

Amorite Tribes and Nations of Second-Millennium Western Asia

ROBERT M. WHITING

THE PEOPLE WE NOW CALL the Amorites are at once one of the most important influences on the development of the ancient Near East and one of the most enigmatic. The enigma stems mostly from the fact that Amorite was never a written language. When people that we know to be Amoriges write, they write in Akkadian and it is very difficult to separate out anything that may be specific to the Amorites in what they say. For these reasons, we do not have a literature that we can specifically attribute to the Amorites: no cosmogony, no epics of Amorite heroes, no lists of Amorite gods, and no Amorite historiography.

What we know of the Amorites comes from references to them in the written records of other peoples, primarily from Mesopotamian or Syrian cuneiform documents, but also to a lesser extent from Egyptian and other sources. Nontextual sources are even less rewarding. The archaeological evidence for the Amorites is scanty and not to be separated from the artifacts of the other ethnolinguistic groups with which they shared the area. No one has yet been able to identify an Amorite pot or weapon with certainty. (See "Pastoral Nomadism in Ancient Western Asia" in Part 3, Vol. I.) Therefore, the reconstruction of the ethnolinguistic group known as the Amor-

ites is based on snippets of information, often contradictory, coming from Mesopotamia and from the areas east of the Tigris, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia, and the islands of the Persian Gulf.

TERMINOLOGY

The term "Amorite" comes into English from the Hebrew Bible. The expression there, *'emori*, is presumed related to, if not borrowed directly from, *amurru* or *amurrû*, the Akkadian word for Amorite(s). The Sumerian term for Amorite(s) is "Martu" (written MAR.TU), and in both languages the terms are also used for a compass direction designating the west. Was the compass direction primary or was the ethnic or geographic designation? If the first was the case, then the Sumerian term Martu might simply mean "westerner" and might then have no more specific ethnic or linguistic connotation than, for example, the use of the term "oriental" by a European. On the other hand, if there had been a country named Martu or a people called Martu to the west of Sumer, it is quite logical that this would become the name of the direction in which this country or people would be found. The answer is provided

by texts from Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh) in Syria where occurs a geographical entity written *Mar-tu^{ki}* or *Mar-tum^{ki}*, indicating that there was a place named Martu(m) to the west of Sumer (but not to the west of Ebla) from which the Sumerian word for "west" was derived. This information, however, does not reduce the inherent ambiguity in the use of the terms, nor does it make any clearer the relationship between Sumerian and Eblaite Martu(m) and Akkadian Amurru(m).

Cuneiform lexical lists record another term for Amorite, "Tidnu" (written GĪR.GĪR), itself possibly derived from a Semitic word (*ditanu*) that had a history perhaps older than Martu. When and in what manner Tidnu, Martu, and Amurru came to be related remain a mystery. Perhaps originally Sumerian Martu referred to a place (as it did in Ebla), while Akkadian Amurru referred to a people (as *'ēmōrī* did in Hebrew Scripture); later, the association was made between a compass designation and a people living to the west. By the end of the third millennium, Martu and Amurru had become fully equivalent in all their meanings.

We recognize people as Amorites primarily when the sources add either Martu or Amurru to the names of individuals or tribes they are citing. However, as ancient scribes were not ethnographers, they were rarely driven to record precise distinctions among people, and in many instances the names of individuals they designate as MAR.TU or *amurrū* turn out not be Amorite at all. This casts grave doubt on our ability to establish with precision when these terms referred to "Amorites" and when to "westerners." We also recognize as Amorites individuals or tribes having "Amorite" names (see the box "Amorite Language" below). In fact, in non-cuneiform sources (except for the Hebrew Bible) this is our only clue to decide when someone was an Amorite.

THE SETTING

Our appreciation of cultural development in the ancient Near East has altered dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. Previously, we pictured civilization beginning in Sumer in

extreme southern Mesopotamia sometime in the mid to late fourth millennium with intensive urbanization, writing, and highly developed religious and political systems and spreading gradually in the early to mid third millennium to the north to encompass all of Mesopotamia. Syria was deemed a largely uninhabited cultural backwater with limited or no political structure. Mari (modern Tell Hariri), where inscribed objects of the early to mid third millennium were found and the only Syrian city mentioned in the Sumerian Kinglist, was considered the westernmost outpost of Sumerian culture and civilization. The first intrusion of Semites into Mesopotamia was the Akkadian Empire founded by Sargon of Akkad. Archaeological discoveries have revealed, however, that well before the end of the fourth millennium the horizons of the Uruk civilization extended from the plains of Khuzestan in Iran to the Arabian littoral and to the upper reaches of the Euphrates in Syria. There is also evidence of Mesopotamian contact with, if not a physical presence in, Predynastic Egypt. It is after this expansion that Sumerian civilization contracts back into southern Mesopotamia, and the network of city-states that has always been considered the hallmark of Sumerian polity was firmly established.

The Akkadians had been considered the first of numerous "waves" of Semites to invade the Mesopotamian heartland from the nearby Syro-Arabian desert over the millennia (with the Amorites being the second), but the discoveries at Ebla and their wider implications have shown that for some time before the arrival of Sargon there was a culturally unified area of Semitic-speaking peoples extending at least from Ebla in western Syria to Mari on the Euphrates to the area of Kish in Babylonia, and probably across the Tigris into the Diyala River basin and further north into Assyria. In Mesopotamia there were hints of this early Semitic presence in the Semitic names of the early rulers of Kish from the Sumerian Kinglist, in the different writing traditions of the Kish area, and in the importance of Kish (especially the title "King of Kish") to the later Semitic dynasties of Mesopotamia, but the extent of the area that made up this cultural zone was not even guessed at. Significantly, the Amorites as indicated by the Sumerian term MAR.TU and the Eblaite *Martu(m)* were already present

Amorite Language

A short while ago classifying the Amorite language, particularly of the third and early second millennia, was quite simple. The only two Semitic languages attested in this time period were Akkadian and Amorite: Akkadian was East Semitic, and Amorite, clearly differentiated from Akkadian by many features, was West Semitic. With the discovery of another Semitic language at Ebla (known as Eblaite), whose attestation is somewhat earlier than the bulk of the Old Akkadian sources, this simplicity came to an abrupt end. (See the chapter "Semitic Languages" in Part 9, Vol. IV.)

There is now general agreement that the system of classification of Semitic languages that has long been in use should be revised. The problem is that there is no general agreement on what form this revision should take. The former scheme, based primarily on geographic attestation, divided the Semitic languages into East Semitic (Akkadian) and West Semitic, with West Semitic being further subdivided into North West Semitic (Amorite, Aramaic, Canaanite, and Ugaritic) and South West Semitic (Arabic, Ethiopic, and South Arabian). This system was workable, despite a number of important *isoglosses* (linguistic features shared by some speakers of a dialect, language, or group of languages) that crossed the West Semitic geographic boundary, mainly because Akkadian was always clearly differentiated from West Semitic. With the discovery of Eblaite, which is in many ways identical to Akkadian yet contains the seeds of many features that are peculiar to later West Semitic languages, the system has become chaos.

The classification of Eblaite has been the subject of much discussion but little agreement. Opinions have ranged from pure Akkadian to proto-Semitic to Biblical Hebrew written in cuneiform. The classification of Amorite within the Semitic languages is of course dependent on how the other Semitic languages are finally classified in the light of the evidence of Eblaite. A thorough discussion of this problem would require more space than can be devoted to it here, but some preliminary ideas can still be set forth.

One of the problems with classifying or establishing relationships among the Semitic languages, especially during the third and second millennia, is the lack of contemporary or overlapping attestation of the

languages, making it difficult to discern with certainty distinctive contrasts or similarities marking specific families. Thus Amorite has recently been characterized as "early Canaanite," which is only possible because Amorite and the Canaanite languages (Phoenician and Hebrew) are not attested at the same time. Describing Amorite as "early Canaanite" implies that it represents the Canaanite family before there was anything specifically "Canaanite" about it; that is, the features that distinguish Canaanite from other West Semitic languages had not yet developed.

The Amorite language is known almost exclusively from names, and the only grammar available is the grammar of names. This means that many features of the language are as yet unattested. Further, the lexicon is obscure because names provide very limited contexts for interpretation, and comparative etymology is essentially the only method of judging the meanings of words. Apart from names, only a very few Amorite expressions are known, primarily from being imbedded in Akkadian contexts or used for untranslatable social or cultural concepts.

Because the Semitic languages are very closely related, many Akkadian and Amorite lexemes are the same, and it is often difficult to differentiate with certainty between Akkadian and Amorite names. Amorite names are recognized primarily by their difference from Akkadian, mostly by morphology (*ya-* verbal prefix instead of *i-*, *ma-* prefix with nouns containing a labial consonant in the root instead of *na-*, *-a* predicative suffix instead of \emptyset , etc.), by lexicon that differs from Akkadian (Amorite *'abdu*, "slave"; *'ammu*, "maternal uncle"; *malku*, "king"; etc.), or by specifically Amorite West Semitic deities, such as Lim, Yarakh (Erakh), Yapukh (Epukh), and El. One advantage to this is that once a particular element is identified as Amorite, it is possible to classify other names containing this element as Amorite even if the other elements may not be recognizable. The major disadvantage is that any Semitic name that is non-Akkadian tends to be classified as Amorite, making it impossible (or at least very difficult) to decide if there is one Amorite language or a cluster of dialects or possibly more than one West Semitic language present.

and participating in the events taking place in this area well before the time of the Akkadian empire of Sargon.

AMORITE HISTORY

Third Millennium

In evaluating our sources we distinguish broadly between literary sources and nonliterary ones. Among the nonliterary sources are the many royal inscriptions. They record actual contacts with the Amorites, albeit couching their interactions frequently in self-serving or propagandist manner. Ranged in the same category are references in administrative documents that occasionally record incidental information about people termed Amorite or given names that emulate Amorite sounds. What is said about Amorites in Sumerian and Akkadian literature—myths, epics, or the like—although almost surely distorted, are the closest thing we have to ethnographic or demographic information.

In a tablet from Fara (ancient Shuruppak), probably datable to around 2600–2500 BCE, a person bearing a Sumerian name is described simply as MAR.TU. This reference is valuable only in giving us the earliest mention of MAR.TU in the cuneiform sources. Whether that person could properly be termed an “Amorite” or not is debatable, and it would be pointless to speculate on his social position or economic role in the local society. In the texts from Ebla (probably dating sometime between 2400 and 2350) the country *Mar-tu^{ki}* or *Mar-tum^{ki}* is not infrequently mentioned, as are individuals coming from there. There is even a reference to a “king” (LUGAL) of *Mar-tum^{ki}* named Amuti. However, the names of these “Amorites” do not show any obvious connections with later Amorite names, and it is questionable whether their linguistic, ethnic, or socioeconomic background was in any way different from the other inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia who appear in these texts.

A date formula that Shar-kali-sharri (circa 2200), a descendant of Sargon, used for one of his years as king reports the defeat of MAR.TU in “Basar.” This is the first circumstantial account of Amorite tribes, and it places the action near modern Jebel Bishri, a low mountain range that

lies west of the Euphrates. This area was also known as a source for the stones that Gudea of Lagash imported to build a temple a short while later. Individuals labeled as “Amorite” occur in ever-increasing numbers in documents of the later third millennium, and it is at this time that names which can be identified as “Amorite” begin to appear.

By the reign of Shulgi of Ur (circa 2050), Amorite pressure on the settled regions of southern and central Mesopotamia forced the construction of a fortification wall stretching from the area of the Euphrates to the other side of the Tigris somewhat north of modern Baghdad. The wall was completed in the fourth year of a successor, Shu-Sin (circa 2035). Even as they attempted to control Amorite razzias, the kings of Ur occasionally raided their tribes; but they mostly traded with such people and even hired them as mercenaries or gave them official functions in the administration of the territory. (See the chapter “Shulgi of Ur” earlier in this volume.)

The last ruler of Ur, Ibbi-Sin, rapidly lost control of the major urban centers of his realm, not directly to the Amorites, but rather through their disruption of communication that allowed city-states to reassert their independence from Ur. Here is what Ishbi-Irra wrote his overlord Ibbi-Sin, sometime during the latter’s sixth year of rule,

Reports that hostile Amorites had entered the country were heard, and all the grain, 144,000 kor, (that had been bought) was brought into Isin. Now the Amorites in their entirety have entered the heart of the country and have taken the great fortresses one by one. (After Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Reign of Ibbi-Suen,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 7, p. 40)

Ishbi-Irra requests that he be placed in charge of defending Isin and nearby Nippur. Ibbi-Sin grants his request, but also beseeches him to forward the much-needed grain to Ur. Whether the grain ever found its way to Ur is not known; but within a couple of years, Ishbi-Irra founded his own dynasty at Isin.

Early Second Millennium

A dark age in Mesopotamian history begins at the fall of Ibbi-Sin, lasting a century. When we pick up its thread, the Amorites are fully in con-

trol at such cities as Larsa, Kish, Babylon, Sippar, Marad, and Uruk, and large segments of the population own Amorite names. Presumably because Amorites are ubiquitous, individuals are no longer designated as MAR.TU. Akkadians and Amorites seem to be fully integrated, and we find Akkadians with Amorite names and vice versa. The new arrivals have fully assimilated the Sumero-Babylonian culture, and texts are written in Akkadian. Beyond the overwhelming number of Amorite names, we cannot tell the presence of the new population.

Dependence on Amorite mercenaries may explain why Amorite dynasties arose in so many cities in a fairly short period of time after the collapse of Ur III. With their penchant for raiding, Amorites must have been well organized militarily and in many areas may have become the strongest military power by default. Eventually, Amorites simply took over cities they were once hired to protect, cities that were weakened by long years of dominance by a central, though no longer effective, authority. The effectiveness of Amorites in military matters is reflected in the Old Babylonian military terminology: UGULA MAR.TU, literally "headman of the Amorites," and (mostly in Mari) GAL MAR.TU, literally "chief of the Amorites," were equivalent to our "general." DUB.SAR MAR.TU, literally "scribe of Amorites," became the term for a quartermaster in charge of military records and logistics.

The letters from Eshnunna (modern Tell Asmar) highlight the relationship between the Amorites and the rulers of that city during the first few decades after the fall of Ur. Bilalama, its ruler, married a daughter of Abda-El, an Amorite chieftain (*rabiān amurrim*); Ushashum, a son of Abda-El, married a cousin of Bilalama. Rather than epitomizing a full-scale alliance between the two groups, such marriages maintained an uneasy truce between a city ruler and the disparate tribal elements operating in his area. Nevertheless, bonds were sensed to have been established thereby, and a letter Ushashum sent to Bilalama relies heavily on this kinship to extract gifts from the ruler of Eshnunna as a means of increasing his own prestige:

I am your brother; your flesh and blood am I. A stranger might be hostile, but I remain at your beck and call. You must therefore listen to me and thus

honor me in the eyes of the Amorites: send me without delay the *expected gifts* for Abda-El, everything that was held back. You know how much: one gold cup, three silver cups, one best quality garment as your *būdu*-contribution, various bronze cups, one copper kettle.

Envoys from the whole country are coming here for the funeral of Abda-El, and all the Amorites are gathering. Whatever you intend to send for the funeral of Abda-El, your father, send separately (from the gifts you send for me). And because you are my brother, send me without delay a young servant from Mashkan-sharrum. Even if he is worth ten minas of silver, send him! Make me famous. (After Robert Whiting, *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar*, pp. 48-49)

Shortly before 1800, Mari and the entire area around it came under the control of Amorite leaders who, while using the urban title of "king," remained not far removed from their tribal origins. But rather than calling themselves "Amorites," the tribal elements around Mari were known as Khaneans. The earliest record of an Amorite ruling Mari comes from an inscription of Yakhdun-Lim, son of Yaggid-Lim, who calls himself "King of Mari, Tuttul, and the land of Khana." He writes of defeating other "fathers of Khana," and kings of cities and of peoples with tribal names: the Urapu, the Amnanu, and the Rabbu. Yakhdun-Lim brags about being the first king of Mari to march to the "Sea" (the Mediterranean). In another inscription, Yakhdun-Lim proudly claims to have rebuilt Mari and its countryside:

I removed the *hostile forces* from the banks of the Euphrates, giving peace to my land; I opened canals, thus eliminating well-water drawing throughout my land. I built Mari's ramparts and dug its moat; I built Terqa's ramparts and dug its moat. And in the *burnt-field*—an arid spot—where not one king since days of yore founded a town, wishing it, I founded a town, dug its moat, and called it "Dur-Yakhdullim"; I then opened a canal for it and called it "Ishim-Yakhdullim." I, therefore, enlarged my country and strengthened the structure of Mari and of my land, establishing my reputation for eternity. (After J. M. Sasson in *Lingering over Words*, ed. by T. Abusch et al., 1990)

Shamshi-Adad defeated Yakhdun-Lim and, after the brief reign of his successor, Sumu-Yamam, took possession of Mari. He installed

his younger son, Yasmakh-Addu, as its ruler. This phase lasted about twenty years until the death of Shamshi-Adad. Very soon afterward, Zimri-Lim, the son of Yahkdun-Lim, returned the "Lim" dynasty to the throne. Very early in his reign, Zimri-Lim married the daughter of Yarim-Lim, king over a powerful kingdom (Yamkhad) centering around Aleppo (Halab). Zimri-Lim lived in a palace of great opulence, consisting of over three hundred rooms and covering about eight acres (three hectares). Almost all of our knowledge of Old Babylonian Syria, and a great deal of our knowledge of Mesopotamia at this time, comes from the archives recovered from this palace, and our ability to reconstruct the culture of the Amorites is heavily dependent on its tablets. It is from a letter written to Zimri-Lim that we obtain our earliest testimony that somewhere near the kingdoms of Yamkhad and of Qatna (Tell Mishrifeh) in Syria there was a country called Amurru (*māt amurrim*).

After Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Mari in his thirty-fifth year, the city ceased to exist. A new kingdom of Khana was founded at Terqa (Tell 'Ashara), a few miles upstream from Mari, and it dominated the middle Euphrates. Indeed, its first attested king, Ishar-Lim, may be identical with a general known from Mari at the time of Shamshi-Adad, but among its other kings were those who carried the names of Mari rulers, Yaggid-Lim, Yahkdun-Lim, and Zimri-Lim. To the northwest, the kingdom of Yamkhad continued to flourish after the fall of Mari, but most of our information about it comes from the excavations at Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana on the Orontes River in Turkey near Alexandretta), a kingdom that paid it tribute. The population of Alalakh (and presumably of the entire northern region) was made up of Akkadians, Amorites, Hurrians, and a smattering of Indo-Aryans coming from the East. Yamkhad was able, at least at times, to extend its dominance eastward across north Syria.

By 1600 the Amorite tribes of the middle Euphrates were being forced westward by the pressure of Hurrians from the north and by a new ethnic group, the Kassites; and it becomes increasingly difficult to follow their history, especially after the Hittites successfully raid Baby-

lon, bringing about the collapse of Hammurabi's dynasty and wrecking Syrian stability in the process.

The kingdom called Amurru, which is barely mentioned in Mari documents, comes into sharper focus from texts recovered at Alalakh and Ugarit (Ras Shamra), about a couple of centuries later. But by then, Syria had become an arena for the struggles of the great powers of the day: Hittites, Mitannians, Egyptians, eventually Assyrians as well, and its story, centering around the rise and fall of a family of opportunist rulers, belongs to the Amarna period. This kingdom of Amurru was formed when originally independent small city-states joined (or were forced into) a confederacy. It occupied a small area between Byblos (modern Jubayl) and Ugarit, but had few or no ethnic Amorites living within its borders.

Amorites in Egyptian and Later Sources

In Egyptian documents, Amurru refers only to the Syrian kingdom of the Amarna period. However, from early in the second millennium come documents we label *Execration Texts*, and they shed light on the contemporaneous population of southern Syria and Palestine. They consist of clay bowls or figurines of bound human captives inscribed with the names and location of potential enemies. When, after the recitation of powerful imprecations, these inscribed objects were broken, Egypt's foes were expected magically to become impotent. The names of princes as far north as Damascus have proven to be West Semitic, structurally similar to the Amorite names of contemporary Mesopotamia. An Egyptian tomb painting at Beni Hasan of around 1900 has given us our best pictorial representation of such people. A caravan of West Semites comes before a local Egyptian high official. Its members wear brightly colored and patterned garments, and its men carry bows, axes, and short spears; one man is playing a stringed musical instrument and has a water- or wineskin slung over his shoulder. Donkeys serve them as pack animals, and we see a metal smith's bellows prominently displayed on the back of one of them. (This painting is illustrated in the chapter on Egyptian medicine in Part 8, Vol. III.)

Yarim-Lim, King of Yamkhad

Among the more famous Amorites of the first half of the second millennium were Shamshi-Adad, who took control of Assyria and of most of upper Mesopotamia, and his younger contemporary, Hammurabi of Babylon. They are featured in separate chapters in Part 5 of these volumes (see "Mari," "King Hammurabi," and "Shamshi-Adad"). We are only now learning about Yarim-Lim of Aleppo, thanks to the documents found at Mari, and it appears that of the three he was probably the most powerful. That less is known about him is simply accidental, for the kingdom of Yamkhad was centered at Halab (modern Aleppo). While Ashur, Babylon, Shubat-Enlil (Tell Leilan), Ekallatum, and Mari are now ruins or minuscule villages, Halab is today a city of more than a million inhabitants, one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in the world, and the remains and records of the kingdom of Yamkhad are somewhere underneath it, inaccessible to modern scholarship.

Yarim-Lim became king of Yamkhad when his father, Sumu-Epuh, lost his life while fighting Shamshi-Adad. We know of this event from a remarkable confession Yarim-Lim made when explaining why he dare not anger the gods by extraditing war leaders who had come seeking shelter in his country.

Zimri-Lim has ousted his enemy and his requests are hard. Sumu-Epuh . . . came close to the kingdom that the god Adad had given Shamshi-Adad. But Sumu-Epuh, my father, did not live until old age: because he attacked the land that Adad had given Shamshi-Adad, Adad killed him. Until now, Adad has not become angry with me. Zimri-Lim has forgotten the will of Adad. (J.-M. Durand, "Le combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la Mer," *MARI* 7, p. 55)

Yarim-Lim became the father-in-law and protector of Zimri-Lim of Mari. As long as Yarim-Lim was alive, Mari could depend on his help. But Zimri-Lim paid much for it, for he kept Yamkhad supplied with tin, imported from Elam. At one time, Zimri-Lim took a trip to Halab, stopping at diverse Yamkhadian towns,

sacrificing to its gods, and handing out gifts to a number of Yamkhadian dignitaries.

We catch one facet of Yarim-Lim's personality in a letter that he writes to Yashub-Yakhad, king of Der, a city that lay hundreds of miles distant from Aleppo. Yarim-Lim's anger is almost incandescent as he lectures his nemesis on proper etiquette among leaders. The discovery of this letter in Mari (rather than at Der or Yamkhad), however, has led to speculation that the whole may have been a literary creation of the Mari scribe.

Tell Yashub-Yakhad; Yarim-Lim, your brother, says:

Shamash ought to investigate and decide on your conduct and mine: Whereas I have acted as father and brother toward you, toward me, you have acted as a villain and enemy. What good was it that, by means of the weapons of Adad and Yarim-Lim, I saved the city of Babylon and gave life to your land and to you? Were it not for Adad and Yarim-Lim, fifteen years ago, the city of Der would have been cast to the winds as if it were chaff; one would never have found it. Would you then have been able to treat me like this?

Certainly, Sin-gamil, king of Diniktu, very much like you would repeatedly respond to me by means of lies and provocations. Having docked five hundred boats in Diniktu's quay, I sank his land as well as him for twelve years! Now, as to you being like him: you are continually responding to me with lies and provocations. I swear to you by Adad, my city's god, and by Sin, my own god: [may I be punished] should I ever go away before annihilating your land and you! Now therefore, I shall come at spring-time and shall pitch camp at your city's gate. I shall have you witness the galling weapons of Adad and of Yarim-Lim. (After J. M. Sasson, "Yarim-Lim's War Declaration" [1985], pp. 241-245)

After the death of Yarim-Lim, his son, Hammurabi, made direct contact with his namesake in Babylon. When Babylon attacked Mari, it is doubtful that Yamkhad objected, and many towns once belonging to Mari shifted to Yamkhad's control. Documents from Tell Leilan (Shekhna) show that Hammurabi of Yamkhad was a major political presence in the Upper Khabur region.

After the collapse of the kingdom of Amurru, *amurrû* and *MAR.TU* continue to be used in cuneiform sources either anachronistically or as a compass point. While in the Neo-Assyrian period (first millennium) "Amurru" could still refer geo-

graphically to the small kingdoms in Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, only in the Hebrew Bible does the term Amorite (*'ēmōrî*) continue as an ethnic designation, primarily for the population of Palestine that was to be displaced by the Is-

raelites when they conquered Canaan. Among such people belonged Sihon, king of Heshbon in Transjordan. In Numbers 21 it is said that Sihon was defeated by Moses and his confederation of Hebrew tribes. Scholars have not as yet recovered independent testimony for this event.

TRIBAL CONFEDERATIONS

Tribes and Tribal Groupings

The primary organization of the Amorites was tribal. Hypothetically, a new tribe could develop when an individual took his family beyond the tribal area. We presume that tribal names were originally derived from an ancestor who was regarded as seminal to the foundation of the tribe, just as for the Israelites, Israel (= Jacob) was deemed crucial to its origins.

The tribal structure is reconstructed from the Mari archives, our best source, but similar, although less detailed, information can be extracted from Mesopotamian documents. Yet our evidence is compromised by apparent contradiction in the way names and terms are used. For example, tribal names may sometimes be used geographically rather than ethnically or may acquire a secondary, not specifically ethnic, application. (Compare how we use the term "vandal.") The main tribal population at Mari is Khana (its members were Khaneans), so much so that the area around Mari was called "land of Khana," and the term "king of the land of Khana" appears in the titulary of the kings of the "Lim" dynasty and the later rulers of the kingdom of Khana. But in addition to its sociocultural or ethnic application, "Khana" could also refer to any non-sedentary population and could be simply rendered "nomad." Another major tribal grouping is the Sutu (its people were Sutians) who seem to be very much on the outside at Mari.

Two major branches of the Khana were the Sim'alites (DUMU.MEŠ *sim'al*, literally "sons of the left") and Yaminites (DUMU.MEŠ *yamina*, literally "sons of the right"), but their distinction seems more a matter of geographical location than ethnic behavior. Their names, based on facing the rising sun to the east, are respectively equivalent to our "Northerners" and "Southern-

ers." A number of anomalies are associated with the Yaminites and Sim'alites; their presence so far is attested only in documents found at Mari, albeit originating elsewhere; they bear names based on cardinal points rather than after eponymous ancestors; individuals are always DUMU.MEŠ, (literally "sons of . . ."), when most other tribal members are LÚ.MEŠ (literally "men of . . .").

Of these two tribal confederacies, the Yaminites are the better known to us since they lived closest to Mari (yet Zimri-Lim, Mari's last major king, apparently was a Sim'alite). Major tribes belonging to this grouping include the Amnanu, the Yakhruru, the Urapu (or Ubrabu), the Yari-khu, and the Rabbu (or Rababu). One document claims that the areas between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean were full of Yaminites, while areas northeast of the Euphrates were Sim'alite territory; but we know the Sim'alites also inhabited the upper Balikh Valley and the Khabur triangle. The Sutu tribes found at Mari include the Almutu, the Mikhalizayu, and the Yakh-mamu. Additional tribe names unconnected with Khana or Sutu include Numkha, Yamutbal, and Ya'ilanu. The first two are found along the Khabur and may in fact be Sim'alites. The Ya'ilanu are found east of the Tigris.

The term most commonly used for tribe was *ummatum*. At another (apparently lower) level of tribal organization, the Mari documents speak of *gayu* (or *gā'u*), giving names to about ten of them. *Cayu* is an Amorite (or, at least, West Semitic) word and is usually translated as "clan." But the *gayu* are invariably associated with the Khaneans and not with the tribes or subtribes of the Yaminites, Sim'alites, or Sutu. References to *gayu* mostly come from administrative texts while the terms Yaminites and Sim'alites tend to be found in letters. Still, the persistent description of the *gayu* as Khaneans poses problems. If the *gayu* are "clans" of the Khaneans then they should be subsidiary to one of the Yaminite or Sim'alite tribes. If the *gayu* are the (sub-)tribes of the Khaneans corresponding to those of the Yaminites then either Khana is just a tribe and not a larger tribal grouping made up of tribal confederations, or else the term Khanean, so often applied to the Yaminites and Sim'alites as well as the *gayu*, is a cultural and not an ethnic

term. But if the latter is the case, why does Khana appear in the genealogies (discussed below) along with some of the tribes (Numkha, Amnanu, Yakhruru), while Yaminites and Sim'alites do not? These problems remain to be resolved. Interestingly enough, the name of one of the *gayu* is Amurru, one of the few uses of the word found at Mari.

Amorite Royal Titles and Tribal Origins

In most locations where the Amorites took over power in Mesopotamia they rapidly assimilated to the Sumero-Babylonian forms of kingship, taking over the ancient Mesopotamian titles and forms. But a number of rulers kept in their titular some reminder of their tribal origins. Thus, in the earliest inscriptions of the kings of Uruk, the title "king of the Amnanu" occurs alongside the title "king of Uruk" and other more typically Mesopotamian epithets. A characteristically Amorite title is *rabiānu*, "chief," particularly when used in the combination *rabiān amurrim*, "chief of the Amorites." Sometimes we even find a version of the title that is more specific: thus *rabian amnan šadlaš*, "chief of the Amnanu of (the city) Shadlash," or *rabiān rababim*, "chief of the Rababu," a phrase used by a ruler of Kishurra.

Another typically Amorite title is *abu*, "father," referring to tribal rulers. The founder of a new dynasty at Larsa, a man with an Elamite name (Kudur-Mabuk), titled himself so, but he did not rule there as king. When he established his son Warad-Sin as king, he called himself "father of the land of Amurru" and later "father of Emutbal (= Yamutbal)."

Amorite rulers of Mesopotamia, even generations after their assumption of power, were well aware of their Amorite heritage. Anam, a king of Uruk, writes Sin-muballit, father of Hammurabi of Babylon, implying that their common descent from the Amnan-Yakhruru tribe is ground for mutual help. A striking indication of the importance of tribal tradition, consciousness, and solidarity comes from two genealogies that have survived. The reputation of Shamshi-Adad, an Amorite from Ekallatum who conquered Asshur, was so high that even a millennium later his

table of ancestors was placed at the head of the Assyrian Kinglist. It was long recognized that this genealogy contained, at least in part, Amorite tribal names; but the full implication was not drawn until the discovery of a second genealogical list. This second list was written during the reign of Ammi-saduqa, the tenth ruler of a dynasty that ruled from Babylon, and was to be used during a *kispu*, a funerary offering to the spirits of dead ancestors. Although the names in the two genealogical lists have become garbled through their long history of transmission, and the order is not the same in both lists, there is little doubt that both these Amorite dynasties, one located on the upper Tigris and the other settled in the Mesopotamian heartland, laid claim to a common ancestry. Even though there is no Amurru among the ancestors, both Khana (known from Mari) and Ditanu (known from Mesopotamia) occur in both lists, providing an indisputable link between the Amorite tribes of Syria and Mesopotamia.

Amorites and the Settled Population

Primarily because the topic is never directly addressed in the texts, it is difficult to assess how the Amorites functioned within the urban cultures of Syria and Mesopotamia—how they subsisted economically, what was their social and political structure, and why they succeeded in taking control of vast areas for the better part of four centuries. The Mari documents again give the best testimony on these issues. While in recent assessments the nomadic character of Amorite life has received differing calibration (see the chapter in Vol. 1 on nomadism) it certainly included the seasonal movement of sheep and goats to and from traditional tribal pasturage along the middle Euphrates and the valley of the Khabur. A number of Amorite words in the Mari documents refer to this pastoralism: *nawû*, "movable encampment of people and herds"; *hallatu*, "transhumant herd"; *hibru*, "transhumant people"; *nighu* "traditional pasturage"; *merhû*, "an official in charge of pasturage"; and *hāširātu*, "enclosure for sheep." There is also considerable evidence of Amorites living in villages and practicing agriculture in the Mari texts. In many cases, such villages tended to be inhab-

ited largely by members of a particular tribe or clan. Each village had a *sugāgu* (larger towns may have more than one) who, upon payment to the central government, was appointed to manage the village and represent it when summoned by the palace authorities. The nomadic segment also had a *sugāgu*, who acted as liaison with the central authorities, and was responsible for assembling its personnel for census and for providing required conscripts for the army or for corvée work. The term *sugāgu* may have been the Amorite equivalent of Akkadian *rabiānu*.

Amorite society around Mari included two elements: pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists. Whether these two blocs were stable or their proportions dependent on constant population movement is not yet known. Surely, tensions between tribes and urban rulers affected the shift, especially when kings took census of nomadic elements with a view of imposing on them taxes or corvée and of drafting their members during times of war. We also know of major wars breaking out between king Zimri-Lim of Mari and leaders of the Yaminites, no doubt because they could not agree on an acceptable formula for coexistence. Here are excerpts from letters that Kibri-Dagan, governor of a district belonging to Mari, sent to Zimri-Lim. They concern imposing authority on the Yaminites, controlling unruly elements close to the city, and disposing of a Yaminite troublemaker:

Sutu tribesmen have settled a three-square-mile area on the Euphrates, above Terqa. Regularly coming here, they meet with me and then return; yet there is absolutely no mischief. On another matter; formerly, before my lord would go abroad on a campaign, the Yaminites, one after the other, turned lawless; they would go from the upper region toward their settlements, and would then return. Now, however, ever since my lord proceeded on a campaign, imposed upon us a regulation, and left us with tough orders, I placed the onus on them so that no one among the troublemakers could—as it used to be—go from the upper region toward his settlement. (After J.-R. Kupper, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan*, no. 12)

In the Yaminite encampments on Terqa's outskirts, numerous are the women who are wives of the enemy—that is, all those whose husbands have fled to dwell with the enemy; and they are living

in my own district. For this reason, the enemy causes me trouble all the time. Five to six men would often assemble; by night, they would cross into these encampments to visit their wives and then would leave. They gather complete reports about us, carrying them back to their accomplices. Because of this, the presence of the enemy is constant here. Moreover, among the three men who are guarding land in Samanum, by night, those enemies who planned to penetrate the town captured these men while upon their threshing floor. They released two men alive, and one man escaped.

Now, whatever his disposition, my lord should consider the report about these women so that I may do what my lord writes me after completing his deliberations. (After Kupper, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan*, no. 16)

My lord wrote me the following about Yarim-Dagan who formerly lived in Dunnum, but who has now gone to Ilum-muluk: "Locate this man. If there is a secluded hole, in the open field or within town, get rid of that man. No one should find him, whether he scale heaven or drop to hell." This is what my lord wrote me.

Now, while this man is dwelling in Ilum-muluk, I have looked into the matter. There is no hole in the open field or in town in which to get rid of him. I have searched for the opportunity to get rid of him but have not yet found it. (After G. Dossin et al., *Textes divers*, no. 107)

There is a certain irony that kings of Mari had troubles controlling Amorite elements for they—no less than the leaders of most major cities in Mesopotamia and Syria of the early second millennium—were themselves of Amorite stock, their fathers or grandfathers having taken to the sedentary palace life just a few decades earlier. The memory of this nomadic past, however, was still so fresh in the minds of Mari dwellers that Bakhdi-Lim, a high official in the capital city, advises his king on how to please both the nomadic and settled elements during a procession. As we read, let it be kept in mind that among the Hebrews of later times, kings (and messiahs) rode donkeys as a symbol of their kingship.

My lord should give his majesty honor. Since you are king of the Khaneans and you are, secondly, king of the Akkadians, my lord ought not ride horses; rather, it is upon a chariot and mules that

my lord ought to ride, and in this way he can give honor to his majesty. (After Kupper, *Correspondance de Baḥdi-Lim*, no. 76)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General

No definitive work on the Amorites has yet been written. The literature of the subject is immense since it touches on so many areas. Two basic studies are: J.-R. KUPPER, *Les Nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari* (1957), which deals primarily with the tribal aspects, and DIETZ OTTO EDZARD, *Die "Zweite Zwischenzeit" Babyloniens* (1957), which examines the texts from and immediately following the dark age after the collapse of the Ur III empire.

Bible dictionaries include articles on the Amorites, but these tend to focus on references in Hebrew Scripture and are useful mostly as sources of additional bibliography. The most recent general summary is M. LIVERANI, "The Amorites," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, edited by D. J. WISEMAN (1973). Still useful is I. J. GELB, "The Early History of the West Semitic Peoples," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 15 (1961).

The Third Millennium

For references to Amorites at Ebla, see ALFONSO ARCHI, "Mardu in the Ebla Texts," *Orientalia* 54 (1985). On the wider implications of the Ebla texts for the Semitic population of Syria and Mesopotamia, see I. J. GELB, "Mari and the Kish Civilization," in *Mari in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Mari and Mari Studies*, edited by G. D. YOUNG (1992). For the Ur III period, see GIORGIO BUCCELLATI, *The Amorites of the Ur III Period* (1966); CLAUS WILCKE, "Zur Geschichte der Amurriter in der Ur-III Zeit," *Die Welt des Orients* 5 (1969); and THORKILD JACOBSEN, "The Reign of Ibbi-Suen," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 7 (1953).

For the archaeology of Syria and Palestine during the age of the Amorites, see KATHLEEN M. KENYON, *Amorites and Canaanites* (1966), and B. MAZAR, "The Middle Bronze Age in Palestine," *Israel Exploration Journal* 18 (1968).

The Second Millennium

The inscriptions of the Old Babylonian rulers of both Mesopotamia and Syria, along with complete bibliography, will be found in DOUGLAS FRAYNE, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, vol. 4 (1990). For the Eshnunna texts that date to the very beginning of

the second millennium, see ROBERT M. WHITING, *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar*, Assyriological Studies no. 22 (1987).

For the tribes and tribal organization, see, in addition to J.-R. KUPPER, *Les Nomades en Mésopotamie* (1957); G. DOSSIN, "Benjaminites dans les textes de Mari," in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* (1939); HORST KLENGEL, *Zwischen Zelt und Palast* (1972); DOMINIQUE CHARPIN and JEAN-MARIE DURAND, "'Fils de Sima'al': Les origines tribales des rois de Mari," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 80 (1986); PHILIPPE TALON, "Quelques réflexions sur les clans hanéens," in *Miscellanea Babylonica: Mélanges Offerts à Maurice Birot* (1985); and, most recently, MOSHE ANBAR, *Les Tribus amurrites de Mari*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, vol. 108 (1991), with an extensive bibliographical discussion of the history of the research on the tribes (pp. 9–26).

On the Suteans, see MICHAEL HELTZER, *The Suteans* (1981); J.-R. KUPPER, "Sutéens et Ḫapiru," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 55 (1961); as well as M. ANBAR, *Les Tribus amurrites* (1991). The military organization is dealt with in JACK M. SASSON, *The Military Establishments at Mari*, Studia Pohl, vol. 3 (1969), and the role of Amorites as mercenaries is suggested by NOEL WEEKS, "The Old Babylonian Amorites: Nomads or Mercenaries?" *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 16 (1985).

For Egyptian sources pertaining to Syria and Palestine, see WOLFGANG HEICK, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (1962; 2nd edition 1971).

On the genealogies, see, for the Assyrian Kinglist, F. R. KRAUS, *Könige, die in Zelten wohnten* (1965), and for the Old Babylonian list, J. J. FINKELSTEIN, "The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 20 (1966); for a recent discussion, see D. CHARPIN and J.-M. DURAND, "'Fils de Sima'al,'" *Revue d'Assyriologie* 80 (1986).

On the letter of Yarim-Lim found at Mari, see JACK M. SASSON, "Yarim-Lim's War Declaration," in *Miscellanea Babylonica: Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot* (1985).

On the Amorite language see I. J. GELB, "La lingua degli Amoriti," in *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Serie VIII, xiii (1958); HERBERT B. HUFFMON, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts: A Structural and Lexical Study* (1965); I. J. GELB ET AL., *Computer-aided Analysis of Amorite*, Assyriological Studies, no. 21 (1980); and G. BUCCELLATI, *The Amorites of the Ur III Period* (1966).

The official publication of cuneiform texts excavated at Mari has proceeded in two parallel series, one containing hand copies of the texts and one containing

History and Culture

transliterations, translations, and limited commentary. They both bear the same title, *Archives royales de Mari*, so are usually cited as ARM (for the text copies) and ARMT (for the translation volumes). Volumes from which letters have been cited include J.-R. KUPPER, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan, gouverneur de Terqa*, Archives royales de Mari: Transcriptions et traductions, vol. 3 (1950); G. DOSSIN ET AL., *Textes divers*, Archives royales de Mari: Transcriptions et traductions, vol. 13 (1964); and J.-R. KUPPER, *Correspondance de Rahdi-Iim*, préfet du palais de Mari,

Archives royales de Mari: Transcriptions et traductions, vol. 6 (1954). For a recent discussion of the texts and a list of the titles through 1976, see DENNIS PARDEE, "Literary Sources for the History of Palestine and Syria: The Mari Archives," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 15 (1977). A new vehicle for the publication of both epigraphic and archeological material from Mari and related information is a series of volumes that appear occasionally: *MARI, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires*.

SEE ALSO **Pastoral Nomadism in Ancient Western Asia** (Part 3, Vol. I) and **The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview** and accompanying map (Part 5, Vol. II).