



ANCIENT SYRIAN WRITINGS

SYRIAN PRECLASSICAL AND CLASSICAL TEXTS

Edited by Gaia Servadio



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The texts discovered beneath the Syrian ground are not just tablets of historical value. They reveal that behind the lifeless statues and the collapsed walls of destroyed palaces of the many ancient civilizations there was a vibrant life, similar to what we experience today in our daily lives.

Through these texts we discover people who, like us, fall in love, feel anxiety, jealousy and anger. We almost see them, and also we can imagine what they wore, how they spoke, what they ate, the details and colors of their clothes. We imagine them in their celebrations and their rituals, and these texts are mirrors that reflect the image of an ancient world; ancient but very familiar.

With her love of Syria and its history, Gaia Servadio has worked on selecting, translating and editing these texts into English for the benefit of the world's readers.

For its part, Damascus, Arab Capital of Culture is proud to include this book among its publications. Ancient Syrian Writings is a proof that Syria which has given the human race that most precious of all gift, the world's first alphabet, is still the center of a great civilization.

Its capital, Damascus, deserves to be the capital of culture, not only for the year 2008, but forever.

Hanan Kassab-Hassan
General Secretary of Damascus
Arab Capital of Culture 2008

WHAT WE CALL CIVILIZATION IS THE DISTANT AND FAR DISTANT PAST CLINGING TO LIFE, DETERMINED TO IMPOSE ITSELF AND EXERTING AS MUCH INFLUENCE OVER THE HABITAT AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES OF MEN AS THE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION OF RELIEF, SOIL, WATER SUPPLY AND CLIMATE.

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean Vol. II*

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G.S.

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Discovering History through the Ebla Tablets

That of Ebla is still the only and the largest archive documented in Syria in the Early Dynastic period.

Careful recording of the position of the tablets at the moment of their discovery has enabled to understand the archival system used by the Ebla scribes, even taking into account the fact that, in the fire which destroyed the palace, the wooden shelves were burnt and numerous tablets fell to the ground and were smashed. These tablets were hardened by the fire and today, therefore, we have beautiful strong tablets.

The tablets were found more or less lined up along the east, north and – to a lesser extent – west walls and most of them had slipped on falling towards the centre of the room. When they were uncovered, the tablets were piled on top of each other but they had fallen into two or three easily recognisable levels.

From their position at the moment of discovery it was easy to see that most of the tablets from the shelves of Ebla's large archive had been stretched upright like books in our libraries today, but parallel rather than perpendicular to the walls.

Many tablets (roughly 80%) in the large archive are administrative and relate to certain principal sectors of Ebla's economy, two of which are of fundamental importance: textile production and metallurgy.

Some texts deal with raising cattle, offerings of animals to the gods, agricultural work and the harvests from barley fields, vineyards and olive groves. In the main archive there were letters received from important rulers with whom the kings of Ebla had political-diplomatic-economic relations. There is also a large tablet in magnificent script bearing the text of an international treaty concerning Ebla's trade with Abarsal a city that had its own commercial network. The location of this city is not certain but it laid on a river, possibly the Euphrates or one of its tributaries.

Some texts relating to rituals are extremely rare in early documentation since cultural and religious aspects were generally transmitted orally and it was only in later periods that rituals, which had been conducted according to strict and well-known rules, were written down. The texts from Ebla not only describe the form of the rituals but also record when these were performed and the individuals who participated in the rites such as, for example, the royal couple.

Other cultic-religious texts were also kept in the archive: spells against snakes, scorpions and so on, besides a few literary texts that are difficult to understand but which tell of mythical events. These include the battle between the main western Semitic god, Adad, who was worshipped at Aleppo, and the seven-headed dragon, the first example of this myth which would spread throughout the Near East and merge into the Christian iconography of Saint George and the dragon.

Certain spells and a hymn to the sun god are of Mesopotamian origin and were known to the Eblaite scribes thanks to their frequent contact with the scribal school of Mari and Kish, two important Mesopotamian kingdoms of this period.

Lastly, the Ebla archives also held about 30 lexical texts containing lists of Sumerian words and signs that the local scribes studied. These texts are amongst the earliest known and are fundamental not only to our knowledge of the Eblaite language, but also to our better understanding of ancient Sumerian.

From the texts it clearly emerges that Syria was divided into a series of kingdoms, some of them having a king (*en*) with the same title as Ebla's king and some with other titles such as *badalum* apparently also indicating an independent ruler.

It soon became clear that without a relative chronology of the Ebla texts, it was impossible to trace the story of the Ebla kingdom and of its diplomatic and political relationships.

Constructing such a chronology would allow to outline the economic, political, and social history of Ebla during the period covered by the archives; it would also enable to understand if there had been a territorial expansion and an increase of wealth.

The study of the royal family and the other principal families of the city of Ebla and their inter-relationships, was of primary importance above all for determining the names of the kings of Ebla.

The lists of the king's daughters and women were the key for the chronological reconstruction; indeed their study was more important than that of other notables.

The names of various princes appear, mostly in lists, but it was impossible to reconstruct the course of their lives. In the case of the court women, above all the king's daughters, the outline of their lives could be traced because the scribes listed the gifts that these women received when they married or bore children. If they became queens of foreign lands the scribes followed them to their new courts.

The study of the court ladies (*dam en*), comprising the king's secondary wives, the aunts, the sisters, the court ladies, and the wet-nurses, also proved to be fundamental. In the monthly accounts of textiles, in the accounts of metals, there are lists of court women receiving textiles or jewels. Normally at the top of these lists there is the queen or the mother of the king and it has been possible to suppose that they were listed according to their importance. It was possible also to follow the careers of some women in the harem and the lives of some daughters of the different kings. In this way several lists and particularly many monthly accounts of textiles, which contain lists of such women, were placed into a relative chronological order.

It has been possible to identify a series of women from a previous time. Later lists were modified because of the death of some women or the arrival of others as secondary wives in the king's harems. Later, recently-born king's daughters were listed and it became possible to trace the lives of some daughters of the king when they were princesses at the court of Ebla. Other texts mention their weddings to foreign princes, their departure to become queens of foreign lands, and the birth of their children. This last event was also celebrated at the court of Ebla with

the gift of textiles and jewels sent to the mother, her newborn child, and the relatives.

Today, after thirty years of study, we can state that the large archive covered three generations of rulers, with the occasional tablets from the previous king Kun-damu, having also survived. Therefore, it covers a period of fifty years or so in the life of the city and kingdom of Ebla, from approximately 2400 to 2350 BC. A few texts can be attributed to king Igrish-Khalab, some to Irkab-damu and a very large number to the last king, Ishar-damu, son of king Irkab-damu.

Two figures were particularly important in establishing fixed points in the relative chronology: that of vizier Ibrium and that of the queen mother Dusigu. The lists of women and a study of the typology of the texts make it clear that a powerful figure began to emerge during the reign of Irkab-damu. This was the woman named Dusigu.

The study of the lists of court ladies has shown that Irkab-damu, the penultimate king of Ebla, was widowed soon after his marriage. He did not give the title of queen to any of the ladies of his harem, not even to such powerful figures as Keshdut or Enna-Utu then, last but not least, to Dusigu.

She begins to be mentioned often and becomes to be active in diplomatic affairs and to make cult offerings.

The texts that mention Dusigu show that she acted like a queen. At a certain point she was described by the designation "great mother of the king» (*ama-gal en*). The death of Irkab-damu was mentioned in texts to do with textiles, although the difficult formulae are not completely intelligible. It was after his death that Dusigu succeeded in putting her son Ishar-damu on the throne. In the harems of the Near East the biggest battle fought among the principal ladies was that of placing their sons on the throne, and Dusigu succeeded. From this moment on she is omnipresent. She is named even before the king her son. She was vizier Ibrium's chief collaborator. It is very probable that Ishar-damu became king while he was still very young, so that his mother acted as a sort of regent.

For some years the queen mother and Ibrium are clearly the most powerful characters at the Ebla court and the young king Ishar-damu is often named after his mother. Then there appears in the lists of court ladies, lists that arranged these ladies according to their importance, a girl named Tabur-damu. Soon she occupied a place only second to that

of the queen mother. Not much later she married king Ishar-damu. Immediately after the wedding she and her husband celebrated a complex ritual of royalty, fertility, and renewal.

From the documents placed so far in chronological order, we can see that, from the very start, Ebla had created a vast trade network and maintained friendly relations with many states. With them, Ebla exchanged gifts and possibly traded, although this latter factor emerges less frequently from the texts. Most deliveries recorded in the monthly accounts of textiles are ceremonial gifts sent to the courts of states that are Ebla's closest allies and which, in turn, made gifts of wine, animals and various goods to Ebla.

The treaty between Ebla and Abarsal shows that, within its network, Ebla possessed and controlled many commercial bases. Later Ebla conducted a military expedition against Abarsal which she conquered. After this Abarsal appears to lose its role as a very important trading centre.

From the very first documents it is possible to see that Ebla had numerous commercial contacts with Mari, the centre on the Euphrates. Friction between the two states seemed to relate precisely to the question of commerce north of Mari, along the Euphrates and in the Khabur, as shown by the letter of Enna-Dagan who illustrates how Mari had interests in the area in which Ebla was trying to expand. In fact, Ebla would soon ally herself with states like Ra'ak, Emar, Shadab and Hazuwan which appear to have been under the control of Mari. Ebla was trying to superimpose herself on the commercial network of Mari.

The countries which appear from the beginning of the documents as states having commercial and diplomatic ties with Ebla are: Mari, Nagar, Kish in central-southern Mesopotamia, and Armi, as well as Haran, which was destined to be linked to Ebla by marriage, Karkemish, Emar and Tuttul. Most of these cities have been identified with modern tells but we do not know where Armi was located. Together with Mari, Armi is the most often quoted city in the Ebla texts. Ebla's relations with states such as Mari were difficult from the very start and were to remain difficult for the entire period covered by the archive. No inter-dynastic marriage is attested between the court of Mari and that of Ebla.

Apart from these states, the administrative texts document close relationships with a conspicuous group of kingdoms with which Ebla had continuous political, diplomatic and economic relations. The group includes more than 30 kingdoms; among them the most frequently men-

tioned are Nirar, Raak, Kakmium, Imar, Dub, Lumnan and Ursaum.

For a number of years Ebla helped various cities that are at war, and rejoices when it hears of defeats suffered. There appears to be conflict between Mari and Kish, Mari and Garaman, between Nagar and Adabig, and between Mari and Nagar.

For eighteen years vizier Ibrum was at the head of Eblaite army; he conducted many military expeditions including one against Kakmium and, with the help of other kings, he cut from his enemy's crop of barley. Following this episode, Kakmium became a faithful subject and its king travelled regularly to Ebla to swear allegiance.

Towards the end of his life, Ibrum conducted a massive expedition against the state of AN'arum. As always, the monthly accounts of textiles provide most information regarding these wars, with cloth given to those bringing news of victory or the seizure of a city, to those settled in the newly-captive cities, to the new leaders appointed by Ebla and, lastly, to allies. The texts tell us the itineraries followed through accounts of cloth given to individuals and kings of neighbouring lands along the way, who conceded free passage to Ebla's troops.

When vizier Ibrum died, his son Ibbi-zikir replaced him at the head of the administration and the army. Ibbi-zikir conducted every year a military expedition, expanding Ebla's political control. He, over the years, improved the relations with the state of Nagar, (*tell* Brak in the Khabur valley), an important regional state in Upper Mesopotamia as shown by the texts found at *tell* Beydar (ancient Nabatum). No war is ever attested between Ebla and Nagar, only an increasing and ever closer relation; our knowledge of the archives of Ebla ends with the king of Nagar sending provisions to the Eblaite army for its war against Mari; the king of Kish, in central Mesopotamia did likewise. Many wars conducted by Ibbi-zikir are recounted at length but the most quoted military expedition is that against the kingdom of Mari. The Eblaite army defeated Mari's army in the territory of Mari's kingdom but a peace treaty between Ebla and Mari was signed on the following years.

Shortly afterwards, the king of Nagar concluded an alliance with the king of Ebla in the great military campaign against the state of Armi, following which the king of Nagar travelled to Ebla to arrange the marriage of his son to an Eblaite princess, Tagrish-damu. All these events are attested in two large monthly accounts of textiles identified by myself some years ago. The two texts were poorly preserved and it

was only recently that, working in the museum of Idlib, I was able to join them together with some bigger fragments, completing one tablet-while a second remains to be finished.

With all the information provided by the two tablets we can better understand the events of the war against Armi and the marriage of the Eblaite princess; vizier Ibbi-zikir was conducting a fair number of campaigns.

After conquering so many states and extending its commercial and political confines, Ebla itself will fall.

The story of Ebla adds to our knowledge of the history of Syria, and so to the history of the ancient Near East.

Maria Giovanna Biga

A Royal Ritual

2,370 ca. BC

Translation: P. Fronzaroli, Additions: M.G. Biga

The following is the oldest ritual text ever found and it is unique in its length. It is a ritual for renewal of the Eblaite royalty and it was performed by the king and the queen; in particular, this is about the last king, Ishar-damu and his new bride, queen Tabur-damu.

The queen offers one golden bracelet as a gift and one sheep for the Sun Goddess as a sacrificial offering ...

When the wedding (with the rite of pouring oil on the head of the bride) ... she brings the golden chain hanging on the red dress and the multi-coloured belt, part of the queen's trousseau for her travels; the queen does not wear them.

A piece of gold weighing 320 grams, a magnificent dress in red, a material of fine colour,

the queen leaves the house of her father

and until she enters the temple of the god Kura⁽²⁷⁾, she cannot enter the city gates.

(27) Kura is Ebla's principal god. He is not mentioned in other city archives nor is the reading of his name firmly established.

The queen enters through the gate of Kura ...

And the clothes are received, the red one, the magnificent one,
and that multi-coloured one;

And the golden chain is received ...

And the queen is dressed

And the clothes are distributed

And she enters the temple of Kura.

The queen gives as a gift four rams, four jewels in the shape of
a falcon made of silver, which she offers to the gods Kura and
Barama, and the gods Ishru and Aniru, those from her father's
house.

Four wooden vases in boxwood for feeding the gods Kura and Bar-
ama, one vase in boxwood for the splendour of the gods Kura and
Barama; one vase in boxwood for the tears of Kura, two crowns in
pure gold for Kura; one jewel in pure gold for Barama; two recepta-
cles in boxwood for the goddess Ishkhara; four sceptres

To the weavers of the dresses in the fashion of Mari the queen
gives the wool of two sheep for the trimming of the clothes to be
woven in Mari style.

On the third day of the new month of Halit the queen enters the
temple of Kura.

On the fourth day of the new month of Halit the king and the
queen leave for the city of Nenash.

During the fifth day of the new month of Halit the king and queen
sit on the thrones of their fathers near the waters of Mashad, a
locality in the kingdom of Nirar.

In Nenash they are received in the month of Maganatenusag.

They travel in a carriage together with the statues of the gods
Kura and Barama and four ropes are provided.

And also planks of cypress wood, and also two shafts of poplar
wood for the cart.

And also a vessel for water, material for the carriage, a mat made
of reeds, the beam for the shaft, harnesses are on the cart which
takes the gods Kura and Barama, Enna-il and the priest who has
been blessed by the god Kura.

* * * * *

The gods Kura and Barama⁽²⁸⁾ leave and also the king and the
queen.

(28) In effigy, like statues in today's processions in Southern Italy.

During the fourth new day of the month of Halit they go towards
Nenash taking the road of Lub.

At the crossing of Lub they turn towards the city of Irad.

When the solar divinity rises in Irad, the house of the king pro-
vides for the divinity of the dead king Abur-lim, one ram, one
sheep, one jewel in the shape of a falcon in silver.

Enna-il offers them in Irad, to the dead king Abur-Lim.

They leave Irad for the city of Uduhudu.

When the solar divinity rises in the city of Uduhudu, the house of
the king gives out gifts for the divinity of Amana.

* * * * *

At the crossing of Nenash we enter the mausoleum

And we purify the mausoleum.

We push towards the steps of Alini a goat with a silver band on
her neck before the entrance of the gods Kura and Barama in the
mausoleum.

When Kura and Barama arrive at the mausoleum, they enter the
room of the king and the queen.

And they stay there.

And the king enters his room.

And the queen enters her room.

When they rise from the linen sheets the king and queen leave,
they sit on the thrones of their fathers

And we watch the moment of the rise of the Sun Goddess.

When the solar goddess rises the invoker invokes and those who
lament intone the lamentation, that of the goddess Nintu, who is
angry.

And the messenger gives a piece of news.

The news is that, thanks to the intervention of the goddess Nintu,
the god Kura is renewed, the goddess Barama is renewed, the
king is renewed, the queen is renewed.

And the one who sprinkles blesses three times the mausoleum
of Nenash from a jug.

* * * * *

When the solar divinity advances towards the two doors of the area
inhabited by the god Kura, the queen sits to the left of the king.

And the king and the queen bring vases of oil.

* * * * *

During the remaining days of the first weekly rite Enna-il offers on the third day of the rite two lambs, seven small flat breads, seven trays, seven jugs of beer, seven jugs with lips, for the vigil of Kura and Barama.

* * * * *

When they return to Ebla
Their hands are without jewels.
Their hands do not touch each other.
No one eats the best food of the king and of the queen.
The best food of the king is eaten by the queen.
Thus they eat them.

* * * * *

When we have celebrated that day for their rite of seven days,
the head of the statue of Kura is veiled.
The king and the queen leave
And go back to the temple of the gods in order to eat from the offerings of the royal palace of Ebla.
On that day the king reclines on sheets of linen inside the temple
And also the queen reclines in the temple of the gods of the king.
That is after their two heads have been dressed.

A Ritual from Ebla

ca. 2,370 BC

Translation: M. G. Biga

one offering tablean offering tray (is placed) before (the statue of) the god of the night.

One offering tray with..., one offering tray with "pure breads>>, one container of oil, one container of beer, one container zibar of wine, one vase with spout for water for the god of the night.

... .. for a black cloth with which to dress the (statue of the) wife of the god of the night.

offering trays before (the statue of) the wife of the god of the night.

seven containers of oil, seven containers of beer, seven containers of wine, seven vases for water with spout, one measure of wool, seven calves and eight young sheep for the god of the night.

seven ? ... for the ... of the black garment placed in front of (the statue of) the god of the night.

one containers of
 beer, one container of wine... offering for the god of the night
 and..... tablet ...

one offering tray with "pure breads>>, one container of oil, one
 container anzam of beer, one container zibar of wine, one vase
 for water with spout for the god NEra.

one offering tray with "pure breads>>, one container bur-kak of
 oil, one container anzam of beer, one container zibar of wine, 1
 vase for water with spout to the deity Abasa, woman of the god
 NEra.

Before the dawn (or the sunset of
 the following day) you must make a second offering to the god
 NEra.

forty people receive
 bread (food)...; (these are) sacrificial offerings for the god of the
 night on the occasion of ... of the king⁽³⁰⁾.

(30) Here we have the dressing of a statue of the bride of the god of the night.

A letter from Enna-Dagan, Mari's new king to the sovereign of Ebla

ca. 2,380 BC

Translation: M.G. Biga. Last edition: P. Fronzaroli

Thus Enna-Dagan, king of Mari, to the sovereign of Ebla:

Anubu, king of Mari, defeated the cities of Aburu and Ilgi in the territory of Belan; in the mountainous region of Labanan he left mountains of ruins.

Sa'umu, king of Mari, defeated the cities of Tibat and Ilwani: in the hilly region of Angai he left mountains of ruins. Sa'umu, king of Mari, has defeated the territory of the cities of Ra'aq, Nirum, Ashaldu, and Baul near Nakhel and left mountains of ruins.

Then Istup-sar, king of Mari, defeated the cities of Emar and Lalanium and the territory of Ebla: in Emar and in Lalanium he left behind mountains of ruins.

.....

Then Iblul-il defeated the cities of Shadab and Addalini and Arisum in the territory of Burman in the country of Sugurum and left behind mountains of ruins; and then the cities of Sharan and Dammium Iblul-il, the king of Mari, defeated them and left mountains of ruins. He then left towards the cities of Nerat and Hazuwan, Iblul-il, sovereign of Mari, received the tribute of Ebla when

he was in the city of Mane and he looted Emar and left mountains of ruins.

And then the cities of Nakhal and Lubat and Shabab, in the territory of Gasur, he defeated and he left seven mountains of ruins, Iblul, sovereign of Mari.

And this is the list of the tributes in silver that Ebla had to give to Enna-Dagan during the first two years of his reign (TM.75.1564)

3 silver minas, 15 sicles in gold for Enna-Dagan

2 minas, 40 sicles in silver for his clerks

For the month of Gasum

6 minas, 40 sicles in silver, 10 sicles in gold for Enna-Dagan and his clerks.

For the month of Maxganatenu-sag

3 minas in silver for Enna-Dagan.

Month of Zatum

4 minas in silver, 30 sicles in gold for Enna-Dagan.

5 minas and 50 sicles of silver plate for his clerks.

Month of Irisa

2 minas, 30 sicles of silver for Enna-Dagan.

Month Inun

3 minas of silver for Enna-Dagan

Month Maxganatenu-ugur

5 minas of silver, 20 sicles of gold-plate for Enna-Dagan.

3 minas in silver for his clerks.

1 belt, 1 sheath, a curved dagger, 30 sicles in gold, 1 pointed dagger from Amurru for Enna-Dagan

.....

When the daughter of the king married, five minas in silver, 30 sicles in gold for Enna-Dagan.

10 minas, 40 sicles of silver-plate for his clerk,

9 minas, 30 sicles in silver for the elders of Mari Arrugum, Bilzail have delivered

5 minas of silver, 1 mina of gold for Saud, 5 minas, 40 sicles of silver plate for his courtiers.

**A Letter from a Functionary
of the King of Khamazi to his counterpart**

ca. 2,400 B C

Translation: M.G. Biga. Last edition : P. Fronzaroli

Thus says Ibubu, superintendant of the palace of the king of Ebla,
to the messenger:

You are my brother and I am your brother; to you who are my
brother I will grant any wish that you express and you any wish
that I express you will grant. Send me some good carts, I beg
you, because you are my brother and I am your brother; ten
trunks in boxwood and two wheels in boxwood I will give to the
messenger.

Irkab-damu, king of Ebla, is the brother of Zizi, king of Khamazi;
Zizi, king of Khamazi, is the brother of Irkab-damu, king of Ebla.

Thus Tira-il, the scribe, wrote: to the messenger he gave this
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A pact of alliance

ca. 2360 B C

Translation: M.G. Biga. Last edition: P. Fronzaroli

There was rivalry between the cities of Mari and Ebla for the alliance of the city of Adu, which has not been identified. In this text the writer from Mari underlines the ambiguity of the king of Adu. The king first reminds him of his alliance with Ebla but then mentions that Ebla looted his cities.

In the first part of the letter there is a contemporary summary of what took place, then the letter.

Suwama-wabar from Mari went to the city of Illa and from there he went on to the city of Kaubadu. The meeting took place in Sharrabu, a smaller city of the kingdom of Adu. Sarrum is the superintendent of Sharrabu. The letter asked him, "For what reason are you here?" His answer was, "As an ally." And he really went on announcing to the king of Adu. So the king of Adu sent Ipesuhi and another three people. And they met Suwama-wabar from Mari when they arrived to Khubadu and they said to Suwama-wabar from Mari.

"Ebla and I are linked by a pact of alliance by the shedding of oil and the swearing of this oath is in front of the god Kura and the god Adad. Thus said the man from Mari to the king of Adu: "Your good man, you did not give to Ebla, instead you gave your bad man for your military expedition with Ebla!"

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"Ebla and I are linked by a pact of alliance by the shedding of oil and the swearing of this oath is in front of the god Kura and the god Adad. Thus said the man from Mari to the king of Adu: "Your good man, you did not give to Ebla, instead you gave your bad man for your military expedition with Ebla!"

When the king of Adu then gathered his people he said:

“Why do you want to starve of oats the city of Illa?

Illa is an ally of Adu.”

Thus the king of Adu said to the man of Mari.

“I am hungry too. Isn't Illa my ally? When Ebla came to cut the oats of Illa I could not deliver it. Now Ebla cuts the oats of Illa and also looted its oxen and sheep and killed its people.

Thus the man from Mari said to Adu: “Why do you make an ally of Ebla? Ebla is as full of lies as a woman is.”

Where the king of Adu gathered his people he said:

“The alliance with Ebla is not good. Instead the alliance of Mari is good, we agree!”

A Treaty between the City of Ebla and Abarsal

ca. 2,400 BC

Translation: M.G. Biga. Last edition: P. Fronzaroli

This is the oldest international treaty that has reached us. It is between Igrish-halab, one of the last kings of Ebla and the king of Abarsal and is written in Eblaite with many Sumerian words on a very large tablet. The city of Abarsal was probably on the Euphrates or in the Balikh valley, east of the Euphrates.

The city of Kablul and its fortresses belong to the king of Ebla.

The cities of Zakhar and Uziladu and their fortresses belong to the king of Ebla.

The city of Gudadalum and its fortresses belong to the king of Ebla.

All the other fortresses which are under the control of the king of Ebla belong to the king of Ebla: all those which are under the control of the king of Abarsal belong to the king of Abarsal.

Karkemish belongs to the king of Ebla.

Tinnu and its fortresses belong to the king of Ebla.

Arga belongs to the king of Ebla.

Ladamu belongs to the king of Ebla.

Darrulaba belongs to the king of Ebla.

Giradda and its fortresses belong to the king of Ebla. Alashune belongs to the king of Ebla.

All the other fortresses in this second area which are under the control of the king of Ebla belong to the king of Ebla; those which are under the control of the king of Abarsal belong to the king of Abarsal.

Whoever insults the king, or insults the gods, or insults the country, will die.

If he is an important man in Abarsal, Ebla will have to extradite him; if he is an authoritative man in Abarsal, Abarsal itself will put him to death.

If he is an important man in Ebla, Abarsal will have to extradite him; if he is an authoritative man in Ebla, Ebla itself will put him to death.

If the guilty one is one of the chiefs, he'll have to pay as a penalty fifty sheep.

If instead he is a commander of a conquered fortress he will have to hand over his goods

The messengers who came will stay for twenty days and will consume what is due for their trouble, but if you want them to stay longer you will have to give more money for the journey.

In the event that messengers delay, the commander of the conquered fortress, ... they will give back the oxen and sheep that had been given to them.

The messengers who receive the gift will not be rewarded with money for the return journey.

If you speak, the king of Ebla will listen; if you don't speak, you will have betrayed the treaty.

The king of Abarsal has to give water to the travellers when they are in his country according to their request; if he will not he will have betrayed the treaty.

.....

If that man from Abarsal will kill bulls for the king, you will have disobeyed the treaty ...As for the payment which Ebla must return to Abarsal and the payments that Abarsal has to return to the authority of Ebla, you will not send somebody to see anybody else but Tir⁽³¹⁾.

If Tir is gravely ill you will send that person straight to the king;

(31) Tir is a middleman trusted by the king.

if you do not send him to the king, you will have betrayed the treaty.

Thus says the king of Ebla to Abarsal:

Those people from Kakmium, from Khazuwan, and from Nirar, who are my allies, you will let them travel through your country for two or three days; if you will not let them travel, you will have betrayed the treaty.

When you hear of a nasty plot, you will send a messenger as quickly as possible.

If you are on a long journey, you need not send a messenger, but if while you are at home you hear of a nasty plot and you don't send a messenger, you will have betrayed the treaty.

Ebla can exercise the fluvial trade towards Abarsal; Abarsal cannot exercise the fluvial trade towards Ebla. It will be possible to find a place for the goods of Abarsal on the big ship and the chief trader will find accommodation on the smaller ship.

As regards the trader from Ebla, Abarsal will allow him to return.

As regards the trader from Abarsal, Ebla will allow him to return.

To the god of Ebla, Abarsal will also offer a cult; every year you will give a bull and a ram; if you don't give them, you will have betrayed the treaty.

If in the festival of the month Isi, somebody from Abarsal kills an Eblaiter during a brawl he will pay fifty rams as a penalty.

If an Eblaiter kills a man from Abarsal in a brawl, he will pay fifty rams.

If after having killed him with a dagger from Amurru and if it is known that bulls and donkeys have fled, sheep will be given instead, but if the news will come that the sheep have fled, then doves will be given.

When the son of a man from Abarsal or the daughter of a man from Abarsal is a slave of an Eblaiter and the man of Abarsal goes to the house of the Eblaiter in order to buy them back, he will give fifty rams to the Eblaiter.

.....

When in the country an ox or donkey belonging to a man from Abarsal has been bought by an Eblaiter who paid its due, the man from Abarsal will have to add twenty sheep. If ten sheep are missing from Ebla you will give them; and also if it is a drink or oil, you will give them; if you won't you will have betrayed the treaty.

If in your country some bad oil or bad drink ends up in the house of an Eblaite you will have to replace them with good ones.

What I have ordered, villages have to deliver; if on the other hand they don't deliver, you will have betrayed the treaty.

If a man of Abarsal kills another from Abarsal and then turns him in at the frontier with Ebla ...

When an Eblaite sleeps in the house of somebody from Abarsal, the owner of the house will give him his bed. In the event that the Eblaite were to rob the house and kill the man from Abarsal, the man from Ebla would have to pay with fifty rams.

If somebody sleeps with a woman who belongs to another man, he will give some belts of multi-coloured textiles and three oxen.

If the woman was willing and she confirms his word, the man who was a guest will marry her.

.....

Thus says the king of Ebla to Abarsal. When in any place my messengers are killed and their mules have been taken, the mules will not be sold, silver, bulls, sheep, son, daughter, wife, vases of boxwood will not be sold.

And you must not use these things saying: in exchange for the beer and the food of those who died, I received silver and bulls and sheep.

All those who act with bad intentions, the Sun god, the god Adad, and the god Kakkab, when they see them will kill them. They will not bring water to drink for their travelling caravans and shelter will be refused. As for you, if you will start a malevolent expedition, you will have betrayed the treaty.

Relationship between the city of Ebla and the city of Emar

ca. 2,380 B C

Translation: M.G. Biga. Last edition: P. Fronzaroli

Tisha-Lim was queen of Emar (Meskene on the Euphrates) a city that had a strong relationship with Ebla; maybe she belonged to its royal house. This document, written by the penultimate king of Ebla, Irkab-damu, is also important to understand the importance of women at that time.

All the land that has been bought in the cities of Irpesh and Gurrabal and that the king of Ebla, Irkab-damu, gives to Tisha-Lim, belong to Tisha-Lim.

And so if Tisha-Lim gives to the king its proper prize, the people from Emar will have the benefits of the land that belonged to Tisha-Lim.

And, besides, the land bought for Emar in the city of Gurrabal belonged to Tisha-Lim.

Besides, the city of Khabra and the hill of Khurazu, a decision has been taken for Tisha-Lim: Tisha-Lim's people who are in the city of Zabikhadu, according to what was established by those of Zabikhadu, will enjoy the benefit of that land.

And while they are travelling,

Akhum-Naim will welcome in the city of Zabikhadu those subjects who are travelling through his possessions and his land.

The priestess of the goddess Ishkhara will leave the city of Dardau, taking with her all her chattels.

And then Enzi-damu, the king of Emar, husband of Tisha-Lim, will welcome her.

Thus says the king:

The people of Tisha-Lim who live in the villages of the king of Emar can live in peace.

And also the people of Enzi-damu who live in the villages of Tisha-Lim can be in peace according to what has been established for them.

Cover Photo: Foundation tablet of Yabdim-Lim, king of Mari
(Tell Hariri) (2nd millennium B.C.)
Aleppo Museum.



Archaeology