

# TERQA: THE FIRST EIGHT SEASONS

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1. **THIRD MILLENNIUM B.C.** - Terqa was, as far as we can see, a major urban center from its very inception, rather than having developed slowly through a progressive and organic expansion of the settlement. We deduce this from two considerations. First, there is no real evidence of fourth millennium occupation at the site, either at the surface or in the various soundings, several of which have reached virgin soil; only a few Ubaid-like sherds were found at the bottom of sounding MP19. Second, a massive city wall ringed the city for its entire perimeter at the very beginning of the third millennium. A possible interpretation is that Terqa was founded as a city by the people of neighboring Qraya, some 5 kms. upstream, where the occupation is well preserved for the fourth millennium but seems to disappear in the third. Geomorphological observations (by R. Shlemon) suggest that both Qraya and Terqa enjoyed a privileged position on the banks of the river. Qraya is situated on a hard conglomerate which resisted the action of the river. The same conglomerate has not been observed at Terqa, although it cannot be excluded: from aerial photographs and a field reconnaissance, however, it appears that at some point in time the river made a large meander loop around the site to the North and the South, creating a peninsular position which would account for the erosion on the eastern side of the tell.

The defensive system of Terqa (6:19-22; 10:42-83; 15:51-58; 16:49-76; 17:10-42. Note:

references in this format are to titles listed in the bibliography at the end of the article) consists of three concentric rings of solid mudbrick walls, for a total width of about 20 meters. The inner wall is 5 to 6 meters wide, and has a glacis of limestone boulders along the base of its outer face. The middle wall is 9 to 10 meters wide, and has a girdle of limestone boulders inside the base of its outer face. The outer wall is 4 to 6.5 meters wide, and it includes an open space about 2 meters wide (either a walkway parallel to the direction of the wall or a casemate system). The perimeter is estimated to have been about 1800 meters, if about half of the original has been lost to river erosion. There were towers projecting from both the inner and the outer wall. No city gate has been found, but a narrow sally-port was uncovered in SG 50 on the outside of an exposed portion of the inner wall. A wide moat encircled the defensive system. The dates of the three walls have been set on the basis of both C14 determinations and diagnostic sherds excavated in the deposits associated with the walls on both the inside and the outside. These dates are approximately as follows: 2900 B.C. for the inner wall, 2800 for the middle wall, and 2700 for the outer wall. Thus the city wall of Terqa is the largest known to date in Syria for the beginning of the third millennium. Our knowledge of the city wall derives primarily from our intensive study of trenches cut by the municipality of Ashara for the construction of a sewer system (shown under the label MP on

the site plan, fig. 1) and from our own excavations in Areas B and D. Fig. 2 shows a reconstruction for the system, pieced together from a variety of different excavation units.

Only in Area B was there space for some substantial exposure of the strata just inside the city wall (1:33-38: 6:14-19: 15:60-75: 16:77-103). The upper stratum contained the shaft burials of two women, with a fair amount of jewelry and pottery as part of the funerary furniture. The burials are dated typologically to about 2400 B.C.. The lower stratum contained storage and manufacturing installations, i. e. silos and kilns dated to about 2500 B.C. A variety of third millennium vessels and bronze objects have been found at various points on the tell, either through chance finds, or in soundings. The most promising area for excavation in this time period is Area K at the northern tip of the tell. A small sounding conducted here in 1983 uncovered good third millennium floors with several artifacts, including 6 bronze spearheads: this part of the site is especially interesting because (a) the third millennium deposition is accessible immediately below some very recent accumulation, (b) there is a fairly large area unencumbered by modern structures, and (c) its location is some 60 meters away from the city wall, i.e. is not in immediate relationship with the defensive system and may therefore be indicative of more normal settlement patterns inside the third millennium city.

**2. A PROVINCE OF MARI.** - There is no evidence as to the relationship between Terqa and Mari during the early third millennium when the city wall was built. The sheer massiveness of the defensive system would seem to argue in favor of Terqa being independent from Mari at the beginning of its history. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that Terqa may have been established by Mari itself as a strategic defense stronghold to the North. But if not before, then certainly by the time of Ebla, Terqa had in fact come under the control of Mari, because the archives of Ebla mention prominently Mari, but seem to ignore Terqa

altogether: this is the period of the shaft burials just described, so we know that Terqa was occupied at the time. From the beginning of the second millennium we have a tablet found on the surface (2): it is identical typologically to the Mari tablets of the period of the *shakkanakku's*, but it does not give us any explicit clue as to the relationship between the two cities.

During the reign of Shamshi-Adad and of Zimri-lim, Terqa is well-known as a major provincial center of the kingdom of Mari from the texts found in the royal archives there. The first major evidence from this period found in our excavations come from a large administrative complex in Area F (12d;14b), where work is still in progress. Three sides of this complex have been uncovered, each about 30 ms in length, while the fourth side (to the south) is still unexcavated. It appears to be a single structure, but it might also consist of two contiguous structures separated by a narrow alleyway. In any case, the entire complex shares common traits which distinguish it from a residential structure and seem to qualify it as an administrative building: an extensive floor plan, a relatively high number of administrative tablets, very large storage jars, several large ovens (*tannur's*), a good drainage system. On the other hand, neither the size of the walls (which are generally only about 80 cms. thick) nor the layout of the rooms would seem to suggest that the complex was used for public functions, as a palace or temple would be, unless we are dealing with the service area of such a building. Area F is only about 100 ms. away from the city-wall, so it is not perhaps as central as one might expect the palace to have been. It is worth noting, however, that one of the tablets found here is a letter addressed to a person named Kibri-Dagan, the name of the governor of Terqa under Zimri-Lim. A total of 34 tablets has been found to date in Area F (they are in course of publication by O. Rouault and A. Podany, 12a): it is important to note that they are widely scattered throughout the rooms as if to indicate not an occasional concentration but a widespread use of scribal services.

whom we identify with the Khana king attested in the archive of Puzurum: this would mean that Babylon and Khana shared a border on the Euphrates, presumably half way between Babylon and Terqa.

The most important single epigraphic find in this respect was the "archive" of Puzurum (STCA1). We have explained (10:35-40; 16:9-24; 17:52-117) the stratigraphy as a collapse due to fire in an area which was used for storage of miscellaneous items of mixed importance (much like an "attic" in a modern household): there is no evidence that anybody in antiquity searched through the rubble after the fire, although the building was reoccupied almost immediately. The numerous tablets (13; 17:91-117) are mostly contracts dated to the time of Yadikh-Abu, a king of Khana who may be dated to 1721 B.C. (middle chronology) through a synchronism with Samsu-iluna. The rich typology of the documents includes a double envelope (111.3), and a wealth of seal impressions (Fig. 6) which have helped to define in detail the characteristics of the Khana style (13a: 21). In most of the texts it is a man by the name of Puzurum who is active in the transactions, and for this reason we have named the structure after him. The contract envelopes had mostly been opened in antiquity, which indicates that these documents had mostly been opened in antiquity, which indicates that these documents had lost their full legal value as contracts: since in addition they had been stored in an haphazard fashion and mixed in with a variety of non-epigraphic materials, and since there was no effort to retrieve the documents after the fire, it appears that the redaction date of the documents (around 1721 on the basis of the synchronism with Samsu-iluna) is earlier than the actual occupation of the house. Tentatively, this occupation may be dated to about 1700 B.C. or even later.

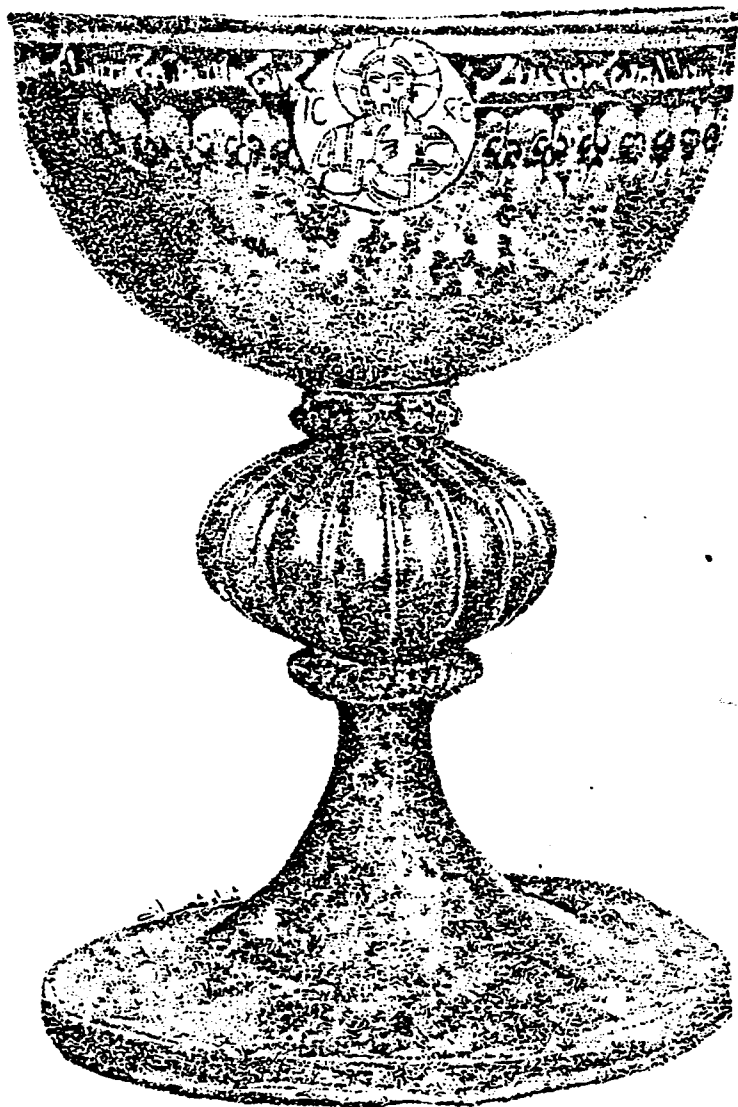
This is especially important because it helps dating a very representative assemblage of vessels which were found during the first season in the pantry room of Puzurum (1:30-32; 15:94-114), as well as those found later in the rest of the house (3; 4; 9; 13c).

Some 76 objects were found on the pantry floor, mostly ceramic vessels, laid out as they would have been in their common household use when the fire engulfed the house. One of the vessels contained some cloves (12c): this is a very significant discovery because cloves were grown only in the Far East, and were not attested in the West before Pliny in Roman times. Here then we have evidence of long distance trade of a very fragile commodity which required specialized use and therefore specialized markets -- all the more remarkable inasmuch as the find comes from a rather simple middle-class household.

The house of Puzurum was situated across the street from the Temple of Ninkarrak (12:19). The identification of the temple is based on a tablet which contains a list with the name of the goddess in first place, the title "king" in second place and then the names of several other individuals (12a). Also, a small bronze dog (the emblem of the goddess) was found next to the altar and two seal impressions from the temple have theophoric personal names which include the name of the goddess. No foundation deposits have been found as yet. Three building phases of the temple have been excavated, and one more is visible below the lowest current floors. The third phase (from the top; 111s. 4 and 5, Figs. 4 and 5) contains tablets dated to Kashtiliashu: since there is one tablet dated to the same king in Puzurum's archive, and since the third phase of the temple of Ninkarrak and the house of Puzurum are synchronous stratigraphically, we assume that Kashtiliashu ruled after Yadikh-Abu. The middle phase had one tablet dated to the Khana king Shunuhru-Ammu. The top phase had no epigraphic remains, and was generally not as well preserved. The layout of the temple is characteristic of Mesopotamian religious architecture, with rabbeted doorjambs, engaged columns and a bent axis approach. The ceremonial section of the building communicates with a larger service area through a small arched doorway. Several cultic implements were found on the floors of the service area, including a bronze knife with serrated blade and antler handle (16:39) and

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