

DOI: 10.31857/S032103910002910-4

A FRAGMENT OF AN AKKADIAN LETTER FROM BOĞAZKÖY WITH A REFERENCE TO ‘MY LADY’ (KBo 14.54)

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The article contains an edition of a fragment of an Akkadian letter found at Hattusa (Boğazköy). The tablet belongs to the vassal correspondence of the Hittite empire and probably dates back to the 13th century BCE. A possible attribution of the letter to the Amurru file of the Hittite royal archives is considered.

Keywords: Hittite kingdom, Boğazköy archives, Büyükkale, letters, Akkadian

ФРАГМЕНТ АККАДСКОГО ПИСЬМА ИЗ БОГАЗКЁЯ С УПОМИНАНИЕМ «МОЕЙ ГОСПОЖИ» (KBo 14.54)

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Статья посвящена изданию фрагмента аккадского письма, найденного при раскопках Хаттусы (Богазкёя). Письмо относится к вассальной корреспонденции Хеттской державы и, вероятно, датируется XIII в. до н.э. В статье обсуждается возможность отнесения фрагмента к переписке с сирийской страной Амурру.

Ключевые слова: Хеттское царство, архивы Богазкёя, Бююккале, письма, аккадский язык

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The author is thankful to J.-M. Durand, R. Nurullin and the anonymous reviewer for their criticisms and helpful suggestions. He is, however, solely responsible for all remaining errors. The work on this article was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (Project No. 16-18-10343).

According to the Hethitologie Portal Mainz (HPM), the small fragment of a cuneiform tablet 154/q, found in square v/11 of Büyükkale at Hattusa/Boğazköy and published as *KBo* 14.54, has not until now received an extensive treatment. Despite its poor state of preservation, it can be shown to be of some historical interest. H.G. Güterbock, who copied the fragment, qualified it as an “Akkadischer Brief an ‘meine Herrin’”¹. The edition that follows is based on Güterbock’s copy as well as HPM photos².

Transliteration:

Obv.	x+1]ṛx x bī ² ia ² utu ² [-šī
	2'	u]ru mi-iš<-ri>-ia al-tap-pár [
	3'	š]ul-mi ša-a utu-ši ṛte ⁴ -ma [
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	4'	du]tu-ši en-ia a-na ugu-hi ṛx ¹ -[
	5']ma-a a-na ugu-hi utu-ši en-i[a
	6'	-]ṛa ² -šu gáb-bá šul-mu ù x [
	7'	-m]eš it-ta-la-ak kur uru ³ ga-aš-[ga ²
	8']x lugal-meš ša-a kur uru ³ ha-at-ti [
	9'	-m]eš al-la-ku-ni ù kur-kur-hi-a [
	10']na a-ma-at utu-ši ù utu[-ši lugal ² gal
	11']ṛx ¹ -nu i-na-an-na kur-tu ⁴ ša-a la-ṛa ² [
	12'	du]tu-ši ù utu-ši lugal gal it-t[a ² -al-ku
	13']ṛx hu ¹ -ud šà-bi i-na kur uru ³ ha[-at-ti
	14'	du]tu-ši a-ba a-bi-ṛšu ¹ [
	15']ṛša ² -a-šu-ṛnu x ¹ [
	16'] ṛx ¹ [
Rev.	x+1] ṛx x x ¹ [
	2']ṛa ² -ti-ia i-na-an-n[a
	3'	-i]š ² li-dal-la-ah
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	4']ṛal ² /kab ² -ti a-na ugu-hi ga]šan-ia
	5'	pa]-ni gašan-ia a-kán-na [
	6']x-ta it-rù-da n[u-
	7']ti tal-te-me-šu-nu ṛx ¹ [
	8']ṛx ¹ [x-]ṛu ²

Translation:

Obv. (1') [... My] Sun² [...] (2') [...] a city within my frontier I continuously wrote [...] (3') [...] regarding² the w[ell]-being of the Sun a message [...] / (4') [...] My Sun, my lord to [...] (5') [...] “To the Sun, my [lord ...]” (6') [...] his whole [...] is well and [...] (7') [...] he went, the land of Gaš[ga² ...] (8') [...] the kings of the land of Hatti [...] (9') [...] I will go (subj.) and the lands [...] (10') [...] for the case of the Sun and My Sun, [the great king / my lord (himself) ...] (11') [...] now the land which is not [...] (12') [...] of] the [Su]n and My Sun w[ent² ...] (13') [...] joy of heart in the land of Ha[tti² ...] (14') [... M]y Sun, his forefather [...] (15') [...] him [...] (16') [...]

Rev. (1') [...] (2') [...] my [...]s now [...] (3') [...] let him constantly disturb [...] / (4') [...] to [my] la[dy ...] (5') [...] be]fore / [...]to my lady in the following manner [...] (6') [...] he sent to me [...] (7') [...] you have heard them [...] (8') [...] /

¹ Güterbock 1963, iv. The fragment was not included in A. Hagenbuchner’s edition of the Hittite correspondence (see Hagenbuchner 1989).

² <http://www.hethport.adwmainz.de/fotarch/bildausw.php?n=154/q&b=+Phb00115d+Phb00116d+Phb00118d>. The author is grateful to Prof. Dr. G.G.W. Müller for sending the digital originals of the photos.

1. *Question of genre, date and origin*

In the light of the 1cs personal pronouns and 1cs and 2ms verbal forms the fragment should be understood as a part of a letter (cf. the opinion of H.G. Güterbock cited above). The text undoubtedly belongs to the vassal correspondence of the Hittite empire, since it contains the phrases ‘My Sun, my lord’ and ‘My Sun, the great king’, which were standard designations of the Hittite ruler employed by his subordinates. The text also makes reference to ‘My lady’ who can be no other than the Hittite queen. Unfortunately, the bad state of preservation of the fragment does not allow one to understand who exactly of the royal couple was the addressee of the message. The same obstacle prevents us from establishing the authorship and precise date of the text. In view of the archival context, which consists largely of documents datable to the thirteenth century BCE, this broad dating can be suggested for the fragment. Below some indirect evidence is adduced in favour of attributing it to Bentešina of Amurru who reigned in the middle of the thirteenth century BCE.

The syllabary and orthographic features of the fragment are compatible with the hypothesis of its Syrian origin. The sign RUM with the phonetic value /ru/ (RÜ)³ (rev. 6') is attested in core Mesopotamian dialects⁴ and is also characteristic of peripheral Akkadian which includes Alalah, Boğazköy, Ekalte, Emar, Nuzi and Ugarit⁵. The writing of the adverb *akanna* (*a-kán-na*) (rev. 5') complies with the scribal habits of Ugarit, Boğazköy and Amurru⁶. The orthography of *gabba* (*gáb-bá*) (obv. 6') also finds parallels in Syro-Akkadian texts of different origin (see below).

2. *Comments on individual words*

Obv.: 1. 2': *mi-iš<-ri>-ia* is regarded as a scribal error for *Mišri* ‘Egypt’ by *RGTC* 6, 275. Therefore, one could reconstruct *kur^umi-iš<-ri>-ia* according to the Hittite habit of writing country names with the determinative for cities. However, a writing with final *-ia* is not attested for Egypt in the Hittite or Syrian corpus (cf. also *RGTC* 12/2, 191–193). This is why we prefer to understand *mi-iš<-ri>-ia* more simply as a noun with a 1cs possessive suffix *mišrī=ya* ‘of my frontier’.

1. 3': one can think of reading something like: [*aš-šum šu*]*l-mi ša-a* ^d*utu-ši te₄-ma* [*ub-la*] ‘he brought me a message concerning the well-being of the Sun’.

1. 4': unfortunately the first sign of the personal name at the end of the line is broken. What is left of the sign resembles the beginning of an UD / WA-type sign.

1. 5':] *ma-a* can be the Middle Assyrian citative particle *mā*⁷.

³ The development of this phonetic value of RUM was evidently connected to the loss of mimation, a characteristic feature of MA and MB, and can be compared with the same evolution of other CVm signs (TUM > TU₄, LUM > LU₄ etc.).

⁴ According to J.J. de Ridder (2018, 159), MA normally uses RU to render /ru/. The same is true of Mitanni Akkadian of Amarna letters, see Adler 1976, *passim* (with very rare exceptions like *šu-kúr-rù* in *EA* 22: iv 21, *bi-ik-rù* in *EA* 25: i 33, all plural nouns).

⁵ Soden, Röllig 1991, 1; Rüster, Neu 1989, 89; Seminara 1998, 90–91. A special feature of RUM, at least in some of the mentioned dialects, those of Ugarit and Ekalte, is that this sign is attested for /ru/ only in the word final position, see Huehnergard 1989, 352 and Mayer 2001, 175.

⁶ *CADA* 1, 260; Huehnergard 1989, 193–194.

⁷ See de Ridder 2018, 531–533.

l. 6': *gáb-bá*. According to J. Huehnergard⁸, in the dialect of Ugarit there were two forms of the word *gabbu* 'all', one fully declinable, and the second frozen, ending in *a*. Sh. Izre'el points out that the texts from Amurru exhibit two variants of this frozen form, with *a* and *i* endings⁹. The examples from Ugarit show that the quantifier can participate in two types of constructions: it can stand in apposition to the second element, or it can be a bound form, with the second element dependent on it¹⁰. In our case we have probably a frozen form within an appositional phrase including either the following *šulmu* (nom. sg.), or the previous noun whose beginning is broken away ([...] -*a-šu* or, probably, [hi-] *a-šu*). The last interpretation would provide a reading: "His entire [...] (/ all of his [...] -s) is (/are) well"¹¹. The orthography of *gabbu* complies with the attestations from Ugarit and Amarna.

l. 7': Gašga is not the only possible restoration for a geographic name, as there are other toponyms beginning with *kaš-* attested in the Hittite corpus, cf. *RGTC* 6, 187–188, 192–196. However, since they are mostly insignificant towns with peripheral Anatolian localizations, they are not very likely to be mentioned in a letter written in Akkadian language. On the other hand, Kaskaesans — who were one of the major threats for the Hittites and were well known on the international scene (cf. *EA* 1 and 31) — would fit the context better. Reading *kaššû* 'Kassites' is precluded by the fact that this name is never written with GA or QA signs. Among the Hittite kings of the thirteenth century BCE, which is the most plausible time span for the letter, Hattusili III was evidently more than any other ruler engaged in dealings with the problem of Kaska¹².

l. 8': If 'kings of the land of Hatti' were not part of a coordinated structure (e.g., 'kings of the land of Hatti and of the land X'), this string can be understood in two ways: a sequence of succeeding rulers within a certain period of time, or a group of kings at a certain moment in time, that is a great king and the vassal rulers of the Hittite empire. If the last sense is intended, the expression will be probably unique in the Hittite corpus, but a Middle Assyrian letter from Tell Sabi 'Abyad (T 02–32) mentioning 'kings from another (single) land' (l. 10–11) coming to Aššur to mourn Tukultī-Ninurta I would provide a possible parallel¹³.

l. 9': *allak=ūni*, a form with the Assyrian subjunctive marker¹⁴, should not be regarded as a clear-cut evidence for linguistic attribution of the text, since it does not have any additional features typical of Middle Assyrian (e.g., no intervocalic (*w>*) *m>b* change, no Assyrian forms of independent pronouns). It should be noted that some Late Bronze Age peripheral dialects of Akkadian experienced Assyrian

⁸ Huehnergard 1989, 141–142.

⁹ Izre'el 1991, 173–174.

¹⁰ Huehnergard 1989, 142–143.

¹¹ It should be noted that the (frequent) postposition of *gabbu* is a syntactic feature of the core Middle dialects (Babylonian and Assyrian) as well as of those peripheral dialects, like that of Boğazköy, which experienced a linguistic influence from Mesopotamia. Unlike those dialects, in Akkadian of Ugarit and Carchemish *gabbu* precedes the quantified word. See Huehnergard 1989, 141, n. 85.

¹² See, e.g., Otten 1981, 16–17; Bryce 2005, 247–250. Mentions of Anatolian toponyms are not unknown from the letters of Bentešina, cf. Arzawa in *KBo* 8.16 rev. 3', which is evidently referred to in the context of Mursili II's campaigns in the west (*abūka ina māṭ Arzawa ittalka*).

¹³ Wiggerman 2006.

¹⁴ For Middle Assyrian subjunctive see now de Ridder 2018, 467–473.

influence to various degrees. Thus, Sh. Izre'el states that Amurru Akkadian of Bentešina is close to the northern branch of peripheral Akkadian along with the Akkadian dialect of Boğazköy and is marked with Assyrianized forms¹⁵. Assyrian linguistic influence grew with time and reached its apogee in the thirteenth century BCE under Bentešina and Šaušgamuwa¹⁶. Another example of a dialect influenced by Assyrian is a vernacular of the letters from Tyre which also date back to the thirteenth century BCE¹⁷. In all these cases it is impossible to speak of consistent and complete Assyrianization: significant segments of grammar were still characterized with intricate interplay between local linguistic features, borrowings from other dialects (including Babylonian) and standard Middle Assyrian rules. Our fragment is quite likely to represent a close phenomenon.

l. 10': under straightforward interpretation *a-ma-at* is st. constr. of *awātu(m)* 'word, case' with the typical Middle Babylonian *w>m* change¹⁸. Less probable is an alternative reading of ([*a*]-*na*) *a-ma-at* as '(for) the maidservant', since this noun is more plausible to be written with GEME₂ sign. However, 'maidservant' could fit the context slightly better from the syntactic and semantic point of view, because this reading would provide a prepositional phrase with a governed coordinated structure consisting of *two* animate (not inanimate plus animate) nouns: 'for the maidservant of the Sun and My Sun, [the great king / my lord]'. The epithet for 'My Sun' can be reconstructed on the basis of ll. 4', 5' or l. 12'.

l. 11': LA differs from other instances of this sign in the fragment (cf. obv. l. 7', 8'). However, the alternative reading as URU, if the last vertical wedge in the line is taken as part of the sign, is not unproblematic either.

l. 12': The beginning of the line could contain a word referring to somebody connected with the Hittite king (his relatives, subordinates, troops etc.) which formed a coordinated structure with the following phrase 'My Sun'. If the abovementioned understanding of *a-ma-at* ⁴*utu-ši* as 'maidservant of the Sun' in l. 10' could be correct, then, by analogy, one would be tempted to reconstruct the same string ('the maidservant of the Sun and My Sun') here. The restoration of the verb (*ittalkū* 3mp perf. of *alāku* 'they went') at the end of the line is tentative.

Rev.: l. 3': *li-dal-la-ah*, to be normalized as *liddallah* and understood as Gtn precativ of *dalāhu* 'to stir up; to disturb' (CAD D, 43).

l. 4', 5': there are several letters of Bentešina of Amurru addressed to 'my lady', i.e. Puduheba, wife of Hattusili III (certainly *KBo* 28.54; 28.55 and probably *KUB* 3.54; 3.55)¹⁹. Our fragment shares the find spot with two of them, *KBo* 28.54 and 28.55²⁰. Taken together with orthographic and linguistic features, this makes an attribution of the fragment to the correspondence with Amurru rather probable. If this attribution

¹⁵ Izre'el, Singer 1990, 100.

¹⁶ For the same increase of Assyrian influence in Ugarit, with a lapse of time, see van Soldt 1991, 521–522.

¹⁷ Arnaud 2001.

¹⁸ Aro 1955, 32–33. Note that the bound form *a-ma-at* meaning 'word, order; case' is present in some texts of the Amurru file: *KBo* 8.16 rev. 7', *KUB* 3.56 obv. 5', rev. 2'.

¹⁹ Hagenbuchner 1989, 375–379. According to I. Singer (2011, 223), the correspondence between Amurru and Hatti under Bentešina was maintained in two parallel channels: each letter was sent in two copies, one to Hattusili and one to Puduheba.

²⁰ There are five more Akkadian texts from Büyükkale Building A which belong or are likely to belong to the Amurru file, see Alexandrov 2018, 35, 51–52.

is correct, then the grandfather or forefather of the Sun mentioned in obv. 14' could be Suppiluliuma I who had established relations with Amurru²¹.

I. 6': since there are scribal errors already on the obverse, one cannot exclude that the sign NU did not begin a new word but belonged to a 3mp pronominal suffix *-šunu* (or *-šunūti*, cf. below) resulting in a sequence *iṣrudaš*=<*šu*>*nu* (or <*šu*>*nū*[*ti*]) "he sent them to me".

I. 7': *talteme*=*šunu*, a 2ms perfect form of *šemû* 'to hear' with the Assyrian vocalization of the prefix and MA/MB *št*→*lt* change²² + a 3mp accusative pronominal suffix. The last sign of the line is partly broken off, however, its initial part resembles TI. If this restoration proves right, the enclitic pronoun will appear in its Babylonian form, and the corresponding changes should be introduced into the reconstruction of the previous line. According to R. Labat, in the Akkadian of Boğazköy the pronominal suffix *-šunūti* quantitatively prevails over its by-form *-šunu*²³. In the dialects of Ugarit and Amurru the situation is the opposite: short, Assyrian forms are more frequent²⁴.

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²¹ Singer 2011, 212.

²² Aro 1955, 37–38; de Ridder 2018, 142–144. It should be stressed that in the case of Amurru Akkadian this phonetic shift is characteristic of late texts (thirteenth century BCE) and those coming from Ugarit and does not appear in Amarna letters from Amurru (cf., e.g., *teštenemme* 'you constantly hear' in EA 62: 40; see Izre'el 1991, 60–61). Some exceptions are known, nevertheless the rule seems to hold (cf. Arnaud 2004 who doesn't mention *š*→*l* shift when discussing the letters of Aziru). It is important that there is another instance of verbal form with *š*→*l* change in our fragment, namely *altappar* in obv. 2'.

²³ Labat 1932, 60.

²⁴ Huehnergard 1989, 131–132; Izre'el 1991, 97–102, esp. 101. Cf. Lackenbacher, Malbran-Labat 2016, 95–97 for new texts of Amurrite origin which attest to the same use of pronominal suffixes.

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