

An Akkadian Letter of the Amarna Period at Ugarit*

Ignacio Márquez Rowe - Universidad de Barcelona, I.P.O.A.

[In discussing the linguistic and historical reevaluation of the 'General's Letter' (RS 20.33) provided by S. Izre'el and I. Singer, the author draws the attention to the main result of their enquiry, namely the Amarna setting of the letter, and proposes in turn a *reevaluation* of this frame. The aim of this paper is thus simple and twofold: first, to compare the language of the letter with the language of the Amarna letters, after the philological review of some of the controversial expressions found in the text; and second, to compare the situation described by the General with the military scene depicted in the Amarna correspondence. Finally, a new interpretation of addressor, addressee and findplace of the letter is suggested.]

1. Introduction

“Tous les épigraphistes comprendront, et excuseront, ma réserve: il faut avoir entre les mains un tel document, le tourner en tous sens pour pouvoir en tirer des conclusions plus fermes”. Not only epigraphists but anyone who would follow J. Nougayrol's decipherment of the Akkadian letter RS 20.33 he called “La 'lettre du général'” could understand his reservation: his first estimation in 1957 that RS 20.33 might well be placed along with the Amarna correspondence had been challenged without hesitation by the excavator of Ras Shamra, Cl.-F.A. Schaeffer, who would date the archive where the tablet was found (the House of Rap'ānu) exclusively to the late 13th / early 12th cent. B.C. The result of this contradictory situation is well reflected in the *editio princeps* of the text in *Ugaritica* 5 in 1968: On the one hand, Nougayrol, after turning admirably the document in all different ways, described in his footnotes and comments the striking affinities of the language with the Amarna letters. On the other hand, Schaeffer, in the historical interpretation of the published correspondence in the same volume, situated the 'General's letter' in the context of the Sea Peoples invasion.

* Review article of S. Izre'el-Singer, I., *The General's Letter from Ugarit. A Linguistic and Historical Reevaluation of RS 20.33* (*Ugaritica* V, No. 20), Tel Aviv 1990. In this paper I follow the abbreviations in *CAD*; in addition, note the following ones: *AkkUg* = J. Huehnergard, *The Akkadian of Ugarit* (HSS 34), Atlanta 1989, *AmAkk* = S. Izre'el, *Amurru Akkadian. A Linguistic Study* (HSS 41), Atlanta 1991, *Amarna Letters* = W.L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, Baltimore/London 1992, *CAT* = A.F. Rainey, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets. A Linguistic Analysis of the Mixed Dialect used by Scribes from Canaan*, (4 vols.), Leiden 1996, *Lingering over Words* = T. Abush-Huehnergard, J.-Steinkeller, P. (eds.), *Lingering over words, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (HSS 37), Atlanta 1990, *OLA* 23 = M. Heltzer-Lipiński, E. (eds.), *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Leuven 1988, *SAU* = W.H. van Soldt, *Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit. Dating and Grammar* (AOAT 40), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, *Ug* 5 = J. Nougayrol et al., *Ugaritica V. Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit* (MRS XVI), Paris 1968. The translations of passages from the Amarna letters in this paper will generally follow Moran's English version in *Amarna Letters*.

2. *The book*

One can say that the roles of Nougayrol and Schaeffer in *Ugaritica 5* are now played in harmony by Sh. Izre'el and I. Singer, more than 20 years later, in their combined linguistic and historical reevaluation of RS 20.33. The order of these two independent studies marks the basis of their cooperation: it follows their preliminary agreement that "linguistic grounds should provide the essential foundation for dating any text, and the General's Letter in particular" (Izre'el on p. 20; see also Singer's opening premise on p. 115).

2.1. *The linguistic reevaluation* ("Part One. The General's Letter: Philological and Linguistic Aspects", pp. 17-111)

Izre'el presents in the first chapter of his philological and linguistic examination the text in the standard way, that means transliteration, translation and commentary including Nougayrol's copy (Pl. I-II), the original photos of the tablet and cast (Pl. III-VIII) and the signlist (Appendix, pp. 185-191). With this regard, it is important to note that this transliteration, as he admits on p. 21, outdates in several considerable aspects the one offered in his *AmAkk* vol. II pp. 92-94 (see there his note in vol. I p. 22 and vol. II p. 96). That the 'General's letter' belongs to the Amurru Akkadian corpus, namely to the so-called "earlier texts" of the corpus, represents in fact the hypothesis (following a suggestion of Nougayrol –see p. 20) and final result of this investigation. This is shown in the second chapter which aims precisely at identifying what Nougayrol termed "la culture du scribe" or, in Izre'el's words, the linguistic system. Indeed, a detailed description of the orthography and grammar of the text systematically compared to the dialect of the Amarna letters from Amurru leads the author to the conclusion that the scribe of the 'General's letter' and the scribes of the letters of Aziru and EA 62 of Abdi-Aširta belonged to the same school. Presumably on the basis that every 'rule' has its exception, Izre'el examines in the following chapter the linguistic irregularities of RS 20.33, what he designates as "extra-systemic elements". These "anomalies" reflect, as suggested by the author, features proper to the Hittite dialect of Akkadian (see in particular the comprehensive study of the representation of sibilants on pp. 87-100).

The assimilation of such "foreign" elements into the Amurru language of the text enables finally Izre'el to advance the discussion of the unknown identity of both addressor and addressee Šumiš, the General settled in Amurru, and his king. In order to answer his tentative question, Was the General dictating to an Amurrite scribe the message addressed to the Hittite king, his lord?, Singer undertakes in the second part of the book the long-debated problem of the historical setting of the 'General's letter'.

2.2. *The historical reevaluation* ("Part Two. Aziru's Apostasy and the Historical Setting of the General's Letter", pp. 113-183)

Four are the premises of Singer's study: first and most important, he assumes the dating of the text provided by Izre'el's linguistic reevaluation; second, as stated in the letter, the scene of the military operations carried out by the General took place in Amurru; third, as deduced from the letter, the General was a subject of a king who had the capacity to challenge an Egyptian army; and finally, the letter was found in Ugarit (p. 122). The first premise rules out the proposal of the Sea Peoples invasion or the more common view of the battle of Qadesh as the historical setting for the events described in RS 20.33. Concerning the geographical setting of the letter, Singer provides a detailed analysis in the second chapter. From the third premise, the author deduces the identity of the addressee: the king of Hatti (p. 123). This conclusion rules out in turn the possibility to interpret the king of Ugarit as the General's lord. As a

solution then for the fourth premise, the author will suggest that the letter was detained at Ugarit on its way from Amurru to the Hittite emperor (pp. 172f.).

With these basic elements, Singer attempts "to reconstruct the earliest stages of Hittite-Amurrite relations, with the aim of detecting the most plausible period for an anti-Egyptian military undertaking, plotted by the Hittites within the territory of Amurru" (p. 124). Through a new ordering of Aziru's Amarna letters combined with a careful survey of the Hittite sources the author presents a revealing reconstruction of *the Aziru's Progress*. The different political stages of his career: seizure of Šumur, visit to the Pharaoh, negotiations with Ḫatti (which apparently were not opened before him by his father Abdi-Aširta) are chronologically arranged and illustrated in chapter 3. This picture together with the resulting redating of Aziru's defection to the Hittite king (ch. 4) as well as the reassessment of the consequent projected Egyptian campaign against Ḫatti and Amurru as deduced basically from the Amarna correspondence (ch. 5; for a similar and simultaneous evaluation, cf. N. Na'aman in *Lingering over Words*, pp. 397-405, contrast M. Liverani's interpretation, *ibid.*, pp. 337-348) make Singer conclude that "the military situation emerging from the 'General's letter' would best fit the time when Aziru submitted to Šuppiluliuma and was expecting an Egyptian retaliation" (p. 182).

2.3. *Critical remarks*

In reaching the end of certain books, and this one in particular, one has the pleasant impression of having read an easy comprehensive research. That is not to say that the task has been a simple one. On the contrary, if there is one difficult and not less risky mission this is to provide a frame both philological and historical to a completely isolated document. In addition, one must take into consideration that the case of the Amarna-like 'General's letter' has been faced ever since its excavation in the House of Rap'ānu at Ras Shamra not only with the late chronology of the archive but with the general later chronology of the texts found at Ugarit. In this regard, Izre'el and Singer must be congratulated for their courageous and successful independent but undoubtedly cooperative work (completed, I must add, with an excellent index). The virtue of Izre'el's study has been to reevaluate and, in his colleague's words (p. 116), corroborate firmly Nougayrol's original dating ("old, yet new", one should conclude with the author on p. 83); the merit of Singer's evaluation, to give preference to the linguistic criteria over historical considerations. Moreover, in interpreting the philological and historical evidence both scholars have assumed the essential methodological premise which usually reviewers insistingly long for: the careful distinction between what is certain from what is merely speculative, possible or even probable. This is particularly important in dealing with such an 'orphan' text: a letter with unknown addressor and addressee and apparently unrelated to its archaeological context. My task then will not be to call the attention but rather to remind the readers of the different degree of probability of some of their interpretations. For example, the question Izre'el poses at the end of his study aiming at a possible identification of both sender and addressee is admittedly speculative (pp. 108f.). This suggestion is based in turn on another conjecture, now in the domain of linguistics, namely that the possible absorption of Hittito-Akkadian features into the Amurru dialect of the text may be attributed to the dictation of the message in the Hittite dialect of Akkadian. Also conjectural is Singer's identification of the addressor as Šumittara, a pro-Hittite Syrian prince attested in Hittite sources and perhaps in EA 57:13 (p. 178). Within this same category, although treated by the same author as a possible solution (p. 173), I would include the explanation for the findspot of the tablet, namely that the letter addressed from Amurru to the Hittite king stopped and was kept at Ugarit and that a copy (or Hittite translation) was sent to its true addressee. My main disagreement in terms of probability, however, concerns the identity of this addressee (also the main argument of R.R. Stieglitz's review in *BiOr* 49 [1992] pp. 457f.). That the addressed king had "the capacity to challenge an Egyptian army", as stated in Singer's second premise, does not necessarily mean

that "the letter was addressed to the king of a great power" and that, as a result, "the choice is practically reduced to one option only, Hatti" (p. 123). On the other hand, this identification raises a difficult problem which is of course acknowledged by the authors (pp. 109 and 171f.): the addressed title *šarru* (lugal) of the letter contrasts with the formal title of the Hittite king "My Sun" (^dutu-*š*i) used by his subjects. Their explanation that the author of the text who belonged to the Amurrite school might not have been familiar yet with the Hittite nomenclature is again conjectural or, at most, possible but definitely not certain.

Among the certain or probable interpretations I must mention the reconstruction of Aziru's career in general and the reordering of Aziru's Amarna letters in particular as well as the main result of the study, namely that RS 20.33 belongs to the corpus of Amurru Akkadian texts of the 14th century B.C. But is it legitimate to speak of conclusive interpretations in the case of ascribing on linguistic grounds a(n isolated) text to a (Peripheral Akkadian) scribal tradition? It can indeed be objected that the attribution of the 'General's letter' to a particular scribe or school is a difficult and perhaps subjective task, especially when the corresponding corpus which includes only the Aziru letters and EA 62 of Abdi-Aširta is a relatively reduced one. Linguistic "affinities" opposed to "idiosyncrasies" or "anomalies" and the fact that, as properly argued by Izre'el (p.89), "each scribe had his own idiolect, which may sometimes have been very different from the language used in the writing of some of his colleagues" may apparently speak in favour of Nougayrol's initial "reservation". Certainly, these objections and doubts are themselves legitimate. Therefore, to conclude this chapter, I consider it appropriate to summarize briefly the primary arguments for such an attribution (expressed or implied by Izre'el).

The first questions to be asked are, where and when was the letter written? Concerning the provenance of the tablet, the content of RS 20.33 makes clear, as mentioned above, that the General sent the letter from Amurru where he was posted. As for the chronology of the text, Izre'el has illustrated the 'archaic' or, in absolute terms, the pre-13th century features of its language, especially phonological (*š* before dentals, intervocalic *w* and mimation) as well as morpho-phonological (e.g. the non-contracted adverbial forms *amnik̄'am* or *ayik̄'am*). Since the only available corpus written in the dialect of pre-13th cent. Amurru Akkadian corresponds to the Amarna letters, the second level of inquiry must question the possible affinity of the 'General's letter' to such subdialect. As shown by Izre'el, the similarities both in script and language are striking; concerning the orthography note particularly the plene writing used at the beginning of forms of I- and I-w verbs (pp. 64f.) or the spelling *as-ZUR-ri* of *assurri* (p. 55); one should perhaps add the use of the determinative UZU before parts of the body (pointed out by the author in *OLA* 23 p. 168), the use of the logogram BAR for *mišlu* (also in EA 161:42) or the same combination of logogram and phonetic complement SIG₅-*iq* (in EA 164:38). Finally, in the last stage of this inquiry, the distinguished idiolect of RS 20.33 within this subdialect is proved by the presence of "anomalies" or "idiosyncrasies" also in script and language. In order to help identify the scribe of the 'General's letter' within this Amarna Amurru school, one should also mention two extralinguistic features: the unusual large size of the tablet, probably determined by the length of the message, and the exceptional lack of rulings and so paragraphs in the text. Another aspect worthy to take into consideration is the paleographical analysis, so important for determining both scribe and school; as already pointed out by Nougayrol (*Ug* 5 p. 76), the shapes of some signs are particular or even exceptional (note e.g. NIM, EN, TI or AL; with this regard one misses in the signlist of pp. 185-191 the depiction of the cuneiform signs and their contrast with the corresponding Amurru attested equivalents; cf. the signlist offered by O. Schroeder for the Berlin Amarna tablets in *VAS* 12, pp. 73-94).

The method of investigation of Izre'el, as one can see, has been one of *reduction*. By this I mean that he has progressively *reduced* the language of RS 20.33 into an idiolect through the successive stages of dialect (Amurru Akkadian) and subdialect (Amarna Amurru Akkadian). My approach in this paper, however, will be to run in a different direction. Not to contradict Izre'el's results but, on the contrary, to attempt to provide a complementary study. In discussing philologically again the language of the letter

I wish to *broaden* the frame of its linguistic setting. The question will not be the affinity of the 'General's letter' to the Amarna Amurru Akkadian but rather its relation to the more extensive Amarna language. The consequence of this approach will be a further discussion of the historical context of the letter. It goes without saying that both analysis, textual and contextual, are intimately dependent on and so have profitted from the firm and stimulating results and suggestions offered by Izre'el and Singer in their respective examinations.

3. The 'General's Letter'

My discussion will also follow the order favoured by Izre'el and Singer. Like them I believe that one should give preference to paleographic and linguistic criteria in dating a text. Exaggerate or radical though it may seem, I am also convinced that in dating the 'General's letter' in particular *only* these criteria may help initially.

3.1. The date

Before undertaking the philological examination and in the light of Izre'el's conclusion, it is essential to ask one preliminary question, namely whether it is possible to find a tablet in Ras Shamra dated to the 14th century B.C. This question may seem again simple. However, as mentioned above in opening this paper, it was Schaeffer's answer to this question which prevailed over Nougayrol's expert opinion. Indeed, as corroborated by W.H. van Soldt's thorough reexamination of the archive of Rap'ānu, "dates from the tablets clearly place the archive roughly in the second half of the 13th and first quarter of the 12th century, thus confirming the evidence of the pottery" (SAU p. 179). As for the dates of the tablets of Ugarit, van Soldt has also demonstrated that "all archives belong to the last phase of the Late Bronze Age (I/3), a period delimited by the Hittite conquest (ca. 1340), on the one hand, and the conflagration that put an end to the city at ca. 1175 BC, on the other" (SAU p. 230). In order to answer our question, another aspect has to be taken into consideration, namely the filing of tablets. Why should a 14th century document be retained on file? It is not of course my purpose to discuss here such a problem. On the other hand, this has also been accurately calculated by van Soldt. As a rule, he points out, "only those documents which bore significant information for future generations were kept on file"; accordingly, letters which serve by definition an immediate purpose are not in principle included among the long-life documents. Indeed, "as shown by their dates", concluded van Soldt with regard to the Ugarit material, "even international letters were not deemed worth keeping" (SAU p. 230). One can of course postulate with Izre'el and Singer that the 'General's letter' was kept in the archive of Rap'ānu as an "antiquarian item" (p. 173 and also Izre'el *AmAkk* vol. I p. 21) but this would involve discussing the complex dilemma between archive and library provided such discussion is legitimate when applied to a single document. Our question, however, is one of probabilities once again. Although a 14th century date seems after all the evidence quite an unlikely choice for a tablet found at Ugarit, one must nevertheless conclude that it is by no means impossible. As also stated by van Soldt, the dates of the archives fall within the two abovementioned limits "except for a few dubious cases" (SAU p. 230). Among these cases one may include RS 4.449, an Akkadian letter found in the courtyard of Temple I. If, as properly assumed, the addressor Niqmepa is to be identified with the well-attested king of Alalah, the letter must then be dated to the 15th century B.C. (for a thorough description, see SAU pp. 215f.).

3.2. *The text*3.2.1. *Mimation*

Before dealing with the particular review of some of the expressions and words of RS 20.33, I want to discuss the general aspect of mimation in the text as a preliminary condition for my transliterations. As already mentioned, mimation represents one of the key features for the early dialect attribution of the letter. Taken thus as his second "archaic phonological feature" Izre'el devotes pp. 57-60 to the "historical spelling with mimation, especially following an *a*-vowel". This specification is at first sight surprising. Nougayrol already observed this peculiar phonological distinction: word-final mimation is dropped after *-u* but maintained after *-i* and especially after *-a*. Izre'el, in turn, considers only as true mimation the sequential representation *CV-Vm*; the consistent and frequent verbal suffix written *-NIM* is thus excluded from his mimation corpus and, as a result, "mimation is preserved in writing mostly after *a*" (p. 58). Whether *-NIM* was spelled /nim/ (as supported by Nougayrol on the basis of the singular mimated counterpart *-am*; see *Ug* 5 p. 78 n. 1) or /ni/ as argued by Izre'el (his first argument, namely the counter-example of *li-iš-ra* in ll. 6 and 16' [also adduced in *AmAkk* vol I p. 45] does not seem conclusive to me since its identification as a verbal form is not beyond doubt), I consider more appropriate a transliteration of word-final *CVm* with *m* in view of the otiose use of mimation and the archaic phonological features in RS 20.33. On the other hand, I believe, in agreement with Izre'el in *AmAkk* vol. I p. 46, that "this procedure also keeps track of the spelling habits of the scribes, as well as serves as graphic illustration for the historical development which can be deduced from these spellings".

3.2.2. *Philological notes*

l. 1: I prefer to read the sign lugal (also in ll. 11', 12', 14', 15', 17', 18', 21') logographically rather than with the value *šàr*, as proposed by Izre'el. As stated in the signlist in *AmAkk* vol. II p. 118, his reason for this exceptional spelling of lugal is that "the usage of phonetic complements is consistent whenever the noun is not in the construct state" (note that Nougayrol adopted also this reading but only for the construct state forms). However, the 'General's letter' shows a clear tendency (common also in Amarna and in other Peripheral dialects, e.g. Ugarit, cf. J. Huehnergard, *AkkUg* p. 78) to use phonetic complements after logograms: sig₅-*iq* (l. 8), kaskal-*ni* (l. 17), *I-en* (ll. 22,30,10',32'), lú-*tum* (l. 10'), érin.meš-*bu* (ll. 19',21'), mu.kam mu.kam-*ti* (l. 26'), u₄-*mi* (l. 27'), šu-*ti* (l. 30'). Accordingly, I would transliterate lugal-*rī* in l. 1, lugal-*ru* in ll. 14', 15' and 21', and lugal in the other, i.e. construct state, examples.

ll. 3-4: *mī-i-nu i-na-an-n[a -]te.meš an-nu-ut-ti ša be-li-ia I ša i-te-ne-ep[-pu-u]š-šu-nu*. Nougayrol restored [*ú-nu*(??)-]te.meš on the basis of the context (followed by A.F. Rainey in *UF* 3 [1971] p. 132). Izre'el, however, would prefer a word for "delays" or the like (p. 29). I myself prefer Nougayrol's secondary alternative [*a-wa*-]te.meš (see p. 69 n. 4, spelled *amāte*) on the basis not only of the expressions *awlmāte epēšu* or *mīnu awlmāte annūte* (both well-attested in Amarna, see *CAD* E p. 202 and *M/2* p. 90, respectively) but also of the usual introductory position of such expressions in letters, especially in the Amarna vassal correspondence; indeed, after the prostration formula, the message begins regularly with the 'acknowledging' reply where the addressor in answering the king alludes to the main concern of his lord's previous letter, by means of standard expressions which include "to execute the words/order" (for the content and scheme of this correspondence see W.L. Moran's introduction to his *Amarna Letters* p. xxx and also below).

l. 4: Nougayrol, Rainey and Izre'el have taken the word *ši-ma-an* in the expression *iš-tu ši-ma-an šu-wa-ti* as the month name *simānu* on account of its form in the absolute state. However, one should mention that both dictionaries of Akkadian have understood it as *simanu* "season, proper time, time" (*AHW* p. 1237, *CAD S* p. 270 s.v. e; note that in the treaty between Mušili II and Niqmepa where it is also spelled with *š* –quoted by Izre'el on p. 88– it appears with the same verb *šapāru*). This different interpretation may be based on the absence of the determinative ITI (note that the sign is used as a logogram in ll. 15, 27, 29) as well as on the fact that in Peripheral Akkadian there exist some particular examples which show unbound nouns with lack of case-ending, cf. in Amarna: *a-wa-at ša be-li-ni* [EA 59:45], in Ugarit: *a-ma-at an-ni-tam* [RS 20.238:26, also ll. 16f.,30], both quoted by Huehnergard *AkkUG* p. 154 who suggested possible scribal mistakes, namely incorrect bound forms. Accordingly, this may also be the case in our text. Of interest are two other examples (one from Amarna the other from Tell Taanach) which may show, in addition, a particularism in using 'absolute' forms in similar adverbial expressions (note that the word in absolute state is in both these cases the demonstrative pronoun): *iš-tu u₄.kam.meš / šu-wa-at* (EA 85:71f.) and *i-na aš-ri šu-wa-at* (TT 2:4), cf. Rainey *CAT* 1 p. 98.

l.5: The verbal form spelled *lik-ta-an-ni-na* still defies translation. Nougayrol understood *liktanni-na*, a precativ of *kutemû* with the West-Semitic energetic suffix (p. 70 n. 3); Rainey took it as a mixture of Dt present with Dt precativ of *kānu* suffixed with the ventive morpheme "parallel to that of *lišra* of lines 6 and rev. 16" (*UF* 3 [1971] p. 136); Izre'el understands it as "an ad hoc derivation" of a Dtn precativ with passive meaning (so derived from the Dt stem) of *kānu* in the 3 f. pl. (-ā) (p. 30, see also *AmAkk* p. 161). Despite the different meanings, these interpretations agree upon one main aspect: the hybrid or non-standard Akkadian form. Indeed, the reduplicated /n/ is puzzling: Rainey took it apparently as a mistake (on the other hand, the ventive should be *-am* in this text, and *lišra* as a verbal form is not beyond doubt as already mentioned), the energetic *-na* and the meaning of *kanû* in this context seems unlikely and a Dtn form of *kānu* is also doubtful (as well as the alternative of a form of *kanānu*). I am myself unable to offer a better solution; however, I would not disregard the second alternative suggested by Nougayrol, namely a hybrid form inspired in the pulal (cf. Ug. L-stem) of *kwn* (perhaps built after the modal form *yqla* used to denote request; for such mixed and pleonastic Canaano-Akkadian forms in the Amarna Amurru dialect, see e.g. *AmAkk* p. 250 and p. 262; note on the other hand the normative Akkadian forms *liwa'ir* in l. 15' and *lišāmid* in l. 21').

l. 16: On the meaning of *anašsaršumu* Izre'el takes the suffix as referring to the land of Amurru mentioned in the previous line and the verb *našāru* as denoting protection rather than blockade (pp. 36 and 39). This interpretation poses, however, several problems: first the plural suffix does not agree with the singular "land of Amurru"; Izre'el proposes then an impersonal meaning or the implication of "the people of Amurru". However, I would rather expect a more concrete reference given the content of the message (for a discussion of the impersonal forms in this text, see the following commentary to l. 24). On the other hand, I see no definite semantic derivation from the sentence *ina māt amurri ašbāku* (l. 15) to *anašsaršumu* (l. 16). Rather, following Nougayrol's translation, the suffix could refer either to the rivals or enemies of the General and his king (see the possible references in the plural verbs [*ibal*]luṭūni(m) in l. 13 and *ikšudūni(m)* in l. 12 or the presumably genitive suffix *-šumu* in l. 12; it is not unlikely that they could have been mentioned explicitly in one of the missing gaps at the beginning of ll. 9-13) or the more specific supplies (*šā.gal.meš ù érin.meš til-la-ta* in ll. 9 and 11, possibly the object of *akaššadšumu* in l. 14). Furthermore, the same object is expressed by the genitive suffix in the next line in *ḥarrānišumu nērebātišumu*. I find it unlikely that "their roads and their accesses" allude to the whole land of Amurru or the Amurru population; as already mentioned, I would understand it as a reference to the very concrete enemy's movements, especially their possible supplies. Thus the verb *našāru* "to guard, to watch, to hold"

may denote in this case blockade rather than protection, in agreement with Nougayrol's translation (see his n. 3 p. 71).

l. 19: Note the interesting Ugaritic equivalent of the expression *ina irti* ^{hur.sag} *liblani* in KTU 1.22 I 25: *b irt lbnn* (now in G. del Olmo Lete-Sanmartín, J., *Diccionario de la lengua ugarítica*, Sabadell 1996, p. 53). In the light of this Ugaritic parallel, I would prefer to follow Nougayrol and take *hur.sag* as a determinative rather than as a logogram.

The enclitic *-ma* after the second *šakin* probably denotes the meaning "likewise" (compare similar examples in the Akkadian of Ugarit in: van Soldt *SAU* pp. 514f.).

l. 24: To return to the discussion of l. 16, the plural accusative suffix in *nīdešumu* probably refers, resumptively (see Izre'el pp. 74f.), to the object of the next sentence in l. 25, namely the supplies (*šà.gal.meš ù érin.meš til-la-ta*) rather than to the impersonal subject of *uštēribūni(m)* (so Izre'el p. 39; for the grammatical analysis of this verbal form see p. 32; note that presumably as the result of a lapsus it is transcribed often in the book [pp. 36, 39, 71] *uštēribūni*). As stated above, the use of an unspecified object seems to me quite unlikely. What is of course attested is the unspecified or impersonal subject by means of the 3rd masc. pl. of the verb. This use can indeed be found in the text in the forms *līgmurūni(m)* (l. 30), *īgammerūni(m)* (l. 32') and the already mentioned *uštēribūni(m)* (ll. 9,24 and 4'); *īpušūni(m)* (correct *ippušūni*, l. 7') and *inammušūni(m)* (l. 13') need not be impersonal forms as suggested on p. 39: the former has *lú.meš-ia* (l. 8') and the non-preserved rival people (perhaps at the beginning of l. 5') as the real subject, the latter *ú-nu-te.meš-šu* in the same line preceding the (intransitive) verb.

l. 29: For the proposed reading *lu-ú-ma-al-li-mi*, note also the same Assyrian form and the same spelling in RS 17.20:5' (cf. Huehnergard *AkkUg* p. 162 and van Soldt *SAU* p. 433 n. 73).

l. 30: Nougayrol compared *1-en-ma* with BHb. *'ht* (n. 2 p. 72) and has been translated ever since adverbially "once and for all". This interpretation is based on the context and probably also on the use of the enclitic (used often after adverbs, see below). However, since the same expression is found without *-ma* in the last line of the text (l. 32') it is possible that the enclitic is employed in this case to emphasize the word or the sentence (note the precative verbal form). On the other hand, the word *īštēn* is found in the text in two more examples preceding the noun it qualifies: "one day" (*1-en u₄-mi*, l. 22) and "one man" (*1-en lú-lum*, l. 10'). Accordingly, one could understand the expression in ll. 30 and 32' *gamāru 1-en zé-ra-ni-ia* as "to annihilate my one enemy". In this regard, it must be noted that the word *zērānu* does not necessarily stand for a plural (the plural verbal forms *līgmurūni(m)* and *īgammerūni(m)* have an impersonal subject as mentioned above; and, as stated by Izre'el on p. 32, *-ia* is "the normative 1 sg genitive pronominal suffix" in Peripheral Akkadian in general and in Amurru Akkadian in particular).

l. 6': The sign written after *-na* *m*?-*hē-ru-nim* has posed problems since the publication of the text. Nougayrol transliterated tentatively *-mi*(?) although, as he stated himself in n. 7 (p. 72), MA is also possible. Izre'el in turn notes that the sign looks rather like GIŠ according to both photograph and copy; and so he prefers to read "a miswritten enclitic *ma*" (p. 41). However, the text does not use the enclitic *-ma* after verbal forms but *-mi* instead and consistently (probably the basis for Nougayrol's restoration; for the analysis of this particle, see Izre'el pp. 72f.). Accordingly, I would prefer Izre'el's first solution (in *OLA* 23 p. 164) and transliterate {GIŠ} (note other scribal mistakes in the text: *gīr.meš{-ia}* in l. 2, *i-na-an-na{-an}* in l. 25, *e-mu-uq<-qa>-am* in l. 20'). P.-R. Berger's restoration ⁸⁵<tukul> (*UF* 2 [1970] p. 285) is also interesting: *maḥāru + kakku* is well-attested in the meaning "to face a weapon, an attack".

ll. 6'-10': The narrative of the fight waged between the General's men and an enemy's unit is described by means of a long string of independent consecutive short sentences. What I want to propose here is a different division of the clauses on the basis of two main arguments: first, the connective conjunction *u* should mark in principle the introduction of the new sentence and second, the verb can stand either in first or last position. Accordingly, I would read after l. 6' where the confrontation between both rivals is introduced: [ù i-i]p-pu-šu-nim tá-ḥa-za-am i-na bi-ri-šu-nu // ù i-ib-bu-ku-šu-nu lú.meš-ia // ù iš-pu-ku-šu-nu ú-nu-te.meš-šu-nu // ù sag.du-šu-nu i-na dan-nu-ut-ti-ma uš-te-eš-šú-nim // ù 1-en lú-lum iš-tu bi-ri-šu-nu iṣ-bat-tù-nim. As a result of this division, the words *ú-nu-te.meš-šu-nu* and *sag.du-šu-nu* do not belong to the same sentence.

l. 8': The verb *šapāku* is translated by Izre'el "to heap up" with reference to *AHw* p. 1168b. However, von Soden includes it under the meaning "hinschütten" (s.v. 6b). *CAD* Š/1 takes this example as "a WSem. phrase" and translates it "to make drop" s.v. 3 "to render limp(?), powerless(?)" (p. 419). This factitive meaning is apparently deduced from the presence of two objects; nevertheless, following Izre'el (cf. pp. 43, 75), I would prefer to interpret the accusative plural suffix as a resumptive suffix referring to *unūtešunu*. As to its meaning, the context suggests, as put forward by the *CAD*, a derived meaning "to cast down, to throw"; note the use of the synonym *tabāku + kakku* with the meaning "to throw the weapons" (*AHw* p. 1295 s.v. *t. 1e*).

l. 9': The following sentence poses more problems of interpretation because the meanings of *qaqqadu* and *dannūtu* in this text remain so far obscure. Nougayrol translated *sag.du-šu-nu* "leurs personnes (?)" and suggested also a secondary interpretation, namely "leader" (in p. 72 n. 8, preferred by Rainey in *UF* 3 [1971] p. 140). Izre'el renders "property" and refers to *AHw* 900a and *CAD* Q p. 109b. However, this meaning refers mainly to silver or estate in legal context; *CAD* includes it indeed s.v. 6 "original amount, principal" but qualifies this example as uncertain. As a result of my division of sentences, I would prefer to understand it with Nougayrol as a reference to the people who constituted the rival unit, in parallel with the material equipment (*unūtešunu*) mentioned in the previous clause. The term *qaqqadu* is well-attested (also in Peripheral Akkadian, including Amarna) to designate the "person", the "self", often followed by the genitive suffix referring to the proper person(s) involved (*AHw* p. 90 s.v. 4, *CAD* Q p. 106f. s.v. 2). Accordingly, *qaqqad-šunu* in our text may simply designate, with emphasis, the rival people; I propose thus a translation "them, themselves" as the object of *uštēšūni(m)* (note the averbial use of *ina ramāniya-ma* in l. 20).

Concerning the expression *ina dannūtima*, Nougayrol's translation "de ce mauvais pas" was corrected on the basis of the meaning "fortress" for *dannūtu* (Berger, Rainey and Izre'el). However, another interpretation is possible. Although *-ma* can be taken here as an emphatic particle (so Izre'el p. 42), this enclitic is mainly used in the text after adverbs or adverbial expressions (see *AmAkk* vol. I p. 327; for this same use in Ugarit Akkadian, see van Soldt *SAU* p. 515): *ina ramāniya-ma* (l. 20), [*ina?*] *pāni pānim-ma* (l. 31), *ina šatti šatti-ma* (l. 26'), *ina ūmišam-ma* (l. 27') (note also perhaps *ištēn-ma* in l. 30, see above). Accordingly, *ina dannūti-ma* may very well mean "by force, violently", possibly as a synonym of the adverb *emūqam* used throughout the text with the verb *kašādu* (ll. 14, 17', 20', 23'; note the association in an OA letter, quoted apud *CAD* D p. 99 s.v. 2, *dannūtam u emūqī la āpulka*). On the other hand, the meaning of "fortress" in EA 81:49 (put forward in *CAD*) is not beyond doubt (following Moran in *Amarna Letters* p. 151, one may rather translate: "Previously GN and its people were strong" [my italics]).

ll. 12'-14': This passage records the words of the General's prisoner after having been submitted to an interrogatory. The information he provided runs as follows: "The king of Egypt will set out; and he will set out *zakām*. His equipment will leave at the next ĒŠ.ĒŠ-day and the king will come forth after his equipment".

l. 12': What does *za-ka₂-am* mean in this context? Nougayrol expected the word *rēqūtam* instead and accordingly translated "(les mains) libre(s)" as a literal variation of "les mains vides". This interpretation has been so far accepted: "without equipment" (Rainey), "unencumbered" (CAD N/1 p. 221) or "unaccompanied" (Izre'el). However, these translations do not seem to me to fit the context; I believe that the prisoner is rather announcing a true campaign of the pharaoh, as the following text of the letter makes clear, so that an opposite meaning is in fact expected. Nougayrol himself noted after his mentioned first impression that: "Il est vrai que ce terme exprime toujours une déconvenue dont il n'est pas question ici" (p. 72 n. 10). Accordingly, I would tentatively suggest that this adverbial form of *zakû* may be connected with the meaning of *zikkû* "to make ready for departure" (attested in OA, OB and Mari). As a result, I would translate the sentence: "... and he has set out well-prepared/ready/ equipped".

l. 13': The expression *i-na u, ÉŠ.ÉŠ* has been rendered *ina eššēši* or *ina ūmi eššēši* and understood as the monthly feast day. However, I would like to follow again Nougayrol's suggestion (p. 73 n. 1), namely that perhaps *eššēšu* and 'neomania' were at that time confused in the usage, and take it as an equivalent of the well-attested Ugaritic day and date *b ym hdt*.

For the active rendering of the verbal form *inamuššīni(m)*, see above commentary to l. 24 and CAD N/1 p. 221.

ll. 16'-20': The meaning of the particle *assurri* "keeps puzzling assyriologists"; this opinion expressed by N. Wasserman in his thorough discussion and study of the examples in the Mari letters (*Florilegium Marianum* II [FS M. Birot] p. 319) can be shared by anyone who would read the wide (and sometimes opposed) range of translations (Izre'el renders it here "heaven forbid"). As already summarized in CAD S p. 412, the reason may be due to the fact that this particle behaves in different ways on the basis of its syntactic construction. In our case, both *assurri*-clauses are followed by a (parallel) clause in the present/future introduced by the conjunction *u*: *as-ZUR-ri ha-mu-ut-tá-am / lugal kur mi-iš-ri^{ki} i-kaš-ša-ad-mi ù e[-mu-u]q-qa-am / la ni-kaš-ša-ad-mi* (ll. 16'-18'); *as-ZUR-ri lugal kur mi-iš[-ri]^{ki} / ú-uš-ša-am la ú-uš-ša-am ù érin.meš pi-it-ṭa-at-te.meš-ma šu-ú-ut / ša ú-uš-ša-am ù a-kaš-ša-ad e-mu-uq<-qa>-am* (ll. 18'-20). I believe, with the translations offered by Nougayrol, Rainey and Izre'el (in OLA 23), that there exists a relation between the two clauses which indicates a condition/result connotation. However, I also believe that *assurri* must denote the volitive in terms of fear or concern (as opposed to hope) "towards issues which are real or concrete" (Wasserman, *ibid.* p. 333). In spite of the long list of different translations and aware of the triviality of a further suggestion, I shall add one which is based of course on the context and attempts to represent its conjunctive-modal function: "in case, alas, that ...".

l. 19': The expression *ú-uš-ša-am la ú-uš-ša-am* has been translated in different ways: "sortant sans sortir" (Nougayrol associated it to the formula 'X non -X', p. 73 n. 7), "vacillates about coming forth" (Rainey assumed the contextual opposition to *hamuttam ... ikaššadmi* in ll. 16'f., p. 140), "does not come himself" (Izre'el, apparently also on the basis of the context, OLA 23 p. 165) or taking it as two separate units belonging to two different sentences (Izre'el p. 47, following a private suggestion of Moran). However, according to the meaning put forward above, this expression must in principle be part of the second *assurri*-clause; as also assumed by the other translations, the context makes clear that its meaning should be: "the king does not come forth". With this regard, I would like to interpret it as *ušâm la uššâm*, that is the well-known Semitic paronomastic infinitive construction (the Assyrian form of the infinitive can be explained on account of the frequent Assyrianisms in the text, see Izre'el pp. 100f.). This rendering would confirm the accusative interpretation of this infinitive (proposed among others by E. Hammershaimb in his study on the *infinitivus absolutus* in Hebrew in *Fs. G.R. Driver* p. 89 or Moran in *JCS* 4 [1950] p. 172, noting in turn the use in normative Akkadian of the adverbial ending *-um*, which possibly applies

also to Ugaritic *-u*; and now also Rainey in *CAT* 2 p. 389). But what is more important for our argument are several other attestations of this same construction in the Amarna letters from Byblos (collated)¹ where the absolute infinitive stands also in the accusative case (see Böhl, *Die Sprache* p. 63, Moran, *Syntactical Study* p. 57; Youngblood, *Correspondence of Rib-Haddi* pp. 328f.; and Rainey *CAT* 2 pp. 389f.). The examples are: *ù ša-ma ú-ul* / [tu-u]š-mu-na (EA 89:9f.); *ù*[la-]qa* / [ú-]u[l] t[u]-ul-qú-ma (EA 90:17f.)²; *a-ša-ba* [l]a a-ši-[i]b (EA 92:10) –Rainey also includes the restored passage in EA 124:54ff. and more tentatively EA 131:17.

l. 29': Concerning the verb *marāru* attested also and exclusively in Amarna I would prefer to follow the meaning suggested by *CAD* M/1 p. 268 (which follows in turn J.A. Knudtson's translation, see also E. Ebeling's glossary in *VAB* 2/2 p. 1463) and translate it "to leave, to go away, to flee". In context, however, I prefer to translate the sentence *ki-i-me-e i-mar-ru-ur i-na ša-ni-šu a-ši-i-šu* (l. 29') in a different way (*CAD*: "when he leaves for a second time"). I would understand it as a result clause introduced by *kīmē* and suggest the translation: "so that it [the Egyptian army] will go away the next time it comes forth".

l. 31': The verb *rahāšu* has been normalised by Rainey *A/O* 36/37 (1989/90) pp. 61 and 64 as WSem. **rḡš* "to smash" on account of the equivalent attestations in EA 141:31 (from Beirut), EA 127:33 (from Byblos), RS 16.144:9,13 (from Ugarit) and our example in the 'General's Letter' as well as the Hebrew and Aramaic cognates **rḡš* and **rʿ*. One should note that although von Soden listed EA 141:31 s.v. *rāsum* (*AHW* 959, followed by Moran *Amarna Letters* p. 228 n. 3) he included paradoxically our parallel occurrence under *rahāšu* (*AHW* p. 943) s.v. A.2.c "niederwalzen" together with the Ugarit D-stem examples which are referred paradoxically again "wie A 1 a", i.e. "überschwemmen". In agreement with Rainey, I believe the Amarna and Ugarit examples should belong to one and the same verb (distinguishing of course the G forms from Amarna from the D forms from Ugarit). Following Rainey's suggestion, it should also be noted that BHebrew did not only preserve a derived root *lr-š-šl* but also *lr-ʿ-šl*, twice attested, with the exact meaning "to smite" (see *HAL* p. 1185); it is significant that the object of *trʿš* in Ex 15:6 is "the enemy" ('wyb) –note furthermore the striking parallel between the whole sentence *ymynk yhwš trʿš 'wyb* and the passage in EA 141:31-33: *ù lu-ú ti-ra-ḥa-aš érin.ḥi<a> pi-tá-<at>-šū* / *ša lugal en-ia* ^{du}utu-ia dingir.meš-ia / ^{uz}sag.du ^{hi}meš a-ia-bi-šu. On the other hand, it must also be noted that the earlier texts of Amurru Akkadian, as pointed out by Izre'el (p. 54, see also *AmAkk* vol. II p. 125), and the Amarna letters in general (see e.g. Böhl, *Sprache* pp. 14f.) tend to confuse the ḥ- and the ʿ- signs (cf. e.g. in our text, apart from the form in question *ni-ra-Aḥ-HI-iš*, *aš-tá-na-Aḥ-al-šu* in l. 11' or *li-wa-Aḥ-ir* in l. 15').

3.2.3. The lexicon

The above commentary on some of the expressions found in RS 20.33 has shown a considerable number of possible West Semitic cognates (Izre'el offers already a long list on pp. 78f.), namely *ina irti*

1. I wish to thank Evelyn Klengel-Brandt for her kind permission to collate these texts in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.

2. This example was only included by Böhl. Moran discarded it because he disagreed with Knudtson's reading (see his *Amarna Letters* n. 3 on p. 164; cf. already Albright-Moran *JCS* 4 [1950] p. 165). However, the tablet does preserve the traces seen by Knudtson: The two first wedges of the Û sign can be distinguished; then follows a damaged gap which could certainly include the rest of Û and another sign, [la], which was restored on account of the following sign, QA, effaced but still visible at the end of the line on the right edge of the tablet.

GN paralleled with Ug. *b irt* GN, *ina u₄ ĒŠ.ĒŠ* perhaps echoing also Ugaritic *b ym hdt*, the verbs *marāru* with the meaning “to go away” or *rahāšu* = BHB. *lr-^c-šl* “to smite” (maybe also *šapāku* “to throw”), the possible hybrid form *liktannina* or the suggested use of the paronomastic infinitive.

But what I want to discuss here, as previously announced, is not so much the possible West Semitic influence in the language of the ‘General’s Letter’ but, within a broader frame, the also presumed affinity of its language to the Amarna letters and more specifically to its lexicon. Indeed, although other linguistic features are also important (note for example the abovementioned parallel of the accusative case of the absolute infinitive in paronomastic construction or the use of the enclitic *-mi* after verbal forms), the lexicographical approach has been usually given less attention and represents with no doubt a distinctive aspect in the Amarna correspondence. I do not intend of course to undertake Liverani’s suggestions for his complex “Research Program on the Amarna Political Lexicon” (*Berytus* 31 [1983] pp. 47ff.) and discuss here the ideas behind the words. My aim is rather a superficial one based on the simple observation and comparison between the phraseology of the ‘General’s Letter’ and the “Amarna lexicon” (using mainly Ebeling’s glossary in *VAB* 2/2 and, of course, *CAD* and *AHW*). What follows then is a short list of, I believe, striking common examples which attempts to support Izre’el’s dating of RS 20.33 and its inclusion within the Amarna corpus, as initially proposed by Nougayrol.

Some of the examples have already been pointed out like the remarkable verbs *marāru* in the meaning “to go away, to leave, to flee” exclusively attested in Amarna (in G-stem and Š-stem [“to expel”], see *CAD* p. 268 s.v. *m. C*) or **rahāšu* (< *lr-^c-šl*) “to smite”; as well as the introductory expression *awāte epēšu* well-known in the ‘acknowledging’ reply-formula of the Amarna letters. Likewise, other verbs and expressions of Amarnian unmistakable stamp can be found in our text. Indeed, “key words in the Amarna political language” –in Liverani’s terms– like *našāru* “to protect, to keep watch”, *balātu* “to live, to stay alive > to obtain food” or *šūšuru* “to prepare, to make things ready” are mentioned in similar military contexts in the ‘General’s Letter’ (ll. 16-18, 13 and 6 respectively). Also characteristic in the Amarna letters is the formula *lū ṛde* (l. 25’) introducing often a report or explanation from addressor to his lord followed also commonly by the conjunction *inūma* “May my lord know that ...” (see Rainey *IOS* 12 [1992] p. 182 and *CAT* 3 p. 78). Other verbs of significant and recurrent use also attested in RS 20.33 are *gamāru* (ll. 30 and 32’) (employed especially in the stative and in Rib-Hadda’s letters; note Moran’s translation and commentary to EA 272 in *Amarna Letters* p. 318 n. 4: “used up, destroyed, wiped out”), *kašādu* “to arrive, to reach” (l. 12 and with *emūqam* ll. 14, 17’-23’), *abālu ana muḥḥi* “to send” (in Gtn l. 27’) or *damāqu* “to be pleasing” in addresses or demands to the king. More punctual but not less significant are the expressions *iāḥaza(m) epēšu* “to do battle” (l. 7’) attested also in EA 185:45 (from Hasi) or the verbal form *i-zé-i-ra-an-ni* “he rejects me” used by Aziru himself in EA 158:37 to be paralleled with the rare nominal derivation spelled *zé-ra-ni-ia* (ll. 30 and 32’). But what I consider to be of primary importance, if I may use a scale in such a lexicographical comparison, is the recurring reference to the arrival of the Egyptian army. Not only the word for the Egyptian “archers” (*érin.meš piṭātu*), which designates collectively the Egyptian regular army, but its association with the verb *ašū* “to go out, come forth” (perhaps “to attack” in military context, following J.-M. Durand’s argument in *AÉM* 1/1 p. 446 n. e) is a feature which belongs distinctively and exclusively to the Amarna correspondence (this striking affinity of the ‘General’s Letter’ was already noticed –although taken as an exceptional later example– by F. Pintore in *OA* 11 [1972] p. 110 n. 54). Indeed, as is well-known, the pharaoh’s vassals in Syria and Palestine and especially Rib-Hadda of Byblos requested insistently their lord to dispatch (*ašū*) with haste (*kīma arḥiš* or *kīma ḥamuttiš* in EA 137:92; note *ḥamuttam* in our text l. 16’) the Egyptian troops (*érin.meš piṭātu*) or/with the king himself in order to put an end to the reported crimes of their local enemies. As for the troops, it is also meaningful that the “auxiliaries” (*érin.meš tillatu*) as another kind of unit which probably designated with the “garrison-troops” (*érin.meš maššartu*) the local contingents in

the Amarna letters are also mentioned in RS 20.33 (ll. 9, 11, 25); note in addition that the *lú.meš nāširūte* (l. 23) may very well be equated, at least etymologically, with the members of the garrison-troops.

Finally, I would like to list some adverbial expressions and particles attested in the 'General's Letter' that are also well represented in the Amarna lexicon. Some of them have already been discussed: *assurri* is indeed of very frequent usage in the Amarna correspondence and the rare *ištu siman-* (spelled *zi-(i?)-ma-an*) occurs twice in EA 29:119, 123 (of Tušratta). Among other Amarna expressions of frequent usage one should include the presentation "behold"-particle *annû* (l. 15) (see Rainey *UF* 20 [1988] pp. 211ff. and *CAT* 3 pp. 155ff.) also attested with *inanna* (*ibid.* p. 213 and pp. 158f. resp.), the adverbial expression *ūma(m) u muša(m)* "day and night" (l. 16, see also Rainey *CAT* 3 pp. 132ff.), *hamutta(m)* "quickly" (l. 16', cf. Rainey *CAT* 3 p. 148) or *ramānu* (+ pers. suffix) "personally" (l. 20, cf. Rainey *CAT* 1 p. 93). On the lower level of frequency but therefore of particular interest one should group the adverbial expressions *šurrunna* "indeed" (l. 10, 14?, 28') which occurs again in a letter from Tušratta (EA 19:27), *ina ūmišamma* "every day, daily" (l. 27') attested in EA 53:60 (from Qatna) and EA 148:24 (from Tyre) (note *umišamma* alone in EA 28:28 of Tušratta) or *ina šatti šattima* "every year, yearly" (l. 26') which parallels *šatta šattama* in EA 33:27,30 and 38:11 (both from Alašiya).

3.2.4. *The scheme*

Last but not least, I would like to draw the attention to another formal characteristic. Indeed, not only the lexicon but also the scheme of the letter agrees quite consistently with the pattern represented in the Amarna vassal correspondence (see the description of Moran in *Amarna Letters* pp. xxix-xxxii). First, the text is introduced by the classic address formula where the king is addressed only by title and the addressor by name, followed by the prostration formula "I fall at the feet of my lord". Secondly, also like in most of the Amarna texts (except for the atypical Byblos letters), RS 20.33 omits the salutation of the subordinate or vassal to his lord. Thirdly, concerning the body of the letter, the message is introduced by the classic 'acknowledging' reply (already discussed above): the General replies to his lord about the "words" he has received; the king's commands are here alluded in order to insist on his unheeded previous demands which are then quoted once again. Finally, like several other Amarna messages, the 'General's' reports on his concrete situation and his own military initiative (note for example the abovementioned use of the classic formula in this context "May my lord know that ..." in l. 25') and ends the message calling attention to the impedent situation (after an also typical sequence of conditional-result clauses which cover the different military alternatives) and with an imprecation for victory.

In what follows, it will also be seen that the political and military events described in the 'General's Letter' agree well with the content of the Amarna correspondence.

3.3. *The context*

3.3.1. *A synopsis*

But before beginning to examine the historical context, I believe I should offer now, after having discussed some of the controversial passages, a synopsis of the letter (cf. Izre'el and Singer on pp. 13f.).

In interpreting the content of the 'General's Letter', it must be emphasized first of all that the lower part of the tablet is missing. Nougayrol calculated that the missing text from the end of the obverse and the beginning of the reverse would amount to approximately 30 lines. The more or less well preserved text counts 65 lines; that means that about *one third* of the original text is completely missing. The

preserved text can be divided thematically into two parts which correspond exactly with the two sides of the tablet.

The first part of RS 20.33 deals with the General's report to his king on the situation and commitment of his mission: stationed in Amurru for 5 months, he is keeping watch of the roads and accesses in order to prevent the coming in of food and auxiliaries towards the enemy. The weather conditions, however, have lessened his own equipment and troops. This is probably the reason for his urgent and insistent demand for supply of new chariots (3 pairs of them), so that he can carry out his duty with success.

After the abovementioned break of approximately 30 missing lines, the General reports about an exceptionally important event, not so much because of the event in itself but because of the compelling result. The episode describes one of the successful achievements of his mission: his men surprised an enemy unit (perhaps with or in search of supplies) in the middle of the night near Ardat; they engaged them in battle according to their commitment and defeated them victoriously. The essential result is the information provided after interrogation by the one man captured from the enemy squadron: The king of Egypt is about to come forth. Faced to such a delicate situation and in an immediate need for fresh troops and chariots, the General estimates then calculatingly the different chances which I consider worth repeating: should the pharaoh come, there is no chance to stop him; however, should the Egyptian army come instead, then he will be able to overpower it. Accordingly, he insists on being supplied with military reinforcements: he exhorts his king not to miss *the* occasion to expel definitely the Egyptian "archers" and defeat finally his enemy.

3.3.2. *The military scene*

As stated by Izre'el and Singer (p. 14), the preserved content of the 'General's Letter' is "one of the most vivid examples of ancient military intelligence". Indeed, the General's military report consists, as we have seen, of an evaluated information concerning the enemy, his situation and the possible further movements (learned through interrogatory) together with the conclusions and possible operations drawn therefrom. The question is now to determine the military scene or the conflict involved in the letter and to consider it, of course, in the light of the language employed. Accordingly, the starting-point of the historical examination I suggest is, Do the circumstances described in RS 20.33 agree also with the content of the Amarna vassal correspondence?

The immediate implication of this hypothesis is of great importance since it bears not only upon the present discussion but also upon the nature of the source: the 'General's Letter' would represent *the* document from the *other*, anti-Egyptian, side of the conflict, or in other words, the only available report from the Egyptian enemy's viewpoint. As a result, although the words and expressions used in RS 20.33 correspond undoubtedly with the Amarna vocabulary, the message must in principle describe an inverted picture, the mirror reversal of the Amarna letters. This is well reflected by the two main military activities or dispositions described in the 'General's Letter'. On the one hand, the siege which the General, conforming to his mission, inflicts upon the enemy through blockade (*našāru*) contrasts very well with the need (and complaints) of the Egyptian vassal rulers of guarding (*našāru*) the place of the pharaoh from the assault of the enemy. On the other hand, the General's urging for military reinforcements in order to expel definitely the Egyptian "archers" from Amurru is clearly opposed to the military preparations of the Egyptian vassal rulers before the arrival of the Egyptian "archers" in Canaan.

3.3.2.1. *Blockade*

As already mentioned, the General's mission is described in the first part of the text (obverse of the tablet). His duty consisted in guarding the roads and accesses in order to prevent the coming in of food and auxiliaries to the enemy (*uš-te-er-ri-bu-nim* ša.gal.meš û érin.meš *til-la-ta*, ll. 9, 11f.[?], 24f.). One of the achievements of this mission is also described in the text, after the broken gap at the beginning of the reverse of the tablet. The General's men succeeded in repulsing an enemy's unit (perhaps with or in search of supplies, cf. *uš-te-er-ri-bu-nim* in fragmentary context in l. 4') and captured one of the members. As can be deduced from his own description, namely concerning the bad weather conditions, it seems clear that his troops were encamped in the open (as put forward by Singer on p. 120). The picture is then quite obvious: the General and his men were holding a strong blockade against the enemy (this was already deduced by Nougayrol; see his synopsis of the letter in *Ug* 5 p. 69).

Blockade, as one of the oldest military strategies, is particularly well documented in the Amarna vassal letters. Associated, in fact, with war (as clearly expressed by Biridiya, ruler of Megiddo, in EA 244:11-16), the enemy's blockade was for the local rulers their particular agony and, consequently, their main reason for complaint and request for the sending of the Pharaoh's troops (*érin.meš piātu*) or, at least as a provisional support, the auxiliaries (*érin.meš illatu*, see e.g. EA 73:44, 82:18, 103:25, 44, 104:15). Rulers like Rib-Hadda of Byblos or Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem tried by all means to illustrate as best they could this unbearable and damned situation to their lord: the former described himself or his people "like a bird in a trap" (EA 74:45f., 78:13f., 79:35f., 81:34f., 90:39f., 105:8f., 116:18), the latter "like a ship in the midst of the sea" (EA 288:33).

As clearly depicted in the 'General's Letter', the *enemy's* operation consisted in blockading all the roads against the adversary (EA 114:37f.) as well as the entrance of the city gate (EA 87:23f., 88:18-21, 106:10f., 244:15f.) by stationing there the men and chariots (EA 87:21f.) and not moving from there (EA 87:23f., 88:19f.) for an indefinite time (two long months in EA 114:41 according to Rib-Hadda's description; compare the five months in the General's report). In addition, one should also mention the blockade by sea with ships inflicted for example to siege the coastal town of Šumur (EA 98:12-18, 105:85ff.).

The severe and terrible consequences of blockade are obvious: the local rulers were unable to go out (Rib-Hadda in EA 81:21f., 88:20f., 102:19, 24f., 104:50f. and perhaps also 106:28; Biryawaza of Kumidi in EA 197:17ff., or Biridiya in EA 244:15f.), or to send out messengers (Rib-Hadda in EA 82:21ff., 83:10-14, 109:56f., 114:9ff., 33-37, 116:21ff., 117:12-19, Abimilki of Tyre in EA 149:26-33, or Abdi-Heba in EA 287:53-57), and, most important, to provide themselves with food and supplies (note especially Abimilki in EA 146:16f., 154:13-18, 155:18-21, Yapaḥ-Hadda in EA 98:17f., or also Abdi-Heba in EA 244:13f.).

What chances did these rulers have in order to break through the blockade? How could they send the messages which did in fact reach the Pharaoh's court? One chance is evident: the advantage of the darkness of night. "The king's messengers must bring (news) by night and bring (it) back by night because of the dog", advised Rib-Hadda to the Pharaoh (EA 108:52-56). Indeed, as he himself explained, it was by night that he could get the messenger(s) into Šumur (EA 112:48ff., 116:24). However, this strategy did not always work since the enemy kept the blockade day and night (e.g. EA 105:12f.). This is exactly the General's mission as he reported it to his king in l. 16: "I keep watch of them day and night". This commitment as well as the enemy's strategy of operating by night is also attested in RS 20.33. Indeed, the unit caught and defeated by the General's men was in fact moving "in the middle of the night" (*i-na qa-bal mu-ši*, l. 6'). In the light of these mirror image parallels, I would suggest that the unit in question belonged possibly to the town sieged by the General and his men and that its purpose might have been, as already mentioned, the sending of messages or the searching of supplies. This last case is illustrated

in one of Abimilki's letters: "the ruler of Sidon does not allow me or my people to go to land to fetch wood or to fetch water for drinking. He has killed one man, and he has captured another" (EA 154:14-20). It is significant that in our text, it is one man who has also been captured. On the other hand, the confession of this man after interrogatory about the plans of the Pharaoh would also confirm the idea that he might have belonged to the besieged town.

But what town or fortress was the General sieging? Unfortunately, no explicit reference of the enemy's location is preserved in the text. The mention of the town of Ardata (l. 5') or its vicinity as the scene of the mentioned combat between both units does not permit us to identify it as the real and specific target of the General. What is, nevertheless, significant is that the geographical setting of the blockade, i.e. the plain of Amurru: between the Lebanon mountains and the Sea, within the area of Ardata and Halba, agrees undoubtedly well once more with the Amarna setting (one should note for example that the siege or seizure of Ardata by the 'rebels' is reported by the rulers of Byblos in EA 75:30, 88:6, 109:13 or 140:10).

3.3.2.2. *The Egyptian campaign*

The information provided by the General's prisoner is well preserved in the second part of the letter (discussed above, 2.2.2. II, 12'-14'): "The king of Egypt will set out; and he will set out well equipped(?). His equipment will leave at the next new moon(?) and the king himself will come forth after his equipment". This passage together with the General's following plans, mainly concerning the Egyptian troops, agree again with the content of both the royal and vassal Amarna letters which deal precisely with the preparations of the Canaanite rulers for the imminent arrival of the Egyptian army. These Amarna documents have been taken as evidence that Akhenaten was as a matter of fact planning a campaign to Canaan. This interpretation has been recently and, to my mind, convincingly defended by Na'aman on the basis of the specific chronological reference of these texts (in *Lingering over Words* pp. 397-405). In closing his discussion on this evidence and accepting Izre'el's dating of the 'General's Letter', he considers it plausible to include RS 20.33 within that corpus and that the passage in question may thus also reflect that particular historical event (*ibid.* p. 405). At the same time, and as already seen, Singer in his historical examination of the text reached the same conclusion, namely that the report of the captured enemy was referring to a planned Egyptian campaign. Both Na'aman and Singer identify the Egyptian king with Akhenaten and date accordingly the projected campaign to the late days of the Pharaoh. However, one must remember that Izre'el classified RS 20.33 within the Amurru subdialect not only of the Aziru letters but also of EA 62 of Abdi-Ashirta (note that Na'aman's admittedly slightly *later* date was based on Izre'el's earlier conclusion in *OLA* 23 p. 405 which included Abdi-Ashirta's letter and the *earliest* letters of Aziru). Therefore, my present question is, Why could not the Egyptian campaign reported in the 'General's Letter' refer to an earlier operation, namely that of Akhenaten's father, Amenophis III?

This question would, of course, imply dating more accurately RS 20.33. And that does not seem to be very likely after Izre'el's study. Nevertheless, I would like to point to some aspects and speculate about the possibility for such earlier dating. As I already mentioned, one of the scribal distinctions between the 'General's Letter' and the Aziru letters is the lack of rulings and, so, paragraphs. It may thus be of interest that both EA 60 and 62 (and possibly also the fragmentary 61) of Abdi-Ashirta lack of ruled paragraphs; note furthermore that in both texts the only ruling is used to close the message like in RS 20.33 (in EA 62 on the left edge of the tablet). Perhaps also significant is the relatively abundant usage of the conjunction *u* in EA 62 which is one of the main distinctive features of RS 20.33 or the use of the (mimaged) verbal suffix sign NIM. I do not for a moment intend to conclude that these affinities imply the dating of the 'General's Letter' to the time of Abdi-Ashirta. However, I want to point out that RS

20.33 need not be exclusively associated within the frame of Aziru's apostasy. In fact, as is well known, an Egyptian campaign was sent by Amenophis III to Amurru to seize Abdi-Ashirta (for the Amarna references, see Na'aman *Lingering over Words* p. 404 n. 32).

That the campaign announced in the 'General's Letter' can refer either to the seizure of Abdi-Ashirta or to the attack against his son is further supported by the content of the letter itself. For example, within the relevant information concerning the Egyptian campaign provided by RS 20.33 one deserves special attention: the General assured his lord that in case of being supplied with fresh troops and chariots he would be able to overpower the enemy's troops (*érin.meš piṭātu*). No doubt this statement parallels some other passages found in the Amarna letters, namely Rib-Hadda's complaints. Apparently the Pharaoh had indeed listened to rumours or advices warning him against the powerful military force of his enemy. So that the ruler of Byblos would incriminate: "I said to the king, my lord, 'Send the troops (*érin.meš piṭātu*) to take Abdi-Ashirta!'; who would advise, 'He would resist (successfully) the troops of the king, my lord'?" (EA 94:10-14). The same complaint is found in another letter but this time regarding Abdi-Ashirta's sons: "Wh[o] are they, the dogs, that they could res[ist](?) the troops of the king, the Sun?" (EA 108:25-28). But it is even Rib-Hadda himself who warned against the ever-increasing danger of the Amurru leader: "Do not the [com]missioners lo[ng for](?) the coming out of the troops (*érin.meš piṭātu*)? He (Abdi-Ashirta) is stronger than the king! (...) [I]f this year there are no troops, [then] he will be strong forever" (EA 93:14-28). Finally, one should mention the end of the message that Abdi-Ashirta addressed to his troops as reproduced by Rib-Hadda in his usual reproving way: "Should even so the king come out, the entire country will be against him and what will he do to us?" (EA 74:39-41).

This message of Abdi-Ashirta brings us in turn to another important aspect revealed also by RS 20.33. As clearly explained by the General, two possible interpretations could be made out of his prisoner's confession. Either the Pharaoh in person was coming, taking thus 'literally' the confession, or it was the Egyptian troops (*érin.meš piṭātu*) which were to arrive. This distinction illustrates very well what could be deduced already from some of the Amarna letters, namely that the Egyptian (regular) troops and the Pharaoh's (irregular) troops were two different forces (either in size, in quality or both). This is, of course, not surprising. Neither the opinion that the former would have been more powerful than the latter, as clearly implied in the General's military estimations and suggested by Abdi-Ashirta's discourse. Before closing this discussion, I believe that another aspect needs further comment, namely the General's twofold interpretation of the captive's confession. Indeed, why did he contemplate an alternative reading, other than the *real* or *literal* version? Once more, the mirror image of the Amarna correspondence may throw some light upon this question. It is certainly well attested how the Canaanite rulers, threatened by revolt not only from the outside but also from their very entourage within their palace and town, tried to persuade their people oppressed by war and blockade that the Egyptian king, their lord, or at least the Egyptian troops were about to arrive. Such relief, however, kept them waiting for long, too long, as the rulers (in particular, of course, Rib-Hadda) complained to the Pharaoh. The obvious result was the people's mistrust and even animosity. "As far as the king, my lord, can, he co[m]es forth. But] it is being said," –explained with grief Akizzi of Qatna– "The king, my lord, will not come forth" (EA 53:45f.); one can also mention the always more painful cry of Rib-Hadda, "[I] was the one that said to them, 'My god [is send]ing(?) troops'. Since they (now) kno[w that] there are none, they have tu[r]ned against[](?) <u>s" (EA 81:41-45). On the other hand, the enemy was obviously interested and also well aware of such *false alarms*. Lab'ayu, for example, determined immediately to take Megiddo as soon as "he learned that troops were not co[m]ing o[ut]", as reported by his rival Biridiya (EA 244:18-24); as for Abdi-Ashirta, he is said to have moved up against Rib-Hadda as soon as he heard that no auxiliary force would assist his enemy (EA 92:18-24). In the light of these examples, I would understand that the General in RS 20.33 had also his doubts about the accuracy of such announcements and that, according to his military disposition, he would try to envisage other alternatives. One should emphasize, on the other hand, that, as can be deduced

from his own report, the General seemed to consider more likely the arrival of the Egyptian regular troops rather than the Pharaoh in person.

Finally, one last aspect of the Egyptian campaign as reported in the 'General's Letter' should be taken into consideration, namely the time of the arrival. Presumably as a result of the General's interrogatory, the day of the Pharaoh's outset is explicitly referred to by the captive: "the next new moon(?)" (*i-na u4 ÉŠ.ÉŠ ša i-il-la-kam*, l. 13'). Regardless of the true meaning lying behind the logogram of the ÉŠ.ÉŠ-day (see discussion above, 2.2.2. l. 13'), the span of time between the revealed message and the outset of the Pharaoh's troops could not exceed one month. No doubt, this explains the urgency of the General's message to his lord and his demand for new troops. The promptness of the campaign would answer in turn the constant pleas of the Canaanite rulers faced to the increasing emergence of their enemy's power. Indeed, almost every cry for help, especially from Rib-Hadda, insisted upon the urgency of the arrival of the troops; "within this year", "within two months" or "with haste!" are the required deadlines which can often be found in these letters (see Pintore *OA* 11 [1972] p. 109).

3.3.3. *The identity of the addressee*

Like in Singer's exposition, I turn finally to discuss the three main problems which concern directly the 'General's Letter'. Who wrote the letter and to whom? And why did it reach Ugarit?

More attention has been devoted to the question of the addressee because two facts are known: first, as the addressing formula makes clear, he was a "king"; and second, the tablet in question was excavated at Ras Shamra. The findplace of RS 20.33 has been taken to identify the addressee as the king of Ugarit (for references, see Singer p. 122, where one should add now Stieglitz in his review in *BiOr* 49 [1992] pp. 457f.). Singer, however, on the basis of his second premise, prefers to interpret that the 'General's Letter' was addressed to the king of Hatti (in agreement also with Izre'el's conclusions). As I have already mentioned, I agree myself with Singer's second premise which is strictly based upon the content of the letter: "the General is a subject of a king who has the capacity to challenge an Egyptian army". Nevertheless, I must insist on the wrong implication (understanding it as not necessarily true) that "the choice is practically reduced to one option only, Hatti" –although this is not completely wrong if we emphasize the word "practically". Indeed, if we are in the Amarna period –as seems to be the case after Izre'el's analysis and the present reevaluation–, the circumstances described in the correspondence between the Pharaoh and the Canaanite rulers make clear that the enemy and the alarming emerging power against the Egyptian vassals was not explicitly the king of Hatti or the Hittite army. Although the Hittite king was undoubtedly behind it, the real danger came from Canaan itself and was the result of internal struggles among coalitions of rival rulers. The emerging leader of this anti-Egyptian front had also a resounding name, Abdi-Ashirta first and later Aziru, his son. That the rulers of Amurru had the capacity to challenge the Egyptian army is, I believe, beyond doubt as revealed by the evidence of the Amarna letters, partially discussed above (it should be noted that Singer himself points to this possible, although apparently judged unlikely, interpretation on p. 122). Suffice it to bring to mind Abdi-Ashirta's message to his people in Rib-Hadda's letter (cf. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest* p. 149 with previous literature in n. 30) or, more illustrative, the constant sieges that both Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru inflicted upon the Canaanite towns (Ardata, Šumur, Tunip or Byblos among others). Moreover, it should be realized that the geographical setting of the 'General's Letter' corresponds well with what seems to have been the homeland of these princes. In this regard it is interesting to note that Ardata, the town mentioned in l. 5', became invariably the first target of both Abdi-Ashirta's and Aziru's conquests (cf. Singer *AmAkk* vol. II, pp. 143 and 149).

On the other hand, unlike the Hittite king interpretation, this identification would not contradict the use of the title of "king" in the addressing formula of the letter (see above, 1.3). As was pointed out first by Na'aman (in *UF* 20 [1988] p. 183. n. 18, with examples; followed by Moran *Amarna Letters* p.

xxvii n. 73), *šarru* was “the common inner Canaanite title for all city-state rulers”. Indeed, it is for example Aziru who is addressed as “the king, our lord” (*lugal en-ni*) by his subjects Baaluya and Bet-ili in EA 170.

3.3.4. *The identity of the addressor*

Although the name of the General is partially preserved (*šū-mi-i[t(?)]-x*, 1. 2), his identity remains so far obscure. The different alternatives to restore his name (of which Šumittara seems to be the favourite candidate) as well as the proposed identifications (cf. Singer’s pro-Hittite Syrian prince) are admittedly conjectural (see above, 1.3). Accordingly, what I want to discuss briefly here is not the personal but, rather, the contextual identification not only of the General but also of his men.

What the text tells us, as we have seen, is that the General was at the service of his king and that his commitment consisted in blockading the enemy. If, as proposed, his lord was the ruler of Amurru (either Abdi-Ashirta or Aziru), then he must have been one of the high officials of the Amurru army (following thus Nougayrol’s first designation of ‘General’). Now, in assuming once again the legitimacy of the mirror image of the Amarna letters, it must be possible to find a designation for the General and his men at least in the enemy’s words. What was the *name* of the forces which encamped against Rib-Hadda and other rulers? Who was actually blockading the roads and entrances of the gates of Ardata, Šumur, Tunip or Byblos? Few complaints and reports of Rib-Hadda and other rulers mention explicitly what exact troops were laying siege to them. Their intention was not so much to detail the enemy’s forces as to accuse or denounce their rival. As mentioned above, the enemy had one main name: Abdi-Ashirta in the earlier letters and Aziru in the later ones. However, a possible answer to the question, Who were their generals and troops?, can be found in EA 87 of Rib-Hadda. Lines 21-24 read: “He (Abdi-Ashirta) has stationed the ‘Apiru and chariots there, and they have not moved [f]rom the entrance of the gate of Gub<la>”. It is not possible to deduce from this or other passages that the General and his men in RS 20.33 were indeed the armed ‘Apiru, so often mentioned in the Amarna vassal letters. Nevertheless, this evidence seems to indicate that such “rebels” were in fact the main component of the troops of the rulers of Amurru. On the other hand, one should also bear in mind that, as previously stated, this term is used by the other side (possibly with a pejorative connotation, cf. e.g. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest* p. 103) to designate precisely the enemy’s forces.

3.3.5. *The findplace*

The last problem to be dealt with is no doubt the main paradox of the ‘General’s Letter’. If the above interpretation is correct, namely that the General (of the ‘Apiru?) aware of and threatened by the arrival of the Pharaoh or the Egyptian troops sent the urgent message to his lord Abdi-Ashirta or Aziru, how on earth could RS 20.33 be found at Ugarit? As we have seen, Singer and his interpretation of the Hittite king as the General’s lord were also faced to the same paradox. On the other hand, this represents obviously the main argument for the identification of the addressee as the king of Ugarit. Singer suggested that the letter had stopped at Ugarit on its way to Hatti and that a copy or perhaps a Hittite translation was made there and sent to its addressee. This interpretation was no doubt speculative. Now, my speculation runs differently in accordance, of course, with my own interpretation of the letter.

My starting, and supporting, point is the already mentioned document EA 170. This letter is rather particular too. It was written by Baaluya and Bet-ili of Amurru to Aziru, “the king”, their lord. But it was found surprisingly among the Amarna documents in Egypt. This is, of course, no surprise when we know, through other letters, that Aziru did in fact visit the Pharaoh at a certain moment of his rushed career. And that the letter in question was an urgent message requiring his presence back in Amurru. What I want to

suggest is then a parallel interpretation for the similar case of RS 20.33. And why not? Perhaps the ruler of Amurru –the proposed addressee of the letter– was at that delicate moment staying at Ugarit. So that the General, faced to such a critical matter, would not have hesitated to send the alarming message to his lord to a foreign country. On the other hand, as the Amarna letters make clear, the kings of Amurru did regularly visit other rulers from Syria and Palestine in order to recruit allies, join forces and expand their dominion against the Egyptian vassal kings. As for the position of Ugarit, one may quote the passage in EA 98 where Yapah-Hadda reports that “all lands from Byblos to Ugarit have become enemies in the service of Aziru” (ll. 4-9). Moreover, despite the difficulty to date accurately the agreement RS 19.68 between Aziru and Niqmaddu II (see Singer *AmAkk* vol. II, pp. 156f.), one may presume a relatively early date for the alliance or, at least, the first contacts for the coalition between Amurru and Ugarit.

4. Conclusion

As students, we are taught that history is limited to the availability of the sources. This, I believe, is true. And it is also true that much of the available evidence used by historians is one-sided. More often than not, there remains only one account of a transaction or one report of a conflict. So that it is not possible to check or contrast the records in order to gain a more ‘objective’ picture of the business or conflict involved. If I begin the last words of this paper with such a statement is because I consider RS 20.33, after the essential linguistic classification of Izre’el, the only record from the other side of an historical event so far known from the one-sided letters of Amarna. It is true that the Amarna archive in Egypt preserves reports and testimonies from the opposing sides of the conflict: Rib-Hadda and Abdi-Ashirta or Aziru, Biridiya and Lab’ayu, or Abi-Milku and Zimreddi. Nevertheless, these different viewpoints are all situated under the same light; they were all addressed to the Pharaoh, their overlord; they were all found in Amarna. It goes without saying that the historian, like Singer, through painstaking effort has been able to discern a loyal addressor from a disloyal vassal especially on account of other complementary evidence (e.g. Hittite treaties). But the interesting and exceptional aspect of the ‘General’s Letter’ is that it does belong to the other, ‘dark’, side. It was unearthed at Ugarit and was addressed to a king who openly conspired against the Egyptian king. Stepping through this looking-glass, I have proposed that this addressee was the ruler of Amurru who presumably was visiting the king of Ugarit and that the sender was his General at the head of his ‘Apiru’ with the mission of blockading the enemy, the Egyptian vassals, and who was now faced to the Pharaoh’s campaign. But again we have little or no clue for it at all. As I also learned from historians, we can only hope for further evidence, made available through excavation, publication or, also, reevaluation.