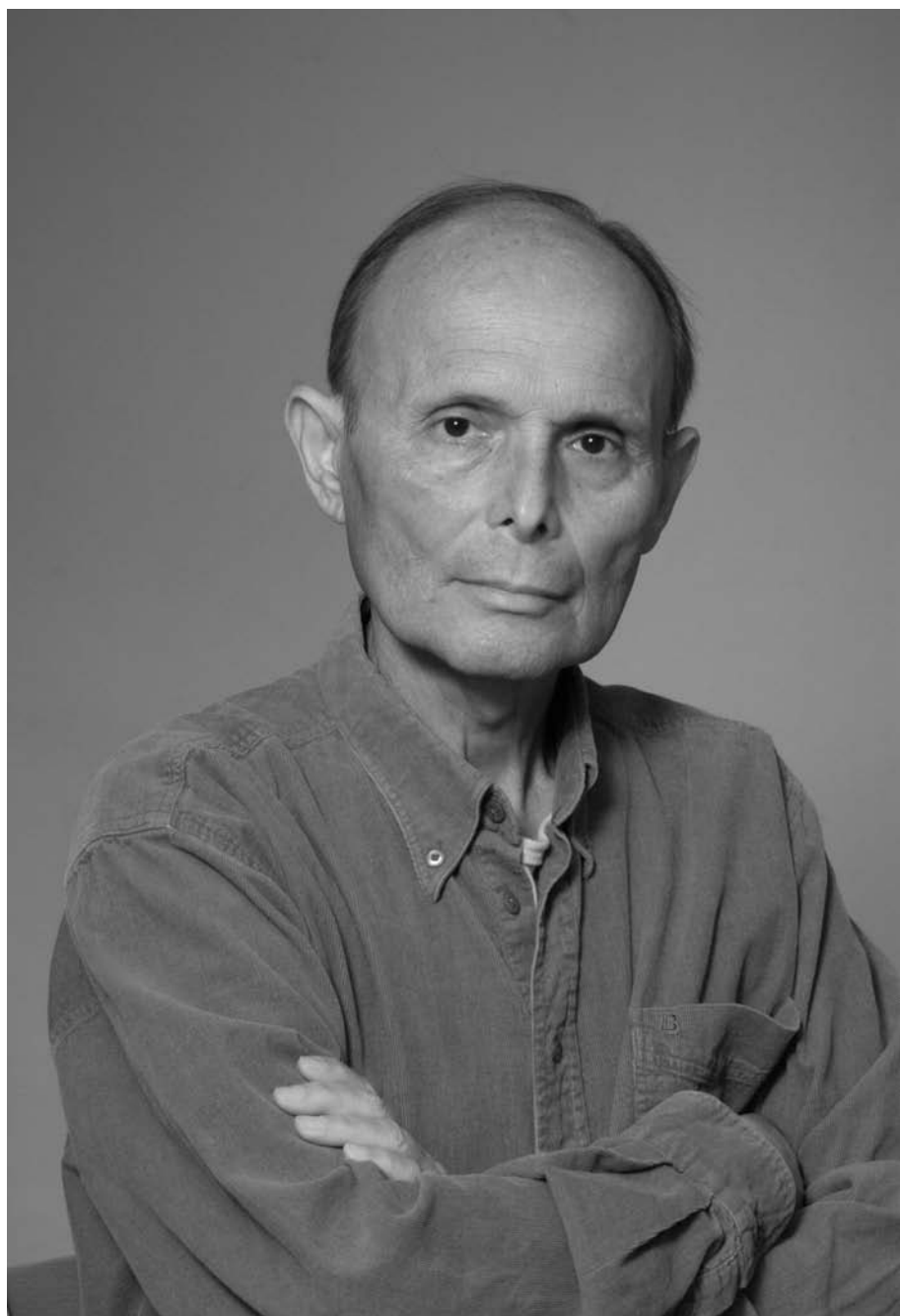


PAX HETHITICA
STUDIES ON THE HITTITES AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS
IN HONOUR OF ITAMAR SINGER



Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten

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Pax Hethitica

Studies on the Hittites and their Neighbours
in Honour of Itamar Singer

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A Note on Hittite Envelopes and HKM 86

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1. Letters are one of the most fascinating genres of Hittite literature. Diplomatic exchanges provide insight into high-level international contacts in the ‘global community’ that was the latter half of the second millennium BC in the Ancient Near East. Intra-state letters yield invaluable information about the inner workings of the Hittite state, and the *postscripta* in those same documents offer rare and probably the liveliest peeks into every-day Hittite society.

It gives us great pleasure to offer the following remarks to Itamar Singer, who has made so many essential contributions on all aspects of Hittite society and literature, letters among them, including his and Sh. Izre’el’s book *The General’s Letter from Ugarit* (Singer & Izre’el 1990), the important publication of ‘A New Hittite Letter from Emar’ (Singer 1999), as well as his recent contribution to the Festschrift for Israel Eph’al (Singer 2008), with its edition of the very difficult text KBo 18.54. We hope therefore that this note will pique his interest.

2. In the introduction to her edition of Hittite letters, Hagenbuchner (1989) brought together a wealth of information about letter writing in the Ancient Near East, focusing on the Hittite Kingdom and Empire: physical, graphic and stylistic attributes of the clay letters, their topics, scribes, messengers, routes and general logistics are all dealt with. One of the questions she raises is that of envelopes. Apart from a single uncertain example, not known to Hagenbuchner at the time, about which more below, there is no evidence for their use. Hagenbuchner (1989: 32) quotes the only textual hint at letter covers in the Hittite text corpus: *nu ṬUPPU ḫēš* ‘open the tablet!’ from KBo 18.48 obv. 17 (letter from the king to Ḫešni, NH). It is noteworthy that Hittite used the same proleptic idiom here that is attested for Akkadian (see CAD P: 347–348, under *petû* 2.a 1’ ‘to open’),¹ as do English and other modern languages, in which ‘opening a letter’ is short for ‘opening an (envelope in order to reveal the) letter (that is inside)’. No Hittite word for ‘envelope’ *vel sim.* is attested, or it has not been recognized thus far. The rare *ḡišDUB.ŠEN* ‘Tafelbehälter’² seems not to have been used for tablets and is more likely to denote a ‘treasure box’.³

For the complete lack of clay envelopes in Anatolia, Hagenbuchner (1989) sees three possible explanations: either they were rarely used (perhaps only for important diplomatic contacts); they were recycled after opening; or they were not made of clay but of other materials such as cloth, leather or wood. Though each option is possible, the third one seems the most plausible. If clay envelopes had been a common feature one would have expected at least one or two examples to have escaped Hittite recycling efforts and to have shown up in the archaeological record. If they were therefore not used for internal correspondence they

* The first author drafted the article, while the second author’s contributions are noted where they occur. Responsibility for the final version lies with both.

1 For envelopes in Mesopotamia, see most recently Charpin (2008: 111).

2 HZL: 99.

3 CHD P: 78, under *palsūwanza*.

may not have been used internationally either. Sealed diplomatic bags or non-clay containers would have offered a similar degree of security as clay envelopes. If a seal closing a leather bag could be forged, so could a clay envelope.

3. At this point the single alleged example of a letter with a clay envelope should be addressed. In his edition of the letters from Maşat Höyük, Alp (1991: 284, n. 427) described HKM 86a and 86b as the inscribed envelope (a) and its enclosed letter (b) respectively.⁴ The lower edges of both are partly preserved, allowing the determination of obverse and reverse. The documents do seem related in that they deal with troops (ÉRIN.MEŠ), even partly duplicating each other, it seems, with the country of Arzawa probably mentioned in both, although the latter depends on the restoration in (b) 9 (KUR^{URU}A[r²-]), which Alp based on KUR^{URU}Ar-za-u-wa in (a) 10. As he also correctly observed, what he considered the letter (b) is upside down vis-à-vis what he dubbed an envelope (a) (see figure on opposite page). *Pace* Alp, however, the hands of (a) and (b) do not seem to be those of different scribes. There appear to be no striking systematic differences in sign shape or the order in which their constituent wedges were impressed into the clay. On the contrary, both should probably be attributed to the same individual. Both documents are marked by a somewhat shallow (due to a hurried writing?) impression of the wedges and verticals slanting to the left.

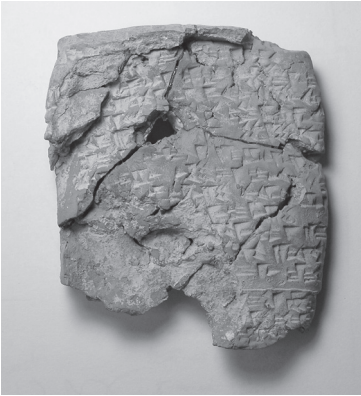
In the summer of 2008 I had the opportunity to examine HKM 86.⁵ Upon hearing of my intention to do so Prof. Cem Karasu informed me that he shared my doubts as to the status of these pieces as an envelope and its contents, and he mentioned the possibility of an original tablet having been overlaid with a fresh layer of clay that was in turn inscribed with a new text. Collation of the original document fully confirmed this. Usually, letters from Maşat Höyük are fairly thick and round, as shown, for instance, by HKM 72 (see figure). Assuming that HKM 86b would have been a similarly shaped letter, HKM 86a clearly could not have accommodated it. The document (b) simply could not have fit into its ‘envelope’ (a). Whereas the side of the object preserving the obverse of (a) and the reverse of (b) clearly shows two overlapping writing surfaces, there are no such indications whatsoever on the other side. It rather looks as if an original letter (b) was (partly) re-used in creating a new document (a). While the obverse of (b) was left unaltered, a new writing surface of fresh clay was superimposed upon Alp’s reverse (b), on which (a) was then written, its obverse covering (b)’s reverse.⁶ One can only speculate concerning exactly what procedure was used. Was the obverse still malleable enough to be smoothed out and inscribed again while the reverse had already dried too much? This would seem unlikely, since the obverse would have been inscribed first, and it therefore would tend to be the side that would dry first. Could it be that the scribe so completely muddled the reverse that he felt it would be easier to coat it with a new layer of clay and rewrite it rather than erasing and then writing over each line? For whatever reason, it must have seemed to the scribe more expedient to revert to this unusual procedure instead of forming an altogether

4 For a further historical evaluation of this letter, see de Martino (1996: 91ff.).

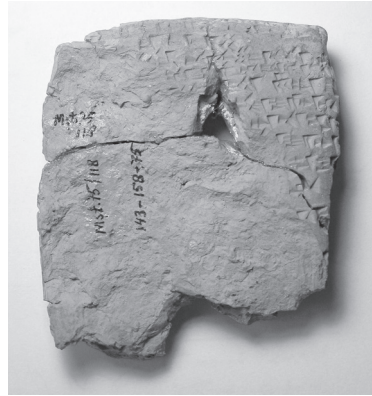
5 I am deeply grateful to the Director of the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi in Ankara, the late Dr. Hikmet Denizli and the curator of the tablets, Dr. Rukiye Akdoğan, for permission to collate this fragment in the summer of 2008.

6 An Old Babylonian example from Mari may show the same procedure *in statu nascendi* (Charpin 2008: 102, fig. 17). Prof. Jared Miller kindly informs me that the same phenomenon of two inscribed surfaces, one overlaying the other, can be observed on Bo 3080.

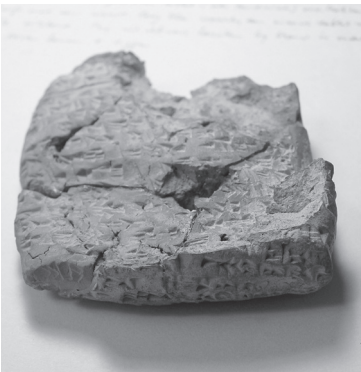
new tablet. In any case, when the tablet was scorched in the conflagration marking the end of Maṣat Level III around 1375,⁷ it burst along the seams of the overlay, exposing its inner core. The contents of the two documents as far as preserved seem to support this scenario.



HKM 86 rev.



HKM 86a obv.



HKM 86a lower edge



HKM 72 side

4. The decision not to send the letter in its original form (b) but to rewrite it may explain why the two texts are so closely related. As far as preserved, (a) 15–17 duplicate (b) 15–17, while (a) 9–11 parallel (b) 8–10. The intervening lines ([a] 12–14 and [b] 11–14) are completely different. Although lines (a) 1–8 are only fragmentarily preserved, the total lack of overlap with (b) 2–7 suggests that these two passages also contained a different text. The information conveyed in the reverse of (b) must have been seen, for whatever reasons, as no longer appropriate or simply wrong in order to prompt the rewrite.

Before discussing the contents of the relevant passages in more detail, a slightly revised transliteration, based on collation of the original, is offered here, starting with the original, that is, the inside letter (b).

⁷ Van den Hout (2007: 397ff.).

HKM 86b (original)

x+2 []x[?] ÉRIN.MEŠ
 3 [le]-^re^r da-^ra^r-at-ti
 4 [EGI]R[?]-pa-an pa-i nam-ma-aš-ma-aš
 5 [ki-i]š-ša-[a]n me-mi a-pu-u-un-w[a]
 6 [o]x ÉRIN.MEŠ ^rÚ-UL^r tum-me-e-ni
 7 ka-a-š[a]-^rwa^r tu-uz-zi-[eš/iš]
 8 ku-it an-[d]a a-ra-an-z[i]
 9 nu-wa-ra-aš nam-ma I-NA KUR ^{URU}A[r-za-u-wa]
 10 ^rÚ^r-[UL] pa-iz-zi nu-wa-^rra^r-an a[n-da]
 11 [EGIR-pa ú-w]a-te-zi
 12 [o o o k]u-wa-at a-da[?]-x[...]
 13 [o o o o]^rÚ^r-UL^r a-uš-tén
 14 [-wa-aš]-ma-aš ku-it

(b): [...] do[n]’t take the troops, give them [b]ack, then tell them [as f]ollows: ‘We will not take those...troops. Because just now troops are arriving, they (i.e., your troops) will no longer go to the country of A[rzawa] and he will [le]ad them [back] t[o (you)]. Why [...]...? Haven’t you seen what [...] there is [to/for y]ou?’

HKM 86a (overlying text)

x+6 []h]a-at-ra-a-mi
 7 [o o tu-uz-zi-i]š ku-iš
 8 [o o]x x hu-u-ma-an-da-aš
 9 [o o a]n[?]-da a-ra-an-za
 10 [nu-wa-r]a-aš I-NA[!] KUR ^{URU}Ar-za-u-wa
 11 [^rÚ-U]L pa-iz-zi nu-wa-ra-aš
 12 [EGIR-p]a ú-iz-zi
 13 [nu-uš me-e]k-ki na-aḫ-šar-nu-ut
 14 [o o o o] ša-r[a]-a ti-it-ta-nu-ut

(a): [...] I will [w]rite [to them[?]]: ‘[The troop]s[?] that have arrived in/to/for all [...], will [no]t go to Arzawa. They will come [bac]k[?]. You must instill [gre]at fear [in them and] put them on alert!

Brief commentary

HKM 86b

- 3: Given the Hittite common gender behind Sum. ÉRIN.MEŠ, Alp’s restoration to [ku]-e is not possible. Since his reading [...]e is likely, restoring the prohibitive *lē* fits both the space and the context.
- 6: Reading based on collation (see photograph).

7: Because of the 3. plur. *aranz*[i], *tuzzi*- must be nom. plur., which can be spelled with either *-eš* or *-iš* in the final syllable; cf. GrHL: 87, §4.19. The plur. is appropriate since it refers to multiple military units coming to the sender of the letter, as opposed to the single unit of the people addressed in the quoted speech, referred to in ll. 4 (*-an*), 5–6 (*apūn...ÉRIN.MEŠ*), 9 (*-aš*) and 10 (*-an*).

11: 'He' is understood as referring to the person who was in charge of the actual requisitioning of the troops.

12-14: For a possible interpretation of these lines see below. The translation remains tentative.

HKM 86a

7-9: Restoration to *[tuzzi]š* is based on the parallel sentence in (b), though *tuzziš* must be sg. here because of the immediately following *kuiš*.⁸

14: *šarā tittanu*- is used to describe how the bee puts Telipinu back on his feet again after having stung him (CHD Š: 220, under *šarā* B l a 53' b'), reawakening and alerting him.

Both passages contain references to three parties, i.e., the sender (cf. *ḥatrāmi* in [a] 6), the addressee in the 2 sg. (cf. *dātti*, *pai*, *memi* in [b] 3–5, and *naḥšarnut*, *tittanut* in [a] 13–14) and a third party, an unnamed town's representatives, referred to in the quoted speech by way of a 2 pl. (cf. *-šmaš* in (b) 4, 14⁹, *aušten* ibid. 13). The letters seem to deal with troop movements in which plans to send military units to Arzawa in western Anatolia play a role. According to (b) the sender had initially ordered the addressee to requisition the third party's troops in order to send them to Arzawa. However, while this order was being carried out, other troops arrived, and the sender told the addressee it was no longer necessary, that he could reassure the third party that their troops would not be sent to Arzawa and that they could expect them back shortly. It follows from (a), however, that the troops that the addressee had been ordered to take from the third party had meanwhile already reached the place where the sender wanted them to go. He now tells the addressee that he himself will write the third party not to worry and that they will be sent back. If this scenario is correct, it seems that when the original letter had been written but not yet sent, the troops had already been taken and arrived at their destination, thus rendering the message of (b) no longer current. In the revised letter (a) the sender wrote the addressee that he himself would assure them that the troops would return and that they were no longer destined to go to Arzawa. The last lines of the quote from (a) are again hard to understand. Did the sender urge his addressee to tell them to be very much on the alert, perhaps because they were temporarily without any military protection? Or should these words be taken literally in the sense that the town's representatives had initially been disrespectful towards the sender's emissary? Should they be forced to show more respect (*naḥšarnu*-) and be made to stand up for him (*šarā tittanu*-)? Perhaps this is what the enigmatic lines (b) 12–14 referred to. Whatever the meaning of these words and (a) 13–14 may have been, the two texts as a whole seem incompatible with each other and one can thus hardly have been the other's envelope.

⁸ This is therefore not a case of *aranza* standing for *aranzi*; for this phenomenon, see GrHL: 182ff.

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