

## “A Community of Peoples”

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# “A Community of Peoples”

*Studies on Society and Politics in the Bible and Ancient  
Near East in Honor of Daniel E. Fleming*

*Edited by*

Mahri Leonard-Fleckman

Lauren A.S. Monroe

Michael J. Stahl

Dylan R. Johnson



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## City Dwellers and Backcountry Folk: Ritual Interactions between Mobile Peoples and Urban Centers in Late Bronze Age Syria

*Dylan R. Johnson*

In his work on the Mari archives, Daniel Fleming outlined two “modes” by which ancient Near Eastern scribes described social identity: one was by place, especially in relation to a settlement, and the other was by names that “transcend[ed] the boundaries of settled polities.”<sup>1</sup> Individuals could claim both social identities simultaneously and deploy them for different purposes.<sup>2</sup> Middle Bronze Age (MBA) Mari revealed that dichotomies like tribe and state, nomad and city-dweller, pastoralist and farmer were too reductive, often conflating subsistence strategies, settlement patterns, and social organization into a single monolithic category defined in opposition to the urbanized state. Far from hostile outsiders, mobile peoples were fundamental components of the Mari kingdom and shared a common social identity with urban dwellers—an identity that both groups maintained across space and time.<sup>3</sup>

The current article returns to the cuneiform archive that first captured Fleming’s academic interest, Late Bronze Age (LBA) Emar, evaluating it according to the two modes of social identity that he defined at Mari. This study is divided into two parts: the first section compares and contrasts Assyrian, Hittite, and Emarite depictions of mobile peoples in the Middle Euphrates, reeval-

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Fleming, *Democracy’s Ancient Ancestors: Mari and Early Collective Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28.

<sup>2</sup> The ability to negotiate different social identities defined the reign of Zimri-Lim, who assumed kingship over the settled people of Mari (the so-called *Aḫ-Purratim*) through the political and military strength of his tribal kin (the Sim’alites). This was reflected in his titular as “king of Mari and the *māt Ḥana*” (Dominique Charpin and Jean-Marie Durand, “Fils de Sim’al: Les origines tribales des rois de Mari,” *RA* 80 [1986]: 230–231).

<sup>3</sup> This is what the sociologist Anthony Giddens deemed “distanciation,” describing how physical and temporal separation of populations need not necessarily result in fragmentation (*A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 1 of *Power, Property and the State* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981], 90–108). See also Anne Porter, “Beyond Dimorphism: Ideologies and Materialities of Kinship as Time-Space Distanciation,” in *Nomads, Tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Jeffery Szuchman, OIS 5 (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2009), 201–225.

uating the traditional dimorphic model for nomadic-sedentary interactions. The second section focuses on three Emar rituals that celebrate the interchange between summer and fall—the rites of Zarātu (Emar 446) and two forms of the *zukru* ritual (Emar 373+/Emar 375+). These rituals show how the inhabitants of Emar not only carved out a space for mobile peoples within their urban framework, but also how they laid claim to an alternative social identity for themselves. This identity was embedded in the physical landscape, it was imagined to predate the town and its administrative organs, and most importantly, it was an identity that they shared with mobile peoples.

## 1 Depictions of Mobile Peoples in Late Bronze Age Syria

To understand how the inhabitants of Emar used ritual to incorporate both urban and nonurban stakeholders in the city, a brief foray into the complex sociopolitical landscape of Emar and its environs is necessary. MBA Emar, more commonly spelled Imar, and the region of Yamḥad represented the northwestern terminus of the Yaminite territorial “range” (*nighum*).<sup>4</sup> During this period, mobile peoples operated throughout the Fertile Crescent, with clear political and social ties to sedentary populations.<sup>5</sup> By the LBA, however, the archives of Emar depict a largely urban-centered world, where social identity was defined almost exclusively in association with towns.<sup>6</sup> Unlike contemporary Ugarit

4 In a letter sent to Zimri-Lim (A.2730), the Sim'alite *merḥûm* Ibâl-El reminds the king of the pastoral range of the Yaminites and Sim'alites: “The land of Yamḥad, the land of Qaṭna, and the land of Amurrû is the pastoral range (*ni-ig-ḥu-um*) of the Yaminites. In that land, the Yaminites sate themselves with grain and tend flocks (in) their pastures. Since the (parting?) of ways (*ù iš-tu da-ar-ka-tim*), the pastoral range of the Ḥana (= Sim'alites) has been Ida-Maraš.” For treatments of this text, see ARM 26/2, pp. 32–34; Jean-Marie Durand, “Peuplement et sociétés à l'époque amorrite: les clans bensim'alites,” in *Amurru 3: Nomades et sédentaires dans le Proche-Orient ancien*, ed. Christophe Nicolle, CRRAI 46 (Paris: Éditions de recherche, 2004), 120–121; Fleming, *Democracy*, 29; Sasson, *From the Mari Archives: An Anthology of Old Babylonian Letters*. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 145–146; “A.2730: Lettre de Ibal-El à son seigneur (= Zimri-Lim),” [www.archibab.fr](http://www.archibab.fr).

5 An OB letter from the site of Emar mentions the *sutû* (<sup>lú.meš</sup>*su-ti-î<sup>ki</sup>*) (Emar 536:26–27) (Jean-Marie Durand, “La cité-état d'Imâr à l'époque des rois de Mari,” *MARI* 6 [1990]: 90). The fifteenth-century BCE Idrimi Inscription mentions both *sutû* pastoralists (ERIN.MEŠ *su-tu-û<sup>ki</sup>*) in the desert regions near Emar (*i-na ma-at ḥu-ri-ib-te<sup>ki</sup>*) and the *ʿapiru* (ERIN.MEŠ <sup>lú</sup>SA.GAZ) in the town of Amiya, situated in the land of Canaan (*i-na ma-at ki-in-a-nim<sup>ki</sup>*)—perhaps just south of Tripoli, Lebanon.

6 For individuals identified by towns at Emar, see the helpful index in Sophie Démare-Lafont and Daniel Fleming, “Emar Chronology and Scribal Streams: Cosmopolitanism and Legal Diversity,” *RA* 109 (2015): 75–76.

and Amarna, the abundant documentation from Emar makes almost no reference to mobile peoples like the *sutû* or the *‘apiru*. Previous interpreters like Gary Beckman surmised that “wider groupings of kin seem to be vestigial in thirteenth-century Emariote society. No particular designations for clans or tribes are to be found in the documents, comparable to the Beni Yamina and Beni Sim’al of the Mari archives.”<sup>7</sup> Jean-Marie Durand similarly emphasized how dramatically the social structures of LBA Emar differed from those of the Mari period, while cautioning that the perceived absence of mobile populations at Emar was the result of their obscurity in the documentation, not their departure from this region.<sup>8</sup> Like Ugarit and the southern Levant, the mobile populations of the Middle Euphrates were often affiliated with urban centers, though not necessarily defined by them.<sup>9</sup> The inhabitants of Emar set aside important places for mobile peoples within their urban frameworks, but the terms they used to describe them differed from those used elsewhere.

The inherent difficulties with identifying mobile peoples in the Emar archives began with the initial publications of the corpus in the 1980s. Both Daniel Arnaud and John Huehnergard identified a social group, known as the “*li’mu* of the field(s)” ([diš] *li-im* A.ŠA<sub>3</sub>[<sup>m</sup> /h<sup>i.a</sup>]),<sup>10</sup> which seemed to describe a mobile component of Emar’s population.<sup>11</sup> Interpreting the writing of *li-im* as

7 Gary Beckman, “Family Values on the Middle Euphrates in the Thirteenth Century BCE,” in *Emar: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. Mark Chavalas (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1996), 59.

8 Jean-Marie Durand observed that, “les anciennes structures bédouines (grands rassemblements tribaux à économie surtout pastorale) sont remplacées dans notre documentation par des groupements familiaux plus réduits (clans villageois) autour d’intérêts fonciers précis. Je ne dis pas que l’ancien ordre a disparu, mais ce n’est pas celui que nous documentent les villages euphratiques” (“*1 li-m a-ša* = « même de loin », à Emar,” *NABU* [2004]: 24).

9 Brendon C. Benz, *The Land Before the Kingdom of Israel: A History of the Southern Levant and the People who Populated It*, HACL 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 136.

10 Found in the nonrepudiation clause of twelve legal documents, the expression appears in both scribal streams at Emar: the earlier Syrian/Conventional style (S/C) and the later Syro-Hittite/Free-Format documents (SH/FF) (Daniel Arnaud, “Les textes d’Emar et la chronologie de la fin du bronze récent,” *Syria* 52 [1975]: 87–92; Daniel Fleming and Sophie Démare-Lafont, “Tablet Terminology at Emar: ‘Conventional’ and ‘Free Format,’” *AuOr* 27 [2009]: 19–26). Most of these texts are testaments (*ASJ* 13 24; *ASJ* 13 27; Emar 30; 80; 180; 185; 213; *RE* 15; 39; 57), though there is also an adoption contract (*AuOr* 5 14) and a manumission contract (*RE* 66).

11 Daniel Arnaud translated *li-im* A.ŠA<sub>3</sub>(MEŠ/ḪIA) as, “le(s) voisin(s) du/des champ(s)” (*Recherches au pays d’Aštata, Emar VI/3: Textes sumériens et accadiens* [Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986], 42, 89). Following Arnaud, John Huehnergard hesitantly rendered the expression “*people*(?) of the field” (“Five Tablets from the Vicinity of

the West Semitic word *li'mu*, “tribe/clan/people,” this entity seemed to recall the old Yaminite tribal divisions of the Mari period.<sup>12</sup> Almost immediately after these first publications, however, Durand tried to dissuade interpreters from viewing the social landscape of Emar through the lens of Mari in a simplistic way. He demonstrated that the expression <sup>(diš)</sup>*li-im* A.ŠA<sub>3</sub><sup>(m /ḫi.a)</sup> had nothing to do with people, but rather, represented an idiomatic legal construction, “*même de loin* (= aucunement),” that emphasized the impossibility for certain individuals to file a legal claim.<sup>13</sup> Yet despite Durand’s objections, scholars continued to use the Emar evidence to describe and understand the social landscape of LBA Syria with terms borrowed from earlier periods.<sup>14</sup>

In reality, the social identities of mobile peoples in LBA Syria anticipate categories and terminology that would come to describe Arameans of the first millennium BCE. Middle Assyrian kings recorded their frequent encounters with *sutû* and *aḫlamû*-Arameans in the Jezirah, but these exonyms (especially the latter) stem from an Assyro-Babylonian frame of reference not necessarily

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Emar,” *RA* 77 [1983]: 21 n. 13). See also Eugene Pentiuć, *West Semitic Vocabulary in the Akkadian Texts from Emar*, HSS 49 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 110–111.

12 *AHW* 1:554a, mng. 2; *CAD* L 198a, mng. C. On the *li'mum* at Mari, see Daniel Fleming, “The Sim'alite *gayum* and the Yaminite *li'mum* in the Mari Archives,” in Nicolle, *Amurru* 3, 209–210. Although the West Semitic term *li'mu* is attested at Emar (Emar 373:156–157; 378:14–15), it is written with the distinctive MB *aleph*-sign (i.e., *li-'i-mi*) (Stefano Seminara, *L'accadico di Emar*, *MVS* 6 [Rome: Università Degli Studi di Roma «La Sapienza» Dipartimento di Studie Orientali, 1998], 155–158).

13 Jean-Marie Durand, review of *Recherches au Pays d'Aštata, Emar VI, Textes sumériens et accadiens, vol. 1, 2 et 3* by Daniel Arnaud, *RA* 83 (1989): 180–181; Durand, “*lîm a-šà* = «*même de loin*», à Emar,” *NABU* (2004): 24; Durand, “Quelques textes sur le statut de la femme à Émar,” *Sem* 55 (2013): 33 n. 28. See also William Hallo, “Love and Marriage in Ashtata,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting, *CRRAI* 47 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 206–211. Durand convincingly demonstrated that this nonrepudiation formula originally meant “(within) a thousand fields,” derived from the literal sense of the verbs *qerēbu* and *šanāqu*, “to approach/arrive at a locality,” used in some Emar documents to describe the initiation of legal claims (*RAI* 47 1:29–31 [SH/FF]; *RE* 15:18–21 [S/C]; Emar 80:30 [SH/FF]; 180:19–20 [S/C]; 185:20–21 [S/C]).

14 For instance, Richard Beale identified a Hittite military contingent known as the *LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ LĪM ŠĒRI*, a semi-autonomous military unit with troops drawn from regions on the fringes of the empire, taking the designation as Akkadian, *lîm šēri*, “clansmen of the countryside” (*The Organization of the Hittite Military*, THeth 20 [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992], 103 n. 380). Beckman connected this Hittite group to Emar’s *li-im* A.ŠA<sub>3</sub>, viewing the kinship term *li'mu* as a vestige of the Mari era (“Family Values,” 59). However, the Hittite *LĪM ŠĒRI* most likely refers to a “troop (of one thousand men) of the steppe,” who may have come from the fringes of the empire but were not clearly a kin-based entity (see n. 38 below).

shared by scribes in the Middle Euphrates. The divergent depictions of mobile peoples in Emarite and Assyrian texts relate to shifting scribal conventions in Assyrian annalistic writing, not to incursions of *aḥlamû*-Arameans. In the inscriptions of King Adad-nirari I (1307–1275 BCE), for instance, the *aḥlamû* are listed alongside other vanquished populations like the *sutû* and the *Iūru*.<sup>15</sup> The term *aḥlamû* derives from an Amorite tribal group that resided in the vicinity of Old Babylonian (OB) Suḥum, evidently a primary point of reference for mobile peoples encountered by the Assyrians.<sup>16</sup> Beginning in the reign Adad-nirari I, Assyrian scribes essentially replaced the word *sutû* with *aḥlamû* until the time of Sargon II (722–705 BCE), when *sutû* was revived as an archaic ethnicon for Arameans.<sup>17</sup> While the name *aḥlamû* may have been an accurate means to describe mobile peoples near LBA Suḥu, the Assyrians used the term to refer to any mobile group they encountered throughout Syria, describing a diverse assortment of social entities in monolithic terms amenable to their rhetorical needs—but it was not an accurate depiction of the social diversity of the region.

The terms *sutû* and *aḥlamû* represent generic designations of “steppe people” who were neither exclusively mobile pastoralist (though many were), nor ethnically homogenous.<sup>18</sup> Though defined in terms of their mobility, these LBA populations lived in towns and had deep historical connections to settled populations throughout the Fertile Crescent. Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) used the ethnicon “*aḥlamû*-Arameans” ([<sup>kur</sup>]Aḥlamê/î <sup>kur</sup>Armayya<sup>meš</sup>) to describe mobile groups he plundered from the land of Suḥu to Carchemish, also mentioning that he destroyed “six of their towns at the foot of Mount Bishri” (6 URU.MEŠ-šū-nu ša GIR<sub>3</sub> <sup>kur</sup>bé-eš-ri).<sup>19</sup> Middle Assyrian kings encountered pop-

15 A.o.76.1, line 23 (A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC [to 115 BC]*, RIMA 1 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987], 132).

16 This group appears in one OB letter (AbB 13 60:32–42), where they are associated with the mobile Ḫana of that region (Michael P. Streck, *Die Amurriter, die onomastische Forschung, Orthographie und Phonologie, Nominalmorphologie*, vol. 1 of *Das amurritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit*, AOAT 271 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000], 28). In a letter found at LBA Emar, the *aḥlamû* still seem to reside in the vicinity of Suḥu (Emar 263).

17 John A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia: 1158–722 B.C.*, AnOr 43 (Rome: Biblical Pontifical Institute, 1968), 285 n. 1844.

18 Brinkman, *Political History*, 287; Hélène Sader, “History,” in *The Arameans in Ancient Syria*, ed. Herbert Niehr, HdO 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 18–20; K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *A Political History of the Arameans: From Their Origins to the End of Their Polities*, ABS 13. (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2016), 80–94.

19 A.o.87.1, v. 59 (A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC (1114–859 BC)*, RIMA 2 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991], 23); A.o.87.2, line 29

ulations of *aḥlamû* as far west as the Lebanese mountains and along the length of the Euphrates River basin—locating them at Babylon, Suḥu, Tuttul, Jebel Bishri, Palmyra, and the land of Hatti.<sup>20</sup> There is no fixed name for this vast territorial range: Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE) described a region known as the “*aḥlamû*-mountains” (*šadān aḥlamî*),<sup>21</sup> Tiglath-pileser I referred to the *aḥlamû* of “the Aramean land” (KUR *Armayyu*), and Assur-bēl-kala (1074–1056 BCE) described the *šiddu aḥlamî*, “(river) bank of the *aḥlamû*.”<sup>22</sup> The geography depicted in the Middle Assyrian inscriptions is ideologically loaded and littered with hyperbole,<sup>23</sup> but the association of mobile peoples with the physical landscape and urban settlements suggests that their living patterns transcended political boundaries and were not reducible to a strict dichotomy between town-dweller and nomad.

Although the Assyrians located *aḥlamû*-Arameans throughout the Middle Euphrates, the term *aḥlamû* appears in just one letter found at Emar (Emar 263) describing two men from the region of Suḥu—the same site associated with the *aḥlamû* in the OB period.<sup>24</sup> The term *aḥlamû* is attested at Emar in the form of personal names, but it did not describe people living in the town’s

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(RIMA 2:34). Younger understood these towns and the steppe as the two poles of the nomadic economy (“Tiglath-Pileser I and the Initial Conflicts of the Assyrians with the Arameans,” in *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria: Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle, LAS 5 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017], 203–204). In any “tribal” group, a segment of the population resided in towns while another operated in the steppe. Individuals fluidly moved between these two subsistence patterns (two poles of a broader continuum) based on seasonal changes and social exigencies (Michael P. Streck, “Zwischen Weide, Dorf und Stadt: Sozio-ökonomische Strukturen des ammurischen Nomadismus am Mittleren Euphrat,” *BaM* 33 [2002]: 168).

20 Frederick Mario Fales, “The Djezireh in Neo-Assyrian Sources,” in *The Syrian Jezira: Cultural Heritage and Interrelations*, ed. Michel Al-Maqdissi et al., DAS I (Damascus: Ministère de la Culture à Damas, 1996), 182; Younger, *Arameans*, 85–86.

21 A.o.78.23, line 70 (RIMA 1:273).

22 A.o.89.6, line 14 (RIMA 2:98); A.o.89.9, line 9 (RIMA 2:107).

23 Younger, “Tiglath-Pileser I,” 203.

24 On the social and political identity of the *aḥlamû*, see Brinkman, *Political History*, 267–288; Sader, “History,” 18–21; Streck, *Amurriter*, 334–335; Younger, *Arameans*, 80–88; Ron Zadok, “Elements of Aramean Pre-history,” in *Ah Assyria ...: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph’al, ScrHier 33 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 104–117. On this term at Emar, see Murray Adamthwaite, “Ethnic Movements in the Thirteenth Century B.C. as Discernible from the Emar Texts,” in *Cultural Interaction in the Ancient Near East: Papers Read at a Symposium Held at the University of Melbourne, Department of Classics and Archaeology, 29–30 September 1994* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 93.

immediate hinterland.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the scribes of Emar almost never referred to mobile groups by any collective term, with the rare exception of a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century BCE administrative document from the nearby site of Ekalte. This fragmentary text identifies a man named Yashur-Dagan as a “leader of the *sutû*” (GAL <sup>lú.meš</sup>*su-ti-e*),<sup>26</sup> who receives an undisclosed quantity of silver and stored grain (*kurā'u*) from two “sons of the town (of Ekalte)” (DUMU.MEŠ *ša a-li*).<sup>27</sup> Yashur-Dagan’s important social status in relation to these inhabitants of Ekalte may be construed from the payment/tribute set “before” (*pānu*) him and the seal impression that immediately follows his name on the tablet. In contrast to the two “townsmen” who pay Yashur-Dagan, four individuals—perhaps including Yashur-Dagan himself—are called “tribal leaders (from) across the Euphrates” (4 *na-sí-ku e-bi-ir ša* <sup>d</sup>ID.DINGIR-*la*).<sup>28</sup> The origin of these tribal leaders “across the Euphrates” could describe any part of the vast territorial swath of the Jezirah, the region over which the Assyrians exercised only marginal control.<sup>29</sup> In the first millennium BCE, the title *nasíku* becomes the highest social rank among Aramean chieftains who oversaw tribes, towns, lands, and even rivers.<sup>30</sup> In southern Mesopotamia, the title first appears in the inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE),<sup>31</sup> but a Syrian/Conventional administrative text from LBA Emar refers to an unnamed “tribal leader” (<sup>lú</sup>*na-sí-ku*) who had seized the sons of two different men.<sup>32</sup> Yashur-Dagan’s position

25 Several Emarites bore the personal names <sup>m</sup>*Aḥlamû* or the feminine <sup>f</sup>*Aḥlamîtu* (Regine Pruzsinsky, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Emar*, SCCNH 13 [Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2003], 103).

26 Ekalte 34, obv. line 7 (Walter Mayer, *Tall-Munbāqa—Ekalte II: Die Texte* [Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 2001], 105). Mayer read this word as *na-sí-quí*, “Arbeitspflichtige,” recognizing it as an antithetical parallel to the DUMU.MEŠ *ša a-li*, but nonetheless arguing that it could hardly designate a sheikh. Given the reference to Sutean nomads, the attestation of the <sup>lú</sup>*na-sí-ku* at Emar, and the interchangeability of the titles GAL and *nasíku* among Aramean leaders of the first millennium BCE, I see no reason to doubt that the title *nasíku* referred to a leader of some kind of mobile population in this text.

27 Mayer took *kurā'u* as “Mietarbeiter,” based on Aramaic *kara'a* “vermieten” (*Ekalte*, 38, 163). However, Akkadian *kurû* (= GUR<sub>7</sub>), “pile of stored barley” (*CAD* K 226a) makes more sense in construct with a “tower/agricultural estate” (AN.ZA.<GAR<sub>3</sub>> = *dimtu*).

28 This would refer to the Jezirah, where Tiglath-pileser I would confront *aḥlamû* nomads (Younger, “Tiglath-Pileser I,” 202).

29 Younger, “Tiglath-Pileser I,” 198–199.

30 *AHW* 2:754a; *CAD* N/2 27a. See Brinkman, *Political History*, 274–275; Frederick Mario Fales, “Moving Around Babylon: On the Aramean and Chaldean Presence in Southern Mesopotamia,” in *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient und Okzident*, ed. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum, Margarete van Ess, and Joachim Marzahn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 94.

31 A.O.101.1, ii.24; iii.35 (*RIMA* 2:203); A.O.101.17, ii.78 (*RIMA* 2:244).

32 RE 95:5.

as the GAL of the *sutû* and a *nasîku* of peoples in the Jezirah corresponds to the titles that Aramean leaders in these same regions would bear a few centuries later.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the Assyrians' hostile view of these mobile groups, however, the evidence from Ekalte and Emar suggests a more intimate knowledge of who these people were. The inscriptions of Middle Assyrian kings treat mobile peoples in broad demographic strokes, whereas they appear as individuals with specific interests in the Emar and Ekalte archives.

There is a similar dissonance between Assyrian descriptions of mobile populations in the service of the Hittite army and how the Hittites themselves characterized such groups. Assyrian kings like Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) claimed to have confronted “Hittite and *aḫlamite* troops” (*ummān ḫattî u aḫlamî*) while Tiglath-pileser I encountered the *aḫlamû* in the land of Hatti.<sup>34</sup> The Hittites, by contrast, never referred to any population as *aḫlamû*,<sup>35</sup> but rather, distinguished those mobile groups in the empire's service (LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ LI-IM ṢE-RI) from those that were not (e.g., *ʿapiru* or *sutû*).<sup>36</sup> In an Old Hittite treaty (ca. 1750–1500 BCE), a group of *ʿapiru* prepare to join the ranks of Hittite palace guards (DUMU.MEŠ É.GAL) and an enigmatic group known as the “men of the LĪM ṢĒRI” (LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ LI-IM ṢE-RI).<sup>37</sup> The men of the LĪM ṢĒRI, probably referring to the “troop (of one thousand men) of the steppe,” consisted of semi-autonomous military units from regions on the fringes of the empire.<sup>38</sup> The late

33 Younger, *Arameans*, 56, 688, 731.

34 Shalmaneser I (A.o.77.1, line 61 [RIMA 1:184]); Tiglath-pileser I (A.o.87.2, lines, 29–30 [RIMA 2:37]).

35 The only Hittite reference to the *aḫlamû* appears in a thirteenth-century BCE letter from King Hattušili III to the Babylonian King Kadashman-Enlil II (“Letter from Hattušili III of Hatti to Kadašman-Enlil II of Babylon,” trans. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. [COS 3.31:52]). The Hittite scribe only uses the term *aḫlamû* in reference to groups the Babylonians had complained about in a previous message.

36 Like the rulers of other urban centers throughout the Levant, the Hittites recruited groups like the *ʿapiru* and the *sutû* to achieve their military ambitions. For mobile peoples that had been in their service for centuries, the Hittites used the term LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ LI-IM ṢE-RI (Beale, *Hittite Military*, 104–112).

37 CTH 27 (= KBO 9.73+), obv. lines 9–11 (Heinrich Otten, “Zwei althethitische Belege zu den Ḫapiru (SA.GAZ),” ZA 52 [1957]: 220–222). For all references to this group and their leaders, see Franca Pecchioli Daddi, *Mestieri, professioni e dignità nell'Anatolia ittita* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1982), 470–473.

38 The use of the Akkadogram ṢĒRI, rather than Hittite *gim(ma)ra*- “steppe/grassland/open field” (HW 109b), may suggest a Semitic-speaking origin of these figures (Beale, *Hittite Military*, 103 n. 380). In contrast to Beale, who took the writing LI-IM as ws *l̄mu* (“tribe/clan/people”), LI-IM is the standard writing for the number one thousand, commonly used as a term for a military troop. A Neo-Assyrian letter to King Sargon II mentions the loyal Aramean Puqudu tribe, Aramean leaders (<sup>lu</sup>*nasîkû*) in various towns, and a mil-



sixteenth-century Edict of Telipinu identifies the leader of this military group as the “chief of the overseers of the *LĪM ṢĒRI*” (*GAL*<sup>lú.meš</sup>*UGULA LI-IM ṢE-RI*),<sup>39</sup> evidently a figure wielding considerable influence within the Hittite administrative hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> The identification of these troops with the “steppe” (*ṢĒRI*) points to a social identity not bound to a particular town or ethnicity, but by the spaces that these individuals occupied.<sup>41</sup> More than just nomadic mercenaries to the Hittites, the people of the steppe were an integral component of Hittite society throughout all major periods of the empire, even participating in state-sponsored rituals like the *KILAM* festival at the imperial capital of Ḫattuša.<sup>42</sup>

What emerges from this comparison of Assyrian, Hittite, and Emarite sources is that social identity—and the social identity of mobile populations in particular—was very much a matter of perspective. The obscurity of mobile peoples in the Emar archives is ironically the result of their familiarity to the town’s inhabitants, who identified individuals rather than larger demographic populations in their documents. The traditional dimorphic model of nomadic-sedentary interaction, which largely conflates social organization (tribe, chiefdom, state) with social identity, best aligns with the Assyrians’ mischaracterization of mobile Syrian populations as *aḫlamû*-Arameans, an exonym only meaningful to the Assyrians themselves.<sup>43</sup> The following section explores the benefits of using ritual to access self-defined social identity, opening new avenues of historical research.

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- itary official bearing the title *lúGAL* *li-im* (SAA 17 152 [= ABL 774], rev. line 7). The same convention can be found in Hebrew as well, where אֶלְפִים, “one thousand/military unit/clan,” often refers to units of this size (e.g., “the commanders of the [units of] thousands [וְרִישֵׁי הָאֶלְפִים]” [Num 31:14]).
- 39 Edict of Telipinu (*CTH* 19 ii.71); Treaty of Tudḫaliya IV and Karunta of Tarḫuntašša (*CTH* 106.A.1 [= Bo 86/299] iv.35). These two texts illustrate the chronological range of the term in Hittite sources. Individuals bearing the title *UGULA li-im* appear in the Late Bronze Age archives of Alalāḫ (*ALT* 172:38; 222:26) and at Ugarit (*PRU* 6 52; *Ug.* v 52).
- 40 In the witness list of the late thirteenth-century BCE Treaty of Tudḫaliya IV and Karunta of Tarḫuntašša, a *GAL UGULA LI-IM*<sup>MEŠ</sup> named Alalimu is listed after the Hittite crown princes but before a number of vassal kings.
- 41 Assyrian kings would similarly designate populations of both *aḫlamû*-Arameans (*ERIM.MEŠ EDIN*<sup>kur</sup>*Aḫ-la-me-e*<sup>kur</sup>*Ar-ma-a-ia*<sup>MEŠ</sup>) (*A.O.*99.2, line 33 [RIMA 2:149]) and *sutû* (*lúSu-te-e* *ERIM.MEŠ EDIN*) as “troops/people of the steppe” ([Grant Frame, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721–705 BC)*, RINAP 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2021), 73 (1:266)]).
- 42 Sponsored and attended by the Hittite king at his capital, the people of the steppe carried enigmatic *alīyazenuš karkidanduš* ritual objects in the *KILAM* festival (Itamar Singer, *The Hittite KILAM Festival*, 2 vols., SBT 27 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983], 1:57, 60, 94).
- 43 Michael B. Rowton, “Urban Autonomy in a Nomadic Environment,” *JNES* 32 (1973): 202–204.

## 2 Social (Re)integration in the Emar Rituals

Like the Hittites, the inhabitants of Emar used ritual to maintain social ties with mobile peoples and locate the gods of the town in a broader regional pantheon. But beyond this, the inhabitants of Emar felt that they had a shared historical identity with these mobile peoples, one invoked through the use of sacred space and ritual movement. The integration of Emar and its cult in the broader region plays out through three specific rituals: the *Text for Six Months*, which delineated the sacrificial rites for the month of Zarātu (Emar 446); the annual *zuku* ritual (Emar 375+); and the seven-year *zuku* festival (Emar 373+). All three rituals associated a litany of cultic rites with the fifteenth of Zarātu, which Fleming labeled “the crown of Emar’s ritual calendar.”<sup>44</sup> The month of Zarātu marked the seasonal interchange between the hot, dry summer months and the rainy winter season. Deriving from the Semitic root  $\sqrt{dr}$ , “to sow/seed,” the rituals of Zarātu were predominantly associated with agricultural activities sponsored by various urban social groups.<sup>45</sup> But the autumn also marked the transformation of the backcountry from arid desert to fertile steppe, a time when mobile populations prepared to depart for winter pastures.<sup>46</sup> These rituals offered an important mechanism for mobile and settled peoples with a shared social identity to create moments and spaces for (re)integration, maintaining shared identities across space and time.

In Emar’s oldest ritual text, the *Text for Six Months* (Emar 446), social (re)integration involved ritual movement in and out of the city and the participation

44 Daniel Fleming, *Time at Emar: The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner’s Archive*, CM 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 160.

45 The timing of the month of Zarātu in the late summer through autumn is probably parallel to the month (or two months) known as *yrḥw zr* in the tenth-century BCE Gezer Calendar (KAI 182.1–2).

46 During the Mari period, the region between Imar and Tuttul was the summer range of the Yaminite Rabbaeans, which they departed during the winter for the Jezirah (Michael Astour, *The Rabbaeans: A Tribal Society on the Euphrates from Yahdun-Lim to Julius Caesar*, SMS 2/2 [Malibu: Undena, 1978], 3; Streck, “Zwischen Weide, Dorf und Stadt,” 163–164). For the effects of climatic patterns on the movement of Syrian peoples, see Jean Sapin, “La géographie humaine de la Syrie-Palestine au deuxième millénaire avant J.C. comme voie de recherche historique,” *JESHO* 24 (1981): 18–19; Sapin, “La géographie humaine de la Syrie-Palestine au deuxième millénaire avant J.C. comme voie de recherche historique,” *JESHO* 25/1 (1982): 1–49; Sapin, “La géographie humaine de la Syrie-Palestine au deuxième millénaire avant J.C. comme voie de recherche historique,” *JESHO* 25/2 (1982): 113–186; Streck, “Zwischen Weide, Dorf und Stadt,” 158–168.

of both sedentary and mobile peoples in a cultic meal.<sup>47</sup> The cultic activities for the month of Zarātu centered on Dagan (head of the regional pantheon) as the “lord of the seed” (*be-el* NUMUM<sup>mes</sup>), the city god <sup>d</sup>NIN.URTA, and various other deities.<sup>48</sup> Most ritual activities took place at city gates, with the various offerings culminating in the diviner’s (MAŠ<sub>2</sub>.ŠU.GID<sub>2</sub>.GID<sub>2</sub>) symbolic scattering of seed (NUMUN) before planting (*e-ri-ši*) could begin. Among other themes, the ritual integrated Emar’s mobile population through the participation of a social authority known as the “leader of the people of the steppe” (<sup>lu</sup>GAL LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ EDIN). Michael Rowton has argued that tribal and parasocial leaders functioned as the link between mobile and urban society, as their privileged position enabled them movement between these two worlds.<sup>49</sup> Rowton’s focus was integration on the elite social level, which does occur in the rituals of Zarātu. Yet, there was also a corporate component to these rites, as the ritual participants were identified as the whole populace (LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ *ga-ma-ru*). These ritual actors would process and arrive at the “great gate” (KA .GAL), perhaps a main ceremonial city gate,<sup>50</sup> where they would provide the diviner and this leader of the people of the steppe with offerings that the latter would consume in a ritualized meal (Emar 446:24–29). By describing the ritual participants as “the entire populace” (LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ *ga-ma-ru*), the rituals of Zarātu cast a broader net than social identities defined by the town (URU<sup>ki</sup>), theoretically allowing them to incorporate a population defined by their association with the steppe as well.

The significance of the seasonal interchange as a moment for reintegrating the urban and the nonurban is not unique to Emar, but also appears in ritu-

47 Fleming noted that the *Text for Six Months* (Emar 446) and the annual *zukru* (Emar 375) are the only ritual texts composed in the Conventional/Syrian style, suggesting that they draw from earlier local custom (*Time at Emar*, 109–113). See also John Tracey Thames, Jr., *The Politics of Ritual Change: The zukru Festival in the Political History of Late Bronze Age Emar*, HSM 65 (Boston, MA/Leiden: Brill, 2020), 284.

48 In a parallel calendar used at Emar, the month of Zarātu was known as SAG.MU, “head of the year” (Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 121).

49 Michael B. Rowton, “Dimorphic Structure and the Tribal Elite,” in *Al-Bāḥit: Festschrift Joseph Henninger zum 70. Geburtstag am 12. Mai 1976*, ed. Franz Josef Thiel, SIA 28 (St. Augustin bei Bonn: Anthropos-Institut, 1976), 219–257; Rowton, “Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element,” *JNES* 36 (1977): 191–192.

50 The KA<sub>2</sub>.GAL in the rituals for Zarātu may correspond to the central “Great Gate of Battle” (KA<sub>2</sub>.GAL *qa-ab-li*) mentioned in the *zukru* rituals (Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 93). Mori considered generic references to a KA<sub>2</sub>.GAL in the Emar tablets an indication that one gate (she counted a total of six) was more monumental and ceremonially important than the others (“The City Gates at Emar: Reconsidering the Use of the Sumerograms KÁ.GAL and KÁ in Tablets Found at Meskené Qadime,” *Quaderni di Vicino Oriente* 5 [2010]: 261).

als at contemporary Ḫattuša, Ugarit, and later in Israel/Judah.<sup>51</sup> These parallels provide some helpful insight into why rituals defined by and marking the agricultural cycle are concern with mobile peoples. Most illuminating in this regard is the Ugaritic text known as *The Feast of the Goodly Gods* (KTU<sup>3</sup> 1.23), a unique blend of mythic narrative and ritual report.<sup>52</sup> The text begins with an invitation for the “goodly gods” (*ilm nʿmm*)—voracious deities who reside in the barren desert (*mdbr*)—to join the urban pantheon (Ilu, Athiratu/Raḥmay, and the *ngr mdrʿ*) for a feast in a place called “the sown” (*mdrʿ*).<sup>53</sup> This feast occurs in the late summer/early autumn—expressed in the mythic register as the waning influence of Môtū—when summer fruits were harvested, winter crops were sown, and the barren desert (*mdbr*) transformed into fertile steppe (*šd*).<sup>54</sup> This is the connection between agricultural rites marking the fall interchange and rites celebrating social (re)integration with mobile peoples. In both the ritual and mythic registers, (re)integration occurred through reciprocal movement of people and deities between urban and rural spaces. First, the urban pantheon and human rulers of the city (i.e., the king and queen of Ugarit) entered the steppe (*šd*) for a “hunt” (*šwd*);<sup>55</sup> later, the goodly gods and the human “enter-

51 For the Hittite rituals, see Alfonso Archi, “Fêtes de printemps et d’automne et réintégration rituelle d’images du culte dans l’Anatolie hittite,” *UF* 5 (1973): 24. An autumnal integration ritual may be preserved in the elliptical reference to Gaʿal son of Ebed in Judg 9:26–27 (see Mark S. Smith, *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination*, SBLRBS 51 [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006], 51). Gaʿal and his kin are said to “enter” (ערב) the built urban environment of Shechem during the grape harvest (late summer), only to leave it again and hold a הלולים-ritual feast in the “house of their god(s)” (בית האלהיהם) that is located in “the field/steppe” (השדה). Priestly tradition associates the הלולים with a first fruits offering (harvested in the early fall) dedicated to Yahweh (Lev 19:24).

52 Smith, *Goodly Gods*, 151.

53 Based on the same Semitic root as Emar’s month of Zarātu and the *yrḥw zrʿ* of the Gezer calendar, the sown represents a “shared space” that brings the urban pantheon outside the typical cultic locales of the temple and palace and draws the goodly gods from the desert/steppe (Smith, *Goodly Gods*, 107).

54 The reference to “pruning” (*zmr*) Môtū (ll. 19–20) is probably an allusion to the first fruits gathered in the early fall (Smith, *Goodly Gods*, 63). This parallels the first fruit offerings in Emar 446 (*bu-kà-ra-tu<sub>4</sub>*) and in biblical tradition (הלולים).

55 In the mythic register, both Athiratu/Raḥmay and the goodly gods are said to “hunt” (*šd*) in the “steppe” (*šd*). Smith tentatively connects this myth to one aspect of the ritual procurement of game meat for a feast, brought in by the enigmatic “enterers” (Smith, *Goodly Gods*, 21, 60–61). However, he cautions against any “simple correspondence of myth and ritual,” as KTU<sup>3</sup> 1.23 combines two separate hunting myths (*Goodly Gods*, 61). On the place of hunting in the economic relations of sedentary and mobile populations, see Streck, “Zwischen Weide, Dorf und Stadt,” 167, 172.

ers” (*rbm*) are granted access to the bounty of the sown (*mdr*).<sup>56</sup> Previous interpreters explained the social metaphor of the *Goodly Gods* in terms of the disinheritance and exile of kin: the heads of the urban pantheon banished their children to subsist like the *‘apiru* on the fringes of the desert.<sup>57</sup> Yet, neither the sown nor the steppe are granted priority in this text: each space has something to offer the other. Recognizing that the *Feast of the Goodly Gods* offers a uniquely Ugaritic form of a fall (re)integration ritual, it nonetheless affirms that social identity is deeply tied to cultic space and that ritual movement communicates something about social relationships.

The *Feast of the Goodly Gods* offers a model for interpreting the use of cultic space and ritual movement in the two other Emar ritual texts at the center of this study (Emar 373+/Emar 375+). Both rituals (re)define the local rites on the fifteenth of Zarātu as a *zukru* that the inhabitants of Emar “give” (*nadānu*) to Dagan.<sup>58</sup> First appearing in the Mari period, the *zukurum* was a ritual that a leader of the Yaminite Yariḫu tribe in the environs of Aleppo gave (*nadānum*) to the regional god Addu.<sup>59</sup> With no clear ties to the seasonal calendar, what

56 Previous interpreters saw the *rbm* as a type of cultic personnel, akin to the Akkadian *ērib bīti* (CAD E 290a). Yet, such officials appear nowhere else in the Ugaritic archives (“Dawn and Dusk,” trans. Dennis Pardee [COS 1.87:276 n. 12]; Smith, *Goodly Gods*, 38). More plausibly, Smith (*Goodly Gods*, 61) connected these figures with their cultic role in this text, where they “process with goodly sacrifice” (*hlkm bdbḥ n’mt* [ll. 26–27]). Another possibility, based on the Emar parallels, is that these enterers are mobile peoples invited to join the elites of urban society for a ritualized feast.

57 Schloen characterized subsistence in the desert in negative terms of loss and banishment (“The Exile of Disinherited Kin in *KTU* 1.12 and *KTU* 1.23,” *JNES* 52 [1993]: 209–220). This misses the many positive depictions of the steppe as a space offering its own bounty and appeal to settled peoples and their gods.

58 The annual *zukru* represented an older local ritual (Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 152), which was vastly expanded under Hittite sponsorship from Carchemish into a “festival” (EZEN) observed once every seven years (Thames, *Ritual Change*, 303–306). The older and more fragmentary Emar 446 does not include the term *zukru*, though Fleming cautiously identified the ritual for Zarātu as “rites affiliated with the *zukru*” (*Time at Emar*, 152). Accepting Fleming’s identification of the month as that of Zarātu, Thames considered it “better to view [the ritual activities] as preexisting calendrical rites that helped to give the *zukru* ritual its shape as it developed into the ritual complex recorded in Emar 375+ and, eventually, 373+” (*The Politics of Ritual Change*, 82). Surprisingly, the seven-year *zukru* festival bears the strongest similarities with the earlier rites of Zarātu, listing cultic participants known as the “seven sowers of the palace” (7 LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ *zi-ir-ra-ti ša* E<sub>2</sub>.GAL-li) and Dagan’s epithet, <sup>4</sup>KUR EN *bu-ka-ri*, probably referring to the “first fruits offering” (*bu-kà-ra-tu<sub>4</sub>*) in Emar 446 (Thames, *Ritual Change*, 149–150).

59 Evidence for this rite comes from a single letter sent to Zimri-Lim (A.1121+A.2731). See Jean-Marie Durand, *Le culte d’Addu d’Alepp et l’affaire d’Alahtum*, FM 7, Mémoires de NABU 8

connected the Yaminite and Emarite *zukru(m)*s was not the date of their performances, but rather their dedication to two regional gods with shrines at more than one urban center: Dagan of the Middle Euphrates and Addu in the Aleppo Plateau. Fleming points to another possible connection: the performance of the *zukurum* by a Yaminite tribe and Emar's legacy as an important Yaminite center during the Mari period.<sup>60</sup> Whether or not the rites observed on the fifteenth of Zarātu at Emar were always known by the cultic term *zukru*, the veneration of the regional deity Dagan at the *sikkānu*-stones outside the city gates and the participation of the <sup>14</sup>GAL LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ EDIN evoked Syrian cultic traditions that were in some senses older than public rites connected to the temples of the town.<sup>61</sup> Defining these rites as a *zukru* invoked this connection to the nonurban cultic past more explicitly.

Despite the association of the *zukru(m)* with mobile peoples in the MBA, many aspects of the annual *zukru* at Emar were thoroughly town centered. In contrast to the whole populace (LU<sub>2</sub>.MEŠ *ga-ma-ru*) that participated in the ritual for Zarātu (Emar 446), participants in the annual *zukru* (Emar 375) included the personified city (<sup>uru</sup>E-mar<sup>ki</sup>), the people of Emar (*ni-šu-ú* <sup>uru</sup>E-mar<sup>ki</sup>), and citizens and leaders of the town (DUMU.MEŠ ù GAL.ĪIA ša URU<sup>ki</sup>). The descriptions of participants changed again in the seven-year *zukru*, which included “the people and the gods” (UN.MEŠ ù DINGIR.MES), or “the citizens of the land of Emar” (DUMU.MEŠ <sup>kur</sup>E-mar)—the latter potentially including a larger segment of the population than those defined by the city alone (<sup>uru</sup>E-mar<sup>ki</sup>).

What the old ritual of Zarātu achieved through the integration of mobile and sedentary ritual participants, the annual and seven-year *zukurus* achieved through ritual movement. Fleming observed that the veneration of Emar's deities with the regional god Dagan at the *sikkānu*-stones evoked other modes of worship “not bound to urban forms.”<sup>62</sup> Just as these offerings and feasts outside the town reconnected the people and gods of Emar with sacred spaces in

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(Paris: Société pour l'étude du Proche-Orient Ancien, 2002), 137–140; Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 113–121; Lafont, “Le roi de Mari et les prophètes du dieu Adad,” *RA* 78 (1984): 7–18. Fleming argued that the term *zukru* refers to the “invocation” of a deity (*Time at Emar*, 113–126). For the other etymological possibilities, see Thames, *Ritual Change*, 223–225.

60 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 114, 121.

61 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 98–99. The *zukru* rituals exhibit a double tendency to place Emar in religious and cultural continuity with older Syrian traditions and incorporate new cultic forms through Hittite influence (Patrick M. Michel, *Le culte des pierres à Emar à l'époque hittite* [Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014], 269–274).

62 Fleming, *Time at Emar*, 91.

the countryside,<sup>63</sup> the “return” (*târu*) to the city reintegrated all participants (urban and nonurban) into the sacred space within the town. In the processional return to Emar, the city god <sup>d</sup>NIN.URTA rode in a cart with Dagan that was pulled to the Great Gate of Battle (KA<sub>2</sub>.GAL *qabli*), where a *kudabu*-offering was performed. As a liminal space between urban and nonurban space, this gate was an important locus for social (re)integration. In the earlier ritual for Zarātu, it was at the gate—perhaps even the same gate—that the leader of the people of the steppe consumed his sacred feast.<sup>64</sup> These rites of social integration could explain the name of one of Emar’s city gates, the “gate of the Sarta clan” (KA<sub>2</sub> *li-î-mi sar-ta*) and the divinized tribe <sup>d</sup>*li-î-mi sar-ta*, which both appear only in the seven-year *zukru* (Emar 373:156–157).<sup>65</sup> The term *li-î-mi* recalls the first-order tribal division of Mari’s Yaminite coalition (the *li’imum*).<sup>66</sup> Despite this tantalizing allusion, there is no evidence that any inhabitant of Emar was a *mār li’m sarta*, or that tribal affiliations at Emar operated anything like they did in the early second millennium BCE. Nonetheless, the reference to this divinized tribe alongside other deities scattered across the Middle Euphrates and Jezirah (the storm-god of Mount Basalama’a, various Baliḥ-river deities, and an old writing for the Storm-god of Emar [<sup>d</sup>IM EN *I-mar*]) evoked the historical connections between Emar and the surrounding landscape.

Participation in local rituals marked stakeholders in the community and was an expression of community identity. The ritual meal shared by the town’s diviner and the leader of the people of the steppe in the rites of Zarātu (Emar 446:29) offered the clearest evidence for the ritual (re)integration of mobile populations at Emar. In the annual *zukru* ritual (Emar 375), the boundaries between town and countryside were made porous through the procession of the inhabitants of Emar (<sup>uru</sup>*E-mar*<sup>ki</sup>) to the feast outside the city, attended by Dagan and <sup>d</sup>NIN.URTA.<sup>67</sup> As the biblical and Ugaritic parallels illustrate, the fall

63 On the identity of the gate of the *sikkānu*-stones as the confluence of a river, see Jean-Marie Durand and Lionel Marti, “Chroniques du Moyen Euphrate 2: Relectures des documents d’Ekalte, Emar et Tuttul,” *RA* 97 (2003): 144–145; Mori, “City Gates,” 262.

64 Mori, “City Gates,” 261. See also n. 50 above.

65 This deity also appears in a god-list (Emar 378:14–15) that begins with <sup>d</sup>EN *bu-ka-ri*, suggesting this text was connected to the seven-year *zukru* (see n. 54 above).

66 Fleming, “The Sim’alite *gayum*,” 209–210.

67 Daniel Fleming, “The Rituals from Emar: Evolution of an Indigenous Tradition in Second-Millennium Syria,” in *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and John L. Hayes (Malibu: Undena, 1992), 59; Fleming, “The Emar Festivals: City Unity and Syrian Identity under Hittite Hegemony,” in Chavalas, *Emar*, 85.

interchange was an auspicious time for the (re)integration of urban and nonurban peoples and their deities, evoked through the participation of mobile peoples or the observance of rites apart from the cultic institutions of the town.

### 3 Conclusion

In recent decades, scholars have made great progress unpacking the unique, town-based social structures of Emar and how they interacted with the Hittite administrative hierarchy. Yet, the relationship between Emar's inhabitants and mobile peoples in the broader regional landscape remains poorly understood. As a primary witness to the transition from the Amorite tribal groups of the Mari period to the Aramean kingdoms of the first millennium BCE, this aspect of Emar's history is an important topic in need of further study. The Middle Assyrian royal annals attest to mobile peoples operating in the vicinity of Emar during the LBA. However, the description of these groups as *aḫlamû*—Arameans stems from a skewed southern Mesopotamian perception of the region's social geography. In the local documentation from Emar, Ekalte, and Hatti, such groups are deemed the “people of the steppe” (LU .MEŠ EDIN) or *sutû*, whose leaders (the <sup>[lú]</sup>GAL or <sup>[lú]</sup>*nasīku*) point toward social categories used by later Aramean tribes. There is no sign that these mobile groups were considered outsiders to urban centers; quite the contrary, the inhabitants of settled polities believed themselves to have a shared social identity with these populations.

The agricultural cycle offered an opportunity for social (re)integration; it marked auspicious moments when the inhabitants of Emar would invoke and evoke their current and historical ties to the broader physical and social landscape. Social (re)integration ensured that physical and temporal separation of populations need not necessarily result in their fragmentation. Through cultic meals and ritual processions, the inhabitants of Emar not only carved out a space for mobile peoples within their urban framework, but also laid claim to an alternative social identity for themselves. This identity was remembered through old tribal names like the *li'mu sarta*, archaic titles of the city god of Emar, a Yaminite tribal custom known as the *zuku*, and rituals performed at cultic stones in the countryside. But this identity was not just a half-forgotten memory of Emar's tribal past. It was a way for the inhabitants of Emar to identify with mobile groups who still occupied the Middle Euphrates, to lay claim to a common historical descent and a shared social identity embedded in the physical landscape and the worship of the deities who occupied it.



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