

# The El-Amarna Correspondence

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# The El-Amarna Correspondence

A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters  
from the Site of El-Amarna based on  
Collations of all Extant Tablets

VOLUME 1

*Collated, Transcribed and Translated by*  
Anson F. Rainey Z"L

*Edited by*  
William M. Schniedewind



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*This edition of the el-Amarna Correspondence is  
dedicated to the members of my family:*

*Zipora, my wife, and Yoni, my son,  
my parents, Anson and Bertie Mae,  
and my cousin Kay Welch*





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## FOREWORD

The collection of cuneiform documents discovered at the site now known as el-Amarna ('Amârnah) preserve both cultural and historical information that shed light on the affairs of the late Eighteenth Dynasty in the fourteenth century BCE. Thus they are important to the Egyptologist. On the other hand, since they are by their nature, exemplars of the Mesopotamian writing practices, they are also of the highest significance to the Assyriologist, especially those concerned with the Fertile Crescent in the Late Bronze Age. The need for a new edition of the Amarna texts has been deeply felt for many decades. World conditions throughout the twentieth century were not particularly conducive to the task of re-collating the tablets, scattered as they are among several museums. The magisterial edition of J.A. Knudtzon served world scholarship for a century and, in spite of its shortcomings discernable today, gave the qualified Assyriologist access to the gold mine of data that has illuminated so many aspects of the regimes, the peoples and the geography of the Fertile Crescent, especially of the eastern Mediterranean littoral.

A new edition of all the Amarna correspondence needs no justification. The non-epistolary documents have been ably collated and republished by Sh. Izre'el (1997). Therefore, this present work is focused entirely on the letters. The one tablet found at Tell el-Ḥesī (EA 333) was copied in the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri in February, 1971. A few texts were examined at the British Museum in 1973. In 1980–1981 it was my privilege to collate the tablets in the Cairo Museum. But work really began in earnest during some terminal sabbatical leave at the British Museum in the fall of 1999. The discovery that corrections and new readings were possible in an appreciable number of tablets was a stimulant to continue this activity. During 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, the texts in New York, London, Oxford, and Chicago, as well as the remainder of the London tablets, were duly collated and edited. During ten months in 2003–2004, collations were achieved for all the texts in Berlin, Paris and Brussels. There remained the three letters in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow; those were collated during July 2007. The present edition is meant to make the results of that activity accessible to the scholarly public. It must be stressed that it is an edition for professionals; the translations are intended for those who can critique them independently by comparison with the transcriptions. There is no attempt to emulate the style of

the late W.L. Moran (1992). Most translations are virtually “off the cuff,” but they are an attempt to grasp the real message that the scribe (or his master) wished to convey. Although consistency in the choice of terminology was sought, there may be instances when such was not achieved. The corresponding transcription will serve to clarify the intention of the scribe.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the many scholars and institutions that have made the edition possible by their generous academic and financial support.

Many fine people have contributed to the success of my efforts in producing this work. A great indebtedness must be acknowledged to the late W.L. Moran, both for his writings and for the privilege of participating in his seminar at Harvard University during the 1976–1977 academic year.

It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the kindness and encouragement of the late Erica Reiner and her staff at the Assyrian Dictionary Project in the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. During several visits in 1976–1977, I was permitted to use the dictionary files as well as the proof copy of volumes M/1–2 and the manuscript of volumes N/1–2. Both the information and the hospitality contributed to the pleasure of this research task.

Through the generosity of G. Buccellati, a mainframe computer printout of a sign concordance for nearly all of the Amarna texts (i.e., Knudtzon’s edition) was made available to me. In spite of its limitations as a pioneer work, it has proven useful in tracking down the occurrences of many particles, e.g. *lā*, and many cuneiform signs, such as LAL. Our thanks are due to Buccellati and his energetic assistants for producing such a tool.

My graduate students at Tel Aviv University, and later at Bar Ilan University, and also those in Moran’s seminar mentioned above, have provided stimulation and, not infrequently, correction of various errors. The challenge of giving them a head start towards the advancement of Amarna studies has been the chief motivation for all my work in this area.

A further obligation must be recognized towards those institutions that have facilitated my lifetime of Amarna research. First and foremost, to Tel Aviv University, which granted me five sabbatical leaves, 1970–1971, 1976–1977, 1983–1984, 1988–1989, and 1995–1996 that could be devoted to EA research and writing. Through the good offices of A. Shapira, then Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, I was awarded a grant from the Irene Young Endowment Fund for Scientific Publications. This subvention was for expenses incurred in the preparation of scholarly works for publication and it was used to support the work by L. Meiberg on the Bibliography and Index of my initial project, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets* (Rainey 1996). The American Council of Learned Societies provided a gen-

erous grant towards my sabbatical expenses in 1976–1977. The Research for Peace Project of Tel Aviv University furnished stipends in 1980, -81 and -82, that made possible the collation of the Amarna texts at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Both Harvard University (1976–1977) and the University of Pennsylvania (1983–1984, 1988–1989, 1995–1996) awarded me visiting research status that made available to me their extensive library collections.

In 1976–1977, a sabbatical from Tel Aviv University made it possible to participate in a seminar by W.L. Moran at Harvard University. It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the hospitality of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University (1976–1977) and the Department of Asian and Middle East Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (1983–1984, 1988–1989, 1995–1996) for granting the status of visiting researcher during the sabbatical leaves which I spent at their respective institutions. During those two decades I was engaged in an intensive study of the grammar of the Amarna letters that embodied the hybrid language used by the scribes in Canaan. Throughout the work on that project (Rainey 1996), the lack of up-to-date collations was sorely felt.

The Cairo texts had already been collated during the euphoria of the new Peace Treaty with Egypt. A few of the London texts were collated during a brief visit to London in 1973. But a comprehensive collation of all the extant Amarna texts seemed at that time like an impossible dream. As an emeritus professor from Tel Aviv University, I found that the dream might be realized. Starting with a two month stay in London including a few days in Berlin, the drive to personally collate all of the Amarna letters became a virtual obsession.

Collation of the London tablets was begun seriously in September 1999 (a few tablets had been collated in 1973) during some final sabbatical leave from Tel Aviv University. Further work was done in January–February of 2000 and April, 2001. This latter trip was made possible by a travel allowance from the Jeselson Fund of Bar Ilan University.

The two texts at the Metropolitan Museum were collated in November, 1999. The fragment at the University of Chicago was collated in February, 2000. Later, when the other part of this letter, EA 26 was on exhibition in Chicago, J. Brinkman was able to join the two pieces and photograph and collate them together. The remainder of the entire Berlin collection of letters was collated during the academic year 2003–2004, financed by a generous grant from the Thyssen Stiftung.

During May 2004, the tablets in the Musée d'Louvre were collated and the one tablet in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels was made available to me.

The three tablets in the Moscow Museum were collated recently by Sh. Izre'el who agreed to furnish his transliterations to the project. Nevertheless, those three texts were personally collated by me in July 2007, during the 53rd Rencontre Assyriologique and photographs were made.

Over the years, collation of the various tablets has been made possible by the courtesy of numerous curators: the late E. Sollberger of the British Museum (1973); M. Çiğof of the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri (1971, 1976); M. Saleh, at that time curator of the New Kingdom section of The Egyptian Museum, Cairo (1980–1981); Ch. Walker of the British Museum, London (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004); J. Allen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1999); J.A. Brinkman of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (2000); H. Whitehouse of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (2002); J. Marzahn at the Vorderasiatische Museum, Berlin (1999, 2003–2004, 2005); B. Salvini of the Louvre, Paris (2004) and E. Gubel of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (2004) and finally S. Hodjash at the Pushkin Museum, Moscow (2007).

G. Wilhelm has generously agreed to permit the incorporation of his latest version of the Hurrian letter (EA 24) into this edition. I. Singer has prepared the two texts in the Hittite language (EA 31 and 32). All the texts in the various dialects of Akkadian are the result of my personal collation of every extant text (for the few texts that have been destroyed or just disappeared cf. the Introduction, *infra*).

The E.J. Brill publishing house took on the job of producing my previous contribution at Amarna research (Rainey 1996). That four volume monograph was accepted into the *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Erste Abteilung, Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten as Band 52. Throughout my career as a student and teacher/researcher, various contributions of that series had played an important role in my research. As a student, I never dreamed that one day, my own work would join the prestigious corpus. Now I am once again in debt to Brill for accepting this present study into the *Handbuch*.

*Anson F. Rainey*

This project was entrusted to me by Anson a few months before he passed away. I had known Anson for many years, first studying historical geography with him at the Institute for Holy Land Studies (now, Jerusalem University College); later, while a post-doctoral fellow at the Albright Institute, I sat in on his Amarna Seminar at Tel Aviv University. I have put most of my efforts into the editing of volume 1 (which included creating a glossary), and I am especially grateful that his wife, Zipora Cochavi-Rainey, took on the task of

completing volume 2, which was only in notes when Anson asked me to oversee this project to completion. Zipora also supplied corrections to the first volume based on her commentary in volume 2. I am also grateful to Jana Mynářová who worked with Rainey and provided a discussion of the discovery, research, and excavation of the tablets for the Introduction. In principle, I have tried to be as faithful as possible in representing Anson's work in volume 1. I especially appreciate the work of my graduate research assistants, Alice Mandell and Timothy Hogue, who have also helped in completing this work. I am particularly grateful to Alice Mandell who did most of the work on the glossary.

*William M. Schniedewind*