

THE “LAND OF AMURRU” AND THE “LANDS OF AMURRU” IN THE ŠAUŠGAMUWA TREATY

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The original meaning and the changes in the content of the term Amurru in the course of the second millennium B.C. have been one of the most intensively discussed and debated subjects of Near Eastern history.¹ The name appears from the late third millennium on, both in phonetic spelling and in the logographic writing MAR.TU. It is now generally agreed that in the early part of the second millennium the term refers loosely to the Syrian regions situated west of Mesopotamia proper and to the inhabitants of these regions. The more difficult questions under debate are concerned with the original meaning of Amurru, whether ethnic or geographical, and with the exact nature and origin of its equation with MAR.TU. These important questions however are of little concern for the issue discussed in this paper.

The broad sense of Amurru as indicated above, often used in opposition to Akkad, is gradually restricted to a more limited region of central and southern Syria. A Mari text has the “Land of Amurru” in a sequence after the lands of Yamhad and Qatna, whereas another text mentions “the messengers of four kings of Amurru” alongside the messengers of Hazor. Texts from Alalakh VII and IV mention individuals from the “Land of MAR.TU”, without however any clues to its whereabouts.²

The sparse attestation during the mid-second millennium is eventually overhauled by the rich Amarna Age documentation. By that time, in the mid-14th century, Amurru had already acquired a clearly-defined geo-political content, referring to the region extending on both sides of the Eleutheros River, between the middle Orontes and the central Levantine coast. The territory is loosely comprised within a triangle formed by the three main Egyptian strongholds established during Thutmose III's campaigns to Syria—Ullaza and Šumur on the coastal plain and Tunip in the middle Orontes valley. In fact, it seems that this territory had acquired its geo-political definition in the wake of the Egyptian consolidation of their Syrian empire, when it became their northernmost province. However, the name Amurru itself does not occur in Egyptian sources before the Amarna Age.

The Egyptians, in conformity with their general strategy in Asia, were primarily interested in safeguarding the naval bases along the coast and the strategic corridor leading into central Syria along the Eleutheros valley. In the highlands flanking this corridor a geo-political entity had gradually developed, the first known leader of which was Abdi-Aširta. The turbulent developments that followed, as aptly documented in the Amarna correspondence, need not be summarized here. It should however be emphasized that both Abdi-Aširta, the founder of the Amurru dynasty, and his resourceful son Aziru had first of all striven to obtain Egyptian recognition as “mayors” (*hazannu*) of Amurru. In other words, they clearly functioned within the framework of the Egyptian imperial system. Any overtures they made or may have done towards other great powers were secondary developments, conditioned by the unfolding international situation and by their keen sense of “Realpolitik”, which in the case of Aziru proved to be quite rewarding. I emphasize these basic points because, as will be discussed below, some doubts were raised with regard to Amurru's original appurtenance to the Egyptian realm. First, however, the evolution of the term Amurru must be further followed.

At the time of Aziru's defection to Hatti, the confines of the Land of Amurru were already clearly established and they remained more-or-less unchanged for the next century and a half, except for the short-lived Egyptian takeover before the Battle of Qadesh.

With the fall of the Hittite Empire at the turn of the 12th century the sources on the kingdom of Amurru are extinguished. Amurru must have shared the same fate as its Hittite

¹ For the changes in the content of the term see in particular Dhorme 1951:109 ff.; Kupper 1957:147-259; Liverani 1973. For other aspects see the literature cited in Groneberg

1980:16, and Buccellati 1990:240-6.

² For the references from Mari and Alalakh see Klengel 1969:182 f.

overlord and its northern neighbour Ugarit. In 1175 B.C. its coasts served as the battleground between Ramses III and the invading hordes of the Sea Peoples.

The name Amurru reappears towards the end of the 12th century,³ this time in Assyrian records. Tiglath-pileser I conducted a campaign to Amurru, which by this time included not only Arwad and Şumur on the coast but also Tadmor in the Syrian desert (Weidner 1958:344 ff.). It seems that the term Amurru has once again regained its broad geographical scope, encompassing central Syria as a whole, bordering on the north with the Land of Hatti of the Assyrian sources. This broad scope of Amurru seems to become even more generalized in later Assyrian sources, when it becomes a loose designation for the "West".⁴

This brief survey on the geographical scope of Amurru (which obviously does not exhaust all sources⁵) reveals an unusual pattern. From a broad, unclearly defined notion in the first half of the second millennium it shrank into a much smaller geo-political unit in the second half, only to swell up again in the new world of the Iron Age.

Alongside this unusual variation in the geographical reference of Amurru, which will be dealt with later on, there seems to have coexisted also the old sense of Amurru, as a designation of Syria in its entirety (Liverani 1973:118). The evidence for the survival of this broad sense of Amurru is scattered and rather equivocal, but its cumulative weight is conclusive.

Perhaps the clearest case for a broad sense of Amurru is in its use as a qualification of various materials and products (Vincentelli 1972 with references). Considered in itself, "the wine from Hurri and the wine from Amurru" listed in the 11th century onomasticon of Amenemope may be thought to refer to Canaanite provinces. However, the same juxtaposition of products of "Hurri" and products of "Amurru" is also found in texts from Hattuša and from Ugarit, some of them dating after the disappearance of Hurri/Mitanni. Evidently, the two juxtaposed qualifications do not refer to the kingdoms of Hurri and Amurru but rather to a broad differentiation between (northern) Mesopotamian and Syrian products respectively, in other words, between "East" and "West".

The same broad sense is probably meant in Middle Babylonian documents referring to "donkeys of Amurru" (see Liverani 1973:131 n. 65 for references).

Finally, a Middle Assyrian text dated to the early reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I mentions fifteen blind men of Amurru who were taken with other loot to Assyria (*KAJ* 180:14; Weidner 1959–60:36; Klengel 1969:227). Some have reconstructed on this evidence an Assyrian campaign that brought to an end the kingdom of Amurru (Forrer 1932:223; Helck 1971:223 n. 80). This is difficult to accept, since from all the other sources it appears that Tukulti-Ninurta's campaign was limited to northern Syria, in the region called by him Hatti.⁶ As suggested by Klengel (1969:227), Amurru is most probably used here in the general sense in which it appears a century later in the texts of Tiglath-pileser I.

In conclusion, the combined evidence from these sources of the second half of the second millennium shows that alongside the younger and restricted sense of Amurru, referring to the Levantine kingdom of the 14th–13th centuries, the broad sense, as referring to Syria in general, continued to be occasionally used throughout the Near East.

A further significant case in support of this conclusion may be adduced, I believe, from a Hittite historical text, the correct interpretation of which has important implications for the early history of Amurru.

In the historical preamble to the treaty between Tudhaliya IV and Šaušgamuwa of Amurru, in the passage relating the earliest Hittite-Amurrite contacts (CTH 105 I 13–27; see Kühne-Otten 1971), we find two terms which at first sight appear to be identical: "the Land of Amurru" (l. 13: KUR.URU *Amurra*) and "the Lands of Amurru" (l. 17: KUR.KUR ḪI.A URU *Amurra*).

³ See, however, the inscribed arrowhead of "Zkrb'l king of Amurru", whose exact date cannot be established (Starcky 1982).

⁴ For Amurru in the Neo-Assyrian and later sources, see Dhorme 1951:152 ff.; Liverani 1973:119 ff.

⁵ For the "Amorite" in the Biblical sources see Liverani 1973:123 ff. (with further literature).

⁶ On Tukulti-Ninurta's wars with the Hittites see Singer 1985 and the literature cited there on p. 103 n. 20.

13 [In the past(?)], the Land of Amurru was not
 14 conquered by the weapon of the Land of Hatti.
 15 Wh[en Aziru] came to the Land of Hatti to the
 16 ‘forefather’ (lit.: ‘grandfather’) of His Majesty, Šuppiluliuma,
 17 the Lands of Amurru were still [hostile];
 18 they [were] vassals of the king of Hurri.
 19 Nevertheless, Aziru remained loyal to him
 20 and he did [not def]eat him by weapon.
 21 Aziru, your ‘forefather’ (lit.: ‘grandfather’),
 22 protected Šuppiluliuma in his lordship,
 23 and he also protected the Land of Hatti.
 24 Thereafter, he protected Muršili in his lordship,
 25 and he also protected the Land of Hatti.
 26 Against the Land of Hatti
 27 he had not sinned at all.

The “Lands of Amurru” (in plural), which were subject to the king of Hurri before Aziru’s submission to Šuppiluliuma, has generally been conceived as a mere variant of the “Land of Amurru” (in singular) mentioned a few lines earlier. This interpretation entails of course a drastic revision of the early history of Amurru, which apparently squarely contradicts all the earlier accounts on these events. In all the other extant Amurru treaties (Aziru, Duppi-Tešub, Bentešina) Aziru is clearly said to have defected from the camp of Egypt, and nowhere in the Hittite record do we find any information that Amurru may have belonged to Hurri/Mitanni before its submission to the Hittites.⁷

No satisfactory explanation has been suggested for this sudden change of standpoint in Hittite historiography, a century after the fall of Mitanni. One may perhaps offer a far-fetched explanation for this gross distortion of history by saying that it may have served the purpose of improving relationships with Egypt (by eliminating a sensitive issue from past relations). But then, one would expect that such a step would already be initiated in the days of Hattušili, the architect of cordial relations with Egypt. In his treaty with Bentešina, Aziru’s first master is clearly stated to be Egypt, not Hurri (*CTH* 62 obv. 4–5). Moreover, the Šaušgamuwa treaty itself provides a most realistic description of the events leading to the Battle of Qadesh, which could hardly have flattered the Egyptians. In short, there appears to be no logical reason for replacing Egypt with Hurri in this late account of Hittite-Amurrite relations and it would be quite unwarranted to assume a simple scribal error.

Another option, of course, is to give credibility to this late account and disregard all the earlier Hittite references to the history of Hittite-Amurrite relations (Kestemont 1978). This course has indeed been taken by some commentators who posit some sort of Mitannian rule over Amurru prior to Aziru’s submission. Whereas Murnane, e.g. (1985:185 f., 235 ff.), thinks in terms of only a short-lived submission to an invading Mitannian army, Kestemont (*ibid.*) goes as far as to maintain that Amurru was initially part of the Mitanni Empire rather than the Egyptian one.

The cornerstone of these historical reconstructions of Amurru’s early history is the respective passage from the Šaušgamuwa treaty, which is ostensibly supported by several allusions in the Amarna correspondence of Rib-Addi of Byblos. In several passages, some of them quite fragmentary and obscure,⁸ Rib-Addi accuses Abdi-Aširta of conspiring with the king of Mitanni against Egyptian interests. In EA 90:19–22 Abdi-Aširta is said to be in Mitanni but his eyes being set on Byblos. In EA 95:27–30 Rib-Addi reports that the king of Mitanni surveyed the Land of Amurru and had exclaimed his admiration over its greatness.

⁷ For a juxtaposition of the relevant passages see Singer 1990:144 ff. The clearest statement in this respect is found in the Duppi-Tešub treaty, where the (fore)fathers of Duppi-Tešub are said to have brought their tribute to Egypt (*CTH* 62 II A I 33’ f.).

⁸ For up-dated translations of the relevant passages see Moran 1987. These differ considerably from the translations

on which Kestemont (1978:28 ff.) based his thesis. In his argumentation for a Mitannian overlordship over Amurru, Kestemont makes use only of the Amarna material and the Šaušgamuwa treaty, but does not refer to the rest of the relevant Hittite sources (the treaties of Aziru, Duppi-Tešub and Bentešina).

EA 86:8–12 apparently reports about the spoil taken from Amurru to Mitanni. In a similar vein, in EA 101:7–10 Rib-Addi claims that Amurru was not able to send to Mitanni a tribute consisting of wool and coloured textiles.

By far the most direct and significant information is contained in EA 85:51–5, where the Pharaoh is notified that the king of <Mi> tanni has arrived in Šumur, planning to march on Byblos itself, but was forced to return to his land for lack of water. This unique piece of information, if taken at face value, does indeed have important bearing on the international political scene. From all that we know from other Amarna sources, Mitanni and Egypt kept to their political alliance, especially in view of the growing Hittite menace. There is, of course, undeniable evidence for a Mitannian offensive to Syria in this period, but it was directed against Hittite surrogates, such as Šarrupši of Nuhašši (*CTH* 53 I 2–11). However, a far-flung Mitannian penetration as described by Rib-Addi, not only into the Egyptian sphere of influence, but to its very heart, the naval base of Šumur, is quite a different matter, which must have drastic repercussions upon the amicable relationships between the two allies (see already Sturm 1933). Most scholars have therefore assumed that the Mitannian “visit” was only devised as a show of arms to rally support for the common Egyptian-Mitannian cause (Kitchen 1962:13; Waterhouse 1965:23; Klengel 1969:233 n. 29, 256).

Taking into account Rib-Addi’s notorious polemics, I would go a step further and regard with much scepticism the very credibility of this report. It is quite remarkable that this sensational event is mentioned by Rib-Addi just in passing, tucked into a lengthy discourse concerning a grain transport which he strives to procure for himself. Kestemont has suggested a connection between this transaction in grain and an assumed drought which forced the Mitanni to turn on their heels, but this is carrying the evidence too far. It is quite surprising that no-one else except Rib-Addi reports about this exceptional event, not even Abdi-Aširta across whose country the campaign supposedly swept.⁹ All evidence taken into account, it seems to me safer to regard Rib-Addi’s alarming report as just another attempt to drum up Egyptian support against his arch-enemy Abdi-Aširta. Although he must have known that this disinformation had short wings, the alarm might just have worked out for him, since shortly afterwards the long awaited Egyptian task force arrived and removed Abdi-Aširta from the scene.

In any event, even if one does give full credit to Rib-Addi’s report, it is still difficult to see in this exceptional episode and a few other obscure allusions of Rib-Addi a definite proof for a Mitannian domination over Amurru in the early Amarna Age. If such a situation had existed, the Amurru treaties (of Šuppiluliuma, Muršili and Hattušili) would surely have referred to it, just as other Syrian treaties do. This would justify the Hittite domination over Amurru much better than the apologetic argument about Aziru’s voluntary defection from the Egyptian camp. Though Abdi-Aširta, like his resourceful son, probably kept a vigilant eye on the unfolding international situation, and may even have explored his prospects in allying himself with one of the other great powers of his age,¹⁰ in the last analysis both the Amarna and the Hittite sources prove beyond any doubt that Amurru was an acknowledged Egyptian dependency before the Hittite takeover (see, e.g., Klengel 1969:245; Liverani 1973:118).

The seemingly aberrant statement in the Šaušgamuwa treaty on the early history of Amurru has to my mind a totally different explanation. The “Lands of Amurru” that belonged to the king of Hurri does not, as generally assumed, refer to the Land of Amurru in the restricted sense (i.e. Aziru’s land), but rather to the broad geographical entity of the Syrian states west of the Euphrates that were indeed controlled by Mitanni prior to Šuppiluliuma’s takeover. This interpretation would readily account for the sudden change from singular to plural, which is otherwise unexplained. Through this resourceful formulation the author managed to remain loyal to historical reality while leaving the question of Amurru’s allegiance vague. His main interest was obviously not directed towards a penetrating scrutiny of Amurru’s history, but rather in praising Aziru’s positive attitude

⁹ Although he expresses his concern over a possible attack on his land by vassals of Mitanni.

¹⁰ For arguments against the alleged submission of Abdi-Aširta to the Hittites see Singer 1990:124 ff.

towards Hatti, in contrast to the other Syrian states which had to be subjected by the force of arms. This motif of Aziru’s voluntary submission to Šuppiluliuma and his exceptional loyalty to Hatti runs through all the Amurru treaties and is especially emphasized in the Aziru treaty itself (Singer 1990:146 f.).

In short, the suggested reinterpretation of the passage not only solves the serious historical difficulties in assessing Amurru’s position in the early Amarna Age, but also brings the Šaušgamuwa treaty in line with the rest of the documentation on Hittite-Amurrite relationships.

With the significant addition of a late 13th century Hittite occurrence, we may now return to reexamine the origins of the term Amurru in its broad sense, as referring to Syria in general. Whereas in its cultural-geographical connotation (qualifying various Syrian products) it probably never ceased to exist, it seems that in its more specific geo-political connotation it was only revived in 13th century Hittite and Assyrian texts.

This development may clearly be related to the changing political scene of the region. Following the Hittite campaigns of Hattušili I and Mušili I to Syria and Babylon, the system of Amorite kingdoms was brought to an end and was replaced by the supremacy of the Hurrian state of Mitanni. By the time of the Egyptian campaigns to Syria in the early 18th dynasty, the current Egyptian term to denote the Asiatic regions was “Hurru”. The parallel cuneiform term “Hurri Lands” (KUR.KUR.MEŠ *Hurri*) was an appropriate designation for the entirety of states comprised within the Mitanni Empire. With the demolition of this empire by Šuppiluliuma I the term “Hurri Lands” had lost its relevance and another designation was needed for a general reference to the Syrian states.¹¹ The revival of the old term “Amurru” in its geo-political sense was a natural development, only that it now acquired a plural marker to differentiate it from the Land of Amurru in the restricted sense.

Changes in geo-political terminology develop gradually. For a considerable period of time old and new designations may coexist side-by-side. This seems indeed to be the case in Hittite texts dated after the fall of Mitanni, especially in retrospective accounts of past events. An author may feel free to employ old terms, which were current at the time of the described events, or he may choose to up-date his terminology. He may even do both. A good case to test are Hattušili’s retrospective accounts of Šuppiluliuma’s accomplishments (CTH 83; CTH 88). At first sight it seems that these much-discussed texts only employ the traditional terminology, i.e. Hurri Lands (KBo VI 28+ obv. 19; KUB XIX 9 obv. 11). However, two obscure occurrences do not readily comply with this observation.

KBo VI 28 refers to both the “Land” and the “Lands” of Amurru. The former (obv. 22, 23) appears as the (southern) border of Šuppiluliuma’s realm and is clearly referring to Aziru’s country. The latter appears a few lines later unfortunately in badly damaged context (obv. 25: KUR.KUR.MEŠ *Amurri*). I would assume that this second reference is used in the same general sense as in the Šaušgamuwa treaty, but the context precludes any interpretation.

KUB XIX 9 obv. 20 has the famous statement that it took Šuppiluliuma six years to subdue the “Land of *A-mur-ri*” (sic) because the lands were strong. This important reference, which is thought to provide the duration of the Second Syrian War, has generally been taken as a scribal error for *Hur-ri* (e.g. Klengel 1964:440).¹² I wonder whether the emendation in this text is really necessary. Perhaps what the author had in mind was again a general designation for the whole of the Mitanni realm, not just the Land of Hurri east of the Euphrates.¹³

¹¹ Logically the term “Hatti Lands”, on analogy with “Hurri Lands”, would have been an apt designation for the Hittite controlled states of Syria. However, this term was restricted to denote the inner-Anatolian regions. With the fall of the Hittite Empire the term Hatti was indeed transposed to northern Syria.

¹² With a superfluous initial *A-*; the second sign can be read both *hur* or *mur*. It is not claimed, of course, that this confusion does not occur in the Hittite texts. A clear example is found in KUB XXI 17 I 14–17, restored from the duplicate KUB XXXI 27 (CTH 86; see Edel 1950:212): “At the time

that Muwatallis fought against the king of Egypt and the Land of Amurru, and when he then defeated the king of Egypt and the land of <A> *murru*, he returned to the Land of Apa.” Another case is found in the parallel Hittite and Akkadian versions of the Aziru treaty (see Singer 1990:145 n. 3).

¹³ The possible chronological implications of this interpretation cannot be elaborated here. We may briefly note that, if accepted, this would mean that Hattušili’s statement refers to the duration of both Syrian wars and not just the Second Syrian War conducted against Mitanni proper.

The ambiguity in the usage of this complex terminology—Land of Amurru and Lands of Amurru, Land of Hurri and Lands of Hurri—may indeed be quite confusing for both ancient and modern readers. But, of course, this is not a rare occurrence in geo-political nomenclature.¹⁴

After a century and a half of coexistence between the terms Lands of Amurru and Land of Amurru the ambiguity was “resolved” with the fall of the Hittite Empire and its vassal kingdom of Amurru. The term Amurru was again “free” to be used in Assyrian texts mainly in its original broad connotation—the Lands of the West.¹⁵ Some new ambiguities were born with the southward migration of the term Hatti, but this is another issue.

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¹⁴ For some modern comparisons one may think of the broad or restricted usages of terms like “America” or “Russia”, not to mention the ambiguity of the English terms “India”, “Indian” and “Indies”, which refer to three entirely

different ethno-geographical entities.

¹⁵ Although occasionally the more restricted sense may still be found in some Assyrian texts, and even in the border description in Joshua 13:4–5 (see Liverani 1973:119 f.).