Aziru, Servant of Three Masters?

Abstract

Since its publication, the recently expanded Hittite text KUB 19.15+ has drawn scholarly attention mainly because of its mention of a individual named Arma'a, whose tentative identification with Pharaoh Horemheb has compelled significant revisions of the Late Bronze Age chronology of the Ancient Near East. This document, however, also provides new evidence on the status of Amurru prior to its annexation to the Hittite kingdom, which begs for a reconsideration of the relevant sources as well as of the different hypotheses that have been put forward in order to explain the apparent contradictions among them.

Keywords: Amurru, Aziru, Hittite treaties with Amurru

1.

The historiographical document KUB 19.15+ KBo 50.241 contains interesting information on the status of Amurru prior to its annexation to the Hittite kingdom, which deserves to be further discussed. The author of the text, in all likelihood to be identified with Mursili II, refers to an Egyptian attack in the land of Amurru, to which he reacts by sending the following message to the Pharaoh:

You are taking [ve]pance upon the Land of Amurru. But was it I who took the [Land] of Amurru away from you, or was it rather my father who took it away from you? It was the King of the Land of Hanigalbat who took the Land of Amurru away from the King of the Land of Egypt, and then my father defeated

* This research was carried out as part of the project “You will have transgressed the oath”. An investigation into the forms of political subjugation among the Hittites, funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. After having completed this article I discussed it with Prof. I. Singer, who informed me that he had expressed partially similar, partially different opinions in his lecture ‘On the Credibility of Hittite Historical Texts’, held at the conference ‘Normierung und Emanzipation: Bausteine für eine Kulturgeschichte des 2. Jts. v. Chr. im Alten Orient’ (Berlin, January 2010), and kindly sent me a draft of the written version of his lecture, which will appear in the proceedings of the conference.

1 The expanded text was published and first discussed by Miller (2008). See also Miller (2007), Simon (2009), Wilhelm (2009) and Devecchi / Miller (2011) for further discussion of the chronological issues.


The description of Amurru’s political status at the time of Aziru’s defection to the Hittites offered by this passage of KUB 19.15+ seems to contradict the traditional reconstruction of this event, according to which Aziru had been an Egyptian vassal before shifting to the Hittite camp. In reality, as already noted by Miller (2008: 547–549), the account of KUB 19.15+ should not come as a total surprise, since in some Amarna letters and at least one Hittite text one finds hints suggesting that Amurru was playing not only a double, but even a triple game with the three Great Powers that were fighting to establish their supremacy over Syria, i.e. Hatti, Egypt and Mittani.

The new evidence provided by KUB 19.15+ begs for a reconsideration of the relevant sources, in particular a highly debated passage of the subjugation treaty imposed by Tuthaliya IV on Šaušanmuwa of Amurru (CTH 105), as well as the different hypotheses that have been put forward in order to explain the apparent contradictions among them.

2.

In the historical prologue of the treaty between Tuthaliya IV and Šaušanmuwa of Amurru the status of this Syrian kingdom prior to ‘Aziru’s apostasy’, as Singer (1990) has dubbed Aziru’s submission to Suppiluliuma I, is described as follows:

CTH 105. A i 13–27

[ [ K UR URU A-mur-ra ṣ 7 U]-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)} UKUL ]
13 [ [ Ša K UR URU Ha]-at-ti ī-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)} e-eṣ-ta ]
15 [ [ Šu-up-pi-lu ] 1 (IS-TU) I-NA ], KUR URU Ha-at-ti ]
16 [ [ I-ti nu ] KUR KUR ]
17 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
18 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
19 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
20 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
21 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
22 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
23 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
24 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]
25 [ [ ku-ru-it ] e-eṣ-ta ]

2 See also Kühne / Otten (1971) and Fuscagni et al. (2008).
3 B o b v. S: KUR] A-mur-ra ṣ 7 U]-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)}
4 B o b v. S: KUR] A-mur-ra ṣ 7 U]-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)}
5 B o b v. S: KUR] A-mur-ra ṣ 7 U]-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)}
6 B o b v. S: KUR] A-mur-ra ṣ 7 U]-\text{31 (IS-TU GIS-1)}
pass over the fact that Amurrli had previously been an Egyptian vassal. In his view, Egypt had been the main enemy earlier, while during Tuthaliya's reign it was an ally, and 'it would have been unpoltitical to stress the negative implications attached to former relations of Amurrli with the Pharaohs', which would explain the clever evocation of the kingdom of Mittani as a scapegoat (Zaccagnini 1988: 299). Since the events recounted in KUB 19.15+ very likely took place during Murśli's 7th year, when Hittite-Egyptian relations were still hostile, and Mittani is already being blamed for the Egyptian loss of Amurrli, Zaccagnini's paradigm can no longer be considered valid.

Similarly, the account in KUB 19.15+ prohibits one from simply dismissing the debated passage of CTH 105 as a 'blatant lie', as proposed by Altman. He explains this supposed falsification of historical truth by assuming that the Hittites needed to deny the fact that Amurrli had been Egyptian territory because otherwise its rebellion at the time of Muwatalli II might have looked like a rightful attempt at redressing the wrong perpetrated when the Hittites took Amurrli from Egypt. Now there are two Hittite texts giving the same account. Are they both 'blatant lies'? Even if one assumes that KUB 19.15+ contained the original lie and that the (badly informed?) author of CTH 105 used this as a source for the historical prologue of the treaty, one must still explain why Murśli II would have felt the need to lie in KUB 19.15+ but not in the almost contemporary subjugation treaty imposed upon Tuppi-Teššup of Amurrli (CTH 62), where there is no mention of any Hurrian claim upon the Syrian kingdom. Furthermore, one must ask what benefit Murśli might have hoped to have gained by uttering a false statement in an argument with the Pharaoh, who surely knew very well who was to blame for the loss of Amurrli. Again, all elements seem to suggest that there must have been at least some truth to the scenario handed down by CTH 105 and KUB 19.15+ and that Mittani must have been somewhat involved in the political games played by Aziru before he finally decided to turn to the Hittites.

A totally different solution to the apparent contradiction between the historical prologue of CTH 105 and the other sources was offered by Singer. He proposed that the plural 'lands of Amurrli', attested in CTH 105. A i 17, is not a simple variant of the singular 'land of Amurrli', used throughout the rest of the treaty text. He suggested that the first geographical designation would refer to 'the broad geographical entity of the Syrian states west of the Euphrates that were indeed controlled by Mitanni prior to Šuppiluliuma's takeover', while only the 'land of Amurrli', in the singular, would indicate the kingdom of Aziru (Singer 1991b: 72). Singer, however, fails to mention an important detail, namely the fact that, where A i 17 reads KUR.KUR.B.A (UR) Amurrli, B obv. 6 has the singular KUR Amurr. Furthermore, one should consider the other occurrences of the plural designation 'lands of Amurrli' in the Late Bronze Age sources.

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9 See also Miller (2003: 357-549).
1. [KUR], kur^MES A-mur-ri
   KBo 6.28+ obv. 25
   Edict of Ḫattušili III for the hekur
   of Pirwa

2. kur^BA A-mur-ri
   EA 145, 24
   Letter of Zimrida of Sidon to an
   Egyptian official

3. kur^MES A-mu-ri
   EA 179, 19
   Letter of a vassal to the pharaoh

4. kur^MES A-mu-ri
   EA 158, 15
   Letter of Aziru to Tutu

5–6. kur^MES A-mur-ri^1
   RS 20.162, 6 and 18
   Letter of Paršu to the king of Ugarit

While the contexts of the first three occurrences are admittedly ambiguous and could indicate either the kingdom of Amurru stricto sensu or western Syria more generally, the other three cases are unequivocal. In EA 158 Aziru tells the Egyptian official Tutu:

[A]s you are my father and my lord, [and] I am your son, the lands of Amurru (kur^MES A-mu-ri) are your [land], and my house is your house (EA 158, 14–16; after Moran 1992: 244).

In this passage one could understand the ‘Lands of Amurru’ as a reference to the whole Syrian territory under Mittanian control only if assuming that Aziru was speaking on behalf of all the other Mittanian vassals, but this is surely not the case; thus, one can only conclude that Aziru himself was referring to his own kingdom as the ‘Lands of Amurru’.

The case of the letter RS 20.162, sent by an otherwise unknown individual named Paršu to the king of Ugarit, is of added interest because it might provide an attestation more or less contemporary to that of the Šašāgamuwa treaty:16

My lord, has the king of Amurru (lugal kur^MES A-mur-ri) not said thus unto you: ‘When you hear anything about the alien enemies, write to my countries (kur^MES-lu)’? (RS 20.162, 6–11; after Izr‘el 1991, vol. 2: 99).

Furthermore, my lord, the lands of Amurru (kur^MES A-mur-ri) and the lands of Ugarit (kur^MES U-ga-ri-te), they are indeed one (RS 20.162, 17–19; after Izr‘el 1991, vol. 2: 99).

Who could the king of the ‘Lands of Amurru’ in such a context be? Surely not a king of all the Mittanian territories west of the Euphrates, since the existence of such an authority is nowhere attested in the sources, and even if it had ever existed it would be totally ana-

15 One may recall here also the expression ‘the whole of Amurru’ attested in a letter of Abdi-Ašipta, Aziru’s father: ‘As I am a servant of the king and a dog of his house, I guard all Amurru (kur A-mur-ri gub-ba-su) for the king, my lord’ (EA 60, 6–9; after Moran 1992: 132). Cf. also EA 61 rev. 5, another letter of Abdi-Ašipta.

16 The document is usually dated towards the end of the 13th century because it was recovered in the archive of Rap‘anu, which was in use during the last period of Ugarit’s existence and due to the atmosphere of impending danger evoked in it, which can perhaps be linked to the approach of the Sea Peoples (Singer 1991a: 175–176; 1999: 721).

chronistic here, because at this time the kingdom of Mittani did not existed anymore. The king of the ‘Lands of Amurru’ can only be the ruler of the kingdom of Amurru, and indeed this is the usual interpretation of the passage.17 One may object that this is just an idiosyncrasy of the scribe, who used the plural also for the ‘Lands of Ugarit’ (RS 20.162: 18); even so it is an indication that the plural designation was conceived as a possible alternative to the more common singular one. In this regard, it should also be noted that in the LBA other political entities of the Syro-Palestinian area could be referred to with plural designations as well. Beside the ‘Lands of Nuḫaššu’ (KBo 1.6 obv. 34; KUB 14.17+KBo 50.30 ii 18’’ / KBo 50.21, 5’’), which might in fact have been a sort of confederation as suggested by the several occurrences of the ‘kings of Nuḫaššu’ in the Amarna letters and in the texts of Šuppiluliuma recovered in the Ugarit archives,18 one can also point to the cases of Kinaḫḫa, Japa and Zalhu.19

Summing up, the evidence collected here on the use of the plural militates against Sänger’s solution, suggesting instead that the attestations of the ‘Lands of Amurru’ from the time of Aziru and from the late 13th century can hardly be interpreted as anything but references to the kingdom of Amurru stricto sensu and making it likely that ‘Lands of Amurru’ in CTH 105.A i 17 also refers to the kingdom of Aziru, an hypothesis supported also by the singular variant ‘Land of Amurru’ in CTH 105.B obv. 6.20


The sentence *nu-ṣṣi ʾAziraḫ-3 qaṭamma pahlḥatat* has also been variously interpreted. Since this is one of the very few attestations of a medio-passive form of *paḥš*– governing the dative,21 scholars agree that the author of the text likely wanted to give the sentence a nuance other than ‘to protect someone’, which is the basic meaning of *paḥš*– with the accusative.22 It has therefore been proposed to translate *paḥš*– with the dative as ‘to be/ remain loyal to someone’ (Kühne / Otten 1971: 7; Singer 1991b: 71; 2000: 99; Fuscagni et al. 2008), ‘to give allegiance to someone’ (Beckman 1999: 104), ‘to be subject to someone’ (Altman 2003: 355; 2004: 440, 448ff.) and ‘to seek protection with someone’ (CHDP P. paḥš– 6, 7). The choice among the proposed meanings depends mainly on the context and on the identity of the referent of the 3rd sing. enclitic personal pronoun ṣṣi, which should be identified according to some authors with the Hurrian king (Kühne / Otten 1971: 29; Altman 2004: 440, 448ff.), according to others with Šuppiluliuma I (CHDP P. paḥš– 6, 7;

18 See RGTC 12/2, 213.
19 See under the relevant entries in RGTC 12/2.
20 Altman (2003: 357) suggests that the ‘Lands of Amurru’ in CTH 105.A i 17 is a scribal error, but the existence of the other attestations makes it likely that it should be seen as a variant of the singular designation.
21 The only other occurrence of *paḥš*– with the dative in CHDP P. paḥš– 6, 7 comes from a letter of Tuthaliya IV (KUB 23.103 obv. 5), the fragmentary condition of which disallows any further conclusions. A fragmentary example mentioned by Neu (1968: 162) and Kühne / Otten (1971: 29) is more likely to be interpreted as a form of *in-ahḫḫ*– (Otten 1981: 16–17).
22 See CHDP P. paḥš–, 2ff.
Beckman 1999: 104). Linguistic considerations, already pointed out by the editors of the treaty, favour the first possibility, because enclitic personal pronouns usually refer to someone/something mentioned in the immediately preceding sentence, which in this case is the Hurrian king, not Šuppliuliuma. This interpretation is supported also by the presence of the Akkadian adverb qatamma, ‘likewise’, which makes sense if this sentence is connected to the previous one, while it is hardly explicable with reference to what follows. All these elements support the interpretation of the passage as ‘they [were] subjects of the King of Ḫurri, and Azira was likewise loyal to him (= the King of Ḫurri)’.

3.

In the previous paragraphs it was shown how the new evidence provided by KUB 19.15+ no longer allows one to discard the statements of CTH 105 as simple falsification of historical events, but rather supports the hypothesis that Amurrú might have enjoyed the more or less official support of Mittani during the Amarna Age, to the point that the relationship between the two might have looked like that between suzerain and vassal. It will now be examined how this scenario can be reconciled with the other Hittite accounts on the events that led to the Hittite subjugation of Amurrú.

The first relevant document is the treaty between Šuppliuliuma I and Azira (CTH 49), where one can find the most detailed, although fragmentary, description of Azira’s apostasy. The better preserved Hittite version relates that when ‘[all the kings, (namely)] – the king of Egypt, the king of Ḫurri, the king of [Qatna?/Aštata?], the king of Nuhaštš, the king of Niyā, the king of [Kizn], the king of Mukišt, the king of Ḫarpa, the king of Karkemia – [all]’ (these kings became hostile to His Majesty, but Azira, king of Amurrú, rose up from the [border] of Egypt and submitted himself to His Majesty, king of Ḫatti’ (CTH 49.II 1 14–19). This is the ‘traditional’ scenario of Azira’s subjugation, according to which the king of Amurrú shifted of his own free will from the Egyptian to the Hittite side, without any Hurrian interlude. Interestingly enough, though, in the Akkadian version of the same treaty one finds a tiny, but perhaps not irrelevant, variant. Here, the list of hostile countries has ‘the king of Amurrú’ (Lugal KUR URU A Uru [r-r] CTH 49.1 B obv. 11), while the Hittite version has the king of Ḫurri. This is admittedly probably just a scribal error, with Singer (2000: 94 n. 4), but it could have been a Freudian slip, revealing of how ambiguous Amurrú’s behaviour might have looked towards the Hittites.

The next source reporting on these events is the treaty between Muršili II and Tuppi-Teššup of Amurrú (CTH 62). In the historical prologue there is no information on Amurrú’s political stance prior to its subjugation to the Hittites, but in the normative section of the agreement one finds the only explicit claim in a Hittite text of Amurrú having

23 Thus tentatively Freydank (1959-60: 359), followed by Klengel (1964: 441) and del Monte (1986: 128). The tiny trace could indeed be the end of a Windelshaken, supporting the reading [za]. Singer (1990: 147) and Altman (2004: 325 n. 7) proposed instead *[gala]r* in agreement with the Akkadian version, which has here KÁ-GAL.

once been an Egyptian vassal.24 Here Muršili II warns Tuppi-Teššup not to behave like his ancestors, who used to pay tribute to Egypt (CTH 62.II).25 It is, however, worthwhile to compare how Azira’s apostasy is described in the Akkadian and Hittite versions of the treaty:

CTH 62.I obv. 2–4

2 Azira ana kása *Tuhipi-{X}-u[p] abi abika šu itti abiya [šu]a[kir]
3 abinya ana ir świętša utěššu LUGAL.MES URU Nuhaštši u LUGAL KUR URU Kinža itti [abiya]
4 ki ikkiri u Azira abi abika itti abiya u ikkiri

Azira was the king, Tuppi-Teššup – your grandfather. He was h[os]i[ile] to my father, (but) my father reduced him into servitude. When the kings of Nuhaštš and the king of Kinza became hostile to [my father], Azira did not become hostile to my father.

CTH 62.II A i 3–6

3 *Aziraz tuel ša *Tu[pip]-{X}-up ABI ABIKA
4 ANA ABIYA IR-ˁALTAT U [ER=MA LUGAL.MES KUR URU Nuhašši]I
5 kuwapit LUGAL KUR URU Kinža=ya [TTI ABIYA kuririya[h] (her)]27
6 =Aziraz=ma ul kurur[=íyatta]26

Azira – [grandfather] of yours, Tulpip-Teššup – submitted himself to my father. When then [(the kings of Nuhašši)] and the king of Niya [became ho(stile)] to [my father], Azira did not beco[(me hostile)].

First, it may be noted that according to the Akkadian version Šuppliuliuma subjugated Azira, while in the Hittite version it was Azira who subjugated himself to the Hittite king. The other documents tend to agree with the Hittite version, but in KUB 19.15+ it is also said that Šuppliuliuma defeated the king of Amurrú, and it might not be a coincidence that the two sources that describe Amurrú’s annexation as an act by Šuppliuliuma are both dated to the reign of Muršili II.

Second, the verb restored at the end of CTH 62.I obv. 2 is of some importance. The form šu{a[kir]} was first proposed by Weidner (1923: 76) and was retained by del Monte (1986: 24 The passages where Azira is said to have come ‘from the gate/border of Egypt’ to Hatti could theoretically be interpreted as a merely geographical, rather than as a political, indication, as J.L. Miller pointed out to me.
25 This passage is not preserved in the Akkadian version, CTH 62.I.
26 Restorations in parentheses are based on CTH 62.II B and C.
27 Collation on photograph confirms that the traces before the break correspond to the beginning of an IT and that the space seems to be sufficient for the proposed restoration, based on the parallel passage of the Akkadian version. Alternatively one could think of [ARKAR], based on the equivalence Hitt. kururiya[h] = Akk. nakāru (for which see HHw, 119, sub kururiya[h]).
156–157), but Singer (1990: 150–151; see also Beckman 1999: 123 n. 12) subsequently suggested restoring [i]t[-a][-a]-[al-ka], ‘he came’, instead, because ‘there is no need to restore a verb with a negative connotation. Quite the contrary. The whole gist of the passage is to emphasize Aziru’s loyalty towards Šuppiluliuma, in sharp contrast to the rebelliousness of Nuzhaššu and Kinza’. Altman (2004: 362 n. 35) agrees that ‘there is no place for a verb with a negative connotation. The argumentation here stresses the fact that ever since Aziru’s self-subjugation to Ḫatti, he and his son, Ari-Teššup, maintained their loyalty to the Hittites. A reference to a negative act on the part of Aziru would entirely contradict this argumentation’. It seems, however, that Aziru’s hostility before the Hittite annexation of Amurrú must not necessarily be seen to clash with the depiction of Aziru and his successors as loyal vassals after the Hittite annexation of Amurrú. At the same time, this claim provides the Hittites with the ideal excuse to justify the subjugation of the Syrian kingdom. Furthermore, the restoration of a form of nakāru seems more likely because of linguistic considerations. In fact nakāru is usually constructed with itti28 and agrees very well with itti abīya preceding the fragmentary verbal form (CHT 62.I obv. 2), while one would rather expect ana abīya if some form of alāku had stood in the break.29 If the restoration [i]t[-a][-k] is accepted, it would supply yet another hint supporting CHT 105’s account of Amurrú being hostile to Ḫatti before Aziru decided to shift to the Hittite side.

Finally, there is the historical prologue of the treaty between Ḥattušili III and Benetšina (CHT 92), which recounts that Aziru’s submission was a spontaneous act that took place after he ‘revoked/changed [... of] Egypt’ (CHT 92 obv. 5). One can only speculate about the missing object of the verb enū, but in view of the context it is usually assumed that it should have been a term related to Aziru’s political status.30 Importantly, there is no mention of Mittani.

To summarize the Hittite accounts of Amurrú’s annexation, two variables are generally indicated, namely the identity of the Great Power to which Amurrú belonged before becoming a Hittite vassal (Variable 1) and whether Aziru submitted of his own volition or was subjugated by Šuppiluliuma (Variable 2), as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Variable 1</th>
<th>Variable 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTH 49.I</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Aziru submits voluntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTH 49.II</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Aziru submits voluntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTH 62.I</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Šuppiluliuma subjugates Amurrú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTH 62.II</td>
<td>(see n. 31)</td>
<td>Aziru submits voluntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUB 19.15+</td>
<td>Mittani</td>
<td>Šuppiluliuma subjugates Amurrú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTH 92</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Aziru submits voluntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTH 105</td>
<td>Mittani</td>
<td>Aziru submits voluntarily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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As noted above, in the historical prologue of both versions of the Tuppil-Teššup treaty there is no mention of Amurrú’s previous overlord.

These two variables are combined in different ways, but two patterns are apparent. The Syrian kingdom was either taken by Šuppiluliuma from the Hurrians, or it became a Hittite vassal because Aziru decided to betray the Pharaoh and submit to Šuppiluliuma. One can also identify a very important element of consistency in both presentations of the events, i.e. the main concern of the Hittites was to show that they were not directly responsible for the Egyptian loss of Amurrú, and this is the message ultimately conveyed by all the available sources.

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