

# HAMATH, NIYA AND TUNIP IN THE 3rd MILLENNIUM B.C. ACCORDING TO THE EBLA DOCUMENTS

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## 1) *Hamath*

Before the discovery of the tablets of Ebla, the name of modern Ḥamā was attested in the cuneiform sources only beginning with the 1st millennium B.C. In the Neo-Assyrian documents it appears as *A-ma-at/mat-* or *Ḥa-(am-)ma-(at-)ta/e/i/u*, determined by URU “city” or, more often, by KUR “land”<sup>1</sup>.

The major archives of the 2nd millennium B.C. (Mari, Ugarit, Hattusa) had different geo-political perspectives, and do not mention Ḥamā, while the tablets from Qatna are still unpublished. During that time, Ḥamā was first included in the powerful kingdom of Qatna, and later (last century of 2nd millennium), in the kingdom of Tunip (Tell Ascharne).

The lists of the places conquered by the Egyptians under Thutmose III (1479-1425) give the name *'mt*, which, it has been suggested, indicates Ḥamath<sup>2</sup>.

The imposing tell at Ḥamā testifies, with its remains, however, to the great antiquity of this centre, and the pottery classification published by the Danish expedition, which worked there from 1931 to 1938, has provided a certain term of comparison for dating of the other settlements of the region, at least from the 24th century B.C. on. The archaeological levels Ḥamā J 8-5 correspond to Ebla IV A, the period of the Royal Palace and its archives.

The tablets of Ebla (ca 2380-2340 B.C.), mostly administrative in character, register hundreds of geographical names of the region dominated directly by that city, and many others of the area east of the Euphrates. Ebla helps us recovering about one millennium of history for Syria, and shows that several centres already existed at that time, although most of the minor ones changed later their name. These tablets also prove that the place-name of Ḥamā already existed at that time.

Two names have to be considered: *'À-ma*<sup>ki</sup> and *'À-ma-at/du*<sup>ki</sup>. Both are attested several dozens time<sup>3</sup>. Many geographical names of the region of Ebla (about thirty in number) may or present the ending *-a(/i/u)t(um)*: *A-la-ga*<sup>ki</sup> / *A-la-ag-du*<sup>ki</sup>; *A-la-ma*<sup>ki</sup> / *A-la-ma-ad*<sup>ki</sup>; *A-mi-sa*<sup>ki</sup> / *A-mi-sa-du*<sup>ki</sup>, and so on<sup>4</sup>. This does not mean, however, that the two forms apply to the same place. On the contrary, the two forms, as a rule, refer to two different places<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Parpola 1970: 146-147. Cfr. Hawkins 1972-1975: 67.

<sup>2</sup> Klengel 1970: 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> *ARES II*: 130-132. *ARES II* is the abbreviation for Archi, Piacentini, Pomponio 1993.

<sup>4</sup> These geographical names are listed in *ARES II*: 21-22.

<sup>5</sup> I am able to suggest only the identity between *Ìr-ku*<sup>ki</sup> and *Ìr-ku-ut/tu*<sup>ki</sup>, and the possible one between *Ba-ḥu-nu*<sup>ki</sup> and *Ba-ḥu-na-tum*<sup>ki</sup>: the first is connected with Urš'au and the second with

Neither can 'À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup> and 'À-*ma/má-at/du*<sup>ki</sup> be two variants of the name of the same town. The first name, Hama, applies to an important political and administrative centre in the north of the Eblaite kingdom. Its territory included, in fact, several fortified centres, *bàd*<sup>ki</sup>. The second one, Hamatu, was instead one of the three major centres where the god Hadabal, written <sup>d</sup>A<sub>3</sub>(NI)-*da-bal*'*bal*'(KUL), had his cult (the other two were Larugadu/Arugadu and Luban). While Kura was the main god of the pantheon of Ebla, and the Weather-god Hadda that of Halab, the cult of Hadabal was spread in all the region around Ebla.

The god Hadabal is, on the contrary, never connected with 'À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup>. Moreover, the personal names related to the two centres are different<sup>6</sup>. This evidence compels us to consider Hama and Hamatu as two different places. Both centres were governed by an "overseer", *ugula*<sup>7</sup>.

Hama ('À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup>) had a relevant strategic function. One document ascribes to Hama ten "overseers of fortresses", *ugula-bàd*<sup>ki</sup>, ([1]); another one fourteen overseers ([2]), what means that ten / fourteen fortified centres came directly under Hama<sup>8</sup>. This is not usual in the documentation from Ebla, and clearly means that Hama controlled an important border of the Eblaite kingdom. Although other documents ascribe to Hama simply "settlements, towns", Sumerian *uru-uru*, ([4], [5]), this does not place their defensive function in question. A similar case is that of Luatum, a town to be placed east of the Euphrates, near the Syrian-Turkish border, south of Irrite and Ḫarran. Luatum had 52 fortresses, and protected the boundary of the Eblaite kingdom in the region of the river Balih<sup>9</sup>.

The name of eight fortresses of Ḫama is known: Alahadu ([6]; Ar'amig ([5]; probably *Ar-à-mi-ig/gú*<sup>ki</sup> = *Ar-à-ne/ni-ig*<sup>ki</sup>); Guriš [5], [8], [9]; Ḫalu [10]; Šariga [5]; Ušigu (*Ū-ši/šè-gú*<sup>ki</sup>) [11]; Zaga [5]. Perhaps also Gasa [7], an agricultural village of Ebla, was close to the region of Hama. The overseers of these towns were, for Ušigu: Saḫa'a and Ida-malik (both for the period of vizier Ibrium)<sup>10</sup>; for Zaga: Danelu (period of vizier Ibrium)<sup>11</sup>.

Here are the relevant passages:

- [1] *MEE* II 32 obv. VI 13-15: 10+10 garments *ugula-bàd*<sup>ki</sup>-*ugula-bàd*<sup>ki</sup> 'À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup>  
 [2] *ARET* III 236 rev. VIII: 14+14 garments *ugula-ugula* 'À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup>  
 [3] TM.75.G.5098 VI 1-2: ] *bàd*<sup>ki</sup>-*bàd*<sup>ki</sup> 'À-*ma*<sup>ki</sup>

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Agagališ, both of two places being north, north-west of Ebla; see *ARES* II, pp. 172-173. 'À-*da-ni*<sup>ki</sup> and 'À-*da-ni-du*<sup>ki</sup> are also two writing of the same town, see *ARES* II, pp. 124-128.

<sup>6</sup> A single datum could be produced in favour of the identification of the two towns. *ARET* VII 93 obv. I 1-II 1 has: 8 *ma-na babbar:kù ugula-bàd*<sup>ki</sup>-*bád*<sup>ki</sup> 'À-*ma-tim*<sup>ki</sup> i-na-sum "8 minas silver the overseers of the fortified places of Hamatum (in the genitive ending) have given". Mistakes of scribes are not unusual (the orthographic writings distinguished between Hama and Hamatu); otherside, we have to admit that Hamatu also had fortresses in its territory.

On a previous discussion on Hama and Hamatu, see Bonechi 1993: 36.

<sup>7</sup> According to TM.75.G.1405 obv. II 3-4, *Ḫa-la* was the *ugula* of Hama when Arrukum was vizier.

<sup>8</sup> TM.75.G.1873 rev. VIII 3-5 mentions twenty elders for Hama: "20 garments for the elders (ábba-ábba) of Hama." This is an unusual high number, which can only be meant for the region controlled by that town.

<sup>9</sup> Archi 1989a: 13. The list of the 52 fortresses is given in TM.75.G.1975, see Archi 1981: 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> *ARES* II: 458-459.

<sup>11</sup> *ARES* II: 477-478.

- [4] TM.75.G.1462 obv. IX 7-9: *in uru<sup>ki</sup>-uru<sup>ki</sup> 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup>*  
 [5] TM.75.G.1462 obv. VI 9-VII 5: šú+ša gín DILMUN babbar:kù mu-DU Ša-rí-ga<sup>ki</sup> Za-ga<sup>ki</sup> Ar-'à-mi-ig<sup>ki</sup> Gú-rí-iš<sup>ki</sup> AN.ŠĚ.GÚ uru<sup>ki</sup>-uru<sup>ki</sup> 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup> "20 shekels of silver: delivery of GN<sub>1</sub>-GN<sub>4</sub>, in total (four) towns of Hama"; IX 1-9: 50 gín DILMUN babbar:kù mu-DU Īr-am<sub>6</sub>-da-mu lú I-rí-gú-nu lú-kar *in uru<sup>ki</sup>-uru<sup>ki</sup> 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup>* "50 shekels of silver: delivery of Iram-damu of Iri-gunu, the trader in the towns of Hama"  
 [6] TM.75.G.2636+3867 (ARET III 778)+ obv. VI 5-6: ] *A-la-ḥa-du<sup>ki</sup> lú 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup>*  
 [7] ARET III 964 rev. IV: 41 simug Ga-sa<sup>ki</sup> 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup> "41 smiths of GN of Hama"  
 [8] ARET III 283 IV: ] maškim-sù Gú-rí-iš<sup>ki</sup> lú 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup> šu-du<sub>8</sub> *in Kak-mi-um<sup>ki</sup>*  
 [9] ARET III 859 rev. II: ] *A-zú-gú-ra ugula Gú-rí-iš<sup>ki</sup> lú 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup>*  
 [10] ARET III 531 III: *Ḥa-lu bàd<sup>ki</sup> lú 'À-ma<sup>ki</sup>*

According to ARET III 131 I, a man from Guriš, one of the fortresses of Hama, was present in Kakmium, a kingdom which delivered most of the wine which Ebla received from abroad<sup>12</sup>. One should locate Kakmium north of Ebla, perhaps in the hills north of Kilis, but south, however, of Antep, in whose region (perhaps in Antep itself) was Urša'um of the Ebla documents and Uršûm of the Mari tablets of the 2nd millennium.

TM.75.G.2361 registers the deliveries (mu-DU) to the palace of Ebla from the vizier Ibrium, other officials, and several centres of the kingdom. It lists in rev. II 6-III 12 *A-bar-sal<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>*, and then three towns: Zaga, Ar'anig ... Ušigu, which we know belonged to Hama. Abarsal was an important kingdom east of the Euphrates which was defeated, probably by king Irkab-Damu, or by his predecessor Igriš-Ḥalab, and in any case before Arrukum was vizier<sup>13</sup>.

These two documents compell us to place Hama in the north, north-east, in the region between Kilis and Karkamiš. The other "fortresses", bàd<sup>ki</sup>, known from the Ebla documents, were also located mostly in the north, north-east area, which seems, therefore, to have been the most greatly threatened border. As well as the case of Luatum (see above), the Treaty with Abarsal (= Tell Chuēra?), ARET XIII 5, mentions the following towns with their fortresses (GN ù bad<sup>ki</sup>-bad<sup>ki</sup>): *Kab-lu<sub>5</sub>-ul<sup>ki</sup>, Za-'à-àr<sup>ki</sup>, Ū-zi-la-du<sup>ki</sup>, Gú-da-da-núm<sup>ki</sup>, Tī-in-nu<sup>ki</sup>, Gír-ra-da-a<sup>ki</sup>*<sup>14</sup>.

Michael Astour has proposed identifying Hama of the Ebla documents with *A-ma-e<sup>ki</sup>* of the Alalakh documentation (Inscription of Idrimi), which he places in the region of A'zāz<sup>15</sup>.

Modern Ḥamā was Hamatu (*'À-ma/má-at/du<sup>ki</sup>*). This was, together with *La/A-ru<sub>12</sub>-ga-du<sup>ki</sup>* and *Lu-ba-an<sup>ki</sup>*, one of the major cultic centres of the god Hadabal (as it was already said above). Years ago I have suggested that the origin of this god could go back to a pre-Semitic substrate<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> A. Archi, 1993: 28-33; ARES II: 326.

<sup>13</sup> ARES II: 87-91.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. also Archi, 1989b: 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Astour 1988: 141 with note 23. He thought, further, that "the textual occurrences of Amatu do not fit too well its supposed identity with Hama".

<sup>16</sup> Cfr Archi 1992: 7. The name *'A<sub>3</sub>-da-bal*, has been considered Semitic by Xella 1998: 887-895, who explains it as /yawda'-ba'//, "the Lord knows"; its structure should be that of a theophoric name, as

An itinerary of a cultic journey of this god (preserved by two tablets which are duplicates, TM.75.G.2377 and TM.75.G.2379), starts with Luban, a centre in the Antioch plain ('Amq) or close to it, then reaches the palace of Ebla (the SA.ZA<sub>x</sub><sup>ki</sup>), and touches an other thirty-seven small centres<sup>17</sup>. This journey, which fell in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the year (MAxGÁNAtenû-úgur), apparently concerned only the southern and western regions, and shows that the cult of this god was deeply rooted in the core of Ebla territory. A confraternity of roughly twelve people belonging to the most important families (which counted among its members also some of the vizier's sons) had to escort the god on his journey<sup>18</sup>.

Hadabal received offerings also at Ebla, mostly as Hadabal of Luban, although there was also an Hadabal of the palace (of Ebla): <sup>d</sup>Ha-da-bal SA.ZA<sub>x</sub><sup>ki</sup>. This proves that the sanctuary of Luban was considered, at least at Ebla, to be the major one of Hadabal. The second hypostasis of this god was Hadabal of (L)arugatu. This sanctuary should be located in the Ghab, or in the Jebel Ansariye<sup>19</sup>.

Hadabal of Hamatu appears instead only rarely in the offering lists of the sheep sacrificed to the gods in the city of Ebla. According to the documents which cover the last twenty-two months of life of Ebla, this god received an offering by the king only three times (twice in connection with the major god of the city of Ebla: "on the occasion of the offering for Kura", in ud nídba <sup>d</sup>Ku-ra)<sup>20</sup>, and another time by Ir'aq-damu, the heir to the throne<sup>21</sup>. Some other sheep were given, although rarely, to people who had to travel to the sanctuary in Hamatu.

This evidence does not mean, however, that the cult of Hadabal of Hamatu was of secondary importance. The documents register, year after year, dozens of gifts, mostly objects in silver and gold, offered to him in his sanctuary in Hamatu by members of the royal families. His consort, known only by her epithet, "the Lady", *ba'altum*, (<sup>d</sup>BAD.MÍ), is sometimes associated with him (*ARET* XII 490 III 4-6: <sup>d</sup>BAD.MÍ <sup>d</sup>'À-da-"bal" 'À-ma-du<sup>ki</sup>, where the offerer is Dusigu, the mother of the last king, Išar-damu). At the service of this god was a "purifier priest, servant", *pašešu*<sup>22</sup>, and several priestesses, *dam-dingir*: TM.75.G.2252 rev. VII 3-4: *dam-dingir-dam-dingir 'À-ma-du<sup>ki</sup>* "(wool for) the priestesses (in) Hamatu". One of these priestesses, Tadub-damu, was a king's daughter who came from the residence which the royal family had in Ḫuzan, *ARET* I 1 (78): "(garments which) Tadub-damu, the priestess, daughter of the king (in) Ḫuzan, has received in Hamatu"; TM.75.G.2339 rev. V 2-7: *dumu-mí en Hu-za-an<sup>ki</sup> dam-dingir in 'À-ma-du<sup>ki</sup>* "the king's daughter of Ḫuzan (who is) priestess in Hamatu".

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in Itūr-Mer and Jakrub-il, two gods of Mari. Also Fronzaroli 1997: 288, offers a Semitic interpretation of the name: /hadda-ba'/' "Hadda the Lord". The writings for /ba'/' and /hadda/ are, however, the "Akkadogram" BAD/BE (fem. *ba-al<sub>6</sub>-tum*) and <sup>d</sup>'À-da, respectively, in all the passages where these two terms are clearly needed. The short writing tradition of Ebla makes not probable that an archaic writing could become the standard writing of a term in particular contexts.

<sup>17</sup> Archi 1979. Of these localities *Da-rí-ib<sup>ki</sup>* and *A-du-bù<sup>ki</sup>* consisted of two hamlets (GN-II), obv. I 6, II 6 and IV 4-5; there were also a "large" and a "small" *Du-u<sub>9</sub>-bù<sup>ki</sup>*, obv. III 4-IV 1. On Luban, see *ARES* II, p. 228.

<sup>18</sup> On the šeš-II-ib confraternity, see Archi 2002.

<sup>19</sup> This town has to be identified with Ugaritic *lrgd*, see Fales 1984; Lambert 1984.

<sup>20</sup> TM.75.G.1173+ obv. XI 27-28; TM.75.G.2598 obv. II 10-16; TM.75.G.10168 obv. I 18-II 3.

<sup>21</sup> TM.75.G.1945 obv. II 26-III 5.

<sup>22</sup> The names of four of these *pa<sub>4</sub>-šeš* are quoted in Archi 1996: 41.

Although situated about 90 km as the crow flies south of Ebla, Hamatu belonged to the territory administered directly by Ebla and its economic system. A document concerning amounts of barley given as nourishment to several villages quotes, among the other places, also Hamatu (TM.75.G.10209 obv. V 12-13: 183 *gubar* = 3660 sila, that is, perhaps about 15 quintals)<sup>23</sup>. According to TM.75.G.1439+ rev. V 13-VI 1, Irniba, an official with important functions in the agricultural sector, owned some land in Hamatu. Employed at Hamatu there was also a gang of workers, *gurus-máh*, *ARET IV* 17 (120)-(121). The jar impressions found at Hama provide additional proof that this town belonged to the economic system of Ebla<sup>24</sup>.

During the first years documented by the archives (before Arrukum became vizier) the town was under the control of a "lord", *lugal*, whose name was Ibišum, *MEE VII* 46 obv. VIII 9-IX 2. Later, in the fourth year of the mandate of the vizier Ibrium, the "overseer", *ugula*, of Hamatu was Ibi-gardu (TM.75.G.2464 rev. II 11-13). Notice that the title *lugal*, "lord", and the name of function *ugula*, "overseer", can be interchangeable<sup>25</sup>.

## 2) Niya

The identification of *Ne-a-ù<sup>ki</sup>* (TM.75.G.2233 obv. XII 2: *Ne-a-u<sub>9</sub><sup>ki</sup>*) of the Eblaite documents with Niya of the Egyptian and cuneiform sources of the second millennium has been suggested by M. Astour<sup>26</sup>. The writings of this geographical name are in Amarna: KUR *Ni-i*, <sup>URU</sup>*Ni-i<sup>ki</sup>*; Alalakh: <sup>URU</sup>*Ni-hi/hé*, KUR *Ni-hi<sup>ki</sup>*; Hatti: <sup>URU</sup>*Ni-ja*, <sup>URU</sup>*Ni-i*, <sup>URU</sup>*Ne-e*<sup>27</sup>. The territory of Niya, in the Orontes valley, bordered the kingdom of Ugarit, and the town occupied perhaps the site of Qal'at el Mudfiq, close to Apamea<sup>28</sup>.

Records of offerings which list in a sequence the sanctuary of Rashap of Tunip, and those of Idabal of Hamatu and Neau are in favour of the identification of *Ne-a-ù<sup>ki</sup>* with Niya; TM.75.G.10074 rev. V 19-24 and TM.75.G.10088 rev. XXIII 25-XXIV 7: <sup>d</sup>*Ra-sa-ap Du-ne-é<sup>ki</sup>* ... <sup>d</sup>*A<sub>5</sub>-da-"bal"* 'À-*ma-du<sup>ki</sup>* ... <sup>d</sup>*A<sub>5</sub>-da-"bal"* *Ne-a-ù<sup>ki</sup>*.

The location of Neau in the Orontes valley is supported also by the fact that people travelling to Ibal (in the region of Qatna) for a military expedition, touched Neau, *MEE II* 40 rev III 2-11. People from Arhadu (perhaps Tell 'Arqa, in the 'Akkar plain which links Homs with the sea) came in contact with the Eblaite administration in Neau<sup>29</sup>.

The vizier Ibrium owned an estate in its territory. TM.75.G.10078 rev. V 8-11: *é Ib-rí-um lú N*. "the residence of Ibrium in Neau"; TM.75.G.2496 obv. III 6-10: 2 *šeš Ma-ù-du dam Ib-rí-um N*. "two brothers of Ma'utu, the wife (whom) Ibrium (keeps in) N."

<sup>23</sup> Another similar passage is TM.75.G.1472 rev. III 6-7: 6 *gú-bar še 'À-ma-du<sup>ki</sup>*.

<sup>24</sup> Mazzoni 1992: 98-114.

<sup>25</sup> Archi 1999: 24.

<sup>26</sup> Astour 1992: 9 with note 31.

<sup>27</sup> For the sources concerning Niya, see Klengel 1969: 60-65.

<sup>28</sup> For the identification of the site, see Klengel 1965: 45 note 12; Astour 1969: 386-387 note 5, with previous bibliography. On the history of Niya, see Klengel 1991: 151-156.

<sup>29</sup> *ARES II*: 397.

The god of Neau was Hadabal, as in Hamatu, and Ibrum used to bring offers (níg-ba) to him, TM.75.G.2359 rev. VII 14-17, TM.75.G.10144 rev. VII 3-7.

### 3) Tunip

The two passages mentioned for Niya, listing in a sequence the sanctuaries of Tunip, Hamatu and Neau, show that these three towns were located in the same region. It is therefore certain that the Eblaite *Du-ne-éb<sup>ki</sup>* (in *ARET* VII 10 [8]: *Du-ni-íb<sup>ki</sup>*)<sup>30</sup> is the Tunip of the sources of the second millennium, which H. Klengel has identified with Tell 'Asharneh<sup>31</sup>. Rašap, and his consort Adamma, were the gods of this town. Several other documents register together offerings for Rašap of Tunip and for Hadabal of Ḥamatu: TM.75.G.1830 rev. X 2-7; TM.75.G.2502 rev. XVIII 1-6; TM.75.G.2507 obv. VII 27-33.

Tunip belonged to the kingdom of Ebla, and several documents concerning the agricultural administration mention this town. *ARET* II 5 (36)-(38) concerns the purchasing of some sheep in Tunip; *ARET* VII 155 obv. V 6-7 registers an estate owned there by the nephews of the vizier Ibrum.

Messengers of Tunip reached Ibal, in the region of Qatna, as well as Dulu, north to Uršûm. *ARET* IV 17 (115), (119). According to *ARET* VIII 532 (48), a trader, lúkar, of Mari received wool for dressing 380 people, who seem to have been under his control. Salba, a small centre connected with Tunip in *ARET* III 861 I, could be identified with Şalaba, 10 km to the east-southeast of Apamea<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> *ARES* II: 212-214.

<sup>31</sup> Klengel 1995, who disagrees with the suggestion of Astour 1977, that Tunip may have been a previous name of Ḥamā.

<sup>32</sup> Klengel 1995: 129.

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