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Edited by I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond and E. Sollberger

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA AND SYRIA

I. SHAMSHI-ADAD I

SCARCELY thirty years ago the figure of Hammurabi, the unifier of Babylonia, still stood out in striking isolation. In fact, at the time he ascended the throne another centralized empire already occupied the whole of northern Mesopotamia: it was the personal creation of Shamshi-Adad I, to whom recent discoveries have made it possible to give his place in history.

Whereas Hammurabi had inherited a considerable territory from his father, Shamshi-Adad had more modest beginnings. He belonged to one of the numerous nomad clans which had infiltrated into Mesopotamia after the break-up of the Third Dynasty of Ur. His father, Ila-kabkabu, ruled over a land bordering on the kingdom of Mari, with which he had come into conflict.¹ It is not well known what happened next. According to one version, the authenticity of which is not certain, Shamshi-Adad made his way into Babylonia, while his brother succeeded to Ila-kabkabu. Later on he seized Ekallatum; the capture of this fortress, on the left bank of the Tigris, in the southern reaches of the lower Zab, laid the gates of Assyria open to him.² The moment was propitious, for Assyria had only lately regained her independence, having previously had to submit to Naram-Sin of Eshnunna, who had advanced as far as the upper Khabur.³ But Naram-Sin's conquests had been ephemeral: on his death, Assyria had shaken off the yoke of Eshnunna, only to fall beneath that of Shamshi-Adad. Once installed on the throne of Ashur, the latter soon set about extending his dominion in the direction of the West. Among the archives of the palace of Mari has been found a letter from a prince of the 'High Country' seeking Iakhdunlim's protection.⁴ He feels that the encroachments of Shamshi-Adad, who has already taken several of his towns, are a threat to him; until then he had victoriously resisted the attacks of his neighbours from the lands of Aleppo, Carchemish and Urshu. But

¹ G, 6, 207 f., 212.

² G, 7, 34 f.; G, 6, 211; §1, 5, 26 f.

³ G, 6, 8 n. 1.

⁴ G, 1, vol. 1, 22, no. 1.

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Iakhdunlim himself was to pass from the scene, assassinated by his own servants,¹ who perhaps acted on Shamshi-Adad's instigation. At all events, he turned the affair to account by occupying Mari, while the heir to the throne, Zimrilim, took refuge with the king of Aleppo. The annexation of Mari represented a considerable gain in territory, for Iakhdunlim had controlled the middle Euphrates valley at least as far as the mouth of the Balikh.

In possession, from now onwards, of an empire which stretched from the Zagros hills to the Euphrates, Shamshi-Adad shared his power with his two sons.² He installed the eldest, Ishme-Dagan, in Ekallatum, with the onerous task of keeping the warlike inhabitants of the mountains in check and of mounting a vigilant guard against the kingdom of Eshnunna, which was to remain his chief enemy. In Mari he left his younger son, Iasmakh-Adad, who would have to exert himself mostly against incursions of nomads from the Syrian steppe.

The correspondence between the king and his two sons recovered at Mari, along with a small collection of archives coming from Tell Shemshāra, the centre of a district government in southern Kurdistan, make it possible to determine the limits of Shamshi-Adad's authority. In the direction of Eshnunna the frontier—if one may speak of 'frontier' at this date—must have run more or less along the 'Adhaim, at least along the Tigris valley, since the eastern marches remained in dispute. Thus it was that Shamshi-Adad had to struggle with Dadusha, the successor of Naram-Sin, for the possession of Qabrā,³ in the district of Arbela, while the Turukkians made it impossible to retain Shusharra (Tell Shemshāra).⁴ Here it was not only the almost continuous hostility of Eshnunna which had to be faced, but the turbulent inhabitants of the foot-hills of the Zagros as well—the Gutians and Turukkians. These last must have been particularly dangerous opponents. On the occasion of a peace treaty Mut-Ashkur, the son and successor of Ishme-Dagan, married the daughter of a Turukkian chieftain called Zaziya,⁵ and even Hammurabi of Babylonia did not disdain to seek this man's alliance.⁶

The whole of Upper Mesopotamia proper was in Shamshi-Adad's hands. The Assyrian 'colonies' in Cappadocia were showing renewed activity at that time, but it is not known how far the new ruler's real authority extended in the direction of the

¹ G, 7, 35 n. 28; §1, 3, 63.³ §1, 7, 441. Cf. below, p. 6.⁵ G, 1, vol. II, 90, no. 40.² §1, 5, 27.⁴ §1, 6, 31.⁶ G, 1, vol. VI, 54, no. 33.

SHAMSHI-ADAD I

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Anatolian plateau. In the west it must have stopped at the Euphrates, where began the kingdom of Iamkhad, with its capital at Aleppo. When Shamshi-Adad boasts of having erected triumphal stelae on the Mediterranean coast, in the Lebanon,¹ it can have been only upon one of those short-lived expeditions, more economic than military, in the tradition established by Sargon of Agade years before. However, Shamshi-Adad did not neglect to extend his influence so as to neutralize Aleppo. He was in alliance with princes of Upper Syria, notably the prince of Carchemish, and he sealed his good relations with Qatna by a marriage: his son Iasmakh-Adad married the daughter of the king of that city, Ishkhi-Adad.² In the south, finally, he dominated the middle Euphrates valley almost to the latitude of Eshnunna.

The empire which Shamshi-Adad had carved out for himself in this way was vast and prosperous. Crossed by several great trade routes, it embraced the prolific Assyrian plain, the humid belt bordering on the Anatolian plateau and the fertile valleys of the Khabur and Euphrates. Naturally, it was coveted to an equal degree by all his neighbours—the half-starved plunderers of the mountains and steppes, and the ambitious monarchs of Aleppo, Eshnunna and Babylon. Shamshi-Adad was to manoeuvre through these manifold dangers with clear-sightedness and skill, energy and tenacity. We have seen that he gave his sons the duty of watching the two flanks of his realm. On Ishme-Dagan, who was, like himself, a forceful soldier not afraid to risk his own skin, he could rely unhesitatingly. Nor did he omit to hold him up as an example to his second son, who was far from following in his footsteps. Feeble and hesitant, Iasmakh-Adad more often deserved blame than praise:³ ‘Are you a child, not a man,’ his father reproached him, ‘have you no beard on your chin?’ He tells him some blunt home-truths: ‘While here your brother is victorious, down there you lie about among the women. . . .’ Ishme-Dagan too does not scruple to admonish his younger brother: ‘Why are you setting up a wail about this thing? That is not great conduct.’⁴ Later, he suggests, either as a political manoeuvre or out of a genuine desire to help his brother, that he should not address himself to the king, their father, directly, but use him as intermediary: ‘Write me what you are intending to write to the king, so that, where possible, I can advise you myself.’ Elsewhere he exclaims: ‘Show some sense.’ It is under-

¹ §1, 1, 15.³ See §1, 3, 68 f.² See below, p. 20.⁴ G, 1, vol. iv, 96 ff., no. 70.

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standable that Shamshi-Adad, whose commendable intention was to school his son for exercising power, should give him advisers who had his confidence and were kept informed of the instructions Iasmakh-Adad received from his father.¹ At the same time, the latter kept his hand on everything. His letters deal not only with questions of high policy, with international relations or military operations, but frequently concern themselves with matters of lesser importance, such as the appointment of officials, caravans or messengers passing through, measures to be taken with regard to fugitives, the watch to be kept on nomads, the despatch of livestock or provisions, boat-building, the projected movements of Iasmakh-Adad, not to mention private matters concerning individuals.

If Shamshi-Adad kept a strict control over things, it was still not his intention to take all initiative away from his sons or officials. For instance, it was for Iasmakh-Adad himself to fill the post of governor of Terqa, or of mayor of the palace at Mari.² It was often the matter of his father's complaints: 'How long will you not rule in your own house? Do you not see your brother commanding great armies?'³ On the other hand, the whole running of affairs did not rest solely on the sovereign's shoulders, for the administrative service was organized on a sound basis at all levels. Each district was entrusted to a governor assisted by other career-officials, all carefully selected on the dual ground of competence and loyalty.⁴ Other high officers were specialized, like the one concerned with the preparation of censuses, who was attached to Iasmakh-Adad's 'headquarters'.⁵ Chancellery and accounting services were organized with the same concern for efficiency. Fast-moving couriers regularly passed through the land, and Shamshi-Adad often emphasized the urgency of messages which were to be passed. That is why he sometimes dates his letters, a practice uncommon at that time, in certain cases even going so far as to specify the time of day.⁶ The king and his sons were always on the move, but the correspondence addressed to them nevertheless ended by being sorted and catalogued in the archive rooms of the central administration. There was the same strictness about the drafting and the keeping of financial docu-

¹ G, 6, 194.² G, 1, vol. 1, 38, no. 9; 120, no. 61.³ G, 1, vol. 1, 182, no. 108.⁴ G, 1, vol. 1, 38, no. 9; 52 ff., no. 18; 122, no. 62; 200, no. 120.⁵ G, 6, 194.⁶ G, 1, vol. 1, 42, no. 10; 128, no. 67 (cf. A. L. Oppenheim, *J.N.E.S.* 11 (1952), 131 f.).

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SHAMSHI-ADAD I

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ments. Thus, Shamshi-Adad required that detailed accounts should be produced concerning the cost of making silver statues.¹

Military affairs were naturally organized with no less care than the civil administration. Garrisons, no doubt small in numbers, were permanently stationed in the towns, and troops were levied for each campaign, both from the fixed population and the nomads; the Khanaeans, especially, provided valued contingents. On their return, the men were demobilized. It sometimes happened that they were sent to rest in their homes for a few days between two engagements, and for the same reason, measures were taken to relieve fortress garrisons periodically. Before marching, a list of the men taking part in the campaign was drawn up, and the distribution of provisions was settled. Sometimes troops operated in considerable numbers: for the siege of Nurrugum, the capture of which represented, on the evidence of Shamshi-Adad himself, one of the most important military events of his reign, the figure of 60,000 men is mentioned.² Censuses, which involved at the same time purificatory rites and the registering of inhabitants on the army muster-rolls, were instituted sometimes at district level, sometimes throughout the kingdom.³ Although the Mari texts make no mention of it, the army must have included some specialized personnel in its ranks. It was perfectly equipped for siege-warfare, about which previously our only information was derived from Assyrian sources. All the methods which may be called classic were employed—the throwing-up of encircling ramparts to strengthen the blockade of a besieged town, the construction of assault-banks of compacted earth making it possible to reach the top of fortifications, digging of galleries to undermine walls, and the use of two kinds of siege-engines, the assault-tower and the battering-ram.⁴ Preparations for conquests were made far in advance: recourse was had to spies, and a propaganda campaign, carried out by natives who had been bought over, opened the way for the military offensive. The aim was to get the populace to come over to the invader's side of its own accord. Finally, the invading columns were preceded by advance guards, whose duty it was to carry out reconnaissance.⁵

Whether it was to lead his troops into battle in person, or to inspect them, to meet foreign princes, or simply to make sure that

¹ G, 1, vol. 1, 138 ff., no. 74.

² See J. Læssøe in *Assyriological Studies*, 16 (1965), 193.

³ G, 6, 23 ff.

⁴ See J.-R. Kupper, *R.A.* 45 (1951), 125 f.

⁵ *Ibid.* 123 f.

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his orders were carried out intelligently and to keep in working-order the bureaucratic machine he had created, Shamshi-Adad was continually on the move. It cannot really be said that he had a capital. To judge from the letters that have come down to us, he was not often at Ashur or at Nineveh, but preferred living in a city on the upper Khabur, which we must probably look for at the site of Chagar Bazar,¹ where a repository of financial archives has been found.

This city was called Shubat-Enlil in honour of the god of Nippur, who pronounced the names of kings and delivered the sceptre to them. The ambition of Shamshi-Adad was in proportion with his success, and he did not hesitate to proclaim himself 'king of all', a title borne of old by Sargon of Agade. In accordance with this claim he invoked the patronage of Enlil, whose lieutenant he was pleased to style himself, and built a new temple for that god at Ashur.² It was probably in the same line of conduct that he repaired the ruins of the temple of Ishtar, built in former days at Nineveh by Manishtusu, and that he dedicated a temple to Dagan in his town of Terqa,³ for Dagan was the god who had once accepted the worship of Sargon, and granted him in return sovereignty over the 'Upper Country'.

It is not yet possible to write a history of Shamshi-Adad's reign. Thanks to the letters from Mari we know some of its outstanding events, but they give us only momentary glimpses. They are not arranged chronologically, and they cover, irregularly no doubt, only part of the reign, which is said to have lasted thirty-three years in all. Texts were dated in two manners,⁴ the Assyrian practice of appointing annual eponyms being much more widely used than the Babylonian system of naming years after an event. Nevertheless, the numerous references to military operations in the king's correspondence indicate that his reign was far from peaceful. One of the principal campaigns had the region of the Lesser Zab as its objective. This ended with the capture of several important towns, notably Qabrā, Arrapkha and Nurrugum.⁵ Many operations, conducted with varying fortune against the Turukkians, also took place in the mountainous region of the eastern marches.⁶ A most carefully organized expedition was made in order to conquer the land of Zalmaqum, the name given to the region of Harran.⁷ Only a few echoes reveal

¹ G, 7, 36; G, 6, 2 ff.² §1, 1, 13 f.³ §1, 1, 9 f., 17. See §1, 8, 25 f.⁴ §1, 2, 53 f.⁵ §1, 6, 72 ff.⁶ §1, 5, 28 n. 1.⁷ G, 1, vol. 1, 40, no. 10; 72, no. 29; 110, no. 53; 116 ff., no. 60.

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the hostilities with Eshnunna; we know, from a year-name of Dadusha's reign, that he defeated an army commanded by Ishme-Dagan.¹ A series of letters deals with another defensive campaign waged against the armies of Eshnunna, but it is composed only of messages exchanged between Iasmakh-Adad and his brother Ishme-Dagan. All the evidence suggests that these events took place only after their father's death.

Shamshi-Adad, in fact, must have passed from the scene at the height of his career. In Eshnunna, Dadusha's son and successor, Ibalpiel II, called the fifth year of his reign 'the year of Shamshi-Adad's death', which suggests that about this time he had become a dependant of the great king. This is confirmed by a letter in which Ishme-Dagan, having ascended the throne, reassures his brother, saying in particular that he has the Elamites on a leash as well as their ally, the king of Eshnunna.² However, Iasmakh-Adad's fears were well-founded. Here the testimonies bear one another out. Several letters recovered at Mari indicate the advance of the troops of Eshnunna; they had reached the Euphrates at Rapiqum, three days' march above Sippar, and were moving upstream. The names of the eighth and ninth years of Ibalpiel II, for their part, commemorate the destruction of Rapiqum and the defeat of the armies of Subartu and Khana, by which we should understand Assyria and Mari.³ Ishme-Dagan had not been able to come to his brother's aid effectively. No doubt he was engaged elsewhere against other adversaries, for the conqueror's death had certainly spurred all his enemies on to attack his dominions. As soon as he was reduced to his own resources, Iasmakh-Adad, a colourless individual, was doomed to be lost from sight in the storm. The precise circumstances accompanying his downfall are not known. A passage in a letter implies that he was driven out of Mari after a defeat inflicted on his elder brother.⁴

The army of Eshnunna did not get as far as Mari, for Ibalpiel makes no reference to the city's capture. But the representative of the dynasty which had been dispossessed, Zimrilim, took advantage of these events in order to regain the throne of his fathers. He could count on the support of King Iarimlim of Aleppo, who had made him welcome during his long years of exile and had given him his daughter in marriage.⁵ Perhaps the defeat suffered by Ishme-Dagan was inflicted on him by troops from Aleppo, who had then expelled Iasmakh-Adad in favour of Zimrilim. In

¹ §I, 7, 440 f.³ G, 7, 38 f.; §I, 7, 445 ff.⁵ §III, 4, 236 f.² G, I, vol. iv, 36, no. 20.⁴ §v, 4, 98I n. I.

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a letter to his father-in-law Zimrilim declares: 'Truly it is my father who has caused me to regain my throne.'¹ It is nevertheless a fact that the king of Eshnunna's campaign had opened the way for Zimrilim's reconquest by invading Shamshi-Adad's former empire from the south.

As for Ishme-Dagan, he succeeded in holding his own, but only in Assyria, losing at one stroke the middle Euphrates and the greater part of Upper Mesopotamia, which either regained its independence or passed under Zimrilim's control.² Even the region of the upper Khabur, along with his father's residence Shubat-Enlil, passed out of his hands.³ He did indeed attempt several counter offensives in this direction, but apparently without success, at least during Zimrilim's reign. We do not know whether he succeeded in regaining a foothold in this portion of his father's heritage after Eshnunna and Mari had fallen under Hammurabi's onslaughts: from that moment our sources fall silent, leaving in obscurity the rest of the reign of Ishme-Dagan, to whom the royal lists give the high total of forty or even fifty years.⁴

To judge from his father's letters Ishme-Dagan seemed nevertheless to have the stature to carry on the work which had been begun. The fact was that the empire Shamshi-Adad bequeathed him was difficult to maintain. It was rich and populous, but lacking in cohesion, formed by a juxtaposition of several quite distinct provinces. Besides, exposed along all its frontiers, its geographical situation made it particularly vulnerable; there was, for example, no direct communication between Mari and Ashur. Hemmed in by powerful and ill-disposed neighbours, Aleppo and Eshnunna, it could not survive the man who had created it by his personal qualities alone, by his unflagging energy, his military genius, and his abilities as an organizer.

II. MARI

Like Shamshi-Adad, Iakhdunlim, his unsuccessful opponent at Mari, was a Western Semite whose forebears had abandoned the nomadic life in order to settle in the Euphrates valley. The origins of his dynasty are obscure. Of his father Iagitlim we know only that he came into conflict with Shamshi-Adad's father, after having been his ally.⁵ But it was Iakhdunlim who seems to have laid the foundations of Mari's greatness. In a building-

¹ §III, 4, 235.² §1, 5, 29.³ G, 6, 30.⁴ G, 7, 36; §1, 5, 31.⁵ G, 6, 33.

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MARI

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record,¹ which by its flawless material execution and brilliant literary qualities shows how far the sons of the desert had adopted Babylonian culture, Iakhdunlim recalls the triumphant campaign he had waged, as the first of his line, on the Mediterranean coast and in the mountains, from which he had brought back valuable timber, while at the same time forcing the country to pay tribute. It has been seen that Shamshi-Adad boasted that he had done the same thing (above, p. 3), which cannot be considered a real conquest. Moreover, Iakhdunlim's power was not wholly secure in his own territory; he had to withstand both attacks by the petty kings of the middle Euphrates and the incursions of nomads, Benjaminites and Khanaeans. It was against the last of these that he had his most striking successes, imposing his rule on them from that time onwards. Once the country was pacified he was able to build a temple to Shamash and to undertake great irrigation projects, designed, notably, to supply water to a new city. It is a fact, as he himself claimed, that he had strengthened the foundations of Mari.² Although his kingdom was shortly to fall into Shamshi-Adad's hands, his work was not in vain, since it was eventually taken up by his son Zimrilim.

The latter did not wait long after the usurper's death to ascend the throne of Mari. We are no more in a position to give an account of the new king's reign than to understand how the reconquest took place. More than thirty year-names have been recovered, but the order of their succession is not known. State correspondence makes it possible to reconstruct certain events, but the constant instability of the political situation in Mesopotamia at this time obliges us to show extreme caution in arranging the letters.

Basically, Zimrilim's kingdom was made up of the middle Euphrates and Khabur valleys. To the south it cannot have reached farther than Hit. To the north it undoubtedly included the mouth of the Balikh, but beyond that it is uncertain whether there lay territories directly dependent on Mari and administered by district governors, or simply more or less autonomous vassal princedoms.³ In his attempts to expand Zimrilim directed the best part of his efforts towards the 'High Country', that is to say Upper Mesopotamia, which in those days was split up into numerous little states. In particular the region, bordering on the upper Khabur, which at Mari was called Idamaraz, appears to have been under his control all the time.⁴ But Zimrilim's policy

¹ §II, 2.³ §II, 4, 163.² G, 6, 33 f.⁴ G, I, vol. IX, 348 f.; G, 6, 10.

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was to impose his tutelage on the petty monarchs of the 'High Country', or even simply to draw them into alliance with him, rather than to annex their countries—no doubt because he had not the resources to do so. This line of conduct was fairly general. We have only to listen to the report of one of Zimrilim's correspondents: 'No king is powerful by himself: ten or fifteen kings follow Hammurabi, king of Babylon, as many follow Rim-Sin, king of Larsa, as many follow Ibalpiel, king of Eshnunna, as many follow Amutpiel, king of Qatna, twenty kings follow Iarimlim, king of Iamkhad. . . .'¹ Grouping their vassals about them, the 'great powers' of the time entered in their turn into wider coalitions, aiming at supremacy, but these formed and broke up as circumstances and the interests of the moment dictated.

In this changing world, between negotiations and battles, Zimrilim's policy nevertheless kept certain constant factors in view—it remained loyal to the alliances with Babylon and Aleppo. In this the king of Mari obeyed a vital necessity, for his country was above all a line of communication linking Babylon with northern Syria, and he needed to retain the goodwill of the powers which guarded both ends. These powers, for their part, had every interest in protecting the freedom of trade and leaving the burden of doing it to an ally. But once Hammurabi, after unifying Babylonia, felt strong enough to assume control himself and reap the profit from it he did not hesitate to subjugate Mari.

It is understandable that in these conditions political intrigue was extremely vigorous, leading constantly to fresh conflicts. Zimrilim recognizes this in a message which he sends to his father-in-law the king of Aleppo: 'Now, since I regained my throne many days ago, I have had nothing but fights and battles.'² The opponents were manifold; first, enemies outside, the most dangerous of whom was Eshnunna, frequently operating in concert with its ally Elam, and not afraid to send its troops into the heart of the High Country.³ There were also rebellious vassals whose loyalty had to be enforced. Lastly, and perhaps above all, there were the nomads, constantly on watch at the edge of the desert, whom no defeat could disarm once and for all.⁴ Zimrilim boasts of having crushed the Benjaminites in the Khabur valley, but a victory like this could, at the most, procure only a momentary respite, for the struggle between nomads and settlers, having its origins in physical conditions, could never cease. Without any respite, new groups came to replace those who had left

¹ G, 3, 117; §III, 4, 230 f.² §III, 4, 235.³ See below, p. 15.⁴ See below, pp. 25 ff.