



## Rivalling Royal Women: Hebrew Bible Narratives in the Light of Old-Babylonian Letters

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### Outline

#### I. Introduction

#### II. The information gained from the Mari letters

(1. Inbatum – 2. Liqum – 3. Inib-šarri – 4. Naramtum – 5. Kirum and Šimatum)

#### III. Three points of comparison with the Hebrew Bible tradition

(1. Rivalry among royal women & access to power – 2. Two sisters married to the same vassal – 3. Opposition of a royal woman to her father's or husband's politics)

#### *ARM X 84: Inbatum to her father, king Zimri-Lim of Mari*

...		
4	<i>tup-pa-am š[a] be-lí ú-ša-bi-lam eš-me</i>	I have heard the tablet that my lord has sent me.
5	<i>aš-šum URU a-ma-àz<sup>KI</sup> ma-da-tim</i> <i>be-lí ú-úr-ri-[kam-ma]</i>	As regards the city of Amaz, on behalf of which my lord has written to me again and again:
6	<i>iš-pu-ra-am URU a-ma-àz<sup>KI</sup> iš-tu pa-na</i> <i>wa-ar-[ki]</i>	Amaz has long since been going behind (= following)
7	<i>ma-a-at be-lí-ia i-il-[la-a]k ù ki-ma URU šu-ú</i>	the land of my lord, and as this city is under the
8	<i>i-na i-di 2 be-lí-ia iš-lu-tú<sup>1</sup> hi-[i]m-di-ia IR-ka</i>	control of my lord, Himdiya, your servant,
9	<i>il-li-ik-ma URU ša-a-t[u] a-na i-di 2 be-lí-š[u]</i> <i>ú-t[e-e]r-ma</i>	has gone and brought this city back under the control of his lord.
10	<i>ma-a-tam ša-a-ti ú-uš-ki-i[n] ù<sup>LU</sup> su-ga-ag-[šu]</i>	He has (re-)established control over this land
11	<i>ša-ki-in be-lí-ia iš-ku-un mi-im-ma URU</i> <i>ša-[a-tu]</i>	and has established a mayor as deputy of my lord. But (whatever in) the city, he has
12	<i>ú-ul iš-lu-ul ki-[m]a URU šu-ú wa-ar-ki-k[a]</i> <i>i-la-ku]</i>	not looted it. That this city is under your control,
13	<i>ú-ul i-de i-nu-[m]a be-lí [i]t-ta-al-kam</i> <i>at-t[a ù be-lí]</i>	he did not know. Now, when my lord returns,
14	<i>i-na bi-ri-ku-nu du-ub-ba-ma šum-ma</i> <i>URU šu-[ú al-ka]</i>	you and my lord you should discuss/convene among you two:
15	<i>be-lí li-id-di-na-ak-k[um]</i>	If this city is yours, my lord will certainly/should give it (back) to you.
...		

#### *M. 8161: Liqum to her brother Zimri-Lim*

...		
4	<i>ša-al-ma-a-ku</i>	I am well.
5	<i><sup>1</sup>a-dal-še-ni be-lí ša-lim</i>	My lord Adal-šenni is well.
6	<i>é-kál-šu ra-bé-ém a-na qa-ti-[ia]</i>	His large palace he has entrusted me (= under
7	<i>ip-qí-da-am i-ša-ri-iš</i>	my hand). Full justice
8	<i>i-pu-la-an-ni 2 ME MUNUS.MEŠ</i>	he has done to me. 200 women,
9	<i>lu MUNUS.NAR.MEŠ lu MUNUS.UŠ.BAR[.MEŠ]</i>	either (female) singers or weavers
10	<i>lu MUNUS.AGRIG.MEŠ a-na qa-ti-i[a]</i>	or stewardesses, at my command
11	<i>i-la-ka ša pí-ia ù<sup>r</sup> e<sup>1</sup>-[pé-eš pí-ia]</i>	they go. My words and my commands
12	<i>i-ip-pí-ša a-na zi-ik-[ri<sup>2</sup>-ia<sup>2</sup>]</i>	they fulfill. This is the present

13	<sup>r1r</sup> a <sup>l</sup> -d[al]-š[e]-n[i] be-li-ma	of Adal-Šenni, my lord,
14	[lu-ú iz-ku-r]a-an-[ni ... ]	which he has made me.
...		
4'	ša-ni-tam DUMU.MUNUS iš-me- <sup>d</sup> da-[gan]	Something else: Išme-Dagan's daughter
5'	ù DUMU.MUNUS DUMU- <sup>d</sup> IM DUMU ya-i-la-[nim]	and the daughter of Mār-Ilīm, the Ya'īlanite,
6'	ma-ah-ri-ia wa-aš-b[a]	they rose against me
7'	ú-ra-a[š-š]a-ni-in-ni um-[ma-ši-na-ma]	and besmirched me as follows:
8'	a-hu-ki ši-ir-ki ù li-ib-[bi-ki]	“Your brother—your chair and your heart—he
9'	ša-li-im-ma mi-im-ma ú-u[l i-ša-ap-pa-ra-kum <sub>7</sub> ]	is well. Why doesn't he send you anything?
10'	i-na [te <sub>4</sub> -em a-w]a-ti-im-ma i-ta-[ra <sup>7</sup> ]	They do not stop to utter (such) words.
11'	ù a-n[a-ku] ki-a-am aq-bi-ši-na-ši-im	and I answered them as follows:
12'	um-[ma a]-na-ku-ma iš-ti-n[a-m]a	I said: “You two,
13'	ma-[la] a-hi i-pa-qi-da-an-ni	the amount that my brother will send me,
14'	[ta-am]-ma-ra i-na-an-na	you will see it.” Now,
15'	[aš-šum <sup>7</sup> p]i-ša-ti-im-ma	because of (their) insults,
16'	[zi-ki-ir] šu-mi-im ša i-na-i[a]	with a present that will please me
17'	[ma-ah-ra p]i-iq-da-an-ni-ma	entrust me!
18'	[ ] šu-up-pi-il	... send!

*ARM X 74: Inib-šarri to her father, king Zimri-Lim<sup>1</sup>*

...		
13	MUNUS aš-ša-at <sup>1</sup> i-ba-al- <sup>d</sup> IŠKUR	Ibal-Addu's wife,
14	ši-ma šar-ra-at ù MU.D[U]	she is queen, and the envoys
15	a-lim <sup>kl</sup> áš-la-ka-a <sup>kl</sup> ù a-la-ni-e	of the city Ašlakka and of (other) cities:
16	MUNUS ši-ma im-ta-na-aḥ-ḥa-ar	this woman receives them (regularly).
17	ù i-ia-ti i-na tu-ub-qi-im	But I, I am constantly
18	ú-še-ši-ba-an-ni-ma	sitting in the ‘corner’ <sup>2</sup> ;
19	ki-ma MUNUS li-el-la-tim	like an idiot / a simple-minded/illiterate woman,
20	i-na qa-ti-ia li-ti-i	he makes me hold my cheeks in my hand
21	[u]š-ta-aš-bi-ta-an-n[i]	(permanently).
22	a-ka-al-šu ù ša-t[e-šu]	His <sup>3</sup> meals and his drinks
23	i-na ma-ḥa-ar MUNUS š[a-a-ti]	are in front of this woman (= he dines with her).

...  
Inib-šarri further mentions twice the “sadness of [her] heart” (*aššum muruṣ libbīja*, o. 4, *murūṣ libbim* r. 30).

Apparently upon Zimri-Lim's intervention, Ibal-Addu promised to make Inib-šarri his queen consort (ARM XXVIII 68 [A. 1054], ll. 5–13):

5	be-li <sup>lf</sup> i-ni-ib-šar-ri	My lord, why does he withhold
6	am-mi-nim ik-la-ši šumma i-túr-ás-du	Inib-šarri? When Itur-Asdu
7	i-il-la-kam it-ti i-túr-ás-du	arrives, may my lord
8	be-lí li-iṭ-ru-da-aš-ši	send her!
9	MUNUS ul-li-tam a-na hu-um-ma-tim <sup>ki</sup>	I will make this woman leave for Hummatum
10	ú-še-eṣ-ši-ši	
T.	ù ši-i GIŠ.GU.ZA-ša	and she (= Inib-šarri) shall seize her throne
12	ù ma-as-sà	and her land
13	li-ga-am-me-er	shall be completely hers.

*ARM X 46: Narâmtum to her father Zimri-Lim*

...		
17	i-na-an-na an-na-nu-um	Now, here
18	GÉME.MEŠ É.GAL-lim e-li-ia	the female palace servants gather against

1 The transliteration of the letters from ARM X adapts the electronic on-line version given by S. Lyosov at [http://www.klinopis.cz/utf/utf/catalogue.php?bookandchapter=\\_ARM\\_10,74](http://www.klinopis.cz/utf/utf/catalogue.php?bookandchapter=_ARM_10,74).

2 I. e. the harem / the women's apartments, cf. Durand/Margueron, CRAIBL 1980, 253–280.

3 Ibal-Addu's.

19	<i>i-pa-aḥ-ḥu-ru um-ma-a-mi</i>	me as follows:
20	<i>ul-la-nu-um i-na É a-bi-k[i]</i>	“There, at your father’s house,
21	<i>ú-ul i-du-ki</i>	one does not know you (any more).
22	<i>da-ḥa-at-ki ú-ul i-[ša-lu]</i>	They do not care for you(r well-being).
23	<i>ù ni-nu-ú-[ma]</i>	But we, should we
24	<i>nu-ka-ab-bi-it-ki a-bi ša e-l[i-šu ṭà-bu]</i>	honor you?” My father should do about me
25	<i>li-pu-ša-an-ni mi-im-ma ar-nam [ú-ul i-šu]</i>	whatever seems good to him. There is no guilt.
...	...	

*ARM X 31: Kirum to her father Zimri-Lim*

...		
30 <sup>4</sup>	<i>[i-n]a-an-na ù šum-ma a-na-ku si-ni-ša-ku</i>	Now, and although I am (just) a woman,
31	<i>[a-b]i ù be-lí a-na a-wa-ti-ia</i>	may my father and lord (please) listen
32	<i>[l]i-qú-ul a-wa-at DINGIR.MEŠ a-na še-er</i>	to my words! I have repeatedly written the words
33	<i>a-bi-ia aš-ta-na-ap-pa-ar</i>	of the gods to my father.
34	<i>e-le-em-ma i-na na-ḥu-ur<sup>K1</sup></i>	Go up and take (your) place in Nahur,
35	<i>ši-ib-ma ù ma-li DINGIR.MEŠ</i>	and what the gods have
36	<i>ú-ka-la-mu-ka e-pu-úš</i>	announced to you, that do!
37	<i>ša-ni-tam a-nu-um-ma 32 TUR.MEŠ</i>	Another issue: Now, 32 servants <sup>5</sup> ,
38	<i>ša i-na É ma-ri<sup>K1</sup> wa-aš-bu</i>	who are staying in the house of Mari,
39	<i>iš-tu i-na-an-na a-na e-pé-eš</i>	from now on I have laid my hand
40	<i>É-tim ša-a-ti qa-ti aš-ku-un</i>	on this house (= it is under my control).
41	<i>u<sub>4</sub>-um a-bi a-na a-la-ki-im</i>	The day when my father will
42	<i>pa-na-am i&lt;&lt;-na&gt;&gt;-ša-ka-na-am</i>	arrive in the city,
43	<i>a-na še-ri-ia li-iš-pu-ra&lt;-am&gt;-m[a]</i>	may he (please) write to me,
44	<i>[t]e<sub>4</sub>-mi lu-uš-ba-at</i>	for that I may take care/responsibility!
...		

*ARM X 33: Kirum’s life in danger*

5	<i>ik-ta-ru na-pá-aš-ti</i>	My life is in danger,
6	<i>i-na ši-tá-am-mi a-wa-at<sup>If</sup> ši-ma-tim</i>	because I have to listen to Šimatum’s words
7	<i>šum-ma be-lí ú-ul i-ta-ar-ra-an-ni</i>	If my lord will not bring me back
8	<i>a-na ma-ri<sup>K1</sup> a-ša-ba-at ap-pí</i>	to Mari, I will seize my nose
9	<i>[i]š-tu ú-ri-im a-ma-qú-ut</i>	and throw myself from the roof.
...	rev.	
18	<i>[x x-ti]m ik-ta-ru na-pá-aš-ti</i>	... “I am tired/weary of my life! <sup>6</sup>
19	<i>[be-lí] iš-pu-ra-am-ma</i>	May my lord give orders that one
20	<i>[a-na m]a-ri<sup>K1</sup> li-it-ru-ni-in-ni</i>	will bring me back to Mari.
21	<i>[i-na li]-ib-bi É-ta-am</i>	In (my) heart, a noble house
22	<i>[ri-iš-t]a-am ú-ul ḥa-aš-ḥa-ku</i>	I do not desire any more.
23	<i>[a-nu-um-m]a a-ia-ši lu ba-al-ṭà-ta</i>	Now, only that for my sake you may live! <sup>7</sup>
24	<i>[ù b]i-iq-ti-ni<sup>7</sup></i>	The hem (of my garment)
25	<i>[m]a-ḥa-ar LUGAL.MEŠ</i>	in front of the kings
26	<i>[i]b-tu-uq um-ma šu-ma</i>	he has cut off, speaking:
27	<i>at-la-ki a-na É a-bi-ki</i>	“Go into the house of your father!
28	<i>iš-tu pa-ni a-ša-ti-ia</i>	From the face of my wife
29	<i>a-mu-u[r]</i>	I look away.”

4 Line 30 corresponds to l. 7' in Dossin’s edition in ARM X.

5 Or: “children” (?). Durand (MARI 3, p. 165) now reads “32 domestiques (lù-lù).”

6 Durand (MARI 3, p. 170, nn. 52–55) revises Dossin’s original reading of ll. 13 ff. (which are only partly legible). He considers them to be part of a dialogue between Haya-Sumu and Kirum, Kirum speaking in ll. 18–23. He understands *iktaru napašū* as “my life is/will be short” in the sense of “being weary of one’s life” instead of “being threatened”.

7 This reading is questionable for several reasons. Durand (MARI 3, p. 170, n. 56) reads *[sī-s]i\*-ik-ti*, “hem”, instead. The cutting of the hem (in the presence of witnesses, like here) and Haya-sumu’s words are typical divorce symbolism.