

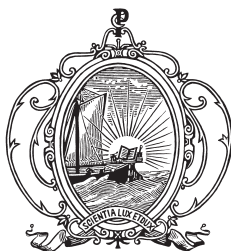
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THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST, A LIFE!

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TOM BOIJ, JOACHIM BRETSCHEIDER,
ANNE GODDEERIS, HENDRIK HAMEEUW,
GRETA JANS and JAN TAVERNIER



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THE AMARNA LETTERS FROM ḪATTI A PALAEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Elena DEVECCHI

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München

This contribution is devoted to a question which has been intriguing me for years, and still does: who was in charge of drawing up Akkadian texts at the Hittite court? Hittite scribes trained to write Akkadian? Or rather foreign scribes whose mother tongue was Akkadian, stemming perhaps from Syria? Or both?

The analysis of the language and script of the Akkadian texts from Boğazköy is the starting point for trying to answer these questions. However, one is often hampered in this task not only by the lack of suitable tools, but also by the fact that the relevant texts are archival copies, and thus could have gone through several stages of copying, so that their linguistic and palaeographic features might contain a sort of “stratification” resulting from the intervention of the hands of several scribes at different times.¹ This is true not only in the case of texts that are usually preserved in several duplicates (e.g. historical, religious and mythological composition, but also international treaties), but also in the case of letters, which belong to the group of documents mainly attested as *unica*.² In fact, these *unica* can be the result of a redactional history as much as any other text, and each stage of the process which shaped the tablet that has reached us might have left a mark on it and influenced its final features. We struggle with similar issues even when we have — as in the case of the Amarna correspondence — the final document that was actually sent to its destination, since one can imagine that also in this case that letter may be the result of some redactional process. In fact, the composition of the final document was very likely preceded by at least the drafting of a rough copy, as the presence in the Ḫattuša archives of mainly Hittite, but in some cases also Akkadian,

¹ See Devecchi 2012 for an overview on the difficulties linked to the study of Akkadian texts from Boğazköy.

² See van den Hout 2002, 864-876 for a discussion of the two text groups in the Ḫattuša archives.

drafts of letters belonging to the Hittite-Egyptian and Hittite-Assyrian correspondence from the 13th century³ suggests.

These difficulties should not prevent us from at least trying to address the issues at hand, and it seems appropriate to add a piece to the puzzle by providing a palaeographic analysis of the letters sent from Ḫatti to the Pharaoh(s) and found in the Amarna archive (EA 41, 42, 43 and 44):⁴ this dossier offers the valuable opportunity of studying a group of Akkadian texts surely dated to a relatively short time period (the reign of Šuppiluliuma I)⁵ and stemming from a phase when the ductus used for the Hittite texts was still clearly distinct from the non-Hittite ductus used e.g. in Syria and northern Mesopotamia, which makes it easier than in other cases to distinguish between Hittite and non-Hittite sign forms.⁶

The analysis has been carried out on a limited group of signs (see Table 1), selected either because they are the relevant ones for dating the Hittite ductus or because they show peculiar variants which can be traced back to specific traditions.

In order to “classify” and interpret the sign-forms occurring in EA 41-44 they have been compared with those from contemporary Hittite texts as well as from material of other contemporary scribal traditions. As for the Hittite texts I used mainly KUB 19.20++, a Hittite letter which has been interpreted as the draft of a message from Šuppiluliuma I to the Pharaoh, recovered at Ḫattuša.⁷ As reference points for the contemporary

³ See Edel 1994, 208-231 and Mora and Giorgieri 2004, 23-24 tables 3-4 and 43 ff. Their nature as drafts is indicated by the absence of the greeting formulas.

⁴ EA 41 is kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 4747), EA 42 and 44 in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin (VAT 1655 and VAT 1656, respectively), EA 43 in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (AN1893.1-41 (408)).

⁵ Ideally one would have included in this study also the letter RS 17.132 (CTH 45), sent by Šuppiluliuma I to Niqmaddu II of Ugarit and recovered in the archives of the Syrian town, but I did not have access to the tablet or to pictures of it, and a palaeographic analysis based only on the cuneiform copy would not have provided reliable results. However, based on an examination of the copy alone, I am inclined to regard its ductus as non-Hittite (see also below, fn. 24).

⁶ Later, during the 13th century, the Hittite script starts showing features that largely correspond to those typical of the (Assyro-)Mittanian ductus: this can make it difficult to decide whether some sign forms attested in 13th-century Akkadian texts from Ḫattuša should be interpreted as late Hittite or non-Hittite (Devecchi 2012).

⁷ Van den Hout 1994. It has been suggested that KBo 49.13 would be an indirect join to the reverse of KUB 19.20+KBo 12.23, but if the second paragraph line indicated in the cuneiform copy is correct, it seems unlikely that the fragment should be placed as indicated in <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetskiz/sk.php?f=154/s> or anywhere else in the reverse: in fact, the reverse of KUB 19.20+KBo 12.23 preserves no paragraphs of only four lines that could correspond to the four-line paragraph of KBo 49.13 7'-9'.

non-Hittite traditions I used the sign lists of Schroeder (1915) for the other Amarna dossiers, Schwemer (1998) for the Mittanian, Assyro-Mittanian and early middle Assyrian ductus, and van Soldt (1977) for the Ugarit texts.⁸

The tablets have been collated on photographs,⁹ which also served as the basis for tracing the signs included in Table 1. It goes without saying that the exactness of such a study depends to a large degree on the quality of the photographs, and therefore one can only hope that in the coming years valuable tools such as the Portable Light Dome developed by Prof. Van Lerberghe and his team¹⁰ will be employed more and more often in order to make available high resolution images of cuneiform texts.

EA 41 — From Šuppiluliuma I to Ḫuriya.

This rather well preserved tablet is historically the most important letter of the dossier, because the identification of the addressee with one or the other Pharaohs who reigned during the Amarna Age is one of the cruxes for the reconstruction of ancient Near Eastern chronology.¹¹

Beckman regarded this document as an example of the “chancellery script”, namely that type of ductus which, according to Beckman, was first used at the Hittite court for drafting Akkadian-language diplomatic material and later adopted also for Hittite-language texts: the “chancellery script” would therefore correspond to the late Hittite script (Beckman 1983, 98-100 and fn. 13). Beckman’s theory has been rejected by some (Klinger 2003, 239), and in any case the sign inventory of EA 41 was not a good example of the “chancellery script” because it shows a number of sign variants that did not belong to the late Hittite ductus, such as IT, KÙ, RU, ŠA and UM.

Among the analysed sign forms, some can be regarded generally as non-Hittite (AK, KU, KI, LA, LI, NI and RU), while others are rather indicative of precise traditions:

⁸ In the sign analysis the generic label “non-Hittite” will be used when a sign form is attested in all these traditions.

⁹ I was able to collate EA 41 on pictures generously made available to me by Dr. Jana Mynářová, whom I would like to thank for her kindness. Pictures of EA 42 and 44 were taken by myself, but see also the website <http://amarna.ieiop.csic.es/>. Pictures of EA 43 were provided by the Ashmolean Museum.

¹⁰ <http://www2.arts.kuleuven.be/info/ONO/Meso/digitalisatie>.

¹¹ See Miller 2007 for a recent discussion of the different hypotheses.

- AL occurs in a variant which at this time can be either Hittite or south-Syrian (Phoenician coast and Amurru).
- The forms used for EN, KÛ and ḪA can be either Babylonian or Hittite.
- IT occurs in the Babylonian form.
- The form of ŠA is Syrian, Mittanian, Assyro-Mittanian and early middle Assyrian but not Babylonian.
- UM occurs in the Syrian, Mittanian and Babylonian form, which is different than the Assyro-Mittanian and early middle Assyrian ones.

How should one interpret this rather mixed picture? One might start with reference to two interesting features in the structure and formulary of EA 41. First, it has been pointed that the heading *umma PN₁ ana PN₂ qibīma* is unique among the Akkadian letters of the Amarna correspondence:¹² this can be explained by the origin of EA 41, since this is the typical opening formula of the Hittite royal correspondence, used by the Hittite kings for messages to other Great Kings as well as for messages to their subjects.¹³ Second, Mynářová has shown that the greeting formula is the one typically used in the letters sent from Mittani,¹⁴ and this could be linked with the predominantly non-Hittite palaeographical features of the letter and suggest that the author of the letter came from Mittani or from the Mittani-controlled territories in North-Syria. One could object that a scribe accustomed to the Mittanian tradition would have used not only the typical Mittanian greetings, but also the typical Mittanian heading (*ana PN₁ qibīma umma PN₂(ma)*),¹⁵ but this is not necessarily the case: in fact, considering that drafts of letters usually do not contain the

¹² Moran 1992, xxii; Mynářová 2007, 102.

¹³ Hagenbuchner 1989a, 40, 44-45 and recently Mora and Giorgieri 2004, 45-47. As examples of the usage of this formula in letters to other Great Powers, see e.g. KBo 1.10+ (Ḫattušili III to Kadašman-Enlil), IM 50966 (a Hittite King to a Babylonian Queen), KUB 3.41 (Ḫattušili III to Ramses II) and the evidence from the Hittite-Assyrian correspondence listed by Mora and Giorgieri 2004, 41-42. Interestingly enough, an archival copy of a letter in Hittite addressed by Amenophis III to Tarḫunta-radu of Arzawa (EA 31) actually provides another attestation of this opening formula from the Amarna corpus: apparently the Egyptian chancellery was aware of this Anatolian epistolary custom and adopted it when corresponding with Anatolian rulers.

¹⁴ Mynářová 2007, 112-113, 120. EA 41 obv. 4-6: “[For me all goes w]ell. For you may all go wel[l]. For yo]ur [wives], your sons, your household, your troops, your chario[ts, and i]n your country, may all go very well” (after Moran 1992, 114). The same formula is attested also in some of the Alašiya letters, but Mynářová stresses that here it is only one of the greeting formulas used by the Alašiyān king, while it is the only type used in the Mittanian royal correspondence.

¹⁵ See “Type 2” in Mynářová’s (2007, 117-118) classification.

salutation formulas,¹⁶ one can imagine that the scribe of EA 41 kept the Hittite heading he found in the draft he was copying/translating from and introduced the greeting formula he was most familiar with (i.e. the Mittanian one).

To sum up, the presence of the typical Hittite heading witnesses the intervention of a Hittite “hand” at some stage of the composition of the letter, most likely in the composition of a rough draft, while the Mittanian salutations would have been inserted in a second phase, perhaps when the final document was prepared. This could also explain the occurrence in EA 41 of some sign forms that can be traced back to the Hittite contemporary tradition (AL, EN, KÙ and ḪA) next to a majority of non-Hittite forms. One can therefore conclude that both the ductus and the formulary of EA 41 are a mix of the Hittite and Mittanian/North-Syrian traditions, the first probably going back to the draft-stage of the letter, the second having exerted its influence mainly in the final redactional stage.

EA 42 — From Šuppiluliuma I (?) to the Pharaoh.

The Hittite origin of this letter, already assumed on the basis of its content and formal similarities with EA 41, has been confirmed by the results of optical mineralogy and petrographic analysis, which revealed that the clay of EA 42 shows the features of the Ḫattuša clay fabric (Goren et al. 2004, 31-32; Goren et al. 2011, 692). The heading is missing, but the attribution to Šuppiluliuma I is suggested by the use of expressions such as ŠEŠ-*ia* “my brother” which indicates that the two correspondents were of equal rank.

Knudtzon (1915, 1093-1094) noted that the signs of this tablet are very similar to those of EA 41, but also pointed out that the ductus shows “mancherlei Abweichungen so bei la, li, ru, höchstwahrscheinlich auch bei uš und amêlu, teilweise auch bei aḫu.” Indeed, while in EA 41 the signs LA, LI, RU and ŠEŠ occur in non-Hittite variants, in EA 42 the picture is somewhat more complicated: LA, LI and ŠEŠ are attested in both the Hittite (LA: Obv. 12, LI: Obv. 16; ŠEŠ: Obv. 19) and non-Hittite forms (LA: Obv. 26, Rev. 28; LI: Obv. 14; ŠEŠ: Obv. 8), while RU shows only the contemporary Hittite variant. Another sign which occurs only in the contemporary Hittite form is AL. Only non-Hittite forms are

¹⁶ Mora and Giorgieri 2004, 43 with previous literature.

attested for IT, KI, LÚ, NI and ŠA, to which one can add also ŠAR (Obv. 23 and Rev. 27) and DUB (Obv. 15 and Rev. 27). Once again these results can be interpreted as the features of a mixed ductus.

EA 43 — From Šuppiluliuma I (?) to the Pharaoh.

This rather poorly preserved tablet was first attributed to the Hittite dossier (Knudtzon 1902, 331-334), then tentatively regarded as a message of some north-Syrian king (Knudtzon 1907, 305; 1915, 1094-1095),¹⁷ then finally recognized again as another letter from Ḫatti (Artzi 1993 and Na'aman 1995). Data from optical mineralogy and petrographic analysis are not available, but it should be recalled that according to Knudtzon (1915, 1094) the clay of this tablet looked identical to that of EA 41, 42 and 44. Unlike the other letters, though, EA 43 shows lines on the obverse which are very much slanted upward to the right.

Artzi's (1993, 7 n. 1) statement that "almost all the signs-shapes belong to the late, 'Chancellery' stage of the Hittite foreign-language service (= 'Empire')" must be revised.¹⁸ In fact, comparison between the signs of EA 43 and those of KUB 19.20++ demonstrates that the two tablets use the same sign-shapes, which can be regarded as the typical Hittite sign inventory of the time of Šuppiluliuma I. EA 43 was therefore very likely drafted by a Hittite scribe, a result which confirms the supposed Hittite origin of the text.

EA 44 — From Zida to the Pharaoh.

The Hittite origin of this letter is based on the identification of its sender with the homonymous Hittite prince, brother of Šuppiluliuma I, and on the results of the optical mineralogy and petrographic analysis carried out on the tablet, whose clay shows a characteristic Ḫattuša fabric (see Goren et al. 2004, 31-32; Goren et al. 2011, 692).¹⁹ The tablet shows several traces of erasures and corrections especially on the reverse, which leads to significant variation in the size and depth of several signs.

¹⁷ This was mainly due to the consideration that EA 43 showed more similarities to EA 44, which at that time was regarded as a north-Syrian letter, than to EA 41 and 42 (Knudtzon 1902, 334; 1915, 1094-1095).

¹⁸ On the "chancellery script", a label coined by Beckman 1983, see above the remarks on EA 41.

¹⁹ This renders obsolete Moran's remark that "the writer seems not to have been in the Hittite capital at the time of writing" (Moran 1992, 117).

As for the ductus, two opposite opinions have been expressed: Moran (1992, 117) believes that the scribe of EA 44 “was either trained there (i.e. in Ḫattuša) or under its influence”, while more recently it has been proposed that this document does not show “the normal sign forms typical for texts in the Hittite archives of this period” (Goren et al. 2011, 692). Both statements are partially correct: in fact, it is true that the forms of LUGAL, ŠA, DUMU and KI would be very unusual in contemporary Hittite texts, but AK, KU, LA, NI, RU and UM occur in variants which are typical of the contemporary Hittite texts, while not attested in the contemporary non-Hittite traditions. Thus, also some features of its script agree with the Hittite origin of EA 44, which can be regarded as another example of mixed ductus.

To conclude, palaeographic analysis shows that three of the examined texts attest a mixed ductus (EA 41, 42 and 44), while one has a completely Hittite ductus (EA 43), i.e. contrary to the *communis opinio* (Goren et al. 2011, 692) none of the Amarna letters from Ḫatti shows an entirely non-Hittite ductus. The appearance of the mixed ductus remains somewhat difficult to explain, since it lends itself to different interpretations.²⁰ However, at least in the case of EA 41 I am inclined to suggest that the features of a Hittite rough draft might have influenced those of the final document, probably drafted by a Mittanian/North-Syrian scribe.

























The fact that at least one of the letters was written in the Hittite ductus is particularly interesting, because it indicates that the Ḫattuša chancellery did not always felt the need to use a special script for Akkadian texts, even when those documents were destined to be sent abroad rather than kept in the Hittite archives. It should be stressed, in fact, that the other Akkadian-language texts whose ductus has been so far interpreted as Hittite are archival copies,²¹ and that they thus had a different purpose and addressee than documents such as the letters found in Amarna. Notably, EA 43 stands out not only from the other Amarna letters, but in general

²⁰ It could be hypothesized, e.g., that it is the result of several stages of copying by the hands of scribes who belonged to different scribal traditions (e.g. one Hittite and one Akkadian), or that some Hittite scribes were trained to write Akkadian with a ductus different than the Hittite one and would sometimes “mix” the two scripts (see Devecchi 2012).

²¹ See e.g. KBo 1.5 (CTH 41.I.A, treaty between Tuḫaliya I/II and Sunassura of Kizzuwatna), KUB 3.7+ (CTH 49.I.A, treaty between Šuppiluliuma I and Aziru of Amurru), KUB 48.72 (CTH 75.E, Muwattalli’s official copy of the treaty between Muršili II and Talmi-Šarruma of Aleppo) and the relevant remarks in Klinger and Neu 1990, 154; Klinger 2003, 242; Schwemer 2004, 76.

from the corpus of Akkadian-language texts (letters, edicts, verdicts) whose official copies have been recovered abroad, which generally show a non-Hittite ductus.²²




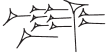



























Table 1.²³

	EA 41	EA 42	EA 43	EA 44	KUB 19.20++
EN (40)	 Obv. 25	—	—	—	 Obv. 5 passim
RU (43)	 Rev. '7', 14 ²⁴	 Obv. 23	 Obv. 4'	 Obv. 10	 Rev. 8'
KÙ (69)	 Obv. 25  Rev. 14	—	—	 Rev. 26	—
NI (72)	 Obv. 9 passim	 Obv. 9, '13'	 Obv. 2', 5'	 Obv. 1, Rev. 24, 27 ²⁵	 Obv. 4' passim
LÚ (78)	'Obv. 7' ²⁶	 Rev. 27	 Obv. 4'	 Rev. 23	 Obv. 6
ŠEŠ (79)	 Obv. '16', 21, 28	 Obv. 8  Obv. 19	 Rev. 29'	—	 Rev. [3]1', 33'

²² This is the result of a preliminary survey of the cuneiform copies of Akkadian documents of Hittite origin discovered in the Ugarit archives, which represent the bulk of Akkadian texts from Hatti recovered abroad. On the palaeographic features of some of these documents see also Klinger 2003, 239-240 and Devecchi in print. The courtesy letter IM 50966 sent from a Hittite king to a Babylonian queen discovered in Dür-Kurigalzu (Baqir 1946, 89-90 and fig. 13 and Hagenbuchner 1989b, 300-301) does not show enough relevant signs to allow a decisive palaeographic assessment: one can note the NI with two inscribed verticals (obv. 2) and perhaps also the LUGAL with one inscribed vertical (obv. 1 and 2), but these two variants alone cannot be taken as sure evidence of a non-Hittite ductus, especially when attested in Akkadian texts of the 13th century, as is the case with this letter (cf. Devecchi 2012).

²³ The signs, listed according to the numbering in HZI, are all reproduced at a scale of 3:2.

²⁴ According to the copy, the RU signs at Obv. 7, Rev. 11 and 12 have this shape too, but I was not able to collate them, since they are on the edge and not visible on the photos available to me.

AK (81)	 Obv. 21  Rev. 10	—	 Obv. 10'	 Obv. 11, Rev. 28	 Obv. 17', 21', Rev. 21'
LA (95)	 Obv. 13 passim	 Obv. 12  Obv. 26  Rev. 28	 Obv. 15', 16', 17'	 Rev. 26	 Obv. 8', Rev. 13'
UM (98)	 Rev. 8, 11	—	—	 Obv. 4, Rev. 27 ²⁷	—
LUGAL (115)	Obv. '1, 9, 11 ¹²⁸	—	—	 Obv. 1, 3	 Obv. 9'  Rev. 17'
ŠA (158)	 Obv. 6  Obv. 26 ²⁹	 Obv. 15	 Obv. 3', 5', 13', 14', 'Rev. 29'	 Obv. 11	 Obv. 2' passim
AL (183)	 Obv. 24, 25	 Obv. 14 ³⁰	—	—	 Obv. 3'
KU (206)	 Obv. 19 ³¹  Rev. 10	—	 Obv. 6'	 Obv. 9, 10, Rev. 20, 24, 25, 29	 Obv. 17' passim

²⁵ Contrary to what is indicated in the copy, collation on photos shows that the NI does not have the two inscribed verticals.

²⁶ According to the copy and to Knudtson 1907, 298 fn. c, LÚ occurs in the form with several inscribed verticals, but I was not able to collate it on the pictures at my disposal.











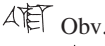
















²⁷ Collation on photos could not confirm the presence of the inscribed verticals hinted at in the copy.

²⁸ All the LUGAL signs are badly preserved and impossible to collate on the pictures at my disposal. Note, however, that according to Knudtson 1907, 298 fn. c all the LUGAL signs seem to be lacking the inscribed verticals that are found in the ŠEŠ and LÚ signs.

²⁹ Collation on photos shows that there are two inscribed *Winkelhaken* rather than only one as indicated in the copy.


³⁰ Collation on photos could not confirm the presence of the inscribed *Winkelhaken* indicated in the copy.

³¹ According to the copy, also the KU in Obv. 17 and Rev. 15 begin with a vertical, but I was not able to collate them.

DA (214)	Obv. 20 (?) ³²	 Obv. 17	—	 Rev. 28 ³³	 Obv. 6' passim
IT (215)	 Obv. 13, Rev. 4	 Obv. 25	 Obv. 5', 10'	 Obv. 9, 10	 Obv. 17 passim
DUMU (237)	—	—	 Obv. 12'	 Obv. 3, 4, 8, Rev. 21	
KI (313)	 Obv. 17  Rev. 14, 15	 Obv. 8, 19	 Obv. 8', 9', 14'	 Obv. 2  Obv. 9	 Obv. 14', Rev. 15', 19'  Obv. 19', Rev. 11', 19'
LI (343)	 Obv. 26, Rev. 4 ³⁴	 Obv. 14  Obv. 16	—	—	 Rev. 9', 35'
ĦA (367)	 Obv. 18 passim	 Obv. 22	 Rev. 29	 Obv. 8 passim	 Obv. 2' passim

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³² The sign reproduced in the copy as a DA (DA-a-pa-a-nu) looks on the photographs more like a ŠA: .

³³ Collation on photos does not confirm the presence of the *gebrochene* horizontal indicated in the copy.

³⁴ According to the copy, also the LI at Obv. 1 has this shape, but I was not able to collate it.

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