

## URBAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR OFFERINGS, OVERLAND TRAFFIC AND THE EUPHRATES TRADE AT PRE-SARGONIC MARI <sup>1</sup>

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The impressive size of Early Dynastic Mari, Ville II, with its monumental architecture and splendid material culture corresponds well to the outstanding political role of Mari as reflected in the archives from the royal palace of Ebla. Mari was the hegemonial power of Upper Mesopotamia and Syria at the time of the earliest cuneiform documents from this region, some fifty years before the end of Ebla, the time of the main archives of Tell Beydar. In these years king Iblul'il ruled at Mari, and he and his successors Nizi and Ennadagan received rich tribute from the Syrian town of Ebla <sup>2</sup>. Mari's direct political influence extended into the Khabur triangle, since Mara'il of Nagar (Tell Brak) dedicated a statue to 'NinIZAZA' at Mari on behalf of king Iblul'il of Mari <sup>3</sup>.

This golden age of Iblul'il, when Ebla, Nagar and its satellite Nabada recognized the hegemony of Mari, did not last forever. A generation or so later, the situation had changed: Ebla had freed itself from its dependence on Mari, and Nagar proved to be a faithful ally of Ebla. The allied forces even won a battle against Mari, as reconstructed by Archi and Biga <sup>4</sup>. Mari survived Ebla and may have played a decisive role in Ebla's destruction; in any case the intensive war against Ebla and Nagar must have used up much of Mari's resources. The weakened cities of Upper Mesopotamia and the Euphrates valley thus became the prey of a new power emerging in the east, of Akkade under its king Sargon.

The role Mari played politically and economically in this period, as is apparent from the archaeological record and the information from Ebla, would not have been evident from the Pre-Sargonic texts found at this site alone. Twenty years after their exemplary publication by D. Charpin <sup>5</sup>, it seems appropriate to have another look at the Pre-Sargonic tablets from Mari, especially as further texts have appeared since <sup>6</sup>. Admittedly, administrative documents listing liters of grain as food for donkeys are not expected to be a relevant source for a better understanding of a city's functioning. So J. -Cl. Margueron, who had considered these texts in his monumental book on Mari, was apparently disappointed that they could not be combined with the archaeological evidence.

1. This paper owes much to the suggestions and discussions, references to texts or the supply of photos by Al. Archi, P. Butterlin, A. Cavigneaux, L. Colonna D'Istria, H. Horioka, J. L. Miller, to whom I express my heartfelt gratitude.

2. ARCHI & BIGA 2003, p. 1-5 with earlier literature.

3. SALLABERGER 2011 a with further literature.

4. ARCHI & BIGA 2003.

5. CHARPIN 1987, 1990.

6. References to Pre-Sargonic tablets from Mari are given in the following format: M.5 = Texts in *MARI 5*, published by CHARPIN 1987; M.6 = Texts in *MARI 6*, published by CHARPIN 1990; H. = Texts published by HORIOKA 2009; A. = Appendix of unpublished texts, partly accessible through CDLI (<http://cdli.ucla.edu/>; A.1 = P 271221, A.2 = P271227, A.3 = P271232, A.4 = P271240, A.5 = P271241).

“On le voit, les tablettes de la Ville II de Mari ne sont pas d’un grand secours pour connaître la vie quotidienne au sein de l’habitat domestique. On regrette en particulier l’absence de textes concernant les pratiques commerciales qui ont pu concerner la population qui habitait ces maisons.”<sup>7</sup>

As this paper hopes to demonstrate the texts in fact can be read as a source for the social and economic life of Mari, the organization of handcrafts and of trade and commerce. Until now, the Pre-Sargonic tablets have mainly been studied as a source for chronology and for the palaeography, orthography and language of the period. Their administrative background and their reflection of social conditions and economic activities has been touched upon only in passing, and it is the aim of this contribution to deal with these aspects, especially by comparing the Mari texts to the nearly contemporary archives of Ebla and Tell Beydar, as well as to other early archives from Babylonia.

### CEREAL PRODUCTS FOR RITUALS

The first group to be discussed here are the eight documents (M.5 5-12) published by Charpin as *Groupe C*<sup>8</sup>, which originate from the administrative buildings of the religious quarter. This sector between the sacred precinct of the Pre-Sargonic Palace and the Massif Rouge was first called *Les Communs*<sup>9</sup>, i.e. service rooms, but is now labelled *Le quartier du Grand Prêtre*<sup>10</sup>. All the texts are about cereals intended for ritual offerings and all date to the same period, namely years 6 to 8 of an unnamed ruler. Charpin has convincingly argued that this was Išqimari, the last king of the city, whose sealings were found in the destruction layer<sup>11</sup>. All tablets stem from room 16<sup>12</sup>, and though they all deal with the same topic, three different series of two or three tablets each can be identified. These series are characterized both by the products dealt with and by the recipients of the offerings:

— *Series A* (M.5 5, 7, 9): expenditures of emmer (še ziz<sub>2</sub>) and emmer flour (zi<sub>3</sub> še ziz<sub>2</sub>, M.5 9) for deities, especially a rite called *gi-ti-um*, which was performed for Ištar, Rašapan, the ‘double’ Euphrates, and most often for Ḫay(y)a<sup>d</sup>EN.KI<sup>13</sup>.

— *Series B* (M.5 6, 10, 11): expenditures of barley flour (dabin) for Ištar, in one case also of “wheat flour” (zi<sub>3</sub> še kib<sub>3</sub>, M.5 11), furthermore of “pure bread” (inda<sub>3</sub> sikil) and “round bread” (inda<sub>3</sub> kur<sub>4</sub>-kur<sub>4</sub>), all destined for the palace (M.5 10-11).

— *Series C* (M.5 8, 12): expenditures of “pure bread” (inda<sub>3</sub> sikil) for deities and rituals.

The tablets always cover expenditures for several subsequent months. Within each series, the single tablets line up to small continuous sequences (**table 1**). Dates are given as year and month, e.g. 07/09 = ninth month of year 7. Months without offerings and thus not registered on the tablet are in pointed brackets, e.g. <08/01>.

Year	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
06									A		A B	A
07	[A]	[A]	[A]	A	A	<A>B	<A>[B]	AB	A<B>C	ABC	A <B> [C]	A B C
08	<A B> C	A B C										

Table 1. Temporal coverage of documents on cereals for rituals (Series A to C, M.5 5 to 12).

7. MARGUERON 2004, p. 189.

8. CHARPIN 1987, p. 70-76.

9. Cf. CHARPIN 1987, p. 70f.

10. MARGUERON 2004, p. 259f.

11. CHARPIN 2005.

12. MARGUERON 2004, p. 259, fig. 248.

13. ARCHI 2010.

- *Series A*: emmer for rituals
  - M.5 5: ...] – 06/09
  - M.5 7: 06/11 – 06/[12] – [...?] – 07/04 – 07/05 – <07/06 – 07/07> – 07/08
  - M.5 9: 07/09 – 07/10 – 07/11 – 07/12 – <08/01> – 08/02
- *Series B*: flour for Ištar
  - M.5 6: 06/11
  - –
  - M.5 11: 07/06 – [07/07]
  - M.5 10: 07/08 – <07/09> – 07/10 – <07/11> – 07/12 – <08/01> – 08/02
- *Series C*: “pure bread” for rituals
  - M.5 12: [07]/09 – 07/10 – [07/11]
  - M.5 8: 07/12 – 08/01 – 08/02

The texts cover the same period, starting late in year 6 (series A and B) or 7 (series C), and they all end by the second month of year 8. This implies that the final destruction must have occurred shortly thereafter, presumably within the next few months, during the campaign season in the summer of Išqimari’s eighth year (see below for the calendrical setting). A look at the specific contents reveals why different documents concerning cereal products covered exactly the same period: these were the accounts of various specialized storerooms and workshops for the preparation of food. Thus series A stems from emmer storage facilities, series B from a grain grinding workshop producing mostly barley flour, and series C from a bakery of the “pure breads”. Such a highly differentiated accounting system can hardly be demonstrated elsewhere in contemporary archives. At Pre-Sargonic Lagash, for example, all offerings are listed in the same documents<sup>14</sup>. At the palace of Ebla, “bread and beer texts” register food given to the people present in the palace and also for offerings<sup>15</sup>.

The three different posts at Mari not only worked at the same time, but often provided food for the same occasion, which may even be attested in other texts from Mari. Most attestations refer to an enigmatic rite (UR<sub>3</sub> GUD MA<sub>2</sub>)<sup>16</sup> for Ištar in 07/12, which seems to be related to boats (ma<sub>2</sub>):

- M.5 9, Series A: 5 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of wheat flour for: *aš-dar iš* UR<sub>3</sub> GUD MA<sub>2</sub>
- M.5 10, Series B: 30 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of barley flour for: *aš-dar iš* UR<sub>3</sub> GUD MA<sub>2</sub>
- M.5 8, Series C: 10 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) for “pure bread” for Ištar of Šarbat (<sup>d</sup>INANA *zar<sub>3</sub>-bad<sup>ki</sup>*)
- M.5 17, Text from Palace P. 1 (*Groupe D*): 50 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of “white beer” (ŠE+DIN BABBAR) for: *aš-dar*, [*iš*] UR<sub>3</sub> GUD MA<sub>2</sub>; 10 liters of “instant beer” (?) for Mr. Ir’ibu, “for Šarbat” (*iš zar<sub>3</sub>-bad<sup>ki</sup>*)

Although stemming originally from three different offices, the tablets concerning cereals for rituals were found, as mentioned, in a single room. This situation suggests the existence of a central bureau for cereal products. The tablets themselves may simply have been discarded after the transfer of relevant data to more general accounts of the expenditures for offerings —accounts that should have resembled those known from other archives and mentioned above (e.g. offerings at Girsu, bread and beer texts from Ebla).

Before taking up the destinations of these cereals, the items listed will be briefly considered. As is well known, barley was the main cereal crop cultivated in the ancient Near East. Interestingly, within the text group two other crops are also named, namely “bread wheat” (še *ziz<sub>2</sub>*) and “emmer” (še *kib<sub>3</sub>*). Bread wheat and emmer, which were used for a higher quality bread, are quite rare and more valuable

14. See the tables in SELZ 1995.

15. The first volume of the Ebla documents was published by MILANO 1990 (ARET 9); a second volume (ARET 10) is to be expected from A. Archi and M. G. Biga.

16. Against the interpretation as ma<sub>2</sub>:gu<sub>4</sub>:ur<sub>3</sub> for standard ma<sub>2</sub>-gur<sub>8</sub>, “procession boat”, suggested by J.-M. Durand apud CHARPIN 1987, p. 75 speaks the fact that unorthographic writings are rare and that the sequence of signs is usually respected.

cereals in the third millennium. At Mari, “emmer” was apparently even stored in a special venue, since it appears only within the texts of Series A. “Bread wheat” is listed only once beside the standard barley flour in series B, the offerings to Ištar <sup>17</sup>.

Series C lists, as noted, a special kind of bread, named “pure bread” (*inda<sub>3</sub> sikil*), either counted per piece or measured according to capacity. Different kinds of bread are mentioned in the Mari documents (**table 2**).

<b>Measured according to capacity</b>	<i>inda<sub>3</sub></i> “bread” (M.5 23, M.6 42, H.8, A.5, A.10) <i>inda<sub>3</sub> sikil</i> “pure bread” (M.5 8, 10, 12, 23), attested also at Ebla <i>inda<sub>3</sub> kur<sub>4</sub>-kur<sub>4</sub></i> “thick bread” (M.5 10), cf. Ebla <i>inda<sub>3</sub> gur<sub>4</sub> si-ga</i> (ARET 9 107 r. iii 2), cf. Neo-Sumerian <i>inda<sub>3</sub> kur<sub>4</sub>-ra</i> <i>inda<sub>3</sub> u<sub>2</sub></i> “bread for nutrition”(?) (M.5 22), attested also in Sargonic Sumerian; cf. Ebla <i>inda<sub>3</sub> u<sub>9</sub></i> (ARET 9, 401 s.v.)? <i>inda<sub>3</sub> UD</i> “white/light bread” (M.5 22), not attested at Ebla, but is the standard barley bread at Pre-Sargonic Lagash
<b>Counted by piece</b>	<i>inda<sub>3</sub> sikil</i> “pure bread” (M.5 8, 10, 12, 23), attested also at Ebla <i>inda<sub>3</sub> NITA<sub>2</sub></i> “... bread” (M.5 23, 27), reading and interpretation unclear <i>inda<sub>3</sub> TAG</i> “... bread” (A.8), reading and interpretation unclear

Table 2. Varieties of bread (underlined attestations are from texts from Chantier B).

The “pure bread” (*inda<sub>3</sub> sikil*) was that given to deities, used in rites and consumed by the “royal house”, very similar to the evidence from the palace of Ebla, where “pure bread” is similarly known <sup>18</sup>. It vaguely reminds one of the situation at Pre-Sargonic Lagash, where “holy bread and milk” (*inda<sub>3</sub> ga ku<sub>3</sub>*) were offered and then distributed by the ruler’s wife to the officials of various temples during religious festivals <sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, the consumption of “pure bread” in the palace agrees well with the cultic functions that characterize the Pre-Sargonic palace of Mari <sup>20</sup>. So the religious use conditioned the production of a specific type of bread, and this was produced at a special bakery from which a few accounts survived.

The documents from Palace P.1 (texts M.5 13-21; *Groupe D*) <sup>21</sup> deal with a greater variety of products, including beer, sheep and fruit, and these goods were used primarily, but not only, in rituals. Most expenditures go to various persons listed either by name or by profession. Since these texts date from the same period (03/05 to 08/02), the evidence of the two series can be combined to reconstruct elements of the ritual obligations. The deities named in the documents concerning cereals for rites and in other documents are given in **table 3**.

The isolated references to deities and rituals contain little information on the cultic calendar at Early Dynastic Mari. The sequence of the twelve months of the Mari calendar, which was also used at Ebla and other places, has been reconstructed by Charpin <sup>22</sup>. The beginning of the year at Mari, the first month, can confidently be placed in spring, corresponding roughly to April <sup>23</sup>, as was the case in Southern Mesopotamia. This is suggested by a probable reference to “harvesting” as a rite in the first

17. M.5 11 ii 2 (cf. i 1): 0.0.1 5 sila<sub>3</sub> dabin, 5 sila<sub>3</sub> zi<sub>3</sub> še kib<sub>3</sub> (read after copy and photo against the transliteration); noteworthy is the consistent use of še before ziz<sub>2</sub> and kib<sub>3</sub>.

18. MILANO 1990, p. 400 s.v. “ninda-sikil”.

19. SELZ 1995, p. 73-78, 203-204.

20. As pointed out by MARGUERON 2004, p. 222-227.

21. CHARPIN 1987, p. 76-80.

22. CHARPIN 1982, 1993.

23. COHEN 1993, p. 23-29, proposed a different reconstruction of the Mari calendar (with Charpin’s third month as his first), which, however, does not take into account the sequences in the administrative tablets listed as Series A to C above. He agrees on the beginning of the year in spring.

<sup>d</sup> <i>a-bir<sub>5</sub>-tum</i> “Hibirtum”	M.5 8, Series C (07/12); M.5 36, Chantier B ([x]/[x])
Aštar: <sup>d</sup> INANA of Šarba(t)	M.5 8, Series C (07/12); M.5 9, series A (07/09)
(Aštar:) Šarba(t) (cult-place)	M.5 6, Series B (06/11); M.5 17, Palace P.1 (07/12)
<sup>d</sup> EN.KI “Enki/Ea”	M.5 7, Series B (06/11); M.5 9, series A (07/11)
AN.KIB.NUN.A:AN.KIB.NUN.A “(double) Euphrates”	M.5 7, Series B (07/[01 to 03])
<sup>d</sup> <i>il-ḥa-lam</i> “God of Halab”(his temple, e <sub>2</sub> )	M.5 6, Series B (06/11); M.5 20, Palace P.1 (04/08)
<sup>d</sup> ŠKUR “Weather-God”	M.5 8, Series C (07/12)
<sup>d</sup> LUGAL- <i>ter</i> <sub>14</sub> - <i>ga</i> “Lord of Terqa”	M.5 8, Series C (07/12); M.5 20, Palace P.1 (04/08)
<sup>d</sup> NIN.KUR “Lady of the Land/the Netherworld”	M.5 8, Series C (07/12)
<sup>d</sup> NIN- <i>na-gar</i> <sub>3</sub> “Lady of Nagar”	M.5 20, Palace P.1 (04/08)
<sup>d</sup> NIN- <i>x-ḥa-da-Lum</i> “...”	M.5 20, Palace P.1 (04/08)
<sup>d</sup> <i>ra-sa-ba-an</i> “Rašap”	M.5 7, Series B (07/05)

Table 3. Deities attested in Mari documents mainly from the religious quarter.

month<sup>24</sup> and to the “threshing floor” in the first and second months<sup>25</sup>. A rite referring to the seeding of grain in the fifth month, i.e. August<sup>26</sup>, agrees with the fact that in Sumer similarly named months appear in positions four and six (thus July and September).

The rites and offerings mentioned in the Mari texts, however, do not permit the identification of annual festivals or rites. For example, Ištar receives offerings in the eleventh month of year 6, but not in year 7 within the same series of texts (Series B). It thus seems more probable that the texts reflect offerings necessitated by actual developments (**table 4**). The frequent references to the “palace” (Series B) or the “consumption by the house of the king” (e<sub>2</sub> lugal, Series C) indicate a close relationship to the king. Therefore, it remains uncertain whether the cult activities mentioned took place in the sacred buildings of the town or in sanctuaries within the palace.

Month	Pre-Sargonic Mari	Nippur/Ur Ur III	Umma Ur III
i ~ April	“sur-Rite of harvesting” (sur gu[r <sub>10</sub> ʔ] [x?]); “threshing floor” (su <sub>7</sub> )	Ur: “Harvesting of grain” (še-KIN-ku <sub>5</sub> )	“Harvesting of grain” (še-KIN-ku <sub>5</sub> )
ii	“threshing floor” (su <sub>7</sub> )		
iii			
iv ~ July		Nippur: “Handling of seed” (šu-nuḡun)	
v	“sur-Rite of barley seed” (sur še-nuḡun)		
vi ~ September			“Handling of seed” (šu-nuḡun)
vii			

Table 4. Rites for harvesting and sowing and references to threshing floors at Pre-Sargonic Mari compared to the Mesopotamian calendar (Ur III).

24. M.5 8 v 5–vi 2 (08/01): 7 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of pure bread (inda<sub>3</sub> sikil) for sur KI[N?] [x?] (KIN = gur 10ʔ; reading KI[N] for Charpin’s p[èšʔ] according to copy); for a rite designated as sur cf. the rite for seeding in the fifth month.

25. M.5 27 (25/01): Beer for the servants (iš ARAD<sub>2</sub>.ARAD<sub>2</sub>) at “the threshing floor of the Weather-god” (su<sub>7</sub> diškur); H.6 (23/02): 560 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of barley “on the threshing floor of Kirbanum (PN?)” (in su<sub>7</sub> kir-ba-num<sub>2</sub>).

26. M.5 7 v 1–3 (07/05): 10 liters (sila<sub>3</sub>) of emmer (še ziz2) for sur še nuḡun.

The texts from the administrative quarter list cereal products from specialized departments, given out in small quantities for royal rituals. The same rituals appear in the more fragmentary dossier from Palace P.1. The small numbers of people and the low quantities of food suggest that they are *not* concerned with the standard provisions for the palace or with regular offerings in the temple cult, but with contributions to various rites.

Some tablets from Palace P.1 are closely related to the royal court, especially since deliveries to the “king” (lugal, delivery of figs, M.5 19) and to the “palace” (e<sub>2</sub>-gal, “white beer”, ŠE+DIN UD, M.5 17) appear, as do two notes on “royal clothes” (M.5 14, 15). The only text (M.5 20) that lists persons by profession or office, to whom “tables” and “vessels” are attributed, enumerates managerial offices of some importance (**table 5**).

sugal <sub>7</sub> -gal	“major attendant, grand vizier”
i <sub>3</sub> -du <sub>8</sub>	“doorkeeper”
nu-banda <sub>3</sub> bad <sub>3</sub>	“captain of the wall”
nu-banda <sub>3</sub> maškim	“captain of authorized agents”
nu-banda <sub>3</sub> <sup>neš</sup> gigir <sub>2</sub>	“captain of wagons”
nu-banda <sub>3</sub> [...]	“lieutenant of [...]
ad-da diŋir-diŋir	« ‘father’ of the gods » (a priest)
ašgab A	“... leatherworker”
uri-apin	“... of ploughs” (or PN?)

Table 5. Professions in M.5 20 (from Palace P.1).

The tablet M.5 20 presents a unique concentration of high officials in the Mari corpus. However, the list does not include those persons that are typically found at a royal court: the royal family, high ranking military officers such as generals, foreign emissaries, musicians and entertainers. So the tablets do not seem to stem from the central archive of the royal palace itself, which becomes evident when compared to the personnel attested in documents discovered in the Royal Palace G at Ebla.

The discussion thus far has emphasized that we deal with two homogeneous groups from two findspots, namely from Palace P.1 (M.5 13-21, *Groupe D* in CHARPIN 1987) and from the religious quarter (M.5 5-12, *Groupe C* *ibid.*). The latter deal only with cereals and rituals, the former with various commodities and mostly with persons. As the tablets cover similar ground and date to the same years, Charpin underlined the similarities and came to the following conclusion: “non seulement ces tablettes sont exactement contemporaines, mais elles constituent les *membra disjecta* d’un seul et même lot d’archives”<sup>27</sup>. However, while the two text groups (and some other texts from Mari) list the same recipients or festival occasions, they clearly reflect two distinct providers of foodstuffs for offerings. The tablets from Palace P.1 appear to be more closely related to the royal sector, whereas the findspot and the contents of the archive from the religious quarter point to a specialized household organizing the preparation of bread and flour for rites distinct from the palace. The religious purpose of the deliveries agrees well with the architectural and urban layout of the quarter as analysed by J.-Cl. Margueron, who has called this area the “quartier administratif du domaine sacré”<sup>28</sup>. The building was situated close to the city’s religious centre, and thus the organization was probably more of urban than strictly palatial affiliation<sup>29</sup>.

27. CHARPIN 1987, p. 93.

28. MARGUERON 2004, p. 259.

29. Naturally, it is never possible to draw a strict border between “palatial” and “urban” spheres, since the king is involved in urban matters and more people are related to the palace than those of the inner circle of the king. Deliveries to the king mentioned in the documents do not decide the matter, since they can stem from an organization either within the palace or outside of it. The tablets themselves give no indication regarding the delivering office.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF CHANTIER B

The second part of this study deals with the tablets found in Chantier B<sup>30</sup> and focuses on the features of the organization in which the tablets were once written.

The 41 Pre-Sargonic documents deal likewise with cereal products, but are of a very different character. First of all, they not only document the expenditure of grain products, they deal with grain received as well. References to “plough oxen”<sup>31</sup> and to threshing floors (su<sub>7</sub>, see **table 4** above)<sup>32</sup> show that they are more concerned with agricultural production. Characteristically, the only text from this group relating to a ritual lists sheep for rites at sowing (še-nu<sub>7</sub>un, M.5 36, **table 4**). And, as mentioned, only barley appears, not the more valuable grains wheat and emmer.

What was the barley used for? Some of it, sometimes explicitly designated as the “purchase price” (šam<sub>2</sub>), was exchanged to purchase goods, i.e. bran (tu<sub>h</sub>, A.6) as fodder for young animals (AMAR.AMAR, M.6 40), grapes (neštin, A.8), fish (ku<sub>6</sub>, H.8; ku<sub>6</sub>-ku<sub>6</sub>, A.10) and, more importantly for the material culture of the Bronze Age, tin (AN.NA, H.8, A.6).

Much of the grain was fed to donkey mares (eme<sub>6</sub>), rarely explicitly designated as “fodder” (še gu<sub>7</sub>; see **table 6**). The asses were attributed to various persons that appear prominently in the text group: Adda (and earlier his predecessor Pabu) was specialized in “big donkeys” (eme<sub>6</sub> gal), and once he also took care of female “mules” (kung<sub>2</sub>).

According to M.5 24 one animal needed 2.5 liters of grain, a ration suited for donkeys<sup>33</sup>. These were the daily rations for small herds of female equids comprising mostly 4 to 8 heads according to the amount of 10 to 20 liters of grain. The fodder was given to them the year round —months 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 are attested— but quite often not for all days of the month. Perhaps the female donkeys were employed somewhere else during these days or they simply didn’t need extra fodder? The small herds of female equids may have been kept for breeding, and in this regard one can refer to a document on the purchase of bran to feed the foals in summer (M.6 40, [x]/04). Interestingly, the more valuable male equids almost never appear: among the 29 single expenditures, only once does one find a male foal, once (perhaps) a male donkey; the latter were probably engaged as draught animals for wagons and chariots.

The texts thus deal with agricultural affairs, the production of grain and the care of donkey herds. The institution included grain processing, since beer, beer ingredients and bread were distributed to persons. Many recipients are listed by name, but those whose profession is indicated, are listed in **table 7**.

At first sight the professions listed would not seem to point to a organization(s) or household specialized in certain products or services. Noteworthy is the inclusion of weavers and blacksmiths, since these craftsmen dealt with more valuable raw materials that could also be housed in the palace. An important segment of persons employed in this household was active in agriculture, including specialists for the plough work, while shepherds and gardeners cared for its herds and date gardens. Even “mice”<sup>34</sup> were fed, a delicacy at these times. Various craftsmen cared for the necessary upkeep of the buildings and their interior equipment, namely bricklayers, carpenters, reed and leather workers, potters, felters and weavers.

30. The texts are M.5 21–37, M.6 38–42, H.1–8, A.1–11; see CHARPIN 2009 on the provenience of further tablets from Chantier B in addition to M.5 21–37 and M.6 38–42; note the prosopographic correspondences between texts from various text groups.

31. <sup>9eš</sup>apin gud M.5 21, called <sup>9eš</sup>apin “plough” M.5 22 and fodder (še gu<sub>7</sub>) for “ploughs” M.5 30; note also “ploughs” (<sup>9eš</sup>apin) of PNs in M5, A.3 (of Ra-ši-DIŃIR), A.4 (of A-bu<sub>3</sub>-la-at and of Zi-ri<sub>2</sub>), A.8 (of A-ḫi-za-gi and of Puzur<sub>4</sub>-ma-lik).

32. su<sub>7</sub> read in M.5 27 and H.6 after photo (Charpin and Horioka: “du<sub>6</sub>”).

33. This can hardly be compared to the exorbitant 10 liters given to the ruler’s donkeys at ancient Nabada; see SALLABERGER 1996, p. 103f. for a summary of the documents regarding the provision of the ruler’s donkeys at Tell Beydar, and WIDELL 2005, p. 728f. for the dangers of overfeeding which is suggested by these numbers. A simple solution of the problem has not been found yet.

34. peš<sub>2</sub>-peš<sub>2</sub>, M.5 30 iv 3, correct transliteration (“LAK 247 – x”) accordingly.

Compared to the personnel represented in the archives from Tell Beydar/Nabada and Tell Mardikh/Ebla, several differences can be noted. Nabada did not maintain blacksmiths and weavers, who apparently were more present in first rank cities. At Ebla, on the other hand, the personnel is known to have worked within the inner quarters of the palace, but the direct management of agriculture did not belong to their duties.

Qty. in liters (sila <sub>3</sub> )	Donkeys (PNs underlined)	Duration (in days)	Reference (with date)
2 TAR= 2.5	1* eme <sub>6</sub> gibil	4 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
5	amar eme <sub>6</sub>	30 (iti.SAR)	H.4 (17?/11)
5	eme <sub>6</sub> ... DU	30 (iti.SAR)	M.6 38 (18/04)
5	<u>da-tum</u>	2 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
5	amar anše nita <sub>2</sub> (?)	3 u <sub>4</sub>	H.3 (18/09)
6?	anše(?) DU	30 (iti.SAR)	H.4 (17?/11)
6	eme <sub>6</sub>	a-di 25 u <sub>4</sub>	A.6 (23/05)
7	2 eme <sub>6</sub>	5 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
7	... eme <sub>6</sub> DU	18 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
7 TAR = 7.5	[...] NE <sub>2</sub> NE	21 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
9	(eme <sub>6</sub> ) NE <sub>2</sub> NE	30 (iti.SAR)	H.4 (17?/11)
9	eme <sub>6</sub> NE <sub>2</sub> NE	25 u <sub>4</sub>	M.6 39 (19?/01)
9	eme <sub>6</sub> NE <sub>2</sub> NE	20 u <sub>4</sub>	A.1 (19/02)
10	eme <sub>6</sub>	26 u <sub>4</sub>	H.3 (18/09)
10	eme <sub>6</sub> gal	22 u <sub>4</sub>	M.6 39 (19?/01)
10	eme <sub>6</sub> gal	26 u <sub>4</sub>	H.3 (18/09)
10	eme <sub>6</sub> gal	30 (iti.SAR)	M.6 38 (18/04)
10	eme <sub>6</sub> maḥ (?)	24 u <sub>4</sub>	H.4 (17?/11)
10	eme <sub>6</sub> <u>il<sub>2</sub>-e</u>		H.3 (18/09)
15! ("13")	eme <sub>6</sub> <u>ad-da</u>	27 u <sub>4</sub>	H.3 (18/09)
15	eme <sub>6</sub> <sup>!</sup> gal <u>ad-da</u>	10 u <sub>4</sub>	M.6 39 (19?/01)
15	kunga <sub>2</sub> eme <sub>6</sub> <u>ad-da</u>	25 u <sub>4</sub>	M.6 38 (18/04)
15	eme <sub>6</sub> ... <u>pa<sub>4</sub>-bu<sub>3</sub></u>	24 u <sub>4</sub>	H.4 (17?/11)
20 s.	anše <u>i-zi-ḥu</u>	25 u <sub>4</sub>	A.6 (23/05)
20 še gu <sub>7</sub>	... eme <sub>6</sub> <u>ad-da</u>	16 u <sub>4</sub>	M.5 24 (22/10)
20 še gu <sub>7</sub>	eme <sub>6</sub> <u>ad-da</u>	15 u <sub>4</sub>	A.1 (19/02)
[...]	... eme <sub>6</sub>	30 (iti.SAR)	M.6 38 (18/04)
[...]	eme <sub>6</sub> gal	18 u <sub>4</sub>	A.1 (19/02)
[...]	kunga <sub>2</sub> eme <sub>6</sub> ... NE <sub>2</sub> NE	30 (iti.SAR)	M.6 38 (18/04)

Table 6. Grain given to donkeys, mainly mares, in the Chantier B archive.  
maḥ? read after photo (unpublished, kindly provided by H. Horioka).



On a more general level, the range of craftsmen is comparable to that witnessed in the household of the ruler's wife at Pre-Sargonic Girsu<sup>35</sup>. The parallels between the Chantier B household at Mari and the Pre-Sargonic Emunus can hardly be explained as a regional Mesopotamian phenomenon, but rather as a sign of their similar function within the state. Both archives stem from an institutional household at a secondary level below the palace, but situated in a first rank city, the capital of a state<sup>36</sup>.

Along with the most basic duties in a subsistence economy by providing their members with food and housing, the households mentioned also fulfilled special functions which served wider segments of the community beyond the household. In Girsu's Emunus the textile industry is of outstanding importance, which can be considered as characteristic for a household led by the queen or another high-ranking woman<sup>37</sup>. At Nabada, an important hub in overland transportation systems, there was a

<sup>ad</sup> adgub <sub>3</sub>	"3 reed workers" (for mats and baskets)	M.5 23, "for 2 days" A.5
ašgab	"leather worker"	a. ... M.6 42, A.10, ašgab 2 M.5 23, ašgab MUNUS A.2
bahar <sub>2</sub>	"potter"	M.5 23, A.6, "for three days" H.8
nagar	"carpenter"	H.3, A.5, A.10; "three carpenters" M.5 23
simug	"blacksmith"	H.8, "for three days" H.8
šidim	"brick layer, builder"	A.8
tu <sub>9</sub> -du <sub>8</sub>	"felted, rope-maker"	"one f.", M.5 23
tu <sub>9</sub> -tuku <sub>5</sub>	"weaver"	"four w.s" M.5 25
nu-kiri <sub>6</sub>	"gardener"	M.5 22, 23, 25, A.5
sipa	"shepherd"	A.2
sipa udu	"shepherd for sheep"	A.5
nam-zu <sub>2</sub> -ri <sub>2</sub>	"guard(?)"	M.5 23
pa <sub>4</sub> -ses	"attendant"	H.2, A.2
šu-i	"barber"	M.5 3, H.6, A.6, A.8
ḡuruš kaš <sub>4</sub>	"male messenger"	A.8
maškim (or ugula kaš <sub>4</sub> ?)	"commissioner" (or "headman of messengers(?)")	A.6
<b>Persons related to boats</b>		
il <sub>2</sub> -il <sub>2</sub> ma <sub>2</sub>	"lifting(?) boats"	M.5 28
šuma <sub>2</sub> gal	"the one of the large boats"	M.5 28
lu <sub>2</sub> addir <sub>x</sub> (LAK 590)	"man of the boat fare"	M.5 31
<b>Servants and others</b>		
urdu <sub>2</sub>	"servants, slaves"	"four s.s" A.3, "six s.s with Mišar, the one of the large boats" M.5 28
ARAD <sub>2</sub> .ARAD <sub>2</sub> su <sub>7</sub> dīškur	"servants of the threshing place of Adad"	M.5 27
DUMU.DUMU šu dag	"the 'sons' of the one of the <i>building</i> "	M.5 28
E <sub>2</sub> -tum na-se <sub>11</sub>	"house (and) people" (?)	M.5 23

Table 7. Professions and designations of persons in texts from Chantier B.

35. For an overview of the personnel of the household see now PRENTICE 2010.

36. For a differentiation of palace archives and other "large household" archives see SALLABERGER in print. Tell Beydar represents the case of a contemporary second-rank city.

37. For the role of the textile industry cf. e.g. PRENTICE 2010, chapter "Redistribution", p. 13-95.

special workshop for the repair of carts and wagons<sup>38</sup>. And the palace of Ebla first of all housed those professions that dealt with palace goods, namely textiles and metals<sup>39</sup>.

Mari's Chantier B household features two specialized sectors: the breeding of donkeys and the care of boats.

### *Donkey breeding*

In the Pre-Sargonic period donkeys were used beside oxen as draft animals for ploughing both in Southern and Upper Mesopotamia, e.g. at Girsu and at Tell Beydar/Nabada. Only donkeys were employed in overland traffic. At Tell Beydar it appears that the breeding of equids is especially connected with the regional center Nagar. For Nabada and Nagar a study of the documents and the animal terracottas revealed that the economic consequences deriving from the political role of the capital were relevant for all inhabitants of a city: some branches and professions served the needs of the royal palace and thus were mainly situated at first rank settlements (Pruß & Sallaberger 2003/04). So the donkey business fits very well to the general political and economic position of the regional center Mari.

In some instances, the documents note a specific use of the donkeys for "expeditions" (kaskal):

H.3 (18/09): 600 liters of grain: Mr. Dati (= Datum, see **table 6?**); 600 liters of grain: Mr. NE.NE, iš kaskal "for the expedition"

A.5 ([x]/[x]): [x]+120 liters of barley flour, 650 liters grain for consumption (še gu<sub>7</sub>): kaskal; 20+120 liters: AN.GUD×KASKAL (=?)

A.8 (0/0): 80 liters of grain for "1 male messenger" (ḡuruš kaš<sub>4</sub>), 110 liters for "sourdough" (used for beer production, babir) iš kaskal

If we accept the same terminology for Mari as it was used at contemporary Ebla, the "expedition" (kaskal) refers to a commercial expedition<sup>40</sup>. Persons were equipped from the Chantier B household with grain for flour and beer to take part (H.3, A.8), whereas the donkeys were fed with grain (H.3, A.5). Considering the rate of 2.5 liters per day per donkey, the 1,200 liters of grain listed in H.3 would amount to twice 8 animals for a month that our institution contributed (2.5 liters × 8 donkeys × 30 days = 600 liters).

Concerning expeditions to more distant regions one can add references to Martu, the country of the nomadic Amorites<sup>41</sup>, which was at this period restricted to the region around Jebel Bishri. And D. Charpin has explained a specific expenditure of beer ingredients as "for the steppe", which refers to a trip as well<sup>42</sup>.

These references indicate that donkeys kept at the Chantier B institution were used for commercial expeditions of Mari. Furthermore, rations for persons related to the chariots indicate that wagons were also part of the administrative agenda of the inhabitants of our house<sup>43</sup>.

### *Boats*

The other specific occupation of the archive is the care for boats. This is of course directly related to the fact that the river Euphrates, on whose banks Mari was situated, served as the only major waterway between Upper Mesopotamia and Syria and that Mari's power was always based on a control of the

38. SALLABERGER 1998.

39. Cf. e.g. ARCHI 1988.

40. ARCHI & BIGA 2003, p. 8, fn. 26; kaskal appears also in the Tell Beydar documents, see *Subartu* 2, p. 181 s.v.

41. M.5 9 (07/09), belongs to "communis", series A (see above): 10 liters of emmer flour each for two men (*u<sub>9</sub>-ši-i-šar, na-ni*) iš mar-tu "towards the Amorites"; A.5 ([x/x]): 60 liters of grain: mar-tu "the Amorite" or "(towards the) Amorites".

42. M.5 28 (26/02): 180 liters of GIŠGAL×TITAB for a man (KUR.I<sub>3</sub>.SI) iš šé-rí "towards the steppe".

43. M.5 23 (22/06): 80 liters of beer product (GIŠGAL×GUG<sub>2</sub>) and 105 liters of barley flour (for the men of the) chariots (<sup>9e</sup>sgigir<sub>2</sub>).

Euphrates traffic. We recall that grain was spent to buy fish for the Chantier B household, that there was a rite connected with boats (UR<sub>3</sub> GUD MA<sub>2</sub>) and that furthermore the Euphrates was venerated as a deity in the royal rituals (**table 3**).

The evidence related to boats seems meager at first sight, but it is specific to the Chantier B archive if compared to other contemporary archives. These are the relevant persons listed (**table 8**):

lu <sub>2</sub> addir <sub>x</sub> (LAK 590)	“man of the boat fare”	M.5 31, A.6 (5 times), A. 8
il <sub>2</sub> -il <sub>2</sub> ma <sub>2</sub>	“lifting(?) boats”	M.5 28
šu ma <sub>2</sub> gal	“he of the large boats”	M.5 28: instant beer for “six servants (urdu <sub>2</sub> ) with Mišar ( <i>me-šar</i> ), the one of the large boats”

Table 8. Persons related to boats in the Chantier B texts.

ARAD<sub>2</sub> read after photo; correct Charpin’s copy and transliteration (“i-kur”) accordingly.

Mr Mišar is only once called “the one of the large boats” in M.5 28. The person, however, is named more often in the archive as one of its more important officials, sometimes at the side of Mr. Zira<sup>44</sup>. The latter one, Zira, appears once as recipient of wooden implements.

M.5 31 (E. Chantier B, VIII; 33/04): “860 wood sticks (<sup>neš</sup>pa) and 200 wooden poles (? <sup>neš</sup>ma<sup>a</sup>madul<sub>x</sub>(BU)): Zira has received it (*zi-ra šu ba-ti*)”

The madul-implements are usually translated as “chariot poles” and are known as parts of carts or wagons and of ploughs especially from Pre-Sargonic Lagash. However, the same term appears in the archaic texts of Ur in the context of ships<sup>45</sup> and so the case is undecided, if Zira can be counted with the wagons or with the boats. The “sticks” (<sup>neš</sup>pa) could be used for both boats and wagons or even as fuel for ovens.

Mr. Zira, the recipient of the wooden implements, is one of the leading figures of our archive besides Mišar: recipient of barley flour and of instant beer in three texts, he appears with amounts of grain, he owes another person 6,719 liters of grain and 10 shekels of silver, and he transfers grain to a person related to boat traffic (**table 9**).

M.5 25 (E. Chantier B, Room V, 23/02)	Barley flour in liters for: 40 <i>zi-ra</i> , 60 <i>me-šar</i> , 40 “gardeners” (nu-kiri <sub>6</sub> ) ...
M.5 22 (E. Chantier B, Room V, 20/03)	Instant beer (GIŠGAL×TITAB): 40 liters each for <i>la-li</i> , <i>zi-ra</i> , <i>me-šar</i> , <i>lu-lu</i>
M.5 28 (E. Chantier B, Room V, 26/02)	Instant beer (GIŠGAL×TITAB): 10 liters each for <i>mi-su-wa</i> and <i>zi-ra</i>
M.5 31 (E. Chantier B, Room VIII, 33/04)	6,710 liters of grain and 10 shekels of silver as debts with Dudu ( <i>aš<sub>2</sub>-ti zi-ra du-du i-su<sub>2</sub></i> ); receipt of wooden implements (see above)
M.6 40 (E. Chantier B, Room I, [x]/04)	Grain for <i>zi-ra</i> (amount not preserved), for <i>mi-su<sub>4</sub></i> (240+180 liters) and three other persons
A.3 (Chantier B, Room I?, [x/x])	Instant beer (GIŠGAL×TITAB) for <i>zi-ra</i> (amount broken) and 5 liters for 4 slaves/servants (urdu <sub>2</sub> )
A.6 (Chantier B, Room I?, 23/05)	100 liters of grain for <i>zi-ra</i> “for the man of the boat fare” ( <i>iš lu<sub>2</sub> addir<sub>x</sub></i> )

Table 9. Mr. Zira in Chantier B documents.

44. Zira: M.5 28, M.5 22, M.5 25; also as recipient of instant beer (GIŠGAL×TITAB) M.5 27, 25/01), in H.3 (18/09) in a list of persons two entries after the “carpenter”, in A.6 (23/05) her receives grain for the “man of the boat fare”.

45. UET 2 25; cf. CIVIL 1989.



Figure 1. Basins coated with bitumen, perhaps used for the caulking of ships (after MARGUERON 2004, p. 171, fig. 147).



Figure 2. The bakery in the Chantier B workshop (after MARGUERON 2004, p. 171, fig. 148).

### *The Chantier B Workshops: Conclusions*

As the above analysis has demonstrated the Chantier B tablets stem from an organization that included a workshop connected with boats and carts. This fits better to the archaeological situation than it was ever realized. The building in Chantier B was dubbed by its excavator J.-Cl. Margueron as “*La résidence aux Installations artisanales*”<sup>46</sup>. Some rooms of this building are characterized by an extensive use of bitumen<sup>47</sup>. Whereas Margueron had thought of a dyeing workshop (“teinture”), the textual evidence points to the use of bitumen for boats. Most probably the boats were not built within the narrow rooms themselves, but some parts of boats and carts could have been prepared here, and furthermore bitumen must have been stored, bitumen that was essential for the caulking of boats. We remember that various craftsmen were employed, sometimes for a few days only (reedworker, botter, blacksmith), and all of these can contribute to the repair and upkeep of boats and wagons (**fig. 1**).

Within the building also a bakery (“boulangerie”) was excavated. This agrees with the fact that mainly grain products are listed in the texts, among other things breads (note the varieties of bread in **table 2**). The grain was delivered from the persons depending on the institution, and grinding, baking and the preparation of beer certainly took place within the workshop (**fig. 2**).

The documents found at the the Chantier B workshop, *la résidence aux installations artisanales*, indicate that the workshop was involved in donkey breedings related to overland traffic and to the care for boats. The location of the building on the northern fringe of Ville 2 close to the river Euphrates agrees well with this identification.

By Mari’s control of the Euphrates, the city also controlled one of the most important trade routes of the region. The Ebla documents are the best testimony of the economic and thus political importance of the trade that run over Mari. For the Euphrates trade apparently a tax had to be paid, which was delivered in olive oil by Ebla<sup>48</sup>.

46. MARGUERON 2004, p. 167ff.

47. MARGUERON 2004, p. 169f.

48. SALLABERGER 2008 on *ARET* 13 15.

The fragmentary nature of the archive from Chantier B does not allow to develop this point further. In any case more is going on in this household than a simple distribution of grain, beer and bread. One new text (H.2) is most instructive, since here 1 to 14 minas of silver are listed with 15 persons; the total amount is 61 manas, a little bit more than a talent (30 kg). A similar document (A.9) lists almost exactly the same amount with 18 persons. According to the general system of equivalences, 1 shekel of silver buys one kor, i.e. 300 liters of barley, 1 mina thus correspond to 180,000 liters, i.e. ca. 120 t of barley. So the 61 minas correspond to ca. 7,300 t of grain; at Ebla this silver would buy up to 3,660 sheep or four to five of the best and most expensive mules.

So the people employed in the Chantier B organization worked in a sector of economy that generated high amounts of silver. One further indication in this direction is given by the description of persons as “man of the fare” (lu<sub>2</sub> addir<sub>x</sub>, **tables 7 and 8**): the use and rent of ships generated silver. So an institution dealing with donkeys and boats was definitely characteristic for the situation of Mari at these days: the donkeys were used for overland communications and the control of the Euphrates water traffic proved to be a substantial source of income for the city’s treasures.

### SUMMARY

This article has dealt with the two households that supplied most Pre-Sargonic tablets at Mari. The first one that bordered on the religious quarter, provided cereals for offerings. The second one with a location close to the Euphrates organized overland trade by donkeys and riverine traffic by boat. Both institutions were not part of the royal palace and apparently did not directly depend on the king, but were urban organizations. Specialized organizations as these two from Mari demonstrate how various special tasks of a city, in this case traffic, trade and cult, were managed in the Pre-Sargonic period. The largely self-sustaining households managed not only the subsistence economy of agriculture, food production and upkeep of the buildings, but beside that they were specialized in crafts and services that benefitted the population of the city as a whole.

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