

Megiddo Mentioned in a Letter from Boğazköy

ITAMAR SINGER (Tel-Aviv)

Among the numerous Akkadian letters copied in KBo XXVIII by the late Professor Kümmel, whose tragic death astonished us all, the small fragment No. 86¹ would not attract any special attention if not for a rare mention of Urḫi-Tešub, the ill-fated nephew of Ḫattušili III. Browsing through the letter my eye was caught by the occurrence of the city *Ma-ak-ki-it-ta-a* (rev. 4' and 5'). The toponym is not attested elsewhere in the Boğazköy texts.² On the other hand, it closely resembles the spelling of Megiddo in second millennium cuneiform texts.³ The possibility that we are indeed confronted with a rare occurrence of this Canaanite city, whose site I excavated as a young archaeology student, gave me the impetus to indulge in a more thorough examination of this letter.⁴ I hope that despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence, the arguments adduced below substantiate the hypothesis and do not deviate from the well-founded and cautious methodology conveyed to me by Professor Otten during my studies in Marburg and ever since.

Obv.?

1']××××[
2']× šum-ma a-na UGU-ḫi-š[u
3'] ù šum-ma a-na ša-a-š[u

4' [ša-ni-tam(?)^D]UTU-ši a-kán-na iš-pu-ra-ma[
5' -di]n[?] m Ur-ḫi-^{DIM} a-šar šeš-i[a[?]

1 The fragment (83/g) was found in Büyükkale square m/13-14, south of Archive E.

2 See G. F. del Monte and J. Tischler, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der hethitischen Texte* (Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes, Band 6), Wiesbaden 1978.

3 At Amarna: *Ma-ki-da*, *Ma-gi-id-da*, *Ma-kíd-da*, *Ma-gíd-da*, see references in J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, Leipzig 1915, p. 1578; Taanach 5 l. 15: *Ma-gi-id-da*, see W. F. Albright, *BASOR* 94 (1944) 24.

4 I wish to thank Dr. Shlomo Izre'el with whom I discussed philological questions regarding the Akkadian of the letter.

6' DUM]U.NITA (?) *am-ma-tum šu-ku-un*[-šu(?)
 7']×-ti ša-a a-šar DUTU-ši EN-ia [
 8' a-na m]a-an-ni ú-še-bi-lu-ú-[m]a' ia-a'-ši'-ma
 9' ú-ul(?)] ú-še-bi-lu-šu DUT[U-ši EN-i]a
 10' a-ma-t]e-šu(?) li-de, ni/i[r-
 11' i]-na KASKAL-n[i

Rev.?

1' ^mMa-an-i]a(?) LÚDUMU.KIN[-ri-šu-nu]
 2' [qa-du ^mRi-a-maš-š]i' (?) ú ^mTi-i[l-li-DIM]
 3' [LÚMEŠ š]a'-a(?) DUTU-ši EN-ia i[l-tap]-r[u-ma]
 4' [il-la-]ku(?) i-na URU Ma-ak-ki-it-ta-a
 5']-ni iš-tu URU Ma-ak-ki-it-ta-a
 6' [^mMa-an-i]a(?) LÚDUMU.KIN-ri-šu-nu il-tap-ru-ni
 7' [ú a-n]a(?) DUTU-ši EN-ia ú-še-bi-lu
 8' [ii(?) LÚM]EŠ ša DUTU-ši EN-ia ú ii LÚMEŠ
 9']× ú-še-bi-lu-m[a
 10']×

11']×[

Obv.?

2'] whether to him [
 3'] or whether for him [
 4' [Further(?) His Majesty has written to me as follows:
 5' "] Urḫi-Tešub at m[y] Brother's[
 6'] make [him(?) an *ammatum*-son!"
 7'] who at His Majesty, my lord [
 8' to w]hom did they bring? To me
 9'] they did [not(?) bring him. Let His Majesty, my lord,
 10' know about his [affai]rs(?). [
 11'] on the road [

Rev.?

1' Mani]a(?), [their] messeng[er]
 2' [with Riamašš]i(?) and Til[i-Tešub]
 3' [the men o]f(?) His Majesty, my lord, [they have se]nt, [and]
 4' [they wen]t(?) to Makkittā.

5'] from Makkittā
 6' they sent me [Mani]a(?), their messenger,
 7' [and to(?) His Majesty, my lord, they brought (them).
 8' [Two(?) me]n of His Majesty, my lord, and two men
 9'] they brought.

Philological notes

- Obv. 5' One may suggest, with much reservation, the restoration *lu-ud-di*]n and render the sentence as follows: "[Let me sen]d Urḫi-Tešub (to stay) at m[y] Brother's." This would obviously have far-reaching historical consequences, therefore, it is better to await further evidence.
- 6' DUM]U.NITA(?) *ammatum* may perhaps be connected with the obscure expression DUMU^{MEŠ} *ammati* that defines various acts of adoption in Ugarit.⁵ The use of the nominative here may indicate a fossilized Akkadian expression. If the connection is valid, some sort of adoption or patronage referred to in this context could perhaps be related to Urḫi-Tešub's exile at the court of Ramses II (see Historical Commentary). Alternatively, taking into account the indiscriminate use of single and double consonants at Boğazköy, one cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that what the scribe really meant was DUMU.NITA *amatum*, "son of a maid-servant". If so, this would be an allusion to the fact that Urḫi-Tešub was the son of a concubine.⁶
- 7' The beginning of the line could perhaps contain the name (ending with -ti) of someone who resided at His Majesty's court. If so, the answer of the author would draw a parallel between Urḫi-Tešub, who is at the court of the Egyptian king, and someone who is at the court of the Hittite king.
- 8' A collation may confirm the reading *ia-a'-ši'-ma* at the end of the line.
- 9' A negative sentence would perhaps give a better sense.

Rev. 1'-2' For the restoration of the names see Historical Commentary.

4' If the restoration *il-la-]ku* is correct, the initial position of the verb is perhaps intended for emphasis. The lack of the ventive morpheme

5 PRU IV 55 (RS 15.92), 6; Ugar. V 173 (RS 21.2307), 4. See CAD A II p. 75.

6 Hatt. III 41; see Ph. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, *The Early and Late Phases of Urḫi-Tešub's Career*. FsGüterbock (1974) 127.

indicates that the author of the letter is not staying at Megiddo. The locative *ina* is used to indicate that the messengers have already arrived at Megiddo. Cf. S. Izre'el, *The Akkadian Dialect of the Scribes of Amurru in the 14th–13th Centuries B.C.* (diss., University of Tel Aviv), Tel Aviv 1985, 315 f.

5' Perhaps [*am-mi*]-*ni*, "why"?

9' The sense seems to require a restoration "of Egypt" or the like, but this is hardly compatible with the preserved traces (*ERIN^{MES}??*).

Historical Commentary

The only fully preserved name in the fragment, Urḫi-Tešub, fixes the date of the letter to the mid-thirteenth century B.C. His Majesty, most probably Ḫattušili III, who is quoted by the author of the letter (obv. 5' f.), is obviously referring to Urḫi-Tešub's exile at the court of his Brother, Ramses II. As we know from the famous letter of Ḫattušili to Kadašman-ellil, the Egyptian refusal to extradite Urḫi-Tešub to Ḫatti caused considerable tension in the otherwise amicable relations between the two countries.⁷ Nevertheless, it appears that Urḫi-Tešub was still residing in Egypt when the royal marriage of Ramses with the Hittite princess was negotiated.⁸ The context in which the Urḫi-Tešub affair is brought up in this letter depends on the exact meaning of *DUM]U.NITA(?) ammatum*, which, as mentioned above, cannot be established. Thus, we are unable to tell, on the basis of this datum, whether the letter was written about the time of the Peace Treaty in Year 21 of Ramses II (1258), or closer to the Royal Marriage in Year 34 (1245).

The reverse deals with the traffic of messengers (*LÚDUMU.KIN-ri = mār šipri*). *mTi-i*[- in l. 2' can reasonably be restored as Tili-Tešub, the well-known Hittite messenger, despite the fact that his name is elsewhere spelled *Ti-li*.⁹ The writer's preference for plane writing is clearly evident in his spelling of the toponym *Ma-ak-ki-it-ta-a*. Tili-Tešub was one of the Hittite envoys who brought the silver tablet of the peace treaty to Egypt.¹⁰

7 KBo I 10 obv. 67 ff.; see E. Edel, *Die Abfassungszeit des Briefes KBo I 10 (Ḫattušili – Kadašman-ellil) und seine Bedeutung für die Chronologie Ramses' II.* JCS 12 (1958) 131.

8 KUB XXI 38 obv. 12; see W. Helck, *Urḫi-Tešub in Ägypten.* JCS 17 (1963) 88.

9 See E. Laroche, *NH No. 1326; KBo XXVIII, p. XVI.*

10 E. Edel, *Die Teilnehmer der ägyptisch-hethitischen Friedensgesandtschaft im 21. Jahr Ramses' II.* Or 38 (1969) 181.

On his seal from Ugarit he is explicitly designated "the messenger who was sent to Egypt" (*mār šipri ša iltapru ana mār Mišri*).¹¹ He is still in this post during the negotiations preceding the royal marriage.¹²

In the peace treaty, as well as in the royal correspondence, Tili-Tešub is accompanied by another Hittite messenger, Riamašši, probably a native Egyptian.¹³ It is tempting to restore his name in l. 2', before his companion Tili-Tešub, but only a collation would establish whether the preserved sign can be read as *-šī*.

Together with these Hittite messengers one often encounters in the royal correspondence the Egyptian messenger Mania.¹⁴ I suggest to restore his name in ll. 1' and 6', where traces of *-ia* are still preserved. If so, Mania is the person designated in the letter as "their messenger", i.e. the messenger of the king of Egypt, who was sent from Makkittā. Unfortunately, it is not known whether Mania had already accompanied his Hittite colleagues at the presentation of the Silver Treaty to Ramses, since the names of two out of three Egyptian envoys are broken.¹⁵ Thus, the question of the exact dating of the letter – whether the second or the third decade of Ramses' reign – remains open.

After having placed KBo XXVIII 86 within the context of the Hittite-Egyptian contacts in the mid-thirteenth century, there remain two important questions to be asked: Who is the author of the letter and where is the city of Makkittā?

I cannot suggest a plausible answer to the first question. The sender appears to be a subject of the Hittite king.¹⁶ He seems to be stationed somewhere between Makkittā and the residence of His Majesty, the Hittite king. If I understand correctly the situation described in the reverse, the Hittite and the Egyptian messengers are sent, probably from Egypt,

11 RS 17.137; PRU IV 106, Ugar. III 135 f.

12 KBo XXVIII 23 (1965/c) passim; Edel, Or 38, 185 f.

13 E. Edel, *Neue keilschriftliche Umschreibungen ägyptischer Namen aus den Boğazköytexten.* JNES 7 (1948) 17 ff.; Or 38, 182, 185 f.

14 Edel, JNES 7, 13 f.; Or 38, 186 n. 3; KBo XXVIII p. XVI.

15 Edel, Or 38, 186 n. 3.

16 Theoretically, he could also be an Egyptian subject, who would also address the Hittite king, his superior, as "my lord", according to accepted epistolary courtesy formulas. However, in that case I would not expect the use of the title "His Majesty" (*PUTU-šī*), but rather "King of Ḫatti"; cf. e.g. the letter of the Egyptian vezier Pašiyara and the "great ones" of Egypt to Ḫattušili, E. Edel, *Der Brief des ägyptischen Wesirs Pašijara an den Hethiterkönig Ḫattušili und verwandte Keilschriftbriefe.* Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Göttingen 1978, 122 f.

and arrive at Makkittā (l. 4'). Then Mania (alone?) is sent from Makkittā to the author (5' f.). The continuation could either contain a repetition, in more detail, of the original information, or some additional information regarding the final destination of the messengers. Such a situation, or one similar,¹⁷ allows for a wide range of possible candidates for the authorship of the letter – from a high-ranking representative of the Hittite king¹⁸ to a ruler of a vassal state in Syria. The historical situation portrayed in the letter, in particular the mention of Urḫi-Tešub, would offer wide possibilities for conjecture, but in view of the fragmentary nature of the evidence it seems advisable to refrain at this stage from further speculations.

The second question can be answered more confidently, I believe. The city of Makkitta, passed by Egyptian and Hittite messengers en route to or from Egypt, is most probably Magidda/Megiddo,¹⁹ situated in the Jezreel Valley on a strategic crossroad of the international Via Maris. It is not without interest to recall, that the hoard of ivories discovered in the palace of Megiddo included an exquisite Hittite plaque,²⁰ probably to be dated to the thirteenth century B. C. Megiddo has also yielded a rare Hittite seal of a similar dating.²¹

The first occurrence of a toponym from Israel in a Boğazköy tablet again emphasizes the great potential of the Hittite-Egyptian correspondence. It is to be hoped that with Edel's publication of this important source material for international contacts, the fragment KBo XXVIII 86 will be brought into relation with other letters which may further elucidate its contents and reveal the identity of its author.

17 One cannot rule out entirely the possibility that the author is a special envoy of the Hittite king stationed in Egypt. Especially so, if the imperative in obv. 6' is addressed to him. In that case, the messengers would be travelling *to* Egypt, via Makkittā.

18 Possibly a Hittite prince on a special mission to Egypt; see I. Singer, A Hittite Hieroglyphic Seal Impression from Tel Aphek, Tel Aviv 4 (1977) 187 n. 18; id., Takuḫlinu and Ḫaya: Two Governors in the Ugarit Letter from Tel Aphek. Tel Aviv 10 (1983) 10.

19 In view of the indiscriminate use of single and double consonants at Boğazköy, the spelling of the name with a double *kk* does not raise any problem in its equation with Magidda/Megiddo. The same applies of course to the unselective use of voiced and voiceless consonants.

20 G. Loud, The Megiddo Ivories (OIP LII), Chicago 1939, No. 44.

21 G. Loud, Megiddo II (OIP LXII), Chicago 1948, pl. 162: 7.