

Although the existence of different scribal peculiarities according to the provenience of the Amarna letters has long been recognized by such scholars as O. Schroeder,¹ F. Thureau-Dangin,² and W. von Soden,^{2a} few investigations have been undertaken emphasizing the scribal peculiarities of any one major group of letters.³ The subject has been most recently touched upon by W. L. Moran who, in his article in The Bible and the Ancient Near East,⁴ enumerated four scribal peculiarities in the Abdi-Ḥepa letters:

¹ See the Zeichenliste appended to the end of O. Schroeder, Die Tontafeln von El-Amarna, VS XI-XII, (Leipzig, 1914-15).

² F. Thureau-Dangin, Le syllabaire accadien (Paris, 1926). He not only talks about an Akkado-Hittite syllabary which is attested only in texts such as the Amarna letters and Boghaz-köy texts, but also finds a "Hittite" type syllabary represented in the letters of Tušratta, Aziru et al., and a "Canaanite" type syllabary represented especially in the letters of Rib-Addi (p.IV-V).

^{2a} W. von Soden-W. Röllig, Das akkadische Syllabar², An. Or. 42 (Rome, 1967), pp. XXXVI-XXXVII.

³ E.g., W. F. Albright, "The Egyptian Correspondence of Abimilki, Prince of Tyre," JEA 23 (1937), p. 190-203.

⁴ W. L. Moran, "The Hebrew Language in its Northwest Semitic Background," in G. E. Wright (ed.), The Bible and the Ancient Near East, Essays in Honor of W. F. Albright, (Garden City; N.Y., 1961), p.66 and p.79, n.42, hereafter=The Hebrew Language. Moran criticizes Z. Harris, Development of the Canaanite Dialects (New Haven; 1939), pp.35-36, 40-41, 62-63, for his recognition of a Jerusalem dialect during the Amarna period. According to Harris, this dialect had two distinct phonemes, [ś] and [š]. But Moran suggests a use of a different syllabary by the Jerusalem scribe. For an earlier refutation of Harris' view, see A. Goetze, "Is Ugaritic a Canaanite Dialect?" Language 17(1941), pp.128-29 n.15

1) non-existence of any y-preformative form, 2) exclusive use of muššuru instead of (w)uššuru, 3) use of Assy. lamnu instead of Baby. lemnu, and 4) use of Assy. ezābu instead of Baby. ezēbu.⁵ The following study will examine these four peculiarities and attempt to build on Moran's foundation by adding two more features to his list.

1) Non-existence of any y-preformative form

Moran holds the Jerusalem scribe "never employs the y-preformative in the verb." According to our counting,⁶ there are nineteen clear occurrences of a preformative in the third person in the Abdi-Ḥepa letters. Of these, the eight occurrences of ibašši can be excluded from consideration, since bašû never appears in the y-preformative form in Amarna. As far as the remaining eleven occurrences are concerned,⁷ Moran's observation is correct, except in one case where the reading of a cuneiform sign is doubtful due to the bad preservation of the tablet. According to the text autographed by O. Schroeder, we have X-qa-bi (EA 286:22). Schroeder saw a trace of a PI-sign, which can be read wa, wi/e, wu, ya, yi/e, yu (and rarely pi/e), and not of an I-sign.⁸ If Schroeder's autograph is correct, the form here is either yu-qa-bi or yi-qa-bi.⁹ This then would constitute the sole exception to Moran's observation. Otherwise, as rightly observed by Moran, the Jerusalem scribe seems to have been quite consistent in not employing y-preformatives.

The same consistent avoidance of y-preformative forms can be observed also in the letters of Tušratta (EA 17-21; 23-24; 26-29), Abimilki (EA 146-155),¹⁰ Aziru (EA 156-

⁵ The Hebrew Language, loc. cit.

⁶ Using the glossary of J. A. Knudtzon, Die El-Amarna-Tafeln, Vol.2, VAB 2 (Leipzig, 1915).

⁷ Namely, i-ka-lu pres 3mpl of akālu EA 286:6; e-pu-šu-ni pret 3mpl of epēšu EA 290:5; i-ḥal-li-iq pres 3ms of ḥalāqu EA 286:37; iḥ-nu-pu pret 3ms of ḥanāpu EA 288:8; i-li-iḥ-e pres 3ms(lcs?) of le'û EA 287:62; i-din-nu pret 3mpl of nadānu EA 287:15; i-din pret 3ms of nadānu EA 287:48; i-din-nu pret 3mpl of nadānu EA 289:23; i-pa-aṭ[-ṭa-ar] pres 3ms of paṭāru EA 289:5; i-qa-bi-ú pres 3mpl of qabû EA 288:54; for the eleventh see below.

⁸ EA 286:22; cf. O. Schroeder, op.cit. XI, No. 162=EA 286.

⁹ "It will be said" or "He will say."

¹⁰ Only one exception may be found in EA 151:69-70, li-id-d[in] pa-ni-šu šarru a-na ardi-šu ù li-za-ḥar yi-ša "Let the king look upon his servant and let his face beam(?)" However, yi-ša must have been inserted here intentionally by the scribe as a Canaanite gloss. This would probably explain the appearance of y-preformative here. Note the incorrect reconstruction in EA 152:42 by Knudtzon.

161; 164-168), and Šubandu (EA 301-306), while y-preformative forms appear quite often in the Rib-Addi's letters (EA 68-93,95; 102-138).

2) Exclusive use of muššuru instead of (w)uššuru

According to Moran, the Jerusalem scribe "uses muššuru, as in letters of Hurrian provenience, instead of wuššuru with the Canaanite scribes."¹¹ Moran is quite right: muššuru appears exclusively in the letters of Abdi-Heba and Tusratta,¹² while (w)uššuru alone appears among the rest of the major groups of the Amarna letters. From this fact, we would expect that the Jerusalem scribe would also have employed amatu instead of awatu,¹³ but this is not the case. Not amatu but awatu is exclusively employed by the Jerusalem scribe, whereas the Mitannian and Byblian scribes employ consistently muššuru-amatu and (w)uššuru-awatu respectively. This puzzling fact is due to the peculiar writing tradition of the Jerusalem scribe, which differs from that of the Mitannian and Byblian scribes. The third word which ought to be taken into consideration is aw/mīlu. However, it so happens that the word is written in the ideogram LÚ except in a few places, mostly in Tušratta's letters, where it is written out syllabically.¹⁴

As can be seen, while Moran's observation is essentially correct, it is, however, a little misleading to leave such a statement without qualification.

3) Use of Assy. lamnu instead of Baby. lemnu

Moran observes that "Ass. lamnu, rather than Baby. lemnu, another Hurrian text feature"¹⁵ appears in the Jerusalem letters. Again, Moran's observation is correct. However, lamnu appears in the Jerusalem letters only once, and both forms lamnu and lemnu appear only nine times in

¹¹ The Hebrew Language, loc. cit.

¹² Knudtzon has ú-[w]a-šer[-š]u (II form) in EA 29:159, but this reconstruction is hardly correct. Cf. C. Schroeder, op.cit. No.12. For the phonetic change of [w] [m], see von Soden, GAG 21b and c.

¹³ Cf. von Soden, GAG 21d.

¹⁴ a-mi-lu-ti EA 12:5; a-mi-lu-tum EA 29:31; A-wi-lu-tum EA 20:53; a-mi-lu-u-tum EA 20:76; a-mi-lu-ú-ta EA 21:30; a-mi-lu-ta EA 356:57. It may be noted that the two different forms, a-wi-lu-tum and a-mi-lu-ú-tum, appear together in one of the Tušratta letters (EA 20:76).

¹⁵ The Hebrew Language, loc. cit.

the entire corpus of the Amarna letters.¹⁶ There do not seem to be any other words which can be indicative of this particular linguistic phenomenon. So, even if lamnu is an Assyrian form, the single appearance of lamnu cannot be used to indicate any possible scribal peculiarity of the Jerusalem scribe without further evidence.

4) Use of Assy. ezābu instead of Baby. ezēbu

The infinitive ezābu appears only once in the Jerusalem letters, namely, amur šarri šakan šumšu ina māt Urusalim ana dāriš u lā i-li-ḥe-e ezābi ša mātāt Urusalim, "Behold, the king has set his name in the land of Jerusalem forever; so he cannot abandon the lands of Jerusalem!" (EA 287:60-62).¹⁷ This is one of the only two occurrences of ezē/ābu in the Amarna letters.¹⁸ Other examples which belong in this category include erābu in u nukurtu dannat ana muḥḥiya u lā alahḥe erāba ištu šarri bēliya, "But the hostility against me is strong, so I cannot enter into the presence of the king, my lord" (EA 286:41-43)¹⁹ and several occurrences of the Assyrian infinitive laqû.²⁰

In addition to these four scribal peculiarities singled out by Moran, the following two features should also be considered, before a total evaluation is attempted.²¹

5) Use of ḥaziānu instead of ḥazan(n)u

ḥazan(n)u and ḥaziānu appear more than fifty times in the Amarna letters, syllabially spelled out ḥa-za-nu (cf. EA 89:41)/ ḥa-za-an-nu (cf. EA 162:10) and ḥa-zi-a-nu (cf. EA 286:52) respectively. It is important to

¹⁶ li-im-na EA 94:6; lim-ni EA 129:86; lim-ni EA 134:13; li-im-na EA 149:16; li-mu-ut-ti EA 162:35, 36; lam-nu-um EA 189:7; li-im-ni EA 239:24; la-am-na EA 287:71. See also von Soden, GAG 9b, as well as AHw. under lemnu.

¹⁷ Translation: W. F. Albright in ANET, p. 488

¹⁸ The other occurrence is in the Assyrian form (EA 211:19).

¹⁹ Translation: W. F. Albright in ANET, p. 487.

²⁰ Though the number of occurrences of the Assyrian form of infinitive of verbs of this type is limited, this may have something to do with the writing tradition of the Jerusalem scribe, especially if we take into any consideration the fact that a dozen of other occurrences of the infinitive form of erēbu (neither in Tušratta's letters nor in Abdi-Ḥepa letters) are in the Babylonian form.

²¹ Moran's additional note about KUR.URU (Urusalem), appended to the four scribal peculiarities we just discussed, seems to have nothing to do with the scribal peculiarities as such, and therefore I omit any discussion of it here.

note that haziānu appears eight times exclusively in the Jerusalem letters.²²

6) Writing of qí-bi-ma instead of qí-bí-ma

The Jerusalem scribe seems to have consistently written qí-bi-ma in the introductory formula of the letter (cf. EA 286, 290, and also 287:65) as against the scribes of some other major groups of the Amarna letters who employed the same formula²³ but wrote qí-bí-ma following the Akkadian scribal practice.²⁴ This deviation is quite strange and is paralleled in only two other letters (EA 28 and 132).

It has become abundantly clear that there are certain scribal peculiarities which appear quite consistently in the Abdi-Ḥepa letters. This, in turn, suggests a different scribal background from those of the other scribes who served different city-states which existed in Syria and Palestine during the Amarna period. Unfortunately, the mixed feature of the peculiarities of the Jerusalem scribe prohibits us from tracing, or connecting, them to any group of homogenous texts from any one area. For instance, the avoidance of any y-preformative form and the exclusive use of muššuru of the Jerusalem scribe agree with the Mitannian scribe, but not with the Byblian scribes, while the employment of awatu by the Jerusalem scribe goes against both the Mitannian scribe and the Byblian scribes. The exclusive use of haziānu by the Jerusalem scribe finds its parallels only in some Middle Assyrian texts, and a few others, and not in the other Amarna letters at all. Furthermore, the writing

²² EA 285:19; 286:19, 52; 287:22, 24; 288:9, 56; 289:9. The first half of the statement in CAD under hazannu, "In MA and EA, haziānu; in Nuzi, hazannu and rarely haziānnu" is somewhat misleading. The form haziānu is an exceptional form in the Amarna letters and appears only in the Jerusalem letters. Howard Wohl has kindly drawn my attention to the fact that the form haziānu appears twice in Mari texts, i.e., ARM 13:143:8 (ha-zi-ia-nu-tam) and 5' (ha-zi-ia-an-nu [-um]), while elsewhere hazannu is employed. For other occurrences of haziānu, see CAD under hazannu.

²³ Namely, ana + addressee + qibīma + umma + addressor-ma. For example, [a]na šarri bēliya qibīma umma Abdi-Ḥepa aradkama ana šēpē bēliya šarri 7-tân u 7-tân amqutnī, "To the king, my lord say. Thus Abdi-Ḥepa, your servant (has spoken): At the feet of my lord, the king, I have fallen seven times and seven times." (EA 286:1-4) See also Knudtzon's glossary under kaḫû.

²⁴ See, for instance, R. Labat, L'akkadien de Boghaz-köi (Bordeaux, 1932), p.9, and W. von Soden, Das akkadische Syllabar², No.122.

qí-bi-ma in the introductory formula of the Abdi-Ḫepa letters is quite an isolated case. We would explain the mixed feature of the scribal peculiarities of the Abdi-Ḫepa letters as being mainly due to a long perpetuation of a local scribal tradition with some influences from other contemporary cultural centers. This local scribal tradition was established possibly during the first dynasty of Babylon. A general view of a similar nature has already been expressed by W. F. Albright.²⁵

Finally, in spite of very limited results, we feel that this type of investigation into the major groups of the Amarna letters can be productive in that more information may be gained about the cultural milieu of the Amarna world. It may also lead us to a better understanding of scribal activity during the period.²⁶

²⁵ "Scribal Concepts of Education," in C. H. Kraeling and R. M. Adams (ed.), City Invincible-A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East (Chicago, 1958), p.106. It is also to be noted that E. Forrer came to a very similar conclusion about the Boghaz-köi tablets, see Die Boghaz-köi Texte in Umschrift, KBo I, WVDOG 41, (Leipzig, 1922), p. 3.

²⁶ See A. L. Oppenheim's remark in his Ancient Mesopotamia (Chicago, 1964), pp.278-9.