded in our letters; but on close inspection, they prove only tangentially enlightening. Thus, when

2. The largest discussion about the “kitchens” in the palace of Mari is in Jean Margueron’s *Recherches sur les palais mésopotamiens de l’âge du Bronze (Institut français d’archéologie du Proche Orient. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique, 107)*, Paris 1982. He reports on sectors “O”, and “P”, of the palace, often taken to be food service areas, because of ovens found in room 70 and the many fragments of jars; see especially pp. 244-256 and 351-352. There are interesting remarks on the same areas in J. Margueron – B.P. Muller – M. Renisio, “Les appartements royaux du premier étage dans le palais de Zimri-Lim”, *MARI* 6 (1990), pp. 433-451. Yet, the likelihood is that throughout the palace, not to say also in areas adjacent, there were spaces reserved for the preparation of diverse foods and drinks. In a study, “L’apport de l’observation ethnographique à la compréhension des monuments anciens: Palais de Mari et palais actuels du Proche-Orient”, *MARI* 4 (1985), pp. 347-374, O. Aurenche points out that in the palaces of recent times, kitchens are decentralized in function (cooking, sweets-making, coffee-making) and therefore decentralized in location. They are likely to be found on diverse floors and are allocated to major segments of the palace, for example areas for reception, areas for presentation, and areas for habitation. In Mari, however, there is only slight evidence for the shuffle of (hot) meals among diverse areas of the palace; see Ziegler, *FM* 4, p. 107; note also her citation of remarks by Leïla Hanoum, p. 107 n. 632. In fact, in our Mari documentation, it is difficult to isolate vocabulary for cooking spaces. There is textual evidence of provision storage throughout the palace (for example oil in courts 131 and 106). One of the most striking observations to be had from careful reading of J.-M. Durand’s “L’organisation de l’espace dans le palais de Mari: le témoignage des textes”, in E. Lévy, *Le Système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 19-22 juin 1985 (Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antiques, 9)*, Leiden 1987, pp. 39-110 is the heterogeneous usage of space in the palace, even for rooms with seemingly specific names: thus, the *bīt mayālim*, which transparently should be a “bedroom” turns out to store grain and precious stones (pp.61-71); in the *é.uzu (bīt šīrim)*, “room for meat”, [but read *bīt nasrim*, “room for pegs”, by the CAD N/2, p. 31] occurred the handling of metal (pp. 75-78); bitumen was apparently neither stored nor transacted in the *é (bīt) kuprim* (pp. 77-80). Therefore, it would be prudent to suggest that how to define a kitchen and where to locate it in the palace remain elusive endeavors.

King Yasmaḥ-Addu writes his crusty father, Samsi-Addu, for permission to spend money on slaves and on beer installations, his father reprimands him as follows:

Rather than opening beer-vats and spending money, satisfy the troops themselves, natives *of the region*, who might come to Mari and *defend the city*. Ration handsomely those who cannot farm for lack of oxen, those who have no flour, who have no wool, who have no oil, who have no [beer?]. Set them by your side, for them to defend you and thus strengthen Mari's foundation. They should regularly be at a meal with you. Don't have them eat anything outrageous (*ṣuḥḥum*), yet always do feed them liberally (*taḥdam*) (ARM 1, 52:15-35 = LAPO 16, #1, pp. 62-64).

Here Samsi-Addu's reply is telling us less about culinary esthetics than about lessons in *noblesse oblige*, on the generosity kings are expected to display to a special sort of people. Still, from Samsi-Addu's admonishment of his son, and from many other stray remarks in our letters, there is a thesis to be constructed. This paper divides into two parts. In the first, I give an opiated review of the Mari documentation on the *naptan šarrim* "king's meal". In the second, I offer insight into a major institution of Amorite society of the Old Babylonian period.

### I. "The King's Meal"<sup>3</sup>

I begin with some dry remarks on administrative accounts of food disbursements from the reign of Zimri-Lim that Mari scribes labeled *naptan šarrim*, literally, "the king's meal".<sup>4</sup> These meals were not

3. In addition to works I cite below, useful studies (albeit occasionally out-of-date) include: C.L. Hamlin, *Cuneiform as Data: Reliability of the Mari Archive for Agricultural Reconstruction*, Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976; R.R. Glaeseman, *The Practice of the King's Meal at Mari: A System of Food Distribution in the 2nd Millennium B.C.*, Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1978; J.-P. Materné, "L'Année de Kaḥat dans la chronologie du règne de Zimri-Lim", *MARI* 2 (1983), pp. 195-199, and "Remarques sur l'écriture des «repas royaux» sous Zimri-Lim", in J.-M. Durand – J.-R. Kupper (eds.), *Miscellanea Babylonica. Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot*, Paris 1985, pp. 223-231. A nice overview of table practices in the Levant are the articles "Mahlzeit" in *RIA* 7: J.J. Glassner on Mesopotamia, pp. 259-267; A. Ünal on Hatti, pp. 267-270; and P. Calmeyer on the archeological evidence, pp. 270-271.

4. By itself, the word *naptanum* can also mean "sacrifice"; see ARMT 26/1, p. 215.

alone to receive food outlays. From palace documents, we learn of outlays labeled *naptan bēltim*, “the queen’s meal”, the documentation for which however remains largely unpublished.<sup>5</sup> We read also about a *naptanum rābum*, “great meal” (ARM 7, 14, 17, 40, 48, 49, 84); but we have only information on the disbursement of body lotions to military personnel. There are further references to several *naptanātum* that may not include the king, such as palace-sponsored meals for foreign personnel (FM 3, 117, oil “for [making] *mersum*, when nomads and Elamites supped in the Murals Courtyard”) or those concluding commercial and, very likely, marriage transactions.<sup>6</sup> We also have intriguing information on ceremonial meals taken by a confraternity dedicated to the god Itur-Mer and labeled *bēl p/budim*.<sup>7</sup> Not yet published are documents found in the living quarters assigned to Zimri-Lim’s diviner (and factotum) Asqudum, and these are labeled *naptan awīlim*, “the master’s meal”.

In this paper, I report on the richest of our material, the *naptan šarrim* documentation, but I will soon have occasion to speak also of the *paššur šarrim*, “the king’s table” (see below). The *naptan šarrim* documentation itself is by no means negligible. Currently, we have about 6100 entries in the Mari archives that have a date attached to them, to the day, the month, and the year of each of the Old Babylonian Mari rulers. Of these entries, about 1300, so over a fifth, specifically track the outlay of food for meal-taking (see Table 1).

5. See Nele Ziegler, FM 4, pp. 26-27 and notes.

6. For meals concluding commercial transactions, see J.-M. Durand, “Sumerien et Akkadien en pays Amorites”, MARI 1 (1982), pp. 79-89. That banquets were included in marriage festivities is implied by ARM 26, 11 (marriage of Šiptum to Zimri-Lim) and ARM 24, 65 (wine distribution connected with Hazala’s marriage to Sibkuna-Addu of Šuda).

7. See “Ancestors Divine?”, in W.H. van Soldt *et al.* (eds.), *Veenhof Anniversary Volume: Studies Presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Leiden 2001, pp. 416-417. The Mari texts use other terms for formal meals: the *kinsikkum* honored royalties (on which see Durand, LAPO 16, p. 214; 17, p. 115) while the *šūkulum* was presented to kings as well as deities (on which see FM 3, 43 [p. 223] and 102 [p. 251]).

ZL Sequence	Year-names	# of dated entries	# of meals / outlays
ZL 01	Accession to throne	23	0
ZL 02'	Throne of Annunitum	33	0
ZL1'	Banks of the Euphrates	232	1
ZL2'	Defeat of Benjaminites	342	101
	[Capture of Kaḥat	179	0]
	[Capture of Mišlan	26	0]
ZL3'	Capture of Ašlakka	154	15
	[Statue of Addu/Ḥalab	88	1]
	[Throne of Diritum	1	0]
ZL4'	Throne of Šamaš	753	183
	[Ḥabur digging	2	0]
ZL5'	Census taking	585	243
ZL6'	Dūr-Yaḥdullim	515	276
ZL7'	Statue of Ḥatta	378	207
ZL8'	Helping Elam	176	31
	[ <i>muballitum</i>	75	68]
ZL9'	Throne of Addu/Maḥanum,	162	2
	[Yamḥad voyage	15	0]
ZL10'	Helping Babylon	139	7
	[Defeat of Qarni-Lim	1	0]
ZL11'	Throne of Dagan	193	1
	[Eluḥut victory	20	5]
ZL12'	2 <sup>nd</sup> Capture of Ašlakka	119	1
ZL13'		?	?

Table 1. Dated entries in the Mari archives (as of January 2001).<sup>8</sup>

8. The data I give below is far from exacting. It refers to datable entries (month “x”, day “y”, year “z”) and not to the number of tablets that contain datable entries. In some cases, entries drawn from different texts may duplicate each other, especially so when replayed in inventories. I have placed between brackets material belonging to year-names judged coeval in recent scholarship, even when the parallelism may not be altogether certain. (We need not be concerned here with a precise placement for a few year-names that are still in discussion in the literature.) I have left out data on a handful of year-names too meagerly attested. I have entered a few texts that refer to oil outlays for the king’s meal within this count. From this table, one notices that our documentation bulges in Zimri-Lim’s mid-years, ZL4’-Z17’ and that our largest harvest of *naptan šarrim* corresponds to this period. As far as we can tell, these were the most peaceful years of Zimri-Lim’s reign. Striking is the paucity of meal-taking outlays from ZL1’-3’ and from ZL8’ on. It has occurred to Mari specialists that Zimri-Lim may have moved to quarters beyond the palace in the years following ZL7’. This is indeed possible; but it would still not explain the dearth of meal-taking records before ZL4’.

In 1981, Lucio Milano wrote a pioneering study on the *naptan šarrim* meals.<sup>9</sup> In it, he sought to overcome anachronistic notions about the cuisine of ancient times by featuring, among other second-millennium evidence, two series of Mari *naptan šarrim* documents. One series centered around two months during the reign of Yasmaḥ-Addu. He drew the second series on the first six months of one year in the reign of Zimri-Lim, Yasmaḥ-Addu's successor. Fifteen years or so separated the two series.

On the basis of a two-liter daily intake of foodstuff listed in the *naptan šarrim* texts, Milano estimated a diet of about 3000 calories. Milano's caloric analysis was exacting; yet his results are astonishing, given that a 3000 calory intake matches what is recommended by our own nutritionists.<sup>10</sup> The amount he estimates may even be too low since his computation does not include ingestion of saturated fats that comes mostly from eating meat and dairy products. (Meat was apparently dispensed to soldiers when in garrison, see ARM 26, 331.) Moreover, we now know the daily grain ration of male field workers could be as much as three liters. We also know that the sample months he selected from the reign of Yasmaḥ-Addu belonged to the eponym Aššur-malik, in which Samsi-Addu and sons conducted wars on many fronts, so it would not be at all surprising if rations were richer than normal in Mari. With such an implausibly rich diet to reckon with, either Milano's arithmetic is (Heaven forbid!) wrong, or another explanation must be offered about the actual purpose of the *naptan šarrim* texts.

As did Samsi-Addu in the tongue-lashing I quoted above, we may wish first to distinguish between two types of records: those concerned with rationing groups or individuals (for which the formulae used differed) and those supplying the king's meals, even if the personnel engaged in the processes could overlap. Rationing tended to be mechanical, with set allocations of bread, powdered beer, and sometimes also oil, measured according to sex, age, employment, status of those receiving them, as well as the context of distribution. It was not

9. "Food and Diet in Pre-Classical Syria", in C. Zaccagnini (ed.), *Production and Consumption in the Ancient Near East*, Budapest 1989, pp. 201-271. The collected essays first appeared in two issues of *Dialoghi di archeologia* 1/2 (1979), pp. 57-72 and 3/3 (1981), pp. 3-160 (including Milano's study).

10. It is interesting to compare Milano's figures with those provided in R. Miller, "Counting calories in Egyptian Ration Texts", *JESHO* 34 (1991), pp. 257-269.

a particularly attractive system and we have sentiments by people who wanted to get cash instead of rations.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, outlays in the *naptan šarrim* records do not fall into regular patterns. These documents report on meals taken by the king, probably twice a day (*naptan kašâtim* and *naptan mūšim* [earlier: *naptan lîlûtim*]).<sup>12</sup> Most of these documents were produced when the king was in Mari, his capital; but if meals were said to take place elsewhere, invariably they occurred in nearby shrine-towns such as Şuprum, Dêr, and Appan, and so a portion of the alimentary bureaucracy must have traveled with the king. However, we know of a number of occasions in which Zimri-Lim traveled far from home, such as to Ugarit in his 10th and 11th year, taking with him a good portion of his court; yet not a single *naptan šarrim* record has survived from these long excursions.<sup>13</sup> We might conjecture that the meal documentation created abroad was discarded or was not brought back to the capital; but this would be an unlikely strategy for a society whose bureaucratic scruples might be envied by the Pentagon.

Another puzzle is that when records for the *naptan šarrim* shrink dramatically in Zimri-Lim's tenth year (called ZL8') and practically give out by his 11th (called ZL9'), the scribe nevertheless used parallel year-names to continue recording disbursements. This is starkly illustrated by the year "muballittum", likely equivalent to ZL8', in which 70 of the 75 dated are concerned with the king's meal. I have no idea why this is so, unless alternative year-names were reserved for documents created elsewhere than in the capital.

The form of the *naptan šarrim* documents is duplicated at other contemporaneous sites, including Chagar Bazar and Rimaḥ, indicating a *koine* in administrative behavior and accounting practices through-

11. A.731, cited by D. Charpin – J.-M. Durand, "Notes de lecture: *Texte aus dem Šinkāšid Palast*", MARI 7 (1993), pp. 373-374: "... they began to vociferously complain, 'payment in silver (*qiršum*) should be given us!' They also began to grouse, so I said, 'My lord Zimri-Lim is of the same opinion as Yaggid-Lim and Yaḥdun-Lim. Did these previous kings give you payment in silver? And so now my lord has kept silver from you. Come now! In Suḥum province, your food, oil, and beer provision stand ready for you. What is this payment in silver that you are wanting?'"
12. This is the same number of daily meals the Hebrew God recommended at Sinai (*Exodus* 16:12).
13. This is noted by Ziegler, FM 4, p. 26. Ziegler (pp. 17-19) nuances Durand's proposal that for the core years of Zimri-Lim's reign the elite found accommodations beyond the palace, thus also explaining the relative dearth of documentation on *naptan šarrim* (as well as other) practices after ZL7'.

out the area.<sup>14</sup> Similar formulations in other food allocations, for travel (*ana magarrê lugal/PN*, *ana šidītim ša PN*, or simply *ana ukullêm*, “provisions”), for ceremonies such as the *kispum* commemorations, and for specific teams of workers, suggest that at any given date the rhythm of disbursements for a *naptan šarrim* was more in consonance with the bureaucratic regime than with the pace of royal meals.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the lack of coordination between the scribal and provisioning services can be blamed for a disconcerting amount of discrepancies, if not outright errors, in the recording of dispensed foodstuff. I reported on this phenomenon almost twenty years ago. Since I did not believe then, and do not believe now, that the Mari administrative scribes were arithmetically challenged, I continue to suspect that the bureaucrats (God bless them) simply “cooked the books” to balance expenditures accomplished months earlier.<sup>16</sup> These observations might discourage us from plotting the king’s movements on the basis of where *naptan šarrim* disbursements were said to occur; for such information may reflect bureaucratic estimation of where the king was to have eaten rather than *post-facto* knowledge on the part of scribes.

14. The recording system for food outlay, bearing the label *naptan [x]*, was widespread in the Old Babylonian period as an inspection of the dictionaries (sub *naptanu*) could easily demonstrate. See also C.A. Vincente, *The 1987 Tell Leilan Tablets Dated by the Limmu of Habil-kinu*, Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1991, pp. 356-366; D. Charpin, “Découvertes épigraphiques à Larsa”, NABU 1989/118, pp. 92-93; possibly also at Harmal, R. Ellis, “Old Babylonian Economic Texts and Letters from Tell Harmal”, JCS 24 (1972), p. 48 (#11-12). Nele Ziegler (FM 4, p. 106) suggests that the Mari *naptan šarrim* documents may have been written by two female scribes mentioned in harem lists: Belti-Lamassi and Ištar-šamši.
15. See ARM 13, 36 [= LAPO 16, #242, pp. 376-380] in which Yasim-Sumu writes to the king: “About the barley for Naḥur, 300 *ugārū* of barley [almost 10,000 bushels] were taken. There is a steward (there); but he sends me no reports, good or bad. Previously, because barley was not available to them, barley from Qattunan, Ṭabatun and Zilḥan were hauled for them. Just now, the grain which they took is solely for their own needs. Because they have received much grain, I fear that they will squander what comes under their control. In the same way as I have assigned enough ration, fodder, and seed in Qattunan and Ṭabatun for one year — as well as outlay for the meals of my lord — I have locked under my own seal the remaining barley. Now I am sending Yal’umu and my lord ought to send troops to accompany him to Naḥur, so that he [?] can [lock under his seal?] one year’s worth of ration, fodder, and seed of the remaining grain.”
16. “Accounting Discrepancies in the Mari NĪ.GUB [NĪG.DU] Texts”, in G. van Driel (ed.), *Zikir šumim: Assyriological Studies Presented to F.R. Kraus*, Leiden 1982, pp. 326-341.



The repertoire of ingredients reported in our texts tends to remain consistent throughout the year, fluctuating only occasionally probably because of the harvest shortfalls that were not infrequent for Mari. These ingredients include a large variety of grains, the exact nature of which is still subject to debate, but certainly barley (*ûm*, processed into *tappinum*-flour), and a variety of wheats (*burrum*, *ZIZZUM kinî-tum*, *samîdum*), processed in diverse ways: whole, cracked or ground into flour. Legumes included *appānum*, *hallûrum*, *kakkûm* which, on the authority of Marten Stol, are now to be understood respectively as chick peas, broad beans, and peas/lentils.<sup>17</sup> Striking is the absence of gourds, cucumbers, melons and other members of the cucurbita family, when they could easily have been processed for storage.<sup>18</sup> Mushrooms, when they are cited in our texts, are always occasional rather than stocked.<sup>19</sup> We hear about eggs when they come from exotic birds.<sup>20</sup>

17. See his "Beans, Peas, Lentils, and Vetches in Akkadian Texts", *BSAg* 2 (1985), pp. 127-139.
18. See M. Stol, "The Cucurbitaceae in the Cuneiform Texts", *BSAg* 3 (1987), pp. 81-92.
19. See ARM 27, 54, in which a governor tells the king how his men searched vainly for truffles(?) (*kam<sup>2</sup>ātum/kam<sup>2</sup>ū*) and had to settle for *gib<sup>2</sup>ū*, which was "like *kam<sup>2</sup>ū*". Zimri-Lim's taste evidently discriminated between the two. However we translate *kam<sup>2</sup>ātum/kam<sup>2</sup>ū* (we rely on Arabic for the meaning "truffle"), we have much testimony for its popularity (on a par with ostrich eggs!). Yasmaḥ-Addu receives Ganibatum truffles right after the (spring) rains; see the note of D. Charpin, "Cueillette de champignon", *NABU* 1989/58, p. 38, and a similar message is sent to Zimri-Lim by a Qattunan official (FM 2, 62) "Rain have settled in and truffles are growing all over. I am sending my lord truffles and 2 ostrich eggs." For more on truffles, see LAPO 16 #179-181, pp. 311-313 (letters from governors who dispatch them to the king). W. Heimpel, "Mushrooms", *NABU* 1997/3, p. 3, connects with Arabic references. In a review of ARMT 14, M. Stol gives a nice bibliography on its harvest, *BiOr* 35 (1978), p. 220. Other comestibles seem also to be appreciated for their seasonal appearances, including the *ḥurnû*, gathered from the steppe, ARMT 14, 34 (LAPO 16 #205, pp. 336-337). It is not likely to be "mint" (AHw), which is readily cultivated and it may be a homonym of *ḥurnûm*, an aromatic wood mentioned in ARM 21, 120.
20. Such as ostrich eggs; see FM 2, 62, cited in the preceding note, and ARM 14, 86 (LAPO 16 #416, p. 608-610), in which a governor of Saggaratum writes, "Having sent men from the outposts as far as two leagues ... they found two ostrich eggs. I am herewith conveying these two eggs to my lord." FM 3, 25, a daily record, registers the outlay of oil for eggs served at the king's meal. A monthly accounting adds that they were ostrich eggs, FM 3, 60, 3. The shells of the eggs were themselves turned into *objets d'art*, see ARM 26/1, p. 487 n. 19.

Commonly mentioned in the *naptan šarrim* documents were garlic (*ḥazannum*), onions (*šamaškillum*, differently spelled), and leek (*kar[a]šum*).<sup>21</sup> Dates (zú.lum.[ma]; *suluppum*), sesame (or is it linseed?) oil, and honey (*dišpum*), when not in conjunction with fruits, are also listed but in surprisingly small amounts, sharpening a suspicion that the records are only about foodstuff destined for processing (see below). The modest amount of oil disbursement could suggest that it was used to soften flour; but when heated over a fire, it was not likely wasted on deep frying, although one text tells us about frying eggs in oil.<sup>22</sup> It is not unlikely that vegetables, perhaps also meat, were sautéed in oil or fats, a very economical way to use precious ingredients.

The fat of sheep (i.udu; *lipum*) is almost exclusively destined for non-comestible usage; perhaps the same purpose awaited cattle fat (suet), mentioned in letters (ARM 27, 131). Lard was also known.<sup>23</sup> Olive oil, itself highly sought, is not associated with food outlays. It was imported from the Aleppo and Emar regions (and seems destined mostly for cosmetic and medicinal purposes).<sup>24</sup> The olive itself is hardly mentioned, although a room in the palace was named the *bīt serdim* (ARM 22, 265, 8), so possibly for its olive-tree decoration. There is frequent mention of *himētum*, always in small amounts, about which see below.

21. On alliaceous plants, see M. Stol, “Garlic, Onion, Leek”, BSAg 3 (1987), pp. 57-80. They include garlic (*ḥazannū*), onions (*šamaškillum/šumatkillū*; see ARM 23, 370, 2), leek (*kar[a]šum*, with different spellings, see Stol, *ibid.*, p. 71 n. 58; ARM 23, 371, 6), and shallot *zimzimmu* (possibly mentioned in a vision, ARM 26, 232, 16, on which see Durand in ARM 26/1, p. 472).
22. See FM 3, 25 (cited above). Eggs were also boiled, according to A.688, “I have boiled (*asluq*) the eggs here, so that they will not break”; cited by D. Charpin, “Compte rendu du CAD volume S (1985)”, AfO 40/41 (1993/1994), p. 8. For more on eggs, see below.
23. See also ARMT 10, 116 (LAPO 18 #1241, p. 461) in which a servant of the queen of Šuna (Princess Tišpatum), who complains about her meager supplies, dispatches to Mari “60 quarts of lard, 10 quarts of ‘pistachio,’ and a basket of sour bread”. Tišpatum herself sends what seems to be lard (for the disputed reading, see LAPO 18, #1238, p. 459 n. c). Lard is a staple at other sites, such as Rimah, OBTR 204 (“scented lard”) and 205 (large quantities), and Shemshara. According to the Leilan archives, lard and pork were served at the *naptan bēltim*; cited in Ziegler, FM 4, p. 26 n. 142.
24. Oil derived from the olive (*serdum*) was used mostly as cosmetic; see F. Joannès, “La culture matérielle à Mari (V): les parfums”, MARI 7 (1993), p. 269. There is an occasional mention of the olive as food, ARM 7, 256, 5. The olive seems to come from (or via) Aleppo (ARM 7, 238, 6; ARM 9, 6, 1).

We know that during some moments in the days of Zimri-Lim 52 women served in the palace as *abarakkātum* (munus.agrig), not counting two dozen more women who had auxiliary tasks and who operated under an officer man named Ilukan.<sup>25</sup> These women were neither stewardesses nor “*dames de chambre*”, but actually “pantry-maids”, with specialized division of labor.<sup>26</sup> Among the foodstuff attributed to them were fruits, including figs (giš.ma, *tittum*), medlar or plums (giš.kib, *šallūrū*), pears (*kamišarū*), and crab-apples (*ḥašhurū*). In this genre of documents, but not so in the letters, when we read about fruits, they are almost always destined for conservation rather than for eating fresh. The *abarakkūtum* apparently made a marmalade out of the figs, steeping them in honey, the term *kabar<sup>2</sup>um* (possibly a derivate of *kabārum*, “to grow thick”) likely referring to process. They also made a jam out of available fruits that were destined *ana inbī*. The fruits themselves were all locally grown, as other documents register orchards that were assigned to private individuals. Surprising is the absence of pomegranates (giš.nu.úr.ma, *nurmū*) in the food records, because we know that there were pomegranate orchards around Mari.<sup>27</sup> Ditto for raisins (*munziqtum*), which we know from other texts were left to ripe on the vine.<sup>28</sup>

25. Ziegler, FM 4, pp. 98-104. In Mari, there are relatively few references to a male *abarakkum* (agrig). One such a personnel occurs in FM 2, 119, 7; but the letter refers to events in Babylon where, evidently, the term had different application. ARMT 18, 55, ii, 1'-3' names two *abarakkū*, recipients of garments. One of them (Šarrum-kima-ili) occurs a fair amount of times elsewhere and is mostly associated with food (meat) services; the other (Mannum-gerišu) is a recipient of garments in ARM 23, 610, 15. Durand now reads *abarakkum* in ARM 1, 28 (LAPO 16 #2, pp. 65-66), in which an *abarakkum* and 5 butchers are said to escape to Mari. ARM 7, 263, iv, 14' has *abarakkum*, but in a break. See below, *Post Scriptum*.
26. The study of D. Pack on this palace personnel is still useful, *The Administrative Structure of the palace at Mari (ca. 1800-1750 B.C.)*, Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981, pp. 62-83.
27. Orchards attributed to private individuals are in listed in ARM 22, 329, with mention of fruit trees. Fig trees were imported from Šubat-Enlil into the Mari region, eliciting a fine letter on the technique of transplant; FM 3, 129, on which see B. Lafont, “Techniques arboricoles à l'époque amorrite. Transport et acclimatation de figuiers à Mari”, pp. 263-268. See also J.-R. Kupper, *apud* J.N. Postgate, “Notes on Fruit in the Cuneiform Sources”, BSAg 3 [1987], p. 138 n. 34 (re: *kamašarū*).
28. See Iškur-saga's letter, A. 793 (FM 1, p. 112), is found also as LAPO 16 #224. p. 359.

The pantry-maids were also involved in the preparation of other products with more or less longer shelf-life. Female bakers (*ēpītum*) produced a variety of breads, some of them bearing names that readily make sense etymologically, and so must be interpreted skeptically. We read about *ninda emšum*, “sourdough”, *ninda kumuranātum*, “risen bread”, *ninda hibšum*, “blistered bread”, *ninda kakkarum*, “round bread”, *ninda našmum*, “singled(?) bread”, (perhaps “blistered bread”, from *šawûm*), *ninda utuḥum* and *ninda mutqûm*, something like a challah.<sup>29</sup>

Because the outlay of foodstuff was recorded not only in daily records but reentered in monthly inventories, the scribe sometimes tired of the tedious copying and substituted a name for a combination of disbursed ingredients. From this sort of shorthand, we learn that *šip-kum*, and probably also *arsanum*, was a name for a multi-grain mixture that included ground or cracked grain (such as *isququm*, *sasqum*, and *pappasu*), ground (?) legumes (such as *ḥallurum*), and nuts (such as *buṭumtum*, “terebinth”).<sup>30</sup> The mixture probably turned into some sort of porridge by the addition of heated liquids, something similar to Hebrew *nezid* of 2 Kings, 4:38.

The production of *mersum* seems to have occupied a number of kitchen specialists labeled *ša mersim*. In Mari at one point there were eight such specialists; but just one seems to be in at the Terqa palace (ARM 3, 84 = ARM 26, 179 = LAPO 18, #959 [p. 105]). Making *mersum* required dates, oil, terebinth, garlic, and coriander.<sup>31</sup> Some people think *mersum* is a bread confection, probably because *ninda*, “bread”, precedes the word. Others regard it as a *bouillie* (porridge or hasty-pudding), likely because it is associated with *diqārātum* (dug. utûl), pots with rounded bottom. But *mersum* could also stand for a broad category of kitchen products, perhaps something like Arabic

29. See Ziegler, FM 4, p. 101. Note also the list of breads in FM 3, p. 26.

30. Compare, for example, ARM 7, 151 to ARM 9, 160, iv, 22-27. On these mixtures, see Birot, ARMT 9, pp. 279-381 (§ §55-59).

31. Terebinth (belonging to the *pistacia* family) was harvested from the Jebel Sinjar area, where it still grows. On the Mari documentation, see D. Cadelli, “Lieux boisés et bois coupés”, pp. 159-173 in FM 2 (commenting on FM 2, 88). We also have two letters (to Zimri-Lim and to Šunuḥra-ḥalu, his secretary) by Qat-tunan officials (Zimri-Addu and Zakira-ḥammu) about harvesting and felling terebinths (ARM 27, 53 and 123; see also 174 and LAPO 17, p. 92). The two documents may come from the same context because Zimri-Addu was occasionally in charge when his superior left on diplomatic missions.

‘*ajīn*, that can be topped by diverse ingredients, as available, before baking and thus producing the Mari equivalent of our famous pizza.<sup>32</sup> At any rate, it was deemed appealing enough that it was served at a splendid meal in a nicely decorated hall.<sup>33</sup>

For processing these ingredients, as well as for spiking the flavor of food, there were outlays of condiments and herbs; but it is hopeless for us to guess the amounts used in particular dishes. Among the former were cumin (*kamūnum*), black cumin (*zibūm*), and coriander (*kisibirrum*); among the latter were *ḥurnūm* (see above) and *azupīrum/azupirānum* (formerly explained as saffron).<sup>34</sup> We also know of essences extracted from wood such as myrtle (*asum*) and scented reed (*qānum ṭābum*), and they served to perfume wine and beer. These essences were not issued to the pantry-maids, but to specialists in aromatics.<sup>35</sup>

The pantry-maids were also picklers, for which they were issued barley and fennel (*uriyānum*), *ana ḥimri*, “for fermentation”, a process carried out in large *namḥarū* pithoi (ARM 12, 740, 14-15).<sup>36</sup> Mme Burke has proposed that *ḥimrum* is a sort of fermented drink, either beer or wine.<sup>37</sup> I rather imagine *ḥimrum* to be an acidic broth that can be used for curing meat or as a stock in preparing other foodstuff.

There is debate also about product of specialists called *ša alappani*. Once thought to mean “syrup”, it has been identified as a barley beer since Birot’s commentary to ARM 12 where he pointed out that: 1) large clay receptacles were used in processing it; 2) raw products yield only one third of their volume in *alappanum* at the end of processing, the same proportion that is found in beer-making, and 3) it was used in large amounts during certain celebrations (see ARM 12, 274).<sup>38</sup>

32. Compare the definitions given by the CAD M/2, pp. 108-109, by J. Bottéro (*Textes culinaires Mésopotamiens [Mesopotamian Civilizations 6]*, Winona Lake 1995, pp. 22-23), and by N. Zieger, FM 4, p. 101.

33. FM 3, 117 (cited above). See also FM 3, 51, p. 225, “3 qa of oil, for the *mersum*, when the acrobats (<sup>lu</sup>*ḥuppū*) performed (*immellū*) before the king” and FM 3, 62, p. 234 (during the sacrifice for Diritum, in Dēr). All these texts come from early in Zimri-Lim’s reign.

34. FM 2, 6 gives a fine listing of condiments and herbs that Zimri-Lim wanted supplied. See the comments of its editor, S.M. Maul, p. 26.

35. See F. Joannès, MARI 7, pp. 261-262.

36. See Birot’s comments in ARMT 12, pp. 13-14.

37. Burke, ARMT 11, pp. 133, 295; Ziegler agrees, FM 4, pp. 102-103.

38. The needed equipment included *namḥarum* bowls, *narṭabu* (beerwort) containers, and *namzītū* (fermenting vats); see Birot, ARMT 9, p. 294 (§77d) and ARMT 12, pp. 12-13. See also M. Stol, “Beer in Neo-Babylonian Times”, in L. Milano (ed.), *Drinking in Ancient Societies. History and Culture of Drinks in the*

Birot is persuasive, especially when we take into account the relatively modest attestations in the Mari records of words for beer, whether as liquid (*šikarum*, *kaš kurunnum*, and *diziptuḥḥum*) or as powdered starter (*billitum* and *isimannum*).<sup>39</sup> And if we can correlate more precisely the Mari calendar with the agricultural season, we might make something out of the fact that supplies of *alappānum* tended to rise sharply during the months of Dagan to Uraḥum (that is VIII – I).<sup>40</sup> Still, my hesitation about equating *alappānum* with beer is based on the observation that the production and distribution of wine and other liquids seem to be carried out by men, most of whom were active beyond the palace walls.<sup>41</sup>

During Zimri-Lim's reign, the corp of palace pantry-maids in Mari included just two *nuḥatimmātum* (munus.muḥaldim), who were supplied with a great number of pots of different shapes and sizes. Yet, to translate *nuḥatimmātum* by "female cooks", as per our dictionaries, would lead us to wonder why so few of them were in such a large palace.<sup>42</sup> In the Mari letters, *nuḥatimmū* seem to be butchers rather than cooks. So it may be that the two *nuḥatimmātum* there dealt with cured rather than fresh meat.<sup>43</sup> In fact, I think that whenever Mari records speak of meat distributions, they almost always refer to conserved

*Ancient Near East (Papers of the Symposium held in Rome, May 17-19, 1990)* (HANE/S 6), Padova 1994, p. 172.

39. Beer (*kaš*) that was mixed with equal amount of second grade beer (*kaš.ús*) is mentioned in ARM 23, 363; quality beer (*kaš.sig<sub>5</sub>*) is mixed with regular beer (*kaš*) in ARM 9, 7. <sup>kaš</sup>*kurunnum* was spiked with odiferous reed; see B. Lafont, ARMT 23, pp. 290-291. *Billitum* is paired with *qēmum* (see ARM 4, 81, 25, 33; C.F. Jean, "La langue des lettres de Mari", RES année 1937, pp. 106, 10.) For *isimannum*, see CAD I/J (s.v.) and Durand in LAPO 17, p. 399. *Kiziptuḥḥum* required scented oil or the essence of odiferous plants, so likely to a jellied dish rather than a drink. The word is evidently Hurrian, and appears in different spelling (ARM 21, 106 [*ki-zi-ip-tu-uḥ-ḥi-im*]; ARM 13, 36, 45 [*gi-di-im-du-ḥi-im*]; FM 3, 64 = 95, 5 [*ki-zi-ip-tu-ḥi*]).
40. Already noticed by Glaeseman, *Practice of the King's Meal*, pp. 47-48.
41. In Neo-Babylonian times, however, beer-brewing was done by women; see Stol, *Drinking in Ancient Societies*, p. 179.
42. N. Ziegler cites an unpublished text (A.562) in which Samsi-Addu attributes 1 *mušākiltum*, apparently a female cook, for every 5 male deportees; "Aspects économiques des guerres de Samsi-Addu", in J. Andreau et al. (eds.), *Économie antique. La guerre dans les économies antiques (Entretiens d'Archéologie et d'Histoire 5)*, Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, p. 24.
43. The large numbers of meat cuts given to them in ARM 21, 63 may have been for processing rather than cooking. The six *nuḥatimmū* who brought "sustenance" (*zinnātum*) to kings (ARM 24, 261) and the *nuḥtimmū* [*sic*] who are given wine in which to soak (baste?) meat (ARM 23, 216) were likely the same.

rather than freshly butchered flesh (see below). The same holds true for locusts, fowl, or fish, whether the last were inventoried by weight or by units.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, when we read about *lurakkûm* and *lurakka-*

44. *Locusts*. The Mari archives have much to say about locusts (grasshoppers in their migratory stage) and the havoc they created. A large vocabulary was used to discriminate among its many varieties, perhaps too among the many stages in their metamorphosis: *erbû*, *šanšar/šaršar* (onomatopoeic, see Hebrew *šelāšal*, *Deut.* 28:42), *erhizzu*, or *ergilatum*. See B. Lion – C. Michel, “Criquets et autres insectes à Mari”, *MARI* 8 (1997), pp. 707-724; M. Birot’s comments to ARM 27, 26-31, 64; and W. Heimpel’s study, “Moroccan Locusts in Qaṭṭunan”, *RA* 90 (1996), pp. 101-120. People took their revenge on these pests by placing them on their tables (acceptable even among the Hebrews, see, e.g. *Leviticus* 11:22), and this topic too is entertained by Lion and Michel (pp. 716-719). I comment just on ARM 27, 64 in which a provincial governor writes the king, “About the *erhizzu*-locusts of which my lord wrote to me. Here, where *ergilatum*-locusts can be caught, there are no *erhizzu*-locusts [obviously a variant of the *irgišu*, attested lexically only]. I sent 5 nomads and they picked up *erhizzu*-locusts at Musilanum of the Talḥayum district. The distance being long, these *erhizzu* locusts died in their reed cages. I have herewith placed 38 *erhizzu*-locusts under my own seal and conveyed them to my lord ... .” From this note we learn that: 1) palates discriminated among several types of locusts (or perhaps locusts at different stages of their morphology), with some locusts obviously more prized than others; 2) that they were appreciated best when eaten fresh, but that, 3) their survival threatened by distant transport, locust may be subject to preservation before shipping. Whether or not locusts were conserved (pickled?) and how they were served is not mentioned in our documents. In recent times, people go into the swarms bearing torches that bring them down and bagging as many as drop. They are eaten fried in oil or butter, after removal of wings and legs. On Assyrian reliefs giant locusts are displayed shish-kebabled for roasting.

*Fowl*. Birds were transported for killing *in situ* (Zimri-Lim’s sends them as a wedding gift, ARM 26 11, 25). But most often they were conserved or even pre-cooked. Samsi-Addu had such a taste for a special Mari dish of fattened dar. mušen (“francolin” according to the CAD, sub *ittidû*) that he wanted a shipment “every few days”, ARM 4, 9 (LAPO 16 #209, pp. 339-340). Together with fish, conserved fowls are mentioned in an administrative text ARM 21, 92 (note the odd layout and arithmetic). They form part of offerings in ARM 19, 214 (*šakkanakku* period). Birds were trapped, as mentioned in ARM 14, 41 and 42 (LAPO 16 ##210, 212, pp. 341-344). But they were also raised in private estates, see ARM 24, 274, and in the palace, see A. 1394 cited by J.-M. Durand, *Le système palatial en Orient*, p. 53 n. 39. Many Mari documents regarding birds are yet to be published, see *MARI* 8 (1997), p. 314 n. 10. A duck is registered in ARM 21, 91.

*Fish*. Aside from citing them generically (*ku*/*nūnum*, as in ARM 21, 87-92), Mari documents refer to a number of fish by name (see ARM 9 25), including *arsuppum* (CAD, “carp”), *abâatum*, *girîtum* (CAD, crawfish or morae), *kuppûm* (CAD, “an eel-like fish”), and *purādum* (AHw, “large carp”). Most often mentioned is *kamârum*, diversely identified by dictionaries and experts, but so appreciated that it was expressly destined for the king’s table (ARM 21, 90) and sent to allies and vassals (see ARM 28, 88, possibly linked to

*tum* in Mari and Leilan documents, we are dealing with conservation specialists, possibly picklers, of fish, crayfish, and grasshoppers. A need for either a *lurakkītum* or a *nuḥatimmatum* is related in ARM 10, 86 (LAPO 18, #1234, pp. 453-454), suggesting that the two shared a goal, in this case, expertise at retarding spoilage. Although we have but a few terms that can be applied to meat conservation, we should keep in mind that the dearth of significant Mari evidence on its technology is no evidence of its absence in Mari culture.<sup>45</sup> And if the information from Salima Ikram's splendid book on butchering in ancient

ARM 21, 88). All these are most likely fresh waterfish, probably raised in moats or in ponds created by blocking off spillways (*balītum*) or marshes (*agammum*). Zurubban, in the district of Terqa seems to have been a center for raising fish, probably because it included the proper facilities. The *kawarḥum* cited in ARM 27, 51 may or not be fish (compare LAPO 16, p. 342 with LAPO 17, 363-364); but they appealed to Zimri-Lim. We have interesting details on the catching of fish, during the rise of waters (FM 2, 85; see G. Ozan, "Viandes et poissons: transport et conservation", FM 2, pp. 155-157) and during cold snaps (A. 2987; see J.-M. Durand, "Problèmes d'eau et d'irrigation au royaume de Mari: L'apport des textes anciens", in B. Geyer [ed.], *Techniques et pratiques hydro-agricoles traditionnelles en domaine irrigué*, 1 [Institut d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique, 136], Paris 1990, p. 121 n. 78). In administrative documents, fish are accounted in units or by capacity. Following Bottéro, Vincente (*Tell Leilan Tablets*, pp. 353-354) supposes that they are fresh when counted in units, and preserved (salted, dried, steeped in brine, maybe even in oil) when measured by capacity. This is not certain. Zimri-Lim requested live fish (*balūtum*) from Dūr-Yaḥdullim, a three days journey to Mari (FM 2, 85), and the 90 fish may well have been fresh (or even alive) when "brought up from Cross-River for the work of the *lurakkū*" (ARM 21, 87). But they were not likely so when they were delivered to Ilansura (ARM 21, 88) or when *gerūtū* from Kaḥat are to be transported to Ekallatum (ARM 1, 139 = LAPO 16 #211, pp. 341-342). In Leilan, crayfish (*erib tāmti*) were handed over to a *lurakkūm* (Vincente, *Tell Leilan Tablets*, pp. 354-355). The catching and eating of fish seemed to have inspired fine satire. For examples, see ARM 26, 107 and OBTR 42.

45. A letter from the governor of Qaṭṭunan to the king (ARM 27, 131) indirectly gives some useful information on one process: "When my lord was in Ḥuṣlan, a donated bull became bloated. So I wrote to my lord and my lord wrote me back, 'Kill that bull, but his meat, together with the fat, should be kept.' This is what my lord wrote to me. When my lord returned here from Ḥuṣlan, I reminded my lord about this bull. My lord told me, 'It should be set (*liššakin*).' But because I left, no one reminded my lord about the meat from this bull. I have now arrived here and the meat of this bull, together with the fat, was set. This meat did not spoil. My lord should write so that this meat could be transported to Mari. If not, my lord should order me as he pleases." While exactly what was to be done to the meat and fat is hidden behind the verb (*naškunum*), it is obvious that the process was intended to stop spoilage.



Egypt can serve us as inspiration, there is no reason why the dehydrating, pickling, salting, and perhaps even the smoking (*ḥarrum*(?) in ARM 21, 68) of meat, would not have been practiced at Mari.<sup>46</sup> In Egypt, fish were hung to dry. Some cuts of meats, in fact, dry nicely when liquids are pounded out of them before light salting. Fats, especially those of sheep and geese, are the second largest component of any meat, and they store readily after boiling and pressing, so it is surprisingly that we read so little its usage in cooking.<sup>47</sup> Blood was not likely eaten, a waste by Polish standards.

Large amounts of different varieties of salt were being brought into the palace.<sup>48</sup> Although I do not know of textual reference for its use in conserving meat, I cannot imagine that it was not so used. Any and all of the processes described above may have been necessary to avoid wasting the enormous amounts of carcasses that in Mari, as elsewhere in Mesopotamia, were the products of the frequent killing of animals, almost exclusively sheep, for extispicy and omen taking. In fact, I think that the *paḡrā<sup>2</sup>um*, which are said to be “given” (*nadānum*) or “sacrificed” (*naqūm*) to the god Dagan about half a dozen times a year actually refers to the presentation of cured rather than fresh meat.<sup>49</sup> There is, in the Mari texts, also a fair amount of messages that report on the transport of meat and these are likely processed rather than fresh meat. This must certainly be the case of meat transported over long distances.<sup>50</sup> One text (ARM 23, 224) tells us that 2 bulls and 16

46. *Choices Cuts: Meat Production in Ancient Egypt*, Leuven 1995; especially chapter 7 on “Processing”, pp. 147-174. For Mari, see G. Ozan, “Viandes et poissons: transport et conservation”, pp. 151-157 in FM 2. J. Bottéro gives a fine overview for Mesopotamia in “Konservierung”, RIA 6 (1980-1983), pp. 191-197.

47. On this topic, see Ikram, *Choices Cuts*, pp. 175-180.

48. M. Guichard, “Le sel à Mari (III). Les lieux du sel”, FM 3, pp. 167-200, citing previous literature on the subject and developing on the works of Durand. See also the last’s comments in LAPO 16, pp. 376-372.

49. Interesting is ARM 18, 38 (LAPO 18 #968, p. 114), a letter Sammetar sent to Mukannišum, “Just recently [*qurbiš*] God got angry with me about giving *paḡrum*-meat. If you really care for me, send me lean and nice shanks, from 1 to 2 pounds, that I may in this way appreciate your friendship.”

50. Cuts of meat are transported from Mardaman, in the Ḥabur Triangle (FM 2, 83 [A. 39], pp. 151-152), possibly also from as far away as Qatna (ARM 1, 66 = LAPO 18, #860 pp. 24-25). ARM 21, 150 was composed by an apprentice scribe and the little that can be understood is that sheep fat was transported from Urgiš to Tadūm. These distances are certainly greater than those mentioned in PUL 3027, where animal parts are shipped from Umma to Ur; see W.W. Hallo, “Carcasses for the Capital”, in *Studies Veenhof cit.* (fn. 7), pp. 161-171.

sheep, stored in *gihinnum*-containers and in baskets, were being shipped from Terqa to Mari.

The hypothesis on which I am currently operating is that the *naptan šarrim* texts tell us less about the meals of the elite than about the flow of raw and pre-processed materials. If so, then it should be evident why only sporadically are we likely to find in them clues about food choices, about appetites and recipes, about presentation of dishes, and about the rituals of the table. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that the care and feeding of the elite (not to say also the gods) was a rather decentralized process in Mari, taking place inside and outside the palace, with only the authority of the king and his most senior officers to bridge or tie its various components. It should not be surprising, therefore, that we are missing the archives of those bureaus that managed foodstuff processed outside the palace. For example, it is highly unlikely that a culture that depended so much on cattle and sheep would leave us almost nothing about milk and dairy products. Milk, a food rather than a drink, indeed easily spoiled in warm climate, but through culturing, curdling, churning and clarifying, it readily converted into more or less durable products: *laban* and *labne*, cheeses, butter, and ghee. Yet, with just a snippet of a letter to tell us about the delivery of milk to the palace (ARM 2, 140 [LAPO 17, #854, pp. 675-676]), a reference to *ì.ga* (pasty cheese? ARM 21, 105, 1), and sporadic mention in the *naptan šarrim* texts of *himētum*, “ghee”, we might imagine that Mari was pre-war Japan! The alternative hypothesis is to imagine a major shift in food habits during the Amorite period from what obtained during the Ur III and Sargonic periods.<sup>51</sup> A similar explanation can be offered for the absence from the Mari records of vegetable, fruits, and nuts that appear in the records of neighboring states or that are accessible to us archaeobotanically.

However, the most telling clue for treating the *naptan šarrim* as a link in a chain of processes rather than as its fulfillment is the fact that when making requests for his table, Zimri-Lim did not directly address the main personalities associated with the *naptan šarrim* series, people such as Ilukan (in charge of the *abarakkātum*), Ilšu-našir (in charge of sesame), Balumenuḥḥe, Ili-ašraya, and Aḥalamu (in charge of oil); rather, he turned to his palace managers and provincial governors. This observation invites us to supplement our information on the table

51. On dairy products, see M.G. Biga, “Il latte nella documentazione cuneiforme del III e II millennio”, in Milano, *Drinking in Ancient Societies*, p. 335; M. Stol “Milch(produkte)” in RIA 8 (1993-1997), pp. 189-201.

practices of the Mari elite from sources other than the *naptan šarrim* texts.

## II. “The King’s Table”

To place the king’s meal in its cultural context, I turn to the sample six-month period Milano selected in his pioneering study, in this case during Zimri-Lim’s eighth year on his throne (ZL6’). The formula used by scribes to date documents produced during that year commemorated Zimri-Lim’s dedication of a town (Dūr-Yaḥdun-lim) to his father’s memory. It was a good time for the king to have done so, for the year belonged to a brief interval in which Zimri-Lim enjoyed relative peace with local tribes and powerful neighbors and had the opportunity to take a census for his kingdom. The king cemented his control of regions in the neighboring region (Idamaraš), and prepared for two extraordinary trips beyond his borders, one to Hušlan for a grand convocation with his allies and the other to visit his holdings in and around Aleppo and Ugarit.<sup>52</sup> But it was also a year full of deaths that affected him personally. His aunt (some think her his mother) Addu-duri, a woman with strong control of the palace, died the previous year. She was followed to the grave by Zimri-Lim’s tough-minded and opinionated sister Inibšina, by his trusted minister Sammetar, and, probably most tragically of all, by his son and presumed heir, Prince Yaḥdun-Lim, less than 4 years old.<sup>53</sup> The period, therefore, witnessed many funerals.

We do not know exactly how the dead were mourned in Mari, but an inquiry by the majordomo Baḥdi-Lim on how to deal with the severed head of Qarni-Lim, an erstwhile ally, makes it clear that decisions

52. See the comments of Durand in LAPO 16, pp. 408-410. Published texts on this voyage include ARM 7, 117; 119; 219; ARM 25, 133; 615; ARM 26, 422, and ARM 27, 131. Hušlan also occurs in the Leilan tablet, F. Ismail, *Altbabylonische Wirtschaftsurkunden aus Tall Leilan, Syrien*, Ph.D. Diss. Tübingen 1991, p. 79.

53. Prince Yaḥdun-Lim died late in ZL5’, as his tomb was decorated early in ZL6’ (ARM 25, 539). Sammetar died early in ZL6’ (just after he had acquired a new wife!). His death was announced in ARM 26, 277 by Inibšina; see ARM 26/1, pp. 576-577, and ARM 27, p. 22 fn. 97. Inibšina herself likely died a brief time later because her household was being inspected by the end of ZL6’ (M. 5754, FM 4, p. 49 fn. 298; M. 11584, FM 4, p. 49 fn. 304). However, Ziegler (FM 4, p. 48 and fn. 293) gives her a longer life, referring to subsequent attestations of this name. But these references seem to me attributable to a homonymous princess or to Inibšunu, another spelling for that homonymous princess.

galore had to be made when orchestrating the proper obsequy.<sup>54</sup> We hear often of deaths, *en masse*, due to epidemics (for example, ARM 3, 39; 5, 87, and 14, 11 [LAPO 18, #1016-1017, pp. 186-188, #988 pp. 135-136]) and of quick burials as soon as danger slackened (ARM 26, 260; 263). Natural, martial, even accidental deaths, however, demanded elaborate ceremonies and mourning that lasted 10 days.<sup>55</sup> These commemorations of dead ancestors required meals and could coincide with rituals for such chthonic avatars as “Dagan of the Carcass” (Dagan [*bēl*] *paḡrā<sup>2</sup>im*). During such ceremonies, drinking must have been heavy. Here is an anecdote drawn from an as yet unpublished letter to illustrate the point. During the observances honoring the memory of a dead king of Yamḥad, a Mari delegation was seated across from its current king. After presenting a meal to the gods (we are not told about its contents), this king, Ḥammurabi of Yamḥad, got drunk and he made promises to the Mari delegation that were so foolish that his own prime minister was forced to crassly withdraw them the next day.<sup>56</sup> In writing to Zimri-Lim, the delegates of course

54. ARM 6, 37 (LAPO 17, #635, pp. 326-327), “... I have given strict orders to Yaqqim-Addu and to Zimri-Addu to look around. But when they searched, they could not locate his body. But I heard it said that his body was bundled in a garment and left to the Ḥabur-river. I am not able to find his body. His head, however, is now in Qattunan. Should his head be buried? In which city should it be buried? Wherever it is to be buried, should it be done outside the city or within it? And when we bury it, should we do it in the regular fashion? [Durand: ‘l’enterrerons-nous de façon détournée?’] I feel anxious (about it). Whatever his decision, my lord should write me. As to his belongings, some of which are in Qattunan and others in Saggaratum, about which my lord wrote me, I want to bring them within Terqa.” The identity of the unfortunate victim was revealed by D. Charpin, “Une decollation mystérieuse”, NABU 1994/59, pp. 51-52. See also ARM 6, 43 (LAPO 18 #1062, p. 236). We know that a king such as Yaḥdun-Lim was buried beneath the Terqa palace, with his tomb remaining accessible to certain administrator; see D. Charpin – J.-M. Durand, “Le tombeau de Yaḥdun-Lim”, NABU 1989/27, pp. 18-19. On death and burial, see A. Finet, “Usages et rites funéraires en Babylonie”, pp. 235-244 in R. Laffineur (ed.), *Thanatos. Les coutumes funéraires en Égée à l’âge du Bronze. Actes du colloque de Liège, 21-23 avril 1987 (Aegaeum. Annales d’archéologie égéenne de l’Université de Liège, 1)*, Liège 1987.
55. In ARM 10, 79 (LAPO 18 #1246, pp. 472-473) Princess Inib-šarri writes the king’s personal secretary, “When Zakura-abum became ill, I wrote to my lord [the king]. When he died, however, I did not weep over him (the full) fifteen days (before) I was made to leave the city and I departed to Nahur. I have conveyed a letter to my lord, so please bring (it) to his attention.”
56. See A. 2428, cited by Durand, CEO 8, p. 283. See also diverse fragmentary citations of this text in ARM 26/1, pp. 156, 444, 560 fn. 147; FM 3, p. 35 fn. 91;

wanted to record their outrage; but they also wanted to reassure their king that, despite recent diplomatic setbacks between Mari and Yamḥad, delegates were still participating in commemorative meals.

This was not always so. A few years earlier, just as an official named Asqudum was in Yamḥad to fetch a princess as queen for Zimri-Lim, the queen-mother, Sumuna-abi, died, and the Mari delegation was not permitted to participate in the funerary rites. Asqudum bitterly complained (ARM 26, 10, 34-38),

Was Sumunna-abi not (also) our lady (now)? If we do not sit in (your) presence and this matter is heard in Mari, there will be [a scandal]. Indeed, the servants of your son [Zimri-Lim] must sit with you.

Asqudum's protest was nevertheless ignored and he had to cool his heels until the end of the mourning period. Only after Šiptu sacrificed a sheep brought from Mari was Asqudum given satisfaction, presumably *à table* (ARM 26, 11).

During ZL6', our sample year, there were also several happy occasions, such as the wedding of Princess Ḫazala to Sibkuna-Addu of Šuda, a trusted ally.<sup>57</sup> Zimri-Lim himself apparently traveled to Ubatum to deliver the bride. Additionally, throughout the year vassals were being summoned to come for rituals at Mari-controlled shrines. We meet frequently with excuses from invitees who sought postponement or cancellation of these festivities, so we presume that in troubled times, when allegiance to one lord could mean enmity to another, these banquets had sinister consequences for vassals.

From the correspondence about these events, we get an inkling of the ceremonial aspect of meal-taking that, at Mari as evidently elsewhere within the Amorite world, was central to an alimentary communion meant to bind hosts and guests and to instill solidarity among them. These instances of meal-taking could occur at palaces and temples, but also anywhere were the king found himself. For the king's

MARI 6 (1990), p. 65 fn. 142. Another occasion in which revelry compromised wise statecraft is reported in ARM 2, 124 (LAPO 17 #54, pp. 168-169).

57. See the comments of Kupper in ARM 28, p. 35 and of Ziegler, FM 4, pp. 63-64. ARM 28, 27 is a letter to Zimri-Lim announcing the arrival of the Princess, "you have given the young bride to this House and I have now set up your gods and [...] her. So, be pleased." Notice how brides are not called by name until after they are made wives. (Same phenomenon during the *fiançailles* of Yasmaḥ-Addu and of Zimri-Lim.) Are princesses given new names on becoming queens?

rich display of vessels, bowls, jars, vats, cups, saucers, and cutlery traveled with him whenever he set out on longer journeys. The many decorated platters and molds found in the Mari palace, likely enhanced esthetically the appearance of the food on which they were served. One text suggests that palm trees, apparently in barrels, were moved into courtyards during banquets.<sup>58</sup> I believe, without adequate proof, that food was served by men.<sup>59</sup>

The retinue that shared the king's meal included bodyguards, the king's inner circle, his secretary, scribes, and diviners, as well as the local top administrators. In the provinces, perhaps also at Mari, elite women could also attend.<sup>60</sup> The numbers of those in attendance varied. During the many celebrations honoring Yasmaḥ-Addu's marriage to a Qatna princess, banquets served as few as 26 and as many as 562

58. See M. 11255, a memorandum cited, but with a different interpretation, by Durand (*Le système palatial en Orient*, p. 57 fn. 58), "re: moving [*nukkurum*] 4 palm trees in the orchard into the Palm Courtyard: Puzur-šamaš ordered Apil-kubi (to do it), for the banquet." We do not know, however, how often and over what distance the trees were moved.
59. When King Ḥammurabi of Kurda was making a state visit to Mari, the governor of Qattunan fretted about how to serve him [*šūkulum*, partly restored] when he made a stop there (ARM 2, 82 [27 75]: 24-27 = LAPO 16 #269, pp. 420-421), "My lord should decide on the allotment for his meal, instructing me as pleases. Moreover, one man from among [... Durand, 'noble' for ulu<sub>3</sub>.gál] should come here and serve him his meal."
60. The primary wife of the king sits with him at these banquet, as is evident from ARM 10, 74 (LAPO 18 #1242, pp. 464-466), a letter Princess Inib-šarri wrote her father complaining about her husband's failure to treat her as a *šarratum*, that is the primary queen, of Ašlakka: "I have written to my lord a few times about my troubles; but my lord wrote me, 'Go, and enter into Ašlakka. Do not make a fuss. Just go!' This what my lord wrote to me. Having now entered Ašlakka, I am enduring much grief. Ibal-Addu's wife is herself queen. As for the donations by Ašlakka and (other) cities, it is this woman who receives them. As for me, (s)he has set me in a nook (harem?) and has had me grasp my cheek in hand, as if a fool. His meals and drinks are constantly (taken) in the presence of this woman. My eyes are [...] and my mouth hungry. He has reinforced the guard over me, *not fearing* my lord's reputation ..." Queens could sacrifice animals (as in A. 9779, Ziegler FM 4, p. 56 fn. 351, dated to 20.xi.ZL7', just before the king left for a long voyage) and may thus generate their own share of meat, possibly for the "queen's meal" mentioned earlier. Queen Yatar-Aya received meat cuts, along with other attendants when in Šubatūm. Still, ARM 7, 206 (= FM 4, 38) is practically unique in recording the disbursement of meat cuts (in fact of any edible) to palace women, including queens, and Ziegler FM 4, p. 27 discusses it. The evidence on whether or not in Mari culture women other than queens attended the king's tables, however, remains ambiguous. J. Bottéro (ARMT 7, p. 273), followed by J.J. Glassner (RIA 7, p. 267), seems to think so. But the very meagerness of such records argues against it.

people.<sup>61</sup> Zimri-Lim once instructed his staff to be ready for as many as 1000 persons that were accompanying his guest, King Ḥammurabi of Kurda, specifying in which segment of the city to quarter them: the *kirḥum* (the palace compound), the *adaššum* (fortified area in which was located a *bīt naṣṣarim* for guests), and other quarters outside the city wall. I am certain that bureaucrats spent many a sleepless night worrying about how to manage the hordes about to descend on them.<sup>62</sup>

But guests too had reasons for anxiety. Court etiquette was strict about who squats, who sits at meals, and who is closest to the presiding lord, all such judgment depending on the prestige of the king a delegation represented and the ranking within a delegation. The potential for public humiliation was infinite, and the letters reveal how thin were the skins of diplomats.<sup>63</sup> Meal-taking also required elaborate

61. B. Lafont, “Le *šābum* du roi de Mari au temps de Yasmaḥ-Addu,” in J.-M. Durand – J.-R. Kupper, *Mélanges Birot*, pp. 165-167. See also the notes of D. Charpin, “Postures de table”, NABU 1992/123, pp. 90-91. For comparative purposes, see the collection of essays in R. Gyselen (ed.), *Banquets d’orient (Res Orientales*, 4), Bures-sur-Yvette 1992, and in L. Milano (ed.), *Drinking in Ancient Societies*. The articles *marāsim* and *mawākib* in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, although they deal with processions, report on practices that are worthy of comparison.
62. A. 2830 (LAPO 16 #266, pp. 415-417; on the terminology, see LAPO 17, pp. 291-294) is a letter from Itur-Asdu: “My lord had written me the following about Simaḥ-lane: “When Simaḥ-lane reaches (Mari), go out towards him [see ARMT 13, 29, 20-22 = LAPO 18 #981 p. 128] and survey his [troops]; if they amount to a thousand or more, they must not enter the city of Mari, but stay outside (*ina kīdim*). However, if (just) two to three hundred men are under him, (the cortege) should enter the outer walled area (*adaššimma līrubam*). Give them lodgings [*bītāt naṣṣarim*; Durand: ‘maisons réquisitionnées’]; but to Simaḥ-lane give a decent lodging within the citadel itself [*ina kirḥim*; Durand: ‘à la zone réservée’] so that he is not offended ...” We know of a dozen visits to Mari by allies and vassals and the preparation for each of them was always elaborate, involving officials at each one of the many stops the cortege makes on its way to Mari. We know most about the trips taken by two kings of Kurda: Simaḥ-(i)lane (early in Zimri-Lim’s reign) and Ḥammurabi (around ZL7’). On the visit of the former, see lastly D. Duponchel, “Les comptes d’huile du palais de Mari datés de l’année de Kaḥat”, FM 3, pp. 212-215.
63. La’um, once Zimri-Lim’s governor in Qattunan (FM 2, 55-61, pp. 95-103), was also his dub.sar mar.tu (ARM 27, 151: 9-10). He wrote ARM 2, 76 (LAPO 16 #404, pp. 596-599) as an ambassador to Babylon: “We entered to take a meal in Ḥammurabi’s presence, entering into the Palace Court, just the three of us: Zimri-Addu, I, and Yarim-Addu. We were outfitted with garments and the Yamḥad (delegates) that entered with us were all outfitted. As all the Yamḥadians were dressed, but they did not dress my lord’s servants, the *attachés* (*ša šikkim*), I told Sīn-bel-aplim (Ḥammurabi’s chief-of-staff) on their behalf, ‘why do you discriminate among us as if/does a sow’s brood? Whose servants are we? And

curtsies at the presentation of each dish.<sup>64</sup> And if the entertainment was anything like the elaborate affairs that unfolded during the rituals for Ištar, everyone must have left pretty happy, having enjoyed choreographed performances by acrobats, dancers, singers, and the like.<sup>65</sup>

whose servants are these *attachés*? We are the servants [of one king], so why would you make right and left hostile (to each other)?’ This is what I stressed to Sîn-bel-aplim. While I was arguing with Sîn-bel-aplim, my lord’s servants, the *attachés*, got angry and stormed out of the Palace Court. Ḫammurabi was told of the matter and subsequently (the *attachés*) were outfitted. Once they were dressed, Ṭab-eli-matim and Sîn-bel-aplim [summoned me] and told me (what) Ḫammurabi said, ‘Since early morning, you are continuing to launch provocative words toward me. Do you imagine now that you can dictate to my palace about garment (distribution)? Who pleases me, I outfit; who does not, I don’t. I won’t come back (on this): I will not outfit messengers at banquets!’ This is what Ḫammurabi told me; my lord should know this.” On the ceremonial at the court of Ḫammurabi of Babylon, see now D. Charpin, “Hammu-rabi de Babylone et Mari: nouvelles sources, nouvelles perspectives”, in J. Renger (ed.), *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne. 2. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 24.-26. März 1998 in Berlin* (CDOG 2), Saarbrücken 1999, pp. 111-130.

64. A. 3451, Lafont, *Mélanges Birot*, pp. 178-179 = LAPO 16 #4, pp. 73-74), “ ‘... they bow three times, and when they are to come to a meal, they likewise must bow three times.’ But I said, ‘Two bows should be enough. When they are to sit before me, they bow in accordance with the number of plates I serve them.’ Your servants were sitting before me for the meal. I put aside some of the «flour» (*upuntum*) I was enjoying and served (it) to one servant, who bowed. I thought that the «flour» pleased him, so I increased (the amount and presented him) «flour» a second time ...” See also A. 3833 and the note of J.-M. Durand, “*šuke<sup>2</sup>unum* = «Prostration»”, NABU 1990/24, pp. 18-19.
65. Latest edition of the Ištar Ritual is by Durand and Guichard, FM 3 2, with comments on pp. 46-52. Although we have much (juicy) information in Mari documents about music and musicians, no evidence is compelling on whether or not meals were accompanied by musical performances. Documents with the formula *inūma zammerī* (“during [the festival? of] musicians”; listing in D. Fleming, “The *kilūtum* Rites of Mari”, NABU 1993/3, p. 2; add M. 7112, MARI 3, p. 135 fn. 37), occasionally bear the same date as a *naptan šarrim* document, for example, ARM 23, 26 and 12, 243 [14.vii.ZL4’]; ARM 9, 176, ARM 12, 581, and ARM 23, 9. Yet nothing suggests a connection between and among them. The one text that speaks of the king (in this case Yaḫdun-Lim) being entertained with music (ARM 22, 139) cannot be associated with a royal meal. On music at Mari, see Ziegler in FM 4, pp. 71-82; Durand, LAPO 16 #16, pp. 92-94; ARM 2, 71 (LAPO 17 #576, pp. 199-200) and LAPO 18, pp. 347-356. A number of texts connect acrobats in the king’s presence (FM 3, 51, cited above, and 67, “when the king returned from the Upper District”) or during festivities (FM 3, 120 “at the Birizzirum”, 103, “... to anoint an acrobat and a wrestler [<sup>lu</sup>ša *humašim*] at the *kuššum*.”)



Still, diplomats accompanying the son of the Elamite king felt shabbily treated despite receiving sheep, wine, even, ice in their own quarters. Because they were different ethnically and culturally, they could not easily participate in palace ceremonies.<sup>66</sup>

A series of symbolic acts around the meal affirmed the bonding between guests and hosts. Just before taking seats, there was parade of standards and before serving the meal, there was a distribution of garments, in some cases likely from the king's own wardrobe and so carrying his scent (much like what took place during the elaborate *darbar*-ceremonies of Moghul India). In this way, back home, participants can bolster their allegiance by recapturing his odor.<sup>67</sup> At the banquet's conclusion, there were more gift-giving, including jewelry and clothing. At such displays of a host's largess, diplomats were conscious of how their treatments compared with others, and we have letters from Mari delegates in Babylon reassuring their king that they challenged every slight to their status and standing.<sup>68</sup> At such moments, too, it was not the quality of the meal that was at stake; but what mattered was how well (or how badly) representatives of foreign rulers were being absorbed into their hosting group.

This notion of solidarity was reinforced by a great number of body metaphors that addressed the unity of houses, that is dynasties, being cemented *à table*. They include reference to the mingling of blood, to sharing the same bedding, and to becoming as one finger in a hand, the last a metaphor approximated in the mouth of Prince Ali of Jordan.<sup>69</sup> The opposite was also expressed in metaphors. To speak ill of

66. See ARM 13, 31-32 (LAPO 16 #407-408, pp. 600-601) and ARM 14, 120, 122 (LAPO 16, #367, 368, pp. 562-565).

67. See lines 7'-10' of a text reedited by N. Ziegler, "Ein Bittbrief eines Händlers", WZKM 86 (1996) [= *Festschrift Hirsch*], pp. 480-481, "My lord had rubbed his hands on the fringes of my garments and I can now smell the wonderful scent of my lord throughout my house." The same fawning writer (whose name is unfortunately lost) writes further, "The mention of my lord's name here is as sweet as Simum wine".

68. ARM 26, 372: 47-54 lists the gifts an overlord (Hammurabi of Babylon) sent a prospective vassal (Atamrum of Andarig) and they include textiles, garments, wig (*huburtum*), and a throne. The vassal indicates his acceptance by promptly wearing the garments and using the throne. Note also ARM 2, 76, cited above. On the parades of visiting dignitaries that were followed by gift distributions see the text published by P. Villard, "Parade militaire dans les jardins de Babylone", pp. 138-140 in FM 1 (= LAPO 17 #579, pp. 202-205).

69. The material is collected in B. Lafont, "Relations internationales, alliance et diplomatie au temps des rois de Mari", forthcoming in *Amurru* 2. The relevant phrases where *ina rubuṣ* [someone] *rabāṣum*, "to share the cot of someone":

an overlord after eating from his table or sharing his cup was an evil that is condemned by the goddess Hišametum herself (ARM 26, 195). In a striking inversion of the metaphor a vassal of Zimri-lim constructs a very crude image of rejection and contempt. Writes Huziri of Hazzikannum:

On another matter; why does my lord not write to Kaḥat about Akin-Amar. Is this man, Akin-Amar, just my enemy but not also my lord's enemy? Why does he remain in good terms with my lord? (At least) once, this man sat by my lord and drank a cup (of friendship). Having elevated him, my lord reckoned him among worthy men, clothing him in garment, and supplying him with a wig. Yet, turning around, [Akin-Amar] dropped excrement into the cup he used, becoming hostile to my lord! (FM 2, 122).<sup>70</sup>

We know from Mari and elsewhere that legal agreements could be sealed by a meal.<sup>71</sup> During celebrations labeled *elēnum* that were widely practiced in the Diyala region, couriers brought vassals portions of sacrificial meat from the overlord's sacrifice, thus ritualizing

ARM 2, 21: 4' (LAPO 16 #350, p. 542); 23: 21-22 (LAPO 17 #590, p. 232); ARM 27, 355: 11, 383: 8-10, 393: 9'-10'; A.896: 27-28 (= ARM 26/2, p. 128); A. 2730: 15 (= ARM 26/2, p. 33); M. 9739: 7'-14' (= ARM 26/2 p. 128) and M. 5157: 23'-24', on which see J.-M. Durand, "Précurseurs syriens aux protocoles néo-assyriens. Considérations sur la vie politique aux Bords-de-l'Euphrate", in D. Charpin – F. Joannès (eds.), *Marchands, diplomates et empereurs. Études sur la civilisation mésopotamienne offerts à Paul Garelli*, Paris 1991, p. 53. For *ubānum ištēt*, "one finger", see ARM 2, 21: 12; ARM 26, 392: 29; 438: 22'; 449: 15; A. 2326: 10-12 (= MARI 7, p. 175 n° 2) and A. 4026: 11-12 (= MARI 6, p. 48). Prince Ali of Jordan is quoted to say, "The five brothers [sons of King Hussein of Jordan] are like the fingers of a hand ... If you're nice to us, it's an open hand. If you do not want to be nice to us, we become a fist." Quoted in the *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 2000, p. 49.

70. See M. Guichard in FM 2, p. 238. It would be piquant to know whether the cup with excrement was the lord's or the vassal's. Note the statement in Esarhad-don's "Succession Treaty", lines 153-156, "(You swear that) you will not conclude a mutually binding oath with anyone who sets up the gods to conclude a treaty before them, by setting up a table (*rikis paššūri*), by drinking the cup (*šatē kāsi*), by kindling a fire (*nipiḫ išāti*), by water [and] oil (*mē šamni*), or by touching the breast (*šibit tulē*) ..."; adapted from S. Parpola – K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2), Helsinki 1988, p. 35.

71. See J.-M. Durand, "Sumerien et Akkadien en pays Amorites", MARI 1 (1982), pp. 79-89. In ARM 22, 328, eating bread and drinking beer are used as mantra for property transfer.

table-sharing.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, elaborate rituals completed the settling of territorial disputes, and we learn about one such occasion in detail from a letter communicated by one of Zimri-Lim's ambassadors (ARM 26, 404, 60-65),

Once Atamrum [of Andarig] and Asqur-Addu [of Karana] came to mutual agreement and made a pact, the donkey-foal was immolated. They made each other take divine oaths and sat to toast (each other). Upon drinking their cups, they exchanged gifts between themselves; then, Asqur-Addu set out for his land and Atamrum set out for Andarig itself.

At such solemn moments, wetting the throat was almost always done with wine.<sup>73</sup> It is appropriate that references to wine offer one of

72. Sending cuts of meats from festival sacrifices to allies, overlords, and vassals reinforced shared values, ARM 28, 169 (from Qarni-Lim of Andarig) and 174 (from Asqur-Addu of Karana). See Kupper's comments in NABU 1996/32, pp. 22-23.

73. As one example, see ARM 23, 494: 1-5, "4 jars of wine (sent by) Ḫammurabi; 1 jar of wine from the temple of Belet-ekallim, for the meals of nomads at the temple of Annunitum-Beyond-Walls, when the king dined ..." A good number of the Leilan documents in Ismail's *Altbabylonische Wirtschaftsurkunden aus Tall Leilān* report outlays of wine when the king entertained diverse visitors. A. Finet's article on "Le vin à Mari", AfO 25 (1974-77), pp. 122-131, remains a good introduction to the topic. It should be supplemented by the comments (especially on blending) of Durand, ARMT 21, pp. 104-112, of Vincente, pp. 288-312 in *The 1987 Tell Leilan Tablets*, and of Milano in "Vino e birra in oriente. Confini geografici e confini culturali", pp. 421-440 in *Drinking in Ancient Societies*. Grapes were grown in the Mari region; see B. Lion, "Vignes au royaume de Mari", FM 1, pp. 107-113. Some vineyards (near Ḫišamta) were apparently controlled by the queen herself; Ziegler, FM 4, p. 55-56 fn. 349. Kings such as Yasmaḥ-Addu owned vineyard in foreign territory, where they also kept a house under the care of an *abu bītim*, ARMT 13, 142 (LAPO 17 #832, pp. 648-651), 149 (LAPO 16 #226, pp. 360-361). Wine was also purchased from the Carchemish region (see Finet's article and Lafont in ARM 26/2, pp. 514-515). It was delivered by allies and vassals (e.g. ARM 24, 64-65; ARM 10, 131-133 [LAPO 18 #1154-1156, pp. 333-336]), or simply appropriated from the estates of dead administrators (e.g., ARM 24, 66). Other alcoholic beverage included beer and *kurunnum*, about which see Lafont, ARM 23, pp. 290-291. Beer itself is not normally associated with the royal meal (see above, comments on *alappānum* and *ḫimrum*.) Beer enters into a merismus ("bread and beer" as in ARM 10, 116:14) to speak of human sustenance. The merismus can expand to include meat, as is clear from the instruction of an administrator, "Make ready; write the king to set aside for you meal allotments for Ḫammurabi [of Kurda]: bread, beer, and sheep" (ARM 2, 82 [= 27, 75]: 20-22, LAPO 16 #269, pp. 420-421).

the rare occasions in which personal choice of the elite is made explicit. In a letter, Zimri-Lim is revealed as a connoisseur of wine, self-assured about the variety of wines he preferred and knowledgeable on how to blend them. To illustrate his personal taste, we can cite a letter (ARM 26, 242, 3-14), likely written by the queen:

The palace is in good order. My lord wrote to me about blending [literally “cut”] the wine to convey to Saggaratum. I opened the wine “cellar” and ordered the blending of 4 jars of red wine that my lord drinks as well as of 4 jars of lesser quality red wine that my lord (also) drinks and had (them) taken to Saggaratum. My lord should [get] the wine he is wont to drink. It is possible that I may [not] have blended this one with that one well; but my lord himself will taste it.<sup>74</sup>

It might be noticed, however, that in the above-cited agreement between Atamrum and Asqur-Addu, the two in fact did not share a meal, likely because no animal was slaughtered.<sup>75</sup> This observation requires a comment.

The king’s meals did include foodstuff supplied by the *abarak-kātum* as well as cured cuts of beef (ARM 21, 65; 80; 81, 16-17). It could also include seasonal harvests of truffles, eels, fish and fowl as well as hunted animals such as rabbits, wild sheep (moufflon), os

Beer is also readily cited as ration for individuals or units, and beer jugs are said to be kept in cellars or storage (ARM 23, 357-363; see also ARM 7, 256).

74. The copy of this letter has been published by M. Guichard, “Présages fortuits à Mari – (Copies et ajouts à ARMT XXVI/1)”, MARI 8, pp. 305-328. Very piquant is the balance of the letter in which the behavior of ants in a wine cellar alarms the king’s correspondent; see Guichard’s comments as well as those of Lion and Michel, MARI 8, p. 722.
75. In Mari contexts that do not involve such tribes as Sim’al and Yamin, “to kill a donkey-foal” was a metaphor for “making a pact”. As far as we can tell, donkeys were never eaten. Our texts do not tell us whether or not such immolated donkeys were (ceremoniously) interred, as numerous donkey burials in the area attest; see J. Clutton-Brock, “A Dog and a Donkey Excavated at Tell Brak”, *Iraq* 51 (1989), pp. 217-225; J. Clutton-Brock – S. Davies, “More Donkeys from Tell Brak”, *Iraq* 55 (1993), pp. 209-221. A handy listing of animal bones found in Mesopotamian tombs is given in Marylou Jean-Marie’s “À propos de certaines offrandes funéraires à Mari”, MARI 8 (1997), pp. 698-699.

triches, even bears and park-raised deer.<sup>76</sup> I suggest, however, that at official functions the meal included fresh meat derived from sheep that were sacrificed at shrines, slaughtered during commemorations ceremonies, or killed for omen taking. This notion is confirmed by the other set of Mari documents that bear on our topic. These texts come from a rather restricted period early in Zimri-Lim's reign (likely ZL1')

76. The sampling below does not include reference to their artistic or ornamental depiction. **Hares** (*arnabātum*) are trapped rather than raised. This is suggested by the following extract: silver for "6 servants of Samsi-erāḥ [of Tillā], who trapped hares in Rašūm [near Andarig]"; cited from G. Dossin, "Les archives économiques du palais de Mari", *Syria* 20 (1939), p. 107. **Bears** (*asum/asātum*) are delivered from such places as Idamaraš, together with oxen and roe deer, as shown by ARM 7, 91 (from Šupram of Susa), thus increasing the likelihood that, as in China, they were eaten. ARM 24, 32 mentions the delivery of animals from allies, among which are 5 *asātum*. It has to be admitted, however, that these references may be to *hazzu*, *hazzātum*, "goats", as Talon already suggested in his comments to ARM 24, 32. The number (231) of **gazelles** (*šabītum maš.dà*) being processed for meat in ARM 21, 73 strongly suggests that they were being raised for food consumption, although perhaps not for the elite for the recipients seem to be cooks, administrators, and palace women. **Cervidae**. Roe deer (*nālum*, *dara<sub>3</sub>.maš.dà*) are given by vassals, together with cattle, ARM 7, 91 (see above) and their meat were conserved and distributed (ARM 21, 85: 3). There are two references to the *šētētum*, "nets", expressly for stags (*ayalū*, *dara<sub>3</sub>.maš*) and they suggest that these animals were trapped rather than hunted: ARM 14, 38 (LAPO 16 #147, p. 283) and RA 64 (1970), p. 26 (#9). Yet we note that in ARM 21, 73 large numbers (231!) of stags were being inventoried, so we could imagine that they were raised in stalls, very much as in Chagar Bazar (cited in CAD A/1, p. 226, 1b). It remains unclear whether the "4 deer and the 4 young boars that stand in a (palace) court" are real or decorative, ARM 24, 273, on which see J.-M. Durand, *Le système palatial en Orient*, p. 53 fn. 39 (Ayalum of ARM 14, 86 is a personal name, see LAPO 16 #416, pp. 608-610). The **ostrich** (*lurmum*, *ga.nu<sub>11</sub>.mušen*) was placed under the king's ban, so it was presumably meant for his palate only. Ḥabduma-Dagan writes the king something about 9 ostriches and about a nomad, concluding, "In accordance with my lord's injunction (*asak bēlīya*), whatever other ostriches remain will be set aside for my lord" (M. 10999, edited by Guichard in MARI 8, pp. 323-325). Every ruler in the Mari age seemed to search for ostriches, their eggs, or their plumes: Zimri-Lim requests an ostrich from Burundum, ARM 10, 140 (especially after collation, LAPO 18 #1184, pp. 372-373); the king of Šuda requests one from Zimri-Lim, ARM 28, 33; the king of Burundum request a garment adorned with ostrich plumes, ARM 28, 43. A. 18008 reports on a bustle? inspired by ostriches; see J.-M. Durand, "Rakabtum, roi de Talḥayūm", NABU 1989/57, pp. 37-38). On ostrich eggs, see above. On "exotic" animals and their fate in cuneiform texts, see B. Lion, "La circulation des animaux exotiques au Proche-Orient antique", in D. Charpin – F. Joannès (eds.), *La circulation des biens, des personnes et des idées dans le Proche-Orient ancien* (RAI 38), Paris 1992, pp. 357-365.

and bear the seal of Asqudum who wore many hats when working for Zimri-Lim.

Each one of these tablets detailed the slaughter of sheep and rams for any combination of the following reasons: to honor specific gods, to practice divination, to celebrate diverse rituals, or to supply the table of the king. Here, reference is not to the *naptan šarrim*, “the king’s meal”, but to the “kings’ table”, *paššur* (giš.banšur) *šarrim*.<sup>77</sup> By recording diverse destinations for the meat in one tablet, scribes were not being parsimonious with their supply of clay; rather, they were making an equivalence between supplying the tables of kings and of the gods.<sup>78</sup>

The amount of slaughtered animals under these circumstances, almost exclusively sheep, was staggering. From the records of a narrow interval when Zimri-Lim year was battling to consolidate his power, we calculate the slaughter of hundreds of sheep for diverse ritual purposes, but also to draw answers on the safety of towns and the success of military expeditions.<sup>79</sup> I do not know what happened to the carcasses of animals slaughtered by governors and palace officials in the absence of the king. Perhaps there were such a thing as proxy tables,

77. See the study of B. Lafont in ARM 23, pp. 231-280. While we might occasionally read of disbursement of meat for a *naptan šarrim* (ARMT 23, 348), the two terms should not be deemed equivalent. Contra Lafont, “en effet, *paššur šarrim* équivaut à *naptan šarrim* ...” (“Sacrifices et rituels à Mari, et dans la Bible”, RA 93 [1999], p. 64). We should note, however, that at Leilan a distinction between the two terms is not easily made; see B.F. Ismail, *Altbabylonische Wirtschafturkunden aus Tall Leilān*, texts #132 and 134 and Vincente, *The 1987 Tell Leilan Tablets*, compare texts 141 and 135. Note also that at Leilan grain are allocated to a giš.banšur.

78. Similar sentiments are now expressed by Lafont, RA 93 (1999), pp. 60-62.

79. Durand cites M. 11293 (ARM 26/1, pp. 36-38; CEO 8, pp. 386-388) that tallies over 4150+ sheep used for divination during 9 months in ZL9’, a year in which, admittedly, oaths were administered to palace personnel. The tallies for other periods is no less impressive, almost 1300 sheep during an unknown stretch of one year, including just 10 sheep for the gods; see ARM 7, 224, on which note MARI 2 (1983), p. 93. Note also the large number of disbursements in each of 136 documents covering less than 4 months in an early Zimri-Lim year; Lafont as cited in the preceding note. Yet, such numbers do not compare with those called upon to bolster the munificence of such kings as Ashurnasipal II (RIMA 2, 30, pp. 288-293) or those cited in the Old Assyrian tale about Sargon, C. Günbattu, “Kültepe’den Akadlı Sargon’a âit bir tablet”, pp. 131-155 [English summary: “A Tablet Concerning Sargon The King of Akkad”] in *Emin Bilgiç Anı Kitabı (Archivum Anatolicum 3) (Ankara History/Geography Faculty, 381/3)*, Ankara 1997.

that is the sharing of meat presided by representatives of the king; perhaps the meat was processed for conservation.

In contrast to the slaughter of sheep, we read about the killing of goats very sparingly, and almost exclusively when covenant-makings with nomadic groups.<sup>80</sup> Healthy bulls were generally reserved for plowing or transport and when they died, they were too tough to enjoy. When bulls were butchered, however, their slaughter was almost uniformly carried out by *nuḫatimmū* on animals that either were over-fed, probably to compensate for the toughness of their meat (ARM 5, 6 [LAPO 18 #971, #972, pp. 117-119]; ARM 27, 131) or were sickly, likely from ingesting toxic fungi (ARM 2, 82 [LAPO 16, #269, pp. 420-421]).<sup>81</sup> It is suspicious to note, too, that bulls given as a donation (*igisûm*) were particularly prone to sickness, so it is not difficult to imagine that they were being dumped on the palace.<sup>82</sup>

Meat from oxen was apparently not placed on the king's table, but fed to visiting dignitary making their way to Mari (ARM 27, 75), or served in communal banqueting in the name of an absent king (ARM 26, 215; goat, FM 2, 38). Similarly, the few times we hear of pigs in alimentary context, they were associated with meals that do not involve the king, although from Tell Leilan records we learn that they

80. See ARM 2, 37 (LAPO 16 #283, pp. 443-444), in which a Zimri-Lim high official forces two parties to sacrifice a donkey-foal rather a goat and a puppy-dog when securing a treaty. The sacrificial program is now complicated by a version of events that was sent to the king's secretary because it mentions a calf rather a puppy dog. See the edition of the dossier by D. Charpin, "Un souverain éphémère en Ida-maraš: Išme-Addu d'Ašnakkum", MARI 7 (1993), pp 182-187. On the possible mention of goats in other texts, see above.

81. On this text see the comments of R. Biggs, "Ergotism and other Mycotoxicoses in Ancient Mesopotamia?", in P. Michalowski (ed.), *Velles Paraules. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Miguel Civil on the Occasion of his SixtyFifth Birthday (Aula Orientalis 9)*, Sabadell 1993, pp. 18-19.

82. Fine examples of a governor's quandary when having to deal with such donations are ARM 14, 5, 6 (LAPO 18 #972-973), studied in my article, "Shunukhra-Khalu", in E. Leichty – M. deJ. Ellis (eds), *A Scientific Humanist. Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund, 9)*, Philadelphia 1988, pp. 347-349. In ARMT 13, 25 (LAPO 18 #970, p. 116), a palace steward encourages the king to sell an *igisûm* bull to merchants. See also ARM 1, 86 (LAPO 18 #971, pp. 116-117) which apparently deals with a similar situation. There is a nice text in which Samsi-Addu instructs his son on exchanging for a healthy bull: "The bull that Šamaš-tillassu fattened for a donation is now in Mari. Now Šamaš-tillassu told me, 'This bull is very heavy — re: size.' Now take this bull and write Mubalšaga. In the city [= Ekallatum] he should give to him bull for bull so that he could present it as his donation." (For a different interpretation, see Durand's comments, LAPO 16, pp. 116-117).

were fed to the queen.<sup>83</sup> Thus, when King Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum found shelter with Ḥammurabi of Babylon, he complained about receiving less attention than the servants of Zimri-Lim for whom there was “pig, fish, bird, and terebinth nuts” (ARM 26, 384, 67'-69'). These observations should not lead us to conclude that kings avoided the flesh of any but sacrificed sheep; but it does mean that his table was ceremonial when it included it.<sup>84</sup>

But for brief respites, Zimri-Lim himself incessantly and repeatedly toured his domain, giving opportunity for administrators and visitors to share his table. However, no matter how frequent were his tours, they never seemed enough, for we have many urgent reminders by his administrators to come and sacrifice at specific shrines or in honor of this god or that ancestor. No doubt the eating was better for the administrators on such occasions; but in a society in which political instability was the norm and loyalty was achieved through formal oaths, sitting together during meals must have created obligations and nourished allegiances at all levels of the culture.<sup>85</sup> And I would not be surprised if the reluctance of Zimri-Lim's predecessor, Yasmaḥ-Addu, to leave his residence—for which he was roundly criticized by his father—did not eventually undermine the loyalty of vassals and of allies who were denied the opportunity to practice table fellowships.<sup>86</sup> I am even bold enough to further speculate that the reason prophecy did not do well at any reign but Zimri-Lim's may have had as much to do with prophecy's potential for destabilizing decision-making as with its capacity to ascertain the will of heaven without the shedding of blood, in sharp contrast with extispicy. Prophecy (in all its variety) thus com-

83. See Ziegler FM 4, p. 26 fn. 142. Pigs were thrown to lions that came too close to town but were accessible only to the king (ARM 2, 106 and ARM 14, 1 [LAPO 16 #214, 215, pp. 345-349]). Otherwise, pigs figure in insults, ARM 26, 5: 24-25 (“... your servant, who is like a pig that grows fat for you to butcher ...”). See also ARM 2, 76, cited above.

84. Lafont, RA 93 (1999), pp. 70-71, collects instances of non-royal animal sacrifice, often done in thanksgiving or to propitiate divine anger.

85. On oaths, see Durand, *Mélanges Garelli*, pp. 13-72 and LAPO 16, pp. 168-180. See also the articles collected in S. Lafont (ed.), *Jurer et maudire: pratiques politiques et usages juridiques du serment dans le Proche-Orient ancien (Méditerranées. Revue de l'association Méditerranées, 10-11)*, Paris 1997.

86. See the comments of Durand, LAPO 16, pp. 136-138.



promised the steady supply of fresh meat that filled the tables at which the elite forged their solidarity.<sup>87</sup>

For me a missing ingredient in connecting the king's table with some sort of sacramental process that bonded gods, kings, followers, and allies, is information on the way animals were slaughtered, what kind of cuts were available for fresh cooking, and what schemes were followed in distributing fresh meat. In particular, it would be useful to know what happened to the σπλόγγα, the internal organs, that spoiled very quickly and did not cure well. Generally this information is missing from cuneiform sources, and we must be satisfied with brief hints in ritual texts or, in Mari and elsewhere, with distribution lists of body parts, as likely as not of cured meat.<sup>88</sup> An exception is a brief Old

87. Notice how prophecy and sacrifice are brought together in a striking prophetic revelation, A. 1121: 13-33. The text is reedited by B. Lafont, "Le roi de Mari et les prophètes du dieu Adad", RA 78 (1984), pp. 7-18. For the most recent translation, see Durand, LAPO 18 #984, pp. 130-133. Still unresolved is how much access elite administrators had for private consumption of meat. We read about the large flocks of sheep and cattle that they held in a number of towns. They had control over them and, we presume, could enjoy their flesh. We even have the case of a corrupt official who managed to do quite well, trading inferior sheep for the palace's good stock (ARM 7, 266). The animals are donations (*igi-sûm*) only if they came from private holdings. Yet, when these administrators died (or were disgraced) the king's officials quickly moved in to secure their belongings, household and livestock, as if they held them as perks for high rank. Yet, the case of the diviner Asqudum excepted, our evidence on these magnates is palace-based and so must be judged incomplete. See the recent comments of Durand, LAPO 17, pp. 521-535.

88. Despite the large amount of scholarship on meat sacrifice, this issue has not yet received the attention it deserves. See D.O. Edzard, *Altbabylonische Rechtsund Wirtschaftsurkunden aus Tell ed-Der im Iraq Museum, Baghdad* (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Abhandlungen, 72 – Veröffentlichungen der Kommission zur Erschließung von Keilschrifttexten, Serie A, Stück 5), München 1970, pp. 129-130; F.R. Kraus, "Die 'Ertragbringer' des 'Palastes': Der Abdecker", Chapter 21 of *Königliche Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit* (*Studia et documenta ad iura Orientis antiqui pertinentia*, 11), Leiden 1984, pp. 350-366; W.G. Lambert, "Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia", in J. Quaegebeur (ed.), *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (*Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991*), Leuven 1993, pp. 191-201. See also H. Limet, "Le sacrifice sanglant", WZKM 86 (1996) [= *Festschrift Hirsch*], pp. 251-262. For a general overview, see C. Grottanelli – N.F. Parise (eds.), *Sacrificio e società nel mondo antico*, Roma 1988; C. Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio* (*Biblioteca essenziale Laterza*, 24), Roma 1999. An interesting study of carcasses and their fate is that of Hallo, "Carcasses for the Capital" *cit.* (fn. 49). On Greek treatment of the σπλόγγα, see G.

Babylonian bilingual published by Foxvog in the *Sjöberg Festschrift*. While it likely was a school exercise rather than a ritual prescription, it might nevertheless be instructive to quote it:

[Kill] the sheep, cut off the head of the sheep, let the blood vessels drip--the blood of the sheep is expressed. Roast the fetlock [bottom limb] and tail; pull out the shoulder and rib cuts. Boil the shoulder cut and place it on the table. Wash the *himsum* in water and arrange it on the table. Inspect the intestines, pull and separate them, then cut the connecting tissues. Remove the feces from the colon and wash it in water. Inspect the liver(?), pull out the ligament of the heart; cut the meat, cut the meat. [Rest broken].<sup>89</sup>

From Mari, itself, we have but fragments on this topic. During a commemoration (*kispum*) ceremony, we are told that:

The meal (*naptanum*/ni.gub) should come out from the palace (expense?). A sheep must be offered in the Throne Compound (*bīt kušsim*) to the *lamassātum*-images of Sargon and Naram-Sîn. [Another sheep] will be offered to the altar (giš.du<sub>8</sub>). (The sacrifice at the Throne Compound must be done before the king's departure and the meat must be boiled.) The top/best portion of the meat (*rēš šīrim*) must be presented to Šamaš. The *kispum* will not have taken place as long as (this meat) has not been presented to Šamaš.<sup>90</sup>

The text goes on to speak of more sacrifices, hither and yon; but nothing about what we want to know.

What we also miss also from administrative records is testimony that display alimentary abnegation and renunciation, denials of desire that are so much part of the sacrificial systems as known from Israel

Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mâgeiros: étude sur la boucherie, la cuisine et le sacrifice dans la Grèce ancienne*, Montréal 1982.

89. D.A. Foxvog, "A Manual of Sacrificial Procedure", in H. Behrens – D. Loding – M. Roth (eds.), DUMU-E<sub>2</sub>-DUB-BA-A. *Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg* (*Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund*, 11), Philadelphia 1989, pp. 167-176.

90. Cited from the recent edition of Durand, FM 3, pp. 66-70. During the celebrations in honor of Ištar, two types of flour were placed before her and were wetted. The flour was by no means parts of a meal, but were used in the taking of oaths; but see Durand's interpretation, FM 3, p. 49.

and Greece. Indeed, in many western languages, “sacrifice” implies a surrender of something cherished, be it part of ourselves (for example rest or satiety) or a valuable object (animal or inert).<sup>91</sup> We know from Mari about spoils of war that are set aside for kings and gods; about ordeals of ingestion, probably of a plant, that controlled oaths; and about purification necessitated by deeds of omission (ARM 26 44). We even have shocked revulsion at watching someone eat raw meat (ARM 26, 115), a major affront against *decorum*.<sup>92</sup> But we probably have nothing in the Mari records that hints of food prohibitions, whether dependent on specific rituals or on the calendar, as we have them from the first millennium.<sup>93</sup> I say “probably” because in a letter sent by an official, there is reference to establishing the precise day of the month in which hot dishes (? *buhṛātum*) could be offered to Addu and Nergal (ARM 26, 231). Presumably, the aim is to prevent a pre-ordained opportunity to approach the gods. This is not really a prohibition, I admit, and it certainly does not match the massive and categorical distancing from animal flesh that we find in Hebrew texts.

To conclude: In this presentation, I have argued for the existence at Mari of ceremonies and rituals that centered on the king's table. Elaborate codes of conduct were staged around sacramental meals hosted by the king, their goal was to include those deemed worthy of

91. See the remarks of Lafont, RA 93 (1999), pp. 58-59, who cites the good comments of J. Bottéro.
92. A fragment from the epic of Zimri-Lim uses similes to assess the bravery of the king's soldiers “Like onagers (eaters of) chaff from the steppe, [Zimri-Lim's] men ate meat”. The passage makes sense as a qualification of the soldiers whether the meat was cooked (i.e. “well-fed soldiers”) or raw (i.e. “fierce soldiers”). On this text, see lastly N. Wasserman, “Sweeter than Honey and Wine ...”: Semantic Domains and Old Babylonian Imagery”, in L. Milano *et al.* (eds.), *Landscapes. Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East. Papers presented to the XLIV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Venezia, 7-11 July 1997. Part III: Landscape in Ideology, Religion, Literature and Art* (HANE/M III), Padova 2000, p. 194. The passage from the epic is cited by Durand, *apud* P. Marelllo, “Vie nomade”, in FM 1, pp. 121-122.
93. K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia. A Comparative Study*, Assen 1985, pp. 33-36; see also M.J. Geller, “Taboo in Mesopotamia”, JCS 42 (1990), pp. 105-117. In “Garlic, Onion, Leek”, BSAG 3 (1987), p. 68, Marten Stol refers to taboos on eating fish, leeks, and cress. For an overview, see the series of articles *sub* “Meal Customs”, in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4 (1991), pp. 648-655. For Egypt, see P.J. Frandsen, “Tabu”, in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 6 (1985), pp. 135-142. It may be that, as in China, the occasional food taboos in Near Eastern antiquity (excluding Israel) are linked to personal temperaments and humors, the last as understood from medieval physiology.

belonging to his circles; but also to exclude those unworthy of the honor. At such moments, leaders could feel themselves part of a “family” and did not hesitate to use kinship vocabulary, father, brother, and son to calibrate precise power relationship among each other.

The evidence for the Mari manifestation on all this is fragmentary and it has to be constructed from tidbits of information embedded in letters and administrative documents. As frequent in Mesopotamia, what we are missing is the gorgeous text that delivers a reasoned exploration of the ideological issues, in this case, an Ibn Khaldun type of treatise on solidarity and discord among those sharing a common culture. Still, if I have been successful in recreating one institution that played a role in this enterprise, then my effort may inspire others to search for it in other Mesopotamian communities. Tracing its development into later periods and into different cultures is likely to follow.

#### *post-scriptum*

In his article, “Les administrateurs de l’époque de Yasmah-Addu”, *Amurru* 2 (2001), pp. 73-76, Pierre Villard publishes A. 1008, a letter with contents of interest to us. Iškur-šaga, a major official in Sagaratum writes Yasmah-Addu the following:

(3) My lord wrote to me about leading Yawi-ila, the *abarak-kum*, to my lord. I have just now assigned to guard him two men among the aliens (*nāsiḫum*) and I dispatched him to my lord. Also, because Ladinum has sent to me a “butcher” (*muḫaldim*) from Tukriš, I have sent him to my lord by entrusting him to Yawi-ila.

(13) On another matter; when Mutu-ekallim, the “butcher”, told this to my lord, “Iškur-saga has not fulfilled my request”, my lord wrote me the following, “Why is it that so long as I have not yet written you have not fulfilled his request?” In the matter in which he has not been satisfied, [Mutu-ekallim] has made incredible charges before my lord. While he did go to complain in my lord’s own presence, work simply overwhelmed me here and I could not go. Once my work is completed, I will come before my lord. Mutu-ekallim and I can

justify ourselves and my lord can then impose fault on the (guilty) person.

(34) But for now I have fulfilled the request of his profession and have dispatched him.

The letter deals with three matters: Sending off an *abarakkum* requested by the king, guiding a Tukriš “butcher” to the king, and fending off a personal attack by another butcher. Iškur-saga seems to have had his problems keeping his staff happy, as is clear from ARM 2, 136 (= LAPO 16, #177, pp. 310-311). Unlike previous references to *abarakkum* (see above note 24, to which one can add broken citations given in Ziegler FM 4, p. 98 ns. 597-598), this one has the potential of a fuller yield if the Yawi-ila so titled prove to be the same as the high official at Šubat-Šamaš, on whom see Villard, pp. 107-109. Nothing in this letter gives the impression that we are dealing with a person of such importance and we keep in mind that the name Yawi-ila was born by a number of homonyms.

*Abarakkum* and *muḥaldim* have a way of finding common reference (see ARM 24, 624): so it is not surprising that Iškur-šaga turns to be the subject of entrusting a meat specialist (*muḥaldim*) to an *abarakkum*. The former is connected with Tukriš (elsewhere also Dukriš), a Transstigidian city; but it is not clear whether the label is innocuous (he happens to be from that region) or meant to titillate the king's palate (he knows how to cure meat in a specific way). Be it as it may, Ladinum is associated elsewhere (ARM 24, 624, 10') among cupbearers.

The third matter involves Mutu-ekallim who is known, also as a *muḥaldim*, to have received an instrument of the profession (a bronze knife), rather late in Yasmaḥ-Addu's reign (ARM 25, 137). Whatever their spat, that Mutu-ekallim could get the king's ear, tells us something of the appreciation of his service.