

INTRODUCTION

A central component in the documented cultural and political life of the Ancient Near Eastern Late Bronze Age is the collection of cuneiform documents known as the Amarna Tablets. The year 2007 marked the one hundred twentieth anniversary since antiquities dealers in Egypt began to acquire cuneiform tablets and fragments from the site known today as Tell el-Amarna (*Tell el-'Amârnah*).

The present toponym is a late, artificial invention based on a misunderstanding of the village name et-Tîl and the tribal name *banû 'Amram*. The name Tell el-Amarna first appears on the map by J.G. Wilkinson (1830).

The semi-legendary accounts of their discovery just over one hundred and twenty years ago are fairly well known to the scholarly world but less so today to the general public (Knudtzon 1915:1–15; cf. Sayce 1917 and Campbell 1964:32–34). Be that as it may, in the acquisitions journal of the then Bulaq Museum, objects that obviously originated from the site (including the cartouches of Akhenaton and the Aten) were listed in 1887 prior to the arrival of cuneiform tablets as recently discovered by Jana Mynářová. This strongly suggests that the original report about a peasant woman who was seeking organic soil for her garden may have been nothing but a cover up to hide clandestine antiquities theft (cf. Petrie 1898:1, who already sensed this).

Discovery and Publication

Today three hundred and eighty two texts and fragments are known although several have disappeared or been destroyed during the twentieth century. Three hundred and forty nine of them are letters in varied states of preservation, some complete, others fragmentary. This present edition includes all of the letters plus one scribal exercise text (EA 380) that was used as a sample template for a letter. As fate would have it, most of the tablets made their way to major museums of Europe. Wallis Budge brought about eighty-two texts to the British Museum. A certain Theodore Graf brought two hundred and one texts to Vienna and sold them to the new royal museum in Berlin. The Assyriologist, Hugo Winckler, made the purchase with a generous grant from James Simon, a textile magnet and friend

of the Kaiser. A few other texts made their way into the hands of private collectors (see the publication record below) several of which were eventually purchased by the British Museum. The excavations by Flinders Petrie in 1891–1892 produced a handful of texts and fragments, mostly scribal exercises; these were donated to the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford University. Two tablets reached the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the fragment of one letter found its way to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Six other letters were acquired by the Louvre and one found its way to the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* in Brussels. Subsequent excavations at the site by German and later British expeditions found a small number of tablets. Those from the latter went to the British Museum. The two German finds were copied in Berlin and repatriated to Cairo in 1926. One tablet included in the “Amarna corpus” is EA 333, a chance find in the archaeological excavations by Fredrick Bliss at Tell el-Ḥesī in 1891. Because that text mentioned personalities known from the Amarna letters, Knudtzon included it in his edition. The tablet is in the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri. Various other tablets, some from the Amarna period, have been found in the southern Levant, e.g. the Taanach letters, two texts from Shechem and now numerous texts from the excavations at Hazor are not included in this edition. They have all been assembled in a convenient volume by Horowitz and Oshima (2006).

The archaeological site now called Tell el-Amarna (properly *Amârnah*) is located about three hundred kilometers (ca. one hundred and eighty miles) south of Cairo in Middle Egypt. It is about half way between the southern (No-Amón = Luxor) and the northern (Moph/Memphis = Mît Rahîna) capitals of Egypt in pharaonic times. Napoleon's savants called it et-Tell. Early explorers focused on the tomb caves in the cliffs to the east of the site. According to the earliest maps of the region, the site of el-Amarna has always been visible to travelers and visitors. It is the largest and most accessible of the few Egyptian cities that have been preserved. Its remains are visible on the surface. Therefore, it is in many ways the most convenient focus for the study of urbanism in the ancient historical periods of Egyptian history.

A drawing of Amarna Boundary Stela A at Tuna el-Gebel was published in 1714, by Claude Sicard, a French Jesuit missionary. The Napoleonic scientific expedition visited the region in 1799, and Edmé Jomard produced a plan of the site under the name El-Tell in the *Description de l'Égypte*, the magnificent volumes summarizing the results of the Napoleonic expedition (1817). The English scholar John Gardner Wilkinson produced plans of the entire city based on his surveys in 1824 and 1826. During the next two decades, copies

of the tombs of Akhenaten's nobles were produced by Robert Hay, James Burton, and Nestor L'Hôte. Further plans of the city of el-Amarna were published by the Prussian Expedition led by Richard Lepsius based on their researches there between 1843 and 1845.

The first modern archaeological excavations at el-Amarna were conducted in 1891–1892 by W.M. Flinders Petrie. His desire to dig there was due to the sensational discovery of the cuneiform tablets a few years earlier. It proved to be basically a one period site with few stratigraphic difficulties. Unfortunately, one such problem did arise with regard to Petrie's description of his few cuneiform finds. He excavated a building (his No. 19) the bricks of which bore the inscription: "The place of the letters of the Pharaoh, 'w.š'" (hieroglyphs in Petrie 1894: pl. XLII; also Petrie 1898: 1). Two particular rooms yielded fragments of cuneiform texts. Petrie claimed that most of the fragments that he found had come from the two rubbish pits beneath the complex of these rooms. Petrie suggested that the rubbish pits "had been filled up before the walls were built". Serious doubts have been raised about his conclusion (Kühne 1973: 70 n. 345). Pendlebury, who excavated Amarna in the 1930's, describes the poor condition of the walls and the floor of the same building (his Q.42.21). Doubts about the accuracy of Petrie's stratigraphic conclusions have justifiably remained to this day (Moran 1992: xvi n. 20). Given Petrie's notorious lack of stratigraphic comprehension, one may entertain serious doubt that the tablet collection was all thrown into a pit, or pits, that were later sealed under the walls of the building. The implications for the chronology of the tablets vis à vis the use of building 19 (Q.42.21) will be discussed below.

Several minor expeditions followed in the ensuing years, but the next really serious undertaking was the methodical survey and excavations conducted by Ludwig Borchardt (1907, 1911–1914), on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft. The expedition was financed by James Simon, whose name was on the license. Some of the most famous artistic works of the Amarna style were uncovered during that period, including the famous bust of Nefertiti, which stood for some time in the saloon of James Simon until it was donated to the Kaiser's museum. The Borchardt/Simon expedition found only two cuneiform tablets, neither in house 19 (Q.42.21). One was a broken lexical text (EA 379) and the other was the now famous legend, the *Šar tamhari*, "The King of Battle" about a presumed campaign into central Anatolia by Sargon the Great. The language and ductus of that text are totally different from the normal Amarna collection. The clay has yet to be examined petrographically, but the odds are that the text was brought to Egypt by an envoy from Anatolia, either Hatti or Arzawa.

Between 1901 and 1907, Egyptologists from The Egypt Exploration Fund (now the Egypt Exploration Society) copied and published the private tombs in the eastern ridges and the boundary stelae around the circumference of the Amarna plain. They resumed work in 1921, this time in proper excavations at the site. The directors, in turn, were T.E. Peet, H. Frankfort, F.L. Griffith, and finally J.D.S. Pendlebury. Their explorations ranged widely over the site, from peripheral regions such as the workers' village, the "river temple," in the south and the northern palace and finally concentrated on the central city. Pendlebury, the last excavator, had his final season in 1936 and finished his publication in 1939.

Another EES archaeologist, G.T. Martin, reinvestigated the royal tomb east of el-Amarna in the wadi behind the eastern ridges, during the early 70's. Then in 1977, the Egypt Exploration Society launched a long term project under the direction of B.J. Kemp and this work has continued at the site since. Kemp commenced excavation at the workers' village but has moved his focus to the main city area since 1987. As mentioned above, Amarna is an ideal venue for the study of the layout of an ancient Egyptian city in spite of its unusual character as the capital of the heretic king, Amenhotep IV/Akhenaton. Prospects for finding more inscriptions have pretty well dwindled.

It would appear that the original venue of the tablet finds was truly the "House of Pharaoh's letters." At least some of the original "discoverers" came to work for Petrie in his excavation four years after the initial find. The following anecdote is a reliable witness (also cited by Izre'el 1997:6).

The cuneiform tablets bearing the royal correspondence with Syria, were found in the block of chambers No. 19 (pls. XXXV, XLII). From the appearance of the chambers I believe the tablets were in the S.W. room. This site was shewn to Prof. Sayce in a previous year as the place where the tablets were found. Some natives, while I was at Tell el Amarna, offered to shew me a valuable site if I would employ them; I replied, as I always do to such offers, by telling them to go and get something from it, and I would pay them well and employ them. They went and dug a block of building; I watched them: they found nothing then, as it was exhausted, but it shewed me the spot which they deemed valuable. Afterwards I enquired of a man, where the tablets were found, and he led me to this place. Lastly, when we dug here I found one piece of a tablet in a chamber, and two rubbish pits, *which had been filled up before the walls were built* (italics mine), and which contained the other fragments ...

There cannot therefore be any doubt as to the site of this great discovery, which was so lamentably spoilt by the present conditions attaching to such discoveries in Egypt. (Petrie 1894: 23–24)

It has been convincingly argued that the texts were not only stored there but that scribes were trained there as well (Izre'el 1997:9–13). Except for a letter or two addressed to Tutankhamon (and maybe Semenkhare'), the epistles were all addressed to either Amenhotep III and his widow, Teye (EA 26), or Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton). Theories that Amenhotep III spent time at Amarna, based on an assumed co-regency with his son, have been thoroughly dispelled by the proper collation of the hieratic date on EA 27, which shows that in the second year of Amenhotep IV, Amenhotep III was already dead and that his son was still in No-Amon.

All this indicates that when the royal entourage moved to the new capital city of Akhetaton (Amarna), the scribes brought with them a number of texts, both international and Levantine, that had been sent to the deceased pharaoh, Amenhotep III. By the time the site was abandoned in the early reign of Tutankhamon, even a large group of letters to the deceased Akhenaton were obsolete and of no use to the bureaucrats and diplomats. Therefore, they were all discarded. In effect, most of the surviving letters consist of “closed cases,” matters that had previously transpired but had come to their final consummation. They were no longer deemed worthy of transport to the new destination of the Egyptian Foreign Office. Most of, nearly all in fact, were probably disposed of in Petrie's rubbish pits. A few fragments were scattered on the floors or just outside the building. The clandestine diggers may even have dropped a fragment or two. Certain other texts, e.g. the “King of Battle,” were found in other buildings. Demolition activities by the ancient Egyptian workman under the Nineteenth Dynasty, who stripped the site of its best building material for use elsewhere, and especially the work of the anonymous antiquities thieves in the nineteenth century CE, must have left Petrie's tablet house in a most disorderly state. The disturbed nature of his building 19 (Q42.21) possibly deceived Petrie into thinking that those same pits were stratigraphically covered by walls of the “House of Pharaoh's Letters,” a view on which Pendelbury cast serious doubt. There is no hope of solving the enigma of the tablet venue, but the internal evidence of the texts themselves must carry some weight in the discussion.

Considering the circumstances of the initial discovery and the subsequent dispersal of the tablets to different museums and private collectors, the publication of the bulk of the Amarna tablets was accomplished in a fairly short time. The news of the discovery and the implications for biblical history no doubt served as a stimulus to European scholars to make their contents available to professional and lay audiences as soon as possible.

The history of their publication is an interesting commentary on the Assyriological profession during its formative stages and subsequent devel-

opment. One tablet (now EA 260) was published in transcription only by Oppert (1888:253). The text was later collated personally by J.A. Knudtzon, who republished it in transcription (cf. *infra*). However, the cuneiform text never saw publication and the tablet cannot be located now (cf. Artzi, 1968:170, where an improved transcription is given). Most of the tablets that had reached the museums of Berlin and Cairo, plus the first one acquired by the Louvre (now EA 209) and the three in the possession of Vladimir Golenischeff (now EA 70, 137, 160; all in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow) were published by H. Winckler from autographs by L. Abel (Winckler 1889–1890). There are occasional mistakes; whole lines were even missed in one or two places. Those texts obtained for the British Museum in London were prepared for publication by C. Bezold and published jointly with E.A.W. Budge (Bezold and Budge 1892). Unfortunately, they were printed in the notoriously unsuccessful cuneiform type instead of hand copies. Four tablets in the hands of Rostovitz Bey (now EA 28, 82, 230, 292) and one belonging to Chauncey Murch (now recognized as a join to make EA 26) were published in autograph and transcription by V. Scheil (1892:298–309). The Rostovitz tablets were eventually acquired by the British Museum in 1903. The Murch fragment was also published by L. Abel (1892:117 ff.); but after that it seems to have disappeared until it was found by Dr. T.G. Allen in the Murch collection (mostly small objects from Egypt) at the Art Institute of Chicago. Records show that it had been acquired by the Institute in 1894. Subsequent republication by D.D. Luckenbill and T.G. Allen, (1916:1–8), made possible an improvement in understanding the text. In the year 2000, EA 26 was brought to Chicago as part of an Amarna exhibition from the British Museum. J.A. Brinkman was alerted to this fact, and he was able to join the Murch Fragment with the British tablet and in order to make photographs and a hand copy and translation (still unpublished). Photographs of the two pieces were made separately by the West Semitic Research photographic team, and the pictures have been joined digitally. A new tablet discovered by F.J. Bliss during excavations at Tell el-Ḥesī (southern Palestine) in 1891 and placed in the Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri (now EA 333) was also published by V. Scheil (1893:137–138). It was included in Knudtzon's monumental edition. The same text, in a more reliable copy and with photographs, was later published by H.V. Hilprecht (1896: Pl. LXIV, No. 147, and Pl. XXIV, Nos. 66–67). The text was collated by Rainey in September 1976. Recently it was collated anew and published by W. Horowitz and T. Oshima (2006:92–94, 214 [hand copy]). The tablets and fragments published up to this point were re-edited by Hugo Winckler (1896a), whose work consisted only of transcriptions though these were mostly based on a fresh examination of the texts.

An English translation of Winckler's work by J.P. Metcalf appeared that same year (Winckler 1896b). Meanwhile, Petrie's excavations at el-Amarna had produced twenty-two more texts, mostly fragments, which went to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and which were published in very inadequate hand copies by A.H. Sayce and W.M.F. Petrie (1894:34 ff., Pls. XXXI–XXXIII). They included one fragment that joined to make EA 14, a large tablet in the Berlin Museum; there were another six fragmentary letters, EA 43, 61, 135, 184, 190, 236, and a dozen scribal texts EA 342, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355; reference is made to two other unpublished fragments, later known as EA 343 and 349, and also to an un-inscribed tablet (Izre'el 1997). The director of the French school of archaeology in Cairo, M. Chassinat, obtained two more tablets (now EA 15, 153) that were published by V. Scheil (1902:113–116). The texts were subsequently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of New York. Later they were republished with new hand copies by W.L. Moran in Ira Spar, ed. (1988:Plates 112–115).

All of the publications mentioned thus far, plus the many scholarly annotations and essays, were superseded by the magisterial work of J.A. Knudtzon (1915; Neudruck: Aalen, 1964). He had patiently collated personally all of the texts and fragments except for those acquired by C. Murch and M. Chassinat (cf. *supra*). Beside the fact that Knudtzon was the last person ever to see all those tablets, his own outstanding ability at reading texts and his thorough mastery of the contents of the Amarna archive made his work a priceless treasure that stood as the only reliable witness to most of the original tablets throughout the twentieth century. Sadly, Knudtzon explained that he was unable, for health as well as financial reasons, to publish hand copies of the cuneiform texts. Therefore, he had to content himself with transliterations. To aid the cuneiformist in identifying the signs that he had seen with his own eyes, a system of transcription was adopted whereby any one sign was usually rendered by its most well-known value at that time. The TUM-sign, for example, was always written *tum*, even though it appeared in some contexts where the mimation could not have been pronounced. In certain cases where he could not decide or where there is some special problem, Knudtzon provided a list of autographs at the end of his text edition to which he referred in his footnotes. However, his transcription method (for which he apologized) was not a reliable representation of the phonetic structure of the words. Comparison with previous text editions, especially those of Winckler-Abel, Scheil and Sayce, shows that Knudtzon's transcriptions represent a tremendous advance in precision. Signs, and sometimes whole lines, that previous copyists had missed, were properly recorded by Knudtzon. In a myriad of cases, Knudtzon's sharp eye corrected the

interpretation of a particular sign. Today it is no secret that the transliterations of Knudtzon are usually more reliable than the autographs of his predecessors! Nevertheless, modern collation has shown that there were instances in which Abel or Bezold were correct contrary to Knudtzon. There are also many places where Knudtzon either failed to discern the signs or where he made a wrong interpretation of the traces preserved. Another significant contribution of Knudtzon's edition is his arrangement of all the tablets in a logical order based on geographical, chronological and functional considerations. His numerical system has stood the test of time and is the only accepted method of designating the texts today. By common agreement they are cited under the prefix EA plus Knudtzon's tablet number. The total number of texts in his edition was 358.

While Knudtzon's work was appearing, a new edition of hand copies made from the tablets in the Berlin Museum was published by O. Schroeder (1914–1915). Schroeder also added a fragment not included by Knudtzon (now EA 360) as well as two texts discovered in the Borchardt excavations at Amarna in 1913–1914 (now EA 359, 379). Schroeder's new facsimiles constitute a valuable, independent witness to the Berlin texts but comparison with Knudtzon's sample autographs suggests that Schroeder tended to present the signs in his own somewhat normalized ductus. Nevertheless, Schroeder took careful note of regional differences in the form of specific signs and presented them graphically in a rather complete sign list. However, recent collation has shown that when in doubt about a sign, Schroeder seems to have drawn the sign that Knudtzon had transcribed into Latin characters. Here and there, one must correct both Knudtzon and Schroeder (which must be used with great caution). An additional fragment was published by O. Schroeder (1917, cols. 105–106; now EA 361).

Additional letters appeared in a variety of venues. Six more epistles from the Amarna collection were acquired by the Louvre in 1918. Their definitive publication was by F. Thureau-Dangin, (1922:91–108; now EA 362–367). For good measure a fresh copy of the other Louvre text (EA 209) was added. Although Thureau-Dangin was one of the leading cuneiformists of his day, he did not specialize in Amarna studies but took on the publication of the Louvre texts as a side issue. Therefore, even his work can be critiqued by direct collation (cf. e.g. EA 362:1 where he mis-transcribed the name of the ruler of Byblos). Further excavation at Amarna by the renewed British expedition produced one more tablet that was added to the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It was a lexical list including Egyptian vocables in syllabic cuneiform. It was published in facsimile and in transliteration by S. Smith and C.J. Gadd (1925:230–240; now EA 368). The two tablets from

Amarna written in the Hittite language (EA 31 and 32) were republished in facsimile by A. Goetze (1930: Nos. 1 and 2) and recollated by L. Rost (1956). Jean Capart heard about an Amarna tablet in the hands of a dealer in Paris and by 1934 he had acquired it for the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* in Brussels. This very important letter was published in cuneiform and transliteration by G. Dossin (1934:125–136; now EA 369). At this stage, S.A.B. Mercer published an edition of all the Amarna texts available (Mercer 1939). Basically, his was only a translation of Knudtzon's work into English with many errors introduced in the process. Mercer had seen the value of Knudtzon's edition but lacked the critical acumen to improve upon it. As for the tablets that had appeared subsequent to Knudtzon's work, Mercer added some of them at the end of the numerical sequence, viz. Nos. 359–361. On the other hand, he tried rather unsuccessfully to insert the epistles in their logical place among the Knudtzon texts. In the meantime, the Egypt Exploration Society had unearthed eight new fragments from el-Amarna during the excavation campaign of 1933–1934. Mercer had applied for permission to include these texts in his edition but was refused. They were finally published for the Society by C.H. Gordon (1947:1–21). Gordon also proposed to renumber all texts that appeared after Knudtzon's edition by adding them at the end of the latter's numerical sequence, a method only partially adopted by Mercer. E.F. Campbell (1964:79–80, n. 29) accepted Gordon's suggestion. Therefore, when A.R. Millard published a newly found tablet from the stores of the British Museum (1965:140–143), he readily assigned the newly discovered text its number (EA 378) in accordance with the new system. Finally, a perusal of the various editions led the late P. Artzi to the discovery that Gordon had overlooked one tablet when he revised the numbering of Mercer. This latter was Schroeder's No. 190 which Mercer had called 354a. It was duly pointed out by Artzi (1967:432), that the correct number of this neglected text should be EA 379. The tablets EA 359–379, that is, all those not in Knudtzon's edition, were published in transcription and translation by A.F. Rainey (1970; revised edition 1978).

All of the non-epistolary texts, that is, the so-called "Scholarly Tablets," have been restudied by Sh. Izre'el (1997). They consist of scribal exercises and reference lists and some important literary texts (and fragments). Two of these latter, "The King of Battle" (EA 359) and "Adapa and the South Wind" (EA 356), were first made known to the Assyriological world by the Amarna finds. Izre'el also included two letter fragments, one of which joins EA 56 (EA 361) and the other hitherto unpublished (EA 381).

As of this date a few tablets and fragments have disappeared or been destroyed. The one letter in the possession of J. Oppert (EA 260) disap-

peared; his original publication (1888) and the transcription and translation by J.A. Knudsen (1915) are all the personal collations we have. Another text (EA 7) was destroyed in 1945 during the bombing of Berlin. There was a leak in the ceiling of the Ashmolean Museum and water entered the display case and melted one fragmentary letter (EA 135) and a few of the scribal exercises. Fortunately, all of the latter were still extant when Izre'el made his new edition. The records in the Vorderasiatitische Museum in Berlin show that another fragmentary letter (EA 128) has been missing since an inventory in 1963.

Knudtson's arrangements of the letters is followed explicitly in this edition and the texts that came to light after his work appear in sequence as proposed by C.H. Gordon (1947) and followed by all subsequent editions and translations (e.g. Rainey 1978; Moran 1992).

Language and Writing

It must have been something of a shock to western scholars when they finally realized that the Egyptians really did use Akkadian as a diplomatic language. But in the 1890's when the Amarna texts became available to them in reasonable editions, the study of the native Akkadian dialects was still in its infancy. The standard in the profession was mainly that of the Assyrian royal inscriptions and of other texts from Assurbanipal's library or from the display inscriptions of other Assyrian monarchs. Nevertheless, Sayce was already able to discern that the Amarna texts were written in a Babylonian ductus, not Assyrian. The Code of 'Ammurapi, composed in classical Old Babylonian, was only discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century and its syntactical and grammatical analysis was achieved a few years later (Ungnad 1903, 1904). Henceforth, the grammar of Old Babylonian from the days of the First Dynasty of Babylon was placed on a firm basis and became the standard for understanding the grammar of this classic dialect.

One letter, EA 24 was seen to be written in a strange language which we now know is Hurrian. Two other letters are in Hittite (EA 31 & 32). Knudtson recognized early on that they were in a European language (Knudtson 1902, 1916; Singer 2005). All the rest are in dialects of Akkadian. Only one letter, EA 16, is in Middle Assyrian (Grayson 1972:48–49; for grammar, cf. Mayer 1971); the Cassite correspondence is in Middle Babylonian (Aro 1955), and in fact it includes some of the best examples of that dialect (EA 6–13). It is Middle Babylonian that came to be borrowed throughout the Fertile Crescent in

the Late Bronze Age. The local and regional dialects of Peripheral Akkadian (from Nuzi to Boghazköi and the Levant) were all based on Middle Babylonian with local variations, especially Hurro-Akkadian.

In the wake of Knudtzon's careful edition, it was recognized (Böhl 1909:21) that the letters from North Syria represented a different linguistic tradition from that of the texts from the southeastern Mediterranean littoral (i.e., Canaan). Now the dialect of those "northern letters" is frequently called Hurro-Akkadian because of the strong Hurrian influence on all levels of the language (script, phonology, syntax and occasional glosses). During the twentieth century, other tablet collections have been discovered with similar Akkadian dialectical features and grammatical studies of the respective groups have been written: the Boghazköi archives of the Hittite empire (Labat 1932), the Nuzi tablets (Gordon 1938; Wilhelm 1970), the Alalakh texts, especially from Stratum IV (Giacumakis 1970), the Carchemish letters found at Ugarit (Huehnergard 1979), the Ugaritian Akkadian documents including many from Hittite sources (Huehnergard 1989; van Soldt 1991), and recently the local texts from Emar (Ikeda 1995). The backbone of Hurro-Akkadian studies is the corpus of Mitanni letters from the Amarna collection (Adler 1976). The locally written texts from Ugarit and Emar do not necessarily contain any marked Hurrian influence, probably because the principal language of the local population was Semitic.

As for the texts from Amurru, a newly organized state standing between the Hurro-Akkadian states of the north and Canaan to the south, there are sub dialects among the various letters, ranging from Canaanite-Akkadian to Hurro-Akkadian, which comprise the majority (Izre'el 1991). Letters from Amurru included not only the Amarna tablets but also thirteenth century texts found in Ugarit and Hattusas.

The Amarna letters written by Egyptian scribes represent a fair attempt to write Middle Babylonian, with only minor West Semitic or Egyptian influences (Cochavi-Rainey 1988, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 2005). The study of Egyptian scribal practices also included later texts from the thirteenth century BCE, namely those sent by the royal family of Ramesses II to the royal family of Hattusili III. Influence from the Egyptian language is more pronounced in the nineteenth dynasty texts.

The Amarna tablets from Alashia include examples in Canaanite-Akkadian besides Hurro-Akkadian though two of them (EA 36, 37) seem to come from a scribe trained in the true Middle Babylonian tradition. The texts of the Alashia corpus, including two texts found at Ugarit are a fruitful field of study (Cochavi-Rainey 2003), especially when the newest discoveries from Ugarit are published.

Most scholarly interest was focused, however, on the texts written by scribes from Canaan. Their verbal system, their many West Semitic glosses, and their very un-Akkadian syntax indicated that the native language of the authors was West Semitic; for lack of a better term, we have called it “Canaanite.” It must be recognized that three linguistic strands are interwoven in the dialect(s) of these Canaanite-Akkadian texts. First, it became clear that the scribes did not choose to base their “interlanguage” on the current Middle Babylonian (as did the scribes at Nuzi, Mitanni, Hattusas et al.). Instead, they chose a dialect of Old Babylonian that even contained some forms typical of Archaic Old Babylonian. The most surprising factor in that choice is that most of the cuneiform texts and fragments discovered thus far in Canaan (apart from the Tell el-Ḥesī, Tanaach, and Kâmed el-Lôz tablets) have come from the late Middle Bronze Age and belong by script and language to the Old Babylonian cuneiform horizon (for linguistic discussion of the texts from Hazor, Hebron, Shechem, cf. Rainey 1996a: vol. 2, 28–31; now Horowitz and Oshima 2006). The second strand in the hybrid language of Canaan consists of local modifications of the Old Babylonian base language. Sometimes, these “colloquialisms” have been wrongly confused with West Semitic features.

The third strand, and naturally the most interesting from an historical (and cultural) point of view, is the use of “Canaanite” verbal inflection on Akkadian stems. The morphosyntactic system reflected in this strand was largely discovered by W.L. Moran (1950; republished 2003). The entire modal system of the prefix and suffix conjugations and the West Semitic functions of the prefix conjugation and the infinitive are now fairly well defined (Rainey 1996a: vol. 2).

The earliest attestations of Canaanite-Akkadian are in the Taanach letters from the late fifteenth century BCE (Rainey 1977; 1999; Horowitz and Oshima 2006:127–151).

So somewhere between the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, the scribes of Canaan came to some kind of agreement as to the method to be employed whereby “Canaanite” inflection would be applied to the Old Babylonian stems. How we would like to know just where and when that happened! Was it due to some dominant, creative personality in one of the scribal schools? Did this result in, or was it the result of, a spoken “interlanguage” that developed among the local administrators (according to Moran)? The answers to these and other questions must remain wrapped in obscurity. Perhaps the discovery of a real local archive will shed some light on them. The Jerusalem scribe reveals an amazing mixture of Middle Assyrian, Middle Babylonian and hybrid West

Semitized forms unlike any other author in the Amarna corpus (Moran 1975; Cochavi-Rainey and Rainey 2009).

The handful of literary works and school texts, including a short list of Egyptian words and their Sumerian equivalents (EA 368) stem from the Mesopotamian tradition but some of the compositions have strong Hurrianizing influence (e.g. EA 359; cf. Izre'el 1995).

The proper nouns, i.e. personal, divine and geographic names, have all been restudied and presented in modern format by R. Hess (1984, 1993).

The Collection and Its Contents

The Egyptian scribes certainly maintained an administrative archive, not only of the many documents written in hieratic on papyrus, but also of the cuneiform correspondence in which they had to be engaged. The composition of the staff of scribes that served in “The House of Pharaoh’s Letters” remains an enigma. Some of the Amarna tablets have hieratic notations in black ink. Two of the literary pieces have a system of red dots like those sometimes employed in hieratic literary texts (cf. Izre’el 1997:11). So, of course, there were native Egyptians trained in the standard curriculum of the pharaonic administration. On the other hand, the “office copies” of cuneiform letters that were written in Egypt and sent abroad testify to the need to assume that trained cuneiformists were also present. Were there two sets of scribes, one for hieratic and one for cuneiform? Or were they basically an integrated cadre? Perhaps some graduates of the Egyptian school were selected to learn a new specialization, viz. how to read and write cuneiform. Given the varied nature of the texts received (Middle Babylonian, Hurro-Akkadian, Canaanite-Akkadian), the cuneiformists would have had to be especially skilled in interpretation. The ruler of Arzawa even asked that all correspondence between the two states be conducted in Hittite (EA 32:24–25)! One of the Hittite letters is actually from pharaoh to the ruler of Arzawa. And then there is the one great Hurrian letter (EA 24) and some Hurrian glosses on texts in Hurro-Akkadian. Of special interest is the question of the hybrid language used by scribes in the Southern Levant. The letters by Egyptian scribes in the Amarna collection show a fairly good knowledge of Middle Babylonian with a ductus resembling that of the northern Levant or of the Hittite sphere. Were those same scribes, trained in Middle Babylonian, able to read the letters from Canaan without assistance? An occasional Middle Babylonian gloss to verbs in the hybrid dialect suggest that the Levantine scribe wanted to be sure that the recip-

ient in Egypt understood the exact verbal nuance intended. So were there some Canaanites working in the same office? And how about Hurrians or Hittites? All these questions will have to remain unanswered. In spite of many conjectures, no one can estimate just how many tablets have been lost.

In any case, the surviving tablets are due to the happenstance of discovery. They were all thrown away when Akhetaten was abandoned in the early years of Tutankhamun. The various groups of letters dealing with one principal event had become “closed cases.” Some of the correspondents were dead by that time, e.g. Tushratta, king of Mittani. In fact the kingdom of Mittani was no longer in existence. It had been conquered by the Hittites and split between them and the Assyrians.

One can hardly call our corpus an “archive.” What we have are remnants of an archive. Their nature is suggestive of the contents and perhaps organization of that archive. There is no comparison, however, with the vast archive discovered at Ebla, where thousands of texts were found lying in a huge pile just as they had fallen when the storage room was destroyed by fire and the wooden shelves consumed. Therefore, throughout this present edition, our corpus is generally referred to as the “Amarna collection.”

The Near East during the Fourteenth Century BCE

The peace with Mittani that was achieved under Thutmose IV was inherited by his son, Amenhotep III (prenomen: *Nb-m3't-R'* = cuneiform *Nibmuarea/Nimmuria*). This latter pharaoh enjoyed what was in many respects the golden age of Egyptian history, certainly the peak of New Kingdom cultural, social and economic development (Fletcher 2000; O'Connor and Cline 1998). Except for one campaign to Nubia (O'Connor 1998:264–268), this pharaoh found no necessity to wage war. Canaan was in his hands (Weinstein 1998) and Mittani was at peace. He enjoyed diplomatic and commercial relations with Babylon and Mittani (Kitchen 1998), Alashia (on Cyprus), Crete and the Aegean kingdoms, especially Mycenae, and Arzawa in southern Anatolia (Cline 1998). Abundant harvests and a steady flow of gold and other resources from Nubia gave him a senior position in the world economy. During his thirty-eight year reign he expended vast sums on public buildings, including his own mortuary temple. The sun god Re' from Heliopolis was joined with Amon, the secluded god of Karnak, thus signifying some new symbiosis between the chief cults of north and south. Amenhotep III liked to call himself “the dazzling Sun King” (Berman 1998).

That dazzling era came to a dramatic denouement with the accession of the next ruler, Amenhotep IV (prenomen *Nfr-ḥprw-Rʿ* = cuneiform *Naphur[u]Rea*) whose seventeen year reign ended in chaos both at home and in the Levant. The new pharaoh expanded a theme in his father's poetic inscriptions, namely the reference to the Aten, the disc of the sun. A new temple was built (or begun) just east of the Amon temple at Karnak but soon the king felt it necessary to move his entire royal entourage to a new capital. He chose the site now known as Tell el-Amarna (‘Amârnah) about midway between No-Amon and Memphis. The work was begun there by regnal year four and by regnal six or eight, the king and all his people had moved to the new site. During the ensuing years, it was decided to close the temple of Amon in No-Amon as well as other temples throughout Egypt.

Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaten “Beneficial to the Aten” and made the single focus of his capital city (named Akhetaten “Horizon of the Sun Disc”) the worship of the Aten, the disc of the sun. From the banks of the Nile, a view to the eastern ridge that encircled the semicircular plain with the wadi in the center resembled the hieroglyph of the sun rising between two mountains and signifying the horizon.

His senior ministers all seem to have had military rank and one gets the feeling that the entire “Amarna Revolution” in religion was also a move by the military sector against the formal religious/financial sector (which controlled vast economic resources).

Late in his reign, Akhenaten appointed a son, Smenkhkare (prenomen *ḥḥ-ḥprw-Rʿ* = cuneiform *Ḥuʿurea?*), as coregent but both of them seem to have disappeared from the scene together and were succeeded by Tutankhaten who soon changed his name to Tutankhamun (prenomen *Nb-ḥprw-Rʿ* = cuneiform *Nibḥurirea*) and abandoned the capital city of Amarna while moving to restore the traditional religious institutions. His proclamation explains that the country had been reduced to chaos. The judiciary was corrupt and the military failed to achieve any of its objectives.

The events documented for the Levantine littoral during the fourteenth century BCE are closely linked to the events in Egypt. The testimony to those events derives mainly from the collection of cuneiform letters discovered in the ruins of the Amarna site. Over a century of studying those texts has produced a reasonable synthesis of several “case histories” concerning city-states and other elements in Central Syria and in the province of Canaan (the southern Levant) as well as a limited number of international communications between the major political states of the region. Of course, the publication of texts from Hattusa (Boghazköi) has led to a much

more detailed history of the period. Texts from Ugarit, including some sent there from the Hittite rulers, can be coordinated with the information of the Amarna tablets. These will be elucidated and illustrated in the ensuing discussion (cf. Rainey apud Rainey and Notley 2006:77–87).

International Correspondence

Babylon and Egypt

The correspondence between Kadashman-Enlil I and Amenhotep III has to do mainly with negotiations for royal intermarriage. Things did not run so smoothly. The Cassite ruler was anxious to receive the maximum amount of precious gold in exchange for his daughter (EA 4:36–50).

Kadashman-Enlil was followed by Burnaburiash II, who also made overtures to Amenhotep III for the continuance of diplomatic relations (EA 6:8–10).

With the accession of Amenhotep IV, Burnaburiash approached him in order to continue the political and commercial ties (EA 7:37–39). However, the Babylonian king professed ignorance of the great distance involved in the journey from Egypt to Mesopotamia (EA 7:14–32).

The amazing list of items sent from Egypt (EA 14) is lacking its introductory lines, and the name of the sender is not certain; it is obviously a vast caravan of gifts sent to Babylon for a princess who was pledged to the Egyptian harem (Cochavi-Rainey 1999:7–38). The robbing of Babylonian caravans by local officials in Canaan will be discussed below.

Mittani and Egypt

Tushratta approached the king of Egypt, Amenhotep III, as soon as he had gained firm control over his own government (EA 17:1–29). He also mentions that there had been an encounter with Hittite forces and he sent some of the spoil to Amenhotep (EA 17:30–38). The economic aspect of the Egypt-Mittani relationship is underlined by Tushratta:

And in the land of my brother gold is plentiful like dirt. (EA 19:59–61)

Two texts (EA 22, EA 25) are lists of luxury items sent from Mittani to Egypt. Like EA 14 from Egypt, the collections of objects, implements, clothes, etc., in these lists are extraordinary (Cochavi-Rainey 1999:51–162). The proposed royal marriage with a daughter of Tushratta, Tadu-Kheba, is a central theme of the correspondence, including the one letter written in the Hurrian lan-

guage (EA 24). Tushratta's sister, Kelu-Kheba, was already in the Egyptian harem.

With the death of Amenhotep III, Tushratta took steps to assure continuity in the close political and economic connections between Egypt and his country. He wrote to Teye, the wife of Amenhotep III, to confirm the stability of these ties (EA 26). At the same time, he wrote to the new pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, and urged him to ask his mother if he needed to be briefed on the Mittani-Egypt diplomatic relations (EA 29:6–10). In response to a letter with gifts from Amenhotep IV, Tushratta had replied by sending gifts (EA 27). The hieratic colophon at the end of this letter reads, according to new collation and photographs:

[Ye]ar 2, first month of winter, day [9?], when one (pharaoh) was in the southern city, in the castle of *H^c-m-3ht*; copy of the Nahrina letter that the messenger Pirissi and the messenger [Tulubri] brought.

It is thus crystal clear that by the second year of Amenhotep IV, his father was already dead (Fritz 1991:Pl. 7; *contra* Giles 2001:31–32). Thus, there is no evidence whatsoever to support a long co-regency between Amenhotep III and IV (*contra* Giles 1997, 2001).

As discussed above, the death of Tushratta led to the eventual conquest of Mittani and North Syria by Suppiluliuma. Those events are described in the texts from Hattusa.

Alashia

The handful of letters from Alashia reflect the relations with Egypt at approximately the time of transition between Amenhotep III and IV. The name of the Alashian king is not given, nor is the name of the pharaoh. But allusions to the latter's celebrations and inauguration on the throne show that the recipient had just entered into office (cf. Helbing 1979:8–12). The letters probably represent a period of several years during the reign of Amenhotep IV. All of the tablets were made of clay from the southern coast of Cyprus (Goren, Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004:48–73). There are three dialects represented in the letters (Cochavi-Rainey 2003). On one occasion, it looks as though pharaoh may have accused the Alashians of some act of piracy. The ruler of Alashia seems to be putting the blame on the Lukku people (classical Lycians) (EA 38:7–12).

All of the Alashia letters deal with shipments of copper for Egypt. The ruler of Alashia generally asks for silver (not gold!) and other Egyptian products, including manufactured goods. However, one very broken passage in a letter written in the Middle Babylonian dialect (Rainey 1995–1996:111),

indicates that there was a three way channel of trade (EA 36:12–16). The copper went from Alashia to Egypt, perhaps in return for shipments of grain to Alashia from Canaan.

It has been suggested (Helbing 1979:14–16) that the reference to a plague (“the hand of Nergal [= Resheph]”) may indicate that the letter was sent during the very end of Akhenaten’s reign (EA 35:10–15, 30–39). Perhaps the Alashian who had died in Egypt was also a victim to the plague.

Levantine Correspondence

The Amurru Affairs

Nearly seventy letters in the Amarna collection are from Byblos (Gubla; known today by its Arabic name Jubail), situated on the Mediterranean seacoast about 32 km (20 miles) N of Beirut, mainly from its ruler, Rib-Haddi. From the internal evidence the texts may be divided into two groups, the first dating to the reign of Amenhotep III and the second to the time of Amenhotep IV. In both cases, Rib-Haddi is trying to warn the Egyptian king and his ministers of imminent danger to the Egyptian interests and territory. During the course of events reflected in his correspondence, one can trace the changes in Egyptian policy which finally, under Amenhotep IV, resulted in the establishment of the hereditary state of Amurru and its subsequent apostasy to the king of the Hittites, Suppiluliuma.

The first enemy to Egyptian interests was a man of unnamed ancestry or origin, ‘Abdi-Ashirta, bearer of a transparently Semitic name. Both Rib-Haddi and ‘Abdi-Ashirta express concern for the safety of Şumur (Simyra = Tell Kazel north of the Nahr el Kebîr) the headquarters of the Egyptian commissioner in N. Lebanon. Rib-Haddi blames the danger on the ‘*apîru* men (EA 68:9–26).

On the other hand, ‘Abdi-Ashirta claims to be protecting Şumur from a threat by the “kings of the Hurrian army,” undoubtedly the rulers of such states as Niyi and Nughasse in inland Syria (EA 60:7–32). In another, badly broken text, ‘Abdi-Ashirta wrote to Paḥamnata that he had rushed from neighboring ‘Irqatu to rescue the Egyptian base at Şumur from an attack by the “troops of the city of Sheḥlali” (EA 62:19–24 *et passim* also in EA 371). This Sheḥlali has been compared unconvincingly to *t3 š3šw Šá-‘ra-r* from the Amarah temple of Ramesses II (Astour 1979:22–23). This latter appears in the company of other Shâsu territories but the suggestion does not seem likely.

But Rib-Haddi explains to Ḥaya, the vizier of Egypt, that ‘Abdi-Ashirta is supported by the lawless ‘*apîru* men (EA 71:10–31). He also explains to

Aman-appa, his own immediate “handler” in the Egyptian foreign office, how ‘Abdi-Ashirta is undermining the local rulers of Amurru (EA 73:14–33). In subsequent letters, Rib-Haddi recounted how ‘Abdi-Ashirta was advancing on Byblos by taking successive port towns along the northern coast, e.g. Ambi, Baṭrôna and Shigata. After a long period of complaints and urgings, Amenhotep III and his advisors apparently decided to act. Aman-appa had come with a limited auxiliary force but was ineffective. Then Ḥaya was sent with an expeditionary force of regular Egyptian sea borne troops. Yet Ḥaya seemed reluctant to commit them to battle. Thus he is accused by Rib-Haddi of acting against the better interests of Egypt (EA 101:1–10, 18–37; collated 27.8.99; *contra* Liverani 1998). In later flashbacks, Rib-Haddi makes mention of the final result of that expedition (EA 117:21–28; cf. Moran 1992:194 nn. 2–3), viz. that ‘Abdi-Ashirta was taken.

However, something went wrong. The Arvadians, who were supporting Egypt’s adversaries, were not detained in Egypt, and they were instrumental in obtaining ‘Abdi-Ashirta’s property for his sons. Not only that, but they also assisted the sons in seizing coastal towns and in laying siege to the Egyptian governor’s headquarters at Ṣumur. But most startling of all, the military equipment of the Egyptian expeditionary force, including their ships, was turned over to ‘Abdi-Ashirta’s sons! This has the smell of an under-the-table arms deal! No wonder Ḥaya was not anxious to move against ‘Abdi-Ashirta. He was sympathetic to what ‘Abdi-Ashirta sought to do. One is led to wonder if Ḥaya may not have benefited personally from the transfer of the ships and armaments to the sons of ‘Abdi-Ashirta. Henceforth, the sons of ‘Abdi-Ashirta continued the program of their father, whose ultimate fate is not revealed in the texts; cf. (EA 104:6–54). Ullasa was evidently classical Orthosia (at modern day Tripoli), and the other towns mentioned are all north of Byblos, mostly along the coast. ‘Ibirta (Youngblood 1961:249) was a crossing point on the Nahr el-Kebîr.

Pu-Ba’lu’s brother, ‘Aziru (Hess 1993:46), was the senior partner and as such, he is their spokesman. He consistently promises the king and his chief minister, Tutu, that he will supply their every request (EA 156:4–14; EA 158:5–19; cf. Izre’el 1991: II, 22). It would seem that Tutu and some other high ranking Egyptian officials had come to the conclusion that it would serve Egypt’s best interests if ‘Aziru and his brothers could establish a buffer state on the northern border of Canaan. On the one hand, Suppiluliuma’s forces were making their presence felt in N. Syria. On the other hand, an Amurru buffer state would control the plain bisected by the Nahr el-Kebîr and also the pass between the Lebanese mountains and the Jebel Anṣariyeh; that is, the corridor linking the Mediterranean coast with central Syria.

Control of that passageway could enable 'Aziru to acquire vast sums of tariff customs from the lucrative caravan trade. Thus, 'Aziru promised the king and Tutu (and probably other officials) a generous share in the profits.

One senior government official, Yanḥamu, was closer to the situation in the field and he held 'Aziru in great suspicion. Yanḥamu was known as a straight arrow (EA 171:3–13). Perhaps Yanḥamu's influence led to the "invitation" to 'Aziru to visit Egypt. The visit is mentioned retrospectively (EA 161:4–6; Izre'el 1991: II, 35; Singer 1991:151). While he was in Egypt, 'Aziru received a letter from his brother, Ba'luya and his son, Bêti-'ilu apprising him of a Hittite invasion of the land of 'Amqi and of the reported arrival of a large army in central Syria led by Zitana, the brother of Suppiluliuma (EA 170). They also wrote to the king(?) and to Tutu (EA 169:12–34). 'Aziru's family had paid a ransom for his release, and they insist that his presence was needed in Amurru in order to protect Egypt's interests in the face of the Hittite threat. When 'Aziru was released, he immediately began to take steps towards his eventual desertion to Suppiluliuma. By now pharaoh had become suspicious and urged 'Aziru to return (EA 162), but the wily fox kept putting it off on the pretext of the Hittite threat.

Meanwhile, the hapless Rib-Haddi, whose warnings and entreaties were ignored by pharaoh, was forced to abandon his city due to his own brother's perfidy (EA 137:14–26; EA 138:39–50). He sought asylum in Beirut where a new ruler, 'Ammuniri, received him grudgingly (EA 142:15–24). Later he even approached 'Aziru to try to make a pact (EA 162:2–4), but the last he is heard of, he was in Sidon and 'Aziru handed him over to the local rulers who presumably put him to death (EA 162:12–14).

The brother who had ousted Rib-Haddi was Ilirapi' who wrote to pharaoh to complain about the behavior of 'Aziru (EA 139, EA 140). Ousting Rib-Haddi left him exposed to further aggression by 'Aziru. He also complains about 'Aziru's crime after(?) his "visit" to Egypt (EA 140:20–24) when he got back to Amurru (EA 140:24–30).

So 'Aziru was working hand in hand with Aitakkama of Qidshi to gain control of the Lebanese Beq'a. This would probably explain the two letters from Kāmed el-Lôz that were sent by Ilirapi'. Neither of these latter show a proper command of cuneiform orthography. Each one is full of mistakes, graphic and orthographic.

To the senior official, my lord, speak: the message of Ilirap' (*'E-li-ra-pí*), your servant; at the foot of my lord I have fallen. Behold, the men of Byblos(!) (^{URU}GUB[!MAḤ]-*la*; Huehnergard 1996:100) the city of the king, my lord ...
(KL 74:300:1–7; Edzard 1982:131; Na'aman 1988:192–193)

The other text has surfaced in the antiquities market (Huehnergard 1996). It accuses 'Ammunira and some other people (including a certain 'Ammurapi') of taking an oath with 'Aziru. These two letters were probably addressed to Puḥuru, who was the Egyptian commissioner at Kômidi.

In answer to pharaoh's demands that he present himself (again) to the king in Egypt, 'Aziru made the excuse that Suppiluliuma was too close. He ostensibly wanted to protect Egyptian controlled territory (EA 166:21–29). What he really did is spelled out in the preamble to the treaty between him and Suppiluliuma:

'Aziru, the king of [Amurru] abandoned the gate of Egypt and became subservient to the Sun, the ki[ng of Ḥat]ti. And the Sun, the great king, rejoiced [...] that 'Aziru fell at the feet of the Sun. He ('Aziru) came from the gate of Egypt and he fell at the feet of the Sun. I, the Sun, the great king, [received] 'Aziru and I added him to his colleagues ...

(Hittite version, I, 23–26; Singer 1990:146–147)

Henceforth, Amurru was a vassal state of the Hittite empire (with a few periods of defection; cf. Singer 1991). The Egyptian response, the planning of a military campaign, will be discussed below.

The Lebanese Biq'a ('Amqi) and the Damascene (Upe)

In parallel with the subversive activities of Aziru in Amurru, Aitakkama in Qidshu was actively furthering the interests of Suppiluliuma. Originally, Aitakkama had gone forth with his father Shutatarra to confront Suppiluliuma when the latter had made a foray into Syria; they were defeated on the field of battle and finally captured after seeking refuge in a certain Abzu(ya) a central Syrian town (*CTH* 51:40–43 = Weidner 1923:114; Beckman 1996b:39–40), possibly to be located at Ḥoms or just north of it (Klengel 1970:109 n. 79). Evidently, Aitakkama was allowed to return to Qidshu as its ruler. In that capacity, he worked deceitfully to expand his own territory while claiming to be a loyal vassal of Egypt. His actions brought him into conflict with Biryawaza, who had responsibility for the Damascus area (EA 189) and who probably ruled in Damascus. While Aitakkama claims that Biryawaza had burned towns in the land of Taḥsi (the northern Biq'a) and in Ôpe (Upe; the Damascene), Biryawaza makes the opposite claim, viz. that Aitakkama has caused the defection of Qidshi (Qissu) and that he is supported by Arsawuya from Rôḡiṣu, who (using troops from Aziru!) captured a town named Shaddu. On the other hand, a rival named Biridashwa, ruler of 'Ashtartu (Ashtaroth), had incited the town of Yano'am, which has to be located in the Bashan or the Hauran, possibly on one of the branches of the

Yarmuk River (Tell esh-Shihâb? Na'aman 1977; 1988:183), and stirred up other cities in the Bashan area, viz. Buşruna and 'Alunnu.

Against the background of these deeds, it must be noted that at one time, Rib-Haddi reported that 'Aziru son of 'Abdi-Ashirta, with all his brothers, was in Damascus (EA 107:26–28). What 'Aziru was doing there is anybody's guess, but it surely was not supporting Egyptian interests.

Two lengthy epistles (EA 185 and EA 186) were found among the Amarna texts from Mayarzana, the ruler of Ḫasi (Tell Ḫizzîn? Kuschke 1958:99) in the northern Biq'a valley. He complains bitterly about the behavior of a neighboring ruler, an Egyptian named Amanḫatpe, located at Tushultu (unidentified; Kuschke 1958:100). It seems that a band of *'apîru* raiders were attacking and plundering cities in the Biq'a Valley and then taking refuge with Amanḫatpe (EA 185:16–20). Mayarzana repeats the same refrain about several other towns: Gilôni (EA 185:21–27), Magdali (EA 185:28–36; Tell Mejlûn near Baalbek, Kuschke 1958:110), and Ušte (EA 185:37–410). Finally, the *'apîrû* besieged Ḫasi, but Mayarzana's forces beat them off. Some of them took refuge with Amanḫatpe, and charioteers and troops from Mayarzana tried to force Amanḫatpe to hand them over but to no avail. Who these *'apîrû* were is not known. Were they forces sent by Aitakama? Were they forces sent by 'Aziru? They were not tribesmen of any kind.

Identical letters were sent from four local rulers in the Biq'a, viz. Bi'eri of Ḫašabu (EA 174), Andaya of Ḫasi (EA 175; successor of Mayarzana?), 'Abdirēša of Ê'ni-šasi (EA 363; Rainey 1978a:24–25; cf. Rainey 1975) and another sender whose name and venue are broken off from the tablet (EA 176). They all give an identical report. This would appear to be a reference to a foray by the Hittites deep into Egyptian territory assisted by Aitakama of Qidshu.

The excavations at Kâmed el-Lôz, Kômidi of the Amarna texts, in Syria (Badre 1997; Hachmann 1986, 1989) have brought to light several cuneiform texts more or less contemporary with the Amarna collection (Edzard 1970, 1976, 1980, 1982, 1986; Wilhelm 1973, 1982); two other texts have also appeared via the antiquities market (Arnaud 1991; Huehnergard 1996). It is difficult to correlate them with the Amarna texts (cf. Na'aman 1988).

Southern Canaan

There are also groups of texts pertaining to affairs in southern Canaan. Some of these events can be more or less coordinated with the happenings up north, but there are less specific references to a particular king than, for example, in the 'Abdi-Ashirta/'Aziru case histories. One way to attempt a

chronological linkage is through the Egyptian officials mentioned in both north and south (Campbell 1965:90–105). Yanḥamu, a very senior representative of the Egyptian authorities is the main personality in this connection. Nevertheless, some of the main “case histories” can be dated to the end of the reign of Amenḥotep III or the beginning of the reign of Amenḥotep IV.

A key player in the early stages of action in the south was Milkilu, the ruler of Gezer (Gazru). One of the texts sent by the older king is EA 369 and exemplifies the kind of requests made by pharaoh from his vassals. He asked that Milkilu “send women cupbearers (who are) very beautiful, of whom there is no guile in their hearts”:

Now, Amon has placed the Upper Land and the Lower Land, the Sunrise and the Sunset, under the two feet of the king.

The reference to the god Amon (written ^d*A-ma-nu*) assures that the letter was written by Amenḥotep III. A letter to Yidia of Ashkelon, sent near the end of the Amarna period, has a modified formulation without reference to Amon:

And may [you be apprised that] the king is fine (well) I[like the sun]in heaven. [His infantry and] his chariotry are great (or: very [well?]). From the upper land to [the lower land], from the sunrise to the sunset, it is very well.

(EA 370:23–29)

On the other hand, Milkilu protested vociferously against Yanḥamu (EA 270). The commissioner is accused of saying to the vassal, “Give me your wife and your sons or else I will smite (you).” The occasion of this incident and pharaoh’s response are unknown.

Another player in the southern intrigues was the ruler of Gath-padalla (*Gitti-padalla* = Jatt in the Sharon Plain, Rainey 2004; Rainey apud Rainey and Notley 2006:89c–99c), whose name is, in accordance with common practice of the time, written with Sumerian ideograms, ^{1d}IŠKUR.UR.SAG which means “the storm god is a hero (warrior).” This name can hardly be anything else but the Canaanite Ba’lu-meher, which means “Baal is the warrior.” Ba’lu-meher complained bitterly that his supporters were being commandeered by Milkilu (EA 249:4–17). Ba’lu-meher is caught between Milkilu to his south and the latter’s father-in-law, Tagi, in the Carmel area. According to an allusion in a Jerusalem letter (EA 289:18–20), there is a town called Gath-carmel which belongs to Tagi and thus places him somewhere on the plan of Acco. That reference does not necessarily mean that Gath-carmel is the seat of Tagi’s rule but only that Gath-carmel is one of his towns, in fact the formulation seems to suggest that Gath-Carmel is not his main place of residence. Evidently, Tagi is also being credited with furnishing

the personnel for the Egyptian garrison at Beth-shean. Gath-carmel is certainly the *Getta* mentioned by Plinius (*Nat. Hist.* V, xviii, 74; Tsafrir, de Segni and Green 1994:135). It is somewhere near Mt. Carmel (*contra* Goren, Finkelstein and Na'aman 2002:249–250). It need not have been Tagi's main base but only a town that belonged to him. Possibly it could be located at Tell Abū Huwām or Tel Nahal (Tell en-Nahl; personal communication J. Balensi 1999). Tagi himself may have ruled at some other significant town such as Tel Mu'ammer (Tell 'Amr).

Ba'lu-meher also requests a reply from pharaoh but in such a way that neither Milkilu nor another man, Lab'ayu, would hear about it. That could well explain why his letter was written on clay at Beth-shean to be sent via caravan to Acco and from there to Egypt by sea, thus avoiding the trunk route passing Gezer. Milkilu is, therefore, linked with his father-in-law in the Carmel area and with this other person, Lab'ayu. The latter is presumed to be located at Shechem on the basis of another allusion in the Jerusalem letters. The passage deals with the behavior of Milkilu and the sons of Lab'ayu, i.e. after Lab'ayu's demise.

“Or should we do like Lab'ayu,” they are giving the land of Shakmu to the 'apīru men!
(EA 289:21–24; Adamthwaite 1992:4)

The chance find of a clay cylinder from Beth-shean, which bears a cuneiform inscription that is at least a partial excerpt from a letter sent by Tagi to Lab'ayu (Horowitz 1996), provides further evidence for the connection between these two figures who appear in the letter from Ba'lu-meher. This is a valid observation even if the formula on the cylinder is merely a practice text (Rainey 1998:239–242).

Lab'ayu's own texts do not reveal his venue, but they provide some details that would best suit a location at Shechem (Tell el-Balāṭah). Furthermore, the clay of his tablets suggests the central hills of Samaria either near or not far from Shechem (Goren, Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004:262–265). One letter has to do with a local conflict about which Lab'ayu has asked counsel from the king. Hostile elements have “seized the town &and my god, the plunderers of my father” (EA 252; collated 26.8.99). It has been conjectured (Reviv 1966a) that Lab'ayu's town that was taken by his enemies may have been somewhere in the hill country but not at Shechem. The town in question must have been Lab'ayu's patrimony because his house and his family deity (a statue) had been plundered; his enemies were “the plunderers of my father.”

Two other letters from Lab'ayu deal with an undefined accusation against him. It would seem that he had been involved in some business frowned

upon by the Egyptian authorities, probably over stepping his bounds with regard to royal territory, and that he had been severely fined (EA 254:6–29; cf. EA 253:7–24). Milkilu of Gezer may have been an accomplice but seems to have avoided the fine. Perhaps he had turned the state's evidence? One may be led to wonder if Lab'ayu's aggression against towns in the Dothan and Jezreel Valleys (discussed below) may have been the main cause of his falling into disfavor. In any case, the same letter sheds more light on the social conditions prevailing in Lab'ayu's home territory. His son was accused of complicity to act against Egyptian interests by associating with the renegade *ʿApîru* (EA 254:30–37). Lab'ayu's professed ignorance and innocence are not convincing. There were apparently bands of *ʿApîru* in the region around Lab'ayu's venue and his son was deeply involved in their activities. All this makes sense in view of other correspondence discussed below which associates Lab'ayu with the *ʿApîru*. It also makes more sense if he is really located at Shechem. The hill country (biblical: "Hill country of Ephraim") would have been a natural place for such stateless refugees or renegades to seek refuge. The suspect son was turned over to Addaya, who was an officer located at Gaza. On other occasions, he carried out similar misdeeds.

Clear testimony to Lab'ayu's further activities is given by the ruler of Gath-padalla in a flashback after the sons of Lab'ayu were seeking to reactivate their father's program (EA 250:4–14). From the quotation of Lab'ayu's sons, Gath-padalla had been taken by their father. It would seem that at one time, Ba'l-meher had been reduced to subservience to Lab'ayu. The next move by the ruler of Shechem took a northerly direction: "... he attacked Shunem, Burquna and 'Arabu and depopulated two of them ..., and seized Gitti-rimmuni (Gath-rimmon) and cultivated the 'fields' of the king, your lord" (EA 250:40–47). Two of these towns were in the Valley of Dothan and the two others were in the Jezre'el Valley. The latter, at least, were responsible for crown lands (Na'aman 1981, 1988c), and the former may have been also. But they also controlled one branch of the trunk route from the Sharon Plain to Beth-shean and all points east.

It must have been after this move that Megiddo came under pressure from Lab'ayu. The ruler of Megiddo, Biridiya, reported to Pharaoh that Lab'ayu has "set his face to take Megiddo" (EA 244:8–43).

There had been a unit of the regular Egyptian army posted at Megiddo, probably encamped outside the city. For some reason, that unit was called home. Was it for something like a Sed festival of Amenhotep III or perhaps was it to assist in the transition from the older king to the young Amenhotep IV? Whatever the cause, Lab'ayu saw this as an opportunity to make a move

on Megiddo. At about this time, Yashdata, a neighbor of Biridiya, was forced from his home by “the men of Taa[nach],” which led him to seek asylum at Megiddo (EA 248:9–22). This tends to suggest that the men of Taanach had joined Lab’ayu at about the time when the latter had seized those towns in the Dothan and Jezre’el Valleys. There are hints in the texts that Tagi was in collusion with Lab’ayu. The sample protocol for a letter discovered on the cylinder from Beth-shean immediately comes to mind:

ana Lab’aya, bēliya, qibīma umma Tagi ana šarri bēliya išteme šapārka ana iaši...

To Lab’ayu, my lord, speak: the word of Tagi to the king, my lord; I have heard your message to me ... (Horowitz 1996:210)

If the original editor is correct in assuming that in this letter Tagi is calling Lab’ayu by the title “king” (which is not certain; Rainey 1998b:239–240), then it puts a new twist on the Lab’ayu affair.

Ultimately, Pharaoh issued an order to arrest Lab’ayu and to send him alive to Egypt to answer for his actions. The rulers in the region carried out the warrant, but it was Surata, the ruler of Acco, who took a bribe and released the culprit. When Lab’ayu tried to escape back to his home base at Shechem, he was trapped by an ambush and slain. Apparently, his colleagues did not want him to reach Egypt alive (EA 245).

Since Lab’ayu had seized towns in the Jezreel Valley and depopulated them, the harvest had to be tended. Further orders must have gone out to the local rulers to provide forced labor for cultivating the crown lands in that area. Biridiya announced his compliance (EA 365:8–29).

There is no way to ascertain how much time elapsed before the sons of Lab’ayu began to actively initiate a new round of intrigues. The ruler of Gath-padalla reported to pharaoh that he was obedient (EA 257:7–22; *contra* Na’aman 1998:52). Confirmation of Milkilu’s co-operation with the sons of Lab’ayu comes from ‘Abdi-Kheba, ruler of Jerusalem (EA 289:21–24; Moran 1987:518; Campbell 1965:201–202; Adamthwaite 1992; Rainey 1995–1996:119–120).

The outcome of this second phase of the conflict is not documented among the surviving tablets. There are, however, some texts that shed light on intercity tensions and conflicts in the southern part of Canaan. The letters from ‘Abdi-Kheba, ruler of Jerusalem, reflect the dispute over sites controlling the main routes from the coastal plain to the central watershed route in the mountains. That ruler’s name, written partially with Sumerian ideograms, meaning “Servant of Kheba,” must be Semitic even though the theophoric element is the Hurrian goddess corresponding to Pidray in the

Ugaritic god lists (Pardee 2002:14, line C 16). Hurrian personal names are not built on the “Servant of ...” pattern. Letters from his arch-rival, Shuwardata, give the opposing view. This later person was evidently the ruler of Gath (Tell eš-Šâfi = Tel Zafit), which seems to be confirmed by the clay of his tablets (Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004:279–286). Shuwardata claimed that Keilah belonged under his hegemony (EA 280:9–15). The site in question is in the trough valley at the foot of the Judean hills; it suits the biblical data (Josh 15:44).

On the other hand, ‘Abdi-Kheba gives a different view of the conflict, claiming that Keilah was lured away from him (EA 290:5–28; Zimmern 1891:141 n.; Greenberg 1955:151, 162 n. 42; Rainey 1978c:149; *contra* Moran 1992:334 n. 2). Another town in the Jerusalem/Gath controversy was Rubbotu. It may possibly be identified with Hārabbāh (Josh. 15:60; Aharoni 1969:35, 383 nn. 95, 96) but it certainly must be the *Ra-bú-tu* that follows Gezer in the Thutmose III topographical list (No. 105). Whether it should be located in the Shephelah (near modern Latrun) or further up in the hills (near Kiriath-yearim) is an open question. It is a place that ‘Abdi-Kheba hints should belong to Jerusalem’s sphere of influence. Another disputed town was Bît-NINIB, which remains a point of intense controversy. The ideographic writing (URU É.NINIB) indicated “the town of the House of (deity name).” The question is which deity. The ideogram can stand for the Akkadian Ninurta, god of pestilence and war. It hardly seems credible that a place in Canaan would be named after a Mesopotamian deity. So which West Semitic deity was equated with NINIB = Ninurta? In spite of some comparative god lists from Ugarit, none gives the equation for NINIB. Today the best suggestion is that of Albright, elaborated by Kallai and Tadmor (1969), to see here Beth-horon. Little is known about the deity Horon (Ḥôrôn Ḥawrân), but the presence of Upper and Lower Beth-horon in various biblical passages (identified certainly with Bêt ‘ûr el-Fôqâ and Bêt ‘ûr et-Taḥta respectively) in various biblical passages, strengthens the impression that ‘Abdi-Kheba is complaining about the loss of three towns that dominated the main routes from the coastal plain to the hills around Jerusalem. This would make sense out of the entire controversy between Jerusalem and its coastal neighbors: Gezer and Gath. Some of ‘Abdi-Kheba’s letters deal with the difficulties encountered when trying to send caravans to Egypt; one of his caravans was captured as it passed Ayalon, just north of Gezer (EA 287:52–57). That could explain why one of his letters was sent via Beth-shean (Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aman 2004:268). ‘Abdi-Kheba sees his enemies as conspirators who wish to seize lands belonging to the king, i.e. to form a coalition opposed to loyal city rulers like himself. The major towns on the southern coastal plain,

Gezer, Ashkelon and Lachish, are involved (EA 287:14–16). But the leaders are his direct neighbors to the west and to the north, viz. Milkilu and the sons of Lab'ayu (EA 287:29–31). As for Lachish, it must have been related to the sedition reported in the tablet discovered at Tel Ḥasi (Tell el-Ḥesī; EA 333:4–26).

There are no texts in the collection to tell how the case of Milkilu and the sons of Lab'ayu finally turned out. Another ruler of Gezer named Ba'lu-dānu (van Soldt 2002; usually read Ba'lu-shipti;) reports a dispute with an Egyptian official over possession of a newly refurbished fort (EA 292:26–40). He also complained that another official, named Pe'ya, had commandeered some of his men, whom Ba'lu-dānu had assigned to guard the Egyptian storehouse at Joppa (EA 294:16–24).

A third ruler of Gezer is known, probably chronologically the last, viz. Yapa'-Haddi. He complained about a younger brother who has entered into a town named Mōḥazu (EA 298:20–29; Rainey 2003:193*–194*; *contra* Na'aman 1979:679 n. 28 and Moran 1992:340 n. 2).

A Planned Egyptian Campaign

Some seventy texts out of the 349 letters are replies to an order from pharaoh. Some of the letters mention that an envoy from Egypt had delivered the message. Two “office copies” of just such orders have survived. One is to Indaruta the ruler of Achshaph (EA 367:14–17). The concluding declaration (lines 22–25) does not mention the god Amon as did the formula in the days of Amenḥotep III; it uses the formula typical of letters from Amenḥotep IV, though the letters might have been sent out by Tutankhamun (or Semenkhare). The reply from Indaruta is apparently (EA 223). A similar letter was discovered in the British excavations. It was addressed to Yidiya, ruler of Ashkelon. The crucial paragraph stipulating the preparations for the coming of the troops is broken off from the bottom of the obverse and the top of the reverse. But there is a letter from Yidiya that gives an explicit response (EA 324:10–19).

Among the other identifiable towns that replied in the same manner were Yurza (EA 315), Lachish (EA 328) on the southern coastal plain, Megiddo (EA 247), Achshaph (EA 223), Acco (EA 233), Sidon (EA 144) and Beirut (EA 141) along the northern coastal route, Şiri-bashani (EA 201), Shashimi (EA 203), Qanû (EA 204) and Ṭōb (EA 205) in the Bashan, and Damascus/Kōmidi (EA 195), Labana (EA 193) and Rōḡiṣu (EA 191) on the eastern route via Bashan and then up through the Lebanese Biq'a Valley. If all these similar replies do relate to one planned campaign (Schulman 1964a; Reviv

1966b), the preparations have to be dated to a time when Rib-Haddi was still alive. He had sought political asylum with 'Ammunira of Beirut who reports his preparations to pharaoh (EA 142:11–17).

Admittedly, there is no clear documentation to prove that such a campaign was actually carried out. Some have doubted that a unified campaign is reflected in this group of seventy texts; they assume that merely routine activities at various times were involved (Liverani 1971:257–263; Pintore 1972:115–117, 130). However, many chronological indications throughout these letters point to a date late in the period covered by the Amarna texts (Na'aman 1990:398–400). Furthermore, a letter from pharaoh to 'Aziru indicates that the king was contemplating a personal trip to Canaan (EA 162:40–41; Na'aman 1990:405 *contra* Moran 1992:249).

All this points strongly to a single planned campaign and not to sporadic orders concerning local situations. There may even be a witness to Hittite preparations for such an attack. The Hittites seem to have posted forces in Amurru, along the Nahr el-Kebîr, in anticipation of pharaoh's arrival with his army. That may be illustrated by a text discovered at Ugarit, "the General's Letter" (RS 20.33; *Ug.* 5, No. 20), which provides on linguistic grounds a fourteenth century dating (Izre'el and Singer 1990; Singer 1990: 162, 166).

Since this last (month of) Sivan, I keep writing to my lord: "Send it forth! three pairs of chariots, may they each be consigned and may they be posted as a *replacement*(?); may they come straight into Ḥalba as soon as they are ready ..." [It is for] these five 'months' that I have been located in the land of Amurru and I keep watch on them day and night. And thus I am keeping watch over them, their roads and their entrances. I am keeping watch over them: half of my chariots are placed on the coast and half of my chariots are placed at the foot of Mt. Lebanon, while I, myself, am stationed here on the plain ... as far as Ardat [and] my men [re]pulsed them in the middle of the night [and] conducted a fierce onslaught among them, their equipment and their personnel. From the stronghold itself they forced them out and captured one man among them. And I have been interrogating him concerning the king of Egypt. Thus he said: "The king of Egypt is going forth, but he is going forth sanctified. On the coming monthly festival his equipment will start out, and the king will come in the wake of his equipment".

(RS 20.33; *Ug.* V, No. 20; *passim*; cf. Rainey 1971:133, 135)

This particular Ḥalba is not Aleppo but rather a town in northern Lebanon (Schaeffer 1968:678–686); the local village still has the same name. Ardat (today Ardât/Ardeh) is known from the Byblos letters (EA 104:10; et al.). The commander, therefore, was posted in Amurru (mainly the plain south of the Nahr el-Kebîr) and charged with guarding the coastal approach to the pass

leading to central Syria or northwards towards Ugarit. If Izre'el and Singer are correct, then the author of this letter, or his family, saved it in the family archive after he had served the Hittites during the late fourteenth century. The text has often been associated with the battle of Qidshu under Ramses II (e.g. Rainey 1971a; Dietrich 2003; et al.). However, the linguistic arguments of Izre'el suggest a fourteenth century date.

It is hard to place this planned Egyptian campaign chronologically between the later years of Amenhotep IV's reign and the death of Tutankhamun. The style of EA 367 suggests Amenhotep IV as the sender. But the letter from Acco (EA 233) is from Satatna, the son of Surata, so obviously we are dealing with a later stage of the Amarna correspondence. A distinct possibility is that the plans for the campaign were made during the last year of Amenhotep IV's life. But even if this campaign was postponed because of the pharaoh's demise, it seems certain that Egyptian military action was taken in response to the defection of Amurru and Qidshu. The "Deeds of Suppiluliuma" makes mention of an Egyptian attack on Qidshu (Güterboch 1956:93). The response led to the ill-advised Hittite aggression into recognized Egyptian territory and this eventually brought a plague on Suppiluliuma himself and on his people (Goetze 1955:394–396; Güterboch 1960). The discussion of the Qidshu campaign is followed in the next column by the report of the Egyptian pharaoh's death (Güterboch 1956:94). Nevertheless, the time frame is not spelled out.

Recently, new evidence has been presented to suggest that it was Nefertiti after all, who wrote to Suppiluliuma for a prince to be her consort (Miller 2007). There are still many imponderables in the equation and it still may turn out that the author of the letter was 'AnkhesnaAten, wife of Tutankhamun.

Tutankhamun's own "Restoration Stele" decries the previous woeful state of affairs:

The gods were ignoring this land: if an army [was] sent to Djahy to broaden the boundaries of Egypt, no success of theirs came to pass.

(Murnane 1995:213)

Details are lacking as to just how much military action had been attempted prior to the restoration and reconciliation with the Amon priesthood. Obviously there was nothing to boast about and thus no reason to erect monuments commemorating any victories. It is well to remember that the regime of Amenhotep IV was strongly supported by the military (cf. e.g. Schulman 1964, 1978). But the Egyptian forces were now faced with a series of failures. Aziru and Qidshi were not retrieved.

Tutankhamon's untimely death was evidently caused by a kick in the chest by a horse. This has been indicated by the new CT examination of his corpse.

Perhaps, when Ay and the other generals of the Atenist regime came face to face with this military reality, they realized that they could not field an aggressive army unless they had a stable society and, most important of all, a dynamic economy behind them. The chaos within Egypt that had resulted from the Atenist "revolution" could no longer be tolerated. Was it the military failures abroad that led senior officials such as Ay to press for a reconciliation with the priesthoods of Amon and the other deities?

The final years of the fourteenth century BCE saw Egypt striving to overcome the many internal stresses caused by the abortive reign of Amenhotep IV. Tutankhamun's aged successor, the general and senior minister, Ay, was in turn followed by a senior military officer related to the royal family only by marriage, Horemheb. He devoted most of the years of his reign to correcting the social and economic evils engendered by the Atenist experiment. Only with the establishment of Dynasty XIX would Egypt begin to reassert its claim to hegemony in the southern Levant.

Historical aspects of the various texts will receive some treatment in the Collation Notes. But this is primarily a linguistic and philological edition, and it is only hoped that it will be useful to the historians.

The Problem of the 'Apîrû

During the very first decade of Amarna studies, scholars took note of a social or ethnic element mentioned in the Jerusalem letters the name of which was spelled *ḥa-bi-ru* (EA 286:56; EA 288:38) or *ḥa-bi-ri* (EA 286:19; *et al.*). It was soon identified with the *'ibrîm* "Hebrews" (Zimmern 1891:137–138), and H. Winckler had notified the Kaiser that at last the ancient Hebrews were documented in ancient cuneiform texts! That view still prevails among people who do not know the real details of the evidence.

Two comprehensive works, the doctoral dissertation of Greenberg (1955) and the papers from an Assyriological conference edited by Bottéro (1954), reviewed all the evidence known up to the middle of the twentieth century. In these two works, all the documentation from Nuzi beyond the Tigris, to Anatolia, Northern Syria, Canaan (the southern Levantine coast of the Eastern Mediterranean) and Egypt was cited and thoroughly discussed. From all that material, any objective observer would have seen that there is nothing in the nature of the *'apîrû* that would suggest a connection with the

ancient *ʿibrîm* (*ʿibrîyîm*). But if anyone thought that all this high level scholarly research would finally settle the matter, they were mistaken. The subsequent decades saw a number of attempts to reinterpret the material or to strengthen one of the older views. The most influential of these was the theory propounded by Mendenhall (1962, 1973) to the effect that the *ʿapîru* were former Canaanite peasants who had fled from the oppression of their Canaanite overlords in order to find freedom in the mountains of Canaan. This thesis was expounded further by Gottwald (1979). Their “revolting peasant theory” (Rainey 1987c; 1987d; 1991:60; 1995) held sway in non-conservative biblical studies for over twenty years. It was also adopted by archaeologists who misinterpreted the material evidence of the mountain sites that sprang up in the early twelfth century BCE (Rainey 2007).

Linguistic Background

Rivers of ink have been spilt on the subject of the origin and meaning of the term *ʿapîru*. It is not our intention to review the exhausting trail of theories and counter theories (cf. Loretz 1984). Just a few pieces of evidence will be discussed here, those which are decisive in settling the issues of the root, form and semantics of *ʿapîru*. The equation discovered in texts from Ugarit established beyond all doubt that the ubiquitous Sumerian logograms LÚ.SA.GAZ.(MEŠ), LÚ.GAZ.(MEŠ), etc. really did stand for the West Semitic *ʿapîru*. Administrative texts from Ugarit in the Akkadian language had the (faulty) logogram LÚ.SAG.GAZ.MEŠ and obvious translations of the same administrative entries in the Ugaritic script had *ʿprm* (Virolleaud 1940a; 1940b). This meant that the syllabic spellings such as LÚ.MEŠ *ḥa-pî-ru* (EA 286:56), must be normalized with *ʿayin* and *pe* with the resulting **ʿapîru*; the plural at Ugarit was undoubtedly **ʿapîrûma*. This equation is also confirmed by the Egyptian references to *ʿpr* people, e.g. in the lists of prisoners brought back by Amenhotep II. The Egyptian examples are not to be confused with the Egyptian word *ʿprw*, which means “crew” of sailors or workmen, from the root *ʿpr* “to equip”; the orthographies are entirely different. A point not stressed in the literature is that the preservation of both internal vowels should be an indication that one or the other vowel is long and/or that the middle radical is geminated. The second consonant is never written double, so that possibility is hardly likely. One never finds **ʿapru*. This can only mean that one of the vowels is long, either *ʿapîru* or *ʿapîru*. The most likely of the two is certainly *ʿapîru* “dirty, dusty” (Borger 1958).

There is no validity to the assumption that the original was **apir* from the stative form with no long vowels (Mendenhall 1973:141; Weippert 1971:82). In short, the plethora of attempts to find some way to relate *‘apîru* to the gentilic *‘ibrî* are all nothing but wishful thinking (e.g. Na‘aman 1986). The two terms never were related (Rainey 1987), and it will be seen that the social status and the activities of the *‘apîrû* bear no valid resemblance to the ancient Hebrews. Furthermore, scholars have rightly ignored Cazelles’ attempt to relate Hebrew to the Akkadian term *ubru*, an Assyrian term (from *wabāru*) also attested at Ugarit (Cazelles 1958; 1973:20). In fact, Cazelles’ summary of the problem (Cazelles 1973) is a classic example of unbridled imagination totally lacking in linguistic or semantic acumen.

Social Background

As is well known, the *‘apîru* (West Semitic term) and its ideographic Sumerian reflex, SA.GAZ (sometimes just GAZ in the Amarna texts), are documented through 800 years of history, from Ur III down to the 20th Egyptian dynasty. They are never mentioned as pastoralists, and the preserved personal names of people bearing this designation are from no single linguistic group. There are Semites, Hurrians and others. They never belong to tribes. They may worship various deities. Geographically they are known from east of the Tigris, to Anatolia, to Egypt, in short, over the entire Ancient Near East. There is absolutely nothing to suggest an equation with the biblical Hebrews! On the other hand, they are also not to be equated with “revolting peasants” throwing off the yoke of their feudal Canaanite overlords. The *‘apîru* men are people who have behaved disloyally towards pharaoh. In the correspondence of ‘Abdi-Kheba of Jerusalem and the letters from his opponents, *‘apîru* serves as a pejorative designating the opposing parties, who are accused of acting against the interests of pharaoh. Neither do the documented *‘apîru* want to escape to the mountains in order to “retribalize.” It is true that they are often found seeking refuge in mountainous areas (Rowton 1965), e.g. those political refugees at Ammia who rallied around Idrimi, himself a runaway royal charioteer, the example *par excellence* of an *‘apîru* (Rainey apud Rainey and Notley 2006:62). More *‘apîru* men are found a century later in the same general area where ‘Abdi-Ashirta recruited them to become his militia; the Rib-Haddi correspondence makes it clear that many of the *‘apîru* men were qualified charioteers (like Idrimi). They continued to support his son, ‘Aziru and shared in the founding of the dynastic feudal state of Amurru. More *‘apîru* show up in the hill country around

Shechem; Lab'ayu used them to carry out his aggressions against towns in the Dothan and Jezreel Valleys. As a reward, he was giving his 'apîru men lands and estates (among the rich agricultural lands in the Jezreel Valley which were actually a pharaonic possession). Instead of seeking to "retrib- alize," quite the contrary, they sought to find a place in the good old Late Bronze feudal social structure. Usually their best option, as males with military training, was to become mercenaries and as such they appear in the personnel lists of Alalakh and Ugarit. Sometimes they signed on with a charismatic adventurer such as Lab'ayu of Shechem or 'Abdi-Ashirta of Amurru or Idrimi of Alalakh. But they were also hired by the Egyptian authorities. They formed part of the Egyptian "foreign legion." A local ruler who had responsibilities as a district overseer for pharaoh in the Dam- ascus region, had such troops under his command (EA 195:24–32; Rainey 1995:490). Biryawaza, the author of that letter, had hired mercenaries, who surely were outcasts from the urban city-state society, alongside a unit of nomadic warriors, the *Sutû*. Incidentally, this shows that nomadic merce- naries were never confused with urbanized 'apîru men (*contra* Na'aman 1982). The Egyptian government also recruited 'apîru mercenaries for ser- vice in the foreign legion at bases in Cush (Sudan). The following letter from Kâmed el-Lôz deals with just such a situation—Pharaoh to the ruler of Dam- ascus:

šanîtam šûbilanni awîli 'apîri (SA.GAZ.ZA) Aburra (= Amurra) ša ašpurakku elišunu ummā anandinšunûti ina ālāni Kāša ana ašābi ina libbišu kîmū ša aḥtabatšunûti

Furthermore, send me the 'apîru men of Amurru(!) concerning which I wrote to you, saying "I will cause them to dwell in the towns of Cush instead of those whom I carried off". (KL 69:277:5–11; Cochavi-Rainey 1988:42*–43* [Hebrew]; *contrast* Edzard 1970:55–60)

Cushite mercenaries, in turn, were often stationed in Canaan (cf. EA 287:33–37).

In this light one must understand the references to 'apîru in Egypt, e.g.

imy dī ity n3 n rmt mš' ḥn' n3 'prw

Cause to be given the grain of the army personnel with the 'apîrû.
(Pap. Leiden 349:14–15; Greenberg 1955:56–57)

These 'apîru men are getting rations alongside troops of the regular army. Both groups are engaged in some public construction project (but not the building of Per-Ramesses or Per-Atum!). The records indicate that army personnel were being employed and alongside them, mercenary personnel

of the “foreign legion” were also serving in these tasks. There is no reason whatever to equate such *ʿapîru* with the Hebrews in Egypt, neither socially, historically nor especially linguistically!