

High society and lower ranks in Ramesside Egypt at home and abroad

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This brief study simply explores mainly nooks and crevices, even curiosities, in the richly varied canvas of life in Egypt and its Near Eastern links in the 13th century BC, besides historical sidelights of wider significance.

1. A Touch of Cuneiform amongst the Plebs

So long time ago (almost a century!) since it first appeared in print in the venerable but invaluable early issues of *ASAE*,¹ the only example that I know of, of a cuneiform sign in an Egyptian inscription, has ever since been left in oblivion until the present time. But such a curio is worth resurrecting, if only to ponder what sort of scenario its presence might reflect.

The piece in question is a modest *shabti* figure (Cairo Cat. 47644), that belonged to a quite minor dignitary, a *hry iry(w) ʿsw T(w)r*, ‘Head Porter, T(j)ur(o)’,² which was found at Saqqara. It bears the usual *shabti* formula, chapter VI of the Book of the Dead, but with just one peculiarity. See Fig. 1. Instead of *smhy*, ‘to flood’ being determined in the normal way with a canal-sign and the three ripples of water (*mw*), here the ‘water’-group (*mw*) is replaced by the regular cuneiform word-sign³ for the Sumerian word A, ‘water’, used in turn as equivalent for Akkadian *mû*, ‘water’. Thus, this stray cuneiform sign fills exactly the role of the Egyptian ‘triple-ripple’ *mw* of the same innate significance.

How this came to be, even in cosmopolitan Memphis where (from his *shabti* accompanying a Saqqara burial) Turo was probably employed, may give us pause for brief thought. The more economical our assumptions and reasoning can be, the less likely it is that we will be wholly in error. No head porter (however efficient) is likely himself to have mastered cuneiform (or Middle Babylonian/Middle Assyrian, its sole *raison d'être* for being found in Egypt). The most economical suggestion I can make is that Turo served at the local ‘foreign office’ building (in Memphis, if not away in Pi-Ramesses) where Egyptian scribes trained in cuneiform actually worked, reading incoming tablets and writing outgoing missives. Among his friends there, one Egyptian scribe with cuneiform skills showed him what he did for a living; and Turo was sufficiently intrigued to get a copy of the sign for ‘water’ that he asked his *shabti* supplier to include appropriately (as water determinative) on at least one of his inscribed *shabtis*. If only to impress friends and inferiors. I can think of no simpler, more mundane scenario.

¹ Legrain, *ASAE* 9(1908/09), 284.

² Probably Tur(o), not Tjur(o); Tur(o) is probably simply a variant of Turi, the nickname of the vizier Paser’s father Nebneteru, of whose name it is an abbreviation. Thus, our T(j)ur(o)’s full name may likewise have been Nebneteru.

³ No. 579, in Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne*, 236/7–238/9; and No.839, in Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, 434–9.

2. Amenmose, most cosmopolitan of Egyptian foreign envoys

Among the immense epigraphic wealth of various scripts and languages discovered in the Late Bronze seaport of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the North Syrian coast, the seal-impressions on one particular tablet should be noted. This is a legal document under the long reign of Niqmepa, King of Ugarit,⁴ redeeming a man Yapa'u and his sons back to Ugarit from the household of no less a person than prince Tili-sarruma, son of the (unnamed) King of Carchemish (viceroy for the Syrian region of the Hittite Empire). These include one (cf. Fig. 2) of a man named in cuneiform as ^mA-ma-an-ma-as-su, and in 'Hittite' (strictly, Luvian) hieroglyphs Ma-n(a)-ma-su; the latter omits (for graphic reasons) the initial A, but gives the correct sibilant—result, Amanmasu, a closely correct transcription for the Egyptian name that we moderns commonly render as 'Amenmose'.⁵

The seal itself was a cylinder-seal of Near-Eastern type, not an Egyptian-type scaraboid stamp seal; its graphics were wholly Anatolian: at left on the impression, the storm-god upon two personified mountains, facing (at right) the Hittite Great King under a winged disc, standing on a lion, and attended by an armed man upon a kneeling genie. Nothing Egyptian here! Clearly, like some other Egyptians, our Amenmose was engaged wholly in Hittite service. In this case, as full-time staff-member and employee of the royal house at Carchemish, attached specifically to the household of prince Tili-sarruma. And (with a colleague) fully entrusted with that empire's internal interstate affairs, as here between Ugarit and Carchemish.

3. Egyptians involved with Hittite princesses marrying Ramesses II in Egypt

After various incidents, the first Hittite princess reached Egypt in Year 34 of Ramesses II, c. 1246/45 BC, and the marriage was well celebrated by enormous poetical stelae. One of the men instrumental in bringing her safely to Egypt was the former Royal Envoy Huy who, for his pains, was rewarded with the viceroyalty of Nubia (tenure, Years 34–38, after which Setau took over the post). On his stela (Berlin 17332), Huy is '(the) one who came from the Hatti-land, (the) one who brought its Great Lady' for his king.⁶

Less familiar in detail is the second such marriage. In Egypt (so far), we have only one almost intact stela (Koptos, in Cairo) and the end of another (Abydos), with no indication of date. However, the cuneiform evidence does help us to limit its date to within Years 42–56 of Ramesses II. Within that period, the pharaoh extended his nomen cartouche, by adding the elements 'god, Ruler of Heliopolis', as his self-identification with the Sun-god Re reached its peak. In the Hittite correspondence, we find his full cartouche titles and names (carefully transcribed and translated into Akkadian) in the extended form (cf. Fig. 3). So, by the mid.-40s, the great event was probably consummated. Who brought her to Egypt? The most likely candidate was the vizier Prahotept, himself (like Huy earlier) a former envoy to Hatti. From Hazor in northern Canaan, the greatest centre of its kind there, comes a statue-frag-

⁴ Lasting from the 9th year of Mursil II (time of Horemheb) down to at least early in the reign of Hattusil III (about years 18–20 of Ramesses II), or some 50 years (c. 1310–1260 BC). For an account of his reign, see Klen-gel, *Syria c. 3000 to 300 B.C.*, 135–9 with documentary references.

⁵ Published by Schaeffer and (texts) Laroche, in Schaeffer, *Ugaritica III*, 42–4 §16, 50–1, figs. 67–71, and (texts) pp. 142–5, VI.A. The text on which the seal appears, Nougayrol, *Palais Royal d'Ugarit*, IV, 109–10 (and pl. II): RS 17.28.

⁶ *KRI*, III, 79–80; *RITA*, III, 55; cf. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 136, 255, and refs.

ment, seemingly of a vizier, which can with good reason be attributed to Prahotept.⁷ The event (and Prahotept's setting up a personal statue at Hazor) may be dated within about 1240–1230 BC (Years 44–50 of Ramesses II). So, we may thus gain further sidelights on this episode.

The route of the princesses to Egypt may be sketched in passing (Fig. 4). From Hattusas (Boghazköy) the cavalcade would have gone SE to cross the Taurus mountains (perhaps *visa* the Cilician Gates) into Kizzuwatna (later, Cilicia). Then through the Amanus range into North Syria, to Aleppo, the great religious centre there. Then, south, probably via Tunip (at or near later Hamath) and on to Qadesh and the Egyptian frontier at the ridge of Kemuat Hertmil. From here, if not before, Huy and Prahotept in succession (Years 34, c. 44), would receive the responsibility of bringing the whole cortège through the Biqa valley to the Egyptian base at Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz), and south through the Merjayun passes to Hazor by the Jordan. Then, across Jezreel, through the Dothan gap (Carmel range) and on through Canaan to Gaza, on the final lap westwards along the Mediterranean littoral (lined with Egyptian forts and depots) finally to Pi-Ramesse and the presence of Pharaoh himself.

4. In Conclusion

These are but glimpses of a cosmopolitan age, on which we may expect to gain further light as work in Egypt and beyond continues. Suffice it to mention the important discovery by Dr. Zivie of a Saqqara rock-tomb that belonged to another Egyptian envoy to Hatti, the Neterwy-mose who helped bring the famous Egypto-Hittite treaty of Year 21 (c. 1250 BC) to Egypt—and his identification with the envoy Parekhnawa, already famed from the subsequent Egypto-Hittite cuneiform correspondence.⁸ One never knows what new surprises may turn up.

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⁷ See latterly Kitchen, *Israel Exploration Journal* 53 (2003), 19–28 for full details.

⁸ See Zivie, in *Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois*, 73–6 and refs; see also Zivie's paper in this issue of *BMSAES*.

KUB III 66+W. 24, Vs. und Rs. (ÄHK 72)

Late Titulary of Ramesses II (years 42-56) in Cuneiform

^{Rto} ①                       ^{Rto} ②      

um-ma in-si-ib-ia ni-ib-ta-a-ua, 'Ua-aš-mu-a-ri-a ša-te-ep-na-ri-a,
d d-in (In-sw-⁶⁴) nb-tzwy, Waf-m³(t)-r^r, Stp-n-re
     

Son speaks the King of S.W. Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Ua-aš-mu-a-ri-a Satepenre

                 ^{Rto} ③           

DUMU 'UTU 'Ri-a-ma-še-ša ma-a-i-'A-ma-na DINGIR-^{Li} LU^{GA}L ^{URU.KI} 'A-na,
^{sz R} R-mo-~~ku~~ Ma-ty-'Imn, nr, hqz 'Imur,
    

Son of Re, Ramesses (II), Beloved of Amun, God, Ruler of Heliopolis

ŠEŠ ša 'An-ba-a-ra, ša 'IŠKUR i-ra-am-^[šū].
^{*sn (n)} 'In-hr, Sw-th mty.
  
^{*Brother of Anhur, (and) of Sutekh, beloved.}

Fig. 3: Transcripts of KUB III, 66 (etc).

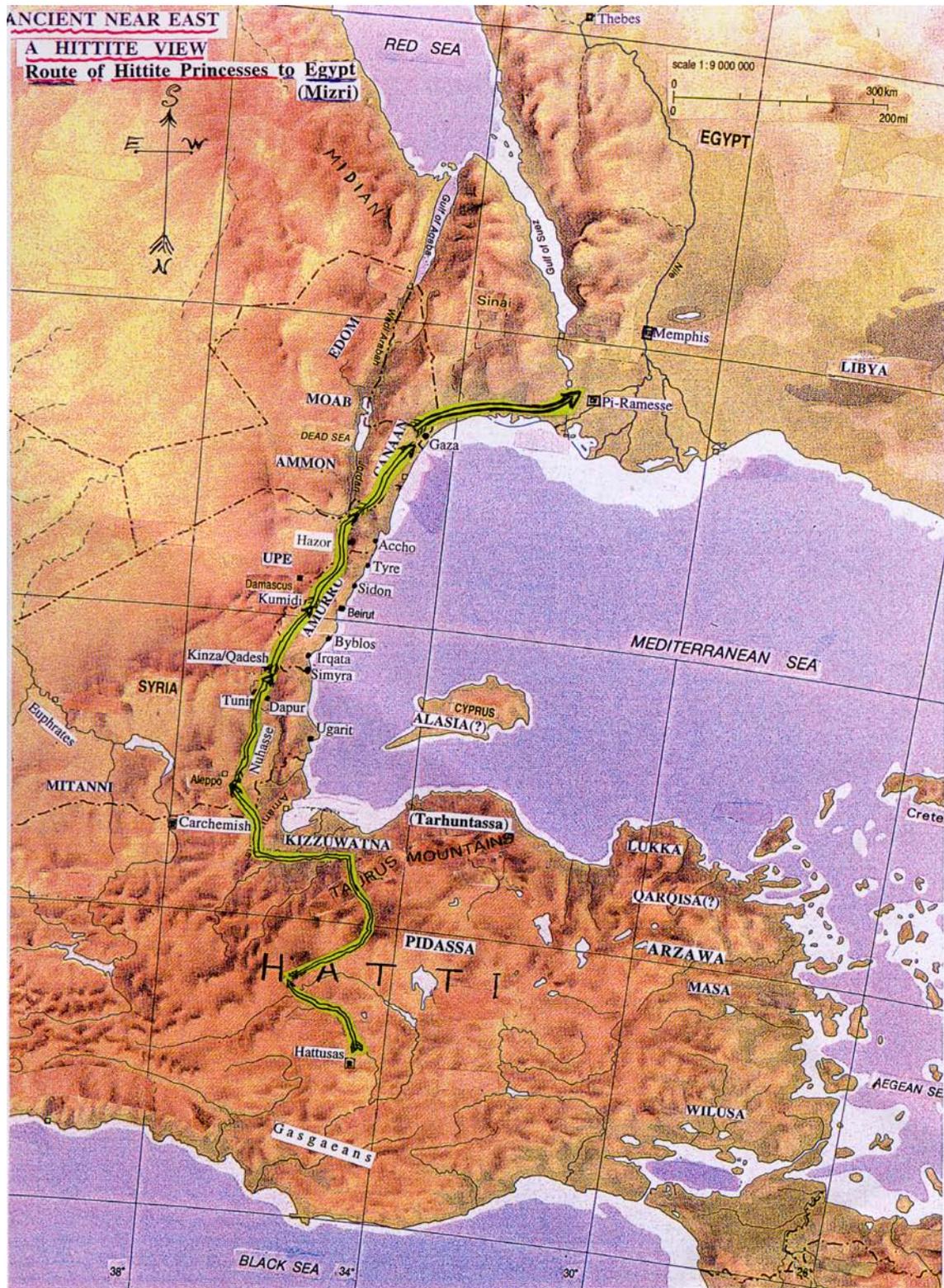


Fig. 4: The route of the Hittite princesses to Egypt. Map based on M. Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia*