

= Mari , Syria =

Mari (modern Tell Hariri) , was an ancient Semitic city in Syria . Its remains constitute a tell located 11 kilometers north @-@ west of Abu Kamal on the Euphrates river western bank , some 120 kilometers southeast of Deir ez @-@ Zor . It flourished as a trade center and hegemonic state between 2900 BC and 1759 BC . As a purposely built city , the existence of Mari was related to its position in the middle of the Euphrates trade routes ; this position made it an intermediary between Sumer in the south and the Levant in the west .

Mari was first abandoned in the middle of the 26th century BC but was rebuilt and became the capital of a hegemonic East @-@ Semitic state before 2500 BC . This second Mari engaged in a long war with its rival Ebla , and is known for its strong affinity with the Sumerian culture . It was destroyed in the 23rd century BC by the Akkadians who allowed the city to be rebuilt and appointed a military governor bearing the title of Shakkanakku (military governor) . The governors later became independent with the rapid disintegration of the Akkadian empire and rebuilt the city as a regional center in the middle Euphrates valley . The Shakkanakkus ruled Mari until the second half of the 19th century BC when the dynasty collapsed for unknown reasons . A short time after the Shakkanakku collapse , Mari became the capital of the Amorite Lim dynasty . The Amorite Mari was short lived as it was annexed by Babylonia in c . 1761 BC , but the city survived as a small settlement under the rule of the Babylonians and the Assyrians before being abandoned and forgotten during the Hellenistic period .

The Mariotes worshiped both Semitic and Sumerian deities and established their city as a center of old trade . However , although the pre @-@ Amorite periods were characterized by heavy Sumerian cultural influence , Mari was not a city of Sumerian immigrants but rather a Semitic speaking nation that used a dialect similar to Eblaite . The Amorites were West @-@ Semites who began to settle the area before the 21st century BC ; by the Lim dynasty 's era (c . 1830 BC) , they became the dominant population in the Fertile Crescent .

Mari 's discovery in 1933 provided an important insight into the geopolitical map of ancient Mesopotamia and Syria , due to the discovery of more than 25 @, @ 000 tablets that contained important information about the administration of state during the second millennium BC and the nature of diplomatic relations between the political entities in the region . They also revealed the wide trading networks of the 18th century BC , which connected areas as far as Afghanistan in Southern Asia and Crete in the Mediterranean region .

= = History = =

The name of the city can be traced to Mer , an ancient storm deity of northern Mesopotamia and Syria who was considered the patron deity of the city , Georges Dossin noted that the name of the city was spelled identically like the name of the storm god and concluded that Mari was named after him .

= = = The first kingdom = = =

Mari is not considered a small settlement that later grew , but rather a new city that was purposely founded during the Mesopotamian Early Dynastic period I c . 2900 BC , to control the waterways of the Euphrates trade routes that connect the Levant with the Sumerian south . The city was built about 1 to 2 kilometers away from the Euphrates river to protect it from floods , and was connected to the river by an artificial canal that was between 7 and 10 kilometers long depending on which old meander it used to be attached with , which is hard to identify today .

The city is difficult to excavate , as it is buried deep under the later layers of habitation . A defensive system against floods , composed of a circular embankment was unearthed , in addition to a circular 6 @. @ 7 m thick internal rampart to protect the city from enemies . An area of 300 meters long filled with gardens and craftsmen quarters , separated the outer embankment from the inner rampart which had a height of 8 to 10 meters , and was strengthened by defensive towers . Other findings

includes one of the city gates , a street beginning at the center and ending at the gate , in addition to residential houses . Mari had a central mound , however no temple or palaces have been unearthed , although a large building that seem to have been an administrative one was unearthed , this building had stone foundations and dimensions of (32 meters X 25 meters) , with rooms up to 12 meters long and 6 meters wide . The city was abandoned at the end of the Early Dynastic period II c . 2550 BC for unknown reasons .

= = = The second kingdom = = =

Around the beginning of the Early Dynastic period III (earlier than 2500 BC) , Mari was rebuilt and populated again . The new city kept many of the first city exterior features , including the internal rampart and gate . Also kept , the outer circular embankment measuring 1 @. @ 9 km in diameter , which was topped by a wall that is two meters thick , suitable for the protection of archers .

However , the internal structure was completely changed , the city was carefully planned ; first to be built were the streets that descends from the elevated center into the gates , assuring the drainage of rain water .

At the heart of the city , a royal palace was built which also served as a temple . Four successive architectural levels from the second kingdom 's palace have been unearthed (the oldest is designated P3 , while the latest is P0) , and the last two levels are dated to the Akkadian period . The first two levels were excavated , the findings includes a temple named Enceinte Sacrée , which was the largest in the city but it is unknown for whom it was dedicated . Also unearthed , a pillared throne room and a hall that have three double wood pillars leading to the temple .

Six more temples were discovered in the city , including the temple called the Massif Rouge (to whom it was dedicated is unknown) , and temples dedicated for Ninni @- @ Zaza , Ishtar , Ishtar , Ninhursag and Shamash . All the temples were located in the center of the city except for the Ishtar temple , the area between the Enceinte Sacrée and the Massif Rouge is considered the administrative center of the high priest .

The second kingdom appears to be a powerful and prosperous political center , kings held the title of Lugal , and many are attested in the city , but the most important source is the letter of king Enna @- @ Dagan c . 2350 BC , which was sent to Irkab @- @ Damu of Ebla , and in it , the Mariote king mentions his predecessors and their military achievements . However , the reading of this letter is still problematic and many interpretations have been presented by scholars .

= = = = Mari @- @ Ebla war = = = =

The earliest attested king in the letter of Enna @- @ Dagan is Ansud , who is mentioned as attacking Ebla , the traditional rival of Mari with whom it had a long war , and conquering many of Ebla 's cities , including the land of Belan . The next king mentioned in the letter is Sa?umu , who conquered the lands of Ra 'ak and Nirum , but king Kun @- @ Damu of Ebla defeated Mari in the middle of the 25th century BC . The war continued with I?htup @- @ I?ar of Mari conquest of Emar , at a time of Eblaite weakness in the mid @- @ 24th century BC . King Igrish @- @ Haram of Ebla had to pay tribute to Iblul @- @ II of Mari , who is mentioned in the letter conquering many of Ebla 's cities and campaigning in the Burman region .

Enna @- @ Dagan also received tribute , and his reign fell entirely within the reign of Irkab @- @ Damu of Ebla , who managed to defeat Mari and end the tribute . Mari defeated Ebla 's ally Nagar in year seven of the Eblaite vizier Ibrium 's term , causing the blockage of trade routes between Ebla and southern Mesopotamia via upper Mesopotamia . The war reached a climax when the Eblaite vizier Ibbi @- @ Sipish made an alliance with Nagar and Kish to defeat Mari in a battle near Terqa . Ebla itself suffered its first destruction a few years after Terqa in c . 2300 BC , during the reign of the Mariote king Hidar .

According to Alfonso Archi , Hidar was succeeded by Isqi @- @ Mari whose royal seal was discovered and it depicts battle scenes , causing Archi to suggest that he was responsible for the destruction of Ebla while still a general . Just a decade after Ebla 's destruction (c . 2300 BC middle

chronology) , Mari itself was destroyed and burned by Sargon of Akkad , Michael Astour give the date as c . 2265 BC (short chronology) .

= = = The third kingdom = = =

Mari was deserted for two generations before being restored by the Akkadian king Manishtushu . A governor was appointed to govern the city who held the title " Shakkanakku " (military governor) . Akkad kept direct control over the city , which is evident by Naram @-@ Sin of Akkad 's appointment of two of his daughters to priestly offices in the city .

= = = The Shakkanakku dynasty = = =

The first member of the Shakkanakku dynasty on the lists is Iddish who was appointed in c . 2266 BC , according to the lists , Iddish ruled for 60 years , and was succeeded by his son making the position hereditary .

The third Mari followed the second city in terms of general structure , phase P0 of the old royal palace was replaced by a new palace for the Shakkanakku . Another smaller palace was built in the eastern part of the city , and contained royal burials that date to the former periods . The ramparts were rebuilt and strengthened while the embankment was turned into a defensive wall that reached 10 meters in width . The former sacred inclosure was maintained , so was the temple of Ninhursag . However , the temples of Ninni @-@ Zaza and Ishtar at disappeared , while a new temple called the " temple of lions " (dedicated to Dagan) , was built by the Shakkanakku Ishtup @-@ Iltum and attached to it , was a rectangular terrace (ziggurat) that measured 40 x 20 meters for sacrifices .

Akkad disintegrated following Shar @-@ Kali @-@ Sharri 's reign , and Mari gained its independence , but the use of the Shakkanakku title continued during the following Third Dynasty of Ur period . A princess of Mari married the son of king Ur @-@ Nammu of Ur , and Mari was nominally under Ur hegemony . However , the vassalage did not impede the independence of Mari , and some Shakkanakku used the royal title Lugal in their votive inscriptions , while using the title of Shakkanakku in their correspondence with the Ur 's court . The dynasty ended for unknown reasons not long before the establishment of the next dynasty , which took place in the second half of the 19th century BC .

= = = The Lim dynasty = = =

The second millennium BC in the Fertile Crescent was characterized by the expansion of the Amorites , which culminated with them dominating and ruling most of the region , including Mari which in c . 1830 BC , became the seat of the Amorite Lim dynasty under king Yaggid @-@ Lim . However , the Epigraphical and archaeological evidences showed a high degree of continuity between the Shakkanakku and the Amorite eras .

Yaggid @-@ Lim was the ruler of Suprum before establishing himself in Mari , he entered an alliance with Ila @-@ kabkabu of Ekallatum , but the relations between the two monarchs changed to an open war . The conflict ended with Ila @-@ kabkabu capturing Yaggid @-@ Lim 's heir Yahdun @-@ Lim and according to a tablet found in Mari , Yaggid @-@ Lim who survived Ila @-@ kabkabu was killed by his servants . However , in c . 1820 BC Yahdun @-@ Lim was firmly in control as king of Mari .

Yahdun @-@ Lim started his reign by subduing seven of his rebelling tribal leaders , and rebuilding the walls of Mari and Terqa in addition to building a new fort which he named Dur @-@ Yahdun @-@ Lim . He then expanded west and claimed to have reached the Mediterranean , however he later had to face a rebellion by the Banu @-@ Yamina nomads who were centered at Tuttul , and the rebels were supported by Yamhad 's king Sumu @-@ Epuh , whose interests were threatened by the recently established alliance between Yahdun @-@ Lim and Eshnunna . Yahdun @-@ Lim defeated the Yamina but an open war with Yamhad was avoided , as the Mariote king became occupied by his rivalry with Shamshi @-@ Adad I of Assyria , the son of the late Ila @-@ kabkabu .

The war ended in a defeat for Mari , and Yahdun @-@ Lim was assassinated in c . 1798 BC by his possible son Sumu @-@ Yamam , who himself got assassinated two years after ascending the throne while Shamshi @-@ Adad advanced and annexed Mari .

= = = = The Assyrian era and the Lim restoration = = = =

Shamshi @-@ Adad appointed his son Yasmah @-@ Adad on the throne of Mari , the new king married Yahdun @-@ Lim 's daughter , while the rest of the Lim family took refuge in Yamhad , and the annexation was officially justified by what Shamshi @-@ Adad considered sinful acts on the side of the Lim family . To strengthen his position against his new enemy Yamhad , Shamshi @-@ Adad married Yasmah @-@ Adad to Betlum , the daughter of Ishi @-@ Adad of Qatna . However , Yasmah @-@ Adad neglected his bride causing a crisis with Qatna , and he proved to be an unable leader causing the rage of his father who died in c . 1776 BC , while the armies of Yarim @-@ Lim I of Yamhad were advancing in support of Zimri @-@ Lim , the heir of the Lim dynasty .

As Zimri @-@ Lim advanced , a leader of the Banu @-@ Simaal (Zimri @-@ Lim 's tribe) overthrew Yasmah @-@ Adad , opening the road for Zimri @-@ Lim who arrived a few months after Yasmah @-@ Adad 's escape , and married princess Shibtu the daughter of Yarim @-@ Lim I a short time after his enthronement in c . 1776 BC . Zimri @-@ Lim 's ascension to the throne with the help of Yarim @-@ Lim I affected Mari 's status , Zimri @-@ Lim referred to Yarim @-@ Lim as his father , and the Yamhadite king was able to order Mari as the mediator between Yamhad 's main deity Hadad and Zimri @-@ Lim , who declared himself a servant of Hadad .

Zimri @-@ Lim started his reign with a campaign against the Banu @-@ Yamina , he also established alliances with Eshnunna and Hammurabi of Babylon , and sent his armies to aid the Babylonians . The new king directed his expansion policy toward the north in the Upper Khabur region , which was named Izdamaraz , where he subjugated the local petty kingdoms in the region such as Urkesh , and Talhayum , forcing them into vassalage . The expansion was met by the resistance of Qarni @-@ Lim , the king of Andarig , whom Zimri @-@ Lim defeated , securing the Mariote control over the region in c . 1771 BC , and the kingdom prospered as a trading center and entered a period of relative peace . Zimri @-@ Lim 's greatest heritage was the renovation of the Royal Palace , which was expanded greatly to contain 275 rooms , exquisite artifacts such as The Goddess of the Vase statue , and a royal archive that contained 25000 tablets .

Mari 's alliance with Eshnunna contributed to its demise , as that city later became an enemy of Hammurabi . The relations with Babylon worsened with a dispute over the city of H?t that consumed much time in negotiations , during which a war against Elam involved both kingdoms in c . 1765 BC . Finally , the kingdom was invaded by Hammurabi who defeated Zimri @-@ Lim in battle in c . 1761 BC and ended the Lim dynasty , while Terqa became the capital of a rump state named the Kingdom of Hana .

= = = Later periods = = =

Mari survived the destruction and rebelled against Babylon in c . 1759 BC , causing Hammurabi to destroy the whole city . However , Mari was allowed to survive as a small village under Babylonian administration , an act that Hammurabi considered merciful . Later , Mari became part of Assyria and was listed among the territories conquered by the Assyrian king Tukulti @-@ Ninurta I (reigned 1243 ? 1207 BC) . Afterward , Mari constantly changed hands between Assyria and Babylon .

In the middle of the eleventh century BC , Mari became part of Hana whose king Tukulti @-@ Mer took the title king of Mari and rebelled against Assyria , causing the Assyrian king Ashur @-@ bel @-@ kala to attack the city . Mari came firmly under the authority of the Neo @-@ Assyrian Empire , and was assigned in the first half of the 8th century BC to a certain Nergal @-@ Erish to govern under the authority of king Adad @-@ Nirari III (reigned 810 @-@ 783 BC) . In c . 760 BC , Shamash @-@ Risha @-@ Usur , an autonomous governor ruling parts of the upper middle Euphrates under the nominal authority of Ashur @-@ dan III , styled himself the governor of the lands of Suhu and Mari , so did his son Ninurta @-@ Kudurri @-@ Usur . However , by that time ,

Mari was known to be located in the so @-@ called Land of Laqe , making it unlikely that the Usur family actually controlled it , and suggesting that the title was employed out of historical reasons . The city continued as a small settlement until the Hellenistic period before disappearing from records .

= = People , language and government = =

The founders of the first city may have been Sumerians or more probably East Semitic speaking people from Terqa in the north . I. J. Gelb relates Mari 's foundation with the Kish civilization , which was a cultural entity of East Semitic speaking populations , that stretched from the center of Mesopotamia to Ebla in the western Levant .

At its height , the second city was the home of about 40 @,@ 000 people . This population was East @-@ Semitic speaking one , and used a dialect much similar to the language of Ebla (the Eblaite language) , while the Shakkanakku period had an East @-@ Semitic Akkadian speaking population . West Semitic names started to be attested in Mari since the second kingdom era , and by the middle Bronze @-@ Age , the west Semitic Amorite tribes became the majority of the pastoral groups in the middle Euphrates and Khabur valleys . Amorite names started to be observed in the city toward the end of the Shakkanakku period , even among the ruling dynasty members .

During the Lim era , the population became predominantly Amorite but also included Akkadian named people , and although the Amorite language became the dominant tongue , Akkadian remained the language of writing . The pastoral Amorites in Mari were called the Haneans , a term that indicate nomads in general , those Haneans were split into the Banu @-@ Yamina (sons of the right) and Banu @-@ Simaal (sons of the left) , with the ruling house belonging to the Banu @-@ Simaal branch . The kingdom was also a home to tribes of Suteans who lived in the district of Terqa .

Mari was an absolute monarchy , with the king controlling every aspect of the administration , helped by the scribes who played the role of administrators . During the Lim era , Mari was divided into four provinces in addition to the capital , the provincial seats were located at Terqa , Saggartum , Qattunan and Tuttul . Each province had its own bureaucracy , the government supplied the villagers with ploughs and agricultural equipments , in return for a share in the harvest .

= = = Kings of Mari = = =

The Sumerian King List (SKL) records a dynasty of six kings from Mari enjoying hegemony between the dynasty of Adab and the dynasty of Kish . The names of the Mariote kings were damaged on the early copies of the list , and those kings were correlated with historical kings that belonged to the second city . However , an undamaged copy of the list that date to the old Babylonian period was discovered in Shubat @-@ Enlil , and the names bears no resemblance to any of the historically attested monarchs of the second city , indicating that the compilers of the list had an older and probably a legendary dynasty in mind , that predate the second city .

The chronological order of the kings from the second kingdom era is highly uncertain ; nevertheless , it is assumed that the letter of Enna @-@ Dagan lists them in a chronological order . Many of the kings were attested through their own votive objects discovered in the city , and the dates are highly speculative .

For the Shakkanakkus , the lists are incomplete and after Hanun @-@ Dagan who ruled at the end of the Ur era c . 2008 BC (c . 1920 BC Short chronology) , they become full of lacunae . Roughly 13 more Shakkanakkus succeeded Hanun @-@ Dagan but only few are known , with the last known one reigning not too long before the reign of Yaggid @-@ Lim who founded the Lim dynasty in c . 1830 BC .

= = Culture and religion = =

The first and second kingdoms were heavily influenced by the Sumerian south . The society was

led by an urban oligarchy , and the citizens were well known for elaborate hair styles and dress . The calendar was based on a solar year divided into twelve months , and was the same calendar used in Ebla " the old Eblaite calendar " . Scribes wrote in Sumerian language and the art was indistinguishable from Sumerian art , so was the architectural style .

Mesopotamian influence continued to affect Mari 's culture during the Amorite period , which is evident in the Babylonian scribal style used in the city . However , it was less influential than the former periods and a distinct Syrian style prevailed , which is noticeable in the seals of kings , which reflect a clear Syrian origin . The society was a tribal one , it consisted mostly of farmers and nomads (Haneans) , and in contrast to Mesopotamia , the temple had a minor role in everyday life as the power was mostly invested in the palace . Women enjoyed a relative equality to men , queen Shibtu ruled in her husband 's name while he was away , and had an extensive administrative role and authority over her husband 's highest officials .

The Pantheon included both Sumerian and Semitic deities , and throughout most of its history , Dagan was Mari 's head of the Pantheon , while Mer was the patron deity . Other deities included the Semitic deities ; Ishtar the goddess of fertility , Athtar , and Shamash , the Sun god who was regarded among the city most important deities , and believed to be all @-@ knowing and all @-@ seeing . Sumerian deities included Ninhursag , Dumuzi , Enki , Anu , and Enlil . Prophecy had an important role for the society , temples included prophets , who gave council to the king and participated in the religious festivals . Ornina , the singer of Ishtar temple , was one of the oldest multi @-@ talented women who has a prominent statue depicting her playing music during the reign of Iblul @-@ II .

= = Economy = =

The first Mari provided the oldest wheels workshop to be discovered in Syria , and was a center of bronze metallurgy . The city also contained districts devoted to smelting , dyeing and pottery manufacturing , charcoal was brought by river boats from the upper Khabur and Euphrates area .

The second kingdom 's economy was based on both agriculture and trade . The economy was centralized and directed through a communal organization , where grains were stored in communal granaries , and distributed amongst the population according to social statues . The organization also controlled the animal herds in the kingdom . Some people were directly connected to the palace instead of the communal organization , those included the metal and textile producers and the military officials . Ebla was Mari 's most important trading partner and rival , Mari 's position made it an important trading center as it controlled the road linking between the Levant and Mesopotamia .

The Amorite Mari maintained the older aspects of the economy , which was still largely based on irrigated agriculture along the Euphrates valley . The city kept its trading role and was a center for merchants from Babylonia and other kingdoms , it received goods from the south and east through riverboats and distributed them north , north west and west . The main merchandises handled by Mari were metals and tin imported from the Iranian Plateau and then exported west as far as Crete . Other goods included copper from Cyprus , silver from Anatolia , woods from Lebanon , gold from Egypt , olive oil , wine , and textiles in addition to precious stones from modern Afghanistan .

= = Excavations and archive = =

Mari was discovered in 1933 , on the eastern flank of Syria , near the Iraqi border . A Bedouin tribe was digging through a mound called Tell Hariri for a gravestone that would be used for a recently deceased tribesman , when they came across a headless statue . After the news reached the French authorities currently in control of Syria , the report was investigated , and digging on the site was started on December 14 , 1933 by archaeologists from the Louvre in Paris . Discoveries came quickly , with the temple of Ishtar being discovered in the next month . Mari was classified by the archaeologists as the " most westerly outpost of Sumerian culture " .

Since the beginning of excavations , over 25 @,@ 000 clay tablets in Akkadian language written in

cuneiform were discovered . Finds from the excavation are on display in the Louvre , the National Museum of Aleppo , the National Museum of Damascus , and the Deir ez Zor Museum . In the latter , the southern façade of the Court of the Palms room from Zimri Lim 's palace has been reconstructed , including the wall paintings .

Mari has been excavated in annual campaigns between 1933 - 1939 , 1951 - 1956 , and since 1960 , and the first 21 seasons up to 1975 were led by André Parrot , followed by Jean Claude Margueron (until 2004) , and Pascal Butterlin (starting in 2005) . A journal devoted to the site since 1982 , is Mari : Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires . Archaeologists have tried to determine how many layers the site descends , according to French archaeologist André Parrot , " each time a vertical probe was commenced in order to trace the site 's history down to virgin soil , such important discoveries were made that horizontal digging had to be resumed . "

= = = Mari tablets = = =

The tablets were written in Akkadian , and they give informations about the kingdom , its customs , and the names of people who lived during that time . More than 3000 are letters , the remainder includes administrative , economic , and judicial texts . The tablets , according to André Parrot , " brought about a complete revision of the historical dating of the ancient Near East and provided more than 500 new place names , enough to redraw or even draw up the geographical map of the ancient world . " Almost all the tablets found were dated to the last 50 years of Mari 's independence (c . 1800 ? 1750 BC) , and most have now been published . The language of the texts is official Akkadian but proper names and hints in syntax show that the common language of Mari 's inhabitants was Northwest Semitic .

= = Current situation = =

As a result of the Syrian Civil War , excavations stopped , and the site came under the control of armed gangs , and witnessed a large scale looting . An official report revealed that the robbers are focusing on the royal palace , the public baths , the temple of Ishtar and the temple of Dagan .