

ONE

INTRODUCTION

Amorites, Their Legacy, and the Study of Identity

During the eighteenth century BC, a fraternity of Amorite kings held sway over a vast expanse of the Fertile Crescent, from Babylon to the southern stretches of Canaan. Where records permit, the founders of dynasties from Babylon to Mari, Assyria, Yamhad, Qatna, Byblos, and Hazor laid claim by different means to a collective social identity as Amorites. By 1665 BC, Asiatic “foreign rulers” of Levantine origins and bearing linguistically Amorite names, who are identified as the Hyksos, established themselves in the eastern Nile Delta, likely by means of a coup against local Egyptian rule. Thus, between the establishment of the earliest principalities ruled by Amorites at the end of the twentieth century BC and the fall of Babylon in 1595 BC, Amorite rulers held power in many centers from the Nile Delta to the Persian Gulf. Their legacy is largely identified with its elites, especially its rulers, who fostered a cultural renaissance in which robust legal and literary traditions, building programs, and warfare were products of an age of intense competition and emulation. It has come down to us in many ways, not the least of which are legal traditions that were codified under Amorite regimes. The most famous of these are the Laws of Hammurapi, which are echoed in biblical legal traditions.¹ Other elements of this legacy are less transparent but

¹ For example, Westbrook 1985; also Wright 2009.

were propagated through the cultural traditions of later groups such as Assyrians and Israelites well into the Iron Age.

A clear consensus regarding Amorites as an identity or cultural phenomenon in Near Eastern history has not been reached, however. Varied memories of the Amorites in different parts of the ancient Near East and distributed among textual sources spanning approximately two millennia have confounded efforts to understand what Amorite identity signified at different moments in antiquity. Twentieth-century scholarship largely viewed the Amorites as an invading group representing the conquest of the “desert over the sown,” while more recent efforts have characterized the Amorites as a social phenomenon but without a clear articulation of its meaning. More recent discussions have thrown into question not only the general enterprise of exploring ancient identities² but also specifically that of the Amorites.³ So we might ask: What is the aim of studying Amorites, or any similarly labeled group for that matter?

There is certainly a tension in the twenty-first century concerning identity and its construction. On the one hand, great emphasis is placed on fundamental aspects of the diversity of individual communities, and in this school of thought all identities merit attention and none should be elevated above another. On the other hand, identities, understood as cultural constructs, are mutable and not exclusive, meaning that an individual’s or group’s identity exists in relationship to one or more individuals or groups simultaneously, and they are negotiated in different contexts, as circumstances warrant over time. It is clear, however, that no single approach, whether historical, linguistic, or archaeological, can seek to adequately address these issues in ancient societies and that a holistic and diachronic approach is required. Historical and philological studies have nearly exhausted what can be said concerning Amorite identity from the sources we possess, yet it remains the case that archaeology has only haphazardly addressed the subject, usually relying on historical studies as their point of departure, often testing these hypotheses but usually in a manner that either reifies or dispenses with them. If a middle ground exists, it has not been adequately articulated. While this should hardly be surprising given the challenge of constructing identity from archaeological remains, archaeology’s chief contribution is very likely its ability to interrogate identity in antiquity, whether we are speaking of ethnicity or variously constructed social identities.⁴

Lacking among existing approaches to the study of Amorites and Amorite identity are both a pan-Near Eastern perspective and one that is concerned with the *longue durée*, which are now warranted in the light of advances in the

² Quinn 2017; Martin 2017.

³ See Homsher and Cradic 2018.

⁴ Insoll 2007.

study of identity and social interaction in antiquity. The question is not whether Amorite identities between 2500 and 1500 BC were one and the same, since they could not possibly be. Rather, the inquiry centers on how Amorite identities developed over this long span of time and how these developing identities might have related to one another, and ultimately what an understanding of Amorite identity in each major period of its development contributes to the study of the ancient Near East. As the scope of this work suggests, Amorite identity, in and of itself, merits such study for the very reason that its study in particular, among a very select few identity groups in the ancient Near East, has raised such issues since early in the twentieth century AD. Furthermore, the processes relating to the construction and maintenance of identities raised by the study of such an enduring identity, albeit changed through time and space, reveals a great deal about the range of factors, processes, and cultural institutions that shape identity and likely have applications to the development of other enduring identities, particularly among Old World sources, such as Greek, Phoenician, and Egyptian identities, to name a few.

AN AMORITE LEGACY

A frequent starting point for the study of identity in the ancient Near East, often under the ethnicity label, is the question of the particular group's legacy. By this I mean the widely regarded cultural contributions of a particular group, if such were necessary to warrant their study. Such is the case, for example, for groups such as the Israelites and Greeks, and for larger cultural configurations like Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, but also more recently for groups like the Philistines and Phoenicians. But why should we care, and why should we endeavor to address the history and cultural contributions of a particular group, as offered to us by ancient sources, skewed as they often are by the idiosyncrasies of their contexts? In the case of the Amorites, we are drawn to consider Amorite identity, on one hand, because of the sheer temporal scope across which references to Amorites are found among ancient sources, which almost serves as an empirical measure of the extent of their influence.⁵ On the other hand, the historical and cultural achievements of notable figures who claimed Amorite identity, like Hammurapi of Babylon and Shamshi-Adad of Assyria during the Old Babylonian (OB) Period, expose the contributions of Amorite cultures to a global cultural heritage, not merely restricted to Western Civilization. Similarly, perhaps we are also drawn to this inquiry because many Mesopotamian sources appear to have been consumed with portrayals of

⁵ For overviews, see Liverani 1973; Whiting 1995; Fleming 2016.

Amorites as the “other” threatening Near Eastern civilization at the end of the third millennium BC, which forces us to reconcile very different characterizations.

Intriguing, if mixed, characterizations of the Amorites first appear among more familiar sources, like the Hebrew Bible, through which Near Eastern and biblical scholars were introduced to the Amorites, long before their identification in cuneiform sources. For this reason, despite being nearly a millennium later than the appearance of the last Amorite dynasty, they have invariably colored earlier discussions of Amorites. In total, the terms “Amorite” and “Amorites” occur eighty-eight times in the Hebrew Bible. Yet three biblical verses may suffice to expose Judah’s pervasive interest in its relationship to its neighbors past and present, among whom the Amorites evidently held a significant place.

In the Bible, Amorites are first identified within the so-called Table of Nations in Genesis 10.

Canaan sired Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites (*'emořim*), the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

Genesis 10:15–18

When the Hebrew Bible began to assume its present shape in the late seventh century BC, Judah was acutely aware of its place as a nation among many thanks in large part to the expansion of the Assyrian Empire. It was compelled therefore to articulate its relationship to the peoples of the world around it. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 provided just that, a cultural geography, the principal aim of which was to frame Judah’s place within a Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean political landscape – Judah’s cosmos. It did so not only by reference to extant states but also by means of eponymous ancestors who represented groups that were reckoned to have played a role in greater Israel’s prehistory. Among these were, of course, the Amorites. (Similar though perhaps better-known processes were contemporaneously underway among the Greeks as well.⁶)

Because the Amorites were identified among Canaan’s traditional inhabitants, they were also among those peoples that Israel defeated to take the “Promised Land,” as the prophet Amos reminded Israel already in the eighth century BC.

Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them,
who were tall like high cedars, and strong as oaks;
I destroyed his fruit above,
and his roots below.

Amos 2:9

⁶ See Hesiod’s *Theogony*.

More than a century later the prophet Ezekiel went even further, characterizing the legacy of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, as the result of a union between Amorite and Hittite ancestors, seemingly resurrecting, as it were, the role of Israel's traditional, though now ancient, enemies.

Thus says the Lord God [lit. *Yahweh*] to Jerusalem:
 “Your origin and your birth are in the land of the Canaanites;
 your father was the Amorite and your mother a Hittite.”

Ezekiel 16:3

While the Table of Nations, written as it was during the late Iron Age, permits neither a reconstruction of Bronze Age history nor a study of Amorite identity, this reference to the Amorites taken together with other biblical references to Mamre the Amorite, an ally of Abraham in Genesis (14:13), and references to later battles with the Amorite king Sihon reveal the complexity of bringing together the region's cultural memories into a single tradition.

From roughly the same period, at the Assyrian capitals of Nineveh and Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad), copies of the so-called Assyrian King List (AKL) reveal an analogous interest to invoke an Amorite legacy. However, while the Amorites were again remembered, here they are grafted into the genealogy of Assyrian kings.⁷ This list opens with seventeen eponymous ancestors, several of which are the names of well-known Amorite tribes in the early second millennium.

Tudiya, Adamu, Yangi, Suhlamu, Harharu, Mandaru, Imsu, Harsu,
 Didanu, Hanu, Zuabu, Nuabu, Abazu, Belu, Azarah, Ushpia, Apiashal.
 TOTAL: 17 kings who lived in tents.⁸

This text has been identified as considerably older than the Neo-Assyrian Period, and it may serve therefore as an important record of Assyrian cultural memory with respect to its relationship to an Amorite past.

A more ambiguous characterization of Amorites is also to be found in Neo-Assyrian times among a collection of Assyrian proverbs, copies of which come from the library of Ashurbanipal (ca. 630 BC).⁹ Here the opening lines of what may have been a conversation between an Amorite and his wife read as follows: “[A low] fellow/[An A]morite speaks [to] his wife, ‘You be the man, [I] will be the woman.’”¹⁰ Consequently, in whatever esteem former Amorite rulers were held during the late Iron Age, mixed characterizations persisted and the context of biblical references therefore can be more clearly understood.

⁷ Millard 1997; Yamada 1994: 12.

⁸ Millard 1997: 463.

⁹ Lambert 1960: 225.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 230.

Perhaps because of the evidence for an Iron Age cultural memory of Amorites, Abraham, the Jewish patriarch in Genesis, is the most likely reason for the position Amorites held in Near Eastern studies, particularly biblical studies.¹¹ This is not, however, because Abram/Abraham was ever identified explicitly with the label Amorite. Rather, this interpretation was in large part bolstered by the assumption that the late third and early second millennia constituted a fitting chronological setting for the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, during which time Amorites were replete in Mesopotamian sources. Efforts to demonstrate plausible linguistic comparisons between patriarchal names and Amorite names seemingly lent still further support to this reconstruction.¹²

Abram's journey from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran and then to Canaan, was further seen as a cultural memory of Amorite population movements, at least as they were envisioned in the mid-twentieth century AD. Yet despite attempts to identify Abraham as an Amorite,¹³ the closest the biblical texts comes to such a suggestion is a statement in Deuteronomy 26:5: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number and there became a great nation, mighty and populous." While it mentions neither Abraham nor the Amorites by name, some have maintained that this reference to Arameans is to be read as a corruption of Amorite, and thereby the reference to Abraham's descendants as "wandering Arameans" was intended to identify them as Amorites.¹⁴ Further identifications of early Aramean groups, such as the Ahlammu-Arameans, as also Amorite have only further convinced some of the merits of this position, be they tenuous.¹⁵ Nevertheless, approaching this literature as cultural memory, with its intensely etiological concerns, moves the discussion of this tradition away from seeking its validation as historically plausible to recognizing its important place in ancient Israel's cultural memory.¹⁶

As both biblical and historical sources illustrate, it seems that an Amorite legacy or cultural memory influenced later traditions, and quite significantly early biblical traditions. Similar associations of Amorites to a wide range of customs and practices have been voiced in more recent scholarship on a range of subjects, from pastoralism to kinship, donkey riding, sacrificial customs,

¹¹ The earliest such research was pioneered in W. F. Albright 1961. For a review of the question of the identification of the biblical patriarchs with Amorites and attempts to historically situate these traditions, see McCarter 2011, but also critical discussions by Thompson 1974 and Dever 1977.

¹² Knudsen 1999. See also chapter 2 in Thompson 1974.

¹³ See Hendel 2005.

¹⁴ Millard 1980.

¹⁵ For a review of the evidence, see Younger 2007: 133–37.

¹⁶ Hendel 2010, but also Hendel 2005.

burial practices, and temple architecture, among others. But who were the Amorites and how was Israel's cultural legacy perceived that they should still be mentioned in texts nearly a millennium after their OB heyday? And, more generally, is there any basis for seeking to address references to Amorites through time? Were such references the product of a meaningful relationship between terms early and late, and how can such a relationship be articulated?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

In this book, which is born of more than twenty years of thought and research on the Amorites and the Middle Bronze Age (MBA), and inspired by observations like those previously mentioned, I contend that recent historical, literary, and archaeological studies make it possible to articulate a meaningful social and cultural history of the Amorites and the negotiation of their identity from the mid-third through the mid-second millennium BC. In this work I have, of necessity, drawn upon my training in Near Eastern and Egyptian archaeology, Assyriology, and anthropology, and I consider that it is this training that has stoked the ambitions of this study. This research has led me to observe that, for a discipline as geographically and temporally expansive as Near Eastern studies, analogous and contemporaneous circumstances are often overlooked by specialists associated with the study of one region, particularly when their focus is situated at one end of this geographic expanse. Yet in antiquity borders that limited the movement of people were almost nonexistent, unlike the obstructed national borders that define states today. As this study reveals, a wide range of factors contributed to a greater degree of mobility and exchange before the mid-second millennium than is often recognized in scholarly literature. My specialty in Bronze and Iron Age Levantine archaeology has required that I continually juggle attempts to maintain some degree of familiarity with cultural developments in Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the eastern Mediterranean, and many of the observations in this work are a direct result of this effort. The greatest impediments to a study like this are, however, the great variety of data, which can be broken into three major components: textual sources such as literature and inscriptions, archaeological data consisting of a range of excavation, iconographic, and survey data, and theoretical approaches, particularly as they concern approaches to cultural exchange and identity negotiation. Each of these areas are integrated in the historical progression of my argument, which form the basis of the chapters in this work. A few preliminary words regarding the main elements of my approach are necessary so as to avoid distractions that might result during exploration of such a complex subject.

Studies of identity during the past two decades, during which concepts such as the negotiation of identity have been increasingly incorporated into archaeological studies, have been particularly significant in shaping the thinking

behind the present work.¹⁷ Concepts derived from such studies, but also including my own research on refugees,¹⁸ I hope distinguishes it from earlier examinations of this subject. I do not embrace an approach that seeks to qualify Amorite identity in strict terms as an ethnicity – at least not in most periods where the term occurs – and for some time now this has been untenable.¹⁹ Rather, despite but also perhaps because of its nebulous character and multiple registers of meaning, I instead employ the term “identity” throughout this work. As the basis for understanding the negotiation of identity through time and during different circumstances, identity can be further qualified in moments where, for example, Amorite identity was elevated – in certain contexts – by means of its association with the rise of Amorite dynasties, or demoted when associated with unwanted social elements. Thus, shifting constituencies and changes in our sources mean that in one moment references to Amorites may conform to traditionally accepted definitions of ethnicity, while in others (and more frequently this is the case) it can be understood as a social identity in which benefits were accrued through association with a broader social collective.

Because this work covers such a lengthy period of time it is most useful to invoke relevant theoretical frameworks as evidence from these contexts warrants, rather than cloud their explanatory value by attempting to define and defend these choices at the outset of this study, outside of the historical settings that permit their description. That said, the reader will find that in the context of defining diachronic negotiations of Amorite identity, I have drawn on a range of mostly familiar approaches, including migration and refugee studies, koineization,²⁰ peer polity interactions,²¹ monumentality,²² entanglement,²³ cultural memory,²⁴ communities of practice,²⁵ and still others. I have, however, avoided major digressions on these subjects, assuming that their application is now sufficiently familiar to allow me to avoid a lengthy defense of their employment. This diversity of theoretical approaches is the result of the fact that Amorites in antiquity are a moving target for scholarly investigation, and no singular approach could ever hope to qualify the adaptations and

¹⁷ Notable examples include Goody 1982; Shehan 1989; Emberling 1997; Hall 1997; Costin 1998; Wenger 1998; Hall 2002; Díaz-Andreu, Lucy, Babić, et al. 2005; Twiss 2007; Yoffee 2007; Roymans and Derks 2009; Pohl and Mehofer 2010; Steadman and Ross 2010; Gruen 2011; Demetriou 2012.

¹⁸ Burke 2011a; Burke 2012; Burke 2017.

¹⁹ See Kamp and Yoffee 1980: 97.

²⁰ Kerswill 2008.

²¹ Renfrew 1986.

²² Osborne 2014a.

²³ Dietler 2010.

²⁴ Jonker 1995; Connerton 1989.

²⁵ Wenger 1998.

developments witnessed among Amorite communities across the Near East over the course of more than a millennium.

Such concepts have prodded me to grapple with the circumstances that faced different Amorites communities during the Bronze Age, in an attempt to understand how these communities may have related to one another and how they negotiated their unique circumstances. The notion of community, which has come into vogue as a means of bounding and defining groups in antiquity,²⁶ has likewise played a significant role in this effort by providing an alternative to the tribal identifications on which most Amorite studies have fixated. This is not to say that tribes, and their smaller subdivisions, clans, are not significant units for observing the negotiation of identity among Amorite communities. They certainly are. However, the historical plight of many Amorite groups suggests that tribes were merely the largest collective that can be ascribed an Amorite identity – confederacies of tribes notwithstanding – and not necessarily the most significant unit for understanding the wide range of responses to different social, economic, and political circumstances by individual Amorite communities. Indeed, it is less common, outside of the Mari texts, that the tribal affiliation of individual Amorites are made explicit, and so when we do encounter these individuals at what level of social organization are we to consider them collectively? To invoke the language of community is to suggest that kinship affiliation, as tribal terminology underscores, is but one fairly restricted way of conceptualizing Amorite social affiliation. Insofar as I occasionally refer to Amorite states, I do so assuming that the state's ruling elites, and not necessarily its full constituency, are the basis for such an ascription, recognizing full well the distinction, as will be made clear. For such states, when sources permit, I attempt to demonstrate how Amorite communities might be identified, usually through material culture, as a significant, albeit not exclusive, source.

Another critical element of my effort is the recognition of the varied trajectories of Amorite communities that are possible within the broader scope of a collective Amorite identity – what might be identified as a supra-tribal social identity. Indeed, individual Amorite communities can be associated with entire settlements, such as towns or cities, but also with quarters or economic enclaves. Just as Amorites can be identified across a wide geographic extent of Mesopotamia already during the mid-third millennium, the increasing appearance of Amorite groups and individuals in the centuries to follow in still wider regions demands reflection upon the mechanisms of these dispersions, but also of the mechanisms that functioned to maintain the identity of these groups, and the contacts and bonds between them. This might explain, for instance,

²⁶ Kolb and Snead 1997. For specific examples, see Mac Sweeney 2011; Porter 2013; and Feldman 2014.

how diaspora communities shared a broader Amorite identity and what this fundamentally meant.

Hand in hand with the issue of the appropriate identification of Amorite social structures is the question of their occupation and subsistence. Historically, Amorite studies have also been transfixed by pastoralist qualifications of Amorites, which have shaded their social, political, and economic characterization.²⁷ More than fifty years of such studies since the 1960s have certainly offered an understanding of the important role that pastoralists, generally, and Amorites, specifically, played in Near Eastern society. However, as I hope is evident in this work, Amorites engaged a wide range of occupations, a number of which were particularly significant to their social and political elevation, in ways that cannot be explained through a nearly exclusive emphasis on pastoralism. More recent qualifications of settlements and communities as agropastoral, because they engaged in agriculture and pastoralism for their subsistence, have not significantly altered the emphasis placed on pastoralism or for that matter nomadism, in connection with Amorite identity.²⁸ Mine, therefore, constitutes a considerable departure from most of the earlier studies, even as it relies on a range of extant observations, principally by Sumerologists and Assyriologists who have engaged the texts in question. Even so, there remains a place for pastoralism within the identity and cultural memory of Amorite groups, as discussed in Chapter 2.

While breaking with the pastoralist economic and tribal social orientations of earlier scholarship on the Amorites, I have not endeavored in this work to provide anything resembling a history of scholarship on the subject of the Amorites, as such enterprises are one of the great pitfalls of studies like this, derailing a wholesale reconsideration (if this is possible) of such well-trodden territory. Although reviews of scholarship are common in area and historical studies, there is a need to break free of the shackles that often needlessly constrain research by excessive digressions to sacrifice at the altar of old paradigms and tired ideas. I am not interested in a Talmudic treatise on what previous scholarship has claimed, and for this reason my footnotes are almost exclusively dedicated to citations of data and bibliography that is particularly germane to my arguments. Naturally, a massive bibliography has been consulted and assembled as part of this larger argument, and I hope that through this work these studies and others like them will be given greater consideration both in future research on the Amorites but also for similar contexts in which the negotiation of identity is of central relevance to identity in the *longue durée*.

In the process of describing the historical contexts in which Amorite identities were negotiated, I make occasional allusions to other, hopefully

²⁷ See Porter 2012.

²⁸ As, for example, in Lönnqvist 2008b; Lönnqvist 2009; Lönnqvist 2010.

more familiar historical phenomena, sometimes outside Near Eastern history, which I hope expose the results of broader social processes. Among these are the Renaissance, Mediterranean exchange in the Iron Age, climate change, and modern refugee crises. My goal here is not a one-to-one comparison with these phenomena, but by analogy to potentially fill in the blanks in our considerations of past processes that are not explicit among ancient textual or archaeological sources.

SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

Concerning the scope of this work, I have endeavored to assess as many of the phenomena as possible that are central to understanding the evolution of Amorite identity among individuals, groups, and states between ca. 2500 and 1500 BC. As such, my approach is in the truest sense and out of necessity Braudelian, with considerations of the impact not only of political events associated with, for example, the reigns of individual kings, but also of long-term processes such as environmental change.²⁹ Nevertheless, I have sought to be comprehensive, not exhaustive. By considering a spectrum of diverse geographic, social, and cultural contexts in which Amorites have been identified, my intention is to identify broad frameworks that may assist our historical inquiries into Amorites as social actors. In difference to monolithic explanations of the past, my goal is to understand the diverse mechanisms behind how Amorites are identified, for example, at point A in moment X, and then at point B, but also at points C, D, and E in the next discernible historical moment, Y. I have endeavored to consider carefully both the spatial and temporal elements of my arguments, which are principally constrained by the limits of individual fields rather than any deliberate omission of certain types of data. I address, therefore, historical, archaeological, and linguistic data in what I hope is broadly a historical study, informed still further by anthropological approaches to understanding social interaction.

Among my goals is to understand the earliest moments in which Amorite identity surfaces. While some refer to such moments as “ethnogenesis,” I do not favor the term since it seems to me, on the one hand, to imply a single moment in time after which an identity was established, and on the other, to presume an early awareness of an identity that depends on labels preserved in sources that are not native to the group in question and often may date to a much later period. It is noteworthy that the labels adopted in such an approach are fundamentally ethnic, usually are applied from the outside, and often do not at all reflect native terms of identification, which were usually just tribal

²⁹ Braudel 1972.

designations – later read as part of an Amorite collective. They do not necessarily reveal native perceptions of their own identification and therefore require the conjuring of precursor groups to whom all too often scholars have appended the prefix “proto” to denote that the group is not yet fully formed (e.g., proto-Israelites, proto-Canaanites). Such language needlessly creates confusion and ignores that diachronic changes in the constituencies of a group are inherently part of the study of that group and normative among all societies. For this reason I have not adopted differentiated spellings of the term Amorite (*Amorrite*, *Amurrite*, etc.), as some scholars have in an attempt to differentiate Amorite groups regionally or diachronically or, likewise, to divorce the identity of Mari’s Amorites, for instance, from later references to Amorites in the Hebrew Bible.³⁰ The use of different terms undermine the recognition of the potential connections that the appropriation of a label may have been intended to create, as I contend that this term effected, especially during the OB Period, as a social identity (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Despite social divisions and dissension within Amorite groups, the identification by a specific name through time, but especially during the same historical moment, is profoundly significant. One could make comparisons to the point in Greek history when appeals to unity among Greek city-states were made on the basis of collective identification as Greeks, which very interestingly was fostered principally by outside pressure, namely the Achaemenid Empire.³¹ Certainly the adoption of distinct spellings of “Amorite” seeks to inject nuance into Amorite identities, by imposing distinctions on the ancient terms we possess, even if they are driven by the recognition that Mari’s Amorites, for example, were not always composed of the same groups of Amorites that appear in Babylon, Larsa, Qatna, or Hazor. Unfortunately, they also decouple a basis for social cohesion as arguably some groups may have intended in their adoption of these terms in antiquity. Furthermore, we already possess a basis for subdividing Amorite identity, namely that they belonged to individual tribes, the names of many of which we have. I assume that in light of developments in archaeology over more than twenty years, at least most archaeologists can accept the premise of the existence of local cultural facies within a broader shared identity such as Amorites in the Near East, as is now evident for other groups that might still bear a single moniker (e.g., Greeks, Israelites, Philistines, Phoenicians). It remains the case, however, that for most of these groups, outside of their broader tribal affiliations, which were also often wedded to particular settlements, individuals often identified themselves by means of their association with a town or city-state.

³⁰ See Fleming 2004: 13–14.

³¹ Hall 1997.

In tandem with embracing a *longue durée* perspective, I recognize that there are distinct historical moments that vastly accelerated both the movement of individuals and the progression of cultural change in antiquity, and no less so over the course of the millennium under study here. The structure of this study is the result of the identification of such discrete events within the broader periods or phases during which a host of factors and social processes contributed to the cultivation, efflorescence, and maintenance of a shared Amorite identity. Stages within the framework adopted here are lengthy, often lasting hundreds of years and they expose, I suggest, the glacial pace at which incremental cultural and social change can often occur. Behind these changes are long-term processes such as environmental change and broader cultural developments in which Amorite communities participated (see, especially, Chapters 2 and 3). These are invoked, though space has not permitted an exhaustive discussion or recapitulation of many issues that may be relevant to the developments identified. The question of the actual impact of climate change on the so-called Amoritization process (a term I do not embrace), for example, remains an open one, though I have sought a middle ground between the extremes in the interpretation of its full impact (see Chapter 2). More recent circumstances, rather surprisingly in the same region of Syria, may serve as illustrative of the impact of relatively limited declines in agricultural fortunes, which coupled with other factors, can lead to significant political and cultural change. Nevertheless, the debate will continue, as it should.

There are also serendipitous and specific moments in this social history that shaped the experience of Amorite communities, Braudel's *histoire événementielle*. Among the more notable are wars, building programs, and other political and economic endeavors that brought with them unique opportunities for social, economic, and political advancement (see Chapters 3 and 4). Careful attention to the wide latitude of experiences within different Amorite communities reveals the social complexity of their world that very much resembles ours today. Thus, this study is fraught with the tension that different individuals who identified as Amorites found themselves on both sides of the fence, so to speak, and I have not sought to oversimplify these circumstances. Rather, I have endeavored to reconstruct how such conditions could have come about, and thanks to anthropological and historical studies, and recent events, I have sought to illustrate how certain developments fed into the social changes at work among Amorite communities and their neighbors.

What follows is a historical archaeology of negotiations within a broader Amorite identity from southern Mesopotamia to the Delta of Egypt from the mid-third through the mid-second millennium BC. This diachronic history of the Amorites begins in Chapter 2 with the consideration of the earliest references to Amorites, which localize them across a broad arc of upper Mesopotamia. I suggest that Amorite identity emerges within this region from

the collective, agropastoral experience shared by the inhabitants of these settlements particularly from ca. 2500 to 2200 BC. These settlements were likely originally inhabited by groups from nearby polities, such as Ebla and Mari, which were situated in more humid zones. These polities sought to exploit the limits of arable land in the so-called zone of uncertainty, for sustainable, rainfed agropastoralism. The original inhabitants of these settlements were comprised of varied constituencies from polities situated in adjacent, but less marginal zones. Yet over hundreds of years these frontier communities developed shared sets of practices, customs, and traditions that created a distinct identity among these communities, one that more closely bound them to each other than to the communities that had originally founded them. Such circumstances developed steadily from 2500 to 2200 BC, and the shared identification may have been furthered by military and imperial ambitions like those of Akkad, which they collectively experienced. This period ended, however, through dramatic changes that befell marginal zones from the southern Levant to northern Mesopotamia around 2200 BC when three centuries of sustained aridity began, known as the Meghalayan. In line with the assertions of scholars such as Harvey Weiss, I conclude that these conditions contributed to the nearly wholesale abandonment of the most marginal communities within this region, the decline of still others, and a spike in settlement within adjacent regions with greater rainfall, such as the Levant and the Zagros, or perennial water courses such as the Euphrates Valley. However, unlike Weiss, I interpret the migrations from this region not as habitat-tracking but rather as that of refugees, whose agency ultimately contributed to diverse trajectories and the pursuit of varied means of subsistence as many entered different ecological and economic environments. Thus, in addition to some residual agropastoralism, out of necessity members of these abandoned communities entered various trades, including mercenarism, ideally suited for the employ of young men during periods of extensive conflict and imperial expansion. With estimates between several hundred thousand and half a million inhabitants put to flight across this region in the twenty-second century BC, the scope for cultural exchange and the impact of Amorite factions among their host communities was significant.

These circumstances leave us at the doorstep of our next major set of textual sources for Amorites during the late third millennium, associated with the Third Dynasty of Ur. In Chapter 3, an examination of social and political conditions in southern Mesopotamia after the fall of Akkad (ca. 2200 to 2000 BC) suggests that conditions were conducive to the reception and integration of Amorites and other migrants, who over the preceding century had gradually adapted to their new circumstances. The Gutian interlude, followed by a no less chaotic period of domination by the city of Ur, I argue, created openings for the political elevation of Amorites already present, and new economic

opportunities, such as mercenarism and mercantile activity, that drew in still other Amorite arrivals. While many Amorites had been longstanding members of southern Mesopotamian city-states, unabating aridity and its continuing effects coupled with new opportunities associated with the Ur III state contributed to a continued pull-factor for social elements from neighboring regions along the Euphrates and Tigris river valleys and the Zagros Mountains. Consequently, once the Ur III state was itself subject to instability, its balkanization served as the basis for the reformulation of city-states led by a range of public servants and military men, many of them Amorites.

Analogous circumstances in the Levant and Egypt during that late third millennium appear to have contributed to very similar changes in the political landscape, with notable realignments of their economies and a seeming rise in mercenary participation by Asiatics in Egypt. Although uncertainties have persisted about whether any of these Asiatics can be associated with the broader phenomena identified in Mesopotamia and the northern Levant, the timing of these circumstances and that they follow upon significant disruptions of settlement in the Levant suggest that they should be considered together. Furthermore, these conditions contributed to shared experiences among Levantine populations that served to further cultivate shared traditions and a broader collective identity.

With emerging opportunities for political control of a number of Mesopotamian and Levantine centers, Amorite rulers early in the second millennium were presented, as the Gutians and Sumerians before them, with their own opportunity to expand their hegemony. In Chapter 4, I identify various mechanisms that contributed to the creation of a broad social Amorite identity that featured regional trajectories of cultural development (i.e., cultures) across the Near East during the early MBA (ca. 2000–1800 BC). The imperial ambitions of early Amorite rulers (though never truly realized), which continued into the second half of the MBA, along with the activities of merchants, contributed to a flourishing of cultural traditions. Royal patronage, which drew heavily on third-millennium Mesopotamian legacy, employed monuments such as palace and temple construction, but also warmaking and competitive emulation to advance their own legitimacy and expansionist aims. A major element of this expansion was focused upon the resettlement and domination of the once-again-productive marginal steppe in the “zone of uncertainty” from 1900 BC. The establishment and expansion of territorial states by ambitious rulers from across Mesopotamia and the Levant, among which Amorite rulers played an exceedingly conspicuous role, contributed to an urban renaissance of sorts. While no ruler, not even Hammurapi, would manage to establish anything resembling the extent or endurance of the Akkadian Empire, Akkad clearly came to be identified as a benchmark for the political aspirations of these early dynasts, with figures such as Sargon at center stage in literary traditions of the period.

During this period, the activities of merchants gave Amorite enclaves a foothold in the eastern Nile Delta, trading opportunities in central Anatolia, and connections with the Persian Gulf, and quite possibly the Indus. These exchange networks, as suggested by Old Assyrian (OA) trade networks, were powerful mechanisms for extending political and economic control, and through these, influence. Not only did control of particular networks provide access to critical resources, but it might likewise restrict access by others to these same resources. Similarly, these networks were easily exploited by the kingdoms that underwrote their activities. Along with the increasing exchange of specialists, these networks also provided grounds for the founding of foreign communities, whose presence in cities, as evident at Avaris, contributed to the rise of factions who could do the bidding of these foreign rulers abroad. This is a likely scenario, for example, behind the rise of the Fifteenth “Hyksos” Dynasty in the eastern Nile Delta during the late MBA.

The warfare that had been endemic to the late third millennium did not abate during the OB Period. While it contributed to instability for many dynasties, in remarkable ways it contributed to exchanges of personnel, mobility of individuals, and non-contiguous polities that brought about more intensive cultural exchanges than would have existed without them. Thus, it furthered one of the processes by which, gradually, an Amorite koine began to take shape. Therefore, it was, I argue, a combination of the intensive cultural exchanges by migrants, merchants, and mercenaries, archetypes of the extensive cultural exchanges attested throughout the MBA, that the ongoing negotiation of Amorite identity established the context for achievements of well-known rulers such as Hammurapi of Babylon.

The work ends its treatment of Amorite social history in Chapter 5 by examining the so-called age of Amorites, during the second half of the OB Period (ca. 1800–1600 BC), a period of unquestionable importance to any discussion of Amorite identity. There I lay out the basis for the significance of the term Amorite in this period, how it served as a means of binding and bounding groups who, through competition and emulation, shared in a range of customs and practices. The residue of these practices were constellations of material culture that comprise the Amorite koine, a label stemming from their principal association with Amorite rulers and elites from the Persian Gulf to the Nile Delta during the late MBA. The negotiation of Amorite identity across the Near East during this period fundamentally meant that, while many elements of distinct constellations of material culture bear resemblance to one another, the appropriation of individual elements of these constellations were mediated by local circumstances, social necessities, tastes, and traditions. Thus, Amorite identity during this period constituted, in the clearest sense, a social identity, creating a basis for unity by transcending traditional geographic, political, and cultural boundaries. In the absence of a single dominating

political structure, comparisons may be made with Renaissance Italy, which experienced a similar degree of cultural unity, and yet regional and social diversity, fraught as it also was with competitive emulation and war, and yet robust exchange.

The work concludes in earnest in Chapter 6 with a review of these historical episodes by recasting them in light of the sources of social power, as articulated by the historian Michael Mann.³² Mann identifies ideological, military, economic, and political power as the bases for social power. It is suggested that the convergence or piggy-backing of these individual strands contribute to the significance of Amorite social identity during the MBA. Where one or another of these aspects can be identified among earlier Amorite communities, by the first half of the second millennium Amorite elites possessed access to each of these power collectives. For this reason, Amorite cultural institutions and traditions were conspicuous across a wide geographic expanse of the Near East in a fashion usually only associated with the social contiguity often associated with periods of imperial control.

³² Mann 2012.