

The Late Bronze Age Town of Emar:
An Examination of the Distribution of City Power
Within the Context of the Major Rituals

BY

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*The Late Bronze Age Town of Emar: An Examination of the Distribution of City Power Within the Context of the Major Rituals*¹

The primary goal of this paper is to examine the major rituals of Emar in order to portray the roles of the primary political entities of Emar within these rituals. The roles played within these important rituals may help to determine the actual political function and strength of each of these offices. The majority of scholarship has not made use of the ritual texts in order to examine these important offices. Therefore, through an examination of the rituals, as well as a theoretical examination of their functions, this paper will provide an analysis of the political entities of Emar in a manner which has not previously been undertaken.

History of Research

Research on the Late Bronze Age town of Emar is a relatively new area of scholarly activity. Located near the modern Syrian town of Meskene, archaeological expeditions to excavate the site did not begin until the early 1970s. Wayne Pitard states that the task of excavation was not undertaken until the site became at risk for flooding due to the construction of a dam on the Euphrates.² This expedition was led by a French team under the leadership of Jean Margueron. After only several days of excavation, a jar was found with tablets mentioning the name of a city previously only known in name: Emar. The team eventually excavated several temples and houses, and discovered over 900 cuneiform tablets. After this initial

¹ This paper was completed to achieve a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from the University of Kansas. My advisor for the duration of this project was Dr. Paul Mirecki. The other members of my committee were Dr. Molly Zahn and Dr. Hagith Sivan. My theoretical work on ritual was performed with great help from Dr. Michael Zogry.

² Pitard, Wayne T. "The Archaeology of Emar." *Emar the history, religion, and culture of a Syrian town in the late Bronze Age*. Ed. Mark W. Chavalas. Bethesda, Md: CDL, 1996. 13-23. Pg. 14.

expedition in 1972, six further expeditions were undertaken until 1976.³ The reports of these expeditions have not yet appeared in full, but preliminary reports are found in several publications.⁴

Beginning in the 1980s, scholarly interest in Emar began to grow substantially with the publication of many of the tablets. Therefore, in the early 1990s, a Syrian team led by Shawki Sha'ath did further excavations at the site. In 1996, a Syrian-German excavation team led by Uwe Finkbeiner resumed excavation of areas of the site which were not covered by water. In their excavations they found previously unknown levels dating to the Middle and Early Bronze Age periods. While these levels show occupation from these earlier periods, no evidence has been found to show that these are earlier levels of the town known in the Late Bronze Age as Emar. These joint expeditions continued until 2002.

In regards to research, in the last few years scholars have begun to work together, resulting in several university-sponsored websites, as well as the first conference solely on Emar research. The Emar Online Database was begun in 2008 by scholars Yoram Cohen, Lorenzo d'Alfonso, and Dietrich Sürenhagen.⁵ Currently, the founders of this database have inserted over 12,000 references to scholarly materials which have been published. The references chosen are deemed of the utmost importance to research about Emar. This website was funded by the University of Konstanz and ultimately led to the first conference on Emar which

³ Ibid, 14.

⁴ Margueron, "Quatre campagnes de fouilles à Emar (1972-1974): un bilan provisoire," *Syria* 52 (1975) 53-85. "Rapport préliminaire sur les deux premières campagnes de fouilles à Meskéné-Emar 1972-1972" *AAAS* 24 (1975) 73-86. "Rapport préliminaire sur les 3e, 4e, 5e, et 6e campagnes de fouilles à Meskéné-Emar" *AAAS* 32 (1982) 233-49). Several other reports on the architecture of the city are found in Margueron "Emar: un exemple d'implantation Hittite en terre syrienne" *Le Moyen Euphrate: zone de contacts et d'échanges: Acts du colloque du Strasbourg 10-12 mars 1977.* 285-312.

⁵ <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/emarkonk/index.html>

was held in Konstanz in 2006 during the preliminary construction of the database. The papers presented at the conference have been collected and published by Cohen, d'Alfonso, and Sürenhagen.⁶

Another valuable website was started by the University of Tübingen, and focuses on the excavations done by the Syrian-German excavation team.⁷ Aside from a general overview of the excavation, as well as many helpful maps, the website offers a comprehensive bibliography of research on Emar. The bibliography is constantly expanding with the most recent publications.

Overview of the History of Emar

The city of Emar was already known through the archives of several other cities, namely Mari and Ebla. Using records from Ebla, Gary Beckman places the date of the first mention of Emar to around the twenty-fourth century B.C.E.⁸ Subsequently, mentions are made of Emar in the nineteenth century when Aleppo argued with Mari and Ebla over control of the city. At this time, it appears as though Emar was ruled by a council of elders.⁹ This council continued to be of great importance in the Late Bronze Age town (circa 15th century-12th century BCE).

The Late Bronze Age town of Emar appears to have been located in a different area than the town of Emar mentioned in the archives of other cities (despite the recent discoveries of older levels at the site). The new site was located on cliffs overlooking the valley where the

⁶ *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo d'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Sürenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008.

⁷ <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de//uni/aaa/>

⁸ Beckman, Gary. "Emar and Its Archives." *Emar the history, religion, and culture of a Syrian town in the late Bronze Age*. Ed. Mark W. Chavalas. Bethesda, Md: CDL, 1996. 1-12. Pg. 3.

⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

older town is presumed to have been located. Beckman theorizes that the town moved due to a change in the course of the Euphrates.¹⁰ However, to date, there is no physical evidence of the older town. Thus, it is unknown what may have happened to the town of Emar between the time it was mentioned in the archives of Ebla, Mari, and Aleppo as a presumed major trading post along the Euphrates (circa 17th century), and the 14th century when Emar suddenly reappeared in a new location. Upon its reappearance, Emar again became a major trading post as can be documented through its own records, as well as those from sites like Ugarit.

In regards to the Early Bronze Age town of Emar, Marc Van De Mieroop mentions Emar in a list of towns which served as vassals and allies to Yamkhad.¹¹ Since the center of the Yamkhad kingdom was located in Aleppo, the proximity of the kingdom to Emar lends support to this possibility. If this was the case, it may be theorized that the earlier town of Emar may have collapsed with the fall of the Yamkhad kingdom to the Hittites in the 16th century BCE. The Late Bronze Age version of Emar is generally thought to have disappeared in the 1180s BCE.

Until the last several years, it was believed that the Late Bronze Age city of Emar was established by the Hittites as a vassal state to guard the lower region of its empire. However, more recent studies have reopened the case as to whether the Late Bronze Age Emar actually existed for a time before being placed under Hittite rule.¹² In their attempts to discover the chronology of the city, d'Alfonso and Cohen have supported this argument that the Hittites were not in control over Emar for a significant period of time. The documents of the First

¹⁰ Ibid, 4.

¹¹ Van De Mieroop, Marc. *A History of the Ancient Near East, Ca. 3000-323 B.C.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007. Pg. 105.

¹² Cohen, Yoram, and Lorenzo d'Alfonso. "The Duration of the Emar Archives and the Relative and Absolute Chronology of the City." *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo d'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Surenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. 3-25.

Dynasty rulers make no mention of a foreign power, while the texts discussing a siege by the Hurrians during the reign of Pilsu-Dagan of the Second Dynasty (circa 1305-1280) starkly note that there is no outside assistance. This paints an extremely new picture of Emar during the period. If d'Alfonso and Cohen's calculations are correct, the Late Bronze Age town of Emar was in existence for around one hundred years before the Hittites made it their vassal state (most likely for the duration of the 14th century).

The Ruling Bodies of Emar: The King, The Elders ("the city"), and the Diviner

In regards to the information in which d'Alfonso and Cohen based their conclusions, it is necessary to discuss the three ruling bodies of Emar located within the city itself. The first of these was the king. Research done on the office of the king has concluded that it was not as important as the title would convey. D'Alfonso and Cohen have even suggested that the First Dynasty may have only been a wealthy family within the city who were not kings at all.¹³ The king always seemed to have limited power within the city, even before Emar was a vassal to the Hittites. The other major power within Emar is referred to as either "the elders," or as simply "the city." When these names occur within legal and administrative texts, they are usually accompanied by the name of the god NIN.URTA. NIN.URTA was the primary city god of Emar, seen as the offspring of Dagan, the central god of the region.

While both the king and "the city" occur within a wealth of documents, the king is usually only mentioned as being a witness to legal texts. Sophie Demare-Lafont theorizes that

¹³ Ibid.

the king never acted alone in any decisions of the town.¹⁴ Working alongside Daniel Fleming, Demare-Lafont concludes that the kings, and later the diviners, play secondary roles to that of the elders. This is a valid conclusion considering that all major land transactions within the city were performed by the elders. In addition, it is stated that the elders and people of the town, not the king, negotiated with the Hurrians during their siege of Emar.¹⁵ Lastly, not until the reign of Pilsu-Dagan in the early thirteenth century, was tribute paid to the palace. Thus, while the office of the king did eventually begin to increase in financial power, its actual role within the city was somewhat limited.

“The city” also seems to have been a descendent of the council of elders discussed in the 19th century documents of Aleppo. This group appears to have played a primary role within the rituals of the city, in addition to an administrative one. As Fleming has stated, this is most likely due to the fact that the majority of Emar ritual was meant to bring the town together as one, and to reinforce citizenship and common goals.¹⁶ Thus, it is not surprising that the town would look to “the city” to be the primary leader within Emar.

This also helps clarify one point regarding the dynasties of the kings. There appears to be a period at the end of the First Dynasty and the beginning of the Second Dynasty in which two persons are simultaneously holding the office of king. While it would normally seem as though there would be dissension between the two sides, it actually appears as though there were no disagreements. The kings ruling at the same period appear as co-signers on legal

¹⁴ Demare-Lafont, Sophie. “The King and the Diviner at Emar.” *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo D'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Surenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. 207-217.

¹⁵ Emar 42

¹⁶ Fleming, Daniel. “The Emar Festivals: City Unity and Syrian Identity under Hittite Hegemony.” *Emar the history, religion, and culture of a Syrian town in the late Bronze Age*. Ed. Mark W. Chavalas. Bethesda, Md: CDL, 1996. 81-121.

documents, and the transition into the Second Dynasty as sole possessor of the title of king seems to have gone seamlessly. Therefore, Fleming theorizes that a tradition of self-governance made arguments over the title of king relatively unimportant.¹⁷

The diviner, another important player within the rule of Emar, appears later within the history of the Late Bronze Age town. While the diviner does not appear to have been a position before the rule of the Hittites, his “house,” designated as M1, has yielded the largest quantity of documents within Emar (around 650 texts). This building has been referred to as the “house of the diviner,” the “temple of the diviner,” and the “temple of the gods of Emar” by scholars. All three of these designations may indeed be correct in describing the function of this building. However, I agree with Daniel Fleming that none of these names is any more correct than the other. Thus, I will be referring to this building simply as M1.¹⁸

The most important documents to our study were found in the excavation of M1. However, it is important first to offer a preliminary sketch of the role of the diviner and the overall contexts of M1 in conjunction with this brief discussion of the king and “the city.” Within M1 are a variety of documents which can be tentatively categorized into administrative, legal, and ritual texts. The presence of administrative and legal texts in the possession of this man shows the importance which his office gained over the years. The texts are written in

¹⁷ Fleming, Daniel. “Reading Emar’s Scribal Traditions Against the Chronology of Late Bronze History.” *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo D’Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Surenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. 27-43.

¹⁸ Fleming, Daniel E. *Time at Emar The Cultic Calendar & the Rituals from the Diviner’s House (Mesopotamian Civilizations 11)*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

several languages, mainly Hurrian, Akkadian, and Sumerian, and the archives of Emar have provided scholars with several more examples of Akkadian literature.¹⁹

Most important to our own study is the presence of many ritual texts. The most important of these texts will be discussed individually, but one important point must be made at this time. While the diviner holds the ritual texts in his possession and appears to be the ritual supervisor, making sure the rituals are correctly performed, he rarely participates as a ritual actor. The majority of times in which he is mentioned indicate his concern that he is paid the correct amount for his services. In fact, the office of the diviner appears to have been primarily that of a scribe, as well as a record keeper. This is evident in the fact that the majority of the texts found within his collection were written by the diviner himself, or one of his subordinates. In regards to his role as a record keeper, many of the documents found in M1 were personal documents of members of the community.²⁰ Therefore, it appears that the diviner was charged with holding important documents for others, as well as important citywide documents including the texts for the city rituals.

The title “diviner” can be confusing when studying the ritual texts from Emar as its connotation usually pertains to ritual and religious life in ancient Mesopotamia.²¹ However, while the office of the diviner did oversee and, on rare occasion, participate in rituals, this does not appear to have been his primary function. This office should be thought of as that of a

¹⁹ Marc Van De Mieroop briefly discusses this in *A History of the Ancient Near East*. Most of the examples found in Emar, and the surrounding towns in Syria including Ugarit, are previously unattested in Babylon, but follow the same style and cultural tradition of other literature from the period. Pg. 146-147.

²⁰ The content of the diviner’s archive is indeed wide in range. Categories of texts which appear are lexical lists, incantation texts, ritual texts, literary texts, Akkadian and Hittite letters, legal texts from a wide area of people and places, cult rites, cult administration, and some private documents.

²¹ Starr, Ivan. *The Rituals of the Diviner*. Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983. This book by Starr is an overview of the many types of divination which occurred in the ancient Near East.

scribe and record keeper, and therefore a prominent citizen and political force within the city of Emar. The title denotes just one small aspect of his function.

The roles of these ruling bodies within Emar's ritual life will be examined within this paper. For the time being, one important point must be made in the context of the roles of the king and "the city" within Emar. It has been pointed out that modern research considers the power of the king as somewhat limited, while "the city" possessed most of the power in the everyday occurrences in Emar. The diviner has called himself "the diviner of the gods of Emar" in many ritual documents, seemingly making it clear that this was his realm of power within the city.

However, the recent work of d'Alfonso and Cohen has shown that the office of the diviner was not yet established for the first part of the Late Bronze Age town of Emar. Therefore, it must be asked when this office was established. Using the work of d'Alfonso and Cohen, Fleming looks briefly into this point. He concludes that the office of the diviner was not established until Emar became a vassal nation of the Hittite Empire (around the beginning of the 13th century).²²

The theory that the office of the diviner was in fact an extension of Hittite rule within the actual town has its basis in several texts. For example, direct correspondence between the diviner and a Hittite ruler has been found, suggesting that this position was indeed important.²³

²² Fleming, Daniel. "Reading Emar's Scribal Traditions Against the Chronology of Late Bronze History." *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo D'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Sürenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. 27-43.

²³ Demare-Lafont 215. Demare-Lafont discusses correspondence between the two over an issue of taxation. The Hittite King orders that the office of the diviner is not required to pay these taxes. The fact that the King would involve himself over a seemingly trivial issue reflects the close nature of these two offices.

In addition, the inheritance of the title of diviner was granted by the king of Carchemish.²⁴ At this time, Carchemish was the regional power of the Hittite Empire, and therefore a direct link with the empire itself. For the king of Carchemish to be involved with the succession of the office of the diviner shows that it did indeed have importance to the Hittites.

Demare-Lafont theorizes that the office was important to the empire, but that its primary interest lay within the town.²⁵ This is most likely the case, as many scholars argue the Hittites practiced a primarily “hands-off” approach in ruling Emar, as well as with many of their vassal states in Syria. Aleppo and Carchemish served as centers for the empire within the region, while other cities, including Emar and Ugarit, were allowed to remain under the rule of their royal family. Gary Beckman argues that the Hittites installed a thin layer of bureaucracy over the greatly differing societies which they encountered, changing little in day to day life and the local cult.²⁶ This certainly appears to be the case, although choosing a local figure to be a intermediary between the Hittites and Emar is certainly plausible. The diviner also appears to have been in charge of Hittite ritual within the city, making him a logical choice for this position.

A brief discussion of the other two primary temples which have been discovered is warranted before speaking specifically of the ritual texts. These two temples have a road running between them, with what appears to be an altar at the end of the road. Due to the

²⁴ Demare-Lafont, Sophie. “The King and the Diviner at Emar.” *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo D'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Sürenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. 207-217.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Beckman, Gary M. "Hittite Administration in Syria in the Light of the Texts from Hattusa, Ugarit, and Emar." *New horizons in the study of ancient Syria*. Ed. John L. Hayes and Mark W. Chavalas. Malibu: Undena Publications, 1992. 41-49.

texts found within one of the temples, and their close proximity, it has been determined that these are the temples of Baal and Astart.²⁷

In discussing these two important temples, Pitard concludes that their architecture is strictly Syrian, and without Hittite influence. While Pitard wrote this article before the new revelations that the Hittites most likely did not found the Late Bronze Age town of Emar, it is important in showing that these temples are part of an older cult.

Finally, the research surrounding Emar is still a relatively new field, with new work being constantly undertaken. The state of research has been changing with the publication of new texts. Unfortunately a vast majority of the dialogue has begun to stray from the religious perspective, focusing more on the legal and administrative texts. However, the new publications of d'Alfonso and Cohen call for a reinterpretation of the ritual texts due to the fact that we do not know whether or not they come from the pre-Hittite period.

One way in which this can be examined is the new study of the different types of script used by the scribes of Emar. The documents of the king and "the city" are written in what is referred to as Syrian script. However, the documents of the diviner are usually written in the later Syro-Hittite script, further showing his relationship with the Hittites. The older documents continue to be copied in their original form, thus, it should be relatively simple to determine when certain ritual texts were written. This study of the two types of script by Fleming and Faist is another new field which is only beginning to be studied.²⁸

²⁷ Pitard, Wayne T. "The Archaeology of Emar." *Emar the history, religion, and culture of a Syrian town in the late Bronze Age*. Ed. Mark W. Chavalas. Bethesda, Md: CDL, 1996. 13-23. Pg. 14

²⁸ There are two essays on the differing types of script located in the *The City of Emar among the Late Bronze Age Empires: History Landscape and Society*. Ed. Lorenzo D'Alfonso, Yoram Cohen, and Dietrich Surenhagen. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. In this text see Daniel Fleming's "Reading Emar's Scribal Traditions Against the Chronology of

One of the most important facts to remember during a study of the texts of Emar is that the majority of the texts have been excavated from M1, and are part of what is referred to as the diviner's archive. Therefore, there is certainly a bias as no traces of a king's palace archive or an archive of "the city" have been found.²⁹ In addition, many of the administrative tablets and legal documents date to the time of the last diviner before the fall of Emar. Thus, the majority of texts that we are working with come from the diviner's archive, and, in the areas apart from ritual, deal with a very small and select time period (circa 1189-1175 BCE when the last two diviners, Zuzu and Ipqi-Dagan were in office).

The Main Rituals of Emar: The Function of the City Leaders and the Function of the Rituals

Seven primary rituals have been identified on the tablets found in the excavation of Emar. As with the majority of the texts, they were excavated from M1. In this discussion of the main rituals, the zukru festival will be of primary importance. The viewpoints on the position of the king, "the city," and the diviner within the power structure of Emar have, until now, only been formed by examination of the legal and administrative texts found within the diviner's archive and dating from a small window of time (the last 25 years of the existence of the city). While the other ritual texts seem to reinforce the idea that the king played a minimal role within the city, this position is drastically different within the zukru festival. Thus, within this discussion it must be remembered that we have no archives of the king's palace to realize his proper place within the power structure. However, the zukru festival, the most important ritual

Late Bronze History" Pg. 27-43, and most importantly Betina Faist's "Scribal Traditions and Administration at Emar" Pg. 195-205.

²⁹ Margueron tentatively labeled a Bit-Hilani on his map of the excavation site. This will be further discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

within Emar, portrays the king as the utmost figure of power within the political triad. This will be demonstrated through comparison with the other ritual texts, culminating in an examination of the zukru.

In addition to discussing the dynamic of the power structure shown by the rituals, a concise interpretation of each ritual will be offered as to its importance and use within the city of Emar. For the most part the categories of ritual are those distinguished by Catherine Bell in her book *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997).

These texts have been distinguished as ritual texts for several reasons. First, they clearly portray physical action intent on communion with the divine. In this communion, the ritual actors attempt to please the divine by lavishing them with gifts and praise. As is usually the case with religious ritual, this praise is given with an expectation to receive something in return. In some cases this “something” may be fertility for the crops, or it may simply be asking the primary gods of the region or city for the protection and well-being of Emar.

However, while the very base of religious ritual may be rooted in this sort of interplay between the divine and mankind, constructs of life and the hierarchy may also be reinforced. For example, we will see in the NIN.DINGER installation text that the simple structure of the seating arrangement and the giving of gifts to certain individuals denote and reinforce a certain hierarchy. In our primary example of the zukru festival, it will be shown that the main ritual actor and primary benefactor of the festival is the king himself, reinforcing his place as protector of the people. In addition, several of these rituals serve an even simpler purpose: reinforcing the ideals of the community and its existence as one, united people. This last point is extremely clear in the zukru festival in which the whole town participates. Thus, it will be

argued that the fact that the king is the primary ritual actor within this festival, which symbolizes and strengthens the bonds of the community, demonstrates that he is the legitimate ruler of the people and an important symbol of Emar.

The Kissu (“throne”) Festivals: Crisis and Exchange Rituals

The kissu festival texts are the most prevalent of the ritual texts found in the excavation of M1 with fifteen tablets and fragments having been discovered. While these were found in the diviner’s archive in Emar, at least several of them seem to deal with rites performed in the nearby city of Satappi³⁰ where the diviner apparently also oversaw ritual acts.

The deities attested on these fragments are Dagan, ERESKIGAL, Ea, Ishara, and NINURTA. Daniel Fleming states that “all of the Satappi kissu rituals are included in text F (MSK 742286b), which provides the framework for ordering the kissu set and the strongest evidence of their unity. Many other fragments were found, and each individual kissu is attested on at least two other tablets or fragments. No kissu for another deity was discovered, so it appears that the bounds of the Satappi set were securely fixed.”³¹

The term kissu has been translated as “throne,” most likely denoting a ritual dedicated to a deity’s particular sphere.³² Therefore, it is not surprising that these rituals are composed primarily of offerings to a single deity. In addition, it appears that, aside from Dagan’s kissu, each of these festivals lasted only for a single day. No specific calendar is given, so it is either

³⁰ The town of Satappi was located only a short distance from Emar. It is believed that diviner of the gods of Emar was also the diviner of this town. It is known that Satappi had a king due to his presence in several of the ritual texts. However, the majority of information about Satappi comes from the records and rituals of Emar.

³¹ Fleming, Daniel E. *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*. Atlanta, GA: Scholar's, 1992. Pg 256.

³² Fleming, Daniel E. "Two Kissu Festivals." *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Ed. William W. Hallo. Vol. 1. New York: Brill, 1997. 442-43.

common knowledge, or the ritual is simply performed whenever it is deemed necessary. These festivals exhibit a uniform formula, aside from the kissu for Dagan which lasts for three days as opposed to one. Due to the differences in the forms of the kissu, we will examine both the three day kissu for Dagan, as well as a one day kissu dedicated to Ishara and NIN.URTA.

The kissu festival for Dagan is unsurprisingly the longest as Dagan is seen as the supreme deity of the entire region. The heading for this text reveals that this ritual is for the city of Satappi. Following this, the sons of Satappi are revealed as the ones who are performing the kissu festival. This group would be identical to that of the sons of Emar who are present in the Nin.Dinger installation text which we will examine shortly. This group may be interpreted in two separate ways. First, it may very well be that every male citizen within the town is present in the performance of this ritual. This possibility is plausible considering the important role in which all the citizens of the town play within the zukru festival. However, the sons of Satappi, may also be another name for the city elders. It is this group which performs all of the major tasks, as well as the presentations of the offerings within the ritual.

The next group referred to is the “men of the consecration gift.” The exact function which these men played within the kissu festival is unclear. However, they are portrayed as a privileged group, for they are the men who eat and drink within the temple of Dagan for the three days of offerings. Again, this group could consist of some, if not all, of the city elders.

At the conclusion of the festival, the king and the diviner are mentioned for the first time. In addition, the chief scribe is grouped with them. The chief scribe may work for one of these two, or he may be the head of the group known as “the city.” These three consecrate the gods with bread and beer. It should also be pointed out that while the diviner of Emar is the

diviner of Satappi, the same does not appear to be the case with the king of Emar or “the city.” The “sons of Satappi” and the king of Satappi are entirely separate entities from Emar. It may be the case that the diviner is the head of ritual life in both Satappi and Emar because he does not hold a large enough position in either town individually to support himself. On the other hand, he may be a trusted servant of the Hittite Empire who has charged him with looking over not only Emar, but Satappi as well.

Although the text states that this ritual was performed in Satappi, the text itself was found in Emar, and thus the festival itself may have also occurred in Emar under the same guidelines. In addition, it appears as though M1 may have functioned as a storage center for the records and texts for Satappi as well. Therefore, in comparing the power structure of the three main players with the city, there are four possibilities. Each of these possibilities accepts that the diviner and the king perform a similar role within this text as they are only mentioned once, performing the same act.

The first possibility posits that none of the possible allusions to “the city” are correct. In this case, the diviner and the king would be placed on a level above “the city” within this important festival. The second possibility supposes that the chief scribe is actually an associate of the diviner whose responsibilities include scribal duties. Therefore, the diviner would be more strongly represented than the other two. The opposite of this could also be true with the chief scribe functioning as an associate of the king. The third possibility accepts that the person of the chief scribe is a representative of “the city.” In this case, all three would be placed on equal footing and seen to represent different important functions within the city. Lastly, “the city” is represented either by the “men of the consecration gift” or the “sons of Satappi.” If

either of these is the case, then “the city” plays a more important role than the king or diviner within this ritual to their most important god. Thus, it cannot be determined which of the four is the most important actor within this text.

The smaller, yet more common style of the kissu festival may be illustrated to us by the kissu festival for Ishara and NINURTA. The majority of the text simply uses the pronoun “they” to refer to the same position held by the “sons of Satappi” in our previous example. Therefore, it is most likely that this is the same group. At the conclusion of the festival, the diviner and the king are unmentioned, yet the group referred to as the “officials who give the consecration-gift” appear again. Thus, our same conclusions may be drawn concerning whether “the city” is represented by either of these groups. However, the king and the diviner play no role within this festival.

One important note should be made considering our second example. Unlike the kissu of Dagan, at the conclusion of the festival each man and woman of the town is given portions of food. It may then be theorized that these people were present for the entirety of the festival and that their presence was important for a positive outcome. The importance of the citizens will again be seen in the zukru festival.

From these two examples of the kissu festivals we have seen our first evidence of the three main sources of power within the city. It can be concluded from these texts, that at least the diviner and the king play a similar role. It is possible that “the city” plays a more important role than both of them, and, at the very least, is on equal footing.

In interpreting the purpose of the kissu festivals, it is probable that the festivals were performed when they were deemed necessary. For example, in times of drought, a kissu

festival would be performed for the deity associated with fertility. Therefore, the rituals may either be interpreted as rites of exchange and communion, or as rites of affliction.³³ Most likely it is a combination of the two. By lavishing offerings and praise upon the divine, the people participating in the offerings are expecting something in return (rain in the case of drought). In the kissu to Dagan, they would not be asking specifically for anything, but rather expecting protection and good will as a result of the ritual.

Commonly, exchange rituals are also rites of affliction as in the drought example. Catherine Bell states that rites of affliction “attempt to rectify a state of affairs that has been disturbed or disordered: they heal, exorcise, protect, and purify.”³⁴ Thus, the kissu festivals would most commonly have been observed immediately following, or during a desperate situation, indicating why these festivals were brief.

The mas’artu installation: Ritual of the Priestess of Astart-of-Battle

The mas’artu installation is the least known of the major rituals of Emar. This is due to the fact that only a single fragmented copy of this text has been found, with both the introduction and conclusion missing. This text has not been widely researched, with only several scholars writing on the installation. Daniel Fleming has done the most research within the field of Emar ritual, and even he writes only several paragraphs on this particular ritual. However, in order to continue our discussion, this ritual text must be considered.

From the parts of the text which remain intact, it can be discerned that there is an initial day of preparation, followed by seven days of feasting and offering. This is a similar pattern to

³³ Bell, Catherine M. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Pg. 108-120.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Pg. 115.

both the zukru and NIN.DINGER rituals. The mas'artu ritual deals with the installation of the priestess of Astart-of-Battle. Therefore, as opposed to the NIN.DINGER ritual which we will next consider, the "battle personnel" are the principal feasting participants in contrast to the diviner and the singers.³⁵

This is all that can be discerned from the remaining portions of text. However, the framework is almost identical to the NIN.DINGER text, and a comparison has thus been made between the two in an attempt to fill in missing text. While we cannot discern any hard evidence about the events which occur in the lost sections, the NIN.DINGER text will provide us with some suggestions.

What can be seen within the mas'artu installation is the absence of the diviner at the feast. This allows for two possibilities. The first of these is that the diviner is not as important to Emar ritual as has been previously imagined. The second possibility is that this ritual may in fact be older than the office of the diviner, just as the temple of Astart appears to be from the time before Hittite rule. If so, then keeping with the tradition of the Hittites, the diviner would not have included himself, or attempted to change local Emar ritual. This possibility of rituals being older than the office of the diviner will be important in our discussion of the zukru and our attempt to offer a new theory concerning the office of the king.

Due to the similar structure and full text of the NIN.DINGER installation ritual, the mas'artu installation will be examined in conjunction with the NIN.DINGER ritual at the conclusion of the following section.

³⁵ Fleming, Daniel. "The Emar Festivals: City Unity and Syrian Identity under Hittite Hegemony." *Emar the history, religion, and culture of a Syrian town in the late Bronze Age*. Ed. Mark W. Chavalas. Bethesda, Md: CDL, 1996. 81-121. Pg. 91.

The NIN.DINGER Installation of the High Priestess of Baal

The NIN.DINGER installation is certainly the most prominently researched ritual from Emar. This is primarily due to the fact that Daniel Fleming has published an entire book focusing on this ritual, as no one else has done with any of the other rituals of Emar.³⁶ This ritual is documented in five parallel copies, of which one is complete. It focuses on the selection and installation of the high priestess of the storm god Baal. As much research has been done on this particular ritual, we will focus on the presence of the three main political powers of the city.

The ritual begins with the casting of lots by the “sons of Emar” to decide upon the next high priestess. The high priestess may be any one of the daughters of the “sons of Emar.” Again, as in the kissu festivals, this group may be interpreted in several manners. First, it is likely that Daniel Fleming’s interpretation of this group as all male citizens is correct. However, this could also be a political group, in which case it would most likely be the city elders. This is probably not the case in this instance, as the city elders are specifically mentioned later in the festival. The “sons of Emar” then perform all the main ritual tasks and offerings throughout the installation.

The diviner is the character most often mentioned within this text. Only at one point, however, does he undertake any specific action as he anoints the head of the NIN.DINGER at one instance during the nine day festival

³⁶ Fleming, Daniel E. *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar*. Atlanta, GA: Scholar's, 1992. This installation ritual has also become popular due to its inclusion in the three volume anthology of ancient Near Eastern texts published by William Hallo (*The Context of Scripture* Vol. 1, pg. 427-431).

Just before the evening watch, they will take fine oil of the temple of NIN.KUR
 And of the palace and at the gate of IM the HAL [diviner] will pour (it) on the NIN.DINGER's
 [head], and when the men of the *qidasu* leave the temple of IM, they will [brin]g her [into the
 house of her father³⁷

The main function of this text, which the diviner seems to have written, is to document the times of his own payment, whether it be in money, food, beer, or animal skins. At four separate instances, the text denotes how much the diviner will receive in payment. At the conclusion of the text, the diviner's name is mentioned ten times to denote his payments in animal skins, food, and beer. The text even mentions what the diviner receives upon the death of the priestess. Therefore, while his name is mentioned more than the other two within this text, only at one point is the diviner actually part of the festival while the king and the "city elders" dine and drink with the important parties.

As mentioned, in all likelihood the "sons of Emar" are not synonymous with "the city." The city elders are only mentioned at one specific point as part of what the text refers to as the "last day" of the festival.³⁸ An interesting point appears in the last line of the entire text. Upon describing the gifts received by the diviner and the father of the deceased priestess, the scribe takes care to include a special reference to the city, most likely referring to the group known as "the city" or the city elders:

These items are for ("of") the house of her father. The city (gets) nothing.
 The house of her father will take her ritual appurtenances(?), (and) the city
 (gets) nothing.

³⁷ Fleming *Installation*. Pg 51.

³⁸ This reference to the city elders occurs on what would appear to be the sixth day within the text although the text itself seems to encompass at least eight days if not nine.

This text is most likely a later addition to the ritual corpus due to the presence of the diviner who is not believed to have been in existence before the Hittite Empire came to power. Therefore, the lack of involvement by the city elders may indicate strife between the diviner and “the city,” whereas the diviner is trying to exert his power.

This power is seemingly exerted more when the person of the king is examined within the text. In the important dining rituals that occur on at least seven, if not eight days of the festival, the king of Emar is present. However, he is not the only king present. The king of Satappi also receives a table, as well as “the king of the land.” The “king of the land” is most certainly a reference to someone within the Hittite hierarchy. While it is very unlikely that it actually refers to the king of the Hittites, it is almost assuredly the king of Carchemish or, most probably, his representative. Earlier in our brief description of the diviner, it was shown that, at one point, the king of Carchemish proceeded over a debate over the title of diviner, ultimately choosing who would receive the title. Therefore, the man holding the title of diviner is in debt to the king of Carchemish for allowing him to hold this prestigious position.

While all three kings participate within the ritual feasts leading up to the actual initiation, it is only the king of the land who receives a portion of the slaughtered animals upon the last day of the festival. This is a fact which has been overlooked in the study of this festival. In doing this, the diviner seems to pledge his allegiance to the king of Carchemish, and, in the process, to the occupying Hittite Empire, over his own native king of Emar. Therefore, it can be seen that this text is most likely a development from the later periods of Emar. However, it must be remembered that the Temple of Baal dates to before the creation of the office of the diviner.

Much like the zukru festival, this installation ritual may indeed function as more than solely a ritual for the installation of Baal's priestess. Due to its appearance as a later text, and the fact that it was written by the diviner himself, this ritual may serve to inscribe power relationships within the city of Emar and the hierarchy of the Hittite kingdom. Thus, this ritual may serve as a "vehicle for the *construction* of relationships of authority and submission," which is a position advocated by practice theorists.³⁹ Catherine Bell states that "practice theories are explicitly concerned with what rituals do, not just what they mean, particularly the way they construct and inscribe power relationships."⁴⁰ In other words, this ritual functions at a deeper societal level than merely as an installation ritual.

Clifford Geertz also writes on the theory of practice. He argues that hierarchical structures within ritual may be seen to correlate with hierarchical structures within the cosmos.⁴¹ Therefore, by placing the "king of the land" at a higher position within the ceremony, the diviner (assuming that he organized this structure by his writing of the text) inherently proclaims the Hittite Empire, through its representative, to be the rightful ruler of Emar in both literal and cosmological terms. Concisely, due to the fact that the "king of the land" holds a larger and more important role within the ritual, he therefore is preferred by the divine over the traditional ruler of Emar. As stated in the previous section, the fragmented version of the mas'artu installation most likely possesses the same ritual function due to its similar nature. However, this can only be hypothesized and not stated with a high degree of probability due to the brief amount of text which exists today.

³⁹ Bell 82

⁴⁰ Bell 83

⁴¹ Geertz, Clifford. *Negara: the Theatre State in Nineteenth-century Bali*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1980.

The Text for Six Months and Agricultural Planting Rituals

The primary use of this text in recent scholarship has been in attempting to reconstruct the calendar for Emar.⁴² The text appears in only one copy, over half complete, but barely legible. Its primary function revolves around agricultural planting rites. As can be seen by its scholarly title, the text relates the ritual actions of certain days with a six month period. Each individual rite exists in three distinct parts: a procession, an offering, and the distribution of materials to the ritual actors.

In Fleming's discussion of this text, largely based on its use in establishing a calendar, he does touch on several points vital to our discussion. He states that "the text for six months treats the rites that were performed under the auspices of leadership distinct from the king and his palace. In fact, 'the city' appears as a prominent supplier of offerings and once even receives a sheep."⁴³ In addition, he says that "the selection of rites for inclusion in the text seems to have been based on the diviner's personal involvement and on city sponsorship."⁴⁴ He also quite correctly postulates that with "the city" as a primary ritual actor, this is most likely a ritual linked to more ancient times. However, it must be remembered that the diviner, an office which did not come into being until well after the reestablishment of the city, is indeed involved in the ritual.

Within the existing part of the text, the House of the Gods is mentioned by name five times. Three of these times relate to offerings and supplies provided by the House of the Gods,

⁴² Fleming, Daniel E. *Time at Emar The Cultic Calendar & the Rituals from the Diviner's House (Mesopotamian Civilizations 11)*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

⁴³ Ibid. 146.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 147.

while the other two relate to materials received by the House of the Gods at the conclusion of a particular rite. Interestingly, in one of these cases the text states: “The House of the Gods (?) (and) the diviner receive the head.”⁴⁵ With the obvious fact that the head is only one object, the House of the Gods and the diviner do appear to be one and the same, and perhaps interchangeable in these ritual texts.

With this said, the diviner is mentioned eleven times within the existing text. Seven of the eight of these times which are legible, he is receiving something upon the conclusion of a certain rite. The eighth time he is actively participating in the ritual by spreading seed on the ground:

The diviner throws down seed onto the ground. The...-bread
from the House of the Gods(?), cups (of drink), and the meat of the right
breast
belong to the diviner. On the next day,
at dawn...they slaughter (a sacrifice) for Dagan and
perform sacrificial homages by lasting oath (?) and by....
Until they finish the sacrificial homages,
no one may go out to plant.⁴⁶

Aside from anointing the priestess' head in the NIN.DINGER installation, this appears to be the only other time in the surviving rituals in which the diviner actively participates.

As previously stated, Daniel Fleming argues that this text is free of foreign involvement due to the participation of “the city.” However, this sentiment may not be entirely correct. Fleming bases the participation and sponsorship of “the city” partly upon the lines which begin the text: “Tablet of the rites of the city.”⁴⁷ “The city” is only mentioned three other times when they provide one sheep each time. In comparison with the great amounts of food given by the

⁴⁵ Ibid. 271

⁴⁶ Ibid. 273

⁴⁷ Ibid 269

House of the Gods, the participation of “the city” is almost non-existent. In fact, a group of people referred to as the *nuppuhannu* provide the majority of the sheep within the ritual. This word has no direct translation although Fleming postulates that they are herdsmen who remain outside the gates and light fires.⁴⁸

Within the rites, several times the phrase, “the leaders,” is mentioned. It is unclear what this is referring to as there are several possibilities. This statement could indeed be referring to “the city” and the king. In this case, although the king is not providing any materials for the ritual, he is involved as an active, leading member of the community who commands respect for his position. The other possibility is that “the leaders” are the ritual leaders who conduct the rites. In this example, these would most likely be men associated with the diviner and the House of the Gods or other temples (which are occasionally mentioned within the text).

Therefore, there are a number of hypotheses which may be postulated in examination of this text. As stated, the king, as well as “the city” (although providing an extremely small amount of meat for the festival), are in positions of power overlooking the ceremony and are being honored in these posts. If the ritual is indeed from more ancient times, then the parts played by the diviner and the House of the Gods would most likely have been run by the leaders of the individual temples as they still play a part within the ceremony.

However, the presence of the diviner within the text is cause for concern. It may just be that this ritual was not written down until the office of the diviner came into being, at which point he inserted himself into the ceremony and appropriated the spreading of seed and taking

⁴⁸ Ibid 151. Fleming notes the similarities in the Semitic language to arrive at this conclusion. These men appear briefly in several ritual texts as providing sheep. In a recent study of the archaeobotany of the region, Simone Riehl found high quantities of sheep and goat dung. This most likely points to the importance of herding to the economy of the city, perhaps making the *nuppuhannu* men a somewhat higher class of society.

of some material goods as his own. On the other hand, this rite may have been instituted later in time, following Emar becoming a vassal nation to the Hittites. This point is a far more important one to consider in that this rite would have been extremely important to the people of Emar.

Being that this was a fertility ritual, and that the text states no one may begin to plant until the rites are complete, it would have been a crucial time of year to the life of the common citizen of Emar. With this in mind, the diviner may have placed himself in the all important position of spreading the seed to begin the planting season. By activating the seed when it comes in contact with the soil, the diviner is imitating the divine and signaling that the planting season has now begun. If the planting season was then successful, he would be the one responsible for imitating the divine, pleasing them, and causing the growing season to begin again and, thus, allowing the citizens of Emar to be able to continue their lives for another year.

While all of these are possibilities, we must look at the text as it exists today. In this text, the king and “the city” are perhaps involved in dining with the community as “the leaders,” but aside from that they play an extremely miniscule role (with the king playing no role at all). It is the diviner and the House of the Gods who are presented as providing much of the materials needed, along with the *nuppuhannu* men, and receiving material gifts at the conclusion of the rites.

Therefore, with the text as it is, there are only two possibilities for interpretation. The first possibility is that, because this tablet was found in M1, its main goal was primarily to lay out only those tasks and gifts which involve the diviner and the House of the Gods. While this may be the case, it is highly unlikely as it does mention “the city,” the *nuppuhannu* men, and

several other temples. Thus, it is the second possibility that is the most likely: the diviner is displayed as playing a major role within an important ceremony which probably predates the existence of his office.

In interpreting this text from a ritual standpoint, there are several important features. The first of these has previously been discussed when examining the kissu festivals: rites of exchange. The primary function of this ritual is to ask favor of the gods to ensure fertility and a good planting season. The citizens of Emar do not begin this season until this ritual is performed. Therefore, by giving offerings and praise to the deities, the citizens of Emar expect a good harvest in return. Catherine Bell states that “rites of exchange and communion help articulate complex systems of relationships among human beings, gods, demons, ancestors, and animals. Such rites call attention to an order in these relationships that all depend upon for their well-being.”⁴⁹ Thus, for the cosmos to remain in balance, the ritual must be performed, and the perceived effect of that rite must be seen.

Next, this ritual is one upon which the entire community depends. It is a ritual which brings together this community as one entity whose livelihood depends upon the success of the ritual. Durkheim was one of the first ritual theorists to propose that ritual is the manner in which individuals are brought together into a collective group.⁵⁰ Durkheim, along with William Robertson Smith, argued that not only ritual, but religion as a whole, functions to bring society together. Catherine Bell cites Robertson Smith when she states that “religion was a social

⁴⁹ Bell 136

⁵⁰ Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free, 1965.

creation that exists, as Robertson Smith had noted, 'not for the saving of souls but for the preservation and welfare of society.'"⁵¹

This viewpoint may be examined in two separate manners when discussing this ritual. First, this ritual was not a product of a religion which was focused on the welfare of the individual. Rather, this rite was deemed to be necessary for the preservation and the general livelihood of the society as a corporate whole. However, Robertson Smith and Durkheim would probably have seen this ritual as serving a more basic sociological function: bringing the community together to celebrate a ritual in order to reinforce the ideals of the society to which they belong.

In addition, this ritual fits within the category of calendrical rites as it would have been performed at harvest time each year. Breaking down this category even further, the ritual would have been a seasonal, rather than a commemorative rite. Bell defines seasonal calendrical rites as "rooted in the activities of planting and harvesting for agriculturalists or grazing and moving the herd for pastoralists."⁵² She argues that these harvest rites "generally involve festivals in which the firstfruits are given back to the gods or ancestors, accompanied by a communal feast with abundant food, music, dance, and some degree of social license."⁵³ Several of these characteristics are apparent in the text, including the communal feasts with abundant food, as well as a representation of the firstfruits being given back to the gods in the ritual action of the spreading of the seed performed by the diviner.

⁵¹ Bell 5

⁵² Ibid 103

⁵³ Ibid 103

It is also necessary briefly to mention one aspect of this festival which will be even more important within the zuku. Several times within the Text for Six Months, a rite cannot begin until the statue of the deity is led through certain gates. Arnold van Gennep has written on the concept of doors, arches, or gates as thresholds in regard to initiation rituals in which a person is undergoing a change in social status.⁵⁴ While the concept of passing through the gates is not important to the community within this ritual, it is certainly important to the deity. Although the references are vague, and we do not know where certain gates would have been, it is possible that the passage through these gates led into an area of designated ritual space. In regard to a change in social status, the deity is undergoing a somewhat similar transformation as he is entering a realm of extreme sacrality. One of the examples of the gates within this text actually refers to the entrance into a gate of a deity whose name has been lost. This provides support for the references to the gates which do not appear to be entrances to temples, but rather entrances into designated sacred space.⁵⁵ This will be of greater importance in our examination of the zuku.

The Texts for Individual Months

There are two individual texts which describe the rites performed on specific days during two separate months. Although distinctly different texts, the second appears to be a continuation from the acts performed in the first. Daniel Fleming argues that the two

⁵⁴ Gennep, Arnold Van. *The Rites of Passage*. (Chicago): University of Chicago, 1960.

⁵⁵ This sacred space may either be an actual ritual area used only for ceremonies, or simply a town meeting place with a large amount of room. Even in this case, the meeting place would function as sacred space for this period of time.

overriding purposes behind these rites are agricultural, and a focus on the underworld coinciding with the coming new moon.⁵⁶

Text One (Emar 452)

The first of these texts is barely more than a list of which offerings should be given to which deities on certain days within the month. In continuing our main purpose in examining the role of “the city,” the diviner, and the king within these rituals, it is important to document the appearance of these offices within the text. Within Text One, it does not appear as though “the city” is mentioned at all, while the *nuppuhannu* men who appeared in the Text for Six Months are included several times.

To begin with, the diviner is not mentioned at all within this text. However, as has been argued, it is probable that the diviner is a representative of the House of the Gods, which is indeed included. The House of the Gods is referred to nine times within the first text, each time as a provider of certain offerings for the rites. Unlike other texts which we have examined, the House of the Gods receives no offerings in return.

The king is also mentioned within this text. He is mentioned by his title three times, while the term, “the palace,” is used in two other places. For the time being, we will assume that these two phrases are interchangeable, although we will see that this may not be the case. Four of these times, the king, or the palace, is providing offerings for the rite. However, on the fifth time, the “abu of the palace” receives an offering. Daniel Fleming has translated “abu” as

⁵⁶ In *Time at Emar*, Fleming remarks further on the timing of the new moon within his overall discussion of the calendar at Emar.

referring to either a “father” or an “ancestor.”⁵⁷ Therefore, the palace is seen to have some sort of divine power, as every other offering within the text is given to either a specific deity or temple, with the exception of two offerings given to the House of Assistance. The function of this house is unknown.

Before examining several other possibilities, we will examine the text as it initially appears. In this assessment, the House of the Gods provides more than twice the number of offerings as the palace or the king. However, the House of the Gods receives no offerings in the ceremony, while the palace does. Aside from the offerings to the palace, all other offerings are given to specific temples. Therefore, in context with the other buildings receiving the offerings, this text implies that the palace has a level of divine nature associated with it. In conjunction, this may indeed show that the king himself is believed to have been granted his position through the blessing of the divine. Thus, in our initial look at this text, although the House of the Gods plays a larger role, it is the king who appears to play a more central role within the community, perhaps even receiving divine status.

However, there are several parts of the text which point to outside influences, and, therefore, a likely change in interpretation. In his interpretation of this text, as well as the second text, Daniel Arnaud proposes a connection with other Mesopotamian ritual. However, by comparing these two calendar-based rituals to Ugaritic examples, Fleming argues that the connection is not as apparent as it may first appear.⁵⁸ He argues that this text is not traditional

⁵⁷ *Time at Emar* Pg. 186. This translation is based upon a scribe’s interpretation of this term in one individual text. Fleming does however state that this translation should be tentative, and the meaning of the festival depends greatly upon the translation of this word as it appears multiple times within the text. However, for our purposes the translation of this term is not of primary importance, and we should focus upon the reference to the palace itself.

⁵⁸ Fleming, *Time at Emar* Pg. 174

to Emar, but rather borrows from other newer traditions. He states that “the notion of calendar-based ritual is surely very old in Syria, but the systematic organization of rites under one month’s frame may be a more recent phenomenon, perhaps inspired by models from Syrian neighbors.”⁵⁹

Further supporting his point, Fleming argues that the presence of Mount Sinapsi within this text is most likely connected to Hurrian rituals.⁶⁰ In addition, the manner in which flour is standardized within the text is a manner characteristic of the Hittites and the Hurrians.⁶¹ With the possibility of a connection to Hittite ritual, we must take a drastically different approach in our interpretation.

There are several points that must be considered if one is to theorize that this ritual is relatively new to Emar, arriving around, or after, the time when the Hittites made Emar their vassal city. The first of these is obviously that the diviner had a large hand in the manufacturing of this text, and perhaps even the ritual itself. Even if the ritual predates the Hittites and the office of the diviner, it was not written before their time, and it may be theorized that the diviner added his own features to the ritual. On the other hand, while we associate the House of the Gods with the diviner, it may be that this House of the Gods predates the office of the diviner, even if he later was to become associated with it.

However, for our purposes, we shall assume that the diviner played a large role in the manufacturing of this ritual, no matter whether it predated him or not, and thus we will continue to associate the House of the Gods with the diviner. In this scenario, the

⁵⁹ Ibid. Pg. 180.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Pg. 178.

⁶¹ Ibid. Pg. 180.

interpretation of the diviner's role within the ritual does not change. The most important fact to be considered is the use of the word "palace" in place of the title "king" for the first time that we have seen in the Emar ritual texts.

The differences in terminology may seem trivial at first, although this is certainly not the case. If we are to assume that this text is from the period of Hittite rule, then we may theorize that this "palace" may not be referring to the king of Emar whatsoever, but rather to the Hittite Empire, or someone representing them (in this case probably the king of Carchemish). If there is no difference between the two, then there is no need for the sudden change in terminology.

It may be necessary to distinguish this case as different from the interchangeable terms of "House of the Gods" and "diviner." The diviner is a representative of the House of the Gods, which he operates along with other lesser diviners. Therefore, he is the head of a group of people, who, together, operate the House of the Gods. The king is not a representative of the palace, but rather a representative of the people themselves. A change in terminology from "palace" to "king" would not simply mean that the entire palace is giving, or receiving, an offering, because the palace would be, in effect, the king. Therefore, this sudden change in terminology in only two places signifies an inherently different meaning. This meaning is most likely that the "palace" is in fact not the king of Emar, but rather represents the Hittite Empire. In this case, the king would certainly not be deified, but rather the rule of the Hittite Empire over the city of Emar would be seen as the will of the divine due to the "palace" receiving offerings along with other temples.

This second interpretation of the palace as representative of the Hittite Empire is far more likely, and will be used in our further examination of this ritual as a political rite. In

placing the Hittite Empire on the level of the divine by presenting it (or its representative) with this offering, it is publicly stated that the rule of the Hittites over the city of Emar is the will of the divine. This would have a profound impact on the community, who, in all likelihood, saw little difference in their daily lives under the king of Emar and under the rule of the Hittites. By proclaiming the Hittites as divinely ordained to rule, there is little chance that the king of Emar would be able to mount a resistance to the continued control of his city. An important theory of Geertz is thus portrayed: rituals construct power.⁶²

Although Geertz's example deals with the more modern rituals of Queen Elizabeth's coronation and the Swazi kings tasting of the firstfruits, in regards to Geertz, Bell states that "status in the human world is an approximate but legitimate reflection of the inherent hierarchical order of the cosmos itself."⁶³ Therefore, when the Hittite king is shown to have the blessing of the divine, it represents that the cosmos is actually in order. For the cosmos to remain in order, then the Hittite king must retain his place of leadership.

Catherine Bell discusses several important points of David Kertzer when discussing political rites which are certainly seen here. She quotes Kertzer, stating that "symbolic action is taken very seriously by those contending for power. Far from matters of 'empty ritual,' etiquette and ceremony can go to the heart of constructing relationships of political submission and dominance. In his study of political ritual, David Kertzer concludes that 'rites create political reality.' It is by participating in rituals that people identify 'with larger political forces that can only be seen in symbolic form. And through political ritual, we are given a way to

⁶² *Negara: the Theatre State in Nineteenth-century Bali*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1980.

⁶³ Bell 86

understand what is going on in the world, for we live in a world that must be drastically simplified if it is to be understood at all.”⁶⁴ ⁶⁵

This quote makes several very important points to our examination of this offering to the palace. As Bell states, this offering may construct a system of submission and dominance by placing the Hittites as divinely ordained rulers. In using Kertzer’s theory to further this point, the common citizen of Emar is allowed to identify with this larger political force that he may know only in name through this offering. Through this ritual, the vast web of politics is simplified to the common citizen. He is allowed to see simply that the Hittites are his ruler, and that they have been chosen by the divine, namely Dagan and NIN.URTA as the god of the region and god of the city, to undertake this task.

Two more points should be mentioned before the next ritual is considered. As was seen in the Text for Six Months, this first text also makes use of gates to symbolize ritual space. One offering is performed at the “cemetery gate,” most likely to appease the spirits of the ancestors buried there. A gate is then mentioned on the following line, although on a different date. While this gate is unnamed at this time, it may be the “cemetery gate” again. The doors to this gate are locked, shutting off the ceremonial space for a time. These gates will be reopened at the beginning of the accompanying text.

Lastly, Fleming has categorized this first text as an agricultural rite at the end of the harvest season, although this is not entirely clear. However, if so, then this ritual is also a rite of exchange or communion, thanking the divine for a good harvest season by providing them with offerings.

⁶⁴ Bell Pg. 133

⁶⁵ Kertzer, David I. *Ritual, Politics, and Power*. New Haven:Yale University Press, 1988.

Text Two (Emar 463)

As previously mentioned, this text appears to be a continuation of Emar 452. At the very beginning of the text, the doors which were closed at the end of the previous ritual are now opened. This text seemingly correlates to the coming of the new moon. Dagan is the chief recipient of offerings, although all of the gods are included. This text offers the most balanced participation of “the city,” the king, and the diviner. The *nuppuhannu* men are also included.

The House of the Gods provides food and drinks on two separate occasions and will initially be equated with the diviner. “The city” and the king each provide offerings individually on three occasions. Therefore, the king and “the city” seem to play a slightly more prominent role within the ritual.

The use of the term “House of the Gods,” as opposed to the use of “diviner,” within the text may denote that it derives from a time before the office of the diviner was in existence. It should be remembered that this text is believed to coincide with the previous ritual, in which the diviner was also not mentioned by name. This theory then portrays a continued celebration of older rituals which existed long before the presence of the Hittites, as well as the office of the diviner. Thus, “the city” and the king represent all of Emar and its populace with their offerings, while the House of the Gods solely represents the temples and deities of the city.

This ritual also offers an important insight into the religious beliefs of the community. In correlation with the previous ritual, Daniel Fleming writes that “the timing of these offerings alone suggests a focus on the underworld. The 25th to 27th days cover the last stages of the moon’s light and influence, before the power of death encroaches on the land of the living in

the darkness before the new moon. In Mesopotamian tradition, the 28th and 29th days of every month belong to Nergal and the underworld.”⁶⁶ Therefore, the offerings in the preceding text likely deal with the ancestors, while the offerings in the second text are associated with the new moon.

Fleming affirms this when he states that “the two texts for individual months weave the rites for the end of Abi into the coming new moon by barring the doors to ‘the gate of the grave’ through the intervening darkness. Together, the rites for the passing and the arriving moons negotiate a frightening time of year when new harvests must replenish stores of food. The convergence of the moon’s movement from darkness to light with the seasonal transition to harvest becomes a sign of hope, and ‘the new moon of Dagan’ thus was a key moment in the turning year.”⁶⁷

In continuing with Fleming’s line of thought, these rites were important to all citizens of the city. Just as the Text for Six Months deals with the first planting rites, the combination of these two ritual texts points to an important time for the entire city in hopes of a prosperous harvest season and new year. This importance to the city as a whole, and not just to a particular deity or religious cult, may explain the prominence of the king and “the city” within the ritual, as representative bodies for the entirety of Emar.

The task of representing the entire city also comes with great responsibility. An unsuccessful harvest season, or any other catastrophe that may strike the community, may

⁶⁶ Fleming, *Time at Emar*. Pg. 186.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Pg. 192.

directly be blamed on those whose task was to bless the gods with offerings.⁶⁸ Perhaps this occurred shortly before the Hittites arrived; explaining why it appears that there was little to no resistance from the city.

Catherine Bell discusses how rituals of this sort have been known to change the power dynamic. She writes that “rituals meant to establish a particular power relationship are not invulnerable to being challenged, inverted, or completely thwarted by counteractions.”⁶⁹ Therefore, as stated, while “the city” and the king are representatives of the entire city through their offerings to the gods, a bad harvest year may cause people to see them as unsuitable for this distinction, maybe even leading to a loss of power. Thus, the fact that “the city” and the king play prominently within this ritual upon which the welfare of the community is dependent displays the power entrusted upon them by the society.

These rites are typical of exchange and communion rites which have been previously discussed. The deities depend upon these offerings for their well-being, while providing the community with the sense that a good harvest season and protection will be given in return. Therefore, this ritual, especially in conjunction with the previously discussed text, is extremely important to the welfare of the city of Emar.

The Zukru Festival

The zukru festival is the most important festival in Emar for several reasons. To begin with, it honors all of the gods of Emar, with the greatest focus on the gods Dagan and

⁶⁸ This is common with the Ancient Near East. For example, many rituals in ancient Egypt, such as the daily ritual at the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, were directly related to the outcome of the ritual. Everyday that the sun rose, this ritual was deemed a success, and the pharaoh was believed to still have the favor of the divine. Had the sun not risen, it would have been deemed that the pharaoh had lost the favor of the gods.

⁶⁹ Bell 132

NIN.URTA. Seemingly just as important, it brings together all the citizens of Emar as one and reinforces their ties to the city.

Before discussing the text, it is important to note that there are two different versions of the zukru festival. There is one version of the festival which is celebrated for one day every year. This text has been translated from several small fragmentary tablets.⁷⁰ The larger version of the zukru text is almost entirely intact and is the longest ritual tablet from Emar. The annual zukru is just somewhat of a smaller version of the larger text. For this reason we will only discuss it briefly.

As opposed to the seven day festival of the longer zukru, which includes an additional year of preparation, the annual zukru lasts only one day. Within this festival, it appears as though offerings are taken to all of the gods; however the text is too fragmentary to confirm this. It is apparent though that Dagan is the central figure. An image of Dagan is taken outside the city walls and between the “upright stones” in procession. The whole of the city ventures outside of the city walls for a feast.

In contrast to the larger zukru, “the city” provides all of the food for the offerings to the gods and the feast of the people. The king does not appear within any surviving portion of this text. Likewise, the diviner does not appear, however, the term House of the Gods appears at least twice. This term may very well have been in use before the role of the diviner was created so it is possible that this ritual is from a time before Hittite control.

Since “the city” provides all the offerings within the annual zukru, it is valid to assume that they had close ties to the citizens of Emar on a more daily basis than the king, or even the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

diviner after his office was established. This is most likely due to the fact that they dealt with everyday issues such as land exchange, while it appears that the king dealt primarily with legal issues in regard to his interaction with the populace. Due to the relative importance this festival seems to have carried, it is not surprising that the diviner does not appear within it. In comparison with the smaller rituals which we have examined, the importance of this festival to the entire populace would not have allowed for an easy insertion into the ritual by the diviner.

The larger zukru festival is the text which may offer another interpretation of the office of the king. This text has been translated and studied in depth in regards to recovering the chronology of the year in Emar by Daniel Fleming.⁷¹ The king provides a vast majority of the offerings, beginning a year before the festival in the month of SAG.MU. While both the House of the Gods and “the city” also provide offerings, they are dwarfed by the offerings given by the king. Daniel Fleming states that “the wealth of the palace is evident behind every expansion.”⁷² Simply, with every subsequent action performed in the festival, offerings given by the king increase greatly.

Fleming also states that the “zukru of the festival text shows heavy dependence on the beneficence of the king.”⁷³ Therefore, this important festival could not happen in all of its grandeur without the help of the king. Our goal here is not to interpret the text itself, as Daniel Fleming has already succeeded in doing so. It is to show the importance of the king within the context of the Emar political structure.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. Pg. 49.

⁷³ Ibid. Pg. 57.

The first step we will take in doing this is to suggest that perhaps this text predates the office of the diviner. As we have seen on several occasions, the term “House of the Gods” is used instead of “diviner.” This most likely points to the existence of this ritual before the office of the diviner. Therefore, I suggest that the “House of the Gods” does not necessarily refer to the office of the diviner. In earlier times there certainly would have been a main temple which would have provided assistance in ritual offerings, just as the House of the Gods provides in both zukru texts and several of the ritual texts we have already examined.

Next there is evidence of the term “zukrum” in a Mari letter from the early second millennium.⁷⁴ The ritual described in this text was unknown in parallel until the translation of the zukru text from Emar at least five hundred years later. Within this Mari text a grand festival is held to honor the central god of the region. This purpose is identical to the celebration of the zukru in Emar. With this information it is possible that the celebration of the zukru may date back even to the previous location of Emar. In addition, the offerings attested to the king are not offerings which could have been provided by a poor and powerless king like the one which has been assumed in modern scholarship.

Thus, this provides us with several interpretations which differ from the scholarly viewpoint on the king. First, the zukru texts may not have been written by the diviner. Following Emar coming under the control of the Hittites, it is likely that the diviner took on this function in order to blend into ritual life within Emar and connect further with the city. However, the king himself still continued to rule over these people.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Pg. 49.

Most importantly, the king is not the semi-worthless ruler that he has been assumed to be. It is obvious that the office of the king at least has gained wealth over time. While administrative and legal documents show that the king did not start taking tribute until the early thirteenth century, the assumption that the position was not wealthy before this relies on the basis that Emar was only a century or so old. The recent discovery of Middle and Early Bronze levels of inhabitation at the site allow for the possibility that this may not be the case.

Critics of this viewpoint would point to the fact that archival information surrounding the kings only goes as far as the 15th century. However, we again remember that the archives of the palace, as well as the archives of “the city,” have not yet been found. Scholars admit that the majority of information on the diviner is related to the final diviner before the fall of the town. It is possible that he only held the most important archives of the past several centuries while the rest of the archives were held in another location, or even destroyed.

There is no debating the fact that within the majority of the texts we possess, the diviner and “the city” are the most influential groups. A reinterpretation of this ritual as older than previously thought, and as a text predating the diviner, allows us to speculate about the actual power of the king within the city itself.

The scholars of the *zukru* admit that this is the most important ritual because it not only honors the gods, but also brings the entire community together. Thus, it is expected that the ruler of the town funds the festival. No matter how distant the Hittite rule of their vassal nation may have been, and how “hands off” their rule may appear, it is certain that the populace of Emar knew that they were no longer a sovereign nation. Therefore, a festival such

as this would remind them that their true leader, the beneficent king, is still there for them and that the gods have not forsaken them.

A brief mention on “the city” is also pertinent here, although it has not received the same scholarly treatment as the king. It is plausible that the king and the council of elders held a semi-balance of power before the diviner and the rule of the Hittites. With the introduction of a new king to follow, it is likely that the office of the king of Emar was greatly diminished in fear of revolt. Thus, “the city” was allowed to keep much of its power while the king was placed into a more honorary role. By keeping his role within this festival and by reminding his people that they are citizens of Emar, the king is slowing the process of becoming an extension of the Hittite Empire himself.

The zukru festival in both of its forms may be examined using ritual theory as has been done in this study at the conclusion of each section. The primary function of both festivals appears to be an emphasis on the bonds of community. Within both texts, it is stated that “the whole populace” and all of “the citizens” of the city participate. Therefore, it is likely that this was the only festival in which every member of the town was included. For example, not all would have been participants in the priestess initiations rituals, while the kissu rituals and rituals for the months would not have pertained to all of the populace. However, people from all walks of life were participants within the zukru. Thus, it is supremely important who provided the food for all of these people, as well as provided for the offerings to the gods of the city which were witnessed by all.

Several theorists have written about ritual and religion as binding the community together, and this has already been briefly discussed. However, it is pertinent to point out

several of these theories to emphasize the importance of the zukru. For example, Durkheim viewed ritual as the way in which individuals were brought together into a collective group.⁷⁵ As has been stated, this would have been especially important after the city became a vassal nation to the Hittites. This ritual would reinforce the religion which was specific to Emar and the region, thus reinforcing their bonds of community.

In continuing, William Robertson Smith interpreted Semitic rites from a similar period as a “festive ‘communion’ between humans and gods that has the effect of sacralizing the social unity and solidarity of the group.”⁷⁶⁷⁷ Thus, the celebration of this ritual not only brought the community together through festival, but also helped them to become closer with the gods of the region, again reinforcing the connection to the city.

The zukru may also be analyzed as a political rite which has already been discussed. Within the ritual, the king is able to show the extent of his power simply through his wealth and ability to organize such an elaborate festival for the entire community. Again, this reinforces the solidarity of the community, as well as the beneficence of the king to his people.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the statues of NIN.URTA and Dagan are processed out of the gates of the city, and then back inside the gates at important moments during the festival. As has been discussed, this coincides with a transition to sacred space. Most likely, it is important to take the statue of Dagan outside of the city to show that he is not only a god of Emar, but the supreme deity of the entire region.

⁷⁵ Durkheim *Elementary Forms*

⁷⁶ Bell 4

⁷⁷ Robertson Smith, William. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* [1889]. New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969.

Conclusion

Through our examination of the power structure within the rituals of Emar we have shown that the scholarship on the king may not be correct in labeling him as little more than a figurehead. By examining the ritual documents it has been seen that the king plays a crucial role in several of the most important festivals, the most vital being the zukru.

One severely fragmented ritual text should be noted to reinforce the importance of the king. The ritual of the imistu revolves around the king making sacrifices and offerings at the temple of Dagan. Lluís Feliu calls this ritual the “only royal ritual from Emar.”⁷⁸ Again the king is portrayed as the major figure in honoring the primary deity of the region. Thus, he has been entrusted with the responsibility of keeping his people safe through his correct performance of the ritual.

In examining the power structure of Emar it should always be remembered that the vast majority of texts from the city originate from M1. Therefore, they were in the possession of the diviner and were subject to change by him. In addition, the archives of the palace and “the city” are unknown. Thus, no judgment should be passed on the king as a lesser figure within the ruling bodies of Emar just from the texts that we have available.

In regard to the ritual texts themselves it should also be reinforced that we do not know when these rituals originated. Therefore, it is even possible that all texts predate the diviner, or, on the contrary, none of them. However, it is probable that at least several of them do, due to the lack of the diviner’s presence and the large role played by the king. Thus, it must be remembered that the diviner may have included himself in any of these texts at a later date for

⁷⁸ Feliu, Lluís. *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*. Trans. Wilfred Watson. Brill, 2003. Pg. 223.

political reasons. He may also have acquired all the ritual functions previously associated with the House of the Gods (if there previously was one).

It must also be stated that in his initial excavations Jean Margueron tentatively identified one of the structures at Emar as a Bit-Hilani.⁷⁹ This Hittite-Syrian style palace did not become popular until several hundred years later, and no excavation has confirmed or denied this identification. However, in this building no archive was found. Therefore, even if this was the palace of the king of Emar, which is debatable, the archives of the king may have been located elsewhere or moved upon the fall of the city. In addition, the archives of “the city,” and any building related to them, have not been found.

In conclusion, a reinterpretation of the ritual texts allows us to theorize about the possibilities of the role of the king within Late Bronze Age Emar and before. This interpretation was gained through a study of the texts found in the diviner’s own archive. Aside from studying only legal and administrative texts as has been previously done, the ritual texts of the town have been used to theorize on the role of the king within the city. Therefore, a more accurate understanding of the power and nature of the king cannot be known until the archives of the palace, or perhaps even of “the city,” are located. There is no guarantee that these two locations will ever be found. Until there is sufficient textual evidence to accurately determine the office of the king, scholars must rely on what is known. Rituals played a major role in the ancient world, and the roles played by the ritual actors in these rituals usually mirror roles played within the community. Thus, a study of the rituals, in regards to the roles of the political entities within ancient Emar, is crucial in showing the power structure within the city. An

⁷⁹ The Bit-Hilani is designated #10 on this map. <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/emar/en/research.html>

accurate depiction of the roles of these entities cannot be achieved without a focus on their roles within the major rituals as well.

Number of Times Each Office Is Mentioned in Each Ritual Examined

	Dagan Kissu	Ishtar/NIN.URTA Kissu	NIN.DINGER	mas.artu	text for six months	first text for individual months	second text for individual months	annual zukru	zukru
King	1	0	2	N/A	1	3	3	0	26
Diviner	1	0	14	N/A	12	0	0	0	0
City	0	0	2	N/A	3	0	3	3	6

Other Important Offices and the Ritual Texts In Which They Appear

	Dagan Kissu	Ishtar/NIN.URTA Kissu	NIN.DINGER	mas.artu	text for six months	first text for individual months	Second text for individual months	annual zukru	zukru
sons of Satappi	X								
men of the consecration gift	X	X			X				
sons of Emar			X						X
nuppuhannu men					X	X	X		
House of the Gods					X	X	X	X	X
The leader					X				
The Palace						X			X
King of the land			X						

This table reflects other important offices which appear within the major ritual texts of Emar. As is seen within the paper, several of these offices may equate to the offices of the three main political bodies ruling Emar. Therefore, within this table, the "sons of Satappi," "the sons of Emar," and "the men of the consecration gift" may actually refer to "the city." The "House of the Gods" may refer to the diviner in some instances. Lastly, "the leader" and "the palace" may relate to the king. The "king of the land" most likely relates to a representative of the Hittite Empire, perhaps the King of Carchemish.

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