TWO NOTES ON THE GEZER-AMARNA TABLETS

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1. THE BA ‘LU-ŠIPȚI LETTERS

These letters (EA 292–295) and their author(s) have been a subject of speculation and debate from the beginning of research on the Amarna archive. By whom were they sent? Were all of them dispatched by the same person? If not, did they all originate in Gezer? Perhaps some of them came from a neighbouring city? Or from an entirely different place?

The least problematic is the last letter mentioned, i.e., EA 295. Moran (1975:153–155) did not even refer to this letter in his discussion of the problem, and it is unknown whether or not he concurred with the general consensus that EA 295 is connected to EA 292–4. *Qui tacet consentire videtur!* At any rate, this particular letter must be excluded from the Ba ‘lu-Šipti group (as well as from the entire Gezer corpus), since its language, script and formulae are incompatible with those found in letters from southern Canaan. Moreover, it has now been convincingly demonstrated by Na’aman (1975:73–76) that EA 295 was sent by a northern ruler, presumably the predecessor of Abimilku of Tyre.

EA 293 poses a different type of problem. It is accepted by all scholars (including those who believe that EA 294 and EA 292 were sent by different persons; see below), that EA 293 and EA 292 were sent by one and the same ruler.1 However, we must point out the following reservations:

(1) If Knudtzon’s reading of line 20 is correct,2 we must conclude that the 1 sg. *yqtl* vowel which is used here is *a*-, versus the usual *i*; the verb *šemù* in this form (*ašteme*) is to be found only in Tyre.

(2) If Knudtzon’s rendering of the verbs of the last lines is correct, i.e. [*ji-ka-āš*] ša-ād and [*ju-]*-kaš-ši-id (ll. 19, 22, respectively), then these forms seem excessively “Ak-kadianized” for the Gezer scribes, in general, and for the scribe who wrote EA 292, in particular. Similar forms (but without the *y*-morpheme!) are found in the non-Canaanite north and in the Tyre area, but are not common in southern Canaan.

(3) Despite the fact that I did not have the opportunity to collate these tablets personally, we may observe in the available facsimiles several obvious palaeographic differences between EA 292 and EA 293; cf. e.g., the signs for *LUGAL, KA, EN* and Ù.

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1 See e.g., most recently Na’aman (1975:76), who concludes that “we have been left with only two certain letters, EA 292–293, for the description of the Gezer kingdom at the time of Ba’lu-Šipti.” See also Moran (1975:153–155), who argues that both the rulers and scribes of the three letters EA 292–294 were the same persons (see below).

2 Knudtzon read this line as: ...[t]*a [H]*[?]*aš(?)-[t]*[i]-[m][t]. Moran, who recently collated this tablet, wrote to me (a personal letter dated December 9, 1975): “aš is certain, *ti* virtually so, *mi* less so, though it is hard to see what else it might be... *ši* probable, *PI* possible; Abel’s clear *ta* was not clear to me, and *TU* or *LI* not excluded.”
(4) There are some (albeit minor) differences in the opening formula and other formulae with the body of the letter; cf. e.g., 2 G.I.R.MEŠ-ka (EA 292:4) as against G.I.R.MEŠ-ka (EA 293:4); ú-ṣur-mi aš-ri (EA 293:10–11) as against ú-ṣur URU.DIDLI. HĀ··(EA 292:21); etc. Cf. also the division of the formulae into lines in the two letters.

(5) To these we should add Knudtzon's hesitations (1915:882 nn. b, c). The first sign of the sender's name is apparently not IM, especially if we note that the DINGIR-sign is missing.

Summing up, we believe that EA 293 was not sent from Gezer, although the evidence is not conclusive.

When we consider the two remaining letters, the problem of EA 294 arises. From a purely linguistical point of view — and with regard to the syllabary as well — the two letters are identical. However, we hope to prove herein that EA 292 and EA 294 were not sent by the same ruler, perhaps not even written by the same scribe, although they may have been composed by two scribes of the same school, a teacher and his student, or the like.

Our arguments are as follows:

(1) There are (as in the case of EA 293) several palaeographic divergences between the two letters. Two examples may suffice:

\[\text{LUGAL} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EA 292}
\end{array}
\end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EA 294}
\end{array}
\end{array}\]

\[\text{ṣur} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EA 292}
\end{array}
\end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{EA 294}
\end{array}
\end{array}\]

(2) There are some minor differences in style and in the composition of the formulae in the body of the letter, as well as in the opening lines, e.g. the use of ú-ṣur-mi (EA 292:20) as against ši-mē-mi (EA 294:8) in the same context; other examples may be easily traced upon comparing the two letters.

3 Although the resemblance is strong (cf. Moran 1975:153–155), similarity of formulae should not be the only criterion in favour of "unification" of scribes, especially when there are no extraordinary linguistic or stylistic features involved (as in the case of EA 295). EA 294 is more problematic from this point of view; see below.

4 E.g. the unique form il₂-qē-št[i-u-mu], which Moran (1975:154) takes as conclusive evidence that the same scribe wrote both letters. There is no doubt that his argument is strong, as far as this particular form is concerned. However, the writing with an il₂-sign for the preterite of leqû is of no great significance. Spellings with il₂ are to be found in forms such as ti-il₂-qul (EA 281:18), ti-il₂⁻¹qē₁ (EA 94:11) etc., in which the base /ilq/ is the same, and the differences are in the preformatives or the modi. As for the form and its meaning, we hope to discuss the problem at length elsewhere in the near future. Other spellings with il₂-signs, such as yi-il₂-ma-ad (EA:passim) and many others, are not particularly rare and are to be found also in our letters; in other words, an il₂ is not at all exceptional.

5 The signs of EA 292 are taken from Scheil's copy, which I hope may be trusted in these outstanding cases. The autographs from EA 294 are based upon a new (1975) photograph of the tablet (see Pl. 18:5), and after a thorough examination of a plaster cast (by courtesy of Prof. P. Artzi and Dr. J. Klein of Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan). Moran (1975:154) refers merely to Knudtzon's assertion regarding the similarity of scripts.

6 Despite the similarity (Moran 1975:153–154).
Moreover, there is one major difference between *EA* 292 and *EA* 294: while the opening formula is quite commonplace in *EA* 294, the sender of *EA* 292 (i.e. the ruler of Gezer) saw fit to write to the king in a most poetic and obsequious style; the historical implications of this fact are worthy of contemplation.

(3) The name of the official *Pi'iya* (the appearance of this name in both letters being one of the main reasons for considering *EA* 294 and *EA* 292 to have been written by the same person) is spelled *pi-e-ia* in *EA* 292 (ll. 42, 51), whereas in *EA* 294 (ll. 16, 24, 30) it is spelled *pi-i-ia*.

(4) The main argument for the identification of the sender of *EA* 294 with that of *EA* 292 was the similarity of their contents. But, in our opinion, this is precisely what makes this identification questionable: Why should two similar letters be sent by the same person at the same time? Two letters with an almost identical response to the king’s orders, as well as a similar complaint against the same official, i.e. *Pi'iya*?

One of Moran’s arguments for considering the scribes (and hence the rulers) as the same person was the use of the same terms in complaining against *Pi'iya* (Moran 1975:154). We have already noted that there are some divergencies in the language of the letters (above, and n. 4), and we shall revert to this problem hereunder.

However, first we must deal with the central question, i.e. the *name* of the sender of *EA* 294.

Knudtzon suggested \([a]d[-d]a-[da-]ni\), equating this name with a probable reading of the Sumerogram *DINGIR.IM.DI.KU₅*, which constitutes the name of the sender of *EA* 292, a reading which Moran has favoured again recently (1975). Albright originally (apud Campbell 1964:101–102 n. 73) wanted to dissociate these two letters, suggesting the reading *Ba ‘lu-Šipti* for the Sumerogram *DINGIR.IM.DI.KU₅*, (a reading which we accept for this ruler of Gezer) without however, being able to offer any proposal for the name of the sender of *EA* 294. Some years later (1966:9 n. 5), upon reconsideration, he assumed that “the illegible name of the sender of *EA* 294 is a form of *Ba ‘lu-shipti*.”

Since it is difficult to accept the reading *Addadani* for the name of a southern ruler, two new suggestions for the reading of the name in *EA* 294 (l. 3) have recently been proposed: *zi-im₃-red₃-[a],* by Rainey and Lambert (apud Rainey 1974:311), and *si-š-ba-aly-li* or *si₃₀-is-ba-aly-li* by Na’aman (1975:53). We cannot accept either of these interpretations, for neither agrees with the remnants of the signs on the tablet.

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7 For an analysis of the period, see Na’aman (1975:76) and his conclusions (ibid.:206, 214, 228).
8 For this reading, based upon the spellings of the name Šipti-Ša’lu in the Amarna letters, see Kallai and Tadmor 1969:144 n. 56. Cf. also Gröndahl 1967:32–33, par. 61 and p. 200 (for *b’lmtp*).
Neverethless, we do not exclude the possibility of the reading *Ba’lu-Šapatu* “Ba’al judged” or the like.
9 Moran’s examples (1975:155) are of northern origin.
Tel Aviv 4 (1977)

After close examination of a plaster cast and a new photograph of the tablet (as well as considering the old photograph), we may now offer our own suggestion of the disputed name.

Cuneiform traces on tablet:

![Cuneiform traces on tablet](image)

Our reconstruction of above:

![Reconstruction of cuneiform traces](image)

Our suggested reading:

\[
\text{ṣi} \quad [\text{id}] \quad [\text{q}] \quad \text{i} \quad \text{li}
\]

The last sign (\(NI\)) is clear and unambiguous, comparable to the \(ni\)-sign in line 30. The reading \(li\) is not found on the Gezer tablets, but certainly does appear — and not only with the usual spellings of \(be-li\) or \(i-li\) etc. — in other letters originating in southern Canaan, e.g. \(EA\) 249: cf. the spelling \(mi-il-ki-li\) on line 6 and also \(li-de\) on line 5. There is no other \(li\)-syllable in \(EA\) 294.

The first sign is doubtlessly \(ṣi\). Cf. also Knudtzon 1915:884 n. a; Moran 1975:155.

The second sign might, of course, be either \(DA\) (\(\text{ṣ} \text{d} \text{t} \text{n} \text{m}\)) or \(ID\), but the traces seem to indicate an \(ID\)-sign, since apparently there was not another vertical wedge in the centre. Also, comparison with the other two \(DA\)-signs of the tablet (l. 33, 35) and with the \(it\)-sign (l. 10) points towards the identification of this sign with \(id\), rather than with \(da\).

In any case, there is no doubt that the third sign is not identical with the second: even a quick glance at the photograph (Pl. 18:5) will confirm this. Furthermore, it is obviously not \(da\); neither can it be separated into two signs. The remnants of this sign reveal a deep rectangular depression on the left, while on its right there is a less deep depression, bounded by two horizontal grooves on its top and bottom and by a clear vertical wedge on its right. By comparison with the \(KI\)-sign on line 2 (\(qi\)), and especially on line 29, we could accept our third sign as identical; the left-hand, deeper depression being probably only a later blemish in the tablet.\(^{11}\)

There is no need, of course, to justify the possibility of such a name; it is sufficient to recall the Hebrew king \(ṣūdqyahu\), and to refer to the works dealing with PNs (Benz 1972:398–399; Gröndahl 1967:187–188 [where we shall find also \(ṣdqll\), literally] ; Huffmon 1965:256–257).\(^{10}\)

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\(^{10}\) See n. 5 above. It is amazing — and rather distressing — to keep track of the deterioration of the tablet over the years. In the 1892 photograph (Benzold and Budge 1892:Pl. 1), one can still identify the two small vertical wedges of the \(NI\)-sign (the last sign in the name), which had been impressed more than 3000 years ago. On the plaster cast, made only several decades afterwards, only one of the wedges is (barely) visible, while in the new photograph (of excellent quality), neither remains, and the two horizontal (big!) wedges are also beginning to disappear.

\(^{11}\) Another possibility which I have rejected was the reading \(ṣi-id-qà-di\) (i.e. seeing the third sign as \(KA\)), since the sign \(QA\) is very common in the Amarna letters and also appears in our tablet (l. 13).
After establishing the fact that it is unlikely that the senders of EA 292 and EA 294 were the same person, we must still explain the following: How is it that the two letters are so alike in contents and share so many similar linguistic and stylistic features?

Moran (1975:155 n. 1) was correct in stating that “a town of a size of Gezer would certainly have its own scribe.” However, there is no reason that such a scribe should not have been hired out to a neighbouring ruler. Such a ruler (presumably of lower rank than the ruler of Gezer) might have utilized the services of the Gezerian scribe while visiting the “big city”. However, in the light of the differences — albeit minor — between these letters described above, we would prefer to assume that these two letters were written by two different scribes, although possibly of the same scribal school.12

We thus remain with only one letter (EA 292) undisputedly sent by Ba’lu-Šiptu, last ruler of Gezer during the Amarna period.


EA 299 was written by Yapahu13 of Gezer, who called for help from the Pharaoh in fear of the ‘Apiru. After the customary opening formula and some words proclaiming his obedience, he writes:

(15) u li-im-lil-ik LUGAL EN-ia
(16) DINGIR.UTU ša īs-tu AN ša₁₀-mi
(17) a-na KUR.KI-šu a-nu-ma
(18) da-an-nu LÚ.SA.GAZ.MEŠ
(19) UGU-nu u <yu->uš-ši-ra
(20) qa-at-šu LUGAL EN-ia
(21) [i] t-ti-ia u lu-ù
(22) yi-it-ra-nu(?)/ni(?) EN-ia
(23) īš-tu qa-at
(24) LÚ.SA.GAZ.MEŠ la-a
(25) tu-ga-mi-ru-ru
(26) LÚ.SA.GAZ.MEŠ-tu₄

and may the king, my lord, the Sun who is from Heaven, have concern for his land. Now, the ‘Apiru are prevailing over us, and may the king, my lord, send his hand to me, and may my lord take us(?)/me(?) away from the hand of the ‘Apiru, so that14 will not destroy us.

12 A tentative solution may be a scene such as the following: two Canaanite rulers are holding some sort of a council, dealing with various matters, while also raising complaints against a certain corrupt official, Pi’iya. Previously, these two neighbouring rulers received the same (or similar) letter(s) from the Pharaoh giving orders of some kind, perhaps, as suggested by Na’amân (see n. 11 above), orders to prepare for a forthcoming Egyptian military expedition to Canaan. After a decision is made by the rulers, the scribe(s) is(are) set to writing letters to the king, replying first to his demands and afterwards complaining against Pi’iya, each ruler putting forth his special disputation.

We have written “scribe(s)”, with the plural morpheme in brackets, our reasoning in favour of two scribes having been expounded above. To complete the imaginary scene described: the two scribes write their letters simultaneously — a teacher with his student, a skilled scribe with his apprentice, or even a father and son (see, e.g. Rainey, Enc. Miqr. V:1010 ff.; Rainey 1968). Such an explanation, though somewhat daring, might explain the recurrence of the ilqe-form (above, n. 4).

13 For the name, see Rainey 1974:311 and bibliography.
This paragraph has several linguistic and spelling peculiarities, for example, the spelling of \( \text{L\U{.}SA.GAZ.MEŠ-tu_4} \) (l. 26), which is incongruously ended with a \( \text{tu}_4 \)-sign.

The plural morpheme \( \text{-atu} \) is not found in the Gezer letters. Therefore — among other reasons not within the scope of this paper — it is difficult to accept a reading such as \(*\text{apirttu} \) for this much-debated spelling.\(^{15}\)

We shall now attempt to justify our reconstruction of the \( \text{yu} \)-sign in line 19. \textit{Prima facie} this improvement seems unnecessary, as \( \text{uš-ši-ra} \) is a good imperative of \( \text{wuššuru} \), very common in the Amarna correspondence. We could, indeed, have seen an imperative in this form if we would have taken the context that follows (\( \text{qa-at-šu} \) etc.) as a glide into 3rd person speech in an honourific style for addressing the king. However, it seems more logical to consider this a scribal error and to complete the \( \text{yu} \)-sign, since it is within the idiom itself (\( \text{qata wuššuru} \)) that we find a genitive suffix of the 3rd person.\(^{16}\)

From a syntactical point of view, we have here an idiom replacing a regular verb; the word order in this phrase in therefore not in any way exceptional: verb (=idiom) + subject (the king) + complement (\( \text{it-ti-ia} \)). Any other conception of this phrase would force the king into the narrow limits of an addressing-parenthesis, which would make it somewhat awkward. The strange \\textit{Glossenkeil} at the beginning of line 20 is also helpful: it was designed to advise the reader that the second word of the idiom was written on a new line merely because the scribe did not have enough space for it no the preceding line, that is, it has the function of a hyphen.\(^{17}\)

The idiom is presumably a translation of a Canaanite idiom.\(^{18}\)

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14 Thus, and not as an exclamatory sentence, as it was taken by Albright for \textit{EA} 274:13 ff. (1943:17 and n. 60).
15 The western Semitic plural form of this word is represented by Ugaritic \textit{'prm}. The Jerusalem Amarna letters utilized the morpheme \( \text{-u} \) (+\( \text{t} \)), most likely as a collective noun, in the singular: see the use of a singular verb in \textit{EA} 286:56: \( \text{L\U{.}MEŠ.\H{A}-BI-ru ḫa-bat ...} \) (note that the verb is not placed at the beginning of the sentence!); and cf. in the singular \( \text{L\U{.}ḤA-BI-ri} \) (\textit{EA} 285:19).
16 Although \( \text{wuššuru} \)-forms occur frequently in the Amarna correspondence, there is not a single instance of a 3 sg. \textit{yqtl} (pr. fut.) form without the \textit{PI}-sign.
17 Cf. Knudtzon 1915:894 n. c. For parallels see, e.g. Berkooz 1937:21. An exhaustive study of the \textit{Glossenkeil} phenomenon is to be found in Artzi 1963. Possibly the wedge was inverted in order to distinguish it from the regular uses of the \textit{Glossenkeil}, i.e. to call attention to a Canaanite word, etc.
18 For the Akkadian, see \textit{AHw}:990a. For the Hebrew, cf. Gesenius-Buhl (1915:831); Rubenstein 1974:23–25, particularly n. 16, also, compare with p. 25. It should be noted that Hebrew has differentiated between \( \text{šilah} \) (G) and \( \text{šilah} \) (D), while Akkadian has \( \text{wuššuru} \) only in the D stem. Note also the Canaanite meaning of \( \text{-it-ti-ia} \) "to me". For this meaning of \( \text{itti} \) in the Amarna letters, see Albright and Moran 1948:245 n. 9 and Moran 1950:19. (Cf. already Knudtzon 1915:1440). This meaning is to be compared with Ugaritic \textit{'m} (\textit{UT} 19.1863), Phoenician \textit{'r} (as against the accusative particle \textit{'yt}; see Harris 1936:83 ff.). There are also some occurrences of such an \textit{'t} in Hebrew (see \textit{Izr'el} 1977).
Another problem is presented by verb *yi-it-ra-nu/ni* (l. 22). Apart from the ambiguity in the reading of the last sign, 19 most scholars are puzzled by the form of the verb itself. Knudtzon did not translate the verb at all, and Ebeling did not include it in the glossary. Hitherto, only one suggestion has been offered concerning this verb: to render it as a *yqtl* of *eṭeru* (Landsberger *apud* Bottéro 1954:110 n. 148), the synonym of *ekemu* “tosave”, “to take away”, 20 a well known verb in the Amarna tablets (cf. also Artzi 1968:167). However, we would expect a *yqtl* form of *eṭeru* to be a form such as *yi-ṭi-ir, yi-ṭi-ra*, or the like.

We would suggest rendering this form as a *yqtl* of *tarū* “to take away”, “to go and get”, etc., which although not a common verb in the Akkadian literature, is already found in the Old Akkadian dialect (Gelb 1957:299 s.v.; see also von Soden 1969:par. 103d; Bezold 1926:s.v.).

**Postscript**

After this paper was already in press I received a letter from my colleague Dr. Nadav Na’aman, who collated *EA* 294:3 on January 1978. He now proposes the reading *ši-li-ib-ni* for the name of the sender of *EA* 294, thus he confirms the view that *EA* 294 and *EA* 292 were not sent by one and the same ruler. However, I do not see how a good Akkadian name could penetrate into the onomastics of southern Canaan.

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19 See Knudtzon 1915:894–895 n. 9 and autograph No. 163 on p. 1007, which could reflect a *nu*-sign impressed over another sign (*ni??*). Prof. A. Shaffer, who recently (August 1975) collated this text, discerned here a *ni*-sign impressed over an erasure, (I thank Dr. Na’aman for this information). Compare this view with Knudtzon’s observation (*loc. cit.)*: “Es ist aber auch kaum *aš . . . und noch weniger ni, über etwas anderes geschrieben.”

20 *CAD* (E:69a) assigns the *EA* *ekemu* references to *naqāmu*, and Mendenhall (*1973:77 ff.*) concurs. Na’aman (*1975:65–66*) does not accept Mendenhall’s view, insisting that the form is derived (as listed in *AHw*;194) from *ekemu*. In the Amarna tablets we find *ekemu* forms in two contexts: (1) When *māt-* is the accusative object (e.g. *EA* 271:13); in such case, the sense is similar to one of those of *ekemu* in Akkadian: “to capture a piece of land (in war, etc.)”, “to occupy an area”, etc. (*CAD* E:65 f.); (2) When the accusative object is a personal pronoun suffixed to the verb (e.g. *EA* 250:20). In the second case, we may consider the Amarna uses of *ekemu* a semantic development, parallel to the development of the verb *eṭeru*. In Akkadian lexical texts *ekemu* appears side by side with *eṭeru*, as well as with *īzubu*! (*CAD* E:401, 403; cf. *AHw*;264 and the gloss in *EA* 282:14). There is thus no need to consider *yi-ki-im* etc. as a form of any other verb than *ekemu*. Furthermore, *naqāmu* does not exist in pure Akkadian — *AHw* does not even list such an entry!
REFERENCES

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1. The lugged axe.

2. The Egyptian "flower-pot".

3. A crucible from Area C.

4. Clay model of a bed from Area G.

EXCAVATIONS AT TEL MASOS

5. EA 294 Obv. (By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

GEZER-AMARNA TABLETS