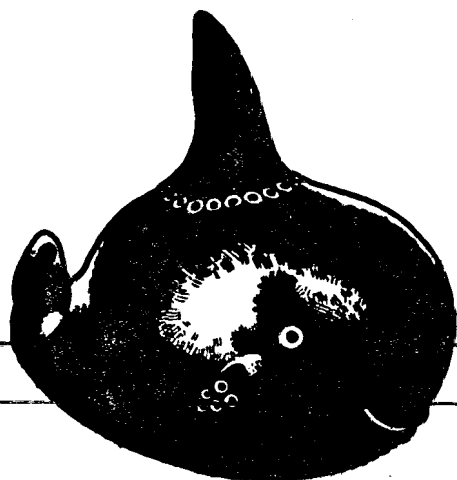


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TERQA 7

by

Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati

There are countless sights which whirl through the eyes of memory as we look back at Terqa 7 -

- the cuneiform tablets which cropped up daily, one at the time, for the last couple of weeks, scattered through massive brickfall,

... and the peaceful river bank on which we are going to start soon construction of our new expedition house;

- the anxious search for faint lines in the parched ground on the tell which might clue us in to the stratigraphy below,

... and the lush green foliage of the fruit gardens laden, at this time of spring, with apricots and plums and figs and apples;

- the many tells we visited in the north, all seemingly identical when you keep your eyes fixed to the ground in search of tell-tale sherds,

... and yet so different, seen among the wheat fields or next to the turquoise blue of water pools or hidden amongst the tall trees.

The bright sun of Terqa has never shone brighter: we have been working our way toward the June solstice, when the light in the sky is so fully pervasive that it seems to acquire a new tactile quality. This was our first Spring season, and we loved it. It was good to weather the Spring storms with their glorious colors, and to grow slowly accustomed to the Summer heat - which is now fully upon us. It was a good Spring season, and it was a good Terqa season.

We dug in two areas of the tell. One, we knew already. It is the Temple of Ninkarrak, which needed some architectural definition and clarification. This came, but it was hard won: heavy modern deposits lay unexpectedly right on top of badly damaged Old Babylonian walls. One little sliver of an Old Babylonian floor, raised as a small island a couple of feet wide in a sea of modern dump, gave us a tablet fragment, tauntingly telling us of what might have been there before the ravages of modern growth.

Across from the temple, we have a large building, which may also be connected with the temple of Ninkarrak: a curved dagger blade bears a cuneiform inscription which gives perhaps the name of the goddess. Between the temple and the other building, an irregular open area which is potentially most interesting: it seems to be a plaza, with a water trough in the middle, leading toward the city wall some 100 m. away ... the city-wall or perhaps even the city gate. This was the sort of public

space where people would gather and discuss matters which pertained to their quarter of the city. Thus it is that the Akkadian word for "door," *babu*, had come to mean "city quarter": the gate, with the open area next to it, was the focal point of the portion of the city which used that particular gate. Thus the gate was a psycho-urban, as well as an architectural, dimension of the city. For now, we only have some slight suggestions of a city gate at this particular point of the massive Terqa city wall: but the open plaza with its drainage leading in the direction of the city-wall provides one of those working hypotheses which captures vividly the imagination and is not only a detached intellectual construct.

The second major area of excavation (for now labeled rather technically as "F") revealed two large buildings, framed nicely by a street on one side and a narrower alley between the two of them. They have a tortured architectural history -- quite interesting because it shows palpably how these early urbanites coped with the problem of limited space within the confines of the city even at a time when the overall population pressure was much less than it is today. Yet here they were, trying to make the most use of narrow spaces, with odd corners, small rooms, tight alleyways. Being closely hemmed in by each other, almost living on top of each other -- was this also a psycho-urban need of man from the beginning? Certainly, they liked the cloistered feeling of a bustling town, and paid high prices for every square foot of it.

From the tablets strewn on top of the floors, just below the brickfall which laid underneath the higher strata, we can now piece together a fair slice of Terqa history -- some 200 years, to be exact, if we combine the evidence from the two major areas of excavation, that of the Temple of Ninkarrak and of the new building of this year in Area F. It is no small feat to piece together such sequences from stratigraphic bits and pieces. Here are the major building sequences:

- 1800 SHAMSHI-ADDU : the lower strata in Building C in Area F contain a bulla with the name (almost complete) of this king who ruled from somewhere a few hundred kilometers to the North, possibly at the site of Tell Leilan. Another tablet from the same context exhibits a month name which was used only during the reign of this king.
- 1775 KIBRI-DAGAN : the next strata in Building B, also in area F, contain a letter addressed to [K]ibri-Dagan, almost certainly the governor of king Zimri-Lim, who was now ruling Terqa from Mari, some 60 kilometers to the South. Whether or not Building "B" can be renamed after Kibri-Dagan is too soon to tell, but certainly we have here another captivating working hypothesis.
- 1750? ISI-SUMU-ABUM and YAPAH-SUMU-[ABUM] : after Mari fell under Hammurapi of Babylon, Terqa became independent, the capital of its own kingdom. The first kings known bear names which have embedded in them the name of the founder of Hammurapi's dynasty (Sumu-Abum): it is tempting to assume that they were ruling under the orbit of Babylon, and were trying to please their overlord by using the name of his ancestor. The top strata of the buildings in

F seem to belong to this phase: whatever followed this, came to be obliterated a long time ago in antiquity.

- 1721 YADIKH-ABU : this is the next known king of the Terqa line: he fought Samsu-iluna of Babylon, and by now Terqa had most likely obtained full autonomy and controlled all of the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur. Yadhik-Abu is known from the first strata in Puzurum's house.
- 1690? KASHTILIASH : by now a new ethnic group was beginning to stir in Mesopotamia--the Kassites, who will eventually take over the throne of Babylon. Kashtiliash is a typical name borne by kings of the Kassite dynasty: the Terqa king by the same name may not have been a Kassite himself, but may simply have paid onomastic tribute to a newly emerging powerful neighbor. Most of the buildings in area C as exposed today are attributable to this king: the early phase of the Temple of Ninkarrak, the building to the South of it, the plaza between them and the house of Puzurum.
- 1650? SHUNUHURU-AMMU : the middle building phase of the Temple is dated to this king by a tablet found on the floor; several other tablets mention this king, but they were found unstratified before our excavations.
- 1625? AMMI-MADAR : he is known only from unstratified tablets found before our excavations: he can be placed chronologically because his titulary mentions Shunuhuru-ammu as being his father.
- 1600? ABI-LAMA : known only as the son of Ammi-Madar, but not documented as king.
- ?? Five other names of kings are known from unstratified Terqa tablets, plus two names of individuals who are mentioned as being the fathers of kings but do not bear a royal title. These we cannot place as yet in a chronological sequence--but then again, our work at Terqa is long from being finished. One interesting point: from circumstantial evidence it appears at the moment as though the last known king of Terqa bore the name "Hammurapi": interestingly, the last king of Ugarit also bore that name.

One major innovation of this season has been the introduction of the computer for stratigraphic work in the field. The experiment has been a total success, and we will from now on develop our work more and more along these lines. Except for a few logistic problems (rotten service from American Airlines, some unevenness in the power supply here in Ashara, and some minor system bugs) we were able to write all our programs and enter a representative portion of the data. This newsletter is being written on our field printer--although the whole thrust of our computing has been in computing proper rather than text editing. Our programs deal entirely with stratigraphic recording, and allow an extremely flexible, highly differentiated and practically instantaneous control on thousands of stratigraphic units (bricks and walls, floors and lenses, objects and sherds, etc.): their individual emplacement, their reciprocal relationship, their depositional history are all identified with minute precision--and yet the vast mass of detail is fully under control. When we need to find the needle in the haystack, we find it--and with it every blade of hay, if we may stretch the metaphor.

We are the first archaeological expedition in Syria to use the computer, and this has caused considerable interest; our main ambition, however, is intellectual, namely, to develop a fully operational system for in depth stratigraphic control. As per our original plans, this season we entered data from only two sectors of the excavation, since we had concurrent logistic and programming concerns to attend to: but this was more than sufficient to give us a handle on the operation, which will extend to the entire excavation next year.

Mario Liverani was with us again this year; a veteran of 7 seasons of excavation at Tell Mardikh, he has now joined the Terqa Expedition on a full-fledged basis: the strategy of the project, and the implementation in the field will benefit immeasurably from his active presence. It was also gratifying to have four more veterans of other foreign Syrian expeditions work with us this season: Drs. Dolce and Gregori from Tell Mardikh, and Drs. Bunnens and Robaert-Bunnens from Tell Kannas. Together with our California staff we have worked very hard, and we feel at the end the satisfaction of leaving behind us a job well done. In this we enjoyed the unfailing assistance of our Syrian friends, who went out of their way to assist us in the many aspects of our work here: Dr. Afif Behnassi, ready to exert all his influence, especially in the complicated and delicate handling of customs matters, which took much of our organizational energy this season; Mr. Nassib Saliby, who spent many an hour with us in the Custom House, talking archaeology inbetween one form and the next; ; Mr. Muhammad Muslim, who singlehandedly got our cars running again; and Mr. As'ad Mahmud who was the key instrument in securing a spectacular piece of land right on the banks of the Euphrates where we will build soon our new Expedition House.

The rumble of war has come to us this year not just from reading the past in the ground, but from very present events. The Israeli occupation of Lebanon came as we were preparing for the final period of evaluation and documentation. Here we would like to write only a positive footnote on this sad event. The calm and dignity with which the events were faced around us left a profound impression on us. It was during this time that the Governor of the Province paid an official visit to the Expedition: coming with a group of some 30 officials, he wanted to make a point of his and his country's friendship for us. It was a short visit because, as he said tersely while taking leave, "Fi harb bil-beled" "There is war in the land." But it was a very meaningful visit, just at the time that our workmen and neighbors and friends were being recalled for military service. Among all of them, no rethoric, no hysteria, no euphoria; only a simple, measured, strong dignity which makes us feel the safest in a country at war. It is a moral strength long to be reckoned with.