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**LE ROYAUME D'OUGARIT DE  
LA CRÈTE À L'EUPHRATE  
NOUVEAUX AXES DE RECHERCHE**

Édité par

Jean-Marc Michaud

FaTEP, Université de Sherbrooke  
LÉSA, Collège de France



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## *Ugarit and Inner Syria during the Late Bronze Age*

Gary Beckman - University of Michigan

From around the middle of the fourteenth century B.C.E. through the early decades of the twelfth century, Ugarit and the Syrian towns and cities on the long stretch of the Euphrates within the Hittite empire belonged to a single political, economic, and cultural system. For our reconstruction of this world we have available not only the archives of Ugarit, but the tablets and bullae recovered from the Hittite capital Boğazköy/Ḫattuša and the Egyptian residence at Tell el-Amarna/Akhetaten, as well as epigraphic material from Meskene/Emar, Tall Munbāqa/Ekalte, and Tell Hadidi/Azû on the middle Euphrates<sup>1</sup>. The newly-discovered records from Mišrife/Qatna on the Orontes, not yet published<sup>2</sup>, reportedly date to the years just preceding the establishment of Hittite hegemony and are thus not directly relevant to my discussion.

During the Late Bronze Age, cis-Euphratine Syria south to around the location of modern Tripoli was part—indeed the more prosperous part—of Ḫatti, the domain of the Hittites. In the course of their centuries-long expansion from their heartland in central Anatolia, the Hittites created an empire more through association than annexation. Much of their Syrian realm was governed through the agency of vassal princes, usually drawn from the traditional ruling families of the region, rather than through direct integration into the central administrative

1. For a guide to the mass of relevant sources, see H. KLENGEL, *Syria 3000 to 300 B.C.*, Berlin : Akademie Verlag, 1992, chapter III. The texts from Ekalte were made available only after the appearance of KLENGEL's handbook : W. MAYER, *Tall Munbāqa-Ekalte II. Die Texte*, Saarbrücken, Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 2001.
2. See provisionally T. RICHTER, "Der 'Einjährige Feldzug' Šuppiliumas I. von Ḫatti in Syrien nach Textfunden des Jahres 2002 in Mišrife/Qatna," *UF* 34 (2002), pp. 603-618.



structure. As can be seen in the provisions of the treaties concluded with the subordinate rulers<sup>3</sup> as well as in actual administrative records, while the Great King in Ḫattuša was the ultimate political authority and focus of their loyalties, it was the king of Carchemish<sup>4</sup> who more immediately supervised these princelings.

That is, the rulers of Carchemish, members of a cadet line of the Hittite royal house, served as viceroys of Syria on behalf of their cousins in the capital. Unfortunately, modern political circumstances have prevented any archaeological investigation of Jerablus/Carchemish since a British team worked there early in the twentieth century. Therefore the archives of the kings of Carchemish and their subordinate officers have not yet been recovered. Nonetheless, numerous records generated by the bureaucracy of Carchemish have been found among the documents at Ugarit<sup>5</sup> and Emar, and these allow us to describe in some detail the administrative system within which these cities functioned<sup>6</sup>.

For example, the king of Carchemish whose activities are best known to us, Ini-Teššup<sup>7</sup>, issued rulings in disputes between Ugarit and her neighbor Amurru on the one hand, and between Ugarit and her one-time dependency Siyannu-Ušnatu on the other. He also concluded an agreement with ‘Ammistamru II of Ugarit concerning compensation in the case of the murder of a merchant, and arranged the resurveying of the borders of Ugarit. More than once he fielded complaints of false imprisonment ordered by high administrators of the port town. Finally, many documents from Ugarit and from Emar dealing with private affairs—disputes at law, sales of real property, and testaments—are said

3. See G. BECKMAN, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, Atlanta, SBL, Scholars Press, 1999<sup>2</sup>.
4. See J.-R. KUPPER, «Karkémish aux III<sup>ème</sup> et II<sup>ème</sup> millénaires avant notre ère», *Akkadica* 79-80 (1992), pp. 19-23.
5. See M. YAMADA, "Reconsidering the Letters from the 'King' in the Ugarit Texts: Royal Correspondence of Carchemish?" *UF* 24 (1992), pp. 431-446.
6. See G. BECKMAN, "Hittite Provincial Administration in Anatolia and Syria: the View from Mašat and Emar," in O. CARRUBA, M. GIORGIERI and C. MORA (Ed). *Il Congresso Internazionale di Hittitologia*, Pavia, Gianni Luculano Editore, 1995, pp. 19-37.
7. See H. KLENGEL, *Op. cit.*, pp. 124-127.

to have been composed “in the presence of Ini-Teššup.” It is uncertain whether this involved the travel of the parties in these transactions to the court at Carchemish, or whether the king rather made a periodic progress through the region under his jurisdiction<sup>8</sup>.

In the pursuit of their duties, officials designated by the Sumerographic term DUMU.LUGAL, literally “Son of the King,” traveled throughout Hittite Syria. It is quite clear that not all holders of this title were offspring of the reigning Great King<sup>9</sup>, but this turn of phrase probably does indicate that the higher echelons of the Hittite administration were generally occupied by persons of royal descent. Records from Ḫattuša, Ugarit, and Emar demonstrate that the “Sons of the King” were officials of very high rank, often dispatched by the Hittite Great King to perform particular political or administrative tasks.

At Ugarit we meet “Sons of the King” redrawing the borders of the vassal state, arbitrating between the queen and a tax official, and chiding King ‘Ibirānu to make his required visit of homage to his sovereign, the Great King. In the Emar documents, the DUMU.LUGAL appear most frequently at the head of the lists of witnesses to various transactions in real estate and slaves.

At a lower level of administration, the territory of Emar, that is, the Land of Aštata, was the province of an official designated as the “Overseer of the Land” (UGULA.KALAM.MA, or on occasion simply <sup>LÜ</sup>UGULA). He was apparently responsible for the entire southeastern sector of Hittite Syria, and was itinerant throughout the region. His attested activities include military intelligence, administrative oversight, and the witnessing of various legal transactions, as well as participation in the local cult. In witness lists he follows any “Son of the King” who might be present. No “Overseer of the Land” or imperial officer of comparable rank is attested at Ugarit.

8. See already G. BECKMAN, “Hittite Administration in Syria in the Light of the Texts from Ḫattuša, Ugarit and Emar,” in M. W. CHAVALAS (Ed.), *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria*, Malibu, Undena, 1992, p. 46.

9. See F. IMPARATI, “Signori’ et ‘figli del rei,” *Or(NS)* 44 (1975), pp. 80-95.

Local governmental business at both Ugarit and Emar was left to the towns' kings and their administrative staffs. On the Euphrates, collegia of elders also played a significant role. The activities of these authorities need not detain us here, but I would stress that we have no evidence of direct dealings of the city governments with one another. Nor should we expect to discover such, since Hittite vassals were forbidden to pursue their own foreign policy, even within the empire. Therefore any official matters arising between Ugarit and the towns on the Euphrates would have been attended to by the imperial authorities. Note that the "Sons of the King" Ḫešmi-Šarruma and Tili-Šarruma<sup>10</sup> are mentioned in records from both Ugarit and Emar.

On occasion, however, the administration at Carchemish might delegate a problem to a native monarch. King Ari-Teššup of Ušnatu writes to an unnamed ruler of Ugarit<sup>11</sup> :

Now my father, the King of Carchemish, has written(!)<sup>12</sup> to me, "I have now sent this citizen of Emar to you. Adjudicate his legal dispute with a citizen of Siyannu (part of the kingdom of Ušnatu)." But this citizen of Emar now says : "I have no dispute in Siyannu. My dispute is with a citizen of ʾAru (a town belonging to Ugarit)<sup>13</sup>." I have herewith sent them to (you), my father, so that my father can interrogate them.

That is, when this local ruler to whom a matter had been referred discovered that it did not pertain to his jurisdiction after all, he passed it on to his fellow vassal king. This was no abrogation of the rights of the Hittite viceroy, since the king of Carchemish would undoubtedly have sent the Emariote directly to Ugarit himself, had there been no confusion about the political affiliation of the latter's legal opponent.

10. See I. SINGER, "A Political History of Ugarit," in W.G.E. WATSON and N. WYATT (Ed). *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, Leiden, Brill, 1999, p. 654, n. 145.

11. RS 17.143 = PRU IV, 217; cf. translation in S. LACHENBACHER, *Textes akkadiens d'Ugarit*, LAPO 20, Paris, Cerf, 2002, p. 186.

12. Text : *tal-tap-ra*.

13. See W. H. VAN SOLDT, *The Topography of the City-State of Ugarit*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2005, pp. 10-11.

In all probability the litigation alluded to in this letter had to do with trade, for Syria was the commercial crossroads of the ancient eastern Mediterranean basin. Trade routes running up the Euphrates valley from Babylonia and Iran beyond and those leading along the foothills of the northern mountains from Assyria would all have crossed the river somewhere between Emar and Carchemish on their way to the entrepot of Ugarit. Here they intersected with the land routes through interior and coastal Palestine to Egypt, Arabia, and Africa, and met up with the seaborne traders linking the Syrian port to Cyprus and the Aegean. It was the wealth generated by this trade that made Syria so wealthy and such an attractive area for Hittite, Egyptian, and later Assyrian expansion.<sup>14</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the only records at our disposal that demonstrate direct contact between the geographic poles of Hittite Syria, Ugarit and Emar/Aštata, are concerned with commerce.

The most significant group of texts in this regard consists of letters from the files of a trading company directed by a certain Šipti-Ba'al<sup>15</sup> on behalf of his mother-in-law, a queen of Ugarit. The participants in this enterprise, like the merchants of the Old Babylonian period<sup>16</sup> and those of the Hittite empire<sup>17</sup>, combined work for the state with pursuit of their own personal profit, making no absolute distinction in principle between public and private activities<sup>18</sup>. Šipti-Ba'al had two senior deputies in this firm, the well-known Urtenu, whose house at

14. On trade in the Late Bronze Age, see B. I. FAIST, *Der Fernhandel des assyrischen Reiches zwischen dem 14. und 11. Jh. v. Chr.*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2001, pp. 201-237.
15. See J.-P. VITA and J. M. GÁLAN, «Šipti-Ba'alu, un 'Égyptien' à Ougarit», *UF* 29 (1997), pp. 709-713.
16. See W. F. LEEMANS, *The Old Babylonian Merchant*, Leiden, Brill, 1950 and J. RENGER, "Das Palastgeschäft in der altbabylonischen Zeit," in A. C. V. M. BONGENAAR (Ed.), *Interdependency of Institutions and Private Entrepreneurs*, Leiden, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2000, pp. 153-183.
17. See H. KLENGEL, "Handel und Kaufleute im hethitischen Reich," *AoF* 6 (1979), pp. 69-80.
18. For an extensive collection of references to merchants and their activities in the ancient Near East, see D. C. SNELL, *Ledgers and Prices: Early Mesopotamian Merchant Accounts*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 3-5 with notes.

Ugarit has recently yielded many important texts<sup>19</sup>, and Dagan-bēlu, who traveled to the middle Euphrates on company business. To judge from his personal name, which features the predominant deity of inland Syria<sup>20</sup>, the latter may well have been a native of the area. A sample of their correspondence :

Say to my dear brother Šipti-Ba'al, thus says your brother Dagan-bēlu :

May the gods of Ugarit, weighty lord Ea, and the gods of Emar thoroughly protect your life and that of your wife, daughter of the king! May your person belong to your lord, the king, and may the eyes of the king single you out among your colleagues!

I have now arrived in Emar. Things are well with me, your servant, and for your female servant (my wife<sup>21</sup>). Please write to me that all is well there with my dear brother.

If your messenger is coming, let him bring oil and a large, fine, linen garment. If you would like a nice bow, write to me and I'll acquire (one) and send (it) to you. I have herewith sent my dear brother two quarts of (some vegetable<sup>21</sup>)<sup>22</sup>.

Probably somewhat later, the same traveler sends another letter to his counterpart in Ugarit :

Thus says Dagan-bēlu, say to my dear brother Urtenu :

19. See M. YON, « La maison d'Ourtenou dans le quartier sud d'Ougarit (fouilles 1994) », *CRAI(BL)*, 1995, pp. 427-451; and W. H. VAN SOLDT, "Private Archives at Ugarit," in A. C. V. M. BONGENAAR (Ed.), *Op. cit.*, pp. 240-242.

20. See L. FELIU, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*, Leiden, Brill, 2003.

21. ʾUL.LAM<sup>SAR</sup>.

22. P. BORDREUIL (Ed.), *Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville : Les textes de la 34<sup>e</sup> campagne (1973)*, RSO VII, Paris, ERC, 1991, pp. 66-70, no. 30.

May the gods of Ugarit, weighty lord Ea, and the gods of the land of Aštata protect your life!

Now things are well with me. Please write to me that all is well there with my dear brother.

Don't keep your son there, but send him on his way and let him come to me. And when he comes, may my dear brother give to his son alum, blue wool, blue-green wool, and a garment of twined linen.

Now don't keep Aziltu (the son?) there, but let him come here to me.<sup>23</sup>

This double letter, whose site of composition on the middle Euphrates is indicated by the invocation of local deities in its blessing, continues with the reiteration of the request to another employee of the firm :

Thus says Dagan-bēlu, say to my dear brother Uri-Te(ššup) :

May it be well with you! May the gods protect you in health!

Now things are well with me and with your son. Please write to me that all is well there with my brother.

When the son of Urtenu comes, you will give him one linen garment, alum, blue wool, and blue-green wool, as much as there is (on hand). Seal it with your seal and give it into the care of the son of Urtenu and that of the messenger of Šipti-Ba'al, and let them receive it for me.

It's urgent!<sup>24</sup>

Dagan-bēlu here places a rush order with his home office for the characteristic luxury product of Ugarit, dyed wool, along with alum, a material utilized in the dyeing industry, and a linen garment. It is not stated just who his customers might have been, or what products of the Euphrates valley or goods acquired from further south and east were sent to the coastal emporium in return. Perhaps the firm, like the Old

23. RS 31.134 = RSO VII, pp. 68-70, no. 31 : 1-20.

24. RS 31.134 = RSO VII, pp. 68-70, no. 31 : 21-43.



Assyrian merchants in Anatolia<sup>25</sup>, simply took its profits in the form of easily transportable silver.

Yet another letter from Dagan-bēlu to Urtenu demonstrates that some merchants of Ugarit had close personal ties to inland areas<sup>26</sup>. After the usual greetings, the traveling salesman continues, apropos of an unnamed colleague :

The rites of his brothers and his associates<sup>27</sup> will take place here for the first time, but he will not send him a gift. I am indeed your *zaratu*-man, a man in the house of his *zaratu*<sup>28</sup>. He will not send a gift. I have herewith sent (my son) Anani-Šarruma to you. May my brother give whatever you have on hand—whether blue wool or alum—to Anani-Šarruma so that he may take it to me.

There is no oil in my household, so, my brother, give me as much oil as you have on hand. It's urgent! (You wrote : ) "You should send your son. Don't send the Emariote, but send your own son to me so that I might give you what you want." I have herewith sent Anani-Šarruma to you.

Whatever the meaning of *zaratu*, it is clear that Dagan-bēlu's association with the local population was intimate enough to allow or even require him to participate in one of their clan<sup>29</sup> rituals. As mentioned above, he may even have been a native of the middle Euphrates region.

25. See K. R. VEENHOF, "Silver and Credit in Old Assyrian Trade," in J. G. DERCKSEN (Ed.), *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Leiden, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1999, pp. 55-83.

26. RS 31.141 = RSO VII, pp. 70-72, no. 32.

27. Read in line 12 <sup>U</sup>TAB.BA-šú with J. HUEHNERGARD, "Notes on Ras Shamra-Ougarit", *Syria* 74 (1997), p. 218.

28. D. ARNAUD in RSO VII, p. 71, translates «famille». See E. J. PENTIUC, *West Semitic Vocabulary in the Akkadian Texts from Emar*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2001, p. 194 for ZA/ZI-ratu as a month name at Emar.

29. On the "brothers" in texts from the middle Euphrates, see N. BELLOTTO, "I LÚ.MEŠ.ah-ḫi-a a Emar," *AoF* 22 (1995), pp. 210-228.

Additional pieces of this correspondence indicate that the company directed by Šipti-Ba'al and Urtenu also had dealings with the cities of later Phoenicia, and with Egypt beyond, thus linking much of their known world<sup>30</sup>.

In interior Syria the commercial activities of Ugaritic merchants even crossed the frontiers of the Hittite empire, as evidenced by a letter sent from Mari, possibly at this time part of the land of Suḫi<sup>31</sup>, to a recipient whose name is not given. I quote this text in full in order to highlight its unusual salutation and a blessing not otherwise found at Ugarit<sup>32</sup> :

May I, your servant Ḫellu, be a substitute for my lord! May Adad, Dagan, and Itur-Mer, as well as all the great gods of the land of Mari protect the life of my lord! May they [take a stand?] to guard everything belonging to my lord! May they establish security for the household of my lord, as well as his step and his path! My heart takes great joy at (the thought of) seeing my lord! Who would not want to see my lord's face or listen to his sweet prattling?

Say to my lord : My lord knows that I paid the price for the horses to your servant Adad-ma-atkala, but he has not sent the horses to me. Now, O my lord, may your servant Yarib-[...], whom I have sent to my lord, receive good horses (from those in the possession of) Adad-ma-atkala, and may he give them to me. May he arrive here quickly. The king is going to inspect the chariotry and I have no horses! Have I not written (previously) to my lord? To whom (else) should I write? The horses belong to my lord. When your servant will have sent (them) to me, (my) chariot will parade before the king. May my lord help me and save my life!

30. RS 34.173 = *RSO* VII, pp. 72-73, no. 33 : 26' (Egypt); RS 34.153 = *RSO* VII, pp. 75-76, no. 35 : 17, 19 (Sidon).

31. See N. HÁKLÁR, "Die Stellung Suḫis in der Geschichte : Eine Zwischenbilanz," *OrAnt* 22 (1983), pp. 25-36.

32. RS 34.142 = *RSO* VII, pp. 101-104, no. 47.

Say (further) to my lord : When I was broken down in the face of the enemy, I had gone far from the interior of the land and my house was neglected. Now that I've arrived back here, my door is sealed, so that I have not been able to send a nice gift to my lord.

It seems that the sender of this letter lost his chariot horses in the course of a campaign in which his forces were defeated. Having paid the agent of a Ugaritic merchant for replacement animals, he has yet to receive them. With a royal review of the chariotry fast approaching, he has written directly to the superior for satisfaction. He also explains the circumstances that have made it impossible for him to include the expected *bakšeesh*. It should be noted that northern Syria was a center for the raising and training of horses from early in the second millennium<sup>33</sup>.

A final letter, in view of its salutation probably to be associated with the previous missive, reports on trouble in the southeast. Once more the recipient is unnamed<sup>34</sup> :

[Thus says] Eniya<sup>35</sup> : May I be a substitute for my lord! Say to my lord : I've (already) sent one tablet to you; this is the second. Ḫadi-libbašu should not bargain in your presence about the horses of your chariot and your charioteer (<sup>LÜ</sup>*sakrumaš*). Give (him) provisions and asses, and let him take (them)!

The doors of your house are sealed. Since there is famine in your household, we will die from hunger. If you do not get here quickly, we will die from hunger. You will not find (a single) living man of your land.

33. See I. SINGER, "A Political History of Ugarit," in W.G.E. WATSON and N. WYATT (Ed). *Op. cit.*, pp. 656-657 (n. 10 above).
34. RS 34.152 = *RSO VII*, pp. 84-86, no. 40 : 1-14.
35. S. LACKENBACHER, in *RSO VII*, p. 84, transcribes *e'/ban'-ni-ia*, but the syllabic use of the BAN-sign would be unusual at Ugarit. For the name Eniya on the middle Euphrates, see *RE* 65, 9.



The presence of a Kassite term (<sup>LU</sup>*sakrumaš*<sup>36</sup>) for a hippological professional here also suggests that the writer was active in an area in or near Babylonia, and not in greater Ḫatti. Nonetheless, the recipient, who was presumably a citizen or a temporary resident of Ugarit, maintained a household in this distant region. I believe I have now demonstrated that Syria under Hittite domination indeed functioned as an interlocking economic sphere.

Finally, Hittite Syria was also a cultural unity, at least in the realm of scribal learning, which, in the nature of the evidence, is all that is really accessible to the modern researcher. Note that three cuneiform literary compositions, “The Dialogue between Šūpē-amēli and his Father”<sup>37</sup>, “A Life without Joy”<sup>38</sup>—also known as “Heroes of Ages Past”, and “A Blessing for a Prince”<sup>39</sup>, are found in the scribal curricula of both Emar and Ugarit<sup>40</sup>. In his study of this material, Thomas Kämmerer goes so far as to propose that the theme uniting these works, that of individual supplication, should be recognized as a characteristic West Semitic cultural innovation<sup>41</sup>. Whether or not we accept this<sup>42</sup>—and as a Hittitologist I cannot but think of the moving prayers of Muršili II<sup>43</sup>—it is obvious that there must have been contact, direct or at slight remove, between those intellectuals of Ugarit and of Ḫatti who operated within the great tradition of Mesopotamian cuneiform learning.

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36. CAD S, 82.

37. See M. DIETRICH, “Der Dialog zwischen Šūpē-amēli und seinem ‘Vater,’” *UF* 23 (1991), pp. 33-68.

38. M. DIETRICH, “Ein Leben ohne Freude,” *UF* 24 (1992), pp. 9-29.

39. D. ARNAUD, «Les textes cuneiformes suméro-accadiens des campagnes 1979-1980 à Ras Shamra-Ougarit», *Syria* 59 (1982), pp. 209-216.

40. T. R. KÄMMERER, *šimā milka: Induktion und Reception der mittelbabylonischen Dichtung von Ugarit, Emār und Tell el-Amārna*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 1998. KÄMMERER also provides editions of all of these compositions.

41. T. R. KÄMMERER, *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

42. B. ALSTER has recently argued effectively that “A Life without Joy”, which he entitles “The Ballade of Early Rulers”, is derived from a Babylonian forerunner; see *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, Bethesda, Md : CDL Press, 2005, p. 293.

43. See my translation of the “Plague Prayers” of Muršili II, in W. W. HALLO and K. LAWSON YOUNGER, Jr (Ed). *The Context of Scripture*, vol. I, Leiden, Brill, 1997, pp. 156-160.

To reiterate, during the final 150 years of the Late Bronze Age, coastal and inland Syria as far as the Euphrates constituted a single political, economic, and cultural system. But this system was fragile and destined to collapse in the first decades of the twelfth century under the combined pressures of large population movements<sup>44</sup>, alienation of the productive classes<sup>45</sup>, and civil war in Ḫatti.

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44. See I. SINGER, "New Evidence on the End of the Hittite Empire," in E. D. OREN (Ed.), *The Sea Peoples and their World : A Reassessment*, Philadelphia, The University Museum, 2000, pp. 21-33.

45. See M. LIVERANI, "The Collapse of the Near Eastern Regional System at the End of the Bronze Age: The Case of Syria", in M. ROWLANDS et alii (Ed). *Center and Periphery in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 66-73.