

LETTERS TO EGYPT FROM BABYLONIA,
ASSYRIA, AND SYRIA, IN THE FIF-
TEENTH CENTURY B.C.

TRANSLATED BY THE EDITOR

AN account has already been given in these volumes of the recent discovery of cuneiform tablets at Tel-el-Amarna in Upper Egypt, which prove to contain official correspondence addressed to the Egyptian monarchs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Amenôphis III and his son, Amenôphis IV, Khu-n-Aten, "The Heretic King" (*Records of the Past*, new ser., vol. ii. pp. 57 *sq.*) One statement, however, in that account requires correction, in view of the letters from the king of Mitanni, which have now been published. Queen Teie, the mother of Amenôphis IV, was not the daughter of Duisratta or Dusratta, the Mitannian king; the daughter of the latter prince was Tadukhepa, the wife of Amenôphis IV. We are still in the dark as to the parentage of Teie, and Prof. Maspero may be right in considering her to be of Egyptian origin, possibly even a sister of Amenôphis III.

In the following pages I have given translations of the most important letters, from a historical point of view, which have yet been published. They are mostly to be found in the magnificent publication of Messrs. Winckler and Abel, entitled *Mittheilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen* (Berlin, Spemann, 1889, 1890), of which two parts have appeared containing the texts of a considerable number of the Tel el-Amarna tablets at Berlin and Cairo. The promptitude and carefulness with which they have been edited contrasts favourably with the tardiness of the authorities of the British Museum in putting the collection of Tel el-Amarna tablets that exists there at the service of scholars. Of the eighty-one tablets now in the British Museum four only have been published (by Mr. Budge in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, June 1888). A few passages in the letters have been translated by Dr. Winckler in his *Bericht ueber die Thontafeln von Tel-el-Amarna* in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin Academy, 1888 (No. xxiii), and Dr. Zimmern has translated four of the texts in the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, v. (1890). Three of these are the same as Nos. 2, 3, and 10 translated by myself in the following pages.

An unexpected light is cast by these letters on the literary education and intercourse which prevailed throughout the ancient civilised world from the Euphrates to the Nile in the century before the Exodus. The government of Egypt extended as far

as Northern Syria, its political influence as far as the frontiers of Assyria. But the culture of Western Asia had its primitive home in Babylonia; it was the language and complicated script of Chaldæa which were taught and studied in the distant countries of the west, and which the educated gentleman was required to learn. Egypt exported gold from the mines which had been opened in the desert, and were worked by convicts and the captives taken in the Asiatic campaigns of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

These Asiatic campaigns, however, had tended to Semitise the governing class in Egypt. The king married into the families of Asiatic princes and filled his court with Asiatic officials. Amenôphis IV even became a convert to a Semitic faith, and endeavoured to substitute a belief in the supreme Semitic Baal, who revealed himself in the fiery orb of the sun, for the old religion of his people. His dominions in Palestine and Syria were placed under governors who bore Semitic names, mostly of a purely Canaanitish stamp. Even the vizier himself has a name which is otherwise not found outside the Bible, although the name of the Carthaginian goddess Dido indicates that it was not unknown to the Phœnicians. This is Dûdu, the Dodo of the Old Testament, etymologically related to David. Dûdu's two sons, Aziru and Khâi, bear names which are equally Biblical in their character.

The two letters of Aziru to his father show pretty

plainly the position occupied by Dûdu in the kingdom of the Pharaoh. He alone is addressed like the Pharaoh himself as "my lord," and even his son calls himself his "servant." Perhaps, however, the most significant phrase is that which speaks of "Dûdu and the king my lord and the nobles." We are reminded of what the Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Gen. xli. 40).

The letters of Aziru possess a further interest. They bring the Hittites before us in the act of descending from their old homes in the north upon the fertile plains and cities of the Semites in the south. Kadesh, on the Orontes, has not yet become their southern capital; but they are already threatening Tunip, the Tennib of modern days, to the northwest of Aleppo. A century later, when the civil wars were ended, which the death of Amenôphis IV and his attempt to introduce a Semitic religion and a Semitic government into Egypt had occasioned, when the stranger and his faith were driven from the land, and the Nineteenth Dynasty was founded by that "new king which knew not Joseph," the Hittites were encamped on the northern threshold of Palestine. The Egyptian armies again marched into Asia, but even the power of Ramses II was unable to dislodge them from the post they had gained, and the utmost he could do was to check their southward advance. The chief result of his war was to weaken both Egyptians and Hittites, and to exhaust the

cities of Canaan, so that they became an easy prey a few years later to the invading tribes of Israel.

Assur-yuballidh, king of Assyria, whose letter to Amenôphis IV I have placed first in my series of translations, is mentioned towards the commencement of the so-called "Synchronous History of Babylon and Assyria" (line 8) as a contemporary of the Babylonian king Kara-Urus. We learn from the letter the name of his father, Assur-nadin-akhi, who must therefore be inserted between Assur-yuballidh and Buzur-Assur (see "List of the Kings of Assyria," *Records of the Past*, new ser., vol. ii. p. 206). Buzur-Assur, as we learn from the "Synchronous History," was a contemporary of Burna-buryas, another correspondent of Amenôphis IV.

A third royal correspondent of the Egyptian monarchs was Dusratta or Tusratta or Duisratta—for the name is written in these various ways—the king of Mitanni. According to the Assyrian inscriptions Mitanni was the district on the eastern bank of the Euphrates which lay opposite to Carchemish. It is called Maten in the Egyptian inscriptions, and was included in the kingdom of Nahrina, the Aram-Naharaim, or "Aram of the two rivers," of Scripture, of which Chushan-rish-athaim was king (Judges iii. 8). It is possible that an obscure passage in one of the letters signifies that the Mitannian prince claimed sovereignty also over Khani-rabbat or eastern Kappadokia. Among the tablets now at Berlin is a long letter from Dus-

ratta, written in cuneiform characters, but in the language of Mitanni, which seems unlike any other hitherto known. We gather from it that the father and predecessor of Dusratta was Sutarna, who is stated in an inscription on an Egyptian scarab to have sent his daughter Kirkipa as a wife to Amenôphis III in the tenth year of the latter's reign, along with 317 attendants. Artatâmas, the grandfather of Dusratta, had also married his daughter to Thothmes IV, so that for three generations the rulers of Egypt and Mitanni had been connected by marriage with one another.

The people of Mitanni, however, did not speak a Semitic language, and it is probable that they did not belong to the Semitic race. But they had adopted the Semitic adoration of the winged solar disk, and along with it, in all probability, some portion of the Semitic worship of Baal. It was this worship and adoration which Amenôphis IV attempted to force upon his subjects. The Semitic tendencies of the court and the dominance of Semitic strangers from Canaan and Syria were due not so much to the intermarriages with the royal family of Mitanni as to the Egyptian conquest of Palestine.

I.—LETTER OF ASSUR-YUBALLIDH, KING OF ASSYRIA, TO
AMENOPHIS IV, KING OF EGYPT¹

1. To Napkhuriya (Neferu-kheper-Ra) [the great king]
 2. the king of EGYPT,² my brother, [I write]
 3. thus, (even I) Assur-yuballidh king of the country of
ASSYRIA,
 4. the great king, thy brother.
-

5. To thyself, to thy house and thy country may there be
peace!

6. That I have seen thy ambassadors
 7. has pleased (me) greatly; thy ambassadors
 8. I have sent for to appear in my presence.
-

9. A chariot [the choicest?] in the kingdom with (its)
harness
 10. and two white horses, [together with]
 11. one chariot without harness and a seal of white ala-
baster
 12. I have despatched as a present for thee.
-

13. For the great king is produced perpetually
14. the gold (which) in thy country (is like) the dust

¹ Winckler and Abel: *Mittheilungen*, i. p. 8.

² Written Mitsari as in the letters of the king of Mitanni. The Babylonian form of the name is Mitsri, corresponding to the Hebrew Matsor and Mitsraim. In the later Assyrian inscriptions the name appears as Mutsur or Mutsri, probably through confusion with the name of Mutsri, a district to the north of Assyria.

15. (that) they collect : why in thy presence
 16. is it brought and kept back, is it withheld and not
 sent?
 17. All the gold that is my property,
 18. as well as what is lacking to it, send.
-

19. When Asur-nadin-akhi my father
 20. sent (an embassy) to the country of EGYPT (*Mitsri*),
 21. 20 talents of gold did they despatch to him.
-

22. When the king of the country of KHANI-RABBAT¹
 23. to thy father and the land of EGYPT
 24. sent (an embassy), 20 talents of gold
 25. did they despatch to him.
-

26. [As] to the king of KHANI-[RAB]BATI
 27. [so] also to myself
 28. despatch the gold.
 29. [The road both in] going and returning
 30. for the hands of my ambassadors
 31. I have made secure.²
-

32. If thou inclinest thy face³ favourably
 33. despatch much gold, and thy letter in return
 34. write (to me) and what thou desirest let them take.
-

35. Behold, distant⁴ lands
 36. have the ambassadors visited⁵ and they have journeyed
 to (many) cities.
-

¹ "Khani the great," or Eastern Kappadokia, the capital of which was Malatiyeh,

² *Ullammatstsi*.

³ Literally, "If thou art good as to thy face."

⁴ *Ruqatum*.

⁵ *Ilika*.

37. As for thy ambassadors
 38. they have delayed on the way because the 'SUTI¹
 39. threatened² them with death, until I sent and
 40. the 'SUTI took *fright* (?)³.
 41. My ambassadors . . . them
 42. [and] they did not delay.
-
43. When the ambassadors (reached) the frontier (of
 Assyria)
 44. why do they not wait?⁴ and
 45. at the frontier they *are in a hurry* (?)⁵
 46. *It is fitting* (?) at the frontier they should wait
 47. for the king; everything is there
 48. and he has established (it) and at the frontier :
 49. he has arranged (it). Against the king who fulfils
 everything
 50. there is no *charge* (?) : why
 51. at the frontier are they *in a hurry* (?),
 52. even the ambassadors who . . .
The last three lines are too obliterated for translation.

II.—LETTER OF BURNA-BURİYAS, KING OF BABYLONIA, TO
 AMENOPHIS IV OF EGYPT⁶

OBVERSE

1. To Nipkhurri-riya king of the country of [EGYPT]
2. by letter
3. I speak (even I) Burra-buriyas king of the country of
 KARA-DUNIYAS⁷

¹ Nomads, who ranged through the desert on either side of the Tigris, in Mesopotamia and the south-east of Assyria.

² *Ura'u*, the Heb. *yârê*.

³ Probably to be read *khardê*, "fear."

⁴ *Ultannazazu*.

⁵ *Imattu*; the verb *imati* occurs in K 1282, *Rev.* 18.

⁶ Budge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, June 1888, Pl. v, vi.

⁷ Babylonia.

4. thy brother : unto myself (is) peace ;
 5. to thyself, thy house, thy wives, thy children, thy country,
 6. thy officers, thy horses (and) thy chariots, may there ever be peace !
-

7. Ever since my father and thy father with one another
 8. conferred in amity,
 9. they sent beautiful present[s] to one another,
 10. but they did not address one another in fair (and) beautiful letter[s].
 11. Again, O my brother, 2 manehs of gold I have sent as my present.
 12. In return send (me) abundance of gold as much as thy father (sent),
 13. or if that is displeasing send half of what thy father (sent).
 14. Wherefore shouldst thou send two manehs of gold (only) ?
 15. For the sake of¹ the folding doors in the temple² of MÂT and the palace
 16. (which) I have undertaken³ to build send much gold,
 17. and whatsoever thou desirest in my country
 18. write for and let them take it to thee.
-

19. In the time of Kuri-galzu my father the KUNA(?)KHIANS, all of them,
20. sent unto him saying : Against the *government of the country* (?)⁴
21. let us sin and rebel.
22. [With] thee will we make (a league). My father

¹ Literally, "in favour of."

² Literally, "house of God," *bit-ili*, the Heb. *beth-el*. The following word *mât* seems to be a proper name, though whether it denotes the name of a deity or of a place I cannot say. We may, however, read *mâd*, "many a temple."
³ Read *tsabtakû*.

⁴ Perhaps the country of "Qannisat." The Kunakhians are probably to be identified with the Kinakhkhians of the next letter. Winckler compares the name of the Canaanites.

23. sent this (answer) to them
 24. saying :

REVERSE

1. Cease (to ask) to ally thyself with me :
2. if thou art estranged from the king of EGYPT my brother, and
3. alliest thyself with another,
4. I will not go and assist¹ you.
5. Thus my father was like-minded with me,
6. because of thy father he did not listen to them :
7. Again, by an ASSYRIAN who regards [my face²]
8. have I not sent to thee after the news (I have) of them, asking
9. why they have gone to thy country.
10. If thou lovest me, no success
11. will they obtain ; dismiss them to their distant land.
12. For a present to thee 3 manehs of alabaster,
13. (and) 14 spans of horses with 5 chariots of wood
14. I have despatched to thee.

III.—LETTER OF BURNA-BURYAS TO AMENOPHIS IV³

OBVERSE

1. [To] Napkhuhr-ri[ya]
2. the king of EGYPT⁴ my brother [it is spoken]
3. thus : Burra-buryas the king of KARA-[DUNIYAS]
4. thy brother—unto myself (is) peace ;
5. unto thee, thy country, thy house, thy wives, thy children,
6. thy officers, thy horses (and) thy chariots
7. may there ever be peace !

¹ *Akhamat* like *khamat*, *W. A. I.*, v. i, 75.

² That is, "is tributary to me."

³ Winckler and Abel, *Mittheilungen*, p. 7.

⁴ *Mitsri*.

8. I and my brother with one another
9. have conferred amicably,
10. and this is what we have said
11. as follows: as our fathers with one another,
12. we also have friendly dealings.
13. Again my ministers
14. who came with Akhi-dhâbu¹
15. into the country of KINAKHKHI² trusted to destiny,
16. from Akhi-dhâbu to visit my brother they passed;
17. in the city of KIKHINNATUNI of the country of KIN-
AKHKHI
18. Sum-Adda the son of Balumme³
19. (and) Sutatna the son of Saratum⁴ of the city of AKKU,⁵
20. when they had sent their men, slew
21. my ministers and carried off their treasures
22. which they [were taking] for [a present to the king of
EGYPT].
23. I have sent to you [therefore] a complainant⁶
24. [who] may speak to thee [thus]:

REVERSE

1. KINAKHKHI (is) thy country and the king [is thy
servant?].
2. In thy country I have been injured; do thou punish
[the offender].
3. The silver which they carried off [was] a present [for
thee],
4. and the men who (are) my servants they have slain.
5. Slay them and requite the blood (of my messengers);
6. but if thou dost not put these men to death,
7. (the inhabitants) of the high-road that belongs to me
will turn

¹ Dr. Zimmern compares the Biblical name of Ahitub.

² Perhaps to be identified with the Kunakhians of the preceding letter.

³ Perhaps the Biblical Balaam. His son's name would represent Shem-Hadad.

⁴ The Biblical Sarah. Sutatna may be Seth-yathan; cf. Numb. xxiv. 17.

⁵ The Accho of Judg. i. 31, now Acre.

⁶ *Sita*[?s'sa].

8. and verily will slay thy ambassadors, and
9. a breach will be made in the agreement (to respect the persons) of ambassadors,
10. and this man¹ will be estranged from thee.
11. One of my men Sum-Adda,
12. having cut off his feet,
13. detained him with him ;
14. and as for another man, Sutatna of AKKU,
15. having made him stand on (his) head,
16. he stood upon his face. As for these men
17. . . . one has spoken thus : I have seen indeed
18. . . . [what] thou askest that indeed thou knowest.
19. [By way of a pre]sent, 1 maneh of alabaster I have despatched to thee.
20. [By] my ambassadors a costly gift I have [sent to thee].
21. [On account of the re]port² which my brother has heard
22. my ambassadors do not detain ;
23. the costly present let them offer [to thee].

IV.—LETTER FROM AZIRU TO HIS BROTHER KHÂI³

1. To Khâi⁴ my brother
2. thus (I speak, even I) Aziri⁵ thy brother :
3. Unto thee may there be peace,
4. and from the soldiers of the palace
5. of the king my lord may there be much peace !

6. What immediately
7. I speak before the king my lord,

¹ That is Burna-buryas.

² [*Dhe*]ma.

³ Winckler and Abel : *Mittheilungen*, ii, p. 38.

⁴ The Hebrew *khay*, "living"; compare the name of Hiel, 1 Kings xvi, 34.

⁵ Aziru or Aziri (Ezîr in the Old Testament) was the son of Dûdu (the Biblical Dodo or David), a high official at the court of the Pharaoh. See Letter v.

8. publicly I speak,
 9. (even) I and my sons
 10. and my brothers, all (being) servants
 11. of the king my lord before (him).

12. Now I and Khatib
 13. have gone again
 14. with a present to Khazai¹
 15. [who is] among you ;² verily the frontier,
 16. behold ! I have reached.

17. From the orders of my lord
 18. I do not free myself,
 19. or from your² orders,
 20. (even) I the servant of my lord.

21. The king of the land of the HITTITES³ in the country
 of NUKHASSE⁴
 22. is staying and I am afraid
 23. of him (and) have defended myself.
 24. To PHENICIA he ascends ;
 25. and if the city of DUNIP⁵
 26. falls, he stays in a place (only) 2 *parasangs from here* (?),
 27. and I am afraid of him ;
 28. yet according to this order
 29. he remains until he quits it.⁶

¹ This seems to be the name of the Hittite king.

² Plural.

³ *Khatte*.

⁴ Nukhasse was in northern Syria ; Dunip appears to have been one of its cities. M. Halévy suggests that Nukhasse is the land of "bronze" (Heb. *nekhosheih*), and compares 2 Sam. viii. 8.

⁵ The Tunip of the Egyptian monuments, now Tennib, between Azaz and Arpad (Erfad), north-west of Aleppo. In the Assyrian period, from the ninth century B.C. downwards, Tunip disappears from history, its place being taken by Khazazu (Azaz) and Arpad.

⁶ *Adi patari-su*. Compare another letter of Aziru (No. 32) : "The king of the Hittites is staying in the land of Nukhasse and I am afraid of him. He is staying in a place [only two] *parasangs distant* (?), [in] the city of Tûnip and I am afraid. The place he has quitted (*iptur*) also I

30. And now one has gone
31. with a costly present to him
32. (even) I and Khatib.

V.—LETTER FROM AZIRU TO HIS FATHER DÛDU.¹

1. To Dûdu my lord, my father,
 2. thus (speak I) Aziru thy servant ;
 3. at the feet of my lord I prostrate myself.
-
4. Khatib has gone
 5. and has *answered* (?) the words
 6. of the king my lord publicly and well,
 7. and I have rejoiced exceedingly ;
 8. and my country and my brothers,
 9. the servants of the king my lord
 10. and the servants of Dûdu my lord,
 11. have rejoiced exceedingly.
 12. Behold, there has gone
 13. the prince² of the king my lord
 14. unto me. From the commands
 15. of my lord, my god, my Sun-god,
 16. and from the commands of Dûdu
 17. my lord, I do not free myself.
-
18. Now, O my lord, Khatib
 19. remains with me.
 20. I and he³ will go (together).
 21. O my lord, the king of the land of the HITTITES

have reached. [So] again . . . we have gone into the land of Phœnicia, the country of my lord, and I am afraid for the country of my lord." So also in another despatch (No. 33) : " And again [the king of the Hittites] is staying in the land of Nukhasse ; [he is staying] two *parasangs distant* (?) in the city of Tunip, and I am afraid it may fall . . . may [the king of the Hittites] quit (*iptur*) the city of Tunip."

¹ Winckler and Abel, *Mittheilungen*, ii. p. 45.

² *Sarru*, which must not be interpreted "servant" here, but "prince," like the Heb. *sar*. In correct Assyrian *sarru* is "king," *malku* (*melech*) "prince," but the writer of the letter follows the Canaanitish usage.

³ *Sîtu*, a curious derivative from *sû* "he," like *yati* "myself."

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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