Hurro-Akkadian from Late Bronze Age Syria Reconsidered: Qatna TT1 and Al.T. 297

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[In Assyriological studies, "Hurro-Akkadian" is more or less vaguely understood as a scribal practice consisting of introducing Hurrian expressions and elements (lexical items and syntactical constructions) into Akkadian texts. It is also assumed as a type of Akkadian in which a Hurrian substrate modified certain verbal forms using Akkadian roots[1] though not following Akkadian grammar. Although there existed precedents in Amorite times[2], documents written in Hurro-Akkadian have been mainly found in several archives that, along northern Mesopotamia and Syria, pertained to the Mittanni state during the Late Bronze Age (hereafter LBA).]

Keywords: Alalakh, Qatna, code-switching, Hurrian, Hurro-Akkadian, mixed language

The present article is a reappraisal of some problems posed by this subject on the basis of two Hurro-Akkadian texts from Qatna and Alalakh IV: Qatna TT1 and Al.T. 297, dated to different phases of the Mittannian supremacy over ancient Syria. Both texts are reconsidered in terms of code-switching. Although the scope of the present study has to be necessarily limited to some comparative observations made on these documents, the conclusions achieved can be reasonably extended to a more general comprehension of what historically seems to represent Hurro-Akkadian for ancient Syria.

1. This is especially recognizable in the verbal –*kunu* forms from Qatna (*tammar-kunu, dunnin-kunu, imar-kunu*), for the 2nd person plural subject, see Th. Richter, "Das 'Archiv des Idanda'. Bericht über Inschriftenfunde der Grabungskampagne 2002 in Mišrife/Qaṭna", *MDOG* 135 (2003) 171-172 fnn 15 and 16.

2. See general references for pre-Mittannian textual evidence gathered in: J. Oliva, "Lengua hurrita: problemas y perspectivas", in: G. Carrasco Serrano - J. C. Oliva Mompeán (eds.), *Escrituras y lenguas del Mediterráneo en la Antigüedad*, Cuenca 2005, pp. 135ff. fnn 57-69, and in J. Oliva, "La cuestión hurrita: luces y sombras en la memoria antigua del Próximo Oriente", *Huelva Arqueológica* 19 (2003) 186-189.

0. *Sitz im Leben*

Under the concept "Akkadian" in this article, we mean Akkadian texts from Syria, i. e. Syrian (West) Akkadian[3]. Since the present survey is limited to Hurro-Akkadian in the Syrian milieu at the time of Mittannian sovereignty, we have to clear up from the very beginning that such "Hurro-Akkadian" had already at this time a strong dialectal character, not only for Akkadian, but also for Hurrian, although on different levels for both languages: On the one hand, Akkadian, which, depending on the site in ancient Syria, mostly represents a written language, that is to say, a more or less skilful script from a scribal tradition of *written* Akkadian. On the other hand, Hurrian, which, although contemporary with scribal Akkadian, shows a different character as an oral, real *spoken* language by a part of the Syrian (Hurrian) population[4]. The evidence that constitutes the analysis presented in this paper is based, as mentioned above, on two Mittannian documents from LBA Syria: the Hurro-Akkadian letter from Tell Mishrifēh-Qatna, TT1[5], and the pseudo-letter Al.T. 297 from Tell ʿAṭshānah-Alalakh IV written about a century earlier.

1. *Historical reminder*

At this point, a short reminder on the historical background of the Hurrians in ancient Syria may be in order:

Between the 16th and the 13th centuries BC, under the dominance of the imperial reign of Mittanni[6], Hurrian speaking populations extended over a wide region of the ancient near East (hereafter ANE), especially northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Regarding ancient Syria, an increasing Hurrian element explains the important Hurrian linguistic substrate we find in a large amount of texts from several archives recovered until now, mainly in Alalakh IV (but also found in its earlier late Old Babylonian period –Alalakh VII[7]– at the end of the Middle Bronze Age), Ugarit[8], Qatna and Emar. Hurrian elements were already present before 1700 BC in inland Syria, at the margins of the Euphrates (see for instance Tell

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3. The bibliography on such a complex subject is quite abundant. See the profuse references gathered by J. A. Belmonte, in his chapter "Los dialectos acadios y su presencia en Siria-Palestina", in: G. Carrasco Serrano - J. C. Oliva Mompeán (eds.), *Escrituras y lenguas del Mediterráneo en la Antigüedad*, Cuenca 2005, pp. 164-190.

4. I agree with the general picture described by E. Von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age. Alalah under the Mittani Empire*, SCCNH 17 (2008) 75f. (with previous literature).

5. Th. Richter, S. Lange, *Das Archiv des Idadda*, Qaṭna Studien 3, Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 44-46. Remarks and critical comments on this book are: J. Oliva, *Vínculos de Historia* 3 (2014) 405-408 (text in Spanish, on-line); D. Campbell, *JNES* 73/2 (2014) 345-351, and J.J. Justel, *ZDMG* 164/3 (2014) 819-823.

6. See J. Oliva, "Los hurritas en la antigua Siria: un balance provisional", in: J.J. Justel - J.-P. Vita - J.-A. Zamora (eds.), *Las culturas del Próximo Oriente Antiguo y su expansión mediterránea*, CSIC-IEIOP, Zaragoza, 2008, pp. 145-152, and the specific bibliography referred to therein. Updated titles are to be found in Th. Richter, S. Lange, *ibid.*, p. 199ff. Some still unfinished works on the topic have recently been edited in the volume E. Cancik-Kirschbaum - N. Brisch - J. Eidem (eds.), *Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space. The Emergence of the Mittani State* (Topoi - Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 17), Berlin 2014; see also M. Novák, "The Chronology of the Royal Palace of Qatna", *Ägypten und Levante* 14 (2004) 299-317.

7. Profuse evidence is gathered in J. Oliva, "Consideraciones sobre el hibridismo hurro-semítico en Alalah VII", *Veleia* 16 (1999) 19-32.

8. See J. Sanmartín, "Sociedades y lenguas en el medio sirio-levantino del II milenio a.C.: Ugarit y lo hurrita", in: M. Molina - I. Márquez Rowe - J. Sanmartín (eds.), *Arbor Scientiae. Estudios del Próximo Oriente Antiguo dedicados a Gregorio del Olmo Lete con ocasión de su 65 aniversario*, *Aula Orientalis* XVII-XVIII (1999-2000) 113-123.

Bi'a/Tuttul, text KTT 379[9]) and, after the Mari records, especially in the northern Syro-Mesopotamian region of Idamaraṣ, although no evidence of Hurro-Akkadian has been recovered from them until now.

The well-known historical outline of the LBA shows that, after the dominance of the Amorites in Syria for about four centuries (*circa* 2000-1600 BC), Hurrians were being progressively established in the area during the process of suppressing several important raids and incursions carried out by the Hittites in northern Syria and Mesopotamia under kings Hattushili I and Murshili I[10].

2. *On so called "Hurro-Akkadian"*

The generic concept "Hurro-Akkadian"[11], and what it actually might historically represent, should also at this point be briefly re-defined: As it appears to me, "Hurro-Akkadian" did not essentially exist as a *real spoken language* in the ANE. This introductory statement is important because some Assyriological works would seem to consider Hurro-Akkadian as a special kind of Akkadian language with a linguistic status. In my view, the conventional concept "Hurro-Akkadian" properly designates a kind of Akkadian texts in which certain expressions, morphological elements or sentences, glosses and isoglosses in Hurrian are more or less commonly employed when the scribes of these *Hurro-Akkadian texts* apparently and –so to speak– urgently needed, or simply used, a term or expression in their own language (in this case Hurrian), in order to clarify certain significant messages. This practice was even linguistically normalized for certain daily-life affairs, since we can observe, for example in the Akkadian texts from Nuzi, that legal formulae regularly used canonical expressions constructed in Hurro-Akkadian, i.e. Akkadian expressions with Hurrian rules[12]. Although no evidence of this kind is documented yet among the Hurrians of the western parts of Mittanni, some terms, like for example *kumānu*, "acre" (Ugaritic *kmn*), have been established as a creation of West Hurro-Akkadian[13]. In any case, the important linguistic Hurrian substrate in West Akkadian has especially been recognized in the Alalakh tablets[14].

The existence of a real spoken mixed language –not bilingualism– seems to me a very strange phenomenon, maybe not very common as far as I know, and, as it appears to me, only possible where, for example, two native and living (oral) languages are being spoken at the same time and by a certain

9. M. Krebernik, *Tall Bi'a/Tuttul – II. Die altorientalischen Schriftfunde*, Saarbrücken 2001, p. 157.

10. See most recently J. Klinger, "The Imperial Space – The Early Hittite Kingdom", in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum - N. Brisch - J. Eidem (eds.), *Constituent, Confederate, and Conquered Space. The Emergence of the Mittani State* (Topoi - Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 17), Berlin 2014, pp. 75-90.

11. See G. Wilhelm, *Untersuchungen zum Hurro-Akkadischen von Nuzi*, AOAT 9, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970; an important amount of Hurro-Akkadian material from Nuzi was also collected by W. Mayer in *Nuzi-Studien I. Die Archive des Palastes und die Prosopographie der Berufe*, AOAT 205/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978; further evidence on the Hurro-Akkadian from Nuzi has recently been investigated by J. Fincke, "A Hurro-Akkadian Expression for Changing One's Testimony Attested in Nuzi Trial Records", in: Ll. Feliu - J. Llop - A. Millet Albà - J. Sanmartín (eds.), *Time and History in the Ancient Near East*. Proceedings of the 56th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Barcelona, Winona-Lake, Indiana 2013, pp. 471-479; more references on Nuzi Akkadian can be found in J. Oliva, "Lengua hurrita: problemas y perspectivas", in: G. Carrasco Serrano - J. C. Oliva Mompeán (eds.), *Escrituras y lenguas del Mediterráneo en la Antigüedad*, Cuenca 2005, pp. 121f. fnn 25-29; as for Syrian Hurro-Akkadian, a holistic monographic study is still lacking; see most recently on the textual material from Qatna: Th. Richter, „Das ‚Archiv des Idanda'. Bericht über die Inschriftenfunde der Grabungskampagne 2002 in Mišrife/Qatna", *MDOG* 135 (2003) 167-187; Th. Richter, „Die Texte des Idadda-Archivs", in *Qaṭna Studien* 3, Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 27-43, and the previous works cited therein.

12. See for a general study G. Wilhelm, *Untersuchungen zum Hurro-Akkadischen von Nuzi*, AOAT 9, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970, and most recently J. Fincke in fn 11 above.

13. See W. G. E. Watson, "Measure for measure", *N.A.B.U.* 2010/1, 10).

14. See D. Wiseman, Al.T. p. 9ff.; G. Giacumakis, *The Akkadian of Alalaḫ*, The Hague-Paris 1970, pp. 45ff.

number of speakers who live together and share daily business dealings in a certain community[15]. We know, for instance, of so-called "Spanglish", i.e. an artificial mixture of Spanish and English, mainly used today in Latin-American music, but also in certain Latin-American sport chronicles and in some Latin communities from New York. Amongst them, for example, it is not uncommon to hear from a part of the population a variety of sentences or common expressions like: "Tengo que **vacunar la carpeta ("to vacuum the carpet")** con la aspiradora", "Hoy **loncheamos** (to lunch) en un **restaurant**", "José **emailea** una carta a su novia", "el **lonche** (lunch) está en el **freezer**", "te … **llamo para atrás** (call you back), okey?", "Anoche fui a **watchar** (to watch) las **movies** con Nancy", "Todas las noches **my baby** toma un **glasso** (glass) de leche", or "quiero **parquear** (to park) el coche"[16].

If this socio-linguistic phenomenon of using a mixed language would apparently be only possible in such communities where both substrate languages are being spoken at the same time –and it even appears uncommon in actual bilingual societies–, it would not seem to have been the case for LBA Syria with respect to "Hurro-Akkadian", mainly for two reasons: Primarily, because Akkadian, as we have stated above, was *not* a proper substrate language in LBA Syria, since mainly West-Semitic (Amorite or/and "Canaanite dialects") and Hurrian were spoken by the population at the same time; and secondly, because of the nature of the recovered textual material itself. This does not actually show a Hurro-Akkadian mixed language, but rather the complementary use of both languages –Akkadian and Hurrian– by means of a well-known switching code mainly employed in letters (now especially seen in Qatna), but also through the addition of Hurrian linguistic elements (mainly suffixes) in administrative texts. The introduction of Hurrian expressions in Akkadian texts is usually indicated by inscribing a particular cuneiform sign on a certain line: frequently the U-sign (for example in Alalakh IV texts), but also the GAM-sign (used in the Ni'i and Qatna documents). Thus, in light of this traditional *scribal* practice, it would theoretically appear that a *Hurro-Akkadian language* never existed in LBA Syria, although one certain Hurro-Akkadian code did actually exist for administrative and diplomatic purposes. On the other hand, the existence of certain Hurro-Amorite or Hurro-Canaanite expressions seems probable, since we presently know some –although

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15. Most recently, I have personally been witness of this in relation to a code-switching practice among 3 native people talking in an African language, but suddenly shifting to Spanish, although with a strong African accent. And, also many years ago, people talking indistinctly in Spanish and Euskara in a code-switching language. This is also not uncommon in today northern Magreb, where local Arabic sometimes uses certain expressions in French and/or Spanish.

16. See more on Spanglish by E. Rodríguez González and M.C. Parafita Couto, "Calling for Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of *Spanglish* and Its Linguistic Manifestations", *Hispania* 95/3, September (2012), pp. 461-480 –published by The Johns Hopkins University Press *DOI: 10.1353/hpn.2012.*0074, and read on-line in April 2015– which includes relevant concerned literature. As a socio-, and psycho-linguistic phenomenon, we do not think, of course, that *scribal* (written) Hurro-Akkadian could actually be compared to the complex contemporary existing code-switching in *Spanglish*, or in many other languages of the world, which, evidently, occur under different social and historical conditions. From my readings on the subject, I have the impression that this phenomenon is mainly studied as a contemporary *oral* practice, and indeed under many disciplines such as: sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, and sociology of language, as well as in certain streams of social psychology, folklore studies, media studies, literary theory, and the philosophy of language. Authorized studies on this high specialized research subject are abundant, though we cannot even quote here but some research outlines like, for example: C. Álvarez-Cáccamo, "From 'Switching Code' to 'Code-Switching'. Towards a reconceptualisation of communicative codes", in: P. Auer (ed.), *Code-Switching in Conversation. Language, interaction and identity*, Routledge, London and New York 1998, pp. 29-48; Ch. Nilep, " 'Code Switching' in Sociocultural Linguistics", *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 19 (2006) 1-22; C. Myers-Scotton and J. L Jake, "Nonfinite verbs and negotiating bilingualism in codeswitching: Implications for a language production model", *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 17/3 (2014/ published on-line 2013) pp. 511-525 (my thanks to Prof. A. M. Relaño Pastor, UCLM, for providing me with these useful references).

still very limited– evidence from Qatna: see especially coming together in Qatna TT3:23: West-Semitic *pagānu* and Hurrian wagan-, in which a probable West Semitic root *pagānu* still remains unclear[17].

So, all in all regarding "Hurro-Akkadian" as a technical concept in Assyriology, it seems to me that it actually appears to be much better defined as "Akkadian" with possible Hurrian expressions (key sentences), lexical items, syntactical constructions, glosses and isoglosses[18], but also Hurrian suffixes added to certain Akkadian words or terms, that are used because of their especial relevance in the message (said of letters), or by means of a better practical understanding of administrative texts by a Hurrian speaker, scribe or reader. The more or less common use of this Hurro-Akkadian scribal practice in LBA Syria goes back, prior to the formation of the Hurri-Mittanni state, at least to the important Hurro-Akkadian or Hurro-Semitic material attested in the Amorite archives from Alalakh VII.

3. *On the new evidence of Hurro-Akkadian from Tell Mishrifēh-Qatna*

The new Hurro-Akkadian texts from Tell Mishrifēh-Qatna[19] provide new interesting information for a better understanding of LBA Syrian society and its linguistic components. One main observable aspect in the Qatna tablets is the usage of two different chief linguistic elements: on the one hand, a West Akkadian dialect[20], on the other, an important and apparently living and dominant Hurrian-speaking component. The West Semitic constituent is only recognizable in personal names[21].

Since West Akkadian and West Hurrian are only recognizable through the usage of one local (Syrian) "Hurro-Akkadian" code, maybe we should more appropriately consider it as "West Hurro-Akkadian" in contrast, for instance, to "Nuzi-Akkadian", which also seems to show special local peculiarities[22]. With regard to West (Syrian) Hurrian, we find abundant and genuine presumably dialectal expressions shared in central and northern Syria by the apparently neighbouring city-states of Ni'i, Tunip[23], Qatna, and Nuhasse[24]. We would like to offer now a possible historical interpretation of this phenomenon.

As is well-known, within the new texts discovered at the palace of LBA Qatna, 5 interesting diplomatic letters addressed to king Idadda of Qatna ("Idanda" or "Idamda" are also possible readings of this personal name[25]) written in Akkadian but containing whole code-switching expressions in Hurrian, were found. The rest of the archive contains different kinds of administrative and legal documents, also using Hurrian expressions. It seems that genuine Hurrian as a spoken language in the Qatna texts looks much more likely in letters than in administrative documents. One of these letters is the important diplomatic missive Qatna TT1: a letter written in so-called "Hurro-Akkadian" and sent to Qatna from the

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17. This is now being investigated by the present author for a future publication.

18. By referring at this point to Hurrian glosses and isoglosses in Hurro-Akkadian texts, we understand this scribal instrument as a usual practice in which the usage of Hurrian does not necessarily *translate* (into Hurrian) a former word or expression uttered in Akkadian or in West-Semitic, but rather as *an explaining extension of the message* content (typical in code switching) which, for some logical reason, directly shifts to Hurrian.

19. See fn 1 above.

20. See Richter, QS 3, pp. 39-41, and the remarks made by Justel, *ZDMG* 164/3 (2014) 819-823.

21. Richter QS 3, p. 173ff.

22. In his edition of these tablets, Richter has accomplished a phonetic standardization of the readings of cuneiform signs that changes the original value, for example: -s- is always read as -š-, so that, for instance *sa* is regularly read as *ša₄*. This is, in my opinion, unnecessary for texts rendered in "peripheral" Akkadian.

23. According to EA 59, see Sh. Izre'el, and I. Singer, *The General's Letters from Ugarit. A Linguistic and Historical Reevaluation of RS 20.33*, Ugaritica V, 20, Tel Aviv 1990, p. 80; Richter, *MDOG* 135 (2003) 176 fn 44.

24. Richter, QS 3, p. 27f.

25. It appears as: *Id-a-ad-da* in the Inventories of Qatna A, B and C, see Richter, *MDOG* 136 (2004) 220.

neighbouring city of Ni'i. As a matter of fact, the Hurrian and Hurro-Akkadian material found in this diplomatic letter, together with that of Qatna TT2, and TT3, represents an important piece of the original linguistic (scribal) component of Ni'i[26].

After a personal study of this text[27], Qatna TT1[28] reads as follows (Hurrian glosses are marked in **bold**):

1.	*a-na* ¹*Id-àm-da* ŠEŠ-*ia*	*To Idamda, my brother*
2.	*um-ma* ¹*Tá-ku-wa* ŠEŠ-*ka*	*so* (*says*) *Takuwa, your brother:*
3.	*bu-lu-uṭ lu-ú šul-mu*	*Live! Let there be peace*
4.	*a-na* UGU-*ka* SUKKAL-*ka*	*for you (and) your minister!*
5.	É.GAL *lu-ú šul-mu*	*Let the palace be in peace!*
6.	*a-ḫi* ᵈUTU-LUGAL *it-tal-kam*	*My brother: the Sun, the King has come*
7.	*ù ep-še-et-ka*	*since your acts/decision*
8.	*ša ka-sa* < **ḫu-šu-gar-a-še**	*of you is* < **that he allies/ an alliance**.
9.	*šu-ú-ut ù* LÚ.DUMU.KIN-*rù*	*Then, he, an envoy*
10.	*a-na* ¹*Ḫa-an-nu-ut-ti*	*to Hannuti*
11.	*it-tal-kam um-ma šu-ma*	*has come. So (speaks) he himself:*
12.	*um-ma* ᵈUTU-*ši*-LUGAL	*So (says) the Sun, the King:*
13.	< **pa-zu-šu** *ša* URU *Qàṭ-na* -	<**"You have sent** of the city of Qatna
14.	< **am-mi-ši-in-na**	< **may it indeed arrive**
15.	*i-bá-aš-ši ù at-ta*	it is, and you
16.	< **na-ku-li-iu-á[w]-wu**	< **I shall not set free".**
17.	*ù i-na-an-na* ₁*Ḫa-an-nu-ut-ti*	And now Hannutti
18.	*it-ti* NAM.R[A] *ša* [<] **ša-ri-ni-ra** *i-ti-iq*	has taken [<] **the tribute**
19.	*ki-i-me* < L[Ú] **en-da**	as the < **enda**
20.	*i-na* URU *Qàṭ-na* < **it-ḫa-la-da** UR.BI	in the city of Qatna. < **Against impurity** together
21.	< **u-bu-lu-[q]a-ri-in**	< **let (you) sacredly swear.**
22.	< **a-wa-d[u]-uḫ-ḫa**	< **(in) Bad advice**
23.	*ù at-*[*t*]*a* ŠÀ-*ka*	and you your heart
24.	< **za-za-li-u-mu**	< **don't you foster!**

This letter, TT2 and TT3 from Qatna, were sent to king Idamda by Takuwa of Ni'i over an indeterminate span of time. From the perspective of the use of Hurro-Akkadian, we can sum up the following preliminary remarks:

1. Letters like this clearly reflect much better than any other written documents the real spoken (and written) language(s) of a given territory at a particular time[29].

2. "Hurro-Akkadian" in LBA Syria, at least in light of this evidence from Qatna, reflects the preeminence of Hurrian culture and language, whereas Akkadian mostly represents an inherited traditional writing system, borrowed from the Mesopotamian (Assyro-Babylonian) dominant culture. Hurrian was

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26. Richter, QS 3, pp. 29-39.

27. For this Hurrian text version, see my full epigraphic treatment "On the Order of Shuppiluliuma in Syria. Reading the Hurrian of the Qatna Letter TT1", *UF* 46 (2015) 299-319.

28. Edited first version by Richter in QS 3, pp. 44-46.

29. A good and well-known example of that is the huge corpus of *Amorite letters* (letters in Mari Akkadian with an important Amorite substrate) found in the Royal Palace of Mari.

surely spoken by the majority, or at least by a large amount of the Syrian population at this time, also by the scribes, most of whom might also have been Hurrians and Hurrian speaking people.

3. The knowledge of Akkadian, as well as the skill in writing cuneiform exhibited by scribes working in peripheral or second rang Syrian cities, such as Ni'i or Alalakh IV, seem to have been somewhat lower than those shown by scribes active in capital cities.

4. Most important from our perspective is the role played by the Hurrian of Ni'i[30] in light of the Qatna texts. Two interesting points are especially relevant: 1) A particular Hurrian orthography and syntax, which are not clear at all and, in any case, do not follow the rules of the Mittanni Letter[31], and 2) more importantly: the existence of a likely "Ni'i-Qatna" West Hurrian dialect, including of course that of Nuhasse, *versus* Mittanni Hurrian in LBA Syria[32], that could possibly represent a continuum from earlier times (Alalakh VII and IV).

5. Finally, by examining TT1, which came from Ni'i but was found in Qatna, we do find a complementary use of Akkadian and Hurrian, not employed as a mixed language in the sense stated above and certainly not arbitrarily with respect to the introduction of expressions in Hurrian, but rather as a code-switching document from one written language to another substrate language.

4. *Perspectives of Hurro-Akkadian in a broader Syrian context (Alalakh IV)*

The new evidence of Hurro-Akkadian in the Qatna tablets becomes even more interesting, since it reopens old perspectives in a broader regional context. Certainly, the new letters and administrative documents from Tell Mishrifēh are closely linked with the important finds from Mittannian Alalakh IV, dated about a century earlier. Just as a feeble though wider continuum, we can now better observe a strong linguistic and historical connection among the important Syrian cities of Alalakh IV, Ni'i, and Qatna, and the region of Nuhasse in the usage of Hurro-Akkadian during Mittannian times. To the beginning of this local scribal practice within the Alalakh IV archives, there are in fact some texts in which it does not seem entirely clear if we are dealing with documents written in Akkadian or in Hurrian[33]. Among this evidence, it is especially significant to mention here Al.T. 297[34], conserved in the Antakya Museum (AM) in Turkey, which was found on the floor of Room 10 at the palace of Alalakh IV[35]. Using the same general scribal pattern observed in the documents from Qatna about a century later, this Hurro-Akkadian text reads as follows (see a hand copy in Wiseman, *Al.T.*, Pl. XXXIII; we have also checked a second hand

30. See the study presented by Richter in QS 3 pp. 28-41.

31. Richter, QS 3, p. 30ff.

32. Richter, QS 3, p. 29ff.

33. We specifically refer to Al.T. 362, 390, 398, 417, but also especially: to Al.T. 420, 422, 423, 424, 425, 430, 435, 436, 438, and 440. Hurro-Akkadian material from Alalakh IV is especially documented in: Al.T. 433 and 434; we even might have a pure Hurrian text in Al.T. 437; see also Al.T. 329:13; and the isoglosses in Al.T. 93:9 and Al.T.100:13 zikk=ikki (see J. Oliva, "Collations of Middle-Babylonian Alalakh Tablets in the British Museum", *AuOr* Supplementa 22, 2006, p. 328). See the preliminary works done by the editor D. J. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets*, London 1953. For further specialized bibliography on Alalakh IV see the monographic studies of Von Dassow, SCCNH 17, and Chr. Niedorf, *Die mittelbabylonischen Rechtsurkunden aus Alalaḫ IV (Schicht IV)*, AOAT 352, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2008.

34. See D. Wiseman, Al.T., p. 90; D. Wiseman, "Ration Lists from Alalakh IV", *JCS* XIII (1959) 53; AHw 1265b, and CAD Š III, p. 230b; Von Dassow, *SCCNH* 17, p. 307, fn 113 (see also p. 331 fn 159). AHw disagrees with this reading and proposes instead: "*šu-kúl-te* !?" (sic).

35. Wiseman, Al.T., p. 119.

copy kept at the Ugarit-Forschung Institute in Münster[36]). Elements in Hurrian are likewise marked in **bold**:

1	5 ME 95 ZÍZ.ḪI.A	595 of emmer
2	*ša* É.GAL-*lim*	of the palace,
3	4 ME 80 *še-em*	480[37] of barley
4	*ša* É.GAL-*lim*	of the palace,
5	*šu-kúl-tú* ANŠE.KUR.RA	fodder (for) horse(s)
6	*ša* LÚ A-RA[38]-*ši-ia*-**né**	of the Man of **the** Alashiya,
7	*ša* Tu-tu-wi-i[n?][39]	of Tutuwen.
8	*še-em* KI.UD *ša*	Rough (?) barley which (is)
9	UGU URU Ni-i[40]-**né** **<ta-an**[41]	at the debit **from the city of** Ni'i
10	**ú-i**	**no!**
11	*la i-na-an-na*	Not now.
12	*še-em a-na* ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ	Barley for the horses
13	**< a-ru-tu-ši**	**< given**
14	*i-na* É.GAL-*lim-ma*	in the actual palace
15	**< ú-i-il**	**< they? (are) not,**
16	*ù* LUGAL-*ru*	and may the king
17	*lú-ú i-te šu-kúl-tú*	know. Fodder of
18	ZÍZ *qa-qa-ri*-**ma-an**	**the actual** floor emmer
19	ÌR LUGAL-*ri*	the servant of the king
20	**< a-ru-tu-uš-ša**	**< he has given**
21	*ù lu?-ú ti-i-te*	and may you know.

This Hurro-Akkadian text from Alalakh IV provides interesting information about some aspects of the Alalakh IV local administration. It seems to be a register note sent from a dependent place outside the city of Alalakh, possibly the very city of Ni'i, providing the central administration with local information about the transfer of incomes and resources of the palace at the debit of Ni'i, but also incomes from the use of Ni'i as a stopover on the way to Alalakh. If we have understood it correctly, this text gives information about an existing situation of fodder supply to Alalakh through 3 different annotations:

-First: lines 1-7, notify that certain quantities of emmer and barley of the palace (are) fodder for horses –that would seem to be sent– from the man of Alashiya, Tutuwen.

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36. Courtesy M. Dietrich and O. Loretz (1996), directly copied by O. Loretz in the Antakya Museum. See Von Dassow, *SCCNH* 17, p. 307 fn 113; see also the correct comment on *genre* of this text made by Ch. Niedorf, *Die mittelbabylonischen Rechtsurkunden aus Alalaḫ IV (Schicht IV)*, AOAT 352, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2008, pp. 44-45.

37. Wiseman, *JCS* XIII (1959) 53 reads: "5 ME 80".

38. This place name, probably identifiable with Cyprus, is regularly attested in Alalakh VII and in Alalah IV texts, in the Amarna letters, but also especially in Ugarit as: *A-la!-ši-ia*, see J. A. Belmonte, *RGTC* 12/2, pp. 11-12. The variant in this text represents an interesting epigraphic deviation, maybe connected to the Hurrian substrate showed by the text.

39. Wiseman, *ibid.*, reads this PN as: *Tu-tu-wa-še*. See Tutuw=ale and Duduw=alle from Alalakh IV, Niedorf AOAT 352, p. 112 fn 425. It does not seem that this PN can be related to Akkadian *tutiwe* "ein Bronzestück für Panzer?", AHw p. 1374, see W. G. E. Watson, "Getting to Grips with Ugaritic *tdġl*", *UF* 42 (2010) 823.

40. Cfr. in EA59:28: URU *Ni-i* KI.

41. We propose to read this as an expression in Hurrian, nominal case ending (instrumental-ablative) –tan "from".

-In a second register: lines 8-11 appear to inform about second class barley. The tablet seems to notify that rough barley from the city of Ni'i is still not available.

-A third register in lines 12-21 alerts about the lack of barley for many horses[42], and this is important to let the king know. So, the official is informed that the servant is giving floor emmer as fodder.

Apart from this interesting information about how the Alalakh IV administration and its close connection to Ni'i was working, our main interest is to point out that this document uses some Hurrian expressions and reproduces a similar scribal pattern to the one observed in the Qatna text TT1 and the other letters from this archive about a century later. However, some of these expressions, especially those in lines 13 and 20, are still difficult to analyse (hurr. ar=ut-could also have negative sense "not given"). Even if the historical relevance of Al.T. 297 is in no way comparable to the important diplomatic letter TT1 from Qatna, the use of Hurro-Akkadian does seem to play a similar role: As we can observe in Al.T. 297, especially relevant details in the message are expressed through a code switch to Hurrian. Again, the comparison of this evidence from Alalakh IV and Qatna reflects a dominant Hurrian-speaking population settled in northern-central Syria, from about 1500 to 1350 BC, that increasingly influenced active (Hurrian) scribes. It also seems to demarcate a mostly inland region inhabited by Hurrians in the areas of Alalakh, Nuhasse, to which probably the sites of Ugulzat, Jaruqat, and Irbid belonged, to the west at least also in the reign of Ugarit, and southwards to Ni'i and Qatna.

5. *Brief outcome*

1. Strongly connected with ancient Kizzuwatna in southern Anatolia[43], a Hurrian cultural continuum existed in wide areas of northern and central Syria for about four centuries, from around 1700 (Late Middle Bronze Age) to 1350 BC. This extensive Hurrianized region could have originated in central Syria, and possibly moved to Alalakh and Ugarit, where, in fact, a remarkable scribal tradition rooted in Hurrian culture is well known. The prevailing Hurrian speaking populations in this area determined that the communication among Hurrian communities regularly employed Hurrian by using code-switching, that is to say, a shift in written documents from Akkadian to Hurrian, so-called "Hurro-Akkadian", when this communication was of official –diplomatic or administrative– character. Why this code-switching practice was applied can be differently motivated, for example by varied social or political circumstances. Just to mention two of them: 1) because of a better understanding between Hurrian communities and 2) because an Akkadian or West Semitic translation of certain Hurrian terms was unsure or unknown.

2. As far as we can ascertain, in ancient Syria "Hurro-Akkadian" seems to represent a more or less refined standardized Akkadian, in which Hurrian linguistic elements –(1) whole expressions, (2) glosses or/and (3) isoglosses (in the sense indicated above, footnote 7) and (4) Hurrian morphological elements (mainly suffixes)– were used whenever scribes from different places, well educated or not, had to use their own language (Hurrian) to make a particular message absolutely clear.

3. The new evidence from Qatna shows interesting connections among wider scribal school practices in Syria during the LBA. Of particular interest are the five diplomatic letters from Qatna, three of which (TT1-TT3) were written in the city of Ni'i. It is also possible that the Qatna letter TT4 was written in Ni'i and sent to Idamda by Hannutti, the Hittite potentate of Shuppiluliuma in northern Syria.

4. It is interesting that also evidence from Alalakh IV mentions Ni'i using "Hurro-Akkadian" about a century earlier. If our translation of Al.T. 297 above is correct, it cannot be excluded that this Alalakh text

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42. Differently to line 5: ANŠE.KUR.RA, here the scribe renders: ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ

43. R. Strauß, *Reinigungsrituale aus Kizzuwatna*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 2006, pp. 210f, 360.

could also have been written in the very city of Ni'i and sent to Alalakh providing information about the local disposal of goods, when Ni'i belonged to the kingdom of Alalakh IV-Mukish during Mittannian supremacy.

5. That Hurro-Akkadian texts were sent originally from Ni'i to the palace of Mittannian Alalakh IV and, about a century later, this same city, maybe allied to the new Hittite bastion in Alalakh III-II, to the palace of Qatna, seems to show a linguistic Hurro-Akkadian continuum, original from Ni'i, that was determined by a dominant Hurrian element. As it seems, Hurrian was generally spoken in northern and central Syria, as Akkadian was apparently little known by itinerant scribes. This probably happened not only during the dominance of Mittanni over wide areas of the region, but also throughout the following period of increasing Hittite supremacy, as we can observe in the new tablets from Qatna. This shows, in our opinion, that the existence of a "Ni'i-Qatna Hurrian dialect" is an interesting hypothesis that deserves further investigation.