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Settlement Dynamics and Human-Landscape Interaction in the Dry Steppes of Syria

Edited by Daniele Morandi Bonacossi

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CNRS (UMR 7192, Paris) / HIGEOMES

The Sutean Nomads in the Mari Period

Suteans are one of the nomadic tribes that the archives from Mari and other contemporaneous sites mention frequently. In our contribution, we would like to give a quick overview of the documentation already published and present the binational research programme on historical geography HIGEOMES and the database developed by it. The focus will be on the geographical aspects of the Sutean presence close to the Euphrates.

Suteans in the Mari Archives
According to the ARCHIBAB/HIGEOMES Database

In order to elaborate a comprehensive database of textual indications on the historical geography of Upper Mesopotamia during the second millennium BCE, project HIGEOMES relies on the indexing capacities of the ARCHIBAB database, developed in Paris since 2008 by D. Charpin and his team. This database offers an overview of the archival contexts in which Suteans are mentioned in the Mari documentation, while the enriched indexes developed within the database by project HIGEOMES make possible a refined analysis of the themes and objects associated with Suteans in these documents.

Mentions of Suteans according to the ARCHIBAB database

In the present state of documentation, Suteans are mentioned in 70 published texts from Mari, including letters, administrative documents and legal texts.

1 The present article is the result of research developed by French and German cooperation project HIGEOMES (ANR / DFG), which brings together data on the historical geography of Upper Mesopotamia from textual and archaeological sources, and analyzes it with the help of modern tools such as geo-informatics and web semantics. The project joins forces with Paris (UMR 7192) and the University of Dijon (for web semantics), but also with members belonging to other institutions or research groups in France (universities of Brest UBO, Lille 3 UMR 8164 or UMR 7041 Nanterre), as well as several German institutions: the Freie Universität Berlin (with a focus on Middle-Assyrian texts), the Johannes-Gutenberg Universität Mainz (working on archaeological data), and the Fachhochschule Mainz (for geo-informatics) – for more information, see www.digitorient.com. The project is currently in its final phase of development and will be followed in April 2014-2016 by the French-German cooperation project TEXTELSEM (ANR / DFG); the results will be available in 2016 on the internet. Given that this paper focuses on a nomadic group for which archaeological evidence is almost completely absent, only the textual material will be taken into consideration here. We are indebted to M. Punigam and D. Charpin for their corrections and remarks.

2 For a presentation of the ARCHIBAB project, see Charpin in press a and b. The project homepage can be accessed at: http://www.archibab.fr. The bibliographical abbreviations used for texts in the present article follow the norms of ARCHIBAB, which can be consulted on the site.

3 All texts can be found in the database ARCHIBAB (http://www.archibab.fr); for this reason, bibliography for the text editions is not given below.

Letters (26 texts)
A 1289+l; A 2801; A 2993+l; A 3297+l; ARM 1 110; ARM 5 12; ARM 6 15; 44; 51; 57; 58; ARM 13 44; 106; ARM 14 78; 79; ARM 26/1 225; ARM 26/2 311; 482; 483; 497; ARM 27 161; ARM 28 8; FM 8 31; M 6159; M 11009+l.

Administrative documents (42 texts)
Expenditures: ARM 7 19; 110; 133; 165; 169; 210; ARM 18 61; 64; ARM 21 336; ARM 23 241; 446; 448; ARM 31 199; D. Charpin, MARI 3 68; M 6731 (= ARM 30, p. 251). Accounting summary: ARM 22 150; 153; 327; ARM 23 449; 450; 451; FM 4 44; M 6654+ (ARM 30, p. 253). Inventory: D. Charpin, Mél. Veenhof 8; Receipt (Șu.ti.a): ARM 23 67; T 178; T 240; T 259; T 260. Delivery: ARM 23 341; T 179. Contribution (mu.DU): ARM 7 225; ARM 21 2; 4; 10; ARM 24 32; FM 10 68. List of people: ARM 21 407; ARM 22 27. Amount + personal name: ARM 9 244; ARM 23 243. Memorandum: ARM 23 592.

Legal texts (2)

The presence of Suteans around Mari is already attested during the reign of Yahdun-Lim (six texts) and the period of the Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia (six texts), even if, unsurprisingly, most known examples date from the reign of Zimri-Lim, the last king of Mari (fifty-six texts) – two texts being impossible to date.
- Yahdun-Lim (unknown year): D. Charpin, Mél. Veenhof 8; T 179; T 259 (8/iii); T 240 (17/iii); T 260 (12/iv). Yahdun-Lim 4: T 178 ([…]/vii).
- Zimri-Lim (unknown year): A 2279; A 2993+l; ARM 3 12; ARM 5 23; ARM 6 15; 44; 57; 58; ARM 7 210; 225; ARM 9 244; ARM 13 44; 106; ARM 14 78; 79; ARM 23 243; ARM 26/1 225; ARM 26/2 311; 482; 483; 497; ARM 27 161; ARM 28 8; FM 8 31; M 6159; FM 10 68 (16/x); ARM 23 241 (28/xi). Zimri-Lim 1: A 1289+l; A 2801; ARM 23 341 (24/xi).
- Zimri-Lim 2: ARM 23 67 (5/xi). Zimri-Lim 3: ARM 21 407; ARM 22 327; M 6654+ (= ARM 30, p. 253) ([…]/[viit+]; ARM 22 27 (26/ix); ARM 23 446([…]/[tx]); ARM 18 61 (14/ix); ARM 23 448 (15+ix); 449 (20/ix); 450 (21/ix); 451 (121/[xii]); ARM 22 150 (24/xi); M 6731 (ARM 30, p. 251) (9/xii). Zimri-Lim 5: ARM 21 336 (5/v); ARM 22 153+170 (23/x). Zimri-Lim 6: ARM 7 133 (22/xii). Zimri-Lim 7: ARM 7 165 (4/vi); 169 (29/vi); Zimri-Lim 8: ARM 7 110 ([…]/ii); Zimri-Lim 10: ARM 6 51 (-vii); ARM 21 2 (5/xi); ARM 18 64 (7/xii). Zimri-Lim 12: ARM 31 199 (4/ii); ARM 21 4 (18/v-bis); FM 4 44 (5/ix). Zimri-Lim 13: ARM 24 32 (8/i).
- Undatable: ARM 21 10; ARM 23 592.

Orthography
The orthography of the Sutean’s name (for the common etymology “Southerner”, cf. Streck 2002: 165) is found in several variations, the main one affecting the second dental consonant: two occurrences render it with DI instead of the more frequent T-v- signs (TE, TI, TU). This variant was understood by B. Groneberg for ARM 2 124 (= ARM 26/2 311) as an idiosyncrasy
of the letter's scribe (Groneberg 1980: 212: "Schreiber verwechselt im Brief häufiger t und d"), but the publication by D. Charpin of a second example in a text dated from Yahdun-Lim (Charpin 2001) excludes this hypothesis. Given the limited number of examples, it is however highly improbable that this writing reflects an alternate spelling *Sudum, and it is safer to assume the use of the DI sign to render a [Tv] sound — according to a rather unusual orthography, attested only in a few contemporary documents.4
- su-ti₄(DI)-im: D. Charpin, Mél. Veenhof 8: 2’.
- su-te-im: T.179: 5.
- su-te₁₀(DI)-e-em: ARM 26/2 311: 16.
- su-ti-a-am-ma: A.1289+: iv 15’.
- su-ti-i.meš: ARM 6 58: 5; ARM 14 79: 7; FM 8 31: 28, 35.
- su-ti-i*: A.3297+: 18, 23; ARM 22 153+170: 36.
- su-te-tim: ARM 26/2 483: 8.

Themes associated with Suteans in the Mari archives, according to the HIGEOMES indexes

Drawing from the indexation capacities of ARCHIBAB, project HIGEOMES has developed a series of tools, with the aim of establishing what could be defined as an ‘enriched thesaurus’ of toponyms. Beyond factual indications such as text reference, line, writing, etc., in documents, every piece of information is entered in the database, as extensively as possible, for each toponym, by each text where it occurs. The collected place names are thus inserted in a

4 See ex. gr., for DI-ti₄, ARM 23 219: 9; ARM 26/2 303: 18’, 26’, 31’; and 324: 6. For an example of DI-te₁₀ in contemporary documents from Upper Mesopotamia, see the Leilan letter PIHANS 117 106: 19 (which contains a lot of scribal peculiarities).
network of information which then allows for a geo-historical analysis, and can be computed, together with archaeological data linked to actual sites, with the help of web-semantics. As far as textual material is concerned, a hierarchical catalogue of parameters has been established for the following categories (table 1):

- a broad geographical zone (see map 1), roughly corresponding to the main ethno-political divisions of the Amorite age. Unsurprisingly, Suteans mostly belong to zones A and Y (the Syro-Jordanian desert); as well as Z (ethnic), even if several examples show them roaming along the Middle Euphrates (zone B) and in the Jezirah (notably zones E and F).

- a more detailed geopolitical categorization, based on ancient terms used to describe political entities and their subdivisions (kingdoms, districts), as well as cultural entities like the Zalmaqum or the Šubartum. This category proved not to be pertinent for Suteans.

- the status of the indexed toponym, be it natural (mountains, rivers) or political (‘land’, ‘house’, etc.). This category is also irrelevant for the Sutean nomads.

- the nature of its administration (king, leaders, sheikhs, administrators, but also elders and assemblies). As far as the Suteans are concerned, it is worth noting that only exceptionally is a king attested or can the name of a Sutean leader be identified as “king” (see below, p. 219). We don’t know what rank exactly the other leaders had. One administrative text (ARM 24 32) documents the existence of Sutean sheikhs (sugāgum), which can also be inferred from FM 10 68, even if it is not stated explicitly: this text records deliveries of sheep, part of which are identified as ‘from the sugāgūnum of PN’, so it is plausible, if not certain, that such was also the case for the Suteans mentioned at the previous line.5

- the nature of its population. In most cases, Suteans mentioned in the Mari archives are men. The few occurrences of women related to Suteans refer to the distribution of female prisoners: in two cases Yaminite captives entrusted to Sutean men (ARM 21 407 and 22 27), and only one mention of Sutean women captured by the Mari troops (ARM 26/2 483). Suteans mentioned in the texts were soldiers or messengers, even if frequent mentions of their flocks also indicate their pastoral activities (below, p. 222). In four cases (ARM 5 23; 13 106; 23 92; and M.6159), they also appear as thieves, or raiders, launching attacks on flocks and people (below, p. 218).

For this category, a reverse search can also prove useful, in order to see which towns or places are mentioned as having Suteans among their inhabitants, or at least are connected to Sutean activities (cf. table 2 and below p. 219ff.). These appear quite varied, and cover the whole geographical horizon of the Mari archives, from Western Syria to the Persian Gulf, including the Jezirah. Of special interest are three mentions of ethnonyms (Almutum, Mehalisayu, Yahmamum) which appear to define the term Sutum, and represent tribal subdivisions of the Suteans (see below, p. 218-219).

- all information regarding a toponym’s environment, natural or anthropogenous. As nomad pastoralists, the Suteans are mostly associated with sheep, either as flocks, or as contributions to the Mari administration (especially taxes). Note however that in one case (ARM 21 4), an equid is mentioned, and that ARM 3 12 even records Suteans settled (šaqnū) on 3 leagues of field (3 bēri a.šā) along the Euphrates, near Tērqa; this need not imply that they were engaged in agriculture, but rather they had temporarily settled on the land (cf. below, p. 220).

5 Note, however, that the mention of Suteans here is not certain, since the middle sign is broken; these might as well be Suhean sheikhs (lù š[i-t]-r-i instead of lù š[i-t]-r-i); see the comment by Marti 2008: 108.
- **raw and manufactured goods** mentioned in relation to the toponym. These picture the Suteans engaged in a regular web of relations with the Mari palace administration, mostly in the form of sheep, delivered as tax, or textiles and silver, received as gifts (cf. below, p.222 f.).
- several **other** indications, such as the belonging of the toponym to an itinerary, or the context where this toponym is mentioned. For Suteans, one notable mention is that of ‘far-away Suteans’ (see below, p.219), and their presence along several routes in Upper and Lower Mesopotamia.

Table 1: Themes associated with Suteans according to the HIGEOMES-index

| ARM 1 100 | Zone: A, Zone: Y, Zone: Z, People: soldiers, Historical context: attempted raid against Yabliya. |

---

6 As indicated above § 1.3, in the HIGEOMES database, ethnics are indexed as “Zone: Z.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARM</th>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARM 5 23</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>A, men</td>
<td>thieves, ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 6 15</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>raw material, barley, varied plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 6 44</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A, Sutum, clan: Mehalisayu, raw material, silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 6 51</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A, messengers, Route: Babilim—Mari—The King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 6 57</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>soldiers, ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 6 58</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>soldiers, ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 19</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>Manufactured goods, oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 110</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>messengers</td>
<td>gift (recipient), silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 133</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>chefs</td>
<td>messengers, gift (recipient), silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 165</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>messengers</td>
<td>gift (recipient), silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 169</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>messengers (origin from), silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 210</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>messengers (origin from), silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 7 225</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 8 9</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>slaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 9 244</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Sutum</td>
<td>clan: Mehalisayu, Almutum, ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 13 106</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 13 44</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 14 78</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 14 79</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Z, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 18 61</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 18 64</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 21 2</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Z, Environment: ovines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 21 4</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y, Z</td>
<td>Environment: equides, gift (recipient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 21 10</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Environment: ovines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 21 336</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 21 407</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>booty (destination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 22 150</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 22 153</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y, Z</td>
<td>men, gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 22 27</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>booty (destination), men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 22 327</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>gift (recipient), clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 23 241</td>
<td>Zone: Z, People: men, People: messengers (originate from), Commodity: gift (recipient), Commodity: silver.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 23 243</td>
<td>People: men, Commodity: gift (recipient), Commodity: meat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 23 446</td>
<td>Zone: Z, People: men, Commodity: gift (recipient), Commodity: clothes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ARM 26/1 225</td>
<td>Zone: Z, Zone: A, Historical context: wedding of Yasmah-Addu and Dam-hurasi.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ARM 26/2 482</td>
<td>Zone: Z.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ARM 26/2 483</td>
<td>Zone: Z, People: women, People: booty (originate from), Environment: equids.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 27 161</td>
<td>Zone: Z, People: soldiers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM 28 8</td>
<td>Zone: Z, People: men, People: messengers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almutum</td>
<td>ARM 9 244;</td>
<td>Zone: Z, Population: Sutum, clan: Almutum, Environment: ovines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARM 14 78</td>
<td>Zone: Z, Population: deportee (destination), Population: Sutum, clan: Almutum, Distance: far-away country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayabu</td>
<td>ARM 23 592</td>
<td>Zone: B, Population: Sutum, Population: booty (originate from), Commodity: booty (originate from)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbe</td>
<td>ARM 23 592</td>
<td>Zone: B, Population: Sutum, Population: booty (originate from), Commodity: booty (originate from)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehalisayu</td>
<td>ARM 9 244;</td>
<td>Zone: Z, Population: Sutum, clan: Mehalisayu, Environment: ovines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purattum</td>
<td>ARM 3 12</td>
<td>Zone: B, Environment: fields, Population: Sutum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suhum</td>
<td>A.1289+</td>
<td>Zone: B, Population: Sutum, Population: soldiers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terqa</td>
<td>ARM 3 12</td>
<td>Zone: B, Environment: fields, Environment: streams, Population: Sutum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahhamum</td>
<td>ARM 14 78: 9</td>
<td>Zone: Z, Population: deportee (destination), Population: Sutum, clan: Yahhamum, Distance: far-away country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suteans in the Mari Period

For the study of the Suteans’ all textual evidence comes from non-Suteans. The Mari archives are actually the richest source; the information they give is manifold, as shown above. They record the presence of Suteans in their realm, and incoming or outgoing goods. Letters and contracts sometimes give us insight into the opinion the inhabitants of Mesopotamia had about them. And this opinion was generally speaking not a very good one: Suteans are seen as outsiders, foreigners, a generally hostile and dangerous tribe of the Syrian steppe. Whoever wanted to cross the latter had to trust in their protection ... and pay for it.

The notion of Suteans being slave merchants

In the eyes of the people of Mesopotamia, Suteans were slave merchants of bad reputation and slavery in Sutean lands was a very severe punishment. This can be seen (among other examples) from an adoption contract from Southern Mesopotamia where the threat of being sold to Suteans should be a guarantee in favor of the respect of the contract:8

“In the future, if NPf1 says to NPf2, her mother: ‘You are not my mother!’ they take away the son of NPf1 and they sell her to the land of Sutum or to the Yahmuteans.”

In the same way, when Zimri-Lim definitely wanted to get rid of some people he proposed selling them to the Suteans:

“One should sell these people to the far-away Suteans, to the Yahmameans or to the Almuteans, or to Eš/the desert,9 a place from where no information will come to their country.” (ARM 14 78 = LAPO 18 929)

To be sold to Suteans was a kind of “worst-case scenario” for the people of Mesopotamia: it clearly meant they had to leave their usual environment forever, to enter a completely different civilisation without any hope of redemption. For this reason, except as punishment, it was forbidden to sell the people of Mesopotamia to Suteans and the kings of Mesopotamia granted to their population that they would prevent this as well as they could.10

This royal protection was an effective one and those who didn’t respect it were supposed to be punished. As an example we can quote a case submitted to Zimri-Lim by the governor of Saggaratum, Yaqqim-Addu:

7 For the different sources and studies on Suteans in general see Kärger and Minx 2012. Joannès 1997 is the fullest presentation of the Mari evidence. See also Ziegler 2004. All these publications mention former publications, notably Kupper 1957.
8 The adoption contract Ch.-F. Jean, Tell Sifr 13 (actually written and discovered at Ur) was republished by Charpin 1980: 46, 208-209; see also UET 5 97 and for further remarks Stol 2004: 913.
9 The description “far-away Suteans” seems to introduce two tribe names (Yahmameum and Almuteum) and one unknown place, written E-AB-KI. This was interpreted as a place-name Eš (e-Šeš) and commented on by Durand 2000: 67. But more recently, Durand 2007 argued that it should be read ʾiṣa-ab and interpreted as a word for “desert” whose etymology relates it to the Arab word yah or yābīb.
10 It was not only forbidden to sell slaves to the Suteans. An edict of Samsu-iluna stipulated that neither was it allowed to buy slaves from them. ABB 3 1: “Nobody shall buy a man or a woman, citizen of Idamaras or from Arrapha from the Suteans [A merchant] who buys a citizen of Idamaras or of Arrapha from a Sutean will lose his money.”
“NP, the no[mad] (hanûm) g[ave] one slave to the Suteans in the country of Hit. He got 2 donkeys and 3 sheep as his pay[ment]. When he crossed here (the river) to [Hit], the police didn’t notice [him], but on his way home the police seized the 2 donkeys [and the 3 sheep] and brought him to me. I made an investigation against NP, who has given a slave to the Suteans. He said: ‘[I have bought] the slave in another country, I have sold the slave to another country. Why [do you investigate about me]?’” (ARM 14 79 = LAPO 18 1056: 5-23)

Selling slaves to Suteans was forbidden. But the seller argued that he had sold a foreign slave bought in a foreign country, so he didn’t deliver a member of the society of the Mari-kingdom to the Suteans and thus didn’t commit a crime. The governor sent the man to Mari and the king had to deal with this case. Unfortunately, we don’t know which decision the king finally made.

The notion of Suteans being hostile wrongdoers

Many letters involving Suteans mention attacks on different towns,11 or caravans,12 notably diplomatic missions crossing the Syrian steppe; other texts mention the plundering of animals,13 or people kidnapped by Suteans (ARM 13 106). The governors of the kingdom of Mari took measures against them. One text even mentions the nightmares the king of Mari had because of the danger they represented to caravans.14 All these documents show that the principal opinion people from Mesopotamia held about Suteans was a rather negative one.

The Sutean clans

The Mari archives give insight into the tribal identities of the Mesopotamian world. Two ethnic groups are particularly important for the people from Mari: the Sim’alite and Yaminite tribes, which were both subdivided into smaller entities. It is clear that the Suteans belonged to neither of these tribes. But, just as the Yaminites and the Sim’alites, they were divided

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11 Cf. below, p. 219, for attacks against the Suhum region and p. 221 for the kingdom of Qatna.
12 See M.6159 for an attack against the Babylonian delegation on the way to Qatna and for the proposal of such an attack, cf. Ziegler 2004.
13 In the time of Yasmah-Addu: M.7583 (unpubl. letter of Hammanum, the governor of Yabliya; courtesy D. Charpin) and an unpublished letter of Tarim-šakim M.8338, probably written during his stay in the Suhum region. For the reign of Zimri-Lim see ARM 6 57 and 58 (= LAPO 17 746 and 747). The general situation of these letters remains unclear. Lion 2001: 154-155 suggests that Menihum, author of the first letter, was the governor of Našer. The Sutean raid would thus have concerned the region south of Mari. See also ARM 26/2 483 where the Suteans raided i-na ma-di-na-dim “in the juridical districts”. ARM 13 106 (= LAPO 17 749) is a letter of the governor of Terqa, Kibri-Dagan, for juridical reaction to the actions of Suteans. The order of Zimri-Lim is first quoted: “Send anybody whose stolen (objects) are with the Suteans and his witnesses who could assist in the making of a legal decision.” Kibri-Dagan then added: “Now I have just sent NP, a man of Terqa, who has been robbed of a servant, and two witnesses.”
14 Yasmah-Addu, waiting for his spouse, the princess of Qatna, is having nightmares about the danger represented by Suteans on the route between Qatna and Mari: “The dream that I saw was frightening. I am afraid the Suteans will seize Dam-burasi and you, and that they will say: ‘As long as you do not return our homes, we will not release them.” (ARM 26/1 225: 7-12). For this proposal of the chronological setting of the text cf. Ziegler 2004: 102 and 2007: 150-151.
into different "sub-tribes" or "clans". We know of three Sutean tribal entities, the Almutum, Mehali-siy and Yahhamum. The Yahhamum and Almutum were both known in the Mari archives as "remote Suteans" *(ARM 14 78: 8-9. Cf. above p. 217 and fn. 9)*.

For the time being, it is nearly impossible to identify the different Sutean chiefs as heads of one or other of these tribes. Only the Sutean chief, Hamni-tilu, can be linked to the "sub-tribe" of the Mehali-siy as e.g. the letter *ARM 6 44 = LAPO 18 1047* shows. Kings of the Suteans are barely mentioned.*

Geographical distribution of Suteans in the Mari documentation

The HIGOMES-database is especially useful for the examination of places where Suteans occur. First of all, the homeland of the Suteans was in the Syrian steppe. Normally, we are not informed about the places they settled or the annual routes along which they migrated with their animals, but we get information about the places where they came into contact with the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. And in the Mari archives the largest number of attestations concerns the Euphrates region south of Mari, the Suhum.

The Suhum region

The governors and officials mention attacks on regions or towns of the Suhum. All these examples show that raids of Suteans against this region occurred frequently.

A governor of Mari boasted about the strength of the defence of the Upper Suhum against the Suteans (M.7583, unpubl., courtesy D. Charpin):

"May the Suteans attack the Upper Suhum region! May my lord see how numerous are his armies. My lord must not be afraid!"

Some letters speak about attacks on the city of Hanat, where the Suteans took 3 prisoners (e.g. the unpublished M.9607). Other letters tell about the attack of, as the author says, 1000 Suteans on Yabliya, opposite modern Shishin (Charpin and Millet Albà 2009). A memorandum mentions a Sutean raid on Harbe and Ayyabu *(ARM 23 592: 4-6)*.

Other texts mention Sutean activities in the region of Hit. This town, or more probably its surroundings, was a place where nomads from the kingdom of Mari could meet Suteans *(ARM 14 79 = LAPO 18 1056 quoted above)* and engage in business activities. The letter *ARM 14 79: 6* calls the place where a nomad had sold a slave the "land of Hit", even though there was no independent country of that name. So, perhaps this alludes to the fact that the Suteans were not allowed to enter the towns and had to do their business transactions outside of the city walls.

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15 Cf. for bibliography Kärger and Minx 2012; 366b. Joannès 1997 enumerated 5 Sutean sub-tribes but in fact there is actually no evidence that the Pu-la-Ila and the Bar-Halanum, two clans of the Suhum region, were Suteans.

16 Unpublished A.304 (courtesy D. Charpin). See also below fn. 19.

17 Cf. fn. 9 for a possible mention of the desert in relation to Suteans.

18 For a recent study on the historical geography of the Suhum in the Mari period, see Charpin and Millet Albà 2009.
The region north of Mari and the Jebel Bishri-region

Less frequent than references to Suteans in the Suhum south of Mari are mentions of these people upstream on the Euphrates. This lack of evidence is surprising, because we know that the Suteans used to settle in the Jebel Bishri but might also settle down in the adjacent Euphrates valley. The governor of Terqa reported this to Zimri-Lim:

“The Suteans settle 3 leagues upstream of Terqa on the Euphrates and come regularly to see me and go back. No mishap occurs currently.” (ARM 3 12 = LAPO 17 748)

This letter shows that the Sutean presence on the Euphrates border was rather exceptional and that the local authorities closely observed the situation. The governor reported about Sutean delegations coming regularly to Terqa, which shows that the authorities were suspicious even if there was no actual reason to complain about the Suteans. Their residence in the territory of the kingdom of Mari was certainly not free of charge. An administrative text from Mari shows that Šamiš, the Sutean chief, had to pay at least a certain amount of silver and 6 textiles for the ıgısim-contribution.19

Sometimes problems occurred between the Suteans and the other occupants of this region. One of the reasons for their confrontations is described in a letter from the king of the Yamnite Uprapeans to Zimri-Lim of Mari. In this letter, Hammí-ıštamar complained about the Suteans who occupied the wells and water-installations of the Uprapeans on the Euphrates. Zimri-Lim was asked to convince them to settle downstream (FM 3 31, cf. the commentary of Durand 2005: 102).

The settling of these Sutean nomads in the Jebel Bishri was less problematic. The Sutean presence in this area, for instance, is known thanks to a letter from the governor of the Mari district to the king about a fortuitous discovery of silver:

“The Suteans of the tribe of Mehalisayu have discovered a hidden treasure in the Bisir (mountains). It is reported to be a lot of silver. Some say it is up to [n] talents, others say it is up to 2 talents, even others say it is up to 10 minas. There is no agreement on the issue.” (ARM 6 44 = LAPO 18 1047)

The circumstances of the discovery are not indicated. Charpin 2010: 243 proposed that the discovery could have been made while a grave was being dug. For funerary practices in the Bronze Age Bishri region cf. Fujii and Adachi 2010.

Uprapeans who wanted to avenge Sutean aggressions could attack them in their home regions close to the Jebel Bishri. An episode of the war between Uprapeans and Suteans is known from a letter in which an Uprapean raid on Sutean flocks is reported and the itinerary of the Uprapean nomads is given:20

19 FM 4 44: 2. The payment of Šamiš the Sutean is mentioned after that of the queen Dam-huruṣi and before that of Šibu, followed by the governor of Mari and other high officials. It seems clear that this indicates the high rank of the “man of the Suteans”, – probably a king (cf. above p. 212 and 219). The tax was collected as ıgısim-contribution from the district of Mari and the Upper district, i.e. the district of Terqa the 5-ix-ZL 12. The presence of Šamiš among the people obliged to pay is exceptional and seems to indicate an exceptional sojourn in the region depending on Mari or Terqa – perhaps as just described in the letter from the governor of Terqa ARM 3 12.

20 An extant translation of the unpublished letter A.2200 has been given by Durand 2010: 261 fn. 30.
"The (Uprapean) nomads who left to raid the sheep of the Suteans (...) raided the sheep of the Suteans in Burtum-Bardat and in Qabaqab. They left and came back below the mountain Ba’alta-Guratin and continued downstream on the riverside. (...) It is some 10,000 sheep that they have taken. (...)"

Qabaqab, one of the place-names mentioned in this letter, corresponds to modern Qebaqeb, southeast of the Jebel Bishri. A Roman camp examined by a Finnish archaeological survey and also a deep rock-cut well dated by the Finnish archaeologists to the Roman period have been found there. Some 18 km from Qebaqeb other water distribution and storage installations (a channel and well) from Roman times were discovered by the same team. The region on the southeastern edge of the Bishri was thus a place where waterholes, wells and channels were common from ancient times onwards. The place-name Burtum-Bardat (litt. "Cold Well", cf. Durand 2009: 261 fn. 30) shows that such water-collecting structures already existed in this region in the 18th century B.C. and were used by Sutean nomads. The long-lived toponym shows that the place was used without major interruption throughout the centuries.

Other mentions of Sutean settlements in the Syrian Steppe

The Suteans didn’t only settle in the Bishri region, but also in other parts of the Syrian steppe - although precise information is lacking. Sutean raids against the kingdom of Qatna (Mišrife) are known from the Mari archives. A governor wrote to the king of Mari Yasmah-Addu:

"Gazizanum, Abi-sare, Hammi-talu, the Suteans and 2,000 Suteans had assem-bled for a meeting and then went out to raid the pastures of the land of Qatna."

(ARM 5 23 = LAPO 17 745)

According to this letter, the Suteans had to make a special journey to the pastures of the land of Qatna; this could indicate that there was normally no territorial proximity between the herdsmen pasturing the people of Qatna’s sheep and the Suteans. According to this same letter, 60 Suteans attacked Palmyra (Tadmer) and Nazala (Qariyatain), but failed.

We have seen above that a Sutean encampment in the Bishri-region bore a place-name formed with the Akkadian word for “waterhole, well” buürtum. Another Sutean settlement in the Syrian steppe known from textual evidence is Bugre-Burtim "Cow’s well". Ziegler 2004 made the proposal that this place might be the modern Ain al Arnağ, not far west of Hit (Ziegler 2004: 105 fn. 38, and for this toponym in neo-Assyrian times Cavigneaux 2010). Caravans between Babylon and Mari used to rest there.

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21 This otherwise unknown name kur ba-ha-al-ta-gu-ra-tim is interpreted as “Lady-of-the-Guratum” by Durand 2009: 261 fn. 30. It is probably the name of a part of Jebel Bishri
22 We are indebted to M. Lönnqvist who gave us this information after our lecture. For the archaeological soundings at Qebaqeb see M. Lönnqvist et. al. 2009 : 18-19 and the maps on p. 26 and 33. We have not yet been able to consult the full publication (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2011).
23 ARM 5 23: 14-21: "And before that, 60 Suteans, another military expedition, had left to raid Tadmer and Našala, but they came back without any booty. The people of Tadmer had even killed one of the Suteans."
Economic activities of the Suteans
Pastoral activities of the Suteans

The main income of the Suteans was clearly based on their pastoral activities, although they could have obtained additional income from other sources.

Suteans had sheep which seem to have been their principal wealth in the eyes of Mesopotamian sedentary people. They conducted raids to get sheep\textsuperscript{24} and were also promised them as rewards.\textsuperscript{25} The number of animals in the Sutean herds was probably enormous. When numbers are given, they amount to thousands: 10,000 or 15,000 sheep are promised to the Suteans (A.3297\textsuperscript{+}, Ziegler 2004), or stolen by the Suteans, or stolen from the Suteans (cf. above A.2200 p. 220 f.), numbers that show that the overall flock sizes were much more impressive.

We don’t know for sure if the Suteans were sometimes employed by the authorities of the Mari-kingdom for the herding of animals. But we see from the texts that Suteans had the obligation to deliver animals to the central authority of Mari: mainly sheep\textsuperscript{26}, sometimes donkeys\textsuperscript{27}. These payments were a kind of tribute to be paid to the king in return for permission to stay occasionally in the Euphrates valley. The size and the regularity of this “tax” is clearly shown by an oath in which the oath-taker had to swear that he had indeed made his deliveries as he was obliged to (A.2279 edited by Durand 1993).

Some economic texts from Mari tell us how this tax-collection was done: notably a small group of texts from the reign of Yahdun-Lim published by Charpin 2001 show that small numbers of sheep were regularly transferred by Suteans to the royal estate as miksum-tax. But it seems that these deliveries were not the only ones, as ARM 9 244, an administrative document, might indicate: 280 sheep are delivered to the administration of Mari as miksum-tax by different Sutean sub-tribes.

Escorts for caravans in the Syrian steppe

The Sutean presence in the steppe can be confirmed in many other ways. They knew this region very well, the waterholes and routes through the arid zones, knowledge that would have been useful to those who wanted to cross, but they were also potential attackers of caravans. In the event, the various Mesopotamian and Western Syrian kings preferred to pay the Suteans for escorting their embassies which travelled between capital cities (Ziegler 2004).

Suteans were used as escorts for diplomatic missions between the cities of Mari and Qatna where they were escorts for ambassadors, and indeed even armies. Yet more frequently we see the Suteans in Mari texts being used as escorts for embassies from Babylon to Mari,\textsuperscript{28} but also as far as Aleppo or Karkemish. They even could find a path between Babylon and Aleppo without passing by the territory of Mari.

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. ARM 6 57 and 58 (= LAPO 17 746 and 747) and also ARM 26/2 483: after a Sutean raid, Buqaqum stated that he succeeded in bringing back the stolen sheep. See also M.11009+ (= LAPO 18 1084) from the time of Yasmah-Addu.

\textsuperscript{25} A.3297\textsuperscript{+} is published by Ziegler 2004. Samsi-Addu promised 10,000 sheep for an attack on a delegation, or 15,000 if a royal gift worth this much was captured.

\textsuperscript{26} ARM 23 341 (24-xi-ZL 0): 10 sheep; ARM 21 2 (5-xi-ZL 10): 2 rams by Hammi-talu. ARM 21 10 (s.d.): 4 sheep by Rabî’tum.

\textsuperscript{27} ARM 21 4 (18-vbis-ZL 12): 1 white donkey by Ballum.

\textsuperscript{28} Perhaps they were used as escorts as far as Kurda, cf. A.2801 (= LAPO 16 268)
On all these routes the Suteans could be guards, but also simple messengers, carrying letters quickly and reliably from one place to the other.\textsuperscript{29} Many rewards for Suteans in Mari economic texts can be explained in this way.\textsuperscript{30}

Suteans as mercenaries

Some letters show that Sutean troops could be engaged as mercenaries by Mesopotamian kings. In the war Hammurabi led against Larsa, Suteans seem to have served as mercenaries for the king of Larsa (\textit{ARM} 27: 161: 33-52). Sutean mercenaries are also attested on other occasions, such as \textit{ARM} 26/2 482 which shows the problems a Sutean mercenary troop had after crossing the Tigris in Akkade and perpetrating some unsuccessful misdeeds. On these occasions the documentation of Mari gives indications that the Suteans moved further east than usual.

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\textsuperscript{29} Hammurabi of Babylon used Suteans as tablet bearers, cf. \textit{ARM} 6 51 (= LAPO 17 553) or \textit{ARM} 28 8.

\textsuperscript{30} Cf. e.g. \textit{ARM} 23 241: silver for (messengers): e.g. Napisum and Naṣirum two Suteans (28-xi). \textit{ARM} 23 243: 8 (1 sheep for the Suteans).
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