

CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES DURING THE BRONZE AGE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Terqa – modern Ashara – and two other nearby sites have furnished a lot of information about the history and chronology of the Middle Euphrates area after the fall of Mari. Indeed, this region is a good observation point for what was happening in Mesopotamia in that period. Observing the location of the Middle Euphrates, we can immediately see that the region is situated on one of the most important highways linking southern and central Mesopotamia to its northern areas and to the Syro-Palestinian countries. Despite the other route following the Tigris river, the Euphrates remains the most important route easily linking the south to the prosperous valleys of the Habur and the Balih, or to the Mediterranean coast following the fringe of the plain. Moreover, by taking this route, it is exactly in the Middle Euphrates region where one can turn westwards to the Mediterranean coast, or continue north towards the Habur and Balih valleys. Alternatively one can turn north-east and reach the Tigris and the Assyrian regions through the wadi Ajij.

All these roads run mainly through subdesertic and inhospitable areas, which at the time were rather dangerous because of the frequent presence of plunderers, especially when the local kingdoms were weak. Hence, the rulers of the northern or southern countries, when necessary, sought to take over and maintain control of these important crossroads. Nevertheless, for long periods, the local powers in the Middle Euphrates – also shielded by the long distances typical of this region – were usually strong enough to preserve their autonomy and could control the region to their own advantage. We must also note that there are some mountains or “djebels” in this area: in the north, the Djebel Abd-el-Aziz (900 m) and the Djebel Sindjar (1400 m), to the west the Djebel Bishri (850 m). Since prehistoric times these mountains served as

a refuge for semi-nomadic populations, allowing them a safe haven from dangers.

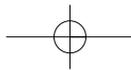
This geopolitical situation explains some of the economic and cultural characteristics of this region: in certain periods it became an important crossroad, where trade afforded local kingdoms the opportunity to become wealthy and powerful. In other more turbulent times, when commerce halted, the area reverted back to its autonomous and autarchic origins – but without severing all ties to neighbouring countries. This oscillation can explain the coexistence of very strong clearly external influences from a variety of outside countries together with enduring local characteristics, which have remained unchanged for centuries, in the regional culture of the Middle Euphrates.

2. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The main goal of the research program of our team was to study, from proto-historic times (6000 BC) down to the end of the classical period, the social, economic and cultural history of the Terqa-Ashara area, exploring both the Terqa site as well as others in the same territory. Terqa has been considered an important site for research on Mesopotamian history since the end of the nineteenth century. It was the area in the deep north of the Euphrates valley where the first cuneiform tablets were found, often in unofficial or illegal diggings, and brought to Europe by dealers. F. THUREAU-DANGIN, amongst others, published some of these texts, and it became apparent right from the beginning that Terqa, at least at a certain stage of its history, had been the capital city of a kingdom, Hana.¹ The localization of these findings at Ashara seemed reliable, because it was a rather important Tell, beneath a modern village. Hence, it was quite likely that this kind of discovery should have been made by villagers digging in their courtyards, or digging foundations

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¹ THUREAU-DANGIN 1897, 1908 et 1909.



for new houses. Further, the village of Ashara has been identified with ancient Terqa since 1908. A tablet coming indisputably from this site, commemorated the construction of a temple in Terqa dedicated to the god Dagan by the king Šamši-Adad, known to have ruled Assur.² Further confirmation came in 1910, when E. HERZFELD, who travelled through the region, passed through Ashara and bought several tablets and fragments. Among these, one, coming from a foundation deposit with an inscription of Zimri-Lim, king of Mari, commemorated the building of an ice house.³ During the same period, A. MUSIL travelled throughout this area and wrote a very important book providing information which is still useful today.⁴

For all these reasons Terqa appeared to be the most suitable place to start a program of excavation aimed at enhancing our understanding of the history of the Middle Euphrates and the relationship between southern and northern Mesopotamia. It was in this spirit that in 1923 F. THUREAU-DANGIN and E. DHORME, during a trip to Syria, decided to spend five days in Ashara. They made a deep sounding there, clearly hoping to find more tablets, this time in their true archaeological context. With the help of French *légionnaire* soldiers, they dug an 18 metre pit, but with meagre results. Nevertheless, they could identify some ceramics and proposed a stratigraphic sequence for the occupation of Terqa from the beginning of the Early Bronze to around the end of the Middle Bronze Ages. They immediately published their results,⁵ also editing some new tablets found by the villagers. However, they omitted to mark the exact position of their sounding on the surface of the Tell. THUREAU-DANGIN and DHORME were confident of the importance of the site and planned to continue excavations on a regular basis. But a few years later, the discovery of a statue on the site of Tell Hariri changed the archaeologists' priorities. This was because one of the proposed identifications of Hariri was Mari, certainly a more important city than Terqa. Moreover, Tell Hariri was free of modern houses, while Terqa was covered by a village, making archaeological work difficult.

Although the early confirmation of the identification of Hariri with Mari, already during the first season by A. PARROT, pushed Ashara-Terqa back into the shadows, the Middle Euphrates area nevertheless emerged into the full light of historical importance.

Later exploitation of the Mari archives provided a lot of information mainly about the period of the Amorite kingdoms, not to mention the reign of Hammurapi of Babylon. However, it also became clear that after its fall the city of Mari was never rebuilt again and that Terqa then became the new political centre of the region. Therefore, documents from Terqa could shed light on the periods not attested in nor covered by the Mari archives. In addition, by chance, the distribution of the Terqa epigraphic documents appears to be largely complementary with the materials from Mari. We have few tablets dating from the time of Šamši-Adad and Zimri-Lim, while the most important part of the corpus belongs to later epochs, mainly the Hana period. A good summary of the knowledge available at the time can be found in the article by F. THUREAU-DANGIN and E. DHORME published after their expedition in the region. The chronological problems were first reviewed by A. GOETZE.⁶ The most important issue regarding the chronology of Terqa at the time was the placing of king Kaštiliašu. Was he only a local king or one of the first of the Kassite dynasty? Could then the presence of a Kassite king in the Middle Euphrates be connected with the raid of Muršili I. on Babylon, and the subsequent foundation of a Kassite dynasty in Babylon? Many different hypotheses have been put forward, but the solution is still not forthcoming even if our texts do provide some new information. Moreover, another king attracted the attention of scholars: Hammurapi of Terqa, whose name has a widely varying spelling. On the basis of some characteristics of the texts, at the beginning of our research on the period, it was thought that he was a king from a late period.

3. RECENT RESEARCH

I must also mention that in 1948 a basalt stela representing a god killing a snake⁷ was found by

² EBELING *et alii* 1926, 27

³ HERZFELD 1914, 131 ss.

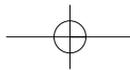
⁴ MUSIL 1927.

⁵ THUREAU-DANGIN and DHORME 1924.

⁶ GOETZE 1957, 63 ss.

⁷ TOURNAY and SAOUAF 1952, TOURNAY 1995.





a peasant in the Terqa area. It was immediately considered an Assyrian provincial work, because the cuneiform inscription contained the name of the Neo-Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta II. However, this subject lies outside of our topic today. Terqa only seriously re-emerged in research during the seventies, when regular digging began on the site under a joint mission led by the University of California in Los Angeles. The expedition was directed by GIORGIO and MARILYN BUCCELLATI, and I participated as epigrapher and archaeologist. Most of the first texts found in regular excavations in Ashara-Terqa were retrieved from the house of Puzurum, in area C, in front of the Ninkarrak temple, during the third and fourth seasons in 1977 and 1978.⁸ Their publication substantially increased our knowledge of the kings ruling in Terqa during the Hana period, allowing us to add the name of several new kings to the previous list. One of the most important pieces of new information in those texts was the discovery of the name of the king Yadih-Abu, because he was probably the same as Yadih-Abu defeated by Samsuiluna of Babylon. According to the twenty-eighth regnal year name of this king, Samsuiluna defeated Yadih-Abu at about the same time as Muti-Huršana, another king. This event was so important that it was used to name three successive years. The king of Babylon probably maintained control over the region at least for a number of years, given that his twenty-third year name mentions some construction activities in Saggartum, a place which was then part of the Hana region. This synchronism provided a good basis for the reconstruction of the Hana dynasty.

Other texts were found from the fifth to the ninth season (TQ5 = 1979, TQ6 = 1981, TQ7 = 1982, TQ8 = 1983 and TQ9 = 1985) under American guidance. I have already published an initial report on their content,⁹ but I have still to complete their publication which is scheduled for the end of 2004. This group of tablets does not provide any important new information about the chronology of the Hana period; most of them seem more relevant to the Old Babylonian and the so-called “Šakkanakku period”. For the peri-

od we are now dealing with, I can say that we have three new year names for Kaštiliašu. One mentions public works in the Lower Habur, “the year when Kaštiliašu changed (unakkiru) the course of the Habur”, perhaps an allusion to the restoration of the great canal of the west bank called today Nahr Dawrin. Another year name commemorates the crushing of the Sutean population by this king, while the third commemorates the construction of some object or a building. This last tablet is not a contract, but a list of personal names, worshippers or servants of the goddess Ninkarrak, found in a temple and confirming the identification of this building within area C. We have also a new year name for Šunuhru-Ammu, recording the rebuilding of a town gate in Saggartum, and a letter sent to Isih-Dagan, known as a king of Hana, probably by another king. The message deals with problems of grain and crop supplies. The finding of this document in Terqa is significant: we know another year name of a king called Isih-Dagan, which I think may be the same man as Yassi-Dagan. This year name commemorates the construction of a new palace in a place called Biddah. Some colleagues have proposed the hypothesis that at that time, Terqa was no longer the capital city of the Hana kingdom, as it had been replaced by Biddah. But the discovery of this letter in Terqa, probably sent by a foreign king, leads me to think that Terqa was still the capital city.

4. A NEW LIST OF KINGS

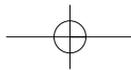
A very important discovery occurred during the twelfth season. That year, after I became director of the mission, we decided to begin a large excavation on the highest point of the Tell, in front of the ancient mosque, on the edge of an eighteen metre cliff cut by erosion due to the Euphrates. G. BUCCELLATI had already done some soundings in this area,¹⁰ but he did not excavate much deeper than the two metres of Islamic deposits. He exposed the top of some walls he attributed to a large old Babylonian monument: high walls were still visible from the bank of the Euphrates in the natural cut along the cliff. Just at the beginning of our operations, while cleaning the top of the

⁸ ROUAULT 1984.

⁹ ROUAULT 1992.

¹⁰ BUCCELLATI 1979, 41 and fig. 4 (SG 40). ROUAULT *et al.* 1997, 99 ss.





cliff, we discovered two jars, one almost complete and one broken, which were full of very badly preserved tablets because for years they had been filled with all the garbage and waste water from the neighbouring modern houses. Nevertheless, we could save around twenty-five documents, mainly contracts, with significant new information regarding the dynasty of Hana.¹¹ Then by excavating from the top of the cliff, we exposed the archaeological context of this epigraphic discovery along a rather narrow strip, between the edge of the cliff and the modern buildings. We found a succession of small rooms separated by larger spaces, probably courtyards without a roof. In these larger rooms there were small platforms built with baked bricks, often with traces of fire to one side. These platforms had been rebuilt several times roughly in the same place, and were used for crafts. All around there were remains of crucibles or melting pots made of a very rough clay, with drops of bronze in them. In neighbouring rooms we found coloured pigments in small bowls, and an ingot of glass with some fragments of figurines made from the same glass as the ingot. The jars of tablets were located in the same context in a small room. We believe that these rooms did not belong to private houses, but were rather the adjuncts of an official building, in an area devoted to small and luxury industries and crafts, and to storage.¹²

Thanks to these new documents, we discovered the name of several kings of Hana, substantially modifying our list. The list of names I propose here is in a tentative chronological order and we will see that some further changes can be proposed: Yapah-Sumu-[Abu], Iši-Sumu-Abu, Yadih-Abu (synchronism with Samsuiluna of Babylon), Zimri-Lim (son of Yadih-Abu/ Idi-Abu), Kasapan, Kuwari, Hanaya (under control of Ya'usa), Kaštiliašu, Šunuhru-Ammu, Ammi-madar (son of Šunuhru-Ammu.) Ammišaduqa of Babylon, Samsuditana of Babylon, Idin-Kakka, Išar-Lim (son of Idin-Kakka), Igid-Lim, Isih-Dagan/ Yassi-Dagan son of Igid-Lim, Ahuni,¹³ Hammurapi (son of Ahuni), Qiš-Addu (under the control of the

Mittani kings), Pagiru, Tukulti-Ninurta I./ Šalmaneser I. of Assyria (*limu* of Libur-zanin-Aššur), Ilu-iqiša and Tukulti-Mer (king of Hana, son of Ilu-iqiša).

From this new list it emerges that the Babylonian presence was still strong during the reign of the first kings of Hana. Yapah-Sumu, a name which in its complete form may have been Yapah-Sumu-Abu, could have been the first king in the region after the fall of Mari. At this juncture we must point out that this reference to the first king of the Babylonian Hammurapi-dynasty, Sumu-Abum, would be a remarkable coincidence, because the name of our first king in association with the second, Iši-Sumu-Abu, where the "abu" is certain. Both pay special deference to the Babylonian dynasty whose latest representative had just destroyed the neighbouring Mari. We can safely suppose that these kings were, at that time, still under the close control of Babylon, and probably of Hammurapi's successor, the king Samsuiluna.

The following king of Terqa was probably Yadih-Abu, already known from the Puzurum archive. We have already mentioned how Samsuiluna tried, at the time, to maintain control of the northern regions of the Euphrates and Habur valleys. We know that in his twenty-third year he invaded the region of Apum and defeated Yakun-Ašar, the king of the capital city, Šehna/ Šubat-Enlil, the ancient names of the Tell Leilan site. Later, following the same path as Šamši-Adad, he attacked the Middle Euphrates and the kingdom of Hana, and, in his twenty-eighth year defeated Yadih-Abu. It appears then that after the first two kings of Hana, who were vassals of Babylon, the third, Yadih-Abu, embarked on a more independent policy and was punished as a result.

Among the new tablets, two contracts were dated by year names referring to a king called Zimri-Lim, son of Idi-Abu. Another later text again mentions a Zimri-Lim, son of Yadi-Abu, but not Yadih-Abu. As it is not rare for the spelling of names to shift from Amorite to Akkadian, as for Yassi-Dagan/ Isih-Dagan and others,

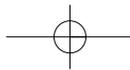
¹¹ ROUAULT 1992.

¹² ROUAULT 1998b, 320.

¹³ Ahuni, father of Hammurapi of Hana, and also a king himself, appears in unpublished texts found during the

twelfth season of excavations in Terqa. The ancient reading *Azilia(?)* (PODANY 2002, 240 and ROUAULT 2001, 16) should be abandoned.





I think it is possible to identify Idi-Abu and Yadi-Abu with Yadih-Abu.

If this hypothesis is correct, Zimri-Lim should be the son of Yadih-Abu, who rebelled against Babylon, and who reigned between Yadih-Abu and Kaštiliašu. After his father's defeat by the Babylonian king, the very choice of this king's name, which is a reference to the last king of Mari, perhaps signalled new aspirations to political independence by Terqa. However, it should be noted that during the reign of Zimri-Lim, there was a clear change in the legal formulae, with the emergence of typical Babylonian forms. It surely was an important change at that time, and again may be direct evidence of Babylonian control over Terqa. This impression is strengthened by another contract, dated from the reign of king Kasapan (*Ka-sa-pa-an*), confirming a royal grant to a certain Sin-imaguranni, previously bestowed on him by king Zimri-Lim, son of Yadi-Abu. This confirmation of an ancient donation occurred during the first year of the reign of the new king, "the year when Kasapan sat on the throne of his father", and it was written by the same scribe who had drafted the contract with Babylonian characteristics dating from the time of Zimri-Lim. It is important to remark that this new contract no longer showed Babylonian characteristics, but followed the ancient Hana tradition. Therefore, Kasapan appears not only to have restored the local legal formulae, but also confirmed and gave back royal donations probably annulled during the preceding period, when the kingdom was under direct Babylonian control. That is, between Zimri-Lim and Kasapan, during the reign of Samsuiluna or of Abi-ešuh.

According to the prosopographical data two kings with Hurrian names, Kuwari and Hanaya, must be inserted in our list at this juncture. Kuwari had to confront the soldiers sent by Hattum, written also Hattu and Hatte. This is probably a reference to the country of Hatti¹⁴ and we can consider these year names as one of the earliest citings of conflicts between Syrian or Mesopotamian peoples and the Hittites. According to this chronology, we have reached the beginning of the seventeenth century. One of the

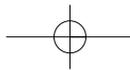
sons of Sin-imaguranni, who received the grant under Zimri-Lim (which was confirmed by Kasapan), also received a donation from two kings whose names were previously unknown, Ya'usa and Hanaya. These two kings appear to have ruled together: they are both mentioned in the oath formula, but unfortunately the year name is broken. This association of two kings is not rare, and we will witness another example in Terqa later. The name Hanaya has sometimes been ascribed to the Hurrian language. As for Ya'usa, which seems to be an Amorite form, it is difficult to tell: if it really is the name of a foreign king, of whom the local king was a vassal, the spelling could be approximate, and so we must look for different names for comparison. The only possible parallel I have found until now is Ušše, a king of the Kassite dynasty ruling later over Babylon: Ya'usa could be the Amorite interpretation of this name. Ušše would then be the sovereign of Hanaya, the local king. But since this reading of Ušše itself is uncertain, this tantalising interpretation remains a rather feeble one. Nonetheless, the overall hypothesis that Terqa was under the control of a Kassite king before Muršili conquered Babylon, is still in my opinion quite attractive.

If we follow this reconstruction of the list, we must place Kaštiliašu just after or before Ya'usa and Hanaya, around the middle of the sixteenth century. Kaštiliašu is attested in five contracts, some of which are still unpublished, showing that during his reign the local legal style, restored by Kasapan after the Babylonian intrusion, was still in use. Generally speaking, these texts resemble the documents written during Yadih-Abu's period. If Kaštiliašu of Terqa is one of the kings of the Kassite dynasty, he could only be Kaštiliašu II, and according to the middle chronology his reign should be contemporary to that of Ammišaduqa of Babylon. Moreover, if we consider Yadih-Abu and Idi-Abu as two different kings,¹⁵ we must now add another king to our list, Idi-Abu, who is not Yadih-Abu, and place him after the trio Kaštiliašu, Šunuhru-Ammu, Ammi-madar. The principal result would be to put Kaštiliašu before the very beginning of the Kassite dynasty of Babylon in

¹⁴ Cf. NASHEF 1982, 123.

¹⁵ For this opinion, see PODANY 2002, 42.





the chronology, making him contemporary with the end of the reign of Samsuiluna.

When I read the tablets from the jar for the first time, one of the surprises was to find two contracts mentioning Ammišaduqa and Samsudītana, the kings of Babylon. The first tablet is characterised by a Babylonian formulary. In contrast, the second from the time of Samsudītana, shows the typical Terqa formulary, with the traditional penalty using asphalt. This return to Terqa of the last kings of Babylon sheds new light on the end of the first dynasty of Babylon. A consensus has existed until now among most historians that after Samsuiluna, the Babylonian kingdom shrank to a relatively limited territory in the south of Mesopotamia.¹⁶ H. GASCHÉ, after examining all the archaeological data concerning the end of the first dynasty of Babylon, arrived at the similar conclusion that the kingdom had shrunk to a very limited territory surrounding the capital city. The Terqa texts therefore show that not only was Ammišaduqa perfectly right to claim control over the Middle Euphrates in the introduction of his edict, but that even his successor, Samsudītana, the last king of the dynasty, hitherto presented as a very weak ruler governing just a small kingdom, in fact maintained control over the same region, probably in order to stop the movement of peoples from the north and east. As a result, the Terqa documents shed new light on events leading to the fall of Babylon.

The possible involvement of the kingdom of Hana in the downfall of the Amorite dynasty of Babylon has been the object of much debate. The presence in Terqa of at least one king carrying a Kassite name, Kaštiliašu, has led some scholars to see in the Terqa kingdom an important step in the Kassite advance towards Babylon. Some authors have even envisaged an objective alliance between Muršili I. and a possible Kassite power entrenched in the Middle Euphrates, the first looking for an alliance against the Hurrians, and the second soliciting help against Babylonian designs over the Middle Euphrates. According to this theory, after the Hittite raid on Babylon the Kassites took advantage of the situation to settle in Babylon themselves.¹⁷ Despite the fact that a

Hana king had a Kassite name, we now know that the Babylonians controlled the Middle Euphrates, and it becomes clear that Muršili's real goal was to fight against Babylon and contrast its influence in the Syrian territories along the Euphrates valley. Hence, the continuation of his expedition all the way down to Babylon was in fact a logical move, and it was probably achieved with the help of the populations living in the Middle Euphrates region.

5. THE LIST AFTER THE FALL OF BABYLON

We are unsure whether to place this series of kings, which we shall now discuss, before or after the end of the first Babylonian dynasty. At the present stage of our analysis, the textual elements in favour of one hypothesis or the other do not appear to be absolutely definitive. Nevertheless, in general terms one can argue that the insertion of Idin-Kakka, Išar-Lim, Igid-Lim, Isih-Dagan and Hammurapi before the end of the first dynasty of Babylon would add too many kings in a too short period. Moreover, it would leave open a large gap in attempts to cover the whole period between the end of the first dynasty of Babylon and the Mittanian domination. Finally, the stratigraphy of Area E in Terqa shows us that king Išar-Lim ruled in a later period, just before the Mittanian kings took over control of the region.

For this period, the unpublished Terqa documents allow us to draft a list of part of the dynasty ruling after the fall of Babylon.¹⁸ We now know that Idin-Kakka, father of Išar-Lim, was king himself, and the succession from father to son works out this way: Idin-Kakka, Išar-Lim, Igit-Lim, Isih-Dagan and maybe Hammurapi.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that after the reign of Išar-Lim, the legal formulas in the contracts revert to their ancient form, mentioning in the oath the local gods Šamaš, Dagan and Itur-Mer (cf. GC1-1 and TQ12-3). Later at the time of king Paratarna, Terqa passed under Mittanian control. In the oath formulas, Paratarna is associated with a man named Qiš-Addu, who was probably the local king. The name has several spellings: *Pa-ra-tar-na* (TQ12-10 and 15), *Pa-ri-tar-na* (TQ12-9 and 16). Another name, which we

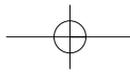
¹⁶ See for instance GASCHÉ 1989 and PONS 1996.

¹⁷ For a summary of these positions, see GARELLI 1997, 133, 307 s., et 338.

¹⁸ ROUAULT 1992.

¹⁹ For the hypothesis that there were two different Hammurapi kings at the end of the dynasty of Hana, see PODANY 2002.





first read as *Pa-i-tar-na*,²⁰ should probably read *Sa-i-tar-na*, and it could be a variant of the spelling of Šuttarna, the Mittanian predecessor to Paratarna.

A third king with the name of Sausadat or better, Sausadatra,²¹ appears as a partner of the same Qiš-Addu in other documents. Again, it is probably a local spelling of the name of Sausatatar, one of the successors of Paratarna to the throne of Mittani. At this time, oddly, the Babylonian legal formulas reappear in the texts, and it is the southern list of gods that is the most current, with Šamaš, Addu, Marduk, Almuš and Annunitum. But this is not a systematic rule, and we also possess two dated tablets of Paratarna and Qiš-Addu, recording the same transaction, but giving two different lists of gods in the oath formula, one again mentioning Šamaš, Dagan and Itur-Mer!

From an archaeological viewpoint, the history and the development of the cultural, political and economic structures of Hana society are difficult to elicit and to understand. At the present stage of our study, the ceramic production of the Hana period seems to show remarkable unity and a very slow evolution over the whole post-Mari period, always reproducing the same shapes, exhibiting very few outside influences. In contrast, the glyptic documentation is much more varied, and it clearly shows all the foreign influence already suggested by the texts, not only Hurrian, Hittite or Babylonian, but also Western. All these outside contributions were often mixed and later merged to form the distinguishing characteristics of local styles.²² But as everybody knows, the diachronic evolution of this type of material is very difficult to use as a chronological index.

The archaeological context of the archive recovered during our twelfth season of excavation may even be more recent than the most recent tablets in the collection. However, in a room close to where the jars were found, on a floor apparently corresponding to the same context, we found a letter (TQ13-154), giving us the name of a certain Pagiru, whose name also appears in two contracts of the archive in the jar (TQ12-26 and 29). He is cited at least once as king in the oath formula. This leads us to believe that our archive could date back to the time of this Pagiru, unless two different

kings bore the same name. The stratigraphic and archaeological evidence seem to show that the site was abandoned from the second half of the fourteenth century.

6. THE END OF HANA

Nevertheless, this system of local monarchies could have survived in the Middle Euphrates region until the very end of the Late Bronze Age, because the last known tablet showing the legal tradition of Hana, belongs to the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I. of Assyria. However, this tablet has been found outside of Terqa and it is dated by indication of the *limmu*, following the Assyrian chronology.²³ The city of Terqa itself had probably already lost its central role, possibly during the struggle for control over the Jezirah and northern Mesopotamia between Assyria and the waning Mittani kingdom during the fourteenth century. After the Hana structures, we encountered no later archaeological levels in Terqa. In the thick layer pertaining to the abandonment period covering the remains of the last Hana constructions, we found mainly Islamic graves or pits. But in area E, we also found a pit and a tomb surely older than the Islamic levels, associated with some characteristic “late Kassite” goblets.²⁴ It was mainly in order to understand this “dark” period, the “late Kassite” Iron Age, so badly documented in Terqa, that we undertook a survey in the surrounding areas. The site of Tell Mashtale, about five kilometres south of Terqa, but on the opposite bank, provided interesting information about the relations between the Middle Euphrates and Babylonia during that period. Relatively large – close to nine hectares – but rather shallow – about five meters above the level of the plain, Tell Mashtale is cut by a wadi or an ancient channel. It is partly occupied by a cemetery still in use today and by a large school. Its roughly rectangular shape induced several scholars to see in it a sort of a military encampment, possibly Neo-Assyrian. Some late Kassite goblets had already been collected during previous surface surveys, and our sounding confirmed this date for the main occupation. In a small sounding we found hundreds of goblets, jars and other ceramic forms characteristic of the southern Babylonian/ Kassite assem-

²⁰ ROUAULT 1992, 254.

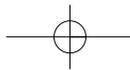
²¹ I thank D. Charpin for this correction of my first lecture.

²² GUALANDI 1997 and 1998.

²³ KÜMMEL 1989.

²⁴ ROUAULT 1998.





blage. The tall bottles had the characteristic filled annular base, often reinforced by the addition of clay to the centre. The ceramic production of Mashtale corresponds precisely enough to the craft traditions typical of the end of the Kassite dynasty in Babylon, or belonging to the Isin II dynasty, at the end of the twelfth century.

One may wonder whether this “late Kassite” southern influence, also attested in Mari, constitutes the sign of an important and unexpected cultural phenomenon. We could perhaps link this surprising Babylonian presence in the Middle Euphrates to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1124–1103), who drove the Elamites out of Babylon through alliances he had forged in the valley of the Middle Tigris, ultimately not too distant from the Hana region, during a period when Assyria, under the rule of Assur-reša-iši I., was relatively weak. This situation should probably also be connected with a particular event of the reign of Tukulti-Mer, king of Hana, son of Ilu-iqiša, who was also king of Hana,²⁵ showing that the region was then strongly oriented towards the south: a votive object,²⁶ bearing an inscription, and dedicated by this king to the god Šamaš has been recovered in Sippar, and it is probably this same king – called “king of Mari” in the Assyrian royal inscriptions – who was defeated by the Assyrian king Aššur-bel-kala, at the beginning of the eleventh century.

The information provided by the archaeological and historical research conducted in Terqa itself and in the surrounding region²⁷ offers fresh

insight into relations between the Middle Euphrates and southern Mesopotamia, especially at the end of the Old Babylonian period, after Hammurapi of Babylon. The control of the Middle Euphrates area probably continued to be an extremely important objective for the dominant states, and despite the emergence of new powers, first Mittanian then Assyrian, Babylonia always managed to project its presence over the region, at least in the form of a certain cultural influence. The Middle Euphrates valley and the Hana country represented a sort of fluctuating border, a contact zone, between all the empires of the Ancient Near East before the time of the Neo-Assyrian hegemony, which conquered and destroyed the local cultures forever.

The Terqa documentation clearly shows how this process was a continuous one, lasting over most of the period. However, we are still left with a gap and very obscure interlude corresponding roughly to the thirteenth century, between the documentation coming first from Terqa and then Mashtale. It is clear that Terqa ceased to be the centre of the kingdom of Hana at the beginning of this “dark” period. However, if we must look for an alternative centre, Mashtale – which shows only a brief period of human occupation – is certainly not the best candidate. We believe Tell Hariri would be a possible candidate, because of the permanence of the title of king of Mari,²⁸ even if the more recent Bronze Age levels in this site are very rare and eroded, and mainly documented by graves.

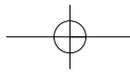
²⁵ Perhaps the same as the “king of the land of Mari”: GRAYSON 1991, 89 and 111.

²⁶ THUREAU-DANGIN and DHORME 1924, 279

²⁷ The last reports have been published in ROUAULT *et al.* 2001 and ROUAULT and MORA 2002.

²⁸ MASETTI-ROUAULT forthcoming.





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